

# FRIENDS OF THE GILBERTVILLE DEPOT

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## President's Letter

Our hopes for a mild, early spring were overtaken by the Coronavirus outbreak. The virus has disrupted daily life to the extent very few of us have ever experienced. We will be following the Black Hawk County Conservation Board's guidelines in regards to opening the restrooms and our events. We will post announcements at the depot, Facebook, and send emails when possible. On a more optimistic note, last fall a group of 5 -6 volunteers tore out all the sidewalks in front of the depot and laid approximately 3,500 vintage brick pavers to replace the steps & slopes of the old sidewalks. The 100+ year old brick pavers are a historically appropriate improvement to our depot, and they look great. This spring we will do the landscaping and concrete work needed to finish the project. This project was made possible from our friends at the Guernsey Charitable Foundation which provided a major portion of the funds for the project. The Friends of the Gilbertville Depot provided all the labor and the balance of funds necessary for the project.

Then we are diving right back into another project this summer to get the exterior wood trim repaired and painted. The project involves repairing or replacing and painting all exposed wood trim on the depot. Several areas of the fascia, exposed decorative roof sheathing and rafters are deteriorated. Those areas will be repaired according to historical preservation guidelines. The repair work will be done by the Friends of the Gilbertville Depot. A painting contractor will assist us with the painting and hopefully we will be able to afford to replace the gutters this year. The Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa has provided a portion of the necessary funding for this project. We have also applied to the Cedar Trails Partnership for a portion of the funding as well.

I hope to see you at the depot and on the trail this year. Thanks for the support,  
Dick Dewater - Board President, Friends of the Gilbertville Depot

## HISTORY OF THE WCF&N RAILWAY

Most cities & towns in the late 1800s and early 1900s knew that to succeed they would need to have a railroad running through the city limits or very close by. Railroads were the lifeblood for growth and survival, bringing people, supplies and a connection to the outside world. This was no different for the cities along Waterloo Cedar Falls & Northern Railway's Cedar Valley Road. The rail line brought all of those things, with an added bonus – electricity.

The WCF&N was an all-electric railroad providing passenger and freight service and in addition was able to offer electricity to small towns. In 1917 WCF&N reported earning 10% of its revenue from selling electricity. Electricity was a new phenomenon and while it was somewhat frightening to many people the possibilities easily outweighed those concerns.

Many of these small towns had never had electricity and most homes & businesses were not even equipped to use electricity when the rail line was built from 1912 to 1915.

In 1913 a group of Gilbertville residents formed the Gilbertville Lighting Company with \$2,000.00 from a group of ten principal stockholders. The plan was to provide electricity from the Gilbertville Depot to lines strung on 45 poles throughout Gilbertville.

Generally, the electricity was used for streetlights and public buildings. One of the first customers in Gilbertville was Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. Rev. Father Nemmers saw to it that electricity was provided to the Church, rectory, school, and the Nun's house.

The demand for electricity quickly outgrew the limited low voltage the WCF&N provided and soon would be provided by larger, dedicated utility companies.

