Vinton's Pioneer Settlers Came From Many Areas of the Country

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VINTON — On Oct. 17, 1887, Robert F. Evans of Vinton, Iowa purchased from the United States of America one section of land (640 acres) which lies in the approximate center of the present Town of Vinton.

This was the first formal record of the future town although there had been residents in the surrounding area since the early 1860s.

Pioneers in the Vinton community were members of families who had settled in Big Woods and nearby areas. Later, with the coming of the railroad, other families moved in from the eastern part of the state. This was the first formal record of the future town although there had been residents in the surrounding area since the early 1860s.

The railroad through Vinton, from New Orleans to Beaumont, Tex., was completed by the J. Pierpont Morgan & Co., in the late 1880s, probably in 1887, A switch-track was placed at Vinton during the time of construction to allow trains to pass one another.

When completed, the line was called Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railway and referred to as the M.L. & T. Railroad. Later it was the Texas and New Orleans Railway (T. & N.O.) and presently the Southern Pacific Railroad.

George Horridge, also of Vinton, Iowa, bought the major portion of Robert Evans' original purchase of land in 1888 and immediately subdivided it and began selling lots. Prices then ranged from $10 to $25 per lot.

The community was named Vinton after the town in Iowa from which the developer had come. Horridge platted the townsite into 12 blocks bounded by present-day Mill, Stevenson, Goodwin and East Streets.

He then sold his interest in the Louisiana property to the Southern Real Estate & Guarantee Co. of Vinton, Iowa, for stock in the company.

Seaman Arthur Knapp, a native well-known in Louisiana history, was president and general manager of the real estate company and came to Vinton to oversee the property.

In 1890, much of the remaining property was sold to Louisianans and Southern States Real Estate & Mortgage Co. Ltd. of Leicester, Eng., which continued to sell lots.

An act of Congress later required companies in foreign countries to seek authority to conduct business in the United States.

EARLY INDUSTRY

The earliest industrial activities in Vinton were lumbering and cattle grazing. A sawmill furnished employment for many men in the early settlement.

In the year 1910, citizens of the community passed a petition to call an election to incorporate the village. The election carried and on Oct. 1, 1910, Governor Jared Y. Sanders signed the proclamation proclaiming the community to be an incorporated village.

Gov. Sanders appointed the first officials to serve during the interim from Oct. 1, 1910 until June 30, 1911. They were Mayor Alexander Perry (affectionately referred to as "Buddy"); town marshal Walter L. Peters and Aldermen Joseph L. Vincent, Dr. J. M. Ford, Max Kaufman, Arthur A. Simmons and S. S. Perkins.

Early in 1911 the first election was held naming C. P. Hampton (referred to as "Mr. Charlie") as mayor; Tom Patrick, town marshal; Max J. Kaufman, S. J. Welsh, Joseph L. Vincent, J. A. Perry and J. D. Standfield, aldermen.

The present mayor of Vinton, W. A. (Bill) Venissat, recalls that the only brick structure in town when his family moved there in 1913 was a bank vault. Street names in the town reflect names of the early families such as Horridge, Vincent, Perry, Fairchild, Hampton, Lyons, Fairchild. Among other families were Granger, Sweney, Broussard, Gray and Fonfand.