

# SATURDAY NIGHT IN HAWARDEN

## “BACK IN THE DAY”

Chapter 22: By Mary Truesdell Johnson

Excerpts from the Hawarden Centennial Book relate memories from many of the early residents. Memories of Saturday nights in Hawarden are very prevalent. Miriam Dawson tells in her story that Saturday night was always the night of the week when people went out to enjoy themselves. In the 1920's and 30's the rural Midwest had its own unique way to enjoy Saturday evenings.

No matter how many hired men she had fed, or how many quarts of fruit she had canned during the week, the lady of the house always perked up for Saturday night; even the men seemed more relaxed and less fatigued on Saturday night. After baths for everyone, good clothes and some “primping” for the women, everyone piled into the family car and headed for Hawarden.



The main business district was three blocks long, but although the north and south blocks were equally busy, the middle block was where everyone hoped to park. It was not just the rural residents that looked forward to Saturday night, but the local town people would regularly take their cars to Main Street in the early afternoon to get a desired parking place. They then walked home and returned when the crowds started arriving.

On the west side of Main Street, parking in front of the Movie Theater was popular, because when the show was over you could see who was dating who. On the east side of the street, parking in front of Harker and Burket Drugstore and J.O. Lind's Department Store was also popular.

Saturday nights held different attractions for different ages. Babies were carried from store to store in their mother's arms as they did their shopping. When the babies and young children fell asleep, they were placed in the back seat of the family car to sleep through the evening while their mother's sat in front visiting with friends and watching the activity on the sidewalks.

If you were a school age child, no doubt your father would give you at least fifteen cents; a dime to go to the movie (usually westerns), and a nickel for popcorn.

Teenagers were a little choosier about what movie was playing, and after finding their best friends, the girls might just sit in the car or walk Main Street pretending to be window shopping, while hoping to see a particular group of boys. If mom and dad were still shopping, the teenagers might even invite the boys to join them in the car (girls in the front; boys in the back) hoping their parents didn't return too soon.

Married men usually congregated at the barber shop or pool hall. Groups could also be found on street corners discussing crops, the weather and world events.

Of course for young people fortunate enough to have access to a car, "scooping the loop" was the cool thing to do.

Over the years, Main Street on Saturday night faded away, although when I was a teenager in the '50's it was still the best night of the week. My mother owned Harker Drug Store and my friend's parents ran Evenhuis Electric, so we always had a good reason to be downtown on Saturday evenings.

High School days and "scooping the loop" were the highlight of our teenage years. Of course a gallon of gas in the 1950's was a whopping twenty-seven and 9/10s cents. If four of us chipped in a quarter a piece, we could circle Main Street for probably both Friday and Saturday nights. There were lots of places to congregate, the city park, school yard, and yes, even a haunted house or two! All the fun was harmless, and we made friends and memories to last a lifetime.

I'm not completely sure what was most responsible for the demise of Saturday night in Hawarden. Maybe the new attraction called "television" kept people at home, maybe the increased ease of travel allowed people to shop more than once a week. According to the information in the 2012 Hawarden History Calendar, the stores were still open on Saturday nights in 1963.

Every generation for the last 125 years has its memories and traditions. We all remember these as "The good Old Days", and the young people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century also are making history and memories. They may not have Main Street on Saturday night, but their opportunities have no boundaries, and the young people I am fortunate to know seem to be choosing wisely and making memories of their own. Where ever their journey through life takes them, just as the generations preceding them, Hawarden will always be their hometown, and hopefully they will remember it fondly.