

## HAWARDEN....HOW IT ALL BEGAN

### BARBERS AND THE "NEW DEAL"

#### Chapter: 38

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Of all the businesses that have started and flourished, in the pages of history for Calliope and Hawarden, I doubt if there has been any business with a longer list of proprietors than those men who came to practice their skill with scissors, clippers and razors to improve the appearance of young and old. The 1887 records show one barbershop in Calliope and one located in Hawarden. The Hawarden Centennial Book lists the names of at least eleven barbers between the years of 1899 and 1900. One of them had the distinction of reducing shaves to five cents. An obvious price war, causing the others to join in the lower price.

In the 1900's even more barbers came to town. At one time 14 barbers were in business to keep all gentlemen neat and trim. Among the names of barbers during the period 1930 to 1940 are such familiar names as Earl Mallette, Keaven Kane, George Niehaus (who retired after 50 years in the business) and many others.

During the Great Depression and the New Deal the NRA (National Recovery Administration) was the primary agency established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. The goal of this agency was to eliminate "cut throat competition" (pardon the pun) by creating codes of fair practices and set prices. It was intended to reduce destructive competition by setting minimum wages, maximum weekly hours and minimum prices at which products could be sold.

In 1935 nine members of the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously declared that the NRA was unconstitutional because it fostered restraint of trade and limited individual liberties in conducting business.

Hawarden barbers obviously did not agree with the Supreme Court. In 1936 they established an NRA of their own in Hawarden and forced the ordinance through the City Council with a petition signed by all the members of the "haircut community". The little "NRA" passed by the City Council fixed the minimum prices charged for barber services as well as establishing the hours that barbers must observe as closing times. The ordinance became law on July 30, 1936 on the day of its publication.

The prices set for barber services were generally already the normal prices charged including forty-cents for a haircut and twenty-cents for a shave. Prices lower than these were not allowed; no more price wars as in the 1900's. The unusual portion of the ordinance called for closing hours for barber Shops at 6 PM except on Saturdays and the days preceding a holiday when it shall be 11 P.M. and Wednesdays from May 15 to October 15 when they shall close at 9 P.M.

Ironically the same day that the ordinance went into effect, the Retail Committee of the Hawarden Chamber of Commerce announced that effective the following week, the stores would no longer stay open on Wednesday nights, leaving the barbers the duty of remaining in their shops until 9 PM while the other business men were free to relax and spend the evening away from their stores. If the barbers chose to ignore the ordinance they would be subject to the penalties incurred by the ordinance. The ordinance called for penalties for violations of not more than \$100 or imprisonment for not more than 30 days, and each day that the violation existed was an additional offense. The ordinance also called for General Hugh Johnson to administer the ordinance and the City health physician, Dr. F.F. Null to enforce it.

The Hawarden barbers, although petitioning for the ordinance, were soon offered a reprieve by the Iowa Supreme Court. Just as the US Supreme Court had declared the law unconstitutional in 1935 the Iowa Supreme Court declared the "Barber NRA" ordinance that was enacted by the Iowa legislature unconstitutional as well. This action automatically nullified the City ordinance and the individual barbers were again able to regulate their own business without fear of punishment.

Barber Shops in Hawarden were located wherever there was a location to hang their barber pole and locate their chairs. There were barbershops in the basement of banks and buildings as well as on Main Street.

Andy Johnson came to Hawarden in 1948 and retired in 1978 after 30 years of serving his customers. Andy was a colorful part of Main Street. He was an avid baseball fan, and many of his customers knew that if Andy's team, the Minnesota Twins were losing, it was not a good day for a haircut. Early morning visitors to Main Street, such as paperboys, etc. would often get a view of Andy doing what he did so well. Lathered with shaving foam in front of the mirror, giving himself a shave.



Earl Mallette retired after 34 years of barbering and Harvey Peters came in 1954. He closed in 1975 after 21 years in the business. He sold his business to Lester Schneider.

Lester Schneider eventually became Hawarden's only barber. His casual, unhurried style as well as his traditional haircut "The Flattop" from the '60s will be remembered by the generation who knew that Barbershops were for men and Beauty shops were for women. When Lester started his shop in Hawarden there were five barbers in town. When Lester retired he was the last barber to operate in Hawarden.

Lester returned to Hawarden after his retirement on a part time basis. He had cut hair at the Hillcrest Care Center once a month for several years and wanted to continue. To the delight of his former customers, Lester started working by appointment only at Linde's Beauty Salon one day a week and continued to cut hair there until he put his scissors down for good in 2010.

Hawarden men are now served by the several Beauty Shops in Hawarden. All of the operators have become proficient at giving the gentlemen who come to them the haircut of their choice.

Like the Barber Shops, Beauty Shops in Hawarden appeared around the 1900's. The shop that holds the title of distinction today would be Linde's Beauty Shop who first opened in the lower level of the Dowdey Furniture Building, now owned by Rodney's Studio, on March 18, 1965. Linde has been a beautician in the Hawarden area for over 50 years and is still operating her shop on Main Street.