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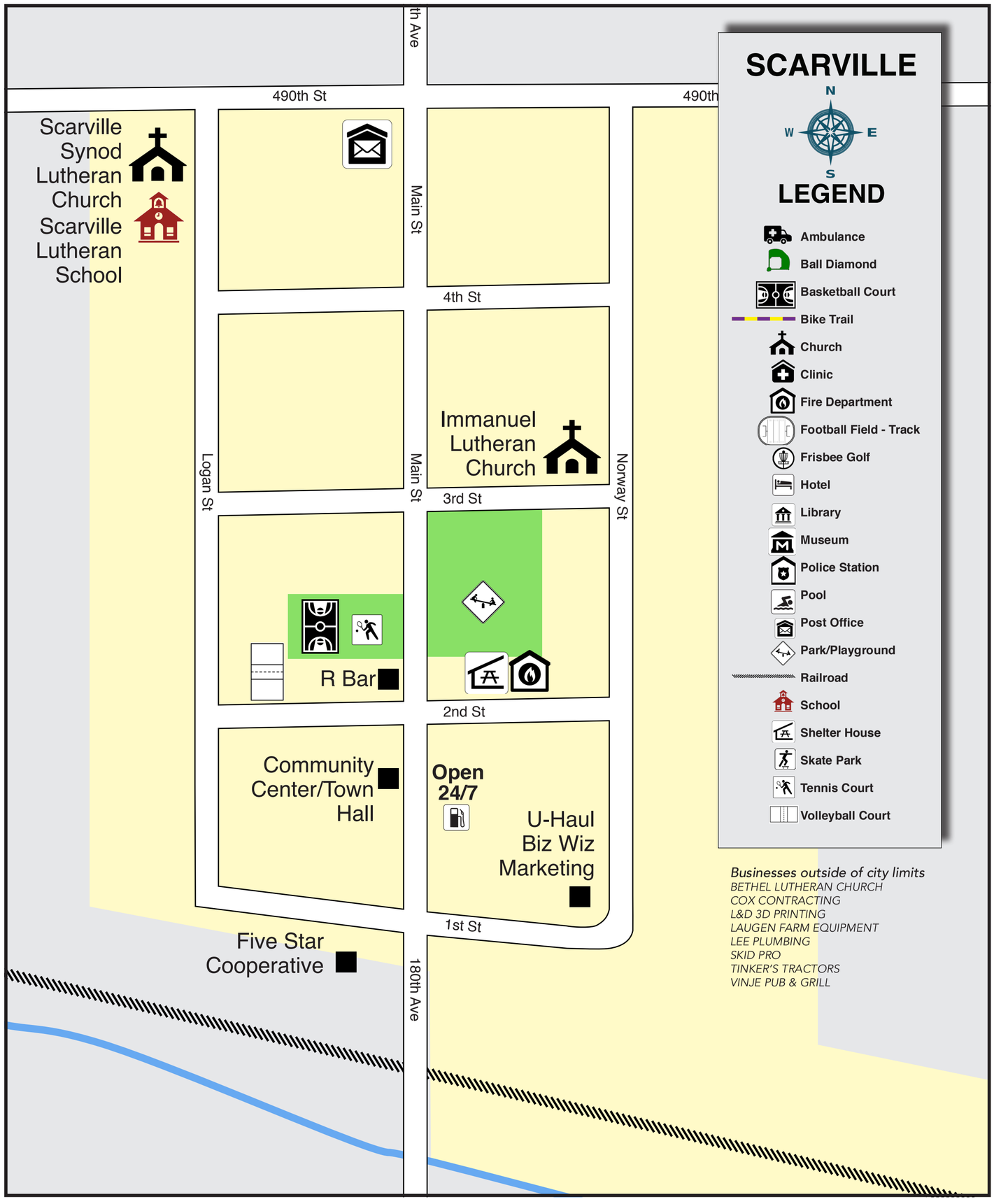

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Scarville

Platted in 1899, Scarville takes its name from Ole Scar, who became a prominent businessman in the area and was the mayor and postmaster for several years. After coming to the U.S. from Norway in July of 1896, Scar settled in Wisconsin before coming to Mitchell County in Iowa, then to Lake Mills to work in an Osage merchant's general store. When the store burned down in 1871, he went to California to join the Gold Rush, where he found enough gold to move to Washington State and purchase 80 acres of land. However, Scar returned to Iowa in 1874 and partnered with the Osage merchant to open another general store in Lake Mills.

After a few years of success in the business, Scar became the sole proprietor of the store, which came to be known as Scar-Nelson Mercantile Company. At the time, this business was the leading retail and wholesale establishment in this part of Iowa. But this wasn't enough for Scar, who began acquiring the right of way for nearly all the rail line constructed in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota. The rail right of way he acquired ran through what is now known as the communities of Hanlontown, Joice, and Scarville in Iowa, as well as Kiester and Bricelyn in Minnesota. While he continued his successful business ventures, including founding banks in the same communities as his railroad right of way and dealing in real estate, Scar also had a hand in platting and visualizing 14 communities in this region, including his namesake of Scarville. He remained a bachelor the entirety of his life and passed away in 1916.

Since then, the town of Scarville has seen many changes. The highest community population was recorded as 163 in the 1930's. Today, the population is less than 100. However, nearly 1,500 visitors flock to Scarville each year for the 4th of July Celebration. Scarville is a hub of activity which maintains a variety of businesses such as a tavern, cooperative grain elevator, post office, technology business, 3D printing business, a U-Haul rental business, and a variety of other local businesses outside the city limits.

Scarville also places a high priority on the education of its youth. The town has had a school in the community since 1904, when classes were held in the basement of the Immanuel Lutheran Church. Then, in 1906, a two-room schoolhouse was built on land donated by Ole Scar. Finally, a frame building was built on Main Street in 1920 where the first high school class graduated from four years later. Additionally, a new brick school was built on the same school block on the north side of town in 1935 and added to in 1952. However, this building was used for a short time with the final Scarville High School seniors graduating in 1958. After that year, grades 1-8 stayed at the Scarville School while the high school students began attending Lake Mills. In the early 1960's, grades 7 and 8 were also transferred to Lake Mills, followed shortly by the remaining grades 1-6 students in 1965. The Scarville School building was then used as a private residence on and off for years and remained standing until 1997.

In the fall of 1927, the Scarville Synod Evangelical Church opened the Christian Day School in the basement of the church. It remained there for 60-some years until, in 1998, a large addition was built onto the south side of the building.

The Annual 4th of July Celebration is one of the best attended events in the area. Scarville's tiny community swells to more than 1,500 people in the early days of July. This event includes a parade that passes through Main Street twice, meaning double the candy for anyone who is lucky enough to catch it. The celebration offers something for everyone, whether it's a parade for the kids or a community picnic featuring burgers prepared by the volunteer firemen for the family. Other events include music in the park (be sure to bring your own lawn chair!), a day-long flea market in the park, a kids' pedal pull, free bars and ice cream in the shelter house throughout the afternoon, and much more. The event ends with the sinking of the sun followed by an amazing fireworks show.

Before and after the Independence Day celebration, Scarville still has a lot to offer for visitors. The Community Center is available for rent by private parties to host family reunions, birthday parties, baby showers, confirmations, graduations, anniversaries, etc., though there is a maximum capacity of 75 people. The space includes a restroom, handicap accessible entrance, a full kitchen, and heat and air conditioning to assure the comfort of your guests. The Community Center is also home to events such as the monthly Town Council meetings and other local groups, and is the voting location for Norway, Logan, and Eden Townships. To rent the facility for your gathering, meeting, or event, call the city clerk at 641-568-3110 or send an email to cityclerk50473@gmail.com.

Though a small community, Scarville continues to be a busy little place which is centered on strong faith with its private Lutheran school and two churches, family-owned businesses, and agriculture.

Reference

CITY OF SCARVILLE
PO Box 15
641-568-3110
Hours by appointment

SCARVILLE COMMUNITY CENTER
121 Main Street • 641-568-3110
cityclerk50473@gmail.com
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641-592-0881
www.lake-mills.k12.ia.us
The public school system has been an important part of the Lake Mills, Scarville, and Joice communities from their beginnings. The Lake Mills Community Elementary School, Middle School, and High School are all connected and centered around a state-of-the-art Library Media Center. Technological opportunities abound at LMCS, where the benefits of small, friendly classes are supplemented by on-line education from around the state, the nation, and the world. Think locally, act globally is both a community and a school point of view.

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ORGANIZATIONS & UTILITIES

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4th of July Celebration	Doug Harmon	641-590-3924
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Garbage/Recycling	Peterson Sanitation	641-592-0271
Phone/Cable/Internet	WCTA	641-592-6105
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VINJE

Written by Ruby Sunde, (edited with updated information)
for the Centennial issue of the Lake Mills Graphic

Vinje is believed to have started in the late 1860's or early 1870's. The first Vinje post office was located in a dirt cellar less than a mile west of the present village, on the late Hans Engebretson farm. The post office was known as Neshein, according to post office records, but was later changed to Vinje, for Mr. Vinje who then lived on the Engebretson farm.

When the village of Vinje was started, the post office was located in the store building, built in 1887 by David Olson for Gullick Gulliekson (also known as Dr. Herm.) The second owners were Lars Hauge and Olaus Kalldal. Owners since then have been Lewis Skattle, Ole Strom, Ed Jenson, Hermon Stendel, Melvin Johnson, L. P. Rudd, Henry Hanson, Marvin Gerber, Arnold Olien, Alfred Johnson, Selmer Nelson, Mike Anderson, Leslie Schroader, William Iverson, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence (Glem) Nelson, and Kent Grunhovd.

Jamie and Jessica Zielske have owned the building since 2002 and it is now known as Vinje Pub & Grub. They serve burgers, steaks, and all the fixings and cold drinks and have customers from near and far. The Pub & Grub has had many improvements since the Zielske's bought the building. A new roof, siding, heating/cooling, plumbing, insulation, refinishing of wood floors, and additions of an outdoor deck area are just a few of the projects they've finished.

During the first years of Vinje, there was also a blacksmith shop owned by Andrew Peterson. A photographic gallery north of the store was owned by Gulliekson.

In 1922 Robert (Dewey) Schroader built a garage on the corner east of the store. Mr. and Mrs. Schroeder lived in the back of the garage. Among the operators of the garage were Alvin Larson, Ole Hauskins, Amos Bendickson, Henry Willert, Clarence Engebretson, and Alvin Engelby.

The Vinje creamery was established in April of 1894. The only equipment were two big separators. After separating the cream at Vinje it was hauled to Emmons to be churned into butter. Erick Gudvangen hauled the cream to Emmons and was also manager of the station. The board members were M. J. Egerdal, president; Nels Berg, secretary; K. M. Hage (father of the late Dr. M. M. Hage of Lake Mills), Christian Engebretson, and John Holman, directors.

In April of 1903 the creamery started to make its own butter. Erick Gudvangen was the first butter maker. The officers were John Holman, president; K. M. Hage, vice president; Nels Berg, secretary; Ole Strom, treasurer; and Ole S. Johnson and T. M. Holstad, directors. The creamery burned in 1913 and was promptly rebuilt.

On July 13, 1929, the creamery renewed its articles of incorporation. Directors were T. S. Brustad, John Bergstad, Lewis Solomonson, Ole Strom, Elmer o. Bergland, Albert C. Engebretson, T. K. Cleven. In September of 1940 the creamery was rebuilt with glazed blocks. The men who have held the position of buttermaker are Eric Gudvangen (who was the grandfather of Glem Nelson), Ed Jensen, Martin Torgerson, Herman Stendel, Albert Knutson, Gay Holland, Helmer Hovland, Selmer Nelson, Charles Brue, and Leslie Tiedman. In 1948 Vinje creamery merged with Scarville Creamery. The building was torn down and, in its place, a new home was built by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Johnson. Their son, Larry, now occupies the home.

The creamery house was across the road from the garage and later was the home of Mrs, Mabel Engelby. In later years it was torn down. The garage house was vacant and in 1966, Mrs. Richard Throne started "Karilins", a thrift shop, in it. In 1968 the thrift shop was reopened by Mrs. Mabel Engelby.

Bethel Lutheran Church was formed by the congregation in 1880 when they built a wood frame church on the west side of Vinje at the top of the hill. A few years prior to that the congregation had met in a nearby schoolhouse. The original wood structure burned in 1949 and a new brick church was dedicated in August 1955 and still stands today. Many a wedding, funeral, anniversary, Sunday meal, and Sunday School & Bible School lesson have been held at Bethel Church. For 140 years (1880 to 2020) Bethel Lutheran Church has stood and offered shelter and the Word of the Lord to all who seek it.

In 1936 the winter of the big snows, drifts were 20 feet high in places. People brought their cream to Vinje by horses and bobsled and brought groceries back home with them. When they needed coal, they went on to Scarville, three miles east of Vinje, taking along several men to help scoop away the snow when the horses became bogged down in the drifts. This was a far cry from the paved roads and fine cars of today when everybody goes somewhere almost every day and evening. It was the custom for the men of the community to gather in the back of Vinje Store where Donna Nelson had the coffee ready. During the big snowstorms of 1968-69 before the snowplows could get there, you would see not cars, but tractors, lined up outside the store for the men's coffee hour and neighborhood news. Today at the Pub & Grub, you will see cars, trucks, motorcycles, snowmobiles, ATV's, and maybe even still a tractor now and then.

Over the years, Vinje has served as the neighborhood center for the people of the community. Because it was close to the store, after attending church services at Bethel Lutheran Church or when the children went to Sunday School and Bible School, people would congregate at the store or stay at the church for dinner and visit all afternoon. Men would congregate at the Vinje Store to catch up on the news.

Vinje is still the local place to meet.....it's just the faces that have changed. But the location remains the same, with the friendly banter, a cold drink and good food.

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