

Along Our Byway

By: Archie Henderson-Lake Country Scenic Byway Ambassador

Our Byway serves our community and brings new interesting people to visit us and enjoy our society. So many things are here and the most exciting part is to hear the "story behind it."

Take for instance this old school bell. It was always placed in a prominent point of the landscape. It had purpose-served it well on three school buildings. Was founded in Sheffield, England in 1889 and was put to service at School District #31, Osage. Used to ring every day when school was in session, tolled when World Wars I and II was over, and sometimes on Halloween night when some young prankster could not resist the temptation to ring it. Now it's retired in a place of prominence for a job well done.

Many teachers used it to announce school was in session. May I recall a few, namely, Miss Crosby, Miss Burnham, Miss Bakke, Miss Schmaus, Mrs. Witter and Miss McCarren. Oh if I could have been that bell I'd have rang so loud you could have heard me in Detroit Lakes when Miss McCarren was crowned Miss Northwest at the Water Carnival there. Instead sirens and horns escorted her through the streets of Detroit Lakes and I just listened. Then the era of men teachers Mr. Olim, Mr. Bateman, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Parker, Mr. Cox and Mr. Vaadeland.

This Bell had it's good times and it's bad times though. It went on to two new buildings, but then consolidation didn't find a place

for it and it's mountings rotted and it fell of the building in disgrace.

At this time a local lady who said, "this bell meant so much to me. From a mile away I could hear it ring and it reminded me that my four sons were safe and learning to take their place in the great American society." A local craftsman mended the pieces together and these four sons placed the bell in its place of honor at mother's request.

Now it can be viewed from the byway and you now know the story. There are many more things to see and stories to be told about Osage on the byway. Seek and you will find, ask and you will be told.

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Osage Community Center current home of the bell



District #31 Osage



Archie Henderson - 3rd Grade Circa: 1938

Bell as a School Bell in 1938

Beginnings- As County State Aid Road #2

By: Archie Henderson

(Later State Hwy #34)

The first road built to serve commerce and the area, with the coming of the automobile, was a grand Scenic highway of tremendous twisting, multitude of ups and downs designed at County State Aid Road #2.

In 1941 engineers overcame the facts of nature to straighten and calm the problems of marshes, lakes, streams, hills and climate to make your byway what it is waiting for you to enjoy!

Beginning of the Byway 1910 to 1920



Osage- 1880 By: Archie Henderson

Squire McKinley, a former captain in the Union Army, arrived in the area of the Carson Post Office (1 mile N.W. of Osage) to seek a claim. He set his claim on the S.W. 1/4 of sec 20 and immediately began building a dam on Straight River which ran through his claim. He laid out a village west of the dam to be named Osage after his home in Iowa. This dam produced a backwater to power first a lumber mill and later a flour mill for area settlers.

Pine Point By: Archie Henderson

A landmark used by explorers, Indians, and traders coming through this area. You may observe it at the protruding point of the Smokey Hills meeting the Upper Shell Prairie off State Hwy 225, five to six miles N.W. of Osage. Shell River, the canoe route into this area from the mighty Mississippi River, runs just under it's brim. May it be assumed that the Indian village 2 miles north of this point of land was named for it. A forestry fire tower now marks it's presence.

Ponsford - 1890 By: Archie Henderson

Was named after O.D. Ponsford who taught school at the Indian mission school at Pine Point for two years. He was very much attached to his Indian friends and never forgot one of them. This new village next to the reservation was named after him during his first winter at Pine Point Mission.

Shell City on the Wheat Trail By: Frank J. Mitchell-Lake Country Scenic Byway Ambassador

Before there were roads, wagon trails were cleared through the woods and across the prairies.

About 1878 a town was started in northern Wadena county on the Shell River. It was at first called Kindred, named after Wm. Kindred who had homesteaded the land. The Kindred post office was established in 1879.

Then in 1881 Francis Yoder and Sewall Chandler bought the property and changed the name to Shell City. They platted the town site and named the streets 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The North south streets were Pine, State and Spruce. At one time there were 75 people living in Shell City. As the population increased homes, 2 hotels, 2 blacksmith shops, 2 stores, post office, school, town hall, sawmill, large feed barn for horses, stage coach barn and a newspaper office. (The newspaper called the "Northern Spy" was started in 1884 by James Billings.

In 1879 a nine man crew set out to survey a more direct route from Verndale to Shell City. This route came through Nimrod where a halfway house was located. Going north from Verndale through Nimrod it forded the Shell River then went northwest through Shell City. The trail then went northwest across the 1st, 2nd, 3rd prairies. (These prairies were later called Hubbard, Shell and Osage) This

route took it through the towns of Manter (Hubbard), Park Rapids and on to Osage.

Wheat was about the only crop raised and it produced real good on the newly plowed virgin soil. In the fall after harvest there would be hundreds of wagon loads of wheat hauled from the 3 prairies all the way to Verndale which was the closest elevators on the railroad. Some wheat was also taken to Wadena. After snowfall they used sleighs with eight horses or oxen to pull the large loads of wheat to the elevators.

In 1884 a steamboat called the "Lotta Lee" was built and put on the Shell River. It was hoped the boat could be used to haul supplies up

and down the river. A huge 3 day celebration was held with rides given up river the to Twin Lakes and back. However the boat went as far sough as Little Falls but was unable to make it back up the Crow Wing River. No one knows what really happened to the boat.

The people of Shell City had high hopes of the railroad coming through Shell City and on to Hubbard. But in 1891 the railroad was built from Wadena to Park Rapids. This was the beginning of the demise of Shell City. All that is left there now to see are the cellar holes and signs put up to show who lived in the town. South of the river is the Shell City Cemetery which is still being used and is well kept.

