

PAST HUMAN ACTIVITY AT ADA HAYDEN HERITAGE PARK

On the occasion of this much-anticipated park dedication, it is interesting to pause and reflect on the people who have walked this land before us. Over the course of the past 2,000 years the area has supported hunting and fishing by prehistoric peoples, more than a century of farming by Euro-American settlers and their descendants, and 35 years of sand and gravel extraction. Prehistory is evidenced by countless projectile points and *debitage* (waste stone flakes left from chipping) that have been gathered in this area since the early settlers began plowing their fields. These lithics suggest periodic short-term camp sites during the Woodland period (500 BC-500 AD). Centuries later, the Mesquakies made annual hunting and fishing excursions along the Skunk River Valley and were reported to have visited this area.

Land records for the present park (Franklin Township, section 22, and part of section 27) date from 1850. That year the U.S. government gave 320 acres of swampland in the southern half of the section to the state which later transferred it to the county. Briefly summarizing activity in each of the five parcels purchased by the City in 2001, we start with the northern-most Jensen parcel. Beginning in 1905, land totaling 120 acres was farmed for almost a century by three generations of the Jensen family. Holger Jensen, of the second generation, is remembered for supplying local grocery stores, campus town and Mary Greeley Hospital with produce, eggs, and "Heart's Delight" milk. Meat was sold from Jensen Meat Market on Main Street. Moving south to the adjoining Pasley parcel, we discover that C.H. Pasley, the founder of three generations of Ames lawyers, acquired 80 acres in 1920 from Walter S. Grove. Land given as a park on north Duff Avenue honors Grove's wife, Inis. The Eness parcel originally formed part of an 80-acre swampland grant which was acquired by early settler, William Arrowsmith, of Arrowsmith Trail commemoration. The Bannister family purchased the farm in 1951, and later sold 10 acres to their daughter.

Although Hallett's parcel, largest of the five, is associated mainly with sand and gravel extraction, the norm for most of its history has been either farming or flooding. Hallett Construction Company opened its plant in 1958, and during the next 35 years supplied materials used on most area gravel roads, and in paving Interstate 35, new highway 30, county and campus roads, and many parking lots and buildings. The sight and sound of the mammoth, red, dragline chugging along in all seasons, day and sometimes night, is surely etched in the memory of long-time residents. The 1942 Page 625 walking dragline held out for the duration of Hallett's operation, and was about the last dragline to operate in Iowa, leaving a legacy of excavating an estimated 7.5 billion tons of material. The last parcel, Stone Brooke, is best remembered as being associated with the namesake of this heritage park. D.M. Hayden and Christine Shearer Hayden owned an 80 acre tract, of which the Stone Brooke parcel forms the northeast corner. Corn, oats and sorghum were grown, and an orchard provided apples and plums. Their only child, Ada, inherited the land in 1914, and used it to introduce her botany students to native Iowa wildflowers and prairie plants. Thus we come full circle in the Ada Hayden Heritage Park, a nature preserve that will provide not only a secondary water source for Ames, but recreation, relaxation, and education for many generations to come.

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