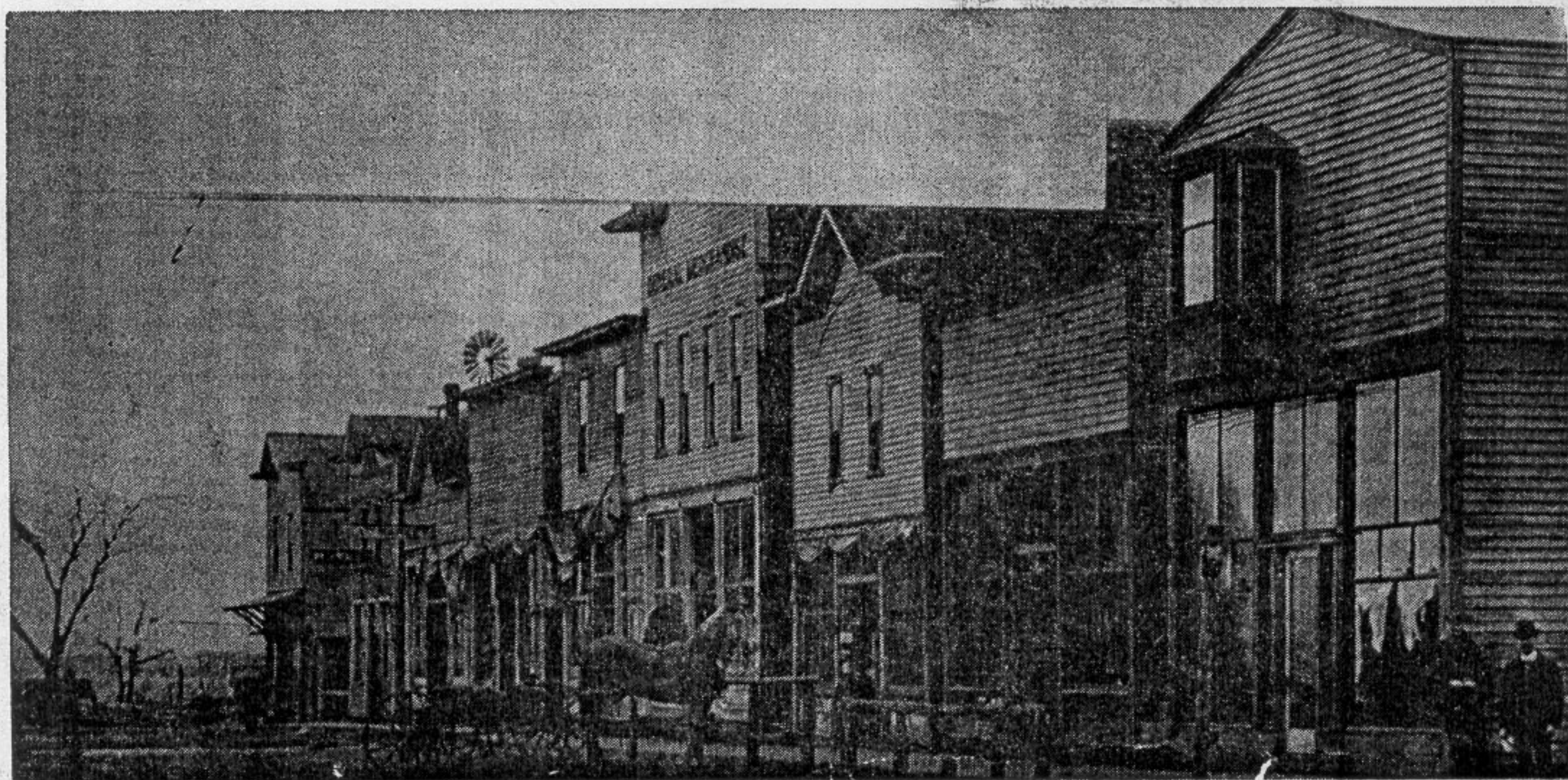


CHESTER TODAY

HISTORY OF CHESTER, IOWA

1858 - CENTENNIAL - 1958

**CELEBRATION
June 13-14, 1958**



Chester Main Street before Fire of 1912 (see inside cover for details)

History of Chester, Iowa 1858-1958

Chester originally started in March 1858 two miles west of town where the present cemetery is now. There was only a government mail post and a house, also a small school.

Artemus Eaton was the postmaster. The post office was in his house. This home was also a sort of hotel where people stopped for meals or to stay overnight on their way to McGregor, Iowa, for supplies, lumber, etc. Mr. Eaton also had groceries such as tea, sugar, beans and cheese.

RAILROAD

When talk that the C. M. & St. P. railroad was to come through this section, a man named A. D. Combs who owned land around south and east of Chester, said he would give the land to the railroad if they would come thru here and Chester would be moved to the present site. He gave land for the railroad, yards, and depot. In 1867 Chester was moved to the present site.

The first depot agent of Chester was W. E. Hasken. He also built the first house in the present town of Chester. This is where Lloyd Ekanger now lives.

The first depot burned down in 1887, but was soon rebuilt again. Some of our early depot agents were: W. E. Hasken, John Platt, Barlow, Barker and Dan Jorgenson. Frank Swartz was the first telegraph operator.

The railroad came in 1867 and built the yards in the same year. Some of the yards stood where the lumber yard does now, altho the railroad company never owned that land. Some of the livestock buyers in years past have been, Roper, Carter, Courtney, Baldwin, Halver, and at present W. J. (Bill) Armstrong.

CHESTER VILLAGE

The plat of Chester village was filed in the year 1873.

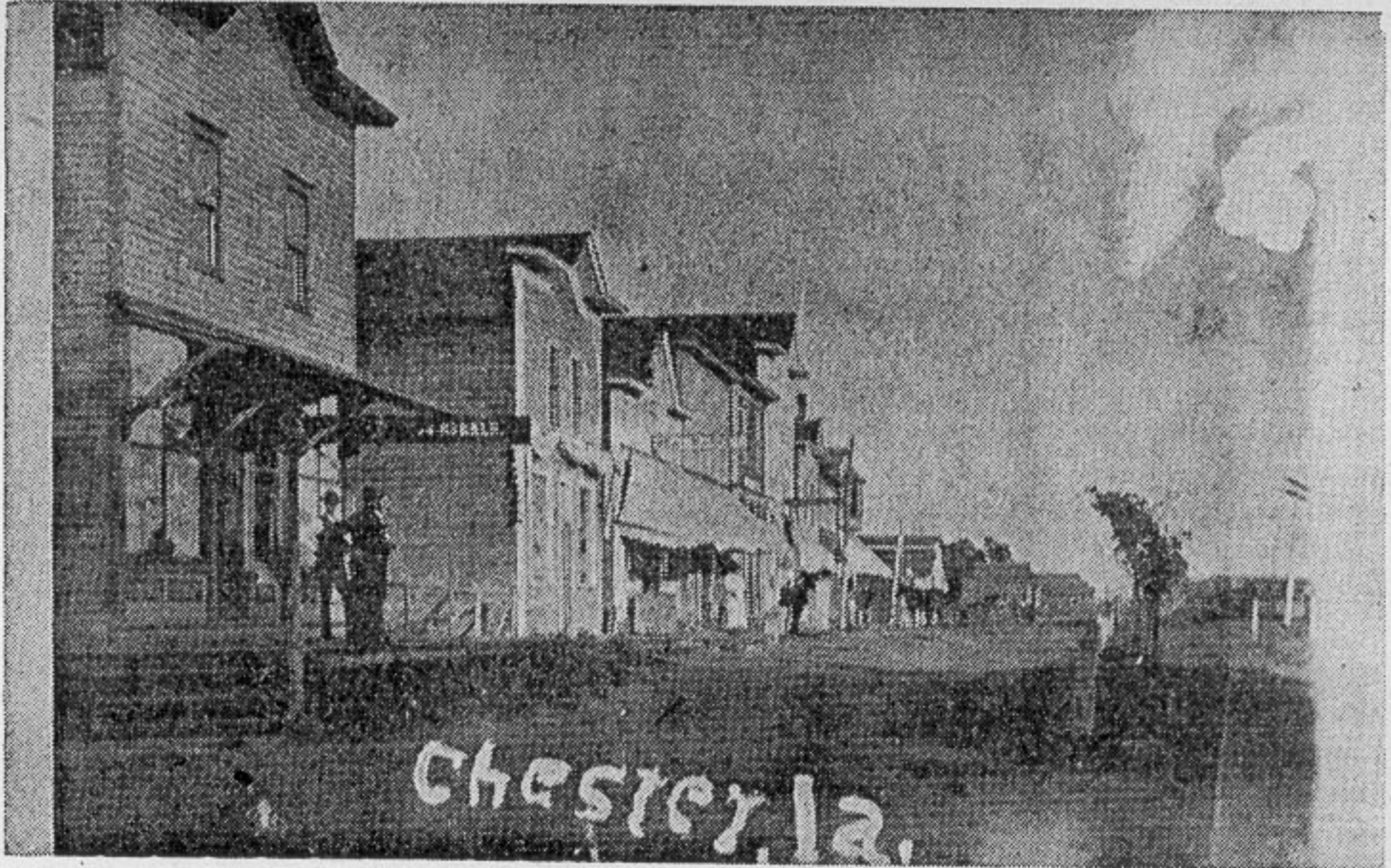
The village of Chester was built on the street facing the railroad and depot. It was all on one side of the road. There was a bank, hotel, butcher shop, funeral home, second hand furniture store, barber shop, pool hall, grocery store, clothing store, and restaurant. After the big fire in 1912 there were only two buildings left standing—the Lake Hotel, which is now McGrane's Produce building, and a bank which was torn down in later years.

In 1911, across the corner from where Armstrong's office now is, Clint Essington owned and operated a furniture store and undertaking establishment. He was the first undertaker in Chester.

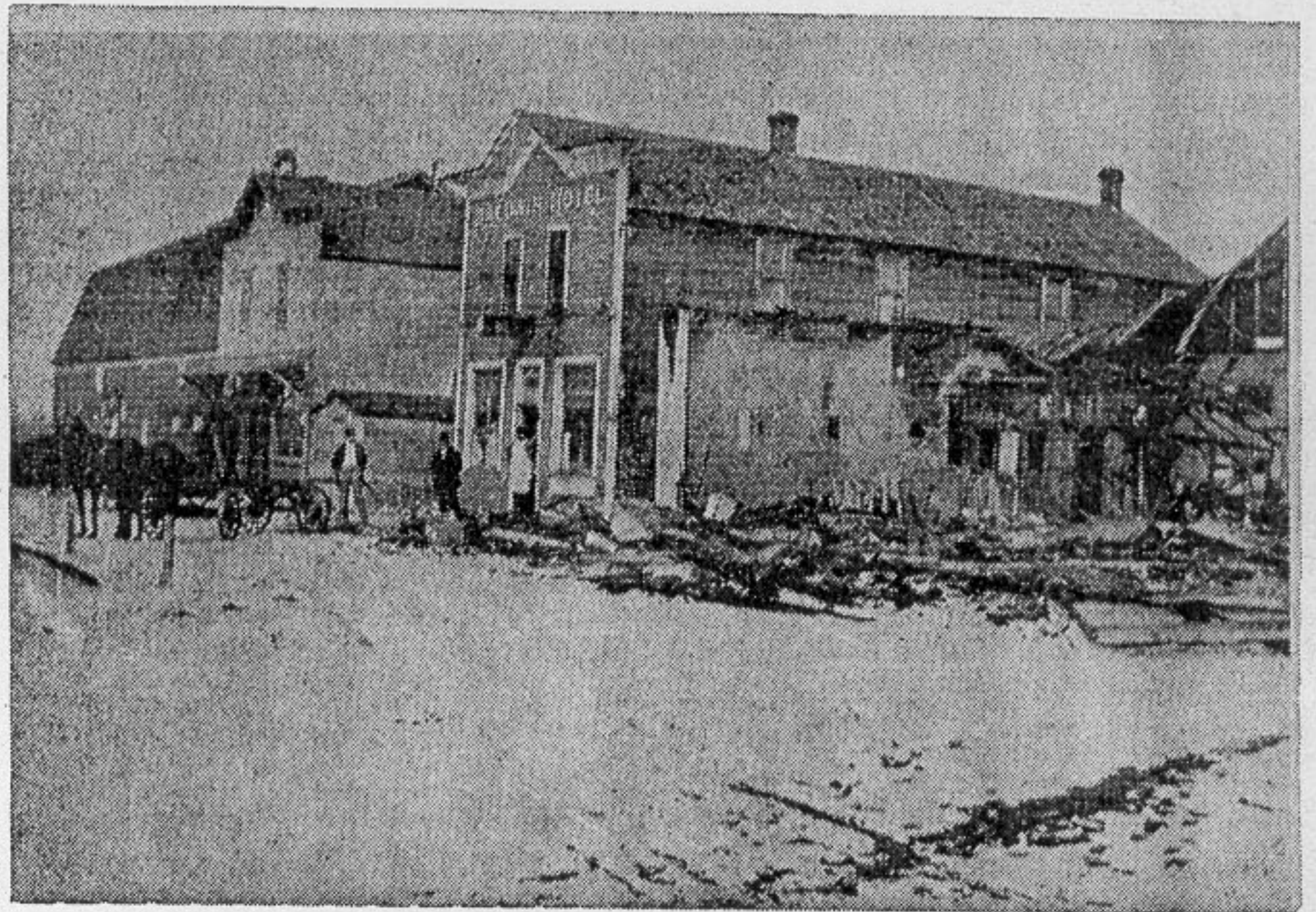
Bill Barnes owned the general store, cafe, pool hall and barber shop.

A lodge hall, the upper floor of which was used for dances, stood east of Lake's Hotel. Jay Roberts and Guy Cagle had a furniture store on the ground floor.

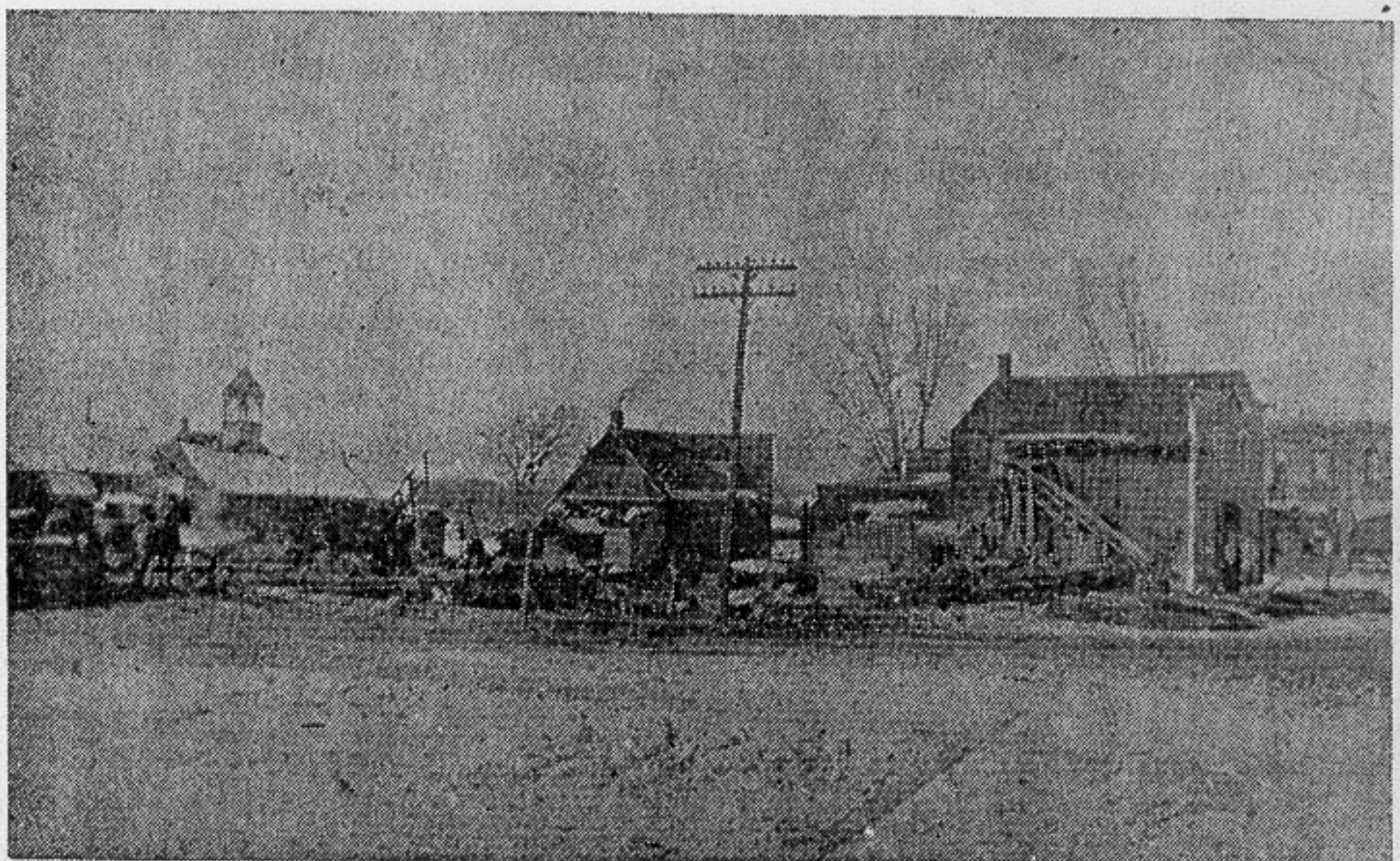
The young village of Chester also had a weekly newspaper called the "Chester Herald". It was started about 1897 or 1898 and published by Fred Davis. It was located for about two years in the mill house. Davis sold



Looking eastward at old Main Street before Fire of 1912. Sun-Herald building at left.



Livery Barn, Bank and Hotel Bldgs. left standing after 1912 fire.



Scene after fire of 1912, which destroyed 6 or 7 business buildings, all of which faced the railroad tracks. Building at right is where Johnson Cafe is now.

the Herald to Sterling in early 1904, it would appear.

Chester Herald copies as far back as Dec. 9, 1904 show G. A. Sterling & Co. publishers. On June 9, 1905, sale of the Chester Herald to Clint Essington of Chester and Clarence J. Zook of the Lime Springs Sun was announced, after which it was consolidated with the Lime Springs Sun, and the name changed soon afterwards to "The Sun-Herald." That same year, the Sun-Herald evidently was moved by Mr. Zook, from Lime Springs to Chester, being published in Chester until late in 1908.

POPULATION

In 1905 the village had a population of 287; in 1910, population 266; in 1915, population 290; At the present time, 1958, the population is 318.

CHESTER BUSINESS PLACES

Since the big fire of Chester in 1912 there have been many changes. Many people have helped to rebuild the town, and many business places have changed hands.

Here are some of the changes:

Marshall and Murray built the present hardware store in 1898.

The general store was owned and operated by Fred Lawson. It stood on the corner where the Thompson cafe is now, and faced east. This store was bought by Dr. John Lyon and turned into a drug store.

A drug store was built and owned by Ernest Eckstien. This stood east of Freddie Baldwin's store.

As Chester began to build after

the fire, the town got a barber shop, produce house, doctor's office, post office, a telephone office that stood on the east side of the street across from Stevensen's warehouse.

Will Cray, Walter and George Smith built the west end cafe and drug store. Art Jones and Will Cray built the tavern and bank.

Mr. Robert Stintzi had a harness shop over the hardware store, and he also repaired shoes.

Lonnie Eaton owned and operated a shoe repair shop east of the Community hall.

At one time Bremmer owned a shoe repair shop here in Chester. This stood across the street from Baldwin's store.

John Hammond and Will Breedlove owned a produce and also sold machinery. Their business place stood by Bill Armstrong's office.

Some of These People at one time Owned or Managed Places in Town:

Roy and Manny Jones—Hardware Store; Capper and Thomas—Baldwin's Store; Armstrong Meat Market—West-End Cafe; Grover and William Hamann, Meat market—McGrane's Produce; Moe and Ness—Jack Sprat Store; Bob and Ruth Stintzi—Jack Sprat Store; Ham Breedlove, general store—Post Office; Jay Fairchild and Archie Winslow, garage — Community Hall; Nels Christensen, Filling Station; J. Roper, cattle buyer; Jim McDowell, barber; McWilliams jewelry store — Bank; Palmer Variety Store—Community Hall; Jack and Laura Johnson—McWilliams Drug.

BIGGEST DISASTER

The biggest disaster of Chester happened in 1912. A local farmers' convention had met in an upstairs hall and the men had already gone home when fire broke out in the hall which was in the middle of the block. It had soon spread into 6 or 7 buildings which were burned down before the fire was brought under control. Since they were all frame buildings the loss didn't run so high. The damage was estimated at \$50,000 or more.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity was installed in Chester in 1915. Most homes and business places had lights. When 11:00 o'clock came the light company would shut off the lights and everything was in darkness.

The pavement came thru Chester in 1930 and the old highway was changed to run through town and is now our Main Street.

STREETS

At one time Chester had all of its streets named. River Street was the street running past the Telephone office.

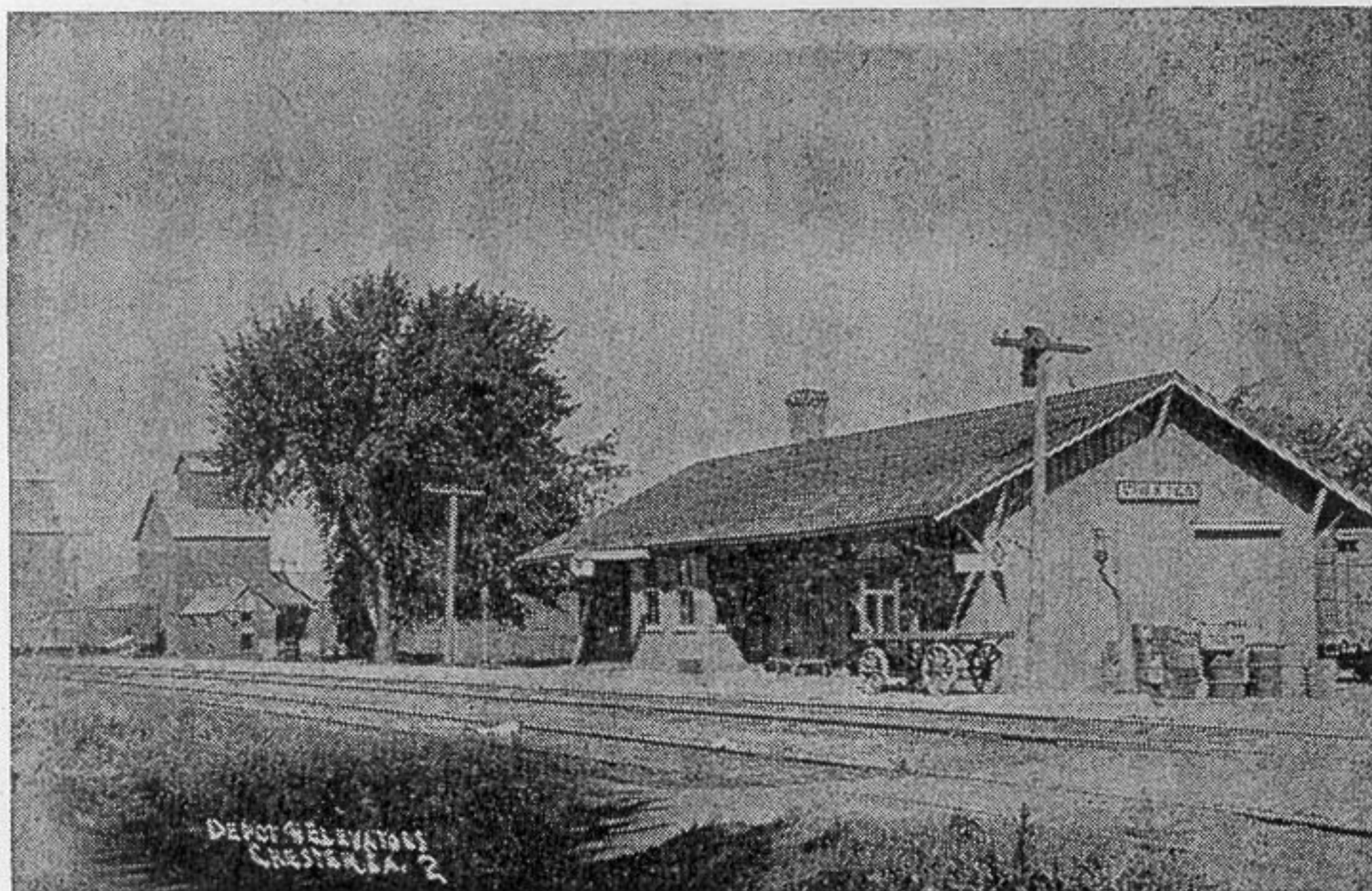
Railroad Street, the road past the elevator, was the main street when the town faced the railroad.

Minnesota Street was the street past the Lutheran church. Arlington Heights was what is now Main Street. Butter-milk Ave. runs from the present school to the pavement.

Haskin Street went from the depot south.



Bill Barnes' general merchandise store on old south main street. Note cuspidors, coffee grinder, gas lamps, old stove, long stockings, button shoes, etc.



Early photo showing depot and two elevators, first Moen Elevator and at far left the Hunting Elevator.

CHESTER RAILROAD

The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad came in 1867. On these trains came refrigerated cars, box cars, flat cars, passenger cars and etc.

The passenger trains quit running in the month of December 1952. With the stopping of the passenger train, the steam locomotive went too. The diesels started coming through sometime in January 1953.

Haskins was the first depot agent, then John Platt, Barlow, Barker and Dan C. Jorgenson. Mr. Jorgenson, the present depot agent, has now been employed 45 years with the Milwaukee Road.

MILLINERY SHOP

There were three millinery shops in Chester. Emma Thomas and Mattie Thomas had their shop on the south side in 1902. Mrs. Mabel Wells and Edna Breedlove had their shop in the rear of Babcock and Nichols general store. The third shop was across from Baldwin's store. Helen Babcock owned and operated it.

LIVERY BARN

Barrett and Williams owned the Livery Barn that stood where part of the lumber yard now stands. This faced west. Then they built a new barn, where Armstrong's garage now stands, by the side of the mill. At one time Charley Thomas owned it with Albert Barrett.

TELEPHONE COMPANY

The first telephone company in Chester came in 1893. The company that installed it was called the Standard Telephone Company. They had four lines leading out of town. They led to Saratoga, Lime Springs, LeRoy, and Spring Valley. The homes didn't then have telephones, so any one wanting to call had to go to the telephone office, which was upstairs in an old building across from Stevensen's warehouse. It now is the Elise Mose house. In 1917 the businessmen and anyone else wanting were given the chance to buy shares. The company re-organized and was named the Chester Telephone Exchange.

The first secretary and treasurer of the new telephone company were John Leslie and Floyd Wells.

The operators from 1917 to 1958 are as follows:

Guy Dawes	1917 - 1926
W. H. Barnes	1926 - 1934
L. P. Thomas	1932 - 1934
Earle Blade	1934 - 1937
L. P. Thomas	1937 - 1941
Elwin Knapp	1941 - 1944
L. W. Nath	1944 - 1945
Stanley Bateman	1945 - 1948
Joe Lomica	1948 - 1948
Jerry Meier —	August 17, 1948 —
	1958. He still holds the position.

POST OFFICE

The first post office that served this area was out on the Harry Ness place across the Minnesota-Iowa line. Freddie Baldwin's grandmother was the first post-mistress. Town was called Eddyville. Mail came by Pony Express from Cresco.

There have been four different locations in Chester where the post office has stood. The first village post office that was apart from any other building was built where the Meier Tavern is now. Then one stood on the east side of the street across from Baldwin's store and one was behind the Baldwin store. This building is now used as a home. The fourth is where the present post office is now.

Postmasters of the present village were: A. C. Blair, Bradley Chapin, Fred Brown, Ham Breedlove, Freddie Baldwin, Charles Murphy.

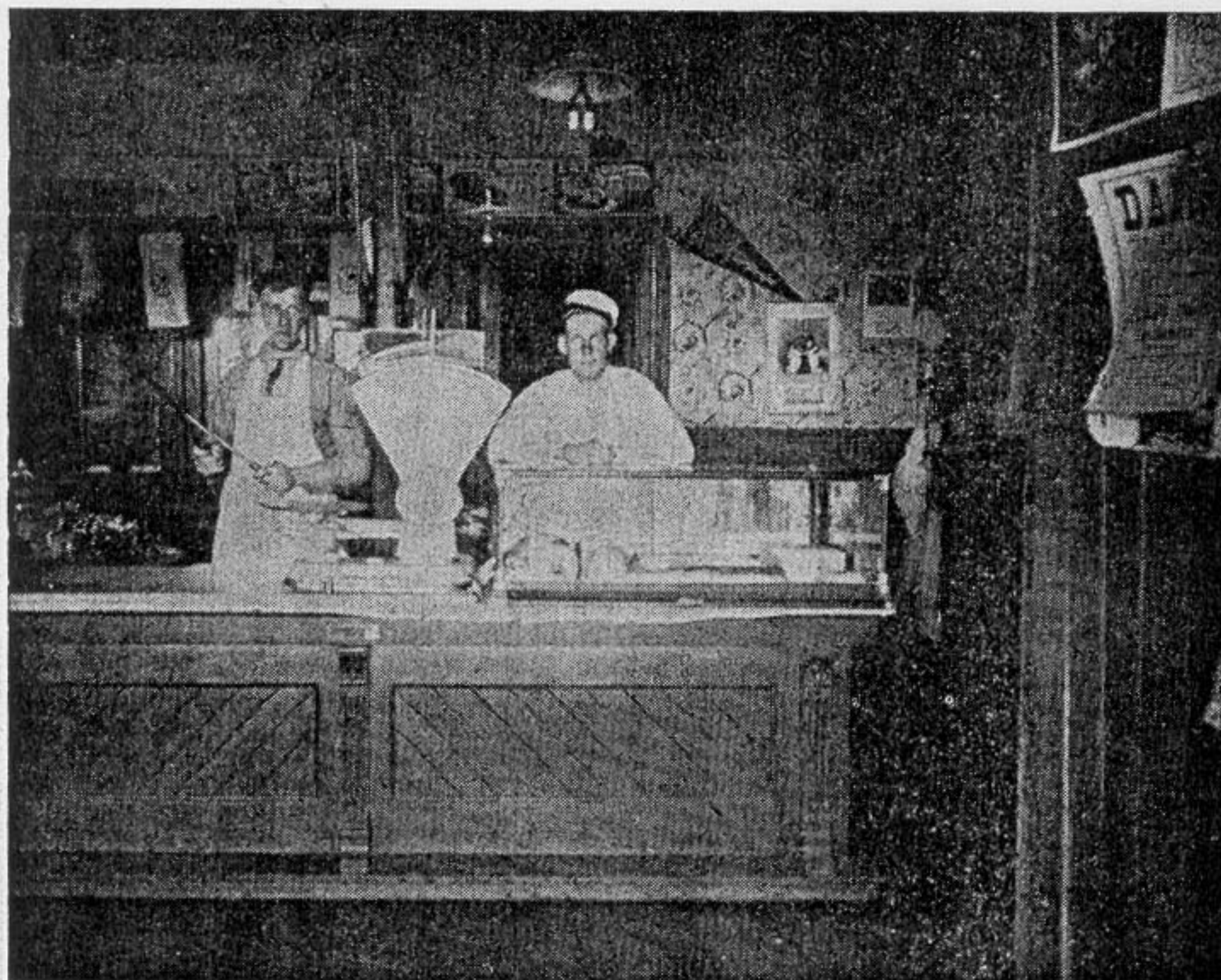
The present postmaster of Chester is Don Rollins.

FIRST MOVIES HERE

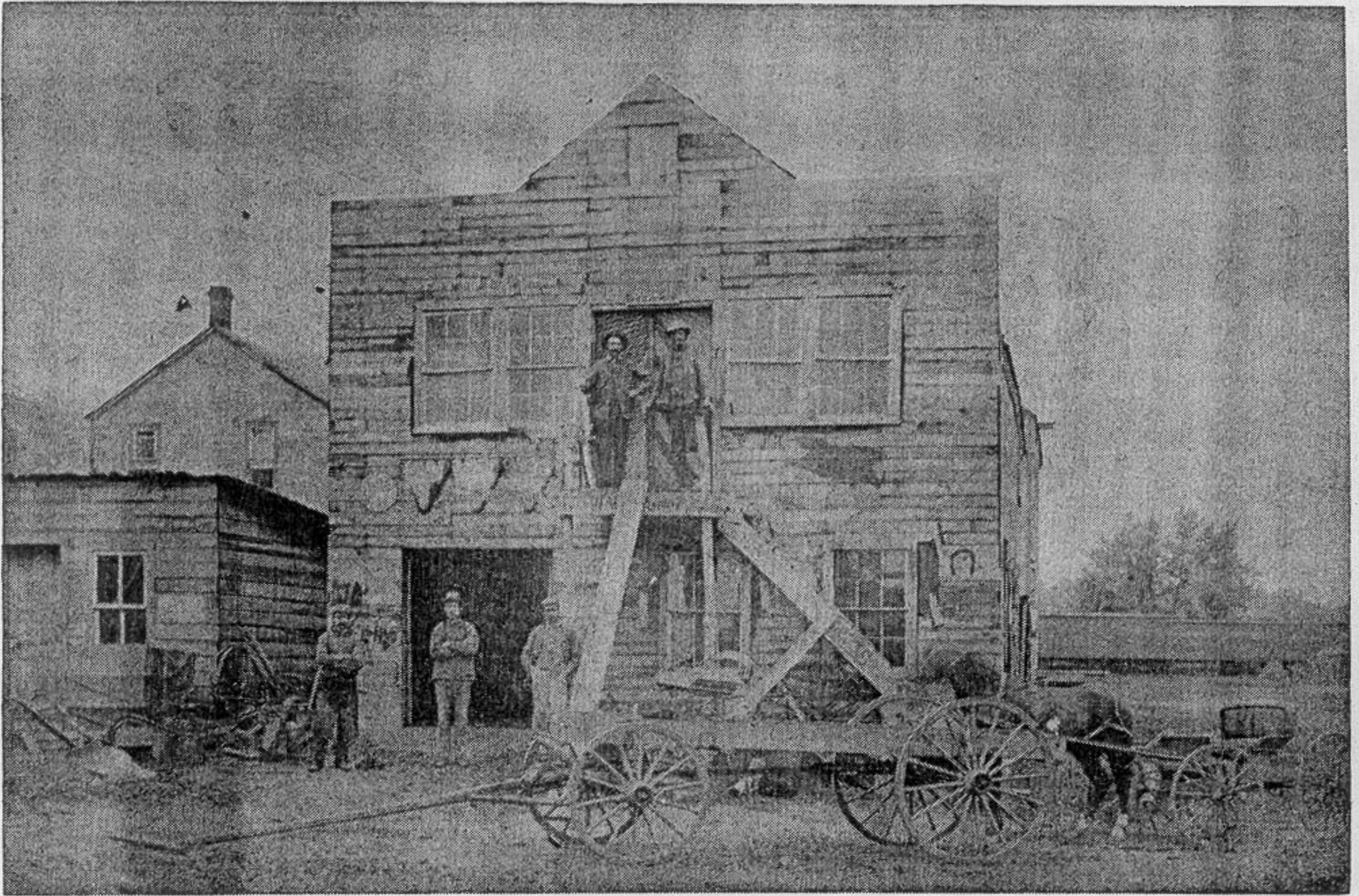
The first moving picture show in Chester was operated by Blair & Son, in the old opera house over the E. Jay Roberts clothing store. It was lighted by gas and turned with a crank. Announcement was made before starting the show, describing the movie plot.

Open Air Movies

Freddie Baldwin says he thinks the open air theatre was originated in Chester. G. W. Dawes, who ran the Telephone office, operated the first open air movie here.



Brothers, Bill (left) and Grover Hamann in butcher shop which they operated in what is present McGrane Produce building. Dance bill on wall advertised dance to Fiske's Harp Orchestra. Photo taken about 1918-19.



John Kelly owned and operated this blacksmith shop, while his brother Tom had a work shop upstairs.

BLACKSMITH SHOP

There were at one time three Blacksmith shops in the town of Chester. One shop stood where Art Steubs'

feed warehouse and office is now, and a man named John Kelly owned it. Later Whiteside owned it. Then Tom Edwards bought it.

The second shop was across from

the depot facing the north. Jim McCray owned and operated it. Also Dave Nichols had a blacksmith shop where the Bob Maurer oil station is now.

EGGS POULTRY

Baby Chicks

Nutrena Feeds



LeRoy Packing Co. & Chester Produce Co.

LE ROY, MINN.

Chester, Iowa
Elmer McGrane, Mgr.

CHESTER CEMETERY

First "Chester" was out on what is now known as "Chester Hill Cemetery". The first cemetery was near the Eddyville Post Office. This was moved to the present location when Artemus Eaton gave the first two acres for the cemetery. The first person buried there was Mr. Eaton, 1862.

The Chester Cemetery Association was organized on July 2, 1897. The first constitution was written by Mrs. W. Smith, Mrs. Tom Turner and Jennie Hall, in 1897. The price per lot then was \$5.00, half a lot \$3.00.

The first officers were: President—Mrs. Courtney, Vice-Pres.—Mrs. H. A. Murray, Secretary—Alta Barrett, and Treasurer—Mrs. Ed Bamer.

It was known by the name of "Chester Hill Cemetery", and it was incorporated under that name in 1946. The first officers then were: President—A. T. Eggerichs, Herbert Hamann, Ruth Ladwig, Edna Fitzgerald, and C. E. Winslow.

Slate of Present Chester Businessmen, in the year they came:

- Henry Stevensen Hardware Store — 1925.
- Robert Maurer, Shell Filling station — 1938.
- Freddie Baldwin, grocery store — 1936.
- Darrel Crouse, Conoco Filling station — 1954.
- Donald Rollins, postmaster — 1954.
- Wayne Shankland, Jack Sprat store — July, 1952.
- Ed Meier, Meier Tavern — March, 1947.
- Thompson Cafe — 1926, 4 years; 1943, 7 years; December 1957-.....
- Win Cray, Real Estate and Insurance — 1948.
- Richard Cray, Real Estate and Insurance, Inc. — 1957.
- Virgil McGrane, Drug Store, — June 1952.
- Jerry Meier, portable mill — 1954.
- Feed Store — 1956.
- Marian's Tavern — March 1947.
- McGrane's Produce — Sept. 1931.
- Arthur Steubs, Chester Feed Mill — Sept. 1945.
- Wesley C. Viktora and Bernell L. Wittrock, Chester Oil Co., — Oct. 1949.
- Dale Eggerichs, manager of Farmers Co-Op. Elevator — 1952.
- Harry Wray, Creamery — May 1955.
- Scheevel Electrical Supplies (Floyd Scheevel), repair service — June 1953.
- William J. Armstrong, cattle buyer — 1933.
- Alice's Beauty Shoppe (Alice Harnack Hovden) — March 1958.
- Earle Blade, carpenter.
- Knute Wilson, plasterer.
- Carl Wolf, carpenter.
- Lars Anderson, seed corn dealer, also Chester's mayor.

Chester at one time had national fame as being one of the greatest hay markets in the United States. Thousands of cars of baled hay were shipped annually from here.



BOB'S SHELL SERVICE

R. F. MAURER

WELDING — MOWER SECTIONS

Phone 26

Chester, Iowa



MEIER'S CAFE

Home of Keg Beer

POOL — CIGARETTES — CANDY —
SOFT DRINKS, Etc.

CHESTER, IOWA

MILL OF CHESTER

The first mill of Chester was built about 1886 by two men, Bidwell and Harding, but was run by C. D. Meredith. It was called "The Flour Mill."

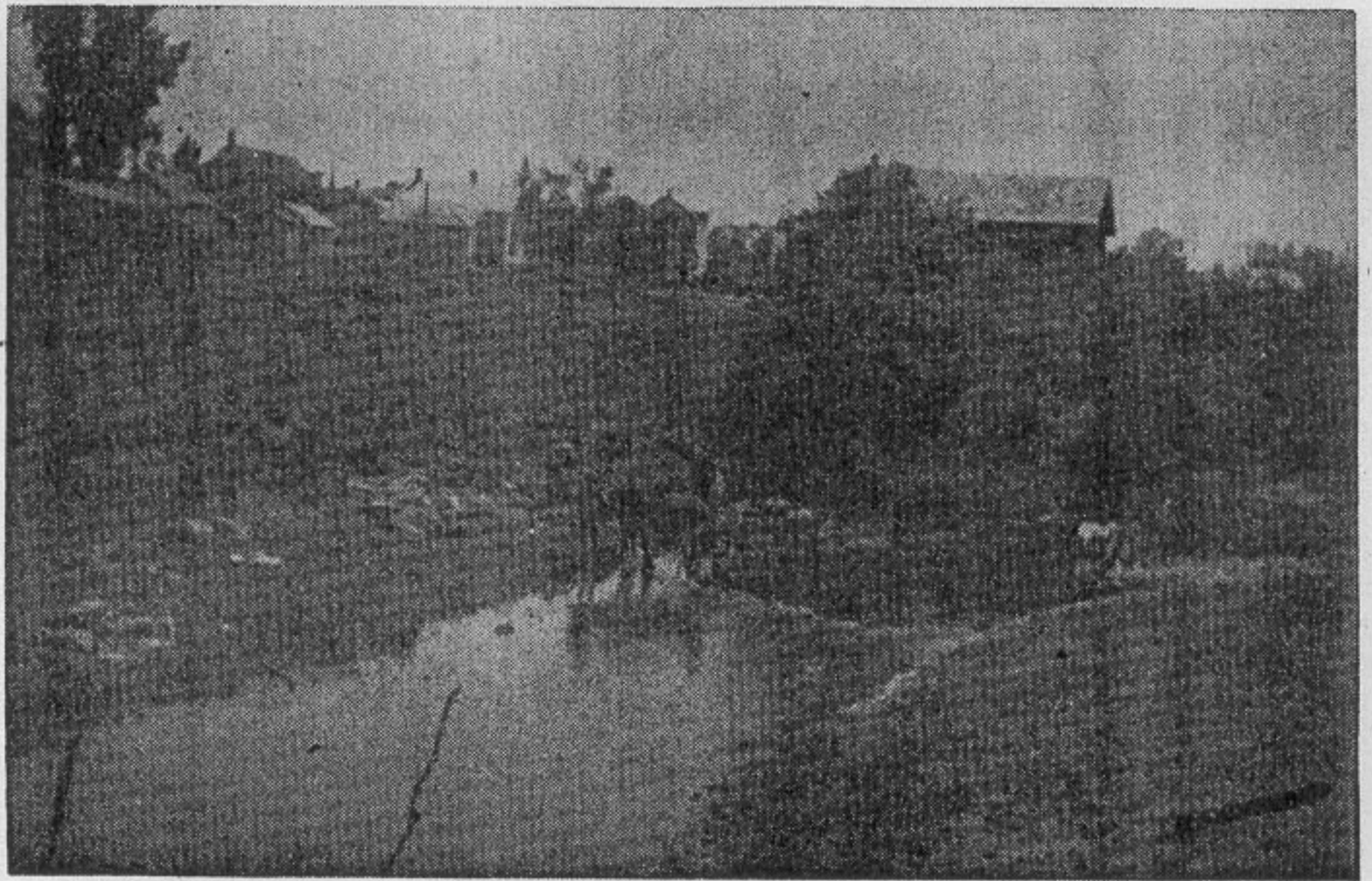
It stood behind the house where Dick Cray now lives. There was a dam and mill pond from where the mill received its power. It was run by a water wheel. Ice was cut from the mill pond in the winter months for the town use in summer, and stored in the ice house somewhere along the old hotel street.

The mill was used mostly for grinding flour, corn meal and buckwheat. The mill burned down and was replaced in later years by Cornelius Oswald, who bought the old city hall that stood in the middle of town, at the end of the street. When the pavement came thru this building was moved to where it now stands.

Other men who ran the mill were Albert Leslie, Willard Wolf and Art Steubs.

The house where Dick Cray lives was called the "mill house," and consisted of two rooms. In one of the rooms the Chester weekly paper was printed.

(We understand some of the beaux and belles of that day used it for dancing to the stirring strains of a mouth organ.)



Old photo showing part of Chester mill pond with old mill at right above. Team of horses in center.

Chester's mill pond extended from the home of Dick Cray, along the river road, covering an area of about 12 acres. It was fine for summer fishing and boating, and for ice cutting and skating in the winter.

Hemminway and J. C. Webster owned a tow mill east of town, built on what was later known as the Phifer land. This burned down.

INTERESTING FACTS

At the time of this writing, the oldest person living in Chester who was born here in town is Mrs. Ruth Lake Stintzi, and the youngest person living here is her little grandson, Robert Wayne Shankland, who is four weeks old.

The Chester community was visited by the "Angel of Death" 13 times in 1952. Both old and young were called.



The old City Hall at right center in top picture, later moved and seen below as it is now in use as the Chester Feed Mill.



Top: Mrs. Ruth Lake Stintzi, oldest living native born resident of Chester.

Below: Her grandson, Robert Wayne Shankland, newest resident (1958), son of Wayne Shanklands.