

Early Day Humane Society— Guarded Animals From Man's Cruelty

On a soggy afternoon in March, 1904, a grocery delivery wagon came pounding down the muddy Main street of Mason City. The driver was shipping horse.

"We're going to have to report him at the next meeting," a woman remarked to a companion on the sidewalk.

When the Mason City Humane society met on the evening of March 9, 1904, for its regular monthly session, the matter of the delivery wagon driver came up for discussion, along with other reports of cruelty.

"Case reported of cruelty to delivery horse by . . ." was the way the secretary wrote it into the record book of the society. Motion made and carried that secretary be instructed to write Mr. M. J. . . . and ask for a reply at the next meeting.

At the next meeting, on April 6, 1904, the matter was placed on the minutes thus: "Report on case of H— J— given. Milton carried that action be suspended during good behavior."

The well kept minutes of the humane society in the months and years that followed contained no further reference to H— J—.

A warning was all he needed to become more humane in treatment of his horse.

But the Mason City humane society, made up of men and women with the common bond between them of solicitude and sympathy for the welfare of animals, sometimes had to resort to more than just issuing warnings.

At the meeting which followed the one referred to Secretary G. N. Netzer reported 20 cases of cruelty on which action was taken. "Any number of instances have come to the notice of the secretary in which the agent has quietly warned drivers of misuse of their teams, but in 8 cases did there seem to be evidence of insufficient gravity to warrant arrest and punishment."

At the time those words were written the Mason City Humane society could claim the interest, if not too much financial backing, from most of the community minded citizens of the city.

The society had come into being in the latter part of 1892 and after the filing of the articles of incorporation Jan. 27, 1893, began holding regular meetings.

These articles stated that "the object of this society shall be to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to children and dumb animals, to aid and assist in the prosecution and conviction of any and all persons who shall abuse, cruelly treat or fail to properly provide for either children or dumb animals."

O. T. Dennison, leading figure in the brick and the industry, was elected the first president and on the board were J. C. Stanbery, Mrs. J. E. E. Mackley, Mrs. H. E. Francis, J. H. McConlogue, Charles H. Barber, Mrs. Norris, Mrs. J. E. Blythe, Duncan, Rule and Mrs. Rosalie Wilson, names prominent in the business and social life of the community a generation ago.

And in the 15 years that followed, during which the society had its greatest activity, names prominent in the society's program and those who helped generously with finances included Mrs. O. T. Dennison, Mrs. Fred Keeler, Mrs. B. C. Keeler, Mrs. W. E. Bries, Mrs. Bonnie Sanborn, Mrs. Emsey Adams, Mrs. L. M. Van Auken, Mrs. L. E. Day, W. A. Brandenburg and Hugh Gilmore.

Mrs. C. H. McNider was a part of the active leadership throughout and for a number of years served as vice president, presiding at many meetings in the absence of the president.

Two names get mention in the record book more often than any others. One was that of Mrs. Rosalie Wilson, mother of Dixie, Cedric and Meredith Wilson, who headed a band of mercy, which carried on educational work, particularly among school children.

The theory behind this work among children was that humane education is the foundation of all reform, that humanity means civilization and cruelty barbarism.

Over and over again Mrs. Wilson presented the idea that when a child is speaking or acting kindly, whether to playmate or to an animal, he is strengthening the noble side of his character and

R. L. Nutting Humane Officer Here for Quarter of Century

Was Known Far and Wide for His Love of Horses and Dogs

Many individuals had a prominent part in the program of the Mason City Humane society, which flourished from the turn of the century until World War I, but the dominant personality of all was the late Rufus L. Nutting, who for a quarter of century served as humane officer.

Born in New York state, in 1842, Nutting started life as a low boy on the Erie canal and later sailed the Great Lakes and the Mississippi river. In the later eighties he and his family came to Mason City, where he became a stone mason. He is credited with having laid the first and last stone on the courthouse.

Nutting was known among all friends and acquaintances for his love of horses and dogs, in fact all animals.

"I've seen him speak once to what was called a one-man dog," said his son, Wallace, one time "and then walk away with the dog following him."

Horses were also his favorites. It was this fondness for animals that led him into humane officer work. He never flinched from his duty when it was the comfort or welfare of an animal that was at stake.

He used to go through the circus that came to Mason City and time and again ordered his boiled circus men to take horses out of the harness that were collar galled.

Mr. Nutting was the grandson of Thomas Nutting, one of the Revolutionary soldiers to cross the Delaware, when he is thoughtless or cruel he is developing the lower or brutal elements of his nature.

The other name prominent in the record is that of Rufus L. Nutting, who throughout the period of the society's active program served as humane officer.

Whenever the attention of the society was directed to some mistreatment of animals and in rare occasions of children, it was Nutting's duty to see that warnings were sounded and perhaps arrests made.

At nearly every meeting of the board there were reports of cruelty. These appear in the records somewhat as follows:

"Case reported of . . . who drove her son into the street to beg money in all kinds of weather."

"Agent secured the arrest of a farmer . . . who had cruelly beaten his horse with chains to the extent that the animal's sides and head were a mass of cuts and bruises. Brought before justice and given a fine of \$10 and costs."

"Three reputable citizens of Plymouth complained of . . . who neglected to properly care for

Throughout most of his history the society was troubled with lack of funds. The membership fee of 50 cents did not cover needed expenses. It was necessary for the

lion of the fountain and Mr. Gilmore to confer with authorities as to placing the fountain."

The fountain was duly placed on the intersection of what is now Delaware and First N. E., the Congregational church corner, and on May 3, 1912, an appropriate dedication service was held at the Congregational church.

The speakers were Father Dougherty of the Holy Family church and James E. Williams. Father Dougherty told the gathering that "man is the masterpiece of God's handwork, has been charged with the protection of dumb animals."

But the humane society wasn't through with the fountain. At the Jan. 29, 1913 meeting "It was voted to notify the council that we cannot sanction the payment of the bills for the installation of the Ensign fountain because of the unsatisfactory character of the work."

On May 15, 1913, everything must have been in readiness for it was voted "to request the water commission to turn on the water for the Ensign fountain."

But the coming of the automobile and the tractor soon changed many of the cherished practices of the past. It wasn't many years before the humane society was moved from the busy intersection on Delaware to a less congested place.

At the years went on, old dollars ceased to be a part of the circulating medium.

Changing times also influenced the humane society. The organization continued its active program until the entry of the United States into World War I in the spring of 1917. The energy of the community was then turned to other things and the humane society ceased its active program.

The society remained dormant for nearly 11 years until on March 7, 1928, a meeting was held and new officers elected headed by Mrs. C. W. Damon as president.

At this meeting the society voted to dispose of a lot left by Miss Cora G. Warner, secretary of the organization some years before.

The lot, in the college addition, was sold for \$500 and the funds placed in the treasury of the society to be used in a program similar to the one previously maintained.

Some 70 members were signed for 50 cents each. Observance of Humane week was announced and in May, 1928, a meeting was held at which a new slate of officers was elected as submitted by a nominating committee.

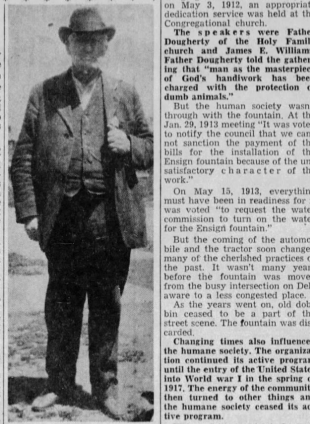
Ralph S. Stanbery was elected president; Mrs. W. E. Bries, 1st vice president; Mrs. C. W. Damon, 2nd vice president; Mrs. Harry D. Page, secretary, and C. A. Parker, treasurer.

This meeting, on May 16, 1928, was the last that was ever held by the society, according to the record book.

The \$500 was deposited in the savings account of the First National bank accumulated interest and has now brought the amount to \$650.00.

Again there is talk of reviving the program of the Mason City humane society. Dobbin may be gone, as far as the streets of the city are concerned. But he still exists as do thousands of dogs and other domestic animals, the treatment of which would be watched over by the humane society.

At the meeting on April 10, 1912, Gilmore reported the granite fountain safe and ready for installation. R. L. Nutting was appointed to arrange for the installa-



REFUS L. NUTTING aware with George Washington before the battle of Trenton. His grandson, also Rufus L. Nutting, lives at 1897 Carolina N. E.

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Mason City Discarded Fountain

Clipped By:



johnwalshderby
Mon, Jul 20, 2020

DEDICATE ENSIGN FOUNTAIN.**Handsome Granite Fountain Formally Dedicated and Presented.**

Special to Times-Republican.

Mason City, May 6.—The Herman Lee Ensign granite fountain has been formally dedicated and presented to the city. Words of force and power fell from the lips of Reverend Father Dougherty, of the Holy Family church and Editor James E. Williams, of the Times, in the unveiling of the fountain and its presentation to the city. Powers' orchestra and the Odd Fellows' Orphan Home band furnished the instrumental numbers on the program. Superintendent Hugh H. Gilmore, of the city schools, presided, a number of the school children sang, Rector William Pence James offered prayer, the band of mercy creed was repeated, Mrs. John D. Wilson read the life of Herman Lee Ensign, and the addresses followed. Mayor Norris made a brief response in accepting the gift in behalf of the citizens.

Mason City Iowa - Evening Times-Republican 1912-05-06

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Wed, Mar 7, 2018

THIRTY YEARS AGO : 1

Once more the Ensign memorial fountain at the corner of 6th and Michigan streets will bubble forth cooling water for the horses of the city. Commissioner Gould has ruled the fountain will be made useful or will cease to adorn the center of the street and he is of the opinion the fountain can be made to work . . . The fountain was abandoned last summer by the commissioners after several unsuccessful attempts to keep the water from running over the street.