

Harry M. Serle

Harry M. Serle, a resident of Fairmont for 35 years, was known as a public spirited citizen. He was Mayor of Fairmont, prominent in business affairs, and was said to deserve greater credit than any other individual in the development of municipal improvements.

Mr. Serle was born in India in 1855 and educated in England. At the age of twelve, he began an active career at sea. In 1876, he came to America and located in Decorah, Iowa. One year later he joined the English Colony and came to Fairmont.

He spent his first year in Martin County driving a stage from Fairmont to Winnebago. He then spent a year in railroading and also farmed in Martin County up until 1883. Later, he started an ice business which developed into a monopoly in Fairmont for some 30 years. His ice houses were located on the east bank of Budd Lake and had a capacity of 3,600 tons. He used horse drawn delivery wagons in his business.

Mr. Serle was perhaps best known to Fairmont citizens for his efficient public service. In 1883 he organized the fire department in Fairmont. It was said that due to his public spiritedness and energy, he developed the department into one of the most efficient in the state for towns of its size. Mr. Serle served as the Chief of Fairmont's Fire Department which at that time had 49 regular members, a team and combination wagon with a 35 gallon chemical tank, 1,200 feet of hose, a Seagrave hook and ladder truck, and normal water pressure of 80 pounds with the possibility of 175 pounds when necessary. The state Firemen's Convention was held in Fairmont in 1914, quite possibly due to his efforts on the local fire department.

In 1913, Harry Serle was elected Mayor of Fairmont for a term of two years. He had previously served on the city council for ten years and had also served as a voluntary deputy game warden. Mr. Serle, a democrat, was a member of numerous clubs and organizations in the community.

He was married to Mary Goldsmith, and they had two daughters. The last local resident of the English Colony days, he passed away in 1940. He was remembered as one of Fairmont's best loved citizens.

For more information about Harry M. Serle, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.

By
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