

Henry Schloeman

Earnest H. Schloeman, with his young wife Anna Marie Voss, left Europe and endured eleven weeks at sea - in the confines of a small sailing vessel- prior to arriving in the United States of America in the mid-1800s. One of Schloeman's sons, John, upon reaching Benton County, Iowa, later married and, in 1892, he and his wife welcomed their first child, a boy.

Henry Oliver Schloeman was born on May 3, 1892 in Norway, Iowa, and graduated with the Norway high school class of 1909. According to his draft registration card, filled out in 1917, he listed his occupation as a farmer on his father's property approximately two miles south of town. There is little verifiable documentation of the baseball team from this era since, in 1922, the Norway School records burned. Today, the only archives of Norway's school teams exist in scattered newspaper reports and fading individual memories. In a case of life transcending baseball, of achievement off the field that eclipsed excellence on it, Schloeman proved to be a real-life embodiment of George Bailey, the unwilling hero in Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life".

Henry was, likely, the first Norway high school baseball player to play collegiately (at Iowa State University, where he teamed with – among others – George Clark and Clyde Southwick, both of whom later enjoyed one-year careers in the American League). After college and his organized baseball career ended, Schloeman returned to Norway, married Ruth Jones in 1920, and began building a life and a community.

He was one of the initial organizers of the Benton County Savings Bank and Lenox Mutual Insurance, two stalwart institutions in Norway, serving as the bank president for twenty-nine years and as a director for fifty. In 1926, upon discovering that the bank was \$8,000 in debt, he and William Uthoff pooled their personal savings to keep the bank running (even as a rival, the National Bank of Norway, failed). With Lenox Mutual, Schloeman worked as president for forty-six years, and served on the board of directors for six decades. He was also the first president of South Slope Telephone when that critical community infrastructure started in 1958, stayed active in leadership at the Methodist Church, and was even a local savings bond chairman during World War II. He was, literally, a character almost too fantastic for fiction.

Henry Schloeman was a wonderful baseball player, and his college experience is a testament to that fact. His legacy, though, is as a Norway baseball player who returned home, and made his community a better place.