

A Glimpse of Martin County's Past

What was the "Older House?"

As time passes, far too frequently segments of our history seem to become obscure and distant. This could well be the case with the "Older House," which may very likely be a name unfamiliar to many.

The "Older House" was actually a hotel. It was located between Second and Third Streets in Fairmont at the present site of the Salvation Army store. This was previously the site of the Masonic Temple and Bob Wallace Mercantile.

The "Older House" was established by J. H. Older who was a Martin County farmer. He bought the building from A. L. Ward, remodeled it, and converted it into a hotel. The hotel also served meals, held dances, and also had a stable.

James Wesley Older, proprietor of the "Older House," was born in Franklinville, New York in 1824. Older married Francis Caroline Chase of St. Lawrence, New York, in 1849. In 1864, he and his family moved to a farm in Center Creek Township where he lived until he moved to Fairmont. He passed away in 1879 leaving his wife, Francis, and nine children. His obituary notice, printed in the February 14, 1879, edition of the *Martin County Sentinel*, stated that J. W. Older was one of Fairmont's old and respected citizens who was honored and beloved by all that knew him leaving a large circle of friends who deeply mourn his loss. He is buried in Lakeside Cemetery in Fairmont.

Remembering Walter Carlson

The late Walter Carlson of Trimont is perhaps the most well-known individual to record Martin County's history. An ardent historian dedicated to local history, Carlson promoted the Martin County Historical Society, sold memberships to the organization, recorded county history, authored a book entitled "*Happenings in Our Neighborhood*" which he had published in 1967, and conducted research as well. He served on the Martin County Historical Society's Board for twenty-five years, including fifteen as its secretary. He also served as museum curator for ten years.

In addition to his interest in history, he was also a farmer, an auctioneer, a realtor, and he wrote columns for the *Trimont Progress* and the *Sentinel*.

Carlson's enthusiastic efforts in recording local history will long be remembered. He was born on June 6, 1902, and passed away in October of 1975. The Pioneer Museum's *Carlson Room* is dedicated to Walter Carlson.

The "Bullard House" – One of Fairmont's Fine Hotels From The Past

The Bullard House was considered an elegant hotel in Fairmont. It was located in the vicinity of where Profinium Financial stands today. According to an article from the

September 13, 1895, edition of the *Martin County Sentinel* entitled “Bullard House Opening-An Auspicious Opening,” the following was stated: “The formal opening and dedication of Fairmont’s splendid new hotel, the Bullard House, will occur on Thursday evening, Sept. 19th, when the public spirited citizens of our town will show their good will toward Col. Bullard and in a slightly more substantial manner present him with a token of their esteem.”

Tickets for the occasion were listed at \$5.00 per couple, or \$2.00 per plate. The intention was to make the affair one of the most interesting social events in the history of Fairmont. The previously mentioned article went on to state that “Our local orators will respond to toasts, and distinguished speakers from outside will be invited. An orchestra will be on duty and the entire hotel will be turned over to the public to do with it as they see fit.”

Some of the more interesting menu items are as follows:

- Blue Point Oysters, a la Peterson
- Boiled Ham Garnished, a la Hill
- Caneton a l’Anglaise, a la Bird
- Roast Lamb, a la Bird
- Filets of Bouef, a la Coult
- Frecandeau of Veal, a la Mocedoine
- Roast Capons, a la Fairmont
- Wine, a la Donaldson

The menu seems interesting, but some of us might find an interpreter helpful.

Ormsby. . . .A Tale of Two Counties

Ormsby is quite unique in that the Martin-Watonwan county line divides the town. According to an August 14, 1967, *Sentinel* article entitled “How Sentinel Area Towns Were Named,” the town was named after Col. E. S. Ormsby of Emmetsburg, Iowa, and apparently no one can determine why it was originally located in two counties.

Col. Ormsby, along with A. C. McCormick and A. C. Brown of Estherville, Iowa, built and operated a bank in Ormsby. The first store, a general merchandise store, was built by J. F. Nothdurft. He was also the first postmaster, and he and his family lived above the store. Rail service was started in 1900, and at one time Ormsby had four passenger trains daily including freight service. In addition, it had two elevators, Farmers State Bank started in 1901, and Grace Lutheran Church was built in 1912. There were also several big fires in Ormsby’s history. They included the 1910 creamery fire, the W. P. Schmidt store and restaurant burned during a thunderstorm in 1919, firecrackers were the cause of a fire on July 4, 1923, in which two stores and a hotel burned, and in 1965, the Town House Supper Club burned.

For more information on these and other historical topics, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.