



## *Wilson Brewer Park*

*Webster City, Iowa*

# ***Historical Information***

---

*Wilson Brewer Park was donated to Webster City in 1932 by Frank Bonebright and Harriet Bonebright to create a perpetual memorial to their grandfather, Wilson Brewer - the City's first settler and founder .*

## ***...they journeyed to Iowa***

An emigrant ox train of five families left Howard County, Indiana around the first of October in 1850. Leading the group was Wilson Brewer, nearly 40-years-old, his wife Margaret Jane and their six children ranging in age from two to eighteen.

Camping on the open prairie each night, their journey to Iowa took six weeks. Crossing the river at Burlington, Iowa, the pioneer group encountered rivers and sloughs and bad roads as they blazed their own trail to the center of the State.

The party remained in Des Moines for several days to replenish provisions and attend to domestic chores. One family remained in Des Moines while the others set out to discover unsettled lands to the north.

Wilson Brewer's settlers selected land along the Boone River about six miles south of Webster City, Iowa. On the site, nestled along a ravine, the group erected crude log cabins. They built log stables surrounded with brush corrals, cut a supply of hay for the animals and chopped wood for cooking and heating. An abundance of wild game supplemented their food rations. With the arrival of the Brewer party, seven families now resided in what would become Hamilton County, Iowa.

Not content with his new surroundings, Wilson Brewer and his family traveled a few miles northward until he

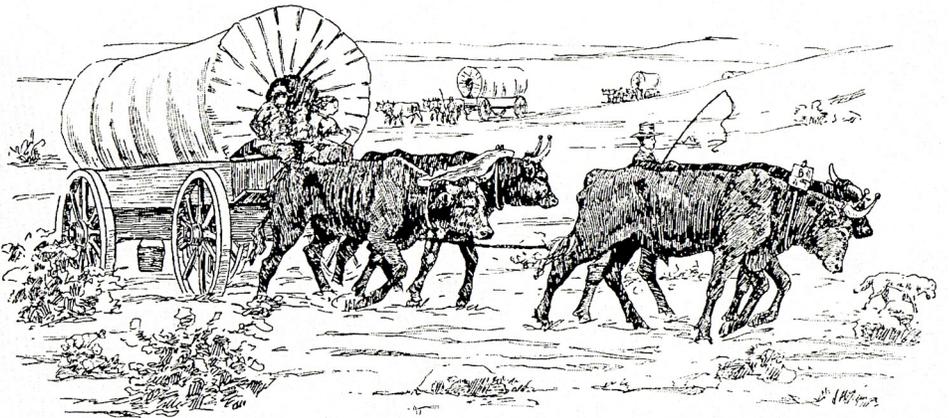
reached the banks of a free flowing creek. Here, along the now named Brewer Creek, not far from the Boone River, he staked out a new claim and erected a wood-floored, bark-roofed cabin to shelter them through the winter.

Brewer named his little settlement Newcastle. He championed his new home, convincing others to come settle along the low bluffs of the Boone River. The town grew and soon changed its name to Webster City.

Wilson Brewer died in December 1856, but his family remained at the old homestead until the last one passed away in 1940.

His grandchildren - Frank Bonebright and Harriet Bonebright - were raised in pioneer lore listening to their mother, Sarah Brewer Bonebright, tell the stories of how life first began in Webster City.

In 1932, Frank and Harriet Bonebright, gave the original homestead and reconstructed log cabins to Webster City to create a perpetual memorial to their grandfather, Wilson Brewer - the first settler and founder of what is now Webster City.



## ***Wilson Brewer - Jackson Groves Cabin***



Frank Bonebright, a grandson of Wilson Brewer, was always a collector of old and unique items. He began his quest to preserve Webster City's history and his family's heritage in the early Twentieth century.

Jackson Groves brought his family to Hamilton County, Iowa in 1855 and resided in this cabin beginning the next year. Bonebright purchased the Jackson Groves cabin, located in Briggs Woods area three miles south of town, in 1923.

Wilson Brewer's pioneer cabin, which had been sold many years before, ended up as a granary on the Peter Frohling farm northeast of Webster City. The Frohling family gave the original settler's cabin to Frank Bonebright in 1931.

With the acquisition of the two cabins, Bonebright began his mission to build a memorial to his grandfather.

After reconstructing the Brewer cabin and adding the Groves cabin as a lean-to in 1931-1932, Frank Bonebright stocked the structure with his massive collections of pioneer history.

With his little pioneer village, Frank Bonebright could share his treasures and stories with everyone who came to learn about early life in Webster City.

**Jameson /  
Jamison  
Cabin**



Brothers Charles M. Jameson (1830 -1864) and Jacob B. Jameson (1839 -1863) came to the Brushy Creek area in Webster County about 1857.

They lived with their parents, Alexander and Mary Ann Moore Jameson, until building this cabin in 1860.

Alexander and Mary Ann Jameson sent three sons - Charles, Jacob and Samuel - off to enlist in the Civil War in April 1863. All three joined the 7th Iowa Cavalry. Only one son came home.

Jacob B. Jameson died of meningitis May 6, 1863 while waiting to be mustered into the 7th Iowa Cavalry. He is buried in Rock Island National Cemetery.

Charles M. Jameson died of yellow fever May 24, 1864 while stationed with his company at Fort Riley, Kansas. He is buried in the National Cemetery there.

Samuel A. Jameson was discharged for disability for a fractured hip in October 1863 at Omaha, Nebraska and was pensioned in 1866. He married Elizabeth Jane Groves, daughter of Jackson Groves, whose cabin is also located on Wilson Brewer Park.

Various Jameson family members lived in this cabin until 1913. The cabin sat empty until acquired by Frank Bonebright, grandson of Wilson Brewer, and moved to the Bonebright home- stead, now Wilson Brewer Park, in the early 1930's.

# *Harmony Center School House*



Harmony Center School House was built in the summer of 1914 to replace an older rural school building.

New Hamilton County country school buildings continued to be erected up to the early 1940's with the last one closing at the end of the spring term in 1958.

Located in Section 24, Webster Township, the school was about a half-mile south of the Tunnel Mill. In the early days, children rowed across the Boone River in the community row-boat kept near the Mill as a shortcut to school.

Schools were generally located so that no child had to walk more than two miles to school. There were fall, winter and spring terms with breaks to accommodate spring and fall farm operations. Teachers lived with nearby farm families during the term.

Donated and moved to Wilson Brewer Park in 1977 by the Bernard Demoratsky Family. Restoration assistance and artifact collection by Phi Kappa Delta educational sorority. School desks were refinished by Mark Hollingshead and Boy Scout Troop 22 as part of his Eagle Scout project. The Harmony Center school bell which called the students to school, is not on display due to its large size and weight.

The building, which has no electricity, contains artifacts from early day rural country schools. Through the years, local teachers have brought their classes to the school to hold day - long school sessions to enable the students to experience school as it was one hundred years ago.

## ***Mulberry Center Church***



The residents of the four corners area in Blairsburg Township, Hamilton County, Iowa began the task of fund raising for a proper church in 1889. The area was called Mulberry Center after early settlers planted 1,200 mulberry trees in the spring of 1884 to enliven the unbroken, gently rolling prairie.

Located near the local school house on land donated by J. C. Miller, the church was constructed by hired and donated labor for \$950. Rocks from the neighboring farms were used for the foundation. Dedication services for this United Brethren Church, named Mulberry Center Church, were held July 13, 1890.

In 1946 the congregants united with the Evangelical church, then in 1968 became the United Methodist Church.

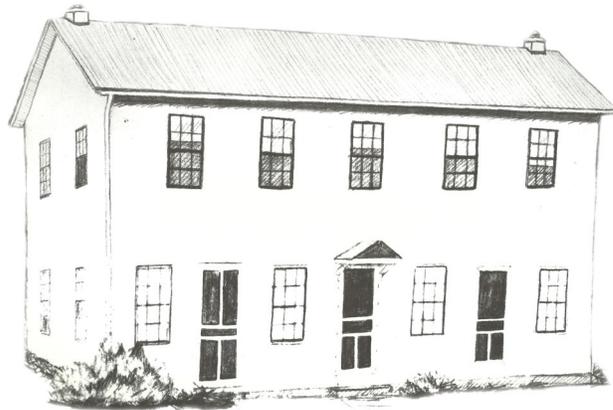
Members of the Mulberry Center Church had long shared a minister with the Webster City Methodist Church and in 1990 the two churches combined to build a new place of worship in Webster city.

Members of the Mulberry Center Church donated and financed moving the building to Wilson Brewer Park in 1995.

The historic Mulberry Center church is the site of weddings, memorial services and social gatherings as well as housing church memorabilia from around the county.

# ***First Hamilton County Courthouse***

## **1866-1876**



After the Civil War, Hamilton County was financially able to build its first Courthouse, a modest two-story wooden structure, on Webster City's Public Square. The building was used from 1866 to 1876 until a more elaborate structure was built.

Costing \$1,934, the building included three downstairs public offices with a second floor court room accessed by an outside stairway. News reports indicate the offices were not connected and could only be accessed through their front doors. A Diebold Safe vault at the rear of the building housed public records.

There was no jail, but the middle ground floor room was used in the Spring of 1869 to hold twenty or so railroad workers arrested after a wild spree in Webster City. Their bosses bailed them out and took them back to finish laying the track which soon brought the railroad to town.

Also in 1869, the County held its first murder trial in the second floor courtroom. John Ross was accused of murdering his uncle John S. Ross, owner of Ross' Mill which was located on the Boone River, six miles south of Webster City. He was acquitted and the case remains unsolved.

After a more prestigious courthouse was built, this wooden structure was sold and moved to the corner of Union and Bank Streets to be converted into private housing.

Ada E. Butler Kearns and her husband Civil War Veteran John V. Kearns purchased the building in July 1904. Their youngest daughter, Margaret M. Kearns Arbogast donated the building to the Hamilton County Historical Society.

The Historical Society raised the funds to move the building to Wilson Brewer Park in 1985, where it was refurbished for use as a museum.

# ***Illinois Central Railroad Depot***



When the first train crossed the Boone River to reach Webster City on April 6, 1869, City residents thought it had taken much too long to arrive. Railroad service meant the City was no longer on the frontier.

The Illinois Central Railroad built their first brick and mortar depot along the tracks on Des Moines Street. This 1869 structure served the city well, but the railroad company did nothing to improve the building.

Finally, after prodding from local news editors and businessmen, construction on a modern passenger station in the company's new architectural style began in October 1901.

W. J. Zitterell of Webster City was the contractor for the \$5,000 wooden structure which featured steam heat, electricity, ladies and gentlemen's waiting rooms and large windows. The building was painted in the regulation gray Illinois Central color.

Illinois Central employees moved into the new Depot on February 3, 1902.

After the Illinois Central Railroad ended passenger service to Webster City in 1967, the 1901-1902 Passenger Depot was no longer needed. The Railroad company gave the building to the City.

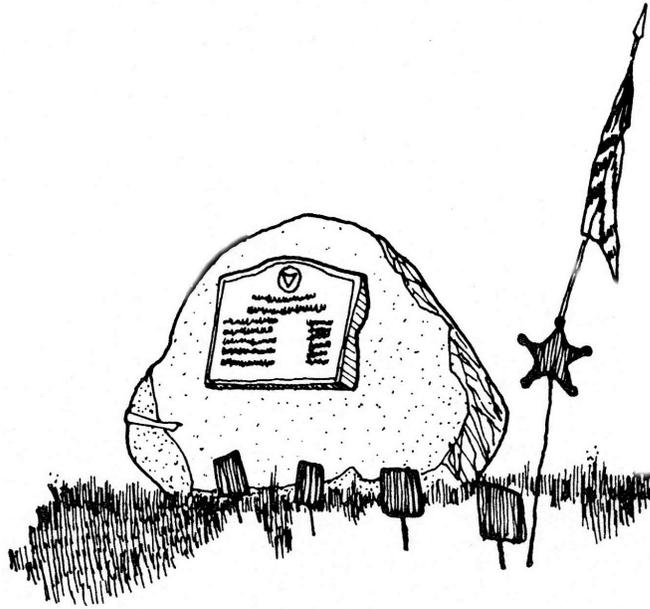
In 1971, the Boone River Area Art Guild and the Hamilton County Historical Society raised funds to move the Depot to Wilson Brewer Park.

Restoration of the Depot took the two groups some five years to accomplish. A formal dedication of the building was held in June 1976.

Historical artifacts from throughout the county are on display including a large Native American collection.

Of Interest: Thomas B. Bonebright, husband of Sarah Brewer Bonebright, began working for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad in 1882, first as a mechanic and then as superintendent of the water department on the western branch of the road, having charge of all the pumps and engines. He retired after 25 years of service. His railroad lantern is displayed in the Depot ticket office. Thomas B. Bonebright was also a member of the 1857 Spirit Lake Rescue March and served in 1858 as a member of the Iowa Frontier Guards.

## ***Burial Mound***



When Frank Bonebright and his sister Harriet Bonebright donated this land and its buildings to Webster City in 1932, the agreement provided for a burial site for the Brewer family members. The burial mound was to be along the Brewer Creek at the site of Wilson Brewer's first cabin.

An above ground burial mound was established as a limestone layer begins just a few feet below the area.

Eight family members who were buried in Graceland Cemetery just a few blocks west of Wilson Brewer Park were moved to the mound in November 1934.

Frank's wife Kathryn died in 1939 and Harriet died in 1940. They were the final family members interred at the site.

The large boulder atop the mound was selected by Frank Bonebright many years prior to his death from the Bridgeman C. Mason farm located east of Webster City.

The memorial plaque was donated by the Happy Land chapter of the Daughters of American colonists and dedicated in October 1961.

### Family Members Interred in the Mound:

- Wilson Brewer 1804/06 -1856
- Margaret Jane Moore Brewer 1816 -1896
- John Thomas Brewer 1839 - Abt 1857
- Julia Ann Brewer 1844 - Btwn 1861-1870
- Nancy Brewer 1849 - Abt 1857
- Sarah Jane Brewer Bonebright 1837/39 -1930
- Thomas B. Bonebright 1826 -1921
- Frank A. Bonebright 1868 -1934
- Kathryn Poe Bonebright 1874 -1939
- Harriet M. Bonebright Cloz Carmichael 1861 -1940

# Artifacts Located Throughout Wilson Brewer Park



## ***Domed boulder from the Bonebright farmstead.***

Shown in 1923 photographs in front yard to right of sidewalk in the Bonebright front yard. Unlikely it has been moved. Located next to electrical junction box on east edge of gravel road in front of Jameson cabin.

## ***Glacial Iron Ore***

Frank Bonebright believed this to be a meteorite. But lab testing shows this to be a glacial iron ore likely from northern Minnesota. Unverified report of 1,200 pound weight. Located in front and between cabins



## ***Mill Grindstones***

Grindstones salvaged from a local Hamilton County Mill. Likely from the nearby Chase Mill but could also be from the Harris Mill or Bone Mill. Located: leaning against a tree in front of the cabins.

## ***Plaque Boulder***

Located to the north of the Brewer/Groves cabin near the edge of Ohio Street. Not readable from the Street. Plaque financed by women's patriotic groups of the City. Dedicated in June 1961. No history on the glacial boulder known.



# Artifacts Located Throughout Wilson Brewer Park



## ***Veteran's Memorial***

Frank Bonebright was a 15-year member of the Webster City Iowa National Guard Unit. An expert marksman, he was selected to be on the 1903 to 1907 National Guard State Rifle teams. Served during the Spanish American war. His father, Thomas Bonebright, was a member of the Spirit Lake Rescue march in 1857 and in 1858 served with the Iowa Frontier Guards.

In April 1955, Webster City's new National Guard Armory, located just west of the Wilson Brewer Burial Mound, was dedicated to Lt. Frank W. Bonebright. When the Armory was torn down in early 2001, local former guardsmen salvaged the limestone sign and erected a memorial to Bonebright and all veterans on Wilson Brewer Park.

## ***Well Pump***

This well hand-pump is located in front of the Harmony Center School house. Original location from the Brewer-Bonebright homesteads. Working pump until state regulations required the well to be capped in the 1990's.



## ***Homer Bell Tower***

A Tim Adams sculpture with the original Homer Methodist Church bell and medallions honoring all the churches in the County. Dedicated in 2013.

The Homer Methodist Church began in 1866. When the church was closed in 2008, many of the historical artifacts from the Church were donated to Wilson Brewer Park for preservation and display.

Located currently to the northeast of the Mulberry Center Church building, the sculpture is slated to be moved to a Path Garden between the Jameson Cabin and the Church.

# Artifacts Located Throughout Wilson Brewer



## **1876-1976 Hamilton County Courthouse Name Plate**

The limestone name and date plates were salvaged from the County's second courthouse when it was torn down in 1977.

Currently lying near the southeast corner of the Illinois Central Railroad (Depot) museum.

Landscape plans call for the limestone name and date plates to be erected as seating on the edge of the planned brick plaza area on the east side of the Illinois Central Railroad (Depot) museum.

## **Stout, Mills & temple Water Turbine**

A water turbine salvaged from a local mill. Some historian's believe it is from the nearby Chase Mill, others wonder if it might have come from the Harris Mill north of the City. It is not from Bell's Mill.

This is a Stout, Mills & Temple American Turbine water wheel manufactured in Dayton, Ohio. It measures 72 inches across and according to the company's sales book, weighs 7,500 pounds. Erected on current rock pillars sometime before 1953.



## **Time Capsule Boulder**

Located in front on the southeast corner of the Brewer-Groves cabins. Marking the spot of a 17 x 13 x 12 inch buried vault encased in concrete. This Time Capsule was filled, buried and dedicated during the 100th Centennial celebration June 11, 1957. MacKinlay Kantor was the featured speaker. Cannot be moved.

## **Farm Names**

**Riverside Poultry Yard** - in the 1890's Sarah Brewer Bonebright raised and sold purebred poultry. Breeds included Indian Games, Partridge Cochins and Australian pheasants.

**The Pioneer Farm** - On April 5, 1926 Sarah Brewer Bonebright registered the name "The Pioneer Farm" at the Hamilton County Recorder's office in the Farm Name Book. It was for Lots 1, 2 and 8 in the SE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of section 6, township 88, Range 25 West of the 5th P.M.



## ***Wish List...***

- ◆ Older farm building to be acquired and moved to a location on the grassy area on the east side of Wilson Brewer Park between the Bonebright Armory memorial and the Harmony Center School to house old farm equipment and farm tools.
- ◆ A Gathering Building to be purpose built on the grassy area to the west of the Burial Mound. This building would house restrooms with a large changing area for people using the Mulberry Center Church for weddings. The building would also contain a gathering hall to host small wedding receptions and which could be used for other community and Park events.
- ◆ A sculpture pad / area to be used for one sculpture relating to the historic era of the Park. Sculpture would not be permanent, but be “on loan” for the season.
- ◆ Engine, train car and tracks to be located on the west side of the Illinois Central Depot Museum.
- ◆ Old style railroad track crossing signals.
- ◆ Salvaged remnants of the Washington Central School become some sort of seating near the Harmony Center School.
- ◆ If the cabins are raised to sit on a concrete slab, face the concrete sides with local limestone.
- ◆ Trail along / viewing area for Brewer Creek.

