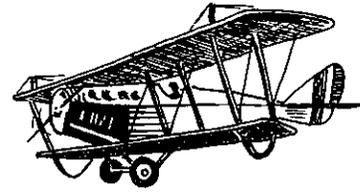


Communications



Adequate communication and transportation services are always of prime importance to a town. In fact the location of the railroad as it extended across the country determined the location of towns and cities, and this was most certainly true of Wheaton. Following the site selection and establishment of the first businesses, newspapers were important to the new businessmen and settlers, and there followed the development of telephone and telegraph services, roads, and other means of communication.

NEWSPAPERS

Several different newspapers have served the needs of Wheaton, commencing with the "Wheaton Gazette" which was founded in 1885. This newspaper has been published weekly since that time but was renamed the "Wheaton Gazette-Reporter" in 1887 or 1888.

The first issue of the "Wheaton Gazette" was published March 6, 1885, by Edward F. Joubert and S. W. Frasier. The introduction to the first editorial read, "In introducing the Gazette to the public, we will say that in its career it will always have three objects in view. First, the advancement of Wheaton and the prosperity of its citizens. Second, the advancement of the interest of Traverse County and the people in general, and last but not least the advancement and prosperity of the interests of the public's two humble servants, Joubert and Frasier, Publishers and Proprietors."

Edward F. Joubert came to Wheaton in 1885 shortly after the railroad came through. He had worked with S. W. Frasier on Browns Valley's "Reporter" the previous two years. Frasier did not come to Wheaton until after the county seat fight in 1889. The building which housed the business was one of the first erected in Wheaton. The subscription price was \$1.50 a year, five cents a line was charged for publishing notices, and a quarter of a column of advertising cost \$20.00 a year. Joubert became sole publisher effective April 7, 1893. He retired in 1918.

A newspaper of short duration was the "Traverse County Star", published from 1922 to early 1924. Originally published by the Star Publishing Company, Frank Bower, editor, it was later taken over by E. W.



In the early days of newspapering all type was set by hand, each letter picked up individually from type cases. The scene above was in "The Footprints" office in Wheaton, shortly after the paper relocated from Browns Valley in 1893.

Brixius, editor. In the final edition the editor commented on the fact that it cost between forty and fifty dollars a week to publish a paper (eight pages), and for that particular week the advertising brought in only half of that amount. An editorial plea was made for more advertising to support the paper.

In 1893 the "Footprints" was moved to Wheaton from Browns Valley by H. G. Marshall and renamed the "Wheaton Footprints". George G. Allanson moved here with him. The Footprints office was completely destroyed by fire in 1903. Allanson was named editor and publisher later that year, and again the name of the paper changed, now the "Weekly Footprints". In December that year Allene C. Bayrell was named the proprietor and editor and Carr the assistant editor.

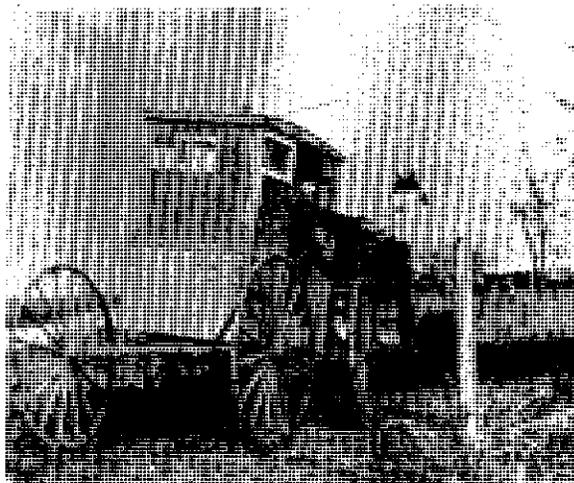
Bayrell renamed the newspaper the "Traverse County Traveler". H. O. Park joined Mrs. Bayrell in the business in 1918. With the last issue on November 8, 1918, the "Traverse County Traveler" consolidated with the "Gazette-Reporter" and formed a corporation, the Gazette Publishing Company. Thereafter there was only one newspaper in Wheaton. In 1924 ownership of the "Gazette-Reporter" was vested in A. C. Bayrell, E. E. Howard, Helen E. Howard, C. F. Ewing, Ralph Huntzicker, F. W. Murphy, C. E. Houston, E. H. Boley and John Hauglie.

Allene Bayrell died in 1925 and E. E. Howard in 1943. Mrs. Howard was the publisher until the business was sold to the E. D. Lum family of Wahpeton in 1946 with William Sweetland, publisher, also having an interest in the corporation. Robert Howard, secretary and general manager, had purchased two newspapers in South Dakota and left when his mother, Helen Howard, retired. In 1952 Sweetland was succeeded by L. W. Mathiason, an employee for two years, who continued as publisher for thirteen years. Since 1963 William Kremer has owned and operated the paper and publishing business.

On November 26, 1948, a page of a "Wheaton Gazette" was put on microfilm and placed in a Minneapolis Star & Tribune century vault with numerous other items from the state. This vault will be opened in

the year 2048 at a special ceremony.

Like the "Wheaton Footprints", the Gazette business was completely destroyed by fire in 1950 with an estimated loss of \$56,000.00. Just five months later the Gazette had rebuilt and was housed in its present location on Broadway. Although all of the old editions were lost in the fire, a complete collection of newspapers published in Wheaton became available to the community in the early 1980's when the State Historical Society microfilmed the old newspapers and offered the originals to the local community through the Traverse County Historical Society. They were picked up in St. Paul as they became available over a period of several years and are stored in the museum in Wheaton.



Joe Benno was named a rural mail carrier in Wheaton in 1909. He used a one-horse covered wagon to carry the mail from farm to farm.

POSTAL SERVICE IN WHEATON

The first postal service to settlers in this area was via stagecoach. Major Joseph R. Brown operated a stage line from 1865 to 1869 which ran from Fort Wadsworth to Redwood Falls. From 1868 to 1879 Colonel Dunlap ran a stage from Fort Wadsworth and afterwards from Fort Sisseton through Browns Valley to Sauk Centre. In 1879 the route was changed to Herman. With this change, the route ran through Traverse County from north to south, and a number

of post offices were established at settlers' homes. There was also a stage running between Herman and Maudada which was discontinued in 1865 and thereafter only ran between Wheaton and Maudada. On the Herman to Maudada run the Torgerson farm east of Wheaton was one of the stops. On August 14, 1885, the Maudada post office was closed.

The stage line through Browns Valley was discontinued for a short while in 1885, but a petition was circulated requesting re-establishment of the line from Wheaton to Browns Valley with a post office enroute in Parnell Township. This was the first and most necessary step toward establishing a mail route between Wheaton and Browns Valley. In 1894 a mail route was established between Wheaton and Winan's Store on the Reservation with the stage running each Wednesday and Saturday. A short time after the inception of the railroads, stages became history.

What is now the Wheaton post office

was established on June 20, 1879. It was known as Lake Valley with Lewis W. Erickson appointed the first postmaster. Hobart H. Howe was appointed postmaster on April 5, 1880, with Erick Olson following in January, 1882. The name was changed to Wheaton on November 17, 1884, with Nels F. Schroeder appointed postmaster.

In August, 1896, the Wheaton post office was elevated to residential class, and the postmaster's salary was fixed at \$1,200.00 annually.

In February, 1903, the first mail route was established for the town of Walls, and the next year the second rural route was established north of Wheaton through the town of Monson. In 1905 all rural boxes were numbered and a third route petitioned, which became a reality in February, 1906, with the carrier being selected under Civil Service rule. Rural routes were revised and four routes established in 1909. Rural carriers received a substantial pay increase in 1911, having their pay raised from \$100.00 to \$1,000.00 a year. This had to



The first rural mail carrier in Wheaton was Gust Sandstrom. When the roads allowed, he covered his route on a smart looking motorcycle. The bags over the rear wheel are mail pouches.

cover all their expenses such as equipment and horse feed. In 1914 the postmaster recommended that the rural carriers use automobiles, and routes were lengthened from 24 to 50 miles. Carriers using automobiles and having a fifty-mile route were to be paid \$1,800.00 a year.

The location of the post office has changed many times. The location depended upon who was postmaster. In 1923 it was located in the Nelson Building, later in the old First State Bank building, then the Swift Electric building (now the First Bank site), and in 1966 it was moved to the present location in the Dunbar building on Broadway.

Many changes have taken place in the delivery system: the year 1905 brought free delivery of packages to business places; postal savings accounts became operational in 1911; and on July 1, 1913, collection-on-delivery (COD) came into effect. In 1916 the route from Wheaton to Diamond, South Dakota, was discontinued, after which Diamond rapidly declined and buildings were moved away. Beginning in 1921 first class mail and newspapers were distributed to lock boxes. That year also saw the post office safe blown open and plundered with a loss of less than \$100.00. Several weeks later a sack with stolen post office records was found along the railroad track.

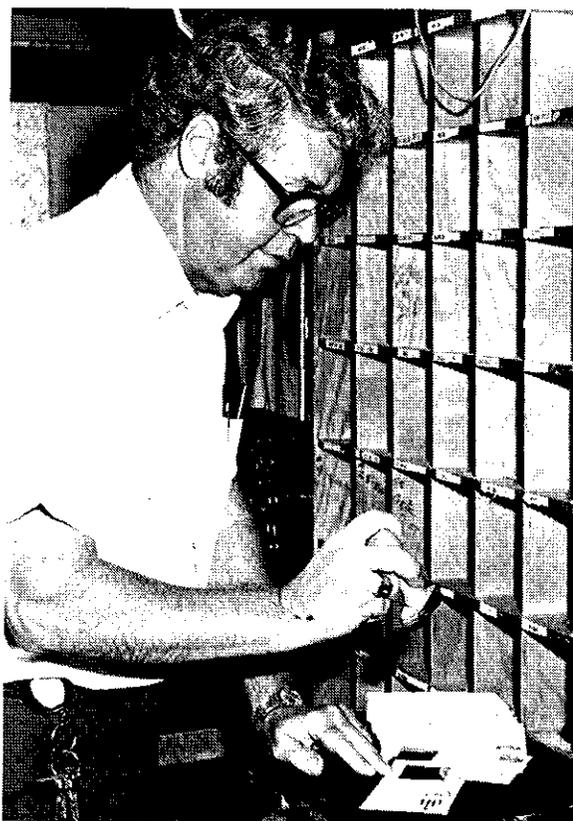
The Wheaton Post Office was elevated to second class in 1921, increasing the regular staff to two clerks plus the postmaster. One of these clerks was Roy C. Cole, who retired in 1963 with forty-two years of service. On July 5, 1964, door-to-door delivery of mail commenced with Donald Anderson and Arthur Heggen, Jr., the first carriers. Today it is a second class post office, with two city routes and two rural routes.

Of interest is the increase in postal rates over the years. For example, in 1919 postage was reduced from 3 cents to 2 cents on letters and was not increased to 3 cents again until 1944, when the 8 cent airmail fee was also established. "Penny" postal cards remained 1 cent until 1952, when raised to 2 cents. In 1974 first class postage was increased from 8 cents to 10 cents, and in 1985 stands at 22 cents. Other 1985 rates are 14 cents for postal cards and 44 cents for the first half-ounce for airmail.

The following postmasters have faithfully served the Wheaton community:

1879-1880	Lewis W. Erickson
1880-1882	Hobart H. Howe
1882-1884	Erick Olson
1884-1888, 1889-1893	Nels F. Schroeder
1888-1889	Thomas K. Mork
1893-1894	Thomas O'Hair
1894-1897	Annie Leaser
1897-1914, 1923-1936	Edward F. Joubert
1914-1923	George C. Allanson
1936-1941	Robert L. Bard
1941-1965	Edwin H. Mielke
1965-1969	Vernon R. Heggen
1969-1983	Vernell Anderson
1984- Present	Wayne G. Hervey

It will be noted that there were eight appointments to the postmaster position in Wheaton's first eighteen years, as the appointment was politically motivated and changed with each new administration. Vernell Anderson, whose appointment was confirmed March 6, 1971, was the first postmaster appointed without political ties.



The 100th anniversary of the post office in Wheaton was commemorated with a special stamp on June 20, 1979. Pictured stamping envelopes on the date of the 100th anniversary is Vernell Anderson, postmaster at that time.

TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The first telephone company was formed and 19 phones were installed in Wheaton business firms in September, 1898. Less than a year later a new switchboard was needed which accommodated 100 lines, 52 of which were in use. The next year the Dakota Central Telephone Co. extended lines to Wheaton, bringing direct connections to towns on the Reservation plus White Rock, Wahpeton, and Fairmount, adding 1600 miles to the system. The local system was purchased by D. N. Tallman in 1900 and was operated as Northern Electric Telephone Co., with exchanges also in Ortonville, Appleton, Big Stone City, Graceville, and Clinton, with lines connecting all these towns. In 1901 Wheaton was connected to Minneapolis. Dakota Central Telephone Co. completed work connecting Wheaton and Fargo with a copper wire circuit, and night telephone service began June 1, 1903.

During the next ten years many changes and conflicts took place on the local level. At one time in 1904 most local phones were removed, resulting in the system being rebuilt the next year. In early 1909 the Minnesota Central Phone Company's linemen took out all the telephones. Customers had again revolted, this time because of large rate increases. The Commercial Club appointed a local committee to investigate the possibility of organizing a local company. Almost immediately over \$6,000.00 was subscribed to form a local stock company to equip and operate a first class telephone system. The Wheaton Telephone Company was incorporated with capital stock of \$10,000.00, and the "central office" was established on the second floor of the Erickson-Hellekson Building.

In 1913 Henry and Frances Lewis took over the Wheaton Telephone Company and ran it successfully until December 30, 1946, when it was sold to the Minnesota Telephone Company. Many improvements in the system were made during these years. For example, in 1925 the capacity was doubled and downtown wires were put underground in preparation for street paving operations. In June 1936 the Dumont Exchange and eight farm lines out of Dumont were purchased. After 1946 a larger switchboard was

LAKE LINE

Wheaton Central	7
Anderson C. J. E.	727
Anderson J. F. & Murphy	73
Alsaker J. Larson	7171
Byman Aug.	171
Erbes W. D.	771
Fraunfelter M. G.	4
Griffith J. O.	272
Jacobson C. & Winchel	777
Johnson And.	7177
Johnson Aug. (Switch)	77
Larson A. M.	177
Larson Walter & J. L.	71
Larson Olof	271
Larson Richard & Larson	277
Luce W. & Murphy	37
Nelson Gust	772
Norsen J. A.	717
Peterson Alf. & Anderson	27
Williams Chas.	3
Kerling L. & J. J.	72

The telephone directory card printed when telephones were extended into Lake Valley Township.

purchased to provide better service without overloading the present facility.

In March 1959 the Marshall County Telephone Company bought the telephone system, and a new building was built on 11th Street between Broadway and First Avenue North. On October 31 the 400,000 dial conversion took place, and eight faithful operators hung up their headpieces, another milestone reached. The Lake Valley Telephone Company, which had been the rural system since 1904, was dissolved and the area taken over by Marshall, with all new lines built.

The Marshall County Telephone Company was merged into Continental Telephone Company on December 31, 1973, and Continental continues to serve Wheaton at this time. An underground cable project in 1977 was part of a major \$1.7 million improvement program carried on in this area. This included a building project doubling the size of the present facility and also included the addition of optional touch tone service.



Before modern highway traffic, railroads provided a primary means of long distance transportation. The depot in Wheaton was a busy spot when the passenger train arrived in town twice daily.

RAILROADS

In August, 1884, the 117 miles of the Fargo-Southern Railroad were completed from Ortonville to Fargo, with 46 miles of the new road in Minnesota and 71 in the two Dakotas. Two crews, one working from Fargo south and the other from Ortonville north, met and drove the last spike on the southeast quarter of section seven in Croke Township. An appropriate ceremony with a program was held there in honor of the event. This railroad had a direct connection with the Northern Pacific, the Minneapolis and Manitoba, and the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul. The next year it was taken over by the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad with the new company assuming the bonded indebtedness in the amount of \$1,450,000 that had been issued for the construction of the road.

In a pattern typical for many west central Minnesota communities, development of townsites began adjacent to railroad tracks. Railroads existed as many

towns' only communication and transportation link with the rest of the state, bringing travelers, businessmen, government officials, mail, news, and freight to the area, and transporting grain and other agricultural products out of the region.

The first passenger train began running through Wheaton September 1, 1884. A band and a large number of people greeted it with music and cheers. The train consisted of a mail car, baggage car, and two passenger coaches, one with reclining chairs. There was a very fine depot in the village of Wheaton. In March 1885 there were five daily trains, four passenger and one freight. The railroad also maintained elevators at stations on the line, and a large steam elevator was built in Wheaton in the summer of 1885. One thousand carloads of gravel a week were taken from a pit north of Wheaton and distributed along the line. In 1887 a water tank was built by the river, and two years later workmen added an additional waiting room onto the depot.

Catastrophe struck in March 1906, when the original depot was destroyed by fire. The "Gazette-Reporter" described it as follows: "Members of the Woodman Lodge on their way home shortly before midnight discovered flames coming through the roof of the building near the chimney. The alarm was given and the fire company responded, but the engine balked, and it was some time before it could be made to work. The hose was attached to the hydrant, but all within reaching distance were found to be frozen except one, and with only one stream the flames could not be subdued, as the lumber was dry as tinder and the fire had gained great headway before it was discovered. The mail received on the evening train, which was piled in the waiting room, was saved, and also the freight that was stored in the freighthouse, but the express and all the records and fixtures were consumed with the building, as the fire started in the office, and it was impossible to get into that room to save anything. A defective flue was responsible for the fire, as it was the ceiling and walls

about the chimney where the flames were raging fierce when the blaze was first discovered."

The rebuilt depot consisted of two passenger rooms with a ticket room in the center. One passenger room was for women; the other for men. The freight area was located in the north end.

During those early years the railroad continued to improve its services. New compartment sleeping cars were added to trains in 1905. In 1927 a number of new combination gas-electric cars were placed on various branches of the railroad including the Fargo to Ortonville run. These cars cost between \$40,000.00 and \$50,000.00 and were operated at a much cheaper cost than the ones in use previously.

During the 1920's to 1940's the widespread use of automobiles and trucks, the construction of good roads, and the development of mass communication systems linked Wheaton with the rest of the state, and the region began to lose some of its isolated quality. These developments mark-



Another view of the old Milwaukee Road railroad depot. Today the building serves as the Traverse County Historical Society Museum.

ed a decline in the importance of rail transportation, and rail passenger and freight services to the area were decreased. Sunday train service was discontinued in 1930. Two years later all passenger service was discontinued, and mail was hauled by star route truck. The stock yards on the right-of-way were removed in 1952 because of insufficient use.

The Milwaukee Road announced the planned closing of the depot in 1975. Although the Chamber of Commerce, Junior

Chamber, and other organizations in the city put up a fight, the depot was closed in August, 1976. Two years later the Milwaukee Road filed a letter of intent to close the railroad line here altogether, and by 1980 the tracks were removed and all traces of the railroad gone.

When railroad service ceased, the opportunity presented itself for use of the historic depot by the Traverse County Historical Society. It now houses a very interesting museum.

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"A Sliver or a Carload"

H. T. SANDS, Manager

Farmers' Co-Operative Elevator Company

GRAIN AND COAL
A Home Institution Composed of
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"Co-operation Means Success"
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Wholesale and Retail Dealers in
Minnesota, North and South Dakota
Lands—Our Specialty is Traverse
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Because it's the "Best on Earth"
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Machines—All Kinds of Implements
to Meet Your Needs
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—Ed Johnson, Proprietors

Wheaton Today

Population, 1800; county seat of Traverse county; a prosperous little city on the C. M. & St. P. railway and King Trail highway. Has three well-organized banks, five churches, six grain elevators, two lumber yards, two hardware stores, three implement concerns, a modern creamery, two garages, four general stores, two drug stores, three confectionery stores, two billiard halls, two vulcanizing shops, one bakery, one jewelry store, three hotels and restaurants, two city hospitals and a Community club composed of farmers and business men, having the distinction of being the first in Minnesota.

Wheaton is located in Minnesota's best agricultural and dairy section; ships small grain, cattle, potatoes,

poultry and eggs in abundance. A crop failure is unknown in Traverse county and the history and growth in farm products shows it to have been very healthy.

The Community club composed of the farmers and business men invite you to investigate one of the most prosperous towns in the northwest. They have appreciated the great wealth of natural resources, and the inexhaustible opportunities for the investment of capital, and have a firm and abiding faith in their city. Building is on the boom in Wheaton; the room is here for thousands of people, those ambitious to possess a home. Others with capital, who wish to get in on the ground floor will find in Wheaton the ideal spot for investment; as property must necessarily increase greatly in value in the next

few years. Improved farms are selling at \$100 to \$150 per acre and there is some unimproved land to be had reasonable.

In education advantages the town is on a par with any town many times its size and the children are given the benefits of a superior high school education combining manual training and domestic science.

They believe of their surroundings it was true that

God touched the earth in kindness and lo,
it dimpled there.
It felt His mighty feeling, and a valley
nestled there;
And He told the artist angel to paint the
sky more blue
Than ever dainty violet or airy blue-
bell knew,
And to stretch it o'er the valley as a
promise from its God
That peace and plenty there should spring
like flowers from its sod.

Railway Fares

WHEATON TO—	
Dumont	\$.22
Gollis	.38
Graceville	.57
Clinton	.82
Ortonville	1.28
Minneapolis	7.02
St. Paul	7.38
White Rock	.28
Blackmer	.42
Fairmount, N. D.	.68
Wahpeton	1.09
Abercrombie	1.54
Christine	1.86
Fargo	2.58

City Officials

John T. Erickson, Mayor; Ralph Huntzicker, Recorder; C. G. Leaman, Treasurer; E. R. Jones, J. E. Dodds, and Frank Peterson, Council; John J. Heldt, City Marshal; Geo. G. Allanson, Postmaster.

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Money

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A 1920 "Pocket Directory of Wheaton" gave information about the town and railway fares to a number of nearby communities. A ride to Dumont would cost 22 cents at the time.

BUS SERVICE

Bus service through Wheaton commenced in 1926 on a Fargo-Sioux Falls route. In August 1930 the Leiderbach Bus Company of Buffalo, Minnesota, established a bus line running from Minneapolis to Breckenridge via Wheaton. The round-trip ticket cost \$9.75 with Sunday service included. Schedules have changed many times during the years. At one time during 1931 the bus left Wheaton for Minneapolis at

12:20 p.m., and one-way fare was \$5.50. At that time the Clover Leaf Cafe served as the bus depot.

The bus depot has been in the Dunbar Hotel for many years. According to Mae Dunbar, the buses have been used to transport more than passengers at times. While living at Ortonville prior to moving to Wheaton, Mrs. Dunbar observed large containers of ice cream being placed on the bus there to be transported to Potter Drug

in Wheaton. It was not unusual for buses to transport supplies of blood for the local hospital, fresh flowers for the floral shop, and freight in general.

At present the Jack Rabbit Line has two buses north-bound and two buses south-bound, connecting with Greyhound at both ends. The south-bound bus from here makes a Minneapolis connection at Ortonville.

WHEATON AIRPORT

With the purchase of two tracts of land for \$7400.00 in 1946 and the grading of two runways to accommodate small aircraft, the Wheaton Airport was started. The village and state shared the \$4250.00 cost of developing the runways. Operated by West Central Airways for about ten years, the field is now supervised by the City of Wheaton. An air show was held in 1947 to officially open the airport.

In the first year five private flying licenses were granted, seven people were taking lessons for private licenses, and fifteen students had soloed.

Using federal grants in 1950 and money from the State Department of Aeronautics in 1970 and 1971, the city made great improvements, upgrading runways and constructing hangars. In 1972 air easements were secured to provide clear access and approaches to the airport. A six-place "T" hangar was added in 1973 for \$27,400.00 with

funds from the state's "Hangar Construction Account" on a loan basis and repaid from hangar rentals.

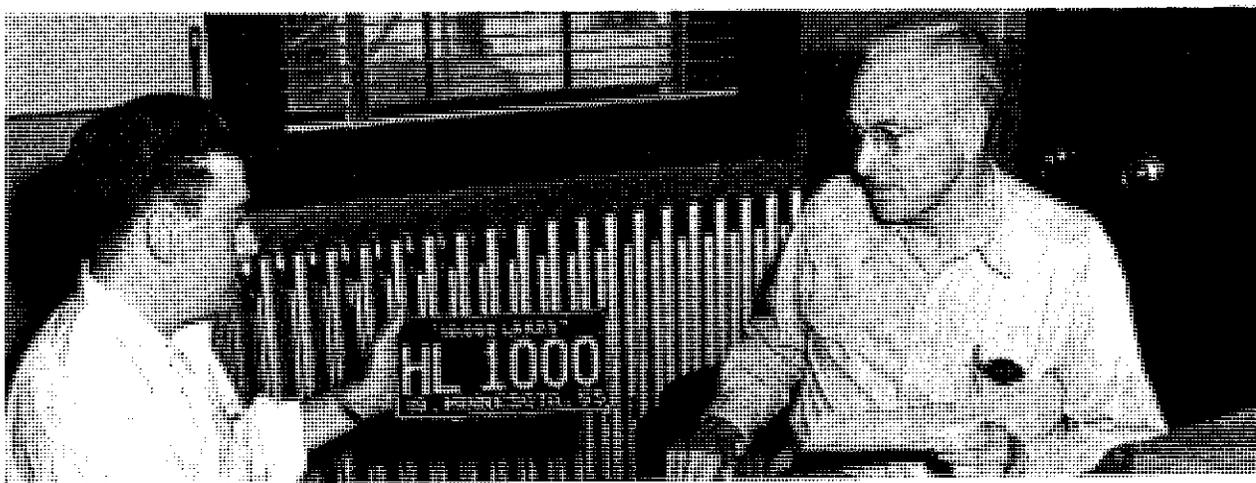
A major project was completed in 1974. This included land acquisition, lengthening the main runway to 3300 feet, widening, paving and fitting it with a complete lighting system. Also installed was a rotating thirty-six inch signal beam and a VASI-2 and lighted wind cone. The total cost of approximately \$225,000.00 was shared by the City of Wheaton and federal and state grants. Named Fridgen Field in memory of the late Ray Fridgen, a local flyer, the field was dedicated August 18, 1974. Lt. Governor Rudy Perpich was the main speaker at the dedication.

In 1976 the Warriors Flying Club was formed. Their first Father's Day Fly-In was held June 19, 1977. Over five hundred attended a ham dinner at noon. Twenty airplanes were flown in for the event.

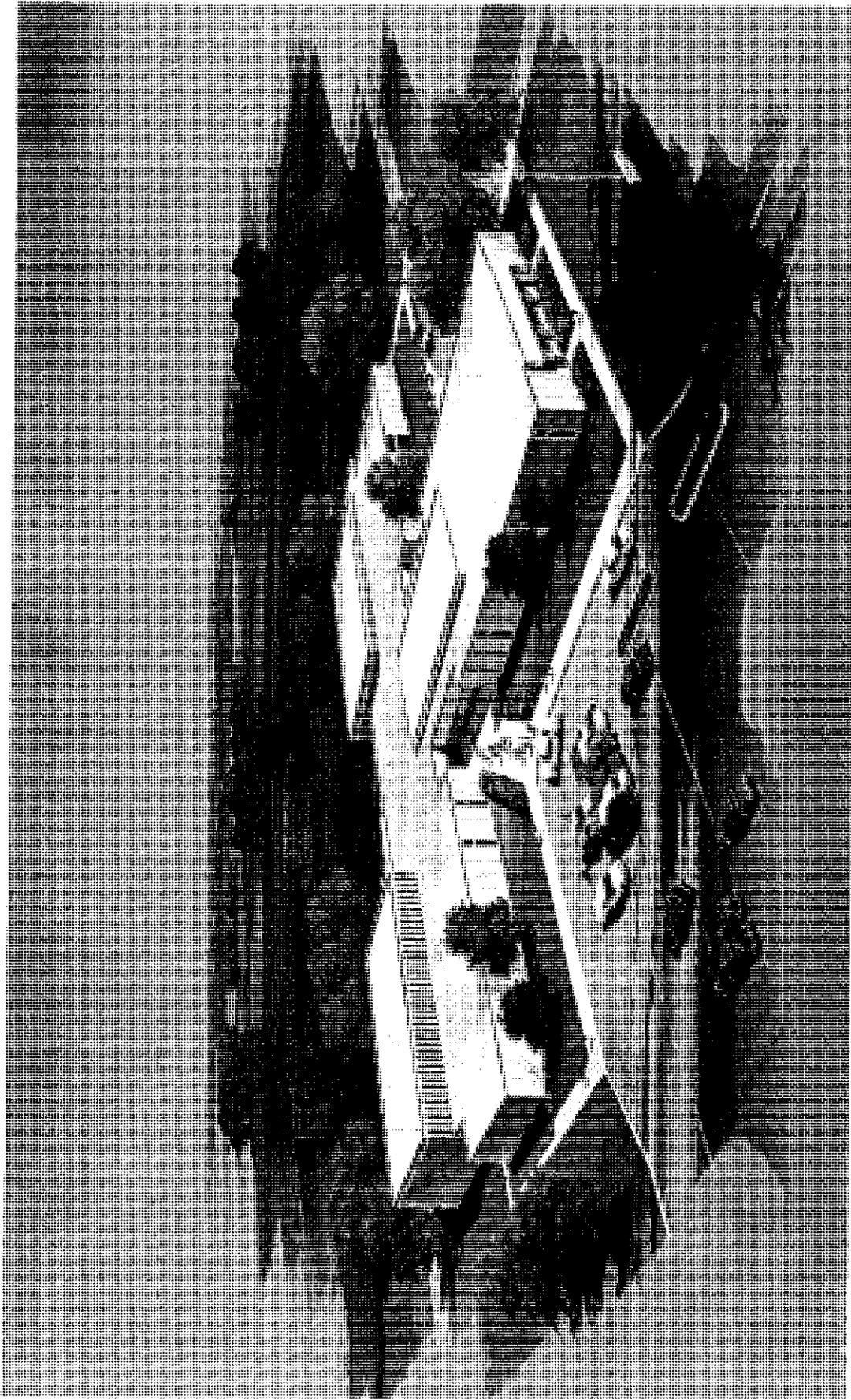
An arrival and departure building was added in 1979 with the State Department of Aeronautics sharing the cost with the City. A non-directional radio beacon was installed to guide airplanes in instrument flying.

The airport acreage consists of 147.71 acres with the farmable area rented out for agricultural purposes. Hangar space accommodates the storage of nine airplanes which are in three different hangars, all of which are privately owned.

Wheaton is indeed fortunate to have such an up-to-date airport.



When J. E. Pearson, right, retired from his school duties in Wheaton, he served for a time as vehicle registrar. He is pictured here presenting the first license plate he processed in his new position to a young Wheaton auto owner, Pete Muellenbach.



Wheaton High School as it appears today. This structure on the southwest edge of Wheaton was dedicated at ceremonies in November, 1974. It was built to replace the old high school building, which was destroyed by fire on April 1, 1972.