

# Madison

## NEBRASKA



Today when you drive through main street Madison, you will see stop signs, pavement, houses, churches, and businesses. But 150 years ago one would have been immediately surrounded by valley and rolling prairie, most of the land in all directions for a number of miles being well adapted to mixed farming. To the westward, then called the Knapp & Scheer settlement, were found farms equal, perhaps, to any in the State, both regarding their fertility and the improvements that had been made upon them. Good barns had been erected on most of the farms despite the scarcity of timber in Northeastern Nebraska. In the fall of 1868, history was made when H.M. Barnes and his sons, Frank W. and William J., established the first settlement in Madison. The Barnes were native of Dutchess County, N.Y. The town site was located on the claim of Frank W. Barnes, who built the first log house in the fall of 1868. Madison was incorporated July 6, 1876. During the years between 1868 and 1876, the village had grown to include five general stores, two harness shops, two blacksmiths, two shoe shops, one furniture store, five agricultural

implement dealers, one flouring-mill, two banks, three law firms, one doctor, two lumber yards, one brick yard, five stock-breeders, two hotels, two public and one private schools, one newspaper and about 600 inhabitants. According to Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska, Madison County, Part 3: at the time of incorporation, inhabitants include such family names as Barnes, Bauch, Becker, Bridenstine, Clark, Findeisen, Fricke, Fritz, Gerecke, Hoffmann, Kelly, Kimball, Neidig, Prince, Robertson, Searles, Seidel, Scott, Steele, Stuart, Sherlock, Wolf, and Tyrrel.

Today, Madison serves as the Madison County seat and is an energized community with a diverse population of 2,438 inhabitants. Many of the founding families maintain a presence within the community through a legacy of remaining descendants. Madison continues to feature a strong agriculture base, modern civic buildings including a museum and library, rail service through the industrial zoned portion of town, two medical clinics, one pharmacy, a recently remodeled long term care facility, one newspaper, a 9-hole golf course, modern camp grounds, updated



**John and Mary (Reid) Knapp Family**  
 Front: l-r- Viola Knapp McGinty; John and Mary; Ella Knapp Jones.  
 Back: Martha Knapp Boe; Marie Knapp Sunderman; George Knapp;  
 Gertrude Knapp Boe; John Knapp; Bertha Knapp Schmitt; Irene Knapp Scheer



A typical Madison downtown street scene is shown here in this photograph taken sometime before the turn of the century. Prominent in the picture is the harness shop of F.H. Kaul. To the north of Kaul's shop is a barber shop indicated only by the striped pole in front. The two buildings on the right were latter replaced by the building now occupied by Deets Furniture. Note the hitching rails interrupted only by space for passage through to the wooden sidewalks. The sidewalks were raised somewhat from the dirt street.

ball fields, several parks, a swimming pool, two public and two private schools, five churches, four banking institutions, several businesses including grocery, hardware, auto dealerships, restaurants, and manufacturing, one motel, and a packing plant. The community has also demonstrated its understanding of the value of preserving our rich history and respect for those that came before us by restoration and reuse of a historic church as a public arts center and current efforts to re-purpose the original Madison Carnegie library. "Preservation creates opportunities for contact through our shared heritage" quoted Madison Museum longtime director, Carol Robertson.

Madison volunteers are working hard to preserve and memorialize those who were involved in the establishment of Madison over the last 150 years and to celebrate those that reside and work today in the community. This upcoming summer plans are in the works for one of the largest celebrations in Madison's

history. This three-day Sesquicentennial celebration has been in the planning stages for over a year already, and with good reason. The community's birthday festivities are being combined with the Madison High School all alumni event which traditionally occurs every five years. "The MHS alumni committee

made the decision to delay the all school reunion for one year to coincide and enhance the Sesquicentennial celebration" explained committee member Terry Pfeifer.

The logistics of creating a worthy milestone celebration containing events and entertainment that is all inclusive of alumni returning to their alma mater from all over the country, families celebrating their legacies through the generations, residents embracing the community they call their hometown currently, and nearby friends of Madison, is monumental to say the least. The dates are set for August 18-20, 2017. The weekend will start Friday evening with a classic car drive night followed by a street dance. "The Nebraska Department of Roads has been gracious in allowing the community to close part of Hwy. 32 running through downtown Madison to accommodate the festival," remarked Mayor Alvin Brandl. Main street Madison will be alive with food and commemorative gift vendors, local entertainment, and community

### CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES

- Local Entertainment & Street Dance
- Tours & Living History Demonstrations
- New Exhibits at the Madison Historical Museum and Madison Arts Center
- Tractors/Car Shows
- "Legacy of 150 Years" Parade
- MHS Alumni Banquet & Reunions
- Concert featuring "Midnight Wind"
- Free Community Breakfast
- Non-denominational Prayer Service

FOR DETAILED LISTING OF EVENTS  
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Mill Dam