

## **Thomas E. Haines (1831-1908):**

Thomas E. Haines was one of Altoona's earliest settlers. He came to the area in 1868 and lived here until his death in 1908. Haines was a community leader and local businessman who was known for his generosity.

Haines was born in Ohio in 1831 to a family of nine children. When his father died, he managed the family farm until coming to Iowa in 1868. He was originally a partner in a sheep herding operation, but later went into the grocery business in Oskaloosa. Haines later sold the business and went to work as a grain buyer in the Altoona area. He eventually started his own grain business in an office he shared with the Des Moines Valley Rail Road.

Haines was a frugal businessman and soon built a ten-thousand bushel elevator across from the railroad depot. A drawing of the elevator appears in the Andreas Atlas of 1875 available at the Altoona Public Library. Besides the elevator, Haines also built and operated a brick and tile company. At one time, Thomas Haines owned fifty acres of land within the city limits of Altoona.

In 1869 Thomas and Loretta Haines built a home at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SE and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE in Altoona. Three years later, they added a large addition to the house and enclosed the property with an iron fence that still exists today. It was the most modern house in Altoona at the time. The house had a "dug" well and an elevated storage tank for water next to the barn. There were several additional tanks inside the house.

Haines and his wife had no children of their own; however, they were known for their interest in young people. They eventually adopted a daughter, Nellie, and helped raise several foster children. Haines also served as Sunday school superintendent at the Christian Church for many years and enjoyed teaching children at church school.

During his lifetime, Thomas Haines held a number of public offices. He served as the town treasurer and as one of the first trustees of Clay Township. He served in the State Legislature from 1882-1883 and voted for woman suffrage and the constitutional amendment for prohibition. Haines was instrumental in the formation of King David Lodge in 1880. He helped organize the Altoona Cemetery Association and served as its president until 1904. Thomas Haines also helped to establish the Bible College at Drake University and was a trustee of the University for several years.

Thomas Haines most lasting and useful gift to his community was the park bearing his name. In the 1880s, Haines donated approximately four acres of land to the city of Altoona for a park. The road through the park was laid out with large, sweeping curves so there would be room for him to exercise his horses. There was also a large lagoon in the park where people swam in the summer and ice-skated in the winter. In the early 1900s, Haines built a hotel near the park to accommodate visitors to the town. The deed to the park contains a forfeiture clause to protect the land from being used for anything other than park purposes.

Sources: Southeast Polk Historical Society, compiler. *A History of Southeast Polk County Iowa*. Marcelline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Co., 1981  
Thompson, Robert W., compiler. *One Hundred Years of Altoona History, 1868-1968*. Altoona, IA: Altoona Centennial Association, 1968.