

Bojen's Story

Researched and Narrated by Roger Bojens

Summer Fest, 2012

Hartley, Iowa has been part of the Bojen's family since 1886. Jacob Bojens was born in Holstein, Germany in 1854. He became a United States citizen in 1873, and after living in Davenport and Atlantic, Iowa, he moved to Hartley in 1886. Jake married Rosa Frahm, formerly of Audubon, Iowa, in 1902. One of Jake's sons, Harold (Boje) was born in Hartley in 1913, and lived there most of his life.

Jake was painting the interior of the chapel in the Hartley Cemetery along with George Dreller, when the plank he was standing on tipped. He fell approximately 10 feet, striking the back of his head on the concrete floor, causing a concussion. He passed away later that evening. According to a recent article in the Hartley Sentinel the accident happened in 1919. However, according to the cemetery deed, and the date on the tombstone, he died in 1920.

Boje married Mae Brinkert, daughter of Herman and Alvina Brinkert of Hartley, in 1934. At that time, Boje was employed in Sam Leibsohn's store. However, most of his working life was in the grocery business in Hartley except for a year or two in Sutherland where he managed a store owned by Lawrence Swanson of Hartley.

In Hartley, he worked for Swanson's, Kosta's, Council Oak, and National Foods. He managed Council Oak and National Food Stores for a total of twenty-eight years.

When asked what he did for a living, he would always say, "I'm a prune pusher."

"Doc" Randall, a supervisor for Council Oak at the time, later started Randall Food Stores throughout the Midwest and became very successful. At one time, he offered Boje a store in Canton, South Dakota. However, Boje declined the offer. I believe his loyalty and love for Hartley played a big part in his decision.

Boje was very active in the Chamber of Commerce, serving on the Board of Directors. He also served as a city councilman, and in 1969, was elected Mayor of Hartley. One of his fondest memories, while serving as mayor, was officiating at the wedding of June Henry and John Heimsoth in the home of Mayor and Mrs. Harold Bojens.

Another great memory and honor was receiving congratulations on his election as mayor, from his long-time friend, and US Congressman, Wiley Mayne. Wiley was originally from Sanborn, but later moved to Sioux City.

Boje served on the Hartley City Council with the likes of “Red” Wagner, Elmer Neebel, Jake Milz, Carl Rahn, Al Hansen, Bruce Boyer, Donald Hansen, and Dr. Paul Sweeney. Some of his closest friends included Roger Potter, Joel Randolph, Merle Smith, Virg and Don Treimer, Carl Ruby, and Butch Westphalen.

Boje passed away in 1971.

Mae Bojens, the daughter of Herman and Alvina Brinkert, was born in Primghar. She lived in Sheldon prior to settling in Hartley. Mae was a gifted singer and performed with area bands.

One time she was headed to Wyoming to perform with one of the bands. The small plane she was riding in, encountered severe storms. After that, Mae decided against a singing career, but she continued to entertain at various functions, along with her sisters Ella and Rose. As a part of her act, she was known to blacken her face and sing Al Jolson songs.

Mae worked for Red’s Café for a number of years both prior to and after her marriage. She and Boje were the parents of two children: Thomas who died shortly after his birth, and Roger. Mae continued to work for many years with Boje in the grocery business.

Mae was an avid golfer. She and Boje were some of the original members of Meadowbrook Golf Course. She passed away in 2001 at the age of ninety-one.

Included in the Bojen's family, was Harold's half sister, Emma Frahm Fick. She had moved along with her mother, Rosa Frahm from Audubon to Hartley. She later married Otto Fick. Aunt Emma was an extremely kind person. She worked for nearly seventy years in various department stores, primarily Leibsohm's. Emma passed away in 1987 at the age of ninety-eight.