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The Wave Watcher

Clear Lake Commercial Club Finds a Way to Boost the Local Economy During the Great Depression

The entire U. S. economy was thrown into dire straits on October 29th of 1929 when there was a sharp decline of the Dow Jones Industrial Average of 13%. The Wall Street Stock Market Crashed saw 16 million shares traded and nearly \$14 billion of stock value lost in one day. Even panic selling could not save the market. While the Gross Domestic Product of the entire world fell by 15%, farmers felt the hardest blow when crop prices dropped 60%. Stock prices continued to fall between 1929 and 1932, losing 90% of their value. The Great Depression took control of the entire world.

The Clear Lake Commercial Club, a group of local Clear Lake businesspeople, came up with an interesting way to help local farmers and keep the local economy of Clear Lake working. Corn Exchange “Money” worth 25 cents, was printed locally and could be used in exchange for the purchase of groceries, to pay a bill or purchase services at a Clear Lake business for a bushel of corn. Farmers brought harvested corn into town, it was stored in bins along 4th Street, bisecting Main. More than 14,000 bushels of corn was purchased by Clear Lake merchants and each bushel was worth a 25 cent Corn Exchange “Money” certificate. The Cerro Gordo State Bank was the only bank open in Clear Lake in 1933 and possibly one of the few in the country. It was known as the Corn Exchange Bank where transactions were handled between the farmers and merchants.



Corn lined up looking south along 4th St. at the corner of Main in 1933.

(Photos are from the Clear Lake Historical Society Collection)



Clear Lake Corn Exchange Bank at the corner of 4th & Main (Charlie's today).

(Photos are from the Clear Lake Historical Society Collection)



**Local farmer
George Sheridan
representing the
local Democrats**

**Local farmer
Axel Thompson
representing the
local
Republicans.**

The midterm Election of 1934 was even part of the Corn Exchange. On March 6, 1933, both the Republicans and Democrats decided to offer a bushel of corn for auction. Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the middle of his first term in office. The Democratic bushel of corn was purchased for \$22.50 and the Republican bushel of corn was purchased for \$33.00. However, despite the price of the Clear Lake corn, the Democrats continued to hold majorities in the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate. Clear Lake Republicans seemed to not agree with the national trend. ☺

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Historical Society Annual Meeting is Coming in August
Watch Facebook and our Website for Details!

⚓ ⚓ ⚓ ⚓ ⚓ ⚓ *Join us as a member!* ⚓ ⚓ ⚓ ⚓ ⚓ ⚓

Membership in the Clear Lake Historical Society lasts for a calendar year, that is January through December. January is the month to renew your membership or possibly become a new member of the Clear Lake Historical Society, which is a non-profit organization. **Fear not – you can still join NOW!** Levels of membership are listed below and your check made payable to the Clear Lake Historical Society, can be mailed to our address also listed below. A membership form can be found on our website; the address is below. We operate based on the devoted work of volunteers, fees collected through memberships and generous donations. No one in our organization receives a paycheck. Membership dollars are crucial for us maintain and update exhibits and programs.

We value our members greatly and thank those of you who have already become members of the Clear Lake Historical Society and have joined our group of dedicated volunteers of all ages who are passionate about learning, preserving and sharing Clear Lake history. If you are not a member, think about becoming one, make new friends, renew old acquaintances and help protect and preserve our community's story. Jump in, the water is fine! ☺

Bowman (students and seniors)	\$15.00	Pilot	\$100.00
1st Mate	\$25.00	Captain	\$250.00
Crew (family)	\$60.00	Navigator	\$1,000.00

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