

"Typical Eastern City" Newspaper Article, September 1, 1900

"Typical Eastern City."

Such Is The City Of Eldora As Seen By A Visitor

City Of Elegant Homes.

Eldora and some of the Outlying Landmarks--Beautiful Pen Picture--Well Graded Streets. The following was written by Mr. Percival, son-in-law of Geo. Pattee, of Ackley and brother-in-law of Dr. Diehl of Eldora, for last Sunday's Omaha World-Herald:

Drive To Eldora

One of the popular drives is along the river from Iowa Falls to Eldora, a distance of eighteen miles. The road, which has been worked until it is almost as smooth and hard as macadam, follows the course of the stream a greater portion of the distance. Through fields of grain, orchards, the trees of which at this season of the year are bending beneath their load of ripening fruit, and through patches of woodland this road winds. The panorama is so changeable that one never tires of the beauties spread out for miles in every direction.

Along the road between Iowa Falls and Eldora are two towns that are historical. Both of them are in their dotage and are rapidly tottering to decay. One is Eagle City and the other Hardin City. Both are past fifty years of age and both came into existence when the first of the townsites booms swept over central Iowa. Both were candidates for the county seat of Hardin county more than half a century ago. Both townsites were gridironed with paper railroads which never became realities. When the railroads passed around these towns they lost their vaunted ambition and the prospective millionaires packed their belongings and moved away.

In Eagle City at this time there is a little flour mill, a small store and a postoffice. Hardin City, however, can boast only of a small mill and one house, which forty-five years ago was occupied by George Pattee, now a wealthy retired farmer, residing in Franklin county, in the suburbs of Ackley. At the time of his residence in Hardin City, Mr. Pattee operated a furniture factory, employing a number of hands.

Hardin City.

Speaking of the ups and downs of Hardin City, Mr. Pattee said:

"Forty-five years ago Hardin City had the brightest prospects of any town in the country. A townsite capable of containing a population of 50,000 was laid out. Streets were graded, subsidies were granted to manufacturing concerns that were willing to locate with us. Mills for all kinds of goods were in operation. In fact, it was the metropolis of the central portion of the State, containing a population of close to 1,000 people. Two or three lines of railroad were surveyed in and great machine shops were contemplated. When the county was organized the county seat was located and the future looked exceedingly bright.

"The first blow the town received was when the Sioux City & Dubuque, now the Illinois Central Railroad company, changes its survey and built through Ackley, fifteen miles to the north. We felt this, but braced up, as we had two or three more paper roads on the string. A few months later our cup of sorrow was filled to the brim. An election was called and the question of relocating the county seat came up. Eldora, which won the prize and still retains it, came into the field. At that time there was no town at Eldora, but there was townsite, owned by some boomers and speculators and there people went to work. In due time the election was held and we lost by a small majority. Whether the election was fair or not, I am not in a position to say, but I know that scores of votes were polled by men who had never been residents of Hardin county.

"After losing the county seat our town commenced to die of dry rot. First one family left and then another. The factories and workshops were closed. The machinery was shipped to other points and most of the buildings were torn down and moved to Eldora or to farms."

Eldora still farther down the Iowa river, is one of the most prosperous towns in the county if not in the central portion of the State. It has two railroads, one the Iowa Central and the other the Iowa & Dakota, better known as the "Slippery Elm." This name was attached to the latter road on account of the fact that a dozen or more surveys were made before a final location was decided upon. At the present time the "Slippery Elm" is controlled by the Northwestern and is one of its most valuable feeders, as it runs in a diagonal direction across one of the richest agricultural portions of the State.

An Eastern Town

Eldora has the appearance of a typical old fashioned eastern town. The business portion, which is largely of brick and stone, is built around a public square, in the center of which is the court house, erected a few years ago at a cost of close to \$50,000. It has a fine opera house with a seating capacity of 1,000, a large number of manufacturing industries, including a tile and sewer pipe plant, flour mills, foundries, machine shops and vitrified brick works. The State Industrial school for boys is located here.

The resident streets of Eldora are probably the finest of any small city in the west. Large shade trees are on either side, in many instances so large that their branches reach across the roadways and touch. The town being the home of a dozen men who are worth from \$100,000 to \$500,000, makes it somewhat aristocratic. There are scores of residences costing from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and it is said that the women of the town set the style for all others in the county. It is

a town of fine horses and it is no uncommon sight to see fifty fine turnouts on the boulevards any pleasant evening.

Not far from Eldora is a park, fronting the Iowa river. In this park nature has been most lavish in bestowing her bounties. She has backed it up with a stone wall, rising sheer and straight a distance of seventy-five feet, while along the front she has caused the river to flow. Here the river is broad, slow flowing and deep. It is a favorite boating resort. The Eldora Boating club is one of the organizations of the town. It has 100 members, most of whom own boats of some description. They have a fine boat house which during the summer months is used as a club house.

Four miles below Eldora is the town of Xenia, the origin of which is recorded only in history. Once upon a time, more than fifty years ago, Xenia was a city. It had business houses galore, theaters, dance houses and a population of perhaps 1,000. Now all that remains to mark the spot is an old dismantled mill, rapidly falling into decay and the river; an old stone school house, a two-story store building vacated years ago, and the ruins of a half dozen stone business houses scattered about the townsite.

The patriarch of the town, an old man whose hair and beard have been whitened by the snows of eighty winters, remains as the guard over the ruins which once gave promise of being a great metropolis. Speaking of the town this old man, as he hobbles about supported by a strong hickory staff, confides to strangers:

"Xenia will some day be a great city. I may not live to see it prosper and grow, but it has a location that will yet make it the city of Iowa."