

# OSAGE HISTORY

## Stagecoach in Douglas Township

*Riceville was small part of "super-highway"*

Early history of stage coaches has been destroyed or forgotten. It seems an important part of our history has been skipped over too lightly. History played a dramatic role in the early life of this county.

In November 1854, the first public road for stage coaches was established and it was called Independence and State Line Road. That "super-highway" ran from Cedar Falls to what is now known as Charles City, then to Floyd and on to Osage and points in Minnesota. This line also came tri-weekly from Freeman

to Mitchell, a distance of 23 miles and a charge of \$1.75.

Stagecoach routes through Douglas township were as follows: Enter center of section line between section 21 and 22, then between 15 and 16—through Holbrook Corner, between sections 9 and 10, then northeast across section 3. A branch left Holbrook Corner and went northeast to Riceville, across the William Templeton farm.

A freight line left Brownville in the northwest corner of Douglas and went south-east through Holbrook Corner and on southeast into Howard County where it forded the river. A freight line also crossed Douglas through New Haven, swing

south then back north to meet the other one at the river-fording place in Howard County. Stagecoaches followed the river course.

Rivers were forded at a favorable place, and if the old road became too full of ruts, a new one was made. Some of the old stage lines will never be forgotten. A line operated by the Walker Stage Lines came up from Charles City, through Stillwater, in East Lincoln, Holbrook's Corner in Douglas township, Doran in Jenkins and on to Riceville. From Riceville, routes turned eastward and also northward to Wentworth, just east of present McIntire and on to Minnesota.

Many stories have been written about life during

those early years. The following are excerpts from a letter written several years ago by Annie E. Sweney, age 91 at the time of writing the letter. "When the roads were bad with deep snow in winter and had bad sloughs in April, the twenty-long miles from Osage to Pettibone's was more than a day's journey."

"Not able to give them stopover and so many travelers asked for food and shelter from us-which we were not able to give them." Father concluded to prepare a place where all could be accommodated. "At that time, none but the most pretentious hostelrys were called 'Hotels', so our place was to be called 'Holbrook's Tavern.'" Fa-

ther thought it best to put a lean-to on the south side and one on the east.

We thought our food was good, although it consisted largely of corn meal in different forms. There was a great variety of meats. It was easy to get venison, hunters brought in buffalo and bear, elk and moose. There were wild fruits which one could get, but we knew nothing of canning, so those must be preserved with sugar or dried. Fried mush was almost constantly used.

The first thing to be done at the beginning of winter was to stretch a rope from the back door to the stables, for in the winter, men had left the back door of the house to go to the barn and

never came back. He was lost on the prairie, or if he fell in the deep snow and could rise, he did not know which way to go, and so was not found until spring.

The number of guests was increasing. The stagecoach came our way twice a week and the driver and the passengers lodged with us and a relay of horses was kept in our stable.

"Ten years later a cyclone had twisted the old house from its foundation. In the corner I found a warranty deed of the eighty acres on which the old house stood"

*This article appeared in the Riceville Recorder dated July 4, 2002 with a map delineating the stage coach routes.*

### OPERATION from page 1

operation. Strasheim later found access to a small patch of land closer to home and started experimenting with produce and microgreens in addition to the chickens.

He said that side of the farm quickly changed everything.

"The gardening stuff just really took off," Strasheim said.

Once he started running the numbers, he realized that the produce side of the business clearly offered a better path forward.

"We did way better at the gardening than we did with the chickens," he said.

It changed the direction of the farm.

Strasheim said the chicken enterprise and the gardening enterprise ran side by side for a time, but produce won out. He saw a more direct path to full-time farming through vegetables than he did through poultry.

"My pathway to full-time farming looked a lot more linear," he said.

In 2018, the family moved to Mitchell. That was also the year Strasheim made the full-time jump into farming.

The move gave the farm room to grow, but not in the traditional sense of buying a large block of land and building from there. Instead, Strasheim said Twisted River Farm expanded through relationships.

"We literally started with a quarter acre of growing space when we moved here," he said.

After getting to know people in town, including a group of local men he met over weekly beers, Strasheim said opportunities started to open up. One local landowner offered him two acres to farm rent-free.

Within a relatively short time, the farm grew from a quarter acre to roughly three acres through a series of local arrangements.

"I was able to basically leverage that and grow my farm with zero dollars on the P and L for rent," he said, meaning he didn't have land costs early on.

Strasheim said one of the biggest barriers for new farmers is access to land, especially in the Midwest, where prices are driven by commodity agriculture and large-scale operations. Twisted River Farm took a different route, adapting a small-acreage, direct-market model more often associated with urban farming.

"This is very unique," he said. "Adapting it to a very small town is pretty unique."

Today, Twisted River Farm grows about 45 different crops.

"Our biggest crops by value and by volume are tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, sweet corn, and onions," Strasheim said.

But the farm is not built around just one crop or one sales stream.

When he first started growing produce, he said he

thought restaurants would be a bigger part of the model. But as the years went on, that changed.

"We've really turned our attention to just direct-to-consumer, mostly in the last five or six years," he said.

Now, the farm sells through several channels, including an on-farm store, a farm box subscription, farmers' markets in Mason City, indoor seasonal markets, and a smaller amount of wholesale to restaurants and grocery stores.

Twisted River Farm is a regular vendor at the Mason City farmers market during the outdoor season and also participates in indoor markets held at Fat Hill Brewing during the spring and fall months.

The farm box program, which Strasheim said is similar to a CSA (community-supported agriculture) but is called a "farm box" because the term is more familiar to customers, reaches about 100 families across North Iowa. Subscribers can choose weekly or bi-weekly boxes depending on the season.

Pickup is drop-site based, with locations at the farm in Mitchell, in St. Ansgar, at three locations in Clear Lake, and at three locations in Mason City.

This year, Twisted River Farm is also expanding what subscribers can add to those boxes. In addition to produce, farm box customers will be able to add products sold in the farm store, including honey, syrup, packaged foods, and other local goods.

Strasheim said that expansion could change how the program works in the future, building off the farm's current drop-site model.

"The CSA might not even be a CSA," he said. "It might just be more of a drop-point service for our online store. We could kind of morph into a hybrid."

Strasheim said the farm store is becoming a bigger part of the operation moving forward.

The on-site farm store, located at 195 S. Madison St. in Mitchell, is expected to open the last weekend of April. The store will be open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The Twisted River Farm Store carries the farm's produce, as well as a range of other goods from local and regional producers.

"We pack her full," Strasheim said.

Customers can find products like honey, syrup, popcorn, packaged pasta meals, sauces, vegetable starts, and hanging flower baskets, and whatever produce is in season. Early in the season, that may include leafy greens, radishes, carrots, asparagus, rhubarb, kale, and chard. Later, the selection changes with the season.

The farm itself also changes with the season, but unlike many operations,

it does not shut down completely when winter arrives.

Twisted River Farm operates seven hoop houses, or high tunnels, including two with heating units. Strasheim said the heated tunnels allow the farm to keep producing leafy greens and some smaller root crops throughout the colder seasons.

"We've had product in all winter," he said.

That year-round work also shows up in the updates Strasheim regularly shares online. On Facebook, Twisted River Farm posts behind-the-scenes looks at the day-to-day work of the farm, including seeding, planting, equipment work, and greenhouse prep.

Recent posts show pepper seedlings started for the season, planting work inside the farm's hoop houses, and early spring activity as the farm moves into the next growing cycle.

The updates give custom-

ers a real-time look at what goes into the farm long before produce reaches the shelf.

That visibility matters to Strasheim, who uses organic methods but does not see much value in paying for formal organic certification when he can talk directly with customers about how the farm operates.

"I can just build that trust with my customers," he said.

He said interest in local food has grown noticeably in recent years, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our sales have grown double digits every year since COVID," Strasheim said.

Asked about community response, Strasheim said support continues to grow.

"Community support has been growing," he said. "So very much so. Oh, yeah."

That growth has not come without challenges.

Strasheim said farming carries the same pressures as any business — labor, costs, and logistics — but also a level of risk that is hard to compare to other industries because so much depends on weather and conditions outside a grower's control.

"Mother Nature dictates a lot for us," he said.

A hailstorm, a frost, a stretch of extreme heat, or a sudden temperature swing inside a hoop house can change the day quickly. Strasheim said even protected growing spaces require constant attention.

"It was 27 degrees outside this morning," he said during the interview, adding that one of his tunnels had already reached 85 degrees once the sun came out.

The farm is run by Strasheim, while his wife works full-time in Mason City, and their 16-year-old daughter is in school. The operation also includes seasonal help, including local

high school students and returning workers.

Strasheim said he also wants to see other local farms succeed.

"I want to see all local farms do well," he said. "I think it's just so good for the community in general."

As the new season gets underway, Strasheim hopes people will stop by, see the farm for themselves, and keep an eye on what is happening there.

"Just come out and see us Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays once we open for the season," he said.

Readers can follow Twisted River Farm on Facebook for regular updates, videos, planting progress, and behind-the-scenes looks at the season as it unfolds. More information about the farm store, farm box subscription, pickup locations, and products is available on the farm's website.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Mitchell County Board of Adjustment will hold a public meeting beginning at 5:30pm on April 2nd, 2026, at the Mitchell County Courthouse. The purpose of this meeting is to address a request for a special exception permit from The Towers, LLC (d/b/a Vertical Bridge) for the purpose of construction a cellular communications tower. If there are any questions or concerns about these topics, please contact the Planning & Zoning Department at 641-832-3943.

*Published in The Osage Oracle on Friday, March 26, 2026*

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The Mitchell County Conservation Board will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, April 14 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Milton R. Owen Nature Center, located at 18793 Highway 9, Osage, IA 50461.

The public meeting will be held as part of the Mitchell County Conservation Board's regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public about proposed improvements and work planned at Otranto Park.

These improvements are intended to enhance park facilities, improve accessibility, and support long-term management and recreational opportunities at the park. Time will be provided for public questions and discussion.

If you have any questions, please contact the Mitchell County Conservation Board at 641-732-5204.

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### MINUTES

#### PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MITCHELL COUNTY, IOWA TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026

The Board of Supervisors convened at 8:30 a.m. with Frein, Wherry, Marzen, and Hendrickson present. Hartogh was available via "Go to Meeting". Also, present were Amanda Baer, Rich Brumm, Stacy Walsh, Ian Cowell, Greg Beaver, Mike Miner, Justin Trees, Gregg Halbach, Keith Horgen, Aaron Murphy, Brandon Halsne, Ashlie Svuem, Dave Hartogh, Elizabeth Thyer, and Dan Shirley. The meeting was made available by video via "Go to Meeting". Motion by Marzen, second by Hendrickson to approve the agenda. All voted aye.

Motion by Wherry, second by Hendrickson to approve the minutes of the March 10th meeting. Roll call: all voted aye.

County Attorney Murphy discussed having approval to sign opioid paperwork. Motion by Marzen, second by Wherry to approve County Attorney to sign opioid paperwork contract and sign opioid paperwork as they come through. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

County Sheriff Beaver presented his fees collected for February in the amount of \$5,723.30. Motion by Hendrickson, second by Frein to approve Sheriff Report for February. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

Mike Miner provided an update after the Conservation Board meet-

ing last week. Miner discussed the public notice on Forest Oaks, accepted child protection guidelines, approved a cashless policy, and renovation plans. The deer and turkey show was this past Saturday. Supervisor Wherry asked for clarification on paying mileage and lodging for solar energy workshops. Amanda Baer stated the individuals would be staying in Mitchell County and Baer has been in contact with individuals from University of Minnesota and Iowa State University. Supervisor Frein asked the two individuals interested in being appointed to Sheriff speak. Justin Trees introduced himself, explained how long he has been in law enforcement, his accomplishments over the years, and he plans to run for Sheriff at the General Election. Gregg Halbach introduced himself, explained how long he has been in law enforcement, his accomplishments over the years, and he does not plan to run for Sheriff at the General Election.

The chair opened the public hearing on Rezoning of Parcel Number 10-14-400-010 from Agricultural District to Light Industrial District at 8:47 a.m. Hendrickson and Marzen received questions on why the project was started before being rezoned. Stacy Walsh stated they did not realize it was not zoned properly, and only groundwork had been done. Wherry, Hartogh, Frein, and Foster had no oral or written comments received. The chair closed

the public hearing at 8:50 a.m. Motion by Wherry, second by Hendrickson to approve Rezoning of Parcel number 10-14-400-010 from Agricultural District to Light Industrial District. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

County Engineer Rich Brumm said one truck is being delivered today. Brumm went over ordering trucks by the end of March would give a possible delivery date in six months.

The chair opened the public hearing on Ordinance No. 64 at 9:01 a.m. The board and auditor received no oral or written comments. There was no discussion with the public in attendance. Auditor Foster did note that the ordinance doesn't go into effect until it is published in the papers. The chair closed the public hearing at 9:02 a.m. Motion by Wherry, second by Marzen to approve Resolution #1352-26 to waive the first and second readings of Ordinance No. 64. Roll call vote: all voted aye. Motion by Wherry, second by Hendrickson to approve Resolution #1353-26 approving Ordinance No. 64. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

Elizabeth Thyer with Gardiner + Company went over FY25 audit with the Board of Supervisors.

Dave Hartogh discussed issues with the cupola. The board would like to add to next week's meeting to discuss how they would like to move forward.

Dan Shirley explained for internal compliance, Valent needs to

add asset tags. There are some items that belong to the County at the pre-treatment plant. Motion by Wherry, second by Marzen to approve Wastewater Pre-treatment Plant items to be tagged by Valent. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

Motion by Marzen to approve Recorder's Monthly Report for February in the amount of \$6,628.42. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

Motion by Marzen, second by Wherry to approve Fireworks Permit for Flashing Thunder Fireworks for July 3, 2026. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

Wherry reported on ISAC Spring Conference, Frein reported on ISAC Spring Conference and Fair Board, and Marzen reported on ISAC Spring Conference. Hartogh and Hendrickson had nothing to report. Received manure management plan update from Schroeder Hog Farm LLC. Auditor Foster noted that Trace Huisman won a scholarship through ISAC.

Frein adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

Rachel Foster – Mitchell County Auditor

Todd Frein – Chair Board of Supervisors

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## DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

### IN AND AROUND OSAGE

#### SUPPORT OUR TROOPS!

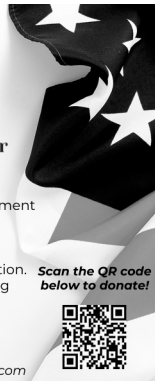
##### CARE PACKAGE DONATIONS

Help us send care package items to our troops stationed overseas!

Here's how you can get involved!

**\*Item Donations:**  
Gather non-perishable snacks, hygiene products, socks, entertainment items, etc. Simply drop these off at the CRC (before January 31st).

**\*Monetary Donations:**  
If you prefer, you can support our efforts with a financial contribution. Your donations help us purchase needed items and cover shipping costs, ensuring that every package reaches our troops in a timely manner.



Cedar River Complex 809 Sawyer Dr. Osage, IA  
Questions? Call or email us! 641-832-3600 info@cedarrivercomplex.com



**Come Join Us**  
**the Last Friday**  
**of the Month for**  
**Liver & Onions**

This month's date:  
March 27th

**BecMar Diner**