

## HAWARDEN....HOW IT ALL BEGAN

### EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT TURNS THE PAST INTO A LANDMARK FOR HAWARDEN

#### Chapter 31

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1976 was a year of reflection for America. It was during this year that we celebrated America's 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Hawarden was hardly middle aged in 1976 boasting 89 years since its incorporation. Calliope was much older and would have been 116 on our Bicentennial year.

History and patriotism was the theme of the year in 1976 and it was at this time that many historians of our area, including Nelson Neiuwenhuis, author of "Sioux land, A History of Sioux County," visited with members of Hawarden's Bicentennial Committee and helped them locate the historical sites and treasurers in the Calliope area. This may have been the birth of the first vision of a village replicating the landmarks of the past. Landmarks that not only helped form our City of Hawarden, but were the foundation of the entire area we now call Sioux County.

The adults of the community were not the only ones with a vision, a teenager, Ronald Hill also had a vision, and this is his story.

Ron was a social young man and loved to visit. One of his favorite people to spend time with was Grandma Carr. She was a very interesting lady who lived in Calliope in a home with no electricity, no running water, and chickens that she raised in her back yard. Her home was lit by lanterns, and the well out back was her source for water. She had lived in this home for many years, and at the time Ron visited her was probably in her 80's and seemed to love to have company and share her stories. When Ron stopped by she usually invited him in and offered him some tea and of course he accepted. She told of the days when she raised chickens in her back yard and cared for many of her grandchildren. Ron continued to visit and heard many stories of her life. Grandma Carr died later that year and after her death the house stood empty.

After the house had been empty for a time, Ron was visiting with Grace Melvin who was a member of the Bicentennial Committee and one of Hawarden's historians. She told him that Grandma Carr's home had been built in 1856 and it had served as a stage coach depot in those early days. Records show that Pinkey Davis was one of the drivers and the building was made out of cottonwood.

It was at this time in Ron's Boy Scout career that he was beginning to think of a project to work on to earn his Eagle Scout Badge. Ron spoke to his Scouting Commissioner, Don Dowdey about his vision for the restoration of the Stage Coach Depot. Scoutmaster Dowdey agreed that it would be a difficult project, but a great fortune for the future.

Ron's first task was to talk the City fathers into acquiring the property. Harry Lankhorst was the Mayor at the time, so he was the first person Ron contacted. He loved Ron's idea and encouraged him to approach the City Council with his idea. The Council was not as receptive to the idea as Ron had hoped and they tabled the discussion for the next meeting. Even at the age of fourteen, Ron was not one to give up easily, so he was in attendance at the next council meeting. At this meeting, Mayor Lankhorst spoke up in his behalf and said that he would monitor the project on the cities behalf. At that time the Council gave \$1000.00 to start the renovation. Mayor Lankhorst also pledged \$500.00 to the project, and Ron Hill began his search to find a group of people to work with him. This group of people became the early Calliope Stage Coach Depot Committee and included Don and Matie Rienking, Grace Melvin, Don Dowdy, Shirley Hill and Ron Hill and Grandma Carr's daughter. Ron was elected president of the newly formed group, and others got involved with the committee.

With the help of Ron's fellow Boy Scouts, Troop 209, the project and the clean up began. There had been an addition to the house built in later years that needed to be torn down as well as removing old plaster and seventeen coats of wall paper. Under some of that wall paper they discovered planks for the walls that had been white washed in what was no doubt the waiting room of the depot. The outside of the building was scraped down to the bare wood and

then painted with several coats of paint. Ron's brother, Dennis Hill was the electrician for the project and added lighting for security. The Hawarden J.C's added a wood roof to replicate the original, and Leo Anderson helped replace all the broken windows.

The City agreed to place the building on a brick foundation which was done by Waterman Construction. The project continued to receive donations from community members interested in preserving Calliope's history and the Sioux City Journal and Channel Nine News were also interested in reporting the progress that was being made on this historical building.



This story is the story of a young teenager working on his Eagle Scout badge with a vision for the future. Many people over the years have continued this vision and made Calliope Village in Hawarden a reality and a source of pride for the entire community. Every project whether large or small has its beginning, and this dream of restoring an old abandoned house to its former glory was no doubt the beginning of what is now Hawarden's most famous landmark, Calliope Village.

These are the words written by Ronald Hill last June when we discussed this story.

*"If only those walls could speak, they would tell us lots of stories. I had hopes and dreams of adding other buildings from Hawarden's history. Hundreds of hours were put into the Stage Coach building by many to save it. A few people thought the building should be leveled. Many thought I was crazy for trying to save it. But through a very tough and hard working, soon to be Eagle Scout, a part of Hawarden's history has been saved and a village was born. A vision of a fourteen year old boy in 1976. Thanks to the many after him, a dream and a vision has become a reality for many generations to enjoy. Now after 155 years, the Stage Coach Depot, that is one of a kind left standing in the United States, still has the echoes of horses, stage coaches and wild Indian attacks that have helped make Calliope so famous. A small village that will never be lost in history."* Written by Ronald Hill, age 50, June 30<sup>th</sup> 2011.

More information on the creation of Calliope Village is found on page thirteen of the Hawarden Centennial Book. This is only one person's story. The vision and hard work of countless volunteers since 1976 are a testimony to the dedication and resolve of Hawarden and Calliope residents to show with pride the contributions that this area has made to our history. Thanks to Ronald Hill for his memories of this project.