

# TOURISM, TRAVELS & TALES

Winter 2019 A PUBLICATION OF THE HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

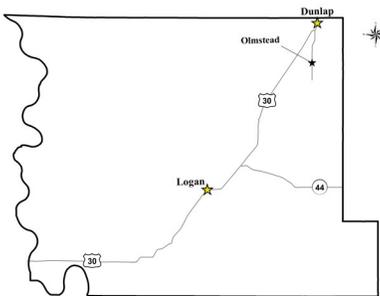
## Olmstead—One of Harrison County's Lost Towns

### Olmstead

**Platted:** December 3, 1857

by

Henry Olmstead



Olmstead was named for Henry Olmstead, one of the first settlers just south of present day Dunlap. It was platted on December 3, 1857, in section 27, township 81, range 41, "on beautiful table land three miles south of present day Dunlap." The "town" never grew to be much, with the Northwestern Railway completing its survey and building tracks that left Olmstead out of their plan the community's fate was sealed.

Dunlap was soon platted and forever stopped any plans for growth in Olmstead. It's spot on the map of history was left to a residence of L. Kellogg that was a brick house later owned by Mathew Jennings. This was the plight of many early Iowa towns as the railroad determined where much of the growth would occur. Settlement and prosperity were signs the railway was headed toward or away from those early platted towns.

There are Olmsteads in Dunlap today but they are no relation to the pioneer who had such high hopes for his name sake.

*\*\*\*This is a part of the continuing series of articles related to this topic. If you have additional information about this particular "lost" town, please share it with us and we will be happy to print the additional information for the readers of the Harrison County Historical Society's quarterly newsletter and for other interested persons in and beyond the borders of Harrison County, Iowa.*

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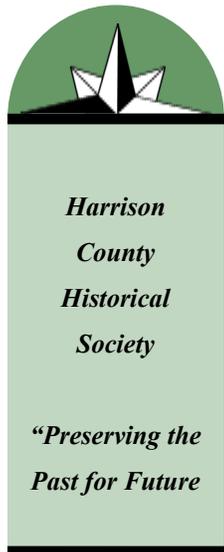
## Early Tourists—Jim Perley

"The American frontier is closed." With this pronouncement by historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1890, Americans realized for the first time that the American wilderness and its opportunities were limited. By that date, nearly half of its population had abandoned rural life for squalid industrial cities. It was left to the poets who included Whitman and Bryant in America and Wordsworth in England as well as writers like Burroughs, Seton, and Thoreau to create a romantic image of nature. Even those seeking to save the natural wonders couched their mission statements in idyllic words. Preservationists like John Muir had as their mission the job of saving "America's cathedrals," the American forests.

Railroad promoters capitalized on this romantic vision of nature with books, and fliers that lauded the wonders of the national parks and monuments. Places like Yellowstone were sold as sylvan settings offering the wealthy American an adventure in 'Wonderland.' By the turn of the century, even middleclass people were boarding trains to view America's natural wonders." (from Interpretive Centers by Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman, p. 22).

Some early tourists shot bison and elk, brewing tea and boiling meat and navy beans in dormant geysers. Some chopped trees and threw rocks or timbers into geysers, hoping to see eruptions. In 1883, Congress appropriated \$40,000, a considerable sum in that day, to hire ten "assistants" to protect the items of interest, game, and timber. (continued on page 2)





“Assistant George Henderson was ahead of his time in seeing the need for people control.” (*Ibid.*). He installed trails leading from one wonder to another with explanatory signs along these progressive trails. Interpretation emerged as a profession and part of the nature study movement. The Perley family records include accounts of Catherine Perley, who traveled to Yellowstone National Park with a friend in 1907; they traveled by stagecoach. The friend described the sightseeing trip as one “to broaden myself.” Their round trip ticket to Butte cost \$54.80 with fifty cents additional at St. Paul; the entire standard sleeper cost was about \$8 each and the over park trip was \$40 each.

They began the trip July 10th on the 8:30 train from their home city to St. Paul where they took a trolley to Minneapolis and spent the night at a Minneapolis branch of the Y.W.C.A. called “Traveler’s Aid,” a cheap, clean place for young women to stay. The next day, the ladies took the streetcar to Ft. Snelling, “garrisoned by soldiers, enjoyed a tour of Washburn and Crosby’s flouring mill, and enjoyed Minnehaha Park with its pretty falls. They had ice cream sodas, listened to the orchestra “wrote postals,” and then departed for St. Paul, where they got into their sleepers a little past 9 p.m., snugly tucked in bed before the train left St. Paul.

The friend described the Bad Lands as “small hills or mountains of stone, standing all by themselves, mostly being round looking, like an inverted kettle, sort of a reddish gray in color.” After a visit with family

In Livingston, they traveled by train to Gardiner and rode in the four-horse coach for Swan Lake. She said that, being small, she and Catherine were put on the box seat with the driver.

They enjoyed their ride of ten miles on the 18 ft. wide road along the Gardiner River. At Swan lake, they registered and were assigned to tents. The next morning, they started out for their longest ride, 43 miles. They saw many hot pools and small geysers, the Norris Geyser Basin, and Roaring Mountain, a mountain with steam coming out of the sides. In the Upper Basin area, they saw Old Faithful play amid a green mass of pines. The next day, they saw “all the noted geysers.”

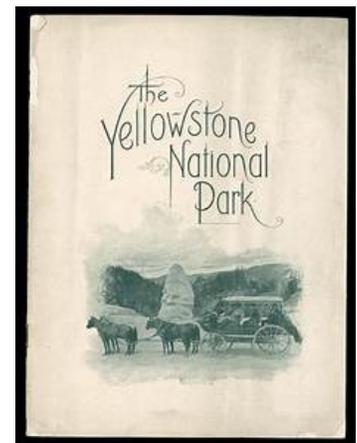
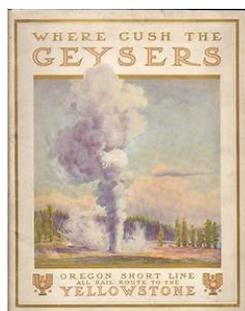
On later days, they visited Yellowstone Lake, “a delightful drive of 19 miles,” Keplin’s Cascade, and Spring Creek Canyon. Their driver described descending down what they called the Corkscrew as a “jolly ride.” Catherine’s friend said this about that part of the trip: “He put on the brakes, started the team, and away we whipped around the curves lickety split. Tine tried to alarm us, but we didn’t scare worth a cent.”

The ladies enjoyed a magnificent view of Shoshone lake with the Tetons in the distance, crossed the Continental Divide twice, and viewed the paint Pots, geysers, hot pools, and a fishing cone in which you could catch fish in a lake and, with it still on the hook, cook it in a hot pool. The trip included inspiration point in Yellowstone Canyon and both the Upper and Lower falls. On the return

trip, they toured a copper mine and took a sightseeing car through Butte, Montana, which the friend described as an odd city “of millionaires, mineral mines, and squalor. Not a green tree, shrub, or grass to be seen.” they also visited Salt Lake City and heard the “drop a pin” and “whisper stunts” that demonstrated the Tabernacle’s acoustics.

The two ladies returned home, having hiked many miles, spent several nights in tent accommodations, bought “postals” to send home, written letters home, seen beautiful scenery—and even seen a soldier shoot a bear three times before killing this large, crossed brown and silver-tipped bear.

I think that we could all agree that their trip had been a broadening experience.



What's in a Name?... Jim Perley

You probably can finish the rest of the quotation from your school days, remembering that the Shakespearean line ends in this sentence: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." We carefully debate the names of children and the question of breaking new ground with a creative spelling of a name or paying respect to other generations by giving a name of a beloved relative. You can even "date" people by their names, although sometimes the older names (like Mabel or Catherine) come back into fashion after a time.

If you think about the importance we put on names, you can get some idea of how fierce the battles were over naming places. Charles Larpenteur platted a new settlement at the foot of Murray Hill (named for Michael Murray, a prominent businessman in the later growing hamlet of Little Sioux); he named it Fountainbleu in homage to the famous French luxurious "vacation home" of French kings. When the stage coach route shifted and the post office he operated at Fountainbleu moved into what became Little Sioux, the dream of Fountainbleu in Iowa faded into dusty history.

Mondamin reflects an Indian name for corn, while Modale became an abbreviation's invention. Originally named Missouri Dale, it became Mo. Dale when letter writers abbreviated Missouri and eventually, the name became Modale. Missouri Valley, of course, reflected the location of the city, just as Little Sioux's name also reflected its location.

Woodbine was named for a beloved English flower.

There is some debate over the origin of Persia's name. One theory was that it reflected a desire on the part of the railroad that had hired many workers from Persia (now Iran) to work on extending rail tracks, while others defend the story that a Persian itinerant peddler remarked that the Loess Hills reminded him of the hills in his home of Persia and that caught the imagination of residents. You never know from where a query about a place's name will come from; last year, a foreign student requested information about the derivation of that Harrison County's city name as part of her work on a thesis.

If you've read this far in this article, you have noticed that not every Harrison County's town name has been mentioned, including the defunct towns like Hardscratch, Oldtown, Whitesboro, or Pickle City. It's the readers' turn to give us stories about the town names not mentioned in this article and the stories you've heard about them. Just send or email your information to [jperley@windstream.net](mailto:jperley@windstream.net) and your information will be featured in a future article.

**Harrison County's current  
10 town names and their origins... as the story goes**

Dunlap	Railroad bigwig
Little Sioux	Little Sioux River
Logan	Civil War General
Magnolia	Named by Iowa Legislature
Missouri Valley	River Valley
Modale	Abbrev. For Missouri Dale
Mondamin	Indian word for Corn
Persia	Railroad workers/Peddler
Pisgah	Mt. Pisgah in the bible
Woodbine	English flower

**THE HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS  
LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS!**

The Harrison County Historical Society works to ensure local lore and heritage are preserved for future generations. This endeavor is of the utmost important to protect historical items, buildings, first-account recollections of the past, and many other significant endeavors.

Preserving history is like reading a real map; to understand where you are going, you need to know where you've been. The Historical Society hopes you will consider joining them on their journey. The membership year begins July first each year; new members are, of course, gladly welcomed at any time during the year.

Life members and those choosing the gold, silver, or bronze levels never need to pay membership dues. With your membership comes a quarterly newsletter and other benefits; please see below for the list of benefits at each donor level.

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Benefits include name plate recognition on the Historical Society Register, free admission to Historical Society activities, a recognition certificate, and the quarterly newsletter.

Silver Membership (1 time fee) \$100

Benefits include name plate recognition on the Historical Society Register, half-off admissions to Historical Society activities, a recognition certificate, and the quarterly newsletter.

Bronze Membership (1 time fee) \$50

Benefits include name plate recognition on the Historical Society Register, discounted admission to Historical Society activities, and the quarterly newsletter.

Annual Member (yearly fee) \$10

Each annual member receives the quarterly newsletter.)

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