

Richter Community

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In 1882, there was no bridge over the Marais des Cygnes River on Highway 68 west of Ottawa's 7th Street. At that time there was a stagecoach between Pomona and Ottawa, and the Wilson Street road was the route over which the community of Richter, west of Ottawa, communicated with that city. The Santa Fe railroad was built through this area in 1883, and the Missouri Pacific railway came through in approximately 1885. About 1890, H.L.T. Skinner, who owned a clothing store at 202 S. Main in Ottawa, built a store at Richter which was known as the Iverne Mercantile Co., named after his daughter, Iverne Skinner. This store was operated continuously until 1940 by Mr. and Mrs. Kirk, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Briles and others.

Tradition tells us that Richter derived its name from a Missouri Pacific railroad engineer. A blacksmith shop and one house were built about the same time as the clothing store. The house was torn down sometime between 1993 when "Trem" Fisher lived there and 2011, though its barn survives and has been remodeled into a residence (2011). The buildings and the farm house of Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Heidner constituted the town of Richter. Later, about 1896, a depot was built and an agent was hired by the Santa Fe railroad. The agent resided in Richter. A post office was operated in the store with the storekeeper serving as postmaster. A star route was run from this office to the farm of A.E. Clark, six miles north and two miles west of Richter, and a post office was operated in this home. These post offices and the star route were discontinued with the coming of Rural Free Delivery in 1901.

In 1896 a Methodist church was organized and a church building built and dedicated on land donated by H.L.T. Skinner. Richter Methodist Church, 3160 Idaho Road, was dedicated in July of 1900, and services have been held continuously since that time. Prior to the building of this church, Sunday services were held in Silver Lake Schoolhouse about a mile west of Richter. Another church, the Oakland Methodist church, located on the northwest corner of the intersection of what is now Sand Creek Road and Indiana Road, was built in 1892? or 1896? (conflicting information), and used until 1945, when the building was sold and many of the members came into the Richter church. Declining attendance at the Oakland church made it impossible to finance its operation.

Three school districts were included in Richter community—Silver Lake, Oakland, and Davy. Oakland school, three miles south of Richter, was given a lease by John Parkinson as District No.

10 in December of 1869. The lease was not recorded until August 4, 1900. The first school building on this site was made of stone, and seems to have been in use until 1927, when a frame building was built. Davy school was organized at a later date than Oakland, and was built on land donated by Mr. Davy. Silver Lake district consolidated with Pomona in 1952, and shortly thereafter the building was sold and removed from the land. Most of the records of Silver Lake School were destroyed by fire in 1928.

In 1906, a grain elevator was built by William Wilson Grain Co. of Ottawa. Prior to the building of the elevator, grain was handled manually, shelled and loaded into cars. Thousands of bushels of corn were piles on the ground at times, waiting to be shelled and loaded.

Depot services on the railroad were discontinued about 1908, and the depot building was replaced by a small shelter where passengers could sit. For some years following the removal of the agent the "daily" would stop for passengers, if it was flagged. Needless to say, the trains did not travel at the rate of speed which is characteristic of the diesel-engine passenger and freight trains of this modern day.

Mrs. Olive Staadt, 1993 and Deborah Barker, 2011