

- 1938 Fillmore County's most disastrous sleet storm since 1926 struck, doing thousands of dollars' worth of damage. Many telephone and power line poles were down and trees were badly damaged.
- 1939 The Ewalt Amusement Co. commenced the erection of a two-story brick building back of the Ewalt residence to replace the former shop there and to house the show equipment.
- 1941 *April*—The city made application to the Works Projects Administration for aid to improve streets, water and sewer lines, and sidewalks.



Courtesy Nebraska Signal

Fairmont Army Air Field Chapel (left) and main gate (right), 1944.

- 1942 It was announced that all car owners would be required to display \$5 Federal Use Stamps on their automobiles.
- 1943 *January*—The new Victory tax, 5% on all income in excess of \$12 per week or \$624 per year, went into effect. *January*—Government officials announced that strict rationing of fruits, vegetables, and juices would go into effect in February. *March*—Many carpenters arrived in Geneva for construction work on the Bruning, Harvard, and Fairmont air base. *Summer*—A contract between the U. S. A. and the city of Geneva to build a Federal Public Housing Utility was made.
- 1944 *May*—Uhlig's Bakery in Geneva closed indefinitely due to shortage of sugar. *June*—Howard Nichols of Geneva, chairman of the local War Price and Rationing Board, announced that there were 10,000 unfilled applications for tires in the Omaha district. *July*—The Geneva Fire Department and the American Legion announced they would sponsor a Fourth of July celebration, which would include dedication of the new county service board in the courthouse park. *December*—The mayor and city clerk were empowered to execute a release covering space in the City Hall which was leased to the Government on September 1, 1942, and used by U. S. Engineers.



Photo from Mrs. Ernest Heinrichs

Pleasant Day School for retarded children in Geneva, taught by Mrs. Ernest Heinrichs. Mrs. Heinrichs (shown in schoolroom) started the school in her home in 1958 with five pupils. Later she moved the school to a Sunday School room in the Congregational Church. In 1962 it was moved to one of the housing units in Geneva. Children age 5 to 25 are eligible. Reading, phonics, language, arithmetic, spelling, science, geography, and health are taught. Children are taught crafts, many of which are sold. They also learn tap dancing and baton.

- 1945 Fillmore County went over the top in the Sixth War Loan drive, the county subscribing \$657,835. *September*—Markets: Yellow corn, \$1.01; wheat, \$1.50; eggs, \$30; hogs, \$11.46 to \$14.10. *October*—The Second Air Force announced that the Fairmont Army Air Field would close temporarily as far as military personnel were concerned.
- 1946 The Nebraska barber board established minimum prices for the state, haircuts being 65 cents and shaves 35 cents.
- 1947 A nation-wide strike of telephone operators affected the Geneva office, where only one operator was on duty to handle emergency calls. The Fairmont Army Air Field was returned to civilian status by the War Assets Administration, and was turned over to the state department of aeronautics.
- 1950 *November*—The city took over the housing project from the government.
- 1952 *June*. A new fire truck was recently delivered to the Geneva Rural Fire Protection District. The truck is painted white, the color used by rural fire-protection districts.
- 1954 *June*—The new motel, called the Goldenrod Motel, opened. A 1,000-watt beacon light was put into operation at Fairmont State Air Field. The light, mounted on the water tower at the former Army Air Base, is the same one used during the war, as it was left intact when much equipment at the base was dismantled.
- 1955 *June*—A jungle gym purchased by the Junior Woman's Club was set up at the city park.

BANKS

Citizens Bank

The Citizens Bank was established in 1885 by J. Jensen, J. M. Fillebrown, and D. Griffith, with a capital stock of \$10,000. Later, the capital stock was increased, and H. L. Smith and E. K. Cobb were added to the list of stockholders and officers. In 1900, stock of the institution passed into the hands of J. O. Walker, C. W. Shickley, E. K. Cobb, V. C. Shickley, J. W. Walker, E. M. Berkley, and H. L. Smith. These persons were the owners and officers of the bank in 1907.



Photo from Mrs. Pete Kelch

Old Citizens Bank building as it stood at original location (NE corner of 9th and G). Notice Post Office location.

As a result of some of the economic troubles of the 1920's, this bank was closed on July 12, 1927, by the State Banking Commission.

In 1890, the bank erected a new brick building at a cost of about \$30,000. This building burned down in 1910.

When the new brick building was constructed in 1890, the old wooden structure was moved two blocks east to the NW corner of 11th and G Sts. and converted into an apartment house. It was known to Genevans in later years as the "Beehive." It was moved north near the alley when the brick building was erected on the corner. It has since been dismantled, and its site is now occupied by a parking lot for the Jack & Jill Food Market.

Geneva State Bank

The Geneva State Bank started operations at its present location 69 years ago on March 27, 1899. Little information relating to banks before this date is available, though it is known that the Citizens Bank, which operated from 1885

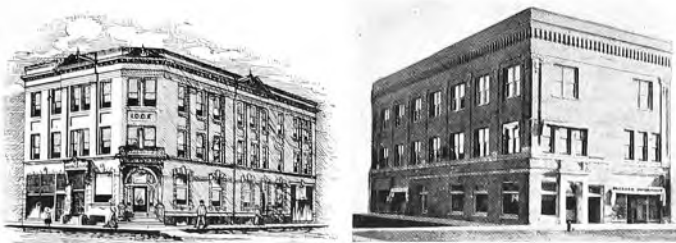


Photo from Nebraska Signal

Geneva Bank Buildings. *Left*: Geneva State Bank; *right*: Citizens State Bank. (Photos taken after 1911).

to 1927, was one of the earlier institutions. In 1910, a Bank of Commerce was organized and managed by Floyd Seybolt, known more or less as a professional bank organizer. This bank operated only a short time before it was merged with the Citizens Bank.

According to the old stock book, the Geneva National Bank was organized January 14, 1891, and began business in the location later occupied by the Coast-to-Coast Store. John A. Dempster was president and A. O. Taylor, cashier and managing officer. In June, 1892, A. G. McGrew succeeded Mr. Dempster as president, with A. O. Taylor continuing as cashier. In January, 1895, Mr. Taylor became president and M. R. Chittick was elected cashier. Mr. Taylor died October 25, 1895. Following his death, W. L. Weed served as president until January, 1896, when E. Sandrock, who had completed his term as county treasurer and was the administrator of the estate of A. O. Taylor, joined the bank as president. In June, 1897, Mr. Chittick resigned to enter the banking business at Ewing, Nebraska, and was succeeded by C. S. Trotter of Iowa.

On March 27, 1899, the newly organized Geneva State Bank purchased the assets of the Geneva National Bank and also the assets of the First National Bank, including the banking quarters and offices on the second floor of the red-brick three-story building on the corner where the Geneva State Bank is now located. George W. Smith, president of the First National Bank, desired to retire from the banking business to devote his time to private investments.

The old building burned from the top down in 1904. The present structure was erected in 1906. That portion of the building and the second-floor offices above the Eller Store were owned by Charles Heagney and the third floor by the I.O.O.F. Lodge. Subsequently the whole of the three-story building was purchased by the bank.

The first officers of the Geneva State Bank were E. Sandrock, president, and C. S. Trotter, cashier. On July 15, 1902, C. S. Trotter, having sold his shares in the bank, resigned his position as cashier and director. On the same date George E. Aldrich was elected president. He also served as a director for many years. Frank W. Sloan was elected vice-president and E. Sandrock, cashier.

In 1906, E. J. Dempster, who had completed his term as county treasurer, was elected cashier. Frank W. Sloan became president, and E. Sandrock, vice-president, which position he held until his retirement due to ill health in 1921. Job Smith, son of George W. Smith, former president of the First National Bank, who had for some time served as bookkeeper, was on January 8, 1907, elected assistant cashier. On January 6, 1908, Earl H. Wilkins was elected bookkeeper. In February, Mr. Wilkins was transferred by Mr. Sloan to the Farmers State Bank at Fairmont to fill a vacancy there, where he remained as assistant cashier until 1911, when he was recalled to take the place of Job Smith, who had resigned to locate in the banking business in California. In January, 1912, Mr. Wilkins was elected assistant cashier. On January 4, 1916, Albert A. Held, who later became executive vice-president of the National Bank of Commerce in Lincoln, was elected teller and in 1917 elected an assistant cashier. This office he held until in 1917 he was advanced to the position of cashier and manager of a bank in an adjoining county. Carl E. Schneider started with the bank in 1918 and Melvin L. Ralston in 1920. Since then both have been identified with the bank in various positions and are now executive officers. Following the death of Frank W. Sloan in February, 1927, Mr. Dempster was elected president (which position he held until his death in 1931) and Charles H. Sloan, vice-president, Earl H. Wilkins and Carl E. Schneider having previously been advanced as cashier and assistant cashier respectively.

Following the death of Mr. Dempster, Charles H. Sloan became president; Earl H. Wilkins, executive vice-president; Carl E. Schneider, cashier; and Melvin L. Ralston, having previously been elected assistant cashier. Early in 1933, Mr. Sloan was elected chairman of the board, Earl H. Wilkins, president, Grady Corbitt, vice-president, with Carl E. Schneider and Melvin L. Ralston continuing in their previously elected positions. Since both Mr. Sloan and Mr. Corbitt were actively and fully engaged in their legal profession, the active management of the bank has remained with the other officers. Following his release from the Army and graduation from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Hugh F. Wilkins joined the force in 1948 and was elected assistant vice-president in January, 1950, and later vice-president.

If time and space of this rather lengthy résumé of the officials



Photo from Geneva State Bank

Interior of Geneva State Bank in 1911. *Left*, E. Sandrock; E. J. Dempster; Earl Wilkins.

who have served and are serving the bank permitted, a long and favorable story would include the services of the many young men and women employed at various times throughout the years, and Charles H. Sloan, John M. Ward, and Frank O. Edgcombe, who served several years as directors until removed by death. Moreover, the efficient and faithful record of service at this time of Warren Rischling, John O'Brien, and Nell Moore as tellers; Lorraine Hedden, Rosemarie O'Brien, Nancy Lentfer, Rosalie Novak, Kay Hampton, and Elaine Naimon as bookkeepers and secretaries; and Tom Hamilton as custodian is to be commended and gives assurance of their continuing best efforts to serve the bank's patrons to the best of their ability. Over the years, many young men and women have been employed and trained to take advanced positions in banking, the professions, and the business world. Most of these have been graduates of Geneva High School; some have come from Fairmont, and only a very few from other points. This continuity of home talent trained to serve the needs of patrons has been unusual and perhaps reflects to quite an extent the successful operation of the bank over the past 69 years. Last and most important is the confidence and support of the bank's patrons and shareholders.

A policy was established long ago and carried on, particularly in the later years, of the investment of additional funds to build a growing capital structure and to maintain reserves consistent with the needs and modern trends in the business.

A condensed summary of the bank's growth is appended:

<i>Capital and Surplus</i>	
March 27, 1899	\$ 25,000.00
January 3, 1905	70,000.00
January 18, 1910	120,000.00
January 30, 1919	200,000.00
December 17, 1945	300,000.00
December 31, 1958	400,000.00
(Capital, Surplus, and Undivided Profits)	400,000.00
December 31, 1966 (Capital, Surplus, and Undivided Profits)	830,286.44
<i>Deposits</i>	
December 2, 1899	\$ 69,808.18
January 1, 1910	363,095.39
January 1, 1920	772,688.74
January 1, 1930	963,399.05
January 1, 1940	798,712.78
January 1, 1950	4,002,143.04
January 1, 1959	4,687,766.32
December 31, 1966	8,713,757.99

Fillmore County Bank

In March, 1965, application for a bank charter for the Fillmore County Bank was made by John R. Bixby to the Nebraska Banking Department. After investigations and hearings, the charter for the bank was granted by banking director Henry Ley on December 23, 1965. Plans were immediately started to build a new bank building, but temporary quarters were set up at the insurance office known as the Bixby Insurance Agency at 143 No. 9th St., Geneva. January 3, 1966, was the first day of business for the Fillmore County Bank, which started with capital \$100,000, surplus \$75,000, and undivided profits \$75,000. The officers were John R. Bixby, president; Roger D. Sack, vice-president; Joseph Bixby, cashier; and Kenneth Morris, assistant cashier. One year later, on February 25, 1967, the bank opened its new banking quarters at 1022 G St., Geneva. The

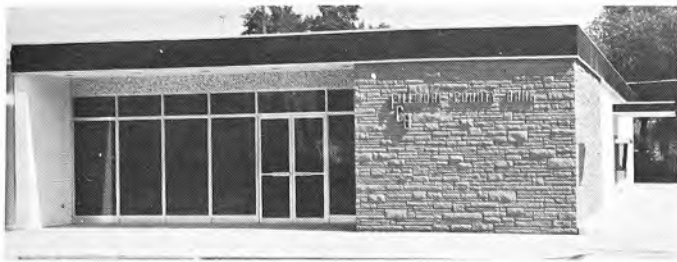


Photo from John Bixby
Fillmore County Bank, built in 1966.

building is constructed of white brick bordered with black trim with a vault of red Colorado flagstone, all situated on Main St. in the county seat town of Geneva, Nebraska. With six employees and four officers, this bank is enjoying a healthy increase as Geneva's newest bank.

BUSINESSES

A. Koehler Company

The A. Koehler Company was started by **Anthony Koehler** in 1885. The first office was on the north side of G St., about the present site of the small roofing house. When the C. & N.W. Railroad was laid through Geneva in 1887, Anthony Koehler moved his yard to the south side of G St. This office stood where the hatchery building is now located. Mr. Koehler also built a small grain elevator on the C. & N.W. right of way.



Photo from Ben Koehler
Office of A. Koehler Co. (1915). Left to right: Barthold (Bat) Koehler, Charles Summers, Edith Summers Brown.

In 1894, Barthold Koehler became associated with his brother Anthony in the business. Anthony's health failed while he was still a young man, and he died in February, 1900, at the age of 40 years. After his death Barthold and a brother, Christian, of Hastings, Nebraska, bought the business from Mrs. Anthony Koehler. These two brothers owned the business, with Barthold as active manager, until the death of Christian Koehler in 1921. During those years Barthold (Bat) Koehler was ably assisted by C. E. (Charley) Summers, who was an esteemed and faithful employee for many years. Barthold's health began to fail in 1924, and his son, John, returned home from Chicago to assist in the business. Both Bat Koehler and Charley Summers died in 1926, thus ending a long and close association.

After the passing of Mr. Koehler, his wife, Clara H. Koehler, was made president of the company, which position she held until a few years before her death on December 6, 1956. Ben Koehler, a son, returned to Geneva and became associated with the business in 1927, and in 1945, still another son, George Koehler, joined the organization.

In 83 years of continuous operation, the A. Koehler Co. has expanded considerably from its rather small beginning. Many older citizens will remember the brick yard south of town, just south of the crossing of the C. & N.W. and the C.B. & Q. railroads, which the company built in 1904. At one time this was an important source of building material, and an important industry in the town. About 25 men were employed from early spring until late fall. With the development of clay building tile this ceased to be an asset of importance, and in 1927 it was dismantled, as were scores of brick yards over the state.



Courtesy Nebraska Signal
Hauling wheat to elevator (about 1915).

The brick office, which is still in use, was built in 1911. A feed department was added to the business in 1932, along with a complete grinding and mixing service. In 1937, the company embarked on a new project, the hatchery business, with Charles Picard in charge. The first turkeys were hatched in 1938, and around 1,000 were raised. In 1940, the turkey operations were enlarged, but an Armistice Day blizzard harvested most of that year's turkeys. The State Health Department advised that the frozen turkeys were definitely edible, and a number of Geneva families had Thanksgiving dinners many times that year. Mr. Picard resigned in 1941, and S. J. Weis, who had been employed by the organization since 1928, took charge, and has continued to manage the hatchery. Mr. Weis is the oldest employee in terms of years of service given the A. Koehler Company. Through his capable and efficient management, this department has made much progress. It now (1959) employs 8 men. A large layer house has been added which houses 4,500 laying hens for breeder stock and instead of 1,000 turkeys (1938), 12,500 turkeys are raised each year.

The elevator business was increased through the purchase of elevators from the Sheridan Grain Co. and the McNeal Elevator Co. during the years 1933 to 1940. From 1950 to 1954 eight steel tanks were added, and the north elevator was completely remodeled. Two steel quonsets were built in 1955 to facilitate the storage of grain. In 1954, a fertilizer department was added.

Chester Dudley, who joined the organization in 1944, brought with him a genial and friendly personality and has been a great asset to the company.

There have also been changes in the building-material department, which is the oldest part of the business. In the early years lumber, sash, windows and doors, were the chief items carried. During the thirties the paint and builders' hardware were added. The Bolton Lumber Co. was purchased in 1943. The growing business found itself short of space in the south office, and in 1947 a modern new office for the lumber department was built on the old Bolton location.

The A. Koehler Co. is in its 83rd year of operation in the Geneva community. The company attributes its success to its many loyal friends and customers, who have given the company the opportunity to serve them through the years. The company feels particularly grateful and indebted to the many faithful employees who have remained with them for so many years, and who have contributed largely in making the A. Koehler Company successful in serving the community.

—Data from A. Koehler Company

Bell Brothers Circus

The Ewalt Amusement Co. was originated by **Tom Ewalt** in the summer of 1934. He built two small drive-it-yourself cars which were taken to near-by picnics and celebrations and used as kiddie rides.

The next winter a kiddie ferris wheel, kiddie merry-go-round, and a large merry-go-round were added, along with extra trucks. In the years that followed more and larger rides were added, and in 1938 a new and larger winter quarters building was erected, replacing the old one just north of the post office. In 1940, a portable stage was added to the equipment, showing liberty ponies, dogs, trick ponies, and monkeys. The company played fairs and celebrations in Nebraska and Iowa.

In the spring of 1944, the show was named Bell Bros. Circus. By now it had large tents, menageries, caged animals, llamas, a string of liberty horses, and Ena the elephant. The circus was transported in 14 trucks and traveled from Texas to the Canadian border, taking in the central states.

Ena was housed in the new winter quarters buildings along with the other animals, being cared for there by a caretaker, Camel Dutch.

In 1946, the Bell Bros. Circus was sold and Mr. Ewalt bought the Sunbeam Theater in Geneva, changing its name to Rialto.