

Who were they?

The history of Fairmont and Martin County readily reveals the fact that it has been blessed with a number of creative and industrious individuals that have permanently left their mark on various aspects of our county. The following are some very brief randomly listed biographical sketches of a few of those early residents of Fairmont and Martin County. Included are their accomplishments in those early days, according to early 1900's editions of the *Martin County Sentinel*.

John Wolf: After spending time working as a bookkeeper in several larger cities in the Midwest, he decided that small town life was more to his liking. When Wolf arrived in Fairmont, he noticed that there were far fewer automobiles than people. As a result of this observation, he decided to “even up the automobile and population in this good town.” Wolf accomplished this by opening the *Fairmont Motor Company*, and made it possible for the average wage earner in Martin County to purchase an automobile.

Edward Albert Luedtke: He left Wisconsin at five years of age. He tried farming in Blue Earth County until he was twenty, and then he opened an exclusive shoe store in Fairmont. Luedtke tried his hand at selling land, selling cigars for Fred Betz, and finally realized what appeared to him to be a great opportunity. Luedtke knew people were usually hungry, so he went into the hotel business and ran the Heidel Hotel for several years, and then the Bullard Hotel. A sign on the dining room door stated, “Pay as You Enter.” Luedtke scratched out the “as you enter,” and added “when you can.” Although he preferred cash, he was a generous man who didn't turn anyone away.

George Andrew Sutherland: He acquired a teaching certificate and taught school long enough to save some money to put towards several oil wells on his father's homestead. With the proceeds of those wells, he paid his way through Columbia Law School in 1892, and then moved to Sherburn. While there, he was involved in insurance, real estate, and owned as much as 240 acres of land. In 1908, Sutherland moved to Fairmont and worked in the life insurance field.

Carl H. Brodt: He was a member of Company E of the Minnesota National Guard for seven years, he officiated at over 1,200 burials, and he built the first telephone line into Fairmont. Brodt also served as vice-president of Fairmont National Bank, vice-president of the National Land Company in Minneapolis, and was also a coroner. In addition, he traveled over 7,000 miles in his Buick six visiting fifteen states.

W. S. Carver: He trapped muskrat when a youth on the farm in Martin County. Carver farmed for nine years in Oregon, he worked as a livestock shipper and meat market proprietor, and he managed Ward & Company Packing Plant. He is probably best known as being Martin County Sheriff from 1913-1919. Carver also enjoyed hunting big game and driving his special Overland automobile.

W. L. Nicholas: He was born in England and he arrived in Fairmont in 1889. Nicholas at one time worked for a mortgage company in Emmetsburg, Iowa. He served as private

secretary to A. L. Ward from 1895-1897, he became a court reporter in 1897, and he was member of the Park Board. Nicholas, a champion Whist player as well as the Nic in the Haynic Theater, was known at that time as the man who brought the "photo stars" to Fairmont.

William M. Hay: He was born in England in 1860 and he arrived in Martin County in 1878. Hay farmed for eight years and sold farm machinery for four years. He served as Martin County Register of Deeds, and treasurer of Fairmont Machine Company. He also enjoyed following the hounds in Martin County. Hay was best known as being the man that put the "H" in Haynic, that being the Haynic Theater, now known as the Fairmont Opera House.

Frank E. Wade: He farmed in Wisconsin and Martin County, arriving in Fairmont in 1881. Before his twenty-first birthday, Wade was put in charge of over 370 men on a construction crew. Other jobs he held included being a traveling salesman for the Fairbanks Morse Company for six years and mining in the Black Hills of South Dakota from 1902-1906. In addition, Wade established the Fairmont National Bank, he was secretary of the Southern Florida Land Company, he was vice-president of the largest sugar manufacturing plant in Mexico, he served as president of Fairmont Gas & Railway Motor Company, he served as chairman of the Republican Central Committee, and he also served as Mayor of Fairmont.

Harry M. Serle: He was born in Madras, India, and he came to the United States in 1876. His first job in the country was driving a stage between Fairmont and Winnebago. He also worked for a time in the ice business. Serle was President of the Minnesota State Fireman's Association from 1913-1914, and was probably best known for organizing the Fairmont Fire Department in 1881, and serving as its chief for sixteen years. He also enjoyed following the hounds in Martin County.

John F. Haeckel: He was born in Lake County, Illinois, and came to Fairmont in 1893. Haeckel worked in his father's blacksmith shop at age thirteen and he also farmed in Martin County. He drove six miles each morning to the Fairmont Business College and graduated from there. Haeckel served as Deputy Treasurer for 4 ½ years and also served as Martin County Treasurer from 1910-1919. He enjoyed hunting and was a baseball fan.

Henry C. Nolte: He was born in Illinois and came to Fairmont at the age of 12. He held a number of jobs, some of which included working as a stenographer in a law office, running a thresher for several years, and selling farm machinery for five years. Nolte served as County Auditor from 1913-1919, being elected by the largest majority ever given a candidate in Martin County up to that time. Nolte's hobby was reading and he also enjoyed his Studebaker automobile.

Paul Peterson: He came to America from Germany. He worked as a clerk in a general store in Sleepy Eye and learned photography while there. Peterson later entered Hamline University at the age of twenty-six and paid his way by doing photography. He worked as a photographer in Lake Crystal for five years, and he settled in Fairmont in 1898.

These are merely a few of the many early citizens who helped shape and influence our county. To find out more about these individuals, and the many others that played an important role in the growth and development of Martin County, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.