

H. A. Christians, a native of Germany, came here in 1856 and opened up a blacksmith shop. His daughter, Clara, was the first child born in Minonk.

Isaac Garrison was the first physician locating here during the summer of 1856. That fall, LC Keedy selected Minonk as his home. In the war of the rebellion, Mr. Keedy would become Captain of the first company raised in this part of the country.

A school was established in the winter of 1856-57. It met in a small building which stood just west of the Webber Hotel. The house had been in use by the railroad as a boarding house for employees of the road. Francis Reeder was the first teacher. The school treasurer's books show that, on April 6, 1857, she was paid \$79 for four months services.

Rev. Frost, a Presbyterian evangelist, held the first religious service in the hotel in the fall of 1856. There was little thought of denomination and all the people came together on short notice to "hear the Word gladly".

The first marriage celebrated was that of Geo. W. Simpkins and Mary Sutton. Miss Sutton's people lived in a part of Mr. Goodrich's warehouse where the ceremony was performed by Samuel Work, Justice of the Peace.

A.H. Danforth who was born in Dana, Massachusetts left his family's farm at age 17 to learn the tanning trade. In 1856, he, his brother George, and sister Nancy moved to Minonk. Both men acquired their own farms. AH sold his farm in 1869 and opened a drug store. In 1879, he went into partnership with his nephew Charles R Danforth as AG Danforth and Co. The Company built its brick bank building on the lot originally occupied by Dobson's store in the northwest corner of West Fifth and Chestnut Streets. The name of the banking business was later changed to CR Danforth and Co.

A.H. Danforth, who at the time was farming southwest of town, Samuel Work, and JB Reeder, organized the first Sunday school in the summer of 1856. Mr. Danforth was also Superintendent of the Sunday school. Services were held in the Illinois Central passenger depot, but in 1858 were moved to the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Danforth served the community in the banking business for over 40 years.

1857. Minonk and the surrounding areas were being settled. Not all was as it is today. The land was alive. One of the early settlers and his son describe what it was like living on the prairie:

Recalling the Prairie

Alvah H. Parks, oldest son of William Alvah Parks. (Compiled July 6, 1929)

In the spring of 1857, Father built a house on the old home farm, Section 16, Clayton Township, which he bought of the school land agent. The family moved there the same spring.

The country around was all virgin prairie, and there were herds of deer, packs of wolves, lots of prairie chickens and, last but not least, scores of rattlesnakes. Father's Uncle Hank used to shoot prairie chickens from a window of our house. Father bought several yoke of oxen to break-up the prairie land, but most of them died with black murrain and this was a great loss. It was hard to pay for a lot of dead oxen. However, Father, though financially hard pushed, always paid his debts. If he could not meet payments when due, he got an extension of time or borrowed the money elsewhere to pay. He always kept his credit good. Beginning with the year 1857, when we moved to the home farm, I will relate some things that I remember. The country was one vast, level plain of wild prairie grass, full of ponds and sloughs. There were no trees except a few small cottonwoods and a few willows around the sloughs, for the prairie fires - which occurred about once a year - destroyed the trees. At great distances, there and there, was a small house. During the evenings, the air was filled with the music of the prairie - the croaking of millions of frogs in the ponds and sloughs and the howling of prairie wolves. In the morning, the crowing and cooing of the prairie chickens filled the air. If it were not for these prairie musicians - the chicken, the wolves, and the frogs - it might have been lonely on the great prairie. Mosquitoes and green-headed flies were in abundance, and these would nearly eat up the horses.
