

Mr. Larsen directed the city band during the summer season of 1951 and then organized the first full-time band program in the Geneva schools. The senior band met four times a week in addition to marching rehearsal, and group or sectional rehearsals were held during the day. The younger folk work one or two days a week in addition to small group sessions during the school day. Mr. Larsen also instructs in boys' vocal work. Herman, like his predecessor, displays not only a fine ability as a musician but also a most likable and friendly personality. He has a great deal of influence on many of the young people of this community and they have profited greatly from their association with him.

From about 1941 to the present a significant change has taken place in the membership of the Geneva City Band. For many years prior to World War II the band had been composed largely of adults, mostly men, with a few women. But with the accelerated expansion of industrial development just before the war a number of the fellows left Geneva to find employment and those who stayed at home were so busy that adult participation in the band concerts dropped considerably. Gradually high-school students were brought into the group to fill vacancies. From 1931 to 1941, high-school students were admitted into the band only after graduation or to fill vacancies, and then only when they displayed exceptional ability. Although this system was continued for some time, the need for these younger people became so great that by 1951 only a few college students and a couple of adults remained on the roster. Since then the high-school band has taken over the summer band program and the members are admitted by invitation from the director. We note this change with some regret and we miss the former feeling of community pride on the part of our adults in playing in the band each summer. But we appreciate the wide acceptance and participation in the band by our school pupils. Twenty years ago not more than 60 or 70 people composed both beginners' and high-school and city bands. Now nearly 200 students are actively engaged in band work. Many superior ratings have been received by the band in high-school competitions, both as a band and in small group and individual competitions.

An important point in connection with the history of the band movement from its inception to the present is that continuously the organization has been directed, influenced, and guided by men of the highest caliber. Through the years the influence of men like Silas Camp, Arthur Curtiss, Charles Reeve, W. S. Nicholas, Ted Nicholas, Professor H. R. Grant, Hugh Hadsell, Professor Leroy, Paul Curtiss, Alfred Elder, and Herman Larsen have made a deep and lasting impression on the lives of many young men and women who have grown up in our community and gone out into the world to be better citizens for having known and experienced the guidance and influence of these men.

In closing, we salute this organization whose primary object is to provide musical entertainment for the community but whose greatest contribution has been the building of high ethical standards and good character in many of our young people.

—Ben D. Fussell

## Golf

The spring and summer of 1920 marked the beginning of golf playing at the county fairgrounds in Fillmore County. What activity there was at that time took place on the quarter stretch and was mostly just knocking the ball from one end of the stretch to the other.

The first club was started the following year with nine paid members. The membership fee was \$5 a year. But as the years passed, the club grew, the grounds were improved, a ground keeper was employed, greens were located and sanded, and a team of horses purchased to operate the ground-keeping machinery the club had purchased.

The club prospered for several years and was a really going affair until the dry years of the thirties, when operations practically ceased. Through the prosperous years several tournaments were held, attracting golfers from many counties. At one tournament there were 112 entries.

The original club paid the Fillmore County Agricultural Society \$200 as rent for the use of the grounds. The following year the rent



Photo from Nebraska Signal

Geneva Golf Course on Fairgrounds in center of picture (1962).

was reduced to \$100, but at that time the members of the club refused to pay for the use of the grounds and began looking for another location.

The board wisely decided to waive all charges for the use of the grounds, noting that by the time when the fairgrounds had to be cleaned for the annual fair, the job had been done and that expense had been eliminated.

During World War II the fairgrounds were rented for pasture. In the spring of 1947, the community expressed a strong desire for the revival of golf. A group of men persuaded Paul H. Farmer to accept the presidency and the club was organized.

The west half of the fairgrounds was all plowed and seeded to blue grass that spring. For two years only 5 holes were played, then 9 holes were established again.

The location and the greens have been changed twice since the revival of the game in 1947.

The German Lutheran parsonage on the gravel road 4 miles S of Grafton was bought by the golf club in the fall of 1958 and moved to the fairgrounds and placed at the SW edge of the race track. During 1958 the house was completely remodeled into a club house. In the spring of 1959 the lawn was seeded and sidewalks built around the new club house.

The membership has grown from 87 to a 1967 membership of 134.

## THE COUNTY NEWSPAPER

The *Nebraska Signal* is the result of the combination of 16 newspapers published at one time or another in Fillmore County. On February 14, 1894, Frank O. Edgecombe purchased the *Geneva Republican*, then in its 20th year, from M. V. King & Son. On the same day he purchased the *Geneva Journal*, published by J. A. Loudermilch. In 1896, he purchased the *Nebraska Signal*, which had been established in 1881 by Dr. J. B. Brazelton at Fairmont. Mr. Edgecombe moved the *Signal* plant to Geneva and combined it with that of the *Republican-Journal*. To get away from the hyphenated name, he retained instead the name of the *Nebraska Signal*.

Other papers which were ultimately consolidated with the *Signal* included the *Fillmore County Republican*, *Fillmore County Journal*, *Fairmont Dispatch*, *Geneva Gazette*, *Grafton Sun*, *Strang Reporter*, *Shickley Herald*, *Ohioa Ohioan*, *Milligan Review*, *Fairmont Chronicle*, *Geneva Daily*, *Milligan Times*, *Exeter Enterprise*, and *Ohioa Spotlight*.

The early-day newspapers had no telephones or typewriters, the type was all hand set, and in the first few years the papers were printed on hand presses. When the *Republican* was started, there were only a few frame buildings in the business section of Geneva.

Weekly newspapers in those days were highly personalized. The papers editorially were the publishers' personal organs. Political beliefs were taken very much to heart. There were some very virulent writings in those days. Editors attacked their "esteemed contemporaries" with little provocation.

When Mr. Edgecombe came to Geneva, his first two years were times of drouth and depression. In the fall of 1894, hot winds destroyed the entire corn crop, and 1895 was a very dry year. As times got better, improvements in the printing equipment were made. Hand composition was replaced by the purchase of typesetting machines. The improvements have continued, and the *Signal* now has one of the best-equipped small-city plants in the state. The newspaper has for several years been printed on a Duplex web press, which prints, folds, and trims the paper and delivers it ready for mailing.

In the summer of 1949, a new front was put on the *Signal* building. The building was erected in 1890 and was not suited to modern business. The new front not only makes a greatly improved appearance,



Courtesy of Nebraska Signal

Signal office—left, 1896; right, 1963.

but also the editorial and news room has been enlarged and working conditions are better. The office front is all glass. The old sidewalk, with railings around two openings in the walk, was torn out, the holes filled, and a new walk laid. From the walk to the office floor level, glass bricks were used to give more light in the press room in the basement. The business office was given an asphalt tile floor.

Frank O. Edgecombe, newspaper publisher in Geneva for more than 50 years, built the *Signal* from a small beginning into one of the better-known newspapers of the state and nation.

"The blind editor from Nebraska," as Frank was known, was born on a farm in Ohio on February 13, 1864. In April, 1865, his parents came to southeast Nebraska and settled on a farm near Rulo. When he grew up, he attended the Methodist college at York and was graduated with the class of 1884. (This college was later merged with Nebraska Wesleyan University.)



Photos from Tyler Edgecombe

Three generations of the Edgecombe family who have published the *Signal*. Left to right: Frank O. Edgecombe, Tyler Edgecombe, and John Edgecombe.

After a few years in the banking business in Rulo, Frank Edgecombe bought a half interest in the Falls City *Journal* in 1889. In 1890, he retired completely from the bank and bought out the other half interest, moved to Falls City, and was in the newspaper business for keeps.

In 1892, when he was 27 years old, he lost his sight through a hunting accident. A group of hunters was walking through a stubble field in western Nebraska, and powder from a shot from one gun hit Mr. Edgecombe in the face, causing immediate and permanent blindness.

After 23 days in an Omaha hospital, where he got his first experience in being read to and in dictating to a stenographer, he returned to the *Journal* office in Falls City to resume his work.

Two years later he sold the Falls City paper and bought the two competing newspapers in Geneva and moved his family here. This was to be his home for the rest of his life.

Frank Edgecombe won many honors for his newspaper. He served as president of the Nebraska Press Association and the National Editorial Association, and was always a leader in forward movements in his profession.

His son, Tyler Edgecombe, was graduated from the School of Agriculture of the University of Nebraska in 1907 and the university in 1911. He worked on the old Beatrice *Daily Express* until 1913, when he returned to Geneva to be associated with his father at the *Signal*. Tyler assumed control of the *Signal* in 1941.

The new publisher was well grounded in newspaper fundamentals, having been indoctrinated with the life and the business from the time he was able, as a boy, to help out in the shop. He explained that he studied agriculture at the university to be able to be of better service to his rural area and to be able to understand and grow with the main industry of his county and state.

The new publisher advocated and adopted modern business principles in his operation of the *Signal*; but in doing so, Tyler did not alter the community-service ideals set up by his father. The *Signal* is still a strong booster for community betterment. Its policies stress service to subscribers, advertisers, and the area in general.

Following in his father's footsteps, Tyler has long been active in N.P.A., also serving a term as president of the association. He is a past president of the Geneva Chamber of Commerce and of Geneva Rotary, has headed the four Masonic bodies of Geneva, and is active in various other civic capacities.

Tyler's son, John Edgecombe, joined the *Signal* in 1947 after spending three years in the Army Air Force and attending the University of Missouri's Linotype School. He is now a partner in the business and serves as advertising manager.

Howard W. Hamilton joined the *Signal* staff in 1948 as news editor and has edited the editorial page since 1950.

The *Signal* has presently a circulation of 3,965, third largest among weekly newspapers in Nebraska.

Some interesting early newspaper history was supplied by Mrs. Marcus Alexander of Pomona, California, in a letter which the *Signal* published on April 14, 1930:

"In the spring of 1883, we arrived in Fairmont: mother, brother Leo, cousin Leota Merrill, and myself, blind for Geneva. There

being no railroad there, we took the hack, with Ed Nuttals as driver.

"Father [T. Wilkins] came ahead of us from our home in Bedford, Iowa, to look around for a print shop. Dr. M. Propst of Blockton, Iowa, came a short time ahead of father. After arriving, Dr. Propst was taken quite sick and father nursed him back to health. Then Dr. Propst's family, consisting of his wife and two sons, Waldo and Clyde, came to live in Geneva. Later, Carl came with his uncle, Dan Propst.

"Father liked the looks of this little burg, so he bought the *Review* from Arthur Scott. Arthur and his brother Ernest had bought it from M. M. Neeves in 1882. Father changed the name from *Review* to *Fillmore County Republican*. Mr. Neeves had published the first newspaper Geneva had. Father had a job printer by the name of John Thompson from Sigourney, Iowa, come and take charge as foreman.

"Quoting from Mrs. Arthur Scott, who is still living in Lomita, California: "The *Review* was located in the center of the block south of the Jameson Hotel, in a story-and-a-half frame building. A family lived upstairs."

"The Scotts moved the shop to the east block over a hardware store. This building was a story-and-a-half frame. While it was still located in the upstairs room, Father bought it from Scott.

"The Citizens Bank was building a new frame building where the brick building now stands. Father had to have more room, so he rented the second story and moved the outfit there. About this time the little town began to grow, and it wasn't long until the Burlington began to lay ties and rails. The first train that rolled in was a freight engine, a freight car, and a caboose. I have a picture of that train. I do not remember the year.

[Two weeks later, in the *Signal* for April 28, 1930, Mrs. A. J. Brown of Geneva gave the date as June 7, 1886.]

"When we got settled over the Citizens Bank, I took it in my head to set type. This was long before the typesetting machine came out. It was talked about, but Father said it could not be done, setting type by machinery. I was taken in the print shop and was called the 'devil's' (printing office slang). I don't remember the date we had to move the shop from the bank building, as the building was sold to Nick Longly. To make room for the new building, Mr. Longly moved the building to a corner lot across from the library. It is still called the Longly Building, but now is half a block north of the corner.

"Father built a new building across the alley north from what is now the R. A. Smith store. The office was downstairs and we lived upstairs. That was when Mark and I were married. I do not know if it still stands there or not.

"Robert Crowley came to work for us there. Father put in a new printing press and job press. We used an old Washington hand press before we moved. It was my job to stand there and ink the forms after each paper was printed. . . .

"Father, T. Wilkins, sold the *Fillmore County Republican* to M. V. King and son Oran November 5, 1889. Then in 1894 Frank Edgecombe bought it and a few years later changed the name to *Nebraska Signal*."

## PROFESSIONAL ROSTER

### Doctors

Among the first doctors to locate in Geneva were Dr. Richard Dailey and Dr. G. R. Hart. Dr. Dailey, born in Madison, Indiana, began the study of medicine in that state in 1874, and commenced the practice of medicine in Geneva in the spring of 1877. Dr. Hart came to Fillmore County and located on a homestead on Turkey Creek in Geneva precinct in July of 1871; however, he did not move to Geneva until the fall of 1878. He began his practice in Ford County, Illinois. The following list of Geneva doctors, their birthplaces, and year of registration in Fillmore County is as complete as possible from available records.

1881: G. R. Hart, Pennsylvania; Richard T. Dailey, Indiana; N. E. Oliver, Pennsylvania.

1882: H. L. Smith, New York; C. J. Harris, New York.

1883: George Mozee, Indiana; William T. Mozee, Kentucky; Ben B. Mozee, Kentucky.

1884: Morgan Propst, Virginia.

1885: Samuel M. Herb, Illinois.

1886: W. H. Davis, Canada.

1887: F. E. L. Hester, Indiana; Thomas C. Canine, Indiana.

1888: L. D. Bailar, Ohio.

1889: William H. Dempster, Illinois; Abner G. McGrew, Pennsylvania; J. T. Baird, Canada.

1892: G. W. Corman.

1894: Flora G. Harbaugh (Mrs. C. M. Barnett).

1897: George W. Johnson, Virginia; Ora S. Stephenson.

1900: Joseph Bixby, G. D. Pendell, A. J. Kaufman.

1901 to 1967: Archibald Murphy; W. C. Beaven, Osteopath; Frank A. Bates, Osteopath; Frederick L. Beck; Joel C. Hickman; Royal Woods; Nathan H. Blakeley; Claire Owens; Charles Curtis Wallingsford; Claus C. Delfs; Blanche R. Bailar, Chiropractor; Aaron Guengerich, Chiropractor; D. C. Stansberry; J. M. S. Chesshir; Clarence S. McKee; Harold A. Rosenau, Osteopath; William S. Musfelt; Edith Y. Ridpath, Chiropractor; Alfred H. Elder, Optometrist; W. E.