

Viewpoints

Dean Bowden wants to seed dreams

When I look at our town, I see possibilities.

I think that is what Dean Bowden sees when he offers to give a million dollars to help fund the park that is Webster City's place of birth.

I refer to Wilson Brewer Historic Park. If you haven't been following the story, here's a summary.

Wilson Brewer's descendants, Frank Bonebright and Harriet Bonebright Cloz Carmichael, gave the ground on which the Brewer homestead sat to the City of Webster City because they had no heirs. The intention was that it become a park, named for their grandfather, Wilson Brewer, who settled with his family along what eventually was named Brewer Creek near its confluence with the Boone River.

This is a crucial piece of Webster City history. Everything that you know about Webster City began in a little cabin that no longer stands on land that today is that park.

There is a legacy of commitment that draws people to the park.

Some of them, like Dean Bowden, are willing patrons.

Dean likes to say he didn't start out with a million bucks. He started humble. He bought some farmland and hung on to it.

Then he bought some more land.

He hung on to that too.

As the years passed, and his meat processing business grew, Dean Bowden kept buying farmland here and there.

And he hung on to it.

Now he wants to give a million to create an endowment for Wilson Brewer Historic Park.

Let me tell you what that means.

It means that there will be a fund, its capital largely held and creating interest, that would greatly supplement the meagre money the City of Webster City can budget for the maintenance and running of Wilson Brewer Park. For a number of years, I was a member of the Wilson Brewer Historic Park Committee, the forerunner to today's commission. At each monthly meeting I would stare down at the budget and wonder how such



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a big park could function on \$12,000 a year. Yes, the city was contributing in-kind, stuff like mowing and other simple maintenance. But even as that budget rose slightly, so did the demands on it. There are six buildings and a caboose that must be maintained.

There is no money for dreams. Dean Bowden sees that a park like Wilson Brewer cannot realistically function without an endowment, which is the kind of legacy funding that supports both the Fuller Hall Recreation Center and the Kendall Young Library. The reality is that, although mightily generous, Wilson Brewer's family gave

what they had. What they had was that land. They did not have the means to give the kind of enduring sustenance that keeps Fuller Hall and the Kendall Young Library running.

It just so happens that Dean Bowden does.

He wants to seed dreams.

You might ask, whose dreams?

I'll answer that this way: Wilson Brewer had a dream that he would bring his family to a place where they would put down permanent roots. It happens that it was at the confluence of the Boone River and the creek named after him.

That place became Webster City.

This is his dream.

We are his dream.

Here, in this beautiful land that is too flat for some people, not well-enough populated for others, and distinctly agrarian with its oceans of earth, we are asked to accept a gift that is itself the fruit of the land.

That is Dean Bowden's dream.

Jane Curtis is interim editor of the Daily Freeman-Journal.

Share Your Views

Send your letters: "To the Editor," Daily Freeman-Journal; P.O. Box 490, Webster City, IA 50595 Or email to: jcurtis@freemanjournal.net

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"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."



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How to Reach Your City Council members

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City Council meetings are held the first and third Mondays of the month at 6 p.m. at the Council Chambers in City Hall. For more information, contact the City Manager's office, 832-9151