

Bovina, Iowa

By Bill Schrier

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Bovina was a hamlet about two miles east of the Schrier family farm in Buckingham township, Tama County, Iowa.

When I was growing up on the farm in the 1950s and 1960s, I never heard that name – “Bovina” – and indeed only discovered it after maps and Tama County history books became available online. There is a grouping of about four houses and farms at this site. When I was growing up Barney and Regina Beenken’s farm was part of that group, and the Drapers lived across the road from them. Alec Green¹ lived in a house just a bit north of them, at the intersection of what is now known as 110th Street and R Avenue².



Figure 1: Bovina from the Air via Google Maps

The Iowa Ghost Towns website says Bovina was “a post office (1868-73) in the northern part of Buckingham Township.” See <http://www.iowaghosttowns.com/page120.html>

J. R. Caldwell’s “A History of Tama County, Iowa, Volume 1”, on page 113, elaborates about the post office: “An office was established at the north side of Buckingham [Township] called Bovina, Charles Blanchard, postmaster, and was discontinued in 1873.

On page 116, says “The Baptists had a church at Bovina, of forty members and regular preaching.” It goes on to note “The regular services of the Congregational and Methodist was at Buckingham, that being a center, but the membership and worshippers were from all the regions round about, and their minister often preached in the country schoolhouses.”

Buckingham Township History, <http://iagenweb.org/tama/history/ch20.html>, has the following citations:

“A Methodist Episcopal class was organized at the Bovina school house in 1864, with J. R. Hankinson as class leader and Rev. Baker as pastor. There was only a small membership. Among them were the following: J.R. Hankinson and wife and Mrs. Jameson and two daughters from Black Hawk county. The

¹ Alec Green was brother to Mary Green. Both emigrated from County Donegal, probably Inch Island, Ireland. They are distant relatives through the Greene (with an “e”) family on Inch and via Mary Boyle, Bill’s great-grandmother. We met Greene family relatives on Inch each time we visited the Island.

² The roads didn’t have names – at least names which I knew – when I was growing up. When 911 service came to Tama County, every road received a name and every farm and house received a street address. So our farm, which was simply Rural Route 1, Traer, Iowa, when I grew up, became “1067 P Avenue, Traer, Iowa”.

organization continued in existence about ten years, being supplied by different pastors. The Protestants in this vicinity generally worship at Traer.

A Baptist society was organized at the Bovina school house about the same time the Methodists perfected an organization, with the following membership: W. T. V. Ladd and wife, George Brown and wife, William Spencer and wife, Mrs. J. E. Davis and C. T. Tower and wife. Rev J.J. Wilkins was the first pastor and was succeeded by E. L. Leshner. Meetings were held every alternate Sabbath. This organization also continued in existence about ten years."

and

"There was a post office established in 1867, called Bovina, with C.H. Blanchard as postmaster. The office was kept at his house on section 10, mail being received twice each week from Buckingham. The office was discontinued in 1873. About this time Buckingham post office was moved to section 22, and kept at the house of postmaster, J.R. Holman. This office was discontinued about one year later."

I suspect, at some point about this time, the north-south railroad came through the area. That railroad was routed through Buckingham to the south and through Voochries to the north, but bypassed Bovina, running about a half mile to the east. That probably spelled the end for Bovina, and people moved to towns on the railroad.