

REDDING, IOWA—A WALK AROUND TOWN

“Yes!” was invariably our response when we heard Dad or Grandpa call, “I’m going to town, does anyone want to go along?” We’d race to the car, climb in, and get ready for a good time.

Redding was a small town. Places of business surrounded the park, which held swings and a teeter-totter that kids enjoyed while their folks conducted business. Proudly centered in the park was the large stone monument honoring Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) veterans of the civil war. It was topped with a brass eagle with outstretched wings and flanked by a pyramid of cannonballs. During World War II, the cannonballs were donated to a scrap drive for the war effort.

On the east side of the square was the café, bank, butcher shop, barber shop, and grocery. Jim and Posy Miller’s Café stood on the corner. Posy was cook, waitress, dealer of sundries, and assorted penny candies. She had a loving heart. One day Margaret and I wanted her chocolate covered animal crackers to decorate Alice’s Noah’s Ark birthday cake. Posy put the box of cookies in front of us and told us to pick out the pairs of animals we wanted.

Next to the cafe was The Union Savings Bank. The financial crash of the 1930’s closed it. To foster a habit of saving, this Bank had given each of us kids a metal bank for our coins. Since it could only be opened by a bank officer, we had to take it there to retrieve our wealth or deposit it. I still have this metal bank today.

The John Reidlinger Butcher Shop was a fascinating place with assorted penny candies near the front. “Butch” stocked a variety of boxed goods on his shelves as well as barrels of pickles or apples in season. The large chopping block was the center of his store. We stood in awe as he swung his big axe or cleaver into a side of beef. Watching hamburger squish through his large meat grinder made us laugh. Butch had a big wheel of cheese that he sliced to order with his big cleaver. A chunk of bologna with a big wedge of cheese and Mom’s homemade bread was a favorite treat of ours.

Next to the butcher shop was Harley Norris’ produce store. He bought the eggs we gathered. John remembers Harley showing him how to check the freshness of an egg. He placed the egg in front of a strong light looking for shadows—that meant the egg wasn’t fresh.

Next we marveled at the red and white striped barber pole in front of the Barber Shop owned by Art and Jewel Wells. Inside, a gathering of men chatted away while waiting for Art to give them a shave or haircut. Through the doorway was the beauty parlor, where Jewel’s deft fingers gave the ladies a cut or a curl. Mom

always cut Alice's and my hair at home, in a Dutch bob style. Since Margaret had curly hair, she got to sit in that special chair with a towel draped around her, ready for Jewel to shingle it. One day after cutting Margaret's hair, Jewel sat first Alice, then me in that chair and proceeded to trim our bangs. We were most delighted at her thoughtful act.

Next we'd go to George and Maude Griffith's grocery store with a list of the staples that Mom needed for home. Sugar, tea and coffee were almost always on the list, plus foods we didn't get from the garden.

The north side of the town held a mixture of businesses. There was Chick Saville's repair shop, the feed Store, the doctor's office, a dry goods store, and the wondrous Redding Telephone Company office. If we saw Effie Holland sitting at the switchboard, then we went in to chat a bit. Connecting two phones miles apart seemed miraculous. She would pull out one plug from the switchboard and insert it into another, then smile and greet us.

The phone company was owned and maintained by local families. Several families were connected to one phone line. Each had a special ring, such as long-short-short, similar to Morse code. Phone subscribers heard all signals on their party line and could listen in if they chose. Privacy was not expected.

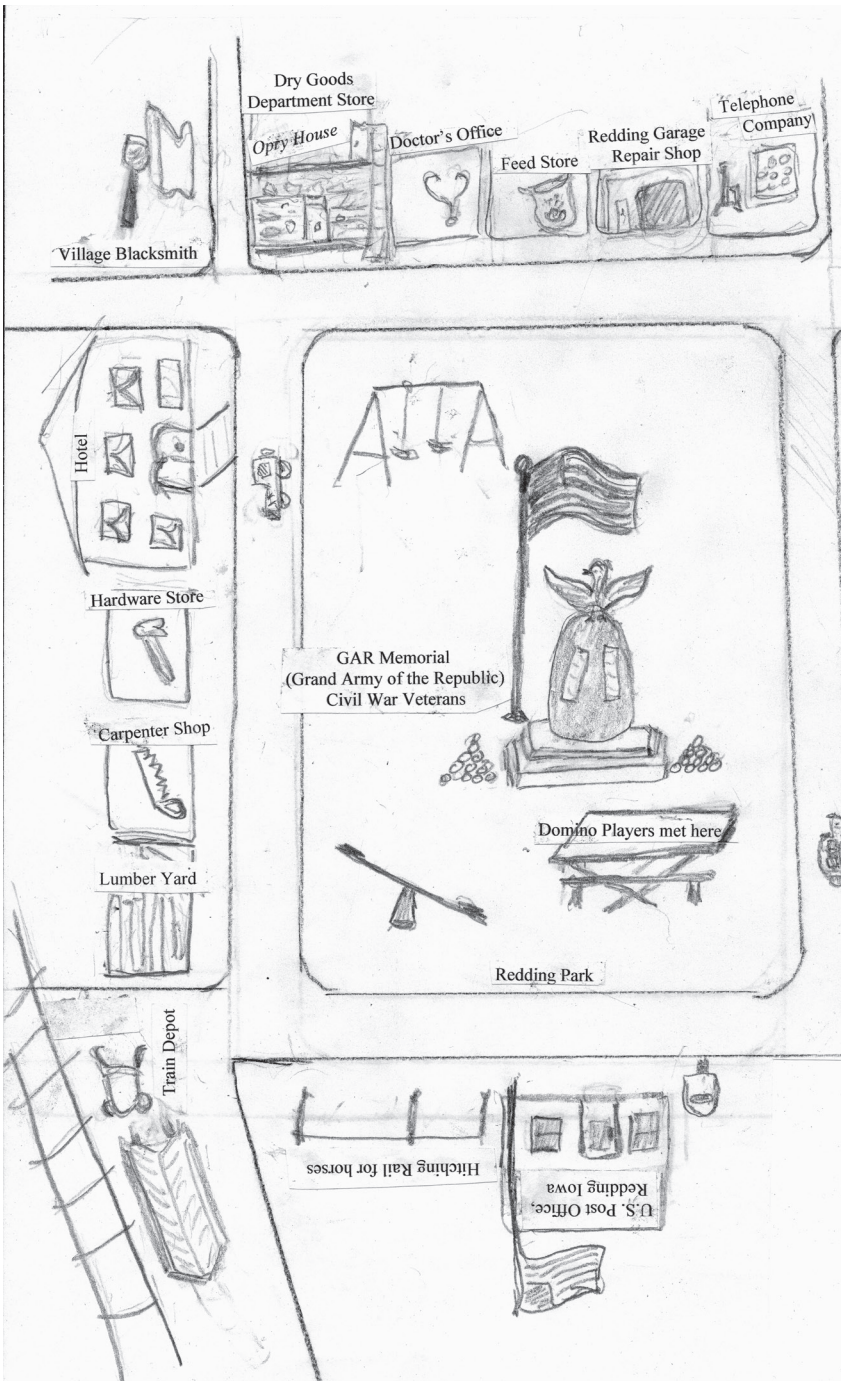
As we walked out of the phone company, we went by Chick Saville's repair shop. It was filled with farm machinery being fixed. Dad said Chick was a whiz at getting them repaired and out for farm work again.

The Feed Store next door held our interest because our animals' feed was bagged in colorful, printed cloth sacks that became clothing, curtains, or perhaps a 4-H project. We made sure that there would be enough matching sacks to sew our new project.

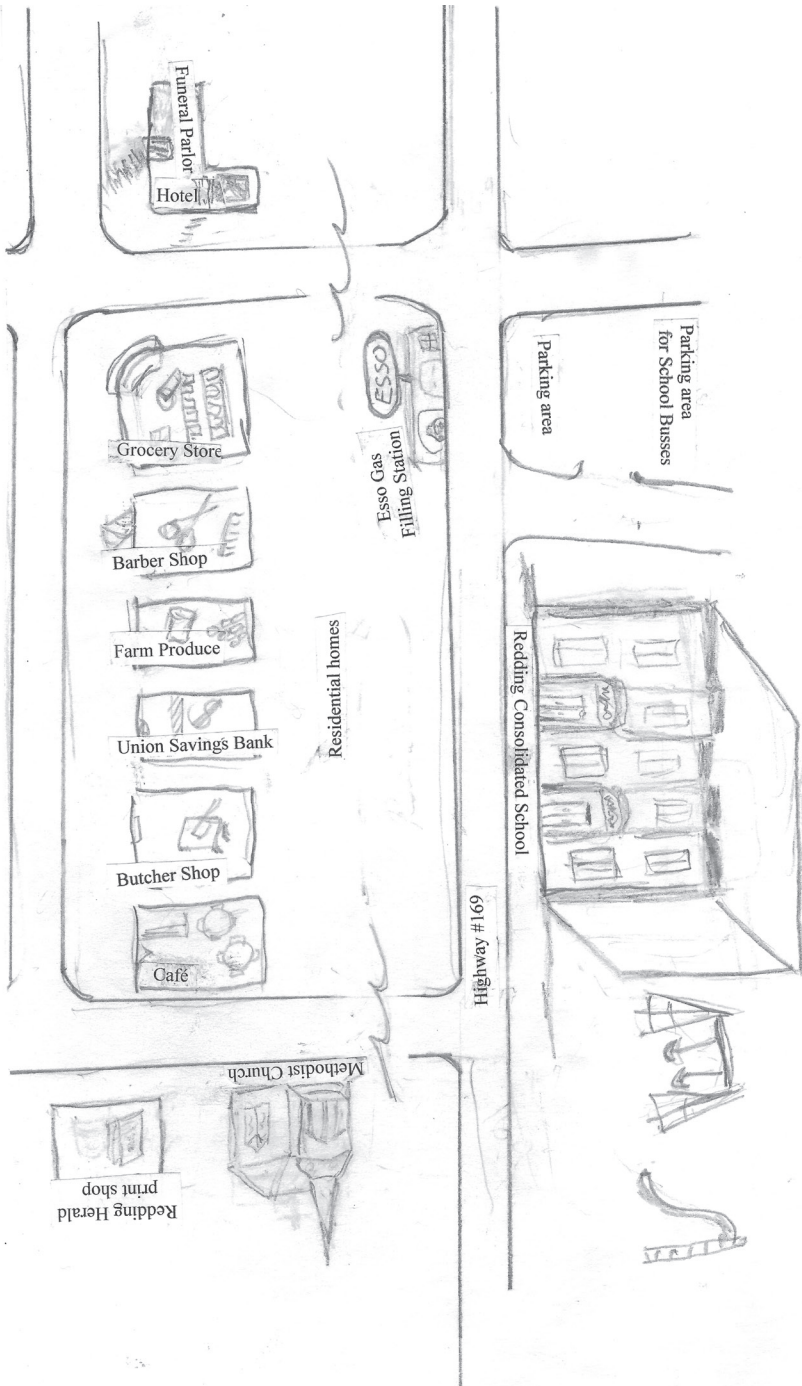
Dr. Fullerton's office was to the left of the feed store. We hoped to stay well, as we didn't want a doctor giving us shots.

Roy and Ralph Smith owned the two-story dry-goods store on the corner. It held everything from schoolbooks, handkerchiefs, teakettles, overalls, buggy whips, and much more. Whatever one needed they seemed to have. We were intrigued by the tall ladder on wheels that was scooted along and used to reach items on high shelves.

The second story was referred to as "The Op'ry House." It was reached by an outside stairway. There may have been plays performed there in years gone by, perhaps even square dances. But when we were young there was a movie screen against one wall, chairs and benches in the middle and a projector that was brought to life each Friday evening. For ten cents we usually watched a Western, followed by a serialized movie such as "The Clutching Hand," which always ended at a critical scene. We'd just have to see the next show to find out how the hero escaped that predicament.



A Kaleidoscope of Memories



On the corner across the street was the Village Blacksmith. John remembers spending time there with Dad or Grandpa getting plow shares sharpened.

On the west side of town was a hotel owned by George and Ella Staton. Several people made their home here and enjoyed the good meals. Alice hoped that their granddaughter, Eloise, would be there visiting.

The Emery Boyles family lived nearby. Their daughter, Amah Lou, was a classmate of Eloise and Alice. The three always had a good time together. One year Alice spent Halloween with them and soaped the town's store windows!

A hardware store was also on the west side, next to Bob and Ida Hash's lumber yard. We liked to wander the aisles and look at the new kitchen utensils, planning a gift for Mom.

John Ullery's carpenter shop was nearby. He made cabinets and windows. My brother John remembers watching him put a handful of tacks in his mouth and spit them out to fasten down the screen when making window screens. On the box of tacks was the statement "Sanitized."

On the south side of the park was a long iron railing where horses could be tied. It was seldom used in our memory, as farmers were proud to drive a Model "T", Chevy or Olds. Everyone wanted a car. The post office, print shop and church were also located on the south side of town.

The Redding U.S. Post Office was the hub of activity when the mail arrived. This was a special time when friends greeted friends while waiting for letters to be sorted. The train depot was a few blocks west of the town center. The town character, Silas Abarr, met the train with his two-wheeled push cart. In it he put the bag of mail and pushed it to the Post Office, all the while whistling his unique tune.

Nearby was Ralph Main's Print Shop, which printed the weekly Redding Herald. It was filled with school news, town and club meetings held and who attended. There was even a column devoted to who visited whom and where. Birth and wedding announcements were given, as were obituaries. It held the heart of Redding. When he was older, John wrote a column for the Herald.

Further along was the United Methodist Church where we gathered each Sunday morning for worship with our minister, Reverend Warrior.

Redding had two gas stations. Flavel Maloy's station was near the town, and Grover Wright's ESSO Station on Highway 169 was convenient to passing motorists.

Two blocks further east of town on Highway 169 stood the Redding Consolidated School. Excitement built each fall as we shopped for new shoes and sweaters, or perhaps a new story-book metal lunchbox.

Each morning we gathered our lunchboxes and school work, then walked

across the field to hop on the bus with neighboring kids. When the roads were too muddy or deep snow covered them, a horse-drawn hack took us to school. We thought that was great fun.



John, Dorothy, and Alice Off to School

There were about a dozen pupils in each class; therefore two grades were combined in each classroom. The first-graders began school with Miss Fern Seaton, eager to learn how to read and write. She taught for forty-six years. We felt important when we sat in the semi-circle of small red chairs with our reading books. Copying letters with our fat blue pencils onto sheets of lined paper became easier as the weeks went by. Sometimes a second-grader helped a struggling new pupil.

Recess was always fun. We played Ring around the Rosie, or teeter-tottered with a friend. Often a group would play "Ollie over the Outhouse." A playground ball would be tossed back and forth over the outhouse to the group waiting on the other side, until one side failed to catch the ball. When the bell rang, we all lined up and tramped back to our classrooms.

The camaraderie of small town residents was delightful. School programs were central to Redding social life. The plays, recitations, music, and basketball games were anticipated and well attended.

Redding was small yet offered the necessities of life: friendship, communication with the world, shopping, and enlightenment through church and school.

What more could we want?