

OSAGE HISTORY

History of Farmers Telephone Company

About 1891 the first telephone came to Riceville when a line was built from Cresco to Saratoga to Riceville. This was a station-to-station toll system with one telephone in each town. The first local service was organized by a few people who wanted this new gadget, and the simple switch was in the Weigle Brothers Implement Shop.

Later the LeRoy Telephone Company established a system, as did the Northern Iowa Telephone Company. The Leroy Company had its switchboard in the store operated by the late Earl Adams and Fannie Mulks was the operator.

In October 1905, the

LeRoy Telephone Company purchased the Northern Iowa Company which was serving 216 telephones in the Riceville community. About the same time the LeRoy Company purchased portions of the New Haven system then owned by Mike Loftus.

In the summer of 1907 the farmers became dissatisfied with their service because there were as many as 38 telephones on one line. At a meeting at the farm home of Neville Chamberlain, one and a quarter miles this side of Saratoga, the present Farmers Telephone Company was born. The corporation charter was received in October 1907, and

C. S. Mulks, C. H. Clark, John Fellows, Fred Srark, N. I. Chamberlain and Ben Miles were the first board of directors. John Fellows was the first president.

For a short-time a temporary switchboard was set up in the Charles Bartlett store and Ann McClravey was the first operator. In 1908 Webster Peavey built a new concrete building and leased it to the Farmers Telephone Company. Later this building housed the Riceville Recorder. A new switchboard was installed and Bessie Clark Swancutt and Louzelle Clark Loper were the first operators in the new building. Mr. Charles Clark and Mr. Neville Chamberlain took turns sleeping in the office and taking care of the switchboard at night with Lynn Markham occasionally helping out.

There were many problems created by two telephone companies competing in the community. Most places of business and farmers had both "phones". The farmers bought out their competitor, the LeRoy Telephone Company in November 1912. By this time the Farmers Telephone Company had many lines running into Riceville from every direction, serving several hundred telephones and giving good efficient service.

The LeRoy Telephone Company switchboard had been relocated over what is now the Riceville Locker plant, and this has become the home of the Farmers Telephone Company until 1947 when the company

moved to its modern new building.

During World War II materials were hard to get, but a slow upgrading process began as new metallic lines (two-wire systems) were built. In 1946 the town of New Haven was converted to dial. This was the fourth dial exchange in the state and it drew a lot of attention all over the state. The 50s and 60s brought big changes in the telephone industry. The smaller towns were bought by the bigger companies and converted to dial. Many of the old-time operators had devoted their lives to serving the people which made it a sad moment when the new dial equipment began clicking away and the cables were cut to the old switchboard. Margaret Ann Fox of Riceville and Betty Wolfe McCarthy of Osage are two of the operators mentioned among the many names.

The linemen, too, became a part of everyone's lives, as he worked day and night to keep every-one talking. In the 60s a new revolution came along, buried plastic cable. This meant no more problems from ice storms, wind, lightning and all other problems with pole lines. In the summer of 1960 Riceville was converted to dial. This was also the acquisition of the Plymouth and Rock Falls Telephone Company.

In 1961 these exchanges were converted to dial with all buried cables and rural lines with no more than four parties on a line. This was the first four-party service in the state of Iowa.

In 1962, Dows converted to dial. In 1963 Alden and Buckeye converted to dial. In 1964 Fountain, Minnesota converted to dial to make a total of ten exchanges under the management of the Farmers Telephone Company. But as times were changing, so it was with the Farmers Telephone Company. The Corn Belt Telephone Company (Dows, Alden, Buckeye, Lime Springs, Cherry Grove and Fountain) was sold to Contel in 1965. Contel was later to become a part of GTE.

In 1977, the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company of Nora Springs, Iowa made an offer to purchase the company from Mr. Pearce and was accepted. Officers of the company were; President, Robert Waller (father of the author of "Bridges of Madison County"), Vice-president, Willard Durant, Secretary, Ronald Laudner and Treasurer, T. Edward Batty. Immediate plans were made to convert the entire service area to a single party buried service. There were 158 two-party lines, 125 four-party lines and 467 over four-party lines in service. Equipment was purchased from General Telephone in Florida to complete the Plymouth exchange.

In 1979, an REA loan was secured for the conversion of the Little Cedar, New Haven and Riceville exchanges. In early 1980, the bids were submitted for the central office equipment and Stromberg-Carlson was instructed to provide digital switching technol-

ogy for the Little Cedar, New Haven and Riceville exchanges. Construction began on an addition to the Riceville central office building and installation began on the switch.

The digital switch for the Riceville exchange was converted on July 20, 1981. Digital service was established for the Little Cedar and New Haven exchanges in February of 1983. The digital service for Plymouth was converted on September 13, 1983; with the conversion of the switching equipment, the Farmers Telephone Company had become 100% digital and had completed all of the efforts to realize 100% single party, buried service.

On January 1, 1989, the business offices of the Farmers Telephone Company were moved to Nora Springs and facilities are shared with the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company. On February 1, 1990 the company moved its operation along with the Farmers Mutual Company to a new business office located on the east side of Nora Springs, now known as Omnitel Communications.

Today Omnitel Communications provides telephone, Long Distance, Cable TV and Internet to the north Iowa towns of Rudd, Rockford, Marble Rock, Nora Springs, St. Ansgar, Greene, Stacyville, New Haven, Plymouth, Rock Falls, Floyd, Riceville, McIntire and Little Cedar

This was taken from a Special Edition of Omnitel Times celebrating 100 years 1904-2004

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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that there is now an application of file with the Zoning Commission of Mitchell County, Iowa, a proposed amendment to the Mitchell County Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance 17) and Mitchell County Zoning Map that revises the zoning for parcels 10-22-300-012, 10-22-300-014, 10-22-300-015, 10-22-300-022, 10-22-300-027, 10-22-300-029, from Agriculture District to Arterial Commercial District.

the Board of Supervisors Chambers at the Mitchell County Courthouse in Osage, Iowa.

A workshop from individuals from The Great Plains Institute and Iowa State University will also be held regarding solar farms, regenerative agriculture, and agronomy.

Any questions may be directed to Mitchell County Planning and Zoning Department at the Mitchell County Courthouse, via e-mail at abaer@mitchellcountyia.gov, or by calling (641) 832-3943.

Published in The Osage Oracle on Friday, April 3, 2026

MINUTES

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MITCHELL COUNTY, IOWA TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026

The Board of Supervisors convened at 8:30 a.m. with all members present. Also, present were Aaron Murphy, Greg Beaver, Justin Trees, Gregg Halbach, Ashlie Sveum, Rich Brumm, Tom Rolfes, Hannah Elliott, John Walker, Becky Murphy, Kaitlyn Berg, Amanda Baer, Rebekah Barr, and Guadalupe Bandillo. The meeting was made available by video via "Go to Meeting". Motion by Hartogh, second by Marzen to approve the agenda. All voted aye.

Motion by Hartogh, second by Wherry to approve the minutes of the March 17th meeting & claims. Roll call: all voted aye. County Attorney Murphy had nothing to discuss. County Sheriff Beaver had nothing to discuss.

Hannah Elliott stated Helen Burrington will officially be retiring at the end of April and she has posted for a part time position. Auditor Foster stated you can begin submitting absentee ballot requests today for the June primary.

County Engineer Rich Brumm is working on the DOT program and budget. Once that is approved in the DOT system, Brumm will bring it to the board for approval. Supervisor Marzen asked about the McIntire bridge. Engineer Brumm said they will be checking frost depth and contacting the contractor. Brumm noted blading will need to be done on detour routes.

Motion by Marzen, second by Hendrickson to approve Resolution #1354-26 appointing Justin Trees as Sheriff at 12:01 a.m. June 1, 2026. Supervisor Wherry stated both deputies are capable of doing the job. His concern was not appointing the one that wants the job, he has nothing against anyone else. Marzen and Frein agreed, with Frein adding he spoke with many employees, and they would like to have one change and move forward. Roll call vote: all voted aye.

Motion by Wherry, second by Frein to approve NIACOG working on a Data Center Ordinance. Supervisor Hendrickson wants to wait until the solar ordinance is done first. Amanda Baer stated the solar ordinance is a priority, the contract would lock in the price for the data center ordinance. Roll call vote: Wherry, Hartogh, Frein ayes, Hendrickson, Marzen nays. Marzen said she would like more support from legal.

Motion by Hartogh, second by Marzen to approve Clerk of Court Report for February in the amount of \$1,089.36. Roll call vote: all voted aye. Supervisor Wherry discussed needing an architect to look at the cupola if it will cost over \$100k. Hendrickson plans to meet with Randal Construction this week to see if it could be fixed for less than that. If Randal is able to look at this week, the topic will be added to next week's agenda.

Motion by Wherry, second by Hartogh to approve Johnson Controls Service Agreement and to be paid out of sub project fund. Roll call vote: all voted aye. Frein reported on FMC ECI, and Hendrickson reported on Iowa Workforce. Wherry, Hartogh, and Marzen had nothing to report. Received manure management plan updates from Jax Dairy Inc, Mark Theis Finisher, and Ruelhow II Site. Becky Murphy introduced Kaitlyn Berg from St. Ansgar High School who is doing a work base learning with their office, as she is interested in law.

- Access Systems Leasing, Serv547.25
- Adams, Jessica, Well Closure Serv.....700.00
- Adams, Tracy L, Mileage/Phone.....225.97
- AgVantage FS, Inc., Fuel.....3071.41
- Alliant Energy, Util36.20
- Baer, Amanda, Mileage/Phone.....98.68
- Betts, Haley, Mileage/Phone.....329.79
- Bissen, Krystal, Mileage/Phone.....318.26
- Bundy, Kelsey, Mileage/Phone.....44.08
- CenturyLink, Phone.....47.53
- City of Carpenter, FM Extensions.....280.11
- City of McIntire, FM Extensions.....350.51

- City of Mitchell, FM Extensions304.42
- City of Orchard, FM Extensions.....243.20
- City of Stacyville, FM Extensions.....895.52
- The Crittenton Center, Serv.....699.75
- Dakota Supply Group, Supp.....6564.21
- Don's Truck Sales Inc., Equip.....179132.00
- Douglas, Christine, Mileage.....14.50
- Elan Financial Services, Supp.....1247.99
- Elliott, Hannah, School1106.31
- Farm Bureau, Dues60.00
- Floyd/Mitchell Solid Waste, Serv626.85
- Frein, Todd, Mileage.....526.75
- Gardiner & Company, Serv.....11438.00
- Giles, Sasha, Mileage/Phone115.91
- Gordon Flesch Company Inc., Serv47.30
- GreatAmerica Financial Svcs., Serv.....152.10
- Samantha Groh, Mileage/Phone126.06
- Hackenmiller, Christine, Mileage/Phone.....43.05
- Halfman, Deanna, Mileage/Phone.....56.40
- Heartland Power Cooperative, Util.....656.59
- Hoff Celebrations-Champion, Serv.....1800.00
- Huisman, Laura, Mileage/Phone.....55.38
- ICEOO District II, Dues.....30.00
- Iowa Dept. of Public Safety At, Traces.....1278.00
- IA Law Enforce Acad, School250.00
- IA Prison Ind, Supp.....272.80
- Iowa State Assoc. of Counties, Dues.....250.00
- LJP Waste Solutions, Serv.... 620.40
- Jim Roll Electric, Serv.....1204.77
- Johnston Autostores, Serv...418.27
- Ketelsen, Jessa, Mileage/Phone72.92
- Kwik Trip, Inc, Supp.....163.73
- Larry Elwood Const Inc, Serv...54.22
- Larson's Hardware Hank, Supp.....18.00
- Martin Bro Dist Co., Supp....635.78
- MCI WorldCom, Phone.....13.09
- McKesson Medical - Surgical, Serv.....2363.43
- Midwest Group Benefits, Insurance304.00
- Midwest Pump Works, LLC, Serv.....833.99
- Midwest Wheel Co., Serv....716.49
- Mitchell Co. Abstract Company, Serv.....220.00
- Mitchell Co. Reg Hlth-Hospital, Serv.....115.00
- NIACC North Iowa Area Communit, Supp.....60.00
- Norsolv Sys Env Serv, Serv....275.70
- North Central International, Serv185.07
- Nuss Trucks, Serv1780.58
- Nuway/K&H Coop Oil Co, Fuel.....44.03
- Osage Coop Elev., Serv492.22
- Osage Vet Clinic, Serv.....155.00
- Phoenix Supply, Supp189.75
- Pitney Bowes Bank Inc. Reserve, Postage.....2000.00
- Pollard Pest Cont Corp, Serv...56.47
- Quill, Supp58.78
- Riceville True Value Hardware, Supp.....6.95
- Richardson, Randy, Supp....289.99
- Schulz, Molly, Mileage/Phone.....231.99
- Sigler, Monica, School34.53
- Smart Pharmacy, Serv.....220.26
- Solutions Inc. Harris Local Go, Serv.....2112.00
- Spahn & Rose, Serv23.76
- St Ansgar Auto Parts, Supp...27.43
- State Hygienic Laboratory, Water Samples.....389.50
- Stellar Truck & Trailer, Serv.....5424.95
- Tri-State Public Safety, Serv.....1220.77
- Unity Point Health, Serv.....84.00
- VEIT, LLC FDA: Visual Edge It, Serv.....69.91
- Verizon, Hot Spots.....200.06
- Wherry, James, Mileage.....580.76
- Windstream, Phone189.97
- Wolf, Dawn, Mileage/Phone.....260.05
- YSS of North Iowa, Serv.....373.20
- Frein adjourned the meeting at 9:16 a.m.

Rachel Foster – Mitchell County Auditor
Todd Frein – Chair Board of Supervisors

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Farm Bureau honors St. Ansgar girls basketball team with commemorative awards

ST. ANSGAR — Members of the St. Ansgar Saints girls basketball team were recognized for their season during a recent team banquet, where they received commemorative signature basketballs through a partnership between the Iowa Farm Bureau and the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union.

Carter Patterson, a board member of the Mitchell County Farm Bureau, attended the banquet on behalf of the Iowa Farm

Bureau to present the basketballs to players and coaches.

The recognition is part of the Iowa Farm Bureau's role as the exclusive title sponsor of the IGHSAU. Through that partnership, the organization supports initiatives aimed at promoting character development, wellness and academic success among female student-athletes across the state. The sponsorship also provides championship memorabilia and awards to

participating athletes.

Farm Bureau leaders say the partnership reflects shared values between agriculture and athletics — including hard work, teamwork, community pride and perseverance.

"The values displayed by these athletes are the same values Iowa farmers take to the fields every day," the organization noted. "By partnering with the IGHSAU, we can help young people excel and strengthen communities across Iowa."

The presentation served as a celebration of the Saints' season while also highlighting the continued investment in youth athletics and leadership development across the state.

The St. Ansgar girls basketball team was congratulated for its accomplishments and recognized as a strong example of teamwork and dedication within the community.



DINING & ENTERTAINMENT IN AND AROUND OSAGE

Community GARAGE SALE

Thursday April 30th @ 4-7 pm **Friday May 1st @ 8 am - 6 pm**

***Saturday May 2nd @ 8 am - 6 pm**

It's an event you won't want to miss! Shop until you drop or set up a booth to sell your treasures.

*Enjoy a cash bar while you shop on Saturday, May 2nd!

CEDAR RIVER COMPLEX EVENTS CENTER

1006 CHESTNUT ST. OSAGE, IA

Scan for more info & how to register for a booth!

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

This month's date: April 24th

BecMar Diner