

“The Time Machine”

by Jebb Willis – volunteer

Wadena County Historical Society

Greetings, my name is Jebb Willis. Today marks the beginning of a new article you will find in the “Wadena Pioneer Journal” this fall and winter. I call it “The Time Machine” because we will be looking into the past. More specifically, from the Wadena High School basketball and football teams from 1900-80. On behalf of the “Wadena County Historical Society” I have researched those teams from yesteryear and documented my findings. I have discovered some amazing stories that need to be told. Stories about the achievements of athletes and coaches, in their sports and in their lives. Stories about the teams and games and even about the rules of the games.

My plan is to have a few articles published during the football season and then do a handful during the basketball season. You may be wondering why not a weekly article? It’s simple. I am retired, and I don’t do deadlines.

To date, I have documented my basketball research in the two “WHS Basketball Scrapbooks” from 1900-59, and from 1960-80. Copies of these “Scrapbooks” are available at the WCHS with all proceeds going to them. I am currently finalizing the “WHS Football Scrapbook” from 1900-49. Copies will be available at the WCHS in the not-too-distant future (remember what I said about deadlines). In the meantime, you can look forward to reading about WHS’s first five decades of football in this article.

To give you a sneak peek at what is to come, here are some topics. You will meet Wadena’s first ever undefeated football team. Not only did they win all their games; no opponent was even able to score against them. Then there’s the WHS alum who holds a world record in golf. There are also two WHS alums that starred for Big Ten football teams. One played on a winning Rose Bowl team, and the other played on a Big Ten and National Championship team. And my favorite story is about a courageous 17-year-old WHS junior and World War II. So, if you like history, especially local history, I believe you will love “The Time Machine.”

See you as soon as my schedule allows!