The Fillmore County Story

Edited by

Wilbur G. Gaffney

Geneva Community Grange No. 403
Geneva, Nebraska
1968
The Geneva Community Grange expresses their appreciation to the Fillmore County History Committee, comprised of Mr. and Mrs. Guy Brown, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Warren Lefever and Mr. and Mrs. Darrel Hughes, for the many hours of work and thousands of miles driven in collecting and compiling the material contained in this book.

The Grange and the History Committee acknowledge with gratitude the time spent by the many contributors without whose efforts this book would not have become a reality.

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This history of Fillmore County was begun a full fifteen years ago, in 1953, stemming from a suggestion of County Agent Ivar Lindstrom. His idea, taken up by the various people who have subsequently worked on this project, was that the history of a pioneering community could best be told in the words of those pioneers still surviving, or of their immediate descendants, while memories were fresh.

The Geneva Community Grange appointed a committee, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. William Lauenstein and Mr. and Mrs. Albert Johnson, to organize people to collect and write up historical information about each of the sixteen townships. Soon a sizeable group of diligent volunteers had begun collecting, township by township, village by village, the often short, often simple—but always interesting—annals of the people who had settled the land and built the county.

Although Fillmore County was not formally organized until 1871, it was already being settled, however sparsely, by 1867. Those pioneers who first faced the treeless prairies—the vast, unbroken seas of grass—and the hazards of an unfamiliar, and often dangerous, climate, are worthy of being honored in this post-Centennial year of Nebraska statehood.

Fillmore County is only one of the 93 counties that make up the state. But it has the special distinction of being ours. The people who settled here—who endured the blizzards, the drouths, the grasshoppers, the tornadoes, and the hazards of an unfamiliar, and often dangerous, climate, are worthy of being honored in this post-Centennial year of Nebraska statehood.

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The information about the various townships has been supplied sometimes by a few, sometimes by a great many, persons in each precinct. It is not possible to give full and exact credit, line by line or page by page, for each item or section: and many more persons have contributed, in one way or another, than those we can name or could hope to name. So many individual persons have been involved that the most we can do is to extend our sincere thanks to all who have in any way been touched by this enterprise.

Some of the accounts remain very nearly in the words of the original writers, the only changes being in verification of facts or in the addition of facts discovered since the original writing; these accounts carry the signature lines of the contributors. Others, for one reason or another, have been through so many hands in the intervening years that it is not possible to assign a name or identification to the original writer; these, inevitably, in the form in which they appear, must be accepted as re-written and edited, and sometimes re-written, by the compilers or the editor. If a credit line for some writer still living has been thus lost, the compilers can do no more than extend their gratitude to the accidentally anonymous original writer.

When this book was first conceived, in 1953, the intention was to make the year 1957 the basic cut-off date. Broadly speaking, that date still stands, although we have tried to bring up to date some of the more obvious developments (such as, for example, the progress of irrigation and the surfacing of roads), and to acknowledge the passing away of several of the older generation, who were still with us when we began. Within the limits set by this co-operative process of gathering our material, we have attempted to get the history of Fillmore County into shape for ourselves, for our children, and for the next generation of historians.
This book owes a good deal of its content, in some ways, to Pioneer Stories of the Pioneers of Fillmore and Adjoining Counties, collected and published in 1915 by the Rev. George R. McKeith, of Exeter. Mr. McKeith's "Preface" contained a paragraph which is worth quoting, by way of remarking on the pitfalls of all who attempt to write histories: "To the piecemeal fashion of the project, in building up the book, must be attributed many of the mistakes and inefficiencies to be found in the text. In many cases, especially in the beginning, the proof sheets were not corrected, neither did we anticipate the need of an index, otherwise the pages would have been numbered and an index provided."

We have attempted to profit by Mr. McKeith's rueful notes: both the manuscript and the proof sheets have been read with diligence; our pages are numbered; and we do have an index.

*University of Nebraska*
*August, 1968*

Wilbur G. Gaffney

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Early History

NO MORTGAGE ON THE FARM

Mary, let's kill the fatted calf and celebrate the day,
For the last dreadful mortgage on the farm is wiped away.
I have got the papers with me, they are right as right can be—
Let us laugh and sing together, for the dear old farm is free.
Don't all the Yankees celebrate the Fourth Day of July?
Because 'twas then that freedom's sun lit up our nation's sky.
Where is there any freedom like being out of debt?
Why shouldn't we, then, celebrate, and the day ne'er forget?

Many people had moved into the new Territory, and the Free Homestead Act of 1862, passed to reward Civil War soldiers, became a further impulse toward settlement. On March 21, 1864, Congress passed an act enabling the residents to form a State government (which finally became a fact on March 1, 1867).

William O. Bussard, a native of Ohio, was the first man to file on a claim in Fillmore County. He filed on the NE ¼ of Sec. 8, T8, R3W of the Sixth Principal Meridian in June, 1866. Mr. Bussard was a man of strong character and high principle. In the years of his retirement he lived in the village of Lushon, York County, only a few miles from the site of his homestead. Being greatly opposed to the use of liquor and the traffic therein, during his last illness he requested his family not to have his body carried in the local undertaker's hearse, where, it was reported, the bootleggers kept their wares. Out of respect to his wishes, Mr. Bussard's remains were carried to his grave in a spring wagon.

Mr. Bussard was accompanied to Nebraska by his cousin, William C. Whitaker, also a native of Ohio, who made the second filing on a claim in Fillmore County, the NW ¼ of the same section (T8, R3W). Thus Bussard and Whitaker were names familiar to the early settlers of the county. The men came onto their claims and made dugouts and shelter for their livestock, thus preparing for a permanent settlement.

In October, 1866, Nimrod J. Dixon, a native of Pennsylvania, filed on the SE ¼ of Sec. 8, T8, R3W, and his fiancee, Miss Lydia Gilmore, filed on the SW ¼ of the same section (T8, R3W). Thus Bussard and Whitaker were names familiar to the early settlers of the county. The men came onto their claims and made dugouts and shelter for their livestock, thus preparing for a permanent settlement.

The Territory of Nebraska was created by Congress in 1854. Surveying of the land began, and the legislature appointed a committee to determine locations, sizes, and names of the counties. The committee, under the able chairmanship of Mr. A. G. Jones, were determined to be fair and to choose names from the leaders of both the major political parties. The adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854 had soudned the death-knell of the Whig party, which, with President Millard Fillmore as its candidate, lost the national elections in 1852. Fillmore ran again in 1856 as the candidate of the American (or "Knew-Northing") party, and, on losing once more, retired from politics. But as Vice-President under Taylor he had presided over the Senate with such impartiality during the turmoil caused by the slavery question that his own thoughts on the subject could not be detected; and as President, although many criticized his actions, no one questioned his honesty of purpose. And so, as his name was chosen for our county, we can look with pride to our name as standing for integrity.
When Mr. Dixon filed on his claim, he was with the family of Elias Gilmore, the father of his fiancée, who was bringing his family to the claim he had previously entered in York County. Mr. Dixon spent the winter in the Gilmore home. Their wedding in the same home, on February 28, 1867, was the first in York County. Mr. Dixon had to go to Nebraska City to get the license. That spring they took up residence on their homestead, where they resided for 40 years, thus being the first to make permanent continuous settlement in Fillmore County. Their first child, Arthur, born January 5, 1869, was the first white child born in the county. A neighbor, Mrs. Eliza Whitaker, was the midwife who assisted at the birth.

Mr. Dixon was an enterprising farmer, always interested in community and civic affairs. After 40 years on the farm Mr. and Mrs. Dixon established a home in Fairmont, where they spent the remainder of their lives. Their youngest son, Lloyd, still resides in Fairmont.

Mrs. Dixon used to relate many interesting experiences of the early days. One time when she was alone an Indian came to the dugout and handed her a paper upon which was written the statement that he had lost a pony. She assured him that they had seen nothing of the pony. He saw a new butcher knife lying on the table, picked it up and examined it, and finally drew out his old knife and held it toward her, saying, "Swap, swap." She said, "Yes," and so he went away with her good knife.

Mr. Dixon told of being on a buffalo hunt in 1867 when he saw the first construction train that came into Grand Island to build the Union Pacific Railroad westward. Mrs. Dixon recalled that though they had many hardships, they had enough to eat, were comfortable most of the time, and had good social times and lots of fun.

The same season, J. H. Malick and Jacob Wirts, young natives of Ohio, and James Whitaker, twin brother of William, filed on claims in Fillmore County, making a total for the county of seven in the year 1866. All of those claim-holders, fearing the severity of the winter, returned East to their families or friends. In the spring of 1867 the Whitakers and William Bussard returned and broke some of the land and then went to Missouri for the winter of 1867-1868. There were no additions to the list of claims or settlers in Fillmore County in the year 1867.

The Whitakers returned in the spring of 1868, bringing with them their mother, Mrs. Eliza Whitaker, then over 70 years old. She filed on a claim adjoining that of her son William.

On October 20, 1868, Henry L. Badger, a native of Connecticut, came from Illinois with his family and built a
Dugout on the bank of the West Fork of the Blue River on the NW ¼ of Sec. 2, T8, R3W. His son Lewis Henry, then 12 years old, lived the remainder of his life on the homestead, passing from this life in 1940.

Later in 1868, E. L. Martin, a native of New York, filed on the NE ¼ of Sec. 1, T8, R4W, and L. R. Warner, a native of Massachusetts, filed on the W ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 10, T8, R3W, but did not settle on their claims until the spring of 1869.

E. L. Martin laid out a town site on his claim and called it Fillmore City, the first town in the county. He was commissioned postmaster on March 15, 1871, and kept at Fillmore City the first post office in the county. Later in the same year Henry L. Badger was commissioned postmaster and kept what was called the West Blue Post Office in his dugout on the NW ¼ of Sec. 2, T8, R3W. It was later kept in the log house Mr. Badger erected on the south 80 of his homestead after the establishment of the Fairmont Post Office.

For the first settlers, Nebraska City was the nearest railroad station. The mail was brought by carrier from one post office to the next, the offices being in the homes of the settlers. The mail was carried in one sack and emptied at each office, where local mail was sorted out and the rest sent on to the next office, where the performance was repeated.

The Nebraska Bulletin (Fairmont) for August 17, 1872, reported, "The Tri-weekly mail route between Fairmont and York by way of West Blue and McFadden was put into operation last week." McFadden was a post office kept at the McFadden home in York County, one mile east of the present Highway 81 and four miles north of the Fillmore County line. There the first county settlers received their mail before the establishment of the post offices at Fillmore City and West Blue.

Very few claims were taken in the northern half of the county in 1869. D. H. Dillon and John Ziska both filed on Sec. 2, T7, R1W on Turkey Creek in that year. Mr. Ziska, a native of Bohemia, naturalized in Wisconsin, came in May, 1869, and rented an old dugout in Saline County to live in. He worked on the first few miles of the Burlington & Missouri Railroad station. The mail was brought by carrier from one post office to the next, the offices being in the homes of the settlers. The mail was carried in one sack and emptied at each office, where local mail was sorted out and the rest sent on to the next office, where the performance was repeated.

The earliest settlements were in the northern part of the county, not only to have easy access to water and fuel, but also because the B. & M. had been surveyed and staked to follow the Blue River valley and passed through York County just north of the Fillmore County line. The settlers desired to be near the railroad and the towns that would spring up.

Congress had granted the railroad companies one-half of the land for 20 miles on each side of the survey as an inducement to build the road. After the survey was made and the road staked, Congress passed another law giving them the privilege of building anywhere within the land grant. Therefore the B. & M. line was built five miles south of the original survey. This saved the railroad company much expense, as the road in Fillmore County was through level country, whereas the York County line would have called for many cuts and bridges. The company was very proud of building 30 miles of line without a curve. The completion of the railroad through the county in 1871 then brought the large trek of immigrants.

The railroad company had selected the sites of their stations. The site for the town of Fairmont was not on railroad land, and so the company hired four men to take preemption claims on the land wanted for the town site, live on the claims for six months and "prove up" on them or obtain title to them. The men hired to do this were George Endley, James Seeley, J. A. Crawford, and Obediah Scott. Each filed on an 80 in Sec. 30, T8, R2W, and they built a house in the center of the section in April, 1871. When title was secured,

Charles Eberstein, native of Michigan; Joseph Rozicka, John Kral, Frank Kabrila, Gottlieb Girmus, and Frank Becwar, all natives of Bohemia; Ellis E. Barnett, native of Iowa; and Thomas E. Barnett, native of Illinois.

Charles Eberstein, the first man to file on a claim in the southern half of the county, passed through Nebraska in 1865 as a soldier. After his release from the army in 1867, he went to Omaha, there to wait until he became of age so that he could file on a homestead. In April, 1869, he filed on Sec. 13, T5, R1W.

Because of an Indian scare, Governor David Butler ordered the raising of a militia, which Mr. Eberstein joined. Several scouting trips turned out to be merely hunting trips, with never a sight of an Indian. After his discharge from the militia, Mr. Eberstein returned to his claim and built a log cabin. He spent the following winter in Plattsmouth, where he worked on the first few miles of the Burlington & Missouri R.R. in Nebraska.

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they deeded the land to the South Platte Land Company, who had it surveyed into town lots in October, 1871, and sold these to the people. In May, 1872, Obediah Scott returned to Fairmont to learn telegraphy.

The country was portrayed as a veritable Eden, with glowing testimonies from those who were here and preferred it to all of the East. Those who returned to the East disheartened and discouraged were not mentioned. The number of abandoned claims advertised were evidence of the heartbreak of the struggle to many who came with high hopes but for whom the success was too great. Nevertheless, thousands were attracted, not only to wrest their living from the soil but to attract settlers. The railroad companies sent out many brochures and advertised extensively in Eastern papers to attract settlers.

Most of these voters had been resident in the county 12 months or less, the majority less. The oldest man registering was William Purdy, a native of New York State, then 73 years of age.

The first election was held on April 21, 1871, in the dugout of Colonel Nathaniel McCulla, on the NE 1/4 of Sec. 20, T7, R3W. A transcript of the poll book for this election is included at the end of this chapter. At this time 82 votes were cast. William Merrill, who made the ballot box (which is still in the possession of his descendants), was the first man to vote, and Asa Glass the second. E. L. Martin, James Horne, and G. R. Wolfe served as judges of the election, and A. W. Chase and W. Woodland as clerks.

The county officers elected were: Henry L. Badger, county clerk; Wilbur Deuel, treasurer; J. F. Snow, sheriff; T. E. Barnett, coroner; William H. Blain, probate judge; Henry L. Badger, county surveyor. The Board of Commissioners were E. L. Martin, Charles H. Bassett, and Jesse Lee.

On October 10, 1871, the first regular election in the county was held and the following men were elected: William H. Blain, First County Judge (left), J. F. Snow, First County Sheriff (right).
Bassett. The Court Journal (Volume I, Case number 3) recorded: "By virtue of decision of His Honor O. P. Mason, Judge of the First Judicial District at a special term of district court held in County of Fillmore on the 28th of February, 1872, Mr. Wm. T. Burnett was recognized as Commissioner for the second district of said county."

Before the courthouse was constructed, the meetings of the county commissioners were held at McCalla’s until March 16, 1872, when a meeting was held at the residence of David Lee, near the town site on the school section. After this, until May, 1873, commissioners’ meetings were held at the office of the county clerk, J. E. Spear, which was located in his residence a short distance northwest of the site of the county seat.

Before the formal organization of the county, Fillmore County was attached to and legally assessed by Saline County. Difficulties arose. The following account of how they were settled is taken from A. T. Andreas’ History of Nebraska (1882):

"The officers of Saline County had refused to give up the tax lists for Fillmore, and on October 16, 1871, the Commissioners ordered the County Attorney, J. W. Eller, to begin a suit before the District Court for their possession. Eller urged the suit, agreeing to pay the costs if defeated, which certainly required considerable assurance, for the young man had just begun the practice of law, and at the time his only possessions were two or three law books, his homestead claim, and 50 cents in cash.

"To attend the meetings of the Commissioners as their attorney, he had to walk about 15 miles, and get trusted for his dimes, but on going to attend the District Court, in Saline County, he borrowed a pony, and managed to scrape enough money to pay his hotel bill, but he secured the tax lists."

At this time the vicinity that is now Franklin township had the largest number of voters because it was the only township that contained no railroad land. It was decided at the time of the election that the county seat should be in the center of the county. There was as yet no settlement there, and the deer, antelope, and elk roamed over the spot long after it had been designated to be the county seat.

The first meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held May 29, 1871, in Nathaniel McCalla’s dugout. As suggestions for names were made, Col. McCalla’s young daughter, Emma, suggested the name Geneva, the name of their old home town in Illinois, and this name was chosen.

In June, 1871, Henry L. Badger, the county clerk and surveyor, surveyed, platted, and recorded the town site, and published its first issue on May 9, 1872. The issue of June 22, 1872, contained this news story about the county seat:

"The sale of the school lands of Fillmore County began at this place on the 11th at 10 o’clock. Nearly one section was sold, then it adjourned to Henry, the site of the County Seat. There was no difficulty in finding the place as there was a surveyor in the crowd. Our reporter arrived just in time to witness the sale of town lots.

"There were 148 town lots and about seven-eighths were sold that day; some at the appraised value, but most of them far above it. The first offered was the COURT HOUSE SQUARE, the appraised value of which was $135, and it was bid off to the County Commissioners at the appraised value. Then followed the lots in rotation beginning with No. 1. The corner lots were valued at $10 and the others at eight. The terms were one tenth of the principal and the interest on the remainder up to Jan. 1, 1873, cash in hand; and a note @ 10 years bearing 10 per cent interest—the cheapest lot sold for $8 and the most paid that day was $41.50. R. H. Werts purchaser. There is some talk of a railroad through the place and gas works and the Court House would be built before long. At nearly 6 o’clock the sale was adjourned till 10 o’clock at Fairmont. Second day the remainder of the lots were sold, highest at $80. Next 5 and 2 acre lots sold. The best 5 for $110 and the best 2 for $156 to E. A. Spear closing County Seat lot business. The NE ¼ of Sec. 36 joining Fairmont was then offered for sale. Sold to Mr. Grant for appraisal price of $18 per acre."

This sale took place in June, 1872, one year after Geneva had been surveyed; but June, 1873, found Geneva still little more than raw prairie. The first signs of a "town" were a temporary jail and courthouse, built by Jesse Thompson and accepted by the county commissioners on May 5, 1873. Various attempts were made to move the county seat to other places, but all failed. E. L. Martin tried to have it moved to Fairmont. The Bulletin reported on October 26, 1872:

"We learn from Maj. Williams that an attempt is being made to establish a town 2 miles west of the County Seat. There is already one building 3 stories, about 48' x 60' store rooms below, offices on second floor and hall on third. It is a fine location on Turkey Creek. The coming term of District Court will be held there."

"This place, called Manleyville and located on the 8½ of Sec. 27, T7, R3W, was another of the places that hoped to become the county seat."

On July 6, 1872, the Bulletin reported on the tax levy: July 1 (1872) returns of State Auditor presented showing rate of taxation to be:

| General Fund | 2¼ mills | $3,164.85 |
| Sinking Fund | 1 mill | 1,265.878 |
| State Schools | 2 mills | 2,531.72 |
| University Fund | ¾ mill | 310.46 |

Ordered by Board that in addition the following levy be made for County purposes:

| General Fund | ½ mill | on the dollar value |
| Sinking Fund | 1 mill | on the dollar value |
| Road & bridge | 3 mills | on the dollar value |
| Court House | 2½ mills | on the dollar value |
| Poor House | 1½ mill | on the dollar value |
| Road Fund | $4 per each ¼ section of land |

On February 6, 1872, J. S. Le Hew, Nathaniel McCalla, and John A. Williams were appointed by the commissioners to appraise the school lands of Fillmore County. They soon found that to survey each section would require much labor and expense, so after consulting the State Auditor it was decided to survey only timber lands and town sites. They reported to the commissioners on April 29, 1872:
We visited each section and appraised it carefully in 40 A. tracts (after encountering some difficulty in finding some of it owing to the fact the prairie fire had burned up the stakes in the sparsely settled part of the county) save Section 16, Town 8, R4W, which is traversed by School Creek and has a small amount of timber along the banks we subdivided it into 10 A. tracts. The southeast one-fourth of Section 56, T7, R3W, we found had been laid out in part in lots and a town located thereon. We thought it advisable to have balance of said quarter surveyed into Outlots which was done and appraised in subdivisions as shown and numbered on the original plot and plots of the additions which we ordered laid out. We thought it advisable to appraise it that way as the county has failed to purchase said ground, it can now avail itself of benefits of county seat location. People could purchase single lots without being compelled to buy 40 A.

On April 15, 1872, G. W. Gue resigned as county superintendent of schools and J. A. Dempster was appointed in his place.

Letters in the Bulletin for July 27, 1872, contained much ado about the county commissioners borrowing money at an allegedly exorbitant rate of interest to purchase the courthouse square and 160 acres of land for a poor farm. On July 30, 1872, the commissioners ordered that at the general election to be held that fall, not more than five mills be levied annually until $50,000 should be realized for the construction of county buildings. The result of this vote was 264 in favor and 243 against.

Notice was given on October 2, 1872, of the first Presidential election (for the county) to be held November 5, 1872. The county was first divided into four districts or precincts, each taking in one-fourth of the county. District No. 1 consisted of the northeast quarter, No. 2 the northwest, No. 3 the southwest, and No. 4 the southeast.

A list of the voters in District No. 2, prepared by Registrar Arthur Murdock, was published in the Bulletin on September 21, 1872. (See end of this chapter.) In September, 1872, more voters were registered in District No: 1 than had been registered in the entire county for the organizational election in May, 1871. (For this list, see Appendix D.)

The first mention of bridges came with a legal notice dated July 30, 1872, advertising for bids for the construction of Bridge No. 1, over the West Blue River on Road No. 6 on range line between R3 and R4 and Secs. 1 and 2; Bridge No. 2, over Turkey Creek on the range line road between R2 and R3; and Bridge No. 3, over Walnut Creek in T3, R1 between Secs. 13 and 14. The contracts for the bridges were let to Mr. Webster for the two bridges over Turkey and Walnut Creeks, and to Mr. Baker for the one over the West Blue. The two were to cost about $3,800.

There were numerous complaints; many citizens felt that the bridges were built to accommodate the commissioners themselves, because they were all near their homesteads. The people in the northern part of the county were discommoded by the lack of bridges. They had to ford the river; and, although the bed was sandy and solid, the mud along the edges made it difficult to haul a load. The first settler, N. J. Dixon, told how, to overcome that difficulty, he had made bundles of willow poles and placed them along the two banks and covered them with sand.

Later the settlers made a log bridge along the homestead of H. L. Badger (Sec. 2, T8, R3). This was the first bridge in that area and became a landmark called the "Badger Bridge." In November and December of 1875 the county built a bridge in the same place. In 1909 it was replaced by an iron bridge which is still in use and still known as the Badger Bridge.

After much ado in the newspaper over why it had not been done before, the county commissioners published the proceedings of their meetings for the first time in 1873, a practice which has prevailed down through the years. There being no courthouse, the commissioners had to hold their meetings wherever they could. William H. Blain, the probate judge, obtained permission to hold his court at his residence, the E 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 20, T7, R2W.

The traffic in liquor has always been a problem, as indicated in this early record of the board proceedings: "It having been represented to the County Commissioners, that certain parties are selling liquor within the jurisdiction of the county without license, it was decided to delegate the authority to J. W. Eller to confer with offenders and receive the amount of license fee which was fixed at the sum of $25 each for term of six months or $40 per year, and also empower him to accept legal application for license for or by said parties." In 1872 the license fee for selling liquor was fixed at $500 per year.

August 10, 1872, brought news of a murder at the homestead of Orlando Porter on Turkey Creek. The victim was G. A. Day. Constable Bain took Orlando Porter into his custody. The coroner's verdict was that Day came to his death by a ball from an Enfield rifle supposed to be in the hands of Orlando Porter, who was committed for trial and taken to Nebraska City.

At the trial held in Manleyville, Porter pleaded "guilty" and in November 23, 1872, the District Court sentenced him to one year in the penitentiary for the murder of Day. The entire jury petitioned the governor for his reprieve immediately, and the governor pardoned him on December 24, 1872. Thus the jury did their duty according to law and according to justice as they saw it. Almost 50 years later, Captain C. S. Allen, who was one of the jurors at the Porter trial, recalled that the jurors had to carry their beds and provisions with them.

There was other violence in the same vicinity with not so tragic an ending. One time six burly claim-jumpers tried to scum a claim-holder whose name was R. T. Mulligan while he was driving home. They surrounded him and fired six shots, all of which missed. He drove as fast as he could, and as he neared some houses the men ran away.

At the general election of November, 1872, a favorable vote was given for a tax for the purpose of erecting county buildings. The commissioners published notice that they would receive sealed bids at the office of the county clerk, until the first Monday in December, 1872, at the hour of 10 A.M., for the building of a wooden courthouse and jail.

The path of the board was not "rose strewn," because there were published many letters of criticism. Some writers felt that they were not spending enough on the county buildings to make them substantial and adequate, others that they had voted more than they were spending, and still others that they should wait till the money was in hand before spending it.

The jail was built in February, 1873, and was the only building in the town for some time. The first man to occupy this jail in a lonely spot was from Turkey Creek. Work began on the courthouse early in 1873 and was finished by May of that year. That building was replaced 20 years later by the present edifice. The old courthouse was moved onto a farm south of Geneva, made into or used as a barn and later burned.

The first town in the county was laid out by E. L. Martin on his homestead on Sec. 1, T8, R4W. This he called Fillmore City. He was commissioned postmaster in March, 1871, making Fillmore City the first post office in Fillmore County. J. E. Porter, the pioneer merchant, opened a store
View of Geneva from west end of G Street about 1880. Notice old courthouse on right.

In Fillmore City on February 10, 1871, so stores were coming nearer to the settlers.

During the summer of that year the railroad reached Fairmont and Mr. Porter moved his store to the new town, beginning business October 15, 1871. The store in Fillmore City was continued by the Melvin Brothers, Charles and Cal, who afterward moved to Sutton. At the same time, Mr. Porter kept store on his homestead two miles southwest of Fairmont. A blacksmith shop was a flourishing enterprise in Fillmore City.

A flouring mill was built at Fillmore by C. M. Northrup, known as the Fillmore Mill. It was known for miles around and had many customers. It was all that remained of Fillmore City for many years. At the beginning of World War I, it was abandoned and torn down. That was before the days of heavy transportation by truck, and the mill was handicapped by not being nearer to a railroad.

By 1874, the call of the thriving city of Fairmont caused Mr. Martin to abandon the city of his dreams and move to Fairmont, there to remain the rest of his life, taking a great interest and part in all civic activities.

The Burlington Railroad laid out the towns of Exeter, Fairmont, and Grafton, named in alphabetical order by the railroad officials, presumably after various towns back East.

Fairmont was surveyed in October, 1871, and the sale of town lots began. Buildings began to spring up like mushrooms. J. E. Porter moved his store from Fillmore City and opened it October 15, 1871, thus becoming the first storekeeper in Fairmont as well as the first in Fillmore City and Fillmore County. A post office called Hesperia, kept by M. H. Brown, postmaster, on his farm adjoining the town site on the northeast, was moved to the town and became known as Fairmont. The town grew rapidly and was for many years the most prosperous and leading town of the county.

Fairmont was incorporated May 26, 1873, the petition for incorporation being signed by E. G. Bliss and 22 others. A. S. Shepherd, H. L. Edwards, W. C. Ziegler, J. E. Porter, and B. F. Parliman were the first trustees.

The fact that the materials for the construction and maintenance of both Geneva and York, the county seat of York County, had to come through Fairmont, the nearest shipping point to both towns, was responsible for the prosperity and rapid growth of Fairmont.

Although Congress had given the railroad companies one-half of the land in York County, that county did not have a railroad until it was well established and the people voted bonds to help build the road.

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The first business house was completed in October, 1871. Now, 15 months later, it has a fine church building, ministers from Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational denominations, a good school, two hotels, two lumber yards, three dry goods and grocery stores, two grocery stores selling only groceries, two hardware stores, one drugstore, a printing office, one livery stable, one blacksmith shop, one boot and shoe store, and one butcher shop. A large dry goods building and carpenter shop are under construction.

These stores advertised to accept wheat or grain of any kind either for cash or in exchange for goods.

The following advertisement, on May 9, 1872, just seven months after J. E. Porter's establishment of the first store, well describes the type of business of the time:

**Pioneer Store**

Having opened the first store established in Fillmore County, and knowing the wants of the people, I keep constantly on hand a large stock of groceries which I will sell at the very lowest living prices, consisting of—

**Dry goods, hats and caps, boots and shoes, garden seeds, all kinds of groceries and provisions, a large assortment of ready-made clothing.**

Corn, corn, I keep constantly on hand a large quantity of corn which I will sell at the lowest prices.

I am agent for the celebrated Valley Chief combined mower and self-raking reaper. The well-known Marsh Harvester; Perry combined mower and reaper; the Moline Corn Planter; Dexter Walking Cultivator; Marsh Sulky Plow and Cultivator; and the Fisk Bro. Wagon.

**Jackson Scales**

Also for the convenience of the public I have put in a pair of Jackson Scales for weighing hay, corn, etc.

"The highest price paid for hides, furs and country produce."

My motto has been and always shall be "Live and Let Live."

J. E. Porter, Fairmont.

In 1875, a bank was established in Fairmont by E. B. Branch & Co. E. B. Branch was a young man from the firm of J. H. Branch & Bro. of Marengo, Iowa. In 1882, Charles S. Miller became the owner of this bank. Mr. Miller was a highly respected banker and remained in Fairmont for several years before becoming affiliated with a bank in Seattle, Washington.

The Fillmore Bank was organized January 1, 1878, by J. O. Chase. It was incorporated on April 1, 1880, with a paid-up capital of $20,000. This bank flourished for a time and then failed. As always when money is lost, there was much bitterness.

Another essential business that mushroomed with the advent of the railroad was the grain business. Stewart Brothers built an elevator in Fairmont and J. W. Price built an elevator of 12,000-bushel capacity. Later there was another elevator, making three in Fairmont. J. W. Price and P. S. Real both had elevators in Grafton. Mr. Real was the pioneer grain man of Grafton. Price also had an elevator in Geneva. There were three elevators in Exeter. Thomas M. Wright, who started to work for J. W. Price in 1882, was for 35 years manager of the elevator. During that time the elevator was owned by George Warren & Co., by Peabody &
Co., and by the Nels Updike Co. It was sold in 1917 to the Farmers' Co-op Association who now own it and have erected a large concrete structure.

The first hotel was built by S. G. Gaylord in 1872. The Fairmont Steam Flouring Mill was erected in 1878 by Welch & Wiley. It was later owned and operated for many years by Welch.

On June 19, 1872, Mrs. Hagerty gave birth to a girl, said to be the first child born in Fairmont, and named "Bessie Fairmont." The first death was that of a young child of William Chapin in the summer of 1872. The first marriage was of Clarence C. Chapin and Miss Morgan in the fall of 1872.

The town of Exeter was laid out in November, 1871, on Sec. 20, T8, R1W, on land procured from Dr. H. G. Smith, who had settled there a year earlier and who was prominently connected with the building of the town. His house, on the NE 1/4 of Sec. 20, T8, R1W, was the first house built in Exeter. Because of his desire to accommodate the settlers he brought in a stock of goods and opened the first store in December, 1871.

The claim north of Dr. Smith's was taken by J. W. Dolan, who later became a partner in the Smith store, William Dolan settled on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 20, T8, R1W, and John Dayton and William N. Babcock took 80 acres each on the SW 1/4 of the same section. All these settlements were made about the same time in 1871.

The first actual settler was Warren W. Woodard, who had homesteaded the NE 1/4 of Sec. 28, T8, R2W, cornering with Sec. 20, in 1870.

The depot and switch were built in 1872. J. F. Kettlewell, pioneer meat merchant, in telling of the progress and prosperity of the town in the July 3, 1872, issue of the Fairmont Bulletin, gave this glowing description of the depot:

"Our new and commodious B. & M. Railroad station house, standing between the main and side tracks, is 22 feet wide and 42 feet in length and 12 feet in the clear, having a platform 8 feet wide on the east, south, and west and 7 feet wide on the north; together with a low platform along the main track nearly 200 feet in length; all this with a mansard roof projecting 5 feet, we boast of our depot and switch as without a rival for many miles along the line East or West."  

"Mr. Kettlewell also mentions Mr. Root, our shoemaker; Mr. Taylor, merchant, of the Smith & Co. firm; a blacksmith of whom the boys say 'his head is level and he makes plow lathes run the same'; our lumber and machine merchant, J. Dolan, Esq., whose sunny boys say 'his head is level and he makes plow lathes run the same'; our attorney at law, P. B. Tolles; bank, J. O. Chase, president, A. Ambler, blacksmith; R. J. Blackburn, livery and feed; A. Ambler, windmills; W. J. Hickox, feed mill. The feed mill was powered by a large Hazen windmill which Mr. Hickox said had a grinding capacity of 20 bushels an hour.

The editor of the Gazette recorded that in his search for news items he climbed to the top of the tall, newly erected Hickox windmill and searched the countryside with a borrowed spyglass and found several newly erected houses.

The Fillmore County map published by the B. & M. Railroad on May 1, 1878, shows the towns in the southern half of the county as follows: Alpine SW 1-6-2; Glengary NE 26-6-1; Turkey Creek SW 11-6-2; Bryant W 29-5-4; Belle Prairie SW 8-5-2; Ohiowa NE 17-5-1; Walnut Creek, SE 13-5-1.  

On a petition filed by A. D. Babcock and 60 others, Ohiowa was incorporated in March, 1887. As most of the residents were natives of Ohio and Iowa, they combined the two names and called the town Ohiowa. It became a railroad town and a permanent settlement.
Strang was incorporated the same year and named for the Strang windmill, which was much advertised in the pioneer papers.

Milligan, another railroad town, named by and for a railroad official, was the center of a Bohemian settlement in the southeastern part of the county.

Shickley, in the southwestern part of the county, was the center of a German settlement. The four towns above mentioned came into existence after the pioneer days and are still in existence. Since the adoption of irrigation from wells, Shickley has become a growing and prosperous town.

The following railroad towns shown on a map published in 1900 are nonexistent today: Martland, Lyman, Sawyer, Burress, and Empire. Dudley, an inland town about five or six miles northeast of Ohiowa, is also gone.

Sawyer and Burress were located southeast of Fairmont in Madison township. Sawyer was founded by one of the early settlers, Simeon Sawyer, on the Northwestern R.R. One-half mile away was the town of Burress, laid out by J. D. Burress on the K. C. & O. R.R. Sawyer faded away, but there is still an elevator and grain business at Burress.

Lyman, on the Burlington branch line that runs from Lushston through Sutton and Clay Center, is now called Bixby and has only a grain business and elevator. A grain elevator is still in operation in Martland.

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In the "rosy morn" of the life of Fillmore County the people flocked in with high hopes for great happiness and prosperity. Every town had doctors, lawyers, merchants, and artisans in every field applicable to the country.

Along with the main business, which was agriculture, the industry most needed was mills for the making of flour.

In September, 1872, P. S. Real, R. C. McComb, and Mr. Wolverton were planning to erect a mill on Sec. 7, T8, R3W on the West Blue River. They asked for public subscription to the amount of $2,000, with interest at 10 per cent and the labor to be donated by the subscribers. By October, work on the dam was started. McComb and Wolverton were succeeded by Skerrett, but for some reason the Real-Skerrett Mill failed to materialize.

During the same summer, C. M. Northrup purchased a site for a mill on Sec. 1, T8, R4W on the West Blue River and went to New York to buy the necessary machinery and have it shipped here. This mill, completed in 1873, was known as the Fillmore Flouring Mills and did a thriving business for many years. Mr. Northrup built a warehouse by the railroad four miles south of the mill to handle the flour, which was shipped to many points; that site became the town of Grafton.

The nearest mill to the first settlers was located at Camden on the Blue River in Seward County.

Building material was in great demand and by 1872 two enterprising young Fairmont men, Le Hew and Likes, had a kiln for making bricks on School Creek near the residence of Mr. J. A. Wirts on Sec. 1, T8, R3. The clay there seemed superior to other clay for brickmaking.

Henry L. Heckman, residing four miles west of Fairmont, started a nursery which he called the "Lookout Nursery." He planted 10 bushels of black walnuts, several bushels of peach pits, and a large variety of fruit trees, grapes, etc.

As the Lookout Nursery did not become a permanent business, credit goes to Youngers & Brown, who established the well-known Youngers Nursery, now known as the Geneva Nurseries. On his arrival in the county, Peter Youngers planted fruit trees on his homestead, and this expanded into the nursery that served a large territory. Mr. Youngers was ably assisted by Mr. Brown, who became the proprietor after the death of Mr. Youngers. He was assisted by his son Guy Brown, Sr.; when his health failed, the management was taken over by Guy Brown, Jr. In the latter part of 1959 the nursery was sold to one of the faithful employees.

During the year 1872, coal was found in Fillmore County by some men attempting to drill a well. Excitement ran high. Professor Samuel Aughly of the University of Nebraska was brought to Fairmont to give a lecture on geology. He watched
the drilling of a well and thought there might be a paying vein of coal.

On February 8, 1873, a company was organized to drill for coal. On February 22, they started drilling on the A. J. Beals farm on Turkey Creek. At the end of a month they had to give up drilling because at 176 feet the water came in. They planned to drill 400 feet. By then the legal notice for the incorporation of the coal-mining company had been published. The name was to be the Fillmore County Coal and Mining Company, under the laws of the State of Nebraska as to mineral rights, etc., for 99 years from that date. The place of business was to be confined to Fillmore County, and buildings sprang up like mushrooms. In August, 1873, J. H. Haughawout, a contractor from Pennsylvania, arrived in Fairmont on a Monday evening, bought a lot from H. G. Bliss, built a house on Tuesday, and moved into it that same evening.

Many builders and contractors came to help develop the new county, and buildings sprang up like mushrooms. In August, 1873, J. H. Haughawout, a contractor from Pennsylvania, arrived in Fairmont on a Monday evening, bought a lot from H. G. Bliss, built a house on Tuesday, and moved into it that same evening.

There were many other capable builders. W. C. Massey built the Fairmont schoolhouse, an edifice of which the citizens were very proud, in the summer of 1873. S. F. Stilley was the contractor for the $2,000 school building in Exeter.

On the farm of Joseph Frazier there was claimed to be a soil that made a plaster superior to anything then known. It was thought this would become a thriving business, as plaster was in great demand, but it did not seem to be developed to any great extent.

Notice was given for the citizens of the northwest townships of Fillmore County and southwest townships of York County to meet at Fillmore City on Saturday June 7, 1873, to take action on the proposition to establish an academy or graded school and confer with the Rev. W. Cochran on the subject. As we fail to find any further record, this must have been a dream that failed to materialize.

The Smith "Adjustable Index Factory" in Exeter, owned and operated for many years by C. C. Smith (son of Dr. H. G. Smith, the pioneer founder of Exeter), held a unique position in the world. The tags or indices, for use in offices, were Mr. Smith's own invention. While working in an office, he made them for his own use to save time and make his work easier. They were soon in demand by businessmen who saw them and desired them for their own offices. Mr. Smith started to make them commercially and soon had a world-wide business, as they were the only items of their kind.

Another business founded here which became world-wide was the Fairmont Creamery Company. (See under "Fairmont.") Thus Fillmore County has fathered two businesses that have reached out to cover the world. (It is interesting to note that another world-wide business had its origin in a sister city, not very far away, and one with which our pioneers had many contacts: the Beatrice Creamery Company, which also grew into a giant food-supplying corporation.)

Another claim to fame, of a sort, is that Rural Free Delivery Route No. 1, out of Fairmont, the first in Fillmore County, just missed being the first R.F.D. route in the state of Nebraska (it was the second). I. N. Beery, a resident of West Blue township, visited relatives in Iowa who had rural free delivery. This inspired Mr. Beery to come home and set the wheels in motion to get this service here. The result of his efforts was R.F.D. Route 1, started in June, 1901, with Frank Robinson, son of Postmaster Clark Robinson, carrying the mail. (For further details, see "Fairmont.")

Soon after the railroad came through the county mail routes reached out from Fairmont to the other towns. There was one route north to York and another southwest through Turkey Creek and Carlton, and on to Kansas, July 6, 1872, saw a regular stage line from Fairmont to York.

The determined purpose of the early settlers caused them to build the new county on those firm foundations that had made the United States of America an example to all the world: churches, schools, and a sound civil government. Those were paramount in the hearts of the pioneers.

There are many sincere claims to the first Sunday School and the first religious services being held in this or that settler's cabin or dugout. We will give the credit to the Rev. Caldwell, a United Brethren circuit rider who came on horseback up the Blue River Valley from his home in Swan-ton in Saline County and held religious services in the dug-outs of the Bussards, Whitakers, and Dioxons in 1869.

There are many records of religious services as soon as there were enough people in a neighborhood to gather together for religious meetings.

On May 7, 1871, the Rev. Erastis Spear, a Baptist minister from Orlando, Indiana, held preaching services in the dugout of Col. Nathaniel McCalla. The following Sunday a Sunday School was organized with James Shepherd as superintendent. The Rev. Mr. Spear continued his preaching at various places. This was the beginning of the organization which was perfected January 21, 1872, at the home of James Loghry and was later known as the First Presbyterian Church of Fairmont (so recorded on July 6, 1872, in the office of the county clerk).

The Methodist Episcopal Church of Fairmont was organized in the fall of 1871 and the first sermon was preached in the new railroad depot by the Rev. G. W. Gue.
The church building was built in the summer and fall of 1872. It was to have been dedicated December 1, 1872, by the Rev. J. G. Evans, of Hedding College, Illinois, but for some reason that date was canceled and the ceremony postponed. The Methodists shared their building with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists until those denominations were able to build their own.

The Congregationalists organized in autumn of 1872 with Charles Hibbard as pastor and services were held in the upper room of a new store building, which was being used at the time for school purposes. The Presbyterian Church was built in 1873 and the Congregational Church in 1881. The Catholic Church was built in 1882, but it was not first in the county, as the Exeter Catholic Church had been erected in 1878.

The Congregationalists were organized in Exeter in 1872, the Baptists in May of that year, and the Methodists about the same time, but they met together as one organization until 1878, when pressure from outside caused them to separate. The Congregationalists built in 1878 and the other two in 1879.

On May 19, 1872, Elder J. N. Webb, General Agent of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, assisted the Rev. J. E. Ingham in organizing the regular Baptist Church of Exeter, with 10 members. Then, on May 23, the Rev. Mr. Ingham organized the Regular Central Baptist Church of Fillmore County, with 15 members present, at the home of Mr. Morgan, three miles south of Fairmont. Rev. Spear, who was preaching around the center of the county, was asked to labor with the Rev. Mr. Ingham.

An item in the August 31, 1872, issue of the Fairmont Bulletin says: "The Picnic of Pleasant Ridge Sabbath School at Walnut Creek proved a great success. Pleasant Ridge Sabbath School and Bethlehem Sabbath School joined in the procession and activities."

A county Sunday School convention for all of the Sunday Schools of the county was held in Fairmont, September 24 and 25, 1872. Many Sunday School picnics were held in Snow's Grove on Walnut Creek in the southeastern part of the county and along the Blue River in the northern part of the county.

Jonathan Horton, a descendant of Joseph Horton, who had been born in England in 1578, settled in 1870 on Sec. 2, T8, R2W. He gave one acre of land for a school lot on which was built a sod schoolhouse that served for many years as both school and church. As a result of services held there by the Rev. D. B. Warner of Ohio, a "Church of God" was organized, with 25 members, and with Mr. Horton and Jacob Witter as elders and Samuel Bair and George Helms as deacons. This church existed for many years, thanks to the untiring devotion and efforts of Mr. Horton. When a frame school building replaced the soddy, it too was used for many years as a place of worship by United Brethren, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. The appearance of the automobile marked the end of the great era of country churches.

It was the custom in the early days to bury the dead on their own land or in a plot of burial ground donated by some homesteader for his family and neighbors.

The Horton Cemetery, donated by Jonathan Horton, was on his farm on the NE corner of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 2, T8, R2W, about 7 1/2 miles NE of Fairmont. The earliest grave recorded here was of Sarah Horton, who died on August 20, 1872. The names of many of the pioneers of that vicinity are recorded in that cemetery, which is still used for burial of the families and relatives of the people buried there in early days. The citizens of Fairmont selected the site for the Fairmont Cemetery in February, 1873.

With the rush of settlers into the county came the organization of school districts. Many of the first schoolhouses were built of sod and poorly furnished and equipped. The 1872 report of the County Superintendent described the schoolhouses as poorly equipped but said that the teachers were making good progress regardless of these handicaps.

As it took some time after the organization of the school districts to raise necessary funds and erect buildings, school was sometimes taught in the homes of ladies capable of teaching. This happened in District 4, in West Blue township, located in the southeast corner of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 2, T8, R3W. County Superintendent George W. Gue organized the district on January 6, 1872, but no action was taken regarding building until March 24, 1873. Meanwhile, Mrs. Laura Phillips taught in her home on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 12, T8, R3W. She was said to have taught the first school and was paid by the parents of the pupils before the organization of the district.

The first schoolhouse in District 1 was a log house on the south side of the river on land now owned by Louis Budler. N. J. Dixon was the treasurer, a position he held for 25 years. As there were no banks, he had to go to Geneva every month to get the money to pay the teacher.

The citizens of Fairmont voted bonds for the erection of a schoolhouse for District 19 on September 21, 1872. School opened in November, in a room over a store building, with Miss Elva Lewis as teacher. A large and substantial two-story building was completed in 1873 at a cost of $2,000. This main building, with later additions, was the first of the town high schools.

The first marriage license granted in Fillmore County was issued June 27, 1871, to William Whitaker and Sabra Brumsey. They were married June 28, 1871, by County Judge William H. Blain. The ceremony took place on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 4, T8, R3W. The names of Mrs. H. L. Badger and John H. Whitaker appeared as witnesses. Judge Blain came from his home on Turkey Creek and spent the night in the home of the county clerk, H. L. Badger, who lived one and one-half miles from the scene of the wedding.

The first white child born in the county was Arthur Dixon, son of Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Dixon, the pioneers. He was born on their homestead January 9, 1869. Grandmother Whitaker, the pioneer lady in Fillmore County, was the midwife.

Emma Whitaker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James C. Whitaker, was the first white girl born in the county. She was a great attraction to the Indian women when they camped near, who loved to be permitted to hold the white "papoose." Emma was married to John K. Hall. They were the parents of two children, Grace (now deceased) and Earl, who for many years farmed west of Exeter.

When people settle a community, organizations quickly follow. Churches and Sunday Schools came first.
Seven months after the first building was erected in Fairmont, the directory of the first newspaper contains notices first of church and Sunday School, and then the Independent Order of Good Templars and a Fairmont Debating Society. Fairmont also boasted the first Masonic and Odd Fellows lodges in the county. Lodge No. 48, A. F. & A. M., was chartered June 26, 1874, with John Vodra as Master. Lodge No. 42, I. O. O. F., was chartered August 17, 1875. Mt. Moriah chapter No. 38, O. E. S., was chartered in June, 1891.

Posts of the Grand Army of the Republic and its auxiliary, the Women's Relief Corps, were in every town, as most of the homesteaders were veterans of the Civil War. The soldiers and sailors were called together to form an organization for fellowship and religious purposes in Bennett township.

The Knights of Honor was one of the organizations men-
tioned in the early newspaper. The Ancient Order of United
Workmen and the Modern Woodmen of America, with their
auxiliaries, the Degree of Honor and the Royal Neighbors,
were lodges that were popular because they paid death ben­
efits. These benefits provided inexpensive protection for the
family man who had indebtedness on his farm or business.
The Women's Christian Temperance Union was active
in all the towns.
These organizations and many others, together with
singing schools, literary societies, debating societies, and
spelling bees made up the social activities enjoyed by every­
one.
Also many and popular were the dances held in people's
homes, and it seemed there were many “fiddlers” ready for
these occasions.
Most of the people had a keen interest in politics. Near
election time feeling ran high. There were debates and
torchlight parades, and men would walk miles to exercise
their right of franchise. Political news in the papers left
little space for local news. Letters concerning every can­
didate—local, state, and national—were numerous and often
bitter. Fillmore County was overwhelmingly Republican be­
cause it was settled largely by soldiers who had served on
the side of the North. One of the first political organiza­
tions was a “Tanners and Cobblers” Club, organized in July, 1872,
to support General Grant for the Presidency. The officers
were: J. E. Cramer, president; N. McCalla, first vice-presi­
dent; H. L. Badger, second vice-president, George Fifield,
secretary; Andrew Church, treasurer; Fifield was absent
so was replaced by L. E. Le Hew; executive committee, J. W.
Eller, F. H. Gerard, and J. L. Le Hew.
The tilling of the soil was paramount in the minds of the
homesteaders. Methods best suited to this climate were dis­
cussed and written about in every gathering and every paper
and magazine. Everyone planted trees to make the country
resemble their homes in the East. There was rivalry between
individuals and different parts of the county as to who could
plant the most. In June, 1872, H. McLaughlin challenged
anyone to beat his record of over 2,000 trees, not counting
cuttings and seedlings. That season Thomas Roe, north of
Fairmont, set out 1,500 trees and 20,000 hedge plants. All
over the county ornamental trees and shrubs and fruit trees
and hedges of osage and mulberries were set out on the
lines. H. L. Badger set a row of cottonwood cuttings around
his half section, which grew in 50 years large enough to
make lumber.
The fruit trees and many others had a fine start, only to be killed out by the grasshopper plague in 1874.

The year 1868 was a poor "growing year" and the crops planted were scarce. In 1869, however, everything grew and yielded well. The first crop of wheat that N. J. Dixon, the first settler, raised was in 1869. It yielded well and was cradled by H. L. Badger. Mr. Dixon hauled his first crop of barley to Nebraska City and brought back lumber for a floor in the log house.

Fillmore was called the banner county in the state by several of the newspapers. One of the merchant grain dealers (the merchant who sold groceries, dry goods, and other needed supplies would buy grain) in the 1872 season offered a $10 prize for the best 10 ears of corn raised in the county. In November, the prize was paid to L. A. Lewis, who lived on Sec. 26, T7, R3W. The weight of his ten ears was 9 pounds and 10 ounces.

Many of the farmers raised stock and found that line very profitable. Texas cattle were driven through the county to feed on Sand Hills grass and to be shipped on the railroad to the eastern markets. The settlers told of seeing the strays around for many years. It was claimed that a herd of 5,000 passed just west of Fairmont.

During the winter of 1871-1872, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing an agricultural society. A committee on constitution and by-laws was appointed to meet and report to a meeting to be held in March. On the appointed day a severe storm kept those living at a distance from coming to the meeting. One of the absentees had the prospective by-laws and constitution in his possession. Three of the committee being present, it was moved to adopt a constitution as much as possible like the one decided upon. The motion was opposed but carried. The constitution and by-laws were drawn up and adopted, officers were elected, and the next meeting was set for the second Saturday in May. There being some disapproval, President Judge Blain was urged to call a special meeting to reconsider the action taken. This he refused to do, as he thought matters could be straightened out at the appointed meeting time. As all of the people were not satisfied, a meeting was called and a committee of seven was appointed to meet with the officers-elect to try to adjust matters to the satisfaction of all parties. This they were able to do, and the constitution and by-laws of the newly formed Agricultural Society were published in the May 16, 1872, issue of the Nebraska Bulletin. The officers were to be president, vice-president, secretary, corresponding secretary, treasurer, and a board of 16 managers, one from each township.

One of the most interesting provisions of the constitution was Article 9: "Every member of the Society shall enter at every Annual Fair of the Society some article or animal for exhibition: if vegetable it shall be accompanied with a concise statement of the character and condition of the soil at planting, when planted, length of time required to mature, mode of culture, quality of seed and yield of same for the benefit of the Society." Thus the object of the organization was to help the farmers learn how and what was best in the new country.

The constitution also forbade intoxicating liquors, lotteries, and games of chance on the fair grounds. Permission was given for shows and exhibitions free from immoral tendencies upon payment of a reasonable fee.

On June 6, 1872, a meeting of importance was called for the first Saturday in August. James Shepherd advertised that he could be contacted at his home, the SE ¼ of Sec. 14, T7, R3W, and would be in Fairmont on the second and fourth Saturdays in June. The meeting held on August 1, 1872, was so poorly attended that it was thought best to adjourn and meet at the J. F. Loghry place on the fourth Saturday in August.

Notice was given to the Township Managers to report to a meeting in October on township activities. The township managers were: J. A. Williams (T5, R2W), Mr. Ward (T5, R3W), C. H. Bemondiffer (T5, R1W), C. H. Basset (T6, R1W), H. F. King (T6, R2W), W. T. Burnett (T6, R3W), Mr. Beam (T7, R1W), Seth Woodard (T7, R2W), J. Loghry (T7, R3W), Prof. J. B. Lewis (T7, R4W), Job Hathaway (T8, R1W), J. E. Cramer (T8, R2W), A. W. Chase (T8, R3W), and J. S. Le Hew (T8, R4W).

Regardless of various obstacles, the society persisted and in 1875 the Fillmore County Agricultural Society held its first fair at Fairmont.

About 1877 there was agitation to have the fair at the county seat; at the same time a series of meetings were held in Alexandria, in regard to a district fair. The result of these meetings was the organization of the District Agricultural and Mechanical Fair Association, comprising Jefferson, Thayer, Fillmore, and Saline counties, the fair to be held in Fairmont. This fair continued for several years. Horse racing was one of the chief attractions.

The District Fair continued for several years after the Fillmore County Agricultural Society had established the Fillmore County Fair in Geneva. The county fair became a successful enterprise that is still an annual attraction for the people of Fillmore and surrounding counties. The association owns its own well-improved grounds, located just north of the city of Geneva.

The first homes of the Fillmore County settlers were dugouts and sod houses. These were substantial structures, cool in summer and warm in winter, but were dark and lacked ventilation. The roofs were made of poles covered with grass and then sod. There was no way to keep them from leaking during a hard rain, and sometimes the entire roof would fall in. Some were built stoutly enough to hold a team and wagon. They would last for seven or eight years, and by that time material could be procured for a frame house.

Many hardships beset the pioneers. In April, 1873, came a blizzard that lasted for three days. It was known as the Great Easter Storm because it started on Easter Sunday. A fine snow was whipped across country by winds so high as to make it blinding and pack it solidly in draws and ravines, leaving the level ground bare. It was so solidly packed that men and stock could walk on top of it across rivers and draws.

The summer of 1874 brought the great plague of grasshoppers in August. They came in such clouds as to obscure the sun and devour every green thing, as well as clothing if it was in their path. Fruit trees that had a nice start were
History Of The Harmony Church And Cemetery
(by Nancy Elbeka)

The Harmony Cemetery Association was organized January 25, 1879. The appointed board members were: F. F. Hill, chairman; Irvin Metcalf, clerk; E. G. Beers, R. W. Stowell, and W. A. Simms, members of the board of directors. At the first meeting of the board of directors, the following officers were elected: E. G. Beers, president; J. W. Nier, treasurer; Irvin Metcalf, clerk; M. C. Matson, who served as trustee for three years; J. W. Dewold, who served as trustee for two years, and Jake Miller, who served as trustee for one year.

The board of directors took care of the cemetery until Frank Rathbun took over. After him, Jim Mikkleson served as sexton for 24 years. In 1945, N. N. Brown of Strang took over the sexton's duties and is still serving.

The cemetery's organizers first named the group the Belle Prairie Cemetery Association. The name was changed to Harmony cemetery October 7, 1947.

The first grave was that of Rhoda Mott. Her son-in-law planted two pine trees that are still there. There are 44 soldiers buried in the cemetery. These include soldiers from every war except the Vietnam conflict. In the northwest quarter in Lot 20, there are graves of three unknown soldiers. They were originally buried on a farm near Strang. The Strang G.A.R. moved them to the cemetery many years ago.

The Harmony church was bought from the Methodist conference February 5, 1900. The inside of the church is exactly the same now as it was when it was purchased. The church has the same kerosene lamps and pews. A piano is the only item that has been added.

A flagpole was put up in 1948. The first big flag was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Grant, now deceased.

The arch over the cemetery gate was suggested April 2, 1951. The arch has the cemetery name on it. Edgar Miller was in charge of putting up the arch.

In October, 1953, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Schweer donated the drive-in gate. At the same meeting, N. N. Brown was nominated to put in a peony bed. Mrs. Henry Wernimont, now of Geneva, donated the 285 peony plants. The plants still make a beauty spot in the cemetery.

The water works was suggested October 5, 1955. The entire water system was put in by donation. The registration box was donated by Edgar Miller in 1955. At the time, there was only one other like it in the entire state. Now there are several like it in Nebraska. It is at the gate.

Ethel Moore donated 10 pin oak trees in memory of her parents. The trees were planted October 3, 1961. All the trees located around the church were donated.

The Memorial day services at Harmony have been held in the church since 1947. The program each year is presented by the American Legion from either Bruning, Ohiow, or Geneva. The services always begin at 2. The program this year was presented by the Geneva Legion. The Geneva Legion will present the program next year.

In 1963, the church foundation was worked on for the first time since it was built. The entire church was recently painted.

I received the information in this report from Mr. and Mrs. N. N. Brown, Strang. The Har-
leaves did not have time to mature before freezing weather hard times in both the middle seventies and the middle bleak time because of the dreary prospects, hard times, no and so the trees died. They leafed out again, but these nineties brought by drouth and depression.

Moving their belongings and worked desperately to save the city of Geneva. The threat was so great that people began north wind swept through the fair grounds and threatened the fire. As late as 1880, a huge prairie fire fanned by a high sary for the settlers to plow around their buildings to stop the prairie fires were an ever-present hazard. It was necessary for the settlers to plow around their buildings to stop the fire. As late as 1880, a huge prairie fire fanned by a high

Before Fillmore County was organized the Indians who had claimed Nebraska as their home had been confined to the reservations and were allowed to go out on hunting trips farther away than Nuckolls County. In the summer of 1868, her dugout with her apron. This was their last appearance in this county.

In the pioneer days the county abounded in wild game. There were buffalo, deer, elk, antelope, and numbers of the smaller fur-bearing animals such as mink, otter, beaver, and a little fox called a swift, which the settlers trapped for their fur.

Buffalo did not come into the county after the summer of 1868. The presence of people in their old haunts along the river caused them to seek other pastures, even though no farther away than Nuckolls County. In the summer of 1868, Grandmother Eliza Whitaker scared the buffalo away from her dugout with her apron. This was their last appearance in this county.

Until after 1871 the settlers were able to supply themselves with meat from buffalo, deer, wild turkeys, and prairie chickens. Along the river there was an abundance of wild plums, grapes, chokecherries, elderberries, etc. Also along the river the settlers found the stark skulls of humans, presumably of persons captured by the Indians along the Oregon Trail.

No history of Fillmore County would be complete with-
The following is a list of the voters registered in District No. 2 by Arthur Murdock. The list was published in the Bulletin (September 21, 1872) together with the notice which followed it:


The names published in September, 1872, were registered by J. E. Cramer with the following: “Notice is hereby given that I will sit for the purpose of correcting the list of voters in Precinct No. 1, Fillmore County, Nebraska as follows: at my office in Fairmont on Monday, September 30, 1872; and at Exeter on Friday, Oct. 4, 1872.—J. E. Cramer, Registrar.”

Belle Prairie Township

Belle Prairie township is on the southern edge of Fillmore County, bounded by Thayer County on the south. It is bounded on the north by Chelsea, on the east by Franklin, and on the west by Hamilton townships. The general surface of the land is rolling. A stream edged by hills—the north fork of Big Sandy Creek—runs through the south central part of the township (Secs. 19 to 33) from west to southeast. In 1966, the township counted 45 irrigation wells. It is crossed from east to west (through Secs. 12 to 7) by the Beatrice-Hildreth branch of the Burlington and from north to south (Secs. 1970 to 31) by the Fairmont-Hebron branch; the two lines cross at Strang, the only village. Nebraska Highway 74 follows the south section line of Secs. 6 to 1; U. S. 81 comes in from the north on the Hamilton township line for a mile, cuts over to the next section line—bypassing Strang by about a half mile on both north and east—and then follows that section line down to Thayer County.

The township was first called Beautiful Prairie because of the pleasing lay of the land. Later it was renamed Belle Prairie in honor of a very pretty little girl who lived there at that time with her parents; but the identity of the girl who thus left her name imprinted on Fillmore County seems to be lost in the mists of history.

The early settlers of this township, organized in 1872, were largely Germans, coming from Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. Among the first were the George Matson, Peter Egggenberger, Chris Dunker, Ralph Stowell and E. G. Beers families. The first farms were homesteaded. The homesteaders had to get their claim papers at Beatrice, driving there and back by team and wagon. The main industry was farming and the feeding of cattle and hogs.

Homesteading Belle Prairie

(The following account was written by early settler Whitefield Crawford in 1908. Although we do not have for other townships any such detailed summary—and if we had them, space would not permit including them all—we print this, in all its detail, because it shows a good deal of the "pattern" of homesteading. Except for a few minor changes of punctuation, for clarity, it is printed exactly as Mr. Crawford wrote it. We have noted in square brackets [thus] some slight variations between his account and the lands shown on the homestead map.)

In Belle Prairie township there was no settlement; nothing but wild beasts and reptiles inhabited the now fertile country known as Township five (5) north of base line of range two (2) west of the 6th principal meridian. Now there is an immense variety of Prairie grass, and was swept by fire every year; which would make the country look drear in the extreme. No people except those of an iron nerve would think of settling in a sea of Prairie where not a tree could be seen to break the view as far as the eye could reach, or arrest the sweeping winds that often approached the dignity of a bizzard. The nearest mill to [at] which corn meal could be bought was at Beatrice, 69 miles east. I said corn meal, that was all we could afford to buy at that time; and we ate sparingly of even that. As Dr. Franklin said to his landlord when she wanted to raise his herd, "Make the gruel thinner: I shall all I can afford to fry." We made the Johnny-cake thinner. I don't know whether to call it a luxury or a necessity: it was very luxurious when we were in luck to have plenty of it. When corn meal could not be obtained we would make a sort of wild onions and lard as a diet; especially when the mosquitoes kept us busy at night and flies at day sucking our very life's blood from our veins.

The first settlement made in the township was on Sec. 2 by George Tuttle his brother Warren filed his claim on the NE¼ of Sec. 14 in the fall of 1870; but stayed at Cub Creek near Beatrice until the spring of 1871; native of New York, but moved from Illinois here in April of 1871. A. Burns settled on the SW¼ of Sec. 14, native unknown; but came from Illinois. Irvin Metcalfe came at the same time with Mr. Burns and took the SW¼ of Sec. 14, a native of Illinois and moved from that state to Nebraska. Jake Lindwar had filed his claim on the N¼ of the NE¼ of Sec. 34 in April and had gone back after his Biddy and left his brother, Henry, in the fall. George D. Lindwar (Dutch Jake) was a native of Germany; but came from Wisconsin.

George Wright took the E½ of the NW¼ of Sec. 34, a native of New York; but came from Illinois here. Joe Clink took the W½ of the same quarter, as he was known as a native of Illinois and came from his native state to Nebraska. S. Crawford took the NE¼ of Sec. 28, his native is Illinois and moved from there here. George Wright, Joe Clink, and Whitefield Crawford came and took the NW¼ of Sec. 32, native unknown. George Goodrich took the NE¼ of Sec. 24, native of Vermont. I think, but his name is unknown here. P. D. Sturdevant took the NW¼ of Sec. 24, native Vermont; but came from Illinois here. D. W. Simms took the SW¼ of Sec. 24. W. A. Simmons took the SE¼ of Sec. 24. The Simms boys were both natives of New Jersey; but moved from Illinois here. Cass Kingsbury took the NW¼ of Sec. 14. Native of Illinois and moved from there here.

In June James Voshburgh took the E½ of the NW¼ of Sec. 28. A native of Pennsylvania, but came from Illinois here.1 C. E. Hyde took the SE¼ of Sec. 28, native of New York, but came from Illinois here. J. E. Miller took the SW¼ of Sec. 22, native of New York, but came from Missouri. He came in early spring but never moved onto it. Miss Mary Rakestraw held it in the name of Tuttle here from Wisconsin and pre-empted the SW¼ of Sec. 12. He was an old man with a young wife yet in her teens. Mr. Tuttle brought some cattle, and had a young man hired to herd for him. He seems to have had a young daughter left behind in Illinois with the young man. Being a free love thinker, a trade was soon made with the young man, whereby the young man gave him a pony for the young wife; and each took possession of their new property at once.

Pete Brown took the NE¼ of Sec. 30. Native unknown, he came from Iowa. Isaac Rakestraw took the SE¼ of Sec. 4. Native of Illinois, but came here from Indiana. Mr. Raven homesteaded the SW¼ of Sec. 10, but never moved onto it. Miss Mary Rakestraw held it in the name of Miller here. Wm. Bell took the NW¼ of Sec. 28, native unknown, he came from Iowa here. T. J. Hall took the NE¼ of Sec. 8. A native of Illinois, but came from Iowa here. James Burwell took the NW¼ of Sec. 8, native unknown, he came from Iowa here. T. J. Hall took the NE¼ of Sec. 8, a native of Illinois, but came from Iowa. John Mead took the W½ of the SE¼ of Sec. 8, he was the step-son of T. J. Hall. Henry Sinn took the E½ of the SE¼ of Sec. 8, a native of Germany, former residence unknown; but came from Illinois here. T. W. Conroy took the SE¼ of Sec. 10, native of England, but came from Iowa to Nebraska. E. G. Beers took the SW¼ of Sec. 8, native unknown, he came from Wisconsin here. James Burwell took the NW¼ of Sec. 8, native unknown, he came from Iowa here. Isaac Rakestraw took the NE¼ of Sec. 8, a native of Illinois, but came from Iowa. Charles Minney took the NW¼ of Sec. 6, a native of Ohio and came from there here. Francis Alvy took the SW¼ of Sec. 6, native unknown, he came from Iowa here. B. F. Turner took the SW¼ of Sec. 18, a native of Ohio, and came from there here. J. E. Miller took the SW¼ of Sec. 12, a native of Ohio, and came from there here. Francis Alvy took the SW¼ of Sec. 12, a native of Ohio, and came from there here. J. E. Miller took the SW¼ of Sec. 12, a native unknown, he came from Iowa here. T. J. Hall took the NE¼ of Sec. 12. Native unknown, he came from Illinois. John Cole took the SW¼ of Sec. 12, a native of Pennsylvania, but came from Iowa. John Cole took the SE¼ of Sec. 12, a native of Pennsylvania, but came from Illinois here. John Cole took the SW¼ of Sec. 12, a native unknown, he came from Iowa here. H. W. Williams (Banty) took the NW¼ of Sec. 6, a native of Ohio and came from there here. A. M. Rex took the NW¼ of Sec. 28, native unknown, he came from Illinois here. Alex McKee and his brother Wm. Miller took the SW¼ of Sec. 18, a native of Ohio, and came from there here. Alex McKee took the NW¼ of Sec. 18, Irish and came from Canada. George Criswell took the SW¼ of Sec. 18, a native of Ohio, and came from there here. J. Seese took the NE¼ of Sec. 12, a native of Iowa, and came from there here. [Benjamin] Spelte took the NE¼ of Sec. 12, a native of Germany, came from Illinois. John Cole took the SE¼ of Sec. 12, native unknown, he came from Iowa here. Josiah Sheppard took the SE¼ of Sec. 30, a native of Ohio, but came from Illinois. Ely Shultz took the NW¼ of Sec. 30, native unknown, but came from Iowa. J. W. Williams (Banty) took the NE¼ of Sec. 30, a native of Ohio and came from there here. Francis Alvy took the SW¼ of Sec. 30, native unknown, he came from Iowa here. Charles Minney took the NW¼ of Sec. 28, a native of Illinois, and came from there here. Alex McKee and his brother Wm. Miller took the SW¼ of Sec. 18, a native of Ohio, and came from there here.}

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Belle Prairie Township
the SE ¼ of Sec. 18, a native of Germany, but came from Illinois. Christ Dunker took the E ¼ of the NE ¼, a native of Germany, but came from Illinois. His mother-in-law took the W ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 18. A Mr. Hicky took the W ½ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 18. John Goodwin took the S ½ of the SW ¼ of Sec. 34, a native of Indiana and came from there. C. Shaffer took the N ¼ of the SW ¼ of Sec. 34, a native of Ohio, but came from Iowa. Wm. Goodwin took the NW ¼ of Sec. 32, a native of Indiana, and came from there. Peter Eggenberger and mother-in-law took the NW ¼ of Sec. 20, and two old ladies, relatives of Mr. Eggenberger, their names I have forgotten took the NE ¼ of Sec. 20, natives of Switzerland, and came from there direct. Peter Peterson and son, Hans, took the SW ¼ of Sec. 20, natives of Sweden, and came from there.

In the fall of 1872, G. S. Crawford took the W ½ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 26, a native of Pennsylvania, but moved from Iowa to Nebraska. In the fall of 1874 George and James Bridgewood took the SE ¼ of Section 10, natives of New York, but came from Iowa.

Peter Eggenberger and mother-in-law took the NW ¼ of Sec. 20, and two old ladies, relatives of Mr. Eggenberger, their names I have forgotten took the NE ¼ of Sec. 20, natives of Switzerland, and came from there direct. Peter Peterson and son, Hans, took the SW ¼ of Sec. 20, natives of Sweden, and came from there.

It will be noticed that only the even number of sections has been taken as homesteads. The Congress of the United States passed a law granting every alternate section to the railroad; to the Santa Fe &

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 26</th>
<th>Homesteaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE ¼</td>
<td>G. S. Crawford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW ¼</td>
<td>George S. Bridgewood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Belle Prairie Township Homestead Map

[Map of Belle Prairie Township Homesteads]
10-mile limit cut off the North East corner of the township, leaving Secs. 2, 4, 12 and the north half of 10 outside the double minimum lands. These sections were taken by people who had never served in the army. These taking a full quarter section except in the above numered sections were Veterans of the Civil War. In the whole 6 sections of homestead land 32 soldiers had settled, making an average of two, to the section. The states they migrated from to Belle Prairie numbered sections were Veterans of the Civil War. In the whole 6

...
ground pipes, buried to a depth of five feet, are radiated four ways from the pump. With the addition of 100 feet of hose from each tap, the entire cemetery can be watered. There are five frostproof taps and the pressure is enough that all can be operated at one time.

"This project was installed by donations from interested friends. Work was donated in preparation for the installation of this project by Strang residents and business firms from near-by communities.

"The pit was dug gratuitously by Junior Lentfer of Strang. Ernest Anderson, also of Strang, donated the mason work and Fred Ough of Strang donated the hose sprinkler. The brick was donated and delivered by the A. Koehler Co. of Geneva. The trench work was donated by the Kister & Walker Construction Company of Geneva.

"Numerous other people have donated their time and labor. More than $1,000 has been collected and donations are still coming in.

"The peony bed in the northeast corner of the cemetery includes about 280 plants donated by Mrs. Henry Wernimont of Geneva as a memorial to her late husband. The bed was planted last fall and came through the winter without a single loss. Many of the plants are budded.

"The Memorial Day service will be held at the church at 2 P.M. May 30. Dr. Frank E. Pfoutz of the Geneva Methodist Church will give the address. There will be special numbers of music.

"The service at the cemetery will be in charge of the Geneva American Legion. The Ohiowa School Band, under the direction of Ben Fussell of Geneva, will give a concert.

"Mr. and Mrs. N. N. Brown, Edgar Miller, and many others interested in the cemetery have given many hours to the progress of this fine community project."

There are 25 G.A.R. veterans, two Spanish-American War veterans, and at last check, six World War I and two World War II veterans buried in Harmony Cemetery. The Harmony Upkeep also owns the little church just across the road north of the cemetery. This church seems to have been built around 1889, having been formed by the people in that community at the time. Mrs. Edith Walker of Alexandria, who remembers that as a child of 10 she went to this church, supplied this information. The church and its contents were purchased for $340 on February 5, 1900, by an M. E. Church committee consisting of L. S. Wells, J. Shephard, and W. C. Hervet.

District No. 36 is included under the history of Strang.

**SCHOOLS**

District No. 36 (Prairie Grove school)—taken about 1890.

District No. 37, known as Prairie Grove school, was located one mile E of the Hamilton township line and one mile N of the Thayer County line, on what is now U. S. 81, on the NW corner of Sec. 32. This school was organized in 1876. It served its purpose well for 75 years. After the school closed in 1951, the buildings were sold and moved away in 1953.

On Sunday, June 29, 1953, a reunion was held on the grounds. Many of the old pupils were present, among them Chris Reichert of Bruning, who started to the school in 1881. His teacher was Jennie Deselms. The oldest lady present was Mrs. G. C. Bruning, who became a pupil in 1888 and whose teacher was Carl Wilson.

District No. 38, better known as Harmony school, was located 3 miles S of Strang and 3 miles E of U. S. 81, on the NW corner of Sec. 26. The first record of the school was found in a treasurer's book dated 1888. In 1912, the original building burned down and school was held at the Albert Stowell farm until a new school was built. When this new schoolhouse was partly burned in 1929, classes were held in a building on the Henry Hopken farm.

Mrs. Edith Walker of Alexandria tells us that her grandmother, Mrs. Mary Heague, homesteaded the 80 acres on which the Harmony schoolhouse stands. Mrs. Heague's home was a sod house on the SW corner. Later a sod house was made east of the schoolhouse, where Mrs. Walker's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Adam Rex, lived and where she and her brother were born.

District No. 42, known as Goldenrod school, was 4 miles E of Strang on the SW corner of Sec. 1. County Superintendent John A. Dempster organized the school September 14, 1872. He appointed A. S. Burns to call the first
meeting for election of school board members on September 28, 1872. The first teacher was Susan Mott.

Some of the people who served this school during its 87-year life are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872-73</td>
<td>Susan Mott</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$22.50 mo.</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-74</td>
<td>Mary Mott</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$22.50 mo.</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>Mary Mott</td>
<td>2 mo.</td>
<td>$22.50 mo.</td>
<td>Thomas Matson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>E. E. Corbin</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$20.00 mo.</td>
<td>Thomas Matson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>Sadie Mosier</td>
<td>4 mo.</td>
<td>$25.00 mo.</td>
<td>George Matson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Sadie Mosier</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$30.00 mo.</td>
<td>George Matson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-79</td>
<td>Eleanor Matson</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$30.00 mo.</td>
<td>George Matson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>Chester Metcalf</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$30.00 mo.</td>
<td>George Matson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>William Evans</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$28.00 mo.</td>
<td>John Near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Elmer D. Town</td>
<td>2½ mo.</td>
<td>$28.00 mo.</td>
<td>John Near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>Carol Jones</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>$30.00 mo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>Carol Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Mabel Cradduck ended the 1957-58 term, school in District 42 was discontinued and the district contracted for one year with the Ohiowa school. On June 1, 1959, District 42 formally joined with the Ohiowa public school (District 40).

The Chris Dunker family (taken in 1897 or 1898). Chris Dunker (father), Mrs. Chris Dunker (mother), James Dunker (son), Herman Dunker (son), Julia Dunker (daughter), Minnie Dunker (daughter).

Chris Dunker filed homestead entry rights in the spring of 1872. He and his brother Charlie came to Alexandria from Moline, Illinois, to stay with friends and to look for land. Chris made his homestead on the E ¼ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 18. The brothers had the first two-room house in that locality, built by W. J. Mosier and Frank Sauer with lumber brought from Lincoln. After the house was finished, Mrs. Dunker and daughter Julia, who was only one year old, came to settle in their new home. This farm was the birthplace of James, Minnie, Herman, and Theresa. Theresa passed away when a small child. Chris later purchased 280 acres of land next to his homestead. Mr. and Mrs. Dunker made this homestead their home until Mrs. Dunker’s death on March 12, 1919. Upon the passing of their parents, James came into possession of the 80, Julia, Minnie, and Herman received the home place and the remainder of the land. They lived there until the fall of 1952 when they purchased a home in Geneva. Mr. and Mrs. Willard Rippe and family moved to the Dunker farm to keep the line intact. Mrs. Rippe is a great-granddaughter of the Chris Dunkers.

Mr. and Mrs. William G. Gewacke (taken in June, 1902).

William George Gewacke was born January 28, 1871, on a farm near Beecher, Illinois, the first child of Christoph and Sophie Gewecke. His mother died in September, 1872. His father remarried, to Marie Sophia Richerdt, in 1877 and
shortly thereafter moved to a farm 5 miles SW of Ohiowa, where for several years they lived in a sod house. During their first year in Nebraska it was not uncommon to have bands of roving Indians come and steal anything outside that was loose, particularly any colored clothes which might be hanging out to dry.

In 1892, he and his parents moved to a farm near Sharon Springs, Wallace County, Kansas, but in 1894 returned to Fillmore County to live southeast of Ohiowa. As a young man he worked as a hired hand on farms. After leaving home he changed the spelling of his name from "Gewecke" to "Gewacke."

On March 25, 1902, he was married to Elizabeth Wernimont, born April 16, 1872, at Varna, Illinois. In February, 1881, she came with her parents, Theodore and Catharine Wernimont, and her brothers and sisters, on a long train journey in an "immigrant car" which contained all of their possessions, including a cow and a team of horses. They arrived in Belvidere, the nearest railroad point at that time.

In the summer before, her father had come to Nebraska and built a small frame house upon a quarter section of land 4 miles W of Ohiowa. They traveled from Belvidere to their new home by bob-sled through the deep snows which then covered the plains.

The Burlington R.R. line which now passes through Ohiowa was built across their farm in the spring and summer of 1886. In October, 1886, Elizabeth watched the first train that crossed southern Fillmore County.

After her marriage she and William lived the remainder of their lives on a farm 3 miles W of Ohiowa. To this marriage were born two sons, Clyde William Gewacke, born August 11, 1905, and John Clifford Gewacke, born October 30, 1907. Clyde was married January 23, 1936, to Thelma Burt. John was married August 16, 1942, to Dorothy Knight. There are five grandchildren: Margaret Ann Nichols and Mary Ellen Gewacke, twin daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Gewacke (born September 27, 1944), and Joan Elizabeth Sarzent (born July 28, 1944), Virginia Suzanne Gewacke (born March 6, 1948), and Marilyn Ann Gewacke (born April 13, 1951), the three daughters of Mr. and Mrs. John Gewacke.


Montcure Robinson McReynolds was born on May 5, 1834, at Washingtonville, Pennsylvania, and moved with his parents to Mason County, Illinois in 1838. He married Harriet Lytell at Mason City, Illinois, on February 25, 1859. They had nine children, of whom two died in infancy. Those who survived were Mary, Robert, Minnie, Luretta, Carrie, Florence, and George, all born in Illinois.

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*Montcure and Harriet McReynolds (about 1900).*

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*Golden Wedding Party (1909) of Montcure and Harriet McReynolds.*

*Montcure and Harriet McReynolds (about 1900).*

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*Information about the McReynolds family was supplied by Miss Florence Loghry of Maywood, Nebraska, daughter of Luretta McReynolds and James Loghry.*
tion, the family discussed going to Missouri, California, or Nebraska. Mrs. "Mae" turned thumbs down on Missouri because the "James Boys" were robbing and looting there, and they agreed that California was too far away. So they settled on Nebraska.

On arriving in Fillmore County, Mr. McReynolds made arrangements for land on Sec. 29, Belle Prairie township, SE of Strang. Then he rode home, telling his wife to sell the cattle and bring the family. She sold the cattle at a good price, and she and the children came West by train. The children who came with Mrs. McReynolds were Minnie, 17; Lurette, 15; Carrie, 10; Florence, 8; and George, about 4 years old. The oldest daughter, Mary, was already married.

In the meantime, Mr. McReynolds had made a dugout for shelter, as the land was unimproved. Later, they built a house, partly in the bank, with a frame upstairs. This was the family home until 1880, when they moved to the vicinity of Genoa, Nebraska.

The move west was especially hard on the womenfolk, as they had left a comfortable home, with orchards of apple, plum, and cherry, and berry patches, to come to this prairie dugout. Lurette remembered one dirt and wind storm. Her mother had washed the place three times while preparing supper and then cried because she had to feed her family on dirty plates.

The McReynoldses were good neighbors, never happier than when "doing" for others. They were good gardeners and lovers of flowers. One of their hobbies was trying new varieties of vegetables. Neighbors visiting the "Maes" in growing season always went home with flowers, or a head of cabbage or a melon, in season.

Mr. McReynolds had an education better than average and was always a great reader. He was honest, upright, and a good citizen. His wife Harriet, who was quite religious, instilled honesty, generosity, and good moral character in the seven children.

Some of their neighbors near Strang were the Arnold, Jones, Shepherd, Gertz, Desolms, and McKeon families. The McReynoldses moved in 1902 to Frontier County and bought 400 acres of land 1 miles S of Maywood, where they lived the rest of their lives, and where they were privileged to celebrate their Golden Wedding in February, 1909. On this occasion, all their living children were present except Florence (Mrs. Phil Theobald). They had 29 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. Mr. McReynolds died in 1914 at the age of 80 years, 4 months and 12 days. His wife Harriet died in 1916.

The oldest boy, Robert, went to the city when they moved and became a streetcar man. He died on February 16, 1914. The younger, George, went to Frontier County with the family, and after the old folks' deaths continued to farm his land and his sister Carrie's share until a few years before his death in 1955.

The oldest girl, Mary, had married John B. Gaffney in Illinois. She died at the age of 52, on December 22, 1911. Minnie married David Desolms (brother of school teacher Jennie Desolms), and moved to Bertrand, later to Edison, passing away at the age of 92. Lurette (Lou) married James Loghry, who moved to Frontier County, 5 miles S of the McReynolds place; she died at 67 years of age. Florence married Phil Theobald; in Fillmore County; after some moving about, he settled near Pine Bluffs, Wyoming, where she later died at the age of 90.

The only unmarried daughter—"Aunt Carrie" to generations of friends and neighbors—learned the dressmaking trade at Friend, and worked for families around Strang as long as they lived in Fillmore County. She too went to Frontier County, and after her parents' deaths, moved to Nebraska. "The land was tried in the same kettle. The cracklings and lye were put in the kettle and soap was also cooked outside.

In the year 1870, George Matson came from Marengo, Iowa, and homesteaded the SW 1/4 of Sec. 2. His first home was a dugout built in a draw on the northwest side of the land. In 1873, he built a three-room frame house on the south side of the land (now marked by Highway 74). The following year (January, 1874), he married Rachel Pumphrey. This house was their home until 1891, when a larger two-story house was built near the same location. This homestead still stands in the name of the heirs of George Matson. He had four children, John W., Charles L., and Edith Mae Matson, and Rena L. Ward. John had three children, Dorothy Matson, Mrs. Vera Darby, and Mrs. Della Thorougohood. Edith Mae is the last survivor among George Matson's children. The homestead now is in the name of Edith Mae and three grandchildren. It is still registered in the original U. S. patent deed, since it has never been sold.

Strang

Strang was the largest village in Belle Prairie township at the time of its incorporation on November 3, 1886. The nearest towns to it then were Ohiowa, Shickley, and Geneva.

The first building in Strang was the west elevator. It burned down in 1902 and was replaced by the present one (1956). The first elevator man and stock shipper was Anthony Koehler. The Koehlers still operate the two elevators in Strang (much expanded) as well as a lumber, coal, and hardware business there.

Among the first houses built in Strang were the home of M. L. Matson, two and one-half blocks west of Main Street, and a two-story structure across the street from it, later owned by Mr. and Mrs. Adam Sallomon. Another old house, which has been remodeled, on the SE corner of Strang, is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Jess Messman. Still another, two blocks east of Main Street on the south side of the street, was originally owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Schilling, now of Lincoln. The present owners are Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Anderson.

 Churches

As early as 1884, preaching services were held 3 miles E of Strang by the Rev. R. G. Carter.

United Brethren Church, Strang (about 1890). When the village of Strang was established, the present church (later remodeled) of the Evangelical United Brethren was erected. Originally called the United Brethren Church, its first minister was the Rev. R. G. Carter. Over the years, 50 ministers served this church, which until the last decade or so remained a prosperous body with an active Ladies' Aid. This congregation is now disbanded. The parsonage, which was moved to Strang in 1891, has been remodeled and rented out. At the present time, the Salem Mennonite Church, southwest of Strang, holds Sunday School and worship services here. Up until 1955 the Evangelical Church had held an auction, bazaar, and supper at the schoolhouse for three successive years. These were well attended, and the money raised helped to support the church.

At one time there was a Methodist Church in Strang, but this was disbanded and the building was sold around 1917 to the late Harvey Parks of Bruning. No records of this church seem to have survived.

The original hotel building in Strang. Its general appearance has not changed.

There are two landmarks in Strang which are much the same as in the early years. One-half block east of Main Street is a house which was the town's first hotel, run by J. R. Piersol. The two-story building on the east side of Main Street, now owned and used by Rebekah and I.O.O.F. lodges, is equally old.
A Congregational Church was organized April 5, 1887, and dedicated July 10, 1887. The Reverend J. J. Robertson was pastor. This church disbanded in 1934.

School—District No. 36

A sod schoolhouse was built March 12, 1872, on the NW ¼ of Sec. 8, T5, R2W, now owned by Ellis Bumgarner. At that time District 36 included Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18. In 1886, the E ¼ of the SW ¼ and the S ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 12 were added. Later the same year, the SE ¼ of Sec. 4, the E ¼ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 8, all of Secs. 9 and 16, and also the W ½ of Sec. 17 were detached from it.

Around 1879, a frame schoolhouse on Sec. 7 replaced the sod building. This was also used for church services until the village of Strang was established. The Reverend R. G. Carter was the minister. The NE corner of the ground is now owned by the Roy Christiancy heirs.

School—District No. 36

The old Strang school building after being moved to the present school location in 1908. This picture was taken in 1923. The school faculty were (left to right) Lale Scofield, Stella Gilmore, Hannah Gilmore, and Vera Shepherd.

Main Street, Strang, looking south from the railroad (taken before 1909).

After the village of Strang was incorporated on November 3, 1886, a new two-story schoolhouse was built on Sec. 7 at the SE edge of town. This school, which included 10 grades, was moved in 1908 to Sec. 7 on the NE corner. The building was bricked over and made to include 12 grades. In 1928, this school burned down and a modern school for 12 grades was built in 1929. Owing to consolidation, the high school has now been discontinued but there still is an accredited eight-grade school which includes rural near-by districts.
Strang's gift was "accidental," after the fact, or whether the town fathers named the town for him on purpose. No matter: it was a long-useful gift, and gave Mr. Strang at least the same kind of municipal immortality as that befalling a man who builds a skyscraper to which he gives his name.

While the village was still "Media," the railroad was having a well dug not far from the school. This railroad well, in use until 1954, was dug by hand. One day while the diggers were gone for their noonday meal, a group of boys and girls from the school, including James Dunker and his sisters Julia and Minnie, dared someone to go down in the bucket used in digging the well. The largest boy of the group, William ("Bill") Coon, took the challenge and went down. The boys at the top were too small to pull him up and so they had to round up some older boys to get Bill out of the well. By the time Bill was rescued, the school bell rang and all started on a quarter-mile run for the schoolhouse. The boys got there on time but the girls, who could not run fast enough to make it, all had to stay in after school. After the well diggers reached water, they had to suspend operations until the railroad was completed so that rock could be shipped in.

Burlington Water Tank at Strang. This later burned down with a tank full of water.

The first graduating class of the Strang school was in 1896, the last in 1951. At this final graduation, the descendants of Chris Dunker were especially honored. Chris Dunker, homesteader, served on the school board 45 years. His son, James, who lived near Strang, was on the board 35 years. Five generations of the Chris Dunker family have been connected with the school.

The first Strang School Alumni Reunion, sponsored by the Belle Prairie Homemakers' Extension Club and Ladies' Aid, was held November 5, 1954, at the Strang schoolhouse. This first reunion brought together 61 out of a total 186 graduates. A second Alumni meeting was held in 1955, sponsored by the same group of ladies. At that time it was voted to have another graduate homecoming in 1958. Other reunions have been held since; the most recent was in 1966, with another planned for 1968.

Girls' Strang School Basketball Team, 1926-27.  Top row, left to right: Alice Gilbert, Coach; Margaret Kiester; Alma Hopken, Captain; and Lois Witt.  Center row, left to right: Una Witt, Hazel Houck; Leona Dunker.  Front row, left to right: Josephine Dunker, Ruby Houchin, and Bonita Butler.  These girls won 13 out of 15 games played.

very well and the play was a pleasing success." "Commencement exercises will be held at the Opera House on Thursday evening, May 19." "The senior class spent the day of the 22nd in Hebron at the Day Studio." "Helen Thompson, who had the misfortune of breaking her leg while playing at school, is able to be back with us again."

"Bonita Butler, Harold Steffens, Winona Butler, Virgil Steffens, Kenneth Mitchell, and Walter Christiancy have been neither absent nor tardy this month." "If you want to know about verbs, ask Harold Steffens." "Russell seems to attend to the class work of his neighbors lately.

The man on the left is C. W. Witt; the other man is unidentified.
The following poem, which appeared in the Strang Reporter, was written about 1908 by Mrs. Minnie Simmerman, a Strang resident:

STRANG IN RHYME

In our airship we set sail
And westward took a fly.
And as we passed o'er the city of Strang
Sailing fast and high.
We saw a hand outstretched to us,
Beckoning us to hail.
We took a dive and landed near
The telephone office door.

Soon before us was unrolled
Ten yards of rhyme or more,
Telling all about the people,
And every shop or store;
So we made haste on our return.

The first great thing that we recount
Is our station agent here,
To sharp your plows, and fix your gigs,
And toot our horn a bit.

Are Cole's and Posson's stores
Packed full of goods, all up to date;
A nobby fitting pair.
And ladies' finest wear,
And pay up as you go;
Safe and sound we know.

Isaac Theobald with flour and grain,
Wm. Pumphrey is on foot,
Pays well for grain, sells flour cheap,
Or painter, if you please,
With all dispatch and greatest ease.

D. W. Simms is our postmaster,
And in his office you will find
Dr. Hickman is the young man
He doctors you clear thru and thru
To sharp your plows, and fix your gigs,
And make the sick man whole.

J. H. Schilling, paper hanger
Or painter, if you please,
And he'll adorn the most forlorn
With all dispatch and greatest ease.
Art Brown is the man
That furnishes the beef,
And tender roasts he sells you
To the housewife's great relief.

J. Rakestraw is the restaurant man
Who dishes up the hash;
It's understood their grub is good
And always cheap for cash;
But I declare I most forgot
His bread so good and sweet—
His buns are rare, and I declare
They simply can't be beat.
And here's our friend Mrs. Ella Sauer
And sister Julia too,
The Intermediate room,
And her sister Maude, in the primary
Is very much alive,
And runs a shoe shop fine,
To sharp your plows, and fix your gigs,
And toot our horn a bit.

And Geo. Workman is right in place
That furnishes the beef,
To the housewife's great relief.

Powell and Grone the elevators run,
And also hold the fort;
They buy your grain at market price,
And not a penny short.

W. J. Wells with his livery barn
Will furnish a rig that spins
And if you want a driver
He'll drive you out and in.

Koebler & Co. with coal and lumber
Are very much alive;
And F. E. Brown sells them cheap,
And so makes business thrive.
Mrs. Smith and Simmerman
Are telephone girls you know;
And always ready to answer you
By ringing out "Hello!"

We have three churches spick and span
Where you can worship free,
Praise God from whom blessings flow
Both here and over the sea.

Here's our schools, they're our pride;
They're always called, "fust-rate;"
Prof. Husman did preside
And kept them up-to-date;
Miss Nellie Wilson, she is in
The intermediate room,
And her sister Maude, in the primary
Is making business boom.

In lodges we are well supplied:
Odd Fellows, good and true.
Royal Neighbors lodge is here,
And Degree of Honor, too;
The Court of Honor shines from afar,
And lights you on your way;
M.W.A. and A.O.U.W.
All good and true are they.

Village board are Brown and Simms,
Pumphrey, Houck and Aldkins,
Messman as treasurer, Cole as clerk,
They keep us all from starvin'.

Our station agent here,
To the housewife's great relief.

S. A. Allman the rural mail
He brings it round precise.
He licks and licks, your stamp be sticks
All at the same old price.

I'll take in the town and simply say
"Hurrah, Hurrah for STRANG."
Businesses

At one time Strang boasted the following place of business: a depot, two elevators, a bank, a hotel, a lumberyard, a coal dealer, three grocery and dry-goods stores, two millinery stores, a butcher shop, a newspaper, a printer, a shoe shop and shoe repair, a drugstore, a hardware store, furniture and undertaking shop, a wagon and harness repair shop, a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, a feed mill, a railroad coal chute, and a saloon. There were also two doctors, a dentist, and a photographer.

Lloyd Monroe, and one of his teams at his livery barn, located where Elmer Messman's shop now stands.

Since 1902 there have been at least eight fires which have destroyed business places. Although some of these were replaced, most were not. With the present ease of transportation by car to larger communities, rebuilding seemed unnecessary. There are now in Strang a Burlington depot (freight trains go through two or three times a week), two elevators, a lumber yard, a hardware and grocery store, a produce station, and a cafe. There is a post office which provides good mail service; it has been in charge of Postmistress Laveva (Mrs. Harry) Gawacke since September 1, 1961. N. N. Brown has been mayor of Strang for 44 years (since May 1, 1923). The town board is made up (1967) of N. N. Brown, Charley Hobbs, Louis Tonkinson, Paul Harms, and Glenn Hintz.

Strang's newspaper was the Strang Reporter, of which the late Frank Bauer was editor. A news item of 1887 reports, "Citizens of Strang burned off the prairies surrounding Strang to avoid danger to the town from prairie fires." The first issue of the Reporter for November 2, 1883 (in the possession of Mrs. Grace Eich, the former Grace Messman), reports Mrs. Eich's birth: "The home of William Messman was gladdened Sunday by the arrival of their first baby girl." Other news in this paper, a weekly two-page affair 15" x 21" in size, was largely political, as it was near election time. Besides the Republican and Democratic parties there was also a People's party (Populists). President Grover Cleveland received a write-up, and some of the advertisements in the Reporter are as follows:

"L. Vanzele. Dealer in Flour, Feed and Exchange."
"Bargains at all times for cash, O. O. Thomas."
"Strang State Bank — Banking, Farm Loans, Insurance — Produce exchange — Elmer Messman, Manager."
"Frank Baand & Koehler Co. — Wholesale and Retail — Grain and feed — Chix feed."
"Trade with Us — We carry a full line of Groceries, Dry Goods, and Shoes — Highest prices paid for Cream, Poultry, and Eggs — Soda and Pop."
"Conegolmy by Yard — Very attractive, very durable, and very reasonably priced — Earl Cristiancy, Dealer in Hardware and Lumber.

"C. S. Bridgwood — Contractor and Builder — Manufacturer of Cement Blocks — All work appreciated."

Mail and Phone Service

Peter Eggenberger started the idea of the first rural mail route, which was established out of Strang in 1903. Arthur Allsman, a Strang citizen, was the first rural mail carrier. The original mail route was 24 miles long and had about 70 patrons. Later, it increased to 27 miles and served about 77 patrons.

Electricity

The residents of Strang had the convenience of electric lights on the streets when Consumers Public Power wired them in January, 1923. On May 25, 1923, the homes of Strang were rendered more efficient with the installation of domestic electricity. Consumers also electrified farm homes within 3/4 mile S and E of the town. Frank Eich was the first to have lights on this route, in 1928, when they were

1. Who was the first resident in Strang? M. L. Matson
2. Who operated the first station agent? Kenyon
3. Who was the first in business in Strang? A. Kocher
4. Who was the first resident in Strang? W. J. Mosier
5. Who was the first to have lights on? Frank Eich
6. Who was the first newspaper man? A. L. Scott — The Record
7. Who was the first farmer to have electricity in Strang? Frank Eich
8. Who was the first constable in Strang? W. A. Simms
9. Who was the first to have electricity in Strang? Frank Eich
10. Who was the first to have electricity in Strang? Frank Eich
11. Who was the first to have electricity in Strang? Frank Eich
12. Who conducted the first hotel? J. R. Piersol
13. Who operated the first bank? A. J. Hettinger
14. Who was the first blacksmith? George Vodra
15. Who was the first apothecary in Strang? L. S. (Sanford) Darling
16. Who was the first physician in Strang? T. Leeman
17. Who operated the first meat market in Strang? Bridgwood & Matson
18. Who operated the first general store in Strang? J. M. Bender
19. Date of first lodge organization in Strang? A. O. U. W., June 25, 1887
20. First carpenters living in Strang? W. J. Mosier and Massey
21. Who operated the first horse stable in Strang? J. M. Bender
22. Who operated the first elevator in Strang? A. Koehler
23. Who was the first stock shipper in Strang? A. Koehler
24. Who was the first minister in Strang? Rev. R. G. Carter
25. Who was the first liveryman in Strang? J. H. Bridgwood
26. Who was the first postmaster in Strang? J. H. Bridgwood — 1886
27. Who was the first postmaster in Strang? J. H. Bridgwood — 1886
28. Who was the first newspaper man? A. L. Scott — The Record
29. Who was the first editor in Strang? J. R. Piersol
30. Who was the first mayor in Strang? W. A. Simms
31. Who was the first to have lights on? Frank Eich
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Living 1/4 mile S and 1/2 mile E of Strang. In the fall of 1950, the R.E.A. came down on the road 1/4 mile W of Strang, making power available to more people.

The first irrigation well in Belle Prairie township was put down on the farm of Jack Hinrichs, 3 miles S and 3 miles E of Strang. By February 21, 1957, the number of wells had risen to 30, and by January 1, 1967, there were 45 irrigation wells in the township.

The first irrigation well in Belle Prairie township was put down on the farm of Jack Hinrichs, 3 miles S and 3 miles E of Strang. By February 21, 1957, the number of wells had risen to 30, and by January 1, 1967, there were 45 irrigation wells in the township.

For some years free motion picture shows during the summer were sponsored by the following Strang businesses: Koehler Lumber & Grain Co., managed by Charley Hobbs, assisted by John Jansen, the depot agent; Albert Butler, Hardware and Groceries, run by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Messman; Lowell Messman, operator of the Produce Station; Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ebbeke, owners of the Strang Cafe; Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Messman of the Post Office, and others.

In 1910 N. N. Brown organized a baseball club in Strang, and continued to manage it until the close of the 1929 season. At first the club traveled to neighboring towns by a hack hired from the Strang Livery Barn. When automobiles came into use, they traveled by car and were able to play clubs at greater distances.

In 1913, several special excursion trains ran from Grafton and Fairmont to Strang. In order to get the service, the ball club gave the railroad company a certified check for $50. Sometimes more than 300 people would take advantage of these excursions. The ball park was then located 1/2 mile from the Strang depot on the west side of the road on Sec. 7. Earl Boering from Dunning, Nebraska, and Lloyd Monroe of Strang were the battery.

The Meridian League was organized in the early twenties, and continued for several years. An old schedule in the possession of N. N. Brown shows 10 towns in the league. They were Tobias, Exeter, Sutton, Geneva, Strang, Milligan, Fairmont, Belvidere, Ohiowa, and Grafton.

When Strang won the M. L. pennant in 1929-1930, Mr. Brown chose for his boys silk watch fobs each with a gold baseball on it. These were given by the Spalding Sporting Goods Co. Bob Logan, whose father had been a depot agent at Strang, was playing with Strang at Sutton when the State League spotter signed him up. He started playing professional baseball in 1930.

In 1937, Elmer Messman organized a baseball team made up of some boys in high school and some out of high school. This team played 22 straight winning games. The battery were Lowell Messman, Herman Everts, and Walter Christiancy.
Bennett Township

Bennett township, on the west edge of Fillmore County, is bounded on the north by Grafton, on the east by Geneva, and on the south by Momence townships, and on the west by Clay County. It differs from the other precincts of the county in that it has no towns, churches, rivers, railroads, or highways, although its southern boundary is marked by Nebraska 41. In one considerable respect it is like all the other townships: farming constitutes its financial basis and background. Its southern sections are crossed from east to west by a branch of Turkey Creek. Thanks to experience of drouth years and to technical progress, the township had, by mid-1966, a total of 73 irrigation wells.

It was named for Allen Bennett, son of Josiah and Mary Bennett, who were among the first settlers in the precinct. Their first home was a sod house in the SE ¼ of Sec. 8, T7N, R4W, and in this house Allen was born. It was also in this sod house that the first school was held in District 64, with Allen’s mother as teacher at a wage of $12 a month. Here she rocked the cradle of the young Allen as she imparted the rudiments of learning to other young Americans.

SCHOOLS

In September, 1872, John A. Dempster, county superintendent, organized Bennett township into four school districts, by the simple process of drawing two bisecting lines which divided the precinct into four quarters of nine sections each. These he numbered as follows: Southeast, District No. 61, Northeast, No. 62, Southwest, No. 63, and Northwest, No. 64.

On September 26, in accordance with the school laws, he sent to a qualified voter in each district a notice of his school’s organization and setting a time and place for the first meeting to be held to elect a school board. It then became the duty of this voter to relay the message to each of the other qualified voters in the district and to hand to the chairman of the meeting a list of those notified.

District No. 61 was set up to consist of Secs. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, and 36. Thomas Ackland was notified that the first meeting to elect officers would be held at his home on October 12, 1872. This was the third school organized in the precinct. School was held for a number of years in the home of David Frolic, with Mrs. Frolic as teacher.

District No. 62 constituted Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. The first meeting to elect officers was held in the home of J. B. Lewis on October 5, 1872. The first school in Bennett township was held in the Lewis sod house, with Mr. Lewis as teacher at a salary of $25 a month. It began on November 1, 1872.

District No. 63 used to be situated on the SE ¼ of Sec. 30 but in 1889 was moved to the SE corner of Sec. 29, where it remained.

The organization meeting was held in the home of P. M. Robbins at 2 p.m. on Saturday October 5, 1872. David Kreachbaum having notified the following voters: Barnett Isley, A. Sherwood, Gilbert Sherwood, Andrew Sherwood, Elihu Hambleton, George W. Hambleton, C. S. Hooper, P. M. Robbins, and David Kreachbaum.

P. M. Robbins was chosen temporary chairman; the officers elected were: Aden G. Sherwood, director; P. M. Robbins, moderator; and David Kreachbaum, treasurer.

Quoting from the minutes: “After discussing the propriety of voting bonds for school purposes and holding a winter term of school, it was decided to let the matter lay over until the annual meeting to be held the following April.”

Evidently this did not prove satisfactory to a majority, for at a special meeting on March 11, 1873, in the home of G. W. Highley, it was voted to hold a spring term of school of three months, from April 1 to July 1, 1873, with the teacher’s wages fixed at $12 per month.

This first school was held in the home of C. S. Hooper with Miss Mary Isley, daughter of Barnett Isley, as first teacher. She received the munificent sum of $36 for the three months of teaching.

No record is available of those who attended, but the list is known to have included John Isley and Martha Isley.

The first annual meeting was held in the home of G. W. Highley on Monday, April 1, 1873. At this meeting Barnett Isley was elected treasurer and thereafter served on the school board. Those who attended were B. Isley, David Kreachbaum, A. G. Sherwood, G. W. Highley, C. S. Hooper, and P. M. Robbins.

Because it was typical of many first meetings of that early time, and the schoolhouse described therein was the typical sod schoolhouse of that day, the details of building and furnishing a schoolhouse, as contrasted with similar expenses today, are most interesting.

A part of the minutes of that meeting are quoted here: “Motion was made by A. G. Sherwood, seconded by David Kreachbaum, that a tax of 10 mills on the dollar on the taxable property of the district be made for a schoolhouse fund to continue for one year and that a tax of 5 mills be voted to be used in any way required to sustain a school and furnish the house in a proper manner and to pay the teacher and any other indebtedness that the district might incur according to law. Motion carried since homesteads were not taxed, etc.”

“Motion made by G. W. Highley, seconded by A. G. Sherwood, that there be a sod schoolhouse built in the district to be 14 x 18 ft. inside with walls 2 ft. thick and 6½ ft. high with a board roof and sod covering. To have a door and 4 glass windows to be built in a good workmanlike manner and furnished with seats sufficient to seat 20 persons, to be finished on or before the first day of October, 1873.” No mention is made of a floor, since the ground usually served as such.

“Motion made by David Kreachbaum, seconded by G. W. Highley, that the schoolhouse be built on the SE ¼ of Sec. 20, that being the homestead of G. W. Highley, and that an agreement be made between the board and G. W. Highley that the house may be removed at any time a majority of the legal voters of the district shall so decide. Motion carried.”
“Motion made by A. G. Sherwood that the district award the contract of building said schoolhouse to C. S. Hooper for the sum of $150 to be paid in a district order. Carried.”

“Motion made by B. Isley, seconded by C. S. Hooper, that a three months school be held in the district to commence the 1st of December, 1873. Motion carried.”

After so much detailed planning, the work eventually came to naught. Several new homesteaders had come into the district that spring, and the board realized that the number of pupils had outgrown the schoolhouse before it was built.

The second term of school was held in the home of P. M. Robbins, with Mr. Robbins as teacher at a salary of $20 per month. According to the superintendent’s report, there were then 19 children of school age in the district, too many to be accommodated in any home, so the settlers were determined to have a schoolhouse even if they had to bond themselves in order to build it. Accordingly they petitioned the board on January 2, 1874, before the school had begun, asking that a special meeting be called for that purpose. Most of those signing the petition had lately come into the district. Their names are therefore of interest, since they were among the early settlers. They were H. P. Wondling, Uriah W. Oblinger, M. P. Hoover, H. Cook Griffith, also Elihu and George W. Hambleton heretofore listed.

The meeting was held in the home of Aden G. Sherwood (present John Sheridan home) on February 4, 1874, with most of the men of the district in attendance. We quote from the minutes: “On motion of H. Cook Griffith, seconded by U. W. Oblinger, that part of the former minutes relating to the building of a sod schoolhouse were rescinded and it was voted to build a frame school 18 x 22 by 10 ft. high on the inside to be wainscoted 4 ft. high on 2 sides and 1 end and ceiled overhead with the balance of the surface plastered. That there were to be 6 full windows, 3 on each side with plain shutters, and 1 large door.

This description is given here because it is that of the typical cracker-box schoolhouse, thousands of which dotted the plains of Nebraska and in which most of our eminent present-day citizens received their early education but which have now all but faded from the landscape.

The board purchased two acres in the SE corner of the homestead of H. C. Griffith (SE 1/4 of Sec. 30, T7N, R4W) for 50 cents per acre. The proposed frame schoolhouse was contracted to A. F. and R. L. Clemons for $600. In later years this schoolhouse was moved to the SE corner of Sec. 29.

1. Mary Isley (first)
2. P. M. Robbins
3. Ida G. Sherwood
4. G. H. Bumgarner
5. F. A. Brownell
6. Christina Fink
7. Laverne Fingerman
8. Clyde Basey
9. Lucy Eckley
10. Bertha Thompson
11. Lillie Green
12. Millie Brown
13. Hallie Salzer
14. Elva Brown
15. Sylvia Pratt
16. Lillie Harrold
17. Guy Carson
18. Laa Boop
19. Rosy Davis
20. Pearl Wagers
21. May Smith
22. Alma Toen
23. Clara Turney
24. May Smith
25. Helen Trace
26. Agnes Konnan
27. Pearl Armstrong
28. Faye Hawkins
29. Lillie Kleinschmidt
30. Carrie Lyle
31. Mildred Clausen
32. Esther Salmen
33. Fauna Young
34. Roine Richey
35. Marita Weatherford
36. Pearl Tysell
37. Evelyn Rudd
38. Ruth Sutter
39. Doris Bruit
40. Evelyn Monavae
41. June Slutz
42. Bernice Carlson
43. Alvina Johnson
44. Joseph Moore
45. Doris Fenske (Miles) (last)

District No. 64 was the second school in the precinct, where the first schoolhouse was built. On September 26, 1872, Alonzo Lucor was notified that the first meeting was to be held at the home of Josiah Bennett on Thursday, October 10. Mr. Lucor notified the following voters: R. Gell, William Gell, A. Tooker, S. J. Case, James Donnelly, E. Angel, O. Angel, J. Brown, E. Knee, Alonzo Lucor, and Josiah Bennett. At the meeting, Samuel J. Case was elected temporary chairman; James Donnelly, moderator; Josiah Bennett, director; and Alonzo Lucor, treasurer.

School began a few weeks after that of District 62, in the home of Josiah Bennett, with Mrs. Bennett as teacher at a salary of $12 a month.

At a special meeting called at the request of five legal voters and held in the home of Josiah Bennett on January 31, 1873, it was voted to establish the schoolhouse site on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 8, T7N, R4W, on the north line of that quarter. It was also voted that the men of the district do the work on the schoolhouse (to be completed on or before May 1, 1873), and that if any money were left in the treasury, it should be applied on the teacher’s wages for the present term. The building committee consisted of John G. Parish, Albert Tooker, and James Donnelly.

At the first annual meeting, on April 7, 1873, the board voted that teachers should not be paid more than $20 a month plus board and room, or $25 if they boarded themselves; to have three months of school commencing May 1, 1873; and to levy a tax of 10 mills for building purposes. The treasurer was also authorized to lend $100 of the district’s money if he saw fit.

The second annual meeting in 1874, held in the schoolhouse, voted to have three months of school that year, to begin in May. In 1875, they voted to have six months of...
school, the spring term to begin May 1 and the fall term October 1. In 1878, four months of school were held; in 1879, seven months; in 1880, nine months (three in summer, three in fall, and three in winter; and 1881, eight months.

In 1882, it was voted to move the schoolhouse site to exceed 90 rods south of the NE corner of the SE ¼ of Sec. 7, T7R, R4W, by a lease of five years with the privilege of 10 years. J. Spencer, J. Bennett, and Albert Tooker served as a committee to let the contract for moving the building, the move to be completed before May 1, 1882.

This location, however, did not prove acceptable to all residents of the district, especially those of the eastern part, and a special meeting was held on April 19, 1882. Since no site could be agreed upon, the meeting voted unanimously to leave the location of the site to J. B. Lewis, the county superintendent. After due deliberation, Mr. Lewis decided to leave the location of the site to J. B. Harrison, the county superintendent. After due deliberation, Mr. Lewis decided to leave the location of the site to J. B. Harrison, the county superintendent.

At the annual meeting on April 3, 1876, it was voted that a school site be located on the corner of Secs. 13, 14, 23, and 24 in T7N, R4W, on June 4, 1875. Charles H. Harrington was notified that the first meeting was to be held on June 12, 1875, at his house. Mr. Harrington notified the following legal voters of the new district: George Watkins, W. Corey, A. H. Orcutt, F. Schulz, E. S. McCashland, Geo. Harrington, F. B. Harrington, C. H. Harrison, D. Dobson, William Miles, John Starr, A. Archibald, R. J. Young, and Isaac Gosser. The records show that the meeting was held at the home of F. B. Harrington with George Watkins presiding. A. H. Orcutt was elected moderator, J. B. Harrington, director, and George F. Watkins, treasurer.

At the first annual meeting on April 3, 1876, it was voted that a school site be located on the corner of Secs. 13, 14, 23, and 24, "provided said site can be secured." They also voted to levy a 10-mill tax on the dollar for the purpose of building a schoolhouse.

According to the minutes, no schoolhouse had yet been built by April 2, 1877. However, they "voted to have a three-month school in case a suitable building can be secured for the purpose, also said school to commence on or before May 1st, 1877." Adella Lewis was hired to teach the three-month term (May through July) for a salary of $20 a month.

At the annual meeting on April 1, 1878, it was decided that the size of the schoolhouse as established in 1876 should be reconsidered. The patrons voted to build a schoolhouse 18' x 30' x 12' studding on "condition E. S. McCashland donate to the District free of charge two acres of ground on the southeast corner of said, McCashland's land now owned by him on SE ¼ of Sec. 14, T7N, R3W."

On May 25, a special meeting was called and it was decided to build a temporary building, 14' x 16' x 8' high. This building cost a sum of $62.47.

Two years later, in 1880, the permanent schoolhouse was built on the McCashland corner with certain specifications. The said building to be 18' x 28' x 12' posts and was to be completed in 40 days so "fare" as money on hand would go and said building to have an east front and said building to have a stone foundation.

At the annual meeting it was decided to have "six month school this present year" and "to employ a female teacher if one can be secured. Two months to be taught when schoolhouse is completed, the balance in the fall and winter." In 1881, the school term was lengthened to seven months and in 1882 to an eight-month term, three months to be taught in the winter, the balance to be taught in the summer and fall.

District 74 was dissolved by petition and annexed to District 16 on July 9, 1956. The last year school was held was the 1947-1948 term taught by Della Everts for a salary of $1,440.

On March 16, 1888, upon written petition signed by a majority of the qualified voters in Districts 63 and 64, the following territory was set apart to form District No. 89: from District 63, all of Secs. 19, 20, and 21; and from District 64, all of Secs. 16, 17, and 18. County Superintendent J. B. Burke fixed the time and place for the first meeting in the newly formed district at the home of James Mount on March 24, 1888, at 2 P.M.

S. J. Case was elected the first director. His report of July, 1888, to the county superintendent stated there were 20 males and 12 females between the ages of 5 and 21 in the district for a total of 32 children. Nineteen, 10 males and 9 females, attended that year. Earnest Case taught the two-month school term for a salary of $28 a month.

On May 26, 1954, the school was dissolved and annexed to District No. 2 in Clay County. The last year the school was in operation was taught by Phyllis Schinzel in 1948-1949.

FAMILIES

I, Thomas D. Ackland, third son of Thomas and Eliza Ackland, was born May 29, 1866, in Berry Arbor, England. In 1869 at the age of three I came to America with my parents, brothers, and sister. There being three sons and one daughter: John Francis, William, and Thomas D., and later Mary was born.

The family located at Kalamazoo, Michigan, where father worked at the carpenter trade for one year. (In England he had been a wheelwright).

Early in April, 1871, the family moved to Nebraska over the newly built Burlington Railroad. The road at that time ended at Crete and there our father hired a team and wagon to take us to Fillmore County, where he had previously filed a homestead in what was later named Bennett precinct, being the first to take up a claim in that precinct. When we arrived in the vicinity of our claim late in the afternoon we had a hard time locating it, since ours was the first claim taken in that precinct and the tall prairie grass which grew every-
where hid the surveyors' stakes. Finally we found a stake by which we were able to locate the approximate boundaries of our claim and our driver unloaded the few supplies we had brought with us—three trunks and a box filled with bedding. Imagine our feeling of desolation as the driver headed his team eastward, leaving us alone on (the sole occupants of) the prairie.

That night we spread the bedding on the prairie and then enclosed it with the three trunks and the box, and in this one enclosure we all slept the first night on our homestead. In the night it rained, a cold wet April rain, and we got soaking wet.

Next morning the sun came out nice and bright and we spread our clothing out to dry on the tall prairie grass. After breakfast, a slim one, because there was only set fuel with which to cook, yet it seemed like a royal banquet since it was the first meal eaten on our own land.

Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Ackland wedding picture, April 20, 1893.

Our father and brother took our only spade and went on an inspection tour of our homestead. They found a large badger hole dug in the side of a hill and beginning with this they enlarged it into a dugout. The dugout was about 8 feet wide and extended back under the hill about 12 feet—using badger hole dug in the side of a hill and beginning with this a blanket to hang over the opening, we felt very snug indeed compared with the night before.

By that night they had dug far enough back into the ground overhead for a roof and leveling the bottom for a floor. By that night they had dug far enough back into the hill so that we were able to sleep with a roof over us. With a blanket to hang over the opening, we felt very snug indeed compared with the night before.

Gradually they extended it back about 12 feet, then on the back end they dug a hole from the top down for a stovepipe.

This dugout was our home for a couple of months or until Father could get some poles hauled from the river to make a roof on a sod house which we later built. The dugout was about 8 feet wide and extended back under the hill about 12 feet—using the ground overhead for a roof and leveling the bottom for a floor. By that night they had dug far enough back into the hill so that we were able to sleep with a roof over us. With a blanket to hang over the opening, we felt very snug indeed compared with the night before.

This dugout was our home for a couple of months or until Father could get some poles hauled from the river to make a roof on a sod house which we later built. In the meantime my older brother had taken up the homestead adjoining us on the west, where the Kennedy family now lives, and we were farming a quarter section.

Then in the spring of 1873 on April 13, came the Easter Sunday storm. Although I was only seven, I remember it well. It had been raining all day Easter Sunday, but just before dark the wind changed from the southwest to the northwest, the rain changed to sleet, then to fine snow, so fine and driven with such force that few houses were sturdy enough to keep it out. We had to bring our oxen and cow and chickens into the house to keep them from freezing to death. We put the chickens under the bed and put boxes around it to keep them there. Finally we ran out of fuel and had to cut up some of our homemade furniture to keep from freezing to death. Had to melt snow for water for our stock and ourselves.

However, the snow, when it melted, gave us plenty of moisture and that year we had a good crop. The next year was a good year also. The corn looked good and most had cut their wheat. It was midsummer. The gardens were good. Then came the grasshoppers! They covered the sky like clouds, darkening the sun, They lit on the green cornstalks and the garden truck and devoured it all. Nothing green was left except sorghum. They came on July 20 and left as suddenly as they came.

Many people were discouraged and returned to the East. My brother decided that he wanted no more of farming and sold his homestead right to a man named Gelespie for a watch, not a good watch either. My parents, however, stuck it out, although it was tough sledding that winter.

After that we got on our feet again and got along fairly well. We had some good crops and some failures but managed to live through it all. We finally got a team of horses and a wagon. My brother cut the wheat with a cradle and bound it with straw by hand. A neighbor bought a threshing machine and we had him thresh it.

When we landed on the homestead there were no neighbors for miles around. A few came in that summer, but the next spring settlers came in fast and some of them had money. Then we had neighbors about a mile away. Finally about all the claims were taken and sod houses were plentiful over the prairie.

Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Ackland wedding picture, April 20, 1893.
For almost 35 years through good times and bad my parents lived on their homestead until the spring of 1905, when they moved to town.

Written by Thomas D. Ackland in his own hand in the summer of 1896 at the age of 90 years.

One of the early settlers of Bennett township was Eilert Baumann, born in Leer, Osterstrasse, Germany, December 31, 1843. He came to America in 1872 and first settled near Edwardsville, Illinois. Here Eilert met Folste Bohlen, who later became his wife. She was born July 11, 1851, in Lammerseifcn, East Friesland, Germany. She had journeyed to America with her parents in 1872, and settled near Edwardsville in June, 1881.

When word reached Edwardsville that land could be homesteaded in Nebraska, Eilert Baumann, along with several other men, decided to go west. They boarded the train and rode west as far as Grafton. The location seemed satisfactory, so he looked at the homestead lands. These didn’t please him, and so he made a down payment, on March 1, 1878, to the Burlington R. R. on the NE % of Sec. 15 and the S 1/2 of Sec. 15, T7, R4W, Bennett township.

Mr. and Mrs. Eilert Baumann, sons Edward and Jacob, and daughter Almina came to Nebraska by train in September, 1882. The furniture, household goods, farm machinery, a team of horses, and wagon were shipped in a box car. A young man named Harmon Everts was in care of the horses during the long trip.

The prairie land which they had purchased had no buildings. However, they were fortunate enough to be able to live with Mrs. Baumann’s father, Jacob Bohlen. He had preceded them to Nebraska in 1877, and lived on the SE 1/4 of Sec. 9, T7, R4W, Bennett township.

Over and above the hardships they had to endure came sorrow and bereavement. Their five-year-old twin daughter, having been in Nebraska less than three months, was called to her heavenly home on November 6, 1882, and was laid to rest in the Grafton Cemetery.

In 1903, Jacob Bohlen entered his eternal home on May 13, 1903, and was laid to rest in the Grafton Cemetery. He left his wife Folste, three sons, and three daughters. Three daughters had preceded him in death.

Folste Baumann and the children continued operating the farm from 1903 till 1915. During these years all the children married with the exception of Ed.

In 1913, Mrs. Baumann gave a portion of her real estate to her six children so each would have a farm on which to establish a home. The land given them still remains in their possession.

From 1915 till 1920, Ed and his mother continued to farm. In the spring of 1920, they had a public sale, after which they moved to Sutton and resided there for three years.

In 1923, Mrs. Folste Baumann and her son Ed moved to Grafton. She was called to her eternal home January 26, 1930. She left to mourn Edward, Jacob, William, Mrs. Sam Oberlander, Mrs. William Otte, Mrs. Reinhard Everts, and 20 grandchildren. Mrs. Baumann, having been blessed by the grace of God, contributed much to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Grafton.

The original land in Sec. 15, purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Eilert Baumann in 1878, remains in the possession of two of the Baumann children. Ed, the oldest son, possesses the E 1/2 of Sec. 15, Bennett township, and Etta, the youngest, now Mrs. Reinhard Everts, has the SW 1/4 of the same section.

Of the Baumann children who survived Eilert, three are now deceased: Jacob and Edward, and Sophia (Mrs. William) Otte. Jacob Baumann entered his eternal home on January 30, 1942. The living descendants are William Baumann of Geneva, Etta (Mrs. Reinhard Everts), and Minnie (Mrs. Sam Oberlander), both of Grafton. All of these three live today within a radius of 12 miles of the home place.

—Mrs. Sam Oberlander (Deceased Aug. 23, 1967)

1 Thomas D. Ackland died June 13, 1969.
Newton C. Burt came to Nebraska in 1873 from Rockdale, Crawford County, Pennsylvania, and homesteaded south of Grafton — 80 acres in Bennett township and 80 acres across the road in Geneva township. Here the Burs lived and worked diligently, wresting from the prairie not only a living but a finely improved farm, with the addition of many acres to the original homestead. Two children were born to them; John and Mattie (Mrs. Edwin Chambers of Whittier, California).

In 1920, Mr. and Mrs. Burt retired to Geneva where Mr. Burt passed away in 1927 at the age of 82. Mrs. Burt resided in Geneva until her death in 1950.

In 1918, John Burt took over the management of the farm and lived there and farmed the land until 1959, except for two years. In 1954, John and his wife decided to retire. They held a sale of all their belongings — machinery, cattle, hogs, everything. Those who attended agreed that it was the largest sale they had ever seen in Fillmore County. Although the Burts retained ownership of the farm, they shortly thereafter moved to Hastings, where they expected to spend their future. But the call of the land was too strong, and after two years of “retirement” they returned and took up life again on the homestead. Their son Keith, who farmed the Harvard Air Base from 1949 to 1960, helped out with the operations and the development of a nice herd of Black Angus cattle.

In December, 1959, Mr. and Mrs. John Burt moved from the farm into Geneva. In 1960, Keith Burt moved onto the farm and also bought the Geneva Implement Company. This is one of the relatively few homesteaded farms in Fillmore County that has remained continuously in one family.

In 1894 Anthony (Tony) Buttell and his family took up their residence in Bennett township. His parents came from Alsace-Lorraine, that disputed territory lying between northeastern France and southwestern Germany, hence the French name Buttell. The nine children of Tony and Anna Buttell grew up on the same farm and all attended District 14 school.

In 1905, Frances joined the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and began her novitiate at St. Elizabeth’s Convent, Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania, dedicating her life to the teaching of Negroes and Indians.

In 1914, Korella (Sister Rita) joined the Ursuline Order, beginning her novitiate at Fishkill, New York. After taking her final vows she taught at Steinauer and later volunteered for mission work in faraway China. She taught a year in Bangkok, Siam; because of the trouble in China the Sisters had to give up their schools and teach in the homes and finally were forced to leave China altogether. She now resides in Arcadia, Missouri.

In 1916, Anna (Sister Juannita) entered the Order of the Blessed Sacrament. While in Chicago she had a bad siege of flu from which she never entirely recovered. She died at Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania, in 1935.

Edward married Anna Burns and lived in Sutton until his death in 1963. Mayme married George Schmit and lived at Lexington, Nebraska, until her death in 1930. Amelia married John Mulvihill; at his death she and her small daughter went back to her home and lived with her parents, caring for them in their later years until their deaths. She now lives in Sutton.

George married Mabel Lyhene, granddaughter of John O’Brien, Sr. They reside in Sutton.


Cyril married Opal Roulier of Hastings. He acquired considerable wealth from his wheat lands near Goodland, Kansas. He retired to Denver, Colorado, where he passed away in 1950 from a heart ailment, survived by his wife and an only child.

During the depression years, Anthony Buttell, like most of his neighbors, relinquished the ownership of his farm and in March, 1933, he and his wife and daughter Amelia moved into Sutton. Two months later he was called to his eternal home. Twelve years later Mrs. Buttell followed him.

None of the Buttell families are now living in Fillmore County.

In the spring of 1879, Charles Elofson, at the age of five years, came with his parents, Ole and Johanna Elofson, from Mt. Carroll, Illinois, and settled in Fillmore County on a farm southeast of Sutton. In 1909, he was married to Anna Baas, who lived in Grafton township. From 1913 to 1926 they lived on the John Paulson place on Sec. 20, northeast of Sutton. Then they moved to the O. R. Lytle farm southeast of Sutton, on Sec. 8, where they resided until 1944, when they retired from farming and moved into Sutton. Thus the greater part of their lives was spent in Bennett township.

Two children were born to the Elofsons: Hazel (Mrs. Orval Oates) and Paul, who was never strong as a child, but
of a cheerful disposition which endeared him to his companions. He passed away in his youth, leaving no one to carry on the family name. Through the Orval Oates family, the Elofsons possess five loving grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

—Mrs. Albert Johnson

Henry Fessler was born in Pennsylvania of Pennsylvania Dutch parents. At the age of 18, he joined the Union army and fought in the Battle of Shiloh or Bull Run or both. He was fortunate enough to receive only a mouth wound during the entire war. About the year 1891 Mr. Fessler came to Fillmore County, settling on a farm in Bennett township, which he purchased from David Kreachbaum. It was here he raised his family of five children; Henry, Dewey, Albert, Sophia, and Susie. Sophia, the last survivor except Dewey, passed away in 1962.

His early acquaintance with the life of hard knocks gave him a roughness of personality which to one unacquainted with him would seem harsh, but that was only on the exterior. He was an honest man and a good neighbor.

During the years 1903-1904 Mr. Fessler served as county commissioner and later held other township offices.

After Mr. Fessler's death, Henry, who married Nellie Ericson, continued to live on the home place for a number of years.

In 1930, Dewey and his wife Lola bought the farm and moved on it in 1931, where they still reside. They put down the first irrigation well in Bennett township in 1941 and another one in the spring of 1955. It is now one of the best-improved farms in Bennett township. The Dewey Fesslers have four children: Mildred, of Grand Island; Marion (Mrs. Richard Helton), of California; Darrell, who married Frances O'Brien, lives a short distance from them on the John Reed place; and Duane at home.

This farm has been in the possession of and resided upon by Fesslers since 1891.

photo from Dewey Fessler taken about 1900

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Fessler and family. Left to right: Susie, Mr. Fessler, Henry, Mrs. Fessler, Sophia, Dewey (center front).

Elijah Huntley and his wife Adelaine (Mann) settled in Bennett township not far from Shickley. (For details of his life and career, see Stanton.) Two of his sons carried the name of Fillmore County to relatively far places.

Arthur V. Huntley was born September 12, 1895. He went through eight grades in District 61 and was a member of Grace United Brethren Church in Bennett township. He later took pre-medical and missionary training and then held various pastorates on the West Coast. He founded Trinity Church in San Diego, California, in 1939 and was its pastor from then until 1955. He married Marjorie Travis of Los Angeles in 1929, and they had two children, Arthur V., Jr., and Phyllis Elaine (Mrs. Earl Brown Lloyd). He died in San Diego on February 10, 1957.

—Mrs. Sam Huntley

Leslie Loran Huntley, fifth son of Elijah Huntley, was born near Shickley on January 10, 1903. He went through the grades in District 61 and then graduated from Grafton High School in 1921. The following two years he taught in a rural school near Shickley and then enrolled in Huntington College (United Brethren) in Indiana. After two years there, he came back and farmed for two years, and then returned to college graduating in 1929. In the fall of the same year, he entered the University of Nebraska School of Medicine, graduating as an M.D. in 1933. After interning for one year at the Methodist Hospital in Omaha, he married Mary Lucretia Bergdall of Cisna Park, Illinois, on July 7, 1934.

On August 9, 1934, the couple began a long "honeymoon" by sailing from New York directly to Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, where they spent two three-year terms under the auspices of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Brethren Church. Forced by the war to return to America in November, 1941, just before Pearl Harbor, Dr. Huntley and his family located at Larned, Kansas, from March, 1942, to September, 1943, when he was called into service as a captain in the Army Medical Corps. One of his first assignments, because of his experience in the tropics and his training at the London School of Tropical Medicine, was to a special School of Malarialogy in Panama; from there he was sent to Assam, India, a highly malarial area. Later he was liaison officer for the First Chinese Field Hospital in Assam, then sent across into China to an American field hospital, where he was stationed at the war's end. Discharged from the army on February 3, 1946, he located as a general practitioner at Washington, Kansas, where he still maintains his own office.

Three of Dr. Huntley's children — Carolyn Joanne, Dwight Eugene, and Alyce Elaine — were born in Africa: the fourth, Mary Louise, was born in this country. Dwight became a bacteriologist; Carolyn became a bacteriologist before turning to pediatrics; Alyce was a graduate nurse until her marriage in 1965 to a physician. The youngest girl, still (1967) in high school, plans to become a teacher.

—Data from Dr. Leslie L. Huntley

From the leaves of an old scrapbook kept by T. O. Huston, now the property of his daughter, Mrs. Floy McCashland, the stories of the Huston families have been gleaned.

T. O. Huston, imbued with the pioneering spirit and a desire to own a home he could call his own, heard the call of the West where land was cheap and easy to acquire. He came to Fillmore County, Nebraska, in August of 1880 and purchased a farm 7 miles S of Grafton on Sec. 36, Bennett township. Returning to his home in New Boston, Illinois, he was married on September 1, 1880, to Viella Bear, daughter of Peter Bear, pioneer of Eliza township, Mercer County, Illinois; he left September 16 with his bride for their home in Nebraska.

While he was back in Illinois getting married and making preparations for coming west, J. H. Sager and E. O. Lemon built a shanty 14' x 22' for him and his bride. This humble
dwellings, with additions, was to be their home for more than 20 years, until a fine new home replaced it.

Six children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Huston, five of whom grew up on the farm. They are Mrs. Floy McCashland of Geneva, Frank of Sedro-Woolley, Washington, Clarence whom grew up on the farm. They are Mrs. Floy McCashland (deceased), and Mrs. Ada Price of Cozad, Nebraska.

Mr. Huston and his wife endured all the hardships and privations of pioneer life but refused to be beaten by them. He recalled that at one time a renter had planted a part of his farm to corn. In the fall he picked his share and left the country, leaving Mr. Huston to harvest the rest as best he could. This he did picking it in sacks while wading in snow above his knees. That winter he burned it for fuel, as coal was expensive and corn was worth scarcely anything.

Mr. Huston took great pride in his fields, his orchards, and his livestock. He had one of the largest peach orchards in the county and one of the largest flocks of sheep.

Mrs. Huston was an active member of the W.C.T.U. and Mr. Huston had received awards for 50 years of membership in the Masonic Order.

In 1912, the family moved to Geneva, where Mr. Huston purchased and operated the Mark Alexander Meat Market until a few years prior to his death, which took place in December, 1942. Mrs. Huston had preceded him in death in 1927.

The Huston family have scattered elsewhere to found homes of their own. The only one remaining in Fillmore County is Mrs. Floy McCashland of Geneva.

Walt Huston was one of the earliest pioneers of Fillmore County. After his graduation from Monmouth College, Illinois, he came west, spending a few years in the Utah mines and teaching school in Utah, Iowa, and Nebraska. He was married in 1886 to Ida Sprout. To this union were born five daughters and one son.

After his marriage, Mr. Huston engaged in different lines of enterprise, the implement business constituting the major part of his career. He held several offices of political trust, serving for a number of years as city treasurer and treasurer of the County Fair Board.

He was a humorist in every sense of the word, even carrying it into his business advertising and office campaigning. For example, he advertised "Wife Getter" buggies guaranteed to win votes. He made a campaign bet which John Christiancy lost. For a Republican and John Christiancy a jolly Democrat, they went on Tuesday until all the children had homes of their own, except Ed Isley, living 10 miles west of Geneva, is in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Lincoln, for treatment of rattlesnake bite received about 8 o'clock Tuesday evening as he was doing chores at his place. He was working late and while walking through the hallway of the barn lay his hand on the manger and the snake struck two fingers. Thinking it was a wasp he went on with his work until his fingers began to swell and stiffen when he went to the house for a flashlight and found the rattler. He was brought to Dr. Ashby in Geneva but there was no serum to be found there so Dr. Ashby rushed him to Lincoln to St. Elizabeth's Hospital where he was confined from Tuesday until Friday. His hand was sore for several months afterwards until the corn picker accident which he said was so much worse, made him forget about it.

None of the Walt Huston family reside in Fillmore County now.

Barnett Isley was born near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on February 22, 1882; his wife, Mary Wolfe, was born near by in the same year. They were married in 1848. Their oldest son, David, was born in January, 1850; their four other children — Mary, Susan, John, and Martha — were also born in Pennsylvania.

The family lived in Davenport, Iowa, while Barnett served with the Union Army from 1863 to 1865, and then moved to a farm near Sturzt, Iowa. In the fall of 1871, he filed a homestead claim on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 28, Bennett township, and the next spring, the family came out together. Susan, who had married, remained in Iowa.

Mr. Isley used to walk some 10 miles to Lakeside School in Clay County to teach a Sunday School class. Mary Wolfe Isley passed away in April, 1891; Barnett lived on the homestead until his death in November, 1911, just under 90 years old. Both are buried in Geneva.

David Isley homesteaded the W 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 34 in 1878, but later traded the land for a team of horses, harness, and a wagon. He married Addie Keachbaum in Geneva on August 5, 1891, and farmed the home place. They had seven children: Edward, May, George, Martha, Jessie, Mary, and Walter. Edward was born May 26, 1892; the youngest was born in 1904. After David's death on November 1, 1903, his widow sold off the livestock and machinery; but in 1909 the family resumed farming. She kept the family going until all the children had homes of their own, except for George, who remained with her until her death, October 3, 1951, at the age of 81 years.

Walter passed away in 1955. May (Mrs. Ancel Seder- sten) lived in Lincoln (died 1957); Bertha (Mrs. Henry Meyers) lives in Des Moines, Iowa; Jessie (Mrs. John Oldenburg) and Mary (Mrs. Hilbert Dahlbeck) live in Sutton. George lives in Fairmont.

Edward Isley stayed on the home place until 1920, when he started for himself 1/4 mile E of there, on a rented place — the E 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 33. He was married in Council Bluffs on September 24, 1924, to Florence Hatch, daughter of Mark Hatch, from near-by Monmence township. They came from there directly to the farm, where they have now resided continuously for 48 years. Here were born their two daughters: Shirley (Mrs. Roger Larkin), of Peoria, Illinois, and Norma Jean (Mrs. Byron Gillett), of Aurora, Colorado. Both girls attended school in District 65 and graduated from the Geneva High School.

Thus four generations of Isleys have lived in Bennett township, and three generations attended school in District 63 — Mrs. David Isley (Addie Keachbaum), her seven children, and two granddaughters. —Data from Edward Isley

Some of the hazards of pioneer — and later — farm life are suggested by these stories of two mishaps which occurred to Ed Isley within less than one year (August and October, 1922):

Photo from Ed Isley

Barnett Isley (at right), his son David Isley and wife Addie and grandson Ed Isley taken in the spring, 1893.

ED ISLEY BUTTEN BY RATTLESNAKE

Ed Isley, living 10 miles west of Geneva, is in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Lincoln, for treatment of rattlesnake bite received about 8 o'clock Tuesday evening as he was doing chores at his place. He was working late and while walking through the hallway of the barn lay his hand on the manger and the snake struck two fingers. Thinking it was a wasp he went on with his work until his fingers began to swell and stiffen when he went to the house for a flashlight and found the rattler. He was brought to Dr. Ashby in Geneva but there was no serum to be found there so Dr. Ashby rushed him to Lincoln to St. Elizabeth's Hospital where he was confined from Tuesday until Friday. His hand was sore for several months afterwards until the corn picker accident which he said was so much worse, made him forget about it.

CORN PICKER ACCIDENT

FARMER INJURED WHEN CLOTHING CAUGHT IN PICKER

Ed Isley, living nine miles northwest of Geneva, sustained a broken shoulder blade, a broken thumb, six broken ribs and numerous bruises when his clothing was caught in a power take-off on a cornpicker about 2 o'clock Friday afternoon.

Mr. Isley and Ed Girmus were picking corn on the
Hoessler farm when the accident occurred. Ed was wearing a jacket which was blown into the power take-off as he stood behind the tractor. Most of the clothing was torn from his body. The motor was killed when his clothing clogged the take-off but he was still held to the machine by shreds of clothing. As he started down the corn row for help he lost consciousness twice. He was on his way to where Mr. Girmus was working.

Mrs. Girmus who had gone to the house for oil saw Ed coming and put him into her car and brought him to his home from where her husband brought him to the Geneva Hospital.

LARGE GROUP GATHERS ED ISLEY’S CORN

More than one hundred neighbors and friends of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Isley gathered at their farm home Wednesday morning of last week to pick and store 100 acres of corn for the Isleys. Ed is recovering from injuries received recently when he was caught in the power take-off on his tractor being used with his compoick. Ed had picked 80 acres before the accident. The Geneva Odd Fellows and two sets of neighbors joined forces and gathered for work at 8 o’clock the morning of October 24th. 17 pickers and other equipment were used. The picking was completed by 11:15 and the crews were through by noon. Altogether they cribbed 2,800 bushels of corn and also shelled and delivered 800 bushels.

At noon members of Rebekah Lodge of Geneva, neighbors, relatives and friends served a bountiful dinner.

—Ed Isley

Andrew Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Johnson and children taken in 1900.

Andrew Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Johnson and children taken in 1900.

Andrew Johnson (widowed young) and his three children — Emma Caroline, Hilda Marie, and John Andrew — left Stocksan, Sweden, and came to America on May 5, 1868. They first settled in Illinois for a short time, and then moved on to Essex, Iowa, early in 1873. Mr. Johnson took out his naturalization papers at Clarinda, Iowa, on October 1, 1873. By occupation, he was a tailor.

In the early spring of 1878, Mr. Johnson and a neighbor came to Fillmore County in a covered wagon. He bought 160 acres of railroad land, the NE ¼ of Sec. 29, T7, R4W in Bennett township. He then built a house which was later used as a granary.

After Andrew’s son John’s confirmation in the Swedish Lutheran church in Essex, Iowa, he joined his father in Fillmore County in May, 1878. Together they built a house and barn and planted trees and orchards, as all pioneer families did.

On March 13, 1886, John A. Johnson was married to Julia Ellen Johnson. To this union were born five girls and two boys: Johanna, Emeline, Ellen, Esther, Edith, Albert, and Carl. The children attended the same school (District 63) as their father.

Sunday School and church were held at the schoolhouse until in later years a church was moved in one-half mile south of the school. This family worshiped and worked to the betterment of the community.

During the scarlet fever epidemic of March, 1894, Ellen May, a 2 ½-year-old daughter, died.

Johnnie Johnson (as he was familiarly called) and his wife could best be described as gentle folk, honest and God­fearing. They brought up their family in the same way. Mr. Johnson took an active part in all civic affairs and held offices of trust in the county and his school district.

This pioneer family went through family losses, the bliz­zard of 1888, hail, drought, grasshoppers, and all the other hardships of pioneer life. The surviving children of John A. Johnson are Carl J. Johnson and Mrs. Johanna Solberg of Alliance, Nebraska, Mrs. Emeline Burough of Scottsbluff, and Albert R. Johnson of Sutton.

Albert, eldest son of John A. Johnson, was born on the farm to which his father had come as a youth with his father (Albert’s grandfather). Albert was married to Cecil Lytle and took over the management of the farm. Here they brought up their four children rearing as one of their own the motherless daughter of Albert’s sister, Esther Burough.

Sheldon A. Johnson resides near Geneva. Dorothy (Mrs. Paul Schneider) lives across the line in Clay County. Geraldine (Mrs. Harry Hank) resides in Grand Island, as does Velma (Mrs. Perry Schneider). The niece Zeola (Mrs. Vern Domeier) lives on a farm in Bectennett township.

On February 18, 1879, Miles Kavanaugh, with his wife Jane and their family, came from Sparlin, Illinois, to Bennett township, where they purchased 120 acres of land — in the SE ¼ of Sec. 7, T7, R4W — from the Burlington R.R. A cottonwood twig used as a cane en route from Sparlin was stuck in the ground and grew to be a large tree on the farm. The lumber for their house was hauled from Grafton. The sod was broken with walking plows. Some dropped corn by hand in the field.

Miles’s son, Charles, was united in marriage to a Lostant, Illinois, girl, Catherine Lawless. Father Murphy performed the marriage in Grafton, as there was no priest in Sutton. They resided on an adjoining farm belonging to his father. Meanwhile Miles K. moved to Hastings, Nebraska.

Around 1886, Charles purchased the farm his father had settled on when first coming to Nebraska. It was a few years before he moved onto his newly purchased farm. In these few years, Charles and Catherine experienced many hardships. One was the famous blizzard of 1888, which struck suddenly and without warning about 4 p.m. It became so severe that Mr. Kavanaugh had some difficulty in getting the stock sheltered and getting back to the house. From what had been a beautiful day a few hours before, it became so cold that the frost lay on the hinges inside the house. The teachers led some of the children to safety by following fences; others kept the children in the schools and burned desks and books to keep warm; but many lives were lost other than school children. Farmers also lost stock. Earl Tucker and Hi Brown, close neighbors of the Kavanaughs, lost large numbers of sheep which were driven off with the wind and frozen. Many farm animals lost in the blizzard wandered around houses and...
frightened people inside who did not know they were stock. 

Hordes of grasshoppers and chintz bugs came in the summer, so numerous that they hid the sun. They, along with the droughts, destroyed the crops in those years.

Mrs. Kavanaugh once prevented a hardship for the Miles Kavanaugh family. While she was out in the yard, she noticed smoke at their farm. Knowing they were gone to town, she hurried across the field and put out the fire before it reached the building. Miles K. gave her an eight-day clock and a mirror in appreciation.

During these years quite a few children died of diphtheria and the Kavanaugh family was very sick with it. The schools were two miles apart and many teachers walked several miles to them. When cars came out, Mrs. Kavanaugh remembered her horse shying when they met a car. They had to hold the horse at the side of the road until the car passed.

People had many peddlers at their doors in those years. Some of these stayed overnight in the schoolhouse, and this frightened the teachers. Dog races and horseshoe games amused the settlers on Sundays. Families supplied their tables with prairie chickens and quail which were abundant. Indian arrows and buffalo bones were found on the Kavanaugh place.

In 1914, Mr. and Mrs. Kavanaugh and their daughter Cora retired to Sutton. Later, their early-day home was burned to the ground by bootleggers. Since, they have moved another house there, and now the fourth generation is living on the same land.

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Mann about 1913.

David Kreachbaum and his wife (Elizabeth Hooper) were born and grew up near Logan, Ohio. After their marriage they lived on farms near Des Moines and Marshalltown, Iowa. Two of their children, George and Addie, were born in the Hawkeye State.

In the spring of 1872, the Kreachbaum and Barnett Isley families came to Nebraska and took up homesteads adjoining each other on Sec. 28 in Bennett township. The covered wagon which they came in served as a home until they built a house. The team of horses on which they drove and the one cow which trailed behind the wagon were their most valued possessions. Two children, Walter and Christian, were born on the homestead. Christian lived only a short time. Seven years after their arrival the mother closed her eyes in death.

The sorrowing husband, unable to carry on with three small children to care for, returned to the home of his parents in Ohio. Later he remarried and in 1885 returned to Nebraska, locating on a farm just east of their first home. This place, though untenanted because of the destruction of the house by fire, is still in the ownership of the Kreachbaum family.

In 1884, Richard Lawless and his sister Catherine came to Bennett township from Lostant, Illinois. They began their home on the farm of Hugh Jennett, who lived near Streator, Illinois. A few acres of this farm was used for a school. Two years later Catherine was married to a neighbor, Charles Kavanaugh.

In 1888, Richard purchased 160 acres of land in Sec. 29 from John A. Peterson and wife, who had in 1881 secured it from the Burlington R.R. This land later became his sister's and now, since her passing, belongs to her daughter.

One annoying experience for the pioneers was to be running their hen houses of bedbugs and fleas.

Richard Lawless was invited to the home of Sumner Barnell in 1907, for an evening with friends, where he became seriously ill. He passed away the same evening.

Samuel B. Mann was born in Germany and came to the United States when a small boy. He was educated in New York City and after finishing school traveled northward and became a charcoal burner (charcoal was used for smelting iron).

In May, 1863, he married Theresa Devins and soon enlisted in the Civil War and stayed until the close of the war. He and his wife then began working for the Great Northern Iron Company, Mrs. Mann as a cook and Mr. Mann as a charcoal burner. They lived in the woods following the forest workers. Mrs. Mann became ill and the doctor advised a change to a drier climate, either Arizona or Nebraska.

In April, 1871, Mr. Mann and his brother-in-law Thomas Devins and Francis Blake entrained for Nebraska. The railroad was built to Council Bluffs, so at this point they bought an equipped oxen train to move westward. Omaha was only a small fort, and Lincoln was a tiny place.

They located on Sec. 32 in Bennett township.

No health precautions were taken. They drank from creeks and lived on this barren prairie, erected small houses, dug a 75-foot well by hand, and brought material from Council Bluffs. There was no means of communicating with their loved ones, and great anxiety was felt for their safety.

They packed their wagons and went back to Michigan.

After a stay of six years in Michigan they migrated back to Nebraska again, better equipped to stand the rigors of the prairies. But by then all available land had been taken and neighbors were plentiful.

The greatest drawback was that the buildings had been taken off their land and again buildings had to be erected for shelter. It was a hard task, as they had children by this time. But by their indomitable will and great strength this was accomplished.

George B. Miles, Sr., and his wife came from Kewanee, Illinois, in 1875 by train as far as Fairmont, where they were met by his uncle, Charles C. Miles, who had homesteaded in Geneva township in 1871. George had been married a year before; he was 21 and his wife was 18.

Charley Miles, George's brother, lived on the farm next east of Finnegan's — the NW ¼ of Sec. 1, T7, R4W. George bought this farm and later bought the NE ¼ from his uncle,
C. C. Miles. Their first house had just two rooms, one downstairs and one upstairs. Later they built on two more rooms. They had lots of company. They used to have dances, and often the guests stayed overnight, the men sleeping upstairs and the women downstairs.

On this farm the Miles family reared their family of seven children: Lydia, Edythe, Leslie, George, Nile, Jimmie, and Gordon. Mr. and Mrs. George B. Miles were very active in helping to establish the Congregational Church at Grafton and were charter members. They continued living on this half-section until they retired to Grafton in 1908, where Mrs. Miles passed away in 1928. Mr. Miles died in 1944 at the age of 89.

Edythe Miles George lives at Good Samaritan Village in Hastings. George and Gordon Miles settled in Portland, Oregon, where George died in 1966. Lydia Miles married Miles Longman in 1908. After his death in 1930, she moved to Grafton, where she resided until her death on June 6, 1967. Leslie Miles farmed the home place until his death from cancer in 1954.

—Data from Lydia (Miles) Longman

In the year 1874, Joseph Oberlander, with his wife and son, left their native Russia, then ruled by Czar Nicholas I, and came to America to found a home. They bought land in Bennett township which is still owned by members of the Oberlander family.

Of the six children born to them, three survive; Mrs. Elizabeth Unterseher, of Harvard, Margaret of Sutton, and Mike, on his farm south of Grafton. Sam, deceased, married Minnie Baumann and raised a family of five children, one of whom (Clarence) resides on the farm with his widowed mother. Joe married Katharine Hahn and was living at Gering at the time of his death. Mike married Anna Bohlen.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Oberlander taken about 1905.

They were not blessed with a family, consequently he was left alone at his wife’s death, and for some years he lived alone close to the road a short distance from the country Lutheran church which he and his wife attended.

Henry married Minnie Bohlen, and was left a widower. He retired to Sutton, where he married Marie Kranz. Like his brother Mike, he had no children, and at his death his wife Marie became owner of the farm in Bennett township.

All of the Oberlanders chose farming as a vocation. There was ever the simple country life but they had time for music and dancing also. The neighboring youth of that generation recall with pleasure the polkas, two-steps, waltzes, and quadrilles which they danced, to the tunes played by the Oberlanders.

John O’Brien, Sr., was born June 24, 1847, in County West Meath, Ireland, in the town of Mullingar, home town of the famous tenor, John McCormack. At the age of 18 he came, with his widowed mother, to America, landing in Pitts­burgh, Pennsylvania, in 1865, just after the close of the Civil War. There he worked in the coal mines and on the railroad for a number of years. On May 6, 1869, he was married to Bridget Battle at Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

In the spring of 1874 they came to Fillmore County, landing in the new town of Grafton. Hoping to take up a homestead, he walked to Alexandria and Belvidere and at length filed on a claim, only to learn that others had filed before him. On the way back he was caught in a storm but was rescued by a Bohemian farmer who took him into his dugout where he remained for two days.

Returning to Grafton, he again worked on the railroad and helped to lay the Burlington siding through Grafton. He lived in a sod house on what is now the William Schumacher place in Grafton township until 1877, when he and his family moved to the farm in Bennett township. Here he resided until 1912, when he retired to Grafton, leaving his sons, George and Jim, to farm the place. He passed away on January 2, 1926; his wife Bridget died August 25, 1936.

The O’Briens went through all the hardships of the early settlers and raised a family of ten children: John, Thomas, William, George, James, Mary (Mrs. James Murray), Ann (Mrs. William Lyhene), Bridget, Ellie, and Gertrude (Mrs. Andrew Schaaf).

Mr. O’Brien was a feeder and shipper of livestock ever since there was a market in South Omaha. An ardent Democrat, he took much interest in politics and served several terms as a member of the Board of Supervisors.

All of the O’Brien children attended District 61, known as the O’Brien School. It was not built, however, until 1879. Before that time they attended school where August Rotter lived. Henry Gillespie plowed a furrow from his place to the Frolics’ so the children could go to school in the fall and have a path to follow. When the weather warmed up in the springtime, rattlesnakes used to come out from the tall grass and lie in the sun in the furrow, so they had to change the children’s path because of the danger lurking there.

As the children grew to young manhood and womanhood they settled near home.

Tom O’Brien lived on a farm south of the home place. He married Winnifred Dwyer and had four children: Mildred (Mrs. Carl Schneider), Cecilia (Mrs. Bartol Walters), Paul, and Roger. Tom was on the school board 40 years. John, Jr., lived just across the road in Momence. His wife was Minnie Willey. He had one daughter who died in young womanhood. Will and his wife bought and lived on the Anthony Buttell

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home after the Buttells moved to Sutton. They had one adopted son, Barney. Jim lives in Grafton in the parental town home. Gertrude married Andrew Schaar and now lives in Albion. Bridget and Ella lived with their parents in Grafton. Bridget passed away and Ella now lives with Jim. George O’Brien married Sara Britt and they had seven children who grew to maturity. Mike remained on the home farm. Will Lyhene lived on a farm in Clay County. When her second child was born, she went to live with her daughter, Mrs. Albert Hotter, at Beaver Crossing. She died on October 5, 1962. Anna (Mrs. Will Lyhene) lived on a farm in Clay County. When her husband died, she moved to Sutton, which remained her home until her death.

Most of the O’Brien lands are still owned by members of the family or their descendants.

John O’Brien, Sr., gave an account of the great blizzard through the Lincoln Star and the World-Herald.

That morning snow began to fall coming from the southeast. It was soft and warm and melted on the ground as fast as it fell. I had two cars of cattle and hogs to feed. I spent the forenoon caring for them as they were all wet with the soft snow. When I had done the chores I started for the house. Looking northwest I saw a white ribbon-like cloud not thinking much of it.

“When I came into the house Mrs. O’Brien said there was a churning to be done and I could commence churning at once. It being an old-fashioned churn with a long dash, I pounded away. It made lots of noise but I thought I could hear something louder than the churn, so I looked out of the window. Everything in the yard was on the move—wagons, hay racks, corn stalks, etc. I went outdoors and looked north-west. The storm was coming not more than half a mile away. It was not a floating cloud but was built from the ground up and it came like a stone wall about a mile high.

“The cattle started running around like they were wild. Then it became dark. When the crest of the storm came with the snow you could not see anything the length of your arm away. It was so cold I had to put on extra clothes and go to the yards. Mrs. O’Brien did not want me to go for fear of getting lost or struck with flying things.

“Making my way out to the stock yards I found it impossible to drive the stock to the sheds as their eyes were frozen shut with the snow and ice, so I gave up. Finding my way back to the house, nearly frozen, I thought of something else.

“We had five children at school and would they ever be able to come 100 rods against the storm? At all hazards I must go to the schoolhouse. But how could I get there as one could not see any distance? Thinking of a wire fence we had for 80 rods on one side of the road. If I could make my way to it I would have no trouble reaching the schoolhouse. Finding the fence I arrived at the schoolhouse in time to find Miss Husted and her 11 pupils standing in a circle around the stove. The name of the stove was no name for it. The snow was rocking like a cradle and the draft of the chimney was drawing the fire up the stovepipe.

“There were five O’Brien’s, four of Mr. Dobson’s, and one boy staying at Mr. Ackland’s. I have forgotten his name. There would have been more pupils from the east and south but for the snow in the morning. I told them to put on their wraps and try to make it to our house. They all thought they couldn’t make it against the storm but I told them it was easier to die frozen than to burn to death, so they all got ready. I told them to all hang together and I would lead them. Then came the ‘tug-of-war.’ We made the fence and I kept my stick busy following it. The snow was like broken glass. Every few steps we had to turn around to get our breath. We reached the end of the 80 rod fence and still had 15 rods to the house. At this stand, the boy from Ackland’s made a break for home. He went but a short way when he got down in the snow. Before he could get up I took hold of him and brought him back to the rest of the children.

“We reached the house all covered with ice and snow. When bed time came we had to make beds for some of them around the heating stove. All were well and able to be up and around in the morning. O boy, didn’t that churning come in good! Mrs. O’Brien made pancakes for the whole bunch. After breakfast, with buckets packed, all were ready to be off to school for the day.

“My loss was 30 head of hogs. It took the cattle one month to look as good as they did the morning before the storm.”

The first settlers of Turkey Creek were Luxembourgers, as they were called, from the duchy of that name in Europe. They located first in Wisconsin and about the year 1871 came to Fillmore County. Among the names were Mr. Peter, Peter, Jacob, and Hans. Peter and Nicholas Gergen, John Marson, two Rock families, Bernard Schommer, John Nittler, Peter Carl, Bartols, Webers, and Diederichs. Germans came later: Reinsches, Kamlers, Rotters, and others.

August Rotter came to Bennet township in 1889. Bernard Rotter came nine years later. They lived on farms across the road from each other where their children grew up together attending the same school (District 61) and the Turkey Creek Catholic Church known now as the Shickley parish.

August Rotter had seven children: Joseph, Anna (Mrs. Edward Wachter), Mary (Mrs. George Wachter), Minnie (Mrs. Fred Standard), Hattie, Emma, and Albert.

Bernard Rotter had nine children: Agnes (Mrs. John Fleming), Fred, Charley, Elizabeth (Mrs. Leonard Finnegan), William, John, Gertrude (Mrs. John Dillon), Leo, and George.

Being small of stature, they were usually spoken of as the “Little Rotters,” but size did not affect their capabilities, for among the 16 children there were farmers, mechanics, storekeepers, salesmen, business managers, nurses, one teacher, and one member of a Benedictine Order of Brothers.

George, the youngest son of Bernard Rotter, had the misfortune to lose an arm in a runway while raking hay as a young boy. He has since distinguished himself in the field of education, having written several textbooks. He is now State Director of Conservation in the Nebraska Department of Education. His wife is the former Gertrude Burke of Grafton, daughter of the late Thomas Burke.

The name of Rotter has gradually disappeared from the columns of the Fillmore County papers as they have taken up residence elsewhere. The little town of Trenton, Nebraska, is the home of many of their posterity, since six of the Bernard Rotter family chose that particular spot when launching out for themselves. Denver attracted some of them and California called others away from Nebraska and Fillmore County and Bennet township.

Mrs. Joseph Schaar, living in her next little house in Grafton, gave us her story as follows:

When she was a young girl of 14 her father, a New York harness maker, or carpenter, decided to come west. A half-brother, John Auer, was working for Weisenboms of Grafton and his letters to the folks “back home,” urging them to come out to this fast settling up new country, were the deciding factor.

Accordingly, in midsummer of the year 1867 (?) the Auers purchased four horses and two mules, loaded all their possessions in two covered wagons, and started for Nebraska.

It took six weeks of slow, steady plodding to make the trip. For the two young Auer girls, Anna and her sister, it was a high adventure all the way. Pitching the tent each evening, eating meals cooked by the campfire, falling asleep to the drowsy murmur of prairie insects, wakened often in the night by the howl of coyotes, and breaking camp at dawn each day were never-to-be-forgotten thrills.

Arriving in Grafton in September, they lived in Weisenborn’s yard until their house was built, which required several weeks.

About this time the Zierens, Franks, Schaafs, Kellers, Staals, and Shankers arrived to occupy the land which Mr. Stahl had purchased, thus making a “Little New York” settlement. All of the families were related by marriage.
except the Stahls.

As the children of these families grew to young manhood and womanhood, Francis and Joe Schaaf married two Auer girls. Joe married Anna Auer, the subject of this story. Joe's parents built and lived in a little two-room house on the NE 1/4 of Sec. 11, the same house in which the Lou Schinzels later lived. When Joe married Anna Auer, they went, as was the custom then, to live with the "old folks." An addition was built to the west and later the kitchen to the south was added. This is one of the oldest houses in Bennett township.

Two sons and a daughter were born to the Joseph Schaafs. Andrew worked for the Farm and Home Administration and in similar governmental positions for a number of years until his retirement. Leo, now retired, worked at the Naval Ammunition Depot in Hastings and made his home with his mother in Grafton until her death on May 8, 1965. The daughter, Mrs. Merl J. Stead, lives in David City. The Schaaf farm was sold to Alton and Bertha Workentine on May 12, 1966, and the buildings have now all been removed.

Mrs. Schaaf's life was not an easy one. Mr. Schaaf was never robust physically and in later life his health was a constant worry to Mrs. Schaaf, fearing that he might be overcome while at work in the fields. His death was very sudden but within his home after a strenuous afternoon's work.

Cholera had struck his herd of hogs, wiping out most of them in a few days. To keep the disease from spreading to neighborhood herds, it was necessary to burn the dead swine so that dogs or wild animals might not carry parts of the animals away and thus cause the loss of a neighbor's herd. With his neighbors' help, he had been working hard to avoid the danger of fire if left burning into the night. The exertion brought on a heart attack and consequently his death.

When Julius Schinzel decided to go west and purchase a home for himself and family, they left Illinois in 1888 and traveled to Orleans, Nebraska, where Mrs. Schinzel's sister lived. They stayed there five years and then came to Fillmore County, settling on the place which Ralph Schinzel still farms.

The Julius Schinzels had nine children. Amanda (Kendall), George, Laurence (died in infancy), Louis, Caroline (Van Patten), and Josephine (Thompson) are deceased. One daughter, Laura May (Rains) lives in California; another, Emma Belle (Miles) lives in Fairmont. The Lou Schinzels lived for a long time on the Schaaf place, where they raised a large garden and kept a yard very attractive with plants and flowers.

The Ralph Schinzels have three boys and one girl: Charles, Waldo, Dean, and Phyllis. Dean, after graduating from the University of Nebraska's Agricultural College, returned to help his father farm the home place.

The Schinzels and Van Pattens were threshermen in the early days, and ran almost every kind of threshing machine manufactured until the combine made its appearance.

—Ralph Schinzel

Among the prominent early pioneers of Fillmore County was the John Sheridan family.

At the age of 21 young John Sheridan left his farm home in Castle Pollard, West Meath, Ireland, to go to England. On the voyage he met a young crew member who convinced him to come to America.

On May 15, 1871, he landed in New York. Because he had used all his money for passage, he had to work at various jobs there until he had earned enough money to take him to Decatur, Illinois, where he had distant relatives.

In the spring of 1878, seven years after his arrival in America, the young Irishman, with his new-found friend Bill Coan, seeking adventure and a pioneer town to make their fortunes, invested all their savings in a wagon, a team of horses, farm equipment, and provisions and left the older state of Illinois in a covered wagon to settle in the newly founded state of Nebraska. Although the railroad that was built through Fillmore County had been completed as far west as Kearney in 1872, many people found it too expensive to travel great distances with farm equipment and livestock; and so these two young unmarried men came across the plains by covered wagon. They were among the last settlers to make the trip in this way.

Upon arriving in Fillmore County, they spent their first night at the Morgan home, and stayed on there until John found a suitable farm to rent. Bill Coan and the Morgans were cousins.

The following fall John returned to Clinton, Illinois, where he and Ellen Sheehy were married September 24, 1879. Ellen Sheehy, a daughter of John and Mary Sheehy, was born in Wilson, Niagara County, New York, and when six years of age (in 1864) came with her parents to Illinois.

The Mrs. John Sheridan returned together to Nebraska and lived near Exeter, a pioneer town established in 1871. Four of their children were born there: William, Mary, John, and Ellen (Nellie). The family lived in a sod house which had been built by Jim Dolan, who homesteaded in this area. The rugged pioneer life, carrying water for family use and caring for four young children, was strenuous. Six years later the family moved to Grafton, where Anne and Edna were born.

Shortly thereafter the family realized their dream and purchased a home of their own 5 miles SE of Sutton, just across the county line in Sec. 30, Bennett township, Fillmore County. This had been the homestead of Aden Sherwood.

Like others among the pioneers, they experienced many hardships, the blizzard of 1888, crop failures, and other aches; but they also experienced the joy of carving out a destiny for their children and grandchildren, in an earlier day when the great tide of emigration sped forward and backward before their door. Hard work and the passing years brought a generous bounty. John was not only a farmer, but also an avid reader and an advocate of legislation that would benefit the people of this Jim Sheridan family. The family were devout Catholics, active in church work. John, Ellen, and Anne received their first Holy Communion on October 1, 1899, at Sutton, from Father Michael A. Shire, the famous Nebraska and Catholic historian.

Though the home farm was in Fillmore County, the young Sheridan children went to school at District 13 in Clay County, because this school was nearer their farm. The three younger girls attended high school in Sutton, and Ellen went to Kearney to normal school.

William was married to Mary Margaret and they made their home in Sutton, where they did extensive farming and sold farm equipment. They raised a family of seven children, five of whom still live in the Sutton area. Mrs. Margaret Sheridan also makes her home in Sutton.

Mary was united in matrimony to Timothy J. Joyce of
Wyoming. The preceding year. They raised a family of seven children, having lost one son in infancy. In 1958, they celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. Mrs. Mary Joyce still lives in Laramie, Wyoming.

Ellen taught District 13, Clay County, and District 74, Fillmore County. In June, 1908, she went to Wyoming with her friend May (Joyce) Swanson, now of Alexandria, Virginia, where both these young ladies took up adjoining homesteads near those of Timothy Joyce, Bill Joyce, the Hughes brothers, the Sam Thompson family, and others from this part of Nebraska, who had gone west before. Ellen taught in Wyoming for four years while she was "proving-up" on her claim. She then returned to the family home and taught again at District 13 and later at Ohiowa. Much of her time, along with her sister Anne, was spent in research and the collecting of antiques and artifacts of the locality in the hope of preserving them for future generations.

Anne as a young woman taught schools at Districts 63 and 20, the West School, Yetman's, and Fairview. Her overwhelming desire to be near her sister Mary later took her West to the Colorado mountains, where, in an isolated mountain area, she taught children and boarded in a log house. Her love for Wyoming brought her back there during World War II, where she taught at the Thomas Sun ranch and lived with the Sun family on their ranch home between Rawlins and Casper. Anne became noted in the local area as a poet of merit, was a member of Ars Poetica (the Nebraska poetry society) and left a large collection of unpublished poems at the time of her death.

Edna, also impelled by her pioneer heritage, obtained a teaching position in the Sand Hills of Garden County, where she boarded and roomed in a dugout. Later she taught a ranch-house school in Wyoming in a region newly opened to homesteaders. Because of her mother's poor health she returned home and taught one year in the home school. On May 3, 1917, she was married to Charles Lacy of Laramie, Wyoming. The Lacy family lived at Trenton, Omaha, and Sutton, Nebraska. They also raised a family of seven children.

There are two members of this pioneer family living today, John in Sutton and Mary in Laramie, Wyoming. Grandchildren of the pioneers John and Ellen Sheridan are Rita Ellen Haviland (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) and Jeannette Motichka (Rock Springs, Wyoming). —Mrs. Andy Motichka

Ole Solberg, Swedish by birth, his wife and one child came from Norway to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, where an uncle of Mrs. Solberg's resided. Lack of employment was the reason for leaving the Land of Midnight Sun to come to America, the Land of Opportunity. A large part of Norway cannot be inhabited and only about one-fifteenth of the country can be cultivated. Logging is the most important industry. When the Ole Solbergs settled in Wisconsin, he worked in the sawmills there for a few years, but malaria was so bad there that for health reasons there they were anxious to find a dryer climate. Nels Nelson, a brother of Mrs. Solberg, who was living in Bennett township in a sod house, sent for the Solbergs. It was rather cramped quarters in a one-room soddy, so a bedroom was added which accommodated them until a frame house was built close by. —Mrs. Albert Johnson

Joseph Zieren, Sr., with an older sister, came to America from Essentoh, Germany, at the age of 14 years. They made their home with an uncle in New York who was a cobbler by trade. Joseph worked at cement making and in a brewery until his marriage to Catherine Sillas of Albany, New York, when he purchased a canal boat on the St. Lawrence River. This was their home. On it they lived and worked and traveled, coming to shore for cargo to exchange for a return load.

In the fall, before the rivers froze, they would go up into Canada and bring back a boat load of potatoes and other vegetables which they kept on the boat until their market season was past in the states, thereby getting a better price for them. However, the size of their family had been increasing and, realizing that a boat was not the best place for raising a family since they were never stationed for any length of time in one place, they were interested in a home where they could settle down.

Christian Stahl had returned from Nebraska after taking an option on a section of land. Having purchased an 80, the Zierens were anxious to see it and make it their home.

In 1878, they took leave of their relatives and friends and their canal boat, the Mary E. Gaylord, and boarded the train for the far-flung prairies of Nebraska. Arrived in Grafton, Mrs. Zieren and the two children remained there until a two-room house was erected on the 80 in Bennett township; the lumber was hauled from Fairmont. It was unplastered and remained so for several years.

As more room became necessary, the Zierens built on and around the original. It was in this unpretentious home that 10 of their 12 children were born. They were: John (deceased); Mary (Mrs. Ben Martin), Lincoln; Anne (Mrs. Mike Griffin), Grafton; Nettie (Mrs. Louis Klein), North Bend, Oregon; Thecla (Mrs. Will Schmitz), Clearwater, Nebraska; Joe, Grafton, Nebraska; Theresa, Rock Springs, Wyoming; Frank, Sioux City, Iowa; Catherine (Mrs. Paul

Photo from Nellie Sheridan

John Sheridan and his sulky (about 1904).

Photo from Joseph Zieren Jr.

Rickettsion), Santee, California; Elizabeth (Mrs. John Weiland), Madison, Nebraska; Hannah (Mrs. James Whelan), Missoula, Montana; and Caroline (Mrs. Gene Workman), Grand Island, Nebraska.

Only two of the first generation of Zierens still reside in Fillmore County.

Across the fields from his father, Joseph Zieren, Jr., batched and farmed. Close by lived the Albert Dietricks. Mrs. Dietrick was expecting a baby and found it hard to locate help for the home at that time. She had lived at Indiana and a friend of hers told her daughter she should go out and work for Mrs. Dietrick at that time. She seemed reluctant to go. Her mother urged her, saying it would only be for a couple of weeks. Two weeks seemed a long time, but, according to her mother’s wishes, she went. Shortly after arriving there, she met Joseph Zieren, Jr. Romance began, and culminated in marriage later.

In 1913, the elder Zierens retired to Grafton and Joseph and his bride moved onto the home place vacated by them. They have lived on this same place for the past 54 years. The two weeks that seemed so long to Mrs. Zieren lengthened into more than twenty times that many years, and she and Joseph are still living contentedly there with their son Raymond. Their 10 children were born there, bringing the number of births in the two generations to 20 in the same house, and never yet has a death occurred there.

The second generation of children are: Lenora Hansen, Denver; Wilma Baird, Cheyenne; Irene King, Denver; Ethel Krull, Hastings; Mary Garbers, Lincoln; Bernard, Carmi, Illinois; Raymond, at home; Florence Faughn, Lincoln; Ellen Voss, Lincoln; Theresa Zieren, Crete; and Frances Kuhler, Shickley.

Only two are living in Fillmore County. Joseph Zieren served on the school board of District No. 62 from 1914 until the school was discontinued, the school where 22 Zieren children received their early education. He was for many years supervisor of roads for Bennett township.

MISCELLANEOUS

“Buried Treasure”

The Signal for May 4, 1922, contained the following account of this unusual incident:

While Alvin Oberkotter was plowing his garden on the afternoon of April 13, he plowed up a baking-powder can containing $1,000 in $20 gold pieces. This 120-acre farm lies in Bennett township 9 miles west and one mile north of Geneva. It belongs to the Oberkotter estate, having been purchased by Mr. Oberkotter on September 28, 1905. He bought this farm, which Mr. Oberkotter was tossing out of the way. This was the same farm which Mr. Alvin Oberkotter and his wife Elva lived on and resided on the farm. He lived alone and was known to keep considerable sums of money around with him and that he occasionally became intoxicated. Stories are told of his losing money which the neighbors found and returned to him. He was found dead at his home five or six years ago. The Swedish Consul came from Omaha when the estate was settled as it was believed probably that Nelson buried the money. There was no one to prove positive ownership the Oberkotters assume that the money belongs to them.

Some years ago an elderly man named Nels Nelson owned and resided on the farm. He lived alone and was known to keep considerable sums of money around with him and that he occasionally became intoxicated. Stories are told of his losing money which the neighbors found and returned to him. He was found dead at his home five or six years ago. There was no one to prove positive ownership the Oberkotters assume that the money belongs to them.

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During the spring of 1908, Mr. Alvin Oberkotter built a two-story frame house on the farm. It had a sod roof and was known as Asbury Chapel, located 4 miles E of the present church site. The Grace congregation purchased that building in the spring of 1908 and moved it to the Mann homestead. The parsonage was built in 1909.

Established as a United Brethren Mission church, the new organization numbered among its first members Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Mann and their daughters Adeline, Caroline, and Jane; F. V. Mann and his wife Alma; the Fenske family; Willie Levander; Louis Lauenstein; Mamie and Ida Peterson; Mrs. Ezra Harrington; and Mrs. John Whitaker. Others influential in establishing the work of the new church were Bernard Isley, Mr. and Mrs. George Myers, and Henry Fessler. The first minister was a Rev. Mr. Wheeler.

On October 14, 1920, the first church burned down. In the spring of 1921, a Baptist church building, over in Clay County, was purchased and moved to the Mann site.

There were many activities in this country church which endeared itself to many people for miles around. Everybody was always willing to go the second mile.

There were Sunday School and church services every Sunday morning, and Christian Endeavor and another church service in the evening. There was always a young people’s choir. Ladies’ missionary meetings met once a month. Every summer, a Sunday School picnic was held in the Manns’ yard, where there were plenty of large shade trees.

In early church days, camp meetings were great events, and people came from miles around. They brought along camping tents, cots, stoves, bedding, food and other supplies enough to last for the duration of the tent meeting. All had an opportunity to meet in fellowship with other Christians. There was always a missionary present.

Two ministers and two foreign missionaries went out from this church during its lifetime, the Revs. F. V. Mann and Arthur Huntley (both deceased); Dr. Leslie Huntley, now of Washington, Kansas, the first medical missionary to serve in the mission field in Sierra Leone, West Africa; and Miss Mabel Shultz, who also served in Africa. So it would seem that this church not only was a great influence in its community but touched many other lives as well.

The last conference held in Grace Church took place in August, 1944. The visiting delegates and ministers stayed in homes in the community, and the church ladies served meals in the basement of the church.

The last services were held here on September 11, 1945, while the Rev. John Frederick Lippe was pastor. In November, 1949, the building was sold to Vern Domeier.

Miss Mabel Shultz, a member of Grace U. B. Church, consecrated her life to Christian work at the age of 14. After completing her studies at the Moody Bible School in Chicago, she served one year as pastor of her home church. On July 28, 1923, Miss Shultz, with other missionaries,
sailed from New York for Freetown, Sierra Leone, where she was stationed at the Bonthe Serbeo Mission. Despite the fact that she liked her missionary work very much, illness forced her to return home before her term was finished. She passed away on March 15, 1938.

Baptismal Pool

A baptismal pool on Sec. 29 in Bennett township is still very visible and when the water comes up it is all of four feet deep.

The pool was inaugurated under the tenure of the Rev. William Trace from Dorchester, Nebraska. A minister of the United Brethren Church of Huntington, Indiana, Rev. Trace was the first minister in the second United Brethren Church on the NE corner of Sec. 32, T7, R4W, Bennett township.

In this pool possibly six adults were immersed in 1909. All are now deceased.

Sam Huntley and his wife Ruth Shultz Huntley recall vividly the service, and to Sam this baptismal pool is hallowed ground; those persons immersed in the pool were his relatives. —Mrs. Sam Huntley

Vanished Scenes

Along the county line where the “Fillmorians” may reach out and shake hands with the “Claytonians” many changes have taken place in the last half-century and more. But the early settlers with far sightedness planted twigs of cottonwood which soon grew into large trees. A row on each side marked the way for miles, not as an avenue, thickly set but at intervals, some distance apart. Travelers jogging along the dusty roads or farmers plodding along to market with heavy loads of grain often stopped their horses for a rest in the shade of these trees from the hot summer sun. They must have blessed the early settlers for their thoughtfulness.

One such tree stood on the corner 2 miles N of Highway 41. It towered above all the other trees, which it outlived a decade or more. It served as a landmark for many years but also as a target for lightning aimed at the highest object around. Each strike stripped it of bark, limbs, and branches until it was no longer a thing of beauty and was cut down and used as firewood. All that remains of those trees are a few stumps by the roadside which refuse to be moved by wind or high water.

If a boy or girl of 60 years ago were to appear along the county line today he would find few of the people he used to know. There are no Adams left, where seven families in a row each had boys named Adam. The same families each had a John, but that is not uncommon even today. In fact, so few people are living along the county line that he would scarcely recognize the farms without their houses and other buildings. Many things of the first half-century in Fillmore County are gone.

Among the most noticeable is that the children of today have missed, they will not see again.

There was the Irish linen peddler with his pack of limens and laces walking a hundred miles and more on his trip each way from house to house.

The Arab peddler traveled an easier way but scarcely any faster. His one-horse open vehicle, the back of which was equipped with a covered box, held his wares. Happy the boy or girl at whose home the peddler was allowed to spend the night, as they were assured some gift from his pack: toys, fancy combs, brooches, ear rings, beads, etc. Baubles they were, but wonderful in the eyes of the young. Other articles they had, too: bolts of silks and satins, fine laces, gay colored scarfs, and handkerchiefs.

The Abdallahs and Aliases had their favorite stopping places where they knew they were welcome to spend their weekends, while in the vicinity. Often as many as four or five would be gathered together to spend their Sunday talking over their week’s sales and experiences. To their credit, none was ever known to break the trust placed in them or take advantage of their host’s hospitality. A slow way of making a living, you might say, but nevertheless many of these peddlers were able to establish themselves in large towns and set up stores of their own.

On a Sunday afternoon you might see a young man approaching the home of his lady love on foot or on horseback, and if you were too young for romance yourself you would hurry to announce to your elder sister that her beau was coming, at which announcement she would pin a pretty bow or ribbon in her pompadour, add a dash of talcum powder on her cheeks — no rouge or lipstick — and would welcome him into the parlor or the porch hammock. If you were the kind you might peek from some vantage point to see him present her with a box of bonbons or to draw from his vest pocket one of the dainty little name cards so popular in those days, or he might present her with his silk neckerchief which many of the swains wore and gave to their favorite lady friend.

If the beau were lucky enough to have a horse and buggy you could see rings on his harness at some distance as he cracked his whip to show off a bit before his admiring girl friend.

On a Sunday afternoon, too, you might see all sorts of vehicles gathered in a pasture with horses tied to fence posts and discover a game of ball was in progress. After the game there would be a horse race. The boys who rode the horses then have grandsons who are the hot-rod racers of today.

All was not hard work in those early days. There were parties, house dances, barn dances, school programs, etc. There were sleighrides in bob sleds or cutters, with the passengers bundled up and tucked in under horsehide lap robes. There were spelling bees and lyceums. If these programs did nothing else, they taught folks to stand on their feet and talk in public. At each program there would be a debate on some subject close to the lives of the people. Debating teams from one school would challenge those from some other district.

“A Reporter at Large”

The following paragraphs are from a newspaper article written by P. J. Kennedy at the turn of the century, listing the people who lived in Bennett township.

Bennett joins Grafton township on the south and is one of the finest townships in the county. We never met finer people. Their homes are cheerful and happy.

The first man we met on the trip was C. C. Kavanaugh. Mr. Kavanaugh owns 160 acres of land and has 30 acres of wheat, 20 acres of oats, and 40 acres of corn.

We took dinner with W. C. Lange. Mr. Lange owns 160 acres of fine land. He has the following crops this year: 50 acres of wheat, 20 acres of oats, and 40 acres of corn. The rest of his farm is pasture and hay land.

We called to see Mike Oberlander but he wasn’t at home. He has a fine quarter of land.

John Oswald has a beautiful farm and his buildings are all new.

Joseph Oberlander was taking his noonday nap when we called and we were a little afraid to disturb him but he came out in good humor. Mr. Oberlander has a fine 160 and we are pleased to say he is doing well.

John Zieren has just completed a new house and has otherwise improved his farm. He is a strong Republican but his politics do not prevent him from being the good fellow he is.

George Martin is living on the W. G. Hainey farm. Mr. Martin bade us welcome and treated us like gentlemen in every way. We wish him a long and prosperous life.

William F. Van Patton is farming a fine quarter section. He has the following crops: 80 acres of wheat and 60 acres of corn.

Harm Evarts is farming 160 and has the following crops: 50 acres of wheat, 30 acres of oats, and 50 acres of corn.

G. W. McCormick was very busily engaged cultivating corn. Mr. McCormick is farming a very fine 160 and his crops look fine.

J. J. Gibbons is farming 240 acres and has the following acreage planted to crops: 90 acres of wheat, 25 acres of oats, and 75 acres of corn. Mr. Gibbons is a pleasant man to visit with.
Charles Burns owns a fine 240 acres and we are glad that we happened around his place about dinner time. We stand ready at any time to speak a kind word for Charles Burns.

The next man we met on this route was Ed Lawless. Ed was asleep when we came to his place, taking his noonday nap. Mr. Lawless and family are nice people to visit with.

P. W. Murray lives along this line. In addition to being a big farmer Mr. Murray is chief justice of the supreme court of Bennett township, a position he very creditably fills to the entire satisfaction of his constituents. The people say his decisions are final.

Here we met our political friend, the Hon. Richard Dobson. Mr. Dobson was not studying politics when we ran against him. Oh, no; on the contrary, he was very busyly engaged mowing alfalfa hay. He owns 240 acres of choice farm land.

Anthony Buttell owns 320 acres of splendid land on this line. He has just completed a fine new house.

John and Carl Stengel both are big farmers and are happy and contented.

J. B. Garrison and brothers own a section of almighty fine land.

Louis Oswald is making money and doing well. Mr. Oswald owns 240 acres of nice land and we wish him prosperity.

Pat and John Sullivan are young men who are farming 240 acres of land. They have quite a large crop of everything and it looks well.

P. J. Case is an old settler having lived on his present farm 31 years. We enjoyed our visit with Mr. Case and hope sometime in the future we may be able to call again.

We turned in for the night with John Sheridan. We knew John and his family when they lived down by Exeter. Mr. Sheridan has a fine home and his hospitality is known the entire country over. He is the assessor for Bennett township and so far as we heard has given entire satisfaction, a fact we like to mention.

We stopped for dinner with George M. White and a finer dinner we never sat down to. The kindness of Mr. White and his family is appreciated. We were invited to call again and that is just what we will do some day soon.

J. A. Johnson has a fine 160 and is treasurer of Bennett township. The funds of Bennett township are safe in the hands of Mr. Johnson.

G. E. Mitchell is farming 160 acres of choice land. He has the following acreage sowed to crops: 100 acres of corn and 50 acres of wheat.

L. F. Launstein is another farmer who has a mighty lovely home. Everything about the place looks clean and neat and this is why we think he is prosperous and doing well.

Well, we meandered along till we came to Henry Fessler’s place. Mr. Fessler is supervisor from the third district and is sure enough a jolly fellow to meet. When his term of office expires we think the people will say, well done thou good and faithful servant.
Charles Whitaker wasn't at home when we called. Bernard Rotter was cultivating corn and we stopped to say a word with him. Mr. Rotter owns a fine farm of 160 acres. August Rotter is farming 160 acres of land. He has the following crops: Wheat 25 acres, oats 15 acres, and 80 acres of corn.

We found T. O. Huston making hog pasture. He had just received a consignment of wire from Cleveland, Ohio, and was busy getting it in shape. Mr. Huston has 30 acres planted to peach trees and they are bearing some this year. His farm is a veritable paradise with trees and flowers. We will slip back some day when the peaches are ripe.

C. B. Sypher is farming the E. A. Cushing farm. We called to see John O'Brien but he was down in Omaha with a carload of hogs. Mr. O'Brien owns 720 acres of land. He also owns something like 150 head of cattle and about three acres of hogs. When Mr. O'Brien came to Fillmore County he didn't have the beautiful home one sees today, but he worked hard and had the help of a good wife, and then his boys grew up and little by little wealth came his way until finally he triumphed and today he is reputed one of the best fixed men in Fillmore County. The writer is glad to note this fact because we know Mr. O'Brien to be a splendid citizen.

David Isley, Ole N. Karlberg, and C. J. Lundberg were people we called on. S. B. Mann owns 400 acres of choice land in Bennett township. Mr. Mann paid us a goodly sum on subscriptions for which he has our hearty thanks.

William Stolldorf and Oscar Solberg live along this line. Both are good farmers.

We are now at work in Momence township and are happy to say that our success in the past has been far beyond our expectations. We always speak with respect for those who don't agree with our politics.

—we.

The Oblinger Letters

Greatly enriching the early history of Fillmore County are the Oblinger Letters. These consist of a series of letters written through the years 1872 to 1880 by a young homesteader, Uriah W. Oblinger, and his wife, Martha Thomas Oblinger, to members of Mrs. Oblinger's family back in their old home in Indiana. Not written for publication, they give an intimate first-hand description of life on a Fillmore County homestead.

Beginning with the young homesteader's determination to have a home of his own, they provide a vivid picture of almost every phase of homestead life. The search for a claim, the filing thereon, building of the sod house, breaking the first sod, the Easter blizzard of 1873, the grasshopper years, hard times, etc., are all there.

The Oblingers' letters were preserved by the Thomas family, who recently presented them to the Nebraska State Historical Society. To the courtesy of the Historical Society and the kindness of Mrs. William Lennemann of Orleans, Nebraska, to whose mother most of the letters were written, and of Mrs. Margaret Oblinger Sandon of Denver, Colorado, the youngest daughter of the Oblingers, who was born on the homestead on October 11, 1877, we are indebted for the privilege of including a few extracts from them in this history of our county.

These letters are of particular interest to the authors of the Bennett precinct story, as the Oblinger homestead was in that immediate locality. The homestead map of Fillmore County (see Bennett homestead map) shows that it was located on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 32, on the present Highway 41, 1 1/2 miles east of the Clay County line and in the same section with the Mann homestead. The Oblinger land, now the Nuss estate; the Giles Thomas land, now the Henry J. Kamler home where Carl Kamler lives. Sam had taken land in Sec. 2, Momence.

In one letter Uriah speaks of his determination to have a home of his own; of his search for a claim; of his intention to jump an abandoned claim; of the procedure required for doing so; and of the wonderful land, smooth-lying and "rich as cream." He mentions a number of neighbors, such as a Mr. Entwistle and a Mr. Elliott. It should be understood that although the ordinary claim jumper was universally despised, no opprobrium was attached to a man who "jumped" a fully abandoned claim. Jumping, or contesting, of a fully abandoned claim was reliably estimated at 2½ filings on every homestead claim in Nebraska. The average was probably not that high in Fillmore County.

[Editor's Note: The letters—or extracts from letters—that follow are printed exactly as they were written except for very minor changes in punctuation and paragraphing.]

Uriah W. Oblinger to his wife, Martha ("Mattie") Thomas Oblinger:

Friday, Nov. 17, 1872
At Giles House

Dear Wife and Baby:

You guess right when you think I am homesick. But it is not to go back to Indiana. It is to secure a home right here and that I think can be done. It is going to cost some privations, but I have made up my mind to stand them for the sake of a home.

I know it will seem pretty rough to those who have never tried to do without wood or timber, but it looks rougher on paper than the reality seems. As to water, there is plenty of it by digging pretty deep. And good too, and never failing. As to the streams, I do not want land with one of the streams here on it, for they are very crooked, cutting the land up bad and the banks are so steep that they are hard to get down to. Besides, there is considerably fever and ague along them and the land is pretty sandy, too. Back from the streams is a better quality of soil, no fever and ague, and the land is very even and nice and almost every section near here can every foot be plowed and cultivated with a very few exceptions. The claim that Giles and Sam has taken can every foot be plowed.

1 There are many more letters than those we have chosen extracts from to quote here. The Historical Society hopes to publish the whole collection at some future date.
November 20, 1872

Well, I promised to write more as soon as my chores were done but Mr. Elliott and wife came and spent the evening with us so I did not write any more and here I am in Crete at the Hotel 20 miles southwest of Lincoln where I have been to complain against a homestead. I am in a fair way now for a home but I will have to make 2 trips to Lincoln yet. My trial for the claim is the 20th of December when I will have to appear at the land office in Lincoln with 2 witnesses to prove that the man has been gone more than 6 months and has never did anything on it. Then the papers will be sent to Washington to be countersigned and as soon as they come back I can homestead it, which may be 2 or 3 months yet. But I am sure of a home now and there is not a square inch of it but what is rich as cream and can be plowed and I can stand almost anywhere on it and see it all. There is a well near the corner of it only 67 feet deep, which is shallow for this country. Giles well is 124 feet deep. There is 3 families living by my claim so that I can build on any part of it and they will not be over 1/2 mile from us and all native born Americans so you see we will be better off for neighbors than we expected to be. We have had some very cold breezes from the Nor-west that make a fellow shiver, I tell you! But I am not scared yet and to tell my opinion I like it better every day that I am here.

I took dinner today with Mr. Vandoran (Joe's uncle) and I tell you they were glad to see me come in. They said it did them good to see some one from their old neighborhood. They are living in the best house they were ever in and are doing well and are well pleased, so you see when I go to Lincoln I will have some place to get my grub — and I tell you it takes a lot to do me now. I can eat from the time I get up till bed time and go to bed hungry. If it serves you so when you get here it will take all we have to eat. I have not seen Giles and Sam since Monday week. They went off toward Beatrice 28 miles to gather corn on the shares and left me hunting for a claim. Sam need not stay on his land only go to it and stay a short time every six months and then go off and work somewhere and put his wages in improvements is all the law requires of a single man. There is a great many of them here doing that way and it is the best thing they can do. I think if Father was here he would be tempted to do just as we did when he would see the land. There is a good many come just to look but as soon as they see the land they go to the land office as fast as they can get there.

Well, Ma [Uriah's pet name for Mattie], I have got Plato yet and I am going to keep him just for you. He killed two skunks last week and we had plenty of musk for a while. It made him awful sick; he vomited like everything. You ought to see him chase the swifts. They are similar to a fox only smaller. There is but one dog in the neighborhood that can-out-run him; he can run almost as fast as a greyhound.

I am going to try to get hauling here and if so I will gather corn on the shares. Well, Ma and Baby, a sweet good night and May God keep you from harm and bring you safe to my western home.

—Your loving husband

Uriah to Mattie:

Sabbath December 1, 1872
At Giles House

Dear Wife and Baby:

I am again at the pen talking to you through its silent medium and a great satisfaction it is to be thus blessed but more so if you were here with me and us occupying the homestead I have in view...

Ma, I don't want you to get discouraged about our situation yet, for I am not. I did not come here to be baffled off so easily. I am going to have my land before I leave here if I live and have health, if I have to sell my team and take the money to live on, and live here alone till I can get a deed for a piece of land, and then I am confident that I can live when I have 160 acres of my own. So you can just make up your mind that I am going to have a home for Ma and Pet. When once my homestead papers are filed on a piece of land you can hold it as well as me, if I am called away; and if I am called before [the papers are filed], you can homestead 160 acres and hold it, for the law says soldiers' widows andorphans can have the same right as the soldier himself; even the guardian for a soldier's orphan can take a piece for the orphan as well as the soldier himself. Some are doing so at this time. So you see Uncle Sam has been mindful of those who stood by the country in her hour of peril by providing in a great measure for those who were ever nearest and Dearest to us.

Well, Ma, we were all at church today and a good meeting we had. Some got up and said they wanted to cast their influence on the side of Christianity that were not professors. This is more than they will do in Indiana, where there is more and better church privileges than we have here.

Ma, the longer I stay here the better I like it. There are but very few old families here. They are mostly young families just starting in life, the same as we are, and I find them very generous indeed. We will all be poor here together and grow up together and I hope be happy together.

Ma, you know I was saying when I left home, just for
fun, I would be a single man when I got here, but I soon found that did not pay. When I would ask anyone to show me vacant land, about the next question was: Have you a family? When I answered in the affirmative they were ready to show me a claim, for they are anxious for people to come in who will be permanent settlers, for that is what we need to make the country. Nearly 1/3 of the claims here are taken by single men. The section that Giles is on has 3 single men. The one that Doc is on has 3 and you might say 4, for one man came from England and left his wife in Chicago till he could come and get a claim, and when he wrote for her she sent him word that she was going back to England and would not come, so he is here alone. Is that the way you are going to serve me, dear wife? If it is, just send our baby, and then I guess Ma will come too . . .

Ma, you know I expected to be a good way off from neighbors when I left home, and you will know by my former letter that I am happily mistaken, and I think, taking everything into view, we have good neighbors. I do not know of one near that drinks, and we can count the improvements on some 75 to 80 farms from here, and that is more than we can say of our old neighborhood . . .

I am trying to make a trade with a man for his cow. He wants a well and I am trying to get the job of digging it for his flannels and his jeans both. And groceries and other goods are no higher than they are in Indiana.

I am trying to make a trade with a man for his cow. He wants a well and I am trying to get the job of digging it for the cow . . .

I am not discouraged yet nor anywhere near it, and the longer I stay here the better I like it. I think that there is a bright future for Nebraska and us with it. I think you will certainly like it here, for mud there has been none yet to

Mattie to her mother and family:
May 19th 1873
At home in our own house, and a sod at that, and just ate dinner. Dear friends as I have an opportunity to send a letter to the office I will send you a few hastily composed lines.

Billie Mote came to our house Saturday morning, he is going to Grafton this afternoon so I will not have time to write much. We have [had] considerable of rain since I came here. Saturday night it rained very hard. It is too wet to plant corn. Some are ready but have to wait a day or so for the ground to dry off. The plants and strawberries that I brought I put on Giles’ place. I was looking at them last evening. They look very promising, the Dialetré especially. We went to Mr. Cambells yesterday to church and Sabbath school, they live seven miles south of here. The minister failed to come so there was society meeting. The Cambels are real Kentuckians, wish you could hear them talk. We took dinner with them.

Urah and Billie are talking. WAC is lying on the lounge and Ella is teasing him for his book. We moved into our house last Wednesday (U.W.O. birthday). I suppose you would like to see us in our sod house. It is not quite so convenient as a nice frame but I would as soon live in it as the cabins I have lived in and then we are at home which makes it more comfortable. I ripped our wagon sheet in two, have it around two sides and several papers up so the boys think it looks real well. Uriah’s made a bedstead and a lounge so [we] could have something to sleep on. The only objection I have we have no floor yet. Will be better this fall. I got one tea cup and saucer and the corner of the glass on the little hero picture broken. Pretty good luck, I think. My goods got here two days before I did. Uriah had taken them over to Mr. Hawks. Uriah was plowing sod this forenoon talks of planting some this afternoon. He has 20 acres sur-
round 16 of it broke. Doc and Billie and Uriah C. stayed with us. I know you would have laughed to see us fixing their bed. We set boxes to the side of the lounge and enlarged Uriah’s bed for all of them. We enjoyed the fun and they enjoyed their bed as much as if they had been in a nice parlor bedroom. U. C. and Doc sung while I got supper. They call Doc “Sam” out here, sounds very odd to me. Wish you could see his whiskers shaved all off but what is on his chin and lip. I told him I wanted some to send you but he could not see it. He has worked one day at his house.

I have got acquainted with some here. They are not hard to get acquainted with. The boys went to Sutton Saturday afternoon. I went along to see the town and country. On our way we seen three antelopes. U. C. shot at them for fun. Charlie, if you was here you would never get done looking for you can see ever so far. Coming from Sutton we could see the county seat which was 11 miles from us. We got a letter from you. U. C. says tell Kate D. that he glories in her spunk and of course feel too badly used up now. I am real sorry for our preacher [Mr. Heckman] for he is so timid. It seems as though he has no confidence in himself and it hurts him very much. He is a very poor man. Has a homestead and of course, like the rest of us he must work hard and he has not much time to prepare sermons for Sunday and he has not much money. I suppose it will soon be time for you to have protracted meeting again. How I would like to attend one of them.

Mattie to her family:

At Giles’s, Monday morning
August 25, 1873

... Yesterday we had preaching (Methodist). I feel sorry for our preacher [Mr. Heckman] for he is so timid. It seems as though he has no confidence in himself and it hurts his speaking very much. He is a very poor man. Has a homestead and of course, like the rest of us he must work hard and he has not much time to prepare sermons for Sunday and he has not much money. I suppose it will soon be time for you to have protracted meeting again. How I would like to attend one of them.

Mattie to her family:

[Undated, but probably about December, 1873]

I think Geo. and Griffin would do well to come west if their money will not go far enough there for them. If they don’t watch the corners pretty close we will be as well off as they are in a few years. We can say now that we own 160 acres. All it wants is improving and I am sure it is a healthy place. Poor little Earnie, it is too bad he must have the chills so much. If I was them I would be willing to sacrifice some of my enjoyments to endure a few privations for the sake of having health in my family. I am very sure they would be healthier here but I shall not urge them to come for fear they would not be satisfied and then we would be to blame. Do you ever hear how Al Shoap likes the west. Is he in the grasshopper regions? Tell Doc we will write to him soon to be patient and wait. I am anxiously waiting for the barrel to come. Think we will get it this week or next. I assure you we will feel very thankful to you all for what is in it. Oh, yes, we got a dime worth of Banbo apples in Fairmont which was seven. I tell you they were good. Ella thought so. I left her at Mr. Heley’s when we went to Fairmont. Well, I will have to stop writing. Guess there is a piece of paper for each of you this time.
and Sam and Giles Thomas (Martha’s brothers) decided to go west. Traveled in two covered wagons. Landed in Fillmore County, Nebraska, took a homestead, built a sod house. The walls were up and ready to put on the roof when the terrible Easter storm on April 13, 1873. A three days’ blizzard. Some people lost their lives and much of the stock perished. Uriah was still living at Giles house so they were safe, but could not get to the barn to feed and water the horses (3 days).

When Uriah went west in the fall of 1872 he left his wife and a 2 year old daughter (Ella) at the Thomas home. When the sod house was ready in the spring of 1873, he sent for them. Martha had kept the dishes and bedding. Uriah had taken 2 chairs and a small cook stove with him in the wagon. Dishes and bedding were shipped to Crete, Nebraska (Railroad was not built through Fillmore Co. yet) (R.R. was completed through Fillmore in Aug. 1871 but due to a quarrel between the town fathers the R.R., trains did not stop in Sutton at that time.) Uriah met them in Crete. Ella was only 2½ years old but could faintly remember it and how glad they were to all be together again.

A home was established in a “little old sod shanty on the claims.” Uriah had plowed some land, and planted, wheat and corn. Also a garden and got a few chickens and a couple of little pigs. Wheat had been harvested; corn was just tasseling nicely. It was getting dry so they were wishing for rain. This was in 1874.

At dinner Uriah wondered if it was going to rain as it went fairly dark; to be getting drunk. “I can’t see the sun,” he remarked. On going outdoors, he called his wife, “Come out here, I never seen anything like this.” The air was so full of grass hoppers, they could not see the sun. They soon began dropping and settled on all growing things, till everything was covered. Chickens ate hoppers until they could hold no more. Uriah turned the pigs out. They ate hoppers also till they could eat no more. Uriah thought he might save the corn by mixing trash and manure together. Martha drove the team while Uriah put the mixture in small piles. It was somewhat damp, so he set it on fire to cause a smudge; this kept the hoppers off for a while, but when the smoke ceased they soon came. Evidently left no eggs as there were no hoppers have it too bad.

Also dug a well. Had been hauling water from a neighbor. Had a garden now, so they began to live a little better. A neighbor (widow) let them have 2 cows on the shares so they had milk and butter. They had to sell the pigs that ate the grass hoppers for lack of corn to feed them. After getting the cows they got a pig so that year they had meat.

In those days they took wheat and corn to the mill, about 20 miles North, for grinding. Toll of a certain number of pounds for each bushel was taken by the mill to pay for the grinding. A nice crop of potatoes also was raised that summer. On October 11, 1877 another girl was born — Maggie Esther. Good crops on what land was cultivated was making homestead life look better. Then in Feb. 1880 Martha became very ill in confinement. After 3 days she passed away, and the child (a little boy) born dead, was buried in the mothers arms. She was about the first buried in what was then the “Dave Myers” cemetery. Name now is Fairview. I believe it is about 11 miles West of Geneva and 3 miles South. The homestead was 11 miles west of Geneva on the north side of the road. It is the South West Quarter of the section 32-7-4. Uriah stayed on the homestead that summer. Hired washing done and the bread baked. Also had help during harvesting and threshing.

At dinner Uriah saw a man walking across the prairie, thought it was a neighbor, but soon saw it was an Indian. Martha had just finished baking bread. Uriah took it and hurried to the cellar. (An Indian will not go into a cellar so the bread was safe.) Indian just walked in — they never knock — and said “How.” He carried a gun. Uriah took it and set it back in a corner out of the Indians reach, and managed to keep between the Indian and his gun. The Indian took a little red purse out of his pocket (he was wearing pants) and a blanket around him with a narrow strip of pink calico wrapped around his head. His hair was hanging to his shoulders. He held out the purse and said “five cents.” Uriah said “no money.” Then he said “pork” and pointed to his mouth. Want’d meat. Uriah said “no pork.” They gave him food which he ate sitting by the stove, then he left and Uriah gave him his gun after he was outside. Uriah had to bring the dog inside to keep him from attacking the Indian. Ella was only 4½ years old, but remembers it all quite vividly. Uriah broke out more land that year, 1875. Set out some trees and the homestead began to look better. Built a larger sod house and put in a floor. The first only had the hard packed dirt. Also dug a well. Had been hauling water from a neighbor. Had a garden now, so they began to live a little better. A neighbor (widow) let them have 2 cows on the shares so they had milk and butter. They had to sell the pigs that ate the grass hoppers for lack of corn to feed them. After getting the cows they got a pig so that year they had meat.

Headstone in Fairview cemetery in Momence Township.

Maggie was 2½ when her mother died, and had always been a delicate child, so the ministers wife cared for her that summer.

Ella and Stella were 9½ and 5 years old so stayed home and assisted in keeping house. All liked mush and milk, fried mush and corn bread. Uriah taught Ella how to do all of them and she continued doing them the same all her life.

In the fall of 1870 after corn and wheat were harvested, Uriah decided he could not continue to manage alone. So had a sale in Jan. 1881 selling everything. Then went to Min-
Bennett Township Homestead Map

Minnesota where his parents lived; also his brothers and sisters who were married. He left Ella at Menominie with her mother's sister and husband (S. Bailey). Estella was left with his brother Horace Oblinger and Maggie with his sister, the Travers. The Travers and Oblinger had no children of their own.

Uriah then worked at different places. In Oct. 1881 he married again. In July 1883 he decided to return to Fillmore Co. He traveled by covered wagon (he had sold the homestead). Left Minnesota on July 4th, arrived in Grafton, Nebr. Aug. 4, where Giles Thomas was living. Rented a place about 1 1/2 miles from the homestead. At that time it was known as the "Fellows place," where Bill Fenskes son, Otto now lives. A half mile east of us was the schoolhouse No. 60. So Ella, Estella and Maggie all attended school there. It was Maggie's first school.

We lived on that farm through 83, 84, 85; left the spring of 1886. Hearing of new land being opened in Kansas he went there in the fall of 1885. Took a timber claim as his homestead right had been used in Nebraska.

In April 1886, we were on the move again in a covered wagon. This time with an ox team. Arrived at the timber claim in Gove Co., Kansas, May 15, 1886. A dugout was the home this time. There were 3 more girls and a boy by this time. The little boy died that summer, 9 months old. Ella was married in Dec. 1886, age 17 years. County was organized in 1887. Uriah was appointed Clerk of the District Court, so we moved to Gove City in Sept. Then at regular election almost 2 years later he was re-elected. Many of the settlers made their final proof on the land at the Clerk's office. Timber claim had been sold, so we were soon on the move again in the covered wagon. This time for the Ozarks in Missouri. Visited Ella, near Danbury, Nebr. While there, Estella, a young lady by then, who taught school, was unknowingly exposed to the measles. In a few days they were very evident. A doctor at Downs, Kans. pronounced it measles. Of course no one would let us in with a contagious ailment. There were four other girls who had not had them. All came down with them at once. We kept traveling however, and all recovered very nicely.

Missouri did not prove to be the garden of Eden he thought, and a farmer going from the Kansas and Nebr. plains
to the rocks of the Ozarks would not like it. Estella married her Nebraska sweetheart and returned to Danbury. Uriah soon went there also in the covered wagon and a few months later the family went by train and Nebraska was the home for all of us thereafter. Uriah, Estella and Nettie (a half-sister) are all buried at Danbury, Nebr.

Ella and family moved near Irmiter. She died in 1958 at the age of 88. Maggie (Oblinger) Sandon has lived in Denver since 1917 and is the only one of the 3 little girls living on the homestead that is living.
Bryant Township

Bryant Township occupies the southwest corner of Fillmore County (T5, R4W). It was presumably named for Edward Bryant, who homesteaded the N 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 14 in 1872. It is bounded on the north by Momence and on the east by Hamilton townships, on the south by Thayer County, and on the west by Clay County. Nebraska Highway 74 follows its northernmost section line from east to west, passing 1/2 mile N of Shickley. The Beatrice-Hildreth line of the Burlington runs WSW out of Shickley, and the Fremont-Superior line of the Northwestern runs SSW from Shickley to where the Thayer County line meets Secs. 33 and 34.

The land is generally level except where Little Sandy Creek flows mostly southeastward through four sections (19, 20, 29, and 32) in the southwestern quarter of the township. Here there are more trees and the land is quite rolling, affording good pasture. A smaller stream, Dry Sandy Creek, rises in Sec. 3, turns south into Sec. 10, and then flows eastward past Shickley. The soil is a rich, loamy loess which is very productive when enough moisture is available either from rainfall or from deep-well irrigation. In 1966, a total of 101 irrigation wells were registered in Bryant precinct.

The Burlington Railroad's main line through the northern end of the county, when it was finished in 1871, brought a great influx of settlers. During the 1870's, many settlers, Swedish immigrants predominating, came to Bryant township. Drouth and grasshoppers halted settlement for a time in the early part of the decade and caused some who had already staked claims to relinquish them and return to the East.

Among the names of early settlers, we find those of William Kline, Robert Campbell, the Lambert family, Peter Nelson, Jacob Pearson, E. S. Rothrock, A. M. Horner, J. L.

Bryant Township Homestead Map
Landsford, L. R. Hoag, the Davis family, Elisha White, and N. T. Smith. Some took homesteads, while others bought relinquishments, and some took tree claims. The Grange was an important organization during the settling of this part of Fillmore County.

Bryant township received its share of worthy Scandinavian immigrants. These accounts of Nels Anderson and Swan Johnson are apparently from contemporary newspaper articles (dates not available):

"In Bryant township in the midst of a large and prosperous Scandinavian colony, where the proverbial thrift and enterprise of this race is well displayed in highly cultivated farms, fine homes, groves, orchards, hedgerows, gardens and bountiful grain fields is the 152-acre estate of Nels Anderson, Esq., a native of Sweden, who came here from Illinois in 1873 with an ox team and $10. He now has an estate worth $25,000. He has now 900 acres under plow, grows 8,000 to 10,000 bu. of corn, 2,000 bu. of wheat, 2,500 bu. of oats, 800 to 1,200 bu. of barley, 120 tons of hay and millet, and large and profitable crops of broom corn. Keeps 70 head of cattle, milks 15 cows, has a few purebred shorthorns, and feeds a carload of steers and 100 pigs. He has $2,000 worth of buildings, extensive groves, and other permanent improvements.

"Mr. Anderson is an intelligent, sagacious man of the world. He is an influential man of broad views and great public spirit and has a host of friends."

"Swan A. Johnson was born in Sweden December 10, 1863. In 1883, with the hope of bettering his financial condition, he came to America, accompanied by his sister, now Mrs. O. W. Peterson of Bryant township. Coming immediately to Fillmore County, he purchased 80 acres of wild land for $720, or $9 per acre. This he subsequently sold for a good price and bought a much better 80, 2½ miles from Shickley. At the age of 25, he was married to Mary Larson, also a native of Sweden, and a daughter of Lars and Margareta Johnson."

Olof Swenson was born in 1853 in Sweden, and came to Galesburg, Illinois, at the age of 16 years. My mother, Jennie Freeburg, was born in Sweden in 1856 and came to Galesburg when she was 19 years old. They were married February 6, 1879, and came to Fillmore County on February 1, 1884.

The O. T. Swenson farm in 1890. Mr. and Mrs. O. T. Swenson in center, Arthur Swenson on horse, Seth Lilledoll in spring wagon, Teckla in rocker, Bert in wagon with dog.

The Olof Swenson farm is the NW ¼ of Sec. 35. Originally railroad land, it was first sold in 1874, and a second time in 1879. Then, in the fall of 1883, it was bought by Olof Swenson for $2,900.

Three of their four children were born in the same room of the farm home: Bert (of Stockton, California), Teckla (of Oelwein, Iowa), and Harry (myself), who still lives on the home place. Arthur, the oldest child, was born in Iowa. My parents lived on the farm for 22 years and in 1916 built a new home and moved to Shickley. They made arrangements to give the land to the children. I got the home place.

I also had three children [by my first wife, Clara Bjork], who were born in the same room in which I was born: Willard (of Carleton), Lester (of Lincoln), and Lavette, who passed away two weeks after her mother. In October, 1924, I married Beulah [Hayes], who had a daughter, Thelma, who lives in Texas. So I still have two sons and one daughter.

I have now lived on this place 51 years after my parents moved to town. So the Swensons, father and son, have lived on this farm 84 years. I quit farming in 1946 and I rent the ground out. In 1955, I put down an irrigation well.

—Harry Swenson

In 1885, the Burlington surveyed for a branch line to run from Beatrice west to Holdrege. It seemed for a time that there would be a trade center established near the Stockholm Church, which was the Swedish community center. However, because of the generous offers of William Kline and Robert Campbell, who owned farms in Sec. 12, 2½ miles E of Stockholm, a village site was laid out on their land. The town was named (according to Nebraska Place-Names) for Fillmore Shickley, an attorney for the Burlington Railroad when the line came through, who also owned land in the vicinity and was instrumental in getting the town located there.

Carlisle

Mr. and Mrs. George M. Hoag, with their son L. R. Hoag, came from Muscatine, Iowa, by covered wagon and mule team, in 1872, and homesteaded the NW ¼ of Sec. 34.1

In the summer of 1888, when the Northwestern R.R. extended its line from Geneva to Superior, it came across the east 80 of this quarter. A town site was laid out on the line between Thayer and Fillmore counties at the corner of Secs. 33 and 34. The railroad built a loading platform and a depot just across the line in Thayer County and called the station Walters. A little community sprang up, with a store combined with living quarters, stock-buying and grain-handling facilities, a blacksmith shop, and a post office.

1 This account was contributed by Mrs. M. M. Hoak (died 1962) and Mrs. A. F. Wagers, daughters of L. R. Hoag.
When mail service became necessary, the Post Office Department declined the request for a post office because another town had too similar a name; and so the name was changed to Carlisle, in honor of John G. Carlisle, President Cleveland’s Secretary of the Treasury. The railroad company continued to use the name Walters, but for all other purposes it was known as Carlisle. Two more residences were built, and it was a thriving little place for about 30 years. At first, church services were held in the depot waiting room, served by neighboring ministers or lay leaders from the Methodist Church at Davenport. When the District 87 schoolhouse was built, 1½ miles N of the village, a Union Sunday School was held there, and a church organization served by the ministers of the Christ Lutheran Church of Davenport. This lasted until about 1910.

As late as 1910, the village had a population of 30; but later everything was sold and moved away, and the land reverted to farmer owners.

CHURCHES

Stockholm Lutheran Church

One of the first objectives of the pioneers was to establish places of worship. It was quite natural that they should consider the necessity of a church and the spiritual welfare of themselves and their children, since they brought a strong religious heritage from their homelands. Early religious services were held in schoolhouses and homes.

The Swedish settlement in Bryant township was the first to organize a congregation, which became known as the Stockholm Lutheran Church. On December 28, 1875, a meeting was held at the home of O. G. Bergquist on Sec. 8 for the purpose of organizing a congregation. The first officers were William Miller, chairman, and Nils Anderson, secretary. Deacons elected were Nils Johnson, Morris Manson, and William Miller. O. G. Bergquist, O. P. Akerson, and O. Erickson were elected trustees. Others present at this meeting were Peter Manson, N. Nilson, N. W. Swanson, John Harnett, Herman Olson, John A. Johnson, and Olaf Olson, who presumably became charter members.

A five-acre tract was purchased from Herman Olson on Sec. 9 for a church and a cemetery, and in the summer of 1881 the first Stockholm Church was built. Some time later it was decided to retain only a part of that land for the church and to deed the other part to what became known as the Swedish Cemetery Association. An adjoining two-acre tract was purchased as the site for a parsonage, which was built in 1883. The first resident pastor was the Rev. H. R. Miller; the church had previously shared pastors with Sarona.

There was a considerable increase in membership in 1888 and 1889 and the following years. The old church became too small, and in 1900 it was razed and a new church was built on the same spot. It is a 36' x 60' building with a steeple 70 feet high. There is a social room addition at the rear. In 1909, a new parsonage, with 12 rooms, not including the basement, replaced the old one. About this time the church reached its all-time high point in membership. The total membership in 1911 was 307, of whom 238 were communicant members.

The Stockholm church had its last resident pastor in 1932-1936. As the parsonage was no longer needed, it was sold and dismantled. During these later years Stockholm has shared a pastor’s service with the Gethsemane Church at Ong. The following are the pastors who have served the church since its organization (1875-1967); confirms number nearly 400.

Shickley Methodist Church

As in many churches, Sunday School preceded the church in the Methodist group of worshipers. Sunday School was held in a schoolhouse on the northwest corner of Sec. 12 before the village of Shickley was organized. As settlers increased in numbers, and with the coming of the new town, the Methodist Church had its beginning in the summer of 1886. The first preacher was the Rev. David Fetz, the Carleton pastor (1884-1886), and Shickley church became part of a three-point circuit, the third point being Summit, a rural church midway between Shickley and Carleton.

Bob Campbell, who owned the NW ¼ of Sec. 12, donated a lot (Lot 1, Block 2) in the new village for a church site. The building committee consisted of Eliza White, Bob Campbell, and Ed Wendell. Sanford Huston and Eliza White circulated the subscription list for the building fund. The edifice, which became the main part of the present structure, was built in 1886 and dedicated on September 4 in the same year. Names mentioned in the conference minutes of 1887 as contributors to missions are Sam Legdon, John Burgess, Ida Knee Garver, Mrs. R. B. Schelp, J. Arganbright, Jennie Hedden, and Mellie Schelp. An 1887 Sunday School record book contains the names of R. B. Schelp, superintendent; Sanford Huston, Mellie Schelp, Mrs. Schelp, Mrs. W. E. Woodruff, and Mrs. Philby, teachers. The minutes of January 9, 1887, report “Number present, 25. Penny collection, 37 cents.”

In 1910, the church was remodeled by raising the building and adding an annex on the north, making a basement, and installing a furnace, giving the exterior its present appearance. In 1955, the interior was extensively renovated. Various houses in town were used as parsonages until 1922, when the Bergquist property adjoining the church was purchased for the pastor’s residence.
Shickley Congregational Church

This writer has been unable to locate any record of the organization of the Congregational Church in Shickley, but there is a treasurer's book which records subscriptions beginning with August 1, 1887, and also various purchases of building materials and payments for labor, beginning with August 4, 1887, and continuing until September, 1889. The amounts recorded, both receipts and expenditures, total close to $1,000.

The one-room structure was erected at the south end of Main Street, about two blocks south of the Northwestern Railroad, which came through during the summer of 1888. Among the early contributors are the names of such pioneers as William Kline, W. E. Davis, E. Bottler, J. C. Robertson, Isaiah Lambert, Sarah Davis, Mrs. W. C. Milroy, William Lambert, A. A. Beach, J. W. Price, C. W. Beeson, Winter Price, C. W. Shickley, the Ladies’ Society, and banker Harry Pattee. No list of the charter members has survived.

In the early 1900’s, the congregation bought two lots (Block 10, Lots 5 and 6) a block north of the Northwestern tracks and one block east of Main Street; the church was then moved to this location, and a short time later a parsonage was built on the vacant lot.

No list of ministers is available. For a short time, Shickley was on a circuit with Grafton, where the pastor lived, and a part of the time with Strang, when the pastors divided their residences between the two places. Some of the ministers who occupied the Shickley parsonage were: E. E. Beitler, J. C. Robertson, Isaiah Lambert, Sarah Davis, Mrs. John Johnson.

In 1887, before Shickley was founded, the Swedish pioneers in this area were visited by their first Swedish Methodist minister, the Rev. O. J. Swan. At that time, Swan served the Swedish Methodist Church in 1963. Wentworth and traveler conditions were never so bad that W. C. (Grandpa) Robb didn’t walk more than a mile to open the door for Sunday School. He was superintend for many years. Early in the 1890’s, the minister of the English Lutheran Church, the Rev. John Engstrom, was also serving a parsonage at Saranville. Religious services were held in a schoolhouse on the NW corner of Sec. 12, or in homes, rotating services with another group to the west, where Ong is now located. When a regular pastor was not available, Charles Wennsten, John Gustus, Swan Ekwall, F. F. Rudd, and other laymen took turns preaching.

Rev. Swan served this group for two years. Others who served the church in the Englischer kyrka were: V. F. Levin, John Jacobson, N. Peterson, John Lundeen, A. G. Engstrom, A. F. Vinell, O. W. Ostrom, and F. F. Rudd. In 1889, while A. G. Engstrom was pastor, a church building was erected in the new town of Shickley, on Lot 1, Block 15, at a cost of $1,500. The building committee were Peter Hillgren, John Gustus, and Swan Ekwall. The Rev. H. W. Eklund of Worcester, Massachusetts, gave the dedication sermon. The remaining debt on the church was taken care of at this service through contributions by members and friends of the congregation and by members of the First Lutheran Church.

Esther Lundgren recalled, in a letter written to John Johnson: “I taught a Sunday School class of young girls, including my sister Anna, Rena Gustus, my sister Jennie, Carlson’s daughter, and the younger Zetterman girls. They were a sweet and lovable group, anxious to do things, so I organized them into a group and we called it the ‘Busy Bee Circle.’ We met on Saturday afternoons and made articles which were auctioned in the church with church members as the auctioneer and we netted $25. With this we had a good fund for the parsonage. You remember the type where a bucket was dropped down and brought up by turning a crank. Were the girls thrilled over that well!”

Rev. Engstrom’s family had stayed in Kansas and they were not in the best financial circumstances. In the blizzardous Nebraska winters, Rev. Engstrom wore a flat. At Christmas the young folks chipped in and gave him $5 for a fur cap. This money he sent to his family, telling me they needed it more than he needed a fur cap.”

John E. W. Ekwall, a sister of John Johnson, provided a list of persons received into the church between 1889 and 1895.

The Rev. A. G. Engstrom was followed by A. G. Milton, who remained for three stormy years, during which his passion for “second blessing” and his strict enforcement of discipline caused about one-third of the members of the church to be stricken from the church rolls. The church never overcame this handicap, since the wholesale unjust expulsion of so many caused nearly the whole congregation to cease attending. Some members joined the English-speaking church, others the Stockholm Lutheran Church, and still others never re-affiliated with any church.

In 1921, when the membership of the Swedish Methodist Church had dropped to 12, the English-speaking church was served by a
former member of the Western Swedish Conference, the Rev. G. Lind, who also spoke Swedish. It was decided to cease holding separate services, and the remaining members were transferred into that church in 1925. As most of their children were already members there, the families were reunited to worship in the same church.

The church building, put up for sale, was bought by the local Ku Klux Klan; the proceeds of the sale were used to aid in the building of a parsonage in Wayne, Kansas, where the English-speaking church had merged with the Swedish church and had turned their property over to the Western Swedish Conference.

**SCHOOLS**

District No. 51, the first set up in Bryant township, was organized on September 13, 1872, although officers were not elected until March 1, 1873. School was held in sod houses before the building of frame schoolhouses. The first teacher was Simon Holsinger, who taught a term of 3 months and 25 days. The schoolhouse, located on the east side of Sec. 27, was not built until 1874. The carpenters were L. R. Hoag and his father, George M. Hoag. Another early teacher in District 51 was Belle Hoag.

District No. 52, in the northwest corner of the township (September 13, 1872), and District No. 53, (September 21, 1872), in the southwest corner, were organized about the same time. The first teacher in District 52 was Alice L. Howe; the first in District 53 was Belle Hoag.

District No. 54 was organized September 28, 1875, comprising Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15, set aside in 1872 by County Superintendent J. A. Dempster for a school district. The first schoolhouse for District 54 was built on the northwest corner of Sec. 12. The first teacher was Anna Davis. On January 15, 1880, more land was added, and more still in 1883. There were deductions and additions until now District 54 includes Districts 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 58, 59, 69, 77, 79, 86, 87, 92, and 93. The old schoolhouse was sold to R. B. Campbell for $78 and a four-room frame school was erected in 1888 on the site of the present Shickley school. (For more on District 54, see Shickley.)

At first, there were only these four districts in the township, with nine sections to a district. By 1887, the growing population made more schools necessary. A new division was made in September, 1887; land was taken from Districts 52 and 54, and District No. 86 was organized (August 11, 1887). Belle Hoag held a meeting at the Peter Nelson home on December 17, 1889, for the purpose of organizing District No. 87, comprising lands taken from Districts 51 and 53.
District No. 88 about 1909-10. *Front row, left to right:* Vivian Bergquist Miller, Harold Nelson, Johnny Hanson, Paul Hanson, Emil Hendrickson, Victor Hendrickson. *Back row:* Miss Daisy Sissel (teacher), Harry Pearson, Clarence Hanson, Clara Nelson Lentfer, Harry Hendrickson, Selma Hendrickson Harnett, John Pearson, Rebecca Hanson Cline, Victor Nelson, Effie Peterson Johnson, Oscar Johnson, Lillian Hanson Carlson, Florence Nelson, Harry Carlson.

It was decided to move the old District 51 building from the east side of Sec. 27 to the west side, which was the center of the new district. A sleet storm had left a heavy coating of ice on the ground, and by placing skids under the building, it was easily moved across. This was done in the latter part of February, 1888, and three days of the current school term were finished after the move.

District 51 built a new schoolhouse on the east side of Sec. 26, one mile east of the original location. District 53 moved their building farther west to Sec. 30. The District 52 building was located on Sec. 3.


A school year in the early days was from April to April. The length of the school term was three months. Teachers' salaries ranged from $20 to $30 per month. Other teachers who taught in Bryant township in the first few years, besides those already named, included Levi Beanblossom, Jennie Williams, Blanche Warner, C. Beminderfer, B. L. Burr, C. E. Jones, Mary Hughes, J. G. Davis, Nettie Howe, J. E. Bryant, Phoebe Davis, Sarah Davis, Clara Strang, Alfred Bates, Clara Stickel, and C. W. Pinkerton.

Schoolhouses served as community centers. They were used for literary and debating societies, for grange meetings, and as polling places. Before the building of churches, they also served for Sunday Schools and church services, thus contributing greatly toward binding the settlers into a community.

No rural schools now operate in Bryant township. District 54 has absorbed 14 other districts, and five buses are required to transport the students from the surrounding areas to and from school. In 1952, a meeting was held at Eddie Randall's, and Districts 52 and 53 were attached to Ong in Clay County.

Shickley

A great deal of the history of Shickley is included in the following essay, "Shickley: Community Co-operation in Economic Decline," written in 1941 for a sociology assignment at the University of Nebraska by a Shickley native, Miss Marjorie Johnston (later Dean of Women there, and as of 1967 College Counselor for the University Extension Division). As it is seldom that any Nebraska community has been the subject of any such detailed study, we include it entire. Although the period of "decline" may be over (as we hope it is, and as the census figures for 1950 and 1960 may indicate), this account no doubt reflects the history of many another Nebraska town in which pioneer co-operation still survives.

**Introduction**

Many villages located in the farm areas have shown a decrease in population and an economic decline in recent years. At one time these villages were the important trade centers for the surrounding farms, but with coming of improved roads and faster means of transportation many people now go to larger communities to do their trading. The recent years of drought and low prices for farm products have caused a still greater decline. Such has been the fate of Shickley, but in spite of the economic decline and the decrease in population there is a stronger community spirit and a greater tendency toward co-operation. People who have lived in Shickley many years or perhaps all their lives seem determined to keep this community a desirable place in which to live. ("Community" refers to the incorporated area and is here used interchangeably with "village").

**Geographical Setting**

Shickley is located in the south-central part of Nebraska in Fillmore County. When the first settlers came to this part of the state all they saw was a vast expanse of level prairie country. There were no large streams and thus few trees. It was 20 miles to the North Blue River and the same distance to the South Blue. The site of the village comprises an area of 160 acres of level land with a gentle slope to the south and is bordered on the north and east by a small meandering stream which is usually dry. If one goes above the buildings of the village he is able to see for several miles in all directions. A good supply of water is found far below the surface of the ground which makes it necessary to drill deeply for wells.

The soil of the surrounding farm area is very fertile but has a gumbo content which bakes hard in time of insufficient rainfall. The levelness of the land and the absence of many trees makes it possible for the hot winds to sweep across the fields and within a few days do much damage to the corn crop. Rainfall is very uncertain and this area often receives little rain from the last of June until the middle...
of August. During years of sufficient rainfall, the yield per acre for corn and wheat is high. These uncertain conditions, which have been characteristic of the history of this community, have made economic incomes unstable.

**Historical Background**

The last of the sixties saw a few pioneers coming to south-central Nebraska. They came from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois in covered wagons filled with the necessities which they had to start a new home. In 1870, there were many settlers coming to this part of Nebraska. Many of them stopped in the northeastern part of the county where the main line of the Burlington was to cross the county. Here the first village of the county was founded, which was called Fairmont and which was to be the main trade center for several years. The next year the settlers decided to choose a spot near the center of the county for the county seat, which was called Geneva. In 1873, the county was divided into townships.

During this time a group of Swedish people had taken home-steads in the southwestern part of the county known as Bryant township. There were many newcomers until 1873, when the grasshoppers destroyed crops and gardens. There was much suffering that winter and the county tried to vote bonds for relief but they failed to pass. It was then that Bryant township decided to vote bonds which were found to be too small to give the necessary relief but gave evidence of united action on the part of these early settlers. For the next few years there were few newcomers to this part of the county because of these conditions.

Most of the homes of these early settlers in Bryant were dugouts or sod houses, since there were few trees and it was 14 to 30 miles to the trading centers. Few trips were made to these places and then one or two men would go for several families in the neighborhood. There were plenty of wild game and the gardens and crops supplied many of the needs. The families helped each other in many ways and there existed a fine spirit of co-operation and friendliness. A church was built in 1888 and the place was called Stockholm. Here would have been the logical site for the trade center and these Swedish people wanted it here.

In 1885, the Burlington surveyed for a branch line to run from Beatrice to Holdrege. This line was to go within a few hundred feet of the Swedish church and these settlers began to plan for the site of the village. Three miles east of the church were the farms of William Kline and Robert Campbell, who wanted the village to be located on their land. For this reason they offered to give many lots to the railroad if it crossed their farms and to sell land cheaply to the newcomers. Thus the site of the village was determined and immediately a store and blacksmith shop were started. The village was named Shickley in honor of the attorney for the Burlington who was also a land-owner in this area. He later started the first bank in the village.

The village was laid out with the tracks dividing the community into two parts. Mr. Kline owned the land south of the tracks and Mr. Campbell owned land north of the tracks. Each man tried to interest the newcomers to choose his land, and for several years this competition existed. The village was incorporated March 20, 1888, with a population of 200. In the same year, the Northwestern R.R. surveyed for a branch line to run from Superior to Fremont, crossing the four south blocks of the original town. At first, most of the building places were located facing Market Street in the two blocks between the Burlington and Northwestern tracks; but there was a gradual trend toward the blocks of Market Street nearer to the Burlington. By 1910, most of the business houses were located in this area, leaving many empty buildings on the south side, which were finally rebuilt into homes.

**Growth and Decline**

With the coming of the two railroads and the reports of good crop, the farm lands were quickly taken up. Each year saw several more business places added to the village, which made it a better trade center. Although the Swedish people were disappointed that the trade center was not located at Stockholm, they were glad to have one so close and became loyal supporters of the community.

Population steadily increased until 1910 (its peak year) and then began gradually to decrease. All figures after that for 1888 are those of the U.S. Census Bureau:

- 1888: 200
- 1890: 372
- 1910: 429
- 1920: 396

*The figures for 1950 and 1960 have been added by the editor, for continuity.

By 1910, there were three general-merchandise stores, a bakery, two drugstores, a post office, two banks, a meat market, a millinery shop, two hardware stores, a furniture store, a saloon, two blacksmith shops, three produce stations, a farm-implement shop, a printing office which published a weekly paper, four elevators, two lumber yards, two doctors, two undertakers, a photographer, one school, and four churches. There were two passenger trains and two freight trains daily on each road. Businesses prospered and crop yields were usually good, with an occasional low return when the rain fall was insufficient. Since there were more cars in the village and the surrounding farm area, the roads had been improved and people did not need to drive their trading in Shickley. Between 1920 and 1930 there were many changes in the business ownership in the village.

Shortly after 1920 the general-merchandise stores gradually became grocery stores with a few items of dry goods. People were beginning to go to larger places to get their clothing where there was a special selection from which to choose. There is only one store that can be called a general store and it carries very little line of women’s clothing. The bakery finally closed, for it could not compete with the trucks that brought bread from larger places. In 1930, the Farmers Bank was bought by the State Bank which still serves the village. The printing shop finally discontinued the paper in 1922 and it closed soon after this. Now the news of the community is printed in the county paper. Today there are two churches instead of four and also only two elevators. There is no hotel but there are two cafes. There is only one lumber yard which has done little business the last few years since there have been few new buildings. There has been no doctor since 1938 and no resident dentist since 1934. The Northwestern passenger service was discontinued in 1937 and the Burlington in 1940. Each road has a tri-weekly freight service and has continued to keep an agent at the station. This great decrease in train transportation was felt after the main highway was placed one half mile north of the village. Truck service then took the place of train service. The village now has three garages which seem to do a fair business since nearly everyone in the community owns some kind of a car.

Property has greatly decreased in value the last ten years. People have not had sufficient incomes to make the necessary repairs during this time. In 1930 the property was assessed at $215,499 and in 1940 the assessed valuation was $194,144. Property brings a very low price at present so there is little sold. Rents are lower than in 1930. At present there are about eight houses that are vacant.

**Public Life**

The first 30 years in the history of Shickley might be called a period of individualistic growth dominated by economic interest. People were getting started in business and were anxious to succeed so that they gave little attention to village improvement. Only with decreasing population and declining business did the people in the village become more conscious of the need for civic improvement. The members of the village board in the early days seemed little interested in improving the community. Not until 1923 when the board was composed of more progressive men did the village take much action to make Shickley a modern community.
The Livery Barn (foreground) which later became the Community Building.

V. P. Nelson in his shoe shop in the 1920's. Photo from Mrs. John Carl

The Village of Shickley and the surrounding rural areas

Until 1923 the village had no general system of electric lights. In 1914, a merchant moved to Shickley to go into business and, having been accustomed to lights, decided to install a small plant in his store to supply the necessary electricity. In a few months he was furnishing power to all business places and the church. Not until 1923 did the village vote bonds to connect with the Blue Valley Power Company and wire the entire village for lights.

About the same time five of the men in the village, realizing the need for a community building which could be used for a school gymnasium and for other social gatherings, bought an old livery stable to rebuild. The Woman's Club was much interested in the project and helped by taking one-third of the building, which they made into a room for the library. The remainder of the building was made into a large gymnasium with a fine hardwood floor which can be used for roller skating. The building is used by all organizations in the village and the surrounding rural areas.

In 1927, the business men in Shickley organized a commercial club for promoting plans to make Shickley a better trade center. One of the first things the club did was to gravel Main Street and several of the side streets. In 1930 the men worked hard to get the main highway [Nebraska 74] to go one mile north of the village. Their efforts were successful, but they soon realized that this highway was to cause a greater decline in business. Now Shickley was on a well-improved highway to Hastings, a distance of 50 miles, York 40 miles, Beatrice 50 miles, and Lincoln 80 miles.

In 1934, the village board took action to lay out an electrically lighted kitten ball diamond. Once a week, on the nights the stores were open, the neighborhood teams competed and at the end of the season a tournament was held. These means served to attract people to the village for two summers but were replaced the next summer by a free moving-picture show which is still found to be effective. During the winter the merchants sponsor a drawing for a free basket of groceries each Saturday afternoon. For the past several years the businessmen have had a community Christmas tree and a Santa Claus on Saturday to distribute treats to the children. Whether the money expended for these means to attract people to trade in Shickley brings back greater returns in business is doubtful, but at least it shows that the men are alert and doing everything possible to keep the community from further decline.

Business was the poorest from 1935 to 1940, but in spite of these economic conditions the village installed a fine water system in 1940. The cost of the system was $32,000, but half of the cost was supplied by help from the Works Progress Administration.

A year after the incorporation of the village the Methodist church was built. The first building was small and with the growing population it was replaced by a larger building in 1910. About 50% of the membership is rural. In 1939, there were 195 members in the membership and a number of the people joined the Methodist Church. At present this church has no resident minister and as a result its unifying influence has been lost.

The Livery Barn (foreground) which later became the Community Building.
community and are much interested in its activities. Their interest in music has been a great asset in the musical training in the community.

The Pennsylvania Dutch and Germans who belong to the Mennonite church have been little interested in the affairs of the village. They are somewhat clannish and do not favor higher education for their young people. They believe that the way to keep their young people from becoming sinful is not to allow them to associate with other young people and become worldly-wise. Only in recent years has the hold of the church weakened and the young people have begun to break away from the church and marry those of other faiths. Often these young people join another church and have associations with other groups. The Germans who belong to the German Lutheran church have been more interested in the public life of the community but have never taken as active a part as the Swedish people.

Despite the variations among these groups making up the population of the village, there has been little evidence of conflict. In recent years there has been a tendency for these groups to act as parts of the community and not as separate units.

The people living in Shickley are noted for the friendly and welcoming spirit which is extended to all newcomers. Every possible effort is put forth by the people of the village to make these strangers like their new home and feel a part of it. There is a genuine spirit of good will existing throughout the community and there is seldom any evidence of conflict in religious or political life.

Family life is still important in this community. There were no divorces in 1930 and only one in 1940. There were four marriages in 1930 and five in 1940. It is still a common practice for the entire family to go to Sunday School and church. This is especially true in the Mennonite families. Dinners between families are still exchanged and many social affairs include the entire family.

Population and Family Life

The early settlers in this village and the surrounding farm area were Germans, Swedes, a few French, and Pennsylvania Dutch. There were many families who came from the eastern states whose ancestors had lived in this country for one or more generations. The predominating influence of the population has no doubt been Swedish. Many customs of these people still prevail in the community. The "afternoon coffees" with Swedish rolls and cookies are still common in the homes and are enjoyed even by people who have not been reared in Swedish homes. Of late years these people mingle freely in the

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Photo from "Shickley—Then and Now"

Original school building of District 54, Shickley.

Photo from "Shickley—Then and Now"

Shickley High School, built in 1908.

Photo from "Shickley—Then and Now"

Shickley's modern school, built in 1954 at a cost of $218,000. In 1953 a new district, No. 54R, was formed consisting of 15 reorganized districts and parts of two others. This plant provides modern classrooms, a gym, a large stage, a kitchen and lunchroom, a shop, and offices.

About 25% of the graduates attend college or business school for a year or two. Most of the young people who go away for a college education do not return to the community to live. Many of them become teachers, nurses, engineers, businessmen, and stenographers.

The village has been fortunate in securing good teachers in spite of the low wages. Shickley looks to the teacher for leadership in the church and public affairs, and much of a teacher's success depends upon her participation in community life. Teachers, as a whole, like to live in Shickley and usually stay there for several years although they do not feel they are paid well. They like the friendly and hospitable spirit of the people living in the village.

Population and Family Life

The following statistics give some idea of family life in the community [1967 figures have been added for comparison]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1967</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of families</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of home-owning families</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of renters</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of families with telephones</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of families moving in</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of families moving out</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the families in town, 28% consisted of 1 person; 30% of 2, 33% of from 3 to 5, and 9% of from 6 to 9 persons. The average-sized family consisted of 3 persons.

These statistics show that the population of the village is quite stable, since so many families own their homes. They also show that a large percentage of the population is composed of older people,
since there are so many families with one or two persons. This fact was further verified when 125 people voted in the last election—37% of the total population. There were four deaths in the village in 1940. In 1930, there were six births; in 1940, there were only two recorded. Since there are so many families with one or two persons, a number of the older people have been put up in the last few years so that people could water their lawns and gardens during the drought. It was found to be much cheaper than electric power, since there is seldom a day in the summer that the wind does not blow. There have been no new homes built in Shickley during the last 10 years. Homes and yards are well taken care of, although at present there are places in need of paint and repairs.

Social Organization

Much of the social life of the community centers around the several churches. Each church has its own organization of the women of the church, which includes sewing circles and task forces and also helps the people of the community. There are several churches. Each church has its own organization of the women of the church, which includes sewing circles and task forces and also helps the people of the community. Since there is no doctor, many of the children are born at the hospital in Geneva and their birth is recorded as from there. The typical home in Shickley is a 1 1/2 story frame building. A very small percentage of the homes are modern due to the lack of a water system. A large percentage of the homes connected with the water system when it was put in and to plan to install sinks and bathroom equipment when incomes are higher. Many homes have a well on the property, but a furnace has not been installed in the last few years so that people could water their lawns and gardens during the drought. It was found to be much cheaper than electric power, since there is seldom a day in the summer that the wind does not blow. There have been no new homes built in Shickley during the last 10 years. Homes and yards are well taken care of, although at present there are places in need of paint and repairs.

As a whole, the people in Shickley have been glad of the assistance that has been offered by the government. At first many were hesitant about asking for Old Age assistance but finally came to it. When crops are good again and business conditions have become normal the people will be glad to get along without this assistance. There will no doubt continue to be quite a few Old Age grants because of the number of old people in the village. At present the County Assistance Office reports the following grants of assistance given in Shickley during the years:

- Old Age assistance ........................................... 18
- Aid to dependent children .......................... 6
- Aid to crippled children .............................. 1
- WPA.......................................................... 7
- CCC.......................................................... 4
- NYA .......................................................... 5
- County relief ............................................... 5

The Assistance Director for this area reports that the trends for assistance during this time has been quite favorable. The applications for assistance grants and a definite decrease in WPA, CCC, and NYA. He states that among the youth and physically fit, many are moving to urban districts, mainly in California.

During this period of drought and depression many of the people in Shickley were forced to give up luxuries of many kinds. Cars have become old, some houses need paint and repair, lawns need reseeding, and trees need to be replaced. Property has not suffered as much neglect as in some other communities near by. Many farmers have left and gone to other areas to farm or to work for someone. There have been few changes in business ownership during this time.

People in Shickley enjoy themselves in many ways. Occasionally they go to a larger place to see a show but in recent years most of their recreation had to be found at home. All activities of the school such as baseball, basketball, games, and carnivals are well attended by the people of the community.

The men's Commercial Club is for both social and business purposes. It has a membership of 24 men and has done much to establish good feeling among the businessmen and to promote the interests of the village. The men organized a Volunteer Fire Department in 1933 after the business section was in danger of being destroyed. This organization has its social meetings, too.

There are a few social clubs and many family get-togethers.

The economic future of this community depends a great deal on the forces of nature that produce crops. If the yields from farm products are good, business will be better and schools and churches will again have funds to improve. Houses and buildings in general can be painted and repaired, trees replanted and lawns reseeded.

The economic decline has not been accompanied by a decline in the spirits of the people. They have been quite hopeful and optimistic and have done what they could to make the community a better place in some time. The people have hopes that incomes will soon be large enough to support a doctor.
Although Shickley can never hope to become much larger, it will probably never get much smaller. Some families have sought homes elsewhere, but the people who have business and home interests in the village are determined to keep this community abreast of the changing times. There is not much future for young people unless they wish to farm. Few business places can afford to keep a clerk and there is no opportunity for those who wish a professional career. Thus Shickley can never hope to keep many young people in the community. It will no doubt continue to be a home for retired farmers and older people because they like to live in Shickley.

Most of the following account of Shickley is drawn from the booklet *Shickley: Then and Now (Diamond Jubilee History, 1888-1963)*, compiled by Laura Pearl Koch, Lorena Wagers, Margaret Vough, and Carl Wennersten:

These are some of the business firms and professional people in the early days of Shickley. The inserted dates indicate when each person or firm came to the town. This list is incomplete because of lack of information.

**General Merchandise:** August Schneider; T. J. Winters; C. W. Beeson; Wilson Bros.; James Bodkin (1886); J. W. Hanson; John Ekwall (1887); Peter Bergquist; Van Timmerman; Thoma & Arends; Limback & Beach; Oscar Johnson & Son; Alfred Rosenquist (1903); Farmers’ Store—Carl Sanburg, proprietor; J. L. Doud; Jake Dorbin; Ed Snodgrass (1925); J. A. Fisher (1915).

**Flour and Feed:** Henry Schott; D. W. Carlson; John E. Brown.

**Restaurants:** Charles J. Phillips (1891); Jim and Sam Garrison; J. C. Boo (1901-1942); Camp & Richie.

**Livery Barn:** Charles Krogger (1887); J. B. Morris; Mike Fitzpatrick; Claus Frantz; Ike Beller; Charles Gehrke.

**Creamery:** Bush Bros.

**Bakery:** Harry Aydelott; Chris Hansen; Harold Bergquist.

**Jewelers:** Charles Bergquist; V. A. Berson.

**Photographers:** W. S. Reed; M. M. Hoak (1906).

**Barbers:** Charles Buehrer; Frank Axelson; Cal Brown; Nick Mar­son; Ed Frazen (1903-1918); Harry H. Johnson.

**Blacksmiths:** Frank Johnson; Dan North; George Beeson; Chris Zehr; Ben Allen.

**Grain Elevator Men:** William Gehrke; George Powell; William Van Buren; Joe Laur; Clint Smith; Frank Anderson; Charles Witt.

**Shoe Repair:** William T. Craig.

**Physicians:** T. C. Canine; Royal Woods; A. J. Chamberlain; George A. Harris; E. A. Wilson; C. G. Delfs; C. W. Wiggins.

**Tailer Shop:** Captain Joe Thomas.

**Dentists:** H. G. Patterson; John Arthur DeMamphrey; J. Q. Adams; Guy Van Styke; Dr. Jaecke.

**Painter and Wallpaper Hanger:** Seymour Thomas.

**Wells and Windmills:** Nels Rosenquist; Ed Stevens.

**Auctioneers:** L. R. Hoag; Loren Teter.

**Carpenters:** Jacky Wallace; John Carlson; A. A. Vough (and wheelwright); Sylvanus Lamb; Samuel C. May.

**Hotels:** Midland—Jerry Coffey, proprietor; Columbia—A. M. Baldwin.

With the advent of automobiles, garages and gas stations were established. The first garages were those of McElroy & Russell, and Charles Bergquist, who later sold to Fred Geise. Chris Gratopp, W. C. Milroy, and Emil Krause were owners of early cars. In 1919, Shickley had four elevators, District 54 school, and four churches. Each railroad ran two passenger, mail, and express trains and two freight trains daily. From 1915 to 1922, the community supported a picture show regularly. With the coming of automobiles and better highways, Shickley was no longer the only trade center for the community and there were many changes in business ownership between 1920 and 1930. The general-merchandise stores became...
groceries, the bakery gave way to trucked-in bread, and there were no hotels but two cafes instead. The weekly newspaper, the Shickley Herald, was discontinued in 1922; after that, the county paper published in Geneva disseminated the news. The Congregational and the Swedish Methodist churches discontinued regular worship services in the 1920s because of small memberships and their church properties were sold and eventually removed. That left two churches within the village, the Methodist and Zion Lutheran, and several rural churches, to serve the community. The rural churches are the Stockholm Lutheran, 2½ miles W of town, St. Mary’s Catholic, 4 miles N; Salem Memorial, 4½ miles S on the county line in Thayer County. The Northwestern R.R. discontinued passenger service in 1937 and the Burlington in 1949. Each road continues its freight service, but the Northwestern station was torn down in 1967. There has been no resident doctor since 1936.

As of 1967, business enterprises were the Alf’s Grain & Fertilizer Co.; Alf’s Implement & Well Drilling Co.; Diegert Bros. Fertilizer Co.; Busse’s Circle Foods; Busse’s Repair Shop; Dick’s Shoe Shop; Erb’s Plumbing Shop; Gay’s Skelly Service; Hatcliff Barber Shop; Janet Jean’s Beauty Saloon; Johnson Feed Mill, Inc.; Lauber Electric; Lichti Bros. Oil Co.; Lohnknecht Repair; Merryman Repair & Mobile Service; Neuhaus iga Store; Nickel Hardware & TV; Rosie’s Place; Schafer Plumbing; Shickley Feed & Produce; Shickley Grain Co.; Shickley Lumber Co.; Shickley State Bank; and Jim Weinrich, barber.

Another business was one in which Dave Steider pioneered about 1940, the addition of frozen food lockers to his already established produce business. The frozen food lockers added much to housewives’ convenience before home freezers became so numerous. The lockers continued until 1960 when Lichti Bros. bought the site and erected their new building.

In 1923, the town voted bonds to wire the village for electricity and contracted with the Blue Valley Power Company for current. In 1949, a $250,000 water system was installed, half of the cost borne by the Works Progress Administration. A sewer system and disposal plant for the town were installed in 1954 at a cost of $85,000. Thanks to these conveniences, nearly all homes are modern.

A building long important in Shickley’s social and recreational life is the community building on North Railroad Street, facing the park. Originally a livery stable, in the twenties it was converted into a community hall. The west third of this building houses the public library and the club room and kitchen of the Federated Woman’s Club. The library was founded by the Woman’s Club in 1923, but is now supported by village tax levy. There are over 4,000 volumes in the library and nearly 20 magazines are received regularly. The rest of this building was floored with maple and was used as a skating rink for many years. Later the floor was tiled and used for basketball before the new school gymnasium was built. Other activities for which this space was used were banquet hall, dance floor, Red Cross Bloodmobile, irrigation meetings, and Farm Bureau and Soil Conservation programs.

The businessmen have been more or less consistent in keeping alive a Commercial Club, always interested in community betterment. Some of its concerns have been better lighting and improved streets. The village board has been in full accord with these improvements. In the early days, Fourth of July celebrations and Chautauquas were events of interest.

The people of Shickley have always been sports-minded and have backed many cup-winning teams in basketball, baseball, and softball. During the drought and depression years of the thirties, kitten ball was played on a lighted field by both sexes and there was keen competition from neighbor-
Early fire-fighting equipment was a hose cart and bucket brigade, with the water supply coming from town pumps powered by windmills. One was on the corner of Market and North Railroad Streets and the other on the corner of Market and Campbell. At one time Shickley was known as “Little Holland” because of its many windmills. After the Johnston fire the need of better fire-fighting equipment was emphasized, and in May, 1932, a Volunteer Fire Department was organized. There were 25 original members. The first truck was bought in the summer of 1932, a Chevrolet equipped with a chemical tank, hose, and buckets. Gradually, additional and more up-to-date equipment has been added, including a fully equipped rescue unit in 1961. In 1950, a new all-steel fire house was built to house the fire-fighting equipment, financed 50-50 by the village and the rural fire district.

In the early days of Shickley many Civil War veterans were residents and there was a strong Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) organization. An old photograph of G.A.R. members pictures Isaac Beeson, Joseph Thomas, Sam Strayer, Samuel Teter, L. D. Phillips, John Hiermier, Mike Fitzpatrick, Cheney Shepard, Albert Herrick, A. A. Beach, William Shuster, Sylvanus Lamb, John Foster Pinkerton, and W. C. Milroy. A later organization of veterans is American Legion Post 164, which was organized in 1919 with 28 charter members. The American Legion promotes Americanism and patriotism in the community. In 1963, the Legion sponsored a flag-selling campaign to promote the flying of the flag. Market Street was testimony to the success of the campaign on Flag Day, June 14, and on July 4, when “Old Glory” was flying from a staff in front of nearly every business place. The Legion sponsors high-school students' participation in County Government Day, held in Geneva each year. Memorial Day services, honoring fallen comrades, are held annually at the Shickley Cemetery and the Stockholm Cemetery. Every year the American Legion sponsors the sale of poppies, the proceeds of which go to handicapped veterans. The Legion stands ready to give community service and cooperates in worthy projects. The present membership is 25, with the following officers (1967): Gordon Johnson, commander; Kenneth Hofferber, adjutant; Don Barney, service officer; Reiny Ackerman, finance officer; and the Rev. Hugh Houchin, post chaplain.
The development of Shickley, like that of any other Nebraska community, has been varied; for the village had its "ups and downs," brought about largely by the fluctuating rainfall. This area is purely agricultural and drought immediately affects the economy. In 1856, there was a bumper corn crop, which resulted in long cribs for storage being built on the railroad rights-of-way. Corn was sold for 13 cents a bushel. The drouth of the 1930's, aggravated by national depression, found Shickley at low ebb. In 1930, the assessed valuation of the town was $215,499; by 1940, it was down to $194,144. A recovery from this condition came with the use of deep wells for irrigation. Geologists have long told us of the lake of water underlying this area, and in 1936 the first well was drilled on the Charles Flory farm, tapping this wonderful supply for irrigation. The growing season of 1937 well was drilled on the Charles Flory farm, tapping this area is purely agricultural and drouth immediate affect.

Fertilizing became a necessity, and this gave rise to fertilizer-distribution business. All the two grain companies are mute testimony to the value of deep-well irrigation. Drouth-resistant sorghum grains have become extinct on September 2, 1905, and its remaining membership transferred to Geneva.


The Leona Rebekah Lodge has met on the first and third Tuesdays of each month and has continued to be an active lodge for the past 60 years. The 1967 membership is 22.

A charter for the local organization of the Royal Highlanders was granted in September, 1907, but the organization was discontinued in the fall of 1918. There were also short-lived chapters of the Ancient Order of United Workmen and the Modern Woodmen of America.

The following first-hand account of Shickley's early days, written by Mrs. Harriet Anderson, is presented in her own words:

You ask me to give you a "History of Shickley." I will try but there will be many items of interest that I have forgotten. To those who have been so far from a town it cannot be of great interest to think of living in a town within a few miles. Of course, we women did not go very often. Sometimes once or twice a week and we did not think much about the "fashions" as we do now.

Our first trading place was Fairmont and then Grafton, Sutton, Carleton, and Edgar. We traded also at Davenport. At first there was only one store, kept by a Mr. Stump. They lived in the room at the back of the store. That was the only house in Davenport at that time.

In 1884, they began to talk of a railroad being built from Beatrice through this part of the county. Everybody was thankful to hear about it. But in 1885 there was more than talk. A road was surveyed and every day we were glad to hear that it had been surveyed through such and such a man's farm. Now Mr. Kline was glad to see them survey where they did but a Mr. Schumutz did not want to be so near a town. He traded his homestead of 160 acres to R. B. Campbell for his farm of 240 acres near the Catholic Church and Mr. Campbell moved to Mr. Schumutz's farm, known now as where A. E. Miller lives.

In the spring of 1886, the "town" was surveyed and Mr. Kline and Mr. Campbell were very generous with the lots, giving so many to the railroad and they would give to anyone who started up a business a lot for $1.00. There were three stores started at once, Mr. Winters on the south side and Oscar Johnson and Mr. Houchin & Cavanaugh on the north side.

A Mr. Wilson built a furniture store where the Opera House now stands and a Mr. Mercer kept the first lumber yard where Mr. Thornton's lumber yard is.

The following first-hand account of Shickley's early days, written by Mrs. Harriet Anderson, is presented in her own words:

A contractor by the name of Lather built, with Mr. James Flory's help, many of the buildings, and everyone was busy and trying to do their part in making a town. They succeeded in getting quite a number of good businessmen located here. It seemed no time until there was a man ready to start some line of business. Soon Mr. Coffey had a hotel up and Mr. Ross put up a drugstore and a Mr. McDougal a restaurant, then a blacksmith shop. Mr. Campbell was real-estate man and postmaster. His mother, Mrs. Woodruff, was dressmaker and milliner. It seemed to us something grand to have our letters and papers come to Shickley after so many years of getting mail from Carlston. We all rejoiced over it and thought of those long cold rides and often disappointments over the mail.

I remember my first trip to Shickley as plainly as if it occurred last month. I did not go to town much on account of not being very strong and could not stand the rides very well, usually being sick afterwards, so when Mr. Anderson asked me if I did not want to see the new town, of course I said I did. But it seemed to me we were there so quick. We all went to Mr. Winters' store first and there I made Mrs. Winters' acquaintance. She invited me into the back room at the back of the store where they lived. A firm friendship lasting as long as she lived here was made. Afterwards we went to visit the other stores, buying something at each place, as I told them I would treat them all alike. I enjoyed my visit to Shickley, coming home much pleased with the new town, and I always had a warm friendship for the people in Shickley.

After the town was surveyed, Mrs. Clara Ekwall bought two lots where Mrs. N. T. Smith's house now stands (R. T. Johnson home). She built the first dwelling house. She had come here to live, bringing her four children, Fred, Theodore, Leonard, and Jennie. She bought lots in March and soon commenced to build. That house is part of Amos Friesen's home and it was moved to its present location by Harvey Johnson, having bought it later.

In the meantime, Mr. Winters and Oscar Johnson had built their stores and Mr. Milroy had also built a hardware store on the south side.

A bank was built and opened by a Mr. William Shickley of Geneva. Then it was decided to name the town after Judge Shickley, who lived at Geneva. He was much respected all over the county.

On the 19th day of August, 1886, at 10 o'clock A.M., the first train came into Shickley. Of course it was a construction train, and it did not get to Ong until the 29th of August.

At this time Mr. Houchin & Cavanaugh had their store built, so Mr. Cavanaugh built a dwelling house. That house is now owned by Mr. Mansfield. Soon after, they began to build the Congregational Church, where Mrs. Augusta Swenson now lives. Then in 1887 they built the Methodist Church. Many other buildings were put up and there began a feeling of rivalry between the North and South Shickley which was not pleasant, and some made statements that they would not trade with one another. There were three elevators built, of course, that was a great benefit to the farming community.

Our first doctor was a Dr. Fish. He built an office south of where the Opera House now stands. They lived upstairs, but he did not stay long, not being very successful.
I had always had a longing for my old home but my mother was not at Shickley. My father being here, he persuaded me to go back with him. I returned satisfied to stay in the "Wild and Windy West" and Shickley looked good to me. One thing, people from the East thought it was uncivilized and that Nebraska people were like Indians, but we got over caring for what they thought.

In a few years the Northwestern was surveyed and they thought they should have bonds voted to help them and threatened to miss Shickley unless the bonds carried. The day of the election was one of the worst days seen in Shickley and if there had not been good men on guard there would have been crime committed. But the bonds carried. There was hard feelings for many years over it. When men on guard there would have been crime committed. But the bonds carried. There was hard feelings for many years over it. When we got over caring for what they thought.

I see the quiet elections since women have the right to vote I rejoice and am glad the saloon is of the past. I hope we will so vote bonds carried. There was hard feelings for many years over it. When we got over caring for what they thought.

Shickley Schoolhouse was built in 1887 and Mr. Neal was principal in 1888 and 1889. If there were any other teachers, I do not remember them, but I think that there has been a great interest in the Shickley school, and all unite in wishing that all may co-operate to make it one of the best in the county or state. I think that some day we may be proud of some of our young people. There may be someone who may be President of this great country. One wish I give you all, that you may all live such a good life and do so much good that we will rejoice that you went to school at Shickley.

I have given you a slight sketch of the early history of Shickley but I think that it is very imperfect. I hope you will all help to make Shickley so grand that a better historian than I will be found to give you a good history of the Little Town we all love.

We sometimes went to other towns but did most of our trading at Shickley.

In the fall of 1886, I went to Illinois for my first visit to my old home. My father being here, he persuaded me to go back with him. I had always had a longing for my old home but my mother was not there to greet me so I felt so lonesome that I lost all care to live there.

When a bank was needed in the community, articles of incorporation for the Shickley State Bank were issued September 19, 1887, signed by T. H. Beekman, C. F. McGrew, Harry Patee, G. Schneider, John Donovan, Jr., George E. Black, and G. W. Clawson. A meeting of the shareholders on January 1, 1888, elected F. H. Beekman, president; C. F. McGrew, vice-president; Harry Patee, cashier; board of directors, F. H. Beekman, John Donovan, Jr., C. F. McGrew, George E. Black, and Harry Patee.

In 1909, William Matzke and W. A. Snare organized the Farmers and Merchants Bank. On March 29, 1930, the Farmers and Merchants Bank was bought by the State Bank, which still serves the area.

Our Trip Out West and Early Days

by Mrs. Harriet Anderson

In the year of 1872 my husband [Nels] came to Fillmore County, Nebraska, to Wm. Miller's and while there he chose 160 acres of land. As he was a soldier he went to the land office at Beatrice to homestead it. But he found that it was already homesteaded so he chose another 160 acres that was not taken on Sec. 22. It is still owned by the family today.

We intended to move in the fall of 1872 but sickness prevented us. In the spring of 1873, April 21st, my husband, myself, and our two little girls, Nellie age 2 years and Adelia 6 months and my two brothers, Nathaniel and Thomas Smith left our loving parents in Rock Island County, Illinois, to come to the broad and fertile prairies of Nebraska. To me it was a sad day and I can hear my mother's words as she kissed my good-bye: "I will never see you again in this world." Oh, how true it was!

We went about 25 miles the first day stopping to visit a sister of Mr. Anderson over the Sabbath Day. My father would not let us start on Friday as he thought it unlucky so we started on Saturday to please him.

It commenced to rain Sunday night. It was a dismal morning to start out on such a long journey in wagons. A friend of my brothers and myself had come to see us and he brought us a bucket of honey which was quite a treat to us and which we enjoyed. Our parents and friends had seen that we were well equipped with things to eat but my appetite failed and the first week was very hard on me and I was sick. I realized that every step was taking me farther from my mother. My husband tried to persuade me to leave them after the first week of our trip and go by train to Fairmont and wait for them there. But to that I would not consent as he had promised to buy me a cow with the money I saved by coming with them in the wagon.

My brother Nathaniel drove the wagon that the babies and I were in as my husband's wagon was heavily loaded with our household goods and here we had more room and it was more comfortably fixed so that no rain could trouble us.

I got better the next week and I began to take more notice of our trip. Our oldest girl began to get so well and strong. She had been so weakly and everyone thought we would lose her on that long trip but it sure agreed with her and her father saw that she had all the milk she could drink and good food to eat.

I remember one farm we stopped at. It looked like rain and the man told us to drive inside his barnyard and to shelter under his shed. When he heard one of the children cry he came and asked me and the children to come into the house. I thanked him but said I would rather stay in the wagon. The next morning when we were ready to start my husband went to him as he was milking and asked if he would sell 1/2 gallon of milk. He said, "I will give you a gallon of the best milk you ever had." I thought so too when we stopped early for dinner. There was such a lot of butter in the pig.

I never had any liking for the roads in Iowa. We sure found them bad but the people were kind and there were many things that were
We lived on one side of the 160 acres and our opponent on the other side. He used to come and order us off but it did him no good. There were a number of soldiers that had taken claims. They came to us and said they would go and put this man's goods on his wagon and send him off. He was a bachelor and no one liked him. My husband had started a law-suit for the land which he won. We had a sod house built that fall. We were neighbors and friends with this man for a number of years.

The next year was a hard one as our money was used for the law-suit. We had a very hard time getting the grasshoppers or locusts as some called them came, and I must say they could eat. I had a very nice garden which I took great pleasure in and in one hour's time there was nothing left. All I could find of my onions were the holes where the onions had been. Our potato vines were ate to the ground. Our 25 acres of sod corn was gathered that fall in a water pail. Just a few kernels of corn on a small cob. We had a few acres of spring wheat which had been cut before the grasshoppers came. We talked over what we should do but decided we would stay on the land. We did but it was not fun! We killed our cow so we could have meat and that was a hard thing on me. I thought that I could not get over that but we had no money and if we left the land we would lose it. So we tried to keep up our courage.

We remember one Sunday afternoon that Mr. Miller came and brought me a small bucket of sweet milk. I made coffee for him. (Mr. Anderson being away.) We had bread and coffee without sugar or butter. As we sat at the table he said to me, "Hattie, have you tried to keep up your courage."

He said, "I feel sorry for you, as you had such a good home, to have it like this."

When he started to go he said, "You tell Nels to come tomorrow and get a cow I have," I told him we could not pay him but he said, "You can some time."

The next morning Mr. Anderson went and got the cow. Oh, how glad I was! Our son Frank was born the 21st of February. I had made a crust and 24 cents of dried fruit, I think it was apples, I thought I was rich.

We reached Fairmont Saturday noon making us just three weeks on the trip. When we drove through Geneva, my husband said to me, "This is the county seat." I said, "Where is the courthouse?" He said, "That will be here soon." We did not see many houses after leaving Geneva.

After leaving Lincoln we camped near the Insane Asylum on Salt Creek and I assure you that salt water doesn't make good coffee. I threw that coffee out and insisted that we have some well water which my husband got as he liked his coffee as well as I did.

We were needing a well as we had been hauling water in barrels all this time and how many times I had longed for a cool drink of water and to have all I needed when I washed. That summer we had a well dug and that was a great deal.

I also had such a longing for pie plant pie. So one day I picked some sorrel which grew in abundance on the breaking. I made a crust using cream and sweetened the sorrel with molasses. We liked interesting and amusing. Some were so ready to let you know they had a gun and were afraid of something being stolen from them. I remember two men that passed us. They had a light spring wagon and a good team and were going at a good speed. They stopped and asked where we were going. The boys said to Nebraska. They said, "We are also." They said, "We are going near Fairmont." We told them that was our intention also. They wished we could travel together, but our wagons were too heavily loaded. They said they had passed the same wagon we had and they had showed their guns and let them know they did not want company. But with wishes to meet these people again they went on. The next day in the afternoon we passed them. One of their horses was sick so they were resting. They asked how far we would go before we camped. We told them about 10 miles. They said they would try and make it and camp with us. Well, we had our supper and they came and a very pleasant time the men had. We left them the next morning and went on. Late that afternoon they passed us again. We were going to have our dinner (we always just took a lunch at noon). One of the men called out, "Why don't you milk one of these cows around you?" My brother said, "These boys are afraid to hold the cow while I milk." So he left his team, came and caught the cow and Tom milked. He got a quart of milk. They had a good laugh and went on. The men met many times in Fairmont but they moved on again.

I did not know the state of Iowa was so hilly. After the first week I got used to having such a small space to move around in, but I was glad when we reached Plattsmouth, Nebraska. There we crossed the river in a ferry boat. We found the roads different. We met many covered wagons leaving Nebraska. They were discouraged over the Great Easter Blizzard on the 14th day of April. They would not live in a place where they had such storms. Now what they said made me feel bad, for I had a fear of living on a prairie and they said the wind blew so hard that houses and wagons had to be chained or they would blow away. My husband told them we were going on and try it anyway.

We stopped in Lincoln one night. I thought it was not much of a place as it had only been the capital 3 years. We went to Wyuka Cemetery to see the grave of Mr. Anderson's sister who had died the fall before. Her husband, Charley Foster, was in Lincoln. He came on out with us to see his land. He had homesteaded the spring before in Fillmore County, when Wm. Miller did. (He was Nels Miller's father.) We were all acquainted with Mr. Miller in Illinois.

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it and when anyone came I made a pie.

One of the things I remember was the wild geese. They sure were a hard thing on our wheat for many years and nearly destroyed it. But with all our losses we managed to live and always had good friends no matter what church they belonged to. As neighbors and friends the early settlers to one another were very dear and early trials drawing us together.

In 1884 or 1885 they began to talk of the B. & M. Railroad being built. There was quite a talk of where a town should be located and at last the location was chosen and named “Shickley.” We thought it a great improvement as we had traded at Fairmont, Sutton, Graffon, Edgar, Carleton and Davenport. Now to have a town so near to us we were well pleased.

Now don’t think we did not have any amusements. We had dances and mush-and-milk parties. Then we were not so particular about our dress and no one ever criticized the other and many happy days and evenings we had.

I think now my happiest days were spent in a sod house. We felt that everyone was a friend and neighbor. We were so glad to have people move here. Some were good and some were bad but we tried to be neighborly to all.

I often think when hearing people talk of hard times what would they have called it to never have any money coming in or to go and get trust or to have to be afraid we would have to leave our land.

I can not tell you how we lived. I asked one lady if she could. “No,” she said. “I only know that I often wondered where our next meal was to come from.”

There were many things sent to the grasshopper sufferers that were never given to them, and for all the aid that they got it would never have kept them alive very long. But I think that I would rather buy a piece of land than homestead but when you homesteaded in early days everybody was poor and there wasn’t much money.

Blizzard of 1888

F. O. Nelson of San Jose, California, sent this letter about the great blizzard:

Well do I remember early that January morning as a 12-year-old trudging across fields to the Beach schoolhouse 2 miles W of Shickley, with the wind blowing lightly from the southeast, temperature about 15 above and the snow 18 inches deep. It was the softest, fluffiest, and biggest-flaked snow I have ever seen. It continued to fall intermittently until nearly noon. Just after the noon hour, about 1:30, the wind turned to the northwest and the 50-mile gale that followed picked it up and it all seemed to take to the air at once.

Our teacher would not let any of us leave for home unescorted. My father came for me afoot because he could not force his horses to face it. As we made our way home we could at times see the clear sky above but never at any time more than 10 feet ahead. We finally made the mile and a quarter by following a fence, a railroad, and the last part of the distance between two hedge rows.

The teacher and some of the pupils whose parents could not make it remained at the schoolhouse all night. Fortunately, that time the coal bin was full.
The approach of modern comforts — wash day lightened by a gas engine (about 1916).
The tenth township to be formed in Fillmore County when it was surveyed in 1870 was named “Chelsea” after the first white child to be born (about 1868) within its 36-mile area. The boy, Chelsea Raines, lived with his family 1½ miles south of the former Chelsea Church site, where he and other members of the family were listed on the earliest church records.

Chelsea township is bounded on the north by Madison, on the east by Glengary, on the south by Belle Prairie, and on the west by Stanton townships. It is crossed from west to east on its first section line below the Madison township border by Nebraska Highway 41. The city of Geneva just barely overflows into its northwestern corner. Its two southern tiers of sections are crossed by the south fork of Turkey Creek, which zigzags from northwest to southeast, leaving the township near the middle eastern boundary of Sec. 36.

The comparatively level topography and the fertile soil of Chelsea township are well adapted to agriculture. Therefore, the raising of corn, wheat, oats, milo, and alfalfa, together with livestock feeding, poultry raising, and dairying, constitute its chief industries. In 1887, however, there was on Sec. 6 a cheese factory, and another sprang up a few years later on Sec. 17. Also, James Cook, on Sec. 13, and Mr. Hinton, on Sec. 17, operated sorghum mills. To these mills people brought their sorghum and had it made into delicious syrup, on shares. The syrup was used as a sugar substitute and as a spread on bread and hot cakes. Two blacksmith shops, one owned by Austin Shackelford on Sec. 23 and the other by Jerry Vance on Sec. 2, performed a very necessary service for the farmers round about.

There has never been a trading center in Chelsea township, or the smallest portion of a railroad track. There are no large streams, and no heavily wooded areas. Osage hedge, however, growing along roads and surrounding many fields, is living testimony of the effort our pioneers made to relieve the barreness of the prairie. Hedgerows also served as fence lines; some farmers kept them attractively trimmed. In time, apple orchards became common; but most of our present tree-planting is confined to windbreaks or drouth-resistant and disease-resistant varieties about the farmstead.

The people who live in Chelsea township are, for the most part, of Irish, German, Swedish, or Czechoslovakian ancestry. The Czechs have become more numerous in the last 20 or 25 years, probably because of the township’s proximity to a Czech community.

In the early history of Chelsea township, farms rarely consisted of more than 160 acres, and many were much smaller, so that farm homes then were much more numerous and closer together. Fourteen families once lived on Sec. 14, as compared with two farm homes found there at present, those of Clarence Higel and Frank Kotas. A clump of trees, a granary, or perhaps a barn are all that remain to mark the place of a one-time dwelling, and even those marks are rapidly disappearing. Although most of the farmhouses in the township were built 50 or more years ago, many have by now been remodeled into comfortable and attractive modern homes with all conveniences. Many of these improvements have come about since the arrival of rural electrification in 1949.

For the most part, Chelsea township has escaped major disasters. It shared with other communities two epidemics of diphtheria, the blizzard of 1888, and the influenza epidemic of World War I. Periods of drouth have been common, but severe hailstorms and true cyclonic winds have been infrequent. To this writer’s knowledge, there has never been any loss of human life by fire or wind, and not more than a half-dozen traffic fatalities. Among traffic accidents, one train-car collision, on June 18, 1933, took the lives of three people: Lee Bailor, his son Robert, and Frances Bumgarner. The 1918 influenza epidemic took a severe toll in the community, three of those stricken being members of one family: Mr. and Mrs. Bill Strothkamp and one of their six children. One unusual accident occurred in 1914 or 1915 when Johnny Kolz was killed while operating a grindstone which disintegrated. Another man, Charles Sprout, was killed (April 25, 1918) when struck by a horse. In 1892 Edward Brooke was fatally injured in a fall from his windmill.

Livestock casualties have caused severe financial setbacks and disappointment to most farm families. One example was the experience of Ed Nelson when he was building his house in 1908. The family was depending on the sale of 1600 to 1800 hogs to meet a share of the cost. Shortly before the house was completed, the hogs were stricken with cholera, and the burning of carcasses became a regular morning chore. One blind pig was all that remained when the plague had passed. In the late thirties, a strange disease commonly known as “sleeping sickness” attacked horses, and many died or became blind. The discovery and use of various vaccines have been effective in curtailing such losses among livestock.

Numerous farm buildings have been lost by fire. The Ben Hafer farm, now the William Bures place, lost both barn (1901 or 1902) and house (1920). Mrs. Hafer was publicly commended for her bravery in rescuing all the horses from their burning barn; an insurance company presented her a check for $150.

After several successive years of drouth during the early 1930’s, a few farmers began to ponder the possibility of pump irrigation. The first well drilled in Chelsea township was on the Ed Nelson farm five miles east of Geneva near Highway 41, in 1939. No more wells were drilled, however, until the early fifties, when lack of rainfall again became a problem. By the end of 1966, there were 58 wells, and more were being drilled.

Increasing costs of production, higher standards of living, and the steady improvement of farm machinery have revolutionized farming practices here as elsewhere. The men doing diversified farming in the 1960’s has a small fortune invested in a complete line of equipment. His machinery will include one or more tractors and the accompanying plow, cultivator, disc harrow, drill, planter, mower and rake, manure spreader and loader, baler, combine, forage cutter and blower, cornpickers, and elevator. In addition he may have a grinder, a milking machine, a truck, and at least one car. The farmer who irrigates has a further investment in the well, the motor and the power that runs it, and a mile or more of irrigation pipe. He may also have a sprinkler and fertilizing equipment. And along with the machinery, of course, go the expenses of operation and repair.

Except in the realm of cattle feeding, farm chores have lessened. Although most people raise a certain number of chickens, an increasing number of farm families buy their milk and milk products. The farm vegetable garden is much smaller than in former years — on some farms, now nonexistent. These and many other changes are more or less the result of modern living conditions. Not all are good, but not all are bad.

The practices of 50 years ago, and even less, now seem almost unreal to the people who experienced them, and utterly unbelievable to those who have not. Then, all farming operations involved a great deal of time and hard work in comparison to the amount of production. Although the binder was considered a wonderful improvement over previous methods of harvesting, it took one day of steady cutting to complete 20 acres of wheat. Operating the binder and driving four fly-tortured horses at the same time was a man-sized job. It was wise to change teams at noon, if possible. Other members of the family, women included, and hired men or boys followed the binder and gathered up the bundles, setting
them in shocks of 12 to 18 bundles each. In this way the grain was kept in good condition until the threshing crew arrived, which might be several weeks later.

Walfred Peterson operated one of the first large threshing outfits in Chelsea township. The separator was powered by a steam engine which had to be supplied with water and burning straw or coal. The crew consisted of the separator man, the engineer, and the water boy, who hauled water in a tank-wagon from the nearest large water tank. Eight men with racks and teams, assisted by four field pitchers, loaded and hauled the bundles up to the separator and pitched the bundles into the feeder, one at a time. The straw was blown up and out into a huge golden-colored stack, and the grain rolled from a spout into a wagon. Three scoopers tended the wagons and hauled the grain to a bin, where it was shoveled off by hand.

By the long-drawn noon whistle of the steam engine, the housewife and her helpers (usually neighbor women) knew that 18 or 20 hungry men would soon have their teams fed and themselves "washed up" for dinner. Without benefit of refrigerator, frozen foods, or ready-mix, a bountiful meal was served. Water was carried from the well, and freshly churned butter was brought from the cave or the milk tank. Bread and pies had been baked in a cob range that kept the kitchen at a consistent 100° Fahrenheit most of the day. Preparations for the evening meal or afternoon lunch began as soon as the dinner dishes were finished. The three crew men usually stayed overnight, for their job of "getting up steam" would begin early the next morning. Barricading weather or breakdowns, a job was usually completed in two or three days, and the outfit moved on to the next farm. About ten jobs completed a season.

The threshing operator hired little help beyond the engine crew, as each farmer on the "run" (about 10, as a rule) furnished his own labor and equipment — such as team, rack, wagon, or whatever — on each of the jobs. Five cents a bushel was charged for wheat and three cents for oats, to engine crew, as each farmer on the "run" (about 10, as a rule) furnished his own labor and equipment — such as team, rack, wagon, or whatever — on each of the jobs. Five cents a bushel was charged for wheat and three cents for oats, to

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Organization vitally concerns any community, and Chelsea township is no exception. The first township meeting was held on April 3, 1888, when Robert Stewart was chosen clerk and J. M. Piersol moderator. A levy of two mills was voted for roads and three mills for all other purposes. At the next meeting, in June, Jonas Miller was appointed constable and an overseer was appointed for each of the four road districts. The first meetings were held in the schoolhouse, as the hall had not been completed. The minutes are printed in the Daily Bee.

Small wonder, is it, that the mechanical cornpicker, introduced about 1918, gained favor so rapidly?

About ten years later, the combine for small-grain harvesting was introduced in the township. Clarence Nun was one of the first farmers to own one; it attracted a great deal of attention.

The tractor preceded both. The first three-wheeled plow tractor in the township came into the possession of Arthur Larson, who won it in 1916 as a prize for obtaining the most subscriptions to the Omaha Daily Bee.

Cars steadily became more common. By the purchase of a two-seated "Jackson" in 1908, Emmor Fox became the first car owner in Chelsea township. A ride around the section was a great thrill for neighbors of the Fox family. About 10 years later farm trucks were introduced. These became another great advantage to the farmer, particularly in getting his grain and stock to market. Before this time, cattle were driven to the nearest stockyard and shipped by train to Omaha and other central markets. If the distance was less than six or seven miles, hogs could be driven also, but more often they were hauled by team and lumber wagon. In hot weather, they were loaded in the evening and hauled at night in order to avoid the heat. It took a long time to drive even a few miles because the horses had to walk to lessen the jarring of the wagon. Any driver who permitted his team to trot was very apt to reach his destination with at least one dead animal.

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The organization of school districts began early in the seventies and continued for 10 years. A brief history of each appears elsewhere in this account.

Some present-day children might have been delighted with the educational policy of our pioneers, as the first school terms lasted only three months; but these short terms rather quickly grew longer. By 1885, most of the districts were holding school for six or eight months and, by 1915, nine months. Teachers received $20 or $30 a month and boarded, if necessary, at a home near the school for a dollar or two a week. Because there were more and larger families, school enrollments were larger; the average was about 45 pupils, with ages varying from 5 to 19 years. The fact that there was a "new teacher" almost every year would seem to indicate that teaching was often an arduous task. Maintaining discipline must have been a job in itself, especially during the winter term when "big boys" went to school for the fun of it, and if the teacher was pretty.

The teacher did her own janitor work and taught reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic to all ages. Geography and grammar were for such older pupils as could afford books. Slates and slate pencils for much written work helped to save paper. Classes recited about every 10 minutes from a long recitation bench at the front of the room. For lack of space, double desks (for two pupils each) were crowded together, and extra pupils were seated on a bench at the back of the room. Children walked to school, and on cold winter days sometimes carried hot baked potatoes or hard-boiled eggs in their coat pockets to warm their hands and to supplement the noon lunch. Frozen sandwiches were not a novelty; and dinner pails, along with wet mittens and overshoes, occupied strategic places around the heating stove in the center of the room. If only as much heat could have stayed near the floor as went to the ceiling! In spite of the long black stockings and high laced shoes that children wore, feet were cold and faces hot. Playground equipment was unheard of, but nothing was more fun than a Fox and Goose ring in the snow.

The county superintendent visited each school once or twice a year. In 1881, County Superintendent Dempster recorded: "Severe winter interfered with progress of winter schools. Late spring keeps many little fellows on the farm. Schoolhouses mostly substantial." In 1882 he wrote: "More demand for advanced grade teachers. Much good resulted from Institute Week. Motto, 'Good Wages for Good Work.' By 1900, salaries had risen to $45 or $50 a month. In 1921,
some teachers received as much as $100 dollars, but salaries had declined to half that amount by 1940. After that slump, however, came a decided increase, and by 1950 teachers were receiving around $180 a month, with greatly improved teaching facilities.

Chelsea Women’s Club (January 29, 1931). Lower row, left to right: Mrs. Howard Snodgrass, Mrs. Lyman Brooke, Mrs. Mike Kelch, Mrs. Tom Hall, Mrs. George Mason, Mrs. Irvin Lange, Mrs. Colon Murphy, Mr. William Watmore, and Clair Yates. The club had for several years an average of 30 members. The club had contributed to several worthy causes and has given a boost to many new homes, for sons and daughters of its members are always given a gift or “shower” when each is married.

Mrs. Brooke was also leader of the first 4-H Girls’ Club in the township. It was founded in June, 1923, the first members being Helen Mason, Lela, Hazel, and Mable Hall, Bonnie Brooke, Helen Nunns, and Bonnie Myers. Most of Chelsea’s boys and girls have since been members of 4-H clubs and have won their share of honors in the various divisions. Helen Nunns, Frances Roberts, John Brooke, Helen Mason, and Eugene Anderson have been winners of coveted Chicago trip awards. John Nelson won the State Public Speaking Contest in 1953.

Since 1915, most of Chelsea township’s young people have attended Geneva High School. At that time, regular attendance, for some, required a bit of doing. Three boys — Fred Rhoda, Glen Berger, and Waldo Schupbach — rode horseback a distance of eight and nine miles each morning and night. Some drove a horse and buggy about the same distance. Others paid, or worked, for room and board in town. Along in the 1920’s, Model T Fords became popular means of transportation; but even as late as 1945, Rudy Jirkovsky rode a bicycle almost nine miles twice a day. On the whole, Chelsea students acquitted themselves very well. Most of the boys enrolled in agricultural courses and took part in athletics. Girls have been interested in home economics and secretarial training. Music also has held the attention of both boys and girls. Several have won scholarships. Christie Nelson was elected to Girls’ State in 1954 and edited the Genesis the following year. Anne Jirkovsky was selected queen of the Spring Festival in 1949. John Nelson king in 1953, and Richard Nun king in 1954. Doris Miller, Darlene Podlesak, and John Nelson are the only Chelsea products of recent years to have graduated from college or university, but several have attended for two or three years; and a number of girls have received normal-training certificates from Geneva High School and taught rural schools in this community and elsewhere. Jesse Mason, son of the late George F. Mason and Libbie Mason, graduated from the College of Agriculture in the 1930’s. Doyle Mullikin, son of an early pioneer, J. W. Mullikin, was one of the first graduates of the University School of Medicine in Omaha. Until his death in 1963, he practiced medicine for more than 50 years at Chester, Nebraska.

—Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

CHURCHES

As noted in the school district accounts, Sunday schools and special religious services were held in a number of the township’s schools almost as soon as the buildings were constructed. The need for a church presently arose; the site selected was adjacent to the little Bethel Cemetery located at the north line of Section 54. A grant was obtained from Salathiel Stanley, who owned the land here, and the United Brethren Church was built here by donated money and labor in 1880. The Rev. Mr. R. G. Carter was the first full-time pastor; a small house on the Ben Morgan farm served as a parsonage. This was moved to Strang in 1886 when a U. B. church was constructed there. From that time until about 1915, the Strang pastor served both charges, services being held at the Bethel Church on Sunday afternoons. Some of the early pastors were Ben Morgan, T. B. Cannon, Mr. Hayden, Mr. Bittner, Mr. Webb, Profil Gregg, Mr. Parker, Mr. Abbot, and Mr. Lundie. Each, of course, drove a horse and buggy. When pastors made “calls” during the week, meals and overnight lodging were, quite naturally, provided by the farmers. More often than not, the preacher’s remuneration took the form of farm produce, which he hauled home in the back of the buggy. There were years when he received as little as $250 in cash.

In 1884, the Methodist Church, through a loan from the General Conference, was built on a plot of ground given by Cyrus Macy, located on the corner west of the U.B. church and Bethel Cemetery. This church, complete with a bell, and of old soldiers, disbanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Robert Hastings purchased it, about 1897, intending to move the building to his farm. He had virtually begun the moving operations when the U.B. people persuaded him to let them buy it. The former U.B. building was sold to August Peterson for $340 in 1898. The church then reorganized, with the Rev. E. H. Pontius of Geneva as pastor. The Rev. Miss Willamette Marks held revival meetings, and the church progressed for some time. There was an active Ladies’ Aid, whose members, with the help of their families, “put on” many a chicken dinner, oyster supper, or ice-cream social. These affairs involved a tremendous amount of labor; for, without kitchen or dining facilities, it was necessary to move home equipment to the church and back again by team and spring wagon. Food was served at improvised tables in the church sanctuary, the only place available.

In 1928 a full basement was added, and the congregation felt very fortunate to have such improved Sunday School facilities as well as a kitchen and dining room for social affairs and Dele’ worship. This church, complete with a bell, a new organ, and a set of old soldiers, disbanded in the late nineties and stood idle until Robert Hastings purchased it, about 1897, intending to move the building to his farm. He had virtually begun the moving operations when the U.B. people persuaded him to let them buy it. The former U.B. building was sold to August Peterson for $340 in 1898. The church then reorganized, with the Rev. E. H. Pontius of Geneva as pastor. The Rev. Miss Willamette Marks held revival meetings, and the church progressed for some time. There was an active Ladies’ Aid, whose members, with the help of their families, “put on” many a chicken dinner, oyster supper, or ice-cream social. These affairs involved a tremendous amount of labor; for, without kitchen or dining facilities, it was necessary to move home equipment to the church and back again by team and spring wagon. Food was served at improvised tables in the church sanctuary, the only place available.

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Mouer conducted a successful revival in 1938), and E. D. Sell. Miss Mann began her seven years of service in 1944.

In 1948 the church edifice again underwent much-needed improvement when, under the leadership of Wilson Miller, the sanctuary was remodeled and attractively decorated. A furnace, electric lights, and other equipment were installed with the arrival of rural electrification. Again, both labor and money were generously contributed by members and friends of the church. Impressive dedicatory services were held in June, 1948, and the community was justly proud of the improvements. It is a sad commentary, however, that in spite of these valiant efforts to preserve a rural church, a combination of conditions and circumstances arose which made it increasingly difficult to support the church program. In 1954, a depleted congregation voted to disband. Most of the families transferred membership to the Geneva Evangelical United Brethren Church, where the Rev. Wayne Schreurers, who had recently come to this pastorate (his first), following a brief tenure by the Rev. Milford Vance, ministered from 1954 to 1956. (The Evangelical and United Brethren denominations were merged in 1950.) In 1956 the church building was razed by Joe Vavra, a Saline County farmer, who purchased it for $500. The plot of ground was sold to Bernard Weiss, an adjacent landowner, for $50.

Chelsea Church, as it was commonly known, touched the lives of many persons over the years. It, and they, benefited in proportion as each individual gave of himself and his means in Christian service.

The record of 1887 discloses a membership of 69 persons, including such family names as these: Wallam, Jacoway, D. Miller, Cook, Wilkison, S. Yates, Larkin, E. Nelson, Morrison, Shobeck (Schupbach), Steele, Folden, Jackson, Pierson, Chelsea Raines, and Whitzel. Other names are Cloyd, and Nettles (a Negro who worked for Mr. Yates). In the 1890's we find the names of Mr. and Mrs. John Archer, Sarah Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. W. Eaton, Osier and Mary Cook. Names of the early 1900's include O. Stone, Flora and Lucy Unnns, Harrison, Mc Cleavy, Churchill, Mullikin, Michaels, Owens, Manan, Rhoda, Miller (family of Jonas M.), Leonard, S. Lynn, F. Hall, Powell, R. Myers, Elton, Saylor, and Hidey.

The following persons were members of the church at some time during the period between 1925 and 1953. Many of the older people, of course, were members before 1925:

Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Schupbach, Eunice, and Clifford
Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler Berger, Mildred, Howard, Robert, and Donald
Mrs. Charles Weiss, DeVoe, and Bernard
Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Miller, Lucille, and Doris
Mr. and Mrs. Roy Miller, Charles, Marie, Clair, Hazel, Irvin, Joan, and Susan
Mrs. Charles Miller
Mr. and Mrs. Alvah Miller and Louise
Effa and Maude Miller
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Fox
Mr. and Mrs. J. A. E. Nelson, Silvia, Verna, and Oscar
Mrs. Oscar Nelson, John E., and Christie-Lou
Mrs. Roy Yates
Mrs. Cecil Fox, Delores, Alvin, and Dorothy
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Churchill and Melvin
Helen, Edna, Edgar, and Fredrick Nunns—children of Fred and Ora Nunn
Robert Nunn, Sr., Ruth, Roine, Robert, Richard, and Francis
Mrs. Francis Nunn, Carol, and Faye
Mr. and Mrs. Lester Brown, Doris, Mervin, and Merle
Ila Zoe Brown
Vorus, Bonnie and Verle Myers—(children of Ed and Audra Myers)
Mrs. Vorus Myers
Clarence, Hazel, DeVoe, John, and Bernice Nun—children of Wenzel Nun
Mrs. John Nun, Richard, Rodney, and Rex
Harry Fox (husband of Bernice Nun), Deryl Dean, and Shirley
Earl and Kenneth Baumann
Mr. and Mrs. Clair Christiany, Ardith, Evelyn, Roger, Clair, Jr., and Robert
Mrs. Howard Peterson, Zelma Mae, Velma Jean, and Paul Forest
Libby, Clayton, and Herman Jirkovsky
Mr. and Mrs. Claude DeWitt
Mrs. Bessie Rhoda, Lillie, Helen, and Edna
Mrs. Leslie Myers (Alma), and her children, Blanche, Lola, and Donald Shapley
Eleanor and Richard McDonald
Mr. and Mrs. Emil Bernasek, Caroline, and Rodney
Donna and Patricia Koehler
Many social functions of a party nature were held in the church basement. Included in these were many "family nights" when all ages participated in well-planned homemade entertainment, bridal showers, receptions, anniversary observances, 4-H gatherings, and class parties. There are perhaps 30 "fiftyish" men and women of the Chelsea community and elsewhere who vividly recall the "Young People's Class" of which they were members. The good times they had were largely due to the tireless efforts of Mrs. Fred Fox, their teacher for many years. To our knowledge, all these former young people are solid citizens today. It is unique that 10 members of the class, the children of both Wenzel Nun and Robert Nunns, Sr., were motherless at an early age. These families gained the admiration of all who knew them by the capable way in which they met such misfortune. Clarence and John Nun and Bernice Nun Fox, and Francis, Robert, Jr., Richard and Robert Nunns, Sr., all have established homes in the township.

— Witma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

SCHOOLS

County Superintendent J. B. Lewis notified John W. Mullikin that District No. 30 ("Dudley") was formed on December 16, 1880, comprising Secs. 25, 26, 35, and 36. Twenty-six qualified voters were informed of the meeting to be held on December 28, 1880, at the Mullikin home. Mr. Mullikin leased two acres of land on the NE corner of Sec. 35 for the school and stipulated that the school building could also be used for religious purposes.

The first term of school opened for three months on December 19, 1881, with Miss Ella Merrill as teacher at $30 a month. Twenty-eight pupils were enrolled, ranging in age from 5 to 19 years. The subjects taught were reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, with geography and grammar added for those who could afford books. A large pond on the west side of the road served as a swimming hole in summer, and was used as an icehouse in winter. The schoolhouse was completed; two additions were made later. The schoolhouse was used for many community affairs, such as "literaries," singing schools, spelling bees, box suppers, and the like, as well as religious services. Miss Lilie Rhoda (to whom we are indebted for most of the information concerning District 30) recalls plainly the long, low, unpainted mourners' bench which was used in revival meetings. Her grandfather, Mr. Mullikin, had a fine tenor voice and conducted singing schools in Districts 30 and 32, and led the

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— Witma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

SCHOOLS

County Superintendent J. B. Lewis notified John W. Mullikin that District No. 30 ("Dudley") was formed on December 16, 1880, comprising Secs. 25, 26, 35, and 36. Twenty-six qualified voters were informed of the meeting to be held on December 28, 1880, at the Mullikin home. Mr. Mullikin leased two acres of land on the NE corner of Sec. 35 for the school and stipulated that the school building could also be used for religious purposes.

The first term of school opened for three months on December 19, 1881, with Miss Ella Merrill as teacher at $30 a month. Twenty-eight pupils were enrolled, ranging in age from 5 to 19 years. The subjects taught were reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, with geography and grammar added for those who could afford books. A large pond on the west side of the road served as a swimming hole in summer, and was used as an icehouse in winter. The schoolhouse was completed; two additions were made later. The schoolhouse was used for many community affairs, such as "literaries," singing schools, spelling bees, box suppers, and the like, as well as religious services. Miss Lilie Rhoda (to whom we are indebted for most of the information concerning District 30) recalls plainly the long, low, unpainted mourners' bench which was used in revival meetings. Her grandfather, Mr. Mullikin, had a fine tenor voice and conducted singing schools in Districts 30 and 32, and led the

Many social functions of a party nature were held in the church basement. Included in these were many "family nights" when all ages participated in well-planned homemade entertainment, bridal showers, receptions, anniversary observances, 4-H gatherings, and class parties. There are perhaps 30 "fiftyish" men and women of the Chelsea community and elsewhere who vividly recall the "Young People's Class" of which they were members. The good times they had were largely due to the tireless efforts of Mrs. Fred Fox, their teacher for many years. To our knowledge, all these former young people are solid citizens today. It is unique that 10 members of the class, the children of both Wenzel Nun and Robert Nunns, Sr., were motherless at an early age. These families gained the admiration of all who knew them by the capable way in which they met such misfortune. Clarence and John Nun and Bernice Nun Fox, and Francis, Robert, Jr., Richard and Robert Nunns, Sr., all have established homes in the township.

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singing in the tabernacle in the maple grove on his farm across from the school. He could preach sermons, conduct funeral services, and offer prayer. Musically, he was self-taught, and started his own children and those of neighbors in music.


Year | Teacher | Director
--- | --- | ---
1881 | Ella Merrill | A. T. Drummond
1882 | Theda Johnston | A. T. Drummond
1883 | Nettie Richardson | A. T. Drummond
1884 | S. T. Drummond | A. T. Drummond
1885 | H. B. Wallace | A. T. Drummond
1886 | Mary Foster | A. T. Drummond
1887 | S. J. Spelke | A. T. Drummond
1888 | O. H. White | A. T. Drummond
1889 | Nellie L. Coffin | T. O. Cloyd
1890 | Lillian Donovan | A. T. Drummond
1891 | Clara Wickizer | A. T. Drummond
1892 | Esther Pierson Lyon | S. J. Hall
1893 | Gerrie Clark | S. J. Hall
1894 | S. T. Conner | A. T. Drummond
1895 | Bertha Thompson | A. T. Drummond
1896 | Nellie Matson | A. T. Drummond
1897 | Grace Wakefield | S. J. Hall
1898 | Mary Davis | A. T. Drummond
1899 | Ora Og | A. T. Drummond
1900 | Carrie Neyhart | S. J. Hall
1901 | Carrie Neyhart | S. J. Hall
1902 | Bessie Bailor | S. J. Hall
1903 | Mable Combs | S. J. Hall
1904 | Alta Andrew Priefert | S. J. Hall
1905 | Belle Rowe | S. J. Hall
1906 | Lottie Putnam | S. J. Hall
1907 | Euel Harrington | S. J. Hall
1908 | Clarence Fry | S. J. Hall
1909 | Willamina Schneider | S. J. Hall
1910 | Alma Toren | S. J. Hall
1911 | Bertha Mathewson | S. J. Hall
1912 | Grace Heidenrett | S. J. Hall
1913 | Stewart Heiderstadt | S. J. Hall
1914 | Electa Dot Hastings | G. M. Galbraith
1915 | Vinetta Miller | G. M. Galbraith
1916 | Elmer Bradley | G. M. Galbraith
1917 | Elmer Bradley | G. M. Galbraith
1918 | Francis Stephens | O. M. Molkin
1919 | Clarice Overhuser | O. M. Molkin
1920 | Alice Neyhart | S. J. Hall
1921 | Anna Tomes | S. J. Hall
1922 | Sarah Kyker | S. J. Hall
1923 | Margaret Hogan | C. M. Bernasek
1924 | Margaret Hogan | C. M. Bernasek
1925 | Helen Matejka | C. M. Bernasek
1926 | Helen Matejka | C. M. Bernasek
1927 | (closed) | Claude Hall
1928 | Rose M. Sieber | Claude Hall
1929 | Junita Nicholson | Claude Hall
1930 | Junita Nicholson | Claude Hall
1931 | Lela Hall | Claude Hall
1932 | Doris Hafer | Claude Hall

Photo from Charles Miller

District No. 32, commonly known as "Chelsea" because of its proximity to the former Chelsea United Brethren Church, was organized in 1872 and originally consisted of Secs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 35, and 36 of T6, R2W. John W. Andrus was instructed to notify all legal voters of the place of meeting. Other schools eventually absorbed some of its territory, so that the district now includes only Secs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, and a part of 22. Early in the century a neat two-door school building replaced an earlier frame structure. It stands on the SW corner of Sec. 13, facing south on a gravelled east-and-west road. There are the usual outdoor toilet facilities, some playground equipment, a fuel house, and a recently covered and motorized pump. The last teacher, Marie Locke, most of whose children attended Fairbury College, two summers, drove the family car a round trip of 24 miles each day to teach her eight pupils.

The earliest record of a school business meeting was signed by Director J. A. Larkin, April 2, 1882. The contract for the drawing of coal and cleaning the schoolhouse was let to the lowest bidder: to Walferd Peterson at 990 a ton, for coal, and to J. Wollam, $1.25 for cleaning. In 1891 O. L. Stone was allowed $3 for taking the "ske" of school children between the ages of 5 and 12 belonging to District 32. There were 66 children listed, 60 under the age of 12. There were members of the following families: W. C. Wollam, D. Cook, G. H. Zimmerman, J. W. Andrus, R. E. Hastings, J. J. Miller, M. Warner, D. Miller, A. L. Shackelford, J. A. Larkin, J. Jones, D. Warner, W. Churchill, J. B. Miller, J. Simburg, H. G. Ryman, M. Menace, J. A. Peterson, J. Wollam, J. M. Borland, R. Nunns, J. Peterson, O. L. Stone, and C. Taylor. In 1890, Mae Bailor taught 63 pupils for $270 over a period of 154 teaching days; the value of school books and apparatus was $60.


Year | Teacher | Director
--- | --- | ---
1879 | J. B. Sexton | E. F. Chester
1880 | J. B. Sexton | J. W. Andrew
1881 | Walter White | A. M. Cook
1882 | Mary Gade | D. Cook
1883-4 | No record | T. J. Whitzel
1885 | Mary Sprout | J. A. Larkin
1886 | Mary Sprout Cook | D. Cook
1887 | Mary Sprout Cook | D. Cook
1888 | Clara Thomas | J. A. Larkin
1889 | Alice A. Gell | O. L. Stone
1890 | Hattie Russell | J. A. Larkin
1891 | Mae Bailor | O. L. Stone
1892 | Mae Bailor | O. L. Stone
1893 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1894 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1895 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1896 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1897 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1898 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1899 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1900 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1901 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1902 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1903 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1904 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1905 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone
1906 | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone

The following teachers taught at some time during the next 10 years: Jessie Sprout, Seldon Moore, Mr. Overton (brother of the U.B. pastor), Lydia Babcock, Maude Mosier, and Bertha Thompson.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Lillie Stultz</td>
<td>Robert Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>H. W. Warner</td>
<td>Willis Zader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>T.L. Clark</td>
<td>V. S. Ennschold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Alice Bailor</td>
<td>Richard Kinsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>N. G. Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Alma Lake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Lillie Huston</td>
<td>C. L. Ray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the teachers after 1890 were Minnie Heller (1899), Myrtle Williams, Jessie Morgan, Al Smith, and Laura Smith Schupbach.
The schoolhouse was also the township voting place; the children enjoyed having Election Day off, but many had to shuck corn on that day.

This school was closed in 1951. It continued to be used as the voting place until the building was sold to Robert Nunns, Jr. in 1954 and was moved to Geneva, where it became Ed McClusky's workshop.

There are two three-generation groups identified with Blain school. One is that of Fred Nunns, Sr., his children, and the children of Fred Nunns, Jr.; the other consists of Robert Nunns, Sr., his sons Francis and Robert, and their children. Two-generation families are Mrs. William Watmore and children, and Lyman Brooke and children.

District No. 45 ("Blain"), consisting of Secs. 4, 5, 7, 9, 16, 17, and 18, was organized May 14, 1872. County Superintendent John A. Dempster instructed Henry King to notify every legal voter within the district that the meeting for election of officers would be held at the King home on Saturday, May 18. The first officers elected were John F. Blain, director; William Sprout, moderator; and John Christiancy, treasurer.

Blain schoolhouse, so called after a pioneer family who lived near the school, was located on the NW corner of a farm now belonging to Vinnetta Miller Eaton, 2 miles S and 2 miles E of Geneva on Sec. 16.

At the turn of the century it had an unusually large enrollment, which made it necessary to build an extension and hire an extra teacher for the lower grades. The annex was later removed.
District No. 65 ("Alpine") was formed when, in accordance with the petition of 20 legal voters of School District 2, County Superintendent John Dempster, on February 26, 1873, set apart Secs. 2, 3, 10, 11, and 12 of T6, R2W, to constitute the new district. He notified Mr. H. G. Cooper that the meeting for election of moderator, director, and treasurer, would be held in the Cooper home on Saturday, March 8, 1875, at 2 P.M. Mr. Cooper was instructed to notify every legal voter five days previous to the meeting. The Cooper family occupied a sod house just south of the present William Bues home on Sec. 2. An acre of land on the southwest corner of the Cooper farm was designated as school land, and a frame schoolhouse was erected a few steps from the road, facing south. In 1904 this was torn down, and the lumber was used in building a new schoolhouse the same year. It boasted a belfry and was considered one of the better school buildings in this area. The board was usually very cooperative in supplying the needs of teachers and pupils.

School programs, picnics, and other affairs were well supported by the patrons of the district. It had quite a large enrollment until about 1930, when the number of pupils began a gradual decline. Although there were but a half-dozen children left by 1947, the patrons of the district worked at the schoolhouse during the late summer to make extensive and much-needed repairs on the interior. It presented a very attractive appearance during the remaining few years of the school's existence. In 1953, District 65 contracted with District 75 to send the children to the Geneva school. The yellow school bus has since become part of daily life as it makes its regular route morning and evening.

Some of the families whose children attended school in District 65 were Archer, Bell, Sluka, Churchill, Wytiers, Roberts, Hafer, Ward, Wilson, McCartney, McDonald, Podlesak, Votipka, Novak, Bues, Fryeck, Rowanda, Kosche, Fox, and Nelson (the only family to have three generations attend District 65).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Director</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Eleanor Matson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Eleanor Matson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>T. J. Whitzel</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Eleanor Matson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>J. D. McHale</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Eleanor Matson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Maggie Stewart</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Parthenia and Eleanor Matson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Luella Harbaugh and Charity Metcalf</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Luella Harbaugh and Sydney Purviance</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>D. L. Beatie</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Eva Davis, Hattie Whitzel, and H. P. Wilson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Grace Porter</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Hattie Gardner</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Rose Owens</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>George Porter, Bertha Sheldon, Minnie Carson, O. D. Wilson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Ada Allen</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>J. S. Moore</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>J. S. Moore</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Anna Thomson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Maude McCartney Heller</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Chan Wickins</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Charlotte Good</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Julia M. Merlitz</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>M. P. Ames</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>A. W. Larson</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Nelle Pfeiffer and Mae Bailor</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Ida Walton</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Verna Mowry</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Mae Bailor</td>
<td>C. E. McCartney</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

District No. 66 ("Centennial") included Secs. 27, 28, 33, and 34 of T6, R2W, when it was organized on February 5, 1876. County Superintendent John A. Dempster requested J. M. Piersol to advise all legal voters of the meeting to be held February 19. A part of Secs. 22 and 21 were later added to the district. A new frame building replaced the old one in 1910. It was considered quite a nice building, and it still maintains a lonely vigil on the corner of Sec. 28 which belongs to the Warner family. Because there were so few schoolchildren after 1945, the district paid tuition and transportation for each until 1953, when it contracted with the Geneva school district.

The names of 40 pupils appear on the "Teacher's Daily Register" of 1900. Some of the family names are Bechtel, Christinsky, Demaree, Fodder, Jones, Leff, McDonald, Parker, Saylor, Tonkinson, Wellman, and Woodworth.
Year | Teacher | Director
--- | --- | ---
1879 | Emma Zerba | M. K. Wellman
1880 | Parthenia Matson | J. M. Piersol
1881 | Parthenia Matson | J. M. Piersol
1882 | Clara Masters | E. O. Wellman
1883 | S. T. Drummond | E. O. Wellman
1884 | Minnie Warner | Walter Christiancy
1885 | W. H. Odell | Walter Christiancy
1886 | Carrie Neyhart | Walter Christiancy
1887 | Alta Andrew Priefert | Walter Christiancy
1888 | Alta Andrew Priefert | Walter Christiancy
1889 | Annie Thomas | E. O. Wellman
1890 | Emma Zerba | M. K. Wellman
1891 | Eva Bahr | Walter Christiancy
1892 | Clara Wickizer | Walter Christiancy
1893 | Fanny Purviance | Walter Christiancy
1894 | Minnie Heller Warner | Walter Christiancy
1895 | W. H. Odell | Walter Christiancy
1896 | Carrie Neyhart | Walter Christiancy
1897 | Alta Andrew Priefert | Walter Christiancy
1898 | Alta Andrew Priefert | Walter Christiancy
1899 | S. D. Purviance and Annie Wilson | E. O. Wellman
1900 | W. H. Odell | Walter Christiancy
1901 | Laura Smith | C. Cumpston
1902 | Kate Lincoln | C. Cumpston
1903 | Minnie Warner | C. Cumpston
1904 | Laura Smith | C. Cumpston
1905 | Emma McCartney | C. Cumpston
1906 | Mamie Lenhart | C. Cumpston
1907 | Mildred Timmons | C. Cumpston
1908 | Mamie Lenhart | C. Cumpston
1909 | Emma McCartney | C. Cumpston
1910 | Mr. Jay Buckles and Miss Maude Sherrard | C. Cumpston
1911 | Stella Stelle | C. E. Cumpston
1912 | Dot Hastings | C. E. Cumpston
1913 | Eva Huston | C. E. Cumpston
1914 | Myra Snodgrass | C. E. Cumpston
1915 | Mildred Timmons | C. E. Cumpston
1916 | Florence Stevens | Lee Folden
1917 | Hazel Huston | Lee Folden
1918 | Hazel Huston | Edwin Taylor
1919 | Ethel Love | Edwin Taylor
1920 | Anna Totemeier | William C. Myers
1921 | Eila Griffin | William C. Myers
1922 | Gladys Allen | William C. Myers
1923 | Ada Myers | Elmer Nelson
1924 | Ada Myers | Elmer Nelson
1925 | Ada Myers | Elmer Nelson
1926 | Ethel Loomis | Elmer Nelson
1927 | Elizabeth Shurtliff | Elmer Nelson
1928 | Anna Thomas | Elmer Nelson
1929 | Anna Thomas | L. L. Myers
1930 | Anna Thomas | L. L. Myers
1931 | DeVee Weiss | L. L. Myers
1932 | DeVee Weiss | L. L. Myers
1933 | DeVee Weiss | L. L. Myers
1934 | DeVee Weiss | L. L. Myers
1935 | DeVee Weiss | L. L. Myers
1936 | Blanche Shapley | L. L. Myers
1937 | Blanche Shapley | L. L. Myers
1938 | Dorothy Busset | L. L. Myers
1939 | Dorothy Busset | L. L. Myers
1940 | Lucille Miller | L. L. Myers
1941 | Fern Most | A. Lentfer
1942 | Pauline Wagers | A. Lentfer
1943 | Norma McCluskey | A. Lentfer
1944 | Norma McCluskey | A. Lentfer
1945 | to 1949 | Otto Otten
1950 | to 1957 | Verle Meyers

**MAIL AND PHONES**

Gleye McCaulley and Henry Reinsch served for many years as mail carriers for most of Chelsea township. Linus Walters, who began in 1955, is the present carrier. Good roads and a car permit him to cover the area in about four hours each morning. Not so fortunate was Robert Carson, one of the first carriers to the community. With team and cab, allowing for the time he took at noon to rest his horses and to eat a lunch, it took him eight hours to cover his 18-mile route. Miss Minnie Carson vividly recalls the pleasure it gave her father when Mrs. John Stephenson invited him in for a warm meal, as she often did. The Stephenson place, now the William Watmore farm, was about halfway on the route. Mail carriers were frequently called upon for services beyond their specific duties. Mr. Carson often delivered messages to people along the route. On one occasion he found a sample of dress material in a mailbox with a request that he please match the material and bring it out on the route the next day or so. “No matter how cold, how deep the snow or impossible the conditions,” recalls Miss Carson, “nothing
FAMILIES

John W. Andrew, son of Henry and Sarah Andrew, was born in Indiana, April 8, 1843. From Indiana he moved to a farm near Fennimore, Wisconsin, where he resided when the "call to arms" was issued by President Lincoln. He enlisted August 26, 1861, and was mustered into service at Madison on August 29, 1861, as a private of Captain Mark Fennicum's Company "A," 7th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, Col. Joseph Van Dorn commanding. On September 14, 1862, he was wounded in the battle of South Mountain, Maryland, and had to enter a hospital. He later re-enlisted in the 8th Wisconsin Infantry and served another eight months, until the close of the war. He served his country as a soldier and as a sergeant for a total of three years and eight months. He received a certificate of honorable discharge on September 5, 1864, returned to his home in Wisconsin, and resumed farming near Fennimore.

On January 5, 1868, John Andrew married Marcia Arvilla Zerba. To them six children were born: one son, Ira, and five daughters, Lillie, Clara, Alta, Effie, and Blanche. In April, 1871, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew, with Lillie and Ira, came to Fillmore County in a covered wagon and settled in Chelsea township. He homesteaded the SW ¼ of Sec. 24, T6, R2W, and obtained his patent from the United States government on September 25, 1878. They made their home here until 1910, when they rented the farm and moved to Geneva. Their first home was a sod house in which Clara was born on December 1, 1872. The rest of the children were also born on the homestead in Chelsea: Alta, October 8, 1876; Effie, April 16, 1878; and Blanche, August 16, 1877.

The family experienced the hardships of two great blizzards, the Easter storm of April 14, 1873, and the Great Blizzard of January 12, 1888. In both storms, they saved their livestock by taking all into the house, where all lived together until the storm had passed. Snowdrifts all but buried the home and the few farm buildings. The nearest town was Fairmont, about 16 miles away. The grain had to be hauled all that distance by team and wagon. Wheat seemed to be the main crop.

Mr. Andrew was active in the civic, educational, and religious life of the community. He was a member of the G.A.R. and the United Brethren Church. The church was built on the northeast corner of this Sec. 24, and a cemetery just west of the church. Soon after, the Methodists built a bigger, better church on the northwest corner of the same section. The first schoolhouse was located near the north border of Mr. Andrew's homestead. Later, the school was across the road, just north of the Methodist church. Mr. Andrew was a member of the school board for many years.

The community was sparsely settled and could not support two churches, so the Methodist church stood idle for several years, until it was purchased by the U. B. church and the U. B. church was torn down and hauled to the farm of Gus Peterson. I doubt whether this church is standing today. I know the homestead was not sold until several years after the death of Mr. Andrew, August 11, 1935. He was 92 years, 4 months, and 3 days old. At the time he was living with his son Ira near Orchard, Washington. Mrs. Andrew passed on at her home in Geneva, March 6, 1917, at the age of 70 years, 3 months, and 9 days.

Blanche died at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, in Lincoln, Nebraska, December 12, 1923, age 36 years, 3 months, and 27 days. Alta Andrew Priefert died October 24, 1927; Clara Andrew Peterson died September 24, 1925; Lillie Andrew DeWitt Thomas died November 11, 1931; Ira Marvin Andrew died April 13, 1952.

I, Effie Andrew Johnson, am the only one left. I'll be 81 years old on April 25, 1966. I am doing the housework and living with an 89-year-old lady in Sterling, Illinois. I have a daughter and two sons living here in Sterling and Rock Falls. Raymond Johnson and Leta Thome live in Rock Falls and Donald Johnson lives in Sterling. I also have a son, Ira, living near Dunning, Nebraska. My oldest daughter, Nellie Johnson Cole, passed on May 11, 1937, leaving four small children.

My oldest son, Glen Andrew Johnson, passed on March 18, 1954, leaving three sons and one daughter, all nearly grown. I have 15 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

—Effie Andrew Johnson

The SE ¼ of Sec. 18 in Chelsea township was homesteaded by Edward Brooke in 1871. He came from Illinois with a team and wagon and a breaking plow, built a house, and put down a well which, after being deepened, is still in use. In the fall of 1873 he asked Miss Minnie Warner to come to Nebraska, and they were married on January 1, 1874. Six children came to bless the home, but in 1892 Edward fell from his windmill and the farm was left to his widow, who passed away three years later. When the estate was settled, the place went to the eldest son, Lyman. He and his wife, the former Ella Ward, still live on this place and enjoy the comfort and convenience of a modern home which they built in 1913. Their son John and his family also reside in Chelsea township. Their daughter Bonnie (Mrs. Sumner Harris) lives in California.

Walter Christiancy purchased the NE ¼ of Sec. 27 from the Burlington R.R. in November, 1883. He improved it, and he and his family lived on the place until his retirement in 1922. His son Clair and his family then moved to the farm and lived there until 1954 when they and their son Robert moved to Geneva. Since that time their son Rodger has farmed the land, and he and his wife are now living on the place.

—Mrs. Clair Christiancy, Sr.
Walter Churchill (1841-1923), naturalized citizen, and his wife Jerraldine Kirchner (1845-1911).

Walter Churchill came from Bristol, England, in 1858. He went from New York City to Pennsylvania, where he worked for a wagon maker. It was there that he met Jerraldine Kirchner who was, at that time, working for a family who were horse trainers. In a few years' time, enough money was accumulated to make it possible for them to get married and set out by covered wagon to "the West."

Crossing the Mississippi River at Keokuk, Iowa, and the Missouri River at Nebraska City made the trip venturesome. Their first child was born in Iowa, and so the young couple lived there briefly before deciding to go farther. Their final destination was a homestead on the S 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of Sec. 14, Chelsea township (1871).

A sod house was built in the middle of the section. It was there that several of their children were reared. Later on, a frame house and barn were built on the section line.

The hardships were many, but their faith in a new land carried them through. On one occasion a big blizzard came in the seventies. The wife put her apron over the horse's face and led it into the house. The oxen were poorly sheltered in a straw shed. Their hides were so badly frozen that the hair came off (after a time). The story originally was that the wind was so violent that it blew the hair off. The latter is only partially true.

In the summer months, churning, bread-baking, and other household chores were done at night so that all of the family could work in the fields during the day. A hasty nap at the ends of the furrows afforded much-needed sleep in the daytime.

The family has come a long way from the pioneer life, but I think each one has an appreciation for the background inherited from the forefathers.

The family of Walter Churchill: Emma Mullikin, Mary Ellen Peterson, Eva Friday George, Walter A., and Albert, all deceased.

—Stella Churchill

Allen T. Drummond came from Lancaster, Missouri, in the fall of 1880 and purchased school land, the SW 1/4 of Sec. 36, one-half mile south of Dudley school. He, his wife, and their three sons and two daughters occupied the place in 1881. Their daughter Ida and her husband William Gewecke had been thrown out the car window. A wagon was awaiting them at Fairmont. The sewing machine, feather bed, and quilts, as well as seven children, were loaded, and all were ready for the short ride to the Emmor Fox home in Chelsea. It was there that they spent their first night in Nebraska. The next day, they took their meager belongings and took up residence in a farmhouse about a mile away and lived there for several years.

Their most harrowing experiences were snakes coming through their sod house floors, and the blizzard of 1888. In great emergencies, corn was parched and used to make "coffee." Corn-meal mush provided a sustaining diet many a time.

The children of Joseph G. Fox were: Eva Wolverton, Cora Shackelford, Orpha Jesse, Gepha Churchill, Lemma Miller, Edgbert Dow, Edmond Low, and Robert W. Fox. (For Cora and Robert, see under Shackelford).

Orpha Fox, daughter of Joseph G. Fox, married Charles Jesse in 1893. They farmed in Fillmore County until 1903, when they moved to Ohiowa and ran the mill there. But

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Joseph Gardner Fox (1831-1917) and his wife, Almyra Shuck Fox (1847-1929).

Joseph G. Fox was born in Pennsylvania and went with his parents to Ohio in 1841. There he grew to manhood, and served in the Civil War (Company "G," Ohio Regiment) in 1864. His second marriage was to Almyra Shuck. The couple resided in Ohio until 1885, when they chose Nebraska for a new home with a future. Joe, as he was known, came before the family and worked for a time on the "Moze" Taylor farm, thus earning enough money to bring his family here.

In 1885 Almyra had a furniture sale in Ohio, packed a few things, and came the many miles by train to their new home. She provided for her children by packing a lunch of chicken, hominy, bread, and sugar. When four days were over and their destination was reached, their food had long been exhausted, as the chicken and hominy had spoiled and had been thrown out the car window. A wagon was awaiting them at Fairmont. The sewing machine, feather bed, and quilts, as well as seven children, were loaded, and all were ready for the short ride to the Emmor Fox home in Chelsea. It was there that they spent their first night in Nebraska. The next day, they took their meager belongings and took up residence in a farmhouse about a mile away and lived there for several years.

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Home of Emmor Fox, 1893. Included in the picture are Emmor Fox by the buggy, Fred Fox in the buggy, Lewis Fox on the wagon. Insert picture shows Emmor Fox and daughter, Dora and son, Lewis.
Charles and Orpha lived only a few more years after that. They had four children. Edith, widow of Glen Chadderton, and her son Bud live in Los Angeles. Bertha and her husband, Ernest McGuire, live in St. Louis, Missouri. Their son Bob, a helicopter pilot, is married and lives in Laguna Beach, California. They have a married daughter.

Howard Jesse and his wife (Inez Engel) farmed east of Geneva for many years. Retired, they now live in Friend, Nebraska. Charles Jesse, Jr., is deceased. —Stella Churchill

J. F. (Frank) McCartney bought the NW ¼ of Sec. 12 as a homestead relinquishment in the fall of 1872. The following spring he brought his wife Elma and her two small sons by covered wagon from Rock Island, Illinois, to a sod house located near the southwest corner of this farm. A year or two later he built a frame house on the north side of the quarter. The family occupied this until 1898, when they built the present two-story house, which faces Highway 41 to the north. Small evergreen trees brought from the Platte River and set out in the front lawn in the 1870’s are venerable trees today. Twice a year needed supplies were hauled by wagon from Beatrice. A large orchard furnished apples and cherries for the family, which ultimately consisted of eight children: Will, Charlie, Mart, Maud, Herbert, Emma, and Alta. Maud, Mart, Herbert, and Emma taught in rural schools. Herbert received a degree in 1911 from Iowa State. Emma graduated from Omaha General Hospital and was one of the Red Cross nurses who served in France during World War I (1918). She passed away in 1931 and is one of the war dead honored each Memorial Day at the Geneva Cemetery. The elder McCartneys retired to Geneva in 1906. The original farm is now owned by the Nelsons.

—Miss Carmen Heller

Joseph McDonald, descended from Scottish ancestors who spelled the name “Macdonald,” came from LaSalle County, Illinois, in February, 1875, and purchased the NE ¼ of Sec. 1, T6, R2W from local land agent H. G. Bliss at Fairmont, representative of the Burlington R.R., for $5.75 an acre. He paid part of the money in advance and then hired out to a man in Illinois for two more years in order to pay off the balance. In 1881 he married Eleanor Kinrade, who had come with her parents to the Burress community in 1879. Two daughters and two sons were born to them. Allen died of pneumonia in 1920, two years after his father’s death. Harold and his family have lived on the farm almost continuously since that time. Joseph McDonald, a very meticulous man, rather specialized in the raising of purebred Duroc Jersey hogs.

—Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

Abraham B. Miller came from Wabash, Indiana, in the fall of 1881 at the age of 19 years. In 1883, he purchased from the state of Nebraska 160 acres in Sec. 16, T6, R2W, and in 1887 and 1889 he purchased 80 adjoining acres. In December, 1889, he leased two acres in the NW corner of Sec. 16 for District 45, known as the Blain school.

Mr. Miller batched in his home for several years; later, on February 22, 1888, he married Miss Mary Foster in Springfield, Illinois. They then came out to their farm where they lived until they moved to Geneva in 1916. The Millers had four children; Vinetta Miller Eaton, of Geneva; Inez Miller Spangler, of Des Moines, Iowa; Ross Miller, of Nashua, Iowa; and Helen Miller Fisher, of Lincoln, Nebraska. Mr. Miller passed away in 1929 and Mrs. Miller in 1940. The farm is still owned by Vinetta Miller Eaton and Inez Miller Spangler.

—Mrs. Vinetta Eaton
John Walter Mullikin and his family were early pioneers in Fillmore County. John Walter was born September 10, 1839, at Bridge Town, Maryland. In 1845, with his parents, he moved from Maryland to Middlefork, Indiana. He grew up without formal education, but few of his day had a better self-taught education. He served as an instructor in the newly established county schools of his community. He served in the Federal Army in the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 in Companies “K” of the 18th and Company “H” of the 118th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and was mustered out of the army early in 1865.

On April 16, 1865, he was married to his boyhood sweetheart, Helen Elizabeth Beard. Elizabeth was born at Middlefork, Indiana, January 19, 1846; her parents originated in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Guests had assembled for the nuptials; but just as the minister was about to begin the ceremony, a messenger rode in on horseback with the shocking news that President Lincoln had been assassinated on April 14. Mr. Mullikin scarcely had the presence of mind to go through the ceremony; he felt that more war was inevitable.

The government furnished Civil War veterans with lists of land available out West. A tree claim of 120 acres on Sec. 26 in Chelsea township was selected. A Mr. Chester had not been able to prove up on his claim because of illness, and Mr. Mullikin purchased his rights.

In 1872, the family, with five small children—Everette, Perry, Orrin, Atley, and Iza—moved from Indiana by covered wagon to the newly acquired claim in Nebraska. The claim was not without improvements: a dugout for a home, a barn, and many trees that were growing on the place. More and more trees were planted; at one time, there were four productive fruit orchards.

Bessie Rue, the second daughter, was the only one of the children born in the dugout (on August 6, 1876). On December 14, 1893, she married William Rhoda of Chelsea township. Within the next three years a frame house was erected over the dugout. Between 1879 and 1891 the five younger children were born: Burke, Doyle, Olga, Owen, and Ida. The oldest daughter, Iza Inez, passed away on December 19, 1880, at the age of nine.

As the sons grew up, all left home to seek work elsewhere. The parents never saw all their large family at any one time. When they celebrated their golden wedding in 1915, eight of the 10 children were present.

The pioneer life of the Mullikin family was typical of that of all early settlers. There were hardships, privations, and prosperity, all dependent largely on the whims of the weather and of insect pests. The family went through two great blizzards—the Easter storm of 1873 and the Great Blizzard of January 12, 1888. At one time in the early 1880's, Mr. Mullikin operated a post office in his home. The address was Dudley, Nebraska. Harvey Ryman went by horse-drawn cart to Fairmont three times a week to carry the outgoing and to bring the incoming mail. When Harvey was not able to make the trip, his wife, Emma Zerba Ryman, made it for him. For several years Mr. Mullikin operated a canes press. Farmers for miles around raised their own cane, which they brought to the mill to be pressed; the juice was then cooked until it formed molasses. Stored in large barrels, molasses was the only sweet enjoyed by the pioneers. Members of the family recalled the first brown sugar in bulk obtainable in some stores. The introduction of white sugar was an event never forgotten. A cider press was a busy place every fall; homemade vinegar was a necessity.

Because he was capable, Mr. Mullikin extracted aching teeth for family and friends. He was also able to fill cavities in teeth, a great aid in the early days.

Elizabeth Mullikin capably met all the challenges of pioneer life in the new country. She was resourceful, thrifty, and industrious; her hands were never idle. Her crafts, arts, and skills were unsurpassed. She carded raw wool and spun thread with which her knitting needles supplied mittens, hose, and scarfs for her entire family. During the growing season, her preserving and pickling kettles were always in use. In a countryside lacking professional aid, Mrs. Mullikin was an angel of mercy in sickness. Her home remedies, teas and brews of native plants, were known to be most helpful. Her skills, almost unknown to the present generation, included the making of kraft, hominy, butter, cheese, and homemade soap. Lye for making soap was obtained by soaking wood ashes in water and using the water with pork or beef cracklings. Other skills included drying and preserving of fruits and vegetables in the sun. What the pioneer woman lacked in conveniences, she made up in resourcefulness.

Mr. Mullikin, an avid student, was far ahead of his day in educational interests. He organized District 30 in December, 1881, and was a school board member for many years. The corner of the NE ¼ of Sec. 35, Chelsea township, was leased to the newly organized school district for as long as the school remained operative. This plot was on Mrs. Mullikin's land across the road from the home. She recalled that her father in Indiana had given three different corners of his land for school purposes. She insisted that District 30 lease the plot, which would thus belong to the then present owner of the land when the school was finally abandoned. Her forethought proved to have merit.

The schoolhouse was used for religious purposes—Sunday school, preaching services, and revival meetings. All the family took part in the religious services of the community. Mr. Mullikin knew music. He not only taught his own children to sing and to play instruments, but he also started several young men of the neighborhood on musical careers. Singing schools were a delight to all who attended. Mr. Mullikin possessed a sweet tenor voice that was unsurpassed. When called upon, he was capable of delivering a Sunday sermon. At one time, he was called upon to conduct a funeral service. He was known to have made a study of many religious creeds, as well as the platforms of all the political parties of his day. Mr. and Mrs. Mullikin remained on the farm for 32 years. With their youngest daughter, Ida, they moved to Cherryvale, Kansas, in October, 1904. Mrs. Mullikin passed away on March 9, 1925, and Mr. Mullikin on October 17, 1926.

All ten of the children married. There were 41 grandchildren. Their son Doyle graduated from the University Medical School at Omaha and was a practicing physician at Chester, Nebraska, for more than 50 years. The daughters Ida and Olga were teachers; Ida retired in 1956 after teaching for 35 years.

In 1966 the surviving members of the family are Owen N. Mullikin of McMinnville, Oregon, and Mrs. Ida C. Mitchell of Chester, Nebraska.

—Miss Lillie C. Rhoda

The John Walter Mullikin family taken on April 16, 1915 at the Golden Wedding Celebration of Mr. and Mrs. Mullikin. Back row, left to right: Burke, Owen, Doyle, and Atley. Second row: Olga Perry, Bessie Mullikin Rhoda, Orrin, Ida Mullikin Mitchell, Everette. Seated: Mr. and Mrs. Mullikin.
Walferd C. Peterson was born September 23, 1866, in the province of Kalmar, Sweden. His parents, Johannes and Sarah "Johnson," and four of their children came to the United States, leaving Emma and Walferd in Sweden with relatives. There was a Swedish settlement in Galesburg, Illinois, so that was where they went. After a time the family had earned enough money to send for the two children, and they came over on a ship which took three weeks to make the trip. At the time Emma was 11 and Walferd was four years old.

On settling in Galesburg, the family assumed the name of "Peterson," as it was the custom in Sweden at that time to take the name of the father's father and add "son" to the name, and hence the family became "Peterson."

After Emma and Walferd came to Illinois, Walferd contracted what we now know as polio. In early days little was known about this disease or ways of treating it; and so Walferd was left a cripple for life.

His formal schooling was very meager; the older boys in the family took him to school in a wagon when the weather permitted, or when the work on the farm was slack. Even though he did not get much education at school, he was an avid reader and mechanically minded. He always kept abreast of the times. Since he had been denied schooling, he was eager to see that his children all got a good education.

In the year 1879, the family heard of railroad land that could be purchased in Nebraska. At that time all the homestead land was taken, but they pooled their money and had enough to buy land in Chelsea township, Fillmore County, southeast of Geneva. The records state that "Eighty acres of land was purchased from the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad Company by Johannes Peterson, for the consideration of $600.00. Legal description, the E 1/4 of the SE 3/4 of Sec. 15, T6, R2W of the Sixth Principal Meridian."

The family had to haul lumber from Fairmont to build their home; it took many trips and many days to get the material. They endured many hardships like everyone else in those early days, but they were of sturdy stock.

When Walferd was a young man, he got a job traveling for an implement company. His mode of transportation was by horse ("Old Flora") and buggy. One of the towns in his territory was Sidney, Iowa, where a John Chaney was the implement dealer. His wife and their young daughters ran the hotel, the only one in town, and Walferd made his headquarters there when in that area. Walferd had a good voice and loved to sing, so in the evenings the young people would gather around the organ in the "parlor" and sing. Rosalie Chaney played the organ and sang. It was on these occasions that he met Rosalie and wooed and won her. In October, 1896, he drove "Old Flora" to Sidney and they were married.

Walferd was always inventing ways to compensate for his not being able to walk far or to work as others did. He made his arms do much of the work for his legs, and thus developed great strength in his arms. He contrived a way to fix a girl's bicycle (as this was easier for him to handle), put the chain on the left side, so that he could pedal with his one good foot, and built a small platform on which to rest the heel of the crippled foot. Before the streets were hard-surfaced, it was difficult for him to ride on the frozen, rutty roads in winter and the muddy roads in summer. A city ordinance prohibited the riding of bicycles on sidewalks, but the city councilmen made one exception: they allowed Mr. Peterson to ride on the walks because of his affliction. The children of the town always respected his handicap and would step off the sidewalks when they saw him riding down the street. Walferd often expressed his appreciation of this privilege.

It was a source of satisfaction to him when, riding past the schoolhouse playground on his bicycle, the young boys would ask him to stop and chin himself on the bars, as he could far outdo any of them.

Mr. and Mrs. Peterson reared a family of nine children, all of whom were graduated from the Geneva High School and all of whom attended the University of Nebraska: Mrs. Leta Tomlinson of Chino, California; Mrs. Dazel F. Camp of Geneva, Nebraska; Mrs. M. Murle Abrahamson of Ralston, Nebraska; Dr. John C. Peterson (deceased); Mrs. Rose L. Hammond of Lincoln, Nebraska; Mrs. Marion L. Calder of Lincoln, Nebraska; Mrs. Helen M. Biba of Carbondale, Colorado; Frank W. Peterson of Homestead, Florida; and Dr. Paul L. Peterson of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Both Walferd and Rosalie Peterson were useful, respected citizens, serving their community in many ways. Mr. Peterson was on the school board from 1919 to 1922 and both of them were active in the Congregational Church until their health failed. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1946 at the church, with all their children present, and many of their grandchildren.

Walferd's greatest pride was his family. Now, his granddaughter Mary Camp Portwood and Dr. David Portwood, a Geneva dentist, and their family are taking their place in the community he so respected and loved. —Mrs. C. C. Camp

Many of the early pioneers in the West had their origin in Europe. This was true of the Frederick Rhoda family, early settlers in Fillmore County. Frederick Rhoda and Sophia Sieffert were born and raised in Schwerin, Mecklenburg, a province of northern Germany. These young people embarked from Hamburg in the early 1850's. By train they journeyed from New York City to La Porte in northern Indiana. Why they chose Indiana is not known; they may have known someone there, perhaps a relative. Both were able to find employment at once in the new land.

After their marriage they lived for a few years at Flint, Michigan. By 1862, Mr. and Mrs. Rhoda and two sons, Frank and Charley, were back in Indiana. Glowing accounts of cheap land and abundant crops "out West" were ever before them. In 1863 or 1864, the family again moved, this time to a farm near Atalissa, Iowa. Here their next children, David, William, Sophia, and Emma were born.

A friend of Mr. Rhoda's wrote of the prosperity of the prairies of Kansas. In July, 1870, the family went by covered wagon to the home of a friend near Lyons, Kansas. They found no prosperity—in fact, only dire poverty and near starvation. Mrs. Rhoda and the three younger children took a train at St. Joseph, Missouri, to return to Indiana. Mr. Rhoda, Frank, and Charley made the trip back by covered wagon. The story is told that the boys made most of the trip...
On their ponies. In Kansas they chased herds of antelope. By the spring of 1871, the family was on a rented farm owned by General Orr near La Porte. The next nine years on the farm were fairly prosperous ones. Crops were good—all gleaned and threshed by hand. The youngest children of the farm were fairly prosperous ones. In the spring of 1871, the family was on a rented farm owned by General Orr near La Porte. The next nine years on the farm were fairly prosperous ones. Crops were good—all gleaned and threshed by hand. The youngest children of the farm were fairly prosperous ones.

The "Call of the West" was ever present, thanks to the advertising of the railroads. In 1878, Mr. Rhoda came to Fairmont, where he was met by H. G. Bliss, land agent for the C. B. & Q. Railroad. From Fairmont, they drove overland by horse and buggy to see available land. The next nine years on the farm were fairly prosperous ones. Crops were good—all gleaned and threshed by hand. The youngest children of the farm were fairly prosperous ones. In the spring of 1871, the family was on a rented farm owned by General Orr near La Porte. The next nine years on the farm were fairly prosperous ones. Crops were good—all gleaned and threshed by hand. The youngest children of the farm were fairly prosperous ones.

Between 1879 and 1880 the family made preparations for moving to Nebraska. In July, Mr. Rhoda became ill with typhoid fever. Before this, he had suffered an injury to the pancreas, caused by the kick of a colt. The injury, aggravated by the attack of fever, brought his untimely death at the age of 40, on August 7, 1880.

With the help of her four sons, Mrs. Rhoda proceeded with their preparations and held a farm sale on September 30, 1880. An immigrant car, with Frank and Charley in charge, was loaded with livestock, furniture, and family possessions. The rest of the family followed by train, arriving in Fairmont on October 5, 1880.

The family lived in a rented house in Fairmont for six weeks. During that time, the sons, with the help of carpenters, erected a small frame house on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 25, set up shelter for the livestock, and dug a well.

Early years on the prairie were filled with hardships and homesickness. Armed with ambition, hard work, and their own crafts and skills, they soon found things shaping toward a better outlook. Having grown used to natural woods in Indiana, they doubly had to plant trees. They planted long rows of osage hedges; a large grove of native trees gave shelter and protection around the buildings; and an apple orchard flourished for many years.

In thinking of those times, it is easier to think of what there wasn't than of what there was. The first three-month term of school opened in District 30 on December 19, 1881, and was attended by four of the Rhoda children. Chelsea, District 32, held spring terms which they attended.

The sod for making the schoolhouse in District 30 was taken partly from the SE 1/4 of Sec. 25. By 1883, a small frame building replaced the sod schoolhouse.

In the spring of 1881 they planted their first crops: spring wheat and barley, and later buckwheat and oats. The mill meant flour for bread for many months. The surplus grain was hauled overland. A load of wheat to A Note from a niece, Ida Compton, in Troy, Ohio, April 24, 1873, remarked: "... there was an excursion going out to Nebraska and ma had a notion to go but she did not like to go by herself, it was $29 there and back." Catherine's brother George wrote: "You speak of those Mexican cattle with their long horns, they are quite a show." Other letters told how Mat Young helped the Swayzes get located. On February 9, 1875, from Covington, Ohio, George Miller wrote to his sister Catherine Shackelford: "... they are making up a car load of provisions here to send to Nebraska to the sufferers. There young and old from near and far. There were several excellent fiddlers and callers in the area. Pioneer life was not all hardship and hard work: there was plenty of entertainment as well as spiritual life.

The Rhodas acquired other farms near their original purchase. Charley Rhoda lived on the old home place until the 1920's. All of the land is still in the family. Emma, William, and Charley married. There are 8 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, and 16 great-great-grandchildren. Ella Rhoda, whose 95th birthday was October 5, 1967, is the surviving member of the family.
was also some, over $300, sent to Missouri from here.”
(George's daughter and family had settled in Missouri.) On
June 27, 1875, L. Sims wrote from Clinton County to
William: “I understood you wanted some dandelion seed, they
seem to be scarce, but I'll send a few if that is not enough let
me know and I will send more. I suppose you only wanted to
get a start of them.” Sims wrote again on July 10, 1875:
“... I am truly glad to hear that you have escaped the
grasshoppers.”

From Nebraska, on July 14, 1875, Eliza Swayze wrote:
“... this finds us well at this time. It rains here every day
or night and has for the last month and the crops are very
slim here. There is no harvest at all and no corn over four
inches high. The gardens, nobody ever got a smell of anything
they planted. Everybody is pretty disgusted here. The grass-
hoppers have about all left. We have had some of the hardest
storms here this summer that ever was. We looked for our
house to go lots of times. It shakes like the cars starting every
storm. It has blown off twice but not since we lived in it. If
nothing happens we don't expect to stay here longer than a
couple of weeks for Jim is about run out of work.”

Letters sent to William and Catherine Shackelford in
the 1880's were addressed to Alpine, Fillmore County.
The Swayzes stuck it out. June 4, 1883, Jim Swayze
wrote to a friend: “We have come to life again. I rented the
farm east of my house where we went to look for the deer
tracks but we live where we did. I have 37 acres of oats and 25
corn, give one-third corn and one-fourth oats. I bought a
team on time. We have a cow paid for. Have been fishing
several times, got some nice pickerel. Tell the old man if he
wants to squirrel hunt to come down. There are lots of them
here, can kill all he wants close to the house, both kinds,
grey and fox squirrels. It has rained more here than it ever
did in Indiana but has not damaged anything yet for me.
Council Bluffs washed off last Saturday, only 28 lives lost.
Corn looks good. Come over as soon as you can.”

A letter to William Shackelford, August 7, 1888, was
addressed to Dudley, Fillmore County. He was a Methodist
and a Mason. After the death of her husband in 1888,
Catherine returned to Indiana to spend her last years with
relatives there.

William had sold out when he left Indiana, bringing
notes from the sale which were later handled by Lewis and
Cicero Sims, brothers, bill collector and lawyer, of Frankfort,
Indiana. A letter from William's brother, S. H. Shackelford,
of Tipton County, Indiana, said that he sent the Swayzes's
boxes by freight after they came to Fillmore County in
the fall of 1873. Catherine's brother, Elliott Miller, had a dry
goods store in Troy, Ohio; her brother George later sold his
bookstore there and moved to Covington, Ohio. Their parents
died a few years after Catherine came to Nebraska. The mother's letters to Catherine expressed deep regret at not
seeing her daughter again.

In addition to farming in Chelsea township, Austin C.
Shackelford operated a blacksmith and machine shop in
Dudley. For recreation, he gave singing lessons to a group
of young people who met for practice in the Chelsea church.
Without an organ at first, they used a tuning fork and song
books.

The children of Austin and Delana were Jason D., Minnie
(Mrs. Robert Fox), Frank, Ina (Mrs. Albert Eslow), Daisy,
Oska, Elva, and Nellie. Three sons had died in infancy. The
greatest tragedy which ever came to this family was in
1894: within 34 days the four youngest children, girls aged
5 to 14, died of diphtheria, the last one on the day before
Christmas.

There were crop failures, and Austin's barn was struck
by lightning and burned. Bees outgrew their hives and moved
to the house; some of the siding had to be stripped off to
remove the honey. Like all the early settlers, they set out fruit
trees of all kinds, berries, rhubarb, and Osage orange hedge
for fence posts. Most of these grew abundantly.

In April, 1896, Jason D. Shackelford married Cora Fox,
daughter of Joseph G. Fox. A month later, Jason's sister
Minnie married Robert Fox, brother of Cora. Minnie and
Robert moved to a farm near Ohiowa. Austin moved from
the homestead to Geneva, a block east of the mill, where he
operated a blacksmith shop with his son Jason. Years later,
Jason had his own shop on the east side of the Courthouse
Square. He played a cornet in the Geneva Band. As a pastime,
he learned to crochet beautifully, taught by Cora, who was
a dressmaker. They had no children.

Austin attained a high degree in the Masonic Lodge and
Delana was in the Eastern Star. They were Methodists. Their
daughter Ina became a skilled tailor. Ina met and married
Albert Eslow in California, where she worked. They moved
to a homestead in Canada; but the change of climate from
the Imperial Valley was too severe, and Ina died a short
time later.

Robert Fox (June 13, 1866-June 22, 1951) and his wife
Minnie (September 27, 1874-May 16, 1944), with their in-
fant daughter Grace, moved in 1890 from the Ohiowa farm to
the Shackelford homestead in Chelsea. Their daughter Ruth
was born in the same house where her mother had come to
life. Minnie gave organ lessons, and Robert continued his
sideline of watch and clock repairing, which he had learned
as a young man in Gallipolis, Ohio. He had come to Fillmore
County in 1892, seven years after the arrival of his father,
Grace died in 1981, Ruth, a University of Nebraska graduate,
became a medical technologist. After working 30 years in
Verona, New Jersey, she retired and now lives in Geneva.

Austin's son Frank graduated from Geneva High School
in 1898 and became a pharmacist. In 1908, he married Anna
Masters, a schoolteacher from Exeter. Geneva relatives went
to the wedding in Exeter, making the trip by train. Frank
later moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Frank and Anna
had two daughters. Melva married Chester Burton, a lawyer

Mr. and Mrs. Austin Shackelford (about 1910)

Machine shop of Austin Shackelford (left), and son, Jason (standing
in center of picture).
in Duluth; they have two sons, Bruce and Gary. Dorothy, remaining in Minneapolis, married Stanley H. Raitz, now deceased. They had a son, Darryl, now a helicopter pilot, married and living in Miami, Florida; and a daughter, Judy (Mrs. Jerry Pertl), of Minneapolis. The Perts have two sons, David and Douglas; Mr. and Mrs. Darryl S. Raitz have two sons, Mark and Jeffrey.

Oscar L. Stone and his wife Clara (daughter of William Shackelford) had a son, Delbert, and a daughter, Zella, who went to school and grew up in Fillmore County. The Stones later moved to University Place, Nebraska (now a part of Lincoln), where they lived near Matthew Young. Delbert, a widower, lives in Lincoln. His son Dale lives in Chicago, Illinois, with his wife and son Craig.

Zella, widow of John Schoenholz, lives in Davenport, Nebraska, next door to her daughter Gladys (Mrs. Royal Hardinger). Royal is a pharmacist. Their son Don is married, lives in Lincoln and has a son, Jeffrey, and a daughter, Shari. Don Hardinger is an auditor in the Labor Department of the State of Nebraska.

Matthew Young and his wife Elvira (daughter of William Shackelford) settled on a homestead in Fillmore County in 1872, on coming to Nebraska from Indiana. Matthew served in the Union army during the Civil War, Company "G," 89th Indiana Regiment of volunteer infantry. He was a Methodist and a Mason. They had five children: Mrs. O. P. McNees, Mrs. S. J. Pester, Mrs. J. L. Vodra, Bertha, and A. H. Young. They moved from the farm to Geneva in 1904, and in 1907 to University Place, Nebraska, where Matthew died in 1911.

In the spring of 1888, Mr. and Mrs. Leonidas Stephenson sold their land in Champaign County, Illinois, and moved to Geneva, Nebraska, where they bought a farm southwest of town and a home in Geneva (now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gibbons). They lived here until Mr. Stephenson passed away in 1895 at the age of 75 years. Mrs. Stephenson continued to make her home in Geneva with a widowed daughter, Mrs. Anna Buckles, who came to keep her company. Mrs. Stephenson passed away at the age of 90.

In 1889, a son, Henry Stephenson, and his family came from Illinois to Geneva. He purchased the farm now owned by the Lauber brothers. They lived here many years, later moving to Franklin, Nebraska, where they passed away.

In 1890, another son, John Stephenson, and his family sold out in Illinois and moved to Fillmore County, locating two miles east of Geneva on what is now Highway 41, on the farm now owned by the Nichols brothers. The John Stephensons had three children, Alice, Helen, and Willard (who died at the age of 18). Mrs. John Stephenson passed away in 1942 and Mr. Stephenson in 1947.

In 1892, Mr. and Mrs. John Babb, parents of Mrs. John Stephenson, came from Illinois and purchased the farm which is known as the Stephenson home place, now farmed by William (Bill) Watmore, son of William and Alice Stevenson Watmore.

The Stephenson farm now owned by Helen Stevenson Shickley and Alice Stevenson Watmore was homesteaded by Frederick Heiderstadt in the early 1870s. This SW 1/4 of Sec. 4 was a tree claim and had a 20-acre ash grove along the south line. Mr. Heiderstadt was the great-grandfather of Mrs. Ed Watmore, Mrs. Susie Ward, and Fred Meyer.

Alice Stephenson Watmore started school in District 45, called the Blain school. The William Sprout young folk—Grace, Lee, and Melvin—who drove a team and spring wagon to school, picked up the children of Mrs. Nancy Purviance, Fannie, Lee, and Willis; Alice Stephenson rode with them. The Sprouts lived on the farm now owned by Mrs. Effie Larson and occupied by her son Don and his family. The Purviances occupied the farm now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Janus Bernasek.

At the time there were two rooms in Blain school, with 90 pupils and two teachers. Professor Lewis, father of Mrs. Flora Houchin, was the teacher at the time of the 1888 blizzard. Other early teachers were John Burke (father of Mrs. Alice Hassler, Miss Julia Burke, and Mrs. John Koe­ller), Milton Ames, Ed Lane, Frank Brannick, Mrs. Anna Buckles, and Robert Case.

There is one Chelsea resident whose early life differed from that of most people. He is Charles Weiss, better known as "Charley." At the age of seven, he was one of 24 orphan boys brought to Geneva from New York in 1889 under the auspices of a group known as the Children's Aid Society. He went first to the Fred Stewart home west of Geneva, but began work at an early age for several farmers in the Chelsea community, one of these being Emmor Fox. By dint of work and saving, he was able, with the help of his wife, Lola Owens, to start farming on a rented place and eventually to acquire his own land and property. His residence in the township has been continuous, and his son Bernard and his daughter DeVee Anderson have farm homes in the Geneva area.

Two other boys who came to Chelsea township with Charley were Andrew Holt, who made his home with the Jimmy Robinsons across the road from the Wilson Miller farm, and John Cuneo, who stayed with the Cash Bum­garner, just west of the Fred Fox home, until he was 17. For many years he wrote, from his new home in San Francisco, appreciative letters to Mrs. Flora Bumgarner, who spent her latter years in Geneva. (She died in 1961 at the age of 100 years and 4 months.) "Andy" Holt, now deceased, married a Geneva girl, Marcella Flory, and served as lineman and finally as manager of the Geneva Telephone Company until the family's removal to York. Mrs. Robinson made her home with the Holts for many years.

—Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

Photo from Mrs. Jim Matejka

Mr. and Mrs. John Stephenson and children, taken in 1890. From left to right: Mr. Stephenson, Helen standing in front of Alice, Mrs. Stephenson holding Willard.
Photo from Mrs. Melvin Anderson

Five horse hitch on two bottom plow

Photo from Fred Fox

Rev. E. H. Pontius

Harvesting on Fred Fox farm in 1914. James Delaney on binder.

Photo from Fred Fox

Taken about 1929

Chelsea Church with Rev. Ray Hinkle standing near the church.

Photo from O. E. Nelson

Oscar Nelson and his 1926 Buick

Photo from Charles Weiss

"Topsy" Driving horse and buggy owned by Charles Weiss. taken in 1906.

Photo from Mrs. Melvin Anderson

Wheat shocks

Photo from Mrs. Melvin Anderson

Loads of Prairie Hay
Exeter Township

Exeter Township, in the northeastern corner of Fillmore County, is bounded on the north by York and on the east by Saline counties, on the south by Liberty and on the west by Fairmont townships. The land is fairly level. Indian Creek rises in Sec. 18 and flows northeast into Sec. 4, where it turns eastward to Saline County and later joins the West Blue River. A branch of Johnson Creek rises near the southern edge, in Sec. 33, and flows northeastward, zigzagging through Secs. 23, 24, and 25 toward Saline County and the Blue. In 1966, the township had 33 irrigation wells in operation.

The township is crossed from east to west, just south of its center (through Secs. 24 to 19), by the main line (Chicago-Denver) of the Burlington R.R., closely paralleled by U. S. Highway 6. The Fremont-Superior branch of the Northwestern R.R. slants across it from the northeast to the southeast corner (Secs. 1 to 31). Both railroads pass through the village of Exeter.

Warren Woodard was the first settler in what later became known as Exeter township, settling here in 1870. A special meeting of the County Board was held on May 27, 1871, for the purpose of dividing the county into Commissioner Districts. The county was to be divided into three districts by two east-and-west lines; thus each district would be 8 by 24 miles. The north district was to be designated No. 1, the middle district No. 2, and the south district No. 3. This put Exeter township into District No. 1.

On February 6, 1872, Orlando Porter was appointed road overseer for Precinct 1. On March 16, 1872, Warren Woodard was appointed to the same post, as Mr. Porter failed to qualify.

A meeting of the county board on November 9, 1872, decided that the county should be divided into precincts six miles square. The date for the reorganization was set for Tuesday, January 7, 1873. The meeting for Exeter township...
was to be held in Exeter. Officials at this time were: Judges of
the election, C. J. Chamberlain and Harvey Wright; clerks of
the election, Warren Woodard and Michael Sweeley; justice of the peace, N. S. Babcock; constable, William Miner; road
supervisor, O. P. Chapman.

Exeter township included the following school districts:
Nos. 20, 22, 23, 24, and parts of 94 and 95. School terms
averaged from 2½ months to 4 months; teachers’ salaries
ranged between $25 and $40 per month. Homestead maps in
the county clerk’s office show that most homesteads ranged
from 40 to 160 acres.

Mr. and Mrs. James Alexander left Aberdeen, Scotland,
for Exeter, Nebraska on June 22, 1872, and eventually ar-
vived at Pacific Junction, Iowa. Here they were left on the
open platform without a home or shelter; but they had some
beds and rugs, and, the weather being fine, they unpacked
these and spread them carefully on the platform. With
the starry heavens for a covering they passed the night. They
next made their way to Lincoln, and on to Exeter. The party
consisted of six people: Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, two small
boys, a grandmother, and a girl who looked after the children.
Mr. J. K. Barbar happened to be near by when they got off
the train and offered to take them to their destination.
Mr. Alexander bought the rights of a homestead—the S ½ of
the NW ¼ of Sec. 24—for $50 and sent the necessary filing fee of $14
to Lincoln. It was not until some time afterward that he learned that
the money had been used for some other purpose. This meant that,
in the eyes of the government, the land was not his, and he had to
pay the $14 a second time. Such was the character of some of the
people with whom the pioneers had to deal.

They rented an old soddy on the adjoining land for $1 a month.
The house had but one room, and the roof leaked so badly that they
had to use umbrellas in rainy weather. The floor, being dug out, made
a good receptacle for water, and was at times more like a duck-pond
than anything else. Probably the rent charged was sufficient for such
a house.

During their sojourn in this house they were called upon to
celebrate their first July Fourth. Mr. and Mrs. James Horne, having
heard of the new arrivals from Scotland, and being themselves of the
same hardy stock, naturally felt inclined to make a friendly visit, and
made the Fourth of July the occasion. With their two children, they
took part in and sheltered, being made as comfortable as possible on the
floor, while the members of the household slept on boxes.

They were often brought to church services by Harry Sturde-
vant, a charter member of the Exeter Congregational Church. He
had a good measure of the old-time religion in his soul; in fact, he was
"pressed down and running over," and so great was the overflow
that the journey by wagon was made lively with his singing. So real
was his experience of the love of Christ which sought outward ex-
pression that where he failed in voice volume, he made up with his
feet on the bottom of the wagon.

There is more, much more, to be said about our early pioneers and
homesteaders than can be compressed into any one book. Much time,
thought, and effort have gone into preparing this material. It could
not be done in this condensed form without the Pioneer Stories of the
Rev. G. R. McKeith (collected for the purpose of recognizing pio-
neers’ Memorial Day, June 14, 1914, and published at Exeter in 1915),
and the articles entitled “Pioneering in Nebraska,” written by Miss
Etula Smith (later Mrs. Ben Smrha) about her father, Dr. H. G.
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memories of the past.

Mrs. T. D. Clarke was asked to compile the history of Exeter,
and had started on this, but her health forced her to give it up. Some
of our information is from her previous efforts. Mr. and Mrs. N. E.
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Clarke were most helpful with information, and with clippings and
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Another source of information was the cemeteries, with dates, spell-
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ings, and sometimes causes of death.
On June 18, 1885, the Exeter Band attended the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in Portland, Maine. The Exeter Band was chosen as State Department Band of the G.A.R. in competition with the bands from Fairbury and Steele City. The band had fine silver-plated instruments and owned about $1,500 worth of property, including a band wagon.

Mr. John C. Bonnell, an officer of the Burlington system, served as publicity man throughout the trip. As he gave the boys the title of "Cowboy Band from Nebraska," large and curious crowds were always in evidence.

The members making this trip were: John Lewis, Will Lewis, Charles Dubey, M. L. Mead, J. W. Eller, Charles Bartlett, Sam Logan, Joe Hassler. Charles Parish, Henry Fisher, J. C. Wilson, Charles Pfug, and Job Hathaway, all of Exeter. In order to fill in some of the parts where the regular members were unable to go, Silas B. Camp and Ed Dempster of Geneva and D. C. Moffatt and Charles Finkle of Friend were taken. Frank Osborne, a colored man, was taken along as property man.

The officers were Joe Hassler, president, J. C. Wilson, leader, and Job Hathaway, drum major. Circled, Colonel Nathan S. Babcock.

T. C. Allen came to Exeter in 1891, bringing his family a year later. During the next few years he worked at various jobs. He had always been interested in road improvement and so he began selling road equipment such as graders and steel tiling, which had just been invented and manufactured by Lee Arnett of Lincoln.

During the off season Mr. Allen often drove Dr. McCleary's team when the doctor made calls. On these trips over all kinds of roads, he conceived the idea of using some kind of heavy drag that could be pulled over the roads as they dried so that the ruts could be filled and not be allowed to get deeper and deeper.

Dr. McCleary supplied the money to construct the first drag. They decided to pass the idea along to the whole township and their drag was used for many years. Thus Mr. Allen was responsible for the first "Good Roads" development in the state of Nebraska.

Colonel Nathan S. Babcock came from New York State in 1871. As the railroad ended at Lincoln, he made his way to Exeter, where the only house visible was the dugout, with one of the best rooms he ever saw. He afterward made his way to Exeter, where the only house visible was the one built by Warren Woodard. While crossing the country, he noticed the horses acting rather queer; then a man mysteriously put in an appearance, asking the colonel what he was after. He assured the man that he was after no mischief, when the man said, "But you have your horses on my house!"

When the colonel brought Mrs. Babcock to their claim — the E 1/2 of the SW 1/4 and the W 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 2, T8, R1W — they came in a wagon without springs, and their seats were wooden chairs, less than an ideal outfit for a 50-mile trip over the prairie. Their household goods did not arrive for a week after, so they built a fire on the hillside. They cooked their meat on the end of a stick, boiled the potatoes in a tassletake, and for plates used shingles, which, with the companionship of silverware, provided quite a contrast in dining experience.

Out here, there was nothing to distinguish weekdays from Sundays. They lost track of the Sabbath for a time, and were no doubt glad when they once more knew one day from another. Rattlesnakes were numerous then; no less than 36 were caught in one day. Colonel Babcock took several rattles to show for his efforts.

Talking of the grasshopper plague, they told of having given to a brother back East an account of the numbers and destruction of the invading host. The brother wrote back, "That is a good fish story you have out West." They finally sent him a small piece of soil about an inch square so he might see the grasshoppers hatch out, instructions being given as to what to do. That small piece of earth contained so many young grasshoppers that they never more doubted the western story.

Mrs. L. T. Blouch gave Bess Streeter Aldrich this portrait of the colonel:

"Colonel Babcock, who served in the Civil War, was an aristocratic-looking man who always wore his full uniform on Decoration Day, and rode his beautiful black horse with much dignity. What a thrill we children used to have when we visited their home and saw his sword and all of the rest of an officer's regalia hanging on the wall. He even took the sword down and let us take it in our hands."

Mr. and Mrs. William N. Babcock came to Nebraska in the fall of 1870, remaining through the winter in Ashland. Mr. Babcock took up a claim on the E 1/2 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 20 in February, 1871, and they moved onto it in May. This land adjoined that of Dr. Smith, part of which is now included in the town.

Their first shelter was a tent made of four sheets sewed together, a home not destined for long life. Within their first week here, they were favored with a typical Nebraska storm, which just after midnight brought down their tent so completely that it could not be re-erected. They made their way barefoot toward the Smith home, being assured they were on the right land by locating a furrow which the doctor had struck around his claim. They made what runs were possible with each lightning flash, finally reaching the dwelling. They were welcomed gladly by Mrs. Smith, who told them she could well guess what had happened. The following day revealed the sad condition of their belongings. The men went that same morning to secure lumber for a more permanent home, during the building of which the Babcocks stayed with the Smiths.

During their brief tent life, Mrs. Smith was their first caller. Making her way across the prairie, she had to wade through a ditch. On reaching the other side, she found a large rattlesnake in the grass. She knew that the Babcocks slept on the ground and wondered if she should tell Mrs. Babcock about it. Thinking that if a snake were near her home, she would like to know about it, she decided to tell her. But Mrs. Babcock just laughed and didn't seem frightened.
Mrs. Babcock had to go to the Woodard home, a mile away, whenever she needed a pile of water. Since Mr. Woodard was also the postmaster, she also had to go there for the mail. During one of those trips, she was overtaken by a storm and had to wade through water to get back to her own home.

On another occasion when she was caught in a storm, and sought shelter in the Smith home, she caught Mrs. Smith going through one of her wet-weather experiences. She was sitting on the bed with her umbrella up and with basins placed around the floor, catching the water.

The Babcock sod house was 12' x 14', and in this building she taught the first local school, having as pupils three Woodard children, Charles Smith, and her own boy, Fred. In this small home, too, she provided lodgings one stormy night for a family of eight persons who were passing through.

It was not uncommon for men to get lost on the prairie. Perhaps the women were not so venturesome, and yet they must have been courageous at times. One dark night when Mr. Babcock was away from home, a man knocked at the door, saying he was lost, and could they understand him to Dr. Smith's house. Nothing daunted, Mrs. Babcock went out and put the man on the right trail, telling him to look for the lighted lantern which the doctor kept burning, and he would surely find the place.

Mrs. Babcock helped Dr. Smith when a nurse was needed. A Mr. Sheldon asked Dr. Smith for help and as a result Mr. Sheldon came to get Mrs. Babcock. They set out in the wagon. After traveling for some time they realized that they were lost; then they saw a house which the doctor thought was his home, but to his disappointment it was not. They went on again, and at last they saw a light. On approaching the house, they had found the right one.

One Sunday morning an Indian looked through the Babcocks' window, and before any information could be given, he was in the house. On looking around the room, he saw a scarlet shawl. Then he commenced saying some sort of rigmarole, the only word she could understand being "papoose." So, taking it for granted that he wanted the shawl for his baby, Mrs. Babcock let him have it.

Then he admired Mr. Babcock's cap, and, anxious to get rid of him, he wanted the shawl for his baby, Mrs. Babcock let him have it. The Indian was delighted and left.

The Texas cattle passed over the prairie, often 15,000 in a herd. One day a cow strayed from the herd and was seen by the Dolan boys. They, of course, could not undertake catching her alone, so they sought the help of Woodard, Babcock, and Smith. These set out after the cow — no easy task, for if the cow saw them first, it was sure to go for them. Sure enough, the cow saw them and was about to make a rush at them, when they all fired, bringing it to the ground. The cow was quartered, each man getting a quarter of beef. As the Dolans had no place to store their share of beef away with Babcocks' beef on the sod roof. All went well until about midnight, when wolves scented the meat and would have had it, for they had already brought it to the ground. If they had not been able to frighten the beasts away, the beef would have been lost.

In February, 1874, Mr. Borland had the honor of bringing the first load of lumber into the town of Exeter. It was secured at Crete, and used in the Smith-Dolan store. It cost 92 cents a board foot.

James W. Dolan left Corning, Iowa, February 1, 1871, and reached Lincoln the same day. After learning, at the U. S. Land Office at Lincoln, that the first location where there was plenty of land was Fillmore County, he took the stage to Crete, with John F. Evans, an old army comrade. From Crete, they walked westward, following the grade stakes of the railroad. He reached the Warren Woodard home in the evening and spent the night. The following day, Mr. Borland took him to the government lands in the vicinity. He selected the NE ¼ of Sec. 20. He then walked back to Crete, took the stage back to Lincoln, filed his claim, and pre-empted, in the name of his brother William, the NW ¼ of the same section. This was about February 20, 1871.

He went to Lincoln on April 13 and bought lumber to build a house. It was hauled from Lincoln to the town by a team of horses. The total cost of the lumber, with one window, and one door, was $43. The hauling cost $12. The house measured 12' x 14'. He used siding boards for the roof, as being less expensive than shingles. The hardware cost $3. A young Englishman, William Haines, the principal local builder at the time, assisted in the building. The entire cost of the house was approximately $65. A box bed of boards was built in one corner of the room. An empty nail keg and a soap box were used for seats. These and a small board table made up the furniture.

Black crickets were plentiful during the summer and entered the house in large numbers. They enjoyed singing in Mr. Borland's clothes during the night. It was his custom before dressing in the morning to give the clothes a good shaking to dislodge the crickets. One morning while performing this daily stunt, he disturbed a good-sized rattling snake that lay through the floor during the night by way of an accommodating knot-hole. The snake replied to the shaking of the clothes with his rattle-box, so Mr. Snake had to be disposed of the first thing that morning. Rattlesnakes were not as numerous as crickets, but there were too many for comfort.

James Dolan's farming outfit consisted of one yoke of oxen, costing $135; one secondhand farm wagon, $70; one 12" breaking oxen, $29; one pair of horses, $50; a set of plows, $30; a team of oxen, $26; a team of horses, $45; a team of mules, $40. This outfit was mostly planted to corn, which did fairly well and helped to inspire confidence, there being at that time much discouragement and doubt as to the country's future. Some hay was cut in the
slough, using an Armstrong Mower. The corn was also cut and saved with the hay for feed. All this came in handy the following winter. During the summer, while farm work was slack, he sometimes walked to Crete, where he worked at unloading lumber, for which he was paid $1 per carload. During the summer of 1871, the B. & M. R.R. was extended from Lincoln to Hastings.

In the fall of 1871, the new town having been located, Mr. Downey disposed of his farm apparatus and engaged in merchandising with Dr. Smith as a partner. He later abandoned storekeeping to enter the lumber and grain business, erecting one of the best modern grain elevators on the Burlington line.

On October 4, 1876, he married Ida M. Hager, the second daughter of A. T. Hager, another early pioneer and the first treasurer of Fillmore County. In the spring of 1880, Mr. Dolan disposed of his business interests in Exeter, and moved to Indiana, Nebraska, where he engaged in banking and real estate. There he served on the school board for 24 years and was a state Senator from the district in the sessions of 1883 and 1886. In October, 1904, he moved to Los Angeles, California.

R. H. Downey, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Downey, came to Nebraska with his parents in May, 1871. His father homesteaded the W 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 2, Liberty township, in June, 1871, and he lived with his parents in a sod house.

He married Anna Coates in 1886 and moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he worked for two years in a railway freight house. While they lived there, their daughter Pearl Anna (Steyer) was born (October 18, 1887). Feeling that the city was not the best place to raise a family, he returned to Exeter. Their first son, Chester H., was born on October 14, 1889, while they were briefly living with his parents.

Then, on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 36, Exeter, near his father’s place, they built in 1890 a large two-room sod house, with walls 3’ thick, plastered walls and ceilings, and a wooden floor. This sod house saw the births of another daughter, Ethel Leona (Trauger), on September 10, 1891, and another son, Harold L. Downey, on July 2, 1894. The family lived in the soddy until 1904, when they moved into a newly constructed frame house.

In addition to farming, Mr. Downey engaged in well digging. He was first in partnership with his uncle, Chester Stephens, but later bought out Mr. Stephens’ share of the business. The sod house, which had the distinction of being the last in Fillmore County, was not torn down until 1916.

Chester Downey married Edith Kail in 1923, and Harold Downey married Louise Diekmann in 1918. Harold had one son, Glenn. Mr. Downey, who now teaches at the University of Nebraska, Glenn’s children are Robert Alan, Linda, and Barbara.

R. H. Downey retired and moved into Exeter in 1923. Mrs. Downey passed away in 1934, and Mr. Downey in 1937. Their children, all now deceased, passed all their lives in the Exeter community.

Pearl Anna, who married Elzie Steyer, died on June 16, 1953; Chester died on May 16, 1966; Ethel Leona, who married Charley Trauger, died on October 5, 1964; and the youngest, Harold, died on June 20, 1963.

Sherman R. Downey was born on December 27, 1887, in Mendon, Michigan. He came to Nebraska with his parents around 1875. They made the journey in a covered wagon pulled by a team of horses. Mr. Downey remembered that one of the horses was completely blind, and that his parents had started the trip alone, but were joined by six different families along the way.

Mr. Downey vividly recalled the loss of the family dog on the trip. When they discovered that the dog was missing they turned back for 2 miles to where some men were working on the road. The men declared they knew nothing of the whereabouts of the dog, but Mr. Downey always felt they had taken him, as he had seen his pet just before they encountered the road crew.

During the six-week journey, and until they obtained suitable shelter here, John Downey and his sons slept under the wagon, and the womenfolk slept inside. They settled on the SE corner of Exeter ship and built a sod house which had a sod roof for three years until it was replaced by a shingle roof. Mr. Downey declared that a "soddy" made a quiet, comfortable home. He recalled an interesting experience with their oxen. While still residing in Michigan, his father had taken Sherm to the mill to grind some sacks of wheat. They had stopped the yoke of oxen near the mill pond and had just stepped into the mill when they heard a big "splash!" Investigating, they found the oxen swimming in the cool, refreshing pond with the overturned wagon floating along behind. The sacks of wheat were salvaged and dried, and another trip was made to the mill to obtain the much-needed flour.

Sherm Downey was married to Edith Dreher in 1904. They moved to Glenwood Springs, Colorado, where he was in the hardware business for two years. Returning to Exeter in 1906, Mr. Downey...
Edward Fitzgerald, of Lincoln). In 1928, they moved to Grafton, where he lived for 40 years. In recent years, Mr. and Mrs. Downey divided their residence in two, with Mr. Downey moving to Exeter.

Downey and Bert Dyer opened the Dyer Implement Company on February 2, 1968.

Thomas B. Farmer came to this area from Bloomington, Indiana. In October, 1870, he arrived in Exeter and began trapping, looking over his traps and found near by several hundred beaver and living on grouse, rabbits, and turkeys, the Blue River in the Sutton and Grafton district, trapping mink and beaver, and living on grous, rabbits, and turkeys shot in the neighborhood. Here, with a companion, he had made a small dugout, but was often alone for several weeks at a time. Once, while he was alone, he came back from looking over his traps and found near by several hundred Ohio Indians. He was naturally somewhat alarmed. But these Indians were out hunting and fishing, with no intention of injuring anyone. He saw them go into camp, after which a few would come around and look into his shack, but in no way interfered with his property.

In the spring of 1871, he homesteaded on his claim, the E 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 28, and built a sod house. Later he returned to Bloomington, where he was married on March 18, 1873. When his wife arrived in Exeter, she expected to see a town, and was surprised to see a town without a depot, asking why she was dropped off the train onto the open prairie. "Why am I left here?" she asked. "Where is the depot?" Then she found, to her amazement, that the town of Exeter consisted of one building, the store recently erected by Messrs. Smith & Dolan.

In due course the grisselers relied them of five acres of corn, besides their garden truck, and the mosquito netting from the windows.

They became the parents of Frank Farmer, born in 1874, who became a nationally known singer. Mabel Farmer Manning, born in 1876, a lifelong resident of Exeter, was a great help in the compilation of this history. She passed away on October 15, 1967.

Henry G. Hammond's barber shop in 1895. (Notice the photographer in the mirror.) Henry G. Hammond was the son of Henry Hammond.

Job Hathaway, Willard Payne, and Elmer Wilcox came together, in the spring of 1871, from Greenwood, Illinois, in covered wagons. They settled on Sec. 30, one mile west of town. Mr. Hathaway filed on the NE 1/4, Mr. Wilcox on the SE 1/4, and Mr. Payne on the SW 1/4; the remaining NW quarter was taken later by the Rev. John E. Ingham. In due course Mrs. Hathaway came West and was met by her husband in Lincoln.

Mr. Payne built a frame house in the middle of the section so that a portion of it was on each claim, and they all lived in the same house, each homesteader having his particular corner. In this way they met the requirements of the law by each man sleeping on his own land. This house ultimately became the property of Mr. Hathaway.

On one occasion a man came up to the house on horseback and asked for a night's lodging. Mr. Hathaway was away and Mrs. Hathaway did not like the idea of having the strange man in the house, so she asked Mr. Payne what he thought. After looking the man over, he decided it would be all right, as the man looked respectable. The man slept with Mr. Payne, and some time during the night, Mrs. Hathaway was alarmed to hear that Payne was receiving a good pounding and shouting to the man, "You damned old fool!" The fight seemed so real that Mrs. Hathaway jumped through the bedroom window, and was making her way to the neighbors' when she heard the call, "Come back, lady! Come back, lady!" It appeared that the stranger had been dreaming about a fight, and in his sleep had commenced to let fly at Mr. Payne. Needless to say, the man was full of apologies, but it hindered Mrs. Hathaway from ever again taking a stranger into the house.

Charles Hole came to America in 1870, from West Pennard, near the famous city of Glastonbury, Somersetshire, England. After spending some time in Boston and in Detroit, he made his way to Exeter in April, 1872, and homesteaded 80 acres 3 miles S of town, the W 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 6, Liberty township.

Mr. Hole married and settled in Exeter in 1878. Then, in 1881, he built a home here, and in 1915 they had the distinction of being the only residents to have lived in one house for so long a time.

James Horne was a native of Low Coats, Lanarkshire, Scotland. After working as an engineer on the Caledonian Railway, he came to America in 1853, where he found work with the Hudson River R.R. (later the New York Central). In 1858, he visited his old home and there married Jane (or Jenny) Miller, and the couple soon came to America. They settled for the next 11 years in Poughkeepsie, New York.
where he continued working for the railroad. They then moved to Illinois where he worked for the Illinois Central R.R. for some five years. He had already bought 90 acres of Illinois land; so that when the “Western Fever” broke out, he was a ready candidate for infection. He first had a look at Canada; that did not seem promising, so he visited Kansas. That did not impress him, either; but Nebraska did.

After his father’s death, James F. Horne in 1903 moved his family onto the home farm in Sec. 34. He had married Edith Alice Howarth on November 8, 1900. To this union five children were born: Emily, Ruth, Dorothy, Richard, and Esther.

James and Edith Horne replaced the frame house in 1924 with a new one and lived there until his death on July 14, 1934. His son Richard and mother Edith Horne and daughter Esther lived together here until Richard married Doris Hetherington on October 12, 1940. To this union were born Frances, James Richard, and Richard Ray, are now living on the Horne farm. A Horne family has been living on this farm for 97 years.

Mr. Lewis began working for the Smith Index Factory. He remained with this firm for 53 years, retiring in 1955. He was a life-long member of the Congregational Church, serving as treasurer for 20 years, and as deacon for 43 years.

Mr. and Mrs. Caleb J. Litch homesteaded here in 1870 on the E 1/2 of the SE 1/4, Sec. 28. They built the one-storied part of their frame home in 1870. The two-story addition, in 1872, made their home one of the first two-storied houses with an open stairway, and other such fine details, to be found in the county. They had one son, Lester, who in young manhood homesteaded the W 1/2 of the same quarter (where Gerald and Margaret Becker now live). He died as a young man.

C. J. Litch passed away in the early ‘80’s. Charley Trauger’s father, M. E. Trauger, had a story about Mr. Litch’s passing. Mrs. Litch had asked Mr. Trauger to take a telegram to the depot, wiring for a former minister to come and conduct the burial services. The message said that Mr. Trauger would meet the train and bring the minister to the Litch home. Somewhere along the line, the message got mixed up, for when the minister got off the train, he showed great surprise. He finally said, “Why, Mr. Trauger, I came here to conduct your funeral, and was under the impression I was to be met by Mr. Litch.”

Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Litch lie buried in the center of the Exeter Cemetery, and their graves were at one time surrounded by four large pine trees.

This farm is owned today by Mr. Charley Trauger, and the original family home is still standing.

Lemuel T. Mead, a native of Fort Branch, Gibson County, Indiana, came to Nebraska in March, 1870, bringing his wife and little son; his two daughters followed later. They settled in Lincoln, where he worked as a wagon-wright for David Bowen, the first blacksmith in Lincoln, Mr. Mead being the first man to do the wood work.

In the fall of that year, he came out West and secured a claim, but returned to Lincoln and worked there till spring. They came to the homestead—the SE 1/4 of Sec. 4—in March, 1871. The SE 1/4 of Sec. 34 was their home for several years before they moved across the road into Exeter township (the SW 1/4 of Sec. 34) and built a frame house, living there until his death in November 1, 1961.

Richard’s son James and wife Sandra, sons James Talbot and Richard Ray, are now living on the Horne farm. A Horne family has been living on this farm for 97 years.

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Frank Augustus Lewis was born in Piper City, Illinois, September 1, 1873. He came with his parents to a farm near Exeter as a young lad and attended school in District 22.

On January 30, 1895, he was married to Minnie Frances Trauger. They lived at Hebron for several years, then moved to Exeter where Mr. Lewis began working for the Smith Index Factory. He remained with this firm for 53 years, retiring in 1955. He was a life-long member of the Congregational Church, serving as treasurer for 20 years, and as deacon for 43 years.

Mr. Lewis was interested in civic affairs and served as Worthy Matron of Exeter Chapter 256, O.E.S. She was also a member and Regent of Stephen Bennett Chapter of the D.A.R. Mr. Lewis passed away on February 3, 1959, and Mrs. Lewis on November 12, 1961.

—Mrs. Robert E. Trauger

Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Trauger
The Menkes raised nine children on this farm. They were Rica (Dumpeart), Mary (Jansen), John, Anna (Barkmeier), Minnie (Hammond), Sophia (Mathews), Lena (Mathews), Henry, and William. Two children died in infancy. The father, Louis, died in 1902. Mrs. Menke continued to live on the farm until 1917, when she moved into Exeter.

William H. Miner came from Illinois in 1870 and located on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 12. He lived through the first summer in a tent, which became a well-known landmark and a place of call for many of the incoming travelers. The countryside was one vast open plain without a shade tree, and wild animals appreciated even the shade offered by tall grass or weeds. On one occasion, an antelope was enjoying what shade a large sunflower gave, when Mr. Miner crept up and shot it. In that easy way he secured a supply of good meat.

At one time Mr. Miner had gone to Weeping Water for a load of corn and was within 3 miles of Cordova when he became lost in a snowstorm. He dug his way into a snowbank and crawled in with his blankets, staying there until morning, the horses having to make the best of the situation.

An Irishman named Pat McMann, whom he had known in Illinois, was passing over the plains to Colorado and called upon him. When he left Mr. Miner, he gave him some nails as payment for his hospitality. These nails were kept in a tub and Mr. Miner, needing some one day, put his hand into the tub and grabbed a rattlesnake.

Jacob Pflug at the age of 16 joined the Union Army and was mustered out in May, 1865. He married Hannah Sayles of Lyons, New York, on November 6, 1865, and on November 7 set out for Nebraska. From St. Louis he rode on a load of goods to Nebraska City. In April, 1866, Mrs. Pflug took a train to St. Louis and then came by boat to Nebraska City.

They lived in Nebraska City until 1868 and then moved to Lincoln, where he and his brother had a grocery store at what is now 10th and P Streets. There were no railroads in those days and many times the streets were very muddy. They attended the laying of the cornerstone of the first State Capitol. A picture of their small son, the late Jake C. Pflug of Ohiowa, and one of the small son of Lincoln's Mayor William T. Donovan were placed in the cornerstone.

In 1871, he took a 160-acre claim about 5 miles NW of Exeter (the SE 1/4 of Sec. 12, Fairmont township) and for a number of years through the winter and on Sundays. They attended the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the first State Capitol. A picture of their small son, the late Jake C. Pflug of Ohiowa, and one of the small son of Lincoln's Mayor William T. Donovan were placed in the cornerstone.

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After staying a few days with Alonzo at La Platte, Palmer Rice took the ferry across the Platte River, rode on a construction train to within 7 miles of Lincoln, and then walked to the city. There he inquired about homesteads, and found many people ready to offer secure homesteads.

They made their way to Camden, an old freighting town, where they met Fred Roper, a land agent, who brought them into the country to see for themselves. Like Palmer, Roper decided on selecting the S 1/2 of Sec. 14. They stayed overnight with the Miner brothers, who, at that time lived in a tent, and the next day had dinner with Schuyler ("Elkhorn") Jones. They located the land with Mr. Roper's help. He counted the horse's steps from Miner's corner, and with Schuyler ("Elkhorn") Jones. They located the land with Mr. Roper's help. He counted the horse's steps from Miner's corner, and

Then they returned to La Platte, but came out again to the claims in the fall and put up a sod house, made some hay, and again went back to La Platte for the winter. In January, 1871, Palmer Rice helped to move Mr. Tanner onto his claim, and on the return trip had his first experience of Nebraska's cold weather. Not being prepared for it, he had a hard time to keep going. If he had in the least missed his way, he would have frozen to death.

He made another trip in March, bringing Mrs. Rice and part of his goods. The sod house in the meantime had shrunk so much that the winds had no difficulty in finding their way into the house, especially at the eaves. Because of the cold house, Mrs. Rice was ill for some time afterward.

Palmer made another trip to La Platte in April to help move the other relatives to their homesteads. At Camden, he saw Dr. H. G. Schuylers, and saw load and sell rails, etc., struck in the Blue River. He went at once to the doctor's assistance. With some confidence in the horses, they braced the wagon to bear the strain and then hitched the extra horses and soon had the wagon on dry land. There was so much improvement of the grass in 1874 induced many people to return East, but the Rices decided to remain. Fuel would be scarce that winter. So they set up the stove in the cellar and because of the cold house, Mrs. Rice was ill for some time afterward.

During his first year here, this district was under the jurisdiction of Schuyler County. The farmers paid their taxes there. The Filbert County was organized. Mr. Rice sat on the first election board for four townships, the meeting being held in James Horne's yard. Mr. Horne was away buffalo hunting at the time.

The Tanners' four-year-old son, Alonzo, was buried on the farm. Their dog would keep the Indians at bay, and he did.

Many of the local farmers were afraid to sow their wheat the spring of 1872. They believed the grasshoppers were scarce and feared that a good crop would not be possible. But Mr. Rice, believing that there was no great risk, secured extra land, furnishing the wheat and accepting his note. The average yield was 12 bushels an acre. The first sales brought 55 cents a bushel, but the price rose to $1.30 a bushel. Mr. Rice had made a good speculation.

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The Roper Mortuary in Lincoln. At times it was necessary to place one vivid memory was of holding a lantern all night while the men tried to nurse the sick, and help prepare the dead for burial. She became Aunt Jennie, Aunt Jen, or Auntie Roper to most of the children in town. In 1905, Jennie Roper married my father, Merritt L. Rogers, and became our second mother. The Rogers family came to Nebraska from Illinois about 10 years later than the Ropers. There was a triple wedding ceremony when my father and Aunt Jennie, and my two sisters, Ruth and Bessee, were married. Ruth and Clint went into Chicago to live, and Bessee and Valentine Babcock went to western Nebraska. Mother said, "One flew east and one flew west and one flew over the cuckoo's nest!" I was the one that flew over the cuckoo's nest.

Among the pioneer experiences which I have heard her tell many times were the grasshopper invasions, and the great blizzards. During one blizzard Frank and Sam Abbott were caught in the barn for 24 hours, freezing the cow's milk for the Indians. The grasshoppers were so numerous that they covered the sun.

When sewing for a living, she made wedding dresses for brides, then tucked in a bouquet for the bride, fashioned from bits of fern and pink. Her blossoms from her own window. Many times she was called on to dress the bride and then attend the wedding in an honored guest.

Before coming to Nebraska she and her mother sent to friends in England for enough black silk to make a dress for each. These friends cut several lengths for the skirts and sewed them together, thus evading the duty. Jennie wore her dress just twice before leaving Illinois, and when they wanted to trace their Nebraska land she sold her silk dress for $20. (They needed $14.) She also brought 20 yards of newly woven rag carpet and sold that when they were in need of cash. She said, "Oh, yes, I sold everything I had which was salable," and when I jokingly said, "But you did not sell the baby," her eyes twinkled and she replied, "No, everyone had babies.

My father was employed in the Tag Factory and earned very good wages for those years. He and Mother took a great pride in and joy in remodeling the home, installing a hot-water heating plant, water, electricity, and a telephone, and the front porch which they always enjoyed so much. It was a real satisfaction to both to reserve one-

Merritt L. Rogers and wife (Jennie Roper Rogers)
tenth of their income to use in generous support of their church and Baptist missions, besides many other good causes. This has not been written with any idea that it was a literary gem, but only as an effort to record a few of the events in a very outstanding life of a pioneer woman of great character and courage. 

Parker Ryan was born at Waterloo, New York, and afterward lived in Peoria County, Illinois. He came to Nebraska with his brother Lawrence Ryan, Pat Drummond, Michael Sweeney, and Henry Hammond in 1870. They filed for homesteads in that year, Parker Ryan taking the NE ¼ of Sec. 8, Lawrence Ryan, the SE ¼ and Pat Drummond, the NW ¼ of the same section. Michael Sweeney settled on the NW ¼ of Sec. 18 and Drummond on the SW ¼ of Sec. 19. Mrs. Ryan and the children left Peoria in March, 1871. They stopped a week at Afton, Iowa, where Mr. Ryan met them and brought them on to Lincoln. They completed their journey here in wagons, arriving at the homestead on April 6, 1871. For some time after they arrived, they camped, using the wagon beds for sleeping.

Five days after their arrival, the two Ryans, Drummond, and Sweeney set out for Lincoln to obtain goods and machinery. On the next Sunday morning, bright sunshine promised a pleasant day, but before long clouds began to gather and rain began to fall, followed by a snowstorm which developed into a blizzard. Mrs. Ryan and her sisters were surprised to see children in the wagon. A brother-in-law, Oliver Johns, nailed some carpet over the wagon front to help matters. Then he, with his wife and mother-in-law, went into the other wagon. Luckily, they had a barrel of crackers with them, although there was nothing eatable in the wagon with Mrs. Ryan and the children. The storm increased in fury and continued incessantly until two o'clock Tuesday afternoon, during which time the mother and little girl had nothing to eat or drink, and the baby just what was possible from a mother receiving nourishment. Mr. Johns had come close a time or two to ask after them but was unable in the storm to render any help. When the storm abated, he speedily sought to relieve them. He found everything frozen so hard that an ax was necessary to cut a way into the wagon. Soon after they had been liberated and a fire started, the other men returned. They had gone no farther than Walnut Creek, where they were stopped by the storm. They had arrived so late if their people were still alive. Their cattle were lost in this storm, but were afterward found near Turkey Creek. A homesteader down there had taken them in and fed them.

Shortly after the Ryans went into their new home—a house of one room, 14' x 16'—they had to entertain three gentlemen who were traveling through the country. Their visitors were a judge and two lawyers from Omaha. The accommodations were very scanty. It was decided that the judge and one lawyer would sleep on the table, while the other lawyer would sleep on a rug under the table. Matters would not have been bad, considering these limitations, had not the judge fallen off the table onto the lesser lawyer, who happened to be lying at that time partly beneath the table, in an unconscious search for a softer place.

The homesteaders had to live close to their lands in those days, or someone was sure to jump their claim. When the Ryans were away, they always kept a hangout in the homestead and several men with two wagons. In conversation, the men told them they were on their way to jump a claim, giving the number and location of the land, which just happened to be the Ryans' homestead. Here was an opportunity to show tact and wisdom and to prove that "a t*te hat of one of them blew off, they did not stop to pick it up.

One morning Mrs. Ryan decided to go along. The screen door had been locked, but she heard an unusual sound as she placed the baby in bed. She heard a rustling noise, and when she opened the door, she heard a woman's voice. She opened the door, and it was Mrs. Ryan. She heard a woman's voice. She opened the door, and it was a snake! She looked rather frightened. She next asked if the women ever saw any Indian trails! One woman, answering in fun, said they were. They took a way into the wagon. Soon after they had been liberated and a fire started, the other men returned. They had gone no farther than Walnut Creek, where they were stopped by the storm. They had arrived so late if their people were still alive. Their cattle were lost in this storm, but were afterward found near Turkey Creek. A homesteader down there had taken them in and fed them. They took a way into the wagon. Soon after they had been liberated and a fire started, the other men returned. They had gone no farther than Walnut Creek, where they were stopped by the storm. They had arrived so late if their people were still alive. Their cattle were lost in this storm, but were afterward found near Turkey Creek. A homesteader down there had taken them in and fed them.

One day two men rode up to the house and were asking particulars regarding the country when they noticed the well-marked trails of the Texas cattle. One of them asked the women if they were Indian trails! One woman, answering in fun, said they were. They looked into the wagon and noticed the children. They noticed it if the woman's voice. Indians, and were told, "Yes, lots of them, we saw 20 Indians not long ago." (They did not add that they were seen in the company of a government agent.) This proved to be enough information for the men. They rode horses eastward, and though they had not of one of them blew off, they did not stop to pick it up.

While the men were digging a well at Mr. Drummond's, one

1This seems to be an error in McKeith's account. The blizzard described is clearly the blizzard of Easter Sunday, April 13, 1873. Parker Ryan's granddaughter, Mrs. Edith Hild of Lincoln, tells us that the arrival date (April 6, 1871) is correct, but that her grandfather was missing in this storm, but were afterward found near Turkey Creek. A homesteader down there had taken them in and fed them. They took a way into the wagon. Soon after they had been liberated and a fire started, the other men returned. They had gone no farther than Walnut Creek, where they were stopped by the storm. They had arrived so late if their people were still alive. Their cattle were lost in this storm, but were afterward found near Turkey Creek. A homesteader down there had taken them in and fed them.

While the men were digging a well at Mr. Drummond's, one...
The first house built in Exeter, where Dr. H. G. Smith opened the first store.

1916, and director of the Nebraska Conference of Congregational Churches from 1918.

Mr. Smith married in 1892. He and his wife reared four adopted daughters. Mrs. Smith died in 1930, and Mr. Smith in December, 1951.

**Dr. Horace G. Smith** first arrived in Nebraska on January 1, 1871. He walked from Lincoln to Milford and then on to the future site of Exeter. He spent his first night here in the home of Warren ("Boss") Woodard. Then the only house in the neighborhood, this was on the NW ¼ of Sec. 28, ¼ mile E of present Exeter, now the home of Leo Charles Becker.

While looking for a place to locate, he noticed survey stakes along a prospective line of the coming Burlington & Missouri River R.R., and another line of stakes about 1 ½ or 2 miles to the south. Wanting to be near the railroad, he selected a homestead close to each line of the survey. He knew that either site might be taken before he reached the land office at Lincoln, and that the railroad would not be laid in both places. Upon his arrival in Lincoln, he found that the south location had already been claimed, and so he filed on the north location, the SE ¼ of Sec. 20. Fortunately, the northern survey line was the one chosen by the railroad.

Dr. Smith returned to Allegan, Michigan, to bring his wife and son, Charles, to the homestead. They came to Lincoln by rail, and from there west, they came in a heavily loaded lumber wagon. The first night was spent in a one-room farmhouse. It had two beds, one for the men slept on the floor. The next day, in attempting to go through a draw filled with water, they got stuck. Dr. Smith walked out on the wagon tongue, unhitched the horses, and rode out to get help. He borrowed a wagon, drove into the stream, and with the help of another man, little by little, they unloaded the stranded wagon until it could be pulled out. That night they spent in the vicinity of Dodge. The third day, they arrived at their homestead. A house of boards and battens was built in such a way as to be ideal for a dry climate, but in about three weeks the rain came. Mrs. Smith found an umbrella too small to cover the bed and had to resort to carpets to keep the sleeping place dry. The house was the last one west at that time; the next being 22 miles away.

It was this house with one room, two windows, and a door, that they entertained the gentleman sent out by the railroad to help the Town Company lay out the town.

Since the nearest doctor was 26 miles away, Dr. Smith was called upon to care for the sick and continued to do so until another doctor located here.

Provisions were scarce in the immediate neighborhood. Dr. Smith had brought a good supply for their own use, but was not willing to sell out of his little stock to the local young people at the store, for general merchandise.

The Smith house was once visited by two Indians from a railroad car that had been switched off near the homestead. As was their custom, they stealthily drew near the house, looked through the windows, and then walked in. Mrs. Smith was scared at first. One of the Indians was carrying a bow about four feet across, and a quiver of arrows. After a serving of fried cakes and other cattables, they went away satisfied.

During a thunderstorm, a flash of lightning made its way down the chimney and melted the ends off the wires stretched across the store, strung with different kinds of tinware. The commotion can well be imagined. Fortunately the lightning missed the kerosene can and passed through the corner of the floor without causing a fire.

The first child born in Exeter was Anna E. Smith, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Smith. Their son Charles later made the family name widely known by inventing the adjustable tag. The first tag factory, founded by Charles C. Smith and located in Exeter, was known as the "Adjustable Index Factory."

When the post office was relocated in Exeter, Dr. Smith was appointed the first postmaster at a salary of $10 a year.

**Nesbit Taylor** and his wife Mary Singer Taylor and family came to Exeter from their home near Covington, Kentucky, in 1871. The family consisted of two boys and four girls: John Edwin, Richard Lewis, Lucy Mary, Eliza Jane, Laura Ann, and Emma Alice Taylor. Nesbit Taylor bought land between the T. B. Farmer and the Warren Woodard homesteads—the W ½ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 28.

Mr. Taylor built a house and barn, planted many trees and shrubs, and in other ways improved the land. Many of the old settlers have told of the good times the local young people had at the Taylor home in the early days. The Nesbit Taylor family brought Southern hospitality with them and made every visitor welcome.

Mr. Taylor later bought an acreage adjoining the west edge of Exeter and moved to town. Part of this acreage became the Nesbit Taylor Addition to Exeter. Edward (or Ed) Taylor, Nesbit's oldest son, was street commissioner and sexton of the Exeter Cemetery for many years.

Two daughters married sons of early settlers, Charles Paine and William Dillon; another married Frank T. Whitmore, a young watchmaker from Boston, Massachusetts. He had a jewelry store in Exeter from 1893 until 1896. Edward Taylor brought his wife with him from Kentucky; Richard L. married Ella Barnes, daughter of another early settler.

The Nesbit Taylor family experienced all the hardships and tribulations common to the early settlers.

Nesbit Taylor, his wife Mary Singer Taylor, John Edwin Taylor and his wife Nancy Taylor, Lucy Taylor Whitmore, and Ella Barnes Taylor are buried in the Exeter Cemetery.
J. W. Taylor, born in Winchester, Va., in 1834, served in the Union Army and was held prisoner in Andersonville Prison. He lived in Indiana after the war until he came to Harvard, Nebraska, in 1888. He usually do, make pretty good citizens. Mr. Taylor said, "People, like not because of accident of birth; and such people ought to, and fulfill lakes made it one of the most delightful counties in the world. So The voyage lasted eight weeks, during which time most of the till they crossed the Mississippi at Quincy, Illinois, their objective made anything less in the telling. On Saturday the news came over again after dark in a blizzard on Nebraska's plains, he could testify that Dolan's hands got cold and numb, he took the lines and drove he A person appointed to an office, even if he had no special qualifications, was of the right stuff, could soon qualify. These people had qualified, and he felt cheap to hear them using legal terms of which he knew nothing. Here was one illustrating: "Then the storm to break up the land it was difficult to prevent 'movers' from driving across the plowed ground. Two miles east of Exeter, a very youthful-looking boy from Maine was plowing with a team consisting of one ox and a car. He was heavily loaded and arranged in an odd fashion, and an old pair of overalls, held by one suspender with nails as buttons, when on the west side of his plowing, he saw a 'mover' drive onto the east side. He stopped his team and hailed the man. 'Where do you see my sign telling you to keep the section line?' Yes! but this don't do any harm, and I'm in a hurry.' To which he replied, 'I don't care if you are. I can't have people driving over my plowed land, and I want you to go right back and keep the section line.' I won't go to the north, if you won't," he said; 'I'll have you arrested when you get to Exeter!' 'Where is Exeter?' the man asked in surprise, 'Don't you see that building off to the west?' That's Exeter, is it? Then who will arrest me?' 'I will, I am the constable!' Then, with a look of contempt, the man replied, 'A looking constable you are! Get up, ponies!' And he drove on and was not arrested, but no one enjoyed the joke more than Fred Sturdevant, the boy constable."

Mr. Taylor missed the April storm of 1873, but had some experiences with Nebraska blizzards. One he did not forget was: A party was being held at Walter Doyel's, 5 or 6 miles NE of Exeter, the last of the winter. Dolan and Mr. Taylor were invited. It had been a mild January day, and they hired a team and lumber wagon and started a little after dark for the house. Mr. Taylor did not know the way, but Dolan claimed he did. A gentle snow from the south began to fall soon after they started, and soon the wind was from the north, and they were in a blizzard. They were soon chilled to the marrow, and could hardly see the horses, and got completely lost somewhere along Indian Creek. He said some uncompensatory things to Dolan for taking him out on the prairie and losing him, but, finding that Dolan's hands got cold and numb, he took the lines and drove he knew not where; but after what seemed a long time, he spied a light and drove straight for it—and it happened to be Doyel's house. He often offered to drive home, if they had not been lost either in a forest or on a prairie. A person loses all sense of direction, hardly knows "straight up," and can scarcely believe his own eyes when he comes to familiar scenes. Having been lost in woods, in Canada, with bears, wolves, and panthers at a great distance, and again after dark in a blizzard on Nebraska's plains, he could testify that it is not an agreeable sensation. But "Sweet is pleasant." When they got into the house, the dance was in full swing, and the discomforts of the trip were soon forgotten, especially as this was where he first met the girl who became the lifelong partner of his joys and sorrows. He had once an Indian scare. In the fall of 1873, the first telegraph operator in Exeter had been a man who never made anything less in the telling. On Saturday the news came over the wire, that the Indians were on the "war path" and had committed some depredations and killed a few honester killers about 75 or 80 miles to the west of Exeter, and the agent said they hed traveled this way. On Sunday evening, the agent and most of the men folk were scattered in different directions, visiting their best girls. Will Dolan and Taylor were the only able-bodied men in town. Will Dolan being the talk drifted mostly to Indians and the probability of their coming to
Exeter. The Indian stories went around the table, when all at once a big Indian stuck his face right against the window. Then he, with his squaw, came in and said, "How!" and, shaking hands all around, there they hammer out and cut into slugs. Dolan, armed with the revolver and a corn-knife, did valiant reconnoiter. Every dog in the vicinity was barking. Taylor had a revolver, and Dolan had an old army musket, but there was nothing in the store larger than No. 8 shot. There was some bar lead, and this they armed with the revolver and corn-knife, did valiant picket duty most of the night. In the morning, the old Indian and his squaw called and were again supplied with food, and so ended the Indian scare.

Of this incident, Mr. Taylor said: "I had been used to Indians in Canada, where they had the reputation of being truthful, honest, and civil; no one in Canada thought of having any fear of Indians. Wild, only 7 or 8 years old, I was often the only man (?) about the place, and we slept soundly with dozens of Indians camped across a narrow stream from our shanty. When I came to the United States, I was surprised to hear them spoken of as being dishonest, treacherous, and deceitful. It was simply a reflection of treatment. It is easy and popular to find fault with the English government (and it has faults in plenty); but the way England has always treated the Red Man and the way he was treated by any other nation."

Mr. Trauger home, built in 1888, with Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Trauger and son, Charles C. (taken in 1884). At this date (1888), the fourth generation of Traugers are still residing in this home. The house has been remodeled many times and there remain only five feet of wall that have not been changed.

M. E. Trauger settled in Exeter township in 1879, after first visiting here in 1877.

The ancestors of the Traugers in America were located in the province of Hessen Darmstadt, Germany. In 1747, three orphan children—Christian, Henry, and Eliza—emigrated for the New World, arriving in Philadelphia on October 9. According to the custom of the time, they sold themselves to a merchant for their passage and worked at Shipport, Pennsylvania, to repay him. In 1767, Christian and Henry moved to Nockamixon Township, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, purchasing adjoining farms, which are still in the Trauger name.

Lewis Trauger, grandson of Henry, migrated to Sussex County, New Jersey, in September, 1818. His son Elias, who was killed while serving in the Civil War, was the father of M. Edmund Trauger. M. E. Trauger was born April 7, 1845. He spent his boyhood on the farm, 1/2 miles SE of Flatbrookville, New Jersey, but found farming difficult in the mountainous terrain. His diaries, which he started in 1866, show that he was supporting himself by cutting and selling to get by in the winter. He made barbed wire and cut it into slugs to sell to farmers. He also taught school.

On November 19, 1873, he married Mary Caroline Hill. On August 10, 1875, they journeyed to Illinois and Iowa, visiting relatives and seeing for themselves if the stories of the "glorious West" were true. In the spring of 1876, they left the land of their birth and moved to Morrison, Illinois, where a daughter, Minnie Frances, was born on March 9, 1877.

While living in Morrison, Mr. Trauger met Dr. O. P. Baker, whose glowing reports of the land around Exeter induced him to come out and see for himself. Arriving in Exeter on Friday, December 9, 1877, he stayed for a time at the home of the F. M. Bucks. He looked at land as far west as Grafton before returning to Illinois, but was most impressed by the Exeter area. Back in Illinois, he worked as a farm laborer and saved his money, to be able to establish a home in Nebraska.

Mr. Trauger and Lyman Beech, who settled in Fairmont township, rented a railroad car and loaded their belonging at Sterling, Illinois. They got to Exeter at 11 A.M., February 28, 1878. In those days, when you rented a boxcar you were allowed to ride free in the caboose. Before they left Sterling, a man—name unknown—asked Mr. Trauger if he could ride in the car and look after the team of horses and the cow. He wanted to go West, but had no money. En route to Nebraska, they encountered a snowstorm and extremely cold weather. The fellow stated that he would have frozen to death had not the cow co-operated by lying down and allowing him to lie next to her.

In the Traugers' "Old Timers" Museum you will find today most of the furniture and machinery brought here in 1879. This museum was started by M. E. Trauger's grandson, Robert Edmund, in 1950 as a family hobby, to perpetuate the pioneer memories of this area. Mr. and Mrs. Trauger bought 80 acres of railroad land, the S 1/2 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 27. They lived for one year on the F. M. Buck farm 1/2 miles S of Exeter and farmed this as well as their own 80 acres.

In 1880, they moved to Dr. O. P. Baker's farm one mile E of Exeter. That spring, they planted trees on the south side of their 80, planning to build there soon. But this plan was delayed by the fact that in 1883 he had the opportunity to purchase the N 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 33 from Caleb Litch. In 1885, he purchased the 80 adjoining the original 80 he had bought in 1879. He then decided to abandon his proposed building site and instead built on the west side of the north 80, so as to be closer to the town of Exeter. Dr. Baker had made him a very good price on the 80 he had purchased from Mr. Litch. He sold this on January 7, 1893, and was forever thankful that he had done so, because of the drouth of the middle 1890's.

A son, Charles C. Trauger, was born on September 22, 1886, while they still resided on the O. P. Baker farm.

In 1888, his dream of a house of his own came true. The house was almost lost before they moved. While they were plastering the house, they had a stove in the upstairs to keep the plaster from freezing. Mr. Trauger had walked halfway home, when he felt that he should go back and check the stove again. When he arrived, he found that a live coal had fallen from the stove and had started a small fire on the floor of the hallway. He easily put it out, but was aways thankful that something had told him to return.

Mrs. M. E. Trauger passed away in 1923, and her husband on March 30, 1925.

Charles Trauger married Ethel L. Downey on August 31, 1919. They had two sons, Donald, of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Robert, of Exeter. Charles Trauger still resides on the farm with his son Robert, Robert's wife Shirley, and their children, Charles and Lynelle and Melissa.

The wagon tracks of a main trail leading from Exeter southeast to Turkey Creek are still visible on a strip of the Traugers' native land. Grandpa Trauger wrote in his diary that he had to string a barbed-wire fence across the farm to keep people from driving across his land.

M. E. Trauger was a charter member of the Exeter Methodist Church. Since he joined in 1879, there has always been a Trauger on the official board. He canvassed for shares in the Exeter Rolling Mills & Elevator Association, and also for the canning factory. He served on the school board of District 22 for a number of years from 1884 onward. He was also township treasurer for many years, and was a member of the board of supervisors during the construction of the present courthouse in Geneva in 1893.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Trauger
Warren Woodard homesteaded the NE ¼ of Sec. 28 in 1870. This first homestead, although "out" in the township, actually set the stage for the founding of Exeter. Mr. Woodard was a lawyer. Before coming to Nebraska, he had lived in Michigan. As a member of Co. F, 10th Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, he had participated in 12 battles during the Civil War. After being mustered out in 1865, he spent two years in the nursery business in Illinois.

Mr. Woodard's house was the first post office, established in 1871, and named for him. He was postmaster until the post office was moved to Exeter proper at a later date. He was the first justice of the peace in Fillmore County, appointed in 1872. He was also one of the clerks when Fillmore County was organized in the spring of 1871. Many of the old deeds carry the acknowledgment of Warren Woodard.

The Woodards had four children: Eugene, May, Leon, and Arthur. In 1876, Mr. Woodard erected a 15-room hotel in Exeter, a two-story building which would house 30 people.

The Fillmore County Democrat reported, on May 13, 1893: "Boss" Woodard was a welcome caller at our headquarters Monday. He was in a reminiscent mood, and gave us a little interesting ancient history. He told us that at the time he had the hotel here, he ran an express to Friend. The forms of the Exeter newspaper were set up here, and he carried them in his express wagon to Friend, where they were printed, and then brought them back the same way. In the words of A. [Artemus] Ward, or somebody else, 'Things is different now.'

Mr. and Mrs. Willard C. Woodworth came to Nebraska in 1872 and homesteaded on the SW ¼ of Sec. 6, 3 miles N and ½ mile W of Exeter. When settling on their land, they were anxious to have everything in as good order as possible, so they spent their ready money on improvements. But that year's farming did not meet their expectations, and soon they needed for food the money which they had spent on the house, barn, and well. They had to go to Lincoln for credit, where fortunately the Farmers' Grocery Stores readily allowed them $5 worth of provisions until a wheat crop was forthcoming to pay for them.

Eleven antelopes ran on their claim for about six months after they located, and hunters would ride over the land in every direction. About that time, Mrs. Woodworth was very ill, and, failing to get hired help, had to do the work as best she could. One day a huntsman said, "Lady, you look sick; can I get you some water?" The man was not only kind enough to get a pail of water, but went out and shot a prairie chicken which he gave her, expressing the hope that she would soon get better. Then, after showing this unexpected kindness, the stranger passed out of her life.

Some neighbors named Crooker living on Indian Creek had a siege of measles. Six in the household were stricken down at one time; so someone thought of asking Mrs. Woodworth, as there were two women in her house, she and her mother, and one might be spared. Mrs. Woodworth went willingly, hardly expecting to find conditions as bad as they were; and for three nights and days she never rested in her efforts to help them through, but one girl died in spite of all the care.

Some time later, Mrs. Woodworth had typhoid fever. Miss Crooker, a schoolteacher, called one day, and, seeing her condition, went home and sent her father and mother to look after her. They remained and cared for her until she recovered.

The Horton schoolhouse was the place of worship for their neighborhood, and they were members of the Church of God who worshipped there. In those early days, men would attend the services barefooted and in overalls, while the women wore large sunbonnets. In later days, "Father" Green of the U.B. Church, a native of Lancashire, England, and a York County homesteader, came often to preach. In fact, for a long time, he was the only preacher there. True to his native-country characteristics and training, he was a very "deep" preacher, and of great fervor in his devotions. He was always careful to kneel when he prayed; he was not ashamed to bow his head there and then. He always had a large round-handkerchief on the floor—evidently to save his best trousers, even though the newness had long since departed. "There were giants in those days," men mighty in faith and prayer. He died about 1895, over 80 years old, and is buried in the Exeter cemetery.

**Exeter**

Exeter was located on the E ½ of Sec. 20. Most of the ground occupied by the village was a part of the original homestead taken by Dr. Horace G. Smith. He came here in January, 1871, to look at the land, and homesteaded on the SE ¼ of Sec. 20. In February, 1871, the NE ¼ of Sec. 20 was the homestead of James W. Dolan; the NW ¼ was the homestead of William Dolan; and the SW ¼ of Sec. 20 was homesteaded by John N. Dayton and William N. Babcock, each taking 80 acres. The first homestead in the neighborhood was that of Warren Woodard, on the NE ¼ of Sec. 28. This was the stopping place for many settlers as they first came to this area. It was also the first post office, called Woodard Post Office; the next nearest post office was at Lincoln.

It was by chance that Dr. and Mrs. Smith located on a spot where the Burlington & Missouri River R.R. also located. (This lucky chance is described in the account of Dr. Smith.) The Burlington extended its line from Lincoln to Hastings in the fall of 1871. The depot was built in 1872.

Few towns have named in as unique a way as Exeter. The railroad propose to build a line from Crete westward, with towns approximately eight miles apart and named in alphabetical order. It is believed that the name was suggested by some settlers from around Exeter, England, who had located in this area. Thus we have the towns of Rochester, Exeter, Fairmont, Grafton, Harvard, Inland, Junita, Keneaw, and Lowell.

Dr. Smith had built a small house, and it was here that the gentleman sent out by the railroad town company was to meet with the people to decide on a town site. A. B. Smith located the land. The land homesteaded by Dr. Smith and J. W. Dolan was considered a little too flat for a town, but this site was chosen anyway. Dr. Smith and Mr. Dolan each...
The Present Hotel

gave a share of their land for the town site. The post office was moved from the Woodard home to the site of the town now called Exeter and Dr. Smith was appointed postmaster. Dr. Smith had added a small lean-to onto his one-room house; this was to become the first store as well as the post office.

The first hotel was built in 1872, by L. Keneval. The first grain warehouse also opened for business in that year. The first marriage was that of J. W. Eller and Frances Hager, in November, 1872. The first schoolhouse was erected in 1873. Exeter was incorporated as a village on April 1, 1879.

During the time between the first homesteaders in 1871 and the incorporation in 1879, many changes had taken place. Many people had decided to settle here and had built houses, and some had put up places of business. The town was beginning to take shape. The Smith store became Smith & Dolan; in 1873, it became Smith & Taylor. Mr. Dolan opened a lumber yard and a grain elevator on the Burlington line.

When people gather in a community, they tend to form some kinds of clubs. One of the first, the “Lyceum,” was a literary club, known as the Exeter Lyceum; in 1876, they had a Lyceum paper, the Exeter Evening Post, made up of poetry, wit, and wisdom, as well as discussions on political and theological topics. By this time, the second hotel had been built, by Warren Woodard. In 1878, many more businesses were opened, including two large grain elevators. The trees planted by the first settlers had grown enough to give some shade and to improve the appearance of the town. F. M. Ziska had opened a general-merchandise store in the late 1870's.
Main Street today has changed considerably in 95 years or so. Then the street was just plain dirt and when it rained it was nothing but mud. And it was a few years before the wooden sidewalks were laid. Later it was graveled and in 1937 paved. At one time U.S. Highway 6 came right down Main Street but is now routed through the south side of town.

In the main intersection a windmill provided drinking water and supplied a horse trough. Many people got their water there until they could put down their own wells. Many also had cisterns to catch rain water, which was good for washing and bathing, but not so good as well water for drinking.

This windmill also had a bell on top, which rang every night at 9 o'clock, the curfew hour for children. They knew that they had better either get home before it sounded or really scramper the minute it did start to sound. This bell also sounded fire alarms and substituted for the ringing of church bells.

For many years, the only means of fire-fighting was the bucket brigade. Later, there was a hose, rolled up on a large wheel, which could be pulled to the fire. In 1905, two big air-pressure water tanks were installed near the present firehouse. The firemen have always been a voluntary group. The city got a fire truck in 1938, and a new one was purchased in 1961. But the firemen are still volunteers, usually numbering around 25. They are an extremely necessary and devoted group of men.

Exeter has been plagued by many fires. A fire started on the corner of the present Barkmeier store and burned south to the brick bank building on a Halloween night sometime around the turn of the century. Another fire in the early 1900's started on the south end of the same block and burned all the buildings to the north, stopping again at the brick bank building. Another fire in the same period burned all the buildings north of the "Auditorium" and gutted that building also. Nearly one-half of the block on the east side of the main street closest to the Burlington tracks also burned in the early 1900's. This fire started in a bakery on the northeast corner of that block. The "Rink" was a victim of fire, and the brick school also burned in 1915. Most of these fires occurred before any fire equipment was available. So they relied on the bucket brigade for many years. By the time the brick school burned in 1915, the fire department had a water-pressure hose which did save the new school building that was nearly completed behind the old one.

About this same time. It was necessary to hold their meetings together until they could build their respective churches. The Catholics organized in 1873. The Christian Church and the Christian Science Church were organized shortly thereafter.

Mr. and Mrs. Emory Yates in front of their tailoring shop in 1902. The Yateses also had the first "picture show" in 1908. (This building, which stood where Erdkamp Motors driveway is now located, was Exeter's first saloon, called "The Blind Pig.")
In 1928, the water tower was erected, with a tank within a tank. The inner tank was to furnish water to the sprinkler system in the tag factory in case of fire. Mr. C. C. Smith, who contributed to the erecting of the tower, influenced its size and construction with a view to insuring the safety of his factory.

Exeter installed in 1927 a municipal sanitary sewer system, which includes a storm sewer system as well as a sewage-treatment plant.

Electricity came early to Exeter. Charles Smith installed a coal-fired steam engine back of the tag factory for a power plant. There was an underground tunnel from the factory to the power plant. The people of Exeter benefited by being able to have electric lights and machines with electric motors. Housewives could have washing machines and electric irons. Mr. Smith sold this power to his fellow citizens until 1912 or 1913, when Consumers bought the power plant from him with the understanding that they would convert all the electric motors for alternating current from the direct current provided by the Smith plant. When Mr. Smith supplied the power, the electricity went off at midnight. As Exeter had electricity so early, it is a bit startling now to look at old pictures of Main Street and see the light-wires and the light hanging over the middle of the dirt street with no cars parked along it. With the passage of time, newer and better lighting systems were installed on the streets. The city council decided in 1955 to put the same kind of light along the highway as those on Main Street. They were to put 21 lights, three to a block, 150 feet apart, on the south side from the Dinneen garage to the Highway Cafe.

The first telephone in Exeter was one put in between John Cran- ven's place of business and his home. Mr. Craven's brother, who worked with the Bell Telephone system at the time, helped to install it. Then a few people had their own telephone systems. There were 15 to 20 telephones with numerous wires running from one house to another. Eventually this worked into a larger group that wanted telephones. So there came to be a control and a central operator in the Exeter Enterprise office. At one time both the Independent Telephone and the Bell Telephone companies operated in Exeter.

In the early 1900's, believing that Exeter needed a playhouse or theater, W. H. Wallace got a company of businessmen together to build a theater. Among those contributing, besides Mr. Wallace, were lumberman John Craven, J. N. Cox, W. H. Taylor and J. M. Ziaka (all in the dry-goods and grocery business), stock buyer Joe Coates, and John Ohm. The brick building, called "The Auditorium," was built about 1905 or 1906, with W. P. Wallace, son of W. H., as manager.

In 1908, Mr. and Mrs. Emory Yates installed movie equipment and Exeter enjoyed its first "picture show." These were silent pictures, and feeling and emotion were conveyed by overacting on the part of the actors and by the piano music that accompanied the show. Miss Ann Yates played the music for the movies and used cue cards that came with every film. Each show sent song slides and Miss Alice Howard sang, accompanied by Ann Yates (now Mrs. Ann Saunders). Later Bernard Nevin played drums to piano accompaniment. Mr. Nevin later taught music for many years at Midland College in Fremont.

Early in 1909, the Pflug Implement Store north of the theater burned, setting fire to and gutting the Auditorium, and destroying the blacksmith shop to the south. The owners immediately had the building rebuilt, with some changes. Instead of a flat roof and level floor with posts through the center to support the roof, it was finished
Chicago & Northwestern Depot, taken at a July 4th celebration.

At one time, Exeter had two depots, adjoined by small parks. The Chicago & Northwestern depot was sold and torn down for lumber in 1951. The Burlington depot is still very much in use and has been remodeled just recently. T. J. Parker became the depot agent in 1965.

With the coming of so many people to Exeter in the 1870's, it was soon evident that a cemetery would be necessary. W. H. Taylor and Charles C. Smith were both actively interested in the needs of the town. Mr. Smith owned land and sold lots for the cemetery, a non-profit organization was started, to help meet the cost of upkeep. The town was given the cemetery in 1947, since when it has been tax-supported. Donations have been used for improvements, such as access of water and maintenance of roads and buildings. Some of the trees that Pat Murphy donated to the cemetery when it first started are still growing there.

A newspaper, the Exeter Enterprise, was started on September 29, 1877, by William A. Connell, who went broke after three months and gave up. His last issue was dated December 1, 1877. He was succeeded by William J. Waite, who revived the paper on January 12, 1878, and continued as editor for many years. The following is a business directory drawn from the revived Enterprise of 1878:

- Failing Brothers, general merchandise
- Hannes & Stilley, H. J. Edney: hardware and grain
- Dayton Brothers, furniture
- Dr. G. W. Whipple, Dr. R. Beecher: physicians
- Job Hathaway, livery
- Warren Woodard, Centennial Hotel
- J. P. Kettlewell, meat artist
- Elias Peterman, harness shop
- T. B. Farmer, contractor
- S. F. Root, boot and shoe maker
- Charles Hole, plasterer and chimney builder
- John Barby, collector
- T. W. Lowrey & Co., grain, flour, coal, and implements
- M. Wiseman, blacksmith

On April 3, 1879, the Exeter Enterprise, with proper booster spirit, had these things to say: "The demand for houses is on the increase; 25 could find renters if they were to be had." "Build a house and be in fashion." "Fillmore County is one of the best Eastern-advertised counties in Nebraska. It must be so; else why would so large and steady a stream of immigration be constantly pouring in?"

One place of much activity was "The Rink," built originally for roller skating. It was a large building with a gallery or balcony around its inside. This came to be used for social functions such as dances and the big Fourth of July celebrations that the pioneers appreciated so much. At one end of the building was a stage, which was the scene of many plays, traveling shows, vaudeville acts, etc.

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By 1882, the town had a population of more than 400. By that time the town had two banks, the Bank of Exeter and the Wallace & Co. bank. More clubs had formed, including the Odd Fellows, the Masons, and the Grand Army of the Republic. The old schoolhouse had been outgrown and

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Photo from William Ruhl
Rebuilt Auditorium after the 1909 fire.

Photo from Esther Jones
Chicago & Northwestern Depot, taken at a July 4th celebration.

C. B. & Q. Depot, Exeter. Among this group are Mr. Steyer, Clifford Downing, Billy Anderson, Lou Allen, William Parrish, and John Downing.

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F. A. Robinson, editor of the Fillmore County News, in 1913 installed movie equipment in a building north of the Klotz Pharmacy and named it "The Wonderland," but this venture was destined to failure, as Exeter was unable to support two amusement places.

In 1956, the Chamber of Commerce decided to see about a band shell for the up-and-coming band, so that the people could enjoy band concerts in the summer. Some donations were made and George Harrison was contacted. With the help of the vocational agriculture boys and some of the community-minded men, the band shell was built from plans designed by George Harrison and Tim Ruhl. Intended as a multi-purpose band shell, 32' wide, 20' long, and 12' high, it was built in six weeks on north lots by the water tower, and served for many enjoyable band concerts. It was later moved to the vacant lot in the middle of the west side of the main business district on Main Street. It has since been torn down to make room for the new bank building.

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a larger school was in the making. The new building was to cost about $7,000.

A foundry was started in 1910. Sam Spitz had been harvesting for people but decided to start making castings and molds so that he could make iron parts for machinery, such as wheels, cog wheels, and so on. The foundry was started in the town proper, but because many of the townspeople complained about the soot, about 1920 it was moved to Hastings (where it is still operated by Sam's son, Louis Spitz).

J. N. Cox started a general-merchandise store in 1884. Some time after the turn of the century, Exeter had a Y.M.C.A.; dates are not available, but it was of short duration. About the same time a Sons of Veterans Club was formed; dates for the organizing and disbanding of this are also not available. Exeter had a race track in the south part of town, used for horse racing. There was also a ball park near by.

The following list of businesses appeared in an 1893 issue of the Fillmore County Democrat:

Costello & Sweasy .............................................. Tonsorial Artists
John Mohr .......................................................... Exeter Jewelry
J. N. Cox ......................................................... general merchandise
Craven Bros ........................................................ lumber, coal & lime
Dr. E. L. Ramsdell ................................................ drug store
First National Bank ................................................ H. G. Smith
E. H. Buck & John Ohm ....................................... blacksmiths
Alta V. Robinson ............................................... milliner
James Kelly ........................................................ meat market
I. T. Powell ....................................................... liveryman
J. C. Smith ....................................................... grocery store
A. S. Cook ........................................................ blacksmith
John McDonald ..................................................... photographer
W. H. Taylor ...................................................... general merchandise
H. S. Bedford ...................................................... Exeter Roller Mills
J. C. Pfing ............................................................. grocery store
C. H. Wullbrandt & Son ........................................ general merchandise
Exeter National Bank .......................................... W. T. Taylor, president
J. A. Nye ............................................................ ice cream parlor
H. S. Greenawalt ................................................ Merchants Hotel
Henry Randall ..................................................... shoe store
C. A. Songster ..................................................... implements
Mrs. R. S. Crooker ............................................... milliner
J. W. Taylor ....................................................... grocery store
F. M. Ziska ........................................................ general merchandise
W. J. Nevins ...................................................... druggist
W. N. Babcock ..................................................... insurance

The same 1893 issue of the Democrat described the school: "The schoolhouse is a fine, large, brick, two-story building in the eastern part of town. Five teachers are employed at this time. The subjects taught are: Algebra, Rhetoric, General History, Civil Government, Bookkeeping, English Literature, Latin, Physics, Geometry, Botany, and Elocution. The total number of pupils in 1893—318." Dr. Claire Owens was the first music teacher in this school; she started teaching here in 1898, just after graduating from the School for the Blind at Nebraska City. (A full account of Dr. Owens appears elsewhere.)

By 1907, many changes had taken place. The population had increased and more business places had opened or changed hands. Joseph Coates, a dealer in livestock, had all his envelopes printed with a glowing description of Exeter. The following passage is from the back of one of these envelopes:

Exeter, Nebraska (The good roads town). Located 44 miles west of Lincoln, on the main line of the Burlington railroad at its junction with the Chicago & Northwestern. Has population of 1200. "The best little town in Nebraska." Exeter is the recognized trade center of a large territory in one of the most fertile regions in Nebraska and nearly all lines of business are represented. These advantages combine to make Exeter one of the most desirable business points, as well as a pleasant residence town, in the State, and progressive men will find opportunities here, both in capital and labor. Farm lands sell from $60 to $100 per acre, and a splendid system of modern roads reaches nearly all parts of our trade territory. Two telephone systems with their country lines reach almost every farm for many miles and

Exeter Y.M.C.A. Left to right: Mr. Ingram, Mr. Whitmore, Mr. Holbrook.

Exeter National Bank

W. T. Taylor, president

W. H. Wallace, cashier

Henry Randell

J. W. Taylor

E. H. Buck & John Ohm
In the 1890's and early 1900's, three famous personages visited Exeter, two Presidents and one unsuccessful aspirant. William Jennings Bryan, one of Nebraska's most illustrious speakers and politicians, made his first political speech in Exeter. Mr. Bryan was attending the university at the time. A speaker was to come to Exeter for a Democratic rally, but canceled his appearance and Mr. Bryan was asked to take his place. The rally was held in the room above the Taylor store. Mr. Bryan later made two more speeches in Exeter; however, the dates are not available.

Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the U. S., made a short stop in Exeter in 1912. Although he was not scheduled to stop here, someone found that he was coming through on his campaign train. The train did stop and a few were fortunate enough to see him and Frank Craven was able to shake hands with him. This was when Mr. Roosevelt, opposed to the way President Taft was running the government, broke away from the Republicans and formed a third party, the Progressive party, or, as a lot of people called it, the "Bull Moose" party.

William Howard Taft, 27th President of the United States, also made a brief appearance here in 1912. The campaign train came through Exeter, stopping long enough for President Taft to say a few words. President Taft had defeated Mr. Bryan in the 1908 election.

It is also interesting that the mother of a man who ran for the presidency in later years (1964) was once a resident of Exeter. Josephine Williams, mother of Barry Goldwater, came here with her parents after she was out of high school. Her father ran a store in Exeter and was on the school board for several years. Josephine went to Arizona for her health and that is where she met Mr. Goldwater, the father of Barry. Evidently she recovered from her ailment, because she has lived a long life. Several Exeter people remember her quite well. She had a few relatives in this area.

By 1915, the town had grown enough to need more land for new homes, and so the SW 1/4, Sec. 20, and part of Sec. 10 had been annexed.

It is interesting to compare 1915 prices with those of today. These market prices were found in the Fillmore County News, December 9, 1915.

Market prices 1915  Advertisements of 1915
Wheat No. 3-93% No. 2 .......................... .95¢ Dr. E. L. Armstrong...chiropractor
Corn ............................................ .52¢ J. A. Craven...lumber and grain
Oats ............................................... .32¢ Dyer & Downey..................implement
Hogs per cwt .................................... $6.00 Debus Bros.................. wholesale and
Cream ........................................... .33¢ retail bakers
Chickens ....................................... .59/4¢ lb. J. B. Klotz.................. retail store
Old roosters ...................................... 94¢ lb. Wallace & Co.....................banker
Ducks ........................................... .08¢ lb. Farmers & Merchants Bank
Geese ........................................... .07¢ lb. Brown & Bickert........merchandise
Turkeys ......................................... .15¢ lb. Dr. F. T. Butz................dentist
Butter ........................................... .25¢ lb. A. N. House............dentist
Potatoes, per bushel ........................... 75¢ McKeag & Hill.............real estate
Gippins ........................................... 32¢ and insurance
variety store
Karl F. E. Wegener, M. D. ....................physician and surgeon
Guy Phelps had just bought Mr. Schriener’s interest in Phelps & Schriener

At this time Exeter had a population of 1,100. The above list was taken from just one paper, so the list of businesses is not complete.

In 1915, the Burlington and Northwestern railroads both had depots. Exeter had excellent rail transportation east or west.

Exeter is also well located as to highways. U.S. Highway 6 once went down the main street but it has been in the south part of town for quite some time. A major east-west road, it joins U.S. Highway 81 at Fairmont, giving access to north and south roads. Interstate 80, not far away, is a great help.

Library
The first library was actually a loaning of books by Mr. and Mr. J. B. Klotz. Mr. Klotz had a drugstore and a good supply of books that he was willing to share with others.

1910-1911: A library was started by the Exeter Dramatic Club, which sponsored plays, socials, card parties, and tag days to raise funds. A library of 1,000 volumes was established.

1915: The library was managed by the Exeter Library Association. Books were for everyone to use, whether members or not.

1936: The Exeter Woman's Club started a library again. It was taken over by the Exeter Village Board some years later and became a tax-supported library, with Mrs. Lillian Perry appointed...
George Horton behind counter in his grocery store in 1920. This building now houses the Exeter Library.

librarian. Mrs. Perry has continued in that capacity since 1936 to the present time. The library was moved to its present location in 1938. There were 3,500 books on the shelves, but many needed to be discarded because they were too worn and so the real number would be less than 3,500.

1968: The library has a collection of 5,264 books. The Woman's Club has given $20 yearly for the summer story hour and reading program.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick Manning gave a movie projector to the library in memory of Mrs. Dick Manning's father, Mr. John Schwab. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer McCabe gave a set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in memory of Mrs. McCabe's father, Mr. Link. Many books have been given to the library at various times by individuals or groups.

**Banks**

In the late 1870s, William H. Wallace of Morrison, Illinois, homesteaded on Sec. 28 in Exeter township. Soon after, seeing the need for some sort of financial aid for the community, Mr. Wallace made small loans to individuals. As an officer, he used a small room in the rear of a harness shop, in which he placed a small iron safe, which thus became Exeter's first bank vault. He later organized Wallace & Co., a private bank, located on the present bank site. This bank later operated under a state charter, under the same name, and then became the Wallace National Bank, under a national charter. In the year 1882, the Bank of Exeter was also in operation. The Wallace National Bank was operated by William H. Wallace as president until his death in 1926, when his son, William P. Wallace, became president. Lesher T. Blouch acted as bookkeeper, assistant cashier, and cashier from 1907 to 1946.

After some years, two other banks were organized in Exeter, the Exeter State Bank and the Farmers & Merchants Bank. The Exeter State Bank was later acquired by the Wallaces. It was operated separately for several years and was then consolidated with the Wallace National Bank. The Farmers & Merchants Bank and the Wallace National Bank were both liquidated in 1933 and the First National Bank of Exeter was organized with H. M. Link as president, Frank Craven, vice-president, and Lesher Blouch, cashier. Mr. Blouch retired from the bank in 1946, after having been affiliated with the banks for approximately 40 years. He was also treasurer of the Village of Exeter for 41 years. After Mr. Link's death in 1961, Elmer McCabe became president of the bank, Roy E. Stubbendick, vice-president, and Lillian Barkmeier, cashier.

In 1966, plans were completed for a handsome new bank building, which was built on the vacant lot two doors south of the former bank site.

Photo from Mrs. Elmer Horton

First National Bank, established in 1934. This building is now occupied by a barber shop.

Photo from Lillian Barkmeier

New First National Bank Building (taken in 1968)
Street scene in Exeter, July 4, 1897—Royal Neighbors of America team drilling. Stores, left to right: P. W. McGeeley’s photo gallery; Lodge hall top floor, J. N. Cox dry goods on street level. Stores, right to left: T. B. Farney harness shop, Enterprise paper; Dr. E. L. Ramsdell drugstore.

Clubs and Organizations

1882: By 1882, many clubs had organized; however, exact dates are not available. The organizations at that time were the Masons, Odd Fellows, and Grand Army of the Republic.

1880: The I.O.O.F. started with 10 members; present membership, 23.

1913: Rebekah Lodge organized in 1883; present membership, 45.

1883: There was an organization called the Sons of Veterans Club, but no other information is available.

1897: The Royal Neighbors of America organized in 1897 with 24 charter members. The R. N. of A. had a drill team at one time, and the Cordova and Milligan R. N. of A. transferred to Exeter Camp 504. The present membership is 43.

1898: The Woman’s Club organized in 1898 with about 20 charter members. Dr. Claire Owens was one of these and served as president of the club for four years, and as parliamentarian for 31 years. The club was inactive during World War I, but reorganized in 1926 and became a federated club. The Woman’s Club sponsors the “Y” Teen girls. The present membership is 50.

The Bide-A-Wee Kensington Club had started in the early days as a birthday club and had Sunset Parties for ladies over 65.

1914: Masonic Lodge No. 293 was chartered in 1914; extinct in December, 1952.

1915: Clubs in existence in 1915 were the G. A. R., the United Workmen, Woodmen of America, and Knights of Pythias.

Chamber of Commerce: The exact date of organization is not known. It was known as the Commercial Club in 1907. This civic organization has grown considerably in the last few years. The membership in 1902 was 62; at present there are 101 members.

Lions Club: First chartered February 11, 1944. Once had about 35 members; reorganized, 1952; present membership, 16.


American Legion: William Sullivan Post No. 218, organized in 1926, named in honor of first serviceman from this community to give his life in World War I. Charter members, 10; present membership, 88.

American Legion Auxiliary: William Sullivan Unit No. 218, the auxiliary, was organized in 1930 with 14 charter members. Mrs. Gertrude Clinton was first president. The ladies have been very active in the community. One of their yearly activities has been to decorate veterans’ graves on Memorial Day. Present membership, 61.


D.A.R.: Exeter has not had an active organization of its own, but 5 or 6 ladies from Exeter were members of the Geneva and Fairmont groups.

Happy Hour Club: The Happy Hour Extension Club, organized in 1917, was called the “Jolly Twenty.” When the membership increased the name was changed. Present membership is 20.

Sunshine Extension Club: Organized in 1925 with 14 members; present membership, 10.

Evergreen Extension Club: Organized in 1926 with 12 members; present membership, 13.

Trilby Extension Club: Organized in 1930 with 14 members; present membership, 18.

Lady Bird Extension Club: Newly organized in 1966 with 9 members.

There are various other clubs, as for bridge and similar functions. There are also many 4-H clubs, too numerous to list.

SCHOOLS

The coming of education to Exeter was described by Miss Elula Smith in the Fillmore County News, April 4, 1935. The first school was taught by Mrs. William Babcock in her sod house. Her pupils were Fred Babcock, three Woodard children, and Charles Smith. The article does not give the year, but it must have been 1871 or 1872. County Superintendent G. W. Gue issued the usual notice: District No. 20 was to be formed of Secs. 19, 20, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33; he notified Job Hathaway that the organizational meeting would take place at Mr. Smith’s store at one P.M. on February 9, 1872. The first officers elected were H. G. Smith, moderator; Job Hathaway, director; and Henry Young, treasurer.

Later, the citizens were summoned to discuss plans for a schoolhouse. Mr. Farmer was chairman of the first school board, Jim Dolan, secretary, and John Dayton, treasurer. Miss Smith wrote: “Mr. O. P. Chapman opposed everything that was suggested, but the majority ruled and plans were made for the building. When the meeting was about to adjourn, Mr. Chapman said, ‘I move that $100 be appropriated to provide a bell for this schoolhouse.’ His motion went over big.” The contractor for the building was Ben Stilley, and one of the carpenters was Mr. Farmer.

Soon after this meeting a 24’ x 36’ building was erected on the corner of Exeter Avenue and South Boundary Street. (This site is now, in 1966, a vacant lot at the NE corner of the intersection of Main Street and U.S. 6.)
It was not many years before this building was outgrown. In 1882, the new brick building in the east part of town was finished and occupied. Mr. Chapman's bell was transferred to it and for many years summoned the children to school. It is said that when this building burned in 1915, the bell gave one last peal as it dropped into the flames. A new brick building was already being built, because the 1882 building was no longer large enough. Although the new building was very close, it was not damaged by the fire. Rev. G. R. McKeith wrote in 1915: "The last, but not the least of Exeter's improvements, is the erection of a $40,000 school building, a magnificent, commodious, and well-arranged property, well fitted, and equipped to meet the needs of the town and district for many years."

During recent years, the Exeter Public School has undergone many changes and improvements. In 1945, the school was housed in one building and, because of the war, many departments needing improvements had to wait until equipment was available. One of the first improvements made was the building of a three-unit kitchen and remodeling of the homemaking department. Other improvements included lights for the football field; building the gymnasium- auditorium; fluorescent lighting for some rooms; new football bleachers; redistricting, which brought the buses and the establishment of bus routes; a Vocational Agriculture building; and a hot-lunch kitchen. Much obsolete and worn-out equipment has been replaced.

By 1961, standards and pressure by the State Department of Education for more playground space forced the school to use the football field to meet this requirement. The land east of the school was purchased for a new athletic field, football and track. The field was named "Scott Field" in memory of Scott Briggs who died while a senior in Exeter High. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Max Briggs.

As enrollment continued to increase, to provide necessary facilities the district voted a $200,000 bond issue in 1965. This amount was for the construction of seven elementary classrooms, a multi-purpose room, and kitchen facilities for the whole school. This new building is located south of the gymnasium. The old building has been remodeled to make more and larger rooms for the Junior and Senior high grades.

There are many organizations within the school system:

- F. F. A. organized in 1954—48 members in 1966
- F. H. A. organized in 1956—15 members in 1966
- Pep club—67 members.
- "E" club—35 members.
- "Y" Teen club—83 members.
- Student Council—15 members.
- Music Dept.—89 students in vocal groups

Exeter has organized an M.A.T.H. honor club, called "Mu Alpha Theta." There are 18 full members and 8 associated members. There are two associated clubs, the "Y" Teen Council Mothers and the Exeter Band Mothers Club.

**Athletics**

- Football: 45
- Basketball: 30
- Track: 25
- Beginners band: 32
- Varsity band: 51
- Junior band: 34
- Stage band: 17

The Exeter Public School in 1966 had an assessed valuation of $5,829,065 and a mill levy of 28.6. Exeter can still boast of its accomplishments in this department. The Exeter School has the lowest school-tax rate in Fillmore County, and ranks among the lowest in schools of comparable sizes.

There were 341 pupils attending the public school, which, combined with the 62 parochial pupils, gave a 1966 total of 403 pupils attending school in Exeter.

**CHURCHES**

In 1915, Exeter had six different churches or meeting places: Congregational, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Christian, and Christian Science. At present (1966), there are only the Congregational, Methodist, and Catholic churches. The others have either joined with other denominations or disbanded.

**Congregational Church**

In a room known as the Exeter Hall, over the H. G. Smith store, the Congregational Church was organized on March 31, 1872, with 11 charter members. They put up their first church in 1872. It was remodeled in 1907, with a 10-foot addition on the west, an alcove for the pulpit on the north, new seating, and a new furnace. In 1924, a story-and-a-half unit, 30' x 32', with full basement, was added on the south. The church has observed four major anniversaries, its 40th, 50th, 60th, and 85th. It owned a parsonage until 1964, when it was sold. In 1960, the church became yoked with the First Congregational.
Church of Friend. The Rev. Donald Cassiday of Friend serves both congregations. One notable earlier pastor was the Rev. G. R. McKeith. An article by Miss Belle Alexander (undated) provides additional information:

"The settlement of this township began during the year 1871 and religious services were held in various homes in the neighborhood. The first preaching service was held at the home of J. K. Barbur. It was in this same home that the first prayer meeting was held and the first Sunday School organized. Services were held in Exeter Hall for about 1½ years and then moved to the new schoolhouse just finished on the corner of Exeter Avenue and South Boundary St. This building was a room 24' x 36', well seated with patent seats and answered the purpose very well. The Congregationalists were the first to organize but the Baptists and Methodists organized soon after. They continued to worship together until 1878, the Congregationalists furnishing the pastor one-half of the time and the Baptists and Methodists the other half. The charter members of the Congregational Church were John K. Barbur, Kate Barbur, Abram T. Hager, Clarissa L. Hager, Frank E. Hager, Orson Hager, Elias J. Hager, H. G. Smith, Catherine Smith, Harrison A. Sturdevant, and Rice Kelly."

In 1966, this church had 108 members, and Sunday School averaged from 50 to 60 members.

Christian Church

This note on the Christian Church was supplied by J. C. Wilson:

"The Christian Church was started in 1898, on July 19, when 19 members organized the Church of Christ in Exeter. Those attending were two young boys, three men and their wives, three young girls, and eight other women. Brother Martin was the elder, Brother Starr and later Francis Hoot were the deacons; Mrs. Starr was the deaconess, and Mrs. C. A. Bickel was the church treasurer. After a few weeks 14 new members were added to the church. Fifteen months later a building was erected at a cost of $1,400."

Twenty-five years later the attendance had reached 96 at the Bible School. The church held regular services until July 1, 1956, when they were no longer able to keep going, and decided to disband. The parsonage and church building were sold and removed from the lots. However, the Christian Women's Fellowship have had regular meetings and in 1966 were continuing to meet.

St. Stephen's Church (Catholic)

The history of the parish of St. Stephen's at Exeter is not well known until 1873. It is probable that Father Kelly, who lived in Lincoln, passed through Exeter in 1870 and said Mass at the residence of F. McTygue south of town.

The first part of the old church was built in 1874 or 1875. Part of the priest's residence was built in 1878. In 1883, the residence and the old church were completed and some improvements were made. A new church was erected in 1901 and 1902. A parochial school was erected in 1907 and opened in September, 1907, with Dominican Sisters in charge. The new priest's residence was built in 1910. A storm damaged the church in 1918, and it was repaired and improved. The church was completely redecorated some time between 1940 and 1949, and an electric organ was added.

The school was remodeled in 1934. It has always had a good library and in 1952 the collection of books was accessioned and tabulated and many new volumes were added. A new set of encyclopedias was purchased in 1954.

The Dominican Sisters remained until 1940, when the Felician Sisters came; they are still there.

The St. Stephen's School and Home Association, formerly the St. Stephen's P.T.A., was organized in 1935; one of its notable successes has been the hot-lunch project.


Extensive renovation of the church was undertaken in 1961, including a complete interior decoration and the installation of a new heating system. In the spring of 1964, St. Stephen's parish purchased property to serve as a convent for the teaching staff. The school building underwent some needed repairs and its educational facilities were considerably expanded. On September 17, 1964, Msgr. Ingenhorst celebrated his Silver Jubilee of ordination with the assistance of the congregation and visiting clergy.

St. Stephen's Church had 477 members in 1966 and the St. Stephen's Parochial School had 62 pupils.

Christian Science Society

The Christian Science Society organized in 1887. First meetings were held in a room of the Smith factory. In 1900, it changed its name to First Church of Christ, Scientist and met in a room above the First National Bank. A concrete-block church was built in 1907, with Frank Craven the general overseer. He also laid most of the block. The church

Photo from Don Johns

Christian Church and Parsonage, Exeter (early 1920's)

St. Stephen's Catholic Church as rebuilt in 1918.

Photo from Robert Trauger

St. Stephen's Catholic Church in 1902

Photo from R. D. Erdkamp

St. Stephen's Catholic Church in 1919.
Methodist Church

As early as 1871, religious services were being held in private homes. The first Sunday School was organized 4 miles S of town and was carried on successfully for several years. The class was organized by the Rev. D. B. Lake in an 18' x 25' room above the H. G. Smith store, on the lot now occupied by the Barkmeier store; entrance was by an outside stairway.

From this class three denominations—Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist—were organized at different times during the year 1872. In 1873, the first schoolhouse was erected, and this was used for some time by all the denominations.

Members of the different denominations took turns doing the janitor work and ministers came from near-by towns every two weeks for preaching services. After a few years, the school had to be given up and the Methodists found new quarters over the W. H. Taylor store. Rev. Davis from Indiana was the first resident pastor. He received the huge sum of $450 per year and furnished his own house, which later became the first Methodist parsonage and served as such until the early 1900's. Until 1879, there had been no board of trustees, so the organization could not legally own property. In that year, J. P. Kettwell, T. B. Farmer, C. A. Songster, W. L. Hildreth, Elias Peterman, and M. E. Trauger were named trustees. In 1880, there came some inclination to raise money to purchase lots on which to erect a church. The first effort was made at the close of a midweek prayer meeting at the home of a member. A collection was taken, but this fell short of the required amount. After the singing of a hymn, Mr. Songster suggested another collection, and this process was repeated until the needed amount was raised.

A 22-foot lot was purchased and the railroad company donated another, and, in 1881, the first Methodist Episcopal Church of Exeter was erected on the site of the present building. The structure was 28' x 48'. Eliminate the main auditorium of the present building and move the east and west ends together and you have the original building.

Several years later the Epworth League sponsored the purchase of the bell which is still in use. The lighting system consisted of large kerosene lamps hung from the ceiling and heat was furnished by a large coal stove placed a little back of the center of the room. Later a large round "Oak" stove was placed under the building after the manner of a pipeless furnace.

In 1903, when the Rev. J. W. Lewis convinced the members of the need for a more modern building and submitted a plan for the remodeled church, which was dedicated in 1906, the church was completely redecorated. A large gas furnace replaced the former coal furnace and a gas floor furnace serves the west room.

In 1905, the Rev. W. Hull this building was extensively remodeled. The church, as dedicated in 1906, was used with normal repairs until 1927, when, because of a substantial gift to the church, the members thought it advisable to refinish, redecorate, and fully modernize the building.

In the winter of 1934-35, the ceiling of the main auditorium was lowered and the church was completely redecorated. A large gas furnace replaced the former coal furnace and a gas floor furnace serves the west room.

In 1927, when it was brick veneered and finished as it stands today, the church was cut in two in 1900 and the present sanctuary was built between the two parts. The tower was removed and placed in the angle.
The first Communion set of plates and goblets were made of pewter. Later Mr. and Mrs. L. Gilbert presented the church with a beautiful silver Communion set. The silver set is at present in the museum at Nebraska City.

When the congregation became quite small, because of deaths and families moving to other communities, it was decided to disband. Those who wished joined with the Congregational Church in a federation of the Congregational and the Baptist in January, 1918.

It was necessary to use the Baptist Church for classrooms for school at the time when the first school grew too small and the new school had not been completed.

The church and parsonage buildings were sold about 1923. The church was torn down and the parsonage was used in the rebuilding of the Farmer Mortuary.

Mr. Bashford passed away in April, 1946. The two remaining members of the quartet, Mr. Blouch and Mr. Clarke, continue to make their home in Exeter.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Clarke learned to sing as a boy when he lived on the Isle of Man, an island between England and Ireland.

Medical Center

The Medical Center began by a vote of the people at a special election in February, 1956. The town board accepted the architect's plans in July and asked for bids. The building, of brick-veneer construction, cost approximately $25,000. Its 28' x 65' area provides 15 rooms, which include a waiting room, three examining rooms, two laboratories, and two private offices. It is completely air-conditioned, with tile floors and smooth plaster walls throughout. The first doctor to occupy the building was Dr. James E. Loukota. At present (1966) the building is being used by two dentists who come out part time from Lincoln—Drs. Harold Demaree and Clifton Hicks—and by an optometrist, Dr. Delwyn Anderson, who comes once a week from Genoa.

The people of Exeter have tried, so far unsuccessfully, to interest a doctor in locating here permanently; but they have not yet given up either hopes or efforts.

CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Farmer Male Quartet

The original Farmer male quartet, organized in the late 1920's, was composed of P. R. Farmer, 1st tenor; T. D. Clarke, 2nd tenor; A. E. Bashford, 1st bass; and L. T. Blouch, 2nd bass. Mrs. W. P. Wallace was the accompanist. They immediately selected suitable numbers and started meeting regularly for rehearsals. As soon as it became known that they were ready for public appearances, they were much in demand. They sang at many different functions and entertained in Exeter and community and in other Nebraska towns and communities.

Frank Farmer, of Denver, a brother of P. R. Farmer, became interested in the quartet, and gave much of his time and talents to their rehearsals. When in Exeter, he often accompanied them on singing engagements, where he would lead in community singing and also sing solos.

The quartet also furnished the music for many funerals. This was a part of the service Mr. Farmer offered to the public without extra charge. In January, 1934, the quartet had several recordings made of both their sacred and secular numbers. They also had photos taken for use in their work.

The community was shocked and saddened when P. R. Farmer was critically injured in an auto accident; he passed away September 22, 1935. P. R. Farmer was the father of Burton Farmer of Exeter and Paul Farmer of Geneva. Both the sons are morticians, as was their father.

Mr. Bashford passed away in April, 1946. The two remaining members of the quartet, Mr. Blouch and Mr. Clarke, continue to make their home in Exeter.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Clarke learned to sing as a boy when he lived on the Isle of Man, an island between England and Ireland.

Memory Manor

A retirement home for many of our pioneers became a reality in 1965. Memory Manor is a result of community cooperation. Mr. Turner, president of Bethel Homes, Inc., agreed that if the local area would raise $25,000, Bethel Homes would build a 45-bed modern nursing home. In the same spirit in which pioneer Nebraskans long worked together, the money was raised; and we now have, in a handsome building on the north side of U.S. 6 at the western edge of Exeter, a pleasant refuge for those who wish to rest, or who because of illness have laid down the plow, shovel, hoe, pot, or pan, and must relax in the well-earned, kind care of others.

Swimming Pool

The Exeter Woman's Club decided, in May, 1963, to promote the project of a city swimming pool. The club's Community Improvement Committee asked for, and obtained, a meeting with the state Department of Health. The village board co-operated, and a meeting of interested citizens evoked considerable enthusiasm. The board de-
decided to place a bond issue before the public on November 12, 1963. The Woman's Club put on a publicity campaign, as a result of which the citizens approved the bond issue. As a result, Exeter is the proud possessor of a modern swimming pool. It was opened to the public in July, 1964, and a formal dedication was held on May 30, 1965.

City Park

Soon after the swimming pool was built in the City Park, in 1964, much work was done to improve the park. The park was completely reseeded, and the city installed a sprinkling system. Picnic tables were repaired and painted. Parking space was provided for the many people who use the park and the pool. There is also playground equipment for children. To the south of the park is a well-attended baseball diamond. This general area is a busy place in the summertime.

Postal Service

The first post office in Exeter was located in the home of Warren Woodard in 1871, 1/2 mile E of town on the present Leo Becker farm. It was later moved to the home of Dr. H. G. Smith here in town. Through the years it had three different locations on Main Street before being moved to its present site in 1928. The Exeter post office started as a fourth-class office, and then remained a third-class office for many years before being rated as second class in 1950.

Postmasters have been the following persons: Warren Woodard, 1871; D. A. Wentworth, 1886-87; Dan Kochendarfer, 1887-89; A. T. Hager, 1890-93; James Kelley, 1893-97; C. N. Phillips, 1897-1906; William J. Hildreth, 1906-15; Dan Kochendarfer, 1915-19; Harry V. Ingram, 1919-39; Frank Ainsworth, 1939-47; Frank Leibee, 1947-65; T. I. Larsen, 1965.

Rural Route delivery started about the year 1880, with three routes. The first carriers were George Borland, Smithe Wallace, and Fred Phillips. Other carriers included William Mitchell, Ed Hall, Mort Rasmussen, Paul Farmer, Soren Manning, and Joe Rogers. We now have two routes out of Exeter. The carriers are (1966) Kenneth Taylor (Route 1) and John Drummond (Route 2).

Elevators

The first elevator in Exeter, built in the 1870's, was owned and operated by James Dolan. In 1878 there were two elevators; names of owners other than Mr. Dolan are not available.

In 1907, there were four elevators. One was the Ragen Co. Elevator, between the Burlington stockyard and the street. This is believed to be the elevator later owned by Joseph Coates, W. W. Kimberly and Co. was located by the Burlington depot. It is now (1966) the location of the Co-op elevator office. The Kimberly Elevator was sold to the William McNeil Grain Co. between 1910 and 1920. The Nye, Snyder & Jenks Elevator, located south of the Methodist Church, was operated by George Horton. There was also the Trans-Mississippi Elevator.

On April 8, 1911, farmers of the Exeter community met to organize a Farmers' Elevator. Permanent officers were Walter Howarth, president, and Levi Steyer, secretary. One month later, $4,000 was pledged, to be divided into $25 shares, with no one to have more than eight shares.

In September, 1911, the board met and bought the Trans-Mississippi Elevator for $3,000. With a few added expenses, the total cost was $3,206.90. S. G. Manning was hired as manager. Business prospered and the year 1912 showed a good profit. In 1913, coal sheds were built. Total bushels of grain bought in 1912 were 207,040 (including corn, wheat, and oats). During the next 10 years, big business items were grain, coal, flour, cement, binder twine, and apples. At times, apples were bought by the carload. Profits continued annually. New board members were Walter Howarth, Levi Steyer, Will Jansen, Henry Kolar, Sam Gillan, Fred Underwood, and N. M. Becker.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY


Photo from Mrs. Cora Rogers

First Air Mail into Exeter in 1938. Left to right: Richard Ferguson, Ed Mitchell, Billy Mitchell, Clark Crane, Verne Johnson, Leo Koehn, Chester Taylor, J. D. Rogers, Pilot (unknown), Irene Murphy (hidden), Frank Leibee (hidden), Frank Ainsworth, postmaster.

Photo from Ted Larson
at end of this period were $24,677.87, with 221 stockholders and 405 shares. Levi Steyer resigned as secretary of the board.

The second decade (1920-30) saw important figures and changes take place. After 11 years, Walter Howarth resigned because of ill health. Before leaving, Mr. Howarth gave a full report, showing a large saving to patrons. In 1924, 372 cars of wheat, corn, and oats were shipped. In 1927, the petroleum business was added. Mr. Gillan's bid was accepted and then gasoline and fuel was sold to patrons. In October, 1929, George Thompson became the new manager. There were policy changes during this time. Interest on stock was frequently as high as 10 per cent. The board added William Morgan and E. J. Barbur to its list of directors.

The next decade (1930-1940) was a period of drought and depression. Wages had to be cut, and the board offered to share undivided profits in grain, whatever was needed, to help the even more unfortunate farmers in northern Nebraska. Rough times continued. Wages again had to be cut; the secretary voluntarily reduced his pay. Public audit started, and it was necessary to borrow money with which to operate. The year 1936 brought the need for a garage business, with Hans Nelson in charge of this department. The board now included new members John Due, Herbert Howarth, John Miller, Charles Trauger, Jim Krejci, Goffrey Mueller, Axel Nelson, and Bob Dougnik. In December, 1939, there were 154 stockholders and 261 shares.

Between 1940 and 1950, some facilities became obsolete; the result was the purchase of the McNeil Elevator on the Burlington for $10,000. Now the old Coates Elevator was torn down for the lumber. The '40's saw some wage increases for the manager and employees, with year-end bonuses. Many repairs were made on the elevator, with some grinder-moving problems. Also added were some small buildings. Business directly reflected the fruitfulness of the years. The new directors added were Frank Lovegrove, Roy Eberhardt, Bert Schwab, William Keil, Walt Guthrie, Willard Steyer, and Olaf Due. In 1947, Walt Barkmeier resigned and Bill Rohl was hired as the new manager.

The decade 1950-60 was an unusual one. The first five years showed substantial additions. A larger scale, a new feed house, and a rollermill to process feeds were added. The commercial fertilizer business expanded considerably. The six-year period from 1955 to 1961 saw great expansion in storage facilities, increasing capacity to 605,000 bushels. A $19,780 grain dryer, a liquid fertilizer plant, and a 5,000-gallon bulk oil tank were added. In 1964, an anhydrous plant and equipment were added, as well as a 4,000-gallon tank for the oil plant. In 1965, a molasses blender, with a 4,000-gallon molasses storage tank, was added.

Thirty-five names have appeared on the board of directors list.
The latest names added were Aaron Guthrie, Harve Johnson, John Leif, John Geiger, Jay W. Dyer, Eric Rasmussen, and Joe Hassler. The last total showed 540 stockholders and 5,650 shares, indicating growth and progress.

The Farmers' Elevator, now known as Exeter Co-Operative Elevator Co., has been fortunate in having had only four different managers during its 55-year life. The board of directors were also dedicated men. One member, Fred Underwood, missed only one meeting in 37 years.

The first successful factory in Exeter was that set up by Charles C. Smith for making index tabs. About 1895, while a clerk in his father’s bank, he devised some adjustable tabs to flag frequently used accounts and save a good deal of time. Callers at the bank who saw these tabs in use took to asking him if he would make a few for them to use in their businesses. This was the very modest beginning of a business that, in later years, gave the name of Exeter more nearly world-wide fame than that of any other American town of its size.

By 1896, Charles Smith was receiving enough orders to justify opening a small factory and employing workers. His first factory was in the directors’ room of his father’s bank. The business prospered and quickly overflowed its way out of the directors’ room. It might even be said that it elbowed the bank right out of the bank building and, in time, also absorbed an adjoining building. When even this grew inadequate, an addition was built onto the back of the plant.

During the early years of the business, Mr. Smith gave primary consideration to developing, improving, and expanding his line of products, first in the continental United States, and then in foreign countries. He also aimed at improving manufacturing procedures. He was instrumental in developing machinery to decrease the amount of hand work in making his products.

The tabs are used to index books and card systems. Some, made wholly of steel, are called Signals or Guides. The signals may be either plain or printed with months, numbers, or letters. The guides have insertable paper labels protected by a celluloid covering.

The leather tab (which has the distinction of being the first and oldest) is made of bronze clips with a projection of leather, this being stiffened by a filler of felt.

The gummed strips, made of paper, cloth, and leather, differ from the tabs and signals in that they are not removable, but are gummed to the paper or card in the place desired for indexing. The cloth and leather strips may also be celluloid covered, which provides a means for slipping a paper label under the celluloid, thus making an index which may be changed. These strips are sold by the foot but in actual use are cut up into as short lengths as desired.

At one time, almost all the signaling items used throughout the world were made in Exeter. Although competitors later arose, the Exeter factory long remained the acknowledged leader for quality signaling. As this is written (1968), the Exeter factory has been discontinued.

The business which Mr. Smith built up was incorporated after his death. The present owners are largely people who either worked for him or sold the products which he manufactured in Exeter.

The Lincoln Journal and Star reported, in June, 1953:

“An old Exeter business firm is under new ownership and has been incorporated. Following, Mr. Smith’s death in December of 1951, the firm came under trusteeship of the First Trust Company of Lincoln. Mr. Smith’s daughters, the heirs, then converted the estate into cash, the purchaser being York businessman Willis E. Stover. According to the records in the office of County Judge Guy A. Hamilton, the amount involved in the liquidation transaction was $23,500.

“An expansion of domestic sales is planned but no change in manufacturing personnel or plant organization is contemplated, according to manufacturing manager Neobit F. Whitmore of Exeter. Thirteen persons are now employed.

“William H. Crawen of Round Hill, Virginia, is president of the corporation. Glen F. Monnig of Exeter is vice-president and general manager and has been acting secretary and treasurer. Nina Chambers is office manager.

“The Government Schedule of Supplies’ has listed the firm’s products for more than 40 years. Most of the stockholders, a corporate officer reports, other than officers and employees, are persons in the stationery and office fields.”
Debus Bakery

In 1912, the Debus Brothers, Sander (Sam) and Henry, started a bakery in the back room of their ice-cream parlor. After operating here for one year, they bought a lot on East Main St. and erected a building on it. (This building is now occupied by Bob's Body Shop.) Their only piece of machinery was an electric dough mixer. The rest of the work was done by hand. They installed a Peterson Pegan continuous fire-brick oven. As time went on and their business increased, they purchased more machinery. They hired T. D. Clarke as a helper in February, 1916. Their output at this time was an average of 800 loaves of bread per day. They also baked rolls and pastries.

In 1917, the brothers dissolved the partnership. Henry went to Fremont, and Sander became the sole owner and manager. T. D. Clarke remained as an assistant baker and Mrs. Nellie Taylor as clerk.

During World War I, many commodities were scarce and Sander was compelled to use substitutes in his bakery goods. He succeeded well with substitutes while many other bakers were not so successful. This news spread rapidly and in a short time he was averaging 3,900 loaves of bread per day, besides the rolls and pastries. The shop was shipping baked goods to many other towns, by express, on both Burlington and Northwestern trains. This expansion necessitated more help, and Sander secured the services of his half-brother, A. J. Miser of Lincoln. Other helpers included Faye and Donald Johns, Clyde Long, and Noel Smith. Mrs. T. D. Clarke assisted Mrs. Taylor as clerk.

In 1923, Sander decided to move his bakery to Hastings and formed a corporation. Frank Crawn, one of the incorporators, became vice-president and continued in that capacity until 1956 when Sander Debus passed away. Mr. Crawn then became president until another company bought out the corporation in 1964.

Fred Craven built the first reinforced concrete silo in Nebraska in 1908. The silo is still in use today.

Exeter Canning Factory

A two-story frame canning factory 24' x 80', with frame porch and attached stairway, was located in the east part of Exeter in the Smith addition, near the C.B. & Q. R.R. This plant, owned by A. J. and Cordelia Bird, canned tomatoes, corn, yellow string beans, and peaches.

Exeter Roller Mills

Founded as a co-operative in 1886, the Exeter Roller Mills was later purchased by H. S. Bedford. In 1893, the Fillmore County Democrat said:

"It is one of the boasts of the city and stands among the best mills in the State. The capacity of this mill is 100 barrels and among his favorite brands of flour we note 'Our Best,' 'Silver,' and 'Ladies Favorite.' Mr. Bedford ships his flour to all points in Nebraska and has also a wholesale house at Lincoln, and branch or exchange houses at Seward and Bee. In connection with his mill here, he has a large storehouse 244' x 80 feet, two stories high, in which now is stored 69,000 sacks of flour, a sight of behold."

On this land was an orchard which had peaches, plums, cherries, and apples. Some of the apple trees had been grafted with other trees and produced large crates of apples.

The canning factory, first started in 1890, was sold to H. S. Bedford in 1893. Some time between 1893 and 1902, the building was destroyed by a fire.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hill bought the land in 1902. The building was gone but some of the foundation was still there, and later some of the labels were plowed up. While the factory was in operation, a large amount of canned corn had spoiled. These cans were dumped, and heavy rains, falling soon after, washed the cans onto some of the farmers' land, much to their disgust.

Exeter has also had a mattress factory several times, but they were never successful and of short duration.

Newspapers

The Fillmore County Democrat was operated for approximately 15 years by Richard Ferguson, 1938-1953, when Mr. and Mrs. Bill Sund purchased the paper. The Sands were here for six years, until 1959. At that time the News was sold to John Farley, who had the paper for six months.

The present publishers are Mr. and Mrs. Al Bonta. They purchased the paper in February, 1960. The Bontas commuted from Alexandria for six months before they could find adequate housing for themselves and their nine children.

The Bontas had operated the Alexandria Argus for eight years before coming to Exeter. After the Alexandria paper was sold, Mr. Bonta worked for 1/2 years for a newspaper in Fairbury.

The Fillmore County News has 750 subscribers.

Kittinger Mink Farm

The mink business started in 1944, more as a hobby than a business. The Burton Kittingers began with five young mink the first year, then traded the surplus males for more females. Some of the mink were raised on shares with other mink ranchers. Another rancher would furnish the breeding stock and the mink were raised by the Kittingers for half.

Mr. Kittinger had been in the blacksmith and welding business, but the mink business demanded more of his time and after a few years he sold the shop and devoted his time to mink raising. For the last seven years the Kittingers have kept about 400 breeding females and pelt around 1,500 to 1,600 mink each year.

The Kittingers are members of the Great Lakes Mink Assn., the E.M.B. Assn., and the Nebraska Mink Growers Assn.

In November, there is a mink ranchers' show at Kearney. A few from other states also enter mink. Competition is keen: the best mink of each color wins a trophy and the next four best win ribbons. The Kittingers have won two trophies and numerous ribbons.

March is the month for mating the mink. Most of the young are
born in May. The average litter is from 3½ to 4. Some females will have 1 or 2 young mink, while others may have from 8 to 10. The average weight of a new-born mink is ½ ounce. A full-grown female weighs 2 to 2½ lbs.; males weigh up to 6½ lbs. Plenty of feed and water are important to the growing mink. The mink are pelted in December and the furs are shipped to New York for auction.

Modern Products, Inc.

Modern Products was incorporated in 1959. The first product manufactured came several months later from an idea brought to the company by Ray T. Hall. The idea was for a machine to bore horizontal holes in the ground. Anyone operating a trenching machine needs an earth auger of this sort when he encounters something that cannot be trenched, such as a railroad track, highway, driveway, or street. Holes are drilled to carry water mains, sewers, telephone cables, electric cables, gas lines, etc.

A network of distributors was built up, covering the United States, Canada, Alaska, Japan, Thailand, and South America, enabling the firm to capture its share of the world's auger market. The products are advertised in national trade magazines and through personal contact with distributors.

This product caught the interest of the Omaha Steel Co., who considered the auger line and a small trencher introduced by Modern Products, Inc., as ideal companions to their recently acquired Brown Trencher line and the Modern line was bought up by Omaha Steel.

Plettner Hatchery

The Plettner Hatchery started in 1919 in a home basement. Here a capacity of 2,200 eggs were hatched in common lamp incubators. In 1927, the home business was discontinued but resumed, with a 30,000-egg capacity, in the old Fillmore County News building (later sold to the American Legion).

The hatchery was moved in 1931 to the Odd Fellows building, operating four 60,000-egg machines. It moved again in 1939 and ran 120,000-egg machines. The hatchery was a partnership between John and Elmer Plettner from 1927 till 1950, when the partnership dissolved. The hatchery has since been discontinued.
BUGS AND WEATHER

Grasshoppers

The early settlers were faced with many obstacles. The breaking of the prairie was backbreaking labor; then they had to wait for rain, and pray that the rains would come at the right times, plentiful enough not to be too much, to permit a bountiful harvest. These were things that could at least be foreseen. But the grasshopper plague was something totally unexpected, and they could do nothing but watch their crops vanish in a matter of days—or hours. Many homesteaders gave up and returned to their native states. Others gave up farming and sought other occupations. E. S. Coates wrote, in a *Nebraska Farmer* article:

"They came for three years. The family had 40 acres in crops. One day about the middle of July, just a few days before their 20 acres of wheat was to be cut, the wind changed from the south, where it had been for a few days, around to the north. Soon came a roaring noise, like a great maelstrom. There was a rain of grasshoppers. They ate everything. The garden, potatoes, wheat, and the corn—everything was gone. The hoppers rose and sailed off to the south. In the spring, my family got seed to plant the 40 acres again, and broke up some more land, planting it to corn. They harvested a small grain crop that year, but the hoppers came again in August, took the corn, took the late garden and potatoes."

The next spring, they planted all the plowed ground and broke more. They harvested a big wheat crop, the corn was in the roasting ear, the potatoes were immense, and it seemed the pioneers' cupboards would be full. They planned a mass meeting at the settlement to give thanks for the absence of the grasshoppers and for a full crop. They had just offered a prayer of thanks, when wind picked up from the north and the grasshoppers began to fall on the assembly. The worst grasshopper scourge of them all was on. The hoppers were so ravenous, they ate the corn and then crawled into the stacks and ate that too. The hoppers had stayed that fall and laid eggs. When the crops were nicely up, millions of them hatched out and began to feed. Everyone despaired. The day my folks were packing up to go back to Iowa, a brisk wind came out of the north. The grasshoppers arose in a huge cloud and left forever." [This three-year siege occurred in northeastern Nebraska.

In the locality around Exeter, they were bad only one year, according to Miss Elula Smith:

"Some of the farmers were quite unfortunate. Mr. A. T. Hager had cut the Hager wheat and finished that belonging to the Alexanders at noon, July 10, 1874. After enjoying one of Mrs. Alexander's bountiful dinners, Mr. Farmer was walking home. A cloud seemed to be passing over the sun, and soon there were grasshoppers everywhere, a smaller species than we are accustomed to see. They not only destroyed the crops and gardens but feasted on the mosquito-bar covering the windows. They evinced a great fondness for onions, destroying them so completely that nothing was left to tell the tale but the heads off of the stalks, where they had grown. The air was literally alive with hoppers, so much so that the youngsters went out with barrel staves and beat down the insects. They were so thick on the Burlington track, and the wheels slipped so badly, that the engineer had to back up the train off the track, and then go around and back to the station."

Grasshoppers were back again to plague the farmers in 1930. Although by now the farmers were better equipped to deal with them, they again consumed distressing amounts of the farm products. Many farmers put out poisoned bran, but this did not prove to be very effective. The grasshoppers not only ate grains and gardens, but were known to climb the stables and even on clothes that were hung out on lines to dry. The problem seemed to solve itself as the drouth of the 1930's passed. Since that time, many insectside do have proved to be quite effective.

Blizzards

Of these storms, Miss Elula Smith wrote:

"One of these storms long to be remembered was the Easter storm which began on Sunday, April 13, 1873, and lasted three days. Severe storms of this type seemed like solid snow commenced falling. Snowdrifts covered everything and in some places nearly all the stock froze."

"During one blizzard, Mr. Chris Kobe [a few miles away in York County] had fed corn to his cattle through a hole in the roof of the barn, and he shovelled in snow to quench their thirst. He had to keep this up for two weeks. [During the storm] he found his way from the house only by following his lariats."

"Many of us recall the blizzard of January 12, 1888, and have read the story of Minnie Freeman, later Mrs. J. C. Penny, who kept her scholars in a sod house until the roof blew off and then tied them to the snowdrifts to save them safely to the home of a settler. She was called the 'Nebraska heroine.'"

"In Exeter, it was one of those mild days that often come in January. Many of the children went to school without coats or hats."

Drouth

One major hazard in farming country is drouth. The two worst in our history were those of 1893 and 1934; statistics are not infallible, but the 1934 drouth may have been the worst ever. That year very few farmers had any crops at all, and the next year was not much better. But conditions slowly improved, and the land was green once more. Many became discouraged and moved elsewhere; but the pioneer spirit was still present, and most stayed on and kept trying and survived.
Fairmont Township

The following account is based on one provided by A. L. Brown:

Fairmont township is a 36-square-mile area of gently rolling, fertile farmland in the northern tier of Fillmore County, the second township from the east. It is bounded on the north by York County, and on the east by Exeter, on the south by Madison, and on the west by West Blue townships. On survey maps it appears as T8N, R2W of the 6th Principal Meridian. It is named after the community of Fairmont, the largest population center within its borders, one of the many railroad-developed communities in Nebraska. The town itself is located at the exact middle point of the township.

The township is crossed from east to west, about one section below its middle line, by the Omaha-Denver line of the Burlington, and by U. S. Highway 6, which closely parallels the railroad. Its western boundary is formed by the north-south U. S. Highway 81. The 32-mile Fairmont-Helvey branch of the Burlington runs southeast out of the town of Fairmont, and its most southeasterly section (Sec. 36) is crossed from northeast to southwest by the Fremont-Superior line of the Northwestern R. R.

Watered only by Indian Creek, which winds from south to north through several sections east and northeast of Fairmont, the region was originally almost barren of trees. Only a few sections boast natural water the entire year; the number depends on the amount of annual rainfall. This lack of a reliable water supply and of timber for fuel and homes demanded settlers with deep faith and a strong back. Lumber and provisions were hauled overland by horse and wagon from Lincoln and Nebraska City until 1871, when the Burlington Railroad laid tracks into the town of Fairmont. This rail link to the eastern towns and cities of Nebraska closed the first chapter in the township's history and opened the area to a new wave of settlers.

To compensate the railroad for the cost of building, the government granted the Burlington R. R. alternate sections of land within a five-mile reach of both sides of the tracks. The railroad in turn offered inducements to settlers to purchase the newly-acquired land for farm and home sites. The township began to gain residents. Many Civil War veterans, encouraged by the Homestead Act, dreamed about plentiful harvests while turning the rich soil. Each homesteader acre tract that was offered. Some held one-half, three-quarter, and one-section farm lands which they leased to tenants. Some of these holdings were known then as the Fisher and Mellen sections. Charles Dumond held land titles to more than 640 acres.

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Most of the settlers took advantage of the 80- and 160-acre tracts that were offered. Some held one-half, three-quarter, and one-section farm lands which they leased to tenants. Some of these holdings were known then as the Fisher and Mellen sections. Charles Dumond held land titles to more than 640 acres.

The industrious settlers were beginning to prosper when the summer of 1874 a sea of grasshoppers swept over the land, devouring everything that had not been harvested. A tract of 40 to 60 acres of corn was stripped within a few hours. Garden vegetables disappeared in a matter of minutes. Even fork, shovel, and hoe handles were partially eaten by the insect marauders.

A second major tragedy occurred on January 12, 1888, when nature unleashed a blizzard that still today is the measuring stick for the severity of any Nebraska winter storm. A dry, fluffy snow fell steadily through the morning and afternoon, creating a blanket of white. Suddenly, about 2:30 P.M., wind raged out of the northwest, picking up the loose snow with suffocating force and obliterating the day. The youngsters were in school, and the stock was on the range. There was no time for a general alert, no time to prepare for the storm. Some teachers realized the danger of disaster, missing school and kept pupils in the schoolhouses overnight, saving many lives. Livestock, not so fortunate, traveled with the storm and perished.

The storm played itself out during the night, leaving behind it drifts 8 to 10 feet high, packed hard enough to withstand a man's weight. The temperature stood at 30 degrees below zero.

This frigid, never-to-be-forgotten night left behind it at least one heart-warming story, the story of a boy and his dog. The pair started home in the midst of the storm. They didn't make it. A searching party the next morning was attracted by a tiny spout of steam rising from one of the drifts just north of the John Hall corner east along the railroad right-of-way. Digging through the hard-packed snow, they found the boy and his dog unharmed by the blizzard. The warm breath of the dog had kept open a passage in the snow sufficient to provide air, and his body heat had helped keep them both from freezing.

Despite nature's cruel tormenting, the population of the area increased. A census taken in 1888 showed that Fairmont township had approximately 400 and the village of Fairmont had 1,800 residents. Every 80- or 160-acre farm was occupied by the owner or a tenant, and some of the occupants were prosperous enough to afford help in the home and in the fields.

When courage began to wane along with the crops under a relentless summer sun, many of the settlers in the northern and eastern portions of the township turned to Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Horton for counsel and comfort. The Hortons, who were among the early settlers, had journeyed from Illinois in a covered wagon. They lived in a sod house on their homestead (the SE ¼ of Sec. 2, T8, R2W) for their first 11 years before moving into a solid frame residence. It was to the sod house that their far-flung neighbors came seeking answers to their problems. The Hortons would read from the Scriptures, offer a prayer, and extend their hospitality. Mr. Horton held church and Sunday School services on the homestead for many years, following the service of the Church of God. A prayer session with the Hortons became a welcome Sunday-morning custom for men and women attempting to build a life in a country that constantly tested their courage and their faith.

When the first death occurred in this pioneer neighborhood, the Hortons gave a piece of their land for a cemetery. This pioneer cemetery is located on the NE corner of the SE ¼ of Sec. 2, T8, R2W, about 7½ miles NE of Fairmont. Many pioneers were buried there; by 1923, the Horton Cemetery contained 39 grave markers—14 for infants and small children, 25 for adults. Seven infants and 15 adults rested in unmarked graves. It is still used as a burial place for some of the pioneers' descendants.

A schoolhouse erected in this section later replaced the Horton home as the gathering place for Sunday church services. The Horton homestead is now owned by Bert Schwab, a grandson of James Whitaker, who filed on his homestead in 1866.

The railroad had continued its journey westward to span the nation while maintaining passenger and freight schedules in those communities which it had joined. One passenger train regularly spent the night in Fairmont. This overnight stop meant providing water and coal for the engines. To provide the water, wells were dug on a site 3 miles E of Fairmont, just north of John Hall's corner. (John Hall owned the NW ¼ of Sec. 26.) An elevated tank was built there, and power to operate the pumps was furnished by windmill (when the wind cooperated), or by horse power. Somewhat later, wells and coaling facilities were provided in Fairmont as the town sought to improve its desirability as a stopover point.
Population growth created a need for better school facilities. Fairmont township, like the others, had districts designated for schools. Bonds for a schoolhouse in District 19 were voted on September 11, 1872, and Fairmont established a grade school and a high school. The site selected was the block between Main and Jefferson streets (east and west) and between Violet and Myrtle avenues (north and south). This is still the basic site for the Fairmont school system. School opened, according to the Bulletin for November 19, 1872, "last week with Miss Elva Lewis, teacher." A second grade school was established in 1885; by this time the school population included 340 students in the town district and 120 in the rural districts.

The first mail route in Fairmont township was established in 1901, running to the north and west of the town. The second route embraced the southern and western sections of the township. By 1920, four rural mail routes were in operation.

Crop failures and skidding farm prices twice threatened the survival of the second. The first period, called "bad years" occurred in the 1890's. Corn averaged 8 to 10 cents per bushel, and eggs sold for less than one cent apiece. Hogs dropped from $2 per hundredweight to 25 cents.

The second such period occurred during the 1930's when Nebraska was caught in the deadly twin pinches of drought and national depression. Bank closings ruined many. Federal aid programs such as the Works Progress Administration provided sorely needed work for men who could no longer make a living from their farms. Surplus food and clothing were made available to the needy. The start of World War II and a sharply increased demand for food for our allies sent farm prices upward. At the same time, nature contributed much-needed moisture.

The young men of the area went off to war, and machines, in ever-increasing numbers, came into common use. Farms had more mechanical cornpickers, elevators to crib the corn, hay balers to care for the alfalfa, and self-propelled combines which could be operated by one man.

More acres were placed under cultivation. Increased production was encouraged by increased attention to conservation of the land. Contours, terraces, and proper drainage facilities replaced older, more haphazard methods on most farms. A new era of farming had commenced.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Nebraska's Senator George W. Norris, electricity came at last to the farm home. Modern plumbing, refrigeration, and lighting were among the benefits that came with public power lines.

About the same time as the electric lines came much-improved highways, this time as the result of state rather than Federal action. Gasoline-tax revenues led to the development of an all-weather road program in Nebraska. The state provided that the first mile and the last mile of each mail route from the post office were to be graveled as soon as money became available, then the second nearest and farthest miles, and so on until all postal roads were fully graveled. By the simple process of adding one mile of graveled each year, by 1967 only six miles of Fairmont township roads remained ungraveled. The township was further helped by the construction by Fillmore County of all-weather farm-to-market roads in areas not covered by the mail routes.

The first Rural Free Delivery route, Route No. 1, out of Fairmont was the second rural route established in Nebraska. The first postal carrier appointed was Frank R. Robinson, who assumed his duties in June, 1901. He drove a team of horses, and sometimes rode a bicycle. It was necessary to stop at noon to feed the horses and let them rest. He was succeeded by J. Lewis Davis, a Fillmore County homesteader. He drove the first automobile used on the route, a Brush roadster. Upon Mr. Davis's retirement after about 14 years of faithful service, Ernest Soubi carried the mail for a short time.

In June, 1916, a young man, Preston P. Ogden, became the carrier. He was soon claimed by the Navy in World War I. Desiring to do his bit toward winning the war, a Methodist minister from Exeter, the Rev. F. C. McVay, drove every day to Fairmont and carried the mail on R.F.D. No. 1 until Mr. Ogden returned from the Navy. Mr. Ogden remained a most efficient and faithful carrier until his retirement on March 26, 1962. At that time, Willis Biegert of Geneva took the route and is still the carrier.

Other carriers working out of Fairmont over the years have included Floyd Abbott, George Rudisell, George Curtiss, H. Carson, S. E. Beckman, M. E. Mellin, O. A. Izer, W. Crandall, and E. Bender.

FAMILIES

A. M. Black, a Civil War veteran, settled in the township in the early 1870's. He homesteaded the SW 1/4 of Sec. 22, which still remains the property of his descendants. His farm was one of the finest in the township. Much of the lumber he needed was transported in wagons from Lincoln. He helped organize the Presbyterian Church and was a faithful member until his death on November 15, 1919.

Another pioneer farmer was Jacob Witter, who arrived in 1870 by wagon from Illinois. He settled on the NE 1/4 of Sec. 12, where he built a sod house for his family, later adding a fine set of farm buildings. He took great pride in maintaining one of the best homesteads in the area.

Other settlers who should be remembered were: A. B. Center, C. B. Thompson and his brother John, J. Kemper, E. Miner, J. Leffer, and J. Hall. This list is necessarily incomplete.

An early sod house, built in 1878. (The people in the picture are Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Brown.)

Fairmont

Written by A. L. Brown (in 1954)

In the spring of 1871, the South Platte Land Company, following usual practices, sent four ex-soldiers into this locality to pre-empt four quarters of land not deeded to the railroad. This section was to become Fairmont, Nebraska.

The site chosen for the town was in the west portion of the section, about one block south and two blocks west of where the Methodist Church now stands. Four board shacks were built on the four inner corners of the area, each shack located on a different quarter-section. Here offices were established while the South Platte Land Company completed transactions for title to the tract. The land company then surveyed the town site and offered lots for sale. Several buildings were put up in the fall of 1871, and by May, 1872, the town boasted 40 structures.

The town's fortunes improved with the arrival of the first Burlington train. The opportunity to live in a "railroad town" attracted new settlers. In addition, one train laid over each night in Fairmont, giving citizens a chance to see new faces and to hear the latest news from eastern parts. It made home seem a little closer for the early settlers.

Stores started to spring up even while ground was still being broken for the town site. J. E. Porter's general store, located on the corner now occupied by the Cubbinson Block, was among the first. In the spring of 1872, William Spade, a pioneer carpenter, built a store just north of Porter's for his brother, Dan Spade, who sold general merchandise.

The post office, called Hesperia before it had a town to be identified with, was moved from its first location on the northeast corner of the section into the Spade store. The
postmaster was W. H. Brown. As the business district expanded, the post office was moved to the Talmage corner, one side street west of the present Farmers State Bank building.

The new postmaster was Roy Finney. Pictures of this new post office appeared in the Fillmore Chronicle on April 14, 1927, and again on April 4, 1939.

By the fall of 1872, the name of Fairmont had been tested and accepted by residents of the new town. A school building, hotels, more stores, lumber yards, and coal and feed yards were under construction. Three brickyards were started to supply materials. One of the brickyards was west of the branch railroad line leading toward Geneva. The other two were located east of what is now the railroad track leading toward Wolfe. Evidence of their efforts may still be seen in Fairmont today. Some of the buildings made from bricks supplied by these companies which still remain are the Farmers State Bank, the hotel, the library, and the Old Opera House.

Fairmont has had three different “main streets” during its first century. The first main street (Fillmore Avenue) ran from the west side of the present depot south to the Cubbison Block corner, a distance of two blocks. The second main street (Jefferson Street) ran from the Cubbison corner east; and the third, Fairmont Avenue (often called, erroneously, “Main Street”), became and remained the main business street. The citizens were not fickle, and the changes of main street were not the result of any political tug-of-war. Fire and water, or the lack of water, determined the changes.

A disastrous fire that in 1886 burned the Cubbison Block and other business houses on Fillmore Avenue was responsible for the first change. At that time Fairmont had a water-pressure system for fire protection which consisted largely of uniformed Civil War veterans. A disastrous fire that in 1886 burned the Cubbison Block and other business houses on Fillmore Avenue was responsible for the first change. At that time Fairmont had a water-pressure system for fire protection which consisted largely of uniformed Civil War veterans.

Rather than rebuild on the destroyed site, the business­men started a new main street running east from the Cub­bison corner. Once again business houses opened up on both sides of the street. Burned out once, the town turned largely to brick for its new stores. The old wooden water mains were replaced with iron pipes. But Mother Nature still had a trick up her sleeve for the citizens of Fairmont. In the early summer of 1899, she hurled tremendous gusts of wind and rain at the elevated water tower and toppled it. Then, on April 19, 1901, fire destroyed the R. G. Hall hardware store, the E. O. Miller store, a tobacco store, and S. F. Ashby, M.D., and Dr. Horner, the dentist. This fire was enough to change the history of Jefferson Street and turn it into a side street.

In 1901, Bert Aldrich began construction of a modern steel standpipe, which is still in use. The town sank two new wells to guarantee an adequate water supply, extended the mains throughout the town to give homes greater protection, and acquired a large steam plant to operate the pump.

The first mayor of Fairmont was E. L. Martin. Sitting with him on the council were John Cubbison, F. G. Usher, William Gaylord, and Fred Page.

Mayor Martin was both prominent and colorful. He was about the same height as “Uncle Sam” and had chin whiskers and longish hair. For patriotic occasions, he dressed himself with a day of rest and relaxation. Bunting and Chinese lanterns gave the city streets a festive air. A superb noon dinner was served; games and sports were arranged, and time was allowed for visiting and the exchange of both tall and short tales. A public speaker made the customary re­marks, and a band concert climaxed the program. The event proved so popular that it became an annual affair. In honor of the early merchants and their patrons, the occasion is called the “Old Settlers’ Picnic Day.” It is still held annually in July or August. The date varies slightly from year to year, depending on the dates when a carnival is available.

By the year 1888, Fairmont’s population was pushing 1,800; it was the metropolis of the area. Business firms began to fan out more widely. The growth resulted largely from the start of new business and industry which, in turn, created new job opportunities. The railroad, for instance, gave employment to more than 50 men who worked in the depots, the freight yards, the roundhouse, and on maintenance and coal and water crews.

Real-estate offices opened up to aid the families searching for a home or a farm site. These were followed by insurance agencies, two weekly newspapers, and the beginning of the town’s professional class: lawyers, doctors, den­tists. Fairmont Avenue was lined with men’s and women’s clothing stores, shoe shops, wagon and blacksmith shops, and an implements dealer.

One of the larger businesses was the Fairmont Cream­ery, which used the town as headquarters for its widely scattered services. It gave employment to butter makers, cream gatherers, packers and freight handlers, office and clerical help, and so made up the town’s largest single pay roll. Production capacity at one time was 100,000 pounds of butter per year.

Other enterprises which helped give Fairmont the right to call itself a metropolis of sorts were four hotels or inns, four livery and feed stables, and two lumber yards.

Fairmont was not without manufacturing in those early days. One of the major industries was the Chase & Clark Hardware, Tin, and Cornice Works. It had a contract to produce 1,000 20-gallon cans for the creamery. The company’s ornamental cornices were used to decorate the fronts of most of the town’s brick buildings.

Another early industry was a monument works established by R. Conroy. White marble and granite were shipped here by the flatcar-load from Vermont. Fairmonters shaped and polished the stone. Fairmont also had a flour mill with a daily capacity of 80 barrels, and two cheese factories. Other products manufactured in Fairmont were incubators, sanitary mite and louse-proof chicken roosts, and post-hole diggers.

Before an annual county fair was set up at Geneva, Fairmont boasted an exhibit center where livestock, grains, vegetables, and handicrafts could be displayed. The 40-acre site was at the extreme northwest corner of the city area and was encircled by a race track. No fair was complete without horseback races and trick and fancy riding. After visiting the exhibits, Fairmonters and their visitors would gather around the track to eat dust and cheer their favorite drivers, who rode on buckboards or light conveyances drawn by two horses. Bicycle racing also made a place for itself on the Fairmont track. It was here that Robert Bennet, later to

[Picture from Lewis M. Whitehead]

View of Fairmont (July 4, 1876).

During those early years, no Memorial Day or Fourth of July parade was complete unless Mayor Martin, thus patriotically attired, was at the head of the marching forces, which consisted largely of uniformed Civil War veterans.

In 1876, Fairmont merchants decided to show their appreciation to their patrons throughout the area by providing all with a day of rest and relaxation. Bunting and Chinese lanterns gave the city streets a festive air. A superb noon dinner was served; games and sports were arranged, and time was allowed for visiting and the exchange of both tall and short tales. A public speaker made the customary re­marks, and a band concert climaxed the program. The event proved so popular that it became an annual affair. In honor of the early merchants and their patrons, the occasion is called the “Old Settlers’ Picnic Day.” It is still held annually in July or August. The date varies slightly from year to year, depending on the dates when a carnival is available.

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gain national fame as a bicycle racer, first raced his bicycle against other riders and fast horses. The fairgrounds included a horticulture building, some permanent horse and livestock barns, and a judges' stand. The first fair of the Fillmore County Agricultural Association, organized in May, 1872, was held in Fairmont in 1875. This fair prospered, and continued for several years after the establishment of the Fillmore County Fair in Geneva.

The town acquired its first weekly newspaper, the Fairmont Bulletin, in 1872. It was not an immediate financial success and passed through the hands of numerous unsuccessful publishers during its first 15 years. It was purchased in 1886 by Joseph Frazier and renamed the Fillmore Chronicle. Frazier and his son, L. W. Frazier, operated the paper; it remained in the family until the death of the son on November 19, 1954. After that date, it was published by John Edgecombe of Geneva, until it was merged (May 1, 1957) with the Nebraska Signal, of Geneva.

In the early days, Fairmont boasted a second paper, the Nebraska Signal, edited and published by Will R. Gaylord and Dr. J. B. Brazelton on the first floor of the old Opera House. This newspaper was founded in 1881 and was moved to Geneva by Frank Edgecombe in 1896.

The town's waterworks system was acquired from B. E. Aldrich by T. J. Bender in 1908. He added an electric plant which provided for street lights and home electricity. At first electricity was available only from early evening until midnight; later, service was provided on Monday and Tuesday when the housewives did their washing and ironing.

Man is by nature gregarious, and five fraternal organizations appear in the town's history. The Masons were granted a charter in 1874, perhaps a step or two ahead of the Odd Fellows. Other lodges active in the town's early years were the Woodmen, the Workmen, and the Knights of Pythias. The Masons and Odd Fellows remain active in Fairmont today; each group is housed in a building equipped with lounge and recreation facilities, and meeting and dining rooms.

### Fairmont Township Homestead Map

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While people built their homes and developed their farms and businesses, they also took time to build churches. Fairmont in its fledgling years had five churches: Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Catholic.

In 1923, at the urging of the Rev. David Honsaker of the Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian and Congregational churches merged, to solve a membership problem. The following year, the Rev. William Perry was named minister for the Presbyterian-Congregationalists, and plans were drawn for a church building. The money was raised by subscription. Cornerstone ceremonies were held on October 11, 1924, and dedication services for the new church—of red brick trimmed with white stone—were held in April, 1926. This Federated Church and the Methodist Church are the surviving churches that today minister to the religious needs of Fairmont citizens.

Methodist Church, Fairmont 1960.
Photo from W. E. Fleischauer

Federated Church (Presbyterian and Congregational), Fairmont (1960).
Photo from A. L. Brown
Photo from A. L. Brown
Methodist Church, Fairmont (before 1914).

Photo from A. L. Brown
Congregational Church, Fairmont, about 1900.

Photo from A. L. Brown
Presbyterian Church, Fairmont, about 1912.

Photo from Mrs. Alta Roper
Catholic Church, Fairmont, Nebr. (before 1900).
One result of a growing town is overcrowded schoolrooms. Such was the case in 1885 in Fairmont. Two ward grade schools, one on the north side and one on the south side, were built to relieve the crowded conditions. When they were built, the two schools were considered among the finest of their time. By 1908, further changes were in order, and the town approved a bond issue for the construction of a new school building, centrally located, to accommodate all grades. An auditorium, a gymnasium, and more classrooms were added later to absorb a steadily increasing number of youngsters.

Special mention should be made of several educators who devoted a major portion of their lives to educating Fairmont's young. High on the list would be Miss Alice Jackson, who taught the fourth and fifth grades in the Fairmont grade schools, one on the north side and one on the south side, as expected, but she also interested her students in wildlife, flowers, and nature in general. Her contributions to the Fairmont school were to be long remembered by her former pupils. At a meeting of Fairmont alumni in May, 1951, a motion was made and carried that the association should provide a memorial gift to the schools in her name. Miss Margaret Aldrich, Mrs. Helen Malsbary Brown, and A. L. Brown were appointed as a committee to choose a project. In view of Miss Jackson's unending interest in the welfare of her children, the committee decided in favor of playground equipment for the grades as well as for the high school.

Mimeographed letters stating the cause and the purpose of the project were sent to all members of the alumni association and produced about $900 in donations. School parents turned out in force to install the equipment. Land adjacent to the school grounds was obtained to permit the development of a football field and sports area. Bleachers were erected and sod was planted, and floodlights were installed for night games.

Lewis Goodrich, superintendent of the Fairmont schools in 1896, was the father of Willard E. Goodrich, a county board member representing Fairmont and West Blue townships from 1948 to 1960. Miss Carrie Dewey was another early teacher who taught both in country schools and in Fairmont.

Street paving came in 1919, when the city council voted pavement for certain districts, with the costs to be paid by landowners whose property faced the areas to be paved. Because a major highway (U.S. 81) entered the town from the north section line, the council voted to have city pavement run from the street connection with this section south to within one block of the Methodist Church, then west for three blocks. Before this was completed, another paving district was voted, this one embracing the main business area. A hard brick paving was used for the surfacing.

In recent years, highways have reshaped the geographical outline of Fairmont. Specifically, U.S. Highways 6 and 81 cross in Fairmont, and the other going southwest to Helvey, its intersection coupled with its markets, its consolidated school, its churches, and the hospitality of its citizens, offer ample evidence that Fairmont will have a good future as well as a proud past.

The following account of early Fairmont appeared in the Bulletin on June 19, 1873:

Fairmont was laid out in November, 1871, by the B. & M. Railroad Company and contains at this writing somewhere between one and two hundred inhabitants. It is building rapidly and bids fair to be one of the best towns along the road. It has an intelligent, thrifty, wide-awake population, who believe in churches and schools and have no use for gin-mills. There is no liquor sold in the town and not a licensed saloon in Fillmore County. Fairmont has a Methodist Church and is building a $5,000 schoolhouse. Preaching is kept up by several denominations in the town and vicinity.

The town has two hotels, the Fairmont House and Gaylord House. The proprietor of the latter, Mr. S. G. Gaylord, is an old hotel keeper formerly of the American House, South Bend, Indiana. His house is one of the neatest and best kept hotels in Nebraska. Though it is a small place it is Multum in parvo, and we have yet to hear of a man grumbling at the fare of the Gaylord House. Mr. G. is building a large hotel and railroad eating house near the depot at an expense of about $5,000, which he expects to occupy in a few weeks. When this is completed Fairmont will be better supplied with hotels than most towns of its size in Nebraska. Mr. Gaylord was the first settler of the town site, and is one of the leading spirits in every public enterprise that promises to be of any advantage to the town. Fairmont contains one newspaper, four general stores, one drugstore, one hardware store, two lumber yards, one blacksmith shop, one milliner shop, one harness shop, one shoe shop, two hotels, two livery stables, and one butcher shop.

S. J. Richard keeps the Fairmont House. This is a snug hotel, centrally located and doing a good business. On account of failing health Mr. Richard wishes to sell out and leave the country, and this is an excellent chance for some man wishing to engage in the hotel business in a live and growing town, where the business is not overdone.

Pinney Brothers keep a large store and deal in every article usually sold in a general store except dry goods. Their store of fancy and staple groceries is very large, and we saw something less than an acre of agricultural implement in their yard that they had not yet got housed. They are old
settlers here and keep the post office in their store. They are first-class business men and hold a very large trade of country produce of all kinds, as well as store goods. D. A. Phillips, besides being the handsomest druggist in this section of the country. He deals in everything usually kept in drugstores, including paints, oils, etc. Mr. Phillips graduated in pharmacy at Ann Arbor Michigan University, and thoroughly understands his business. He is a shrewd, bright young man, and is a bachelor, will be a splendid catch for some Nebraska belle. His good looks won't hurt business.

At Phillips' we made the acquaintance of Frank H. Newton, a dentist by profession and a splendid good fellow by practice. He offered his services gratis to pull all our teeth but we declined the generous offer and shall convince him that we were in the right of it the next time we visit the City Hotel.

P. P. Dawson has a very large hardware store and tin shop. His building is 25 x 85 feet and crammed full of tinware, stoves, shelf, builders' and general hardware and cutlery. He also keeps a large assortment of agricultural implements, including Reed breaking plows, Schutler wagons, and Carter & Planter and Garden City and John Deere mortgages, including Reed breaking plows, Schutler wagons, and Carter & Planter and Garden City and John Deere mortgages, including Reed breaking plows, Schutler wagons, and Carter & Planter and Garden City and John Deere mortgages.

The City Hotel is bound to maintain its popularity with such a genuine fellow for a landlord. The City Hotel is bound to maintain its popularity with such a genuine fellow for a landlord. He has the only meat market in the town and supplies all the country around with various articles of food. He has the only meat market in the town and supplies all the country around with various articles of food. His building is 25 x 85 feet and crammed full of tinware, stoves, shelf, builders' and general hardware and cutlery.

farms, negotiate loans, buy and sell mortgages, sell tickets to any point in the world, and in fact do a business that would astonish your eastern readers. Mr. Bliss came here in ’71, from Missouri, Mr. Shelley is from Illinois, and has been here a little more than five years.

Conner & Maule, attorneys and counsellors, are men of recognized legal ability, and, having the fullest confidence of the people of this section of the state, thereby enjoy a very large practice in the county, state, and federal courts. They are extensively known as the leading attorneys of Fillmore County, a place where they have made for themselves very enviable records, and are thoroughly identified with the interest of Fairmont and Fillmore County. Mr. Maule has occupied for the past two years the position of district attorney of the first judicial district of Nebraska, and as an evidence that he has given complete and general satisfaction we mention the fact that he has been renominated on the Republican ticket for the same position for another term. Both these gentlemen are young in years, but being constant and applied law students, their opinions upon all matters pertaining to law are regarded as reliable. They have a very large and complete library. We might mention the fact, also, that their collection department is well and systematically arranged and carefully looked after by Mr. Harry Finigan, a young gentleman who has been reading law with them for the past year and who is regarded by all as one of the most efficient accountants and bookkeepers in the state.

George W. Fifield, attorney at law, is a young man of recognized ability, and enjoys liberal practice in the county, state and federal courts. Mr. F. has the fullest confidence of the people of this county, and carefully and promptly attends to all business entrusted to him. He pays particular attention to collections, and has one of the largest businesses in this line in the state. He is in every respect a sharp business man. He is a justice of the peace, attorney at law, real-estate agent, a great admirer of Shakespeare, a jolly good fellow, and a regular Nilsson of the male persuasion. “Dick” is one of the old settlers of Fillmore County, and is a Badger born (i.e., Wisconsin) boy.

Brazelton & Farnsworth are physicians and surgeons, and they enjoy a lucrative practice. These gentlemen are experienced physicians, Dr. B. having had 25 years’ practice. He was in the 134th Indiana Regiment, and has lived in the county for about 18 months, and likes Nebraska better than his old home, Illinois.

Messrs. Ruffner & Anderson are extensive dealers in dry goods, groceries, clothing, boots and shoes, hats and caps, and everything, in fact, pertaining to a first-class stock of general merchandise, and inform the people of Fillmore County that they will sell their goods exclusively for cash and are thereby enabled to sell at bottom prices. In fact, they do not propose to be undersold; and by fair and liberal dealing, and selling exclusively for cash, they have gained the confidence of the people of this section and are consequently enjoying a very large trade. Mr. Ruffner conducts the affairs of the firm at this point, and Mr. Anderson resides in Glenwood, Mills County, Iowa.

J. W. Price is the name of the proprietor of one of the largest elevators in Fairmont, and in fact one of the largest along the line of the road. Mr. Price is handling a very large amount of grain, having shipped this season 130 cars from this point, and will, before the season is over, ship about 300 more cars. His elevator at this point has a storage capacity of 12,000 bushels. He also has another large elevator in Granton from which he ships considerable grain. Mr. Price enjoys the reputation of paying the highest price for all kinds of grain, and consequently has a liberal share of the grain from this point.

C. N. Paine & Co. have a large stock of lumber which is offered at prices, in some instances, below those of any Lincoln firm. The yard is directly under the management of Mr. Paine, a gentleman guarantee that the business is transacted to a dot, and that Paine & Co. will not be undersold by any firm. Their stock is kept up sufficient to supply the demand, and it is no unusual matter for several carloads of lumber to arrive daily direct from the mills, which are located at Oshkosh and Merrillan, Wisconsin. Paine & Co. have one other very extensive lumber yard at Hastings. Mr. Gordon was formerly in the office of Tuttle at Lincoln, and thoroughly understands his business.

Tidball & Fuller are proprietors of one of the largest lumber yards at this point, which is directly under the charge of Mr. C. H. Kittridge, a gentleman who thoroughly understands the lumber business. This firm has yards also at Crete and Friendville, and carry very large stocks at each place. They sell their lumber on very small margins, and consequently enjoy a very large trade in this county.

Stuart Brothers are extensive grain dealers and have one of the largest elevators in the city. They probably handle as much grain and stock as any shippers along the road. Have been in business about six years, and came from Manchester, Illinois.

Mr. P. P. Dawson is an extensive dealer in hardware, stoves, and tinware, and carries a very large stock of everything in his line. Mr. Dawson is a young man who thoroughly understands his business, and by fair and liberal dealing has built up a very large trade in the county. Mr. Dawson has been in business in this city since 1871, and is one of the pioneers. He is also the proprietor of Dawson’s Hall.

Martin & Noble are extensive dealers in wagons and farm machinery. They have a large line of McCormick corn planters, Buckeye drills and cultivators, iron and wood seeder, and tare plows, and do an extensive business in hay and wood. They are also agents for the celebrated Nichols, Shepard & Co. “Vibrator,” and they sell a great many of them. Both gentlemen are pioneer settlers and are from Wisconsin.

S. F. Lockwood has the only exclusive boot and shoe store in town. He has just opened out a full line of boots and shoes of all kinds which he is selling cheap as the cheapest. He makes a specialty of custom work, and pays particular attention to repairing. He came from Ohio last January.

A. S. Shepard is the polite and efficient postmaster at this place and has two assistants. Mr. S. has had charge of the government business here for the past five years. He is gentlemanly, always pleasant, and in fact has all the qualifications of a good postmaster. This gentleman came here when there was no Fairmont, and has witnessed the unalloyed prosperity and progress of his favorite town. He is the general dealer of satisfaction, and he has similarly furnished us with the following report of business transacted at this office. Amount of stamps sold during the year ending Sept. 30, 1878, $2,000; number of money orders issued in the past year ending Sept 30, 1,239. The mails are at least one-half heavier for the present year than in 1877.

H. Pinney is a wholesale and retail dealer in farm machinery, hardware, carriages, buggies, spring wagons, etc., and carries a very large and general stock of everything in his line. Prominent among the machinery he handles we might mention the Studebaker, Mitchell, and Kansas wagons, the Buckeye mower and reaper, Wood’s harvester and self-binder, and makes a specialty of fine buggies and carriages of every make and pattern. Mr. Pinney has resided in Fairmont about six years and is recognized as one of the leading and most reliable citizens.

Gorham, Treadwell & Co. are extensive dealers in agricultural implements and farm machinery, and positively proclaim that they will handle no machinery that is not as good as any in the market. They handle among other machinery all of the celebrated Marsh goods, the Harrison wagons, the Glidden steel barb wire for fencing, and all the Gorham goods. They part of the improvement firms of Fairmont, and their fair and liberal dealing with the farmers, have their entire confidence, and are consequently enjoying a very large trade.

J. A. Aikins manufactures and deals in all kinds of harness and saddlery and keeps a very large stock of everything in his line constantly in store. Mr. Aikins in a thorough mechanic and turns out none but first-class work. He has resided in Fairmont about one year, and came from Pawnee, Nebraska.

Lewis F. Whitehead carries a fine stock of dry goods,
boots and shoes, hats and caps, and a general stock of notions. He has without doubt one of the neatest stores in Fillmore County, and does his share of the business. Mr. Whitehead has been here about five years, and came from New York. Mr. Whitehead also has branch houses in Harvard and Friendville.

W. C. Ziegler carries an extensive stock of dry goods, ready-made clothing, boots and shoes, hats and caps, notions, and everything usually kept in a first-class establishment. Mr. Ziegler is at present suffering with an attack of typhoid fever, and during his illness Mr. M. H. Brown, well known in Fillmore County as a clever gentleman, has charge of the store.

Mellen & McNeal are extensive dealers in hardware stoves, and tinware, and carry a very large stock of everything in their line. These gentlemen have been in business here but a short time, having purchased the stock lately owned by Mr. N. H. Pinney, but are by fair and liberal dealing building up a very large trade in this county.

I. H. Williams is a manufacturer of and dealer in harness, saddles, collars, bridles, whips, halters, combs, brushes, etc. He pays particular attention to repairing, and warrants all work. Mr. Williams is an old experienced saddle and harness manufacturer, and formerly carried on extensive business in England. He came here in 1871.

Atherton, Willson & Son are the leading druggists of Fairmont, and carry a fine large stock of drugs, medicines, patent medicines, oils, paints, varnish, toilet articles, stationery, books, notions, etc. They also have an extensive jewelry establishment, this branch of business being carried on by Will S. Willson. This firm sells a great many groceries, also, and their trade comes from all portions of the county.

Blakesley House—A. Blakesley, proprietor—is the only first-class hotel in the city, and Mr. Blakesley thoroughly understands his business as a landlord, never overlooking anything that will add to the comfort of his guests.

C. Beecher, blacksmith and wagon maker, has rather extensive shops and is prepared to do all kinds of repairing of farm machinery. Mr. Beecher keeps none but the best mechanics and turns out only first-class work. He has resided in the county about four years.

Blakesley, Carson & Co. are the proprietors of one of the largest livery, feed, and sale stables in the city, and they keep their stables well stocked with fine horses and carriages. Parties wishing a team can get on short notice as nobby a turn-out at this stable as can be found anywhere in the West.

Mrs. A. Christian has one of the neatest millinery establishments in the West, which she keeps well stocked with a fine line of millinery, notions, and fancy goods. Mrs. Christian is thoroughly conversant with every branch of her business and is well informed in all the very latest styles and fashions. She enjoys a very large trade. Has been in business about two years, and came from Plano, Illinois.

Prescott & Chapin are contractors and builders, and are recognized as gentlemen who are thoroughly conversant with every branch of their business, to which fact the excellence of their work will bear witness.

Levi Jones handles groceries, provisions, queensware, glassware, canned fruits, etc.

O. H. Martin & Co. have a stock of drugs, medicines, paints, oils, perfumeries, and toilet goods.
The following passages are extracts from a historical article in the Fairmont Bulletin, January 3, 1884:

The town, as originally surveyed in October, 1871, comprised the NE ¼ and 460 feet of the NW ¼ of Sec. 30, T8, R3W, in all comprising 188.67 acres. The first sermon was preached in the fall of 1871, at the new railroad depot, by Rev. C. W. Gue. Late the same year the building of the Methodist Episcopal Church was commenced. This was the first church edifice in the county. J. W. Stewart was pastor.

The first newspaper, called the Fairmont Bulletin, was established early in May, 1872, by Will R. Gaylord. The first death occurred in the summer of 1872, and it was that of a young child of Mr. and Mrs. William Chapin. The first marriage took place in the fall of 1872, and it was that of Clarence C. Chapin and Miss Morgan.

The early history of Fairmont is marked by no remarkable events other than its wonderful progress. In the spring of 1873 the town had attained such size that it was determined to become incorporated as a village, which was accomplished May 26, 1873, and A. S. Shepard, H. L. Edwards, W. C. Ziegler, J. E. Porter, and B. F. Parham were appointed trustees.

Among the first acts of the new village board was to secure the laying out of a park adjoining the town site. The town company donated the land, and a fine park, comprising a little over seven acres, was laid out, and, in due time, was planted to trees. This park has ever since been the pride of the village, and has received careful attention. The result is that at this date the trees have attained sufficient size to afford good shade, and the ground having been sown to orchard grass, the park presents a very attractive appearance.

In 1873, the schoolhouse was built, and was 24' x 48' in dimensions, with two wings, each 10' x 24', and the entire building two stories high. The schoolhouse grounds comprise an entire block, which was donated by the town company. This was planted to trees.

Fairmont continued to improve very fast until the summer of 1874, when the grasshoppers ruined the crop throughout the country tributary to it, when a dull period followed for about two years.

Churches and Schools

The church societies of Fairmont are the Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Catholic, and Episcopal. The first four named have church buildings. The Methodist Episcopal church was built in the fall of 1871; the Presbyterian in 1873; the Congregational in 1881, and the Catholic in 1882.

The schools are in a prosperous condition. To the large schoolhouse erected in 1873, an addition has been built, 24' x 32', and two stories high. The school is well graded and is divided into four departments. Great care is taken to secure good instructors, and the pupils in attendance make rapid progress.

Societies

Fairmont Lodge, No. 48, A.F. & A.M., was organized in 1874. It is now in a prosperous condition and has a membership of 45 in good standing.

Hesperian Lodge, No. 42, I.O. of O.F., was organized in 1874. It is in a prosperous condition, and has a membership of 55.


Fillmore Lodge, No. 1463, Knights of Honor, was organized March 10, 1879, with 13 members. It now has 38, and is in a flourishing condition.

E.A.U. Lodge, No. 218, is an insurance association organized in 1881.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union has a working organization here. The society was organized in 1881.

Business Interests

There are two banking institutions in Fairmont. Chas. S. Miller & Co. began business early in 1882, as successors to the banking house of E. B. Branch & Co., which was established in 1875.

The Fillmore County Bank was organized January 1, 1878, by J. O. Chase. On the 1st of April, 1880, it was incorporated with a paid-up capital of $20,000. J. O. Chase is president, and Irwin B. Chase, cashier.

The Fairmont Steam Flouring Mill was built in 1878 by Welch & Wiley, at a cost of $6,000. Mr. Wiley retired from the firm in 1879, and the firm then changed to J. H. Welch & Co., who added improvements to the value of $2,500, and continued the business until the 22nd day of November, 1883, when they retired, being succeeded by the present proprietors, Mr. E. B. Welch, who contemplates making extensive improvements in the spring, substituting crushing rolls for the present system of burrs, and increasing the output to 100 barrels per day. The present proprietor is a thoroughly competent miller, and the flour made at the Fairmont mill is second to none in the State.

The Fairmont Dairy Association was organized and began operations in the manufacture of cheese on February 1, 1882. About 80,000 pounds of cheese are made in each month, most of which finds a market in Omaha, Lincoln, Denver, and Atchison.

The Fairmont Wagon shops, Beecher & Buckmaster, proprietors, besides the manufacture of wagons and carriages, make corn planters and cultivators.

Fairmont has two grain elevators. The one controlled by Geo. H. Warren & Co. has a capacity of 30,000 bushels, and has handled during the last year 205 carloads of grain.

The one controlled by A. Salisbury has a capacity of 25,000 bushels, and has handled 290,000 bushels of grain during the past year, paying out for the same $104,000.

The Press

The Fairmont Bulletin was established May 1, 1872, by Will R. Gaylord. The Bulletin is a seven-column paper, folio, and Republican in politics. Chas. Turner is the editor and manager.

The Nebraska Signal is a weekly newspaper published by Brazelton & Putney. It was established October 27, 1881. It is a six-column paper, anti-monopoly in politics.

Telephone Exchange

The telephone exchange owned by the Nebraska Telephone Company, established September, 1882, Will R. Gaylord manager, has at the present time 30 instruments in use in Fairmont, and the number is being constantly added to. The central office attends to 500 calls per day, on an average. They also have connections with Geneva.

Post Office

There were issued from the office at Fairmont during the year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,350 postal orders, amounting to</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>650 postal orders, paid, amounting to</td>
<td>13,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamps and stamped envelopes sold</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal notes, since September 3</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales this quarter stamps and envelopes</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: $42,200

The sales of stamps and stamped envelopes, last quarter, with a reduction of one-third in the price of stamps, amounting to $650, shows that the business of the office is increasing.

Livestock

E. L. Martin, dealer in livestock, reports the number of hogs shipped for the year 1883, at 6,565; number of pounds, 1,717,000; amount paid out during the year, $80,600.

Lumber

The Badger lumber yard; Tidball & Fuller, lumber and coal; W. N. Stewart, dealer in coal; and other coal dealers make annual sales amounting to $85,000.
The Professions

Are well and ably represented. The lawyers engaged in the practice of their profession number seven, as follows: John Barsby, J. W. Eller, Will R. Gaylord, John P. Maule, Rushton & Mathewson, W. A. Sloan, and B. C. Whitman.

The Justices of the peace are R. G. Pinney and B. C. Whitman.


There are three practicing physicians, as follows: D. R. Farnsworth, G. W. Johnston, and R. Willson.

Three hotels cater to the wants of the public. They are the City Hotel, L. Steiger, proprietor; the Pacific Hotel, J. E. Clark, proprietor; and the Henry House, Mrs. Shepherd, proprietress.

Dr. L. S. Moore, in connection with his drugstore, is a practicing dentist, though he does not practice as a physician.

Business Houses—alphabetically arranged. Amount of stock carried:

- Beree & Backmaster, wagon shop................................................ $ 600
- Beacham, A. ................................................................. 1,000
- Badger, lumber yard.......................................................... 3,500
- Chapin & Co., groceries......................................................... 4,000
- Christian, Mrs. A., dry goods and millinery.............................. 12,000
- Conway, F. & J. dailor yard...................................................... 400
- Cubbison, J. & Co., dry goods................................................... 8,000
- Curtis, H., agricultural implements.......................................... 8,000
- Dumont, C. W., confectionery, etc........................................... 700
- Howard & Dye, livery........................................................... 4,500
- Hohn, J. H., boots and shoes.................................................. 3,000
- Heathon, T. J., restaurant .................................................... 900
- McIntyre, blacksmith ........................................................... 3,500
- Melkonian & Melkon, hardware............................................... 5,000
- Morris, Richard, organ and musical instruments....................... 60,000
- Martin & Co., hogs and coal..................................................... 60,000
- Moore, L. S. & Co., bankers—responsibility.............................. 80,000
- Noble, Agnes, furniture.......................................................... 3,000
- Oldham & Callans, general merchandise.................................... 7,000
- Patterson, W. F., furnaces..................................................... 3,500
- Peck, Wm., blacksmith.......................................................... 5,000
- Phillips, D. J., confectionery and fruit...................................... 800
- Peth, Geo., harness and saddlery............................................. 1,800
- Pollard, J. N., groceries........................................................ 8,000
- Porter & Son, general merchandise........................................... 10,000
- Prescott & Bennett, contractors and builders.............................. 3,500
- Rullison, Geo., groceries....................................................... 5,000
- Ruffner & Anderson, general merchandise................................. 4,000
- Sawyer, E. C., drugs and stationery.......................................... 4,000
- Sargant, M., drugs.............................................................. 2,000
- Solomon & Nathan, dry goods, etc........................................... 3,000
- Stiles & Graves, hardware....................................................... 3,000
- Stewart, W. N., coal dealer.................................................... 1,000
- Steiger, L., groceries............................................................ 1,000
- Talman, J. W., agricultural implements..................................... 5,000
- Thompson, H., livery........................................................... 4,000
- Thompson, H., confectionery................................................... 500
- Tubb & Fuller, limer............................................................. 1,000
- Williams, J. H., harness......................................................... 1,000
- Willson, W., jeweler.............................................................. 2,500

Total: $193,300

Lumber and timber (not included in the above table) $85,000

Other stock carried (but not listed in the table), estimated to be 11,500

Total: $298,800

FAIRMONT CITY LIBRARY

This account of the library was written in 1953 by Miss Zola R. Shoemaker, the librarian:

When the Fairmont Woman's Club was organized in January, 1916, they chose for their civic betterment project "A Library at Some Future Date."

The first money raised for the library was $3 from the sale of a collie pup given to the club by L. A. Whitten. In the summer of 1919, the Red Cross gave a dinner for the returned soldiers and sailors. The sum of $128.15 was left over, and it was voted to use this for a memorial to our soldiers and sailors. This fund was held until 1934, by which time it amounted to $202.58 and was given to the book committee, which purchased 250 books for the library. They placed in the front of each book a bookplate "In Honor of our World War Veterans."

In 1922, the Woman's Club began looking for a room for a library. The city council consented to their using the City Hall every Wednesday and Saturday of each month. On April 7, 1922, the Fairmont Library Association was organized. The first officers were Myron Gibson, president; Verdelia Brown, vice-president; Mary Badger, secretary; Alice Jackson, treasurer; and Mrs. C. W. Woods, Dr. M. W. Deffenbaugh, and M. E. Boren, board members. Membership dues were $1 a year. Mrs. W. A. Whitcomb was hired as librarian at a salary of $75 cents a day; she served in the position for 9½ years.

The formal opening of the library occurred on October 14, 1922, at which time punch and wafers were served. In January, 1923, the library was insured for $300. The first Library Association must have died, as no more records can be found.

In June, 1931, Miss Jackson talked to the Woman's Club about moving the library to the Wyatt house. Rent for the summer would be free, but the club would have to clean and repair the building. The club did this with the help of the Boy Scouts, and the library was moved the last of June.

In January, 1932, the Library Association was reorganized. The new officers were Alice Jackson, president; W. R. Dorrance, vice-president; Mrs. M. M. Akin, secretary; Mrs. B. E. Aldrich, secretary; and Mrs. M. E. Boren, Mrs. William Winsor, and R. V. Starks, board members. On March 15, 1932, bids were read for the job of librarian. Miss Shoemaker's bid being the lowest, she was elected and began work on March 23, 1932. On February 12, 1934, Miss Cubbison offered the southeast room of the Cubbison Building for a library, at a rental of $2.50 a month. We moved on March 29, and on April 7, 1934, had our opening. Punch and wafers were served to 183 callers.

On June 8, 1934, the Library Association closed its books and we became a City Library. A new board was appointed by the mayor, consisting of R. V. Starks, president; W. R. Dorrance, secretary; and Miss Alice Jackson, Mrs. Marnie Kemp, and Mrs. M. E. Boren, board members. A quarter-mill levy was set, out of which the librarian received a salary of $100 a year. At this time we had 4,500 books and 550 borrowers. Many gifts of money and books have been received over the years from friends and organizations: the D.A.R., Campfire, P.E.O., Legion Auxiliary, City of Fairmont, Library Benefits, Royal Highlanders, and Fairmont Women's Club.

Once again we moved, on March 16, 1945, to a city-owned building, on the corner of Fairmont Avenue and Jefferson Street. The building is called the "Library," although it has an apartment upstairs, a basement room, and a rest room. A gas heater was installed, and venetian blinds added much to the comfort of our new home.

I have seen our library grow from 2,000 books to 6,800. I have helped move it three times. May it always remain in its present location! There have been many changes in the more than 22 years I have been librarian.

[Miss Zola Shoemaker ended her service as librarian on April 9, 1955, and was succeeded by Mrs. Russell Snodgrass, who still holds the position in 1967.]

In 1955, the Fairmont Library Association was reorganized with the following officers: Mrs. W. A. Whitcomb, president; Miss Alice Jackson, vice-president; Mrs. M. M. Akin, secretary; Mrs. B. E. Aldrich, secretary; Mrs. M. E. Boren, Mrs. William Winsor, and R. V. Starks, board members. The new officers were Alice Jackson, president; W. R. Dorrance, vice-president; Mrs. M. M. Akin, secretary; Mrs. B. E. Aldrich, secretary; and Mrs. M. E. Boren, Mrs. William Winsor, and R. V. Starks, board members. On March 15, 1932, bids were read for the job of librarian. Miss Shoemaker's bid being the lowest, she was elected and began work on March 23, 1932. On February 12, 1934, Miss Cubbison offered the southeast room of the Cubbison Building for a library, at a rental of $2.50 a month. We moved on March 29, and on April 7, 1934, had our opening. Punch and wafers were served to 183 callers.

On June 8, 1934, the Library Association closed its books and we became a City Library. A new board was appointed by the mayor, consisting of R. V. Starks, president; W. R. Dorrance, secretary; and Miss Alice Jackson, Mrs. Marnie Kemp, and Mrs. M. E. Boren, board members. A quarter-mill levy was set, out of which the librarian received a salary of $100 a year. At this time we had 4,500 books and 550 borrowers. Many gifts of money and books have been received over the years from friends and organizations: the D.A.R., Campfire, P.E.O., Legion Auxiliary, City of Fairmont, Library Benefits, Royal Highlanders, and Fairmont Women's Club.

Once again we moved, on March 16, 1945, to a city-owned building, on the corner of Fairmont Avenue and Jefferson Street. The building is called the "Library," although it has an apartment upstairs, a basement room, and a rest room. A gas heater was installed, and venetian blinds added much to the comfort of our new home.

I have seen our library grow from 2,000 books to 6,800. I have helped move it three times. May it always remain in its present location! There have been many changes in the more than 22 years I have been librarian.

[Miss Zola Shoemaker ended her service as librarian on April 9, 1955, and was succeeded by Mrs. Russell Snodgrass, who still holds the position in 1967.]
FAMILIES

Samuel Smith Shivers was born May 28, 1848, at Gnadenhutten, Tuscarawas County, Ohio. At the age of 14 he moved with his parents to Sullivan County, Indiana, where later he became a schoolteacher. In 1871, he was united in marriage to Marcia A. Gillman and in 1873 they came to Clay County, Kansas, where they were early settlers. They lived there until 1897, when they traded their Kansas land for a home in the north edge of Fairmont. This was their home until 1909, when they purchased a home across the street from the Methodistic parsonage.

They brought four of their children to Nebraska with them—Emmett, Maude, Inez, and Blanche—leaving two married daughters in Kansas—Lillie May (Mrs. Wesley Dever) and Samantha (Mrs. Jerome Clark). About two years later Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Clark also came to Fairmont to make their home. A few years later, Emmett married a Kansas girl and returned there to live. Maude became Mrs. Edson Sharp; Inez, Mrs. Neshit Whitmore; and Blanche, Mrs. Wayne Winchell.

Mr. Shivers busied himself with carpenter work, moving, building, and remodeling houses. A few years later he added to his work the building of cement sidewalks. Much of his work is still in evidence around Fairmont.

Mr. and Mrs. Shivers were devout Christians, being faithful attendants at the Methodist Church, where Mr. Shivers was class leader and a Sunday School teacher as long as his health permitted. He passed away on January 10, 1918, and Mrs. Shivers on February 15, 1923.

— Blanch Shivers Winchell

Wallace Wheeler was born in Brandon, Vermont, March 4, 1840. His father was a carpenter and a wheelwright by trade, and for some time operated a sawmill in Vermont. He moved to Illinois in 1852 and engaged in farming, an occupation which Wallace also followed until 1886, when he became a farm-machinery salesman. In 1889, he came to Nebraska City, where he organized the firm of Wheeler & Tucker, which lasted for three years. He then moved to Lincoln as the western agent of the Marsh Harvester Company, and remained with them until their failure in 1884. He then, in the same year, came to Fairmont, where he organized the Fairmont Creamery Company and served as its president until his death in 1897.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

The first major business enterprise after the establishment of the steam flouring mill was the Fairmont Dairy Association, founded in 1882, as described in the Bulletin article quoted earlier.

The Fairmont Creamery Company was organized as a stock company by Wallace Wheeler and J. H. Rushton in Fairmont in 1884. Mr. Wheeler, its first president, held that post until his death in 1897. The other officers were J. H. Rushton, secretary-treasurer; V. C. Stuart, vice-president; and J. O. Chase and I. V. Chase, board of directors.

The original plant was operated alone in Fairmont until 1888, when the company purchased the Crete Creamery. The Tobias plant was added in 1890, the Fairbury, Dewitt, and Milford plants in 1892, and the Hebron plant in 1898.

After the death of Wallace Wheeler, J. H. Rushton was made president, a position he held from 1898 until 1921, at which time he was made chairman of the board of directors. (He died in Omaha, January 2, 1922; Mrs. Rushton died, also in Omaha, May 2, 1934.) Under Mr. Rushton's management the Fairmont Creamery grew to be the largest in the world, with offices not only in New York and other large cities in America but also in Europe.

The Fairmont plant was moved to Crete, but the head office, through the influence of Mr. Rushton, was retained in Fairmont for several years. The company grew to such proportions that larger quarters were required; at this point, Mr. Rushton was "outvoted" by other stockholders, and in 1907 the main office was moved to Omaha. Their Fairmont office building was bought by Dr. S. F. Ashby, and it has been used by Drs. Ashby ever since.

Within recent years, the company changed its name to Fairmont Foods Company, Inc., and does a world-wide business. Though spawned in the lush agricultural region of Fillmore County, no part of the company now remains there. During its existence in the county, it furnished many local jobs and a large volume of postal business. The company distributes dairy products, chips and snack foods, soft drinks, cookies, crackers, and nuts. Its net sales in 1965 were reported as $199,771,696—a substantial sum to have had its ultimate origin in one Nebraska town!

BLIZZARD

Some of the impact of the Blizzard of 1888 on the Fairmont vicinity is revealed in a letter to Mrs. Hart from Miss Minnie Carver (then teaching in Altoona, Pennsylvania), dated April 18, 1929:

"... I always think of it when January 12 comes along. I was teaching four miles north of Fairmont where the Browns, Kempers, Fines, Coxes, Darts, Petersens, and so on lived. I kept 20 or more boys and girls in the schoolhouse all night.

The coalhouse was built over the door which faced a bare prairie towards the north. That saved us some. There were lamps in the room for a lyceum held there, so we were not in the dark. The older boys and girls, Oscar and Frank Petersen and their sisters, Belle Kemper and others helped me to play games, tell stories, etc., so that we could keep awake and keep the fires up.

The smaller children we wrapped in our coats and they went to sleep near the stove. At 10 o’clock the next morning Mr. Kemper, Mr. Dart, and others came for us with a big wagon bed of straw and warm covers and took us to Mr. Dart’s home, where we had a good hot breakfast, and later on to Kemper’s, where I boarded.

I got to Fairmont and to mother later in the day. She was terribly worried of course. I did not realize then, nor admit now, that it was a great thing I had done. At the time it was the only thing to do and I merely did it. Certainly it was my duty to care for these dear boys and girls I had been entrusted with...

Mrs. Minnie Kemper Graham, now 89 years old and still living (1967) in Fairmont, was one of Miss Carver’s pupils during that winter of 1888. She herself, she recalls, did not go to school on that particular day.

[Mr. Brown, in a note on his original manuscript, gives credit to “early newspaper items and the memory of our oldest citizens,” one of whom was Mr. W. E. Black—Editor.]
Map of Fairmont in 1885.


Looking Southeast from Fillmore Avenue. Fairmont early 1890's.

Fairmont Avenue ("Main Street"), looking south (1910). Bank building in foreground; Methodist Church in upper center; Congregational Church at left. (This picture taken from the Fairmont standpipe.)

Main Street, looking north on pavement (1920).
Fairmont Avenue ("Main Street"), looking south (July 25, 1940).

William S. Brown's Garage (1912)—the first in Fairmont.

Fairmont Avenue ("Main Street"), looking north.

Livery Barn, Fairmont, Nebr. about 1907. Rigs hitched ready for a funeral. Mel Millen and his coach dog.

Fairmont lumber yard. Late 1880's.

Building built before 1900. Elmer Spahr in front of coal and feed office. Fairmont South Railway St. and Fairmont Avenue. Lot No 371.

Men who built the Fairmont telephone line about 1880.

Fountain Beach, Fairmont. Located on lots 645, 646 and 647; bordered on the west by West Avenue, and by Jackson Street on the north. The pool was built about 1900 by Ed Hall.

Original Fairmont Creamery Plant. Present day office of Dr's. Ashby & Ashby.
Franklin Township

Franklin township, in the far southeastern corner of Fillmore County, is bounded on the north by Glengary and on the west by Belle Prairie townships, on the east by Saline County, and on the south by Thayer County. It is crossed from north to south, near its middle line, by Little Sandy Creek, and most of its eastern sections are traversed in the same general direction, just inside its Saline County boundary, by Walnut Creek. State Highway 74 runs across it along the first section line south of Glengary township. It is also crossed from east to west by the Beatrice-Hildreth line of the Burlington, which serves the thriving little town of Ohiowa. By 1966, the township had some 14 irrigation wells.

The finishing of the Burlington’s main line in the autumn of 1871 brought the first large influx of settlers into the “South Platte” area. Many of the first settlers of Fillmore County homesteaded in the northern part of the county because the West Blue River gave them a supply of fuel and water. However, Franklin township in the southeast also had a large number of early homesteaders.

One of the first was Austin Adams. Mrs. Josie Adams Stowell, who now lives in Hebron, tells the following about her family and the early days:

Austin Adams homesteaded just south of Ohiowa on the NE 1/4 of Sec. 17 in 1867. Austin Adams, A. F. Clemons, and Ed Stone came from Ohio. Their women and children came later, after plans had been made for them. Mrs. Stowell was born on this homestead in 1879. The older children in the family were Bertha, Vesta, and E. C. Adams. Mrs. Stowell remembers that when she was seven or eight years old, a young man who came from Chicago brought a revolver and shells because he thought that when he got off the train he would have to protect himself against cowboys and Indians. He felt very foolish; and when he returned to Chicago, he gave the revolver to her brother E. C., or Erk, as he was called.

Mrs. Stowell’s father was the second postmaster and held that post for several years when the mail came by horseback from Fairmont. The Adamses also handled medicines; something called the “Golden Medical Discovery” was a kind of ointment and pain reliever. This family moved to Geneva when Mrs. Stowell was four years old. Her father was county treasurer.

The Adams family were active workers in the Baptist church, where they didn’t always have a preacher but did have an active Sunday School and Christian Endeavor. The young people loved music and would prepare fine Christmas programs, which they practiced upon for weeks. They had a fine quartet, composed of Bertha and Josie Adams, E. C. Adams, and either Professor Huntington, Will Fulton, or Dr. J. D. Patterson.

Tempa Enslow Adams came from Alexandria to Ohiowa soon after the town was started. Mr. Enslow had a grocery store between the Hasterlick saloon and O’Boyle’s Hotel. Mrs. Adams recalls that the young people had picnics and parties. They loved roller skating, and the ice skating in the winter on Hopken’s pond.

In the Gay Nineties they wore the lovely, picturesque dresses of the period, made of pretty prints, with leg-o’-mutton sleeves, very long, sweeping skirts over many petticoats, and lovely hats. Mrs. Adams’s graduation dress was sent to her from Kansas City for the event in 1893.

Graduation exercises, held in the Opera House, were as big events then as they are now. But the Fourth of July celebrations were really the events looked forward to: booths in the streets, barrels of lemonade, speeches, and fireworks. Farm families came from miles around in wagons for these events. The young people had many good times, but would have been shocked at the behavior of young people today, especially at the girls’ wearing of slacks and shorts.

The pioneer farmer tilled his farm with walking plows, planters, and cultivators. He threshed his grain with the help of his neighbors. He milked his cows, shelled his corn, and scooped his grain without the help of gasoline or electric motors. Until the railroad came through, he hauled his grain a long distance to sell it. He bought necessities he couldn’t produce himself at Crete, Nebraska City, or Beatrice.

The grasshoppers came in clouds so thick and heavy in 1874 as to blot out the sun. They ate the turnips, potatoes, and onions—leaves, stem, and root—leaving only holes in the ground. Hailstorms and droughts brought want, hunger, and depression. The years 1893 and 1894 were hard for everyone. There were drouth, general scarcity, and bank failures.

But these rural people had stamina; they stuck it out, started again, and made progress. They built homes, better churches, better schools, better business places. They didn’t always agree, and they argued over politics. They planted trees—many trees—built better roads, and put in telephones and electric lights.

What would grandfather or great-grandfather say today if they could see thousands of bushels of corn stored, feed lots full of fat cattle, big, powerful tractors, and cornpickers—shellers? They would probably ask, “Why don’t you sell that corn? What are you going to do with it?” No doubt he would stew and talk about the weather, as farmers from Austin Adams’s day have done. He would argue politics and maybe denounce the farm plan, with the rest of the farmers. But I am sure that he would be shrewd enough to realize that we haven’t found all the answers yet.

Grandmother would appreciate the hot-water heaters and automatic furnaces, washers, and dryers; but maybe she would smile to herself and think, “You can’t bake better pumpkin pie or ginger cookies than I did 60 years ago.”

SCHOOLS

Before Ohiowa was incorporated as a village, schools were organized in Franklin township. Today we see many abandoned one-room schools, some idle, some converted to other uses, that years ago were the pride and joy of their community. Many of these were also used for church and Sunday School meetings, social functions, and voting places.

School was free and open to all, but attendance was not then compulsory. On family farms where everything had to be done by human labor and a team of oxen or horses, every child was a “hand.” Even without any payment for tuition, it was still something of a family sacrifice to spare a child—but the children flocked in.
The free public school, open to all, was born in America; it was built into the earliest foundation of our nation. Never before in the world had such a notion been entertained. This more than anything else, it seems to me, marked the birth of American democracy.

The first school was taught in school district No. 9, commencing May 27, 1871, by John A. Williams—the number of pupils enrolled 17, average attendance 9 1/2—length of term 3 months 36 days. Wages paid to teacher $30 per month—John A. Dempster, County Supt.

The school was taught in a board granary 12' x 14' square, with a dirt floor and the pupils seated on homemade pine benches. There were no other furnishings except a stove. Only about half the scholars had books, the other half borrowing. A frame schoolhouse was put up in May, 1872. It was 20' x 30' and seated with Richmond patent desks. The building and all its furnishings cost about $500. This was the first frame schoolhouse in the county. Superintendent Dempster reported:

Friday, June 21, 1872

I visited in District No. 9 taught by Samuel B. Heaps—nine pupils present—frame schoolhouse. Scholars doing very well—system good.

School opened in 1873 with 30 pupils, taught by Samuel Heaps and Nute Hansen, each for a three-month term. The largest number of pupils appeared in 1884, when 72 enrolled. From 1873 to 1918, enrollment averaged from 45 to 50 pupils; after 1918, the numbers started to drop. The first continuous full nine-month term came in 1913. The school had 15 pupils in 1955.

Two men served long terms as director in this district: John Hickey, 1876-1892, a total of 17 years, and P. W. Sieckmann, 1923-1945, a total of 21.

The teachers and directors who served District 9 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary and term</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Samuel Heaps</td>
<td>$20.00—3 months</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>G. E. Barnett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Nute Hansen</td>
<td>$20.00—3 months</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>G. E. Barnett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Mary Hammon</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Frank Preece</td>
<td>$33.33—7 months</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
<td>$25.00—2 months</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Eva Thomas</td>
<td>$25.00—4 months</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Chester Metcalf</td>
<td>$30.00—4 1/2 months</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Walter White</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Tideman Hale</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Laura Thomas</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>J. W. Fries</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Ida Sharp</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>J. W. Fries</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Laura Angstead</td>
<td>$30.00—3 months</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>John Hickey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The free public school, open to all, was born in America; it was built into the earliest foundation of our nation. Never before in the world had such a notion been entertained. This more than anything else, it seems to me, marked the birth of American democracy.
District No. 10 was organized under the supervision of G. R. Wolfe, county superintendent. Mr. McLaughlin was directed to notify every qualified voter in the district that the organizational meeting would be held on Wednesday, September 20, 1871, at one o'clock at the home of John Shuster. The first director was Mr. A. Lee.

From the records of the superintendent's office:

School picnic at District No. 34 about 1954.

By action of petition of Districts 9, 10, and 34, District No. 10 has been eliminated and the territory added to Districts No. 9 and 34.

School opened in 1873 with 35 pupils attending for a three-month term, with two teachers instructing. Susan Mott received $18 per month and William Garrison $30 per month. This school's enrollment remained fairly constant, not showing the big fluctuations that many schools experienced. A record enrollment of 59 pupils attended in 1899. The first full nine-month term came in 1914, when the teacher was paid $55 a month. In 1912, the number of pupils dropped to nine, rose to 15, and then, in 1915, dropped to five. The school closed after the 1951 term.

District No. 34 was established after a petition of voters in the district by County Superintendent John A. Dempster. This district was laid out to comprise Secs. 19, 20, 30, 31, N 1/2 of 29, W 1/2 of 21, S 1/2 of 18, NW 1/4 of 28, all in T5, R1W. Mr. Dempster notified Cecil Flowers that the meeting for the election of officers was to be held at the nearest central place at 2 p.m. on August 12, 1872. The NE 1/4 of Sec. 24, T5, R2W, was then added to the district. Another change in district boundaries was made later: to detach from District 34 and attach to District 83 of Thayer County the SE 1/4 of Sec. 31, T5, R1W.

December 21, 1885

The boundary lines of District 34, 83, and 76 of Thayer County have been changed by granting of request which reads as follows: As basis for this request we hereby represent that the location of our dwelling house is such that on account of streams of water or certain seasons of the year, it is impracticable and almost impossible to have our children attend school in said District 34 for a period of from 2 to 3 weeks each year.

(Signed) E. F. Medlar

Martha J. Medlar

This request was granted.

Mrs. Clyde Gewacke of Ohiowa wrote of District 34:

My grandfather, James W. Burt, was director of this school for several years and my mother, Maye Quinlan, taught this school during the year of 1900. I attended this school from 1911-1916 inclusive. I have many vivid memories of the walks to and from school and the rides in a wagon on stormy days. School lunches under the willow trees, skating on the thin ice, baseball games, and drowning out gophers in Henry Mohlan's pasture were exciting. The reading contests, the school programs, and box socials will always be highlights in my memories. I could never forget the games of pull-away and "old cat," especially when "German School" was in session during the winter months and all of the big kids were attending and adding to the fun at noon. If the pupils were on good behavior we were always invited to, and allowed to, attend the numerous weddings at the Lutheran church across the road. I remember that I missed the little rural school the next fall when I started to High School in Ohiowa.

School opened in 1873 with nine pupils. J. H. Bremer was the first director, and the first teacher was John A. Williams, who was paid $33.33 per month for the three-month term. Enrollment soared to 43 pupils in 1876, and fluctuated during the following years until 1895, when the record number of 69 pupils were enrolled. The first full nine-month term was held in 1914, when the teacher's salary was $45 a month. In 1955, there were 33 pupils, and the teacher's salary had risen to $2,250 per year.

District No. 40 is included under Ohiowa.

District No. 41 was founded when a meeting to elect school officers was held on March 29, 1872. School opened in 1873, with R. L. Clemens as director and with 21 pupils enrolled. In 1874, 32 pupils were taught for a three-month term by J. A. Buthnell for $25 per month. Conrad Most was elected director. The first full nine-month term was held in 1914, when the number of pupils dropped to 10. In 1956 only 11 students were enrolled. It is interesting to note that Fred Sieckmann served as director of this district for 26 years, from 1907 to 1932.

Year | Teacher | Salary and term | No. Pupils | Director
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
1962 | Marjorie Langhorst | $1,800 per year | 12 | Milo Buzek
1963 | Marjorie Langhorst | $1,800 per year | 10 | Milo Buzek
1964 | | $2,625 per year | 11 | Milo Buzek
1965 | Peggy Schulte | $2,625 per year | 15 | Milo Buzek
1966 | Lucille Thomas | $265 per month | 16 | Leslie Mathies
District No. 73 was organized in 1874, with Francis Story as director, and school began in the same year with four pupils. No school was held from 1878 through 1881. The school reopened in 1882, with George P. Fries as director and with Sam Kruse teaching 25 pupils for a three-month term at $25 per month. The highest enrollment recorded was in 1909, when 45 pupils attended. Full nine-month terms were not held until 1921. Two men served long terms as directors: George P. Fries, 17 years (1882-1898), and Herman Bartels, 15 years (1922-1936). This school closed after the 1936 term, when 25 pupils were enrolled.

The teachers and directors who served District No. 73 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary and term</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Sam Kruse</td>
<td>$25 mo. — 3 months</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Flora Angstead</td>
<td>$30 mo. — 3 months</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Ella Thomas</td>
<td>$30 mo. — 3 months</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Emma Thomas</td>
<td>$40 mo. — 3 months</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>John A. Story</td>
<td>$30 mo. — 2 months</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Ida Hickey</td>
<td>$30 mo. — 3 months</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Ella Thomas</td>
<td>$33.33 mo. — 2 months</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Ida Hickey</td>
<td>$33.33 mo. — 4 months</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Ella Thomas</td>
<td>$33.33 mo. — 6 months</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>George P. Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>No record</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No record</td>
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<td>1893</td>
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<td>1894</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>No record</td>
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| 1903 | John Samuel Cradduck home after a snow.

John Samuel Cradduck and his wife, Viola Moore Cradduck, came to Nebraska in 1878, and settled on a farm in Franklin township (Sec. 26), 9 miles north of Alexandria, the nearest railroad town. Their first home was a crude shack, so they dug a basement, lined it with rock which they hauled a house over it. During the blizzard of 1888, their cattle strayed, and their faithful dog, who had become in the process a veritable snowball, rounded them up and presented them to Mr. Cradduck. The Cradduck farm is now owned by William Pribyl.

FAMILIES

John and Christina Moore came to Franklin township (Sec. 24) in 1877 from Lee County, Illinois, via covered wagon, with their eight children and grandfather Ephraim Moore. John Moore was a Civil War veteran and a member of Hunter Post 122, G.A.R., by transfer from J. W. Morehouse Post 188. Their farm had a maple grove which was used for picnics in the 1890's. Both Mr. and Mrs. Moore are buried in Pleasant Ridge Cemetery, which is on the site of their farm.

Conrad and Minnie Most, with four of their children, came to Nebraska from Beecher, Illinois, in 1874, in a covered wagon. They settled on a farm 5 miles SE of Ohiowa. Their first home was a dugout in which they lived several years. Later they built a log house, which in turn was succeeded by a frame one. Their family consisted of 10 children: Lenna, John, Minnie, Sophia, Henry, Mollie, Alvina, Anton, Emma, and Conrad. The only survivor of this family is Emma (Mrs. Will Mussman), who resides in Ohiowa.

Henry Mussman, born in Germany, came to America at the age of 22 in 1866, and settled near Chicago. In 1888, he married Dorothea Dittem. They moved to Indiana in 1875 and eight years later came to Nebraska and settled on a farm 4 miles east of Ohiowa. Mr. Mussman spent many active years in the farming community, and his family continued the tradition of hard work and dedication to their homestead. His descendants continue to live in the area to this day.

Photo from Wesley Cradduck
days in the fields so that his family might be comfortably provided for. He retired in 1935 and moved into Ohiowa.

Their family consisted of 10 children: Anna, Emma, Alvina, Rose, August, Will, Viola, Howard, Henry, and Harry. Mrs. Mussman passed away in 1936, and Mr. Mussman in 1942, having reached the age of 98 years.

In 1898, Lewis Charles Schafer and Martha Adaline Schafer came to Nebraska from Illinois and settled in Franklin township (Sec. 26). They arrived in sub-zero weather and had to live in an old house. They raised a family of seven children, and are buried in the Ohiowa cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Thole came from Holt County, Illinois, in 1881 with a family of 10 children, including twin daughters, Johanna and Wilhelmina. They homesteaded 1 1/2 miles east of Ohiowa on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 10 (now known as the Walter Fries farm). In 1900, the twin sisters were married to brothers: Johanna to Henry Fries, and Wilhelmina to Gust Fries. (See Fries.)

Ohiowa

The village of Ohiowa occupies much of the central portion of Sec. 8. The following early history of the village, written in February, 1891, by W. R. Fulton, then editor of the Ohiowan, was read at a meeting of businessmen. It was reprinted in the Nebraska Signal for October 31, 1929.

Perhaps no portion of the inhabited globe has witnessed as sudden and remarkable changes as have characterized the growth of the American states. The wonderful development of the natural resources of the country, the immense accretions to the population by immigration, find no parallel in the world's history. The changes of a decade exceed those of a century on the continents of the Old World.

Truly the history of our country is stranger than fiction. Today the tangled forest, the impenetrable swamp, and arid desert, affords a home only for the wild beast and savage red man. Tomorrow the forest is felled, the swamp drained, the desert irrigated, and the wilderness is transformed into fertile fields, into populous cities and beautiful villages, giving homes and employment to industrious millions gathered from every quarter of the civilized world.

The possibilities of this marvelous development none can foresee. Ten years ago no one had dreamed that a village would one day exist where Ohiowa now stands. The name of Ohiowa is much older than the town. It is the result of a compromise. When the first country post office was established in 1870 at the house of A. F. Clemons near the present site of the town, some of the pioneers who hailed from the Buckeye State wished to call it Ohio post office. This faction was opposed by another composed of Iowa men who desired to give it the name of their native state. The feud waxed warm and would doubtless have resulted in the complete extermination of the settlement had not a compromise been effected by which the two names were blended together into one, giving the euphonious name of Ohiowa. A very desirable settlement of the dispute, considering the sparseness of the population at that time.
Many interesting stories might be told to illustrate the strange customs of the early pioneers, among whom existed an utter disregard of those conventional forms, a violation of which in the older states of the Union would have been considered an unpardonable offense. Men were then judged according to their merits rather than by external appearance.

No time was wasted upon the frivolities of dress and personal adornment. Coats were used only for protection, while boots and shoes were not deemed a necessity except during the winter season. Indeed, I am credibly informed that the total expense for shoe leather of one of these pioneers, now a prominent banker of Ohiowa, did not exceed $25.00. His garment was considered very fortunate who possessed more than one pair of pantaloons. These were of the coarsest material, worn inside out during the week in order to appear new on Sunday when they were turned the right way.

The preliminary survey of the Burlington Railroad which runs through Ohiowa was made during the months of April and May, 1886. The site was selected as a site for the town by a portion of the farms of William Sieckmann, J. H. Luke, E. D. Babcock, and R. L. Clemons. The first trains were run in October of the same year, the railroad company being represented in the town by William Riddell, a man peculiarly fitted for the position he occupies on account of his great size and strength which not only enables him to successfully protect the property of the company but to accomplish a greater destruction of the baggage than would be possible with a man of less muscular ability.

The foundation of the first building in Ohiowa was laid in May, 1886. This building was erected by the Clemons brothers, who have since occupied it in the banking business. During the summer and autumn of 1886 a number of business blocks were erected and the following businessmen located in town: I. J. Hasterlick, who had been for many years engaged in business in the village of Chicago, Mr. Hasterlick thought Chicago was not as prosperous a town as it should be and [so] resolved to try his luck in a town with brighter prospects. Chicago is too slow, like Strang.

C. C. Enslow, who came here from Alexandria, Nebraska, for the purpose of educating his children in a better moral atmosphere and to assist in superintending the affairs of the Ohiowa baseball association. Mr. Enslow is not himself a baseball player although he has in him the material for a first-class shortstop, if he didn’t try to dodge the balls [Mr. Enslow ran a large general store].

B. F. Bothwell opened the first store. David Conner engaged in the real estate and loan business. H. E. Larimer established the Ohiowa newspaper, the first newspaper of the place. Mr. Larimer is a native of Nebraska. He was educated for the ministry, but finding the newspaper business better suited to his tastes, entered upon the perilous duties of an editor on July 19, 1886.

John O'Boyle and Mrs. Nancy Storie became rivals in the hotel business. Ed Metcalf was assistant cashier of the Bank of Ohiowa for two years. Mr. Metcalf afterward engaged in the hardware business but recently has devoted all his time to politics. W. C. Fitzger engaged in the furniture business. During the same summer, Babcock & Burrus started in the hardware business.

The first drugstore was established by Carpenter & Crowl. The lumber business was first represented by J. G. Burruss, also of Alexandria. Ohiowa's first physician was Dr. H. W. Strader, a native of Pennsylvania, who practiced in Alexandria. Surgeons at Baltimore, Maryland. The doctor has been uniformly successful in his practice.

The first attorney of Ohiowa was C. A. Fowler, a brother of the celebrated O. C. Fowler, the great phrenologist. Mr. Fowler was engaged in the banking business at Alexandria for several years before coming here and never made any attempt to escape to Canada. Never having been convicted of any offense against the law, Mr. Fowler is not a criminal lawyer.

In the fall of 1886, J. W. Quinlan erected the opera house block and entered into the agricultural implement business, which he conducted until the winter of 1890 when he sold out to J. M. Curran. Another early resident of Ohiowa is W. F. Buchmeier, also engaged in the implement business. Dr. T. J. McGee, J. W. Quinlan, and Conner & Clawson are dealers in general merchandise. F. H. Kettridge, and the barbershop by William Bunce. Of the two livery barns, William Matson is the proprietor of the Red Front and David Conner of the other.

Post Office

The first post office called Ohiowa was established at the Al Clemons homestead ½ mile east of the present town in 1870. On October 3, 1872, Austin Adams was commissioned postmaster and the office was moved to the Adams homestead ¾ mile south. Mr. Adams' commission was signed by J. W. Marshall, first assistant postmaster general. Mr. Adams served as postmaster until the fall of 1883, when he was elected county treasurer. He was succeeded by Ryland Clemons. When the railroad got as far as Tobias it was planned to locate the town a short distance southeast of the present location and B. F. Bothwell started a small store. The post office was moved to this store and Mr. Bothwell acted as assistant postmaster.
Sam Spelde became clerk again and served seven years.

The village board in the year 1929 was composed of F. J. Sieber, E. J. Lynn, and L. Kaderabek, with Mr. Sieber as chairman. J. P. Moor served as clerk for a number of years in an efficient manner.

In 1962, the board members were Henry Molthan, serving his ninth year with two years as mayor, Dale Sieckmann, Ray Dittmer, Joe Bors, and Mrs. Claude Hall, clerk.

**Businesses and Professions**

The records give us some ideas of the efforts of those who lived in Ohiowa 75 years ago—and later.

C. E. Babcock was a real-estate dealer in the early days. The Clemons brothers, A. F. and R. L., were in the banking business. J. W. Quinlan built the Opera House building which stood for more than 40 years. The first floor was used for an implement business, a drugstore, and the Farmers Bank. After the hard years of 1893 and 1894 the bank went out of business.

William F. Buchmeier, S. Radford, J. W. Quinlan, and Charles Summers. The board organized by making Mr. Buchmeier chairman. H. E. Larimer and C. A. Fowler were candidates for village clerk, Fowler being elected. R. L. Clemons was made treasurer; C. A. Fowler, attorney; Frank Badger, marshal; and Hartford Wood, street commissioner.

The first ordinances passed by the board related to streets and crossings and sidewalks. On June 7, 1887, a committee was appointed on a calaboose and the board authorized the building of a corral 50' square. In July the same year Ohiowa celebrated the Fourth in an appropriate manner and the board appropriated $25 to help defray the expense.

In 1888, the following board was chosen: J. W. Quinlan, S. D. Radford, C. E. Summers, W. C. Fitz; and W. H. Wychoff. Edwin Metcalf was appointed clerk, Morris Thomas overseer of streets; R. L. Clemons, treasurer; and B. F. Durkin, marshal.

In the spring of 1889, on petition of Dave Conner and others, the board passed an ordinance regulating the planting and protection of trees. At the election of this year L. H. Corbine, S. D. Radford, Joseph M. Walker, C. E. Summers, and J. W. Stevenson were made members of the board, and Mr. Summers was chosen chairman.

In 1891, Ed Metcalf, S. E. Matthews, M. H. Cott, C. S. Stover, and J. A. Fulton were elected board members. W. R. Fulton was made clerk, a position he held until 1899, when Sam Spelde took up the work.

Space does not permit the listing of all the board's activities or personnel year by year, and so we detail instead a few years chosen at random, which may be taken as typical.

In July, 1902, a combined town hall and jail was built. G. W. Phelps became clerk in 1904, serving two years. He was succeeded by F. J. Sieber, who held the office until 1911.

The auditorium upstairs was used for public gatherings until the high-school auditorium became available in 1923. Here the William Lewis and Chick Boyes players played to good crowds. Commencement exercises, dances, Epworth League meetings, and high-school plays were held. The old landmark burned to the ground in the fall of 1929. A few years later a new auditorium was built on the same site.

Paul J. Gundermann, one of Ohiowa's pioneer businessmen, came about the time the town was started. In the late 1890's Mr. Gundermann started his own drugstore and continued in business until shortly before his death on January 7, 1941.

J. C. Pflug came to Ohiowa from Mound City, Missouri, in 1897 and had a hardware and implement business for 36 years. The Pflug children all grew up in Ohiowa but live in many places now.

Fred Wolter came to Fillmore County in 1888. He worked as a blacksmith, then as manager for the Lincoln Grain Company. He was appointed postmaster in 1916 and...
served in that capacity for many years. From 1958 until near the end of his life, he was in the gasoline, oil, and tire business. He also served for several years as village clerk, light and water commissioner, and Fillmore County supervisor for Franklin and Belle Prairie townships. One of Ohiowa’s oldest citizens, he died on April 15, 1963.

The Averills and Phelpses were early settlers. For many years, Alphonso Averill carried mail. T. E. Averill kept a hardware store. I. C. Steele had a furniture store, and Conrad Arneke was a faithful shoemaker. Alice and Mabel Ameke have been and still are active in church and community work in Ohiowa.

As recollected by Claude M. Chenoweth, the following firms and people were active in Ohiowa in the years following 1890:

**General Merchandise:** Chenoweth & McFarland; C. C. Enslov; Ben F. Bothwell; John G. Wollam; George F. Jenkins; Mr. Donahue; A. L. Averill; Frank Spelde; J. P. Moor; Steele Brothers.

**Drugs:** Harris & Davis; Paul Gundemann. (Mr. Gundemann was also the undertaker and photographer.)

**Doctors:** J. D. Patterson; M. S. Eiss; J. L. Brown.

**Banks:** Farmers Bank of Fillmore County (C. C. Conner, Clayton Babcock); Bank of Ohiowa (R. A. Harvey, F. J. Sieber, H. C. Rowland, R. R. Chenoweth, R. H. Marks, A. F. Clemens).

**Clothing:** I. J. Hasterlick.

**Feed Stores:** Fulton & Whitman; E. F. Meiller.

**School Superintendents:** J. C. Clegg; V. D. Timmerman; C. W. Taylor.

**Farm Implement:** William Buchmeier; John Curran; Bennett Hayes; Ben F. Dunkin; J. C. Pflug.

**Postmasters:** H. McLaughlin; J. A. Hollister; W. R. Fulton; C. M. Chenoweth.

**Blacksmiths:** Olaf Forselle; Boyd Gillispie; Henry Parker.

**Grain Buyers:** R. L. Clemens; J. A. Hollister; Mate Cannon; W. C. Moore; W. S. Pool; R. R. Chenoweth; Herb Cooper.

**Hermes:** Ed Metcalf; Lorin Heston; J. W. Crawford.

**Lumber Yards:** C. E. Summers; R. A. Harvey.

**Restaurants:** Jerry W. Forbes; Ernest Wisroth; Clyde Raketrav.

**Barbers:** W. G. Davidson; L. B. Frankforter; Ben Grant.

**Doctors:** H. E. Larimer; W. R. Fulton.

**Attorneys:** Charles A. Fowler; W. R. Fulton.

**Painters:** Sieckmann & Brown; Meyer & Wertz; I. J. Hasterlick.

**Livery:** Fulton & Whitman; David Conner, William F. Young.

**Railroad Agents:** A. Riddle; Charles F. Hollenberger; Fred Holtz;

**Hotels:** J. O’Boyle; Ben Bothwell; W. H. Walker; Mrs. S. P. Sharp.

**Auctioneer:** James T. Walker.

**Cobblers:** Adam Brunner; Conrad Arneke.

**Hardware:** Byron L. Tripp.

**Farmers Union Co-operative Association**

In 1912, a group of farmers in the Ohiowa community desired to form a co-operative in order to get better prices for their livestock and grain. They secured information from the Extension Department of the University of Nebraska, and after a number of meetings in various schoolhouses, they formed an organization which they named the Farmers Equity. At first they loaded their grain directly into box cars on the siding by scooping it from their wagons. This was one of the first co-operatives in Fillmore County and among the first in Nebraska. It was incorporated in 1916. A grain elevator, stockyards, and even a grocery store and cream station became part of the organization. Some of the original organizers of this co-operative who are still members are Cyril Bornasek, Henry Schelbitzki, Mr. Frank Schelbitzki, Omer Schroll, Frank Sieckmann, Mrs. Dave Sweeney, Robert Weber, Mrs. Corb Williamson and A. O. Wood.

There have been a lot of changes, but the original grain elevator was still in operation until 1958 when it burned. The organization is now known as the Farmers Union Co-operative Association. Present facilities include a modern elevator, office building, 240,000-bushel grain storage, a new feed mill, fertilizer plant, bulk petroleum plant, and a 50-ton, 30-ton storage silo. The present board members are Joe Schelbitzki, Lloyd Schelbitzki, Herman Nun, Roy Most, Melvin Thomas, and Arthur Wulf. The present employees are Ross Munn, who has been the manager for 15 years, Lester Bahe, Verlin Most, Earl Peppie, LaVerne Deke, and Willard Meyer.

**CHURCHES**

The Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, commonly called the South Lutheran Church, began its career on September 25, 1887. For several years it was served by itinerant pastors. Only 15 members were on the roll when the church was organized: William Nierstheimer, Christ Gewecke, William Molthan, Ernest Molthan, Henry Gewecke, Henry Dearking, Christ Schweer, Henry Schweer, Henry rippe, Barnhart (Bernard) Krug, William Schroder, Henry Kappmeier, Louis Rippe, and William Gewecke. In 1888 the first church building was completed.

The pioneer pastor in 1887-1888 was the Rev. J. Ramser. He was succeeded by the following pastors: Rev. R. Gardew, 1888-1890; Rev. Rhinehart Bauer, 1890-1891; Rev. Max Henning, 1891-1894; Rev. H. Fricke, 1894-1901; Rev. W. Kronsbein, 1901-1903; Rev. Otto Klatt, 1903-1907; Rev. P. C. Martin, 1907-1908; Rev. Rudolf Lentz, 1908-1910; Rev. A. Theodore Mikkelsen, 1910-1912; Rev. Walter Fieg, 1912-1913; Rev. G. Klatt, 1913-1927; Rev. William Harder, 1928-1937; Rev. V. R. Pietzko, 1938-1942; Rev. Fred Loeffler, 1943-1944.

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ohiowa (1962)

This church became one parish with the St. John’s congregation in 1944 and was served by Pastor H. J. Diekhoff from 1944 to 1950, at which time the congregations were again separated until 1953. In 1953, through a final vote, the congregation decided to become a separate church, and the former South St. John’s became the Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The Rev. Henning Pearson was the first pastor to serve the newly reorganized church. During his four years as pastor, a new electric organ was purchased, a garage was built, and other changes were made, all through donations and the willing work of members.

Various improvements have been made from time to time. During the pastorate of the Rev. Otto Klatt, the high
steeple was built and the bell (weighing about one ton) was installed. In 1911, during the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Mikkelsen, the convenient parsonage was built. In 1917, a new church was erected. Other improvements included a new cave, new sidewalks, a garage, numerous tree plantings, a new lawn sowed and beautifully kept, a cemetery fence and a gateway arch erected.

The first confirmation class of this church was composed of Adolph Gewecke, Joseph Gewecke, Minna Gewecke, Emma Dearking, Martha Molthan, and Anna Krug. The first baptism to take place in the congregation was that of Minnie Meyer, who later became Mrs. Herman Schroeder.

"Pastor Heinrich Wilhelm Fricke was born in Hanover, Germany, and was trained in the Hermansburg Missionary Institute. He came to America in 1871 and served as a schoolmaster for a few years in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Corning, Missouri. In 1878 he entered Carthage College and studied theology, was licensed by the Nebraska Synod in 1880, and ordained at Waverly, Nebraska, in 1881. He had a kindly disposition coupled with a voice with the penetrating powers of a buzz-saw.

"Other pastors answered the call to go to America and by 1890 there were just as many from the Old Country as there were American-born pastors in the Nebraska Synod." (From Lorin J. Wolff, Story of the Midwest Synod, as quoted by St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ohiowa (1955) published a booklet in 1955 issued to celebrate the church's 75th anniversary. (Most of this account is drawn from that booklet.)

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was the first organized Lutheran church in Ohiowa. Before its formation in 1880, preaching services and religious instruction were given in farm homes. Later, services and the administration of the Holy Sacrament were held at the District 40 schoolhouse and at the home of Mr. J. H. Bremer.

The homes of Claus Claussen, Frederick Matthies, Sr., and Frederick Vogt, Sr., were opened for church services and religious instruction. The first Lutheran service was conducted by a Mr. Williams, a teacher by profession, who came from Switzerland. Mr. Williams came from Chicago to Beatrice to take up a homestead. There he met George Fries. Taking a homestead claim, Mr. Williams settled where Jim Schropfer now resides. Mr. Williams was in poor health and soon died of consumption and was buried on his claim.

The Rev. Simon Meeke was the first ordained Lutheran pastor. The Lutheran people from this community and from Swan Creek (near Tobias) were served together. A meeting for the organization of a Lutheran congregation was held at the home of Mr. Hothan at Tobias, but because of disagreements, plans failed to mature.

On January 1, 1880, Lutherans of this community organized the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. The charter members were: Henry Claussen, Sr., Frederick Matthies, Sr., Henry Langhorst, Sr., Christian Claussen, Frederick Mussman, Sr., Hans Claussen, Gerhard Hopken, Anton Do- meier, John F. Goebel, William Schielke, John H. Thole, and Christian Schropfer now resides. Mr. Williams was in poor health and soon died of consumption and was buried on his claim.

The first pastor of the new congregation was the Rev. William Thole, a brother of John H. Thole. Although he was badly crippled, he was a true servant of God and served about eight years, bearing all the hardships, troubles, and hindrances of pioneer days. Right at the beginning, a little frame church was built, and also a two-room parsonage. The first buildings were located two miles east of Ohiowa on Sec. 10, land now owned by Gust Nun, Sr.

On April 24, 1881, the new congregation voted to join the English Lutheran Synod of Nebraska a district of the General Synod. When the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Nebraska was organized in 1890, with all-German congregations, 16 in number of the English district withdrew, among them St. John's Church.

On April 8, 1883, a permanent and regular Sunday School was organized. After the residence of the Rev. Mr. Thole, the Rev. J. Bond served from 1887 to 1889 and the Rev. O. L. Luschei from 1889 to 1890. The Rev. Herman Schumann became pastor on August 24, 1890. He served 4½ years, preaching also for Lutherans at Turkey Creek. As the church building became outgrown, the members voted, on April 3, 1893, to build a larger church. The new church, a fine building, was continuously used for worship from that time until 1955.

The Rev. C. Thomsen served in 1895-1896; he was followed by the Rev. F. Schwarz, who served from 1896 until he was appointed superintendent of the Synod in 1899.

In the spring of 1899, one week after the departure of the Rev. Mr. Schwarz, the Rev. M. Kossick became pastor and served for eight years. During his ministry, a new parsonage was built in 1904. His successor was the Rev. L. H. Traubel, who served 4½ years. During his ministry, the interior of the church was remodeled and new pews, altar, pulpit, and baptismal font were installed.

The Rev. J. A. Bahnsen preached his first sermon and was called as pastor on December 8, 1912. During his pastorate the church and parsonage were moved to the present site in Ohiowa, in December, 1921. The first services held in town after the church was moved were on January 15, 1922. This was an important move for the congregation and was experienced wonderful progress and growth in every way. The membership of the Sunday School and church increased 100 per cent. It was during the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Bahnsen that the Frauenverein was organized (October 4, 1922) and the Tabitha Missionary Society (March 27, 1927). Pastor Bahnsen served faithfully until 1932, nearly 20 years, the longest pastorate in the history of St. John's Church.

In the beginning of the trying 1930's, the Rev. E. C. Hansen was called as pastor in 1933 and served until 1936.
He was followed by the Rev. W. F. V. Churchill (1936-1939). Both these men are remembered with gratitude for their service during these economically difficult years.

The second longest pastorate in St. John’s was held by the Rev. H. J. Diekhoff, who served from June 6, 1939 until July 15, 1953. These were “war years” and required even greater consecration on the part of the pastor. During his pastorate, all church debts remaining from previous years were abolished. He served the congregation faithfully, serving also the Lutheran congregation south of Ohiowa for nearly five years.

On October 15, 1953, the Rev. Burnell W. Hartman was called as pastor of St. John’s together with South St. John’s—nearly five years. The last services were held in the old church on October 13, 1954, at 9:30 a.m., and the work of razing the building began immediately following. Ground-breaking services were held October 24, 1954, with the Rev. Karl Koenig, Jr., of Sutton, as the speaker. For the next 11 months, services were held in the village auditorium; funerals and Lenten services were held in the Methodist Church; and the meetings of all organizations were held at the parsonage.

At last, on September 4, 1954, the new church was dedicated, and the congregation settled into its new home; by the time of the 75th anniversary celebration in 1955, the building was debt-free. A new parsonage was completed in 1958.

Methodism in Ohiowa and Vicinity

The history of Methodism in this vicinity goes back farther than most of us might suppose. The Annual Conference minutes and records left by the Rev. W. D. Gage, the Rev. George H. Wehn, and the Rev. O. W. Filer, show that this community was included in the Meridian Circuit in 1871. In 1872, this area was included in the Virginia Mission. The first quarterly meeting of the Virginia Mission, Beatrice District, Nebraska Conference, with J. B. Maxfield as presiding elder, was held at Little Sandy, and W. T. Hill was again employed. Present as members were H. C. Rhodes, local deacon, J. E. McClellan, class leader, and J. W. Easley, steward.

At the third quarterly meeting held at Pioneer, September 28, 1872, W. T. Hill had left the charge and H. C. Rhodes was employed as preacher in charge. The minutes give four members present, viz.: J. E. McClellan, H. C. Rhodes, T. E. Allen, W. H. Garrison. The minutes of the last quarterly meeting held at Little Sandy say that there were four members present: H. C. Rhodes, J. W. Easley, W. H. Garrison, and J. E. McClellan. There were elected George Sellick, James H. Church, F. Reeman, P. Garrison as stewards, with a membership of 106 and nine appointments. J. Gray was licensed to exhort, and thus closed the year of 1872.

W. P. Grintham, a supernumerary preacher of the conference, supplied for a short time after W. T. Hill and preceding H. C. Rhodes. The Nebraska Conference met at Plattsmouth on April 10, 1873. Bishop Anderson presided . . . J. B. Maxfield was appointed to the Beatrice District and Wm. D. Gage to the Little Sandy Circuit. We had about 60 members on the circuit and will have 169; 26 on probation; five Sabbath schools, 155 scholars, 39 officers and teachers; 150 books in library, 70 Advocates and Good News. Schools paid this year $29.10 for books. They have paid me this year $211.20. The conference coming on in September, the harvest was not sold, and it made a sorry time for them, but we hope and trust in God.—W. D. Gage.

Now let the Rev. George H. Wehn tell us about the year of 1874 and 1875. “From the Conference Session of 1874, Bishop Bowman presiding: W. D. Gage was again appointed to this work, but owing to his wife’s illness failed the appointment. At the conference of 1874, Hebron Circuit was formed by a division of the old Little Sandy Circuit or Mission. I was appointed to the Hebron Mission; in March 1875, the two were joined together—being then styled Hebron and Little Sandy Mission—embracing a little more than the south half of Fillmore County, all of Thayer County, and a part in the SE corner of Clay County, also a part in NW corner of Jefferson County. We also supplied Nuckolls County with preaching a part of the year and organized the class known as Elton Class, 2 miles E of Elton. During the year we organized a class at Hebron, one at Howard’s S. H. [schoolhouse] Fillmore County, one at Martin’s S. H. in same county. We had precious seasons of waiting upon the Lord. We reported in full membership 106 at conference with 35 probationers. Out of the entire number of probationers know but one backslider who we doubted at the time of uniting. During this year we built a parsonage at Geneva which we think when plastered will be worth $490 and call it good considering that the people are just emerging from the terrible plague of the Grasshopper of last year the consequences of which are still felt severely. Temporarily the year will be remembered because of its trail of our faith (in God to provide) by the threatening millions of grasshoppers that passed us daily for weeks in the early part of the season, followed by threatening of drought, then the storms, hail and rain in torrents—threatening to and in many cases even destroying crops. The floods of water swelling and flooding to overflow the streams the taking before them bridges and these things were appalling; these with growing of wheat in shock and stack were truly causes of discouragement to farmers and in fact all, as all were dependent upon the agriculture. Our Spiritual interest was not so great as could have been desired but a steady growth has through the entire year been manifest. At our fourth quarterly meeting it was recommended that a division be again made of the mission as follows viz. Geneva, Martin, Howard, Cheyenne, Franklin, and Walnut to be called Geneva Mission; then as follows viz. Hebron, Belvidere, Carlton, Alexandria, Elton and Kiowa to be known as Hebron Circuit. With pleasure we add that Bro. W. H. Blaine Local preacher did good and effective service preaching regularly every sabbath and thus kept up 5 appointments. All the summer of 1875 we count him a good helper, a laborer in the Lord’s vineyard, also Bro. Peter Vanhosen an Exhorter did good and acceptable service in holding meetings. The year in the whole has been a pleasant one not a jar nor discord but harmony seems to have prevailed. We close in prayer for still greater and greater and greater blessing to rest upon the people that the years to come may be more abundant in labor for Christ and his Kingdom. We might have noticed many others whom we shall remember for their zeal and earnestness in labor for Christ and his cause. Respectfully submitted, George H. Wehn.”

1 Record Book of Little Sandy Circuit and Later of the Geneva Mission.
2 Ibid. 3 Ibid. 4 Ibid.
In his history dated September 23, 1876, the Rev. George H. Wehn says, “Franklin Class, the oldest of the circuit, has had less pastoral attention than any and yet a good revival influence. The Rev. C. M. does still. The membership are so scattered, 6 miles E or W of the S. H. their influence cannot so be concentrated, Their Sunday School has been a success.”

There are no details for the years 1877 to 1880. The Rev. J. A. Chapin (October 1876-October 1879) and Rev. R. C. Johnson (October 1879-October 1880) were the pastors of the Geneva Mission at this time.

In 1880, the conference appointed Lewis D. Willard to supply the Franklin Circuit and reappointed him in 1881. In the following year, 1882, the conference minutes show 60 members for Franklin but make no mention of a pastor.

The Annual Conference minutes of 1883 report Franklin and Chelsea to be supplied and list 40 members. But a “Brief History of Ohiowa M. E. Church,” compiled by the Rev. A. T. McFarland and assisted by the Rev. G. M. Jones, tells us that the Rev. Samuel Jones, of one of the Pennsylvania conferences (a located Elder), was pastor of Franklin and Chelsea in 1883. The Rev. G. M. Jones held quarterly conference for him on March 4, 1883, in a schoolhouse south of where Ohiowa now stands.

In 1884, the Franklin Circuit was supplied by the Rev. J. D. Smith and a “church was finished and ready for dedication at Chelsea on Franklin Circuit and a parsonage was built on the same circuit. Church value $1,400.00 Parsonage value $500.00.”

In 1885, “Ohiowa is a large country circuit and has within its limits the possibilities of a number of strong charges. The Rev. J. D. Smith has supplied the work for two years with a good degree of success. A church and parsonage have been built and paid for to within $400.” The church building was “Chelsea” church that later became the property of the United Brethren. The parsonage was built 1½ mile W of the Franklin schoolhouse (District 10), on the old Garrison farm where a small cemetery is still located. At this time Ohiowa charge included Chelsea, Harmony, Prairie Grove, Franklin, Walnut Creek, and possibly others.

In 1886, the Rev. M. C. Smith was the pastor of Ohiowa with Marshall, Chelsea, Harmony, Prairie Grove, Franklin, and Walnut Creek as a part of the charge.

In 1887, Strang was a new circuit. Having been formerly a part of the Ohiowa charge, it now included Chelsea, Prairie Grove, and Strang. Ohiowa, with the Rev. M. C. Smith as pastor, still included Franklin, Walnut Creek, Marshall, and Harmony.

During 1888, the Rev. C. S. Kathan was the pastor and two new churches—Antioch and Ohiowa—were built and paid for during that year.

In 1889, Ohiowa was joined with Tobias, Daykin, and Antioch with the Rev. John F. Lewis as pastor. “He continued on through 1890 and was used of God in bringing 200 people into the kingdom.” In the following year (1891), Ohiowa was separated from Tobias and Daykin. The Rev. John F. Lewis continued as pastor of Ohiowa and Antioch until the fall of 1893. During this year a new parsonage valued at $1,200 was built.

The Reverend G. M. Jones was appointed to Ohiowa in the fall of 1893 and served Ohiowa and Antioch until the fall of 1896. “During the Rev. George M. Jones’s ministry the church property was much improved, and there were several gracious revivals which did much to strengthen the church.”

In the fall of 1896, the Rev. M. C. Smith was again appointed to this charge. The Sunday School report for Ohiowa at this time shows an average attendance of 64 for the quarter preceding May 10, 1897.

After the fall of 1897, there are no records available for many years; and so we list the names of the pastors as compiled by the Rev. A. T. McFarland. (In earlier days, Methodist ministers were allowed to stay only two years at one church.)


In 1910, an excavation was made for a basement. The church was moved over this and an addition was built on the east side. The alcove for the choir and pulpit was added on the west. This same year the parsonage was moved from the east side of the church to a location 1½ blocks east (now known as the Wood property).

During the pastorate of the Rev. F. C. McVey, the Sunday School records show an average attendance of about 100. The Epworth League records also show an interested group taking active part in the Young People’s Department.

During the pastorate of the Rev. B. N. Kunkel in 1917-19, the old parsonage was sold to Frank Wood for $1,500 and the present parsonage purchased from Frank Theobald for $3,350. The money from the sale of the old parsonage was applied on the purchase of the new one. Nineteen hundred dollars was borrowed in order to complete the transaction.

The church was incorporated at this time.

The minutes of an adjourned session of the quarterly conference of December 21, 1919, contain a motion to sell the Antioch church and the amount received to be applied to the debt on the new parsonage. During 1924, the second year of the Rev. E. A. Knight’s ministry, the money was raised to repay the parsonage loan. A gift from the late May A. Garrison made possible the installation in 1939 of a set of accordion doors; these added much to the convenience and privacy of the Sunday School hour.

The following ministers complete the list of pastors:


School—District No. 40

Before the incorporation of the village of Ohiowa, a country schoolhouse was situated on the corner ¼ mile E and ¼ mile S of the present town site, and the children of the early settlers attended there. A meeting for election of officers was held at the home of A. F. Clemens on Wednesday, March 20, 1872.

Clara Ann Mussman gives us a picture of school in those days:

“Water had to be carried from farm homes to the south until a well was dug on the grounds in 1879. Coal and all other supplies were brought from Alexandria. If you could read the first treasurers’ books kept by District 40 you would be amazed or amused. One item Dec. 2, 1887 read: ‘Rawhide for teacher, 25 cents.’ Tall lanky lads came to school for a few winter months when they did not have to help on the farms.”

“One of the earlier teachers was Mrs. Parthenia (Matson) Kelly who taught District 40 in 1880. Eighty-odd years can make a difference; change yourself, change your school, almost stop looking on blue mears in the tall prairie grass, or carrying a pail of water on the worn path to District 40.”

After incorporation, it was thought advisable to provide a town school that would answer more fully the educational requirements of the growing community. In 1888, a frame school building was erected on the site of the present building. This two-story building had four large rooms and front and back halls. Later, it was found necessary to erect a two-room addition at the rear. The upper room was used in connection with the high school and the lower room served as a gymnasium.

Miss Ida Sharp, who was teaching at the country school at the time of the erection of the new building, came to Ohiowa as the first primary teacher. John C. Clegg, the first superintendent, was noted for his interest in croquet.
The first commencement of the Ohiowa school was held on June 2, 1891. The graduating students were Clayton Babcock, Eva Bothwell, Irene Hollister, Charles Matson, Ray Kingsbury, George Matson, Fred Burns, and Ira M. Andrew. The teachers were John C. Clegg, principal; Ettta Morgan, grammar room; Isaac B. Conner, intermediate; and Olive Hollister, primary.

In 1892, the graduates were Floy Clark (later Mrs. Charles Roper of Lincoln), Lydia Babcock King, Clara Medlar Bigelow, and Bertha Adams Klatt.

The first class to graduate after the school had 12 grades in 1900 was composed of three members: Maye Quinlan Burt, Alice Walker Dunnigan, and Mae Stowell Grant.

Charles W. Taylor was superintendent from 1899 to 1900; E. F. Monroe held the same position from 1907 to 1909. Of superintendents between 1901 and 1907 there is no record. Those since 1907 have been:


School opened in 1873 with 21 pupils enrolled and R. L. Clemons serving as director. The first teacher recorded was Nellie C. Carver, who taught 16 children for a three-month term in 1874 for a salary of $25 per month. Enrollment rose steadily, until in 1882 the number of pupils reached 71. One teacher, Anna Gordon, taught the entire school for a three-month term for $25 a month.

In 1884, District 40 began holding school for a full nine-month term. By 1900, the school had six full-time teachers. In 1912, enrollment reached its all-time high of 205. After that peak year, enrollment began to decline until, by 1936, there were only 100 pupils registered for the school term.
Photo from Otha Wood

District No. 40 schoolhouse, built in 1888. The exact date of this picture is not known.

Photo from Mrs. Verlin Most

District No. 40 (Ohioowa) in February, 1946

(An interesting sidelight on local history is that the school census in 1895 showed 208 pupils of school age in the district; in 1902, 180; in 1910, 195; in 1912, 205; in 1920, 145; and in 1929, 160 pupils.)

Soon after World War I, the frame building was condemned and bonds were voted for a new schoolhouse. Clara Mussman gives us a good explanation for the condemning of the old school:

"School was dismissed more than once when the old schoolhouse started to rock in a strong wind. The basement of the new school was dug by people of the community with farmers bringing their teams of horses and slip scrapers. It took a great deal longer than it would today with all the big machinery. After classes started in the new building, the old school was taken down. Farmers who got the lumber were Robert Weber, who used it to build onto his house; Henry Wulf, who used it in his house on the farm where Arthur Wulf now resides; some of the windows that Henry Wulf got were used later on by Henry Fries to build a porch onto his house, where Joe Bors lives now; Will Wulf, who used his lumber in a hog house; and Miles Hurley, who built the barn on the farm where Dallas Mussman now lives with the lumber that he got."

The new brick building was erected just south of the old schoolhouse in 1921-1922. It is fireproof and completely modern, has a large auditorium which serves also as a gymnasium, and is surrounded by beautiful and well-kept grounds. Teachers and pupils moved into the new building in the winter of 1922-1923. Enrollment increased considerably after the erection of the new building.

The Ohiowa athletes worked hard during the school year of 1938-1939, capturing two state championships. One was the Class C Tournament in basketball, and the other was the Nebraska State Track Meet Class D Championship. Nine trophies were added to the collection that year. By winning two state championships in that year, Ohiowa ranked with Lincoln High School, which won the Football and Class A Track Championships, and Omaha Central, which won the Nebraska wrestling and baseball championships. In other years, the boys went to the state tournaments, but didn’t get to be the state champions. The large collection of trophies displayed in the hall of the Ohiowa school speaks well for all the pupils during the years in all kinds of activities.

In 1955, six full-time teachers were employed in District 40; by 1967, the number had risen to 10.

FAMILIES

Anton Domeier, his wife Louisa, and their family, after spending some years in Illinois and Iowa, came to Franklin township in 1879, where they purchased a half-section of wild prairie land. The family worked hard to improve their homestead. Many grandchildren and great-grandchildren of this family still live in this community.

Anton Domeier and daughters, Anna and Louise (taken before 1900).
Henry Fries, a Franklin township native, was born on the place his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Peter Fries, homesteaded in 1870, 3 miles E of Ohiowa—the NW ¼ of Sec. 14, now known as the Ed Matejka farm. The parents had emigrated from Germany to Wisconsin, then on to Nebraska. Henry was born in a dugout in 1874. Later the family built a sod house, and then a frame house. Henry was third oldest of a family of 10 children. His father worked at Nebraska City to help provide for his family. Coming home, he would carry a 50-pound bag of flour on his back, walking all the way. Henry’s father donated a corner of ground for a school, District 73, until 1960 when it was moved.

The Fries family once watched a group of Indians bury a small baby just west of their farmyard, tamping the ground so hard that the mound of dirt always showed. Henry and his schoolmates spent the night of the 1888 blizzard in the schoolhouse.

In 1900, Henry married Johanna Thole, who had come to Franklin township in 1874, when four years old, with her parents, her twin sister Wilhelmina, seven other sisters, and a brother. Wilhelmina married Gust Fries. The Thole twins lived to celebrate their 82nd birthdays together in Ohiowa, where they lived most of their lives.

Henry and Johanna Fries had two daughters, Margaret (Mrs. Joe Bors), now living in her parents’ home, and Ida (Mrs. Jess Most), living 4 miles E of town. The Frieses celebrated their golden wedding in 1950.

Henry Fries passed away in May, 1959, at the age of 85 years; Mrs. Fries in December, 1959, at the age of 84. They had lived in Ohiowa since 1927. Mr. Fries lived in Franklin township all his life.

M. F. Garrison farmed near Dixon, Illinois, until 1878, when he came to Franklin township and bought 160 acres of fine prairie land. He farmed until 1890, when he moved into Ohiowa to live with his daughter Mrs. James (Mary A.) Quinlan.

William H. Garrison and his wife Emmogene came here from Illinois in 1871. In September, 1884, at the age of 17, he had enlisted in Co. F, First Illinois Light Artillery, and went through several battles. As a veteran, he homesteaded on Sec. 28. Their first home was a dugout, and for two years they lived in a sod house. He was the first person to raise a crop of grain west of Little Sandy Creek, so thinly settled was the region at this time. He was, in 1872, the first teacher in Franklin township; his wife also taught in 1875. Mr. Garrison wanted the township named Franklin. There was opposition, and so he got out the voters and the name Franklin carried. In 1893, he was elected county supervisor for three years; he also served two terms as assessor. His son, John G. Garrison, died July 15, 1965; but one daughter, Florence Garrison Wood, still lives in Ohiowa, as do a number of Garrison grandchildren.

Mrs. Pauline Lapcheska Jenkins, who was born in Germany in 1871, was brought to Illinois by her parents at the age of two years. When she was 12, she came to Belvidere with her grandparents. Mrs. Jenkins vividly remembered life in the early 1880’s. The pioneers’ first concern was shelter, food, fuel, and clothing. She remembered the hayburners—a round type of stove which was stuffed full of prairie hay. Later (in bad years) many people burned corn for fuel. There were many sod houses around the country; many pioneer families first shelters were dugouts. But as soon as each family was able, they built small frame houses. The pioneer families worked hard, thrice, and progressed rapidly, in spite of hardships when drouth and grasshoppers took their crops.
Mrs. Jenkins recalled the dry years of 1893 and 1894 when they had to kill young animals as they were born because there was nothing to feed the mothers. Potatoes raised during those years were like marbles but had to be used anyway. Mrs. Jenkins and her brother would shell a load of corn with a hand sheller, and the next day her father would take it to Alexandria, where it was sold for 9 cents a bushel. Mrs. Jenkins, like many others, mentioned the fact that before the town of Ohiowa started, that particular section was very low—in fact, a duck pond, where Mrs. Jenkins and her brother Fred Lapcheska used to go to shoot snipe and plover for meat.

Mrs. Jenkins was married to George Jenkins in 1889 and moved to Ohiowa in 1896. Here she raised her family: Agnes, Minnie, Blanche, George, and Daisy. Mrs. Jenkins, long a fine example of the old pioneer spirit that nothing could discourage, died at the age of 89, on May 19, 1960.

Ben Bothwell, the first storekeeper, had his store ½ mile E of town. The first school was also held there. Later, when the town site was changed to the center of the section, Mr. Bothwell moved his store building.

Mrs. Jenkins also recalled the business places that lined the street just west of Main Street. In the late 1890’s, the town had two banks, two butcher shops, and two hotels, besides many other shops.

Henry (Heinrich) Langhorst came to Franklin (Sec. 1) as a homesteader in 1870. His first home was a sod house, and he cultivated his land with a team of oxen. He worked in the railroad shops at Nebraska City to help provide for his family. In early days, Beatrice was their trading post, and Lincoln was the nearest railroad station. Gradually, pioneer-fashion, he replaced his dugout by a sod house, and then, later, hauled lumber from Fairmont for their first frame house. Indians frequently stopped to beg for food; if given food, they would leave and not bother. In 1878, the Indians were moved to the Black Hills.

Henry Langhorst was a member of the Nebraska Legislature for the 37th District in 1895 and 1896. In 1897, C. A. Fowler was elected to the legislature, but resigned at the end of one year; Mr. Langhorst served in 1898 to finish the term. He was also assessor for Franklin township for eight years. The Langhorsts had seven children, all of whom worked hard, and the name of Langhorst is still familiar in and around Ohiowa.

John Langhorst was born on the Henry Langhorst homestead in 1872. He remembered the blizzard of 1888. John married Ann Thomas, who was born and raised in Franklin township on the farm where Will Schropfer now lives. He farmed south of Ohiowa in Thayer County for more than 40 years. He moved into Ohiowa in January, 1947, and lived there until his death.

Sophia Most had been brought to Franklin township in 1874, at the age of three weeks, by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Most, who homesteaded 3 miles E of Ohiowa. She was married to Fred Matthies in 1891. They lived on the farm south of the Matthies homestead, where they reared three sons and three daughters: Sophia, Fred, Malinda, Ella, Will, and Ed. He was an excellent farmer and managed everything well. In 1944, they retired from the farm and moved into Ohiowa. Fred Matthies departed this life on June 10, 1950.

Mrs. Matthies recalled the blizzard of 1888 and various other pioneer experiences. On occasion, the Most family shared food with some very hungry Indians, giving them boiled potatoes with jackets. The Indians would pray and then eat all. In early days, potatoes were boiled in their jackets because they would keep better.

Sophia Matthies, still spirited and active, passed away November 20, 1963, at the age of 89.

William McCurdy came from Iowa in 1880, at the age of nine, to his new home in Franklin township. His father, Lewis C. McCurdy, purchased 160 acres of unimproved land for $1,300. They later bought additional land and built an attractive home. William McCurdy passed away May 16, 1960. His son Guy now lives on the home place.

Fred H. Matthies was brought to Franklin township at the age of 1½ years by his parents, who homesteaded 2½ miles E of Ohiowa. He grew to manhood on this farm (the SE ¼ of Sec. 10) with his brothers Henry and Louis. His father departed this life at an early age.

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Frederick Saatmann came from Illinois in 1883 and bought land from Gerhard Hopken, who had homesteaded it. He brought with him three sons—Fred, Herman, and Ernest—who became industrious and prosperous members of the community. Herman Saatmann passed away in 1918. Ernest Saatmann died on May 20, 1951, and his wife on December 28, 1966. Fred Saatmann died November 26, 1944. Mrs. Fred Saatmann died on May 20, 1951, and his wife on December 28, 1966. Fred Saatmann still lives here, along with sons and daughters of these families: Frederick, Frieda, Ella, and Chris Saatmann, and Mrs. John Jacobs and Mrs. Rudy Sadlo. The Saatmann holdings have been large through these many years.

Coming to Nebraska, they homesteaded on the NW (4 of 4) quarter. Later, they built a house in the NW corner, where the buildings still remain. The father and the older sons frequently worked in Nebraska City. Fred grew to manhood on the family farm. As a boy, he spent much of his time herding cattle, as there were no fences, in all kinds of weather, at times getting lost in blizzards. He saw herds of antelope passing through, and the Texas cattle drives. Also, as a boy, he worked in the Ben Stockfeld dry goods and grocery store. He remembered Indians coming by and begging for food. He saw the railroad put down and the village of Ohiowa built up. Before the railroad came, he and his father made many trips to Tobias with teams and wagons to haul lumber for building purposes in Ohiowa. At one time his mother, sister, and he were snowed in for three days in their dugout. His father and older brothers had gone to Nebraska City to work. After three years, Ernest Molthan, father of our long-time mayor, Henry Molthan, with help, dug them out.

In 1891 he was married to Alvina Mussen, who had come from Illinois to Franklin township with her parents, when a girl of 12 years. Mr. and Mrs. Sieckmann farmed near Ohiowa for many years, retiring to Ohiowa in 1938. Their greatest pride was working close to nature. When working in Ohiowa, Mr. Sieckmann worked in filling stations of Brown, Lucht, and Judy. He was township assessor for eight years.

Fred and Alvina Sieckmann had seven children, six sons and one daughter: Fred, Charles, Ed, Grace, Howard, Jess, and Dallas. They were privileged to observe their 69th wedding anniversary in April, 1960. Mrs. Sieckmann passed away in April, 1960. Mr. Sieckmann then made his home with his daughter Grace (Mrs. Fred) Matthies in Ohiowa until his death on May 23, 1965.

William Sieckmann, with his wife Wilhelmina and four children, came to America in 1870 from Hesse, Germany. Coming to Nebraska, they homesteaded on the NW ¼ of Sec. 8, Franklin township, the same section in which Ohiowa now stands. At that time there was no town. The family first lived in a dugout on the SE corner of that quarter. Later, they built a house in the NW corner, where the buildings still remain. The father and the older sons frequently worked in Nebraska City. He also ran a hotel in Ohiowa's early saloons. They went to Nebraska City, Beatrice, and Tobias for supplies.

The William Sieckmanns had seven children: Minnie, William, Henry, Fred, Charles, Sophie, and Mollie. The only survivor of this family is now Mollie (Mrs. Will McGraw), who resides in Lincoln.

Fred Sieckmann was long Ohiowa's oldest citizen, a resident of Franklin township for all of his 95 years. Born in Germany on September 29, 1869, he was only six months old when his parents brought him to America. Fred grew to manhood on the family farm. As a boy, he spent much of his time herding cattle, as there were no fences, in all kinds of weather, at times getting lost in blizzards. He saw herds of antelope passing through, and the Texas cattle drives. Also, as a boy, he worked in the Ben Stockfeld dry goods and grocery store. He remembered Indians coming by and begging for food. He saw the railroad put down and the village of Ohiowa built up. Before the railroad came, he and his father made many trips to Tobias with teams and wagons to haul lumber for building purposes in Ohiowa. At one time his mother, sister, and he were snowed in for three days in their dugout. His father and older brothers had gone to Nebraska City to work. After three years, Ernest Molthan, father of our long-time mayor, Henry Molthan, with help, dug them out.

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Calvin S. Stover came to Franklin township from Iowa in 1883. He worked for Ralph Stowell for three years and then went into the draying business in Ohiowa. In 1888, he married Anna Einhause, a native of Germany. In 1891, he changed his business to that of stock buyer and butcher. He was said to be a young man of remarkable business ability, and he prospered.

Dan Theobald came from Illinois with his family and lived in the Harmony community before he bought the farm in Sec. 20 of Franklin township in 1896. From then until very recent times there were always Theobalds in this community; but the last—Harry and Dan Theobald, and Myrtle Theobald Silvey—are now gone. Mrs. Dan Theobald's maiden name was the same as that of her husband: she was Margaret Theobald, a sister of George Theobald, but the two families were not related in any way. Mrs. Silvey remembered her parents saying that they came across the prairie in wagon from the end of the railroad and came as far as the Frank Hurley place before going on to their Harmony home.

Frank Hurley came here and bought land in 1883, before Ohiowa was a town. George Hurley still lives in Ohiowa, although the other Hurley families have all moved elsewhere.

George Theobald came to Ohiowa soon after his marriage to Dora Wolter in 1887. His home, consisting of 240
acres, was on Sec. 32. He and his wife worked hard and had a beautiful farm home. They had two daughters: Goldie (Mrs. Earl Hill) and Laura, who married Dr. S. G. Panter, once an Ohiowa physician. He had several brothers who settled elsewhere in Fillmore County, and his sister Margaret married Dan Theobald.

George Augustus Wright came from Mendota, Illinois, in 1871, homesteading on the E ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 34, Belle Prairie. (He is included here because of his connection with Ohiowa.) Among the pains and pleasures of pioneer life, he told of walking to Alexandria for a sack of flour, carrying it home on his back, and of walking barefoot to Sunday School with Ralph Stowell. His son, Norman Wright, Sr., who lives in Ohiowa, spent some 18 years as a county supervisor and is now (1967) mayor of Ohiowa.

Other early residents were William Baker and others who came in 1870. Mr. Baker filed homestead entry right in 1869 and moved his family from Ohio in the spring of 1870. The Baker, Lowry, Dempster, and Case families came together, arriving at Beatrice, and built dugouts so that they could live close together. They chose their homesteads in Sec. 22 on the creek so that they had water and timber. Later on, the grout house, constructed of lime and rock, was built. According to her daughter, Mrs. Dave Sweney, when Mrs. Baker moved in, no queen was ever prouder. The family was raised on this farm and Mrs. Sweney lived there until very recent years, when she moved to Milligan.

Albert F. Clemons homesteaded ¼ mile E of Ohiowa in 1870 and had the first post office; his brother, R. L. Clemons, another early settler, was postmaster in 1883.

We pay tribute, if only by naming them here for memory’s sake, to these early families: Schroefler, Strauss, Krause, Staatmann, Wulf, Clausen, Sieckmann, and Most. Still familiar names in the community are those of Thomas, Fries, Matthis, Pfingston, Hurley, Hopken, Schiele, Vogt, Hill, Schafer, Garland, Theobald, Watermann, Dunse, Chalupka, Moltan, Schroeder, Moore, McCurdy, Warken, Eppeler, Sharp, Franz, Brown, Craduck, Baldwin, Brunner, Sweney, Sieber, Garrison, Quinlan, Buchmeier, Dearing, Schweer, Blanke, Wright, Todd, Rippe, Wood, Wedeking, Metcalfe, Babcock, Clemons, Demaree, Peppic, and Heston.

Ohio Auto Club in 1909

Stacking wheat bundles in summer of 1913: Otha Wood on load of bundles, Bryson Walker on stack, and Ed. Sigman on empty rack.
Geneva Township

Geneva township is T7N, R3W, in Fillmore County. The township takes its name from the county-seat town of Geneva, most of which is included at its southeastern corner in Sec. 36, in the geographical center of the county. The town of Geneva is the voting point as well as the principal shopping center for most of the township's inhabitants.

The land in this area is gently rolling, with one stream, Turkey Creek, flowing from west to east across its southern part, mostly through Secs. 30 to 25. This stream is small, slow, lazy, and sometimes dry; it becomes swift and swollen only after melting snows or heavy rains.

Geneva township is bounded on the north by West Blue, on the east by Madison, on the south by Stanton, and on the west by Bennett townships. Its entire southern boundary is marked by Nebraska Highway 41 and its eastern boundary by U. S. 81. The Fairmont-Hebron branch of the Burlington runs from north to south down the middle of Secs. 1 to 36, the Fremont-Superior line of the Northwestern slants in southwesterly in the northern quarter of Sec. 36 and then parallels the Burlington through the town.

That Geneva township has been a progressive one is evidenced by its having connected its rural residents by telephone as early as 1907; and the Geneva Township Club, founded in 1921, became the first organized extension club in the county. All its farm homes are now on year-round roads, and all now have access to electricity. As of 1968, the township contained 66 irrigation wells.

Manleyville

During 1871, when negotiations were pending for the purchase of a portion of the school land in the center of the county for county purposes, A. J. Manley conceived the idea of laying out a town site and getting the county seat located there. He built a large hall, 20' x 60', and offered to donate this to the county should they locate there. This offer was refused, with the result that this hall and a blacksmith shop were the only buildings ever actually erected in Manleyville. A shoe shop and a grocery store were opened up in the hall. One day, while Porter was working in the hay field, a neighbor told him that Day had been guilty of criminal intimacy with his wife. Porter went to the house and, taking his wife on his knee, made her confess the truth of the report. He arose, exclaiming, "He shall die!"

Just at that moment, he saw Day riding up on one of the horses he had loaned him. In anger, he caught up his loaded musket, thrust the muzzle out the window, and fired. Day rolled from the horse, dead.

An inquest was held, and Porter was held for trial on a charge of murder. At the regular term of court in November, held at the Manleyville hall, Porter was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced. He was soon paroled, however, and returned back East.

Mordecai Pangle purchased the ground after the town was disbanded. His son Charles remembered and told about breaking up the ground and plowing into the stakes which had been driven to mark off town lots.

The first term of District Court in Fillmore County was held, earlier in the same year, at the near-by Pangle homestead. In the fall of 1871, William Smith had been arrested for larceny and was confined, awaiting trial, in the Pawnee County jail at great expense. Therefore, upon a request from the county commissioners, Judge O. P. Mason ordered a special term of the District Court to be held on February 28, 1872. The first jury in the county was drawn on February 7, and the first term of court was held at the Pangle homestead. Smith was convicted and sentenced to 60 days in the Otoe County jail.

SCHOOLS

Early in 1872, the first four school districts in Geneva township were organized; a fifth district was added in 1883.

District No. 7 was organized on January 7, 1872. County Superintendent John A. Dempster ordered an organizational meeting at the home of E. R. Spear on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 28, T7N, R3W. The meeting, attended by Girard R. Hart, Ebinezer Milner, E. R. Spear, J. E. Spear, R. E. Spear, and M. S. Spear, elected a board consisting of E. Milner, moderator; G. R. Hart, director; and E. R. Spear, treasurer.

A temporary board-shanty schoolhouse was located on the south side of the E 1/2 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 29. A report of Superintendent Dempster's appeared in the Nebraska Bulletin, July 6, 1872.

June 25, 1872—Visited the school in District No. 7, taught by Miss Lettie Williams. There were 13 pupils present, of 16 on the list. Good order maintained, and the school in prospect of fair advancement, considering the disadvantage of so small a room, and a poor building. This is Miss Williams' first term, and she succeeds well."

1 Most of the Geneva township material was compiled by Mrs. Vera Lovegrove and Mrs. Darrel Hughes.
At a special meeting of legal voters on April 7, 1873, it was voted to change the schoolhouse site from Sec. 20 to the NW corner of the NW ¼ of Sec. 29, and to build a sod house to be used for a summer school. William Spear, William Bell, and A. J. Long were elected to serve on a building committee for a permanent new school house. After advertising, the contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, Edward Webb, Jr., who agreed to build and furnish the schoolhouse for $750 and to have it completed by August 15, 1873—which he did. The temporary schoolhouse, and the rest of the assets—including a bed, a broom, and a window—were sold at auction for $4.90. Mr. Webb also made up a firebreak around the schoolhouse and banded the building with sod for $5.75.

At the regular meeting in April 1879, the following resolution was adopted: "Resolved that action of the school district board of this District No. 7 of Fillmore County, State of Nebraska, in purchasing the five acres of land on which the schoolhouse stands as described and sold from B. & M. Railroad Co. to said district is hereby approved." The schoolhouse was moved to its final location, the NW corner of Sec. 32, T. 23 N., to make its location more central in the district. In the school year 1874-75, there were 47 pupils enrolled. School was discontinued here in 1950, and the building was sold.

It is interesting to note that the following former pupils of District 7 all became the parents of twins: Lloyd Russell, John Wagner, George Stoldorf, Edwin Jacobson, and Berniece Biester (Mrs. Robert Kubevec), and Roscoe Burke. Among the earliest residents of the district still residing in it are the Lindes, the Wilds, and the Tobissens. Also, Mrs. Tom Wagner has the distinction of being the only former teacher still living within the district.

Following is a complete list of the teachers in District 7:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Lottie Williams</td>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>Martha Oberkotter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Laura Webb</td>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>Lora Harrold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>Carrie E. Harvey</td>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>Lydia I. Miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>Elva J. Lewis</td>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>Mary Stanard (Shoff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>J. H. Sager</td>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>C. H. Merriman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-79</td>
<td>J. B. Lewis</td>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Mrs. M. S. Bond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>James McElroy</td>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>Verna Mowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Kate E. Spear</td>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Susie Larson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>John Chase</td>
<td>1908-09</td>
<td>Susie Larson (Og)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>J. E. Harris</td>
<td>1909-10</td>
<td>John Curtis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Aaron Davis</td>
<td>1910-11</td>
<td>Earl Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Sarah Martin</td>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>Maude Serrard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>Mary Hart</td>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>Mabel Everett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td>E. M. Davis</td>
<td>1913-15</td>
<td>Leda M. Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td>Eva M. Davis</td>
<td>1914-16</td>
<td>Emma Renken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-85</td>
<td>Eva M. Davis</td>
<td>1915-17</td>
<td>Velma Lauber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>M. L. Moore</td>
<td>1916-18</td>
<td>Marcella Sullivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>Amy Stephens</td>
<td>1917-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>E. H. Stephenson</td>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>May H. Henderson</td>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>G. H. Stephens</td>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>Edna Murdock</td>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>Ethel Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>Lulu Arrowsmith</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>Edith Halsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>Erma Stephens</td>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>Margarette Hourigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>Hattie Hoobler</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>(Swails)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>Katie Herriott</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>Mrs. E. M. Maclaugl</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892-93</td>
<td>Mamie Renz</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Kate Kittrell</td>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Edith A. Black</td>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>nurse A. Bassett</td>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>Mrs. Audry Henry</td>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-96</td>
<td>Lou Arrowsmith</td>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896-97</td>
<td>Dorothy Dumprtt</td>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>Dorothy Dumprtt</td>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-99</td>
<td>Evelyn Leichtenberger</td>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-00</td>
<td>John Witter</td>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>Mrs. Herbert Nicholas</td>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>Lulu Arrowsmith</td>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>Anna Renken</td>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>Mary Stewart</td>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>Lulu Arrowsmith</td>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Silas Thompson</td>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>M. P. Ames</td>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>School closed</td>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District No. 12 was organized at the request of a majority of the voters within this district on Monday, January 29, 1872, at the home of James Loghry. The schoolhouse is located on the northwest corner of the NE ¼ of Sec. 26; the land was originally given by Ben P. Wolfe.

A description of the schoolhouse in 1872 appears in the records of the county superintendent:

"October 1, P.M., 1872.—Visited school in District No. 12 taught by Mrs. Sadie A. Long. 12 pupils present—11 on the list; still apparently in a good state of progress. Mrs. L is veteran teacher of 26 terms, and has not failed to acquire a good system. We are happy to state that this district has erected a fine frame school house of good size, seated with patent iron seats and furnished with a spacious blackboard. We hope other districts will take pattern."
District No. 14 was organized on Tuesday, January 23, 1872, at the residence of Chester Ward. The schoolhouse, which was a board granary, was located on the NE corner of Sec. 8. To give it a more central location, it was later moved to the NE corner of Sec. 18, on ground donated by Ben McCashland.

The first schoolhouse was described in the "Records on Condition of Schools" in the county superintendent's files: "Tuesday, June 25, 1872—Visited school in District No. 14 taught by Miss Addie Miles in a board granary. Eight pupils present. Very good system of teaching."

An expanded version of this report, signed by County Superintendent Dempster, was printed in the Nebraska Bulletin on July 6, 1872:

"June 25, P.M.—Visited the School in District No. 14 taught by Miss Addie Miles. Eight pupils present. It is on the list. She has a bright school of small scholars, keeps good order, and has a good method of teaching small children. Her form of asking general questions I consider commendable. School kept in a grainer, small but neat and clean. This is Miss Miles' first term, and she bids fair to attain a good standard of teaching."

By 1873, the granary had been replaced by a more formal building. January 8, 1873—Visited school in District No. 14 taught by Miss Addie Miles. Twelve on system and rather shack. School taught in new frame house, seated with iron seats."

By the following autumn, the schoolhouse situation had been improved. The Bulletin printed another report (1873): "August 29, District No. 18—James Shepherd, director; Miss Lottie Bock, teacher. New frame school house 16' x 24', ten feet posted, seated with the Eurekas. Good blackboard."

Incidentally, 12 Nichols children, the families of Clarence and Edward Nichols (brothers), and 13 Brower children graduated from the eighth grade in District 18 (commonly known as the "Charter Oak") school. The children of the Clarence Nichols family are Herbert, Francis, Gordon, Wilbur, Donald, and Marian. The children of Edgar Nichols are Robert, Howard, Elvin, Jess, Helen (Mrs. Kenneth Hofber), and Maurice. All of the children of the John A. Brower family (except two who died in infancy) received eight years of education at this school: Ellie (Lovejoy), Bessie (Miller), Bonnie (Berger), Harry, Hazel, Lorraine (Larson), Tom, Florence (Chesnut), Russell, Edna (Garrett), Frank, Mildred (Fisher), and Howard.

Miss Helen Scruby, the first teacher in District 18, taught a three-month term for a monthly salary of $15. In 1874, there were 25 children between the ages of 5 and 21; of these, 24 attended school. It is interesting to note that in 1945 there were just 12 children in this age range, and by 1956 the number had decreased to 6.

The teachers in District 14 (as far as the records show) were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873-75</td>
<td>Addie Miles</td>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Mary Hammersly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-75</td>
<td>R. C. Croley</td>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>Em</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>Belle Fisher</td>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td>Ruth Scoville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>John T. Coulter</td>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>Mary Hammersly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>Sarah Coulter</td>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>Shadrack Doty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>E. L. Eckley</td>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>Anna Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-79</td>
<td>G. W. Plants</td>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>Anna Edwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>Annie S. Gillespie</td>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>E. E. Kingsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>Elmer Cochran</td>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>Eva Miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Iva A. Bullock</td>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>W. R. Rice</td>
<td>1892-93</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Emma Shafford</td>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Sarah Egan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>C. A. Smith</td>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>Atty Wagner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District No. 18 was founded when, on the request of a majority of voters in the district, the county superintendent notified James Shepherd that a meeting to organize and to elect officers would be held at the residence of Mr. Syas on February 10, 1872. The officers elected were A. D. Fisher, moderator; James Shepherd, director; and W. H. Neal, treasurer.

The ground on which the school was located, the NW corner of Sec. 12, was donated by W. T. Carson. The first schoolhouse was described in the "Records of Condition of Schools" filed in the county superintendent's office:

"October 2, A.M., 1872—Visited school in District No. 18 taught by Miss Helen Scruby in sod house, small and inconvenient. Ten pupils present; a full attendance. Order, good; system, medium. Miss S's first term."

The Nebraska Bulletin had a more extended comment (October 19, 1872):

"October 2, Wednesday, October 2, A.M.—Visited school in District No. 18; Miss Helen Scruby, teacher. School taught in sod house, with no benches; not being built for a school house, it is small and inconvenient. Ten pupils present—ten on the list; we were glad to see full attendance. She is not a professional teacher, but is doing very well, this being her first term."

The school closed in 1902.
The teachers in District 18 were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872-73</td>
<td>Helen Scruby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-75</td>
<td>Sherwood Burr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>Emma Bingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>James Shephard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>B. S. Burr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-79</td>
<td>Lizzie Curtis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>Lucia Wellman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-85</td>
<td>Grace Porter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>Ida B. Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>Hattie Dewey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>May Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>Mame Haid (Combs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>Ray Banta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892-93</td>
<td>(?) Anna West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Mary Donnell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>Ida Walton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-96</td>
<td>Ella Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896-97</td>
<td>Lottie Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>John Geosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-99</td>
<td>John Fishel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-00</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>Lena Oberkotter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>Jennie Timmons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>Fannie Goodrich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Addie Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>John Geosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908-09</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-10</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-11</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>Ada B. Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District No. 81 was founded, on written petition of qualified voters, from lands set aside from Districts 7, 12, 14 and 18. This new district, number 81, was organized on December 17, 1883, at the home of J. W. Hart. B. B. Ogg was elected the first director, to serve the term 1883-1884. John Pittard was elected director the following year. He was the grandfather of John Pittard, now residing in the district.

The original building was a little red schoolhouse, 26’ long by 18’ wide. One winter, 40 pupils were enrolled. Because of its inadequacy, this schoolhouse was sold in 1898, and a church building across the road to the east was purchased and moved onto the school ground. The little red schoolhouse was purchased by Jess McMahon and moved to his farm % mile N of the school ground, where it is still standing. This schoolhouse was sold in 1898, and a church building across the road to the east was purchased and moved onto the school ground.

The present school building served the dual purpose of school and church for a number of years, as well as being the center of many community activities. Since the founding of the district, the school has been in operation here continuously with the exception of four years (1949-1953).

Four generations of the Charles Pittard family attended school here: Charles Pittard; his daughter, Vera Pittard Lovegrove; his granddaughter, Jean Lovegrove Hughes; and his great-grandsons, Douglas and Richard Hughes.

The teachers in District 81 over the years were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>1885-86</td>
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<td>1886-87</td>
<td>Hattie Dewey</td>
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<td>1889-90</td>
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<td>(?) Anna West</td>
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Reunion of early students of District No. 81, June, 1969. Seated, left to right: Yvonne (Stinton) Ewart, Mrs. Faye (Hosack) Bare, Malcille (Bradley) Coleman, Ceci (Ogg) Dunn. Standing: James Ogg (a first pupil), LeRoy Miles, Thomas Coleman, Chloe Ogg, Charles Pittard.

Lauber Seed Company

A private industry located in rural Geneva township is the Lauber Seed Company, established in the fall of 1931 by Herbert E. Lauber, a longtime resident of Fillmore County. The initial business was originating car and truck lot alfalfa and sweet clover seed, which was sold throughout Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska. The first truckload of alfalfa seed was purchased in 1933. The company was one of the pioneers in the sale of alfalfa seed in bushel bags. The Lauber Seed Company first produced hybrid seed corn in Fillmore County in 1938. A processing and drying plant was built near Geneva in 1940. The company shipped a number of carloads of hybrid seed corn to Europe for rehabilitation after World War II. The processing plant—both the building and much stored corn—was destroyed by fire in 1947. Rebuilt, it is now one of the most modern plants in the seed business. The company supplies hybrid seed corn to approximately one hundred dealers in Nebraska and Kansas. The Lauber Seed Company is now operated and managed by Clayton and Wendell Lauber, sons of Herbert.

INDUSTRY

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Roads

All farm homes in the township now have access to graveled roads. The first graveled (county) road through the township was started about 1933 and completed in 1937. The first section to be graveled started at the Fair Grounds. The first graveled (county) road through the Lauber farms in 1939.

Irrigation

Irrigation in this township was pioneered by Herbert Lauber; his deep well on Sec. 1, T7, R3W was dug in the spring of 1938. By 1957, the construction of the graveled road was continued north for 4 miles between Secs. 15 and 16, 9 and 10, 3 and 4, and Secs. 33 and 34 of West Blue township, to U. S. Highway 6. This road was so located that it placed all the farm homes in the township within 1/2 miles of a main road. Since then the rural mail routes have all been graveled, and also fractions of miles, so as to put every home on a graveled road.

Electricity

The first electricity in the township was brought in by the Iowa-Nebraska Light & Power Co. (later bought out by Consumers Public Power District) in the fall of 1937. The line followed the first county graveled road. The R.E.A. started building electric lines here in 1950, furnishing electricity to many more eager rural residents.

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

This church was located in the extreme SW corner of Sec. 18 on ground donated by Henry Bohlen with the understanding that it would revert to him if the church were ever dissolved. The cornerstone of the church was laid in late 1903, and the building was completed in 1904.
The church closed in 1956, and the building, purchased by Martin Greiss, was dismantled in 1959. The parsonage was purchased by the Geneva Golf Club and was moved to the fairgrounds, where it was remodeled for use as a clubhouse. The pews were bought by the Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Geneva and are still in use there.

**GIRLS' TRAINING SCHOOL**

The Nebraska State Industrial School at Kearney at one time cared for both delinquent girls and delinquent boys. In 1892, a separate institution for girls was provided at Geneva, and the 20 girls then at Kearney were moved to the new institution. Mrs. Henry Muhlenberg cooked the first meal for them.

The following paragraph is from the *Semi-Centennial History of Nebraska*, a historical sketch compiled in 1904 by A. E. Sheldon, director of field work for the Nebraska State Historical Society:

*The Nebraska Girls' Industrial School.*—This school is located at Geneva. Originally the boys and girls were in the same institution at Kearney, but the work was not satisfactory, and a division was made in March, 1892. The law governing this institution was amended to permit the institution to be for girls only. The original enterprise was made possible by an endowment of $120,000. The newest addition to the 50-acre state-owned tract consists of three triplex apartments for employees, completed in the fall of 1964.

Formerly the girls stayed until they had completed high school; some stayed as long as 3 or 4 years. Now, however, the official plan is to get them back to their homes, or placed in foster homes, as rapidly as possible. Some girls are paroled at the end of 6 months, although the average length of stay is from 10 to 14 months.

A biennial report for the period from December 1, 1914, to December, 1916, stated that at the time the girls were divided into three “family groups” as follows: “A”—receiving ward, and girls who needed to be segregated; “B”—the bright, intelligent, normal, and progressive girls; and “C”—children from 3½ to 14 years of age.

The institution has a fully accredited “Class A” school called North High School. In June, 1915, the first graduation exercises were held at 11 girls completed the course prescribed for eighth-grade work. In May, 1917, four girls graduated from the 12th grade and 14 from the eighth grade.

The number of girls enrolled at the Girls' Training School—the name was changed in 1923—has ranged from 196 in 1928 to 83 in 1955. As of the middle of May, 1967, enrollment numbered 106 (94 girls and 12 boys). With the closing of the school year, a number of girls and boys were paroled, leaving 87 enrolled as of May 26, 1967.

The enrollees are committed by the courts as juvenile delinquents; they must be under the age of 18 at the original time of commitment, and must be released on or before their 21st birthday. The Girls' Training School is designed for and directed toward the retention, education, industrial training, and reformation of female juvenile delinquents. The enrollees can receive vocational training in several fields—Cosmetology, Nurse Aid, Warehouse Clerk, and Food Service. All the girls are taught to clean, cook, bake, wash, iron, and sew. Girls who qualify may accept employment by the day in the Geneva area. The girls committed to the school are to be instructed in morality, self-government, and domestic duties.

At the present time (early 1968), the youngest girl is 11 years old and the youngest boy is 9. The school had been exclusively for girls until January, 1967, when 12 young boys under the age of 14 were transferred here from the Boys' School at Kearney.

Superintendents who have served at the school since 1938 are the following:

- July 1, 1938-July 1, 1951—Mrs. Blanche Clouse
- July 1, 1951-July 1, 1955—Mrs. Maude Dishbrow
- July 1, 1955-February, 1958—Mrs. Blanche Clouse
- February, 1958-January 8, 1963—Mrs. Gladys Hart
- January 8, 1963-present—Mr. Donald Best

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The Camp family came from Jasper County, Iowa, in 1874 and settled in Geneva. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Camp, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Camp and son Earl, Mr. and Mrs. Silas Camp and daughter May, and Mr. and Mrs. C. D. (Stote) Camp and son Burt.

There were only five buildings in Geneva besides the jail, and since all houses were occupied, the only place to stay overnight was in the jail. This lasted only a few days until lumber could be hauled from Fairmont. Each family busied itself putting up small houses temporarily until better accommodations could be arranged. Each newcomer took his first shelter in the jail until completing their homes.

The three Camp brothers built a general-merchandise and grocery store as soon as possible and operated it for several years. J. H. Camp built a livery stable where the Northwestern depot now stands.
Fred H. Camp, son of C. D. Camp, was born in Geneva on August 22, 1874, and was the only Camp who remained in Geneva. He saw the town develop from its tiny beginning and he was one of the few who remembered the erection of every building in town. As a boy he helped make the brick that went into the construction of the first brick business building in town. He watched the railroad tracks laid into town and saw the first train come in.

Soon a Fairgrounds was built and the famous "Sile Camp's Band" was organized. This band was soon known all over the country. Fred was a bugler in Company G of Geneva at the time of the Spanish-American War, but was not allowed to accompany the boys to war because by that time he was a married man. For many years the Camp Band was a feature of every celebration in Geneva. Eleven Camp relatives played in the band. Old-timers well remember the gaudy uniforms and plumed helmets worn by this band. Fred led a band of his own at one time.

Geneva began to grow faster and there was much building being done. J. H. Camp also built an eight-room hotel beside the photograph gallery. Fred Camp hauled the first load of lumber to start the town of Strang, just south of Geneva.

In 1904 some of the Camps went farther west. The Sile Camp family located in Twin Falls, Idaho. The Jim Camp family went to California. C. D. (Stote) Camp and wife and Otis H. Camp and wife went to Salida, Colorado, while Burt Camp and family went to Boise, Idaho. Ross Camp and family went to California. Lena Camp Wheeler and family located in Lincoln, Nebraska. Otis Camp is the only living one of those early-day Camps.

In 1894, Fred married Hattie Elmore of Geneva, daughter of Ed and Mrs. Elmore. Ed was for many years the Northwestern depot agent. To this union were born two children, Mrs. Maybelle E. Booker of Denver, Colorado, and Dr. C. Cass Camp, now deceased. Cass was a dentist, and practiced for 42 years in Davenport, Nebraska.

Fred learned the barber trade early in life in the shop of Beals & Wilkins, under the Citizens Bank building. On February 22, 1895, he opened his own barber shop in a room in the old Geneva State Bank Building. In 1898, he sold his barber shop to Al Severns. Following the sale of his shop, he went into the photographic business with his father, who was Geneva's pioneer photographer. His studio was located at the corner of 8th and G. He later sold the studio to Dewald & Ralston and started in the mercantile business.

Mr. Camp was a member of the city council when the city removed the hitch racks from in front of the courthouse and the farmers threatened to boycott the town. He was also a member when the city removed the old board walks and ordered the laying of brick walks, granted the first electric-light franchise, and granted the second telephone franchise (to the Fillmore County Company). He was a member of the school board (1916-1919) and was for many years a director of the county fair, and secretary of concessions.

Fred often talked about visiting with the Indians who camped on the banks of Turkey Creek in the early days.

There was never anyone more proud of his home town than Fred Camp. During the last few years of his life, he served as night clerk at the Geneva Hotel, where he made his home. He enjoyed visiting with all who stopped at the hotel, always praising Geneva, the place of his birth. He passed away on January 14, 1955. Hattie passed away March 26, 1935.

Fred Camp was one of our few people to have been born in and lived in Geneva all his life.

At the present time, his granddaughter, Mrs. Mary Portwood, and her husband, Dr. David Portwood, and his great-grandchildren are carrying on the good works of Fred and Hattie Camp.

James F. Loghry was born in Steuben County, New York, February 1, 1827, a son of John and Electa (Foster) Loghry. His father was of Irish and his mother of English descent. He farmed with his father until he was 20 years old.

Then his father found him a place to learn the blacksmith trade, at which he worked as a journeyman for two years.

He became acquainted with Lucy A. Cutler, who was teaching a district school in the neighborhood, and they were married January 10, 1850. Lucy was born in Rutland, Vermont, October 6, 1839, to Mr. and Mrs. John H. Cutler, but when less than a year old was taken by her parents to Worcester, Massachusetts, and when she was seven the family moved to Orland, Indiana.

After his marriage, Mr. Loghry opened a blacksmith shop of his own in Branch County, Michigan, where he carried on business for three years. He later moved to the village of Orland, Indiana, where he ran a smithy in partnership with a Mr. Carpenter.

In 1865, during his residence in Orland, he responded to the government's call for more troops to help in putting down the Rebellion and enlisted for one year of the war in Company K, 152nd Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and was mustered in on February 15, 1865. As the war soon closed, he was discharged at Charleston, West Virginia, August 30, 1865, with the rank of corporal. He returned to Indiana and five days later secured another shop and resumed business. Four years later he disposed of his property and started westward, landing in Fillmore County on March 12, 1871.
He filed on a homestead on the SE ¼ of Sec. 24 in Geneva township. He proved up on the homestead November 10, 1875. As soon as he settled on the farm, James built a sod forge, covered his hovels with a canvas, and resumed work in the open air, pounding out drill points for those far and near needing to have work done. He shod their horses and also shod many a horse for the Indians. Here the honest blacksmith with his hammer, sledge, and strong arm, coupled with farming operations, succeeded in making for himself and family a comfortable home, almost within sight of the place where he first unloaded his household goods on coming to the state.

Mr. Loghry was active in community affairs. According to records, the meeting of the Agricultural Society to organize a County Fair was held at his home August 1, 1872. On January 21, 1872, the First Presbyterian Church of Fairmont was organized at the home of James Loghry and was so recorded on July 6, 1872.

He cast his first presidential vote for John C. Fremont, and was an ardent supporter of the Republican party. He came of a very patriotic and loyal family, in which four of the six sons were among the boys in blue during the Civil War and all of whom lived to return to their homes. He was reared in the Methodist Church, but did not join any church. His wife became a member of the Congregational Church in Geneva.

The Loghrays sold their farm to Vitura A. Bartlett on November 22, 1888, for $5,000 and moved to a home in Geneva. James again opened up a blacksmith shop, located near where Emery's Cafe is now located. In his later years he moved his shop to his home and carried on his business from there.

To Mr. and Mrs. Loghry were born five children. (1) Helen M. became the wife of Adam Huston, who lived 1½ miles N of the old homestead; they had seven children: James, who married Lou McCombs; Hugh, who married Viola Roles; Ella (Mrs. Charles Pittard); A. D., who married Nettie Talkington; Hattie (Mrs. Sam Lash); Pearl (Mrs. Prentice Murr); and Frank, who married Dorothy Sole. (2) Leroy F. married Ida Platt and they lived on a farm 2 miles from the old home. (3) Lurisa married William H. Garrett, who owned and operated a farm in Madison township; they had eight children: Julia, Dora, Harry, Ada, Nellie, Amy, Hazel, and Pete. (4) Jay married Anna McPherson, and they had two sons, Frank and Clarence. (5) The other child died in infancy.

James Loghry died in Geneva on September 10, 1906, and his wife Lucy passed away in March, 1917, at the age of 87 years.

Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Miles at Golden Wedding celebration (1911). Seated on ground: Harold Miles, Ruth Chesnut, Charles Combs, Edith Miles, Gordon Miles, Edgar Chesnut, Nellie Miles, Velda Combs, Wallace Chesnut. Seated, left to right: Lena (Linnert) Miles holding son Floyd; LeRoy Miles; Adelbert Miles; Charles A. Miles; Eva (Miles) Spear; Charles C. Miles; Eva Williams Miles; Birge Miles; Drusilla Miles Combs; Roy Miles. Back row: June Chesnut; "Ktt" Arrowsmith Chesnut (Mrs. Charles); Harry Chesnut; Dan Spade; Bertha Miles (Mrs. Adelbert); Freil Combs; Lydia Green Miles (Mrs. Charles A.); Mamie Davis; Lydia Longman; Miles Longman; Myra Miles (Mrs. Frank); Mr. and Mrs. George Miles; Eunice Camp Miles (Mrs. Birge); Link Chesnut and wife, "Puss" Arrowsmith Chesnut; last two unidentified.

David Creola Mowry was another early pioneer of Fillmore County. He traced his paternal ancestry back to England. The first Mowrys came to America in 1631, in company with Roger Williams, and were associated with him in his religion and the settling of Providence, Rhode Island. Some Mowrys are to be found there yet, but many found their way westward. David was the ninth descendant. He was born on a farm near Wynette, Bureau County, Illinois. After a public-school education, he attended an academy for two years. He started west on his 21st birthday (March 1, 1878), and came to Fillmore County, where he had three uncles living near Carleton, and decided to stay. He bought land in Bryant township in 1878. The farm bordered on the Thayer County line. He made several improvements including a pond.

In 1882, he married Lucy M. Brown, daughter of a pioneer family. Two daughters were born to Mr. and Mrs. Mowry while they lived on this farm: Genevieve (Mrs. John Erikson of Nampa, Idaho) and Verna (Mrs. Tom Wagner of Geneva). In 1886, Mr. Mowry sold his farm and moved to the new town of Geneva, and started what was called a "screen-door factory" but did all kinds of wood-turning work. He first built a big shop (painted red) just south of the park. While he lived in this shop, his son Cleo was born there. David then built the house where Mrs. Lydia Loom lives now, and one son (James) was born there. Cleo grew to manhood and attended the state university. After graduation he went to Schenectady, New York, as an electrician. There he died two years later. James was an aviator during World War I. James will be remembered as a good athlete in Geneva High School. He passed away in 1959 in Peoria, Illinois.
The David C. Mowry screen door and window factory in 1888—just south of Courthouse. The house, still standing, was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Louis Laun. Left to right: Mrs. D. C. Mowry, Genevieve, Vernie (Mrs. Tom Wagner), Cleo, Mr. D. C. Mowry.

Early-day neighbors of the Mowrys in Geneva were Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Camp; the A. J. Beals; Frank Wight; Will Weed, the Burlington depot agent; Bryant, a lumberman and coal dealer; and the Wards, who had a furniture store and the Ward Opera House, a popular place for all entertainment. Blind Boone, and Blind Tom, Negro pianist, came there. There were hypnotism shows, minstrel shows, and many others. In 1893, Mr. Mowry gave a show called "Fantasticle Fantasima," a sleight-of-hand work.

The "big red shop" was sold in 1890, and the family moved to the north part of Geneva. Five children were born here: Martha, Herbert, Clinton, Thora, and Alice, all now deceased. Martha and Thora were married when they passed away, leaving three children. The Mowry home was then remodeled to accommodate a large family.

Dave Mowry was the first plumber in Geneva. He put in most of the water system for the town and for the Girls' Training School and tarred and painted the standpipe. He later sold his plumbing business to Frank Bentley. He then bought the brick building on the southwest corner of the west business block and did all kinds of tent and awning work, with the help of his son Clinton.

Clinton was the first radio repairman in Geneva. Part of the front of the first floor was a museum where relics of the past were brought. Most of the things were given to Mr. Mowry. The collection grew fast and soon more space was needed. Later, more space was needed for the repair shop and people were told to come and take their relics if they wished, but the museum was to be taken to Hastings and placed in the "House of Yesterday." The building that had housed the museum was burned in 1936.

David Mowry passed away in 1925, and Mrs. Mowry in 1938.

John Brown, father of Mrs. D. C. Mowry, came to Fillmore County in 1873, and bought land joining his brother-in-law, I. E. Allen, in Hamilton township. He brought his daughter Lucy, a girl of 12, with him. Two other children were left in Clinton, Iowa, with relatives.

In the big blizzard of 1873, Mr. Brown's two oxen were smothered to death. Mr. Brown was killed in 1875, struck by lightning while riding a mule. His daughter Lucy then lived mostly with her aunt, Mrs. I. E. Allen.

In a letter written to his parents in the East, Mr. Brown described Fairmont as he saw it in 1873 as having 20 houses, all new since 1871.

Bright B. Ogg was born in Sangamon County, Illinois, on January 10, 1850, and was a son of Bright B. and Frances (Thomas) Ogg, who were natives of Kentucky, whence they emigrated to Sangamon county. His father was a carpenter by trade, and in addition to that pursuit carried on farming. Both he and his wife spent their last days in Macoupin County, Illinois.

Upon the home farm in the county of his nativity, Bright B. Ogg spent the days of his boyhood and youth and early became familiar with the duties that fell to the lot of the agriculturist. He was indebted to the public school system for the educational privileges which he enjoyed. From Sangamon he removed to Macoupin County, and after a few years left Illinois for Nebraska; this was in the year 1880. He located in Fillmore County and purchased land in Geneva township, where he bought and sold several farms. For many years Mr. Ogg was extensively engaged in stock dealing—buying, feeding, and shipping—and found this a very profitable source of income.

Mr. Ogg was married in Macoupin County, February 10, 1876, to Ellen Redfern, a native of Kansas, and a daughter of John and Polly (Pritchett) Redfern. They reared a family of seven children, namely: Ora L., James W., C. Claude, Cecil, Chloe, Josie, and Hazel.
Mordecai Pangle, son of Isaac Glass Pangle, was born in Lima, Ohio, in 1845. He enlisted in the Union Army (6th Ohio Light Artillery) and was mustered out in 1865. He married Rebecca Carpenter in 1869, and they became the parents of 11 children.

In 1871, he came West looking for land. He came from Delphos, Ohio, to Lincoln by train, and then walked to the present farm location (SE 1/4 Sec. 22) and staked a claim. Then he walked to Nebraska City to file his claim, paid $1 per acre to squatters to relinquish the land, and went back to Ohio. He had to return within six months and live on this land for five years to hold his claim.

In September, 1871, Mr. Pangle drove a team and wagon from Delphos to Chicago. There he purchased a cookstove for $30, and some lumber. These and their other goods he loaded on a railroad car and came to the end of the line (at Crete), and from Crete he drove to the homestead. While in Chicago, he wrote to his wife and told her to address her letters to Empire, Fillmore County, Nebraska.

Mr. Pangle built a dugout and a barn. When he had lived on the homestead 18 months, his wife and three children came West. By this time the railroad was built to Fairmont. No one was at the depot to meet her. (Mord had not received her letter telling when she was arriving, as the mail sometimes was not delivered for two weeks.) The railroad agent, who knew the general location of the farm, offered to take her to her new home in his wagon. When she reached the place which she thought might be her husband's farm, she entered the dugout and, recognizing some of the furniture as her own, knew she had arrived. She was so disappointed in the home, and so overwhelmed by the desolation and loneliness of the prairie, that she threw herself down on the bed and cried.

The family lived in the dugout for about a year, until a frame house could be built, which became a permanent home. Mr. Pangle died in 1875, but his widow lived there until her death in February, 1920. A son, Ross, lived there and farmed the place the remainder of the year. Another son, Charles, purchased the farm from the estate and has owned and lived on the place since that time. One interesting fact about the Pangle place is that it has never had an encumbrance of any kind against it: Charles Pangle thought that in this respect it might be unique in Fillmore County history.

Mr. and Mrs. John Pittard (photos taken in 1918 and 1890, respectively).

He championed constitutional amendments adopted a few years later, which created the state railway commission and led to the reorganization and enlargement of the supreme court. He served in Congress from the old Fourth District from 1911 to 1919, and from 1929 to 1931. He held a seat on the Ways and Means Committee and also served on the Agricultural Committee and was author of legislation for the eradication of tuberculosis in livestock and cholera in hogs.

He was the senior member of the law firm of Sloans, Keenan, & Corbitt, formerly Sloan, Sloan & Burke. He was a member of the District, State and American Bar Associations, and took a deep interest in their meetings.

He was for years associated with his brother, Frank W. Sloan, both in the practice of law and in banking, and was a director of the Geneva State Bank.

In 1935 he was awarded a Master of Science degree in agriculture by Iowa State College at Ames.

Mr. Sloan was a member of the Geneva Masonic and Eastern Star lodges for more than 50 years. He served as Grand Orator in 1898 and as Past Master from to 1903 to 1905. He was a member of the York Rite and Scottish Rite bodies, and of Sesosstris Shrine at Lincoln.

Interested in the welfare and advancement of Geneva and Fillmore County, he took an active part in Community Club projects.

He was a member of the Methodist Church and served on its official board. A student of the Bible, he liked to act as a teacher in the Sabbath School of the church.

Mr. Sloan loved Nebraska and was convinced that her destined place was among the first. He was a cheerful optimist, a hard worker, a gifted public speaker. During his long public life he delivered many addresses in Nebraska and in many other states. He passed away in Geneva on June 2, 1946.

His wife, Emma P. Sloan, departed this life on October 19, 1946.

His son, Frank Blaine Sloan, died in World War I. His other children are Ethel (Mrs. Grady Corbitt) and Charles Porter Sloan, who reside in Geneva, and William McKinley Sloan of Eugene, Oregon. He has six grandchildren, Frank Blaine Sloan of New York; Kathryn Margaret (Mrs. Sherman Ashby) of Geneva; William Marshall Sloan of Grants Pass, Oregon; Sarah Nancy (Mrs. Roger Hannum) of Eugene, Oregon; Charles Windsor Corbitt of San Francisco; and Margaret Anne (Mrs. Harold Higley) of Grand Rapids, Michigan; and 17 great-grandchildren.

—Grady Corbitt

Charles A. Thorpe, widely known in America and Europe by his nickname of "The Honest Jockey," was one of Geneva's most noted sons. Born in 1862, he came as a youth to live with the Ab Tucker family on their horse-breeding farm near Geneva. His riding career was a fabulous one, taking him from county tracks in Geneva and Lincoln to St. Louis and New Orleans, and then to the famed ovals of Austria, France, and England.

He began to ride professionally in 1881 by riding Harry Edwards (owned at Fairmont), for a while Nebraska's most famous race horse. Later he rode Belle K., foaled on the Ab Tucker farm, who, with Charlie in the saddle, defeated the speedy patriarch Harry Edwards. His reputation for honesty, together with his skill, combined to earn him what was, for those days, a substantial fortune. In the year 1892, his services earned him more $20,000. Between 1901 and 1903 (when he finally retired at 40, a full 10 years later than the normal retirement time of a jockey), he was riding winners for royalty and titled European owners, with 80 to his credit in 1903.

Thorpe had early married the lovely, kind, and thrifty Alice Bassett of Geneva, recorder in the office of the Fillmore County clerk. While she lived, his earnings were well invested. In 1901, he built in Geneva a two-story, 13-room house, which for some years was the scene of much entertaining of visitors from far and near. After the death of his wife in 1907, his convivial tastes (we may guess, but do not know) apparently contributed to his financial decline. He died in 1916 in Omaha, where he earned a scanty living by tending bars and working as a cleaning man in the buffet of the Omaha Livestock Exchange. He is buried in the Geneva Cemetery.

His mansion later became the hospital of the Geneva Hospital Association, for some time managed by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Bender. Auctioned in 1958, to make way for the new Fillmore County Memorial Hospital, it was bought by local farmer Vern Domeier, who used the lumber of the old landmark in the construction of an overhead elevator on his farm.

Berend (Barney) Tobiassen was accompanied to Nebraska by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jurgen Tobiassen and family, who came here from Chapin, Illinois, where they had settled after migrating from Germany to the United States. Barney bought the NE 1/4 of Sec. 31 from the Burlington in 1879, when the only tree on the place was a lone cottonwood.

Since there was no shelter, on their arrival they spent the first night on their land under their overturned wagon box, with their horses and mules tied to the running gear. During the night a windstorm struck and the horses and mules broke loose, but, luckily, did not get very far away.

They started construction of a farm home immediately. The new home was soon the scene of a double wedding, as Mr. and Mrs. Barney

The Tobiassen home in 1888. Left to right: Ben, Mrs. Anna Tobiassen, Lizzie, Mrs. Hilka Tobiassen (grandmother), Anna Tobiassen.
Tobiassen and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Linde were married there. Mrs. Tobiassen was a sister of Mr. Linde and Mrs. Linde was a sister of Mr. Tobiassen.

The Tobiassens had seven children: Anna, Margaret, Benn, Lydia, Carl, Emma, and John W. John farmed the home place for many years.

Mr. and Mrs. Will Lauenstein were also married in this house. Mrs. Lauenstein being a sister of Barney Tobiassen. Also, the two oldest daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Tobiassen were married in the same room in which their parents were married. Anna married John Riel and Margaret married Jacob Schaldecker.

On April 4, 1954, the golden wedding anniversary dinner of Mr. and Mrs. John Riel was served in the family home; and on August 16, 1956, Mr. and Mrs. John Tobiassen celebrated their silver wedding anniversary there.

Henry Wagner was born in Baden, Germany. As a small boy, he was brought to Ohio by his parents, and lived in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. During the Civil War, he and others went ahead of the army building temporary bridges, but he did not serve in the army.

In 1873, Mr. Wagner came to Gage County and bought railroad land, paying $7 an acre. In 1874, he married Margaret Lowry of Waverly, Ohio; she was born in Ohio, but her parents had come from Dublin, Ireland. Mr. and Mrs. Wagner, who had five sons, all born in Gage County, experienced the usual early-day hardships. In 1892, the family moved to Fillmore County, where they had bought the Samuel Rhinehart farm in Sec. 33.

Wagner married Verna Mowry of Geneva, who had been a schoolteacher in Tom's home district (No. 7). To this union were born three sons, Jack, Donn, and Richard.

Mrs. Wagner and her three sons are all graduates of Geneva High School. All three boys were inducted in World War II. Jack was placed in NASA (the space agency) after graduating from the University of Nebraska. Donn was in France when the war ended; Richard, who had been in Italy, had completed his 50 missions and was stationed in Florida when the war ended. Donn married Lily Priest of Canton, Texas; Richard married Norma Kohler of Sutton, Nebraska.

Tom Wagner always did general farming. Although retired from active farming, he lived on the home place, farmed by his son Richard, until his death on May 13, 1965. Mrs. Verna Wagner still lives there.

Peter Youngers was born in Pike County, Pennsylvania, on December 25, 1852. When he was seven years old, his parents moved to New York City. He became a street newsboy, selling the New York Times, and in his teens drove a coal truck for Barry & Co.

In May, 1871, the family came overland in a covered wagon. Peter and his father, Peter Youngers, Sr., took adjoining homesteads in Liberty township 8 miles S of Exeter and planted an orchard of apples, cherries, peaches, and grapes. Prices were high, with flour $10 a barrel, bacon 30 cents a pound, and poor-grade kerosene 50 cents a gallon. Peter Youngers, Sr., sent to England for clover seed, and in this way clover was introduced in the West.

One of Peter's first jobs when he came West was with a nursery at Crete. He soon became foreman and had charge of setting out trees along the Burlington right-of-way. People used to call this section of the prairie an alkali desert because there was nothing to break the wind and dust. Mr. Youngers persuaded farmers to plant rows of osage orange along the outlines of fields to form windbreaks. Later, most farmers wanted to use all available space and so cut out the trees to enlarge their fields.

Along with farming, Peter, Jr., found it necessary to work with a team on the railroad to obtain provisions for his family. Most of the crew were boys from the East who knew nothing about the West. Mr. Youngers often laughed about one man who admired his "cady" hat [sketch hat] and wanted to swap with him, and so Mr. Youngers was delighted to take the man's cap. A few months later, he could pull the cap over his ears to keep warm while the other man's ears were freezing.

One winter, Peter, Jr., worked at Kearney with a railroad track-laying gang for wages of 25 cents a day. One of the last buffalo hunts took place at this time, but Peter decided that he needed the 25 cents worse than he needed to go buffalo hunting. There was an army camp at Kearney, and one winter Peter delivered the mail there, and in so doing had to cross the Platte River on horseback. After making final proof on the homestead, Mr. Youngers went into the nursery business, growing the stock and traveling over the country as a salesman, with books of colored plates showing varieties of fruit. He also carried specimens in bottles. In 1883, he bought a farm 2 miles E of Geneva and put in 20 acres of apples.

Peter Youngers was a highly practical horticulturist. He was a lifelong student of farming problems and did pioneering work in many ways that we have now taken for granted.

"Pete," as he was known to his friends, was a member of the National Nurseriesmen's Association for about 25 years and never missed a convention; on his retirement, he was made an honorary member. He was elected a member of the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture in 1888 and served on its Board of Managers from 1899 to 1906, when he became its president and served two terms. He was also president of the Citizens State Bank in Geneva.

His studies of scientific agriculture made his business a success. While on the state board of managers, he contributed much to its financial stability. He was treasurer of the State Horticultural Society.
for many years, and was superintendent of the Horticulture Building at the Omaha Exposition.

He was most widely known for his work with his nursery company. Thousands of orchards were produced from trees propagated and grown there. Probably there is no section of Nebraska which did not feel, directly or indirectly, his influence as a horticulturist.

He was a man who loved life — his home, his family, his friends; and his real business in living was the joy of beautifying his country and, at the same time, making it more prosperous.

Mr. Youngers passed away at his summer camp in Mercer, Wisconsin, on August 15, 1921. In 1929, he was honored as an outstanding nurseryman and a portrait of him was unveiled in the "Hall of Agricultural Achievement" at the university's Agricultural College in Lincoln.

—Nellie Youngers (Mrs. Lionel) Henkle, Westbrook, Connecticut
Geneva

The history of Geneva begins with the organic election of the county on April 19, 1871. The group that originally established the town suggested a number of nationalities. Names like Dixon, Whittaker, Martin, Porter, Shields, Merryman, Badger, Camp, and Bigelow indicate Anglo-Saxon extraction; Kathaisel, German; and a Russian settlement located on the west side of Geneva. This group scattered after the assassination of President McKinley in 1901. (Learning of the assassination upon returning from the Peter Youngers beet field, where they had been working all day, they expressed great joy. This angered the other citizens, so they were told they would be tarred and feathered if they did not leave town by morning. They left—many moving toward Sutton.)

Soon after the county buildings—jail and courthouse, first located on the north side of Court Street (G) between 9th and 10th, then later moved across the street to the courthouse block—were completed in 1873 (as described elsewhere), James H. Bigelow erected on the northwest corner of the square a small, one-story building in which George Bigelow opened a store with a small stock of goods. A post office had been established in the first residence. The next building to be erected was a small store by A. S. Shepherd & Co. on a lot where the Putnam House was later built. The store was kept but for a short time, the foods were soon moved, and the building sold to W. P. Friend, who occupied it as a hotel.

In June, 1874, the courthouse, the jail, a small frame building east of the courthouse, a residence, and a store room west of the square were the only buildings in the county seat. Later in the year, A. G. Camp & Sons—S. B., J. H., and C. D.—moved their grocery and dry-goods store from Fairmont to the G. E. Bigelow building west of the square and opened the first general-merchandise store in Geneva.

In the spring of 1875, J. H. Camp started building a residence and hotel and barn northwest of the square. In the fall of 1875, several business and professional men located here and improvements at once commenced.

The first coat of paint and the finishing touch will soon follow.”

“Something of which a city might be proud is the Putnam House, now nearly completed. Its dimensions the main part is 32' x 40' and three stories high with a Mansard roof which will soon be crowned with an observatory where a view of the surrounding country can be taken, as far as the eye can reach. The whole is placed upon a stone foundation enclosing a large basement story. Through the center of the lower story extends a spacious hall, on the one side being an office and a large dining hall and on the other ladies’ and gentlemen’s parlors. These are being nicely furnished and are most delightful apartments. The second story is also divided on either side by a hall into suites of rooms and single rooms, in pleasant and convenient style. The third story is not yet divided into apartments, but will be before long. To the main part is connected a wing 18’ x 32’, two stories high. The lower story is occupied as a culinary department and the upper story is divided into sleeping apartments. The whole has received the first coat of paint and the finishing touch will soon follow.”

“We can truthfully boast the finest and largest hotel west of the capitol of our state.”

This hotel also had a large livery barn attached, “30’ x 50’ and 28’ x 34’, erected at a cost of $1,000, can keep 40 horses,” Mr. Putnam traded his hotel to Horace Kellogg in September, 1882, for a 240-acre farm in Franklin township; the hotel then became known as the “Kellogg House” and in 1885 it was called the “Fillmore,” with C. Banta as proprietor. In 1890, J. M. Noyes purchased the ground occupied by the Fillmore House and erected a $15,000 brick hotel which retained the name of Fillmore. This building was located on G Street between 9th and 10th on Lots 84 and 85 east of the Opera House that was built in 1883.)
By 1882, E. Stowell was operating a hotel located west of the square next to the Platt store, which he operated until it was closed about 1890.

In 1885, the old Platt store building at the southwest corner of the square was rebuilt as a hotel and was advertised to accommodate as many if not more than any other hotel in the county. E. Stowell managed this hotel after the Stowell House closed.

The Platt House (about 1889). Notice two sections to the building—identified. The south part erected in 1875 and the north section added in 1887.

Stowell House closed. Hotel in the county. E. Stowell managed this hotel after it was closed about 1890.

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thence east in the center of Court St. to the center of Main St., thence north to the center of Lincoln St., thence east to the east line of said village, and all territory lying east to the east line of said village, and all territory lying north of said line and east of Church St. to be the first ward. And all territory lying south of said line and east of Church St. to be the second ward, and all territory lying west of Church St. to be the third ward. (Court St. is now G, Lincoln is H, Church is now 8th, and Main is now 10th.)

The affairs of the city were to be conducted by a mayor and two councilmen elected from each ward. Each councilman served for a period of two years. The mayor and other officers were elected every year until 1922 when the term was increased to two years.

Results of the election of Geneva as a city held on April 2, 1889, were as follows: Mayor, H. L. Smith; clerk, J. D. Hamilton; treasurer, A. J. Beals; police judge, A. G. Camp; city engineer, V. A. Jones; councilmen of first ward, F. H. Briggs for two-year term and John A. Dempster for one year; councilmen of second ward, M. V. King for two years and J. H. Ward for one year; councilmen of third ward, P. B. Donisthorpe for two years and J. M. Noyes for one year.

The original town of Geneva consisted of all that part lying between the Chicago & Northwestern R. R. tracks on the west and Highway 81 on the east, and between Highway 41 on the south and a line between K and L Sts. (should this line extend on west, it would join the road south of the cemetery).

Additions to the city of Geneva have been made as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 1878</td>
<td>J. Jensen County Clerk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 4, 1882</td>
<td>Smith &amp; Sloss—filed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 17, 1877</td>
<td>E. R. Spear's &amp; D. Lee's Subdivision of out-lots 26 &amp; 27.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 1878</td>
<td>E. R. Spear's Subdivision of lots 103 &amp; 104.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4, 1884</td>
<td>Subdivision of out-lot No. 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4, 1884</td>
<td>S. E. Johnson's Subdivision of out-lot 23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20, 1884</td>
<td>Subdivision of out-lot 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5, 1886</td>
<td>F. Heiderstadt's Subdivision of out-lots 12 &amp; 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 19, 1884</td>
<td>Smith &amp; Fifield's Subdivision of out-lot 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 31, 1885</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow's First Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 8, 1884</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow’s Second Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 10, 1885</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow’s Third Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 8, 1882</td>
<td>Peter R. Yates’s Subdivision of out-lot 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 9, 1885</td>
<td>John A. Dempster’s First Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 15, 1884</td>
<td>Geneva Cemetery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14, 1886</td>
<td>W. J. Yates’s Second Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 11, 1886</td>
<td>John A. Dempster’s Second Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26, 1887</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow’s Fourth Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 8, 1886</td>
<td>Corporate Extension of Geneva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 7, 1887</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow's Subdivision of out-lot 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 12, 1886</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow’s Fifth Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25, 1887</td>
<td>Walter V. Fifield’s Subdivision of out-lot 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22, 1887</td>
<td>John A. Dempster’s Third Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20, 1887</td>
<td>James H. Bigelow’s Sixth Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 30, 1887</td>
<td>C. F. McGrew’s Subdivision of out-lot 1 of Dempster’s Third Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 21, 1887</td>
<td>W. H. Pardee’s First Addition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 27, 1888</td>
<td>Austin Knowler’s Second Addition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social life was considered quite as refined and enjoyable as in larger towns and moral status far above the average. People were united and thoroughly enterprising in everything that concerned local advancement. With all the activities, meetings, concerts, etc., there came the need for an appropriate meeting place. The only place suitable at this time for public meetings was the court room and this became very inadequate.

In 1888, John Jensen and F. H. Briggs built the first Opera House, at a cost of $4,000, on the north side of G St. between 9th and 10th Sts. This theater opened in 1883 with a home-talent play, "Fruits of the Wine Cup." According to the Nebraska Signal, in July, 1898, the old Opera House passed into history when "C. W. Hrubesky, owner of the building, closed the outside stairway and made one inside and used the room for his stock." From that time until the construction of the new Auditorium in 1915, the Fraternity temple room in the National Bank building served as the community gathering place.

The Auditorium was built in 1915 at 160 No. 9th St. Early in 1900 an architect named Deuel drew up plans for a new city hall and fire station, but it was not until 1915 that these plans materialized. Contracts were then let to F. B. Bentley, plumber, and L. L. Fisher, contractor. In December, 1915, the new $20,000 city auditorium was opened to the public by presenting a play, "The Dutch Detective," given by local talent under the direction of A. E. Holt. Proceeds were applied on the purchase of a piano for the auditorium. That same month, the city clerk's office was moved to the council chamber in the city hall, the west room to be used exclusively by the fire company.

It was not until 1881 that the first sidewalks were built; the first were constructed along 8th and 9th Sts. This comment concerning the wooden walks appeared in the Review, April 22, 1885: "Our street crossings are pretty narrow for two persons to pass on. One more plank of 12" would greatly add to their convenience for the pedestrian. We are aware that all people do not need wide walks and crossings as badly as those in a license town; but we do not like to stand out in the mud to let others pass, or vice versa." In time these wooden walks began to deteriorate and several accidents occurred. Following one accident, a lady, who fell and broke her arm as she tripped on a loosened board, filed a suit against the city for $300. This prompted the city officials into action. In 1905, they ruled that no more wooden sidewalks be built; all walks were to be built of sidewalk brick, cement concrete, or stone. In 1901 and 1902 the first brick sidewalks were constructed, the first built between 8th and 9th on G St.

The years 1884 and 1885 proved to be years of rapid development. Besides the John Dempster elevator, two banks and a large number of private residences were built; churches were rebuilt and other improvements effected. A "fine" new schoolhouse valued at $5,000 was constructed.

Building and maintenance materials for Geneva had to be hauled from Fairmont by teams for years, as there was no railroad. This need was met by the formation of the "Fairmont-Geneva Transportation Company," which purchased several heavy wagons and did a good business for some years. This firm did not, of course, survive long after the coming of the railroad line.

After the coming of the railroad in 1886, the village of Geneva grew by leaps and bounds. The population increased from 650 in 1885 to 1,580 by 1890. On May 21, 1886, following the completion of the Burlington track, the construction train "iron horse" was run into Geneva. A tremendous crowd, plus S. B. Camp's band, saluted its coming. The first train to enter Geneva came on the newly completed Burlington line from Fairmont on June 7, 1886. This event was one of great importance to Geneva and the citizens flocked to see the arrival. Later in the day, when the train went back to Fairmont, among the passengers were Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Brown and their older children who were on their way to
Kansas to visit Mrs. Brown’s parents. Mr. Brown was the partner of Peter Youngers in the Youngers & Co. Nursery, one of the largest in the state in those early days.

The telegraph also made its appearance at this same time, following the Burlington route.

In March the following year, word came that the Northwestern would be built. Immediately the flag was run up on the courthouse to let people know the good news and that evening a big crowd gathered to celebrate—the band played, guns were fired, and bonfires burned. The Chicago & Northwestern line between Fremont and Geneva was built in 1887 by the Fremont, Elkhorn, & Missouri Valley R.R. Company, under the guiding hand of John I. Blair of Blairstown, New Jersey. It was extended from Geneva to Superior, its present terminus, in 1888.

The first grain elevator in this city was the John A. Dempster elevator constructed by Warner & Co. of Chicago in 1885. This building was 60' x 70' and 65' high (outside measurements, includes the office). It had a capacity of 3,500 bushels of grain per hour and cost $15,000 to build. The November 18, 1885, issue of the Republican reported that the new elevator was ready for business, with W. H. McCullough in charge of handling the grain and the general supervision of the elevator.

In 1887, A. Koehler Company built a small grain elevator on the Northwestern right of way which this company still uses.

The first roller mill was erected in 1887, filling a great need. The Geneva Milling Company is one of the first businesses that is still in operation at the present time. It was then known as the Geneva Roller Milling Company. Until then the grain was processed by the stone burr mill which ground grain between two large stone burrs such as Sam Yates operated. He ran one of the first tread mills in Geneva, in the early 1880’s. It was powered by oxen to grind flour and feed. This mill was located across the street north of the present schoolhouse on G St.

Another year of much advancement was 1890, shown by this newspaper report on October 30, 1890:

“This Following is a list of buildings erected or in course of building since January 1, 1890.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Bank and Masonic Hall</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jameson Hotel, brick</td>
<td>30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fillmore House, brick</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Kessler, brick business rooms</td>
<td>8,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windmull factory and foundry, brick</td>
<td>16,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four brick residences</td>
<td>11,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-eight frame residences</td>
<td>1,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Church</td>
<td>2,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Shickley greenhouse</td>
<td>500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wight &amp; Blott meat market</td>
<td>400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(immediately west of 1st Nat’l Bank)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Longy shop</td>
<td>300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Gustafson shop</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. J. Henderson shop</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Shickley green house</td>
<td>400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings at fairgrounds</td>
<td>2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small buildings and additions other than above</td>
<td>2,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aggregating in round number $128,000.00

Geneva had a total of 31 dressmakers in town at this time.

The city was proud of its modern water system which finally became a reality early in 1890. This meant they could now take care of the increasing demands for water for homes, businesses, and fire control. Dave Mowry, the first plumber in Geneva, installed most of the water system at the Girls’ Training School when it was constructed in 1891.

In 1891, other business blocks were erected: the three-story brick building on the northwest corner of 9th and G which housed the First National Bank, Knights of Pythias, and I.O.O.F., and a two-story brick building put up by Miss Jennie Brown, the second building west of the First National Bank.

For approximately 10 years the city had made several unsuccessful attempts to acquire electrical power. Finally, in 1904, Gregory F. Skinkle secured a franchise to build and operate an electrical plant. In January, 1905, the four street lights were illuminated for the first time. The people were delighted. It was so light outdoors they thought surely the sun was coming up. Only night-lighting service was available at first. In the summer of 1907, day service was started for the purpose of running fans and furnishing any other motor power that could be sold.

Among the first bakeries in town was that of O. P. Lacy in 1878; at that time, his was the only bakery, which he operated in conjunction with a restaurant. A December, 1892, issue of the Review announced that “C. J. Hall and Mr. Butt have installed an oven and will be operating a first-class bakery and are prepared to furnish tickets to those wishing to buy bread.” They would be keeping a full supply of the “staff of life” on hand at all times and advertised to have fresh bread every day.

One of Geneva’s oldest citizens, William Manning, operated the Geneva bakery in the early 1900’s. He purchased and installed the first cake mixer, dough moulder, and bun
1911, Geneva, population 1,741, claimed a total of 42 automobiles. Obviously, the autos brought a need for a new business, that of auto sales and services. By 1909, William H. Lake had an Auto Garage located in the vicinity of 133 North 10th. By 1911, several garages were advertising in the local weekly paper their various models of cars plus their services. They were (as of November 11, 1910):

W. C. Peterson and Co.—Buck, Velie, and Jackson Automobiles
- Home of "Wife Getter Buggies"
- W. L. Spear & Co.—Ford Model
- Wm. H. Lake—Overland, Regal and Buick
  All kinds of supplies and oils,
  Smooth and nobby tread Morgan & Wright tires

Brown Auto Co.—the E-M-F "30"—$1,000; Rooster "30"—$1,000;
  Demi Tonneau "30"—$1,000;
  Five Passenger standard touring car—$1,000
  Coupe "30"—$1,450.

(Located on west side of square)

The first filling station was erected and operated by C. J. Warner on the southwest corner of 8th and G Sts., now Eddie’s Service (owned by Eddie Reinsch). The day the station opened, March 17, 1922, a pipe broke off of one big tank and some 15,000 gallons, or $2,500 worth, of gas leaked out.

Before this time two gas pumps located on G St. furnished fuel for the autos. One was located in front of Walt Spear’s store at 854 G St. The second was operated by N. E. Thomas at 1014 G St. In 1909, gasoline sold for 12 1/4 cents a gallon.

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Woodmen Picnic in 1896. This picture, taken from the west end of Main Street, shows Sile Camp’s band, a contingent of Company G (Nebraska National Guard of Geneva), and floats in the parade. The parade marshal, A. J. Beals, is in the right foreground on the white horse.

Toasts in the morning before the races—boys’ race, wheelbarrow race, greased-pole race, and sack race; two ball games were played that afternoon, which ended in defeat for Geneva; a grand ball was held all afternoon and evening at the Opera House and ‘there seemed to be no lack of dancers’; the skating rink was also crowded. To conclude the day’s entertainment, there was a fireworks display in the evening.

For many years the annual Woodmen picnic in Geneva was a big affair. One of the most important events in the history of Fillmore County was the return of Company G from the Spanish-American War in 1899. The return of the veterans had been delayed several weeks. On that specific day several thousand people came to Geneva to attend the homecoming. Elaborate preparations were made. Special trains carried visitors from several points to Geneva; a grand reception was in the making. The train was due at 10 a.m., but did not arrive until 9 p.m. By this time many disappointed people had returned home. The program proceeded about 10 p.m., but relatives had taken possession of most of the boys and not many soldiers occupied their appointed seats on the stage. Five bands were present. The parade was in charge of Major T. L. Williams and seven aides mounted on white horses. The Rev. O. W. Fifer of York paid a tribute to the dead. Charles H. Sloan presented the company flag and emblems. Fireworks displays ended the program. Three merry-go-rounds and many refreshment stands did a big business that day.

PERMANENT COUNTY ORGANIZATION

On March 15, 1871, a large number of citizens of the unorganized Fillmore County petitioned for an election to choose county officers preliminary to organization of the county. On that day, Acting Governor William H. James, by proclamation, ordered that an election be held at the dwelling of Nathaniel McCalla on Sec. 30, T7, R2W, on Friday, April 21, 1871, to select county officers. The governor appointed James Horne, E. L. Martin, and D. W. Dillion as judges, and Warren Woodard and Jacob A. Werts as clerks to conduct this election. However, according to poll books, G. R. Wolfe served in place of D. W. Dillion and A. W. Chase substituted for Jacob A. Werts.

Results of the first election (April 21, 1871), when a total of 82 citizens cast votes, were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Clerk</td>
<td>H. L. Badger</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Treasurer</td>
<td>Wilbur Deuel</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Sheriff</td>
<td>J. F. Snow</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probate Judge</td>
<td>W. Walker</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supt. Public Instruction</td>
<td>G. R. Wolfe</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyor</td>
<td>H. L. Badger</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coroner</td>
<td>T. E. Burnett</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Commissioners</td>
<td>Elisha L. Martin</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges of election</td>
<td>William Merrill</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks of election</td>
<td>A. J. Begle</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The citizens also voted to locate the county seat in the center of the county on the SE 1/4 of Sec. 36, T7, R3W.

The first meeting of the county commissioners, called...
by the county clerk, was held on May 27, 1871, at the residence of Nathaniel McCalla. There present were county commissioners E. L. Martin, C. H. Bassett, and Jesse Lee; county clerk, H. L. Badger; and probate judge, William H. Blain. Jesse Lee was named chairman because he had the least number of votes. The temporary meeting place to conduct county business was fixed at the McCalla home on the NE ¼ of Sec. 30, T7, R2W. C. H. Bassett was selected by the board to confer with the proper officers of Saline County in regard to the assessment rolls of Fillmore County. (Prior to county organization, Fillmore County was duly and legally assessed by the authorities of Saline County for revenue and judicial purposes. At the meeting on September 11, 1871, of the county commissioners it was reported that the officers of Saline County refused to deliver the assessment list until Fillmore County paid the expenses of the trial of a prisoner named Morris Harris who was held for a murder in Adams County. The Fillmore authorities believed they were entitled to the list without first paying the expenses of the trial and keeping of the prisoner. The county treasurer was directed to procure the list by legal action if it could not otherwise be obtained.

On October 16, 1871, the board ordered an attorney, Mr. J. W. Eller, to commence suit. However, on November 8, 1871, Saline County surrendered and delivered to Fillmore County the assessment list with the certificate of the county clerk of Saline County, stating the amount of taxes levied by Saline County for Fillmore County for the year 1871.)

Also at this first meeting of the board, the county commissioners divided the county into three commissioners districts, which was done by two east and west lines through the county, making each district 8 miles wide north and south and 24 miles long east and west—the north district being No. 1; the middle district No. 2; and the south district No. 3.

The next subdivision of the county was made when, at a general election on November 8, 1887, a majority vote was cast in favor of "township organization." Each of the 16 townships elected a supervisor to represent them on the board of supervisors.

At a meeting of the board on August 27, 1895, the commissioners—to comply with the state law, Section 27, Chapter 28 of laws of 1895—voted to divide the county into seven supervisors districts, divided and numbered as follows: Exeter and Liberty—No. 1; Fairmont and West Blue—No. 2; Grafton, Bennett, and Momence—No. 3; Geneva City and Township—No. 4; Madison, Chelsea, and Glengary—No. 5; Franklin and Belle Prairie—No. 6; Stanton, Hamilton, and Bryant—No. 7.

When the organic election was held in 1871 the southwestern part of the county had the majority of voters. Franklin precinct, in the southeast, not being covered by railroad land grant at that time, was settled more generally than any other early precinct. Judge William H. Blain wrote: "It was found to contain more voters at the time of the organic election than all the remainder of the county, yet, strange as it may appear, the citizens of that precinct unanimously voted the county seat at the center of the county. Such magnanimity is seldom seen in the location of county seats." Thus it was voted that the geographical center of the county (the SE ¼ of Sec. 36-73-3W) would be the location of the county seat. As it was school land belonging to the state, nothing could be done until arrangements were made for its purchase.

However, the county seat was surveyed, platted, and recorded on July 7, 8, and 9, 1871, by Henry L. Badger, county surveyor and county clerk. The surveyor and his assistants camped on the town site, with a covered wagon to sleep in, and "cooked on the big prairie range." At that time only one building, about 4 miles S, owned by Robert Shields, was completed. James O. Merryman, about the same distance southwest, was busy erecting a fine-looking sod house for a dwelling.

While awaiting the state's approval to purchase the school land, two persons near the center of the county tried to secure the seat of government. At the meeting of the commissioners, on July 3, 1871, James Mar, owner of the N ¼ of Sec. 25, T7, R3W, offered to donate, at the option of the county commissioners, either 40 acres of said land or to donate 10 acres and erect a courthouse at the cost of $2,500, provided that the courthouse site be located on the above-described land. This offer was refused. About the same time, A. J. Manley tried to secure the location of the county seat on the SW ¼ of Sec. 27, T7, R3W. He built a large hall, 20' wide and 60' long, and offered to donate this to the county should they locate the county seat there. This village, called Manleyville, consisted of 238 lots, a number of which were sold but never occupied. This offer was also refused.

Exeter and Liberty—No. 1; Fairmont, and North Madison—No. 2; West Blue, Grafton, Bennett, Momence—No. 3; Geneva Township and North Geneva—No. 4; South Geneva and South Madison—No. 5; Glengary, Franklin, and Belle Prairie—No. 6; Bryant, Hamilton, Stanton, and Chelsea—No. 7.

Voting Precincts

For voting purposes, the board of commissioners on July 6, 1871, divided the county into four voting precincts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precinct</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Voteing Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 1</td>
<td>NE ¼ of the county</td>
<td>James Hone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>NW ¼ of the county</td>
<td>D. Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3</td>
<td>SW ¼ of the county</td>
<td>W. T. Burnett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>SE ¼ of the county</td>
<td>William Robinson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About a year and one-half later in November, 1872, "it was the opinion of the board" to reorganize the voting precincts—to divide the county into precincts six miles square with each township constituting one precinct. The legal voters of the various precincts met at appointed places in the precincts on January 7, 1873, for the purpose of reorganization. The townships were named and voting places selected as follows:

- Franklin—Schoolhouse, District 40
- Belle Prairie—James Vashugh, NE ¼ of Sec. 28
- Hamilton—John B. Hibbis, NE ¼ of Sec. 22
- Bryant—C. H. Bemenderer, SE ¼ of Sec. 22
- Chelsea—Schoolhouse, Sec. 24
- Momence—Mr. Morgan's
- Glengary—Glengary [P.O.]
- Stanton—William T. Burnett's NW ¼ of Sec. 19
- Madison—John S. Beardley, SW ¼ of Sec. 22
- Geneva—Mr. Bosworth, NE ¼ of Sec. 22
- Exeter—Exeter
- Fairmont—Fairmont
- West Blue—Jonathan Hall, NW of Sec. 22
- Grafton—Arthur Murdock's, SW of Sec. 22

County Seat Located

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Sixty-six years later, in 1937, the townships were again reorganized to give each district equal representation in the county government. On January 5, 1962, they were reorganized on a population basis.
In accordance with an act passed by the legislature, which provided for the sale of school lands, a public sale was held in June, 1872, and a number of lots were sold. Among these was the land purchased by the county, on which to erect public buildings. (An account of this sale appears in the "Early History" chapter.)

At the July 2, 1872, meeting of the county commissioners it was reported they purchased several blocks—Block 8 (Courthouse Block) for $135.50, Outlots No. 17 for $160, No. 18 for $182 and No. 20 for $100. Also land for a "Fillmore County Poor House Farm" was purchased for 88 per acre (the SE ¼ of Sec. 16, T6, R3W).

The county seat was first named Henry but at the July 2, 1872, meeting of the commissioners at the residence of N. McCalla, it was decided to change the name. Colonel McCalla’s daughter Emma, a young lady in her teens, suggested that the town be named after Geneva, Illinois, the McCallas’ former home. The board ordered that hereafter the county seat be called “Geneva” instead of Henry as was first filed for record.

The First Courthouse

On September 11, 1871, at a meeting of the county commissioners, a petition signed by 30 people asked for a vote of the citizens on a proposition to issue bonds in the amount of $50,000 to provide a courthouse and jail and other county buildings.

At an election on October 8, 1872, it was voted to levy a tax not to exceed five mills on the dollar valuation for the purpose of constructing county buildings. The tax was to be levied annually year to year until $50,000 had been realized. The votes cast were 264 “for” and 243 “against.”

In November, 1872, the commissioners made plans for a “temporary courthouse and jail” to be constructed. The plans were referred to George P. Webster for detailed specifications. On November 16, 1872, bids were received as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contractor</th>
<th>Bid (March 3, 1873)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duell &amp; Brock</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams &amp; Webb</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George P. Webster</td>
<td>$2,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse P. Thompson</td>
<td>$3,075.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contract was awarded to Jesse P. Thompson and was to be completed by May 1, 1873. The commissioners purchased Lot 83 in the city of Geneva from James Loghry for $36.50 on which to erect these buildings. Lot 83 is the present location of Gamble’s Hardware & Appliance store. The buildings were approved on May 5, 1873, and at once the county’s records were deposited there. Prior to this time each officer had kept his records in his own home.

The following description of the first courthouse and jail is from records in the office of the clerk of District Court, filed in 1874:

1. Each frame building ceiled on inside with light pine boards and are neither lathed nor plastered.
2. Is 24’ by 48’ on the ground and two stories high.
3. Lower story is divided into three rooms and a hall. Second story is all in one room.
4. The three lower rooms are used by County Clerk, County Treasurer, and Probate Judge as offices.
5. The upper room is used for a court room.
6. The jail is 12’ by 14’ and one story high.

As soon as the temporary headquarters were constructed, the commissioners promptly began making plans for the permanent courthouse. In July, 1873, the board ordered that the clerk be authorized to advertise for sealed proposals not to exceed the amount of $37,500 for a courthouse and county offices according to plans and specifications presented by Architect L. W. Foster. The building was to be built of brick on a stone foundation and to be completed within three years. The proposal was printed in the Fillmore County Bulletin and the Weekly State Journal of Lincoln.

The bids were opened and filed on October 11, 1873. However, an injunction had been filed by Samuel Butterbaugh against the county commissioners, thus enjoining them from letting the contract. The injunction stated that the five-mill levy exceeded the authority of the board. Mr. Butterbaugh contested that the county buildings just constructed were quite sufficient and as “large and commodious as those in the surrounding counties” and it would be wasting the citizens’ money to build such an expensive building, especially when there were doubts that Geneva would even retain its status as the county seat, since only one dwelling and one store had been constructed on the town site as of October, 1873.

After almost a year and a half, on May 19, 1875, the court decided in favor of Mr. Butterbaugh. The “courthouse tax” was declared illegal by the District Court of the First Judicial District; thus the plans for the permanent courthouse were canceled.

The commissioners proceeded to make the existing building more presentable by lathing, plastering, and painting. In 1876, an addition was built onto the courthouse by C. C. Wright for a sum of $825. Fireproof safes eventually were supplied for the offices for the safety of the records. The Fairmont Bulletin in June, 1882, said of one such safe: “The county safe, weight 7,000 pounds, was being brought from Fairmont to Geneva on wagons. Two miles south of town it slipped off the wagons. It took several days to get it loaded again and brought to Geneva.” Later the people realized that a safer place was needed for important papers and records than the “old firetrap,” and so, in 1885, a concrete vault—14’ x 16’ x 6½’ high, with walls 2” thick—was constructed.

In the summer of 1880 the courthouse was moved across the street to the “Courthouse Block” from Lot 83, Block 5. A contractor from Lincoln, J. M. Cramer, was acquired to
move the building “150 feet and turn around.” The jail had been moved in the same year prior to April 1, by several local men.

It is interesting to note that in August, 1873, the board ordered that a firebreak be plowed around the county buildings for protection from prairie fires. At a board meeting on May 5, 1877, it was decided that the “Courthouse Block” be broken “during the proper breaking season,” which was done by M. D. Williams and A. J. Beals at the proper time.

In April the following year, J. M. Fisher planted trees on the square. More trees were planted in the spring of 1883 by April 20, 1893. Side-tracks were laid from the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley R.R. depot eastward to the center of the courthouse block to convey construction materials to the grounds, thus saving the expense and danger of unloading onto wagons. But the Fillmore County Republican said (April 26, 1893): “The track laying to the courthouse grounds is at a stand still. A small sized hitch seems to be troubling the contractor and railroad company.”

The Board appointed a building committee, consisting of W. S. Brown, W. S. Huston, Peter Keenan, Pius Reinsch, and C. W. Dumond. W. S. Brown, a prominent farmer, was named chairman of this committee and was to “remain upon work daily and constantly.” The entire committee met at least once a week to examine all materials and workmanship.

In December, 1892, the board decided to locate the new courthouse at a point near the center of the courthouse square, as had been originally planned when the park was laid out. The ground on which the courthouse was built was broken by Jesse Walker, using his oxen to pull the plow.

Preliminary work having been completed, contractor L. F. Pardue had begun to lay the foundation for the courthouse by April 20, 1893. Side-tracks were laid from the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley R.R. depot eastward to the center of the courthouse block to convey construction materials to the grounds, thus saving the expense and danger of unloading onto wagons. But the Fillmore County Republican said (April 26, 1893): “The track laying to the courthouse grounds is at a stand still. A small sized hitch seems to be troubling the contractor and railroad company.”

The laying of the cornerstone on July 6, 1893, was observed with a fitting ceremony and county-wide celebration. It was estimated that from 4,000 to 5,000 persons swarmed through the gaily decorated streets of the city that day. The stone was cut in Omaha and laid in accordance with the rites and usages of the Masonic fraternity.

This account of the program is from the Nebraska Signal for July 13, 1893:

“The following program, previously arranged, was carried out: At 3 p.m., the procession formed in front of the courthouse, led by Company’s band of 15 pieces (also known as the military band of Company G), and next came Company G, Nebraska National Guards, followed by 24 plumed Knights of Pythias, 160 A.O.U.W.’s, 75 Odd Fellows, 25 ladies of Eastern Star, 100 members of the Masonic fraternity and the following Grand Officers: J. P. A. Black, G.M., Bloomington; H. H. Wilson, G.W.W., Lincoln; Christian Hartman, G.T., Omaha; George W. Martin, G.C., Kearney; Monroe C. Steele, Grand Marshal, Beatrice; Lee P. Gillett, Grand Custodian, Beatrice; then came the Fairmont and Geneva Hose com-

1 L. F. Pardue, a resident of Geneva, also owner of several farms in the county.

2 The Board of Supervisors in 1893, the year the building was constructed, consisted of: Paul Anton, Liberty township; W. S. Brown, Geneva city and township; Charles Champion, Charles Township; G. R. Davis, Bryant; C. W. Dumond, Fairmont city; W. H. Harrison, Franklin; Walt S. Huston, Geneva city and township; Peter Keenan, Granton; A. V. Kouba, Glengary; George Matson, Belle Prairie; J. M. Perkins, West Blue; Pius Reinsch, Monroe, M. S. Schelkopf, Hamilton; G. R. Simmons, Chelsea; M. E. Trauger, Exeter; G. A. Walker, Madison; J. S. Foulon, Fairmont township.
companies and citizens—about 500 persons being in the procession.

"The line of march was east on Court St. to Main St., north to Lincoln, west to Church, south to Court, east to entrance to the park, across the park, and back to northeast corner of the courthouse, where the final ceremonies of laying the stone took place." The Hon. Charles H. Sloan delivered the oration of the day.

The following articles were deposited within the stone, sealed in a copper box about 6" square and 8" high:

History of Geneva Lodge, No. 79, A.F. & A.M., including names of charter members, date of dispensation, date of charter, list of officers, and number of members.


List of officers of the Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M.

History of Fillmore County from its organization to 1893, with population, assessed valuation, list of officers, and members of County Board.

Copies of all daily state papers.

Copies of all Fillmore County papers.

Copy of the Holy Scriptures.

Copy of the A.O.U.W. badge.


Copies of all Fillmore County papers.

Copy of the Holy Scriptures.

History of Geneva with summary of business, institutions of all kinds, its population, assessed valuation, and names of members of city council on July 6, 1893.

Copy of the program of the day.

Columbian half-dollar medal and other current coins of the realm.

Sundry social, business and professional cards.

History of Trueso Chapter R. A. M., its officers and members.

Picture of the new courthouse as it was to be when completed.

Y.P.S.C.E. badges and card of invitation to meetings of Congregational Church of Geneva.

A.O.U.W. badge.

Copy of the A.F. & A.M. manual.

Refreshments were furnished in the park by the Congregational Church people. At the west end of the park was a steam "merry-go-round" that attracted lots of attention plus many nickels.

Later in the afternoon the fire bell called the Geneva and Fairmont hose companies out to a contest. After each had made a run, Geneva Hose Company No. 1 was awarded the prize. A display of fireworks concluded the program for the day.

Most construction projects seem to have their setbacks. Mr. Pardue did not escape his share of tribulations. Early in the construction, as they were laying the brick walls, part of the west wall collapsed under the pressure of a strong cyclone-like windstorm. A second mishap occurred in September when Mr. Pardue was injured when thrown from the top of the new courthouse to the first floor, a distance of 20 feet. "A rope to a derrick came loose from some cause letting the derrick swing and strike him with sufficient force to knock him off the wall."

The county officers moved from the old courthouse into the new building on January 27, 1894—or "the rats left their holes and vacated their old stamping grounds," as the local newspaper remarked. One of the first criticisms of the new building after occupancy was "too much light," so Venetian blinds were ordered for the sum of $400, installed.

The old courthouse was purchased by George Kenyon on February 17, 1894, for $261. Mr. Kenyon moved the building, which was used in more recent years as a dairy barn, to his farm 2 miles S of Geneva—now known as the Joe Bixby farm on the SE 1/4 of Sec. 12, T6, R3W. On March 26, 1936, however, the building was destroyed by fire and the loss was set at $1,800.

The new courthouse was dedicated on a "bright, sunny and frisky" February 22, 1894, with a day-long affair. As early as 9 o'clock that morning teams began to arrive in Geneva from the surrounding country, bringing hundreds of Fillmore County citizens to the county seat to assist in the dedication. By noon there were 3,000 people in Geneva. Citizens of Fairmont and the northern part of the county chartered a special railway car for transportation to the "blow-out." The Burlington officials held the car till night to carry its patrons back home. Every town in the county was largely represented and the reports say, "Never before in the history of the county did there exist such good feeling and sociability."

The program began with a parade under the direction of the marshals of the day, A. J. Beals of Geneva and J. G. McFadden of Fairmont. The parade, headed by Grafton, West Blue, and Fairmont cornet bands, included the mayor of Geneva; the speakers of the day; 20 county officers; the different secret and civic societies, consisting of the Ancient Order of United Workmen, Odd Fellows, uniformed ranks of Knights of Pythias, Grand Army of the Republic, Woman's Relief Corps, and a Bohemian society from Milligan; citizens on foot and citizens in carriages; the military band and Company G, Nebraska National Guards, brought up the rear of the line. They all marched to the depot to welcome Governor Lorenzo Crounse, then back to the courthouse to listen to speeches and toasts.

The courthouse was entirely too small to accommodate the enormous crowd. Hence the overflow was entertained at Ward's Opera House by Captain W. C. Henry of Fairmont and at the Fraternity Temple building where different bands dispensed music. Meanwhile, at the courthouse, the dedication program was proceeding. Music was provided by the four brass bands and a double quartet. Speeches and toasts were given by the following: Address of Welcome, County Attorney Charles H. Sloan; Governor Crounse, who gave pleasant reminiscences of early history and the holding of court in schoolhouses and vacant buildings, showing the contrast between then and now; "Our New Courthouse," architect George W. McDonald; "Board of Supervisors," Hon. John Jensen, ex-representative of the Nebraska Legislature from the Geneva area, who came all the way from Enid, Oklahoma; "County Officials," Charles H. Miller; "Our Churches," Rev. A. A. Cressman; "Our Schools," County Superintendent J. C. Clegg; "Homely Men," Rev. Joel A. Barker; "Old Court House," Charles H. Sloan. The Toastmaster was J. J. Burke.

In the evening a rousing camp fire was held at the Opera House sponsored by the Grand Army of the Republic. Speakers in the evening were Captain Henry of Fairmont, who was especially entertaining, Comrade W. H. Pardue, and Charles H. Sloan. The day ended with a well-patronized ball given by the Sons of Veterans at the Fraternity Temple hall.

The Women's Relief Corps fed all who came to their tables in the Masonic banquet room at noon and in the evening for 25 cents a plate.

In 1909, a "large first-class" clock was installed in the courthouse tower by Geneva jeweler W. P. McCall. A place was paid by the business men of Geneva and the other half furnished by the county board.

Two cannons secured for the Grand Army of the Republic by Congressman Charles H. Sloan were placed, in
1912, on the north side of the courthouse block, one on the east side and one on the west side of the walks leading north from the courthouse. They were dismantled during World War II when the metal was needed for war machinery.

For many years the men in the Geneva community played croquet on a specially constructed croquet ground northeast of the courthouse. At the first the players were mostly Civil War veterans; often 20 or 30 men would be sitting on the benches around the court watching the game. The croquet ground went the way of the old trees and other landmarks when the courtyard was rebuilt in the late thirties.

In April, 1938, a resolution regarding the trees in the park stated that the park should thereafter be known as “Fillmore County’s Pioneer Park”; and that the trees planted in the park should be dedicated as follows—46 American elms on the east side and 45 American elms on the west side to be dedicated to the school districts in Fillmore County; all trees not dedicated to school districts to be dedicated to pioneer citizens of the county or others; the county should purchase, care for, and replace all the trees dedicated; the school district or person dedicating a tree should pay $5 for cost of the bronze dedication marker. In November, 1938, it was announced that any forest trees not already dedicated were open to anyone wishing to dedicate a tree.

On February 7, 1938, the city of Geneva leased the ground on the east and west ends of the “Courthouse Block”—until then, occupied by the bandstand and picnic tables—for a period of 99 years to be used for parking lots.

A fountain was placed north of the courthouse some time prior to 1918—but the date and the identity of the donor seem to be lost in the mists of unwritten history.

Postal Service
The original proposed location for the Geneva post office was designated on February 28, 1873, as follows: 6 miles W of Empire and 7 miles E of Turkey Creek. In late 1873 or early 1874, the post office was located in the first residence on the town site. It was moved when John Dempster in 1876 erected a building located on G St. between 9th and 10th Sts. Later, it was moved into the Citizens Bank Building. In 1890, when the Citizens Bank Building was moved from its location on 9th and G to the south end of the lots on 11th and G Sts., the post office was moved to the brick building two doors north of the new bank building, now known as 135 North 9th St. In 1912, this building burned and the post office was moved to 139 North 9th St. Early in April, 1926, a lease was affected with the Geneva State Bank for quarters at 140 North 9th St. The post office remained here until September 1, 1940, when a new Federal building was completed on the northwest corner of 9th and H Sts. The post office has occupied this site from that time to the present.
Later, rural carriers were paid $600 per year until July 1, 1905, when the pay was raised to $720. In 1907, it was again raised to $900 and to $1,000 in 1911. Since then salaries have been based on mileage traveled and are contemporarily favorable.

During earlier years, John Curtiss, Waldo Propst, Paul Curtiss, Minnie Carson, Adeline Allen, Mae Timmons, Harry Simmons, and George Harrington were among those who served in the post office. The present complement includes a postmaster, assistant to the postmaster, one regular clerk, a substitute clerk, two regular city letter carriers, a substitute city letter carrier, two rural carriers, with substitutes, and two custodial laborers. The office is served by three star routes and a mail messenger from Fairmont. Mail service by rail was discontinued about 1939.

Early Rural Free Delivery service was provided by the following persons:

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<th>July 1, 1903</th>
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<td>Charlton B. Hyde</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>Henry Sheldon</td>
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<td>John Klink, Jr</td>
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<td>William Klink</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
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</tbody>
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1907-1909-1911* Bert Bradley 900
Robert M. Carson 900
Roy D. Hampton 900
John Klink, Jr. 900

*Salary listed at $1,000 in year 1911.

Other rural carriers included Pete Ertel, Clyde Propst, Henry Reinsch, Gleye McCaulley, Floyd Abbott, Linus Walter, and George Cruse.

Sunday School was organized October 18, 1925, with 23 children enrolled, divided into three groups. Meetings were held August 7 and 14, 1927, to organize a congregation. The five charter members were: George Everts, John Biel, John Wittmack, Thomas W. Boyes, and W. A. Domeier. Incorporation of the church was completed and signed December 6, 1928. In the spring of 1929, the congregation purchased the church and parsonage (the Free Will Baptist properties they had been renting).

Pastor Kuckhahn left Geneva March 29, 1929. Pastor Roy Vollmers accepted the call to Grace Church and preached his initial sermon on the first Sunday in Advent, 1929. He was succeeded by Pastor E. A. Breiling, who served from May 31, 1942, till October 6, 1946. During his pastorate in 1944 the interior of the church was redecorated and refurnished. This work was dedicated in a special dedicatory service on October 29, 1944.

The Rev. D. Grummert began his pastorate in Geneva on January 19, 1947. He served the congregation until July 11, 1954. In November, 1947, the congregation voted to establish a Christian day school. A building was acquired, renovated, and dedicated on August 28, 1948. The first teacher (not including the pastor, who did a good deal of teaching) was Miss Laverna Everts, who taught from 1947 to 1958. Later teachers were Sharon Becker and Judy Meyer (1958-63), Virginia Neidfelt and Phyllis Haas (1964), and Beverly Renike (1965 to the present). Enrollment over the years has averaged 28 pupils.

The Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church was established and installed its first minister in 1925. The Wisconsin and Ohio Synods made several attempts to establish mission stations in Geneva. The Mission Board of the Nebraska District of the Wisconsin Synod finally decided to place a man in this city. After two candidates had returned the board's call, the Rev. Herman Kuckhahn accepted and was installed on October 4, 1925.

The installation and all services were held in the vacant West Ward schoolhouse until May, 1926. Starting that month, services were held in the vacant Free Will Baptist Church across the street.

Churche:
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church and parsonage (former Free Will Baptist properties).

First airmail out of Geneva, May 19, 1938. Left to right: Pilot, Dr. George Hansen; Shickley Postmaster Amos Frieden; Geneva Postmaster George Koehler; Assistant Postmaster Paul W. Curtiss; Legionnaire William Dana. The landing field was on the Gilbert McPeck farm, 4 miles S and 2 miles W of Geneva.

Grace Evangelical Lutheran parochial school, dedicated in 1948.
Later pastors have been the Revs. Paul E. Eickmann (1955-58), James Rockhoff (1958-63), Paul Seiltz (vicar, 1964), and David Fisher (1965-present).

--- Mrs. Harlan Domeier

The Christian Church of Geneva was organized early in 1890. On June 25, 1890, Mertie Rhinehart, formerly Mertie Mack, and her husband, John H. Rhinehart, of Arapahoe County, Colorado, deeded to B. B. Mozee, J. H. Ballard, and J. S. Small, the trustees of the Christian Church in Geneva, the W 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of Outlot 16 in the city of Geneva.

No records are available as to when construction of the building was begun, but the church was dedicated on June 7, 1893. The first financial records are dated January, 1893, but no names are given for clerk or treasurer. The first minister was a Mr. Henry, followed by E. J. Syas. There is no record of those who organized the church, but early membership rolls include Mr. and Mrs. B. B. Mozee, George Mozee, Rachel Yates, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Yates, Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Yates, A. C. Wickizer, Mr. Selzor, Mrs. A. C. Tucker, Ike Ashton, J. H. Ballard, J. S. Small, W. E. Harrison, O. A. Merril, Mr. and Mrs. J. N. Spivey, Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Laing, A. G. Peck, Mrs. Humphreys, Walter Haskins, and Mrs. W. H. Cooksey. There was a Ladies' Aid Society and a Christian Endeavor. In 1904, 88 members were listed. The building was heated by coal stoves and there were kerosene lights. In January, 1905, electric lights were installed. A furnace was put in and sidewalks were laid the following year.

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Christian Church on the day of dedication in June, 1893.

In 1904, E. M. Johnson, a student from Cotner College at Bethany, Nebraska, served the church as minister, and after his graduation he was resident minister for several years. Later ministers were J. B. McDonald, J. A. Beattie, E. L. Pettus, D. G. Wagner, Carl E. PerLee, and P. B. Cope, who had been field man for the Child Saving Institute at Omaha for the past 25 years. Later ministers were Clerin Gunewalt, Glen McRae, George P. Clark, H. Darling, Oscar Grover, and H. S. Souder.

During the depression so many families moved away that during the war years and for some time after, the church was closed. About 1952, it was reopened under the leadership of H. B. Milliken, president of Nebraska Christian College at Norfolk, Nebraska. The last two ministers were Olive Atwood, who lived at Sutton, and also had charge of the Christian Church there, and Harold Fox, a student pastor from the Norfolk college. For the past 10 years the Church of Christ has been using the properties.

--- Mrs. Edith Ridpath

The Geneva Congregational Church organization was started at a meeting in the home of F. H. Briggs, September 10, 1886, and a notice of this organization was filed with the county clerk, October 13, 1886. In January, 1887, with pastors present from surrounding towns, the formal organization was completed and 27 charter members were received into the church. The Rev. Glen Taylor served as the first pastor, and services were held in the Town Hall. A gift of $20 from a Sunday School in Connecticut, and another $20 raised locally, were used to purchase a library of 90 books; this served as the first public library for Geneva. The first communion service was a gift from the First Congregational Church of Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

With help from the Church Building & Loan Society of the Congregational National Council, the first church edifice was dedicated October 23, 1887. The lots cost $500, and the building about $3,500. This low cost was made possible by a great deal of the labor being donated. The women had organized in 1886, and as their project they raised funds for an organ which cost $150, and also purchased the chandeliers, carpet, and pulpit set. The parsonage was built in 1912 at a cost of $3,931.25.

In June, 1925, the old church building was torn down. A gift of $5,000 from Miss Nancy Beggs started the drive for a new building. Again with the help of the National Congregational Building Fund, the present church building was completed at a cost of $56,000, including the $7,500 pipe organ. The dedication services were held on November 26-28, 1926. At the Silver Anniversary service of the present building, November 25, 1951, the new stained-glass windows were formally dedicated.

During the 80 years since its organization the church has increased its membership to more than 400 with a
Sunday School numbering from 125 to 130. Two robed choirs, the Pilgrim Fellowship, Laymen's Fellowship, and Women's Fellowship are active in support of and participation in the church program. All loans and grants have been paid, and additional improvements and equipment have been provided, including the upkeep and remodeling of the parsonage.

The Congregational fellowship is founded not on a creed but on the fundamental principle of a brotherhood of Christians, each one sincerely believing in God, following Christ with all sincerity, and striving to serve the interests of his fellows with all diligence. While maintaining their independence of action and their control of their own affairs, Congregational churches exercise great care that the essential unity of fellowship with other congregations shall be maintained. Throughout the years the Geneva church has been a member of the Blue Valley Association, the Nebraska Congregational Conference, the General Council of Congregational Churches, and the National and Nebraska Councils of Churches.

Following is the list of pastors serving the Geneva Congregational Church:


—Mrs. Marietta Kerl

People of the United Brethren denomination began coming to Geneva around the turn of the century. Because there was no United Brethren church there, many of its members united with other churches, maintaining an inactive membership in their former home churches, or dropped out of any church affiliation whatever. The Martland, Strang, and Bethel churches were in outlying territory. (Bethel later became known as "Chelsea" because of its location in Chelsea township.)

Several appeals were made to the Nebraska U.B. Conference to begin a church in Geneva, but it was not until the 40th session of the conference in September, 1911, that Presiding Elder W. O. Jones was instructed to investigate the matter again. Accordingly, on October 28, Dr. Jones visited the field with a view to establishing a church in Geneva. Mr. I. N. Beeson, formerly of the Martland community, was one of the first persons contacted. Elder Jones made another trip in January, 1912, and found other interested people. On February 25, Bishop Weekly, Rev. F. W. Brink (pastor of the Strang church), and Elder Jones called the people together for the first meeting, which was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Nelson; "some 15" were present.

The next official visit of the elder was made April 13, 1912, in company with Rev. Charles Melville, pastor of the Beatrice church. Unfavorable comment upon the project by the city paper had a tendency to discourage some people and only a few were present. However, the names of 24 persons were secured who agreed to unite with the church if and when it should be organized.

Negotiations were begun with the Baptist people for the purchase of their unused property at what is now the corner of 11th and G Sts. The elder gave his report at the next conference, held in Lincoln in September, 1912, and a definite agreement was made for the purchase of the Baptist property for $3,500. ($500 of this amount was to be donated by the Baptist church.) The Rev. C. J. Melville was assigned to the Geneva mission and preached his first sermon to an audience of about 50 persons on Sunday night, September 29, 1912. Regular services were held each Sunday morning and evening throughout the conference year. The Sunday School was also organized at this time.


—Mrs. Marietta Kerl

United Brethren church at NE corner of 11th and G Sts., remodeled into present brick structure in 1917.

J. Plymouth, H. A. Dierendorff, A. W. Swanson, Glenn Cain, E. D. Sell, Maude V. Mann, Milford Vance, Wayne L. Schreurs, Dr. Walter Bachman, Fred H. Stevens, and Clifford Bahr, who is now serving as pastor, E. H. Pontius, E. W. Thompson, H. J. Plymouth, and Maude V. Mann will be remembered as having served over the longer periods of time.

After the yellowish frame building was remodeled in 1917 into the present brick structure, its membership reached a peak of 282. For various reasons the number has since declined to about 100 resident members.

In the early thirties it seemed advisable for the pastor to serve both the U.B. and Chelsea churches on alternate Sundays, although Sunday School was maintained in each church every Sunday. Not until the latter part of Miss Mann's ministry was a preaching service held each Sunday morning in both churches. The time was 10 o'clock at the country church and 11 o'clock in town. Miss Mann also conducted Monday afternoon services each week at Rose Lawn Home, and later U.B. pastors also continued those services, which seemed much appreciated by the residents.

The pastors also take their turn every fourth Sunday conducting services at the Girls' Training School.

The merging of the Evangelical and United Brethren denominations became effective in the Nebraska conference in 1956 and our church became known as the Evangelical United Brethren or "E.U.B." By action of the local conference the Chelsea church was merged with the Geneva church in 1954, and the Geneva church became owner of the Chelsea church property. Several families of the Chelsea congregation retained their membership in the E.U.B. church. Others went elsewhere.

—Mrs. Oscar Nelson
The Methodist Church was one of the major churches of the pioneers. When the first session of the Nebraska Conference adjourned April 8, 1861, there were 21 Methodist ministers in the entire state. There were only four Methodist church buildings, and no preacher could boast of serving a charge that provided him a parsonage.

The Rev. George W. Gue was the first resident Methodist preacher in this county. He arrived in the early summer of 1871 and preached the first sermon in Fairmont in the new Burlington station. In the spring of 1872 the Methodists built in Fairmont the first Methodist church in the county.

The Rev. Mr. Gue also made arrangements to build a church 7 miles S of Fairmont, probably on Turkey Creek, where he preached during the winter of 1871 and 1872. Although the church was never built, this "Class" was the nucleus that, a little later, became the Methodist Church of Geneva.

On Easter Sunday, 1873, a Sunday School was organized in the home of Henry Stanley, attended by the Walter Churchill family, the Sam Range family, and possibly others. This was the beginning of the organized Methodist work that was later called the "Chelsea Appointment" on the Geneva Circuit.

Some time in the early summer, possibly in May, 1875, the Rev. George H. Wehn was requested by his presiding elder, Dr. J. B. Maxfield, to take charge of the new work at Geneva. In Rev. Wehn's words: "After a few visits to Geneva, finding a few faithful ones who stood by to secure the material, we succeeded in building a small two-story parsonage into which we moved, moving up from Hebron in the midst of the Conference year." The records show that a bond for a deed for Lot 2, original city of Geneva, was filed June 25, 1875. The lot was purchased from David Lee for $400.

Geneva appears first as a regular appointment in the minutes of the conference session held September 15 to 23, 1875, when Mr. Wehn was appointed pastor. At this early date all general religious meetings were held in the courthouse, which had been completed in May, 1873. Mr. Wehn conducted a revival meeting that winter and reported 175 converts. Most of these converts united with the newly organized Methodist church, though a good number joined the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations.

The Conference Minutes of October 10, 1878, remark: "Geneva is moving with their might in the erection of their much needed church. $500 have been borrowed and $800 raised by subscription." The deeds for Lots 39 and 40, original city of Geneva, were filed for record in September, 1878. Lot 39 was sold to the church by Julius E. Spear for $40 and Lot 40 by Joseph E. Dean for $45. On account of the unpledged indebtedness this church was not dedicated until 1885; but at this service pledges were taken to cover all outstanding obligations.

The Conference year 1885-86 was a great success. Seventy-three persons joined the church.

The very next year, added improvements were necessary, as shown by the Minutes of September, 1887: "As a result of a wonderful revival last year the building was found to be too small, was enlarged, improved and paid for. At the beginning of this year the trustees found the building still too small and enlarged it at an expense of $2,000. Valuable improvements were made on the parsonage and all paid for so that now we have a fine church building, with tower and bell, and class rooms finely furnished." It is interesting to note that while the enlarged church was valued at $5,000, the parsonage was valued at $6,000. This year the membership more than doubled and the Sunday School nearly doubled.

The Rev. Mr. Barker was pastor, the new parsonage was built on the north of the church lots at a cost of $1,800. The old parsonage property was sold July 7, 1893, to Lulu Bruner. This is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Pete Kelch at 1045 I St.

In 1902 the present brick edifice was built and dedicated by Dr. Claudius B. Spencer on December 28, 1902. The parsonage was modernized in 1909. Lot 38, adjoining 39 on the west, was presented to the church by M. Bolton on August 31, 1921.

The church celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1926 with a five-day Semi-Centennial Jubilee. The celebration began Wednesday evening, April 21, and continued through Sunday, April 25.

In the autumn of 1936 work was completed on the excavation of the church basement. This project provided a beautiful and useful room.

In April, 1939, the unification of all Methodist churches occurred at the General Conference. As a result of this merger, the name of the local church was changed from "First Methodist Episcopal Church" to "First Methodist Church of Geneva."

Further conforming to the new organization, the former Ladies' Aid Society and Foreign Missionary Societies reorganized on September 4, 1940, as the Women's Society of Christian Service.

A new pipe organ, a memorial to Alfred H. Elder and Mrs. Lulu M. Barker, was dedicated on Mother's Day, 1943. Later, chimes were added through gifts by the A. H. Fulton family and the congregation. These chimes were in commemoration of the men and women of the church who had served the nation during World War II.

May 7, 1950, the church observed its 75th anniversary. Rev. Ben Wallace was the pastor. An echo organ was installed in the spring of 1950, the gift of the late Mrs. William Kilburn. In 1954, a new Baldwin No. 10 electric organ replaced the first electric organ.
A new parsonage was completed in April, 1956, and the cornerstone placed June 2, 1956. The basement of the parsonage was planned to be used for the nursery department of the Sunday School.

In the fall of 1965, a fund-raising campaign was held to obtain money to build an educational unit.

The following pastors have served the Geneva Methodist Church:


St. Joseph’s Catholic Church was founded later than the other churches. The first Mass was said in Geneva in 1878 by the Rev. F. Lechleitner of Crete. Since there was then no church building here, Mass was offered in the Longly hall. Only six Catholic families were here—John J. Burke, Nicholas Longly, Joseph Schaubel, Patrick Doud, Joseph Weis, and John Thoma.

During that summer a church was built in the rural parish of St. Mary’s on Turkey Creek and for the next 20 years Geneva Catholics attended Mass there, except on those rare occasions when Mass was said here.

The first resident pastor was the Rev. Bernard Ulbrick, who served the parish from January, 1898 to August, 1900. During the next year the parish was attended from Hebron by the Rev. A. Petrasch and the Rev. C. A. Becker. Four lots were secured in South Geneva and the first church was built, also the rectory, which is now the Sisters’ convent.

In August, 1901, Father Becker was appointed by Bishop Bonacum as second resident pastor with St. Mary’s at Shickley as a mission. In 1908, repairs and improvements to the amount of $35,000 were made on the parish plant. Also in 1950 the Golden Jubilee of the parish was observed with an outstanding celebration with the Most Rev. Bishop Lorris B. Kucera presiding.

The Faith Mennonite Church is the newest religious group in Geneva. In November, 1964, the first steps were taken toward organizing a Mennonite Fellowship. With help from the Henderson Mennonite Church, as well as from the Northern District Conference, and with counsel from the General Conference of Mennonites (with central offices in Newton, Kansas), this group began meeting regularly on March 14, 1965. Their first meeting was in the Meeting House of the Meridian Courts, and here they held their worship services for more than a year.

In the summer of 1965, the group extended a call to Albert Gaeddart to come and serve them as pastor. He accepted the call, and the Gaeddart’s moved to Geneva in late August. Steps were taken toward the organization of a congregation, and also toward incorporation. November 21, 1965, was observed as Membership Day, at which time 23 persons formed the original charter membership.

Photo from Mrs. Rena Kamler
St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and Parochial School.

1From 1881 to 1938, all dates run from September to September except as otherwise noted.

Photo from Guy Brown, Jr.
Faith Mennonite Church, built in 1966.
The group chose the name of “Faith Mennonite Church,” which replaced the earlier name of Geneva Mennonite Fellowship.

During the sessions of the Northern District Conference in June, 1966, the Faith Mennonite Church became a member of the District Conference, and filed application with the General Conference Mennonite Church to become a member of this larger body of 55,000 souls.

Our heritage stems from the Anabaptists, one of the groups that developed during the Reformation days of the sixteenth century. Our group is named after Menno Simons, who gathered together in Europe the groups that came out of this heritage and underwent severe persecutions for their beliefs. To accept the challenges of living as disciples of the Master is one of the principles that we set for ourselves.

—Alber Gaeddert

The new Prince of Peace Lutheran Church at 16th and Oak Sts. began with a meeting of 25 families with Dr. E. G. Fritschel in the Rialto Theater in Geneva on October 29, 1961. This meeting voted to form a congregation, and elected a steering committee, consisting of Harry Carlson, Lawrence Wattles, and Dr. D. C. Anderson. The building committee were M. M. Rosen (chairman), Henry Fangmeier, Edward Reinsch, Dick Deets, and Lawrence Wattles.

Pastor Leon Bauer of Carleton was asked to serve the group. The first service was held on November 11, 1961, in the Geneva City Auditorium, with 63 persons present. Preparations for the formal organization of a congregation were begun at once. By January 14, 1962, the necessary steps of incorporation, adoption of a constitution, election of officers and of a church council were completed.

Some time in mid-February, the Rev. Otto Hesla, regional director of American Missions of the American Lutheran Church, met with the congregation to explain the home mission program. Shortly thereafter, Prince of Peace was certified as a “Package Mission.” Arrangements were then made for the purchase of the plot on which the church unit now stands.

A ground-breaking service for the new building was held on November 4, 1962, and three days later construction began. Good weather enabled rapid progress, and the building was finished by mid-February, 1963. It was dedicated at special services on the morning of Sunday, March 19, 1963, at which time 550 members of the congregation and friends joined in the two services.

In early 1968, the congregation numbered 300 members. The Rev. Woodrow Wilson, who became pastor of the church in June, 1966, is still serving us.

SCHOOLS

A History of School District 75, Geneva by Howard W. Hamilton

The history of the Geneva public school, District 75, might well be prefaced with a reminder that the school was established within a short time after the county was officially organized and Geneva was named the county seat (as described earlier).

In June, 1871, the county seat was surveyed and recorded. In June, 1872, some of the lots were sold at auction. The new town developed slowly for two years, even after a courthouse was built in 1873. In 1875, however, the town improved rapidly and by January 1, 1876, it had a population of 140.

On February 1, 1876, the citizens, foreseeing a need for a school, organized a school district. The district included land in four townships: Chelsea, Madison, Stanton, and Geneva.

Although no enrollment figures for the first school are available, the annual report on file in the office of the county superintendent, signed by Director J. B. Thompson, shows there were 15 males and 24 females in the district between the ages of 5 and 21. The report for 1877 shows the district received $88.50 from the county and $510 from other sources. The teacher received $88.50 while $510 was paid for a building, leaving the district owing $1,154.15. The levy was 25 mills. This report, also signed by J. B. Thompson, showed there were 34 males and 36 females in the district between 5 and 21. There were three men teachers and one woman teacher. Salaries totaled $145 for the men and $35 for the woman. The value of the school was fixed at $930 and the lot $125.

Emma McKeelv Johnston headed the first school in Geneva in 1876. John Chase also taught three months of the term. In 1877, J. H. Sager taught three months as did J. B. Lewis. Emma McKeelv Johnston taught the school three months in 1878.

Others listed as heading the school before a superintendent was elected were as follows: 1879-80, Charles Fort; 1880-81, H. W. Caldwell; 1881-82, D. B. Huston; 1882-83, Jesse Hesseltine.

The first superintendent of the Geneva school was C. C. Heltman, who apparently became head of the school in 1882. He served until 1888.


Although the Geneva school had operated since 1876, the district actually had no title to the land on which it operated a school until 1887. At that time the State of Nebraska executed a deed to District 75 in the names of Daniel Lynn, Charles C. Miles, and Joseph H. Springer to Outlot 17 in Geneva for $1,000. The deed, dated May 25, 1887, was signed by Governor John W. Thayer and attested

Courtesy Nebraska Signal

J. H. Sager, one of first teachers in Geneva Public School.
by Joseph Scott, commissioner of public lands and buildings. Fillmore County also gave the school district a quitclaim deed to the property. The deed from the state recited that the sale was made June 17, 1872, when the officials of Fillmore county purchased the land at public auction.

In 1917, E. J. Dempster, president of the board of education of District 75, gave the following account of the Geneva public school in an address before the 1917 graduating class:

"In the year 1876, in February, School District No. 75, now known as the school district of the city of Geneva, was organized. The first term was for six months in a small schoolhouse of one room but it was soon found another room and an additional teacher were necessary; the term also was lengthened to nine months.

"After a time, these facilities becoming too small, the old building of two rooms was abandoned and a new house built with four rooms. In a few years two more rooms were added and still later another building was built on the school block and a ward schoolhouse was erected in the west part of town.

"All of this was found after some years to be inadequate and as a result we have our own present high-school building which at this time we find none too large, every room being occupied."

The new building referred to by Mr. Dempster is the present "main" building. It was built in 1905 at a cost of $36,000. A complete description of the building was carried in a special Union Normal Institute edition of the Nebraska Signal, dated Friday, May 4, 1906; here are some excerpts:

"A feature new in the construction of the schoolhouses in Nebraska, principally, is the complete finishing of the basement rooms ... Seven feet of the 10' basement are above the grade line.

"On the north of the large central hall in the basement are two more rooms which could be used well for school purposes, and an elegant gymnasium, 75' x 25', with a 14' ceiling."

"From the grade line to the water table the building is built of Tiger Eye Omaha hydraulic pressed brick. The balance of the building from the water table up is built of hard Omaha hydraulic pressed gray brick."

The old wooden building which was replaced by the structure described above was sold to Dr. H. L. Smith of Geneva. He divided the building and moved the sections to lots south of the courthouse park, making three houses, which have since been known as the Smith houses.

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The Geneva Public School, erected about 1885 on Block 17, original town. This picture was taken about 1899; the building faced the north.

The Old School Building, divided to make three identical houses; at the southeast corner of Courthouse Square.

West Ward schoolhouse (about 1900).

The ward school was used for many years but school was discontinued there just prior to World War I. The building was used as a meeting hall and polling place for many years. It was finally sold to the Chaney Brothers in 1949 and is now used only for storage purposes.

In 1921, another building, called the Smith-Hughes building, was added to the school campus. Later it became known as the gymnasium building. The Smith-Hughes vocational and home economics classes were located on the ground floor of the building, as they are today, the gymnasium being on the second floor.

The bids on the new building were opened August 31, 1921. Low bidder was the J. W. Assenmacher Co. of Lincoln with a bid of $24,000. The building was to be completed within 90 days. The first basketball game was played in the new building Friday, December 2, 1921, when Geneva met Shickley in a special game. Geneva defeated its guests 28 to 10.

The old gymnasium in the main building was converted to indoor toilets, which replaced the outdoor latrines located southeast and southwest of the main entrances; the space between the new toilets was used for storage. During the
later years of the depression, between 1937 and 1939, the storage space was converted to an auditorium for plays and music programs. Later yet, it was used for a music room and in 1957 the space was made into two grade classrooms. During this time, the gymnasium was remodeled, eliminating the old balconies at each end of the room.

On April 29, 1953, a disastrous fire broke out in the gymnasium building during the night. Dozens of students had been working in the room preparing decorations for the annual spring festival. The fire was discovered about 2 A.M. and was attributed to an overheated flue used by the vocational agriculture department.

After assessing the damage and holding public meetings on what to do about replacing the destroyed facilities, the board of education submitted a bond issue to the voters, who voted $132,000 toward construction of a new gymnasium, the bonds to supplement insurance money in the amount of $43,112.05 received as payment for the fire loss.

New public rest rooms, a large lobby, school lunch facilities, and a fine 50' x 90' gymnasium floor were included in the new gymnasium building, which is attached to the Smith-Hughes building.

Basketball

The Geneva high school has compiled a fine record in many fields but basketball has been the activity with the longest and probably the most outstanding record in the school's history.

Early-day basketball teams played a few games each year on a court on the school grounds. After the construction of a gymnasium in the main building in 1905, basketball became a regular part of the school program and games were scheduled throughout the winter season.

Geneva boasts many fine teams during its history, including four state champions. The first state championship was claimed in 1909, when the team challenged the state for the title. Crete accepted the challenge but the Geneva team defeated the challengers.

The 1909 Geneva team included Tryon Shepherd, Hugh Garrett, Roscoe Hill, John Curtiss, Verne Baroch, Hallie Fellows, and Earle Hill. The coach was L. I. Frisbie.

The first official championship was won by Geneva in 1913 when the third annual state tournament was held in Lincoln. There was only one class in the tournament. Geneva won the championship in a grueling series of games with the following results: Geneva 46, Herman 6; Geneva 19, Temple 8; Geneva 25, Omaha 24; Geneva 35, Omaha 24.

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Albion 19; Geneva 43, Gothenburg 17; Geneva 41, University Place 26.

Members of the team were Jay Davis, Herb Ashton, John Davis,  Art Weis, Harry Yates, Al Davis, Vincent Janda, and Willie. The coach was John C. Gewacke. Members of the 1956 team were Donn McCashland, Bob Hamilton, Jimmy Burgh, Larry Nichols, Larry Fiedler, Lynn Koehler, The coach was John Haberman. Larry Nichols was named to the all-class, all-state team as well as the all-tourney, all-class team as well as the all-state Class C team.

Geneva won another state championship in 1957, this time in Class C. The championship was being based on the number of boys in high school. The victory came after another final game in which Geneva defeated Seward during the regular season.

One of Geneva's finest teams was the 1947-48 team which was rated at the top all-season but lost out in the finals of the district tournament to Seward, which later became state champion, although Geneva defeated Seward during the regular season. Members of the 1947-48 team were Gerald Walton, Charles Curtis, Lester Thum, Clete Adams, Dick Ingwersen, Henry Brower, Jr., Eugene Betka, Charles Elznic, James McCarthy, Roger Christianity, and Virgil Ostidek.

The 1953 and 1954 teams, coached by Kenneth Ackerman, were rated number one in Class C with the 1953 team being a perfect record. The 1954 team lost only to Crete, a Class B team.

In 1912, Jesse Ertel won the individual state championship. In debate, Geneva boasts three state championships.

In 1902, Strickland, Jr., and Grover played for an undefeated, untied team. Grover was named all-state in other classes for the second straight year.

Football

In football, Geneva also has had many fine teams, including three undefeated aggregations. The history of football, however, shows a series of struggles to install the sport in the school, to keep it in the school program, and to keep up interest in the sport, which traditionally seemed to take second place at basketball to Geneva.

Football was introduced in the school in 1901 by the new superintendent, Charles W. Taylor. Games were usually played on Saturday and sometimes players out of school were recruited to fill vacancies on the team.

Another Geneva basketball star, Condra ("Beanie") Clark, achieved all-state, all-class honors in 1952. Although the Geneva team was edged in the district finals in Class B by a strong York team.

Jesse Domeier, Kenneth Leonard, Lawrence Domeier, and David Linde.


Dick McCashland of the 1953 and 1954 teams made all-state fullback in all classes, later being a star at the University of Nebraska.

The 1955 team, coached by Harry Pitcaithley, was given publicity in the Signal for October 17, 1955, stated: "President George Mozee and Secretary Sager state that the Signal that members of the school board do not object to the city superintendent of schools having any connection with any football team that may be mutually agreeable to the team and to the superintendent provided this connection is maintained outside of school hours and that no team be called a high-school football team.

Some of the boys mentioned as being members of the 1901 team were Glen Carson, Charles Hubrisky, Donald ("Doc") Koehler, Jim Burke, Leo McFarland, and Lester Ryman.

The 1902 team, although unofficial, played several games with varying results, according to published in the Signal, however, when it defeated Fairfield 6 to 0. Listed as members of that team were Roy Hampton, Ben Moze, Joe Yates, Claude Kimbrough, Leo McFarland, Roscoe Moze, Lester Ryman, Floyd Tallmadge, Charles Theobald, Earl Caball, Ralph Brinkman, and James Budge.

High-school football at Geneva was not restored on an official, approved basis until 1916. With two weeks of practice, the team played an experienced Hebron team, losing by a 59 to 0 score. The team of 1916 played an experienced team from Hastings, winning 13 to 0, taking the ground for a football tradition at Geneva.

Members of the 1916 team listed in the Signal for October 17, 1916, were Carl Schneider, Tom Otis, Herb Mowry, Everett Roles, Francis Sullivan, Warren Edgecombe, Ed Fussell, Golee Swails, Cass Koechle, Seymour Martin, Frank Martin, and Lester Nicholas. One member of this team was Ben Kenedy. Football career after graduation and started on a United States Naval Academy football team that twice defeated the Army team.

The first undefeated team of the 1917 season was coached by Jesse Lowe. A first game scoreless tie with Seward Academy was the only blot on its record. On the team were the following: Sterling Cope, Charles Doremiere, Maurice Rotter, Kenneth Morgan, Ralph Hie, Dave Gunst, Bob Barrem, Leonard Grothe, Gerald Braden, Charles Grothe, Lawrence Doud, Paul Ford, Clyde Moss, Paul Peterson, LaVello Stotes, Dale Murrell, Don Fricmer, Norbert Gergen, and Fred Wallatmene.

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college tournament in 1928. On the team were Lucille Eaton, Anne Taborsky, and Charles McEachran.

Geneva also won several district championships in the twenties and thirties, qualifying for the state debate tournaments at Lincoln. Several district championships and high ratings also have been received in other speech work, including one-act play contests.

Music

Geneva has for many years emphasized the teaching of music in the public school. Apparently the first organized music program in the school was started by the Geneva Woman's club, which hired Miss Claire Owens, later Dr. Claire Owens of Exeter, to organize a class in harmony in 1916. Professor H. R. Grant was secured to organize a school orchestra and band the same year.


Paul W. Curtiss directed the first school band at Geneva in 1925. He continued to direct the school bands until a few weeks before his death in 1951. In May, 1951, Herman L. Larsen was hired on a full-time basis to teach instrumental music in the Geneva schools. He is the present director of instrumental music and boys vocal music in the school. Vocal music has for several years been under the direction of Norma (Mrs. Richard) Wagner (formerly Miss Norma Kohler, of Sutton).

Geneva was the location of the District 1 music contest 27 times since the contest was started in 1928. Geneva's entries have usually received top ratings, with Geneva leading all schools in all classes in superior ratings practically every year.

Geneva High School Band.


attending the Geneva school, being transported by buses operated by District 75.

By 1966, the assessed valuation of the Geneva school district had risen to $11,531,790.

Enrollment in the school year 1966-67 totaled 742 students. Of these, 260 were in the senior high school, 127 in junior high, and 355 in the elementary grades.

The professional staff in the same years—teachers, administrators, nurses, etc.—numbered 23; the nonprofessional staff—bus drivers, cooks, janitors, etc.—numbered 20.

In 1966-67, the superintendent of schools was Bernard Bliefernich; the principal of the junior and senior high schools, William McNaught; and the elementary school principal, Robert Myers.

**Teachers' Institutes**

As school districts were established in Fillmore County, other educational activities began to take shape.

The first teachers' institute for Fillmore County was held at the Hall in Fairmont, commencing December 1, 1872, and continuing for one week. The second and fourth institutes were also held at Fairmont, but the third institute was held at Geneva, commencing on November 16, 1874.

In 1880, additional instruction was given at the institute. The session was called the first annual County Teachers' Normal Institute and was held at the schoolhouse in Geneva for two weeks. The notes of County Superintendent J. B. Lewis state: "This Institute begins a new era in facilities afforded for improvement of teachers. Not only is instruction given in branches taught in the schools but also methods of giving instruction. A tuition fee of $2 was charged to pay expenses of instruction and incidentals."

The third Teachers' Normal Institute session was held at Fairmont for three weeks commencing on July 17, 1882. Sixty-two teachers were enrolled. The curriculum was broadened to include school managements and methods, grammar, analysis of sentences and study of the verb, arithmetic, percentage, methods of teaching, compound numbers, physiology, nervous system, history, causes leading to the adoption of the Constitution, bookkeeping, and orthography.

Before 1891, the expenses were born by the teachers paying a $2 fee and by admittance fees for evening lectures. The records show that in 1891 the county superintendent received $100 from the county treasurer. This amount was increased to $350 in later years.

Names important in early education in the state appeared often as teachers and speakers in the institutes and normal school programs. State Superintendents S. R. Thompson was on the faculty several summers; also mentioned was Schuyler, Chancellor Fairfield was listed on the programs repeatedly. E. J. Hoenschel, noted grammarian and textbook writer, taught in the Junior Normal in 1902.

—Miss Emma Renken

**Junior Normal School**

In the summer of 1902, State Superintendent W. K. Fowler organized junior normal institutes of five weeks' length at Holdrege, Culbertson, and Sidney. These were the precursors of the junior normal schools. In 1903, the legislature appropriated $12,000 for the biennium to support five such summer schools of ten weeks each, located at Alliance, Valentine, McCook, Holdrege, and North Platte. In 1907, with an appropriation of $15,000 for the biennium, eight schools were maintained—Alma, Broken Bow, O'Neill, and Geneva being added and Holdrege being dropped. The length of term was reduced to seven weeks.

Junior normals were established to encourage the teaching profession among those in the western and northern parts of the state for whom distance to established schools in eastern Nebraska was hundreds of miles and expense prohibitive. The Junior Normals were placed in the centers of the vast areas of country where the problem was that of overcoming isolation and insufficient local school facilities.

During the first five years of Junior Normals, from 1903 to 1908, 5,000 teachers and prospective teachers from remote districts were enrolled, only a small percentage of whom would or could have attended any other institution of summer training.

Junior Normals did the work of university extension, and inspired young men and women to carry on their education in established institutions of higher learning.

Before a student was entitled to a Junior Normal credit in any subject he had to attain an average of at least 70 per cent and attend instruction in each subject for at least 30 days. A student who had attended Junior Normal for four sessions of not less than six weeks each could receive his elementary state certificate upon completion of the entrance requirements as provided by law at the state normal schools and the completion of the junior normal training course.

The instructors were men and women of scholarship, experience, and integrity, men and women of well-known and approved educational opinions. The tuition was free but an enrollment and incidental fee of $2 was charged each student-teacher.

![Junior Normal class photo, taken in 1910.](Photo from Mrs. William Fenske)

The Junior Normal was held at the Geneva public schoolhouse. The courthouse supplemented the schoolhouse in accommodating the teachers in class and lecture periods. The basement of the high school building was used for the dining hall, with the Geneva domestic science instructor in charge. It accommodated 150 to 200 students. They could secure board at the Prior from $2.50 to $3 per week. Board and lodging was made available in private homes for $3.50 per week. Those who boarded at the dining hall could secure rooms in homes for 50 cents a week.

The Junior Normal school was held in Geneva from 1907 through 1912. In 1913 Geneva lost the school owing to lack of interest in securing the school. Many educators felt that it was now unnecessary because Normal Training had been added to the high school curriculum. The subjects offered in 1908, when enrollment totaled 153, were listed in the Signal as follows:

- Agriculture
- History
- Reading and Literature
- Algebra I
- Music
- Geography
- Algebra II
- Composition
- Geometry I
- Arithmetic
- Written
- Rural Schools
- Arithmetic—Written
- Rural Schools
- Bookkeeping
- Drawing
- Orthography
- Botany
- Physiology and
- Pennmanship
- Chemistry
- Physics I
- Grammar
- Physics II
- Civics
- Hygiene
- English

Other subjects were taught if the number desiring such study was sufficient to warrant forming a class.

**UTILITIES**

**Water**

The earliest water supply was provided by wells and windmills, with cisterns for storage. Inadequate fire protection and the steadily increasing water consumption each
year caused J. H. Luke and a number of other citizens to petition the city council on April 15, 1889, for a modern waterworks system, with an investigation and cost estimation of such works in other cities.

A special election was held August 15, 1889, to vote on $23,000 in bonds for construction, maintenance, and operating costs of waterworks. There were 279 votes cast, with 265 for and 14 against.

The engine house and standpipe were placed on the west side of Garfield St. and facing Court St. between Lincoln and Court Sts. For the sum of $800, A. A. Richardson of Lincoln drew up plans and specifications for waterworks and acted as consulting engineer; W. G. Hames was to superintend construction.

The following bids were let:

- **Boilers—Brownsell & Co. of Omaha**: $720.00
- **Standpipe—Porter Jackson & Co.**: $3,795.00
- **Engine house—L. L. Fisher**: 1,286.00
- **Two wells with pumps and engines guaranteed to furnish 125,000 gal. of water per 24-hr. day—Cook Well Co.**: 2,100.00
- **Stone for base of standpipe—Keys & Bullock**: 53.30
- **Two hose carts and 1,000 ft. of hose—Rubber Co.**: 1,220.00
- **Boiler smoke stack—T. J. Beals**: 297.00
- **Twenty-eight or more Adams Patent Improved Fire Hydrants with two 2½” nozzle and 4” bell at $31.00 each—Sager lot**: 808.00
- **Bids of Shicklen, Harrison & Howards of St. Louis, Mo., for 2,600 ft of 8” cast-iron pipe, 7,744 ft of 6” cast-iron pipe, and 4,208 ft of 4” pipe—All totaled**: 8,803.23
- **Five 8” Lorain Hub and brass-mounted gate valves, seven 6”, and four 4”—U. S. Wind Engines & Pump Co.**: 1,266.00
- **Ladder on standpipe—Porter Jackson & Co.**: 125.00
- **Building for hose carts Geneva No. 1 and Geneva No. 2—Sager lot**: 125.00

On January 16, 1890, the final test of the waterworks system proved satisfactory. The plant consisted of a standpipe 110 ft. high, capacity 93,000 gallons; 2 pumps, each capable of raising 125,000 gal. of water per day and driven by a 60-horsepower boiler; about 2½ miles of mains ranging from 4” to 8” in diameter. Auxiliary to this was a two-horse-company fire department supplying 1,200 ft. of hose and 40 fire hydrants. Water rates fixed by the council were $5 per year for household purposes and $2 for connecting on the mains.

By May, 1890, the water system was self-supporting. The demand was so great that more bonds were voted to extend 2 or 3 miles more of water mains.

In April, 1894, water rent was raised to $18 per place, provided there were four taps per main. The water commissioner charged 25 cents per load of water.

The bonded indebtedness of the city, because of the water system, was $27,000 on April, 1896.

On January 30, 1898, meters were placed at the Courthouse, Citizens Bank, and Geneva National Bank buildings.

In June, 1902, water meters were installed all over town. Water rent was to be paid quarterly at the rate of 20 cents per 1,000 gal. for the first 10,000 gal. and 15 cents per 1,000 gal. thereafter for each quarter.

In May, 1901, a new well was added at a cost of $673.05. In the fall of 1904 water was run to the city school.

In October, 1907, the city voted to furnish 2 motors, 2 transformers, and 2 geared-head pumps to furnish full-day service of water and lights, at a cost of $1,245. Adding another boiler, engine, and dynamo doubled the plant service for a full day.

On April 1, 1909, the city changed from steam to electric pumps at an annual cost of $1,953 for a five-year contract between the city and the Geneva Electric Co. (G. F. Skinkle, mgr.).

At present Geneva has four wells. The older ones are at 7th and H and 8th and K Sts. All are now powered by electricity, although the oldest well (at 7th and H) can be converted to gas operation in case of emergency. The capacity of each well is 550 gallons per minute. The standpipe holds 100,000 gallons.

In May, 1959, the council awarded a contract for construction of a new city well and about eight blocks of new water mains to replace the old third well (located west of the Koehler lumber yard). The well contract went to Layne-Western of Omaha, whose bid was $10,295; the contract for the mains was awarded to Munt Brothers of Beatrice with a bid of $15,201. The new well was located at the NE corner of the junction of Highway 81 and I St. The addition of this well gave the water department a pump capacity of about 1,900 gallons per minute.

The newest well, added in 1965, is at the NE corner of the city park, at 15th and F Sts.

The present water rates are as follows: $1 minimum for 200 cubic feet per month; next 300 cu. ft. at 25 cents per 100 cu. ft.; next 500 cu. ft. at 20 cents per 100 cu. ft.; next 1,000 cu. ft. at 15 cents per cu. ft.; next 8,000 cu. ft. at 10 cents per 100 cu. ft.; and all over, 10,000 cu. ft. at 7.5 cents per 100 cu. ft. During the summer a special rate is given: All the water used over 1,000 cu. ft. is given a 50 per cent discount.

**Sewers and Paving**

A modern sewage disposal system was accepted by Geneva in November, 1922. The contract was let on May 8, 1919, to S. A. Canaglia and Co. of Omaha for the sewer and disposal plant for the sum of $30,244.70. The right-of-way for the plant was purchased from Charles H. Sloan, to be located on his farm north of Geneva. In July, 1923, plans were accepted to enlarge the sewage disposal plant to include the Government Housing Project in east Geneva. In the winter of 1954-55 a lift-station was constructed at 10th and A Sts., in the south part of town, giving more Genevans in that area access to the sewer. The sewerage system was extended until by the end of 1959 most of the city was connected to the sewer system. A sewer-use fee has been added to the water rates to provide for expansion of the system.

The first paving contract was let to the Abel Construction Co. of Omaha on May 29, 1919, for the sum of $140,493.75. The contract called for the paving and storm sewers of 10½ blocks—G St. from 6th to 11th Sts.; H St. between 9th and 10th Sts.; 8th St. from F St. to the alley between G and H Sts.; 9th St. from G to H; and 10th St. from F north to H St. This district was completed early in 1920. Gradually more streets were paved, and by 1958 a total of 46 blocks had been hard-surfaced or paved. Thirteenth St., being a part of U. S. Highway 81, was paved by the state from the south to the north city limits, F St., which is part of State Highway 41 from 13th St. to 5th St., then north to the Girls’ Training School, was also constructed and maintained by the state.
The first residence street in the city to be graveled was North 11th St., in 1929. Graveling the streets was completed in 1931.

As of December 1, 1967, a total of 156% blocks were hard-surfaced, with gutters and storm sewers. Of these, 26 blocks—on Highways 81 and 41 and the highway to the Girls’ Training School—are maintained by the state; the rest are maintained by the city.

Stop signs were installed at numerous places and stop lights placed around the school area. (In 1926, the city voted to place “stop buttons” on streets and a man was employed to enforce traffic laws.) In 1953, the city purchased its first police car from the Steider Plymouth and Chrysler Co. It was a black, 2-door, 1953 sedan and cost $1,332.78.

Electricity
Interest in electric lighting was aroused in 1890 when some eastern capitalists presented a plan to build a plant. They were not successful in their attempt. In April, 1893, it was voted to grant an exclusive franchise for 10 years to the Geneva Electric Light and Power Co. to erect and operate a plant, with the privilege of purchasing the plant at the end of 10 years if desired. This plan also failed to materialize.

The first plant which actually produced electric current was built by Gregory F. Skinkle in 1904. Mr. Skinkle sold his drugstore in Geneva and secured a franchise to build this plant, which he owned and operated until 1916. The plant was a house 45 x 48 located on 9th St.—¾ block north of the courthouse (about where Consumers is located now). This location was chosen by Mr. Skinkle because it would be a great saving, especially in furnishing heat, to have the plant close to the business houses. The building was divided into two rooms, leaving plenty of space to double the capacity of the plant.

The engine was a high-grade Atlas Corliss of 115 horsepower. The engine had a 12-foot flywheel, occupied a floor space of 9 x 20, and weighed 23,000 pounds. The boiler had the same indicated capacity as the engine, with an overload capacity of 25 per cent.

The crowning piece of machinery was the dynamo. It was a single-phase Wood alternating, manufactured by the Fort Wayne Electric Works. This dynamo was a 60 K.W., having a frequency of 60 cycles, 1,100 volts, 900 revolutions per minute.

Under the Wood system an alternating current of high pressure is generated at the power station and is reduced to low pressure by transformers placed on poles in various parts of town. (The voltage of an electric current corresponds to the pressure of the waterworks system.) There were 14 of these reducing transformers, with a total capacity of 660 lights.

The vitalizing current was turned through the street lamps for the first time on January 22, 1905. The city had four arc lamps, located respectively at the principal Court St. (G St.) intersections and 21 incandescent lamps at as many residence street intersections. Several business houses were connected and lighted the following week. Among the first residents to have electric lights were F. B. Donisthorpe, Mrs. Kate Koehler, Mrs. Frank Koehler, B. Koehler, E. Sandrock, C. A. Thorpe, C. A. Warner, Dr. W. E. Propst, and Dr. M. Propst.

Electric service at this time was intermittent. The plant operated from dusk to 11 p.m., with a little longer service on Saturday nights. Daytime service was established in 1907, and at that time several motors were installed. On June 19, 1911, the city contracted with Mr. Skinkle for 67 Mazda street lights of rated 60 candlepower each at a monthly rate of $1.75 per lamp. The lights were maintained on a midnight-moonlight schedule. The lamps burned from dusk until midnight only, and on moonlight nights were not turned on at all.

Five years later a new contract provided Geneva 24-hour service for residential and commercial use. The commercial lighting rates at that time (1916) might also be of interest; the top rate was 20 cents per kilowatt hour and the cheapest, 9 cents.
“Betsy,” as the generator was called, with her two boilers was able at the beginning to supply the demand for electricity, but as time went on the engine with its 90-K.W. generator could not meet the demand, and transmission lines connected to larger plants were installed. Betsy was disassembled, sold, and shipped away to be recast into some other type of equipment.

The plant (called the Geneva Electric Co.) was sold in 1916 to the Continental Gas & Electric Co., which owned the plants at York and Aurora. The name of the new company, after being purchased from Mr. Skinkle, was the “Public Service Co.” F. J. Gunther of York came to Geneva as manager.

In 1916, 18 electroliers were installed on the north side of G St. and along 9th St. In January, 1917, 20 more electroliers were added.

By 1917, the building of transmission lines bringing current into the city had caused the plant to be abandoned for generating electricity. The old plant, however, was kept as a standby for emergencies and was used as a heating plant for the courthouse and quite a number of business buildings. Modern advancements finally made it unnecessary; and so, shortly after Herbert Lauber built a brick building adjoining the south side of the powerhouse in 1948 and 1949, the old plant was rebuilt into the present Consumers Public Power office building.

As the years passed, several different companies furnished Geneva’s electricity. In October, 1927, Nebraska Gas & Electric passed on their franchise to the Iowa-Nebraska Light & Power Co. Although on August 19, 1929, an ordinance granted a 25-year franchise to Iowa-Nebraska, they relinquished this in April, 1941, when Consumers Public Power District started serving the city.

Consumers today supplies current to Geneva through the Nebraska Public Power System, an intricate statewide network. A Nebraska Public Power System sub-station that supplies Geneva is located 2 miles N of the fairgrounds. In case of trouble, power may be secured from York, Hebron, Beatrice, or Seward by switches located at this sub-station.

The residential rates in 1967 were: $1 for the first 13 kilowatt-hours per month, 6 cents per kwh for the next 37 kwh, 23 cents per kwh for the next 350, and all additional at 1.5 cents per kwh. Commercial rates are higher than residential.

The latest improvement in electricity for the city was accomplished in January of 1951. Sixty-one luminaires street lights were installed to replace the electroliers extending from Highway 81 throughout the downtown area. These have also been extended to the high-school street because of the many community activities there. The units consist of 25-foot standards whose brackets support scientifically designed luminaires, equipped with 10,000 and 6,000 lumen lamps, to provide maximum output of usable light on traffic area.

Natural Gas

Geneva was one of the first communities in Nebraska to pioneer the use of natural gas. A franchise to serve Geneva was granted to the Iowa-Nebraska Light & Power Co. on Oct. 14, 1931. Natural gas was turned into the distribution system for 42 customers on December 22, 1931. Although many old records are no longer available, it is believed that natural gas was first turned on at the Geneva Hotel and that Jake Weiss, of 311 South 10th St., was the first customer to use natural gas for cooking.

The Central Electric & Gas Co. purchased the natural-gas system on February 26, 1945. By 1967, a total of 1,003 Geneva customers were using natural gas.

The company, now known as the Western Power & Gas Co., buys its gas from the Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Co., a Nebraska firm located in Hastings. Natural gas is gathered from western Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. By means of underground pipelines, the gas is brought to Geneva for house heating, cooking, water heating, refrigeration, clothes drying, incineration, all-year air conditioning, and many other uses.

In 1932, approximately 7,713,700 cubic feet of gas were used in comparison to 217,688,000 cu. ft. during 1966. This overwhelming acceptance of natural gas has been partly responsible for maintaining the lowest possible rates.

The first year natural gas was used in Geneva, 20,000 cu. ft. cost the customer $14.20. This rate prevailed until 1945, at which time Central Electric & Gas reduced the rates. Again in August, 1946, and November, 1947, rate reductions gave Geneva customers even cheaper gas service.

World War II started an inflationary spiral that caused prices to rise. In many instances, the price of normal necessities increased as much as 200 per cent before 1947. Not until January, 1955, was the first price adjustment made for natural gas, and this increase did not absorb the previous three reductions. The second price adjustment was made on October 1, 1957, due to increased cost of natural gas by the pipeline company. Another upward adjustment was made on August 17, 1964; but, in contrast to other costs, the average home owner pays less for natural gas today than in 1931.

—Data from Western Power & Gas Co., Inc.

Telephones and Telegraph

As early as 1883, telephone service was brought to Geneva by the Nebraska Telephone Co., which started with about 12 subscribers. By 1886, 30 telephones were in use. In the early 1890’s, the Bell Telephone Co. organized in Geneva. The company had its office in the Will Stewart home, now the Hugh Hadsell residence. Laura Bender (later Mrs. Monroe Heisey) was one of the first telephone operators. Mr. Stewart’s daughter, Bess, was also an operator.

In 1903, Mr. Wettstine came to Geneva, bringing with him a crew of men (one of whom was Monroe Heisey), with wagons and equipment to build a telephone line. When the
line was completed and the crew moved on, they left Mr. Heisey here to take care of the line, which he did on horseback. With the completion of this line the first independent company was formed. This, called the Fillmore County Telephone Co., consisted of operating exchanges at Geneva, Exeter, Fairmont, Strang, Grafton, Milligan, Shickley, and Ohioa. This company was managed by John Barsby. The office was located over the Citizens’ State Bank. Later, because of the fire, it was moved to a room over the Signal office. Here it stayed until the new and present telephone building was built in 1924.

The Independent company almost immediately became the dominant one of the two telephone companies then doing business at Geneva. In 1904, the Bell company, with R. J. Dean as manager, was operating only 31 telephones on the Geneva exchange, most of which were in business establishments.

The Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph Co. purchased the Bell properties at Geneva in January, 1912, and of the Fillmore County organization in July, 1913. These properties were consolidated in September, 1913, at which time the Bell company was serving 366 subscribers and the Independent 570. This, of course, represented a duplication of service, because a majority of the subscribers of both companies had to have two telephones in their homes or offices, because there was no interconnection between the Bell and Independent switchboards.

In 1913, several switching companies also had telephone facilities on the Geneva switchboard. These were the Chelsea, Alpine, West Geneva, and Big Four telephone companies. The Pioneer Telephone Co., also a switching company, was purchased by the Lincoln company in 1918, at which time the Pioneer company had 78 subscribers who received switching services from the Geneva switchboard.

At about the same time that the Lincoln company purchased the Geneva properties, it also reached an agreement with the Bell system for a general division of properties in the state. The Bell company withdrew from the area south of the Platte River westward to Adams and Webster counties and Lincoln T. & T. purchased all the Bell properties in these 22 counties. A number of Independent properties were also purchased at that time.

At present (1967), the Geneva exchange serves approximately 1,600 local patrons, as well as all the other towns in Fillmore County, plus Ong and Tobias. Geneva went over to the all-dial system in 1963 and is now on Direct Distance Dialing. The local exchange also provides mobile phone service for microwave transmitters.

The telegraph line was put in at the same time the Burlington line was built in June, 1886.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Volunteer Fire Department

As the village of Geneva grew, so did the need for an organized fire department. In 1890, the first books were kept and the department was named the Geneva Hose Company. The first officers and members of the Geneva Hose Company were the following:

Hose Company No. 1
F. A. Kuler, Foreman
C. L. Rathbun, 1st Assistant
O. C. Houchin, 2nd Assistant
W. B. Holmes
G. R. Wolf
S. S. Walker
L. F. Landmesser
W. W. Fellows
Clink Shickley
William McCartney
C. R. Burnett
A. B. Barton
Robert Schofield
Frank McGrew
Will Carson
E. A. Webster, Secretary

Hose Company No. 2
H. B. Young, Foreman
Arthur Atherton, 1st Assistant
F. C. Laffin, 2nd Assistant
Bert Cobb
Waller Spear, Treasurer
Louis Cobb
Frank Crawford
Charles Spanier
W. S. Huston
J. W. Burt
A. Stephenson
A. Koehler
O. A. Beals
J. D. Kessler
J. H. Sager, President
Frank Burke

H. F. Mohrman served as chief for 20 consecutive years. In 1895, he wrote to the city council this letter: “After 5 years’ experience as Chief of the Geneva Hose Co. and knowing full well that at every fire the boys spoil more or less clothing I would therefore pray that your honorable body allow out of city funds the sum of $1 to each member of the hose co. that answers to his name after each fire. Also $25 to each member participating in monthly practice.”

The company was located on North 10th St. in a frame building. A large bell served as an alarm until about 1923 when an electric siren was purchased. Their first equipment consisted of two hose carts, a hook-and-ladder wagon, six buckets, and five lanterns. In March, 1890, the department gave a ball to defray the expense of uniforms.

The first fire in Geneva after the completion of the new
water system occurred on September 11, 1890. The barn of C. A. Smith burned to the ground with all its contents. The hose companies were promptly on hand, and though too late to save the barn, prevented its spreading further, which it might have done without them, as the wind was very high.

A terrific explosion occurred on August 16, 1893, at 5 A.M. The fire took place in the Fisher Block in rooms occupied by Byron Mershon, grocer, and J. R. Ballard, boots and shoes. One of the upper rooms was occupied by Ryson & Co. Photo Gallery. The blaze was a loss of $16,000. Frame buildings adjoining this block were saved.

At 4:30 A.M. on April 9, 1894, a fire started in a frame building owned by L. Fiegenbaum and rented by J. P. Desher for a clothing store. The fire swept to W. L. Spear & Co. hardware store, which had a machinery house in the rear filled with new farm implements. The fire also destroyed one-half of a building owned by the First National Bank.

A laundry and livery stable burned in 1903 and a frame restaurant building in 1904.

A large fire causing a gross loss of $33,400 occurred at 3 A.M. on October 28, 1904. Destroyed were the Fraternity Temple and properties, property of Company G, Fillmore Co. Telephone Co., Geneva State Bank, and tenants' property on the first floor, and the basement was burned and damaged. The fire originated in the Benson & Hensley restaurant in the little Geiselman frame building that stood next to the west side of the Temple Building (Geneva State Bank location). At first the water pressure seemed below normal, as it was impossible for the hose stream to reach the windows on the second floor. This difficulty was overcome, but later during the fire one of the pumps refused to produce water. The only possible explanation was perhaps an injury or disarrangement of the check valve.

In 1908, the Fillmore Hotel was burned and in 1910 the Citizens State Bank on the northeast corner of 9th and G Sts. was destroyed by fire. On February 26, 1912, a fire estimated at $25,000 destroyed the Boston Store on 9th St., located the first door north of the Signal office in the brick building that replaced a livery barn, damaging the adjoining post office and Nebraska Signal. The mail was saved, however. The local Independent Telephone Co. sustained some damage.

In 1915, the present City Hall was built and the Geneva Hose Company moved into its present location.

In 1917, the firemen were still using their hose carts and were badly in need of a fire truck. That same year the city purchased a Ford fire truck, its first motor-driven vehicle. The city council, which had been asked to purchase one, did so without consulting the firemen as to the type they wanted. This created such a situation that the men all resigned. Knowing that the town could not be without fire protection, a new company was soon organized. W. E. Bruce was made fire chief, a position he held for 18 years; president, Charles Underwood; vice-president, Clay Thomas; secretary, Bert A. Lynn; treasurer, H. E. Fellows. The men then set to work to install on this truck the necessary equipment.

Several years later a second-hand Chevrolet truck was secured. The Mowry fire of 1936 showed the great need for a pumper truck and within a short time it was purchased. On numerous occasions this truck was called out of town; since this left the town without adequate protection, the council purchased another Chevrolet truck to answer fire calls in the country and surrounding towns.

On May 6, 1931, the firemen aided a fellow member when his 19-month-old daughter fell into an abandoned well. After many hours of digging they were successful in returning Carol unharmed to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Brower.

In 1931, an attempt was made to organize a rural fire association. After some 21 years of effort, this dream became a reality in 1952.

On the morning of July 28, 1936, fire completely destroyed the double brick building at the northwest corner of the courthouse square, the Hinkle Package Store, Mowry Tent & Awning and Radio business, and Fiegenbaum's Jewelry Store. Mr. Mowry had had a very interesting display of antique items in his building; just a few weeks before the fire, however, he had moved them to the House of Yesterday in Hastings, Nebraska. The loss of the buildings and their contents was estimated at $10,000. The Sutton, York, and Ohiowa fire departments were summoned to give aid.

The Bedford Produce Co. building on the west side of the courthouse square, along with all its contents, was completely destroyed on October 26, 1937. Two International trucks were also destroyed. Grave danger existed for the Coryell filling station on the south and the Barker & Heath ice plant on the north. Without the new city pumper engine, these two would have burned also. The pumper at this fire saved enough property to pay its cost.

In 1938, during the Fillmore County Fair, the grandstand, numerous concessions, and the city chemical truck were all destroyed. Fair officials estimated the total loss at $20,000. Fortunately the fire occurred between the after-
Charles

Thorpe residence. *Inset:* Charles Thorpe, world-famous jockey.
Mordecai Pangle, son of Isaac Glass Pangle, was born in Lima, Ohio, in 1838. He enlisted in the Union Army (6th Ohio Light Artillery) and was mustered out in 1865. He married Rebecca Carpenter in 1869, and they became the parents of 11 children.

In 1871, he came West looking for land. He came from Delphos, Ohio, to Lincoln by train, and then walked to the present farm location (SE 1/4 of Sec. 22) and staked a claim. Then he walked to Nebraska City to file his claim, paid $1 per acre to squatters to relinquish the land, and went back to Ohio. He had to return within six months and live on this land for five years to hold his claim.

In September, 1871, Mr. Pangle drove a team and wagon from Delphos to Chicago. There he purchased a cookstove for $30, and some lumber. These and their other goods he loaded on a railroad car and came to the end of the line (at Crete), and from Crete he drove to the homestead. While in Chicago, he wrote to his wife and told her to address her letters to Empire, Fillmore County, Nebraska.

Mr. Pangle built a dugout and a barn. When he had lived on the homestead 18 months, his wife and three children came West. By this time the railroad was built to Fairmont. No one was at the depot to meet her. (Mordecai had not received her letter telling when she was arriving, as the mail sometimes was not delivered for two weeks.) The railroad agent, who knew the general location of the farm, offered to take her to her new home in his wagon. When she reached the place which she thought might be her husband's farm, she entered the dugout and said, "Furniture as her own."
noon and evening performances and no one was seriously injured.

The Economy Paint Mill burned in 1939 and the Ellison Cafe in 1943. The Ellison fire proved very dangerous to the adjoining filling station and a near-by home, but both were saved.

In January, 1945, the Geneva Mill was damaged by fire. Firemen fought the fire for a full week, because the grain blazed up intermittently. The owners, John and Charles Grothe, rebuilt the mill.

The last large fire was the Geneva High School Gymnasium on April 29, 1953. A new gym has now been built and the damaged gym has been repaired and is now being used for classroom space.

The fire company is composed of 30 men. Bert A. Lynn recorded the minutes of the first reorganization and served as secretary and treasurer for 44 years until he retired in 1964. Tom Brower, another faithful member (died December 30, 1965), served for more than 32 years. The following men of the present company (1967) have served for 20 years or more: Harry Helton, Kenneth Heisey, Wilbur Kelch, Leslie Shuster, Harold Stiers, Jim Willy, and Wayne Chapman.

The company has two well-equipped trucks, and also houses the truck of the rural fire organization, which they also operate.

The firemen have always contributed generously to worthwhile projects. Over the years, by selling magazines, they have accumulated 10 hospital beds and five wheel-chairs. These are available without charge to any resident of Fillmore County.

—Mrs. Clair Christiansen

City Park

On October 29, 1935, the city council voted bonds not to exceed $10,000 to buy land for a city park and swimming pool.

The Federal Emergency Administration gave the city a P.W.A. grant not to exceed 45 per cent of the completion cost of the project nor in any event the sum of $6,955. Contracts were let to A. E. Brabam of Geneva for plumbing; A. Biba Construction Co. of Geneva and E. W. Nichols Construction Co. of Fairmont for the construction; and Everson Filter Co. of Chicago for the filtration plant. Total cost of project was $15,506.88. C. G. Hrubesky was employed as engineer in designing, erecting, and constructing the project.

On June 17, 1936, at 1:30 p.m. a large crowd participated in a dedicatory ceremony for the new city park and swimming pool. Those in charge of the pool estimated 300 persons swam that day. Robert Miller was swimming instructor and Curt Ogg was in charge of the grounds.

The city has since established a recreation and picnic ground on the rest of the land it owns north and east of the swimming pool. Tennis courts are located to the northeast, a ball field on the east, and picnic grounds between the pool and ball field.

In 1941 the Geneva Woman's Club aroused interest in a shelter house at the park. By June, 1942, a new clubhouse, at a cost of nearly $1,600, was completed under the leadership of the Woman's Club and other local organizations. The cottonwood logs used in the building were donated by and removed from a farm owned by the Geneva State Bank.

On February 3, 1947, City Engineer C. G. Hrubesky filed plans and specifications for further park improvements. At the city election on April 1, 1947, the voters approved a $5,000 bond issue for the construction, building, and erection of a public lighting system and ball park, to be located across the street south of the clubhouse, and so the present ball park was built.

In June, 1950, West Brothers of Fairmont were given a contract to erect a bandstand east of the clubhouse at a cost of $3,979. On the evening of July 27, 1951, a mass band concert was given at the newly completed bandstand and it was officially named the "Paul W. Curtiss Memorial Bandstand." The members of this special band had played under Paul's direction at some time during his more than 30 years
of conducting the city band.

The latest improvement to be built at the park was the modern rest rooms constructed in 1955.

Until this park was constructed the “Courthouse Block” was used for recreational activities and celebrations. In 1896, a bicycle track was built around the edge of the block by the Bicycle Club. Later, a croquet ground and horseshoe court were constructed on the east end of the block; these were wiped out when the parking lot was built. A bandstand was located at the west end of the park area. In earlier days a "swimming hole" was located in the vicinity of the present city auditorium.

The Geneva Public Library was originally the idea of Dr. H. L. Smith. In June, 1897, Dr. Smith donated some 2,000 books from his personal library to the Masonic and Odd Fellows orders for public use. These books were housed in a room on the third floor of the Masonic Temple.

The library was first placed under a board of nine trustees from the Masonic and Odd Fellows orders. The lodges were to alternate in the majority of the board year by year. J. M. Ward was president and W. H. Stewart was secretary of the first board.

The library was later moved to a room on the first floor of the Citizens Bank building at 9th and G Sts. Dr. Smith granted free rent on condition that the library belong to the City of Geneva on approval of the Masons and the Odd Fellows; this approval was given.

The library was accepted by the city and on January 15, 1906, Mayor A. H. Stevens appointed the first city library board. On November 12, 1906, the library board appointed Miss Nellie Williams, who later became the wife of W. C. Bleaven of Washington, D. C., as the first librarian at the salary of $21 per month. She served until November, 1915, when she took a position with the State Library Commission at Lincoln.

When the library was opened as a city institution on January 1, 1907, an appeal was made to residents to subscribe to magazines for the library and to donate books. The first subscription—to the Review of Reviews for 1907—was the gift of the Hon. Charles H. Sloan.

The building was open on Wednesday from 2 to 6 P.M. and on Saturday from 2 to 8 P.M. for the delivery and return of books. The reading room was open for "the perusal of magazines, papers, and reference books" every weekday afternoon and evening from 2 to 9 P.M. and on Sundays from 2 to 6 P.M.

On February 13, 1910, the Citizens Bank Building burned and the library suffered a loss of $2,265.40 in books, on which $2,000 insurance was paid. The library was given temporary quarters in the lecture room of the Baptist Church at 11th and G Sts. Later the library was housed in a rear room in the Dempster Block.

In the meantime, the trustees had taken up negotiations with Andrew Carnegie for a library building. The result was a gift of $8,000, to which was added $2,000 raised by popular subscription, and the present library building was erected. The ground was purchased from the Shumway heirs for $1,900. The four Shumway heirs each gave $100 toward this purchase and the remainder was raised by popular subscription and a Tag Day which netted over $150. R. W. Grant of Beatrice was the architect. On May 7, 1912, L. L. Fisher's bid on the construction contract was accepted. The contract for the heating plant and hardware was awarded to Walter Spear. Mr. Skinkle supplied the lighting system and Mr. Hrubesky the cork floor matting.

The new library building was dedicated on January 7, 1913 with an open house from 2 to 6 P.M. The Geneva Military Band played at 4 P.M., and at 8 P.M. a program was given in the library audience room.

On October 17, 1917, the library received a $1,000 bequest from the will of Mrs. Pierce B. Brayton, president of the board from June 26, 1906, until her death in October, 1911. This money established the first trust fund for the purchase of books—called the Pierce B. Brayton Trust, as the money was given in his memory.

Since then the library has received several gifts which

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established additional trust funds. They are as follows:

- Woman's Club Revolving Fund—established June 1, 1907—$50, for current books.
- Community Club Revolving Fund—established in 1944—$200, for current books.
- Martha M. Meyer Fund—established in 1945—$500, for books for the moral education of children.
- Earl H. and Grace W. Wilkins Fund—established in 1945—$1,000, for books of permanent value.
- Miscellaneous Maintenance Fund—established in 1945. The first gift was $2 from Lt. and Mrs. Krebs who were stationed here during World War II. Other contributions have brought this general maintenance fund to $961 at the present time.
- Josie B. Hamilton Fund—established in 1947—$2,440, for salaries of librarian and assistants.
- Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Nichols Trust—established in 1950—$290, for general maintenance and salaries.
- Grace W. Wilkins Trust—established in 1954—$1,000 for books of an educational nature.
- Nettie Henry Book Shelf—established in 1955—$100—originated in the gift of Nettie Henry, who had taught in the Geneva Public Schools 50 years before. The members of the class of 1905 have added to this gift until it is now $2,416.15.—Purpose, purchase of biographies useful to Geneva High School students.

Mrs. Isabel Bixby succeeded Miss Williams as librarian in 1915 and held this position for the next 35 years—years during which the Geneva Public Library grew and increased its services. During this time free library privileges were procured by the citizens of Geneva township, Chelsea township, and for a time, Madison township.

In 1949, Mrs. T. B. Moore became acting librarian for Mrs. Bixby, who was in poor health. In 1950, Isabel Bixby retired and Thelma J. (Mrs. Howard W.) Hamilton, who had acted as librarian from June, 1950, was appointed librarian in 1951. Since that time the library has been completely modernized, with a new floor covering of asphalt tile, venetian blinds, a new lighting system, a new roof, new storm windows, attic insulation, and air-conditioning. In February, 1953, when the major part of these improvements were completed, the library held an open house both afternoon and evening.

Many clubs have made it a practice to give money each year toward book purchasing, and for some years the library has had a Memorial Shelf on which many fine books have been placed.

The following figures show library use in a typical recent year, as indicated in the Librarian’s Annual Report:

- Amount received from tax levy on Geneva property $6,080.43
- Fines collected on overdue books $86.78
- Number of books on shelves 12,123
- Books circulated during year 13,763
- Magazines circulated during year 2,510

The library subscribes to about 50 magazines and four newspapers. Some 1,300 individuals hold library cards.

The following persons were members of the Library Board for the term of June, 1966, to June, 1967: Dr. J. Q. Adams, president; John Bixby, vice-president; Mrs. John Fahlberg, secretary; Mrs. Sherman Ashby; and Robert B. Waring.

Fillmore County Hospital

The need for adequate hospital facilities in Fillmore County had been long recognized. The earliest hospital beginnings were in pre-state World War I when Dr. Royal Woods and Dr. Joseph Bixby built the two-story frame house east of the schoolhouse in Geneva, later known as the Archer house and later occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Hobart Ridpath and Marion.

These facilities, however, were wholly inadequate and it was not until late in 1925 that the first state-recognized hospital was opened in the county.

Photographs:
- Former Librarians at Geneva City Library. Left: Miss Nellie Williams, first librarian. Right: Mrs. Isabel Bixby, librarian 35 years.
- First Hospital in Geneva, built by Dr. Royal Woods and Dr. Joseph Bixby.
- Fillmore Hospital, located at 324 No. 12th, in operation from 1925 to 1942—later the home of Emma Eggenberger.
collected and pledged to assure the purchase of the hospital from Mrs. Schlecty.

On September 3, 1946, the Geneva General Hospital Association, Inc., was incorporated by C. G. Hrubesky, John H. Koehler, and Edith M. Elder, with a capital stock of $15,000. The first board of directors consisted of Dr. Joseph Bixby, John H. Koehler, and C. G. Hrubesky.

The new corporation took over the management of the hospital October 15, 1946, with Mrs. Bertha Leeds, formerly of the old Fillmore Hospital, as manager. About a year later the management was taken over by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Bender, who continued to operate the hospital until it was closed by order of the state fire marshal January 31, 1957. After that date Fillmore County had no hospital facilities.

Those who had salvaged the old Geneva General Hospital in 1946 by the formation of the hospital corporation had realized full well that this was no permanent solution to the need for adequate hospital facilities in the county and that this was only a stopgap measure until something better could be obtained.

A new corporation was formed to take care of the hospital problem. The old Fillmore Hospital Corporation, consisting of Earl H. Wilkins, chairman, John Koehler, Ross Dorrance, W. H. Weiss, J. A. Fischer, Clarence McCartney, and John Stohs organized the county for the voting of a bond issue to build a county hospital. Architects were employed and plans prepared for a 30-bed hospital. The committee went to the county and obtained approval to have placed on the ballot with the general election November 2, 1948, a proposition to vote $190,000 in county bonds for the erection of a hospital. Despite considerable public meetings and an extensive effort on the part of the committee, the proposition failed of approval in obtaining a county hospital, the proposition was defeated by 316 votes (2,003 for the measure and 2,319 against).

The county board, at the request of the committee, again placed the proposition on the ballot at the general election held November 7, 1950. The proposition and plans were the same as in 1948. This time, little public effort was made in support of the proposition and it was defeated by 950 votes (1,103 for it and 2,053 against).

The matter was not again submitted to the voters until a special election held August 10, 1954. State authorities were threatening to close the old Geneva General Hospital unless something drastic was done by way of change and improvement. The county bond issue again went on the ballot. This time, however, different plans were prepared, calling for only a 20-bed instead of a 30-bed hospital and only $150,000 to be raised by bonds.

A new committee was formed with Earl H. Wilkins as chairman, and an extensive county-wide campaign was made. Notwithstanding this effort the proposition was defeated by 46 votes (1,759 for and 1,805 against).

After the old Geneva General Hospital was closed by the fire marshal on January 31, 1957, people became more aware of the need for some hospital facilities in the county.

In order to get a bond issue on the ballot again, petitions were circulated throughout the county calling for a special election. New plans were prepared, this time for a 24-bed hospital. This time it was proposed that a large portion of the cost would be raised by subscription. A goal was set for a bond issue of $97,000, private subscription of $98,000, and the balance to be raised by Hill-Burton funds. Before the election, solicitors for funds had gone over the top for the $98,000 to be raised by subscription. The special election was held June 10, 1958. The proposition this time carried almost two to one, the vote being 1,222 for and 1,150 against.

Three days after the special election the committee went to Lincoln for a hearing on Hill-Burton funds and were promised a grant of about $130,000. The total project was planned to cost $325,000.

On June 23, 1958, the old hospital corporation gave the old building and site to the county for the new hospital.

August 25, 1958, the Fillmore County Board of Supervisors appointed the following hospital board: Calvin Serr, Robert Nichols, J. A. Fischer, W. R. Dorrance, and Milo Kottas. Calvin Serr was elected president, with Robert Nichols as secretary.

September 24, 1958, the county board selected the Lincoln firm of Arter & Speece as architects to design and plan the new building. On December 3, 1958, the old building was auctioned off to make way for the new construction.

After plans were prepared, a letting was held June 11, 1959. The general contract was let to the John Beall Construction Co. of Lincoln for $182,239. The mechanical contract was let to Stewart Plumbing & Heating of Hastings for $99,007. The electrical contract was let to Myrl Moxham for $28,375.

Ground was broken for the new building on July 18, 1959. Dedication ceremonies and an open house were held on Sunday, February 5, 1961. —Data from Dedication Program Roselawn Home

On June 1, 1947, Mrs. Irene Bobbitt opened the doors of the Roselawn Home. She had been caring for two well-known Geneva citizens, Mr. and Mrs. Frank O. Edgecombe, in their home. After their deaths, Mrs. Bobbitt was urged to open a nursing home and so secured a state license to open a home for aged women in the Edgecombe residence.

The Home opened with three guests. Within four days there were 10 occupants and soon it was operating at capacity of 14, with a long waiting list. Applicants wrote in from various parts of Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Montana, Florida, and other states.

The Roselawn Home held religious services every Monday afternoon. The Rev. Maude Mann, Rev. W. L. Schreurs, and Dr. Walter Bachman, all of the Geneva Evangelical United Brethren Church, served as pastors.

Birthdays of the guests and special holidays were always observed and friends and relatives were invited in for the festivities. The guests had television and other things to make life interesting and to make them feel at home.

On January 30, 1954, Mrs. Bobbitt was honored as Geneva’s “Good Neighbor” on the air over radio station KMMJ, Grand Island. She was also nominated by the people of Geneva for “Nebraska State Mother for 1955.”

The Roselawn Home, after exactly 20 years of community service, closed down on June 1, 1967, upon the opening of the newer rest home, Colonial Manor.

Colonial Manor Rest Home

This modern rest home, erected by the Turcon Construction Co. of Ainsworth, Nebraska, and owned by Goscor, Inc., of Ainsworth, is located at the north edge of Geneva.
Colonial Manor, Geneva's new home for senior citizens.

east of Highway 81. It was built at a cost of approximately $300,000 and financing of the building was arranged by the Geneva banks.

It is an attractive brick-faced structure with a pentagonal area in the center which houses the office, nurse's station, nurse's utility room, dining room, living room, personal care room, physical therapy room, and kitchen. Four wings extend from the pentagon; three of these are residence wings with space for 69 guests. The fourth wing is a maintenance wing. There are three "drive-in" showers, a whirlpool bath, and two island tubs for the residents.

Construction began in the summer of 1966 and open house was held on May 28, 1967. About 25 employees are needed to operate the home, of which Mr. Bernard Correll is the manager.

Cemetery Association

Shortly after the location and establishment of Geneva as the county seat, the inhabitants formed a cemetery association, but it apparently kept no records and filed no plat of the burying grounds with the county clerk. No information is now available, although the ground was used for burials.

A meeting was held at the courthouse on July 14, 1877, after a notice had been published for three weeks in the local weekly paper, the Review, to organize a Geneva Cemetery Association. At this meeting, J. A. Dempster was temporary chairman, and V. A. Jones, secretary. It was first moved and carried that they do away with all proceedings of the earlier so-called Cemetery Association and organize anew. The following trustees were then elected: C. M. Northrup, C. H. Bane, F. Heiderstadt, S. B. Camp, and J. A. Dempster; and the following residents of the county in attendance were enrolled as members: J. T. Platt, J. D. Hamilton, H. Stewart, J. A. Dempster, R. B. Likes, D. H. Goodrich, C. M. Northrup, S. Burr, S. B. Camp, J. B. Lewis, C. H. Bane, George Selby, F. Heiderstadt, M. M. Neeses, D. Warner, V. A. Jones, and W. V. Fifield.

Thus was organized the present Cemetery Association. Later, there was received from the old association $6,68. Mr. Heiderstadt reported on his solicitation of subscriptions, and for 90 acres off the east end of the land of the Agricultural Society, the new association paid the Agricultural Society $55.16, and the State of Nebraska, $144.50, a total of $199.66.

The association then proceeded to function in routine manner until the year 1913. In April, 1913, the First Baptist Church of Geneva, having sold their church property in Geneva, submitted to the president and trustees of the association the following proposition: "1. To donate and place in Trust for the Permanent Care and Improvement of the Cemetery the sum of $2,000 conditioned that the Association donate $1,000 and lot owners and others interested donate $3,000, making a total of $6,000 to build the trust fund of income to be used for the Permanent Care of said Cemetery." In October, 1913, the association donated $1,000. The lot owners donated, at $50 per lot, the sum of $3,170, and thus the Permanent Care Fund was established with $6,170 in the fund. Since that date the fund has been increased by gifts and by the payment into the fund of one-half the price of lots sold after that date. On April 1, 1956, the Permanent Care Fund amounted to $40,688.06. After 1913, with the above start, others gave sums in trust for special purposes on special lots, and the trusts now amount to over $4,000. So the year 1913 marks the beginning of the present financial structure of the Association.

Since that date the association has operated in regular routine manner, but now it will have to expand and enlarge its platted area.

—Guy A. Hamilton, Secretary (dated March 11, 1957)

ORGANIZATIONS

Throughout the years various groups have organized. Many are still strong in numbers and goals; some have dissolved, perhaps for lack of interest or because their purposes were fulfilled. It is impossible to obtain a history of all organizations that have had a part in the development of the city and surrounding territory, but the following clippings from the city's newspapers suggest many.

1876: I.O. of G.T. (Independent Order of Good Templars) was organized May 8, 1876, with 15 members. George Bigelow was Worthy Chief and E. B. Brown, Worthy Secretary. (At one time the organization had a membership of 150 but by 1882 had decreased to 40.)

1879: Lovers of music met at the courthouse to organize an permanent musical association. M. M. Neeses was elected chairman.

Twenty members joined. Quarterly dues for men were 25 cents; ladies' dues were free. Professor Ballou was music instructor.

1879: G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic). Department Commander, Adjutant General Wood, of Omaha, completed the organization of a Post of the Grand Army of the Republic at this place last Tuesday night. The following named officers were elected and installed: Post Commandant, M. D. Williams; S.V.C., C. H. Bane; Adjutant, G. P. Wintersteen; Sergeant, G. R. Hart; Chaplain, M. L. Spear; O. D., G. W. Stults; O. G., S. Harbaugh; O. M., R. M. Hazlett; Sergeant, J. A. Dempster.

Who those signed the roll and have not been mustered are requested to be present at the next regular meeting, which will be held at the courthouse, Thursday evening next. Soldiers, please turn out; let us remember old ties, and make this organization socially a benefit.

All honorably discharged Union soldiers are cordially invited to join us.

1881: The Geneva Woman Suffrage Association meets Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock, September 7, with Mrs. Belle G. Bigelow.

Ladies and gentlemen are cordially invited to attend. Gentlemen are entitled to all privileges of the society, excepting eligibility to office.

1882: Company G, First Regiment of National Guard, was organized in the summer of 1881 and was first known as the Independent Rifles. In the spring of 1882 it was transferred to the National Guard. In reviewing the company on July 3, 1882, the Inspector General pronounced it one of the best drilled in the state. Lieutenant N. S. Oliver, an experienced tactician, is drill master. The chief officers are George P. Winstead, captain, N. S. Oliver, first lieutenant; W. S. Crawford, second lieutenant.

1890: August. The Vigilant Society of Geneva, Madison, Fairmont, and West Blue Townships met at Fairmont more than 100 farming families being present. The object of the society was to put a stop to horse stealing. The officers were: president, George W. Jackson; vice-president, M. Rodgers; secretary, F. F. Robbins; treasurer, William Searles.

1896: Nebraska National Guard, Co. G, First Infantry, Geneva, January 10, 1896. “At the regular meeting of the company last evening it was decided to hold a special meeting of the company on next Thursday evening to discuss the advisability of organizing into the return of the company from the Sioux Indian war of 1890 and 1891. A cordial invitation is extended to all members of the company and their ladies as well as all veterans of that campaign who are not now members of the company. It is desired that all members wear their uniforms and all who possess Indian War badges wear them also—C. D. Jensen, Second Lt. and Chap. Com.”


1897: Geneva Lodge No. 18, subordinate lodge of the Business Men’s Fraternity, was organized by the supreme president. The following were officers: president, J. B. Sixton; vice-president, A. W. Shickley; secretary, Joe Rosenstein; treasurer, Dr. W. T. Smith; guide, Dr. W. E. Propst.


1913: The Fillmore County Old Age Pension Board held its first meeting. The members were: R. A. Matteson, Geneva; Henry Jensen, Exeter; E. W. McFarland, Ohiowa; Tom Fitzgerald, Griffin; and Albert Thornton, Shickley.

1914: The Geneva Community Club organized a “housing bureau” with headquarters in the city auditorium. Bert Lynn was in charge of the offices, which helped find housing for people coming to Geneva to work on the air base.

1917: Fillmore County Threshermen’s Association elected the following officers: president, H. R. Deming; vice-president, B. F. Benedict; secretary, James Rodgers; treasurer, I. N. Trask; Eli Redfern elected stock buyer.

1948: Several Geneva organizations co-operated to organize a summer recreation program for grade-school-age youngsters. Principal M. L. Christensen was selected to direct the program.

American Legion

After the end of World War I, several local veterans met at the Geneva courthouse to form an American Legion post, which was at first called Fillmore Post No. 68. A few years later the name was changed to Sloan-Bolton Post No. 68 in memory of Frank Blaine Sloan and Clarence J. Bolton.

The charter was granted on September 13, 1919. Commander at that time was Donald D. Donovan. The charter members were M. Francis Hourigan, Thomas E. Ashton, Arthur A. Weis, William P. Schneider, Walter Weis, Andrew


The meetings were at first held in various buildings in town. Following the end of World War II, the Legion purchased a large brick building on Main Street, formerly known as the Economy Paint Mills. After extensive remodeling, it was dedicated on July 4, 1947.

The Legion sponsors a Geneva High School junior to Cornhusker Boys’ State each spring; assists several other organizations in presenting a summer recreation program for boys and girls; sponsors a Legion Junior Baseball Team; sponsors Boys’ and Girls’ County Government Day; and presents a Certificate of Distinguished Achievement each year to an eighth-grade boy and girl.

The officers in 1966-67 were: Charles Massoth, commander; Henry Reinsch, vice-commander; Mervin Leonard, adjutant; Melvin Ralston, finance officer; Willard Mussman, service officer; and Wilson Miller, chaplain.

Legion Auxiliary

The Sloan-Bolton Post No. 68 was organized in the spring of 1920. The first meeting was held in the City Auditorium on August 19, 1920. Mrs. J. K. Waring was elected the first president; Mrs. R. P. Wilson, vice-president; Regene Rock, secretary; and Mrs. Cora Smith, treasurer. Mrs. Rock, Mrs. Gilmore, and Mrs. Barker were the Executive Committee. Dues were fixed at 25 cents for National, 50 cents for State, and 25 cents for Local.

Charter members were Mrs. Matthew Rock, Mrs. William Baruch, Mrs. Fred Kenny, Mrs. J. K. Waring, Mrs. Sarah E. Wilson, Mrs. Cora M. Smith, Mrs. Cynthia M. Hill, Mrs. Cora Ashton, Mrs. Emma P. Sloan, Mrs. Lillian Sloan, Mrs. Hamah Gilmore, Mrs. Mary Parris, and Regene M. Rock, all from Geneva, Nebraska.

The Auxiliary is kept busy throughout the year with many activities. They give a $50 donation to the park recreation fund. They send a check and make gifts for the Veterans’ Gift Shop in Lincoln and also at Christmas time make four Tarlton Men which are filled with cigarettes, cards, socks, and other small items. They sponsor a girl to the Girls’ State each year, make close to 100 wreaths for the veterans on Decoration Day, sell poppies in the spring for the veterans, give a check to the “Yanks who gave” at Christmas time, and give Hallowe’en parties for one or two grades of the public school. They have a “Little Red Schoolhouse” to donate to at each meeting, which collects money for nurses’ scholarships; there is usually one girl from the local high school eligible for nursing scholarships. They serve lunches for the monthly square dances. They send cards to all who are ill, or in time of death (for immediate members, they send flowers). They give $2 to each new baby born to a member of the Auxiliary. Each spring the Legion Auxiliary gives an annual birthday dinner for the Legion; that in March, 1968, was its 48th such dinner.

The following have served as presidents of the organization:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mrs. J. K. Waring</th>
<th>Blanche Kroll</th>
<th>Mrs. Agnes Baroch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Cora Smith</td>
<td>Mina Churchill</td>
<td>Lillian (Mrs. Porter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Percy Bedford</td>
<td>Margaret Johnson</td>
<td>Sloan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Catherine</td>
<td>Murad Pearson</td>
<td>Marjorie (Mrs. Henry) Reinsch</td>
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<td>Schuelzky</td>
<td>Dona Jean Brower</td>
<td>Mrs. Henry Steinacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Naomi Lockard</td>
<td>Lois Weiss</td>
<td>Mrs. Armon Ackerman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Emma Crawford</td>
<td>Phyllis Walker</td>
<td>Louise (Mrs. Ralph) Gipson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mildred Howell</td>
<td>Marcella Placek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Parris</td>
<td>Ann (Mrs. W. E.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera Waring</td>
<td>McDonald</td>
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Beta Sigma Phi

The Geneva Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi was organized on Founder’s Day, April 30, 1947, with 8 charter members, one transfer from Colorado Upsilon, the director and sponsor present. Beta Sigma Phi is a nonacademic organization. Its aims and activities are social, cultural, and educational. Meetings are held twice monthly.


The first 9 members were: Mary Hoarty Becker, Shirley Isley Larkin, Margaret Fahlberg, Mary McPeck, Helen O’Brien Jennett, Evelyn Lauber, Ann Jirkovsky McDonald, Betty Caton Bumgarner, and Camilla Reinsch Rosener.

Mrs. Edith Elder and Mrs. Edna Dennis Tucker were made director and sponsor of Beta Sigma Phi in 1947. Mrs. Blanche Roseman was director for one year. In 1952 Mrs. Tucker was made an honorary member and Miss Mae Matson was made sponsor; she still remains the same. Mrs. Elder was director until 1957 when she also was made an honorary member.
member. Mrs. Elder became director again in 1958 and remains in that role (1967).


In June, 1936 all girls that had been in Beta Sigma Phi four years or more formed an Exemplar Chapter, Xi Alpha Gamma. The group, limited to 12, listed the following members in 1967; Norma Babst, Sharon Barbur, Erma Burch, Dorothy Eich, Lorene Hofferber, Helen Hromada, Mary McCarthy, Ann McDonald, Mary McPeck, Phyllis Stephens, Rosemarie Thurin, Doris Weis, Mrs. Elder (director), and Mae Matson (sponsor).

The funds we raise from our different projects have gone to help redecorate the hospital, to the Brownie and Cub Scouts, and for books for the library. We were always on call to Mrs. Bobbitt of Roselawn Nursing Home. We give yearly to the March of Dimes, Red Cross, Cancer and Heart funds. Our organization has chapters in every state of the Union and in foreign countries.

—Mrs. William Eich

Boy Scouts

It is difficult to secure a complete official record of the history of Boy Scout Troop No. 175, of Geneva, but a report of the National Council, Boy Scouts of America, New Brunswick, N.J., shows the following records of various troop organizations in Geneva:

Troop 1: Organized by a group of citizens, September, 1913; dropped September, 1914.

Troop 1: Geneva Community Club organized a troop May, 1917; dropped May, 1922.

Troop 1 (185): Organized by the Geneva public schools December, 1925; dropped December, 1931.

Troop 162: Organized by Geneva Methodist Episcopal Church April, 1936; dropped April, 1937.


Howard Boyd, director of registration of the National Council, in a letter dated June 17, 1966, stated: "The present troop, 175 of Geneva, was first registered in May, 1949, under the sponsorship of the Geneva Community Club. It remained active until May, 1950, after which it lapsed for five months. Your troop has had unbroken registration since that date and is now in its 17th year."

Cornhusker Council records in Lincoln indicate the troop was chartered in December, 1935, sponsored by the First Congregational Church of Geneva. Dr. Edward W. Day, pastor of the church, signed the application. J. R. Freeman was listed as scoutmaster with Charles G. McEachran as assistant. Other members of the committee were Sterling Harris, J. W. Hammond, Charles J. Crew, and Edward W. Day.

Scoutmasters

According to personal recollection of the writer and information recalled by others, Rev. B. A. Warren of the First Congregational Church of Geneva probably started the first troop in Geneva in September, 1913. He served as scoutmaster then and through the World War I years, although the charter probably was dropped between 1915 and 1917.

Chris Peterson, Geneva produce station operator, led the troop during the 1917-1922 years with others assisting. Recalled are Len J. Davis, Milford Carlson, LaVerle Peterson, Charles Jeremiah, and J. C. Swinbank.

R. W. Kretzinger, superintendent of schools at Geneva from 1924 to 1927, was responsible for re-activating a Scout troop in 1924, the charter being dated and issued December, 1925. He also served as scoutmaster.

Superintendent Kretzinger was followed by several highschool executives and teachers. Included were David Bize, Howard W. Hamilton, Coral Dubry, and others who assisted.

For several years in the thirties the troop was unsponsored but regular Scouting activities were carried out. Howard Hamilton was succeeded by Clyde Propst, who devoted much time and energy to the troop during several years.

Others serving as scoutmasters during the intervening years are not listed but the following names are recalled: Ben D. Fussell, Fred Waltemade, George Brown, Hugh Wilkins, Elmer Sprague, Marion Ridpath, Marion Harrington, and Floyd Richardson.

The current scoutmaster is Cliff Adcock. The troop is now sponsored by the Geneva Lions Club and seems to be on a sound basis.

Meeting Places

Through the years the Boy Scouts have met wherever they could find space, including the Congregational Church school rooms, the Methodist Church basement, a basement room under the Odd Fellows building, two or three empty buildings in the business district, Firemen's Hall, the highschool gymnasium, the second floor of the building now occupied by the Schults shoe repair shop, a cave in north Geneva that has long since been filled in but which was located just west of the Rex Shaner home, the Legion Hall, the library basement, and possibly other places utilized for short periods.

Several attempts have been made to provide separate and permanent quarters for the Scouts. One was the cabin built on Turkey Creek in 1936, located 2 miles N and 1½ miles E of Geneva. It was used briefly but was destroyed by a mysterious fire the following year.

Following World War II, a building was moved from the Fairmont Air Base to the lots just east of the present pump-house on North 5th St. It was remodeled and used for a time but it was never completed. Troop inactivity caused the building to deteriorate and it was later demolished.

The current drive by the Geneva Lions Club to erect a building in the city park promises to meet a long-felt need. Wendell Lauber, as president of the club, during 1966 spear-
headed the drive to get the building started. It was completed and dedicated in mid-1967. The building is also used by other organizations, including the Girl Scouts, and also for the public.

**Eagle Scouts**

It has been impossible to secure a complete list of all Geneva Boy Scouts who have attained the rank of Eagle Scout, but the following are among those who have done so: Norman Sothan, Elmer Sprague, Jr., Hugh Campbell Wilkins, Paul Weis, Tom Weis, James Hammond, Quinton Friesen, and Larry Heath. —Howard W. Hamilton

**Chamber of Commerce**

On November 20, 1914, businessmen of the city met in the Commercial Club room in the Citizens Bank Building, with J. A. Harris in the chair. The revised constitution was read and was then signed by the following persons:


F. O. Edgecombe was nominated and unanimously elected president of the association. From a slate of eight names, four were elected directors: F. Picard, A. Koehler, L. F. Johnson, and J. A. Harris. C. C. Spangler was appointed secretary by the board of directors at $10 per month.

Meetings have been held in the Geneva Hotel, cafes, the Geneva Community Club House, the Fire Hall, and the V. F. W. Hall.

The officers in 1966-67 were: president, Milford Scarlet; vice-president, Clyde Lambertz; secretary and treasurer, Charlene Brower; directors, Walter O'Neal, Orville Ellison, Leon Walker, Hugh Wilkins, and Joe Adamson.

The Business Men's Club was known as the Geneva Community Club for a number of years, but in 1951 it voted to join the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, and it now goes under the name of the Geneva Chamber of Commerce.

The purpose of the Chamber of Commerce is to promote a better community in which to live, to help 4-H work, to sponsor a recreational program for the children during the summer months, and to stimulate better business for the merchants. A large Christmas program of decorating the streets and courthouse and an Easter program for the children of the trade territory are annual projects.


**Circle 8 Square Dance Club**

On August 3, 1953, 12 couples organized the Circle 8 Square Dance Club, with Ray Ainsworth, president; Mrs. Reno Weis, secretary; and Mrs. Clyde Jacobsen, treasurer. The organization was founded for the purpose of family recreation. A constitution and by-laws were made, and a membership limit of 200 was set—members to be admitted only after application had been approved by the executive board. When parents have membership, the children may also attend the club dances. The use of alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited; violation results in forfeiture of membership. The officers consist of a president, secretary, treasurer, board of directors, and entertainment committee.

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Although the club's primary purpose is to promote family fellowship, it has benefit dances throughout the year and the net proceeds are given to various groups such as March of Dimes, Heart Fund, and the local baseball treasury. In May, 1955, the club was the first donor to the Memorial Hospital fund set up in 1952.

Presidents and secretaries of the club have been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
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<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>Ray Ainsworth</td>
<td>Mrs. Reno Weis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>James B. Barbour</td>
<td>Mrs. John Brooke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>Virgil Clinkenbeard</td>
<td>Mrs. Howard Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>Ed Newman</td>
<td>Mrs. Ben Koehler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>Charles Grothe</td>
<td>Mrs. Bernard Weis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>Ben Koehler</td>
<td>Mrs. Fred Slepicka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>Fred Slepicka</td>
<td>Mrs. James Barbour</td>
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**Daughters of Union Veterans**

Barbara Frietchie Tent, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, 1861-1865, was organized in Geneva on July 18, 1921, by Department President Georgia Priestly of Fremont. The following names were on the charter: Martha...

The first officers were: president, Elsie Laurine; senior vice, Hannah Gilmore; junior vice, Mary McKibben; chaplain, Elizabeth Ford; treasurer, Clara Thomas; patriotic instructor, Martha Walker; secretary, Stella Gilmore.

We hold membership in the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies and in the Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense. Through our legislative committees and the National Defense Committee, we keep in close touch with the pulse of the nation and in tune to the needs of proper patriotic sentiment.

We are alert to the courage and vision of our fathers when they opened the doors to our organization, that nothing will admit you excepting the noble heritage of being a direct lineal descendant of honorably discharged soldiers, sailors, or marines who served their country for the Union between 1861 and 1865.

At present (1967) our Tent has 5 members. Our oldest member now is Mary Kreachbaum.

It was the pleasure of our District, with Mrs. Hannah Gilmore as president, to aid in the 100th birthday celebration of Georgia Compher Hart, which occurred just a few months before her death (Dec. 18, 1952). She was the oldest member in our organization in the United States. She was the mother of Joy Hart Case.

We were at first associated with the Hastings Tent in District No. 5, but after other Tents relinquished their charters, Hastings was placed in District No. 4 farther west and we were placed in District No. 1 with Tents to the east and northeast.

Past presidents of our Tent are Hannah Gilmore, Mary McKibben of California, Minnie Carson of Fairmont, Joy Hart Case, Clarice Tice of Clay Center, Elizabeth Crawford, Janet Kreachbaum, Dollie Ellis, Alma Myers of Greeley, Colorado, Edith Ridpath, who is also our present (1967) president, Josie Hamilton, and Margaret Battle, both deceased.

The object of the Daughters of Union Veterans is to perpetuate the memories of our fathers and of their loyalty to the Union, and to keep alive the history of their heroic struggle for the maintenance of our free government. We spread widely the teachings of patriotism.

Our Tent has been favored with offices in our State Department. In 1935 we held three offices: president, Hannah Gilmore; secretary, Joy Hart Case; patriotic instructor, Josie Hamilton. In 1954 we held three: chaplain, Edith Ridpath; treasurer, Hannah Gilmore; press correspondent, Joy Hart Case. Joy held this office a number of times.

We hold a picnic each summer. In our earlier years members of the G.A.R. and W.R.C. gave us the pleasure of having them with us.

Our duty is to inculcate a love of country and patriotism and to promote equal rights and universal liberty.

—Hannah Gilmore


Houghton of Wichita, Kansas, formerly of Lincoln.

We hold a picnic each summer. In our earlier years members of the G.A.R. and W.R.C. gave us the pleasure of having them with us.

Our duty is to inculcate a love of country and patriotism and to promote equal rights and universal liberty.

—Hannah Gilmore

A board meeting of the Farm Bureau, September 26, 1967. Left to right around table: Clair Christiany, Jr.; Vaden Myers, secretary; Rodger Christiany; Ronald Tatro; George Nelson; Vorus Myers; Richard Janing, president.
Farm Bureau

Farm Bureau first began in Fillmore County in approximately the late 1930's. At first it was a group of interested farmers meeting together, as units, in homes or schoolhouses. They discussed farmers' problems, legislation, and various issues of the day. In these early days, fertilizer and seed corn were sold.

Farm Bureau then was organized on a county basis about 1955. Insurance services were added over the state in 1948. While Farm Bureau has been inactive in the county at times, in 1967 it is a strong organization with a membership of 327 farm and town families. Today the services include all types of insurance, tires and batteries, and animal health supplies. The county office is in Geneva.

The Fillmore County Farm Bureau Women's Group has had a program the past few years of placing books in the school libraries of the county. In 1966, books were held open in seven schools. They also sponsor some contests for the young people of Farm Bureau families. An annual picnic, a Christmas party, and other meetings of interest are held at intervals during the year.

Farm Bureau is the oldest and largest farm organization in the county. Past presidents are Wayne Steiger, Calvin Serr, Bob Yates, Karl Brinkman, John Pittard, Stuart Gratopp, Rodger Christiancy, and Vorus Myers. The president in 1967 is Richard Janing.

Fillmore County Fair

The May 16, 1872, issue of the Bulletin, published the constitution and by-laws of the Fillmore Agricultural Society. The article stated that during the preceding winter interest had been shown and a committee had been chosen to draw up the constitution and by-laws and meet to organize in March. On the appointed day a severe storm kept from the meeting the man who had the prospective constitution and by-laws. Three of the committee of five being present, it was moved to draft a constitution as nearly like the adopted one as possible. This action later caused much dissatisfaction, so the elected president, Judge Blain, called a meeting and a committee of seven was appointed to meet with the officers elected to form the constitution and by-laws that were published.

Apparently because of lack of interest, little progress was made until the early summer of 1875, when a newly organized Fillmore County Agricultural Society board of directors filed a petition with the county supervisors asking assistance in the purchase of permanent grounds for the society. They purchased 80 acres, the S 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of Sec. 36, T7, R3W, as the permanent fair grounds.

This society was organized during a period of adversity. Grasshoppers had descended upon the county and destroyed nearly everything that was edible. Yet a small band of courageous men met together to form a society to promote the agriculture of Fillmore County. The first officers were C. H. Bane, president; J. J. Jensen, secretary; H. T. Hager, W. P. Friend, J. E. Cramer, and C. A. Warner, directors.

It is almost unbelievable that a group of men would have the faith in the future exhibited by this group under conditions existing at that time. Yet, when we consider their other manifestations of faith in the future of the community, we know their actions in organizing an agricultural society were typical of their actions in other fields.

Good times followed bad times, not once but often. The fatigue of the early settlers was overcome, the hardy remained to carry out the purposes of the first settlers.

Throughout the years, good and bad, the Fillmore Agricultural Society carried on. Sometimes its resources were small; sometimes they were exhausted. At times it seemed that the organization was doomed and it seemed unlikely that another county fair would be held.

The records show, however, that as spring came and crops promised a better prospect for the new year there was some talk of another fair and the county fair was always held. The next fair always was to be the largest and the best. Sometimes it was, but often weather, hard times, or failure of events to come off as planned caused disappointment.

Those who were active in promoting the Fillmore County Fair over the years were clearly optimists by nature. Usually they served at great personal sacrifice of time and money for an organization that became part of their lives.

We learn much from reading the annual reports of past presidents of the society. First came pride or disappointment in the number and quality of agricultural exhibits. Then came pride or disappointment in the quality of entertainment furnished fair patrons. Always came elation or dejection at the size of the attending crowds.

As officers of the association have changed during its history, so has the fair itself changed. Changing methods of farming, methods of travel, and forms of entertainment, all have caused the county fair to change with them.

Whereas people once came by horse and buggy, now they come by automobile. Whereas they once came for the entire day, now they come for separate sessions, returning home between programs. Whereas once a bicycle race, a baby contest, or a horse race was considered the ultimate in entertainment, now patrons expect a thrill show, spectacular acts, fine music—or just anything new and different.

Some lament the passing of the time when exhibitors brought large assortments of fruit, dairy products, fancy work, baking, and other household arts. Many lament the absence of fine horses, poultry, and cattle. But there again change has produced different types of exhibits.

The emphasis now is upon youth, as exemplified by 4-H Club activities and the work of the county's schools. Little need be said about the accomplishments of these groups, but many may need to be reminded that they are the backbone of today's county fair.

The Fillmore County Fair, like most successful county fairs, represents a compromise between the old and the new. Undue emphasis upon either the ultra-modern or the ultra-conservative probably would mark the end of such fairs.

The county fair board always has the task of pleasing the average person and in so doing aims to please the most people, always keeping in mind that the main purpose of a fair is to attract county residents to the fair grounds to see what has been done to promote agriculture in the county.

Despite changing times and the shifts in emphasis of the county fair, one thing has remained constant through the years. That is the urge of people of the county to go where others will. The average person still looks forward to fair time. It is something he probably can't explain.

The county fair has been an annual event since 1875, but the first record available appears in the Geneva Review for October 1, 1879:

"Fillmore County's 5th Annual Fair. The Grandest County Exhibition ever held in the State."

"Our county fair held last week was indeed a success far surpassing our hopes. The weather though dry was otherwise pleasant, and by noon of the first day—Wednesday—articles for exhibition began to come in and continue to arrive until evening of the second day. Up to noon of the second day the astonishing number of 599 entries were made up to the hour for closing entry books, and the attendance on that day was estimated at 4,000. The third and last day was the day of days and the attendance was estimated on that day to be from 5,000 to 6,000 people. The horse, cattle, and swine show, in respect to thorough breeds, is as good as can be shown in the state, as their pedigrees, and records at our state fairs will prove."
Since the society was organized, three Agricultural Buildings have been constructed. The second hall, with 3,600 square feet of floor space, was erected in 1890; the old building was rearranged for a speed stable. In 1925, the present "Anniversary Hall" was built at a cost of $15,000. This building, with two stories and a basement, is 90' long and 60' wide. The new building was dedicated the first day of the fair on September 11, 1925. The cornerstone was laid by the Masonic Grand Lodge.

Starting in 1909, the Fillmore County Fair Board has found it necessary to build three new grandstands. According to the records of the board, a new amphitheater was built in 1909, another in 1919, and a third in 1939. On the first two occasions the old structures were dismantled, much of the old material being used to build larger structures to accommodate the growing crowds. President Weis stated in the 1919 annual report, "During the year we have completed the grandstand at a cost of $1,158.35 and now have one of the best amphitheaters of any county in the state." It was a modern building, 36' wide and 144' long. This structure, with additions and improvements, served the fair crowds until the disastrous fire of September 15, 1938.

Fifteen minutes after a capacity crowd had filled the grandstand, a blaze broke out in a concession under the seats. Bystanders calmly watched a concessionaire nonchalantly attempting to beat out the fire. Suddenly a gasoline stove exploded, showering flames over the dry timber in the structure. Within seconds, it seemed the entire grandstand was in flames. Fortunately, no lives were lost, but there was considerable damage to personal property of concessionaires.

The fair completed its annual showing that year without a grandstand. The following year the present grandstand was placed, the list of officers before 1900 is incomplete. Those found it necessary to build three new grandstands. According to the records of the board, a new amphitheater was built in 1909, another in 1919, and a third in 1939. On the first two occasions the old structures were dismantled, much of the old material being used to build larger structures to accommodate the growing crowds. President Weis stated in the 1919 annual report, "During the year we have completed the grandstand at a cost of $1,158.35 and now have one of the best amphitheaters of any county in the state." It was a modern building, 36' wide and 144' long. This structure, with additions and improvements, served the fair crowds until the disastrous fire of September 15, 1938.

In 1910, the cattle, hog, and horse barns were moved from the south and east sides of the grounds to the present location south of the speed barns and rebuilt and enlarged. In 1921, the cattle and hog barns were again rebuilt and enlarged.

In 1921, connection was made with the city sewer plant and modern rest rooms were installed.

The most recent improvements on the fair grounds have been the construction of the two steel quonset buildings by John Wilkins Construction Co., erected in 1956 to replace the barns demolished by a severe windstorm early that same year. Because of growing interest in 4-H livestock projects, more space was needed to exhibit these animals at the fair, and so, in 1959, another shelter was built (constructed by Courtesy Construction of Geneva). All these three buildings were constructed with the financial aid of Ak-Sar-Ben grants.

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Bert A. Lynn holds the record of service for length of time served in one office—34 years as treasurer of the Fillmore County Agricultural Society. He was elected to this office in 1920.

4-H Clubs

Little did the handful of rural school teachers and county superintendents of over a half century ago, who tried to make their courses of study fit into the home life of their students, visualize the huge 4-H program of today. Some of them, however, maintained their singleness of purpose as state and national leaders in making it possible for thousands of farm boys and girls to appreciate the dignity of rural living through a national junior program, which grew into 4-H clubs.

A growing tide of farm sentiment for better living and improved methods of raising crops and livestock during the early years of the new century gave impetus to the efforts of these forward-looking educators. It was expressed in corn contests and, for girls, in home economics projects. Many rural educators of a half-century or more ago rebelled at the cut-and-dried textbooks and courses of study that were being handed down by city-trained educators. They found little that would appeal to the boy and girl on the farm and began searching for corrective measures. One of the first of these in this area to put the welfare of boys and girls above such things as courses of study, buildings, equipment, or books was E. C. Bishop. In applying this philosophy to his teaching in the Middle Creek district school in Seward County, Nebraska, in 1894, he launched a career that was to be of service to both Nebraska and Iowa youth.

Mr. Bishop made his greatest contribution to Nebraska boys and girls as assistant state superintendent of schools. His outstanding work with corn clubs and home projects as...
county superintendent of York County, prompted J. L. McBrien, who was elected state superintendent in 1904, to bring the young educator to Lincoln. He was asked to put on a program for the whole state patterned on his county activities. Several hundred boys in 65 counties enrolled in the junior corn club in Nebraska during 1905. For girls, a cooking project was also outlined.

Those who completed their work and made reports were invited to take part in the first state junior corn show held at the Agricultural College in December, 1905.

During this session, the first state-wide boys’ and girls’ organizations were formed—the Nebraska Boys’ Agricultural Association and the Girls’ Domestic Science Association. They elected officers, approved a constitution and by-laws, and outlined a full program for rural youth of the state.

At this meeting Hugh Garrett of Geneva was elected secretary for the boys’ club and Eva Bolton of Geneva secretary for the girls. Mabel Wythers, now Mrs. Henry Foster of Geneva, was the secretary to E. C. Bishop.

Slowly but surely the farm boys’ and girls’ club idea was welded into a nation-wide organization which became officially known as the 4-H Club in 1918.

Since that time many 4-H clubs have been organized and hundreds of Fillmore County 4-H youth have enjoyed and received much benefit from being 4-H members.

During these years many Fillmore County men and women have served as 4-H leaders. As of 1967, Don Kimball, 1935-1941; I. E. Lindstrom, 1941-1960; Elbert Lowen­thy, 1918-1921; Lee W. Thompson, 1921-1935; Paige L. Fulton, Blanche Kroll, Betty Jean Lynn, Corene McKibben, Laverne Ogg, Frances Simon, and Lila Waring, was led by Mrs. Charles Crew, captain.

Troop No. 2, whose members were Dorothy Bertram, Betty Crew, Margaret Anne Corbitt, Marylyn Heath, Marion Kroll, Phyllis Most, Helen Most, Donna Mae McKibben, Helen Nahrgang, Katherine Sloan, Jean Ward, and Mary Waring, was led by Miss Delia Fisher, captain.

In 1939, Troop No. 3 was organized for younger girls, with Miss Delia Fisher as captain and Miss Phyllis McKibben as lieutenant. Mrs. Robert Waring taking over leadership of Troop 2. Members of Troop 3 were Mary Adams, Carol Bender, Eloise Bender, Rosemary Biegler, Genevieve Edward, Gladys Grothe, Mary Kelley, Patty Kline, Carol Kroll, Marilyn Lynn, Doris Merrill, Patty Murrell, Ethel Most, Colleen McDonald, Dixie Beth Winchell, and Corene Woodhead.

In addition to the knowledge and skills acquired in earning Second and First Class ranks and proficiency badges, many point-to-point hikes, cookouts, and overnight camps were enjoyed, with week-camps at Horkey’s Park at Crete in 1937, 1938, 1939, and 1940, and a 10-day trip through Rocky Mountain National Park in 1941.

As examiners during this early period of Scouting were the following: Homemaker, Miss Pearl Brown and Mrs. Victoria Day; Health and Nursing, Mrs. Blanche Rosenau; Child Nurse, Mrs. Rosella Ward; Hostess, Mrs. H. C. Walker; Life Saver and Swimming, G. Joy and R. H. Helgels; Scholarship, H. B. Simon, Anna Kyker, Creola Wythers, Vera Ehmee, and Jeannette McNamara; Star Finder, Mrs. Grace Wilkins; Nature, Mrs. Harry Campbell; and Craftsman, Miss Mae Matson.

Interest in Girl Scouting has varied in intensity; but some time before 1948, Mrs. Ray Holroyd had a troop, and the group was active from 1948 to 1952 under the leadership of Mrs. V. S. Lynn and Mrs. Rex Shaner. Another slight lapse of interest ended with a revival in late 1950, with Mrs. Shaner and Mrs. George Cruse as troop leaders. At the present time (1967) there are 120 girls between the ages of 7 and 15 enrolled in Girl Scout work—54 Brownies, 40 Junior Girl Scouts, and 26 Seniors and Cadettes. A total of 29 adults preside as troop leaders and troop committee members.

The Grange

In Nebraska, county agricultural associations were organized as early as the territorial period. The most important factor in rural life during the 70’s, however, was a new school of social reform which was at work. The great popular movement destined to affect profoundly our political and social history through many years was the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry. Although this organization, founded in 1867, was national in scope, it was supported most effectively in the frontier and
post-frontier regions.

The reason for the great strength of the Grange on the frontier was largely the strained financial circumstances of the pioneers. To the pressures caused by natural hazards such as drought, hail, and blizzards were added the exactions of often unfair—indeed, often gouging—railroad freight rates, mortgage-holders, and the great centralized grain and cattle markets.

The Grange brought the isolated farmers together, welding them into a strong unit with bargaining power, and in a short time made them a force to be reckoned with. One of its principal accomplishments was in forcing railroad legislation into the constitution, and so giving the state some control over rates, keeping them in line with prices paid to the farmers. It also advocated a "pay as you go" policy, educating its members to save a sum before purchasing, thus enabling them to save considerable amounts in interest.

The regular meetings of the Grange brought the people together 12 or more times a year. New friendships were formed and old ones strengthened, and the discussion of the common problems of their vocation gave them courage and made for progress.

What was originally conceived as a co-operative designed for the particular needs of farmers has evolved into an organization concerned with diversified community problems.

Several Granges were founded in Fillmore County townships in 1873 and 1874. There are few if any records of the achievements of individual groups; but it is interesting to note who the early Grangers were, and where. The Granges of those years were the following (listed in the order of their organization):


**Madison Grange** (Dec. 6, 1873): Oliver Chapman, master; Joseph Thompson, secretary; Edwin Place, Jake Hickey, Oliver Chapman, Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Thompson, Robert H. Ford, Mr. and Mrs. W. Besack, Norton W. Stannard, Deloss Angell, Jasper Culow, and wives.

**Prairie Flower Grange No. 339** (Glencoe Township; Dec. 6, 1873): Isaac F. Scott, master, George Hay, secretary; Francis Story, John T. Lippencott, H. W. Thomas, G. W. Gesell, Robert Folsen, Warner Folsen, Moses Taylor, Gerry Lippencott, Benjamin F. Bothwell—and wives.


The Nebraska Granges went into a number of co-operative business enterprises but these failed, partly because of inadequate management, partly because of the general agricultural depression. "With the failure of its economic enterprises," writes one recent historian, "the Grange generally went into a decline; after 1875 hardly any local Granges were organized; after 1876 the order rapidly declined in Nebraska"—and, naturally, in Fillmore County as well. Later, many of the former Grangers and other farmers joined the newer Union Alliance and the Farmers' Alliance. But "by 1876 the Grange had achieved one of its major political objectives, and that, too, may have contributed to its decline—the constitutional provision for the regulation of railroad rates—so that its efforts were by no means wasted. The Grange at its peak had a membership of about 800,000. Today (1967) it still has more than 620,000 members, in some 7,000 local Granges.

**Geneva Community Grange**

One of the youngest organizations in Geneva is the Geneva Community Grange No. 403. On the evening of February 19, 1952, 26 farmers and their wives gathered in the I.O.O.F. Hall in Geneva. The Friend (Nebraska) Grange wished to organize a new Grange as a community service project. Thus the first Grange in Geneva came into being.

Of the present 88 Grangers, 34 are charter members. They are: Mr. and Mrs. Clair Christiany, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Orville Dunkin, Mr. and Mrs. Darrell Hughes, Mrs. and Mrs. Ernest Jacobsen, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Lefever, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. William Nowak, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Nunn, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Norman Oglen, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Peterson, Mr. and Mrs.

Photo from Darrel Hughes


1 James C. Olson, History of Nebraska (University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 178.
Cecil Richards, Mr. and Mrs. Dean Richards, Mr. and Mrs. Jess Richards, Mr. and Mrs. Dwayne Tatro, Mr. and Mrs. William Watmote, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. Alva Ward. The Grange has added new members each year.

Each year, the State and National Granges sponsor community service contests. In 1954, our Grange, entering for the first time, placed third in the state. In this year, we made a health survey of the entire county, the results of which have been discussed at several medical conventions. A Grange at Sutton was also organized in 1954.

The year 1955 proved to be one of our most rewarding and exciting ones. Members worked hard all year on community service projects, and in October our Grange was informed that we had placed first in the state contest and would receive two $100 bonds and a plaque. All state winners were eligible for the national award of $10,000. We soon learned that we were among the top 10 Granges of the nation and would be visited by five judges. On October 26, the Grange women prepared a luncheon to be served at the Congregational Church and a delegation of members met the judges at the Fairmont Air Base. Among our guests were the State Master, a few state officers, representatives of Geneva organizations, radio and TV men, and many Fillmore residents who had been very helpful in carrying out our projects. After the luncheon, the project chairmen told how each project had been begun, what had been accomplished, and the merits of each project.

A few of our outstanding projects in 1955 were: Sponsored day at the Fillmore County Fair; F.F.A. hog project; 20 blind road corners eliminated; and preparations for the publication of a county history. During this year, members worked 3,343 hours and traveled a total of 9,605 miles in community service work. Although our Grange placed only fifth in the 1955 national contest and won only $1,000 in prize money, we felt that the year had been a dramatically successful one. The mere fact that our Grange had served its county so well as to attract nation-wide attention was enough.

In 1955, the Geneva Grange quartet won the honor of "Nebraska Grange Quartet," went on to the national contest in Cleveland, Ohio, and won fourth place. The members of this quartet were Mr. and Mrs. Guy Brown, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Johnson. In 1957, the Nebraska State Grange announced a "couple of the year": Mr. and Mrs. Darrel Hughes. Two members have had the distinction of being officers in the Nebraska State Grange: Mrs. Warren Lefever, Ceres (1961), and Guy Brown, Jr., executive committee (1968-61).


Some of the Grange's 1967 projects included final steps toward the publication of the Fillmore County History; erecting a Nativity scene for Christmas in the Courthouse yard; sponsoring the 4-H Coronation at the county fair; sponsoring two 4-H youths to the Conservation Camp at Halsey; providing Christmas packages for residents of rest homes in the county; and providing a covered wagon and oxen for Centennial parades. (The wagon was built by Grangers and the oxen were grown by Granger William Novak.)

Data from Grange members

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Home Demonstration Council

The Agricultural Extension Service was set up in Fillmore County in 1918. There is no record of activities until 1921, when an advisory council or committee of volunteer leaders helped to plan and direct a county-wide network of project clubs. That was the beginning of the Home Demonstration Council.

The purpose of the council, as stated in its constitution, is to serve as an advisory board for the Home Agent: to develop, strengthen, and correlate all interests aimed at advancement of home and community life in the county; to develop leadership and initiative among women; and to formulate and develop home demonstration programs for the project clubs and the 4-H clubs. The council is composed of present and past county chairmen, group chairmen of the seven training centers, two women on the county extension board, and a representative of the 4-H committee.

The Geneva Township Club was the first one organized in Fillmore County. Through the years, many women's project clubs have been organized, at present there are 32 project clubs in the county.

The women who have served as Home Agents in Fillmore County have been the following: Edna Pegler (1921-23), Edith McConne (1924-25), Lena Hauke (1926-27), Mary Runnalls (1930-34), Irene Goodhue (1934-37), Florence Emmott (1937-40), Agnes Arthaud (1940-45), Mabel Cooper (1950-55), Donna Tinkham (1955-59), and Mrs. Ardis Bates (1957 to the present.)

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Ku Klux Klan

A Geneva citizen provided the following account of the brief existence of the Ku Klux Klan:

The local Klan was organized about 1925 and included many leading citizens during the years from 1925 through 1928. Membership increased greatly during these years, but the quality of the new members was not equal to the original members.

After 1929 most of the original members dropped out and the Klan began to fall apart. In 1928, however, the local Klan entertained a large group from York who came by special train. A big parade was the outstanding event of the evening.

During 1930 the local Klan ceased to exist. During the
earlier years of its organization, the Klan performed many charitable acts, including the distribution of food packages to the poor of the community.

While the Klan did no spectacular good things in the community, neither did it do any harm. The Klan, as Geneva and neighboring areas knew it, was not the same type of organization as the South has known it to be during the 1950’s and 1960’s.

There was a Woman’s Auxiliary to the Klan during the time it was active.

**Lions Club**

In the summer of 1944, a representative of Lions International, “Stu” Holcomb, came to Geneva to see if business and professional men were interested in forming a Lions Club. The club has six basic objectives: (1) To form a body of men representative of the business and professional interests of the city and to promote a closer business and social union among them; (2) To encourage participation in concerns of commercial, civic, and industrial betterment; (3) To uphold the principles of good government; (4) To aid in furthering the interests of its members and to bring about better understanding among men; (5) To teach that organization, co-operation, and reciprocity are better than rivalry, strife, and destructive competition; (6) To encourage application of high ethical standards in business, and to try, by exchange of methods and ideas, to increase all-round efficiency.

The first meeting was held on August 23 at the Geneva Hotel. On charter night, held October 18, 1944, the following became charter members: Glen E. Felix, Dr. J. Q. Adams, Mervin V. Bedford, Dr. C. G. Delfs, James B. Barbur, Lawrence Doud, Ralph E. Reemts, David Engel, Charles Grothe, Sterling Harris, Harry Helton, K. C. Brinkman, J. W. Hammond, Harry A. Hulse, George Kochler, Ivar Lindstrom, Orval McDonald, W. E. Newell, Elmer Sprague, Waldbo Schupbach, Joe Uhlig, Harry Vanier, C. M. Humphrey, and Duane Sams.

The first officers were: Mervin Bedford, president; James Barbur, 1st vice-president; Elmer Sprague, 2nd vice-president; Dr. C. G. Delfs, 3rd vice-president; Glen E. Felix, secretary-treasurer; Wavelry Hammond, lion tamer; W. E. Newell, tail twister. As a service club, the Lions Club has been specially interested in aiding the blind. It has provided glasses for needy children and paid medical bills for eye treatment.

Other useful activities have included: Donating $500 to the Geneva General Hospital for a sterilizer; donating $75 each summer to the boys’ and girls’ playground program; financing the polio shot program; sending annually two Boy Scouts to the Boy Scout Camp in New Mexico; financing a fish pond north of Geneva, on the Porter Shan land, and planting all the evergreen trees around this tract; planting trees at the County Fair grounds; purchasing materials and donating many hours of labor when various organizations helped remodel the Geneva General Hospital; sponsoring and producing a successful home-talent play in 1948, sponsoring and promoting the 1957 Agricultural Conservation Book for Fillmore County; paying the expenses for sending a boy and a girl to the state Boys’ and Girls’ County Government Programs; taking an annual blanket donation at local basketball games for the March of Dimes; furnishing ticket takers and gatekeepers at home football games; conducting several trapshoots; and taking an active part in promoting a new hospital for Fillmore County.

At the present time, the club meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7 p.m. at the V.F.W. Hall in Geneva. The club has 44 members and a limited membership of 44.


In 1966-67, the Lions Club erected a $16,000 building in the City Park, dedicated to all Scouts, with a shelter house at the back of the building to allow for its being used by two groups at the same time. The building is available for community functions except when in use by Boy or Girl Scouts.

—Data from Willard Foster

**Masonic Lodge**

Dispensation was granted a group of Masons in Geneva, Nebraska, by Grand Master Rolland H. Oakley, to organize a probationary lodge. The first meeting under the dispensation (a term used to denote the status of a lodge before being officially instituted by the Grand Lodge) was held December 2, 1879, with the following officers:

Julius E. Spear, worshipful master; J. E. Cramer, senior warden; Sherwood Burr, junior warden; H. L. Smith, treasurer; G. P. Wintersteen, secretary; J. M. Fisher, senior deacon; B. F. Benedict, junior deacon; Mark Butler, senior steward; C. A. Warner, junior steward; and M. D. Williams, tyler.

The charter was granted to Geneva Lodge No. 79, Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons (A.F. & A.M.) on June 23, 1880. The first meeting held under the charter was October 11, 1880, with the following charter members: Benjamin F. Benedict, William H. Blain, Calvin B. Darrow, William Harrold, Edward D. Place, Hiram L. Smith, Charles A. Warner, Sherwood Burr, Mark Butler, Joseph M. Fisher, Warren C. Massey, Walter C. Scott, Julius E. Spear, George P. Wintersteen.

The following were the first officers: Joseph M. Fisher, worshipful master, Hiram L. Smith, senior warden; Sherwood Burr, junior warden; Julius E. Spear, treasurer; Warren C. Massey, secre-
tary; Benjamin F. Benedict, senior deacon; George P. Wintersteen, junior deacon; Mark Butler and Charles F. Warner, stewards; William H. Blain, chaplain; and William Harrold, tyler.

In 1882 the membership was 34. Hesperian Lodge of Shickley, Nebraska, transferred its membership to Geneva Lodge in 1906. In former years there were also Masonic lodges at Ohiowa, Grafton, and Exeter.

The Temple Craft Association erected a Masonic Temple on the third floor of the building located at what is now known as the south side of the present courthouse. In 1913, a fire destroyed the building and 21 families. The present Masonic Temple was purchased for the lot by a Masonic brother, Jr. Smith. That temple was razed by a conflagration February 13, 1910. The present temple was erected on the same site. This place has also been used by the Geneva Chapter 180 of the Eastern Star since that order was established.

Cornerstones laid by the Masonic order, in Geneva, were those of Trinity Chruch (October 8, 1890), the county courthouse (July 6, 1896, by the Good Warden; Temple; April 27, 1913).

It is customary to award a bronze Jordan Medal to the oldest living member of each local Masonic lodge. This medal was first presented in 1953 to Walfred C. Peterson, who had become a Master Mason on March 15, 1890. After his death in 1955, it was presented to William Manning on August 30, 1955. Mr. Manning had become a Master Mason on April 26, 1890, at Kinsley, Kansas, later transferring to the Geneva chapter. On October 7, 1958, the lodge presented Mr. Manning a Masonic apron honoring his 68 years of Masonry. He was awarded the Gold Jordan Medal on September 7, 1961. He passed away January 23, 1966. The present holder of the bronze Jordan Medal is Clarence McCarty (deceased May 16, 1967).

Fifty-year pins are given persons with that length of membership. At the end of 1967, holders of these pins were William A. Biba, Claude J. Kimbrough, Bert A. Lynn, Ben Kuska, senior steward; Ben D. Fussell, junior steward; and Edward Newman, tyler.

The Geneva lodge has enjoyed a steady growth over the years. Its 1967 membership was 170, of whom 85 are nonresident members. Having philanthropic as well as fraternal purposes, the lodge makes contributions to the Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children at Fremont, the Boys' Home in Omaha, and the Old People's Home at Plattsmouth, as well as to other worthy charities. The Centennial year of Masonry in Nebraska was 1957.

The officers of the Geneva lodge in 1967 were: Leslie M. Newman, worshipful master; Joseph Adamson, senior warden; Vernon A. Wortman, junior warden; John R. Bixby, treasurer; Henry Foster, secretary; Everett Renken, senior deacon; Doyle Lude, junior deacon; Donald Beardsley, tyler; Benjamin F. Benedict, senior deacon; George P. Wintersteen, chaplain; and William Harrold, tyler.

The officers of the Lodge in 1967 were: Leslie M. Newman, worshipful master; Joseph Adamson, senior warden; Vernon A. Wortman, junior warden; John R. Bixby, treasurer; Henry Foster, secretary; Everett Renken, senior deacon; Doyle Lude, junior deacon; Donald Beardsley, tyler; Benjamin F. Benedict, senior deacon; George P. Wintersteen, chaplain; and William Harrold, tyler.

Order of the Eastern Star

The Eastern Star is auxiliary to the Masonic Lodge, open to wives, daughters, mothers, widows, or sisters of Master Masons. It is a service organization for the care and relief of widows and orphans. Nationally, the order co-operates with the Shriner's in their program of aid for crippled children. The local chapter contributes to Nebraska Masonic Home for Old People at Plattsmouth and to the Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children at Fremont.

Geneva Chapter No. 180 of O.E.S. was chartered March 15, 1890. Charter members and with Anna Matthes as worthy matron, Hiram L. Smith as worthy patron, and Minnie Roberts as associate patron. Other charter members were:


The chapter has recently celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1964. Fifty-year members who have been honored by the local Eastern Star have been Jessie Bears, Alta Brown, Guy Brown, Sr., Pearl Brown, Guy Case, Bertha Crawford, Neil Huston, Lettie Ingles, Minnie Nelson, Linnie Propst, Albie Richeson, Maude Stringfield, Mabel Trobaugh, Susie Ward, Minnie Warner, Alice Watmore, Neva Weidman, and Nannie Willkins.

Members who past Grand Chapter officers were Richard A. Bell, Mrs. J. H. Robinson (the oldest pioneer present), Mrs. T. T. Hill, MRS. J. F. McCarty, Mrs. J. W. Williams, Mrs. Theodore Voightlander, Mrs. A. J. Brown, Mrs. Melissa Goodl, Mrs. J. N. Spivey, Mrs. C. F. Cockins, and Mrs. D. B. Lincoln. All offered reminiscences of the hardships of pioneer days, ranging from prairie fires, rattlesnakes in their homes, dust storms, and grasshoppers to that major topic, the Blizzard of 1888.

Modern Woodmen


In later years the clubs at Martland and Burress consolidated with the Geneva camp. Over the years, Modern Woodmen paid its beneficiaries, through the camp, more than $150,000.00. Richard A. Smith, Sr., was the last consul of Geneva's camp, which is now inactive.

Mothers' Club

The Geneva Mothers' Club is the oldest organized club in Geneva and probably in the county. Although the earliest records have long since been lost, it is an established fact that the club was organized shortly after the turn of the century. A group of ladies, under the leadership of the late Mrs. John K. Waring, banded themselves together for the purposes of friendship, self-culture, mutual assistance, and becoming better mothers and more efficient homemakers. Available records, which date back to 1913, show that it was then an independent club. The membership in 1914 numbered 30; Mrs. Waring was president and Mrs. Bates was secretary.

The members took turns in presenting some topic of interest to the club. One meeting a year presented a special program devoted to the pioneer mothers of the community, who were invited guests.

In or about 1919, the Mothers' Club, with two or three other recently organized clubs, joined the State Federation of Woman's Clubs and became a department of the Woman's Club. New names appeared on the roll in the next 10 years or others began to take up the task started by those who had resigned, moved elsewhere, or passed away.

One of the most interesting meetings during that time occurred on May 7, 1925, when pioneer mothers were honored at the W. C. Peterson home. The honored were Mrs. C. A. Warner, Mrs. William Bell, Mrs. J. H. Robinson (the oldest pioneer present), Mrs. T. T. Hill, Mrs. J. F. McCarty, Mrs. J. W. Williams, Mrs. Theodore Voightlander, Mrs. A. J. Brown, Mrs. Melissa Goodl, Mrs. J. N. Spivey, Mrs. C. F. Cockins, and Mrs. D. B. Lincoln. All offered reminiscences of the hardships of pioneer days, ranging from prairie fires, rattlesnakes in their homes, dust storms, and grasshoppers to that major topic, the Blizzard of 1888.

Mothers' Club (1903), Front row, left to right: Augusta Rickling, Anna McDonald, Beryl Grothe, Blanche Winchell, Mrs. John Waring, Anna Biba, Thelma Hamilton. Back row: Maurice Brinkman, Faye Montgomery, Anna Brower, Gertrude Dudley (hidden), Kathryn Biedler, Marie Basset, Eileen Shancer, Lily Hampton, Rose Hammond.
In June, 1929, the Mothers' Department voted to withdraw from the General Club. In October, 1930, at the home of Mrs. Edgar Foster, the club decided to take up extension work. Miss Mary Runnalls, home agent, was present at that meeting and explained the year's extension projects. The first project leaders were Mrs. J. K. Waring and Mrs. Lloyd Wytches.

The club is now a closed group consisting of 20 active members, one of whom, Mrs. W. A. Biba, has been a member for 44 years. Three others have been members for more than 37 years. They are Mrs. Fred Merrill, Mrs. Ed Rischling, and Mrs. Orval McDonald. Two others who have been members for 34 years are Mrs. Wayne Winchell and Mrs. Tom Brower.

In earlier years, the Mothers' Club held receptions in the early fall for Geneva teachers. The club now meets on the first Thursday of every month at the home of some one of the members.

Past presidents of the club have been the following: Mrs. Nellie Youngers (1913-14), Mrs. J. E. Waring (1915-16), Mrs. Pearl Burns (1917-18), Mrs. W. C. Peterson (1919), Mrs. Limback (1924), Mrs. Clarence Collar (1925), Mrs. I. McCashland (1926), Mrs. W. A. Biba (1927), Mrs. W. A. Benn (1928), Mrs. Phelps (1929), Mrs. Clarence Shaw (1930), Mrs. Rulea (1931), Mrs. Bernice Chesnut (1932), Mrs. Orval McDonald (1933-34), Fred Bassett (1935), Mrs. Fred Merrill (1936), Mrs. Bill Minich (1937), Mrs. Elwin Montaguary (1938), Ralph Bieger (1939), Mrs. W. A. Biba (1940), Mrs. Ed Rischling (1941), Mrs. Tom Brower (1942), Mrs. Wayne Winchell (1943), Mrs. Lillie Hampton (1944), Mrs. Myra Most (1945), Mrs. Lucy Dudley (1946), Mrs. Chester Dudley (1947), Mrs. Bill Newell (1948), Mrs. I. Lindstrom (1949), Mrs. Robert Kister (1950), Mrs. Reno Weis (1951), Mrs. Robert Nichols (1952), Mrs. Orval McDonald (1953), Mrs. Ben Fussell (1954), Mrs. Alvan Heath (1955), Mrs. Gerald Mattock (1956), Mrs. A. E. Holmes (1957), Mrs. Robert Jezeck (1958), Mrs. Lew Jezeck (1959), Mrs. K. O. Nelson (1960), Mrs. John Fahlberg (1961), Mrs. William E. McDonald (1962), Mrs. Lowell Heath (1963), Mrs. Wesley McMullen (1964), Mrs. Reno Weis (1965), and Mrs. Royal Eugene Anderson (1966).

The officers of the club in 1967 were Mrs. Wallace Swanson, president; Mrs. Robert Deterding, vice-president; Mrs. Clyde Lambertz, secretary; and Mrs. Augusta Rischling, treasurer.

Odd Fellows

Geneva Lodge No. 65, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, was founded on March 27, 1877, in a white frame building on the north side of the west block. That building is no longer there, so that all records up to that time were lost.

It was organized with 11 charter members—J. D. Hamilton, J. A. Dempster, B. F. Ryman, F. R. Stone, H. R. Deming, J. Shepherd, Samuel Walz, R. B. Campbell, S. Hanabaugh, G. A. Lynn, and J. H. Ward. J. D. Hamilton was the first Noble Grand and B. F. Ryman was Worthy Secretary. By 1882, the lodge had 50 members.

The building which the I.O.O.F. lodge now occupies was purchased April 25, 1920, for $6,000, a sum loaned to the lodge by Mrs. A. J. Beals. The furniture from the old building was brought to the new home and is still in use. In 1947, the lodge hall was extensively remodeled, gas heat was installed, and regalia rooms and a modern kitchen were provided, making it one of the nicest lodge halls in the state. The first floor has always been rented commercially. The basement is rented out for business purposes.

The lodge has managed to pay off all mortgages and is entirely free of debt at the present time.

We have had the honor of at least two of our members serving as officers of the Grand Lodge. In 1949-1950, Fred Merrill was Grand Guardian and in 1956 Ronald Elznic served as Grand Outside Guardian.

One of our principal activities is contributing to our Home at York, Nebraska, which is maintained for the care and protection of the orphans, the old, and the feeble of our organization. Other projects of the order are giving to such worthy causes as the Polio Fund, the Red Cross, and kindred needs.

Through the years, the order has grown, with some fluctuations, from a membership of 50 in 1882 to 116 in 1967. The officers of the Geneva lodge in 1967 were Friedhold Ulmer, noble grand; Glen Fussell, vice-grand; Cliff Cramer, secretary; and Ronald Elznic, treasurer.

Rebekah Lodge

The Rebekah Lodge was founded as a social organization, an auxiliary of the Odd Fellows Lodge. Membership is open to wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of Odd Fellows, as well as to Odd Fellows themselves.

Silver Link Rebekah Lodge was instituted at Geneva on April 30, 1880, with 16 charter members: Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Beals, W. J. Carrin, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Dempster, Walter
P.E.O. in 1915. Top row, left to right: Joy Hart (Mrs. Guy Case), Hattie Edgecombe (Mrs. F. O. Edgecombe), Lora Bolton, Hattie Anna Brower, Romona Watmore, and Shirley Ward.

The organization is and always has been very active in Geneva. They meet on the first and third Mondays of each month at the Odd Fellows building, which the Odd Fellows kindly provide, rent free, for their sister organization. The Rebekahs have tried to compensate for this courtesy by helping in every worthwhile project which the Odd Fellows undertake.

In 1948, the Rebekahs helped the Odd Fellows in remodeling the Odd Fellows Hall and kitchen, making a modern and beautiful meeting place. In 1956, the lodge room was supplied with wall-to-wall carpeting and chrome chairs. The Rebekahs furnished the substantial amount for this project. We are proud of our hall, which, although small, is second to none in Nebraska in appearance.

Silver Link Rebekah Lodge is proud of the fact that in October, 1950, our lodge was asked to present the initiatory work at the State Assembly at Hastings. This we did with a seven-member degree staff and took with us 28 candidates, all from Geneva, to be initiated into the Rebekah degree.

Fifty-year jewels have been awarded to Mrs. Joy Case, Mrs. Bertha Trask Crawford, Mrs. Vinetta Eaton, Esther Axtell, and Mae Matson. Mrs. Eaton also received the Decoration of Chivalry of the order in 1956.

We also have an active Past Noble Grand Club that meets on the second Friday of each month at the members' homes.


—Mrs. Irene Merrill

P. E. O.

The P.E.O. Sisterhood was 26 years old when Chapter O of Geneva was organized on May 2, 1895. Present at this meeting to become the charter members were Mrs. Mary Bre-erton, Miss Mattie Cox, Mrs. Fanny L. Elmore, Mrs. Hattie M. Edgecombe, Mrs. Luella McKeilvey, Mrs. Adde Sexton, and Mrs. Blanche Stewart. Meetings have been held regularly since that time.

The purpose of the P.E.O. Sisterhood is educational and philanthropic as well as social. An educational loan fund of national and international proportions is available to worthy girls—Mildred Berger and Neva Bishop of Geneva and Beverly Trapp of Shickley—have applied for and received this assistance.

P.E.O. International Peace Scholarships, which attract outstanding foreign girls to study, promote better understanding and peaceful relations among nations.

The national sisterhood owns and maintains several P.E.O. homes for aged members; the Nebraska home is at Beatrice. It also owns and maintains the Cottey Junior College in Nevada, Missouri. Two Geneva girls have attended Cottey College. Shirley Nunnings (Born-schleg) and Jeanette Krutier (Franklin).

Chapter O was hostess to the state convention held in Geneva in 1902. Miss Hattie A. Little of Geneva served as state president in 1906 and 1907 and was secretary of the Supreme Chapter from 1911 to 1914.

Nine members have been honored by the chapter for 50 years of membership: Hattie M. Edgecombe, Clara Koehler, Laura V. Donisthorpe, Louise Gibbons, Joy Case, Grace Ketrige, Ethel Corbitt, Vera Waring, and Edith Elder.

The following members have served as president of Chapter O since its organization:

1895-97: Hattie M. Edgecombe: 1932-33: Ethel Corbitt
1897-98: Adde Sexton: 1933-34: Vera Waring
1898-99: Virginia McGrew: 1934-35: Evelyn McQuinn
1899-00: Martha Skinkle: 1935-36: Lillian Sloan
1900-01: Eva E. Hines: 1936-37: Virginia Koehler
1901-02: Emma Porter Sloan: 1937-38: Male Stringfield
1902-03: Clara Koehler: 1938-39: Grace Stringfield
1903-04: Kate Koehler: 1939-40: Marieta Kerl
1904-05: Alma Williams: 1940-41: Faye Curtiss
1905-06: Laura V. Donisthorpe: 1941-42: Edith Elder
1906-07: Hattie A. Little: 1942-43: Edith Elder
1907-08: Addie Smith: 1943-44: Minnie Brice
1908-09: May Skinkle: 1944-45: Emma Renken
1909-10: Sarah King: 1945-46: Veda Harris
1913-14: Elmore Hadsett: 1949-50: Angela Humphrey
1916-17: Hattie A. Little: 1952-53: Jean Ashby
1917-18: Hattie M. Edgecombe: 1953-54: Jean Ashby
1919-20: Laura Bates: 1954-55: Dorothy Gwawke
1921-22: Laura V. Donisthorpe: 1956-57: Susanne Brinkman
1924-25: Marguerite Davis: 1959-60: Barbara Wilkins
1925-26: Bertha Dempster: 1960-61: Barbara Felkberg
1927-28: Isabel Bixby: 1962-63: Dorothy Brooke
1928-29: Pearl Burnham: 1963-64: Dorothy Brooke
1930-31: Florence Devoe: 1965-66: Kathryn Ashby

Parent-Teacher Association

The Geneva P.T.A. was organized November 15, 1950. The first officers were: Dale Otte, president; Mrs. LaGrande Shaw, first vice-president; Mrs. Woodrow Kinder, secretary; Hugh Wilkins, treasurer.

Presidents of the group from 1955 onward were: Miss Helen Crawford, second vice-president; Mrs. Woodrow Kinder, secretary; Hugh Wilkins, treasurer.

Among the accomplishments of the P.T.A.: 50 folding chairs were purchased for gym; Halloween parties have been sponsored with cooperation of other local organizations; coffees between parents and teachers to promote better understanding have been held yearly; and books have been purchased for the grade-school libraries. Many faculty members and educational speakers and films have been presented by the P.T.A.

Rotary Club

The Geneva Rotary Club, the newest of our city organizations, was organized in 1958 and received its charter on November 11, 1958, under the sponsorship of the Hebron club. The club started with a membership of 24.
These objects are: (1) To encourage acquaintance as an opportunity designed for such activities.

It is not the intention of Rotary to compete in community affairs but for service; (2) to hold high ethical standards in business and profession; (3) to apply the ideal of service to each member's personal life; and (4) to advance international understanding, good will, and peace through world fellowship of men dedicated to the ideal of service.


Veterans of Foreign Wars

Samuel J. Marsh Post No. 7102 of the V.F.W. was organized on May 29, 1946, at a meeting held in the Geneva Fire Hall. When it came to selecting a name, it was decided to name the post after the first Fillmore County boy to lose his life in World War II, Samuel J. Marsh. His father, Ed Marsh of Grafton, a Spanish-American War veteran, told a formal meeting of the post that he would be honored to have the post named after his son. The name became official, then, at the meeting on October 10, 1946, and the post number, “7102,” was added. (The number represents the order in which posts are organized.)

The first elective officers were: Charles H. Miller, commander; Ernest Pavel, senior vice-commander; Louis Kelch, junior vice-commander; Gerald Churchell, quartermaster; Kenneth Heisey, chaplain; Ed Rock, advocate; Wilbur Pearson, post surgeon; Lowell Eich, Eric Johnson, and Ray Willy, trustees.

The first appointive officers were: Dick Wagner, officer of the day; Bernard Rischling, adjutant; Francis Weis, post historian; Dale Thole, guard; Virgil Ostdiek, national color-bearer; Mervin Leonard, post color-bearer; Joe Babich, patriotic instructor; Fritz Placek, legislative officer; and Harlan Heath, quartermaster sergeant.

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Fridays of each month. The first meeting place was the Picard building. In June, 1949, the post moved from there to the basement of the Odd Fellows Hall. After prolonged discussion, the post decided to build its own meeting hall, and paid down $1,000 on a lot on the N. E. Thomas property on G St. Money raising was started, and the building was soon under construction, much of the labor being donated by members.

In December, 1953, came the proud moment when the first meeting was held in the new building. It has since been used extensively by other groups in the community as well as by the post and the V.F.W. Auxiliary. Completion of the building also saw the post membership increase to 200.

In May, 1948, three boys entered the state marble tournament sponsored by the V.F.W.; Glen Johnson, Jr., of Geneva placed second. In August, 1948, the V.F.W. ran a stand at the Fillmore County Fair in the former Farm Bureau building, which was turned over to the organization. The V.F.W. have completely remodeled it and have run the stand every year since then. In September, 1948, the post acquired folding wheel chairs, sun lamps, and crutches, to be used by county residents rent free.

In December, 1955, the members voted to grant life membership in the Fillmore J. Marsh Post to Spanish-American War veterans. The members thus honored were Charles Higginbotham and William Merrill, Ed Marsh having been given a life membership previously.


in the post club rooms in the Picard building north of the Signal office. In 1949, they moved to the basement of the Odd Fellows building, and early in 1954 moved into their own building.

Goldie Tull, department president of Kearney, Veral F. Meyers, department president of Hastings, and Evely Harbolt, district senior vice-president of Superior, together with the officers of the Superior Ladies Auxiliary, were present to organize and initiate members. Eighteen were initiated and four others were unable to attend.

Charter members were: Alice C. Price, Hendricka Thole, Nellie Bell, Rose Leonard, Helen Marsh, Ruby Miller, and Augusta Rischling.

The object of this organization is to promote culture in the homes and to assist any movement aiming toward the betterment of social and commercial conditions of the community and to strengthen, by organization, individual and philanthropic measures.

One of the club's most outstanding projects was its sponsorship of the building of the Geneva Club House. This club house was completed in 1942 at the cost of about $5,000 and was named after the Geneva Woman's Club. They also maintain and operate the building, which is used for a variety of activities.

One of the club's charter members, Mrs. T. B. Moore, has held the honor of serving as vice-president of the Fourth District of the Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs from 1923 to 1925; she also served during the next four years as a district board member.

The club presently has only three departments: Book Review, Junior Women, and Literature and Art. In 1967, it had a total of 100 members; all ministers are included as honorary members.


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RECREATION, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SPORTS

Even though the town and the surrounding territory were developing rapidly, the people seemed always to have time for various activities. The following items, condensed from newspaper accounts, indicate in chronological order the types of entertainment and recreation from year to year.

1883—Home Dramatic Club organized; will give entertainment at the C. A. Warner farm in Chelsea precinct. Six to eight sets could dance at a time. Music by Messrs. Luke and Miller; F. C. Chamberlain called. Dance and supper—81. Dance started at 4 P.M. Floor managers were James Bridgewood, H. S. Heiderstadt, and M. C. Matson.

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1897—The charity ball at Geneva was largely attended. The proceeds were $35.35. The prize was won by Miss Nellie McClosky.

1898—Blind Boone gave a concert in the Ward Opera House and drew the largest crowd ever in the building.

1899—The Salvation Army pitched their tent in Geneva Thursday evening and will hold a three-week series of meetings.

July: The Hose Companies were granted the exclusive privilege of running booths and stands on the Fourth of July—they are to furnish at their own expense two policemen for that day and night and to erect no stands on the street.

1892—January: The home talent operetta, Trial by Jury, was given at the Ward Opera House. It was a great success.

1901—Frederick Emmons Brooks, well-known poet, appeared in Geneva on the high-school lecture course.

1902—The Canadian Jubilee Singers pleased a crowded house at the Methodist Church.

1903—Uncle Tom's Cabin showed at the Geneva Opera House and drew a good-sized crowd.

1905—A balloon ascension by a woman drew a large crowd to Geneva. Afterwards there was a ball game between Geneva and Bruming.

The council approved the application of Harry Glasscock for a bowling alley.

November: The first moving-picture entertainment was given at the Opera House. A speaker explained the pictures as they were shown.

1904—Geneva Volunteer Fire Department has made arrangements for a carnival and asked the privilege of the streets from Tuesday, August 2, to Saturday, August 6, inclusive.

1905—The skating rink will be open thereafter only on Tuesday evening, Thursday evening, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday evening.

1907—The Geneva orchestra, consisting of 12 pieces, gave a concert at the Christian Church for the benefit of the ladies' band.

1910—License fee for picture show is $25 per year.

1913—January: A large audience gathered to hear the Kaffir Boy Choir, appearing on the high-school lecture course.

1914—The Opera of His Life was presented by Geneva home talent for the benefit of the Mothers' Club.


1914—Forty-five singers met at Prof. H. R. Grant's studio in Geneva to organize a community chorus.

The Geneva Chautauqua was well attended and the program was considered very good. (Note: Chautauquas brought many fine programs to the people in the Middle West and were a popular medium of entertainment for many years. The programs included outstanding speakers, musical groups, Negro singers, comedians, and the magician, who was always a great favorite with everyone.)

Mr. Dow closed his Jolla Theater at Geneva and the town was left without a picture show.

The Geneva Progressive Temperance Party held a mass meeting at the courthouse with speeches and music.

1915—May: Dr. Ole Thobald, famous violinist, gave a concert in Geneva.

1921—The Geneva Woman's club presented a cantata, "Golden Valley," with a cast of local people, at the Congregational Church.

1922—April: A popular coloratura soprano, Miss Cho-Cho, the health clown, at the Geneva city auditorium.

1926—January: The Lewis Stock Co., old favorites, opened an engagement at the city auditorium. More than 100 people were turned away because of lack of seating capacity.

1926—February: Permit granted to operate and charge for moving-picture show on Sunday but not to conflict with the hours of church services.


1926—The courthouse grounds were reseeded to grass and many new trees were set out. The croquet grounds used by the old-timers for 40 years disappeared.

1928—Ivan Ertel was granted a bowling-ally license.

1940—January: The skating pond provided by the city of Geneva was proving a popular place as freezing weather put the ice in good condition.

1942—The Ewalt Amusement Co. of Geneva opened the season at the Fourth of July celebration in Logan, Iowa.

1944—July: An American Legion junior baseball team was organized at Geneva with Jack Adams as business manager and Orval McDonald as field manager.

1947—The Easter egg hunt, postponed one week because of bad weather, attracted hundreds of youngsters to the courthouse park. The Geneva Community Club had hidden 1,800 eggs for the event.

Tom Ewalt's circus, Bell Bros., left its winter quarters in Geneva for the summer annual tour.

September: A true square dance was held Friday evening. September 24. Music was furnished by Don Machan and his band, one of the best-known square dance bands in the Midwest. The dance was held on the pavement between the Geneva State Bank and the Picard building.

History of the Geneva City Band (1875-1958)

The first known record of any band activity in Geneva was in 1875 when Silas B. Camp came to town after having taught music in Beatrice in 1873-74. Mr. Camp organized a band that year and was active in this work until 1904. Not much is known of the first few years of this band, but in 1882 a history of Nebraska states that Geneva, a town of 500 people, had three bands: Geneva Cornet Band, Company G Martial Band, and a juvenile band. Probably some members were active in more than one band, and, as far as is known, Mr. Camp was the inspiration and motivating influence behind the entire band program as well as the director of all three bands. Company G had been organized in 1881, indicating that the Martial Band was a fairly new organization in 1882. A history of Nebraska states that Geneva, a town of 500 people, had three bands: Geneva Cornet Band, Company G Martial Band, and a juvenile band. Probably some members were active in more than one band, and, as far as is known, Mr. Camp was the inspiration and motivating influence behind the entire band program as well as the director of all three bands. Company G had been organized in 1881, indicating that the Martial Band was a fairly new organization in 1882. A history of Nebraska states that Geneva, a town of 500 people, had three bands: Geneva Cornet Band, Company G Martial Band, and a juvenile band. Probably some members were active in more than one band, and, as far as is known, Mr. Camp was the inspiration and motivating influence behind the entire band program as well as the director of all three bands. Company G had been organized in 1881, indicating that the Martial Band was a fairly new organization in 1882.
In the formation, organization, and direction of the first band in Geneva, Silas B. Camp was the outstanding personality both in instruction and inspiration. Mr. Camp's ability and pleasant personality contributed much to interest others in securing instruments and giving time and effort in rehearsal to build a really good band. After the Camp era, under Mr. Grant, the band was temporarily suspended and the July 4th celebration at Geneva included a parade ½ mile long led by Professor Mitchell's band from Hebron and Major Pendleton's Drum Corps and Military Band from York. Various civic activities in Geneva used bands from York, Hebron, Fairmont, Exeter, and Sutton for the next several years, but the desire for a Geneva band was always quite strong and in July, 1907, a number of local musicians held a meeting and the Nebraska Signal gave the following report:

"A Band Proposed for Geneva

"A number of Geneva young men would like to participate in the organization of a town band. For the most part at least they have their own instruments. So long as they are willing to provide their own instruments, they feel that the citizens of the town would be willing to co-operate with them. They have appointed Charles B. Reeve to represent them in this matter and Mr. Reeve is presenting the matter to the people through the newspaper.

"The kind of co-operation the young men need most is assistance in employment of a competent band instructor. They desire to make their organization creditable if they form an organization. To do this it will be necessary to hire an instructor and that will take some money. The Signal will be pleased to publish the names of all who are willing to contribute to such a fund and the amount of such contributions. Anyone who desires further particulars can obtain them from Mr. Reeve or any of the others interested."

On June 19, 1907, the Brotherhood of St. Paul Orchestra, so named because the members held their rehearsals in the Brotherhood Room of the Geneva Methodist Church, held a musical program at the church. This was repeated on July 2, 1907. The Brotherhood Band also held rehearsals fairly consistently for several years without a professional director. Ted Nicholas and one or two other members were acting directors at various times. And although the band improved steadily, outside organizations were used for picnics, fairs, and other occasions. Professor Leroy was a talented cornetist and he set a high standard of musicianship for the musicians to follow. He also directed the Geneva Brotherhood Orchestra and instructed in band for a while at the Girls' Training School. In 1916, he received an offer to go to York for a similar position and, as Geneva could not match the offer, he accepted it.


organized for a more efficiently activated program. The City Amusement Committee met and elected the following officers: president, Charles B. Reeve, and secretary, John E. Curtiss. Some of the money for the maintenance of this organization was secured through taxation and some through public subscription. This continued to be the system used to finance the band until approximately 1920, when the city council adopted an amusement tax. Since then this has been the support of the city summer band program.

On December 21, 1916, the Hallowell Concert Company was secured to give a benefit concert for the Geneva City Band. This group was composed of personnel of exceptional merit. The vocal music instructor of Geneva City Schools, Miss Claire Owens, stated that it was the finest musical program ever presented in the city. This group was all male except for one woman drummer.

At the benefit program given on February 21, 1918, the band and orchestra were assisted by the High School Boys’ Glee Club. The program included “Garden Dance” by Vargas, sung by the Glee Club, and the overture, “Garden of Eden,” played by the band.

Although conditions during World War I were to disrupt the band program considerably, the Signal carried the note that the Geneva Band of 22 musicians was giving concerts every Wednesday evening in the park with Professor Grant directing. During those times the band sometimes consisted of as few as eight musicians but, as Alfred Elder later reported, they never missed a concert. Alfred had come to Geneva in 1918 when he purchased the McCall Jewelry and Music Store and, as there was a shortage of bass players, Alfred played bass horn in the band for many years. He also played a most important part in promoting the finances of the band. Much of the fine spirit of good will which prevailed through the depression years when money became very scarce, was directly due to the efforts of Alfred Elder.

Professor Grant left in 1919 and the directorship of the band was handed to a young man just home from the service, Paul W. Curtiss. Paul had started his musical career on his father’s tenor horn in the Brotherhood Band. He made rapid progress and while he was in high school his father presented him with a new cornet which was his pride and joy. Paul enlisted in the army and was stationed at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Washington, D. C. He had a brilliant career in the Army Band and at the end of the war was quite proficient. Paul gave this job everything he had and from 1919 to 1951 he directed the City Band. In 1925, a group of high-school band members, led by Burdette Higginbotham, asked Paul to organize a high-school band. Paul agreed, and served the first year without compensation. Since that time the Geneva High School Band has been an important and active part of the educational program of the Geneva schools. During Paul’s tenure as band instructor at Geneva High, beginners’ band practice was held immediately after school twice a week and the advanced band rehearsed from 7 P.M. to 8:30 on Mondays and Wednesdays. Mr. Curtiss achieved considerable success with the band. He produced some fine bands as well as some exceptional musicians. But even more important than this, Paul set an example of fine Christian morals and a pleasant personality which made him the friend of every boy and girl who played under his direction. He played many outside jobs with the city band at fairs, picnics, and other occasions. Paul and his band were an important part of the Fillmore County Fair every year since 1925. Paul also directed bands at various times at Tobias, Davenport, Shickley, and Fairmont. He also directed the Tehama Shrine Band at Hastings for several years and the Sesostris Shrine Band at Lincoln from 1946 to 1950. He was in great demand to play in Shrine and American Legion bands on convention trips and played in Los Angeles, Miami, Atlantic City, Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, Denver, and other places. In 1949, Paul entered Lincoln General Hospital for surgery and his son, John Arthur, directed the band that year. In 1950, Byron Havlicek assisted. On March 19, 1951, Paul passed on, leaving many friends to mourn his death.

In May, 1951, the Geneva school system secured Herman L. Larsen of Marquette, Nebraska, to take over the band program. Mr. Larsen commenced his work by preparing for the summer concert season, the high point of which was the dedication of the new bandstand at the Geneva City Park, as a memorial to Paul W. Curtiss. At this ceremony musicians came from all over this part of the country to honor their deceased friend. The Burlington Band of Lincoln chartered a bus and brought most of the fellows Paul had played with while connected with that organization. Wayne Sherrard, director of Bands at Illinois Normal School, directed two numbers, and Harold Chatelsain, director of the Fairbury Municipal Band, also directed a number. This band consisted of 96 musicians, including Paul’s brother Val of Lincoln and Paul’s two sons, Arthur and Charles. Arthur played a solo.

Geneva's portable bandstand—used from 1949 through 1951. It was pulled onto Main Street every Wednesday night during the summer for concerts.
Mr. Larsen directed the city band during the summer season of 1951 and then organized the first full-time band program in the Geneva schools. The senior band met four times a week in addition to marching rehearsal, and group or sectional rehearsals were held during the day. The younger folk work one or two days a week in addition to small group sessions during the school day. Mr. Larsen also instructs in boys' vocal work. Herman, like his predecessor, displays not only a fine ability as a musician but also a most likable and friendly personality. He has a great deal of influence on many of the young people of this community and they have profited greatly from their association with him.

From about 1941 to the present a significant change has taken place in the membership of the Geneva City Band. For many years prior to World War II the band had been composed largely of adults, mostly men, with a few women. But with the accelerated expansion of industrial development just before the war a number of the fellows left Geneva to find employment and those who stayed at home were so busy that adult participation in the band concerts dropped considerably. Gradually high-school students were brought into the group to fill vacancies. From 1931 to 1941, high-school students were admitted into the band only after graduation or to fill vacancies, and then only when they displayed exceptional ability. Although this system was continued for some time, the need for these younger people became so great that by 1951 only a few college students and a couple of adults remained on the roster. Since then the high-school band has taken over the summer band program and the members are admitted by invitation from the director. We note this change with some regret and we miss the former feeling of community pride on the part of our adults in playing in the band each summer. But we appreciate the wide acceptance and participation in the band by our school pupils. Twenty years ago not more than 60 or 70 people composed both beginners' and high-school and city bands. Now nearly 200 students are actively engaged in band work. Many superior ratings have been received by the band in high-school competitions, both as a band and in small group and individual competitions.

An important point in connection with the history of the band movement from its inception to the present is that continuously the organization has been directed, influenced, and guided by men of the highest caliber. Through the years the influence of men like Silas Camp, Arthur Curtiss, Charles Reeve, W. S. Nicholas, Ted Nicholas, Professor H. R. Grant, Hugh Hadsell, Professor Lever, Paul Curtiss, Alfred Elder, and Herman Larsen have made a deep and lasting impression on the lives of many young men and women who have grown up in our community and gone out into the world to be better citizens for having known and experienced the guidance and influence of these men.

In closing, we salute this organization whose primary object is to provide musical entertainment for the community but whose greatest contribution has been the building of high ethical standards and good character in many of our young people.

—Ben D. Fassell

Golf

The spring and summer of 1920 marked the beginning of golf playing at the county fairgrounds in Fillmore County. What activity there was at that time took place on the quarter stretch and was mostly just knocking the ball from one end of the stretch to the other.

The first club was started the following year with nine paid members. The membership fee was $5 a year. But as the years passed, the club grew, the grounds were improved, a ground keeper was employed, greens were located and sanded, and a team of horses purchased to operate the ground-keeping machinery the club had purchased.

The club prepared for several years and was a really good affair until the dry years of the thirties, when operations practically ceased. Through the prosperous years several tournaments were held, attracting golfers from many counties. At one tournament there were 112 entries.

The original club paid the Fillmore County Agricultural Society $200 as rent for the use of the grounds. The following year the rent was reduced to $100, but at that time the members of the club refused to pay for the use of the grounds and began looking for another location.

The board wisely decided to waive all charges for the use of the grounds, noting that by the time the fairgrounds had to be cleared for the annual fair, the job had been done and that expense had been eliminated.

During World War II the fairgrounds were rented for pasture. In the spring of 1947, the community expressed a strong desire for the revival of golf. A group of men persuaded Paul H. Farmer to accept the presidency and the club was organized.

The west half of the fairgrounds was all plowed and seeded to blue grass that spring. For two years only 5 holes were played, then 9 holes were established again.

The location and the greens have been changed twice since the revival of the game in 1947.

The German Lutheran parsonage on the gravel road 4 miles S of Grafton was bought by the golf club in the fall of 1958 and moved to the fairgrounds and placed at the SW edge of the race track. During 1958 the house was completely remodelled into a club house. In the spring of 1959 the lawn was seeded and sidewalks built around the new club house.

The membership has grown from 87 to a 1967 membership of 134.

THE COUNTY NEWSPAPER

The Nebraska Signal is the result of the combination of 16 newspapers published at one time or another in Fillmore County. On February 14, 1894, Frank O. Edgecombe purchased the Geneva Republican, then in its 20th year, from M. V. King & Son. On the same day he purchased the Geneva Journal, published by J. A. Loudermilch. In 1896, he purchased the Nebraska Signal, which had been established in 1881 by Dr. J. B. Brazelton at Fairmont. Mr. Edgecombe moved The Signal plant to Geneva and combined it with that of the Republican-Journal. To get away from the hyphenated name, he retained instead the name of the Nebraska Signal.

Other papers which were ultimately consolidated with the Signal included the Fairmont Republican, Fairmont County Journal, Fairmont Dispatch, Geneva Gazette, Grafton Sun, Strang Reporter, Shickley Herald, Ohiowa Ohiowan, Milligan Review, Fairmont Chronicle, Geneva Daily, Milligan Times, Exeter Enterprise, and Ohiowa Spotlight.

The early-day newspapers had no telephones or typewriters, the type was all hand set, and in the first few years the papers were printed on hand presses. When the Republican was started, there were only a few frame buildings in the business section of Geneva.

Weekly newspapers in those days were highly personalized. The papers editorially were the publishers' personal organs. Political beliefs were taken very much to heart. There were some very virulent writings in those days. Editors attacked their "esteemed contemporaries" with little provocation.

When Mr. Edgecombe came to Geneva, his first two years were times of drouth and depression. In the fall of 1894, hot winds destroyed the entire corn crop, and 1895 was a very dry year. As times got better, improvements in the printing equipment were made. Hand composition was replaced by the purchase of typesetting machines. The improvements have continued, and the Signal now has one of the best-equipped small-city plants in the state. The newspaper has, for several years been printed on a Duplex web press, which prints, folds, and trims the paper and delivers it ready for mailing.

In the summer of 1949, a new front was put on the Signal building. The building was erected in 1900 and was not suited to modern business. The new front not only makes a greatly improved appearance,
but also the editorial and news room has been enlarged and working conditions are better. The office front is all glass. The old sidewalk, with railings around two openings in the walk, was torn out, the holes filled, and a new walk laid. From the walk to the office floor level, glass bricks were used to give more light in the press room in the basement. The business office was given an asphalt tile floor.

Frank O. Edgecombe, newspaper publisher in Geneva for more than 50 years, built the Signal from a small beginning into one of the better-known newspapers of the state and nation.

"The blind editor from Nebraska," as Frank was known, was born on a farm in Ohio on February 13, 1864. In April, 1885, his parents came to southeast Nebraska and settled on a farm near Rulo. When he grew up, he attended the Methodist college at York and was graduated with the class of 1884. (This college was later merged with Nebraska Wesleyan University.)

After a few years in the banking business in Rulo, Frank Edgecombe bought a half interest in the Falls City Journal in 1889. In 1890, he rented completely from the bank and bought out the other half interest, moved to Falls City, and was in the newspaper business for keeps.

In 1892, when he was 27 years old, he lost his sight through a hunting accident. A group of hunters was walking through a stubble field in western Nebraska, and a shot hit Mr. Edgecombe in the face, causing immediate and permanent blindness.

After 23 days in an Omaha hospital, where he got his first experience in being read to and in dictating to a stenographer, he returned to the Journal office in Falls City to resume his work.

Two years later he sold the Falls City paper and bought the two competing newspapers in Geneva and moved his family here. This was to be his home for the rest of his life.

Frank Edgecombe won many honors for his newspaper. He served as president of the Nebraska Press Association and the National Editorial Association, and was always a leader in forward movements in his profession.

His son, Tyler Edgecombe, was graduated from the School of Agriculture of the University of Nebraska in 1907 and the university in 1909. He was the old Beatrice Express until 1913, when he returned to Geneva to be associated with his father at the Signal. Tyler assumed control of the Signal in 1941.

The new publisher was well grounded in newspaper fundamentals, having been indoctrinated with the life and the business from the time he was able, as a boy, to help out in the shop. He explained that he studied agriculture at the university to be able to be of better service to his rural area and to be able to understand and grow with the main industry of his county and state.

The new publisher advocated and adopted modern business principles in his operation of the Signal; but in doing so, Tyler did not alter the community-service ideals set up by his father. The Signal is still a strong booster for community betterment. Its policies stress service to subscribers, advertisers, and the area in general.

Following in his father's footsteps, Tyler has long been active in N.R.A., also serving a term as president of the association. He is a past president of the Geneva Chamber of Commerce and of Geneva Rotary, has headed the four Masonic bodies of Geneva, and is active in various other civic capacities.

Tyler's son, John Edgecombe, joined the Signal in 1947 after spending three years in the Army Air Force and attending the University of Missouri's Linotype School. He is now a partner in the business and advertising.

Howard W. Hamilton joined the Signal staff in 1948 as news editor and has edited the editorial page since 1950.

The Signal has presently a circulation of 3,965, third largest among weekly newspapers in Nebraska.

Some interesting early newspaper history was supplied by Mrs. Marcus Alexander of Pomona, California, in a letter which the Signal published on April 14, 1930:

"In the spring of 1883, we arrived in Fairmont: mother, brother Leo, cousin Leota Merrill, and myself, bound for Geneva. There being no railroad there, we took the hack, with Ed Nultals as driver.

"Father [T. Wilkins] came ahead of us from our home in Bedford, Iowa, to look around for a print shop. Dr. M. Propst of Blockton, Iowa, came to see a store and then to be head of father. After arriving, Dr. Propst was taken quite sick and father nursed him back to health. Then Dr. Propst's family, consisting of his wife and two sons, Waldo and Clyde, came to live in Geneva. Later, Carl came with his uncle, Dan Propst. Father liked the looks of this little burg, so he bought the Review from Arthur Scott. Arthur and his brother Ernest had bought it from M. M. Neeves in 1882. Father changed the name from Review to Fillmore County Republican. Mr. Neeves had published the first newspaper Geneva had. Father had a job printer by the name of John Thompson from Sigourney, Iowa, came and take charge as foreman.

"Quoting from Mrs. Arthur Scott, who is still living in Losmita, California. The Review was located in the center of the block south of the Jameson Hotel, in a story-and-a-half frame building. A family lived upstairs.

"The Scotts moved the shop to the east block over a hardware store. This building was a story and a half. While it was still located in the upstairs rooms, Father bought from them.

"The Citizens Bank was building a new frame building where the brick building now stands. Father had to have more room, so he rented the second story and moved the office there. About this time the little town began to grow, and it wasn't long until the Burlington began to lay ties and rails. The first train that rolled in was a freight engine, a freight car, and a caboose. I have a picture of that train. I do not remember the year.

"Two weeks later, in the Signal for April 28, 1930, Mrs. A. J. Brown of Geneva gave the date as June 7, 1886."

"When we got settled over the Citizens Bank, I took it in my head to set type. This was long before the time when the typesetting machine came in. It was talked about, but Father said he could not be done, setting type by machinery. I was taken in the print shop and was called the 'devil'sliss' (printing office slang). I don't remember the date we had to move the shop from the bank building, as the building was sold to Nick Longly. To make room for the new building, Mr. Longly moved the building to a corner lot across from the library. It is still called the Longly Building, but now is half a block north of the corner. The building was built a year north from what is now the R. A. Smith store. The office was downstairs and we lived upstairs. That was when Mark and I were married. I do not know if it still stands there or not.

"Robert Crowley came to work for us there. Father put in a new printing press and job press. We moved an old Washington hand press before we moved. It was my job to stand there and ink the forms after the type was set."

"Father, T. Wilkins, sold the Fillmore County Republican to M. V. King and son Oran November 5, 1889. Then in 1894 Frank Edgecombe bought it and a few years later changed the name to Nebraska Signal."

PROFESSIONAL ROSTER

Doctors

Among the first doctors to locate in Geneva were Dr. Richard Dailey and Dr. G. R. Hart. Dr. Dailey, born in Madison, Indiana, began the study of medicine in that state in 1874, and completed his training in the practice of medicine in Geneva during the spring of 1877. Dr. Hart came to Fillmore County and located on a homestead on Turkey Creek in Geneva precinct in July of 1871; however, he did not move to Geneva until the fall of 1878. He began his practice in Ford County, Illinois. The following list of Geneva doctors, their birthplaces, and year of registration in Fillmore County is as complete as possible from available records.

1883: George Moze, Indiana; William T. Moze, Kentucky; Ben B. Mozee, Kentucky.
1884: Morgan Propst, Virginia.
1885: Samuel M. Herb, Illinois.
1886: W. H. Davis, Canada.
1887: E. L. Hester, Missouri; Thomas C. Canine, Indiana.
1888: L. D. Bailar, Ohio.
1892: B. W. Combee, Indiana.
1894: Flora G. Harbaugh (Mrs. C. M. Barnett).
1897: George Washington, Johnson, Virginia; Ora S. Stephenson.
1901 to 1967: Archibald Murphy; W. C. Beaver, Osteopath; Frank A. Bates, Osteopath; Frederick L. Beck; Joel C. Hickman; Royal Woods; Nathan H. Blakeley; Claire Owens; Charles Curtis Wallingsford; C. Dolfen, Osteopath; Chiropractor; Aaron Guenge, Chiropractor; C. D. Stansberry; J. M. S. Chesshir; Clarence S. Ford- Claus C. Delfs; Blanche R. Bailar, Chiropractor; Aaron Guenge, Chiropractor; G. W. Corman.
1907: C. O. Woods; Nathan H. Blakeley; Claire Owens; Charles Curtis Wallingsford; C. Dolfen, Osteopath; Chiropractor; Aaron Guenge, Chiropractor; C. D. Stansberry; J. M. S. Chesshir; Clarence S. Ford- Claus C. Delfs; Blanche R. Bailar, Chiropractor; Aaron Guenge, Chiropractor; G. W. Corman.
J. C. Clark (1888), A. F. Cogswell (1894), J. W. Puckett (1898), Optometrist; A. A. Ashby; Charles F. Ashby; Vincent S. Lynn; Edward J. Hunsick.


Dentists


Veterinarians


Lawyers (in practice, 1967)


Other Occupations


Plumbers (1967) — licensed by City Clerk: Joe E. Schelkopf, Dean Garrett, Harrison Xarr, Koehler & Co.

Electricians (1967) — persons and businesses licensed by City Clerk: James S. Matekja (Geneva Electric), Fred Schalander, John E. Schelkopf, Don Cuda, Andrews Electric, Kaneb Terminal (Fred Vermogen), John Wilkins Construction (Wayne Churchill), Koehler & Co., Gamble, Gehabe Construction Co.


BUSINESS HISTORY

The following summary is from the Bulletin for January 3, 1884:

Geneva This town is the county seat of Fillmore County, and is located at the geographical center of school Sec. 36, town 7, range 3 west. Its location is a pleasant one, on the level upland prairie. The town was laid out on an open prairie, but now a fine growth of forest and shade trees surround it. The population numbers about 400. It is located about 8 miles S of the B. & M. Railroad, and the nearest railroad station is at Fairmont.

Business Houses and Stocks Carried

Dempster Bros., drugs, general merchandise $25,000
Platt & Smith, general merchandise 10,000
F. H. Briggs, groceries 5,000
Mozee & Co. 1,000
A. G. Camp & Son, general 5,000
L. Fiegenbaum, drugs 5,000
H. Conant, notions 3,000
I. E. Mack, confectionery 2,000
B. W. Jones, restaurant 500
Jones & Barry, hardware 4,000
Stone & Pardee, hardware 3,000
Baris & Reed, furniture 3,000
S. H. Yates, flour and feed mill 2,000
M. Cowell, flour and feed mill 1,000
Mozee Bros., general merchandise 5,000
Mrs. G. Hedge, millinery 1,500
Mrs. Haywood, bakery 1,000
J. Selby, coal 1,500
C. Heath, harness 1,500
W. S. Crawford, harness 1,200
F. Stone, stone chimneys 1,200

Total $74,700

Improvements

District schoolhouse $ 5,000
Opera house and store, Jensen & Briggs 4,000
Mozee Bros., store and addition 3,000
Mr. Conant, store and addition 2,000
A. O. Taylor, office 500
S. Camp, store building 300
J. M. Fisher, dwelling 4,000
E. Spear, dwelling 1,500
C. Donathorpe, dwelling 800
Mrs. Clark, dwelling 700
A. J. Jones, dwelling 800
Mrs. P. D. Sturdevant, dwelling 1,000
Mrs. McKee, dwelling 1,200
F. Heiderstadt, dwelling 1,200
C. H. Bane, dwelling 1,200
Mrs. Moore, dwelling 800
J. Lemon, dwelling 800
O. C. Lacy, dwelling 200
A. J. Beals, dwelling 600
G. Nettleton, dwelling 400
C. L. Spear, livery barn 200

Total $37,800

Professions

The attorneys are: C. H. Bane, J. Jensen, W. H. Cooksey, and J. D. Otho.

The doctors are: B. G. and William Mozee; R. T. Dailey and G. R. Hart.

The clergymen are: Revs. M. E. Donisthorpe, Willis and Pardee.

Societies


The Geneva cornet band and the juvenile band furnish music for the town.

The real-estate business is represented by Taylor & Day, S. Camp, and B. Shickley.

The insurance agents are: J. C. D. McDonald, A. V. Dworak, and J. M. Mack.

In the next 22 months, the business interests of the town expanded considerably, as indicated by this Business Directory from the Fillmore County Republican of October 28, 1885:

Billings & Donisthorpe—attorneys-at-law (on Center St. near Court)
Batzle, C. — Fillmore Hotel, Lumber, F. H. — groceries, etc.
Brunner, Adam—shoemaker (on corner next to Camp’s store)
Brown, Mrs. F. M.—milliner and dressmaker
Carson, J. D.—attorney-at-law (office with A. O. Taylor)
Cooksey, W. H.—post office, news depot
Camp, C. D.—photographer
Camp, J. H.—liveryman and feed stable
Clark, George C.—painter (east side of courthouse square)
Cudworth & Evans—milliners
Dempster, Hazlett & Green—drugs, jewelry, and books
Dempster & Stewart—dry goods and tailoring (successors to Dempster Bros., opposite the courthouse)
Faust, J.—shoe shop
Fillfield, W. A.—attorney-at-law
Foster, J. H.—Co.—real estate and loan agents
Fiegenbaum, Lou S.—drugs, wall paper, and books
Fillebrown, Mrs. Ellen—milliner

Fillmore County Bar (1895). Back row, left to right: William Waite, deputy sheriff; Hon. W. G. Hastings, presiding; E. A. Cary, reporter; Bright B. Og, sheriff; F. B. Donisthorpe, John J. Burke, deputy district clerk; H. F. Pultitz, district clerk, H. P. Wilson, Seated: John Barsby, county attorney; Robert J. Sloan; A. Sandage, bailiff; D. Carson; James W. Christy; Frank W. Sloan, Charles A. Fowler; Charles A. Sloan.

Photo from Geneva State Bank
Green, G. R.—jeweler and watch maker
Glover, Mrs. S. J.—dressmaker (in Mrs. Fillmore's millinery store)
Hart, G. R.—physician and surgeon (office in Fiegenbaum's drugstore)
Herb, S. M.—physician and surgeon (office over Woodruff's hardware store)
Heath, Mrs. C. H.—teacher of vocal and instrumental music
Heath, C. H.—harmonies and saddles
Henderson, S. J.—blacksmith
Hitch, G. R.—groceries, etc.
Jensen, J.—attorney-at-law (in Citizens Bank)
Jensen, Fiegenbaum & Griffiths—bankers
King & Wilkins—real estate, loans, and abstractors
Lemmon, E. O.—contractor and builder
Lacy, O. P.—furniture dealer (west side of courthouse square)
Luke, Mrs. L. M.—milliner
Mathews, A.—dentist
McClintock, Miss Martha—teacher of instrumental music (at Mrs. Heiderstadt's in NE Geneva)
Martin, H. H.—contractor and builder (on corner, northeast of courthouse)
Moxon Bros.—drugs and dry goods
Moore Bros.—physicians and surgeons
Matson & Wilkins—tobacconists
Ough, T.—wagon maker
Pittman, A.—carpet weaver
Smith, Fisher & Fife—bankers
Shumway & Alexander—meat market
Sayas & Boyce—plasterers and stone masons
Spear, D. J.—drugs and hardware
Stone & Sager—windmills, pumps, and belting
Shumway & Alexander—meat market
Ough, T.—wagon maker
Pittman, A.—carpet weaver
Smith, Fisher & Fife—bankers
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Sayas & Boyce—plasterers and stone masons
Spear, D. J.—drugs and hardware
Stone & Sager—windmills, pumps, and belting
Shumway & Alexander—meat market
Ough, T.—wagon maker

Geneva will in a few years be one of the leading railroad centers of Nebraska. It is a station on the Chester and Fairmont Elkhorn & Missouri Valley R.R., which gives it a direct outlet to different points of the compass. Other railroad companies are extending their lines in this direction, among which are the Missouri Pacific and the Wyandott & Northwestern, and indications are that Geneva will in a few years be one of the leading railroad centers of the state. The town is situated in the center of the county, the products of which are grain, cattle, and hogs, increasing in such measure as to attract attention. The soil is rich and fertile and admirably adapted to growth of all cereals. . . . There is a large school building and an excellent graded school. The churches are the Methodist, Rev. G. M. Couffer; Congregational, Rev. H. S. Wannamaker; Baptist, Rev. L. T. Fisher.

Bank of Geneva are solid banking institutions and are substantial aids in building up the place.

"The traveling public and others are cared for by the Stowell House, G. Stowell, proprietor; the Platt House, by Frank Strong; and the Fillmore Hotel by C. Banta."

"Alexander, Mark—meat market
Antes, S. P.—assistant agent
Arnold, George F.—real estate
Atherton, H. A.—manager of the Nebraska Telephone Co.
Ball, L. D.—railroad agent
Bank of Geneva—A. O. Taylor, president; William H. Jameson, cashier
Banta, C.—proprietor of Fillmore Hotel
Beals, A. J.—city transfer
Beals, T. J.—lumber
Beals & Webster—carpenters
Beals & Wilkins—barbers
Bentley, D. B.—blacksmith
Berndt, M. & S.—clothing
Billings, E. M.—attorney
Breitling, J. F.—restaurant
Brown & Farr—groceries
Brown, William—ice
Burk, J. M.—hardware
Burnett & Merrill—carpenters
Camp, C. D.—photographer
Camp, J. H.—livery
Carpenter, C. M.—millinery
Casnov, John D.—attorney-at-law
Chapman, A.—real estate
Citizens Bank—authorized capital $50,000; treasurer, president; H. L. Smith, vice-president; E. K. Cobb, cashier
Clark & Bumgarn—agricultural implements
Clark, J. C.—dentist
Cobb, E. K.—cashier of Citizens Bank
Conant, D. H.—attorney
Cone, C. H. & Co.—lumber—R. W. Schmoldt, manager
Cooksey, W. H.—postmaster
Crawford & Brown—groceries
Crowley Bros.—rubber stamps
Curtis & Son—loans
Daltry, E. H.—planes, organs
Darow, J. R.—grocer
Dempsatt & Convell—general merchandise
Dempsatt & Haslett—drugs
Donisenthal, F. B.—attorney
Donisenthal, S.—abstracts
Dworak, V.—loans, insurance
Exchange Bank—George M. Smith, president; J. M. Fisher, cashier
Faust, J. F.—shoemaker
Fauver, W. H., Dr.—veterinary surgeon
Fiegenbaum, L. S.—drugs, etc.
Fife, W. V.—attorney
Fielbloom, Ellen, Mrs.—millinery
Fillmore County Democrat—Sumner E. King, publisher
Fillmore County Republican—T. Wilkins, publisher
Gaylord, Will R.—abstracts
Geneva Manufacture & Repair shop—David C. Mowry, proprietor
Geneva Milling Co.—Jacob Pflug
Geneva Roller Milling Co.—A. O. Taylor, president; F. H. Briggs, secretary; J. Jensen, treasurer
Glover, Mrs. S. J.—dressmaker
Green, G. R.—jewelry
Griffiths—bankers
Haskins Bros.—carpenters
Henderson, John—meat market
Henderson, S. J.—blacksmith
Holland, David—barber
House, G. Stowell, proprietor; the Platt House, by Frank Strong; and the Fillmore Hotel by C. Banta.
Holl, Frank—tailor
Hitch, M. & Sturtevant—general merchandise
Huston & Schofield—lighting rods
Jensen, J.—president Citizens Bank, attorney-at-law
Jewell, T. B.—loom manufacturer
Jones, F. W., Mrs.—dressmaker
Justice, F. A.—groceries
Keefer, T. M., Miss—dressmaker
King, Sumner E.—publisher of Fillmore County Democrat
Koehler & Co.—grain
La Paul, C. A.—well digger
Lair, Martin—shoemaker
Lemmon, E. O.—carpenter
Lightbody & Tilley—livery
Limback & Heath—drugs
Lonely, L. N.—waggonmaker
Luke, J. H.—real estate
McClintock, Martha, Mrs.—music teacher
McMadden, J.—barber
McGregor, C. F.—attorney
Mayland & Gill—meat market
Musser, C. L.—dry goods
Miller, H. A. & Son—attorney
Mohrman & Arends—general merchandise
Moore, B.—physician
Moore, G.—physician
Moore, T. E.—physician
Nebraska Telephone Co.—H. A. Atherton, manager
Noyes, J. M.—coal
Otis, F.—carpenter
Ough, Thomas—waggonmaker
Pardeus, Henry—billiards
Parker & Son—groceries
Parkhurst, H. L.—lumber and coal
Peth, George—shoemaker
Phillips & Son—hardware
Platt House—Strong & Ward, proprietors
Powell, W., Mrs.—restaurant
Price, Joseph—grain
Probst, M.—physician
Shickley Bros.—real estate
Shickley, J. B.—auctioneer
Shuster & Co.—foundry
Smith, Luke—photographer
Smith, H. L.—vice-president of Citizens Bank
Smith, Charles—shoemaker
Spear, G. R.—dry goods
Spear, D. P.—hardware
Stanley, S.—flour and feed
Stevens, E. D.—coal
Stovall, E.—proprietor of Stowell, prop.
Strong & Ward, Props.—Platt House
Stutzel, Q.—painter
The Fillmore Hotel—C. Banta, proprietor
Thompson, W., Mrs.—restaurant
Tidball & Fuller—lumber and coal
Tidd, T. M., Mrs.—physician
Turner, Robert—barber
Tyson, L., Mrs.—restaurant
Wait, J. E.—subscription books
Walker, S. S.—painter
Walkup, W. C.—groceries
Ward, J. H.—hardware
Watrous & Spear—meat market
Westover & Son—carpenters
Weed, W. L.—station agent B. & M. Railroad
W. R., Mr.—shoemaker
Wheeler, W. T.—coal
Williams, Mr.—proprietor of Fillmore County Republican
Williams Bros.—painters
Williams, M. D.—real estate
Wolfe & Burder—carpenters
Wilson, D. W.—restaurant
Wood, T. L. & Co.—merchant

Photo from Mrs. Guy Brown, Sr.

Peter Youngers' nursery crew in the early 1900's. This building, later
used by the Economy Paint Mills, is now the American Legion Hall.

Then, as we move some 20 years from that first list
of 1884, we find the population quadrupled. This description
and directory are from the "Nebraska State Gazetteer and
Business Directory for 1902-03:

Geneva—Population 1,600, is on the B. & M. and F.E. & M.V.
R.R.'s near the center of Fillmore County of which it is the county
seat. It has 2 banks, 2 newspapers, 2 elevators, 1 roller mill, and an
abundance of churches Express: Adams, American.

Attorneys—F. B. Thorpe Dorris, J. D. Mathewson, B. F. Shickley,
Sloan Brothers (Charles H. and Frank W.), H. P. Wilson.

Abstracts—F. M. Flory
Banks—Citizens Bank, J. O. Walker, president; C. W. and V. C.
Shickley, vice-presidents; E. K. Cobb, cashier

Hardware and harness—Hranac Brothers
Hardware and furniture—D Geiselman
Hardware and implements—M. Barnett, W. H. Spear & Co.
Harness and upholsterty—A Barnes
Ice and meat market—M. Alexander
Hotel—Fillmore Hotel, L. W. Thompson, proprietor

Shoe repair—E. A. Bidelman, Albert Kline, Wise & Owens (Peter Wise,
Joseph Owens)

Laundry—A. C. Phelps
Mayor—H. P. Wilson
Meat market—W. E. Eckley, W. Wright
Newspapers—National Signal, F. O. Edgecombe, editor; Geneva
Gazette, W. J. Waite, manager

Millinery—Mrs. F. E. Houcho, Palmer & Wheeler (H. L. Palmer,
A. M. Wheeler), Mary J. Traver

Music dealer—George H. Nelson
News and cigars—Hyde & Co.

Billiard—F. M. Eaton
Bottler—M. Gasper

B & M R.R.—W. L. Wood, agent
City Clerk—J. D. Hamilton
City Treasurer—W. S. Huston
Clothing—W. P. Eaton

City Treasurer—J. D. Hamilton
Clothing—W. S. Huston

Confectioners—B. F. Walton
County Clerk—A. N. Strickland
County Judge—Frank W. Sloan
County Clerk—A. N. Strickland
County Judge—Frank Skipton
County Treasurer—Jacob Weis
District Court Reporter—J. W. Brewster

Burleigh's shoe store (in 1800's). Left to right: J. S. Burleigh, Laura
Bender, J. C. Bender.
<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Chairman of Board Clerks</th>
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<td>M. M. Neeves</td>
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<td>J. M. Fisher</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>Frank Bates</td>
<td>A. D. Curtiss</td>
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**SOME GENEVA FIRSTS**

- **1871** County Judge—William H. Blain
- **1872** Undertaker—J. B. Noble & Co.
- **1873** James H. Bigelow erected the first store building.
- **1875** Mark M. Neeves published Geneva's first newspaper, the Fillmore County Review.
- **1876** The first building on the town site was the county jail.
- **1877** The first Sunday service in the new Methodist Church was held. Rev. Chapin preached in the morning and Rev. Powell of Fairmont preached in the evening.
- **1878** The first liquor license was granted to Amos Herr.
- **1879** The first appointed board of election. Judges of election were A. A. Camp, B. M. Putnam, J. D. Williams. Fees were $2 per person.
- **1880** The first sidewalks were built. It was decided to start on Church and Center Sts. They were to be built of good lumber not less than 1" in thickness and laid crosswise and nailed to and supported by timbers at least 2 x 4" placed not more than 2' apart. The walk should not be less than 6' wide and 4' wide depending on the location of the business district. Every owner of lots shall be privileged to build the sidewalks at their own expense and not be assessed. The walks were to be completed before September 1.
- **1881** The first filling station in Geneva, built by C. J. Warner in 1922. Notice the "stop button" in center foreground.
SOME PASSING GLIMPSES

The following miscellaneous items, mostly relating to Geneva, have been condensed from contemporary newspaper accounts.

1872—December—About 600 Pawnee Indians camped for a few days on the Blue. They had left for the hunting grounds and to fight the Sioux. One of them bought a clean white shirt of a merchant here (Fairmont).

December—A "United States" windmill has arrived for P. J. Read and when erected all are invited to see it perform. He is the authorized agent west of Crete for Halladay's mill.

1873—Preaching at Pangles' schoolhouse on Turkey Creek on May 4, 1877.

Geneva, have been condensed from contemporary newspaper

1874—March—The Omaha Indians returning from their buffalo hunt camped on Turkey Creek Saturday, and some of the boys from Geneva persuaded the gents of the plains to array themselves in their best blankets and appear in the Court House in the evening, for the purpose of giving citizens a treat in the shape of a war dance. Evening arrived and so did the noble red men. The people paid 25 cents to see them go through their wild orgies. Messrs. Renshaw and Warner were Masters of Ceremonies. The music was a bass drum and an Injun to pound it. They danced! They danced the war dance, the scalp dance, the squash dance—and they danced several other dances, but we cannot remember the names nor do justice to the subject, so will merely say that the Indians had a war dance.

July—Mr. C. G. Worden, the well-known notion man with G. L. Florence & Co. of Atchison, Kansas, was in town Sunday and Monday with his traveling store (an immense wagon) of the best of goods in the line of notions. As proof our merchants always buy largely of Worden, and but very few orders for notions goods are sent away. He makes his runs here once every six weeks, consequently our merchants look to him for supplies and get them of best quality.

September—C. A. Smith, son of Dr. Smith of Geneva, left Monday for Lincoln to attend high school.

June—Courthouse yard has been plowed and countless number of weeds have been destroyed.

June—Messrs. Putnam have put up mosquito bars in the windows of the Putnam House.

August—Geneva taking up new water works. The hawly [Holly] system is now in use.

1880—Voted a tax on 7 mills on the dollar on all taxable property in the town of Geneva for general purposes.

January—The weather was so warm Turkey Creek didn't freeze and no ice had been harvested.

June—The Signal suggested that either the county or the city build a crossing across the street to the courthouse.

June—The county safe, weight 7,000 pounds, was being brought from Fairmont to Geneva on wagons. Two miles south of town it slipped off the wagons. It took several days to get it loaded again and brought to Geneva.


1885—May—The park around the courthouse is now a most beauti­ful spot and in the coming years the shade afforded by the trees will make it a popular resort, provided the business of the town does not grow up around the square so as to cause a perpetual dust in the park.

County Superintendent J. B. Lewis made the following report:

2,327. Male teachers employed, 39; female, 95.

frame, and two sod. Total cost of schools for year, $43,500.

The superintendent of the state census announced the value of all property in Fillmore County in 1886 was $2,510,854.

A. C. Tucker of Geneva sold a half interest in his famous horse, Belle K, for $1,500.

April—The steel cage for the county jail arrived.

May—A good many farmers were hauling their corn to market. The price was 13 cents per bushel.

December—an enthusiastic railroad meeting was held at Geneva to talk over the prospect of getting the Union Pacific to build through this county.

The frame of the new flour mill at Geneva was nearly up.

The Signal was urging farmers to plant some broom corn as there was considerable demand for that crop.

Farmers were complaining that chinch bugs were damaging their wheat and barley.

February—A band of Omaha Indians camped on the Blue River five miles from Fairmont and spent considerable time in town begging for food.

Mr. Harbaugh of Geneva left for Washington to secure a patent on a windmill. He had a model that he exhibited on the street.

It was an everyday occurrence for farmers to be on the streets selling apples of their own raising.

1886—January—Waterworks are all finished—two hose teams are being put in business.

February—Brick for the new Citizens Bank building is being piled in the street and work will commence as soon as the old frame can be got out of the way.

March—Revival meetings at the Methodist Church have attracted 20 good deal of attention during the past week and inquirers have become numerous.

April—A heathen Chinese visited Geneva last week and concluded it would be a profitable place to start a wash house.

April—W. H. Jameson has about perfected arrangements for the erection of a brick hotel on his residence property at the NE corner of the courthouse block. Ground was broken for the new Jameson Hotel last Thursday A.M. and work on the building will be pushed as rapidly as possible. It will be 38' x 109', two stories and a basement, and will cost about $18,000.

George Smith's new residence in east Geneva is rapidly nearing completion and he will occupy it early in the spring. The building will cost about $7,000 and is the handsomest in the county.

August—On motion, a water trough was ordered put in the square near the courthouse.

August—Starting September 1, the stores in Geneva will close every evening except Saturdays at 8 P.M.

September—Work has begun on the foundation for the new Episcopal Chapel on the corner opposite and south of the residence of F. H. Briggs.

1888—The Fillmore House — early hotel.

Photo from Deila Fisher
September—Postmaster Stewart has gone to a great deal of expense in refitting and remodeling the post office and putting it in shape to correspond with its new quarters. It’s doubtful if there is another office in the state in a city of this size that presents so metropolitan an appearance. Arlington Walworth’s farm (90 acres) a few miles NW of Geneva was sold for $1,860.

September—The new Masonic Temple is receiving its finishing touches and is the equal in every respect of any in the state. It will be formally dedicated on or about October 8th. On the same date the cornerstone of the new Episcopal Church will be laid with appropriate ceremonies by the Masons.

October—J. M. Noves has purchased the ground occupied by the Fillmore House and will commence the erection of a $15,000 hotel as soon as the plans, which are now in the hands of an architect, are completed.

January—Miss Jennie Brown bought the Shumway livery barn in Geneva. (It was on the corner where the Safeway Store now stands.)

1892

February—A law-and-order mass meeting was held at the Methodist Church in Geneva. J. B. Lewis acted as chairman.

February—S. Bair of near Fairmont marketed 106 bags that averaged 382 pounds. The price was 4 cents per pound.

1893

Every pair guaranteed fast black. For sale only by Sorrick & Son.


August—We heard someone remark a few days ago that a young lady in our city kneads bread with her gloves on. That’s nothing; we knead bread with our shirt on, with our pants, drawers, and socks on. In fact, we shall soon knead bread without any pants on, if our subscribers do not walk in and pay up.

Floving by steam successfully tested.

June—An occasional prairie schooner was seen wending its way eastward across Fillmore County, the occupants having been forced to give up western homes on account of drought.

June—According to assessors’ reports, the value of farm lands in the county was $1,414,519; city and village real estate, $255,512; personal property, $453,690; railway and telegraph property, $975; a total of $2,819,986, or an actual valuation of more than $16,000,000.

July—A soap peddler bought a dollar’s worth of soap at Stiles’s grocery at Fairmont. He cut the soap up and sold it at 25 cents per piece, taking in $38.75 and having some soap left to sell Geneva people.

The air was white with them all day.

—It was ordered that all slot machines be suspended and all gambling, lotteries, and raffles be prohibited in the City of Geneva.

The city paid Julia Larimer $300 medical bills and court costs for a broken arm caused by a fall. She sued the city for negligence in repairing a loose board in the walk and not having warning signs thereabouts.

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October—There had been a butter famine in Geneva for three weeks. Hot weather had dried up the pastures and the price of cream discouraged the feeding of cows. A number of Fillmore County people visited an Indian herb doctor at Alexandria. He was doing a big business.

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February—The the growing of winter wheat in this section was the principal subject of discussion at the farmers’ institute at Geneva. Spring wheat was the usual crop.

January—A Regular Hack Line

—We heard someone remark a few days ago that a young lady in our city kneads bread with her gloves on. That’s nothing; we knead bread with our shirt on, with our pants, drawers, and socks on. In fact, we shall soon knead bread without any pants on, if our subscribers do not walk in and pay up.

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February—Frank Wright purchased the east half of the Geneva opera house building, occupied by Palmer & Wheeler’s millinery and Miss Alice Burger’s dressmaking establishment.

June—The petition of C. H. Barnett et al. for the removal of the B. & M. stockyards as a nuisance was read. On motion same was referred to the Board of Health.

June—City marshal was instructed to prevent the washing of ice on the sidewalk of Court St.

1905 The secretary of state's office at Lincoln had registered 547 automobiles at $1 each under the state law.

It was voted that city lay necessary pipes, make the proper connections, and furnish the water for the public fountains proposed to be established by the Geneva Commercial Club.

February—Youngers & Co. of the Geneva nursery this week received a shipment of a carload of nursery stock, in all about 500,000 trees, from France, on which they paid nearly $1,000 tariff and freight, the tariff alone amounting to $576.

April—An Equine Hospital: Last summer Dr. I. W. McEachran found in his veterinary practice quite a number of cases where he was called to treat animals that owners could not give time and attention needed. Dr. leased the Ford barn west of the tracks and opened a hospital. He employed Harry Ford, who resides near by, to look after the barn and animal patients without traveling miles into the country to see them.

November—The mayor instructed to cause the triangles of the courthouse walk or watering troughs to be filled with cement.

December—The Geneva bloodhounds were called to Carleton to use in trying to trace a thief who stole some money.

1906 The city of Geneva put hitching racks along the south side of the courthouse square. Twenty-four posts and 400 feet of chain were used.

1907 Dr. J. W. Puckett and family made a trip from Geneva to Omaha by automobile. It was the longest trip a Fillmore County citizen had undertaken by auto. The party left Geneva at 7 A.M. and arrived in Omaha at midnight. There were no bridges across the Platte at Ashland or Louisville so they went to Plattsmouth and crossed the river by ferry.

The Geneva school board decided to introduce manual training into the Geneva school. Eight carpenter benches were provided for the use of the seventh and eighth grade boys.

One of the first ice-cream parlors and candy kitchens in Geneva (1906), in the west side of newly built Geneva State Bank building. Peter J. Stiefer (at right) was the owner-operator.
Harry Porter's livery stable, at the SW corner of 1914. This building is now used by Ralph Gipson as a private garage.

1921 Seventy-five demonstrations in gopher eradication were given in the county in one day, with 725 persons in attendance.

1922 The law making necessary the posting of an application for a marriage license 10 days before the license could be granted went into effect.

1924 Fillmore County was being visited by crowds of hoboes following the harvest across the county. Twenty-four got off one railroad car in Geneva at one time.

1925 July—The city council was considering the construction of cement sidewalks.

1926 February—It was voted that the mayor appoint a committee to investigate the matter of graveling the streets.

1927 The road from the fair grounds entrance to the Geneva Cemetery was graveled. The gravel project on the Meridian Highway between Geneva and Fairmont was finished. Four speed limit signs were placed on streets leading into the city.

1928 March—Repealed Ordinance No. 11 and drew Ordinance No. 98, naming and numbering streets and avenues as they now exist.

1929 A postal inspector was laying out city mail delivery routes in Geneva.

1930 D. C. Mowry of Geneva announced the reopening of his museum. It had been closed while he installed a painted screen at the entrance.

1932 January—A state relief organization was formed to gather supplies of food and clothing for citizens of several western counties who were about starved out.

1933 March—The top price for hogs was $310. Wheat was 33 cents, corn was 14 cents, and oats were 8 cents.

1934 April—Forty cases of canned beef were received by the county relief committee for use in Fillmore County.

1935 June—The Fillmore County Relief committee was issuing many orders for feed for livestock. The drouth continued unabated.

1936 July—The government bought 214 cattle, four carloads, at Geneva. Cattle buying was a drouth relief measure and more were brought in for sale than could be taken.

1937 July—Legal liquor returned to Geneva after 20 years when the government, amounting to $131,000.

1938 August—Fillmore County farmers had sold the government 1,111 head of cattle that they could not feed on account of drouth conditions.

1939 Fillmore County farmers received 2,400 wheat checks from the government, amounting to $131,000.

1940 February—The county extension column gave suggestions to farmers for conditioning their horses for spring farm work. It's different now.

1941 The Iowa-Nebraska Co. started a rural electrification project by constructing a 65 mile power line NW of Geneva. Electric service was installed for eight homes in that area.
1938 Fillmore County's most disastrous sleet storm since 1926 struck, doing thousands of dollars' worth of damage. Many telephone and power line poles were down and trees were badly damaged.

1939 The Ewalt Amusement Co. commenced the erection of a two-story brick building back of the Ewalt residence to replace the former shop there and to house the show equipment.

1941 April—The city made application to the Works Projects Administration for aid to improve streets, water and sewer lines, and sidewalks.

1942 It was announced that all car owners would be required to display $5 Federal Use Stamps on their automobiles.

1943 January—The new Victory tax, 5% on all income in excess of $12 per week or $624 per year, went into effect.

1944 January—Government officials announced that strict rationing of fruits, vegetables, and juices would go into effect in February.

1945 Fillmore County went over the top in the Sixth War Loan drive, the county subscribing $657,835.

1946 The Nebraska barber board established minimum prices for the state, haircuts being 65 cents and shaves 35 cents.

1947 A nationwide strike of telephone operators affected the Geneva office, where only one operator was on duty to handle emergency calls.

1948 The Fairmont Army Air Field was returned to civilian status by the War Assets Administration, and was turned over to the state department of aeronautics.

1949 November—The city took over the housing project from the government.

1950 June—A new fire truck was recently delivered to the Geneva Rural Fire Protection District. The truck is painted white, the color used by rural fire-protection districts.

1951 June—The new motel, called the Goldenrod Motel, opened.

1952 June—Markets: Yellow corn, $1.01; wheat, $1.50; eggs, $3.30; hogs, $11.46 to $14.10.

1953 October—The Second Air Force announced that the Fairmont Army Air Field would close temporarily as far as military personnel were concerned.

1954 November—The city took over the housing project from the government.

1955 June—A 1,000-watt beacon light was put into operation at Fairmont State Air Field. The light, mounted on the water tower of the former Army Air Base, is the same one used during the war, as it was left intact when equipment at the base was dismantled.

1956 June—A jungle gym purchased by the Junior Woman's Club was set up at the city park.

BANKS

Citizens Bank

The Citizens Bank was established in 1885 by J. Jensen, J. M. Fillebrown, and D. Griffith, with a capital stock of $10,000. Later, the capital stock was increased, and H. L. Smith and E. K. Cobb were added to the list of stockholders and officers. In 1900, stock of the institution passed into the hands of J. O. Walker, C. W. Shickley, E. K. Cobb, V. C. Shickley, J. W. Walker, E. M. Berkley, and H. L. Smith. These persons were the owners and officers of the bank in 1907.

Old Citizens Bank building as it stood at original location (NE corner of 9th and G). Notice Post Office location.

As a result of some of the economic troubles of the 1920's, this bank was closed on July 12, 1927, by the State Banking Commission.

In 1890, the bank erected a new brick building at a cost of about $30,000. This building burned down in 1910. When the new brick building was constructed in 1890, the old wooden structure was moved two blocks east to the NW corner of 11th and G Sts. and converted into an apartment house. It was known to Genevaans in later years as the "Beehive." It was moved north near the alley when the brick building was erected on the corner. It has since been dismantled, and its site is now occupied by a parking lot for the Jack & Jill Food Market.

Geneva State Bank

The Geneva State Bank started operations at its present location 69 years ago on March 27, 1899. Little information relating to banks before this date is available, though it is known that the Citizens Bank, which operated from 1885...
to 1927, was one of the earlier institutions. In 1910, a Bank of Commerce was organized and managed by Floyd Seybolt, known more or less as a professional bank organizer. This bank operated only a short time before it was merged with the Citizens Bank.

According to the old stock book, the Geneva National Bank was organized January 14, 1891, and began business in the location later occupied by the Coast-to-Coast Store. John A. Dempster was president and A. O. Taylor, cashier and managing officer. In June, 1892, A. G. McGrew succeeded Mr. Dempster as president, with A. O. Taylor continuing as cashier. In January, 1895, Mr. Taylor became president and M. R. Chittick was elected cashier. Mr. Taylor died October 25, 1895. Following his death, W. L. Weed served as president until January, 1896, when E. Sandrock, who had completed his term as county treasurer and was the administrator of the estate of A. O. Taylor, joined the bank as president. In June, 1897, Mr. Chittick resigned to enter the banking business at Ewing, Nebraska, and was succeeded by C. S. Trotter of Iowa.

On March 27, 1899, the newly organized Geneva State Bank purchased the assets of the Geneva National Bank and also the assets of the First National Bank, including the banking quarters and offices on the second floor of the red-brick three-story building on the corner where the Geneva State Bank is now located. George W. Smith, president of the First National Bank, desired to retire from the banking business to devote his time to private investments.

The old building burned from the top down in 1904. The present structure was erected in 1906. That portion of the building and the second-floor offices above the Eller Store were owned by Charles Hogeany and the third floor by the I.O.O.F. Lodge. Subsequently the whole building was purchased by the bank.

The first officers of the Geneva State Bank were E. Sandrock, president, and C. S. Trotter, cashier. On July 15, 1902, C. S. Trotter, having sold his shares in the bank, resigned his position as cashier and director. On the same date George E. Allrich was elected president. He also served as a director for many years. Frank W. Sloan was elected vice-president and E. Sandrock, cashier.

In 1906, E. J. Dempster, who had completed his term as county treasurer, was elected cashier. Frank W. Sloan became president, and E. Sandrock, vice-president, which position he held until his retirement due to ill health in 1921. Job Smith, son of George W. Smith, former president of the First National Bank, who had for some time served as bookkeeper, was on January 30, 1906, elected assistant cashier. On January 6, 1908, Earl H. Wilkins was elected bookkeeper. In February, Mr. Wilkins was transferred by Mr. Sloan to the Farmers State Bank at Fairmont to fill a vacancy there, where he remained as assistant cashier until 1911, when he was recalled to take the place of Job Smith, who had resigned to locate in the banking business in California. In January, 1912, Mr. Wilkins was elected assistant cashier. On January 4, 1916, Albert A. Held, who later became executive vice-president of the National Bank of Commerce in Lincoln, was elected teller and in 1917 elected an assistant cashier. This office he held until in 1917 he was advanced to the position of cashier and manager of a bank in an adjoining county. Carl E. Schneider started with the bank in 1918 and Melvin L. Ralston in 1920. Since then both have been identified with the bank in various positions and are now executive officers. Following the death of Mr. Dempster, Charles H. Sloan became president, Earl H. Wilkins, executive vice-president; Carl E. Schneider, cashier; and Melvin L. Ralston, having previously been elected as cashier and assistant cashier respectively. Following the death of Mr. Dempster, Charles H. Sloan became president, Earl H. Wilkins, executive vice-president; Carl E. Schneider, cashier; and Melvin L. Ralston, having previously been elected as cashier. Early in 1953, Mr. Sloan was elected chairman of the board. Earl H. Wilkins, president, Harriett Corbett, vice-president, with Carl E. Schneider and Melvin L. Ralston continuing in their previously elected positions. Since both Mr. Sloan and Mr. Corbett were already fully engaged in their individual professions, the active management of the bank has remained with the other officers.

Following his release from the Army and graduation from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Hugh F. White joined the bank in 1943 and in 1946 was elected assistant vice-president in January, 1950, and later vice-president.

If time and space of this rather lengthy résumé of the officials who have served and are serving the bank permitted, a long and favorable story would include the services of the many young men and women employed at various times throughout the years, and Charles H. Sloan, John M. Ward, and Frank O. Edgecombe, who served several years as directors until removed by death. Moreover, the efficient and faithful record of service at this time of Warren Rischling, John O'Brien, and Nell Moore, as tellers; Lorraine Hedin, Rosemarie O'Brien, Nancy Lentfer, Rosalie Novak, Kay Hampton, and Elaine Naimon as bookkeepers and secretaries; and Tom Hamilton as custodian is to be commended and gives assurance of their continued best efforts to serve the bank's patrons to the best of their ability. Over the years, many young men and women have been employed and trained to take advanced positions in banking, the professions, and the business world. Most of these have been graduates of Geneva High School; some have come from Fairmont, and only a very few from other points. This continuity of home talent trained to serve the needs of patrons has been unusual and perhaps reflects to quite an extent the successful operation of the bank over the past 70 years. Last and most important is the confidence and support of the bank's patrons and shareholders.

A policy was established long ago and carried on, particularly in the later years, of the investment of additional funds to build a growing capital structure and to maintain reserves consistent with the needs and modern trends in the business.

A condensed summary of the bank's growth is appended:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Capital and Surplus</th>
<th>Deposits</th>
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<td>December 31, 1966</td>
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**Fillmore County Bank**

In March, 1965, application for a bank charter for the Fillmore County Bank was made by John R. Bixby to the Nebraska Banking Department. After investigations and hearings, the charter for the bank was granted by banking director Henry Ley on December 23, 1965. Plans were immediately started to build a new bank building, but temporary quarters were set up at the insurance office known as the Bixby Insurance Agency at 143 No. 9th St., Geneva. January 3, 1966, was the first day of business for the Fillmore County Bank, which started with capital $100,000, surplus $75,000, and undivided profits $75,000. The officers were John R. Bixby, president; Roger D. Sack, vice-president; Joseph Bixby, cashier; and Kenneth Morris, assistant cashier. One year later, on February 23, 1967, the bank opened its new banking quarters at 1022 G St., Geneva. The
building is constructed of white brick bordered with black trim with a vault of red Colorado flagstone, all situated on Main St. in the county seat town of Geneva, Nebraska. With six employees and four officers, this bank is enjoying a healthy increase as Geneva's newest bank.

BUSINESSES

A. Koehler Company

The A. Koehler Company was started by Anthony Koehler in 1885. The first office was on the north side of G St., about the present site of the small roofing house. When the C. & N.W. Railroad was laid through Geneva in 1887, Anthony Koehler moved his yard to the south side of G St. This office stood where the hatchery building is now located. Mr. Koehler also built a small grain elevator on the C. & N.W. right of way.

In 1894, Barthold Koehler became associated with his brother Anthony in the business. Anthony's health failed while he was still a young man, and he died in February, 1900, at the age of 40 years. After his death Barthold and a brother, Christian, of Hastings, Nebraska, bought the business from Mrs. Anthony Koehler. These two brothers owned the business, with Barthold as active manager, until the death of Christian Koehler in 1921. During those years Barthold (Bat) Koehler was ably assisted by C. E. (Charley) Summers, who was an esteemed and faithful employee for many years. Barthold's health began to fail in 1924, and his son, John, returned home from Chicago to assist in the business. Both Bat Koehler and Charley Summers died in 1925, thus ending a long and close association.

After the passing of Mr. Koehler, his wife, Clara H. Koehler, was made manager of the company, which position she held until a few years before her death on December 6, 1956. Ben Koehler, a son, returned to Geneva and became associated with the business in 1927, and in 1945, still another son, George Koehler, joined the organization.

In 83 years of continuous operation, the A. Koehler Co. has expanded considerably from its rather small beginning. Many older citizens will remember the brick yard south of town, just south of the crossing of the C. & N.W. and the C.B. & Q. railroads, which the company built in 1904. At one time this was an important source of building material, and an important industry in the town. About 25 men were employed from early spring until late fall. With the development of clay building tile this ceased to be an asset of importance, and in 1927 it was dismantled, as were scores of brick yards over the state.

The brick office, which is still in use, was built in 1911. A feed department was added to the business in 1932, along with a complete grinding and mixing service. In 1937, the company embarked on a new project, the hatchery business, with Charles Picard in charge. The first turkeys were hatched in 1938, and around 1,000 were raised. In 1940, the turkey operations were enlarged, but an Armistice Day blizzard killed most of Barthold's turkeys. The State Health Department advised that the frozen turkeys were definitely edible, and a number of Geneva families had Thanksgiving dinners many times that year. Mr. Picard resigned in 1941, and S. J. Weis, who had been employed by the organization since 1928, took charge, and has continued to managed the hatchery. Mr. Weis is the oldest employee in terms of years of service given the A. Koehler Company. Through his capable and efficient management, this department has made much progress. It now (1959) employs 8 men. A large layer house has been added which houses 4,500 laying hens for breeder stock and instead of 1,000 turkeys (1938), 12,500 turkeys are raised each year.

The elevator business was increased through the purchase of elevators from the Sheridan Grain Co. and the McNeal Elevator Co. during the years 1933 to 1940. From 1950 to 1954 eight steel tanks were added, and the north elevator was completely remodeled. Two steel quants were rebuilt in 1955 to facilitate the storage of grain. In 1954, a fertilizer department was added.

Chester Dudley, who joined the organization in 1944, brought with him a genial and friendly personality and has been a great asset to the company.

The company attributes its success to its many loyal friends and customers, who have given the company the opportunity to serve them through the years. The company feels particularly grateful and indebted to the many faithful employees who have remained with them for so many years, and who have contributed largely in making the A. Koehler Company successful in serving the community.

—Data from A. Koehler Company

Bell Brothers Circus

The Ewalt Amusement Co. was originated by Tom Ewalt in the summer of 1934. He built two small drive-yourself cars which were taken to near-by picnics and celebrations and used as kiddie rides.

In the next winter a kiddie ferris wheel, kiddie merry-go-round, and a large merry-go-round were added, along with extra trucks. In the years that followed more and larger rides were added, and in 1938 a new and larger winter quarters building was erected, replacing the old one just north of the post office. In 1940 a portable stage was added to the equipment, showing liberty ponies, dogs, trick ponies, and monkeys. The company played fairs and celebrations in Nebraska and Iowa.

In the spring of 1944, the show was named Bell Bros. Circus. By now it had large tents, menageries, caged animals, llamas, a string of liberty horses, and Ena the elephant. The circus was transported in trucks and traveled from Texas to the Canadian border, taking in the central states.

Ena was housed in the new winter quarters buildings along with the other animals, being cared for there by a caretaker, Camel Dutch. In 1948, the Bell Bros. Circus was sold and Mr. Ewalt bought the Sunbeam Theater in Geneva, changing its name to Rialto.
Bell Brothers Circus (about 1945) — Tom Ewalt with Ena, the elephant.

Mortuaries

The following is an account of the undertaking business in Geneva from about 1900 to the present time.

G. W. Hrubesky (from Schuyler, Nebraska) bought out the furniture and undertaking business of Tom Francis on January 1, 1898. The store (at Gamble Store present location) was an old wooden building—furniture on the first floor (24' x 60') and on the second floor was the old opera house (48' x 60'). This opera house never operated in our day and we used it for furniture later. Back of the store was the office and work-room and behind that the casket room with 7 or 8 caskets which folded back into the wall on hinged panels. Caskets (except children's which were white) were covered in black. The inside of the casket was untrimmed and we bought "pillow sets" which included all the trimmings and we put on all handles.

In that day the embalming was done right in the homes. We worked in one room while the family chatted in another and often overheard things we shouldn't have. Whenever we were called in town we walked and carried a folding slab table, that was darned heavy, in one hand and our case with instruments and embalming fluid in the other. On out-of-town calls we drove a team and hauled our equipment.

In the early days it was the old black-plumed horse hearse, of course. The livery stable kept a regular hearse team to pull it. In the summer the horses wore long black fly nets. In snow, rain, or whatever, the hearse driver and undertaker (not "mortician" in that day) rode on a high seat with no cover except a robe, and he darned near froze or floated away at times.

In 1905, G. W. Hrubesky and Frank White, who operated a butcher shop next door east (now Gamble's furniture), bought this plot of ground. Hrubesky built a new wooden building which is the present building the Gamble store occupies.

In 1915, I received my embalmer's diploma.

In June, 1916, we got our first auto-hearse. It was the first in quite a wide territory but we kept the horse-hearse for four or five years for emergency until folks could get their Model T's.

I took over the undertaking business from my father in February of 1920. It was hard converting people to the idea of a mortuary but in 1920 we moved our casket supply and equipment north of what is now the Safeway and opened a very crude mortuary. In 1913, I moved to the first door south of the hotel (now Garrett plumbing), adding a few improvements.

In 1939 I purchased the old Bolton residence, now the Farmer-Kritner Funeral Home, from Judge Langren. Since Mr. Bolton was in the lumber business for many years in Geneva, only the finest knot-free lumber and material was put into this structure, making it very desirable for a mortuary. Our first funeral at the present location was on August 2, 1939.

In July, 1948, I sold the mortuary and business to Paul H. Farmer. Between 1898 and 1948 we took care of 2,067 people.

— Frank Hrubesky

Arthur M. and Robert L. Kritner opened the Kritner Funeral Home in Geneva in May, 1936, in the building north of the Signal office at 135 No. 9th St., where the business was conducted for ten years.

In August, 1937, the Kritner Funeral Home was opened in Fairmont, in the Hall building, first door north of the Cubbison block, where the Fairmont business has now been established for 31 years.

In 1944, the Kritner Funeral Home bought the Wolfe Mortuary in Fairmont and in 1946 bought the Wennersten Mortuary in Shickley. Also in 1946, the Kritner Funeral Home bought the Dempster residence at 1055 H St. in Geneva and remodeled it into a modern funeral home.

In July, 1952, Arthur M. Kritner sold his interest to Sherman F. Ashby. For the next five years the mortuaries at Geneva and Fairmont were known as the Kritner-Ashby Funeral Homes. In February, 1957, Robert L. Kritner bought the Sherman F. Ashby interest and became sole owner.

Later in the same month, Robert L. Kritner and Paul H. Farmer consolidated the Hrubesky-Farmer Funeral Homes in both those towns. The present building at 242 No. 10th St., Geneva, was enlarged and completely remodeled in 1957 to accommodate the newly organized firm of Kritner-Farmer Funeral Home.

— Paul Farmer and Robert Kritner

Kerl Book Shop

The Kerl Book Shop, owned and operated by Mrs. Lewis H. Kerl, opened in Geneva in November, 1949. Two years later it was listed as a member of the American Booksellers' Association and as the largest bookstore of its kind in the United States operating successfully in a town of less than 5,000 population. In spite of early predictions that such a store could not survive in so small a community, the Kerl Book Store was able to report an increase of business each year. The largest single source of income is the mail-order department.

In 1951, the shop became the official bookstore for the Nebraska Congregational Conference, contracting to supply books at all state
meetings of the conference in Nebraska. This averaged about 10 meetings each year in all parts of the state, from Omaha to Scottsbluff. In addition, “book nights” were often scheduled in churches of western Nebraska (until 1965), sponsored by various church groups to acquaint members with better books for the home or the church.

Starting with only religious books, and a few story books for children, the shop now carries, in addition to a large stock of Bibles, all sorts of gift, technical, and reference books. The Harper line of Blue Ribbon books (called “better books for both children and adults”) is available at all times, as are the exclusive Gibson books for weddings, guests, and anniversaries. No “comic books” are sold, but there is a line of coloring, play, and “make-n-do” books for children of all ages.

The motto of the shop, “If it is in print, we will get it for you,” assures customers of quick, sure, and efficient service on any and all titles.

--- Data supplied by Mrs. Lewis H. Keri

Furrner

Geneva's custom furrier, Gale Walton, came of pioneer stock. His parents on both sides were born in sod houses and lived the usual life of the early settlers. His mother was the first white girl born in Glengary precinct. Her father, Aaron McPherson, was a contractor who built many of the early houses in Geneva, a number of which are still in use and readily distinguishable by their L-shapes and steep roofs of that period. His father owned a confectionery in Geneva for a number of years and later owned the Walton Barber Shop, which is still operated by another son, Gerald Walton.

In 1929, Gale Walton, three months wed, decided to buy his bride a muskrat coat. He made the trip from Geneva, where he lived, to Lincoln and shopped for the garment. Before he knew it, he was catapulted into the fur industry, and he's still at it—quite successful as a custom furrier.

As Mr. Walton tells it: "I used to trap muskrats as a hobby. So I knew the price of muskrat skins. When I heard the price of the muskrat coat at the Lincoln furrier's, I felt it was too high. So I decided to make a muskrat coat myself."

Mr. Walton explains that he was the youngest of three sons, and had been raised practically as the "daughter" of the home. "My mother taught me how to cook and sew, and I could out-perform many of the young ladies in Geneva. So I put my talent to work and sewed the muskrat coat by hand."

First, though, he acquired a formula for tanning muskrats and dressed the skins himself. The resulting muskrat coat was good enough to bring a request from a friend of Mrs. Walton's for one just like it. And Mr. Walton, one of the original "do-it-yourself" boys, produced another garment.

Later he bought a ready-to-wear muskrat coat, opened it up, and studied the professional techniques of cutting, stitching, etc., and then applied these techniques in his own garments. For, by this time, Mr. Walton was in the fur business. He had partitioned off a section of the living room in his home as an office and showroom. Later he set up a factory in the basement.

His home in Geneva is still his base of operations 39 years later. Relying on nothing but word-of-mouth advertising up until a few years ago, Mr. Walton has built up a trade throughout the state of Nebraska, and has customers as far west as Hollywood and Seattle, and east to New York and Florida.

His first venture into advertising came several years ago when he sponsored a TV program for 13 weeks, featuring as the star his 17-year-old daughter, Gayle, an accomplished Hammond organist.

Today, Mr. Walton employs a number of skilled workers in his organization and personally travels an average of 1,000 miles a week, paying calls on customers in many parts of the country. Since 1937, he has attended fur skin auctions in St. Louis and Seattle regularly, and auctions in New York since 1949.

Mr. Walton is probably the most enthusiastic proponent of color in furs in the Midwest. For some 20 years, he has worked closely with the Superior Fur Dyeing Corp. of New York City in developing clear colors on a variety of furs. He originated the idea of dyeing sheared muskrat in many colors over 20 years ago, and still sells the item, which has been his number one dyed fur for several years.

A descendant of George Walton, who was an original signa­tion of Independence, Mr. Walton recalls with obvious relish his early years in the fur business. He exhibits many of his ancestor's traits, particularly independence of thought and the courage to be different.

"When I began my business, I had no idea of where or how to get supplies to manufacture furs. I managed to get hold of a trade magazine and there I read about Samuel Bauer & Sons, the New York supply house. Bauer furnished me with supplies. In 1930, I bought a second-hand sewing machine from Bonis Bros."

Curiously enough, Mr. Walton never set foot in the New York fur market until after 1949. Consequently, for many years the Bauer firm labored under the illusion that Gale Walton was a woman.

"They used to send me beautiful gifts for Christmas," Mr. Walton recalls. "I'd get vanity cases, lipstick, cosmetics. Finally, I sent them a picture of myself."

In the beginning, Mr. Walton taught himself the techniques of production of a great variety of furs. His procedure was simply to purchase a garment, take it apart, examine the cutting and sewing techniques, create a pattern, and go into manufacture.

"Some years ago," he reminisces, "I got my first order for a mink coat. Now, I knew that a mink coat had to be let out, but I didn't know the first thing about it. So I went to a friend of mine—a doctor in nearby Lincoln and shopped for the garment. Before he knew it, he was catapulted into the fur industry, and he's still at it—quite successful as a custom furrier.

As Mr. Walton tells it: "I used to trap muskrats as a hobby. So I knew the price of muskrat skins. When I heard the price of the muskrat coat at the Lincoln furrier's, I felt it was too high. So I decided to make a muskrat coat myself."
On November 1, 1941, Fred Picard sold the "Picard Pharmacy" business to its present employees—Ralph Reemts, Lawrence Doud, Allan Kline, Wilbur Pearson, and Creston Swails. He retained a small interest in the corporation. At his death in 1950 he left his shares of stock to his grandsons, James McCarthy, Jr., and Fred Picard 3rd. In 1942, Creston Swalls sold his shares to the other stockholders.

In 1943 the firm purchased the building to the east adjoining the drugstore, formerly occupied by Monroe Heisey, and opened an appliance business which they named the "Modern Appliance Co." Allan Softley was employed by the firm in 1944 as bookkeeper and continued to serve the corporation faithfully until his death on December 25, 1955.

After receiving a discharge from World War II in 1946, James McCarthy joined the staff of Picard Pharmacy, Inc. Wilbur Pearson sold back to the firm his shares of stock in 1953 and in 1954 Fred P. Picard 3rd sold his shares, leaving Lawrence Doud, Ralph Reemts, Allan Kline, and James McCarthy the owners in 1959.

Since 1905, there have been five other drugstores opened and closed at various times.

In addition to drugs and sundries, the Picard Pharmacy, Inc., handles a complete line of school supplies, wall paper, glass, paints, motor oils and greases, poultry minerals, and appliances.

**Geneva Milling Company**

In June of 1887, the Geneva Roller Milling Co. was formed with A. O. Taylor, president, J. Jensen, treasurer, and F. H. Briggs, secretary. The ground was purchased from Austin Knowler, who had bought it from the railroad on June 1, 1872. This is one of the first industries in Geneva that is still in operation at the present time. It was operated under the above ownership until 1895, when H. L. Smith obtained it by mortgage. The Guthrie Brothers from Superior then operated the Geneva Mill under lease for several years and in 1903 purchased it and made extensive enlargements.

With the roller system, the grain was ground between two steel rolls and bolted or sifted out over reels with silk cloths. Later the long system roller mills came into use. More rolls were used and the grain was processed by gradual reduction and was bolted or sifted out over swing sifters or purifiers. This was the system that was put into use at the Geneva Milling Co. in 1917 when John A. Johnson, Mrs. Percy Bedford, and Henry R. Collars purchased and remodeled the mill. It was remodeled somewhat again in 1929 when John J. and W. H. Grothe bought it, and again in 1939, John J. Grothe and his son, Charles Grothe, had purchased the mill in 1932.

In the beginning the Geneva Milling Company was mostly a flour and meal mill. In the early days a good deal of the milling was toll milling or exchange milling. The farmer would bring in his grain and the miller retained a certain percentage of it as a "milling charge." The farmer then took the balance back home in the form of flour and meal. Often the farmer would make such long drives—50 or 60 miles—to the mill to exchange wheat for flour that he would need to stay overnight and return home the following day. He would lay in a supply of 20 or 30 50-lb. sacks of flour at a time. As late as the 1930’s, the largest part of the Geneva Milling Co. business was of this type.

Most of the production of the mill was flour and cereals until about 1935, when large amounts of "prepared" poultry and animal feed were milled.

In 1945, Charles Grothe became sole owner. During this year the mill was destroyed by fire and was replaced with a modern feed mill. Now most of the flour milled is for bakery use. All types of feeds are milled, including pelleted and granulated feeds. Today much of the feed is sold and delivered in bulk to the farms.

**News Dealer**

On Saturday, November 8, 1958, Monroe Heisey, the local news dealer, rounded out 50 years of business in Geneva. The event got wide news coverage and was celebrated with an open house at the store, where 709 friends signed the guest book. Portions of the Nebraska Signal’s account (Nov. 13) of this event follow:

"The Geneva Chamber of Commerce recently honored Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Heisey, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Heisey, and Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Garrett at a banquet, where the guest speaker was John E. Curtis of Lincoln, a patron of the Heisey store when he grew up in Geneva.

"Mr. Heisey has been busy the past week recalling early history of his business and the community for reporters and friends calling at the store, so he hauled out some of his mementoes of the past and put them on display. Included was a good crystal set and a single-tube radio set, his collection of old pictures of the community, a fine collection of old coins, and a scrapbook containing a lot of history of the community and its people.

"Mr. Heisey recalled Tuesday that he would never have been in business in Geneva except for the accident he had while climbing a transmission pole near Lincoln. He broke both legs in a fall and after he had partially recovered he knew he was through climbing poles. It was then that his father-in-law, the late J. C. Bender of Geneva, sent word to him that the Tal Sholton news stand, across the street from the Signal office, could be purchased. Monroe came to Geneva and made arrangements to buy the business. He later moved the business to the main street.

"During much of this period his father-in-law operated a shoe-repair shop in the rear of the store. Mr. Heisey later moved to his present location. During 49 years of this time, his sister-in-law, Mrs. Harvey Garrett (Viola Bender), has been employed in the store, and a son, Kenneth Heisey, has been associated with his father since he was a small boy. A daughter, Leta (Mrs. Everett Ritchey), also has assisted in the business, as did Mrs. Monroe Heisey before retiring a few years ago."

(Monroe Heisey passed away on June 2, 1963.)

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**Geneva Milling Company (before the 1945 fire).**

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**Geneva Nursery.**

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(E) Monroe Heisey being honored by Geneva Chamber of Commerce upon his 50th anniversary as a Geneva business man (1958). **Standing, left to right:** John E. Curtis, Monroe Heisey, Harvey Garrett, Kenneth Heisey. **Seated:** Mrs. Monroe Heisey, Viola Bender Garrett, Mrs. Kenneth Heisey.
Geneva Nursery

Pete Youngers and A. J. Brown met in 1871 while planting trees on the north side of the Burlington tracks from Lincoln on west. At that time Youngers lived in Liberty township and Brown in Madison. In 1889, they became partners in the nursery business. Bill Harris had charge of the office and Stella Deland was secretary.

The nursery, which was a wholesale operation, covered between 600 and 700 acres. During the spring and rush seasons, they hired 85 men, with 5 in the office. They shipped to all states except the extreme South; but they budded almond trees for the Southern states.

In 1916, the Youngers & Brown partnership was dissolved and both men retired.

Geneva then had no nursery for several years, until 1921, when Guy A. Brown, son of A. J. Brown, started a nursery 1½ miles E of Geneva. In 1933, Mr. Brown bought a half-block of ground on the west side of U. S. 81 and built the present nursery building. The operation of this nursery reached its peak in 1941, when 18 men were employed. When World War II caused a shortage of labor the operation was cut down considerably.

In 1936, Floyd Schroeder began working at the nursery and worked there continuously thereafter except for the time he spent in the Coast Guard. He purchased the business in 1962 and has operated it since then as owner.

Roster of Geneva Business Firms, 1959

Clockwise from south side of Block 7:
- Clinkenbeard's Blacksmith Shop
- Geneva Transfer—Moving, Transfer & Tires
- Apel Farm Equipment Co.—Ford Tractors & Farm Equipment
- Joe Bixby Real Estate & Ins.—Office
- Lichti Repair—Complete Auto Repair
- Ray Burton Radio & TV Service
- Cartwright Radio & TV—Electric Appliance & Service
- Hop Inn—Cafe
- Garrett’s Plumbing—Installation, Sales, & Service
- Geneva Hotel, Les Foote, Prop.
- Dr. Lewis H. Kerl—Dental Office
- The Kerl Book Shop
- Geneva City Library
- Myrtle’s—Cafe
- Smith’s Public Market—Groceries & Meats
- Fries Package Store—Liquor
- Chick’s Repair Shop—Auto Repair
- Schelkopf Engineering Service—Plumbing, Heating, and Electrical Service
- Bud’s Shoe Repair
- Floyd’s Body Shop—Auto Body Repair
- Clockwise from NE corner of Block 6:
- Eich Buick Co.—Complete Auto Repair, Sales & Service
- Dr. J. Q. Adams—Dental Office
- Jayne Rooming House—Hannah Gilmore, Prop.
- V.F.W. Hall
- Geneva Sheet Metal Works—Furnace Work, Roofing & Guttering
- Geneva Dairy—Dairy Supplies, Fountain Service, & Teen-age Center
- Geneva City Auditory
- Geneva City Library
- Clockwise from south side of Block 5:
- Geneva Locker
- Safeway Store—Groceries & Meats
- Waltemade Cleaners—Dry Cleaning, Men’s & Boys’ Clothing
- Hofroyd's Bakery
- Monroe Heisey’s News Stand—Magazines, Newspapers, Notions, Cards & Gifts
- Geneva Photo Co.
- Hested’s Stores Co.—Variety Store
- Heath’s Quality Market—Groceries & Meats
- Jacox Jewelry & Vogue Clothing Store—Men’s Clothing & Jewelry
- Radio Theatre—Movies
- Fulton’s Furniture Store—Furniture
- Fulton’s Appliance Store
- Gamble’s Store—Hardware
- Elder Co.—Jewelry, Gifts & Watch Repair
- Modern Appliance Co.—Electric Appliance
- Picard Pharmacy—Drugs, Paints, & Wallpaper
- Masonic Temple—third floor
- McKimmey’s Barber Shop—basement
- Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation—Vaults & Storage
- Soil Conservation Service—Office
- Side Entrance to Picard Pharmacy
- Nebraska Signal Office—Weekly Newspaper Publishers
- Dr. D. A. Portwood—Dental Office
- LaSalle Beauty Shop
- Bernie’s Pool Hall
- Bixby Insurance Agency—Office, Loans & Insurance
- M. A. Nichols, Contractor—Office
- Consumers Public Power—Office & Appliances
- Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph Office—Telephone Exchange & Telegraph Service
- Earl’s Gift Shop
- Kritner-Farmer Funeral Home—Mortuary & Ambulance Service—NE corner of Block 2
- Dr. V. S. Lynn—Physician & Surgeon—SE corner of Outlot 22
- United States Post Office—SE corner of Block 3
- Venus Wholesale—oil & grease—Alley of Block 5
- Clockwise from NE corner of Block 4:
- City Auditorium
- City Light & Water Office
- Geneva Fire Department—City Council Room and Fire Hall on second floor
- Drs. A. A. Ashby & C. F. Ashby—Physicians & Surgeons
- Shuster Radio & Electric Repair
- Eric Waltemade’s—Cafe
- Gerald Walton's Barber Shop
- Geneva Insurance Co. Office—Hugh Wilkins, agent
- Geneva State Bank
- Fillmore County Abstract Association—Office on second floor
- Dr. H. A. Rosenau—Physician & Osteopath—office on second floor
- Keenan & Corbit—Attorneys (second floor)
- Waring & Gewacke—Attorneys (second floor)
- Dr. George Carlson—Dental Office (second floor)
- Eller Co.—Dry Goods & Ready-to-wear
- Schneider’s IGA Store—Groceries & Meats
- Dearing Radio & TV—Sales & Service
- Merle Archer Barber Shop
- Marquardt’s Shop—Ladies & Children’s Ready-to-wear
- J. C. Penney Co.—Dry Goods & Ready-to-wear
- Central Electric & Gas Co.—Office
- Dondlinger & Miller Agency—Insurance
- Coast-to-Coast Stores—Hardware
- Cumberland Style & Beauty Shop—Women’s & Children’s Ready-to-wear & Beauty Shop
- Green Turtle Pool Hall
- London, Inc.—Vacant
- 100F Hall—(second floor)
- Farm Bureau Office—(basement)
- Swanson & Carlson Insurance & Real Estate—Office
- Genevaa Produce Co.
- Blanke’s Tavern
- Kinder’s Accounting & Insurance—Office
- NicholsConstruction Co.—Office & Shop

Main Street looking west (1967).

Main Street looking east (1967).

Clockwise from east side of Outlot 26 to south side of Block 5, James Biglow 1st Addition
- Yates Welding Shop—Repair Shop
- Dr. L. C. Shaw—Veterinary Hospital & Office
- Les McPeek’s Produce—Cream, Eggs, & Poultry
- C. & N. W. Depot
- Koeher Lumber Co.—Lumber & Hardware
Aerial view of Kaneb Pipeline Co. Hill Oil Co., and Cafe.

The following business places are located along Highway 81:

- Hill Oil Co.—Service Station & Cafe—1 mile north of city limits
- Kaneb Pipe Line Co.—1 mile north of city limits
- Hy Way Lanes—Bowling Alley
- John W. Wilkins—Builder & Contractor—Office, Shop
- Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation—Office
- Rocole’s Hy-Way Service—Phillips “66” Station, Gas, Oil & Service
- Geneva Drive-in—Package Liquor Store
- Fillmore County Hospital
- Millie’s Cafe & Grocery
- Ellison Oil Co.—Gas, Oil & Service; also Tank Wagon Service
- Skelly Service Station—Gas, Oil, & Service
- Cafe
- Simon & Sons—Chevrolet & Oldsmobile cars, Service & Auctioneers
- Swails Standard Service—Gas, Oil & Service
- “81” Tourist Cabins & Mobil Service Station
- Swedish Cream—Drive-in Ice Cream Parlor
- Melton-Isler Motors—Ford Cars, Service
- Goldenrod Motel—Tourist Rooms
- Goldenrod Grill
- Geneva Nurseries

**Style of Nebraska Department of Roads**

**Other locations:**

- Walton Furrier—Custom-made Fur Coats—237 No. 12th
- Newman’s Drive-In—542 G St.
- Verna’s Auto Repair—1429 G St.
- Ye Ole Corral—Roller Skating Rink—16th and G Sts.
- Peake Transport—15th and F
- Harry Bodner—Iron Dealer
- Hayden Oil Co.—Tank Wagon Service—310 F St.
- Geneva Milling Co.—Grain, Feed—709 D St.
size. The stone will also be put up in ornamental designs for trimming buildings and all sorts of decorative purposes.

The cement blocks are also very extensively used for sidewalks, watering troughs, and in numberless other kinds of construction. The new artificial stone factory will be operated in the Sam Lightbody Building on the west side of the square.

1907 W. M. and W. H. Hindman of Shenandooh, Iowa, opened a cigar factory in Geneva. Their quarters were on the second floor of the Odd Fellows building.

1910 The Geneva Bottling Works was started by Gus Gasper some time prior to 1910. The original location was a frame building on the lot where the Uhlig Cafe now (1959) stands.

In 1910, Tim and William Hourigan purchased the business from Mr. Gasper. They remained in this location for nearly one year and then moved to the building occupied now by the Geneva Cold Storage at 124 North 10th. In 1912 or 1913, they erected a brick structure across the street where the Schelkopf Appliance Store is now located—129 North 10th. At the same time, William Dinneen, who operated the Geneva Ice Cream Manufacturing Co. joined the firm and they named their enterprise the Geneva Manufacturing and Supply Co. To their pop business they added the manufacture of ice cream. This business continued until it was sold to Ed J. Pierce of Holdrege in 1915. The Hourigan brothers moved to Fairmont and opened a bottling plant there.
Mr. Pierce moved to Geneva and immediately began to reorganize and enlarge the business, putting out his products under the name "Takmor," a suggestion followed by the public. The manufacture of butter as an adjunct to the ice-cream business followed.

In March, 1917, Mr. Pierce bought the offices and storehouse of the Geneva Nursery Co., just west of the Burlington tracks (now the American Legion building at 615 G St.). At this time he disposed of his ice-cream business and thereafter confined his manufacturing exclusively to soft drinks, greatly enlarging this feature of the business. The additional space provided by his new quarters in the big nursery building made it possible for him to add a new line of business, that of a wholesale distributor of fruits and vegetables. During the year 1918, Mr. Pierce handled 15 cars of salt on government contract. He also handled 4 cars of apples, 9 cars of peaches, 7 cars of cabbage, and 6 cars of potatoes. All of the fruits and vegetables were distributed to local dealers within a radius of 100 miles of Geneva. He was unable to supply the demand for soft drinks because of the shortage of sugar and syrup. Mr. Pierce continued in the business until 1920, when Frank Battle and John Spohn purchased the business, employing Henry Domeier as delivery man.

William Aldrup bought the pop factory in 1922 and moved it to a building east of the Courthouse Square (a brick building just north of the alley and south of the Launderama. This building was later occupied by the Krawolski Motorcycle Shop.) Mr. Aldrup ran the business until 1932, with Bert Parris as the pop bottler, when his son Carl took over the firm. This business was dissolved about 1934.

1911: Oliver C. Bedford asked the city to furnish water for his ice-cream business and thereafter confined his manufacturing business to Geneva. He was unable to supply the demand for soft drinks because of the shortage of sugar and syrup. Mr. Pierce continued in the business until 1920, when Frank Battle and John Spohn purchased the business, employing Henry Domeier as delivery man.

1920: The Economy Paint Mills was a new business just opening. (Fred Picard and Dr. H. L. Smith went into partnership to supply paints and oils to this territory. Knud Knudsen was employed to manufacture paint for the firm. When Dr. Smith passed away, he left his interest in the business to Clarence Wilson. When Knud Knudsen withdrew from the firm to go into business for himself, Ray McCauley bought shares in the firm and became paint foreman. In 1928, Clarence Wilson bought Fred Picard's interest in this business and continued to operate the paint mills until the 1930's.)

1947: The Sothan Body Manufacturing plant was moved from its headquarters at the Fillmore County fairgrounds to Plattsmouth.

Geneva Auto-Gro

One of Geneva's newest businesses is the Geneva Auto-Gro plant, set up for the year-round hydroponic growing of tomatoes. (Hydroponics is the science of growing plants without the use of soil and freed from weather conditions, by controlled and automated supplies of water and soluble plant foods.) The Geneva plant was started in 1966 by Kenneth and Donald Strothkamp in a steel and fiberglass greenhouse at 16th and F Sts. The company operates, in a sense, under the wing of, but not controlled by, Pan American Hydroponics, Inc., a nation-wide organization by this new and expanding field.

MARKETING

From earliest times, up into our own pioneer days and until fairly recent decades, in rural areas, trading was the method of purchasing the household necessities. Farmers traded their butter, eggs, and cream for domestic needs. The general store, with its pot-bellied heating stoves, dry goods, barrels of crackers, salt, and sugar, and open bins of cookies and dried fruits, has been replaced by streamlined supermarkets, electrically controlled cases for frozen foods, garden-fresh vegetables and fruit, dairy products, and meats. Attractive cans, packages, and containers are used for foods of all kinds today. The late thirties and early forties saw the trading method replaced by cash purchasing.

The following grocery and market prices show the advances through the years:

**Quotations from Chicago**

*Fillmore County Bulletin, December, 1872.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beeswax</td>
<td>$5.00-$6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>$5.00-$7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>$5.00-$8.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>$3.50-$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs, live</td>
<td>$2.20-$4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep, good to choice</td>
<td>$7.25-$8.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter, choice</td>
<td>27c-30c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs, fresh</td>
<td>12c-13c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour, white</td>
<td>$0.50-$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>winter extra</td>
<td>$0.50-$1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring extra</td>
<td>$0.65-$0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grain:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat, spring No. 1</td>
<td>$1.42-$1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wheat</td>
<td>$1.325-$1.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>42c-43c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oats</td>
<td>34c-35c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye</td>
<td>74c-75c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barley</td>
<td>56c-57c/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard</td>
<td>85c-85c/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pork</td>
<td>48c-55c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chicken</td>
<td>58c-65c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egg</td>
<td>34c-50c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Provisions:**

- **Flour:** $2.50-$3.00
- **Cream:** $1.25-$1.40
- **Wheat (spring)** 65c-75c
- **Corn** 30c-35c
- **Barley** 20c-25c
- **Oats** 20c-25c
- **Potatoes** 40c-50c
- **Bacon** 12c-14c
- **Ham (sugar cured)** 16c-18c
- **Turkey** 12c-15c
- **Tallow** 8c-10c
- **Butter** 20c-25c
- **Cheese** 20c-25c
- **Eggs** 20c-25c

**Fuel:**

- **Wood per cord:** $4.00-$5.00
- **Coal per ton:** $10.00

**Groceries:**

- **Apples:** $1.25
- **Cheese:** 15c-15c
- **Tea, per lb.:** $1.00-$1.75
- **Coffee, per lb.:** 25c-30c
- **Rice, per lb.:** 125c
- **Butter:** 6c
- **White beans** 6c-7c
- **Raisins lb:** 25c-30c
- **Fish in kit** $2.50-$2.75
- **Mackerel in kit** $2.00
- **Dried apples** 14c
- **Dried peaches (Salt Lake)** 20c
- **Sugar per barrel:** $1.50
- **Syrups** 70c-$1.40
- **Kerosene** 40c
- **Vinegar** 40c

**Local Markets—1967**

*March 29, 1967.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>$1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>35c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>70c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milo</td>
<td>$1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 1 cream</td>
<td>50c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creamery butter</td>
<td>10c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy hens</td>
<td>6c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosters</td>
<td>4c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs, current receipts, delivered</td>
<td>25c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top steers sold at $2.25 per cwt.</td>
<td>At Omaha yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs, Omaha top, Tuesday, at $18.25 per cwt.</td>
<td>25c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cattle:** $2.00

**Chickens:** 4c

**Turkeys:** 5c

**Guinea:** 6c

**Ducks:** 6c

**Veal:** 25c

**Hens:** 4c

**Flour, best grade, per sack:** $0.75-$1.00

**Local Markets**

- **Sheep:** $3.10
- **Wheat:** 33c
- **Oats:** 14c
- **Local Markets—1939**
  - **January:**
    - **Corn:** 25c
    - **Wheat:** 60c
    - **Eggs:** 13c
    - **Butter:** 25c

- **Local Markets—1942**
  - **Wheat:** $1.11
  - **Corn:** 63c
  - **Oats:** 40c
  - **Beeves, choice:** 35c
  - **Roosters:** 40c
  - **Eggs:** $0.95-$1.05

**Local Markets—1939**

- **January:**
  - **Corn:** 25c
  - **Wheat:** 60c
  - **Eggs:** 13c
  - **Butter:** 25c

- **Local Markets—1942**
  - **Wheat:** $1.11
  - **Corn:** 63c
  - **Oats:** 40c
  - **Beeves, choice:** 35c
  - **Roosters:** 40c
  - **Eggs:** 27c
  - **Hogs:** $0.95-$1.05

**Local Markets—1945**

- **September:**
  - **Corn:** 35c
  - **Wheat:** 60c
  - **Eggs:** 13c
  - **Butter:** 25c

**Local Markets—1955**

- **March 30, 1955:**
  - **Wheat, new:** $0.92
  - **Corn, new yellow:** $1.37
  - **Milo, per cwt.:** $1.95
  - **Oats:** 70c
  - **No. 1 cream:** 57c
  - **Creamery butter:** 75c
  - **Eggs:** 26c
  - **Poultry:**
    - **Heavy hens:** 10c
    - **Light hens:** 6c
  - **Old roosters:** 25c
  - **Hogs, Omaha top, $18.50:**
    - **Top cattle sold at $30.00 per cwt. at Omaha yesterday.**

**Local Markets—1967**

- **March 29, 1967:**
  - **Wheat:** $1.39
  - **Corn:** 35c
  - **Oats:** 70c
  - **Milo:** $1.64
  - **No. 1 cream:** 50c
  - **Creamery butter:** 30c
  - **Heavy hens:** 5c
  - **Roosters:** 4c
  - **Eggs, current receipts, delivered:** 25c
  - **Top steers sold at $2.25 per cwt.**

*Photo from Don Strothkamp.*

*Geneva Auto-Gro (1966).*
Glengary Township

Glengary Township, in the southeastern quarter of the county, is bounded on the north by Liberty, on the west by Chelsea, and on the south by Franklin townships. Its eastern boundary is the Saline County line. The surface is gently rolling. The south fork of Turkey Creek runs in a northerly direction from Sec. 13 to Sec. 3, where it joins the main stream. A smaller stream, Walnut Creek, runs southward through Secs. 24 to 36. These streams account for the fact that Glengary had, in 1966, only five irrigation wells.

The township is crossed from west to east by Nebraska Highway 41, which follows the first section line below the Liberty boundary for 5 miles, then jogs south a mile to Milligan, then east a mile, and south one more mile along the county line. Nebraska 71 comes in from Liberty and terminates at Highway 41, a mile east of the Chelsea line. The Fairmont-Helvey branch of the Burlington slants from northwest to southeast, across Secs. 3 to 24, passing through Milligan.

In early days, a pioneer post office called Glengary was located in the NE corner of the NW ¼ of Sec. 22, but this seems to have vanished with the coming of the railroad to Milligan.

In a letter dated from Oak Park, Illinois, May 3, 1956, a former resident, Henry J. Podlesak, supplied the following recollections of early life in Glengary township.

We arrived in Fillmore County, Nebraska, about 3rd day of January, 1872, at Fairmont, were picked up by a farmer from Glengary township and moved to my uncle's farm, homestead, in Glengary township, into a small dugout shanty which was small, for seven people. Father applied for a "homestead," and dug out a shanty on it, and started farming.

After a few years we had some few acres of wheat, oats, and corn, couple cows, and lots of work. Lots of blizzards, scorching summers, even cloudbursts. Great life, out west. But we, like many others, survived.

One year—about the middle '70's—after having cut the grains, with a Walter A. Wood self-rake and bound it by hand—we were stacking the grain when all of a sudden the sky became darkened by clouds of grasshoppers, heading for our region. On seeing the hoppers father tried to hurry to shanty, particularly the vegetable garden patch, to save it from being eaten up by the hoppers. But we did not make much headway before the hoppers landed; the hoppers got into our faces, clothes, well, everything; the horses would not go forward because the hoppers got all over them; the horses had all they could do to keep the hoppers from eating up their eyes. By the time we got to the garden, everything was gone—very little left for us to eat. That was the worst grasshopper plague we ever had. They ate up the growing corn; on our way to the garden we went along a good-sized corn field of our neighbor but before we got to the end of the patch, there was not a leaf nor ear left, only the hard stalks were standing.

We had plenty of cloudbursts, tornadoes, cyclones, and dry years—some life! But in 1888 we had the worst blizzard on record. It came on Jan. 12, a little after 1 P.M., in our region, and lasted for three days and nights, wind blowing hard and temperature way below zero. All the quail and rabbits were frozen to death.

The fore part of January, 1888, was mild—warm, we called it—and all the children big enough to work were working in the fields. I happened to be the "cheecher" of District No. 44 on Jan. 12, 1888, had about 20 pupils attending when the blizzard started to show up, and we were in a jiffy. Sizened up the coal supply, which was very low, very little water. But I could not send the kids home, some of them had 2 miles to walk; so the only thing to do was to apportion them to the nearest farms. Took 10 or 11 to the old Steinacher farm, not far but against that fierce wind—what a task that was! Took seven to old Kotas's farm, two to Anton Kotas's farm, and five to my father's farm. I'll never forget that experience.
District No. 39 was organized on March 12, 1872. It comprised Secs. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33. The first meeting was held at the home of Duncan McLeod on March 19, 1872 Early school board members were Henry Clausen, 1874-79; Anton Nun, 1880-81; J. Gobel 1883-85; and Frank Sieber, 1887-89. The earliest teachers were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>H. J. Morse</td>
<td>$25 a month</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>E. J. Chester</td>
<td>$25 a month</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Emma Zorba</td>
<td>$20 a month</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>E. J. Chester</td>
<td>$25 a month</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>E. R. Gould</td>
<td>$35 a month</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Parthenia Matson</td>
<td>$35 a month</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Parthenia Matson</td>
<td>$35 a month</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Parthenia Matson</td>
<td>$35 a month</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Parthenia Matson</td>
<td>$35 a month</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>J. H. Harris</td>
<td>$30 a month</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Parthenia Matson</td>
<td>$22 a month</td>
<td>11 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


District No. 44 was established on March 14, 1872, by G. W. Barrows, deputy for County Superintendent G. W. Gue. It was made up of Secs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of T6, R1W. T. W. Clark was notified of the election of district officers, to be held “at the nearest central place in the said district” on Thursday, March 21, at 1 P.M. In May, 1874, Superintendent Dempster, on petition, removed Secs. 1, 2, 11, and 12 from District 44 and attached them to District 71.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>B. F. Bothwell</td>
<td>$25 per mo.</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>B. F. Bothwell</td>
<td>$25 per mo.</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>B. F. Bothwell</td>
<td>$25 per mo.</td>
<td>4 mo.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>B. F. Bothwell</td>
<td>$25 per mo.</td>
<td>4 mo.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>B. F. Bothwell</td>
<td>$25 per mo.</td>
<td>5 mo.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>George H. Lee</td>
<td>$30 per mo.</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>George H. Lee</td>
<td>$30 per mo.</td>
<td>4 mo.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>E. S. Stevens</td>
<td>$31 per mo.</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>B. R. Stevens</td>
<td>$31 per mo.</td>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Henry Podlesak</td>
<td>$30 per mo.</td>
<td>6 mo.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F. J. Znojensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Joseph Podlesak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On June 29, 1953, District 44 was dissolved and attached to District 71.

District No. 67 (May, 1900) In doorway: Anna (Schelbitzki) Rippe; Mary (Kuska) Pock. Back row, left to right (by door): *Chas. Sluka; Just Schelbitzki; Cyril Bernasek; James Bernasek; *Joe Bernasek; *Rose (Vejrraska) Sadlo; Emma (Rehor) Rezabek. Tall ones, left to right from building: Christina (Bernasek) Krupicka; Valentine Kuska, Agnes (Vejrraska) Ach; Henry Schelbitzki; Frank Fujan; Josie (Simic) Kasak; *Josephine (Podlesak) Rehor. Teacher. Bottom row: *Tony (Schelbitzki) Krist; Emma (Bernasek) Houner; Josephine (Rehor) Vosoba; unidentified boy; Joe B. Kuska; *James F. Kasak; *Frank Bernasek; *Leo Hennessey.

The teacher in this picture died on July 11, 1966, at Torrance, Calif., on her 87th birthday. This picture appeared in the Nebraska Signal on Dec. 29, 1966.

*Deceased
District No. 67, on petition of the voters of Districts 2 and 39, was set up by Superintendent Dempster on June 9, 1873, to consist of Secs. 7, 8, 16, 17, and 18, and the N ½ of Secs. 19, 20, and 21 of T6, R1W. S. J. Galimore was notified that the first meeting—for the election of a moderator for three years, a director for two years, and a treasurer for one year—would be held at the nearest central place on Monday, June 18, 1873, at 2 p.m.

Later, the W ½ of SE ¼ of Sec. 6 was transferred from District 2 to District 67; still later, the W ½ of SW ¼, Sec. 7 went to District 65, and the SW ¼ of Sec. 18 to District 32.

In December, 1952, Richard Poch and family moved into the district; their two children were sent to District 65, at tuition charge of $275. From September, 1953, to May, 1954, the Poch children were sent to District 65, with District 67 paying the tuition of $570. In September, 1951, $270 was paid to District 71 as Henry Allen Kasik entered the first grade. Henry and his little brother Ralph went to District 71 in 1952 and 1953 at a cost of $500 per pupil. In 1954, the next younger brother joined the Kasik boys (in kindergarten), and these pupils were being sent to District 71 at a tuition cost of $500 each.

District No. 71 was set up by Superintendent Dempster on May 18, 1874, to comprise Secs. 1, 2, 11, and 12 of T6, R1W. John McManas was notified of the first meeting, to be held at a central place on Saturday, May 30, 1874, at 2 p.m., to elect the usual officers. This district later absorbed District 80. (More details on this district, which became the Milligan school, are given in the history of Milligan.)

District No. 80 was set up on a petition of the voters of District 43 by Superintendent J. B. Lewis on May 18, 1850. It was made up of Secs. 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, and 24, dedicated for the purpose from District 43. However, on the combined petitions of voters in District 71 and District 80, these sections—comprising the whole of District 80—were re-attached to District 71. With this action, taken by Superintendent P. H. Hines on July 22, 1899, District 80 ceased to exist.

FAMILIES

Claus Henry Clausen (better known as Henry) was born October 29, 1845, in Suderheistadt Dietmarschen, Holstein, Germany. At the age of 22, in 1867, two years after the Civil War, he immigrated to America. He stopped first at Clinton, Iowa, where he remained three years. In May, 1870, he walked from Clinton to Fillmore County. He was a wagon maker by trade. He homesteaded on the NW ¼ of Sec. 32 in what is now Glengary township. He gave a plot of ground in the northeast corner of his homestead for a cemetery and a school, known as Clausen Cemetery and School District.
Three brothers followed him to Nebraska: Franz Chris ten (known as Christ), Hans, and John. Christ, who re mained a bachelor, homesteaded on the SE ¼ of Sec. 4, in Franklin, 2 miles NE of Ohiowa. Their parents, Claus Rode Claus sen and his wife, Anna Rohevedder Clausen, and three daughters — Catherine (never married), Matikla (Mrs. Wenzel Landkammer), and Anna (Mrs. J. Gobel) — came to America and lived with Christ Clausen.

Henry Clausen met Maria Wieden by a lone cottonwood tree at the north edge of his homestead while she was walking to visit a neighbor. A romance started, and they were married on February 29, 1875, in the one-room schoolhouse on his land. They obtained their marriage license at Fairmont (Geneva and Ohiowa did not yet exist). They started housekeeping in a dugout. Maria often told how she would find bull snakes coiled by her milk crock in the dugout. For many years the dugout house and barn could be found in the pasture. After some time in the dugout, they built a very small house and a barn in a grove on the east edge of their land. Henry walked many a time to Beatrice, and later to Alexandria, to get and carry home a sack of flour. To their union were born 10 children, four of whom died in infancy. Henry and Maria Clausen, his parents, his two brothers, and five children are all buried in the Clausen Cemetery.

On January 1, 1889, Henry and Christ helped organize St. John's Lutheran Church and were charter members. Before organization, services were held in farm homes and in the District 40 school. Henry opened his home for services. He was a prosperous farmer, giving land to each of his children, and did many good deeds for his fellow men and his church. His generosity helped many a family when in need.

In 1908, he retired from farming and became a resident of Ohiowa, with his six living children, Rudolph, John, Henry, Mary (Mrs. Fred Karre), Minnie (Mrs. Bruno Goerz), and Martha Mrs. Jess Beckwith). Rudolph and Minnie died during the 1918 influenza epidemic. John, who became a guard at the State Penitentiary in Lincoln, was murdered by an inmate on Good Friday, April 16, 1954. In 1919, a new bungalow and other dwellings were built on the west edge of the homestead, close to the highway. The place is now owned by Mrs. Joe Kaderabek of Milligan and farmed by her son.

Henry and Maria celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on February 28, 1925. Maria passed away on November 26, 1927, and Henry on December 16, 1935.

Maria Wieden Clausen was born January 1, 1857, in Hermsdorf, in the German part of Bohemia, and came with her mother, brother, and sisters to the United States in 1871. They were met at Fairmont (then the terminus of the railroad) by her father, who had been in America and in Fillmore County for two years. Her parents were Joseph Wieden and Franziska Müller Wieden. They homesteaded on land adjoining Henry Clausen on the NE ¼ of Sec. 4, Franklin, east of Ohiowa. Her one brother, William Wenzel Wieden, a baker by trade, specialized in pastry and cake trimming. He enjoyed relating pioneer history. While living in Beatrice, he furnished bread for the Sioux Indians when the government moved them through town in 1873. On August 1, 1877, William and his wife started a bakery in a small frame store building in Sutton. He lived and hunted buffalo there. On August 1, 1924, in the evening, he became ill and closed his shop. Two weeks later, on August 14, he passed away. His business had continued more years without change of management than any other in Sutton.

Josef Kassik, Sr., and Veronika Franek Kassik were married in 1859 in Czechoslovakia. They settled in Glen garcy township in 1870, on the W ½ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 10, with two boys, James and Joe. Their third boy, Frank, was born here on January 21, 1871, and passed away on September 17, 1954, at the age of 83 years, 7 months, and 26 days. He was the oldest resident born in and living in Glengary township all his life. A sister, Anna (Mrs. Charles Keberle), also had a long life in the area; she died on March 8, 1958. Of the Kassiks' five boys and two girls, the last two living in Fillmore County were Emil Kassik Sr., aged 91, and Albert Kassik, Sr., 88. Both have now passed on. Albert, with his three sons, owned and ran the alfalfa mill and pellet factory in Milligan.

Joseph Kassik, Sr., used to work at Nebraska City and walk there and back, often carrying home a 50-lb. sack of flour. Once he brought a grindstone on his back. When he came to a stream, he spotted a young fawn. He lay down the grindstone and chased and caught the young animal. He took it home and sold it for $5. When he came back home, the grindstone was missing. But he had nothing to tie it with, so he took off his suspenders and tied it up. By that time he had lost track of his grindstone. When he finally found it and got back to where he had left the fawn, the animal was gone, also the suspenders. He went on homeward, on this third day of his journey. When night came, he thought that he must be close to home. But in the dark, tired and hungry, he lay down to sleep, with the grindstone beside him on a straw pile. When he awoke in the morning, he found that the straw slack was his own.

Mrs. Veronika Kassik had an experience with Indians one day. She was at home alone, just starting a fire in their dugout. When an Indian woman came in and, seeing the matches, wanted them. Mrs. Kassik was scared, so she gave her the whole box of matches, and then for a long time had to use flint stones to start the fire. Kindlings that time were weeds tied in small bundles.

Mr. and Mrs. Kassik managed to give each of their five boys a 160-acre farm with a three-room house, a barn, and a granary. The boys all had to work while very young. They were often tied to the seat of a machine so they would not fall off while the machine was in motion.

—Agnes Ach
Anton Kuska was born in Malkov u Lnár, Kraj Pisek, Czechoslovakia, on December 14, 1852. His parents were Thomas and Marie Vavra Kuska. He grew up in Czechoslovakia, where he learned the shoe trade from his maternal uncle John. Upon reaching the age of compulsory military service, he entered the artillery corps of the army of Emperor Franz Josef I, King of Bohemia. Later he served in the medical corps. On completing his army service, he was released from further military obligation and decided to emigrate to the United States. Arriving in New York City in May, 1881, at the age of 28, he came on to Chicago, where he remained for a few weeks with an uncle before coming to Nebraska. He then came to Exeter, where he worked as a shoemaker for a short time. Later, he found work on a farm near Milligan.

My mother, Elzbeta Kolar, and my wife's mother, Mary Bures, were the children of Anton Kuska. They came from the same district in Bohemia as my father. Tomás and Marie Vavra Kuska. He grew up in Czechoslovakia and came to America from Czechoslovakia on the same steam freighter. My mother could get on this ship but my father had to wait a week. He came to America from Czechoslovakia on the same steam freighter. After they were on the ocean the weather turned stormy and dark. The water was rough and they drifted off course. They feared they would never reach land. During the storm, the ship constantly blew its whistle to gain warning to other ships to avoid collision. Food supplies ran low and so did fuel. Much sickness and many deaths occurred on this voyage. However, they reached Baltimore and proceeded to Fillmore County. My mother came to Kolar's home on the creek north of Milligan. Even though mother experienced a longer ocean trip, she arrived in Fillmore County before my father.

Anton Kuska arrived on September 17, 1881, Anton was united in marriage to Elzbeta Kolar. To this union eight children, seven sons and one daughter, were born. The living children are Emil Anton Fairmont, Mrs. Mary Foch of Milligan, Valentine of Lincoln, Joseph B. of Lincoln, Anna of California, Henry of Berwyn, Illinois, and Clement of Oak Park, Illinois.

Dad and mother began married life on a farm 4 miles NW of Milligan in Liberty township. Oxen were used to do the farming on the farm on which Antun purchased land. Later they purchased 80 acres (S 1/2 SW 1/4 17-6-1 Glengary township) of B. & M. R.R. land on contract and received a deed to this land on March 27, 1885. They lived on this land the rest of their lives.

Life on the farm often talked about the hardships of pioneer days. The grasshopper plague and drought of 1894 were severe blows. Crops in previous years were fairly good: larger acreages were planted, and grew well in the early part of the season. On July 26, 1894, a heavy rain drowned much of the corn, causing the crop to be lost in one day. Later in the same month the grasshoppers came. They came so thick that they obscured the light of the sun like a dark cloud so that within a short time the crops that survived the hot winds were destroyed. It was said that the Indians tasted the grasshoppers and ground them into a meal for food. In 1895, there were some crops. A big corn crop was raised and the price was 8 to 10 cents a bushel. That year's crop caused many cribs to be built in town, as the farmers were hauling ear com there to sell. However, there were several farmers who would rather burn corn than buy coal because the latter was too expensive. We had a cow for our milk supply and when it died we didn't have the money to purchase another.

I can remember the big snowdrifts of the famous Blizzard of '88 (Jan. 12). The drifts were hard and I could walk over them. The day started very nice but by noon large snowflakes began falling and in the afternoon a heavy snow began and soon it was a severe whirling windstorm. Visibility was zero. Some mothers lost their lives by trying to get to schools to save their children. There is no doubt that the suffering and loss in the blizzard were greater because of the way the storm struck and the inadequate weather forecasting and communications which caught people and livestock without warning. The storm moved from Montana to Southeast Nebraska (a distance of 780 miles) in 17 hours, an average speed of 45 miles per hour. Temperatures at North Platte dropped 32° in 13 hours and at Crete 18° in 3 minutes. This storm, in contrast to the 1949 blizzard, was much worse. The 1949 blizzard traveled at only a 2 to 4 mile gait, and later the facilities of weather warning and thuder settlement reduced danger to a minimum.

Another interesting fact of these progressive pioneers was their foresight in bringing alfalfa seed from their native homeland which they planted in this country. This alfalfa seed (Turkey Stand) has been kept in the family all through the years.

I, Emil Anton Kuska, am the oldest child of Anton and Elzbeta Kolar and have been a resident of Fillmore County since my birth on August 6, 1882. On February 14, 1912, Katherine Becwar, daughter of John and Elizabeth Becwar, and I were married. Our first home was on a farm near Milligan. We bought the SW 1/4 of Sec. 18, Liberty township, in 1913 and have lived there ever since.

I attended University of Nebraska short courses in Agriculture and have been in agriculture continuously. In 1936, I was elected by the Pasture-Produce Livestock Commission at Omaha as the pioneer in bringing brome grass as a permanent and temporary pasture into south-central Nebraska in 1900. Also, I have kept sowing the alfalfa seed that my father brought to this county.

My wife and I have three sons. Donald graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1928 and is corporate director of quality control for the Oliver Corporation, South Bend, Indiana. William passed away during his sophomore year at the University of Nebraska in 1938. Melvin, after graduating from the University of Nebraska, went into the Army Air Force in World War II as a captain, and returned to Fillmore County to take over the farming operations.

John Placek was born in 1837 in Rakolusky, Kralovice County, Czechoslovakia, and in 1863 married Catherine Kotas, born in Kozojedy, Czechoslovakia. In September, 1868, they came to Chicago, then to St. Louis. The following year they came up the river (a seven-day trip) to Nebraska City, where they found Vac. Petracek, who conducted a boarding house at the time. Petracek informed Placek of a countryman named Kološ, from Brezi, Bohemia. Kološ advised him to wait until the Czech settlers from the Big Blue country can down, then they would take him back with them. Shortly thereafter, Matej and Frank Kvarnik, John Brabc, and George Krajnik came down to get a seeder they had ordered. Placek bought a wagon and other necessities and set out with them. They stayed at Krajnik's for three days, sleeping in their wagon, because Krajnik's sod house was filled to overflowing.

Vincent Aksamit had a homestead in that neighborhood and on it a little shed, and so they moved in and lived there one winter. Placek had to go to Nebraska City, 75 miles, for furniture. In the spring he took a claim, broke 30 acres, and lived in an open camp. Later he built a dugout, where their son was born. When the child was three days old, the mother came to the field with it and helped Placek plant potatoes, the other children staying at home alone. A cloud burst occurred; the mother and child sought shelter under the wagon, and Placek hurried home. He found the dugout full of water, the frightened children in bed. When he came, he had brought with him a nephew, who found work with a settler, but sickened and came to Placek's to die. Their home measured only 4' x 6'; they had to place the corpse outside and cover it until the funeral.

The next year Placek planted 70 acres. Many settlers poured in. The year following, that he bought railroad land in Fillmore County, selling it two years later (an 80 for $500) and buying a quarter-section for $700. Then he bought another 80 for $400 and, still later, school land for $1,000, all in Fillmore County. As his boys grew to manhood, he kept on selling improved land and buying unimproved land to give them farms—all earned by hard work of himself and his family. It was a good example of the way many others did and in time were rewarded.

Settlers kept coming, railroads were built, towns were established, and Placek was able to retire with his wife to Milligan, in his old age, to enjoy a well-earned rest, and, as he said, to await the time when they were to abide in that last and smallest "sod house" of all, which measures 2' x 6' but in which its occupants find eternal peace.

The Placek family:
1. Fred E. Placek
2. Louis Placek
3. Albert Placek
4. E. E. Placek
5. Frank Placek
6. Anna Rohla (Placek)
7. Christine Kubicek (Placek)
8. Mrs. John Placek
9. Mr. John Placek
10. Mary Boxa (Placek)

Photo from Mrs. Henry Steinacher
Emil Edwin Placek, son of Jan and Katerina Placek, was born in a sod house in Fillmore County on December 14, 1877. Emil worked on the home farm and attended public school at Milligan. In the fall of 1894, he entered Western Normal College at Lincoln; the next year he transferred to the University of Nebraska, taking a law degree in June, 1897, followed by graduate work in law. He was appointed recorder in the office of the Fillmore County clerk on January 1, 1898, but soon resigned to enlist in Company G, 1st Nebraska Regiment, U. S. Volunteers. He served in the Philippine campaign and was present at the taking of Manila, August 14, 1898; he then served through the Philippine insurrection from February 4 to July 1, 1899, and was honorably discharged on August 23, 1899, at San Francisco. Upon his return, he again became recorder in the clerk’s office. On January 1, 1900, he was appointed clerk of the county court, but on June 1, 1900, he resigned to take a post in the Census Department at Washington.

On March 1, 1901, Emil Placek took up residence at Wahoo and engaged in the general practice of law. He served as county judge of Saunders County for two terms (1906-1911). In the meantime, in 1904, he purchased a controlling interest in the Nebraska Culvert & Manufacturing Co. of Wahoo, of which he has since been president and general manager. All of his employees in this firm—which makes road machinery and corrugated culverts, and does general sheet-metal work—work on a profit-sharing basis. Besides his various business and civic interests, he served two terms (sessions of 1911 and 1913) in the Nebraska State Senate. He also served two terms as mayor of Wahoo.

In 1904, he was married in Wahoo to Elizabeth Lindercamp, a daughter of John and Agnes (Lent) Lindercamp, the former of whom had served in the German army during the Franco-Prussian War. To this union were born three children: Corenne S., born at Wahoo, May 21, 1905; Emil Elizabeth, born at Wahoo, September 10, 1910; and Wayne Edwin, born at Pasadeno, California, March 11, 1921.

At the age of 27, in 1870, Wenzel Schelbitzki came to America from Austria-Hungary. It took three weeks to cross the ocean. He worked in Nebraska City for one year and then came to Fillmore County, where he homesteaded 80 acres on Sec. 26, Glengary township, 11 miles SE of Geneva. He lived in a dugout and during the first year walked many miles to Beatrice for groceries, carrying a sack of flour on his back and groceries in a bucket. Sometimes a snake would make its way into the dugout. Once, while working in his potato patch, he was bitten by a rattlesnake. To draw out the poison, he buried his arm in the mud of the creek, thus averting poisoning. He built chairs, tables, and beds the family used for years. Stones for the foundation and lumber for the frame house he built were brought by wagon and oxen from Alexandria.

In 1875, he married Mary Kruta, who had come from Czechoslovakia. He bought 80 acres adjoining the homestead and cleared 12 acres on Sec. 20, Glengary township, 11 miles SE of Geneva. He built the frame house there. Here he reared his family of four sons—Anton, Frank, Henry, and Gust—and four daughters—Sarah, Mary, Antonia, and Anna. He lived there continuously until his passing at the age of 85 years. His wife preceded him in death. These hardy pioneers are buried in Glengary Cemetery.

A large granite rock which was partially embedded in the ground was taken from the homestead pasture and placed in the Geneva park as a memorial.

As of this year (1966), the survivors of the Wenzel Schelbitzki family are: Henry and Gust Schelbitzki of Ohiowa, Mary (Mrs. John Sieber), of Ohiowa, and Anna (Mrs. George Rippe), of Sidney, Nebraska.

Among our local pioneers, the family of Frank J. Sieber of Ohiowa is a four-generation family: the great-grandfather, the grandfather, the father, and the son all had the same names, and lived all their lives in Fillmore County.

In 1870, four men from Hermendorf, Bohemia, decided to come to America. Each had a profession but thought that opportunities were few, and so they sailed for America hoping to find a better situation. Those men were Frank J. Sieber, Joseph Stoy, Jozef Staritz, and Carl Wiesen. Their families were left in Bohemia to come later if the men found America to be a desirable place to live and bring up their families.

From New York they came to Beatrice, to contact a land agency. They were first shown land in western Nebraska but decided to come back to the east. They then went to the town of Ohiowa, where the Homestead Act of 1862 provided that anyone who was an American citizen, or who declared his intention to become one, could claim 160 acres of government land. They decided to homestead on Sec. 28 in Glengary township. In the center of the section they dug a well so that the four families could all share it. Dugouts were made, and these served the four men as their living quarters. For miles and miles around there was nothing but prairies and sky. The dugouts were dark caves, but when they came outside and saw the level prairie and beautiful blue sky, hardships were forgotten.

In the fall they sent someone to Bohemia to bring over their families. This did not work out too well, because the men they sent squandered the money they had been given for the families’ passports. He also told the families that America had nothing to offer them but Indians, snakes, and wild animals. It was then that the aged grandfather told the families that he would go to America and write them back the truth. During this time, the men who were already here started to build sod houses to be ready for the families when they arrived. The great-grandfather finally arrived, found things favorable, and wrote the families to come.

In the fall of 1871, they sailed for America. There were the aged grandmother Sieber, Helena, the wife of their son Frank (already here), and their children, Frank, Mary, Caroline, and Tracy. Other children born in America were John and Anna Stoy. The family of Joseph Stoy (already here) coming with them were Mrs. Joseph Stoy, three sons—Julius, Joseph, and Anton—and a daughter, Mary. They were on the ocean 20 days and had many exciting experiences. Finally they arrived in America and went to Ohiowa, where the men walked together 50 miles once a week to get supplies. One time they were caught in a severe blizzard and had to seek shelter in a haystack for several days. When spring arrived, they turned over more prairie with oxen and a wooden plow. They also planted many trees. Although not much grain was raised the first year, a little meant a great deal to them. They had many hardships in these years, but somehow they surmounted them.

After a few years, neighbors arrived, and later more immigrants came. A schoolhouse was built not far from the homestead first called the Sieber district. The names of the first settlers were Stoy, Staritz, Sieber, and Clark. In 1882, the Peace Christian Church was built. In 1885, the children of these families went to school there. There was not much equipment, but as time went on more was added.
The grandparents of Rose Sieber Lynn made three trips to their native land, Bohemia. They always enjoyed these trips, but America was home to them and they were always glad to get back. One by one the pioneers were laid to rest in the little cemetery by the District 39 schoolhouse. On their tombstones can be read the names of many brave pioneers who helped make Fillmore County history.

As of 1967, the survivors of the Frank J. Sieber family were: Rose Sieber Lynn and her two sons, Vincent and Leland; Mrs. Sophia Sieber (wife of Frank J. Sieber, Jr.); Mrs. Grace Sieber (wife of Joseph Sieber) and her daughter, Mrs. Betty Joe Zengerle of Annville, Pennsylvania. Vincent S. Lynn, M.D., and his wife, Helen live in Geneva; they have two daughters, Mary Carmen, of Chicago, and Mrs. Ray Decker, of Lincoln. Leland M. Lynn, D.D.S., teaches dentistry at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. He and his wife, Laura Mae, have one daughter, Laura Lea.

Charles Smrha was born in Styria, Austria, on September 14, 1876. In 1884, he came, with his parents, brothers, and sisters, to Exeter, from where they eventually moved to Milligan in 1893. He graduated from the Exeter High School in 1896. On August 30, 1904, he was united in marriage to Agnes Barta of Wilber.

Mr. Smrha started his adult life as a country schoolteacher, but this activity was interrupted by his service in the Spanish-American War (1898-99). On his return from service he became Fillmore County’s superintendent of schools. In 1903, he became cashier of the Farmers & Merchants Bank of Milligan, of which he later became president, and served in the latter capacity until 1933. During this period he served two terms as a state Senator, representing the 17th District (Fillmore, Jefferson, and Thayer counties). Throughout his lifetime, he was actively affiliated with and devoted to the ideals and principles of the Democratic party.

In 1933, he became the Nebraska state manager of the
Home Owners Loan Corporation, and in 1938 he was appointed state Director of Insurance by Governor Roy L. Cochran. During World War II, he served as district director of the Office of Price Administration at North Platte from 1943 to 1945.

He was a 50-year member of Stotsenberg Lodge of the Knights of Pythias, and with this organization was past grand chancellor of the Grand Lodge of the State of Nebraska; a 50-year member of the Masonic order, Geneva Lodge No. 79; a charter member of Z. C. B. J. (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association); a member of Harris Fraley Post No. 131 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; past commander of the Nebraska Department of United Spanish War Veterans; and a member of the Knife and Fork Club.

His ability as an orator gained him wide recognition. He was called upon to deliver addresses on many occasions, and he delivered the funeral addresses at almost every funeral in the Milligan community for nearly 50 years, from 1910 until 1958, when failing health made it impossible for him to continue.

Mr. Smrha died at the Veterans Hospital in Lincoln on April 19, 1961.

James (Vaclav) Svec and Marie Suda were early pioneers in Fillmore County. They lived all their married life on the farm on which Vaclav filed his homestead entry on April 17, 1871, filed his proof at the Beatrice land office in January, 1877. The farm, still in the family, is in Sec. 10, Glengary, one mile W of Milligan.

Vaclav Svec was born in Zichovice, Okris Stasecky, Czechoslovakia, on October 16, 1841. When he was only 12, he lost his mother, and so had to make his way in the world while still a young boy. He took up the trade of a cabinet maker. When he came to America in 1869, he followed this trade for a time in Iowa. He came to Nebraska two years later, settling in the neighborhood of the present town of Milligan. He pursued his trade here also, being called upon from
time to time to make caskets for his neighbors, as the need arose.

Marie Suda was born in Bezdekova, Czechoslovakia, and came to this country with her parents in 1868, when, following the Civil War, there was a great influx of European immigrants. Her first home in America was in Chicago, where the family remained until 1871. Leaving Chicago after the great fire, the family then came to live in the vicinity of Milligan.

Vaclav Svec married Marie Suda on January 17, 1873. Their marriage was blessed with 11 children, one of whom died in infancy. One son, James lost his life in action in France, in the Argonne Forest, during World War I. To make a living for his family, Vaclav made journeys to work in Lincoln, Beatrice, and Nebraska City, walking there and back, and carrying on his return trips the necessities of life. He and his wife endured, and survived, all the usual hardships of the pioneer days. In his later years, when the family relieved him of the heavy work, he spent his leisure time walking to the creek to fish and to enjoy the shade of the trees. He loved to listen to the songs of the birds.

—Pauline Votipka

Josef Vejraska was born in 1850 and his wife, Marie Kucera, was born in 1856, both in Czechoslovakia. They were married on May 1, 1877. They had six children; the first child, a son, died of diphtheria when he was only one year old. The other children were daughters: Anna, Agnes, Mary, Rose, and Frances. Josef’s father, Jan Vejraska, came to Fillmore County in 1880. Josef and his family followed in the summer of 1884 and bought 80 acres of school land on which they settled.

William and Joe Svec standing in front of their home near Milligan. The house is built of bricks made from clay on the Svec farm.

They built a sod house, and after a few years, when snakes and other pests were dangerous to the children, they decided to look for clay for making bricks, as Joseph Vejraska and his father were both masons and brick makers in their fatherland where they made bricks commercially. They found the clay, so they decided to make their own bricks and build a brick house.

First they took off the top dirt and dug out enough to make a sample for bricks. They found out that this worked, so they dug out the clay, broke the clods, poured water over it, a batch at a time, worked it into a smooth dough by hand with tools and walked in it with bare feet—and all that was hard work for both hands and feet. They pulled the water from the well with a long bucket by hand. When the clay dough was smooth it was worked by hand into a breadlike loaf on a long plank table and then thrown into a wooden form with force so it would fill the corners in the form. The form was made for two bricks at a time. Then the top was cut off by a wire saw, handmade from a fresh bough of a tree skinned and soaked in water, then bent, and wire was fastened to both ends. As it was drying, the wire would stretch so tight that it cut the brick straight. These bricks were 10⅛” x 5⅛” x 2⅛”. The bricks were then dumped on a straight smooth field, brushed with fine powder-like sand, with a “know-how” so the bricks would not be lopsided. When the field was full it was a beautiful picture. The bricks lay nicely in straight rows, just an edge of form space in between. When they dried off enough to be picked, the bricks were put into a shed to finish drying, piled so that air could go through.

The shed was made of brick pillars and wooden sides. The pillars held the wooden sides which were removed when the weather permitted so the bricks could dry thoroughly.

The kiln for baking the bricks was dug out in a hill made like two rooms. One opening was made at the bottom of a hill for coal and a fireplace. The other one was large and deep, about 40’ square and 40’ deep. It had two burners made of heavy iron to hold the large load of bricks. When enough bricks were made and dried they...
were then hauled into the kiln via wheelbarrows, and placed zig-zag so the air, heat, and smoke could go through. Then the fire was started and slowly pushed to the back end. A hot poker was used to push the fire far in and get the ashes out underneath the grates. It took 4 days and 3 nights to bake the bricks with slow steady heat. Intense heat would have deformed the bricks.

When the bricks were red hot and little flames started shooting up through the bricks, the fireplace was closed and the top was covered with dirt thick enough to keep the heat in for slow cooling. If rainy weather set in the top was covered with a tin roof over the dirt.

The house built of these bricks on the Vejraska 80-acre farm in Sec. 16, Glengary township, was 22' x 24' inside. The walls were 16' thick. The dry raw bricks were used for the inside of the wall to take up any moisture and keep the house dry. In those days lime, sand, and hair was used for plaster—cement was not available. The interior of the house was whitewashed in the spring.

As the family grew, a homemade brick addition was added on to the house which was 22' x 46'. More bricks were also made for the barn built in the hill and with a wooden roof. That replaced a low barn that was in a dugout and had a grass roof which was made of small bundles of long swamp grass and fastened on heavy laths with a smooth thick twine put over just like shingles and it never leaked and was very warm. Horses were precious in those days and the Vejraskas believed in good housing for them.

A chicken house was dug out in the hill and the lower part was made of sod and square nests were dug right in the side of the dirt walls and the roof was of grass.

This 80-acre farm with the brick house and barn has been continuously in the Vejraska family. The grandson, Joseph Sadlo, Jr., and his father Joseph Sadlo, Sr., farm it at the present time.

—Mrs. Frank Hamouz

Barn built in 1902 from bricks manufactured on the Vejraska farm.

[The section on Milligan owes a great deal to Robert I. Kutak's The Story of a Bohemian-American Village (1933). This was a study of the relationship between inherited and traditional customs and their transplantation to a new land, especially in a community heavily influenced by one national group of immigrants. This study, undertaken between 1928 and 1933, with the aid and co-operation of many of the people of Milligan, was the Columbia University Ph.D. thesis of Dr. Kutak, who later became professor of sociology at the University of Louisville.]

Frank Znojensky, a native of Bohemia, was granted his homestead claim on the "E 1/2 of the NE fractional quarter of Sec. 4, Township 6N, Range 1W... containing 80 acres and 69/100 of an acre" on June 15, 1875, by a patent signed by President U. S. Grant. He was naturalized as a United States citizen on September 26, 1906.

Mr. Znojensky lived on his homestead from 1875 until his passing away on August 2, 1915. It took from that time until 1929 to locate his heirs overseas. At that time, the farmstead was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Joe Steinacher, who lived there until 1965, when they in turn sold it to Edward Uldrich, who is the present owner.

Milligan

In a town named Milligan, located in Glengary township, one might expect to find an Irish population, but the town is inhabited largely by the descendants of Czechoslovakian settlers.

Milligan was established as a village in the fall of 1887. In the same year, the Kansas City & Omaha R.R. began to build a branch from Fairbury to McCool Junction.

The first inhabitant of Milligan was a blacksmith, Charles Polansky, and the first business here was the hardware firm of Kotas & Bulin. By the end of 1887, the following businesses had been established: Hardware: Kotas & Bulin, and Placek & Wozab; General Merchandise: D. S. Robinson, and Frank Chase; Elevators: Taylor & Burke, with C. O. Morgan and A. A. Hamouz, assistants, and Davis & Co., with Frank Stech as assistant; the Milligan Exchange Bank, with W. J. Zirhut as cashier; Lumber Yard: Bagley & Parkhurst; Drugstore: Williams & Co.; Furniture: Anton Vodicka; Livery: E. J. Hanabery; Blacksmith: Charles Polansky; Carpenters: John Havel, John Lukisik, and Anton Vodicka.

The town was duly organized and incorporated February 15, 1888, with the following trustees: D. S. Robinson, chairman, and W. J. Bulin, E. S. Bagley, Frank Chase, and Anton Vodicka. J. E. Starr was elected justice of the peace, and Charles Polansky was appointed marshal. The first postmaster was Anton Vodicka, who was appointed January 19, 1888, and served until April 15, 1890. During the year 1888, additional places of business were opened: General Merchandise: N. M. Zmudsky; Hardware: F. A. Placek; Implement: Kotas & Bulin; Saloon: Kotas & Kotas; Millinery: Mrs. A. Vacek; Meat Market: Joseph Kotas; Doctors: Amy & Amy; Livestock: W. J. Kotas. This year remains memorable all over the West for one of the most violent blizzards that the oldest settlers can remember.
John Havel was an early-day carpenter in Milligan who helped build many of the business buildings. This picture was taken in 1885. Front row, left to right: Jim, Joe, Bill, Emil, John. Center row: Frank, Mrs. Havel, Mr. Havel, Emma. Top row: Anna and Mary.

On June 16, 1872, President U. S. Grant issued a patent to the Burlington & Missouri River R.R. of Nebraska covering Sec. 11 in T6N, R1W of the 6th Principal Meridian, the section on which Milligan is now located. The first depot agent in Milligan was Charles Walker.

Transportation

E. J. Hanaberry had the first livery stable in 1888, with two teams of horses and one buggy. When William Dinneen bought out the business in 1896, a special wagon was built to pick up children each morning to bring them to school. A team and buggy rented for 50¢ and up to $1 to $1.25, depending on the distance. The first auto in town was owned by Frank Soukup in 1901. About 1915, automobiles became the rage and slowly took over. In 1928, Milligan also had a taxi, No. 956, run by James Kassik, who drove his patrons wherever they wanted to go around the country.

Fire Department

Milligan’s Volunteer Fire Department was organized May 12, 1933, with 16 members. The charter members were Henry Rischling, Emil A. Havel, Fred Kasak, Ernest Kotas, Bohumil Buzek, Lew Hamous, John Bulin, John Pavelka, Albert Kasek, Joe Jicha, Jim Jarolimek, Joe Prokop, Milton Stastny, Fred Skopec, Slav Petracek, and Ben Jeseck. Emil Havel and Ernest Kotas are the only charter members with a continuous membership who are still active today.

The first fire-fighting equipment was a two-wheeled hose-reel cart which had to be pulled by hand. In 1950, a fire truck was purchased for $10,000.

Telephones

The Bell Telephone Co. installed Milligan’s first telephone in 1897 in A. V. Kouba’s bank, located in the present Kotas building. Soon thereafter the bank was moved to its present location. The telephone, however, remained in the store building, and constituted the entire service for several years. Then the Fillmore County Telephone Co., with Attorney John Barsby as manager, took over this telephone, and others were installed both in town and in the rural areas. This necessitated the switchboard which was set up in the Milligan Times office. The switchboard was operated during the day by J. V. Kotas and E. J. Kotas, and at night by Pat Hanaberry and Frank Holpuch. About this time Iko Steele of Ohiowa started the Farmers Cooperative Telephone System, which also served this community. Later, the switchboard was moved to the home of J. V. Kotas. Dial telephones were installed in March, 1941, and Direct Distance Dialing reached Milligan in April, 1963.

Newspaper

The first newspaper published in Milligan was the Milligan Review, founded in 1892 by Fred Gilmore. In 1897, it was sold to J. A. Harris, who edited and published the Milligan Journal, which continued until 1900, when it became the Times. In 1933, Merle Furse started a new Milligan Review, but sold it in 1939 to Robert Dvorak. At present the Milligan news is published in the Nebraska Signal.

A clipping from the Milligan Review dated April 16, 1952, reads:

The present day Milligan Review editor was handed a copy of the April 18, 1913, issue of the Milligan Times recently by Frank J. Schultz. Exactly 38 years ago the newspaper serving Milligan was a six-column “handsel” with two pages home-print and six pages ready-print. The editor was Frank Rischling, who at present resides at Lawence, Nebraska, and still visits the home town occasionally. With the closing of the Milligan Times several years later, the community was without a newspaper until Merle Furse started the Milligan Review in 1933. The present owners bought out from him in 1936. Among the advertisers of that day according to the Times were Petracek & Co., clothing and millinery; Frank J. Korbelik, meat market; F. A. Placek, hardware; A. A. Hamous, dry goods and groceries; Rut & Jeseck, meat market; W. D. Russell, cafe proprietor; Frank Hdy, groceries and dry goods; Frank Rozanek, furniture; Joseph Jicha, Central Hall saloon; S. H. Michener, manager lumber yard; Joseph Kotas, produce business; E. J. Kotas was village clerk; James Jarolimek, resident physician and surgeon; E. J. Kotas was village clerk; James Smrha was cashier of Farmers and Merchants Bank. Some of the printing was in Czech language. All news items are of interest at the present time because they are history. The Milligan Review of almost 40 years ago told the following story: Wheat, No. 2, 73¢; Corn No. 3, 45¢; Oats, 25¢; Eggs, 14¢; Butterfat, No. 1, 28¢; Butter, 20¢ and 25¢; and so on.

A grand wrestling match was advertised for Saturday, April 19, at 3 P.M. at Stastny & Kotas Hall between Joseph P. Bartu of Milligan and Emil Martin of South Omaha. Admission was 25¢.

The issue is yellow with age and has been patched in several places with scotch tape. These old histories of a town and its people become valuable with age and in reading the daily happenings of a past generation, one is taken back to “the good old days” for a picture of things and people as they were at that time.

Photo from Mrs. Emil A. Havel

Water System
In 1888, the first water system of Milligan consisted of two windmills, each over a deep well. Most families had their own wells, but those who did not, and who lived close to the town windmills, went there to get their water. Later a town well was drilled where the power house stands and that well served the community until 1938, when the present water system and tower were installed. The new well north of town has a very good supply of water.

Post Office
A post office was established at Milligan on January 19, 1888. Anton Vodicka was the first postmaster. The records show that during 1888, $250.07 worth of stamps and stamped paper were sold. On September 15, 1904, Rural Free Delivery service was established in Milligan, with Henry Spirk as rural carrier at a salary of $720 per year, including horse hire.
For many years the post office was located in Block 9, Lot 12, in the bank building west of the banking rooms. In 1923, the post office moved into the new Krisl Building, on Block 9, Lots 10 and 11. On January 28, 1961, the post office was moved to the Hrdy Building, Block 9, Lot 3.

Local Politics
Nearly all of the members of the town board had to be drafted into its service. The office carries with it a great deal of responsibility, provides no financial return, takes much time, and results in but little prestige.
At one time interest in local politics was very keen; two tickets were in the field and bitter contests occurred. Charges and counter-charges were hurled back and forth, and every method was employed by each faction to win the elections. Sometimes the law stepped in to set limits beyond which candidates might not go in their efforts to win votes.
The local political campaign just opening will probably be the driest one that ever struck this vicinity, or, in fact, the county. Candidates are not allowed to set-em-up to the foaming pivo (beer), cigars, or other refreshments that will require the expenditure of money; and so ice-water, cornfield handshakes, and a whole lot of talk will have to be used instead on susceptible voters. For the candidate who is possessed of a social nature and liberal disposition, this will be a hardship, but for the fellow who wants your vote but hates like thunder to chip in even for a livery rig to come to town and ask for it, it will be a godsend. — Nebraska Signal, October 13, 1889, quoted in Milligan Journal.

Interest in state and national politics is still keen in Milligan, but the waters of local politics have not been troubled in many years. Such apparent indifference has caused comment from other communities in the county, but the local attitude is ably defended in the following article:
The Signal last week commented on the fact that the Milligan ballot for the village election and the school board election contained the names of no candidates and left the voters free to go to the polls and write in the name of anyone whom they pleased for the places to be filled. If the Signal were to be an observer of Milligan events as it has held itself, it would have seen in this no unusual occurrence. It has probably been 15 or 20 years since a caucus has been held here to nominate candidates for village offices. And the interesting feature of it is that nothing has been lost thereby... A village fight or a school fight may break the monotony of an otherwise quiet life, but it does much more than that. It breaks up a spirit of co-operation without which no community can prosper or progress. It doesn’t take very much to start a village fight... And while the fight is over, like engaging in a law suit, both sides to the controversy are the losers. — From the Milligan correspondent of the Nebraska Signal, April 13, 1922.

Despite this apparent indifference to local politics, and the fact that no formal caucuses are held before elections, yet the voters are not without some direction when the time comes to elect the village trustees. A few rather able politicians in the town manage to run elections pretty much to suit themselves, and the men whom they prefer sit on the town or school board. One of these men, the village banker, is the political “boss” of the village, and has been elected three times to the state senate on the Democratic ticket. Of him one of the Milligan girls who attended the state university wrote as follows: “We have one eminent man in town, and he was a Nebraska State Senator in 1923 and again in 1927. He always was the outstanding person in Milligan, and people all went to him for advice and help in business and domestic affairs. He is a good speaker, and since gaining recognition he has been called outside the community to deliver graduation and political speeches, Memorial Day and fraternal addresses. Years ago he was a county school superintendent of Fillmore County and also took part in the Spanish-American War as an officer.” (From an unpublished manuscript entitled “Community Attitudes: A Study of a Town,” University of Nebraska 1927.)

Churches
Milligan has two churches, the St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The first Catholic church, now located in the north cemetery, was built in 1876, on Sundays the people of the entire settlement gathered there for worship. Father Joseph Bartik was the first resident priest after the church was built in town. In pioneer days the priest traveled from one mission to another to take care of the spiritual welfare of the faithful. In 1909, the St. Wenceslaus Church was built in Milligan. Father Bouska contributed not only his time but also his money. The first couple to be married in this church by Father Bouska were Frank Tenopir and Matilda Slepicka (January 6, 1901). The first baptism in this church was held for Fannie Hodek Haberman, daughter of Frank and Anna Hodek. Milligan has two ladies who joined the Sisterhood: Sister M. Geraldine, daughter of the late W. J. and Rose (Hamouz) Butin, and Sister M. Frances Ann, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Emil A. Havel.
The foundation for the Methodist Episcopal Church of Milligan was laid in 1884, when a group of women organized a Ladies Aid Society and raised money to buy a church lot. After that year, a Sunday School was held in various buildings until the year 1924, when a permanent church organization was formed in the ZCBJ Hall under the direction of District Superintendent Rev. R. Gettys of Beatrice and Rev. Henry Iber, who at that time was in charge of the church at DeWitt. The next pastor was Rev. Watters.

Sunday School was held in various buildings until the year 1924, when a society was formed, and 3.15 acres one mile S of Milligan were purchased from Abumen and Sarah Starr for $10. The cemetery was named Glengary Cemetery Society. In 1897, a group from the Bohemian Gymnastic Society and ZCBJ Lodge Rabi took over the cemetery and the name was then changed to Ceska Narodni Hrbitov (Bohemian National Cemetery). In 1947, the association reorganized and new by-laws were agreed upon. The cemetery is now owned by the public, each lot owner being considered a member of the organization.

The Ceski Bratri Cemetery, one mile N and one mile W of Milligan, was established in 1876. A great many pioneers are buried there. The first burial was a Mrs. Josefa Shenkirk, who died in 1876. This plot is also known as the Pioneer Cemetery.

Schools

The 1854 act authorizing a territorial government for Nebraska provided for free public schools, and reserved Sec. 36 in addition to Sec. 16 for the maintenance of schools. Since District 71, as first organized, was composed of Secs. 1, 2, 11, and 12, it can be assumed that the first schoolhouse of the district was that on what is now the Millard Korbilek farm. John Dempster was county superintendent at that time, and the school was established in 1876. A great many pioneers have had their children there. The first teacher was added in 1893. The curriculum was extended to the eighth grade in 1895; the tenth grade was added the next year.

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In the years 1879-1888, the following persons taught in Milligan, with an average stay of three months: B. F. Bothwell, Minnie Butler, E. R. Gould, S. D. Poiriance, S. S. Blauvelt, Mary Page, May Stewart, Eva Poiriance, V. B. Crane, C. C. Spangler, and C. A. Buss. A new building was erected in 1889, for $1,500, on land that was part of the town site originally purchased from the C. B. & Q. R.R., and which is now the Funrall Park. The frame building had four large rooms. The 130 pupils were in the care of two teachers; a third teacher was added in 1893. The curriculum was extended to include the ninth grade in 1895; the tenth grade was added the next year. By 1915, all twelve grades were being taught. The first commencement exercises were held in 1897 for six graduates: Nellie Hanberrry, Emil J. Kotas, Frank A. Motis, William Podlesak, Anna Smrha, and Frank A. Stech.

Transportation facilities for children living at a distance have changed with the times. The Kingsville system put into operation in 1899 was new in this part of the country. Under this system, the school district hired a driver who furnished his own wagon and horses to transport the pupils. The wagon, or hack, was a vehicle with benches along the sides; for children whose parents had probably walked long distances to school, such an arrangement was, no doubt, considered luxurious. Among the drivers of the horse-drawn hacks were John O. Kotas, Albert Boss, and many others.

With the coming of motorized transportation, the drivers acquired buses that resembled delivery trucks. In 1953 the school district bought its first regular bus, a Ford, and hired James Stromadka as driver. A second bus, a Chevrolet, was purchased in 1956 when a second route became necessary. The new bus was driven by Herman Michl.

Within the past 15 years, Shelby has been installed in the assembly room to provide for a growing library, and for current publications. The books are catalogued in the Dewey System. Facilities for music teaching have been improved by providing a music room in the new addition. The Band Mothers have worked diligently in support of music projects. The school has always had a program for physical fitness. At one time Sokol activities were a part of this program, but more recently, inter-scholastic sports contests have received emphasis.

The gymnasium is the main feature of an $85,000 addition approved in 1956. Its laminated wood beams, oak bleachers, and maple floor help to make it one of the most beautiful and functional gymnasiums in this area.

Cemeteries

Milligan, like any other town, soon found that it would be necessary to set out a plot for a cemetery. On October 22, 1881, a society was formed, and 3.15 acres one mile S of Milligan were purchased from Ahumen and Sarah Starr for $10. The cemetery was named Glengary Cemetery Society. In 1897, a group from the Bohemian Gymnastic Society and ZCBJ Lodge Rabi took over the cemetery and the name was then changed to Ceska Narodni Hrbitov (Bohemian National Cemetery). In 1947, the association reorganized and new by-laws were agreed upon. The cemetery is now owned by the public, each lot owner being considered a member of the organization.

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The foundation for the Methodist Episcopal Church of Milligan was laid in 1904, when a group of women organized a Ladies Aid Society and raised money to buy a church lot. After that year, a Sunday School was held in various buildings until the year 1924, when a permanent church organization was formed in the ZCBJ Hall under the direction of District Superintendent Rev. R. Gettys of Beatrice and Rev. Henry Iber, who at that time was in charge of the church at DeWitt. The next pastor was Rev. Watters.

In 1931, the Rev. E. L. Cochran was instrumental in obtaining a church building from Friend, Nebraska. This was moved to Milligan on January 7, 1931, and dedicated on February 8.

The 1854 act authorizing a territorial government for Nebraska provided for free public schools, and reserved Sec. 36 in addition to Sec. 16 for the maintenance of schools. Since District 71, as first organized, was composed of Secs. 1, 2, 11, and 12, it can be assumed that the first schoolhouse of the district was that on what is now the Millard Korbilek farm. John Dempster was county superintendent at the time, and the school was established in 1876. A great many pioneers have had their children there. The first teacher was added in 1893. The curriculum was extended to the eighth grade in 1895; the tenth grade was added the next year.
The school now operates as a Class II minor-accredited school. Requirements for graduation are 40 hours each of English and social studies, 30 hours each of mathematics and science, 20 hours of practical arts, and 10 hours each of music and physical education. The walk from the street to the front door crosses over a culvert in cement balustrades at either end. During dry periods the culvert has provided imaginative young minds with many delightful games, and in winter the culvert has been plugged and the basin filled with water for skating. No doubt there are many fond memories of playtime down by the "bridge."

High School Alumni Association

Since many of the graduates of the Milligan High School often said they wished that Milligan would have an Alumni Association like those all the surrounding high schools had organized many years ago, Miss Agnes M. Capek, now Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz, called a meeting of a number of interested graduates for the purpose of organizing, on Thursday, April 29, 1948, at the National Farm Loan office at Milligan. Those attending this meeting were:


At a short business meeting, the following officers were elected for the next year: Norman Steinacher, president; Miss Arlene Laun, vice-president; Mrs. Frank W. Kassik, secretary; and James F. Kottas, treasurer. The president read letters from distant graduates unable to be present.

All were disappointed to hear that Mrs. Nellie Hanaberry Roth of Bayard, one of the speakers, was unable to be present. Mrs. Roth’s reading was closely followed by Mrs. Mary E. Krisl of the Class of 1898, giving her topic, “Pioneer Days in Schools,” which was well read by Miss Anna Smrha. In her message, Mrs. Roth extended greetings from Bayard, the “Buckle of the Beet Belt,” and went on to say, “Yes, we were the big six (the Class of 1897), who put dear old Milligan and our Alma Mater on the map. We did not ‘Roll Out the Barrel,’ but we started the ball a-rolling; we pioneered, we paved the way for all the streamlining that came later.” In the following paragraph, Mrs. Roth gave a vivid picture of the graduating class in 1897:

“Going down memory’s lane, turning back the pages, I see our class taking their places on the stage in the old Jicha Hall. What a thrill! What a picture for sore eyes — there we were, the Gay Nineties, the open heresy all their splendour — that is the first class of 1897. And those ending in “8.” The 1948 graduates were Rosalie Beranek, Mari lynn Cecrle, Virgie Lee Havel, James Jaros, James R. Kassik, Mildred M. Matejka, Norma Jean Mest, Bernard J. Pavelka, Darlene M. Poding, Betty M. (Henry) Stavka, Ruth (Herman) Toba, and Arlene Weaver. The response given was by Mrs. Fred Kovanda.

The second banquet, on June 2, 1949, turned out to be another successful event with 300 alumni and guests present. Again 45 classes were represented.

Mrs. Frank Hamouz (graduated 1930), first president of Milligan High School Alumni Association.

Agnes M. Capek was elected president and Mary E. Krisl secretary to serve till the time of the first banquet and meeting, scheduled to be held on Thursday evening, June 3, 1948, at the Milligan Auditorium. The following committees had been appointed:

Committee to set-up By-laws
Mrs. Otto Kotas Louis Hamouz
Otto Kotas Edward Rozek
Mrs. Joseph G. Capek Richard Buzek
Irene Capek

After some changes were made and additional committees were appointed.

With the assistance of Mrs. Charles J. Kotas, who kept an outstanding scrapbook, Mrs. Anna McClure, principal of the Milligan Public Schools, and Sup. A. R. Jensen, a list of graduates from 1897 to 1948 was made, totaling 589. The Invitation and Registration Committee worked very hard to get all the addresses.

Program — First Banquet — June 3, 1948

On the evening of June 3, 1948, it was found that 324 graduates and guests assembled in the basement of the Milligan Auditorium for the first gathering of its kind in more than 30 years. It was interesting to learn that 308 graduates had paid their dues, thus becoming members of the Milligan High School Alumni Association,

The entire banquet was planned around the motto, “The Pioneers’ Trails Paved the Road to Our Present.” The decorations were carried out in the school colors, purple and white. The motto, in orange blossoms and roses. On the other end of the motto was hung a poster bearing the picture of a covered wagon and a bow of purple floss.

The nut cups were wagon wheels in purple with white hubs. Very effectively marking the places for the classes at the tables were stands of purple with the figures in white. The hedges were squares of purple construction paper, with the names and years of graduation, or graduation chosen in white ink.

The program, menu, committees, and graduates of each of the honored classes were bound in a booklet, the cover of which had a covered wagon and a bow of purple floss.

Grateful for the use of the Klima loud-speaking system, Miss Anna Smrha, as mistress of ceremonies, announced the program. The group singing was led by Mrs. Milo Kotas, a guest, accompanied by Mrs. Herman Michl at the piano. Miss Agnes M. Capek gave the welcome and introduced the graduates representing the honored classes and the class of 1897.

Ninety years in all their splendor! We had everything but the bicycle built for two. Emil (Kotas), brave in his snug-fitting suit and cellu-lloid collar; Frank Stech, practically shapeless in a suit that allowed for expansion; Frank Motis like a scared bunny, hair parted the wrong way, wearing the collar of his old looking suit, the trousers of his new look” because I do not want to be the last by whom the new is tried; so there you have that thrill-packed picture as it was at the right of nights so long ago.”

Emil J. Kotas of the Class of 1897 was called upon to say a few words. James R. Kassik talked on “Modern Days in School.” His talk was followed by a history of the Milligan High School given by Mrs. Frank W. Kassik. Leonard Beecarw pleasantly entertained the group with several selections on the accordion.

The graduates of the class of 1898 were Nora Dunn, Anna R. Hamouz, Lizzie A. Toomey, August B. Hromadka, Frank Kucera, and Emil Loukota. All are deceased except Anna R. Hamouz. The second banquet, on June 2, 1948, turned out to be another successful event with 300 alumni and guests present. Again 45 classes were represented.

Emil Kottas, of the Class of 1930, president of the Milligan Alumni Association, gave a vivid picture of the graduating class in 1897:

“Going down memory’s lane, turning back the pages, I see our class taking their places on the stage in the old Jicha Hall. What a thrill! What a picture for sore eyes — there we were, the Gay Nineties, the open heresy all their splendour — that is the first class of 1897. And those ending in “8.” The 1948 graduates were Rosalie Beranek, Marilyn Cecrle, Virgie Lee Havel, James Jaros, James R. Kassik, Mildred M. Matejka, Norma Jean Mest, Bernard J. Pavelka, Darlene M. Poding, Betty M. (Henry) Stavka, and Arlene Weaver. The response given was by Mrs. Fred Kovanda.

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Miss Agnes M. Capek, president of the Milligan Woman's Club, presented the corsage from the club to Mrs. Emma Havel Kolar, who had graduated 50 years before, in 1899. Mrs. Kolar gave a short talk contrasting the commencement exercises of the two periods. 50 years apart. They had 20 numbers on the program consisting of orations, essays, music, and songs. Their motto was “Think for Thyself.” There were three members in this class — Mrs. Emma Havel Kolar, Mrs. Emma Mongler Dye, and Mrs. Lillian Motis Vrazil, deceased. A moment of silence was held for the departed members.

Miss Avee Kotas gave a vocal solo, “Without a Song,” accompanied at the piano by Miss Virgie Havel. A song, “Fair Evening” was sung by the sextette (Miss Faye Kotas, Mrs. Alvin Kohler, Mrs. Joseph G. Capek, Mrs. Ed Kronhoffman, Jack Dunker, and Melvin Vavra). Virgie Havel played the accompaniment. Attorney Joseph Aich talked on “Not the End, But the Beginning,” motto of the Class of 1919.

The next number consisted of talks by some of the graduates. As a last number, the group sang “Fare Thee Well Until We Meet Again.” After that all went to the Auditorium to dance to the music of the Harmony Knights Orchestra.

This year the Association issued a directory of all of its graduates. This directory (which was for sale) listed the names of all deceased graduates, by classes, and also all graduates in alphabetical order with their present addresses. It was a 33-page booklet, attractively bound with a white-trimmed-with-purple cover, the Milligan High colors.

The 1949 graduates were LeRoy Becwar, Lorene Bedlan, Bernice Koca, Faye Ann Kotas, Delmar Kuska, James Lurzem, Jr., Blanche Michl, Elaine June Simacek, William Slezak, Norma Spicka, and Elaine Sula.

The third banquet was held on Thursday, June 1, 1950, with 237 alumni and guests present. The banquet was planned around the motto of the Class of 1950, “With the Ropes of the Past, We Will Ring the Bells of the Future.” Mrs. Elizabeth Shirey Donisthorpe of Aurora, a graduate of 50 years ago. Miss Krisl was the only one present. Mrs. Carrie Krisl, graduate of the Class of 1910 (first 11-grade class), spoke a few words about her commencement exercise, marked by long orations and musical numbers. Their motto was “Nothing is Impossible to Industry.” JoAnn Beranek, Donald Kotas, Norman Kresak, Marilyn Kucera, Patricia Steinacher, Jean Vavra, Ronald Ulrich, and John Zak.

Mr. Marc Stasny capably addressed the audience, stressing that your learning belongs to you, and that we must have confidence in our government as they will find the way. He concluded the talk with these words, “With the ropes of the past, we will ring the Liberty Bell of the future.”

Mrs. Carrie Krisl, graduate of the Class of 1910 (first 11-grade class), spoke a few words about her commencement exercise, marked by long orations and musical numbers. Their motto was “Nothing is Impossible to Industry.” JoAnn Beranek and Jean Vavra sang “In the Garden of Tomorrow.” Jean Vavra, JoAnn Beranek, and Donald Kotas sang a medley.

Recognition was given to four families, having all their members graduates of the Milligan High School — the Henry Steinacher family, the Millard Podlesak family, the Frank Hruby family, and the Edward F. Laun family. Mrs. Mary Staney and her six children, all graduates and all present, were also honored.

The Milligan Woman’s Club again served the meal. The following officers were elected: Richard Buzek, president; Robert Chudy, vice-president; Mrs. Lillian Frycek, secretary; and Glenn Kovanda, treasurer.

The fourth banquet was held Thursday evening, June 7, 1951, with 187 alumni and guests present, Forty-three classes were represented. James Taner, graduate of the Class of 1910, acted as toastmaster and announced the program. Mrs. Henry Steinacher led the group in singing the doxology. Richard Buzek gave the welcome and introduced the graduates representing the honored classes. The response was given by Shirley Synovec, president of the Class of 1951. Frank Havel, Sr., a graduate of the Class of 1901, spoke a few words about his commencement. There were eight in his class — Celia Emma Hansum (Mrs. John F. Kucera, deceased), Jessie T. Bors (Mrs. Charles Sloepicka, deceased), Marie M. Kopp (Mrs. Herman Stasny), Frank Havel, Estella A. Motis (Mrs. Frank J. Ruzicka), Joseph F. Lauvetz, Thomas F. Hannaberry, and Mamie A. Hrdy (Mrs. J. D. Kopp). The 1901 exercises had kept the orations written by the graduates and musical numbers. Their motto was “Our Government.” Their motto was “We Have Reached the Hills, the Mountains Are in View.” Mrs. Ruzicka sent greetings and quoted from her oration, “My America.”

Supt. A. R. Jensen presented the 10 members of the Class of 1951, namely: Glen Koca, Dean Placek, Robert Oliva, Arlene Rischling, Shirley Synovec, Leo Oliva, Lumir Jansky, Donald Urban, Leslie Scoe, and Daniel Zak.

Glen Koca played a trumpet solo. William H. Kotas gave the address. LeRoy Becwar entertained with his magic tricks.

The following officers were elected: Leonard Becwar, president; Mrs. Bernard Zeleny, vice-president; Mrs. Frank W. Kassik, secretary; and Irene Capek, treasurer.

The American Legion Auxiliary served the dinner.

The fifth annual banquet was held on Thursday, June 5, 1952, with 178 alumni and guests present. There were 43 classes represented. Mrs. W. A. Biba (Anna Laun) of Geneva, graduate of the 1906 class, was the toastmistress. The program began with the singing of the doxology. After the meal, group singing, led by LeRoy Becwar, took place. Virgie Havel accompanied on the piano. Songs popular in the years 1902, 1922, 1932, and 1942 were sung. The senior class of 1952 sang “Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.”

President Leonard Becwar gave the welcome and introduced the graduates representing the honored classes that evening. The response was given by Ronald Svec.

The Association presented a boutonniere to the speaker, Len Davis, and to the toastmistress, Mrs. W. A. Biba, and to Mrs. Mary E. Krist, a graduate of 50 years ago. Mrs. Krist was the only one present of the seven members of the Golden Anniversary Class of 1902. Four of the members, Charles Kubick, Leon Schnze, Fred R. Stech and James Jansky, are deceased. Mr. and Mrs. (Barbara Ceeral Fred Rottas presented. Montana, were unable to be present, but sent greetings. Miss Krist gave a short talk. Their motto was “By Our Efforts We Hope to Rise.”
The following officers were elected: president, Tom Oliva; vice-president, Mrs. Merle Buzek; secretary, Mrs. Donald Skuka; and treasurer, Mrs. Leo Soulup. The Milligan Woman's Club served the meal.

The ninth annual banquet was held on Sunday, June 3, 1956, with 209 present. Forty-three classes were represented. Ed Steig was the toastmaster. Rev. S. J. Siegianski gave the invocation. President Tom Oliva gave the welcome and Richard Oliva, president of the class of 1956, gave the response.


The Class of 1956 was honored as the 60-year graduating class. Nellie C. Hanaberry (Mrs. O. W. Roth), the only one able to attend, was presented with a carnation corsage. Mrs. Roth gave an interesting talk. She said:

"We didn't have class rings, we didn't have what this generation has, but we had the will to do, determined to face the unknown and unknowable future in the knowledge that no one ever crossed the ocean without first leaving the shore.

"Sixty years is a long time to be wandering around in this vale of tears. Two of our number have gone to their reward, the remainder four waiting their call. Yes, time adds to our years, but graciously brings beautiful memories to temper the stings."

The following officers were elected: president, William H. Kotas; vice-president, Edward Smith; secretary, Mrs. Richard Brunkow; and treasurer, Mr. John Kuska. The dinner was served by the American Legion Auxiliary of Milligan.

The tenth annual banquet was held on Sunday, June 2, 1957, in the Milligan Auditorium with 207 graduates and guests present. Forty-four classes were represented. LeRoy Beecar was the toastmaster. President William Kotas gave the welcome and Roger Przybil, president of the Class of 1957, gave the response.

The ninth annual banquet was held on Thursday, June 4, 1953, with 203 alumni and guests present and 41 classes represented. Jeanette Luzum led the group in singing the doxology. The meal was served by the Milligan Pythian Sisters.

The following officers were elected: Leonard Kassik, president; Anton Capek, vice-president; Mrs. Milo Hromak, secretary; and Mrs. Kenneth Wester, treasurer.

The seventh annual banquet was held on Friday, May 28, 1954, with 191 alumni and guests present. Val Kuska, a 50-year graduate, was the toastmaster. President Leonard Kassik gave the welcome and Norma Jean Koca, president of the 1954 class, gave the response. The invocation was given by Rev. S. J. Siegianski. R. S. Deems of Exeter gave the invocation. After the meal, President R. O. Spousta gave the welcome. The response was given by Gene Kuska, Gizela L. Lauvetz (Mrs. Anton Gutchovsky), James D. Kopp (deceased), Richard Placek, president of the Class of 1955.

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The following officers were elected: president, William H. Kotas; vice-president, Edward Smith; secretary, Mrs. Richard Brunkow; and treasurer, Mrs. John Kuska. The dinner was served by the American Legion Auxiliary of Milligan.
Tribute to the deceased alumni was given by Mrs. Milton Stastny.

The following officers were elected: president, Merle Buzek; vice-president, Frank W. Kassik, Jr.; secretary, Teresa Stech; and treasurer, Mrs. Jim Kotas.

The eleventh annual banquet was held on Sunday, June 1, 1958, at the Milligan Auditorium with 218 graduates and guests present. There were 45 classes represented.

Miss Katherine Kuska was the toastmistress. President Merle Buzek gave the welcome. The response was given by Dwayne Luzum, president of the Class of 1958.

Supt. A. R. Jensen presented the class of 1958, who were: Mary Ann Kotas, Arline Kottas, Dwayne Luzum, Roger Rut, Rose Mae Steinacher, Stuart Vavra, and David Zisenek.

The evening's entertainment consisted of a song by the Class of 1928, a trombone solo by Arline Kottas, a vocal solo by Mary Ann Kotas, and an accordion solo by Rose Mae Steinacher. Interesting talks were given by Joseph Ach and Harry Kottas. Group singing was led by Mary Ann Kotas. The tribute to the deceased alumni was given by Irene Kotas.

The honored classes were presented. Nora Dunn is the only living member of the Class of 1898. The members of the Class of 1908 were Anna Bulin (Mrs. Fred Kovanda), Mayme Davis (Mrs. Joe Miles), Rudy Havolka (deceased), Frank Holpuch, Mary Holpuch (Mrs. Frank Hrdy), Anna Jicha (Mrs. Harry Gregory), Mamie Jicha (Mrs. Joe Varejka), Adolph Kotas (deceased), Rudolph Krish, Emil L. Soukup, and Joe Svec. Their motto was "A Place in the Ranks Awaits Us." Mrs. Fred Kovanda was presented a corsage, being the only one present.

Officers elected for the following year were: president, Ernest Kotas; vice-president, Ellsworth Marek; secretary, Arlene Weaver; and treasurer, Mrs. James Luzum. The meal was served by the Catholic ladies.

These reunions became such popular traditions that they have been continued; and we may hope that, not only for their sentimental but for their historical value, they may be continued on and on into the future.

Chamber of Commerce

A Chamber of Commerce, organized in Milligan, April 23, 1924, has long been active in promoting local business and other activities. Within a few months it had demonstrated its value to the satisfaction of the local reporter:

"Since the organization of the Chamber of Commerce, a number of projects beneficial to the community have been launched and enough of them carried to a successful conclusion to demonstrate the value of such an organization.

"Here are some of the things that have been accomplished during the short time that organization has been in existence. Under its auspices, the Czechoslovak band was secured to come here and give a concert. People from a distance of 50 miles and more came here to hear them and complimented the spirit of the town in having secured this truly wonderful organization. The purebred sire train committee was induced to come here for the purpose of looking us over and left with the conviction that folks here do things on a big scale and broadcast the story that there was more interest manifest in the enterprise here than at any other point where they visited. The purebred sire train is coming, too, there is no doubt about that.

"Took initial steps to put the old school ground in condition to be used as a tourist park. When the federal road is opened east to Wilber, there will be need of such a park here, and ours will be ready by that time. Called attention of the town board to the necessity of replacing some broken fire hydrants. New ones are already in place. Arranged for a meeting with the town board for the purpose of discussing the proposition of graveling the streets. There have been continued; and we may hope that, not only for their sentimental but for their historical value, they may be continued on and on into the future.

Milligan Chapter of Jednota Ceskych Dam.

(Unity of Czech Ladies) — about 1895.

(Unity of Czech Ladies) — about 1895. (None of these ladies have been identified.)

Standing, top row, left to right: Frank J. Kucera, Joseph Hulka, V. Svoboda, Frank V. Kucera, Pavel Anton, A. V. Kouba, (Milligan's second banker), Charles Smrha, Sr., F. M. Ziska, Vaclav Vodicka, Gottlieb Girmus, Victor Prokop, Matias Kubicek.


Standing, top row, left to right: Frank W. Kassik, Jr., Roger Odvody, Richard W. Brunckow, Arnold Soukup, William H. Kotas, Robert Risching.

Photo from J. J. Klima

Photo from Mrs. Henry Steinacher

Photo from J. J. Klima

Photo from Mrs. Henry Steinacher
is money on hand which is to be used for the purpose of repairing the streets and alleys and without doubt it will be possible to agree with the board on some program whereby this money can be used to the best advantage.

"Monday night six laborers came to town looking for places to work in the harvest fields. The committee on community co-operation called up all the farm lines to notify the farmers that this help was available, and those in need of harvest hands came and got their men. Projects are now in process of crystallization which will mean much to the town and community as a whole. There is no use talking — there is no limit to which a community may build and grow if it just has the proper spirit and willingness to co-operate for the promotion of the good of the whole."

—Nebraska Signal, July 3, 1924

A later news story reflected the same kind of enthusiasm:

"Word has been received here from the Omaha Chamber of Commerce that a train load of 100 businessmen from Omaha will visit Milligan on a 'good will trip' Thursday, May 22, from 5:40 to 6:05. One of Omaha's best bands will accompany the party, and they are bringing with them two cars of souvenirs for distribution."

"The Milligan Chamber of Commerce will make arrangements to greet the visitors and will make an effort to impress upon them the fact that Milligan is a lively burg which measures up to Omaha standards in everything but size and what it lacks in size it makes up in quality.

"This will be the first visit Milligan has enjoyed of this nature. This is due largely to the fact that we are off the usual beaten paths of commerce and travel, but when once we've been located most of our visitors seem to have no trouble in remembering that we're here."  —Nebraska Signal, May 8, 1930

National Farm Loan Association

The Milligan NFLA was organized on February 20, 1920, when 16 farmers signed its Articles of Association and applied for Land Bank loans. Frank Elznic, the first president, with James Nohava, Joseph Sadlo, Joseph Suda, and Albert Kresak formed the first board of directors of the association. C. Smera was the original secretary-treasurer and served until August, 1933, when J. J. Klima succeeded him. By 1923 the association had only 33 members. Steady growth brought the membership total to 69 at the beginning of 1933, and by the time the needs of the community, principally caused by the nationwide agricultural depression, were cared for, the maximum membership stood around 300. In a 1943 consolidation, the group joined with others originally formed at Crete and Geneva and organized a consolidated association, called the Saline-Fillmore National Farm Loan Association of Milligan. J. J. Klima was the first secretary-treasurer. L. W. Kubert of Crete was the first president of the newly formed association, followed by Mike Becwar, Jr., who served for many years thereafter.

Recent growth of the company has included building a concrete elevator in 1959, and purchasing an anhydrous ammonia fertilizer bulk plant in 1957. On December 31, 1962, the company had 622 members, assets totaling $352,802, and fully paid capital stock of $164,650.

The Farmers and Merchants Bank of Milligan stands on the lot where the first bank of Milligan was founded. The State Bank of Milligan lasted only five years, from 1892 to 1897. After its failure, A. V. Kouba organized a new bank in 1897 called the Farmers State Bank of Milligan. In 1900, he converted the institution into a private bank, the Nebraska State Bank of Milligan. In 1903, he sold this bank to the following group: George E. Aldrich, Anton A. Hamouz, and other expenses. These first meetings were attended by Vaclav Aeh, Vaclav Capek, Anton Fujan, Frank Fujan, Frank Jansky, Fred Kottas, Jr., Joseph Kottas, John Kucerba, Sr., Robert Laun, Albert Novak, Albert Placek, Fred Placek, Emil Slepicka, Bohumil Slajchert, Edward Smith, Frank Smith, Joseph Svec, Jr., and Joseph Suda.

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In the 1990's the company found itself in extremely difficult times. The first blow was dealt by the Depression, followed by several years of drought. The volume of grain purchased was naturally very low, and farmers could not afford to purchase fuel except for the small amounts that were absolutely necessary. The company kept expenses low, and employees agreed to take a reduction in salary, so the company came through the crisis in relatively good condition.

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The Farmers and Merchants Bank of Milligan was organized on February 20, 1920, when 16 farmers signed its Articles of Association and applied for Land Bank loans. Frank Elznic, the first president, with James Nohava, Joseph Sadlo, Joseph Suda, and Albert Kresak formed the first board of directors of the association. C. Smera was the original secretary-treasurer and served until August, 1933, when J. J. Klima succeeded him. By 1923 the association had only 33 members. Steady growth brought the membership total to 69 at the beginning of 1933, and by the time the needs of the community, principally caused by the nationwide agricultural depression, were cared for, the maximum membership stood around 300. In a 1943 consolidation, the group joined with others originally formed at Crete and Geneva and organized a consolidated association, called the Saline-Fillmore National Farm Loan Association of Milligan. J. J. Klima was the first secretary-treasurer. L. W. Kubert of Crete was the first president of the newly formed association, followed by Mike Becwar, Jr., who served for many years thereafter.

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**Businesses**

**Ben's L.G.A. Store**, located on Lot 10, Block 8, is owned and operated by James J. and Velma Halama. They purchased the property in 1962 from HSSK Post No. 240 of the American Legion, which had used the building for its headquarters. The building has housed businesses as varied as a pool hall and a meat market, and was once the office of Dr. George F. Zerzan.

In October, 1933, Ethel's Beauty Shop was opened by Ethel Chaslek (Steinacher) in the south room of the Auditorium building. In 1932, the beauty shop was moved into the north rooms of the hotel building, where it remained for eight years. Between 1940 and 1946 it was located in several different places before being moved to the Steinachers' new home on Highway 41.

Early in 1921, a small group of farmers from the Milligan area organized the Farmers Co-Operative Company. They had heard of the benefits derived from Co-operatives, and they organized one in Milligan to market grain. This group of pioneer co-operators, 20 in number, held their first meetings at their farm homes, with each member donating $5 to cover the cost of travel, mailing of letters, and other expenses. These first meetings were attended by Vaclav Aeh, Vaclav Capek, Anton Fujan, Frank Fujan, Frank Jansky, Fred Kottas, Jr., Joseph Kottas, John Kucerba, Sr., Robert Laun, Albert Novak, Albert Placek, Fred Placek, Emil Slepicka, Bohumil Slajchert, Edward Smith, Frank Smith, Joseph Svec, Jr., and Joseph Suda.

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Charles Smrha, Jr., and Frank W. Sloan, and it was renamed Farmers and Merchants Bank. In 1956, J. J. Klima purchased the old building from the bank, and rebuilt it the same year. During the reconstruction, the bank conducted its business from the Mary E. Kral building; it occupied the new building on November 1, 1956. Mary Smrha, who joined the bank as an employee in 1908, retired in 1963, after serving the bank for 55 years, becoming in that time a director and vice-president.

The bank is now and has been since 1934 a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, insuring its deposits for amounts up to $10,000, for which it pays semi-annual premiums.

The bank was chartered by the State of Iowa, and located in Milligan, Iowa, Block 14. John Halama purchased the building in 1958, and started the blacksmith and general repair shop, which is doing business at present. F. S. Soukup and his sons operated a blacksmith and repair shop in the building for several years before selling it to Mr. Halama.

In 1904, the Taylor & Morgan Grain Co. was the first business to be conducted on the lot that the Kassik Milling Company stands on today. In 1912, Charles Smrha erected a dairy barn and silos, and operation of this dairy business in this location. In 1922 he sold the barn to Albert Kassik, Sr., who built the flour mill in 1923. In the spring of 1924, "A. Kassik & Sons" was born, and started milling flour. In 1928, they started manufacturing feeds. In 1930, they built their first vertical mixer at home, and started using pre-mixes in their feeds. They stopped milling flour in 1938, and devoted all their attention to the feed business, calling their product "Kassik's Formula Feeds."

The Kassik's built the alfalfa mill on the C. B. & Q. right-of-way in 1947, and now ship alfalfa meal and pellets to many points in the eastern and southern United States. In 1950, they built a modern seed plant on the old flour and feed mill, but never operated it, because a few months later both plants were destroyed by fire. In 1951, a new mill was built, and Kassik's Formula Feeds were once again offered. Since its founding, the mill has been operated by the Kassik family. Albert, Jr., and Leonard Kassik are the present owners and managers.


In 1963, the Kotas Grocery celebrated its 50th anniversary. Charles Kotas began as a clerk in the A. A. Hamouz General Mercantile Store in 1917 and remained for three years. He then clerked in C. J. Cerveney's general merchandise store in 1920. In 1921, Mr. Kotas started his own store. He bought the Frank E. Loukota grocery store in 1932, moving his store to this building, remaining here to the present.

The Standard Oil Company began business in Milligan in 1919, and in this 25' x 90' building the number of appliances offered began to grow, especially after R.E.A. came to farms around Milligan. Frigidaire's complete line of appliances was added in 1953. Zenith, Philco, and RCA televisions were displayed, sold, and installed.

The Post held its meetings in the lodge room of the Joseph Jicha Central Hall (now torn down) in 1933. The occasion was the arrival of the first load of beer into Milligan after the end of Prohibition.

ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

American Legion
On February 29, 1920, a group of World War I ex-servicemen met in the Nebraska State Bank Building at Milligan to plan the organization of an American Legion post. Temporary officers were elected and Joseph J. Klima was selected to prepare all papers necessary to secure a charter for a Post in Milligan from the Department of Nebraska American Legion at Lincoln. On March 31, 1920, a charter was granted. The post was named HSSK Post No. 240 in memory of four Milligan boys who had lost their lives in France, using the first letters of their family names: James Houska, Edward Slezak, James Svec, and Frank B. Koca. The bodies of two of them, Edward Slezak and Frank B. Koca, were returned to Milligan for burial. The two others, James Houska and James Svec, were buried in France. The first officers of the newly organized post were: Joseph Bors, Commander, and Joseph J. Klima, Adjutant. The other charter members were: H. C. Flint, John F. Kotas, Fred Kolar, Edward Chudly, Adolph Kotas, Fred Havel, Albert Shimick, William B. Bartu, Ed Stetina, Joseph Petracek, Alois Petracek, James F. Kassik, John Mich, and James C. Smith.

The post held its meetings in the lodge room of the Joseph Jicha Central Hall on the first Tuesday of each month. The meeting date was later changed to the last Tuesday of each month, a practice still followed.

Work on the American Legion Park was commenced in the spring of 1928, and the park was opened on land donated by the local school district for a memorial to the boys who lost their lives in France during World War I and to World War I President Woodrow Wilson. Although the park was developed largely by the Legion members, much help, materials, and money were donated by the community. Formal dedication ceremonies were held on Arbor Day, April 22, 1927. The day started with a parade led by the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps down the main street of the village, then to the school building to join the delegation there.
of the people of the school district. After the gymnasium was completed, the post sponsored an event from which the proceeds were used to purchase a very fine gym time-clock and a popcorn machine to be used during sports events in the gymnasium.

Annually the post sponsors Girls' and Boys' County Government Day, a project it believes will bring about needed interest in government among the coming leaders of the community.

Another project of our local post of the American Legion was the compilation of a Service Record Book showing the pictures and service records of all boys of the community who served in World Wars I and II. A supplement has been added to include those who served during the Korean conflict.

The goal of HSSK Post No. 240 of the American Legion and its Auxiliary is to live up to its constitution in the future as it has in the past.

American Legion Auxiliary

The eligibility of mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters of veterans who served in the armed forces between April 6, 1917, and November, 1918, brought a large group of ladies together to form an American Legion Auxiliary.

Two years after the post was organized, an auxiliary unit began taking form. In May, 1922, a meeting was called and an application issued for a unit charter. Seventeen ladies were present and they elected Mrs. Adolph Kotas as acting president.

On April 28, 1925, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a unit. Acting president of this group was Mrs. Frank P. Mehuuron and secretary was Mrs. Joseph Bors.

The organization was formed and a charter was issued in July, 1925. Mrs. Frank P. Mehuuron was elected president and Mrs. Joseph Bors was elected secretary. The charter members were:

- Mrs. Frank Mehuuron
- Mrs. Joseph Bors
- Mrs. Edward Laun
- Mrs. Alice Hanouz
- Mrs. Emma Kotas
- Mrs. Millie Jarolimek
- Miss Rose Skunk
- Mrs. Joseph Bors
- Mrs. Barbara Kropicka
- Mrs. Tom Harpham
- Miss Madalta Kotas
- Mrs. Ada Klima
- Miss Anna Kolar
- Miss Mary Smrha
- Mrs. Anna Kotas
- Miss Emilye Koca
- Mrs. Anna Suda

The April 28 meeting elected a committee of three—Mrs. Harpham, Mrs. Jarolimek, and Miss Clara Kolar—to prepare by-laws. On November 24, 1925, the committee presented the by-laws, which were accepted. (In January, 1936, new by-laws were read and accepted, which were prepared by Mrs. Mary Stastny, Mrs. Clara Corole, and Mrs. Mary Hrdy, as the first set were lost.)

On March 30, 1926, it was decided to purchase a wool American flag. The unit appointed Miss Mary Smrha, Mrs. Lillian Frycek, and Miss Clara Kolar to make the Unit Banner.

Auxiliary held their meetings in homes until 1937 when they helped the Legion build the clubhouse on Highway 41 on the south edge of Milligan. Then the Legion in 1954 sold the building to Mr. and Mrs. Dave Sweney and purchased the Jansky building (now the IGA store). In 1961, they purchased the Mary Krisl building, which is now the post's meeting and social activities center.

With the passing years, membership has alternately risen and declined. World War II, with the tremendous number of servicemen involved, made eligible the wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers of those who served between December 7, 1941, and September 2, 1945. A few years later more ladies became eligible—those whose menfolk served during the Korean troubles, between June 25, 1950, and July 27, 1953.

The Auxiliary maintains a roster of Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star Sisters for all three conflicts.

American Legion Junior Auxiliary

The Junior Auxiliary was organized in the fall of 1956 by Lenora Suda, senior Auxiliary member, who also acted as junior counselor for the term of 1956-57, with Ethel Steinacher as assistant. The enrollment started with 16 Juniors. On September 15, 1956, the first meeting was called to order the following officers were elected: President, Gloria Swartz; vice-president, Nancy Kotas; secretary, Marlene Uldrich; sergeant-at-arms, Diane Luzum; publicity chairman, Nancy Kotas, pianist, Sharrel Krupicka; hospital chairman, Carol Steinacher; chaplain, Judy Kohler.

Chautauqua

Around World War I days, there was a great deal of interest in the Chautauqua in Milligan, but unfortunately the interest was not often apparent in the gate receipts. Nearly every year the people who signed the contract were forced to make up a deficit.

"Monday a number of businessmen signed a contract for a Chautauqua of four days to be put on some time during the month of August.

"Chautauquas have not been exactly what you might call a howling success before—except for the howling of those who have had the deficits to pay for, but that does not necessarily mean that they cannot be made so. They do bring to town a series of programs that is worth taking in." —Nebraska Signal, February 9, 1925.

Early in August the Chautauqua came to Milligan and pitched camp on the schoolground south of the schoolhouse. The profits from the Chautauqua were to go towards new playground equipment, but the children had to go without the equipment that year, for the Chautauqua ran true to form and showed a deficit. Finally the sponsors rebelled, and the 1925 Chautauqua was the last one in Milligan.

So ended a heroic attempt to introduce "culture" into the community. Seasonal work and the weather usually combined to cut down the attendance, and the entertainment and the instruction were often not of the best. Many people of the community could not understand the speeches and plays. But, in Milligan as elsewhere, the Chautauqua was really a device to stimulate business as much as to educate and entertain. The Milligan businessmen soon found other and less expensive methods of stimulating business.

Dramatic Societies

Although the dramatic society might not be indispensable to the establishment of a Czech community, yet such a community was not long in existence before at least one such association was formed. Two years after Milligan was founded the newspaper recorded the success of a Czech play. "The Bohemian home talent rendered last Saturday Trauah a Bera at the Kotas Opera House in a very creditable manner," said the Nebraska Signal (Oct. 24, 1889).

Throughout its earlier history Milligan was treated to liberal doses of Czech drama. In the town's early days, Czech plays were the only ones offered. Back in the 1920's a traveling company of players brought in English-language plays, but the largest crowds were always found at the Czech dramas. As late as the 1920's and 1930's the village had several dramatic societies, one of the most successful consisted almost exclusively of young people who presented Czech plays in a way acceptable to the older people. Their first play was a great success. According to the Nebraska Signal for December 5, 1929:

"One of the biggest crowds for a home talent play that Milligan has had for many years turned out for the Bohemian play presented by the Ceska Lipa Dramatic Club, recently organized by Father Biskup. This play is a very clever comedy and for a Thanksgiving play when a good laugh is needed to help in the digestion of a Thanksgiving dinner it proved to be a very happy selection, because it kept the crowd in an uproar sufficient to digest several dinners. . . ."

Father Biskup selected and coached the play and its presentation showed him to be a man of the theater. The ticket receipts were better than $300 and everybody who was there seemed to agree that it was money well earned. It is hoped that Father Biskup will take the time to help put on other plays by this group in the playing season."

This play was such a success that it attracted the attention of neighboring Czech towns. The next month the club journeyed to Bee, Nebraska, where it presented the same production. Dramatic clubs in other towns often came to Milligan to present their plays.

The Nebraska Signal, February 9, 1925.

"The dramatic Club of Bruno presented a play at Jicha's Hall Saturday evening which drew a good audience and which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who saw it. The play was an operetta depicting the merry life of the old country mill and depicting also, of course, the pathos which comes with every story where love has a part. . . . The Simen Orchestra from Brainard was also here and furnished music for the dance which followed the play. The visit of the club was thoroughly appreciated by followers of home talent plays, and it is hoped that their visit may be repeated when they have another play prepared." Nebraska Signal, February 13, 1930.

After the play a dance was usually held. The proceeds of the play were generally donated to one of the lodges or to the local unit of the Sokols.

Once or twice a year a company of professional actors came to Milligan and presented Czech dramas. On June 29, 1929, the Nebraska Signal said:

"Don't fail to see the Cesko-American Narodni Divadlo [to be] given here on the evening of July 6 and 7 under the management of Joseph R. Krojec of Chicago. Among their plays are Baby Mine, Where the Meadow Lark Sings, The Twins, and Merry War. This [will] be an unusual treat for all lovers of this sort of entertainment and all who attend are assured of an evening well spent."

Although the Czech drama was more popular than the English in Milligan, road companies which toured the small towns of Nebraska did not despair of getting an audience. One article announcing the arrival of one of those companies suggested the type of entertainment offered. To quote again from the Nebraska Signal (December 9, 1930):

"The Hazel McCune stock company, which plays Central Hall and Opera House at Milligan, Nebraska, on the night of December 14, is reputed to be the best organization of its kind on the road today. The company has formed a circle of towns including Wilber, Geneva, Edgar, Clay Center, Sutton, Exeter, and Crete, playing each one on the same night every two weeks. At present there are a couple of nights to fill in, and the company is playing [at] Milligan with the intention of including it in the circle permanently should the patronage warrant."

"The best of reports have been given from Geneva and Willer, where the company has already played. Their plays are of the finest and produced by an A-1 company of ladies and gentlemen, each one a star in his respective line."

"The play that has been chosen for Milligan is one of the most beautiful bills ever written, entitled The Girl from Out Yonder, a comedy-drama in four acts. The highest class of vaudeville is introduced between each act, including the Hazel McCune quartette of excellent singers which is well worth the price of admission alone, singing in harmony the very latest and best ballads and numbers."
By all means come out and see this excellent company and be assured of seeing a good high-class show played by a real company once every two weeks.

As far as drama was concerned, Milligan people were much more interested in Czech plays than in English productions. The type of drama offered by the Czech societies was generally superior to that offered by the English-speaking companies. The acting, although amateur, was rather good, and the company provided many free performances to residents in the audience. The proceeds were usually donated to some worthy cause. The lines could be followed even by those who did not understand the Czech language very well. The Czech drama, therefore, could rekindle a part of the most important links which the people had with the Old World.

Stage plays in both English and Czech have suffered, since the above account was published in 1933, from the competition of other forms of entertainment. The change of the audience in the last 10 years or so, all over the nation, of interest in stage plays and in local theater groups may offer some hope that this fascinating tradition may not be totally lost but can be given a new lease on life once more.

Knights of Pythias

Stotzenberg Lodge No. 43, Knights of Pythias, was named for Colonel Stotzenberg of the 1st Nebraska Regiment, who lost his life in the Philippines. The lodge was formally organized on December 31, 1901.

The first officers installed were: G. W. Trobrough, C. C.; Joseph Knuce, V.C.; Frank Hudy, P.; P. V. Rohla, M. of W.; P. O. Kucera, K.R.S.; Frank Stech, M. of F.; A. V. Kouba, M. of E.; V. F. Bouse, M. of A.; Martin Lesher, I. G.; and Frank Tivy, O. G. A. charter was granted by the Grand Lodge on October 14, 1902. Other charter members were: S. J. Chyma, Thomas Jicha, Rudolph Motis, F. A. Placek, W. B. Saunders, J. A. Trobrough, Peter Vojta, and G. F. Zerzan.

The lodge was led by James Temples until he died in 1910. The year 1902 was marked by the following charter members: Charles Smrha, Emil Kassik, Sr., Fred Placek, Sr., and W. B. Saunders. The lodge is composed of 90 members, from Geneva, Excelsior, and Zinnia.

The purpose of the organization is “to appeal to the good of mankind, to lift up the fallen, to minister to the distressed, to heal the broken, to bring friendship to the friendless, and exemplify the practices of brotherly love among mankind.”

Pythian Sisters

In 1929, Mary Bors became interested in instituting a Pythian Temple in Milligan. It was discovered that 23 wives, sisters, and daughters of the Knights of Pythias were eligible for membership. On March 29, 1929, at a meeting in the home of Mary Bors, the following ladies became charter members: Nellie McCartney, Agnes Smrha, Mary Bors, Agnes Ach, Lillian Frycek, Tony Haxe, Agnes Steinauer, Alba Rischling, Mildred Buzek, Alba Hamouz, Alba Buzek, Stella Hospodsky, Velma Halama, Anna Bulin, Emma Bouse, Mary Jicha, Libbie Petracek, Helene Petracek, Rose Placek, Gladys Placek, Viola Rischling, Mamie Laun, and Eliza Zoman.

The Nebraska Signal for April 4, 1929, reported the formal installation of the Temple:

“Friendship Temple No. 20 was the name and the number chosen by the ladies who formed the first lodge in the area.

Motion was made to adjourn until 7:30 in the evening. Some time was spent in meeting the visiting sisters and brothers, including 35 from York and seven from Crete and some from Hastings, who had condensed in the Temple. It was the opinion of all that this was a good start.

“All sisters, visiting sisters and brothers went to the spacious and open doors of Sister Marie Bors’ beautiful home, where the Milligan sisters had prepared a delicious two-course dinner. The dinner was very well filled and Everybody seemed to give such good service to many hungry folks; the eats were certainly good and were relished by everyone.

The meeting was again called to order by the Grand Chief, after which the York Temple took charge of the meeting, conducting it in ritualistic form. Sisters Rose Placek was given the initiation work, which was given well by the officers and degree staff of the York Temple. The money raised was to be used to start a fund for the sick and the shut-ins. A generous payment of dues was a good start toward a prosperous financial condition of the temple.

Grand Chief Sister Marie Bors presented Grand Chief Sister Olson and G. M. of R. and C. each with an appropriate framed motto, expressing their true friendship and love. These will be prized by the two sisters. It was indeed a surprise to receive such tokens of appreciation, and we will long cherish the memory of the time spent with these sisters. The meeting was then closed until the next meeting, after which kolace and hot coffee were served. The visitors and members were all present (1957) Mrs. J. B. Frankforter serves as the librarian. It is expected that interest in building and developing, to promote good fellowship, and to work for the good of the community. The club chose the sweet pea for their flower, pea green and pink for their colors, and “Do More and Wish Less” as their motto. They used the word “Community” in the name (Milligan Community Woman’s Club) because they wanted the women of the rural area to feel that they were eligible and wanted as members.

The club members to recall just when the word “Community” was dropped from the name.

In 1927, the club, for their first money-making project, sponsored the showing of a moving picture. Also that year they undertook the care of the tourist park. During the summer they planted trees and shrubbery. For a number of years, the club hired a man to keep the grass cut.

The year 1929 marked the beginning of the receptions held for the faculty of the Milligan Public Schools. For a number of years the school board of District 71 at Milligan have served as co-hosts with the club to this faculty reception. The invitation is extended to all patrons of District 71, and parents of all pupils enrolled in the school.

A traveling library, started by the club in 1932, was kept up by one of its members, Miss Mary E. Kral, till 1941. At that time the club sponsored the Milligan Public Library housed in the south front room of the Milligan Auditorium. At present (1957) Mrs. J. B. Frankforter serves as the librarian.

The school ground beautification project was undertaken in 1932. In addition to the American Legion, the village board, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the school. Plantings included 119 trees, 40 clumps of shrubbery, and 8 ivy plants. A merry-go-round and slide were purchased.

In the spring of 1939, the club sponsored the two-tree project. Each member purchased two Chinese elms, which were planted in the
tourist park. These trees were planted so closely together that the club was "kidded" about Milligan's "windbreak," but it was much easier to remove a few trees in 1949 when the park was renovated than it would have been to start planting trees. The club also donated 200 trees to the Nebraska National Forest at Halsey.

In January, 1940, the club held a birthday party celebrating its 14th anniversary and the General Federation's Golden Jubilee. At this meeting the guest speaker was Mrs. Joseph Bisby of Geneva, president of the Fillmore County Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1946, the 20th anniversary was observed. Mrs. Russell Freidel, vice-president of the Nebraska Federation was the guest speaker. The Silver Anniversary of the club's federation was celebrated on October 10, 1951, with Mrs. William H. Hasebrook, president of the Nebraska Federation, as guest speaker. The club observed its 30th anniversary of federation on October 18, 1956. Mrs. J. E. Yost of Milford, president of the Fourth District, NFWC, was the guest speaker. Especially honored were the two charter members with 30 years of continuous membership, Mrs. J. V. Kotas and Miss Mary E. Krieh.

In 1935-36 the club sponsored a flower show with 200 entries and a crowd of 500 people. Several other successful flower shows were held.

In November 10, 1938, the club sponsored a public safety program in charge of Mrs. Russell Freidel, state safety chairman, and Captain Weller, attended by a large crowd. The Milligan Auditorium co-operated and didn't charge rental.

The first mother-daughter banquet was held on May 21, 1941. This get-together has continued throughout the years, either as a banquet, a covered-dish supper, or an evening program followed by a social hour. The faculty women and the high-school senior girls are invited as guests.

During World War II, collections of waste fat, scrap paper, and used clothing were promoted. Many contributions to worthy causes, such as Red Cross, War Chest, Cancer Fund, Library, and Infantile Paralysis Fund, were made, partially from funds earned by selling waste fat and scrap paper. The amount received for scrap paper, $50, was divided evenly between the two local churches.

When the Milligan High School Alumni Association was being organized in 1948, the club was asked to back them and serve the first banquet. Since the association didn't have funds to start with, the club offered to, and did, donate the plates served to the Class of 1948, the first honored class to be initiated into the Alumni Association. Since that time the club has served many of their dinners.

In May, 1949, the club entered the "Build a Better Community" contest sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the Kroger Foundation. The project undertaken was the renovation and beautification of the Tourist Park, which had been neglected during the war years. (The working out of this project is described under Funfrall Park, hereafter.) The renovated park was dedicated in July, 1949, with a community picnic, each year since that time, an anniversary picnic is held on the last Sunday in July.

This project won the club an Honorable Mention in the "Build a Better Community" contest. The club continues to sponsor the park.

The following year, the contest was "Build Freedom with Youth." The club entered this contest also, and won fifth place in the state of Nebraska. The local high-school and upper-grade students were enlisted for the tasks of raising funds, looking after upkeep, and planning organized park activities.

In cooperation with the Saline and Fillmore County Extension Service and the businessmen of Milligan, the Woman's Club sponsors the annual Grasslands Day held in Milligan. The first was held in 1949. The club sells the noon plate lunch, thus making money to cover the expenses.

A memorable trip to the Christmas City of Minden was made in December, 1949, serving as their December meeting. Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Wamp arranged the accommodations for this visit and tour, which included seeing the livery barn and farm, and someone else beside them would be selling farm machinery this spring; Hans thought he had made his last harness, and Roznek even never hoped to see his farm again. But they were all rescued before being killed and each...
The Sokols

Since its establishment in 1894, the Tel. Jed. Sokol local in Milligan has met with varying degrees of success. In its early years it was a strong organization. At that time there were many new arrivals from Europe who had been members of the Sokol organization which was originally established in Prague, Bohemia, in 1862. It was natural for these new settlers to take an interest in the organization in America. During its early days the Milligan Sokol Organization took part in both the state and national tournaments. This news item illustrates the interest displayed in the national tournaments, usually held in Chicago:

"Ben Smrha arrived home Thursday afternoon from Chicago, where he has been for nearly two months studying and practicing the new system of gymnastics arranged for use in various Tel. Jed. Sokol (Bohemian Turners) lodges over the country. He passed the examination in the highest class and has his diploma."—Nebraska Signal, September 1, 1909; quoted from the Milligan Journal.

The effect of weather on the Sokol tournaments and other Milligan social affairs is aptly reflected by this passage from an article published in 1909:

"Until very recent times the possibility of meeting expenses at all public gatherings in Milligan was dependent on weather. Muddy roads kept not only the farmers, but also residents of neighboring towns at home. Time and again the village newspaper ascribes the lack of success of social events to the fact that it rained. The 'large crowd' reported was usually present in the editor's imagination. Today one gravel road leads to Milligan, but all of the side roads are still unsurfaced. Expenses are made today regardless of weather, but a large profit can be made only if the sky is clear."

In Milligan the Sokols did not at any time have a hall of their own. They used halls owned by other lodges. During the course of the winter, the Sokol's masquerade ball was one of the major social events. The ball of 1901 was described by the local paper:

"The T. J. Sokol's masquerade ball turned out pretty well regardless of the storm which occurred in the evening. There was a very large crowd present and everyone seemed to have a good time. The masks were numerous and some of the finest ever seen."—Nebraska Signal, March 1, 1901; quoted from the Milligan Journal.

A 1925 article from the Nebraska Signal remarks upon the sporadic interest commanded by the Sokols from 1905 to 1925.

"Twenty years ago and more the Sokols were one of the liveliest organizations here. Classes in physical training met regularly and delegates were sent to all tournaments. Of late years the organization has dwindled down, some of the active ones having gone beyond the river and others having moved away or grown too old for the strenuous exertions to which the Sokol is put. There was also a strong girls' class and while they did not become active at any time in going through the physical exercises, they were active socially and were the sponsors of many pleasant events.

"In the past few years the Sokols have been taking a new lease on life, several organizations having been formed in various parts of the state. Not to be left behind, Milligan formed an organization last Tuesday evening. Frank Chmelik, who came here direct from Czechoslovakia three years ago, spent a week here looking over the ground and holding classes at the school gymnasium. As a result of this a meeting was called for Tuesday evening at the ZCBJ hall and an organization was formed. An admission fee of $5 was agreed upon and a further payment of yearly dues of $5."—Nebraska Signal, November 26, 1925.

Under the leadership of the recently arrived Mr. Chmelik, interest in the organization grew. In May, 1926, it was ready to show the home folks what had been accomplished.

The year 1926 marked one of the high points in the revival of the Sokol organization in Milligan. On a Sunday following an exhibition at Milligan, the state tournament was held in Omaha. Many Milligan people were present. A special train which started at Milligan and picked up a number of delegates along the way was filled with several hundred contestants and spectators when it arrived in Omaha. The Nebraska Signal reported:

"The exhibition at the auditorium was a revelation to those who witnessed it. The auditorium hall was full. The exercises came in a methodical and orderly manner and the drills were given with precision. The Milligan contingent took part in the various classes and did exceptionally well; the girls' drill with rings being particularly good."—Signal, May 27, 1926.

The Sokol spirit was high at this time, and another tournament was held in August at Wilber, a neighboring town. An estimated 5,000 people watched the Milligan teams win several prizes. At Thanksgiving a Sokol benefit was given to help the Omaha lodge finance a new hall. The community responded liberally and furnished food and other items to help make the day a success; more than $200 was raised.

ZCBJ Lodge

ZCBJ Lodge is mentioned here because it has close ties with Milligan; but, as it was organized and still meets in Liberty township, it is described in that chapter.

The masks were numerous and some of the finest ever seen. —Nebraska Signal, March 22, 1901; quoted from the Milligan Times.
Z. C. B. J. Lodge Hall about 1910. School was held here while the schoolhouse was being built.

2nd row from bottom, left to right: Teresa Frycek, Fanny Stech, Veny Cerveny, Malinda Cerveny, Agnes Naimon, Mary B. Krisl.

Mary Jicha, Mary Rohla, Amelia Jansky, Mary Kotas, Anna Ondrak.

Milligan Chapter of Royal Neighbors of America — about 1905.

Top row, left to right: Tonye Bulin, Marie Steinacher, Frances Brt, Anna Novak, Anna Julia Yeck, Josie Loukota, Barbora Slezak.

Mary Simkovsky, Josie Rohla, Anna Placek, Anna Kubicek, Anna Sredl, Anna Soukup.

Children's Clubs

In the early days the children of the Milligan community had to wait until they were grown before they could belong to clubs and lodges. Whatever spare time they had, they spent at the old swimming hole at Placek's or filled in with various forms of informal play. In the last decades of the last century they had but little leisure. Men, women, and children spent most of their waking hours working. The newspapers of the time mention dances, masquerades, and other activities, but care no reference to clubs organized to pursue the interests of the young.

All this has been changed in recent years. Each issue of the county paper carries notices describing activities of numerous children's clubs. The school has been responsible for the formation of most of these. In connection with the agricultural courses, 4-H clubs have been organized. Boys learn how to raise pigs, cows, corn, and other animals or plants. Records are kept of the methods used and of the cash outlay. At the end of the season, prizes are awarded to those who have been most successful, and exhibits are prepared for the county and state fairs. Most of the clubs to which girls belong are restricted to activities in which only women engage, such as sewing, cooking, and housekeeping. Milligan was quite proud one year when two of their girls from the cooking club won the state championship of the cash outlay. At the end of the season, prizes are awarded to those who have been most successful, and exhibits are prepared for the county and state fairs.

Boys' clubs are concerned mainly with activities which do not require many meetings of the entire group. On the other hand, girls' clubs hold frequent meetings, and the activities carried on are often reported in the county paper.

"The Sunny Side cooks held their meeting at the home of Miss Sylvia Risching Friday, July 25. Plans were made for attending the 4-H club camp at Alexandria from August 4 to 7. Plans were made for a demonstration team at the county fair, demonstrating how to make muffins."

"Sylvia showed us how to knead bread by pushing it once or twice and turn around quarter way and fold it over toward you. Anna Prokop told us how to take care of bread after it is cooled and ready to put away. The bread that the girls brought to the demonstration was then judged. In the white bread Irma Havel had the best. In the whole-wheat Marian Kassik had the best. A delicious lunch was served."—Nebraska Signal, August 7, 1930.

Movies

"Saturday, June 28, and Sunday, June 29, Billy and Dot and The Last Kiss, both of them Czechoslovak films, will be shown at Central Hall."—Nebraska Signal, June 26, 1924.

If the producers of the Czechoslovak films had any hopes that they might find a ready market in Milligan they were disappointed. Such films were regarded more as curiosities than as regular film diet. But it is certain that a year's film diet does penetrate from the European hinterland to the Nebraska prairie. When some important event such as a Sokol tournament occurs in Bohemia, films are usually made and sent to the United States. Pictures of the tournament held in 1920 were shown in Milligan several months after it was held.

Czech films are infrequent visitors to Milligan, while Hollywood productions are seen several times weekly. Here a typical hero pursues a typical villain and rescues a typical heroine from his clutches. The effect of these films on Milligan is much the same as anywhere else in America. This indicates the type of movie often shown locally:

"The Sage Hen, which will be shown at the Gem Theater Sunday, April 9, is a drama that goes straight to the mother heart of the world, being the poignant story of an outcast woman of the early West who was branded with the scarlet letter and turned out on the desert with her little son to die."—Nebraska Signal, April 6, 1924.

When "talkies" came, Milligan did not lag behind. Early in the spring of 1930 the talkies made their first appearance in Milligan:

"The Central Theater . . . has installed talkie equipment and gave its first public performance Saturday. This equipment is being installed at an expense of about $2,000. It compares favorably with that of the smaller theaters in our neighboring towns."—Nebraska Signal, March 20, 1930.

See also account of J. J. Klima.

CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Funfrall Park (City Park)

The Funfrall Park is located in the northern part of Milligan on the four 50-foot lots which Milligan's first schoolhouse, built in 1888. The ground was donated for this purpose by the Kansas City & Omaha R.R., operating through Milligan at that time. The park is bounded on the north by the American Legion Park and a part of the present school grounds. On the east, it is bounded by Nebraska Highway 41, as it comes through the town.

Such a park had long been of interest to the Women's Club. The first beginning is credited to a "Krousek" (club) of public-spirited women, which between 1914 and 1916 started the project on this site when the Milligan school was shifted to its present location in 1913. The women got help in cleaning up the old site and built the arbor (which still stands) and tables and benches. Later, the Woman's Club adopted the park with a view to business as well as to general hospitality, it was called the Tourist Park. The American Legion (J. V. Charvat, Commander) was responsible for planting the elms.

In the few years which followed the club paid for the mowing of the grass and some members planted and cultivated shrubbery there. However, upon hearing a report that the village board would prefer that the women stay out of the park, so far as upkeep was concerned, the club discontinued these activities.

In 1939, the Women's Club members each planted two Chinese elms in the park, as described in the account of the club Ten years later, in the spring of 1949, when the club entered the "Build a Better Community" contest, it convened a meeting of residents or representatives of all the organizations in the Milligan community to discuss the project, and were pleased to find a general consensus in favor of renovating the city park.

Impressive results were then achieved. Besides the club itself, there were: the Knights of Pythias, Pythian Sisters, American Legion and Auxiliary, Lodge Cecgie, Lodge Rohla, Lodge Cornhusker, Lodge Svatopluk Cech, Altar Society, Women's Society of Christian Service, Milligan Project Club, Milligan Junior Project Club, Liberty
On May 17, 1949, the Woman's Club then voted to carry out the project, and the newly installed president, Miss Agnes M. Capek, appointed a park committee: Mrs. A. R. Jensen, Mrs. Norman Dunker, and Mrs. James Vavra. This committee drew up the plans and appointed the Rev. C. C. Stirn, pastor of St. Wenceslaus' Church, as general manager.

Chairmen were appointed to take charge of various units of the work: Fence building, James Laun; Sand boxes and general repair, Norman Dunker; Painting, Robert C. Dvorak; Fireplaces, Fred Hospodsky; Tennis and volley-ball court, A. R. Jensen; Lighting, Ernest Kotas; Necessary removal of trees, William H. Kotas; Weed control and mowing, Norman Steinacher; Picnic tables and benches, Joe M. Oliver; Installing water fountain, moving in stands, and leveling dirt, and taking pictures, J. J. Halama.

It would perhaps not be worth the space to list such details except to show the complexities, and the real need for unified co-operation, in even an apparently simple community project. From the moment the plans were made, every effort was put forth to see that every organization had some part in the actual fulfillment.

All work was donated. Everyone was enthusiastic and pitched in, with hopes of completing the project by the middle of June; but a rainy season slowed or halted progress many times. When the project was started, the neglected park had an arbor badly in need of paint; a table of very little value inside the arbor; a practically unrepairable picnic table with attached benches; outdoor toilets with doors breaking off at the hinges, much in need of paint and rather too well hidden in shrubbery; broken trees in need of trimming, and dead branches all over the place; and weeds, and more weeds. There was much work to be done.

Finally, not too much later than originally planned, the work drew to a close. The park had a complete new look. There were two open fireplaces, with near-by picnic tables and benches; facilities for horseshoe-pitching and croquet; a tennis and volley-ball court; sand boxes (old tractor tires put to use) for the children; and a rustic rail fence, running the length of the park. The bandstand was moved into the park and screened. Lighting facilities made the park usable in the evenings. The toilets were repaired and painted, and playground equipment was purchased.

Figuring the donated labor at about 50 cents an hour, and costs for material and equipment at wholesale prices, thanks to the cooperation of local businessmen, it was calculated that the cash value of the park project came to about $2,500.

A "Name-the-Park" contest was held which was entered by more than 50 people. Miss Betty Ann Sleczak won the prize for her suggestion of "Funfrall."

The park was formally dedicated on a late-July evening in 1949, with the Rev. C. C. Stirn as speaker and a gathering of about 700 people. Since the dedication, more picnic tables and more recreational equipment have been added, using money from occasional donations and money raised by the Woman's Club, largely from lunch sales at the annual picnics.

Professor Vesley's Band. This group played for all orations and even funerals. Standing, left to right: George Boza, Joe Yack, Lou Phillips, Emil Yeck, Lou Laun. Seated, left to right: Emil Yeck, Albert Boza, Professor Vesley, John Styskal.

The New Auditorium

For some years Milligan had needed a new auditorium. The old hall had been built in 1890 and was very inadequate. In 1929, a campaign for funds was inaugurated and about $15,000 was raised. When bids were asked, the committee discovered that a suitable hall could not be built for less than $50,000. An appeal was made to the lodges to raise the necessary money. They put on an intensive drive for funds, and succeeded in raising an additional $10,000. The committee decided to start building the hall, relying upon the sale of $25,000 worth of bonds to complete the cost of the building.

It was not an easy task; for the committee had waited until all the bonds had been sold, the auditorium would never have been built. Before ground was broken for the new building, the committee expressed its disappointment at its lack of success.

"The committee which undertook to raise the money by voluntary subscriptions was very much surprised and disappointed in the raising of funds. With but a few exceptions the amount subscribed by different individuals was far below that which the committee expected. In a number of cases they came away empty-handed, when they had felt sure of a liberal donation."

"The difficulty seems to lie in the fact that the people who have means haven't the generous spirit and the people who have the generous spirit haven't the means. It is no small project that the community has undertaken and it will require the loosening of the purse strings more than the exercise of the vocal cords to put the project through."—Nebraska Signal, October 17, 1929.

After the ground was broken, the community took great interest in the construction and longed to see the building completed. In November, 1929, the committee decided to issue the bonds, urging everybody to "Buy a Bond and By a Bond be Bound to Milligan." In this same month the necessity of completing a given piece of construction before freezing weather set in made it imperative for the men of the community to give of their muscles as well as of their money.

"Everybody works but father" is a thing of the past in the present day when necessity requires everybody working, including father. Friday the contractor at work on the community auditorium was particularly desirous of having as much concrete poured as possible for fear freezing weather might set in and seriously retard the progress of the work. He let his wants be known to Jim Charvat and Jim said to him, says he, 'I can get you all the men you want who will stay on the job until it is finished.

"So Jim proceeded to spread the news that all able-bodied men were requested to be at the auditorium by 6:30 that evening and help pour concrete until the contractor hollered 'nuff.' About 50 fellows were on the job at the appointed time.

"It was a jolly crowd. Wheeling that wheelbarrow up a steep incline wasn't light work, either. Some of those wheelbarrows didn't seem to have the cartreter working right and some of them seemed to be running on flat tires, but the push behind them kept them going until the job was completed. The building of King Solomon's temple or the construction of the Chinese Wall must have been some job, but when you get together a bunch of fellows who seem to have the spirit there just isn't anything that can't be accomplished."—Nebraska Signal, November 21, 1929.

In April, 1930, a month before the auditorium was dedicated, the last of those bonds were sold. More than one person borrowed money at a high rate of interest to buy bonds which gave a smaller return. When the bonds were all sold the local correspondent complimented the community on its achievement:

"The financing of this $50,000 project speaks volumes for this community. The past six months haven't been especially favorable for the raising of ready cash for the reason that prices of farm products have been lowering and farmers haven't been selling, but in spite of all this the money has been raised and we have witnessed another demonstration of what a community can do when a respectable number of people get behind a project and determine to stay with it until it is accomplished."—Nebraska Signal, April 17, 1930.

Each week the newspaper reported the progress made during the previous week. As the building neared completion, the committee was confronted with the problem of its dedication. Elaborate plans were made, and for three days Milligan gave itself up to rejoicing and congratulations.
"As originally planned, the dedication of the new auditorium comprised three days. It had not been planned, however, that they should be three hectic days. The plans and specifications called for three days, but the committee had some misgivings about this and a precautionary insurance policy surely had need of it. It rained Friday and it rained Saturday. It didn't rain Sunday, but that made no difference, because the roads couldn't have been any sloppier if it had rained for the last 30 years."

"But even the rain couldn't stop the fitting climax which had been planned for observing in a fitting manner the completion of so fine a project as the construction of this splendid public building. All of the plans for the ceremonies were upset and abandoned, and while they were not witnessed by capacity houses, the attendance was such as to demonstrate conclusively that under favorable weather conditions the attendance would have been of such proportions as to have made it beyond all power to take care of the throngs. As it was, it was possible to handle the visitors satisfactorily and send them home with a desire to come again."—Nebraska Signal, May 1, 1930.

"On Friday the ceremonies opened with a concert and a dance. On Saturday the attendance of the state's and other notable addresses. But on Saturday evening a problem confronted the committee."

"Saturday evening was designated for the jazz dance. A ten-piece high-priced orchestra was engaged from Omaha for the occasion. At about 7:30 they called upon Soward that they were having trouble with one of their cars, but would send seven of their men on ahead and the rest would follow later, if possible. About an hour later they called again that they couldn't come at all. The dance committee sweated blood and oozed tears and almost swore."

"They called up frantically everywhere they had ever heard of an orchestra being. They called up York, Clay Center, and Lincoln. They called Crete and Tobias, thinking dances there might have been called off and therefore available. But to no avail. Something had to be done. So finally Jim Ach with his accordion and the help of his two sons and John Kucera took their places on the stage and substituted for Jimmy's Serenaders. Jim did a good job of it and made half the effort to fulfill his contract that Jim Ach made to please the crowd, there would have been no disappointment."—Nebraska Signal, May 1, 1930.

"So Milligan reached another peak, took another step along the long road which is called progress. After the dedication was over, the community was jubilant. They turned off at midnight."

"People cannot always live on the heights, nor is all community spirit exhibited there. In those days (and again in later years) when all sources had not yet been definitely ascertained, but they will not be far from the $3,000 mark. Hundreds of people were kept away by the rain and the condition of the roads. The management is considering repeating the two plays, giving one of them on one Sunday evening and the other the next Sunday evening. This would give our friends from a distance an opportunity to see the new hall and witness a demonstration of how it meets the needs of the community. Should this be determined upon, the final announcement will be made in a few days. In the meantime, the hectic days are over and the auditorium is formally dedicated."—Nebraska Signal, May 1, 1930.

"Miss Petracek started to work for C. J. Cerveney in 1899. In 1904 she started a restaurant in the Vaca. She worked in the community for many years, lost only one game. On the team were boys from the families of Havel, Kotas, Lauvetz, Leisher, Hrdy, and Rybin. Mr. Saunders left Milligan in 1905, to join the school board, and was a charter member of the Milligan Knights of Pythias. During his stay in Milligan, he organized and managed a boys' baseball team, which, during his two years of management, lost only one game."

"Frank A. Placek started in the hardware business in 1887 and held the longest record of continuous service. Selling out the hardware store to William H. Kotas in 1937, Mr. Placek built the first electric light and power system, which served the town for many years, giving Milligan electric lights when most towns its size did not have them."

"W. B. Saunders, known to everybody as Boone Saunders, was one of the lumbermen who made more than an average impression on the community; he learned to understand the Czech language, and was a charter member of the Milligan Knights of Pythias. During his stay in Milligan, he organized and managed a boys' baseball team, which, during his two years of management, lost only one game. On the team were boys from the families of Havel, Kotas, Lauvetz, Leisher, Trobaugh, Smrha, Janda, Holpuch, Motis, Lukisik, Deams, Hrdy, and Rybin. Mr. Saunders left Milligan in 1905, to operate a lumber business in Gillette, Wyoming."

"Dr. V. V. Smrha came with his parents to Milligan in 1894 at the age of 15. In 1895, he started teaching school, and in 1901 he entered Creighton University. After graduation in May, 1905, he returned to Milligan and started to practice medicine. During horse-and-buggy days, he crossed Turkey Creek many times when the horses were the only means of transportation. He also traveled in blizzards and on icy roads to answer sick calls, first using an automobile to answer calls in 1911. Dr. Smrha delivered more than 1,300 babies."

"J. J. Klima, who became president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank in 1954, is also known for his interest in motion pictures. He first became interested in movies in 1937, when he acquired a motion-picture camera and projector. During following years, he took motion pictures of various community events and family get-togethers and each year showed the pictures at some public gathering. From this project stemmed his interest in a community theater, and when he transferred the motion-picture equipment to the Community Club, Leonard Kassik then took over the management, and continued to operate it, also without compensation, until June, 1962, when the rising competition of television forced it to bite the dust."

"The projector is still housed in the Auditorium, and gets used now and then on special occasions."

"The building which now stands on Lot 8 in Block 7 was perhaps visited by everyone in this community at one time or another because for over 30 years it was occupied by William Lobberger, who operated a general shop there. He repaired everything from the minutest item to tractor engine."

"The building was also occupied at various times by a butcher shop, a hardware store, and a theater. The theater was known as the Gem Theater and was run by E. J. Kotas and J. V. Kotas. (See Movie, earlier in this chapter.)"
In the winter of 1951, in response to a query in the Nebraska Signal as to how many were still around who remembered the blizzard of Jan. 12, 1888, many interesting letters were received. Almost every township had its story.

Henry Podlesak of Chicago, who was a rural teacher at the time, wrote as follows:

"The weather was warm, springlike, enough so that the older pupils went home at noon to help cut and clear cornstalks so the fields could be plowed. By afternoon recess it was getting cold and somewhat windy so that I rang the bell right after recess started. By the time the last pupil got in, the wind had begun to blow quite hard. All pupils got in and a few tiny icicles made themselves felt.

"I knew at once what was coming. We had very little water in the bucket and very little coal in the shed, so I decided to apportion the children among the nearest farms. I took some of the smaller ones to the Steinacher farm, which was nearest, and believe me it was some work against the wind which was blowing very hard by then. I carried Tenny Placek and dragged Emil Placek, that now famous banker at Wahoo.

"The Biba and Hodek children were among the first allocations. Then I took six to the old Kotas farm. That trip was not so bad, being with the wind, but coming back to the school house was no fun. I took five to our farm which was with the wind, though a little bit across it. Two of the largest boys I took to Anton Kotas's farm to the east of the school. The trip was across the wind and believe me it was some work against the wind which was blowing quite hard. I rang the bell right after recess started.

"The school was District 44 in Glengary township. There were two deaths due to freezing in our neighborhood, a Mrs. Masek who lived north of where the town of Milligan now stands but which at that time was a separate settlement, and a man who was found frozen near the old Andrle farm which was north of the Masek farm. The man was never identified. All of the quail and rabbits were frozen and it took about two years to replace them.

"The Nebraska Signal gives further details reporting on Mrs. Masek's death. We read: "Hitherto all stories of the blizzard have dealt with escape from human tragedy, but this week our first story is about a little known tragedy that stands out clearly in the mind of a Geneva resident, Mrs. Mary Matejka, who lost her mother in the big blizzard. Newspaper files of the time do not seem to report the tragedy but several residents of Geneva recall that a woman was frozen to death, although the name of the woman and the details of the situation are not known.

"Mrs. Matejka, the former Mary Masek, was 12 years old at the time of the storm and she gives a good description of the blizzard which took her mother's life.

"Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Masek, were immigrants to this country and the family lived in a sod house one and one half miles west of the present town of Milligan. Mary and her brother Charles were not in school the day of the storm but their brother Thomas was. Her father was ill and unable to be out so he sent her to feed the horses. She said the wind blew the hay out of her hands as fast as she could pull it out of the stack. The snow was like rice and the wind whistled so loud she couldn't hear anything else. She could barely see her hand in front of her.

"When the storm struck, Mrs. Masek became worried about Tom (in school) and decided to walk the one and one half miles to the school to get him. Mrs. Matjeka says her mother arrived at school to find him all right but everyone was gone. It developed later that Tom spent the night with a family by the name of Hanson. Mrs. Masek started home but apparently she became exhausted and fell beside the road in front of what was then the John Kotas home. Mr. Masek and the children worried all night about their mother and brother, but they decided she must have remained all night at the school house.

"When Mrs. Masek failed to arrive home the next morning, Charles went to find her. He found her frozen to death. Neighbors came to the assistance of the Maseks and helped them bury her in a private cemetery near Milligan. Later Mr. Masek was buried in the Milligan south cemetery. Here Mrs. Masek rests in an unmarked grave. She was one of the unsung heroines of the storm which took so many lives."

PUREBRED SIRE TRAIN

It was in 1924 that the purebred sire train came to Milligan. The article in the county paper which describes the affair has a headline in large capital letters, "Milligan's Big Day." Subheads contained the words "A Tremendous Crowd, Great Enthusiasm and Remarkable Parade." An understanding of the great day is best through the description of the town correspondent.

"The big day came Thursday, October 23, and 3,719 individuals passed through the train and viewed the exhibits. The afternoon was given over to the biggest and finest parade of floats ever seen in Fillmore County. Thirty-one floats of local business houses, local lodges of various kinds, private float owners, time farm implement dealers, flour threshers, and retired farmers were in line.

"The Farmers and Merchants Bank float led the parade. It was prettily decorated, advertising over half a million dollars on deposit and saying that the local bank reflected the prosperity of the locality. Adolph Zeman had four International tractors in line advertising the fact that one can plow for gold by plowing deep. James Bore had a nicely decorated Fordson resembling a submarine. The Milligan Lumber Company had a pretty bungalow with children playing in it and a decorated lawn.

"The Farmers Co-operative Company had about 24 men pulling a loaded farm wagon [representing] the fact that enough men must pull together to make the proper progress. Kasik & Sons had a well-decorated truck advertising their mill products and their elevator.

"All three local Western Bohemian Fraternal Association lodges had floats. The most elaborate of these was that of Lodge Rabi, which displayed a large emblem and a home fireside with the breadwinner absent and the widow and the children receiving the benefits of the fraternal insurance. They displayed the motto "Keep the Home Fires Burning." Lodge Svatojil Cech displayed an old-time Czech plow and depicted an event in Bohemian history. The ladies' lodge Cochce had a decorated car in which rode Mrs. Katherine Smrha, the oldest local member, together with the youngest members, the six-year-old Elenore Hrdy and others."—Nebraska Signal, October 30, 1924.

"Several of the district schools had floats depicting the value of the purebred sires. The American Legion float won first prize. The finest float and the one receiving first prize was the American Legion float. They had decorated the floats of the old-time flail threshing. The truck driver was hidden under a piece of furniture. On a cot lay a stricken soldier who was attended by two beautiful nurses. No wonder he was stricken! The float was escorted by soldiers and sailors in their uniforms, most beautiful emblem worked out in maroon and yellow. It was certainly a dandy float, and well deserved the prize.

"The old-time flail threshing was pictured by Mrs. Ignac Se­besta and Mrs. Vaclav Halama, Albert Frycek and Vaclav Swajgr, dressed in Bohemian national costume. Their float was prettily decorated and they made a pretty picture threshing wheat, oats, and rye. Following this float was one decorated with farm products in which rode many retired farmers and their wives, sitting in rockers, some reading, others smoking and talking amongst themselves and having much enjoyment. They illustrated the fact that this territory is prosperous enough to retire its older members to comfort and rest. They bore the motto: We have Earned Our Comfort.

"The surrounding farmers got up a float that was a joke on the businessmen. About twenty-five farmers decorated a float that was erected by forty pretty cows, while they themselves were decorated with garbs across their breast. The float was decorated with a man wearing the name of the businessman he burlesqued. The whole represented a session of the Chamber of Commerce. E. E. Slepicka represented Dr. Smrha as president of the chamber, and he explained the working of the assembly. He was followed by Vaclav Ach, who has much forensic ability and who represented Charles Smrha. He read the minutes of the previous meeting. The motions that were made and the debate that followed were read out all the minutes and were most comical and entertaining."—Nebraska Signal, October 30, 1924.

"The train visited thirty-one points in the state. At but one stop did the number of those passing through the train exceed that at Milligan, and this was Bridge Bow. Something over 4,000 people passed through the train there, so that Milligan lacked but few to be the top-notchers of the state."—Nebraska Signal, October 30, 1924."
Grafton Township

Grafton township occupies the northwest corner of Fillmore County. It is bounded on the north by York County, on the east and south by West Blue and Bennett townships, and on the west by Clay County. The West Blue River crosses the northeastern corner of the township, and School Creek flows from near the southeastern corner to near the northeastern, emptying into the Blue near the York County line. The Chicago-Denver line of the Burlington R.R. crosses the southern end of the township from east to west, about a mile from its southern border, closely paralleled by U.S. 6. The Lushotn-Clay Center branch of the Burlington crosses from northeast to southwest, through Secs. 2 to 30, following closely the course of School Creek. Despite a reasonable amount of ground water, by the end of 1966, Grafton township had 57 irrigation wells, with more in prospect.

School Creek and the West Blue had, in the early days, a constant flow of water and were well wooded. Naturally, the first claims were taken along the north end of the township so that the settlers could be sure of water and fuel. A few log houses were built. Those who located out on the prairie had to build sod houses, which were comfortable but hard to keep clean. The settlers found that some of the soil could be baked into brick, and some of them used brick walls and thatched roofs for their homes, but the brick was not too solid and the thatch often leaked. Wells were the real problems; digging a well with a spade was a hard job.

Grafton township was settled by immigrants from Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, New York, Delaware, West Virginia, and New England, who were looking for new homes after the Civil War. These people were mostly Anglo-Saxon, though among them were a number of Germans and Irish. Some took up homesteads, while others bought railroad land. The Burlington Railroad was built through the county in 1871. This made life much easier for the pioneers, who before its coming had hauled their provisions and supplies overland; the nearest town was Lincoln.

One of the first homesteads was taken in 1869 by the Shroyers, who came here from West Virginia. There were three brothers—David John, Jake and Andy Shroyer—with their mother and their two sisters, Mary and Vina. Other names familiar to early homesteaders were Elisha Littlefield, Joseph Tatro, Wallace Fairbanks, Scott Mattern, Joseph Frazier (Lou's father), Tom and John Watt, the Lytle brothers, O. H. Parsons, George Wintersteen, Erskine Clark, Jasper Culver, Joseph Le Hew, Silas Pringle, and Xerxes Stevens.

The lives of the pioneers were not too dull. They visited their neighbors, often driving a yoke of oxen to do so. A few had ponies. If they were driving past a house near mealtime, they stopped to eat and were welcome. Dances, spelling bees, and quilting bees furnished entertainment. Prairie fires were a terror to the settlers. Some were started (as nowadays) by carelessness, some by guns, some by sparks from locomotives. They were hard to control and did a great deal of damage.

Building up a home from scratch and organizing townships and counties was a mighty task, but these people undertook the job and finished it. The land had to be surveyed. Corner stones were buried, one mile apart, at all section corners. Many of these can still be found and are used as basic evidence for settling boundary lines. In the late 1880s a band of German-Russians moved into the northwest corner of Grafton township, and their descendants are still there.

Grafton township has seen four towns started. The first was Fillmore, located on Sec. 1, the NE section of the township. It had a store, a blacksmith shop, and one house. Grafton was first platted out for a town just five miles west of its present location in the year 1871, immediately after the laying of the Burlington railroad. It consisted of one store, a post office, and four small houses erected by the railroad company. Here it remained until 1875, when it was moved to its present location and Captain Patrick S. Real opened a store one...
block south of the present city light-plant building. This store was later sold to W. G. Hainey, who moved it nearer to the railroad. Here it remained and did business as long as there was a Hainey in Grafton—more than 65 years.

Grafton was a lively little town in the 80's. It had three dry-goods stores, two restaurants, a newspaper (the Grafton Leader), two livery barns, a resident doctor, a lawyer who had a boy in his office studying law, a drugstore, two hotels, and a post office. Among the familiar names of that date were W. G. Hainey, George Hainey, H. J. Day, E. A. Cushing, Dr. Charles Ballard, O. J. Lytle, John Conness, Dr. Johnson, E. H. S. James, B. J. La Shalle, P. T. Tales, George Wintersteen, Elizabeth Stevens, E. F. Hinkley, George Warren, Bob Price, Captain P. S. Real, J. B. Hitchcock, John Menzie, Mrs. Keeler, A. Spandau, John Fitzgerald, Dennis & Roland, Tom Fisher, Emmet Real, A. McNickle, John Burke, John Shoff, Dan Easten, John Kalbin, and John Kahn. John Shoff was the first postmaster (appointed in 1873).

The last town to be started was Lyman; but when it was found that another town in the state had the same name, it was changed to Bixby. Bixby was on the Kansas City & Omaha R.R. (later part of the Burlington system) which crossed the northwestern corner of the township. It had a large elevator, a good stockyard, one store, and one house. It did good business for a while, but it was too close to three other towns and faded out.

In early days grist mills were common. Three dams were built on the West Blue, and each one operated a mill. The Fillmore Mill was built on the site of the old town. Seeley's Mill was across the line in York County. The Farmer's Valley Mill was a little farther west. At that time, farmers took their grain to the mills, where, for a commission, the miller ground it and gave back flour and meal. A Mr. Ellis, John Welch, Bill Smith, and Les Frederick were millers at Fillmore.

—Ellen Fitzgerald

Grafton

The history of the present town of Grafton begins in 1874. Except for the name, the present town has little or no connection with the town of that name which figured so prominently in the early history of Sutton. More appropriately, it could be said to be an extension or relocation of Fillmore City, the first town in the county.

When the Burlington Railroad, in 1871, changed its projected course through southern York County to its present location it apparently sounded the death knell of Fillmore City, and there was soon little left of the town. In 1872, however, C. M. Northrup located there and prepared to build a mill. Together, he and E. L. Martin laid out a town that was to be a bigger and better Fillmore City. To the original town site, which constituted the W ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 6, T8, R3W, in West Blue precinct, was now added the E ½ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 1, T8, R4W in Grafton township.

The township line was to be the main street. The whole was surveyed, platted, and filed in the county clerk's office as a town site on December 10, 1872. Work on the mill was completed in 1873, and the production of flour was begun. The mill was well built, with four runs of burrs, and ground a good grade of flour. Despite a great demand for the mill's products, Fillmore City never grew to be a town, undoubtedly because of its lack of a railroad.

For a time, Mr. Northrup hauled his flour by team and wagon to Fairmont, the nearest shipping point on the Burlington, but this proved unsatisfactory, as the round trip added up to 22 miles. Captain P. S. Real, who had come from Illinois with his wife and family in 1872, was a friend and neighbor of Mr. Northrup. He was a personal friend of John Fitzgerald, the famous railroad builder. Thanks to his influence, the B. & M. built a siding at a point four miles south of the mill, where Mr. Northrup thereafter loaded his flour.

Soon the farmers in that locality were bringing their wheat there to sell or to exchange for flour, and Mr. Northrup built a small warehouse. This made it a convenient place for the farmers to get their mail, and so, in 1873, a post office was established in the near-by home of John Schaff, with Mrs. Schaff as postmistress.

This made Northrup's siding seem a good place for a town; and so, when, on March 27, 1874, at the request of the proprietors, the county commissioners declared the town site of Grafton, near Sutton, vacated, another town with the same name was laid out here on the farm of Joseph Trotto. Mr. Trotto, at the suggestion of Mr. Real and through Mr. Real's influence with the railroad, had previously entered into a contract to donate a share of the lots to the railroad in exchange for a depot to be built there. This town site, which consisted of about 60 acres in the SE ¼ of Sec. 25, T8, R4W, was surveyed in April, 1874, by A. B. Smith. The plat was filed on June 11, and on July 1, 1874, a share of the lots was transferred to the township committee. The town did not begin to grow, however, until 1875, when a depot was built.

The first actual business house in Grafton was a flour and grain warehouse and office built by Mr. Northrup in 1875. In the same year P. S. Real bought the first grain. Later he built and kept the first lumber yard and established a store. Among those who established businesses was W. G. Hainey, an experienced dealer in general merchandise, who, on October 1, 1875, took over the store started by Mr. Real, with a stock worth $6,000. This became one of the most progressive stores in the county.

By the fall of 1876, the population numbered about 50, and Grafton was fast becoming an important grain market and trade center. The town grew steadily, although slowly, until
the spring of 1879, when a new wave of settlers moved into the county and a number of business and professional men located here. Among these were A. C. Spandau, who opened the first drugstore in 1878; Dr. Charles F. Ballard, the first physician; and Arthur Murdock, who opened a lumber yard. H. J. Day opened a general store with a stock of $6,000 and later built the town hall and the Palace Hotel.

In 1880, George H. Warren erected a new steam elevator with a capacity of 20,000 bushels and did a heavy trade in grain and seeds. For many years thereafter, Grafton was one of the best grain markets on the Burlington. R. J. Blackburn began the livery business.

In 1881, the Bank of Grafton was organized, with J. O. Chase of the Fillmore County Bank, “one of the ablest financiers in Nebraska,” as president. R. C. Price, “an accomplished young businessman who represented wealthy Eastern shareholders,” was cashier. The directors were W. G. Hainey, J. O. Chase, and J. W. Price. Mr. Chase later founded the famous Chase National Bank in New York.


The first grocery and dry-goods store in Grafton was, as noted earlier, opened by Captain P. S. Real. It was taken over in 1875 by W. G. Hainey and moved to a new location. This business remained in the Hainey family until 1940, when the stock was liquidated and the building torn down. It is not known whether these persons were the first to follow their particular business or profession in Grafton, but in 1879 these names were in the business directory: Edward Brophy, hardware store; F. F. Combs, meat market; N. J. Shenck, proprietor Cooper House (hotel); D. Easton, blacksmith; C. H. Eggleston, attorney-at-law; H. C. Johnston, agricultural implements; J. W. Price, grain and coal; and J. M. Spandau, drugs, paints, books, etc.

In 1882, Dr. Charles Ballard set up practice in Grafton, and R. J. Blackburn established a livery stable. The Grafton Gazette was being published by H. C. Hensel, and Mrs. C. A. Richards opened another hotel, the Grafton House. There were two other attorneys, George H. Ryman and T. B. Tolls. Dr. John W. Archard set up his practice in 1894 and continued in it until 1907 or 1908. He was followed by Dr. Grey, and later Dr. Sweeney practiced for some years. In 1915, Dr. C. S. Hubbard began a practice which he continued until his death.

Growing town of 500 people. It has a beautiful and commanding location, an elegant schoolhouse, three churches, a solid bank, three elevators with a storage capacity of 100,000 bushels, two fine new hotels, a new and enterprising journal—the Leader—edited and published by D. D. Crane, a heavy shipping trade in grain and livestock, a large general trade, some live and enterprising businessmen, and a good showing of pretty, tasteful homes.

Needless to add that the most important contributing factor to all of this is the fact that it is surrounded by a rich agricultural region in which intelligent and energetic farmers are carrying on a broad program of farming and livestock raising.

Early Businessmen

Among the first owners of general-merchandise stores in Grafton were H. J. Day and E. A. Cushing. Mr. Day moved to Grafton in 1879 and began business as a dealer in groceries and dry goods. He built a spacious home with a circular staircase and a turret, which for many years was the most elegant residence in the community. Some years later he sold his estate to Mr. O'Donnell. In 1912, this store was being run by C. A. Rossman when the building and much of the merchandise were destroyed by fire. Mr. Day also built the town hall and the Palace Hotel, which many years later was torn down and rebuilt on the same location to house Jake Walters’ machine shop.

Another store was being operated in 1879 under the name of Cushing Brothers; a few years later, E. A. Cushing was listed as the owner. In 1904, this store was taken over by Frank Mecham in partnership with J. C. Cox, an Exeter merchant. After the fire of March 10, 1912, which destroyed most of the businesses on the west side of Grafton’s main street, he and Mr. Cox built a large brick building to house their stock (which had been only slightly damaged). Mr. Mecham continued in the mercantile business until his retirement in 1946.

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except for an eight-year period during which he practiced elsewhere. During this interval, Dr. Archard returned to Grafton for a short time, and several other doctors, including Dr. Bayles and Dr. Sterling also practiced. In 1931, Dr. Hubbard retired, but remained in Grafton until his death in 1940. He was Grafton's last resident doctor.

E. H. S. James came to Grafton in 1889 and opened a drugstore which he operated until his death in 1934. This was the last drugstore in Grafton. Walter Thomas, Grafton's barber, set up his business on the east side of the street after the fire destroyed his original shop. In 1912, Brown Brothers of Sutton built a brick building south of the Mecham store, which has housed a restaurant and pool hall until recently. Sadie and Bert Willy were the first operators of these businesses in the new building. It now (1967) houses Keller's Bar.

Grafton has had three major fires. The first, some time before 1900, burned George Warren's elevator. On March 10, 1912, a fire burned out at least five business places on the west side of the street: Frank Conrad's meat market, the pool hall operated by Tony Green, the post office, Walter Thomas's barber shop, and the C. A. Rossman general store. A Civil War cannon which had been donated to the town by Congressman Charles H. Sloan, and which was stored in the pool hall, was destroyed. The third fire, on October 16, 1929, destroyed the bank building, a restaurant, and a meat market. Frank Mecham's store was damaged by the two-story brick wall of the bank which toppled over on it.

Two dreadful accidents have happened on Main Street where it crosses the railroad. The first was in the summer of 1891, when Nebraska was being visited by very heavy rains. The Union Pacific tracks along the Platte River had been washed out; the company asked for the privilege of running some of its fast trains over the Burlington line, and this was granted. On the afternoon of June 26, a fast U.P. train was going west just ahead of our local afternoon train. Maria H. (Mrs. Joseph) Tatro was to take the afternoon local, and Grace L. (Mrs. George) Hainey was walking with her to the station. They heard the whistle and started to hurry. Just as they reached the track, Mrs. Tatro stumbled. Mrs. Hainey reached to help her, and both were run over by the U.P. train. Mrs. Hainey's little boy was running along behind, but someone stopped him.

The other accident happened at the same place, many years later, on August 8, 1920. Jim Colman was bringing his mother home from morning church when a fast train was going through town. Jim didn't see the train; their car was struck, and both were killed.

Schools

The village of Grafton has maintained good schools through the years. There have been three buildings. The first was a one-room schoolhouse on the east side of town. The second was a two-story building, with three rooms on each floor. This was finally outgrown, and the present brick building was erected in 1914. The first graduating class was that of 1885. Over the years, Grafton graduates have entered many walks of life and are widely scattered over the United States. The townspeople were the kind that thought first of their churches and their schools; and any project started by the school always brought out a good crowd and received the support of the community.
Churches

St. Helena's Church (Catholic)

Back in the late 70's, the early pioneers blazed the way and arrived in the vicinity of Grafton, 60 miles west of Lincoln on the Burlington R.R., only to find that churches were a luxury out here, and as such were few and far apart.

Some of the early settlers were Schroers, Schafs, McDonalds, Reals, Schmitzes, Russells, O'Briens, Zierens, Kellers, Weisenborns, Donovanos, Stahls, Rolfs, Ryans, Scheneks, and Fitzgeralds.

Catholic services were held for some time in the railway section-house home of George Schroer, north and west of the Wilson elevator. This good family spared no pains to make visiting priests and fellow Catholics at home in their temporary house of worship. Later the hospitable home of Patrick S. Real, Sr., was placed at the disposal of priests and worshipers to serve their religious needs.

Services were held twice a month until the building of the first Catholic church in Grafton (which was also the first church erected in the township), completed in the late spring of 1880. This was a major undertaking and meant great sacrifices to provide a suitable church for a growing congregation. Many memories still cling about the old church that in those days was a Christian landmark on the plains.

The present church grounds—comprising Lots 270, 271, 272, and 273, Block 23—were donated to the church by Patrick S. Real, Sr. The south half of the cemetery grounds of 2½ acres was also donated by Mr. Real.

There was no resident priest in charge until the spring of 1885. During those first years several priests, including Fathers Ambler, Jennett, and Lecklughtner, came from Exeter to hold services.

Late in 1884, efforts were made to establish a rectory in order to secure a resident priest. This building was completed in the spring of 1885. Father William Murphy was the first resident priest. He was followed, in 1887, by Father J. E. English. Nine months later came Father Thomas Corcoran, who was here for 10 years. During his pastorate all the debts contracted in the building of the church and rectory were paid in full.

In August, 1897, the Rev. D. G. Fitzgerald took charge. He built an addition to the church, which improved its appearance and provided better accommodations for its increased membership.

Father J. W. Loughnot next held the pastorate, beginning in the spring of 1906, for nine months. In January, 1907, came Father William McKenna, who served until 1911. In his time here, he had modern conveniences placed in the old house. His health failed, and he was forced to seek a change. For the next few months, the pastor in charge was Father E.
F. Fitzpatrick, who was a college teacher; finding pastoral work not to his liking, he shortly returned to his college chair.

Father Patrick J. Healy was appointed May 11, 1911. As the 40-year-old frame buildings were showing wear and tear, he took steps to erect a modern two-story rectory. Started in the fall of 1912, this was completed in March, 1913, at a cost of $5,000. The architect was C. W. May of Hastings, and L. V. Peterson of southwest Grafton was the contractor. The chairman of the building committee was Father Healy; the treasurer was James F. Burke; and the other members of the committee were John W. Fennell, John O’Brien, Sr., John Merten, Joseph Bauer, and Tom Fitzgerald.

On May 21, 1916, at a general meeting of members, the pastor proposed starting a building fund toward erection of a new church. After earnest discussion, the matter was under committee—the pastor, Tom Fitzgerald, and J. F. Stahl—secured plans and specifications for a new church. Leo Daly of Omaha was the architect and Edward R. Green of Hastings was the builder.

The old church had to be moved to make way for the new one, and the contractor took it over for $400. The last Sunday Mass in the old church was held on November 19, 1922.

Some suitable place had to be found to hold services during construction, and Paul E. Hainey kindly donated the use of the Opera House. Here church services were held until September 10, 1923. Pews from the old church were used, which were patronized not only by church members but also by members of the community at large.

By 1922, the fund had reached $18,000, and it was time to get direct subscriptions to see the project through. The building committee—the pastor, Tom Fitzgerald, and J. F. Stahl—secured plans and specifications for a new church. Leo Daly of Omaha was the architect and Edward R. Green of Hastings was the builder.

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Grafton Congregational Church

The earliest records of Congregationalism in Grafton show that it began here in the 1870's. In 1877, pastors Warren Cochran of Fairmont and the Rev. G. S. Harrison of York held church services here during the year. On February 21, 1878, an organizational meeting was held in Tatro's Hall, with 55 persons present, with the Rev. W. S. Wills of Seely Congregational Church as acting moderator. Officers elected were Chester Ward and Augustus Ambler, deacons; R. S. Cooley, clerk; and C. C. Miles, treasurer. A building committee was also appointed, but plans to build a church were abandoned until later.

In January, 1882, it was voted to accept one acre of ground east of the schoolhouse, donated by C. B. Banton of Chicago. The church edifice was completed in 1883. Before this time, church services were held part time in Tatro's Hall and part time in the Methodist Church. Among early members were the Stuckeys, Haynes, Waggoners, Amblers, Tatars, Mileses, Carneys, Bossermans, Burts, Shoffs, McCashlands, Murdocks, Wards, Menzies, Cooleys, Combises, Dr. Ballard, and others.

The Rev. William S. Wills was the first regular minister, followed by the Rev. A. Dean. The Rev. John B. Doolittle served six years and during his time built a parsonage. This was later sold to the Dean Stuckey family as a residence. The Revs. Joseph Herbert, E. H. Baker, John Andreas, A. A. Cressman, and C. L. Hammond all served before 1900.

In 1879, a ladies' society was first mentioned in the church records. It was known as the "Ladies' Congregational Mite Society." There is still an active ladies' group, known nowadays as the "Women's Fellowship."

In 1904, during the ministry of Mr. Hammond, the church building was moved from the north end to its present location in the south part of town. During the early 1900's, some of the ministers serving the church were the Revs. Harry Triplett, T. J. Brown, H. M. Skeels, Samuel Unser, James Deans, and Julius Kraemer. The Rev. Thomas Brown was the first pastor to live in the new parsonage, which had been built by the Ladies' Aid Society. The parsonage is still owned by the church but is now rented to private families.

The Rev. James Deans of Antioch was with the church for two years. During his stay, the congregation, through the Ladies' Aid Society, in 1921 bought the unused Methodist church building across the street. It was given the name of Plymouth Hall and made into a place for church-related activities and recreation.

The Rev. Julius Kraemer of Clarks followed the Rev. Mr. Deans. During his five years here, both the church building and Plymouth Hall were remodeled, improving both their appearance and usefulness. The Rev. Alfred Robertson followed Mr. Kraemer for one year. In 1929, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary, the minister at that time being the Rev. Howard Pyche. Many former pastors and members were present.

The period of the 1930's represented "hard times" for churches as well as for families. The Revs. Howard Lacy, John Craig, and Jesse Pruitt served as resident ministers during the depression years. Following them, the Rev. W. W. Wright, minister of the Federated Church of Sutton, served the church for four years. During this time he held services in Grafton at an early hour before returning to Sutton for his regular services in the Federated Church.

The coming of Alexander Fales, of Rhode Island, a student at Doane College, was the beginning of a series of student pastors who served the church. The Rev. Mr. Fales had come to Doane College for his health, and served as resident minister for one year and one summer. He was followed during the next five years by several students supplied by Doane College. The Rev. Frederick Leavitt of Cretes was the last resident minister, serving for three years. The Rev. W. C. Brewer, a retired Presbyterian minister of York, served one year.
In the summer of 1952, the Rev. Maude V. Mann began her 12 years of service with us. She was an Evangelical United Brethren minister who also served her E.U.B. church in Lushton at the same time as her service in the Grafton Congregational Church. In September, 1964, ill health forced her to discontinue her work here. During her ministry, both the church and Plymouth Hall were extensively remodeled and redecorated.

Miss Mann was followed by the Rev. George Bartell, minister of the United Church of Christ in Sutton, who assumed the duties here in addition to those of his own church. He came faithfully for more than a year, holding services here at 8:30 a.m., until failing health made it imperative that he give up the church in Grafton.

For a time we again turned to Doane College to supply our needs. At present we share a minister with the Fairmont United Church of Christ—the Rev. William Reitmeier.

Mrs. Lloyd Kleinschmidt
Grafton Methodist Church

Late in the 1870's, a Rev. Mr. Chapin came to Grafton and held some special meetings, which resulted in the conversion of 40 people. It was then decided to organize and build a Methodist church; their building was completed in the early 1880's. About 1910, however, the Methodist organization was disbanded because many of its members had moved away. The old Methodist church structure was bought in 1921 by the Congregational Ladies' Aid Society, and it was remodeled into the present Plymouth Hall.

Photo from Grace Shroyer
Grafton Methodist Church, about 1916.

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

In the mid-1920's a group of Lutherans in and around Grafton, desiring to be served, called upon the Rev. J. Witt, president of the Nebraska District of the Wisconsin Synod, to ask that a pastor be placed in their midst.

The first service was conducted by the Rev. H. Kuckhahn of Geneva on Christmas Day, 1927. Thereafter the parishioners were served by Lutheran pastors of the Nebraska District.

In the following year (1872), however, C. M. Northrup located here and made preparations to build a mill. Together he and E. L. Martin appointed postmaster. It was not long until there were two stores and a blacksmith shop in operation. But in the fall of 1871, the Burlington railroad line (which was originally planned to come through this region) was completed through the county, running about 4½ miles S of the town, and with that rerouting went the bright prospects of Fillmore City. J. E. Porter moved his store to a new town on the railroad, called Hesperia, later Fairmont, and soon there was nothing left of the town.

In the following year (1872), however, C. M. Northrup located here and made preparations to build a mill. Together he and E. L. Martin laid out a town which was to be a bigger and better Fillmore City. To the original town site, which comprised the W 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 6, T8, R4W, West Blue precinct, there was now added the E 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 1, T8, R4W, Grafton precinct, and the precinct line was designated as the main street. The whole was surveyed and platted and filed in the office of the county clerk as a town site on December 10, 1872. A row of stately cottonwoods still marks the site.

On April 18, 1928, with the guidance of the Revs. F. Brenner and W. J. Schaefer, the following charter members organized and were elected into office: Harry Lentfer, president; Jacob Baumann, secretary and trustee; John Everts, treasurer; Edward Baumann and Sam Oberlander, trustees.

On May 22, 1928, this group decided to erect Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village of Grafton. A call was sent out to, and accepted by, the Rev. W. A. Krenke of McIntosh, South Dakota. He was installed on August 5, 1928, as the first pastor. After his installation, more members joined the church.

On November 25, 1928, seven months after its organization, the Trinity congregation of Grafton was privileged, by the grace of God, to dedicate its new church edifice. "God's word shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleaseth, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto He sent it." (Isaiah 55:11.)  —Pastor A. W. Fuerstenau
Free German Reformed Church

Salem Church, located on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 7, T8, R4W, was organized in 1897. The church, built in the spring of 1898, is still on the same ground and has services every Sunday.
The work on the flour mill progressed, and in 1873 it was completed and the manufacture of flour commenced. Fillmore City never grew to be a town, however, and C. M. Northrup soon sold his mill to Welch & Price. Later millers were J. A. Ellis, Jasper Culver, Lowell Snow, William Smith, and Les Fredrick. Mr. Fredericks was the last miller. The mill was torn down in 1923.

The Hand-Book of Fillmore County (1884) says: “The town of Fillmore lies 4 miles N of Grafton on the West Blue, in the pioneer settlement of the county, and beyond its delightful location is mainly noteworthy now as the site of the Fillmore Mills, owned and operated by Welch & Price. These mills are well built and equipped with four runs of burrs, have an unflagging water power, and are driven to full capacity on merchant and custom work. Mr. Welch is also interested in the steam mills at Fairmont, is a successful feeder of heavy pigs, and belongs to the race of driving, money-making men.”

While Mr. Welch was running the mill, an Indian squaw with a papoose on her back came by one day where Mrs. Welch and her little red-haired girl were near their home. She asked Mrs. Welch in sign language if she would trade babies. Not understanding the language, but wishing to be agreeable, Mrs. Welch nodded. The squaw then deposited her papoose on the ground and made off with the red-haired child who had captured her fancy. Mrs. Welch ran to the mill for help, and her husband and the men who happened to be at the mill followed the squaw to the Indian camp, about a mile away, and traded babies again.

People from as far away as Geneva came with ox-drawn wagons to this mill and spent the night, returning the next day with their flour.

One man living near Fillmore City occasionally gave liquor to the Indians. After enjoying a bit too much of this, they would run their ponies back and forth across the bridge south of town through the whole night, disturbing the sleep of the people of the community with the noise.

After the first post office at Fillmore City was discontinued, a post office was established in 1873 in the home of John Shoff and he was appointed postmaster. This post office was later moved to Grafton.

Bixby

The trading center first called Palmer, after Judge Palmer, but named Lyman by the C.B. & O. R.R. when they built their branch line in 1886, is located midway on the line between Sutton in Clay County and Lushon in York County. The settlers of this community had great hopes and a 40-acre plot was provided for a town site, but the town never developed.

In the early 1920's, when it was discovered that this place was being confused with another Lyman in the western part of the state, the name was changed to Bixby to honor the brother of the depot agent at Lushon, who was a well-known Nebraska writer of that time.

Shortly after the branch line between Fairfield and Stromsburg was completed, an elevator was built at Lyman by Philip Schwab and August Groshans, and stockyards were constructed. Jacob Shroyer was a livestock buyer for many years and shipped many hundreds of hogs and cattle from Lyman and Bixby.

In 1901, John Eberhardt was operating the elevator for the Nebraska-Iowa Grain Company. Fred Ulmer followed him as manager in 1908 and soon after opened a small grocery store. Later managers were Adolph Trautman and Gilbert Trautman. In 1943, the Bixby non-stock Co-op Company was formed, and they purchased the elevator and are continuing its operation.

In the first elevator, horse power was used. The horse became blind from walking around in the dark room for such long periods. It needed no driver; when a new load of grain was dumped, it would start its rounds when spoken to. A gas engine replaced the horse power about 1910, and electric power has been used since 1948, when the R.E.A. lines were built through the township.

Many of the people living near Lyman-Bixby had come with the German immigration from Russia, where they had lived for several generations. They had been enticed to settle in Russia as a group by the German-born wife of a czar with the promise that neither they nor their descendants would ever have to enter military service. After the death of this czar and his wife, this promise was broken, and so once more they emigrated as a group and many settled in this territory. Some of the family names of this group include Serr, Trautman, Fuhrer, Peter, Griess, Hofmann, and Rauscher. Some others of the early settlers in this community were Frank Littlefield, Pete Frundall, Thomas Watt, and Charles Allen.

—Mrs. Lee Parsons
SCHOOLS

District No. 8 was organized on January 15, 1872, comprising Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18. In 1885, Secs. 17 and 18 were attached to District 31, and in 1914, Sec. 9 was detached and added to District 29. The first teacher in the district was Lottie Milholland.

District 8 was dissolved in June, 1965, and its territory annexed to District 2, Clay County, District 16, Fillmore County, and District 95, York County.

District No. 16 was organized on January 20, 1872, originally containing Secs. 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, and 32. On March 23, 1876, Secs. 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, and 36 were added. The first teacher was Ezra Witter.

Through the petition method, in 1956 all or parts of Districts 14, 29, 66, 70, 62, and 74 were added to District 16. The high school was closed in May, 1956, and the school reverted to Class I. In 1968, it was a class I school with 5 teachers and an enrollment of 80 pupils.

The first school in District No. 29 was held in a dugout on the Fred Schaldecker farm on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 2, Grafton township. There is no record of the number or names of the pupils, but the teacher, E. Clark, drew a salary of $30 per month for a three-month term.

The district was formed in April, 1872, to comprise Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. A small frame building about 15' x 15' was erected on a hill overlooking the valley through which School Creek runs. This was near the center of the district, on the SW 1/4 of Sec. 11. Later this building was enlarged to about 15' x 30' and still later a large hall was added onto the west end.

In October, 1873, Secs. 1 and 12 were dropped, but on June 15, 1880, the SW 1/4 of Sec. 12 was again added. On January 25, 1924, Sec. 9 was added. The small frame building erected in the 1870's and later enlarged served the needs of the community until 1932, when an enrollment of 40 made it badly overcrowded. A building fund had been started several years before, so it was possible to erect a modern building. With the support of a very active P.T.A., District 29 became the first Superior Standard school in the county. This high degree of efficiency was maintained for several years, but with the enlargement of farms and consolidation of districts, which were trends of the times, the number of pupils decreased until, in 1956, the district was dissolved and annexed to District 16 at Grafton.

A partial list of the teachers who presided over District 29 before the turn of the century includes: E. Clark, Anna Brown, Shadrack Doty, Dora Kaufman, W. D. Ambler, Mary Shroyer, Susan Willis, Anna B. Waggner, Eva Irwin, Frank Brannick, Alice Wallace, Adelaide Allen, Drusey Miles, Alice Jackson, and Grace Fitzgerald.

District No. 31 was organized on March 24, 1872, to include Secs. 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33. In 1873, Secs. 19, 21, and 28 were attached to District 31. Since that last change, the district has contained the same territory. The first teacher in District 31 was Emma Cory.

Before the 1924-1925 term, a new two-room schoolhouse was built, and ninth and tenth grades were added. This organization continued until the end of the 1941-1942 term.

District 31 is the only Class I, one-teacher school now operating in Fillmore County. As recently as 1964, it had an enrollment of 26 pupils; but as of September, 1967, the enrollment had dropped to 10 pupils.

District No. 66 was organized on March 18, 1873, composed of Secs. 21, 22, 27, 28, 33, and 34. The first teacher was Belle Fisher. On July 9, 1956, District 66 was dissolved and annexed to District 16.

The first pupils in what later became District No. 70 attended classes in the various homes in the community.
About 1880, a small building—12′ x 14′—was used as a school for a few terms, and then a larger building was erected about 400 yards to the south on a site which remained the district's school yard as long as school was held there. This was on the NW ¼ of Sec. 1.

Some of the early teachers in District 70 were Nellie Stevens, Ella Bennett (Mrs. John K. Waring), Mary Little, Grace McCashland, Lydia Merrihew, Hattie Matteson, and Ed Standard.

An Indian camp was made every winter within a mile of the school. The Indians often came to the schoolhouse and sat around the stove, and the teacher had great difficulty getting them to leave. They would go to the mill and beg for grain and then dance around a tree just north of the school with their small sacks of meal. They also took animals which had died of cornstalk disease, and the schoolboys would steal up to the edge of their camp and watch to see if any Indians were being buried as a result of eating the flesh, but no burials were ever seen.

Following the trend of the times, the District 70 school was closed about 1955 and the land annexed to the Fairmont district.

—Mrs. Lee Parsons

FAMILIES

“Charles S. Allen’s 480-acre stock ranch, 4 miles NW of town [SE ¼ of Sec. 10] is a model stock and grain farm, well watered by School Creek and by wells with windmills. The house, barn, stables, feed yards, and 5 miles of wire fence cost $2,500. Mr. Allen raised 10,000 bushels of corn, 2,000 bushels of oats, 500 bushels of barley, 500 bushels of wheat, and 300 bushels of rye last year. He has 40 acres of clover and timothy meadow, keeps 50 high-grade stock cattle (mostly breeding cows), feeds two carloads each of steers and pigs, has made the bulk of a $15,000 property out of Fillmore County soil in the last dozen years, . . . drives work for all there is in it, hails from the Mohawk Valley, . . . and speaks in high terms of the country."

—Fillmore County Hand-Book (1884)

The farm and home of A. Ambler, the Fillmore County Hand-Book reported in 1884, “lying on the southeastern border of the town, is noteworthy for its fine thrifty groves of catalpa, cottonwood, and box elder; the long columns of shade trees that outline it, the substantial horse, carriage,

Grafton Township Homestead Map
and grain barns; the strong crops of corn and small grains grown the past season, and the well-bred herd of high-grade shorthorns and pigs which Mr. Ambler is steadily improving. He came in '75, from Wisconsin, and made a most fortunate location, has increased his means 300 per cent, is an earnest Christian man, and is delighted with the country."

—Mrs. Ernest Kleinschmidt

William H. Bosserman, known as "Uncle Billy," was born in Licking County, Ohio, in 1842. He spent three years of service in the Civil War and was mustered out on June 22, 1865, at Salisbury, North Carolina. In 1871, he came to Fillmore county, where he homesteaded in West Blue township and erected a small frame house with lumber he hauled from Crete. He moved in 1877 to the then new village of Grafton and worked at the carpenter's trade. He also conducted a furniture store and in 1897 was appointed postmaster by President William McKinley. The Bossermans had four sons: Harry, Charles, William, and John.—Mrs. Ernest Kleinschmidt

Of A. W. Chase, whose 160-acre farm lay 2 miles E of Grafton, the Fillmore County Hand-Book (1884) said that the farm, "upon a commanding divide, is one of the most valuable quarter-sections in this division of the county. It is improved with a comfortable home, convenient stables, sheds, and feed yards; a well and windmill, a fine orchard and plenty of small fruits; extensive bluegrass lawns, embellished with 30 varieties of shade trees; heavy sheltering groves, long columns of forest trees, and well-sheltered feed lots stocked to tame grasses. Mr. Chase grows 3,000 bushels of corn and good crops of small grain, feeds 40 prime pigs and keeps a small herd of cattle. He came here in 1870 from Illinois without a dollar, borrowed money to pay the entry fee upon his land, and now owns this model farm; has a quarter-section of wild land south of the county seat, and could sell his personal and real property for $8,000 or $9,000. Mr. Chase has just closed a year of highly creditable service as county treasurer, is a gentleman of liberal and progressive views, excellent judgment and executive gifts, . . . and charitable to a fault."

"Jasper Culver's 170-acre West Blue Farm, lying 3 miles W of Grafton, is watered by the Blue and improved with groves, a good house, barn, stable, and orchard, is in a good state of cultivation, and is one of the best of the old homesteads in this region. Mr. Culver also owns a 160-acre farm 3 miles NW of town [NE ¼ of Sec. 14], upon which he has a thifty grove of 40 acres, embracing several varieties of native timber. He came here a dozen years ago from Ohio, with little means, has now town and country estate worth $8,000, is a live, pushing, reliable man of excellent standing . . ."

—Fillmore County Hand-Book (1884)

Under plow. The farm is all bottom land and was settled as early as 1866 by Mr. Dixon, who broke the first prairie and planted the first crop in the county in 1867. He came here from Pennsylvania, with a single horse and $10, has quietly held the situation through all the ups and downs of pioneering, has now one of the finest bottom-land farms in the county, and is worth, in personal and real estate, close to $9,000."

—Fillmore County Hand-Book (1884)

One whose history should be included with those of the early settlers of Grafton township is Shadrack Doty. Very little definite knowledge about his origin or family is obtainable, but many of the younger pioneers remembered him as one of their first teachers, and all of them agree that he was a "good teacher." One recalled that he never failed to begin each school day with prayer.

As early as 1871, Mr. Doty was teaching in District 8, and records show that he later taught in Districts 16, 29, 66, 11, and 2, and in other schools outside Fillmore County. His ambition was to continue in his profession for 50 terms, and it is said that he missed this goal by just one term.

His tombstone in the Grafton cemetery bears the dates November 20, 1852, to July 28, 1912.

On the earliest maps available of Grafton township more than a section of land is listed in the names of Shadrack, Frances Ann, Alonzo, and Zeno Doty, the last three thought to be a sister and two brothers of Shadrack. Zeno Doty also taught school in District 66 for several years (1875 to 1878). Another name on this map is that of Eli Oryall, who was a stepson of Shadrack Doty and also a relative of Joseph Tatro, on whose land the town of Grafton was located. Many people recalled the day when a small child of Eli's got lost during threshing time. The machine was stopped and the crew, as well as other neighbors, joined for many hours in the search. Eli himself was the one who, by lantern light, found his child fast asleep in the tall grass and weeds growing in the middle of one of the seldom-traveled roads of that time. A joyous shout from the father signaled the good news to the other searchers.—Mrs. Lee Parsons

Daniel Ely, a veteran of the Civil War, married Susan DeHaven at Monroe, Wisconsin. Four boys were born to this union while they were still in Wisconsin. Daniel Ely, with his wife and boys, came to Sutton in 1877. A girl was born to them in June. Daniel rented a farm in Hamilton County and lived there until he bought a place 8 miles NE of Sutton, the homestead of Peter George (the SE ¼ of Sec. 6, Grafton). This place didn't have a house on it except a combination dugout and log cabin, cut into the edge of a hill. The first floor was a dugout, with bricked-up walls; the second-floor room, above the hill, was made of logs. The family
all slept in the second-floor room. Three children were born to them in the log cabin, Irving, Lillie, and Alice. They lived there for several years, and then Daniel built a frame house on the hill.

They were living in the frame house when the blizzard of 1888 struck, on January 12. Four of the boys were in school. Daniel Ely rode on horseback to the school and told the teacher to keep them there all night. All of the children who lived west of the school stayed all night. The teacher, Edwin Arnold, lived 3 miles W of the schoolhouse and drove a horse and buggy to school. He had a wife and some small children.

Will Salmen had been to the flour mill in his wagon and he stopped at the schoolhouse as the storm began and took all the children living east of the school along with him. Gaylord Ely and Ernest Kleinschmidt, the oldest boys remaining, went to the closest neighbor's house (Will Keller's), and Mrs. Keller baked enough biscuits for them all to eat. The next morning was clear but very cold. The schoolhouse was about 1 mile SE of the Ely farm.

The Daniel Elys had 11 children, 6 boys and 5 girls: Milton D., Gaylord, Clinton J., Clarence A., Cora May, Irving W., Lillie Pearl, Alice Myrtle, Orin P., Mary Elizabeth, and Grace. Grace died of spinal meningitis at the age of two years. Daniel Ely, his wife, and four of the children lived on the farm until he fell ill and died in 1904. A few years later, Mrs. Ely sold the farm and they moved to town.

—Mrs. Lillie Ebert

The J. J. Fitzgerald family came to Nebraska on June 1, 1880. The family consisted of J. J. Fitzgerald, his wife Mary, four sons—John, Thomas, Edward, and James—and three daughters—Grace, Ann, and Ellen. The father and the boys came in a boxcar with their tools, implements, and stock. The mother and daughters came on a passenger train.

There were no homesteads available any more, so they bought 200 acres of railroad land in the NW 1/4 of Sec. 1, Grafton township, at about $10 an acre. Soon after arriving, they built a frame house on this land; part of this house is still standing. This farm is located on the Blue River, and the water and timber available were valuable assets. They broke some sod and planted a crop the first year. After raising good crops for three years, Mr. Garbe bought the SW 1/4 of Sec. 1 adjoining their home farm. Sod had to be broken on nearly all the farm ground.

Farm prices were low, but crops were fairly good for the first 12 years. But in 1883 and 1894 drought hit pretty hard; those years were known as the poor years. Crops were so poor that many farmers had to find other sources of income to pay taxes and make a living. So Mr. Garbe caught fish and sold them in surrounding towns and to farmers. He also shot jack rabbits during the winter and shipped them frozen to St. Louis. In 1895, rains came, bringing better crops and a return of better times. After eight more years of good crops, he bought the SW 1/4 of Sec. 12 in 1903.

In 1904, Albert F. Garbe was united in marriage to Augusta B. Hackbarth, who was a native of Custer County and a daughter of a pioneer homesteader there. To this union was born one daughter, Elsie, now Mrs. Arthur Heckman, who is still living on the home place.

In pioneer days, the Blue River was a sort of hunter's and fisherman's paradise where fish and game were plentiful and easy to get. During the '80's and '90's, Indians were given permission to leave the reservations and hunt and fish and trap along the river. On one occasion the Indians camped on School Creek about 1/2 mile from the Garbe farmyard. On one warm February day Mr. Garbe visited the camp and found the squaws were washing. The little Indian children were running around naked while their clothes were being washed. Indians would come to the farm homes to beg for food or feed for their horses. The Indians also liked to play cards. To please them, Mr. Garbe would play with them, but he let them win, fearing they might become angry and could not be trusted. On another occasion an Indian came to the

The family came from South Elgin, Illinois, where they had lived for a short time after moving from Chicago. Mr. Fitzgerald, a carpenter by trade, had built houses in Chicago. But he had always wanted to be a farmer, so he decided to leave Elgin and come to Nebraska, as farm life would be better for the family.

When Grandfather was looking for a place to settle, he had two Irish settlements in mind, Grafton and Greeley, and he intended to look over each and then decide where to buy. But when he came to Grafton he met an old friend, former army captain Patrick S. Real, who talked him into buying land in Grafton, and so he never got to Greeley.

Their first home on the farm—the NW 1/4 of Sec. 24—was a part sod, part dugout house on the side of the hill on which they later built their permanent house. This house was built in sections, and the result was floors of different levels and ceilings of different heights. Grandfather lived on this farm until his death in 1913.

All the Fitzgerald girls became schoolteachers, and Grace and Ellen taught for many years in the neighboring schools. Edward became a doctor and practiced in Omaha. James became a lawyer and later a District Court judge. Thomas lived in Grafton. John and Grace lived on the farm until their deaths, as did Ann and Ellen except for a few years late in their lives.

Albert F. Garbe, a pioneer of Fillmore County, was a native of Stillwater, Minnesota, where he and his father, Frederick Garbe, were engaged in farming. His father also did stone and brick masonry work. Hearing about the plentiful and low-priced land in Nebraska and about the homesteading possibilities, they decided to sell most of their belongings in Minnesota and come to Fillmore County. They loaded some machinery, tools, and household goods into a freight car and came along with their goods, arriving at Fairmont in April, 1879.
farm to beg for hay for his horses. He was allowed to help himself at the haystack. Mr. Garbe was very much surprised at the large amount of hay the Indian could carry away in a bundle made with a rope sling over his back.

Albert Garbe told of another incident, where a neighbor had lost a large steer from cornstalk disease. The Indians learned of it, and when the farmer had skinned the animal they quartered the carcass. One Indian slung a hind quarter weighing twice as much as himself over his shoulder and carried it off with ease.

Besides the conventional farm crops and methods which are standard in this locality, Albert Garbe tried many side lines in farming, such as orchards and tame grass, selling fruit and grass seed commercially. He also kept bee hives and a pond stocked with game fish. In 1912, he operated an amusement park with a baseball diamond, a roller-skating rink, and a dance pavilion. He also built a dam and a power plant on the river to generate electricity and furnish electric power to the town of Lushton. As early as the 1890’s he also had pump irrigation from the river.

Blue River Amusement Park power dam constructed in 1916 on the Garbe farm. Insert shows water wheel; photo below shows the dance hall at the park.

After a long and colorful life, Albert F. Garbe passed away in November, 1937, at the age of 77 years and 11 months.

—Elsie Garbe Heckman

William G. Hainey, pioneer merchant of Grafton and one of the best-known citizens of Fillmore County, was one of the earliest settlers of this area. His parents emigrated to America from County Longford, Ireland, in 1839. William was born on the present site of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1840. In 1848, his parents moved to St. Louis, where his father worked for the American Fur Co. for three years, sorting hides and furs. There William spent his boyhood and youth attending school and receiving good business training by clerking in a store.

In 1859, he went to Pikes Peak, Colorado, where he spent some time in mining. Later he worked in the master division of the regular army on the frontiers, traveling over Colorado and New Mexico. He then entered the employ of the Overland Mail Company. He drove a stage from Fort Lyon to Santa Fe, then to Fort Union and Fort Craig, and from there to Parajo, New Mexico. He made one trip to Death Valley. In 1864, he resigned this position and came to Nebraska City, where he began freighting across the plains to Denver. He was thus engaged for three years, during which time he had three narrow escapes from the Indians. He then located at Green River, Wyoming Territory, where he helped lay out the town.

In 1869, he returned to Nebraska City and remained there until 1875, when he came to Grafton. Here he bought the town’s first general-merchandise store, which had been opened a short time before by Captain P. S. Real. This store continued to be operated by members of his family until 1940, when the stock was auctioned off and the business closed. He was an extensive land owner, and held some 1,200 acres. He also had an interest in the creamery and for a time served as bank president.

He was married in 1870 to Mary B. Condon in St. Louis. They had eight children: Mary L., George F., Walter, Sarah B., Margaret E., William R., Edwin F., and Carrie. Mr. Hainey died on July 23, 1908. —Mrs. Lloyd Kleinschmidt

Patrick Halligan came from Ireland in 1877 and settled in Fillmore County west of Grafton. After starting homesteading with a tree claim, he sent for his wife, Bridget Kelly Halligan, who had been born in Drogheda, County Louth, Ireland. Their small son, Patrick, was left in Ireland with Mrs. Halligan’s sister Catherine. Catherine followed later, when young Patrick was about five years old, and came to live with the Halligans.

The Halligans had a small three-room house, which they enlarged as their family grew. Their children were Patrick (born in Ireland), Mary Jane, Alice, George, Mary, Frank, Rose, Ann, and Nellie. Mary Jane died when she was small; George was drowned in the Blue River when he was 20; and Nellie died as a young woman, leaving two daughters.

During the blizzard of 1888, because the Halligans lived near the school, the children were all at home when the blizzard struck. The family all had to go to bed to keep warm, since they could not get out for fuel.

—Elsie Garbe Heckman

Mrs. Bridget Halligan about 1900

—Patrick Halligan

The Johann Griess family in 1875. Back row, left to right: Margaret, Elizabeth, John, Christian. Second row: Magdalene, Mrs. Johann Griess, Johann Griess, Henry. Front: Jacob (on mother’s lap), Peter G.

The Griess family originally settled in York County but moved to Sec. 30, Grafton, in 1901.

—Mrs. Bridget Halligan about 1900

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—Elsie Garbe Heckman

Mrs. Bridget Halligan about 1900

The Johann Griess family in 1875. Back row, left to right: Margaret, Elizabeth, John, Christian. Second row: Magdalene, Mrs. Johann Griess, Johann Griess, Henry. Front: Jacob (on mother’s lap), Peter G.

The Griess family originally settled in York County but moved to Sec. 30, Grafton, in 1901.
Patrick Halligan died of a heart attack at the age of 54, while working in the fields. Mrs. Halligan stayed on the farm with the children until Frank married. Then she, Rose, Ann, and Nellie moved into Grafton. The family maintained the land until after her death in 1939 at the age of 83.

Four of the Halligan family are still living: Mrs. Rudolph Nehe of Lincoln, Nebraska, with three of her four children (the other daughter lives in South Dakota); Mrs. Charles Carroll, with two children living in Nebraska; Frank Halligan and his wife (the former Elizabeth Miller of Grafton) live in Los Angeles with a son and daughter (another son lives in Nebraska); and Mrs. William O'Leary of Lincoln. One granddaughter, who was raised by Grandmother Halligan, lives in Lincoln with two daughters, and her sister lives in the East. There are in all 11 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren, and 15 great-great-grandchildren. Of these only 4 of the grandchildren, 13 of the great-grandchildren, and 7 of the great-great-grandchildren have left Nebraska.

—Mrs. Mayme Carroll

Frederick Hofmann came to the United States from Odessa, Russia, in 1873, when he was 18 years old. In October, 1883, he purchased the NW ¼ of Sec. 6 from John A. Smith for $2,500. Frederick Hofmann died in October, 1921, leaving this NW ¼ to his son Theodore, who farmed it until 1955. Then Theodore moved to Sutton, and his son Ruben now owns and operates the farm.

E. H. S. James came to Nebraska from Seaford, Delaware, his native home. He had a drug business first in Greenwood, Nebraska. He then moved to Osceola, and from there to Grafton in 1889. The drugstore was at first located on the west side of Main Street and was known as James & Meaker, then as James & Fulmer. About 1903, the store came to be known as the Corner Drugstore when it was moved to the east side of the street.

John Hugh Jennett and his wife Maria came to Nebraska with their family on March 1, 1893, and settled on a farm they had purchased from the Tatro family 1½ miles W of Grafton. Hugh Jennett was born in Bureau County, Illinois, and his wife near Streator, Illinois. The '90's were not fruitful years for farmers, and so Mr. Jennett resumed his old work of school teaching for a couple of years. He took a great interest in state and local affairs, serving as a member of the Grafton school board for a number of years. He also served on the board of county supervisors, acting as chairman for some time. Later he was named cashier of the Grafton Bank and worked in that capacity until his health failed. He died on February 24, 1901, at the age of 48 years.

Mr. Jennett continued to live on the farm until 1912, when she moved to a new home in Grafton. She died on July 7, 1932, at the age of 87 years. The surviving children of the family are: Frank, of Dalton, Nebraska; Leo, of Exeter; Mary Jennett Casey, and Katherine, both of Omaha; Oliver, of Lincoln; Arthur, Elizabeth, and Alice Jennett Real, all of California. Emmett died in February, 1956, and Nellie Jennett McGerr in November, 1965.

—Leo Jennett

Henry Clay Johnson was born in Hayesville, Ohio, in 1834. He married Harriet Cipher in 1872, but she passed away at an early age, leaving him with five young children. He took them to a new home in Illinois for a short time and then pushed on westward to Grafton, Nebraska, in the spring of 1877.

The Burlington Railroad had received from the government a grant of every odd-numbered section of land for 20 miles on both sides of the railroad line and the right-of-way through every even-numbered section along the line through the entire state from Crete, Nebraska, on west. John D. McFarland, Land Commissioner, appointed H. C. Johnson the company's agent for Fillmore County, a position he held for many years. He was also a justice of the peace for several terms.

Mr. Johnson spent the winter of 1896 in California and decided to make that state his home. He moved there in 1899 with his daughter Bertha and son Edrow and spent the remainder of his life there until his death in 1913.

Another son, Oscar, remained in Grafton. At the time of the 1888 blizzard, he and another man rode horses to the
Grafton school with long ropes attached to their saddles. The pupils held onto these ropes and were led to their homes, if possible. When they reached the Johnson home, about a mile from school, their eyes were so plastered with frozen snow that they went no farther, and the rest of the children stayed there.

In 1889, Oscar Johnson married Malinda Philina Garrett and received as a wedding gift from his father, H. C. Johnson, a deed to a farm on the NE ¼ of Sec. 2. This had been homesteaded by Jacob Werts in 1866. Oscar and his wife moved to this farm in 1894 and suffered through the terrible drought of that period. During this time he raised many hogs but no grain because of the drought, and so he turned the sows loose to raise their own litters. One sow wandered to the farm of a neighbor, Rudolph Salmen; when he reported this to Mr. Johnson, he was told to keep the hogs if he could feed them.

The Oscar Johnsons had two sons, Ernest and Ray. In 1920, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson retired from the farm and moved to Grafton, where they spent the remainder of the lives. Mrs. Johnson died in 1932, and Oscar Johnson passed on in 1940.

—Ernest Johnson

Thomas Keenan and his son Peter purchased the SE ¼ of Sec. 27 from the C. B. & Q. R.R. for $8 per acre in 1877. This farm is presently owned by the heirs of John N. Keenan, son of Peter. Thus three generations of Keenans have been the only owners of this land which is now being farmed by Francis and Jerry Keenan, sons of John N. Keenan.

—Thomas J. Keenan

John Linder, born in Canton Berne, Switzerland, in 1835, emigrated in 1852 to Wisconsin, where he lived for two years in Milwaukee. He then went to Monroe, Wisconsin, where he and his father conducted a meat market for several years. On October 7, 1861, he enlisted in Co. K, 9th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, and served 3 years and 2 months, receiving his discharge on December 5, 1864.

John Linder and Elydia George were married in 1886. In 1872, with their two little girls, they left by covered wagon for Nebraska, where they homesteaded on the SE ¼ of Sec. 8, Grafton township. They lived in the covered wagon while they built a small frame house which was shared with other settlers until they could provide homes of their own. A few years later, John Linder was joined by his father, John Linder, Sr., and together they purchased the NE 240 acres of Sec. 17. After the death of his father, Charles P. Linder became the owner of the original homestead and the N 40 in Sec. 17, and John Linder III became the owner of the S 200 acres.

John Linder III died on October 15, 1954, and in 1955 his farm was sold to a new owner. Charles P. Linder died on May 18, 1956. The original homestead is now owned by the Charles P. Linder heirs.

—Mrs. Henry Pope

Arthur Murdock was born in Jefferson County, Ohio, August 17, 1842, and lived in Belmont County, Ohio, until he came to Nebraska. He enlisted on September 1, 1862, in Company E, 15th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and took part in the battles of Stone River, Nashville, Mission Ridge, and many skirmishes. He was mustered out at Louisville, Kentucky, in May, 1865. He was married in 1869 to Cassie Dilworth. They had five children: Ada L., Edna, Mattie, Clyde, and an infant son.

In 1871, he located on a homestead of 160 acres, the SW ¼ of Sec. 14, Grafton. Later, in 1879, he took charge of a lumber yard in Grafton for Goodman, Bogue & Co. of Chicago. Around 1916 he moved to Denver, where he spent the rest of his life. The farm in Sec. 14 was sold to E. F. Kleinschmidt, who built a complete new set of farm buildings.

—Mrs. Henry Pope

Herman B. Nehe was born in 1842 in Prussia. After serving with the German army in the Franco-Prussian War, he married Mary Gesana. Their wedding trip was a voyage to the United States. They landed in New Orleans and then proceeded to St. Louis, where Mr. Nehe helped build the famous Eads Bridge. They then came on to Grafton, where they lived in town while breaking sod and building a farm home 2 miles NW of Grafton.

To this union were born two sons, Rudolph and John. The boys grew to manhood on this farm. Herman Nehe died in 1904, followed by Mrs. Nehe in 1907.

Rudolph married Alice Halligan of Grafton. They had four children: Herman, Agnes, Helen, and Raymond. The Rudolph Nehes lived on a farm 7 miles NW of Grafton until they moved to Lincoln in 1923. There Rudolph died in 1934; his widow still lives in Lincoln with the youngest son, Raymond. Herman Nehe also resides in Lincoln. He and his wife
The Herman Nehe family in 1892. Seated: Mr. and Mrs. Nehe. Standing, left to right: Rudolph and John.

Mary have five children: Marjorie Kannolt, Nancy Krueger, Gerald, James, and Mary Beth.

John Nehe married Sarah O'Connor in Grafton, where they lived on a farm until 1933, when they moved to Omaha. They had four children: Vincent, Gerald, Eugene, and Mary. Vincent died at 38, Gerald at 7, and Mary at 21. Eugene is the only living child, resides in Oakland, Iowa, and is married to the former Margaret Connelly of Omaha. They have five children: Nancy Lyman of Weeping Water, Mary Jane of Omaha, and Jeanne, Robert, and Patricia, all living at home.

The Nehe boys, Rudolph and John, passed on their early memories and stories told by their parents. While Herman Nehe lived in St. Louis, he bought a revolver. The year before they had a crop he provided most of the meat for the table with this revolver. This was during the time he was breaking the sod on the farm, which he bought from the railroad for $8 an acre.

When Rudolph started to school at Grafton he could speak very little English, but he learned it rapidly in school and in turn taught it to his younger brother John. Their mother never did learn to speak very fluent English.

The main thing John remembered about the blizzard of 1888 was that Rudolph was in school two miles from home. He started home with a schoolmate, Jim Fitzgerald, but the storm soon grew so bad that he got lost. He finally found a fence and followed it home.

Patrick O'Connor was born in County Mayo, Ireland, in 1857, and came to America when he was 12. Mary Ann Reel, whose father and mother were born in Ireland, was born in Illinois in 1858. Patrick and Mary met and married in Illinois. A daughter, Sarah, and two sons, Mark and John, were born there; John died.

They moved to Nebraska and homesteaded 6 miles N of McCook in 1888. Children born there were Patrick, Julia, Margaret, Marcella, and James. The family endured the hardships of drouth and grasshoppers.

In 1900, they moved to a 120-acre farm ½ mile W of the present Grafton Public School. Shortly after this, they purchased a quarter-section ½ mile N of their first farm and established their home there. Here another son, Charles, was born. One night, while Patrick was away, this house burned down, and Mary took the children to the Fitzgerald farm. They later put up another house, but in 1919 moved to Omaha.

Patrick O'Connor died on June 30, 1934, and Mary followed him in death on December 10, 1935. O'Connor children who are now deceased are Patrick, Mark, James, and Sarah.

Orin H. Parsons was born near Dorset, Ohio, on April 14, 1847. He was one of the younger members of a large family. He spent his boyhood in this community. At the age of 17, he enlisted in Company K of the 177th Ohio Regiment and served through the last 10 months of the Civil War. After his discharge, he came west in 1866 to make his own way in the world and landed in Farmers Valley, Nebraska. Subsequently he clerked in the J. C. Merrill general-merchandise store and Hoerer's hardware store in Sutton and the W. G. Hainey store in Grafton. He also served for a time as a guard at the Nebraska State Penitentiary.

On February 15, 1873, he received title to his homestead on the NE ¼ of Sec. 6 in Grafton township. Later he sold this land and, on November 9, 1877, bought the NW ¼ of Sec. 2 from J. H. Malik, one of the first settlers in Fillmore County, who had acquired this land in 1866.

Around 1890, Orin Parsons returned to Ohio and married Sarah Elizabeth Lee. They took up their residence on the Malik homestead, where he had built a small frame house, which he later added onto. Here their three children, Lee, Don, and Lucille, were born.

Orin Parsons died in January, 1917. The eldest son, Nathaniel Lee, still lives on this farm, which he purchased from the other heirs in 1930 after the death of their mother. A modern house was built in 1934 following the destruction of the original frame house by fire. In 1940, one of the first
irrigation wells in Fillmore County was drilled on this farm and has been in steady operation ever since.

—N. L. Parsons

Mr. and Mrs. Valentine Peter, Sr., and their 11 children—Valentine, Jr., Elizabeth, Philip, Ann Marie, Katherina, Eva, Christina, Andrew, Margaret, Philippina, and Hannah—came from Odessa, Russia, arriving in Sutton on November 11, 1878. Sutton was chosen because relatives had settled there. The family lived with these relatives until they built a sod house on land purchased from the railroad, the N 1/4 of the NW 3/4 of Sec. 28. He later added to his holdings, and one 80 (the S 1/4 of the NW 1/4) is still owned by William Peter, a grandson. Their sod house was well constructed; it remained intact until about 1916. On to the sod house, in the '80's, they built a frame addition which is still standing.

The Peters experienced all the hardships of pioneer life, such as grasshoppers, drouth, and hail. At one time, a prairie fire started from the smokestack of a railroad engine threatened the farmstead. Indian squaws with papooses on their backs were frequent visitors, begging for money and also asking for any animals that had died.

Three of the Peter children were in school at the time of the great blizzard of 1888. The teacher dismissed school, and the children walked a mile and a half to their home. The older brother took the two little sisters by the hand and followed the fence. The girls' arms were frostbitten. In the meantime, the father and another daughter had started with a horse and buggy to get the schoolchildren, but lost their way. They let the horse choose his way, and he brought them back home safely.

Valentine Peter, Sr., passed away January 9, 1914, at the age of 83. Two daughters, Mrs. Hannah Nuss, aged 94, and Mrs. Margaret May, 92, are the surviving members of the family. Both live in Sutton.

—Mrs. John Rauscher

Michael Rauscher, Sr., with his wife and five sons, came from Odessa, Russia, and arrived in Sutton in 1875. He was a shoemaker and followed that trade until September, 1886, when he bought the SW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 31, Grafton township, from the Burlington Railroad for $500. In 1888, Michael Rauscher sold this farm to his son Jacob, who raised a family of seven girls and five boys there. Jacob added to his land holding. This farm, now occupied by Jacob's youngest son, Albert, and his wife, has been in the Rauscher family ever since it was bought from the railroad.

—Mrs. John Rauscher

Captain Patrick S. Real was born in Ireland on April 23, 1835, and came to America in 1851. He enlisted in the first call, in 1861, in Company E, 7th Regiment, Missouri Volunteer Infantry. Enlisting as a private, he was promoted to sergeant, lieutenant, and captain. He participated in 25 general battles, was wounded at Atlanta, Georgia, and Mission Ridge, Tennessee, and was mustered out at Atlanta in 1864. Although Patrick fought under the Stars and Stripes, his brother James joined the Southern army and was killed in the battle of Shiloh while Patrick was fighting in the same battle on the other side.

Patrick married Ellen Purcel, a native of Ireland, at Henry, Illinois, in 1865. They had nine children: Mary Ellen, Thomas, Emmett F., Winnefred, William, Patrick, Philip, James, and Agnes. He came to West Blue precinct in 1872, locating on a soldiers' homestead in Sec. 20, T8, R4W. He later acquired a considerable amount of real estate in Grafton precinct, where he established his residence and built, on a hill overlooking the town of Grafton, a large home which was a community landmark for many years.

Patrick Real, initially a farmer and stock-raiser, built and kept the first store and the first lumber yard in Grafton. He also built the first elevator, bought the first grain, and built and kept the first hotel. He donated land for both the present cemetery and the Catholic church building. He reserved 65 grave plots for his family—visualizing, no doubt, that his children would remain in the area, raise large families, and be buried there. However, only four members of the Real family are interred there: Captain Real, who died on May 23, 1893, his wife Ellen, his son William, and an infant grandson.

—Mrs. James Real

"T. S. Russel, of the firm of Culver & Russel, owns a choice 150-acre farm on School Creek, 5 miles NW of town. It is improved with a fair house, orchard, and grove, has a good belt of native timber, and is devoted to mixed farming. Mr. Russel owns a good number of town lots and a pleasant home in Grafton, hails from Indiana, came here a dozen years ago, likes the country, and is a thrifty, enterprising, and successful businessman." —Fillmore County Hand-Book (1884)

Caspar Salmen came to America from Canton Glarus, Switzerland, in 1849, when he was 14 years old. He settled in New York and worked for a number of years as a delivery boy for a merchant, delivering goods from Brooklyn to New York City. While he was later living in Rochester, New York, he married Mary Krepts. They moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and later to Green County, near Monticello. Eight children were born to them while they were in New York and Wisconsin: Henry, William, John, Caspar, Rudolph, Anna, Fred, and Emma.

Mr. Salmen was a cabinet maker by trade and also did upholstering. He opened the first furniture store in Milwaukee. During the Civil War, he worked in Tennessee building artillery waggons for the Union Army and making soldiers' coffins.
He came to Fillmore County in the fall of 1875. The trip to Nebraska was made by covered wagon with his wife and seven children, the eldest son, Henry, having gone to Hornell, New York, to live with an aunt.

Among the family possessions which they were able to bring to Nebraska was a walking plow which was tied on the outside of the wagon. The interior was crowded, so the three older boys took turns walking. They always managed to stop near a farmstead at night, where they purchased food supplies and the boys slept in haylofts.

They spent their first year in Fillmore County in half of the four-room house of the John Linder family, who had come here earlier from Wisconsin. The covered wagon and a granary were used for sleeping quarters until a two-room dugout was completed on a farm near by. Mr. Salmen contracted to buy this land from the B. & M. Railroad and in 1883 acquired a deed to the NW ¼ of Sec. 9 in Grafton township.

Besides the dugout, a windlass well was made and other improvements added. A frame house, still standing on the farm, replaced the dugout several years later.

At first, the farm work was done with a yoke of oxen and the team of horses which pulled the covered wagon. Indians were frequent visitors. While they were about, the younger children were kept in hiding, since, although they were friendly, they were not entirely trusted. Buffalo were a common sight in the valley which the dugout overlooked.

Within a year after the family arrived in Nebraska, the mother died following the birth of a son, Charles. Mr. Salmen shouldered the entire responsibility of caring for his family, which included several very small children, for seven years. During this time there was an outbreak of smallpox. He vaccinated all the children by first inoculating himself with a fluid from the pox of a neighbor. When that worked, he successfully vaccinated the family by scratching their arms enough to draw blood and then applying fluid from his own arm.

In 1883, he married Margaret Foltz. They had seven children: George, Chrissie, Frank, Elsie, Ernest, Ray, and Eva. They continued to live in the first frame house, to which more rooms had been added, until Mr. Salmen’s death in October, 1901. After Mrs. Salmen retired to Sutton, different sons lived on the farm until 1946, when it was sold to Harold Griess.

Caspar Salmen had increased his land holdings and owned the SW ¼ of Sec. 4 and the NW ¼ of Sec. 16. This latter quarter-section is still in the family and is farmed by a grandson, Wesley Salmen.

Frederick Schaldecker came to the United States from Wittenberg, Germany, in 1869. In 1880, he married Mary Zacharius of the Sutton community. They erected a frame house on their land and made this their home for many years. They had eight children: William, Walter, Gertrude, George, Clara, Arthur, Homer, and John.

In 1888, he married Mary Zacharius of the Sutton community. They erected a frame house on their land and made this their home for many years. They had eight children: William, Walter, Gertrude, George, Clara, Arthur, Homer, and John.

Mr. Schumacher later, in 1900, bought other land near by, and about 1908 built a new house on the SE ¼ of Sec. 26, which was their home until his death in 1910. Mrs. Schumacher and her daughter Clara moved to Lincoln in 1913.

“Adjoining Mr. Dixon’s place is J. A. Schwartz’s 320-acre farm, embracing 170 acres of river bottom, 50 acres of native timber, half a mile of river front, secure yards, ample cribs and stabling, a comfortable cottage, and thrifty domestic groves and hedges. Mr. Schwartz grows about 7,000 bushels of corn, from 400 to 800 bushels of wheat, 900 bushels of oats and 600 of rye, keeps a few cattle and some good teams, annually turns off 120 model Poland pigs ranging from 250 to 600 lbs. weight and recently sold a carload averaging 400 lbs. He is one of the best swine feeders in the Blue Valley, has a splendid estate, is a live, go-ahead, ambitious young Canadian who came here from Illinois in ’78, with two teams and $500 and has now personal and real property which could not be purchased for $10,000.”

—Fillmore County Hand-Book (1884)

Mrs. William Schwartz says that Joe Schwartz was her husband’s uncle; that his father came in 1883 and while waiting for their own home to be vacated they lived in a log cabin, the only building left in Fillmore City, which was formerly the hotel. Besides this there used to be two stores and a blacksmith shop, also a post office kept in a store.

John Seitz was born in Wunsiedel, Bavaria, Germany, on February 10, 1830. When he was 22 years old, he emigrated to America and landed in New York, where he worked for 12 years. On April 14, 1864, he entered the Civil War as a sailor in the navy and served one year as a cook on the battleship Gettysburg. He was honorably discharged at Portsmouth, Virginia, on April 14, 1865. He then went to Sterling, Illinois, where he worked in the copper trade.

On November 22, 1873, he married Wilhelmina Klein- schmidt. In 1878, with their two children, Fred Henry and Kathryn Fredricka, they moved to Fillmore County. He bought the SW ¼ of Sec. 9, T8, R4W in Grafton township, paying the railroad $7 an acre for the land, which was all prairie at that time. Four more children—Hermima, John, Jr., Sarah, and William—were born to them here. William died at the age of 3½ years of scarlet fever.

John Seitz broke up the sod, farmed, and worked long hours, seeing all the hardships and joys of pioneer life. He improved his home little by little until it was one of comfort and convenience, having an 11-room house and large and numerous outbuildings. He planted many trees, including apple, cherry, and pear, and also a mulberry hedge of which many of the trees are still alive. As the fruit trees died out, some of them were replaced by the eldest son, Fred, who also planted large strawberry beds and other garden crops. Many of the people of this vicinity yearly bought supplies of tomatoes, rhubarb, strawberries, and other products from this farm. The Seitzes also produced much honey. This was a thrifty place, and scarcely any piece of ground was without its crop of some kind.

Mrs. Seitz always had a good garden and many flowers, which were her delight. The Seitzes retired from the harder farm work in 1904 when John, Jr., rented the farm, together with land of the Shroyer estate. At this time Mrs. Seitz remarked that they were retired but not tired farmers. The place was rich in alfalfa and prairie hay and always had good pasture. It was a good home for the family, where they raised a great deal of poultry but not many cattle or hogs.

John Seitz, Sr., passed away on October 30, 1922, and Mrs. Seitz on May 26, 1935. Their daughter Emma still resides on the farm and is the only surviving member of the family.

—Emma Seitz

Henry Serr, an immigrant from Russia, purchased his farm, located on the SW ¼ of Sec. 16, from the Kansas City & Omaha R.R. on November 4, 1884. His son Jacob took over the operation of this farm in 1891 and resided there until his retirement in 1929. Jacob married Christina Peter, and they had five children: Nora, Rudolph, Theodore, Calvin, and Gertrude. Jacob got possession of the farm in 1898, and his son Calvin in turn became the owner in 1951. At present, Henry’s great-grandson, Raymond Serr, is residing on and operating this farm.

—Calvin Serr

John Shoff, Grafton’s first postmaster, was born in Guernsey County, Ohio, on October 27, 1840, and lived there until 1852, when he moved to Fulton County, Illinois. In 1860, he moved to Sigourney, Iowa, where he farmed until he came to Nebraska. He enlisted in Sigourney on August 14, 1862, in Company H, 33rd Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry. He participated in several engagements, was wounded at Jenkins’ Ferry, and was discharged for disability on June 25, 1865.

He was married in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, in 1866 to Martha Taylor of Coshocton County, Ohio. They had six children: Serrepta A., William, Jesse, Hattie, Charles, and Martha.

He first located in West Blue precinct in the fall of 1870, homesteading on Sec. 30 west, and held the office of justice of the peace for a number of years. Later he moved to the
village of Grafton. He was appointed postmaster in 1873 and held this post for 15 months. He was reappointed in the fall of 1878 and held the office over a long period. His son Charles also served as postmaster at a later date. John was also a dealer in clocks and sewing machines.

Mr. Shoff lived to the age of 94 years. He passed away at his home in Grafton in 1934 and is buried in the Grafton Cemetery.

Mrs. Anna K. Shroyer, with her husband and family of six children, left Grafton, West Virginia, to seek a new home in the West. They settled first in Schuyler County, Missouri, where some of their relatives were located. While they were in Missouri, her husband died, and in the next year (1869) she and her children—David, Jacob, Andrew, Mary, John, and Elvina—came on to Nebraska. They homesteaded on the S ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 10, Grafton township. At first they lived in a dugout near School Creek. After a well was dug on higher ground, they built a sod house near the well. Here they lived until a frame house was built years later. As time passed, more rooms were added. From the time they came in 1869 until the railroad came through in 1871 they drove, with team and wagon, to Lincoln for food and supplies.

The Shroyers applied for a timber claim on the N ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 10. This claim was granted at Lincoln on January 20, 1885, and was recorded in Fillmore County on May 3, 1886, as Timber Claim 106 in Nebraska. The papers were signed by President Chester A. Arthur. The Shroyers later bought adjoining lands. Their chief occupations were farming, stock raising, and buying and shipping stock.

Mary Shroyer taught school in District 29 during the terms of 1881-82 and 1882-83 and in District 66 in 1884. She and her husband moved to California in the 1890’s, and in 1913 Mrs. Anna K. Shroyer, her son John, and her daughter Elvina also moved there. Anna Shroyer passed away in 1916 at Pomona, California.

Jacob T. Shroyer remained on the farm until his death in 1921. Andrew G. Shroyer purchased the SE ¼ of Sec. 3 on June 28, 1886, from the C. B. & Q. R.R. He lived there until he retired in 1919, after which his son William continued to live on the farm.

It is said that Grafton was named for Grafton, West Virginia, the town from which the Shroyers originally came.

—Mrs. William Shroyer

Joseph Tatro was born in Burlington, Vermont, on May 5, 1824. He moved to Monroe, Michigan, in 1833 and lived there until 1847, when he moved to Winnebago County, Wisconsin, and farmed there until he came to Nebraska in 1871.

He was married in 1858 to Phoebe Josslyn of Rhode Island. They had five children: Jonathan, Lewis, Lorenzo, Patrizade, and Alfred. He enlisted in 1863 in Company G, 36th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. He participated in 15 general engagements, was twice wounded, and was mustered out at Annapolis, Maryland, in June, 1865.

In 1871, he homesteaded on Sec. 26 of Grafton township. Later he acquired the eastern part of Sec. 25, where he assisted in laying out the town site of Grafton, donating a share of lots to the town company. He erected the first frame house in Grafton, after the railroad section house, in 1871, and engaged in the furniture and undertaking business.

After the death of his wife Phoebe, he married, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Maria Oryall of Clinton County, New York. He died in 1885 and was buried in the Grafton Cemetery.

Four-generation picture of Anna Shroyer family: Vina Parker and son, Mary Shroyer Miller, Anna K. Shroyer.
The following account was written by Eva Waggoner Todd in 1966, at the age of 89:

Charles Willard Waggoner, with his wife and three children—Delos, 7, Eva, 2, and George, 5 months—came to Grafton, Nebraska, on March 10, 1879, a bleak cold day, he called it.

My father, threatened with tuberculosis, was advised by his doctor to seek a dry climate, so he sold a good farm in Illinois and bought 320 acres 2 1/4 miles NW of Grafton from a Mr. Wright. Later he added an 80 to this. Mother, used to the woods, streams, and fruit of Ohio, missed them greatly, but they had found the dry climate and Father lost his cough entirely in the outdoor life.

A native of New York State, he thought we must have a fruit orchard, and set out apple, peach, pear, cherry, and plum trees. Not many survived the hot, arid summers. He put out, also, a grove of black walnut trees for shade as well as future fence posts for the big pastures. These trees, too, failed to live long. One big success was a meadow of white clover near his dozen beehives. The honey was plentiful and very delicious. My father worked among those bees with bare hands and face, and never a sting. Watching him, I've had my eyes swollen shut and my hands aching from stings of those unfriendly insects. Mother said a bee would fly a mile just to sting her, so she never ventured near the hives. A stream called the Elk Run, which carried very little water except after heavy rains, meandered through the large pasture, and my sister and I loved to follow it, looking for the wild prairie flowers.

Father was a respected member of the community—men said “His word is as good as his bond.” Mother was active in many ways. A serious sickness brought a call for her; we had no R.N.’s in those days, and many a life she saved through her good common sense and her willingness to serve. She helped slow pupils to learn.

She formed a club of young farm girls who met once a week at our home, where mother helped them with different forms of sewing and handicraft, and supervised the serving of refreshments.

She was a most ardent worker in the W.C.T.U., for Nebraska was very wet, and the results of intemperance were pathetic, sometimes tragic. Four of the brightest men of our town were victims of the “social drink”: the banker, the newspaper editor, the pleasant lumber man, and our beloved family doctor. Paresis, insanity, delirium tremens, and suicide. I was forever impressed with the Biblical warning, “Wine is a mocker; whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise, for at the last it biteth like a serpent.” I remember that the Catholic priest, Father Murphy, worked with the Union, for he had some weak brethren in his church and he was a real father to his parish.

Father and Mother had both been teachers in Illinois, and one winter the school board of the Allen district—Mr. Allen, Mr. Stanord, and Mr. Watt—came to ask mother to take their school the rest of the year. It seemed that a young woman had been frightened away by the misconduct of the big boys, young huskies who came in when corn-picking was finished. Mother said, Yes, if she might take me and my sister, three and four years old. She welcomed these hoodlums and set them to work at higher arithmetic, civil government, current events, and bookkeeping, and got them so interested they wouldn’t miss a day, even worked through the noon hour. When the term ended, they presented her with a handsome chair. The pleased school board coaxed her to teach a second year. Then she was persuaded to go to town as assistant principal for two or three years. Her pupils always spoke of her with admiration.

When Father retired from the farm, and I graduated from high school with a scholarship, it seemed natural that, when our Congregational minister, who was a Doane College man, suggested to us that a move to Crete would be fine for me and my sister to attend college, our parents decided to do so. This was in 1895. My brother Delos had already moved to Colorado.

George H. Warren was born in Concord, Massachusetts, and lived there until 1866. Coming west, he lived for a time in Hinsdale, Illinois, and Kearney, Nebraska, before settling in Grafton. In the fall of 1880, he began business as a dealer in grain, coal, and lumber. The elevator he erected then was enlarged in 1881 to a capacity of 20,000 bushels. It measured 48' x 20', was 25' high, with a driveway 12' wide, and cost $4,000 to build.
[This first part of the history of Hamilton township, from here to the listing of schools by district, was written in 1961 by Mary Ethel Flory (Mrs. Charles Flory) of Shickley, at the age of 78. She prefixed it with the following note: "With sincere gratitude to each of the numerous friends whose contributions made the writing of this unit of Fillmore County History possible."]

According to data believed to be authentic, it was in the month of January, 1873, that Fillmore County was politically divided into 16 equal-area precincts (also called townships) having demarcations that as of now (February, 1961) still obtain. In the processes of choosing names for those officially defined areas, the second one from the west in the southernmost tier of divisions was christened "Hamilton." Technically Hamilton precinct is Township 5 North, Range 3 West of the 6th Principal Meridian.

Concerning the choosing of the name "Hamilton" as a township designation, some conjecturers have opined that the appellation was a memorial tribute to the United States founding father, Alexander Hamilton, whose genius for affairs served the new nation in so many meritorious ways.

### Hamilton Township Homestead Map

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Hamilton Township Homestead Map
that according, to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, “American history presents a no more striking figure than his.” However, another well-supported tradition concerning the choosing of the name “Hamilton” holds that the act was a special honor accorded the then-contemporary citizen, Joseph D. Hamilton, a Civil War veteran and lawyer, who, as a homesteader on that township’s Sec. 34, was active in the organizing and promoting of both local and county welfare movements.

The emigrants who located in Hamilton Township during the very early years of its official history were, like the pioneers who preceded them to that area, mostly from eastern states, notably Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In the main, Hamilton township’s early population was comprised of young married couples, some of whom had children. Of that early populace, practically all of the adults were sturdy, energetic people possessed of refined sensibilities and high moral convictions. The most commonly-used language was English, though some other languages, especially the German, had some adherents.

**TOPOGRAPHY AND SOIL**

Hamilton township’s topography as known to its early settlers included some bluffy terrains, especially in parts of its Secs. 11, 12, 13, 14, and 24; some nearly level lands; some gently rolling and slightly sloping areas; a few low hills; one almost-continuously watered draw (North Fork of the Big Sandy), angling irregularly through and from Sec. 7 until exiting from the NE 1/4 of Sec. 24; at least seven minor draws of more or less temporary water content; one dry-pond; variable-sized tracts of swampy lands; and some differing depressions that were, sometimes, ponds having fishing, hunting, and skating potentials.

Some early-day travel routes as there were, other than the winding prairie trails, included section lines and were without benefit of grading or bridging. By the year 1961, techniques of surveying, draining, leveling, damming, irrigating, and surfacing, combined with soil-conservation practices, had gradually, but markedly and constructively, altered a considerable portion of the early topography, notably the pond-prone places, swampy areas, and public roads.

In the years 1886 to 1887, two railroads, the Burlington & Missouri River line (subsequently called Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) and the Chicago & Northwestern line (now the Milwaukee & North Western), were, in that order, constructed across Hamilton township. The first one, in an almost straight north-to-south course, crossed Secs. 12 to 7 inclusive and the second one diagonally across Secs. 6 and the NW corner of Sec. 7. Both railway beds became, as of April 1, 1961, permanent parts of Hamilton township topography that, lacking any truly strategic village-founding site, seemingly became invested with a for-keeps village status as early as 1889. By the year 1961, technical analyses had shown Hamilton township’s predominating type of soil to be of crete (formerly called Grundy) formation, although some spots, especially in Secs. 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, and 28, were found to be mostly composed of Fillmore and Scott silty loam.

**SCHOOLS**

Of the many problems that confronted Hamilton township’s pioneers and later emigrants, none were more basic than the one involving procurement, as needed, of multipurpose premises usable for elementary schooling, temporary church centers, business meetings, social and educational get-togethers. During the years 1871 to 1892, that problem was, in the main, adequately solved by way of the county’s timely organizations of school districts that, in Hamilton township, eventually numbered eight. Thus, the citizenry in each of those eight districts, in the order of organization, was assured of a schoolhouse and such accompanying blessings as the name then implied. Even so, District 58 (Summit), one of the area’s three school districts organized during the last pre-Hamilton year, had one short term of school in each of two sod-house homes previous to public schoolhouse availability. That district’s first schoolteacher, Frank Smith, is said to have, regularly, walked four miles to and from his teaching duties.

In due time, Nebraska’s normal expansions and improvements in educational subject matter and teaching techniques led each of seven of the township’s school districts and the divisional parts of its eighth district to merge with a village-centered school district of its choice. Thus, it came about that Hamilton township’s era of multiple-district schooling ended in the year 1953.

In September, 1959, the only one of the eight schoolhouses constructed in Hamilton township, still intact and occupying its original site, was that one (Medlar) located on Sec. 28 in District 77. By that time, some six years of solitude had caused that schoolhouse to become strongly suggestive of Whittier’s “Ragged Beggar Sunning.” Had some magic provided gifts of insight, speech, and memory, that modern “ragged beggar,” as era historian, could have named: (a) each of the 14 pupils by whom four generations of that district’s Carl Heinrichs family had been represented; (b) each of the some 250 teachers who had a part in guiding Hamilton township’s children and youth through paths of elementary learning; (c) each of the township’s large number of pupils who had eventually acquired college or university educations; (d) the one ex-pupil who had lost his life while in military service; (e) each of some 25 pupils who had become veterans of war; (f) each of the several pupils who had become ministers of the Gospel; (g) each of the many pupils who had become public-school and church-school teachers; (h) each of the very large number of pupils who had achieved successes in various other lines of vocational endeavor. Certainly, the “historian” could have continued by telling of schoolhouse business meetings and about schoolhouses having been settings for stirring evangelistic meetings, for week-night prayer services, Sunday church-school and preaching services, neighborhood literary programs, spell-downs, singing-class training, ciphering matches, quiz programs, special day observances, and last-day-of-school get-togethers. Too, the “beggar” could hardly have concluded without reminiscing about each of the large number of school-board members whose efforts had bulwarked the township’s educational work.

**TOWN HALL AND TOWNSHIP BOARDS**

In the year 1888, the Hamilton township board named I. E. Allen, D. E. Smith, and H. Sauers as a committee to submit a plan for the building of a town hall and to lease, or buy, a suitable site on which to erect the said building. The ultimate result of that action was a 20' x 24' x 10' building, constructed during the following year, at a cost of $300, upon the leased SE corner of Sec. 16, by Sylvester Lamb, a competent carpenter whose family home was on Sec. 19. The building project was, in the main, financed by a special two-mill levy upon the township’s valuation that, in 1887, was $129,337. (The valuation in 1959 was $1,565,201.) The leasing arrangement was continued until in April, 1906, at which time the township purchased the 209' x 209' plot of ground constituting the town-hall site from Chris and Phoebe Lauber at a cost of $75.

Throughout all of its years, the well-kept town hall had, as of February 1, 1961, adequately served as the precinct’s voting place and as a suitable place for the transaction of all other of the township’s official business. Too, until well into the twentieth century, it served the public in a goodly number of other valuable ways, especially that of being the setting at regular irregular, and special times for organized religious activities pertinent to each of several different denominations.

Statistics and other school data appear at the end of this chapter.
The earliest record (known to the writer) of a Hamilton township board meeting bears the date of April 3, 1888. That meeting was held in the District 59 schoolhouse. As of January 1, 1961, the aggregate of available records pertinent to township board meetings showed the names of 54 men who had served the township as board members. Each of 38 of that number had been a board incumbent for a period of two or more years. Those who had board records of six or more years were J. T. Wagers, 6 years (as clerk); Mr. Wagers called the April 3, 1888, meeting to order; C. L. Evens, 6 years; S. L. Strayer, 7 years; J. C. Roussh, 11 years; A. F. Wagers, 9 years; Ronzo Hedden, 14 consecutive years as clerk; Leonard Hillgren, 12 years; Henry Neiman, 10 years; I. N. Schelkopf, 8 years; August Frenzen, 7 years; Don Flory, 9 years; George DuBois, 12 years; Maynard Merryman, 8 years; Royal Jackson, 20 consecutive years as clerk. As of January, 1961, currently serving board members were Maynard Merryman, clerk; Robert Frenzen, treasurer; Earl Houck, justice of the peace.1

CHURCHES

During Hamilton township history prior to 1961, there had, in the aggregate, been, at least, seven religious faiths represented in its variable populations. To a marked extent, religious faiths were the avenues by the way of which people of Hamilton township and its adjacent areas entered into co-operative relationships, from which church organizations, uninhibited by township boundary-line importances, emerged and, in variable times, erected church buildings upon such sites as, in the main, approximately centered the areas to be served.

Bethel Church (Church of the Brethren)

Although Bethel Church is not, geographically, in Fillmore County, but in Thayer, it is just across the line from the SW corner of Sec. 31, Hamilton township, 5 miles S of Shickley, and was founded by, and has long served, numerous residents of Bryant and Hamilton townships.

Among the early pioneers in this neighborhood was James Edward Bryant, who, with his wife, homesteaded the N 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 14, Bryant township, in 1873. Levi Holsinger had built a sod house south of the present site of the Bethel Cemetery, on the east side of the road on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 32 (the farm now occupied by the Allen Betty family). After the death of his wife, Levi Holsinger returned to Illinois, Mr. Bryant and other local adherents of the Dunkard faith met for a time in the vacated sod house and organized themselves into a Sunday Bible school that, for some years, had served the Methodist organization as a worship center. Traditionally, the thrice-used symbolic name "Summit," originated with the Allens and was submitted by them when, in the middle seventies, they wished to make sure that their family name would not become a permanent appellative for the then-new, near-by District 58 public school.

The church acquired, for its sanctuary and a cemetery, a five-acre site "just across the way" in Thayer County, and there, in 1884, erected a building that, in due time, was given the Hebrew name "Bethel," meaning "House of God." Daniel Heiny, a Dunkard preacher who, with his family, emigrated to Hamilton township in the 1880's and located on Sec. 39, soon became a co-minister in the Bethel Church. As of the end of the year 1960, the original Bethel Church building had, at strategic times, been subjected to such repairs, additions, and facility improvements as had kept it in continuing and, sometimes, markedly expanded service.1

Summit Church

The first building constructed within Hamilton township's borders solely for religious uses was the Methodist Church located near the SE corner of Sec. 30 and dedicated on January 5, 1887. Specifically, its setting was part of an area donated about the year 1872 by the I. E. Allens from their homestead farm for use as a cemetery (then immediately needed) and for the church building that they hoped would, in due time, be erected thereon. The name "Summit," given to the church, was the same as that of the plot-sharing cemetery and, also, of the across-the-way District 58 schoolhouse that, for some years, had served the Methodist organization as a worship center. Traditionally, the thrice-used symbolic name "Summit," originated with the Allens and was submitted by them when, in the middle seventies, they wished to make sure that their family name would not become a permanent appellative for the then-new, near-by District 58 public school.

1 This account is based largely on the original minutes of the Bethel Church of the Brethren. An account written in 1935, by charter member J. E. Bryant, for the church's 60th anniversary, and edited by Walker D. Wyman, husband of Mr. Bryant's youngest daughter, appeared in the Nebraska State Historical Society Magazine, XXVIII, No. 3 (July-Sept. 1947), pp. 187-195. On p. 193, Mr. Bryant states that the township was named for Mr. Hamilton, a pioneer Presbyterian minister.
religious interests, of which perhaps the chief one was the annual winter-time series of revival meetings that netted immeasurable benefits.

By the year 1906, natural causes had so shifted the early population of the Summit area that, in numbers, the Methodist Church's membership had become only a small fraction of what it had been in its earlier years. In that situation, dispersement of the remaining memberships to churches of other localities was agreed upon, and in due time, the church building was transferred to the Ong Methodist Church for use in an enlargement project.

After a devastating fire had, in 1948, destroyed the Summit schoolhouse, the one remaining early-day landmark of the Summit community center was the then unkept cemetery having somewhat more than 60 graves. However, goals for renovation and permanent care of the cemetery were taken on, in 1954, by a newly organized cemetery association that, in its early operations, was supported by contributions of both labor and currency, and through later years, with funds appropriated by the township. Thus, as of the end of the year 1960, a thoroughgoing cemetery renovation achieved some six years earlier, had produced a highly satisfactory cemetery status that had been, and was being, consistently maintained. Royal Jackson of Sec. 35 had, at that time, served the cemetery association as president since its time of organization and, as cemetery caretaker, since the completion of the reclamation project.

**Salem Mennonite Church**

The first Amish Mennonite emigrant to arrive in Hamilton township was Jacob Beller who, with his family, located on Sec. 28 in the year 1890. Others of like faith arrived soon and, very shortly, the Amish Mennonite families began holding more or less regular Sunday School services in the District 69 schoolhouse. The Amish Mennonite people's first minister was P. P. Herschberger, a temporary settler. The Amish Mennonite families organized as an Amish Mennonite Church in the latter part of the year 1891, and for about 12 years thereafter, used the town hall for regular Sunday worship and Bible School purposes as well as for all other times of desired assembly.

Jacob Beller, Daniel Miller, Joseph Kuhns, Sr., Joseph Stutzman, Emanuel Kuhns, Daniel Troyer, and Christian Beller, with their families, were the church's charter members, and Christian Beller was its first permanently established minister.

Using the SE corner of Sec. 17 as a building site, members of the Amish Mennonite Church organization, with member Chris Eichelberger of Sec. 20 as head carpenter, constructed a 32' x 48' church building that was finished December 3, 1904, and dedicated on the following day. As one of the dedicatory rites, the church was given the name "Salem," a Biblical synonym for the word "peace." The three acres used for the church building and a cemetery area were donated by the afore-referred-to Dunkard minister, James A. Flory, whose family home was about 1/2 mile distant. It was not until approximately 27 years after church organization that the Amish Mennonite people, as a church, adopted the English language and dropped the German tongue previously used in practically all of its religious services. In 1920, the Salem Amish Mennonite Church merged with the Orthodox Mennonite Church and therewith dropped from its title the word "Amish" and forthwith acquired charter membership in the Mennonite Iowa-Nebraska Conference, under the name of Salem Mennonite Church.

Over the years, two additions were made to the original church building. The first one provided for a hall and a nursery room. The second addition was a 30' x 30' sanctuary extension that increased the seating capacity to approximately 500.

**Seventh Day Adventist Church**

It was probably at some time during the first half of the 1890's that certain of Hamilton township's families (and, possibly, some families of the out-of-township location) organized a Seventh Day Adventist Church that, for a considerable number of years, used the town hall as a setting for its church services. Rather early in the twentieth century, the township's Sec. 33 Herman Orthmans, as one of the family units of the said Seventh Day Adventist Church, made part of their home into a somewhat simulated church sanctuary that was so used by that church organization for quite some time—presumably, until in the year 1969, when the Orthmans disposed of their farmstead home. In subsequent years, centers of Seventh Day Adventist Church activities were rarely of Hamilton township location.

As of the end of the year 1960, a resume of such religious activities as were pertinent to Hamilton township history showed that, during the years subsequent to the year 1890, a considerable number of its people, at various periods and lengths of time, had out-of-township church sanctuary affiliations that, seemingly, had worthily helped to maintain status for each of a goodly number of Christian faiths.

**Agriculture**

As of the advent of the year 1961, it was noteworthy that, throughout Hamilton township's political history, agriculture had been the major source of its citizens' livelihoods. Even so, a considerable number of the people had, at variable times, supplemented agricultural commitments with other kinds of more or less lucrative work, some types of which were carpentry; plastering; dressmaking; teaching organ and piano playing; school teaching; coaching group-singing; doing commercial trucking, itinerant merchandising, and agency selling; caring for business-office routines; and serving as official electees to positions of public service. One long ago, contemporarily significant instance of public service having been thus officially rendered was in 1907 when, as state representative-elect, Samuel Logsdon, of Hamilton township's Sec. 5, served as a member of Nebraska's state legislature.

Certain manuscripts have indicated that practically all of Hamilton township's very early would-be farmers started with very little agricultural equipment. Consequently, that early-day farming involved a great deal of manual labor such as pumping and (or) bucket-drawing of water supplies from underground sources, seeding, hoeing, spading, scooping,
Corn picking by hand in 1920's

Stacking small grain (perhaps about 1915)

Early-day windmill with wooden tower and wheel. This was a "self-closing" type, especially suited for the high winds of the prairies. Instead of a flat wheel facing into the wind, the wheel was made of several sections forming a shallow cone facing away from the wind. As wind speeds increased, the "wings" folded forward to take less wind and so keep the windmill from racking itself to pieces or overpumping. The wings could be completely closed by a lever from the bottom; this one is shown in the closed position.

Early steam traction engine (about 1895). This is a Baker Model 1201, of 15 horsepower. Note the steering-gear chains running to the front wheels.

Scything, milking, cornhusking, stacking, and blading-shock-tying folders. Incidentally, some intangible rewards resulting from careful and regular performance of certain of those manual labors were acquisitions of brilliant skills that were oftentimes comparatively discussed and, sometimes, competitively demonstrated before interested observers.

A wind-operated invention (marvelous for its time and aptly called "windmill") designed for the pumping of ground water to above-surface objectives was introduced into Hamilton township in the early 1880's and, in that decade, rather generally acquired. In due time, the windmills were being so successfully used for their designed purpose that manual pumping was being used only in the occasional times of special need and (or) emergency situations, incident, in the main, to times of windless weather.

Farm Draft Power

In Hamilton township, the earliest sources of agricultural draft power other than the human type, were oxen, which were few in number and, soon, almost entirely superseded by horses and mules that, for approximately 40 years, rated as indispensables in that area of need and, from 25 to 35 years longer, were, in variable lessening degrees, very definitely important as farm draft power. Too, horses (draft types) were much used for riding purposes and, to somewhat lesser extent, the pony species were likewise useful.

An impressive type of agricultural draft power first brought into Hamilton township in 1897 was a 10-horsepower steam engine that its owners used as belt power for two, possibly three years and then replaced it with a larger, much more powerful, but similar type of steam engine which, though mainly used for practically any and all kinds of desired belt-power service, was, in selected situations, also feasibly used for direct-draft servicing. A distinctively interesting feature inherent to the larger steam engine was its whistling facility that, codified, became a medium through which the engineer could, at will, transmit certain messages to previously briefed folks.

1 Both of these pioneering steam engines were owned by the Flory brothers.—Editor's note.
The secondly acquired steam engine had been in use a few years
when its owners applied it on a negotiated transaction whereby they
acquired a big (60 horsepower) kerosene-fueled tractor with which,
during the succeeding 20 or more years, a great deal of heavy belt
work of considerable variety was done, also, many kinds of direct-
draft servicing of which some were pulling graders for road work,
moving buildings, and pulling an eight-bottom plow for tillage of
farm lands.

By the time the 20th century's first score of years was nearing
its point of departure, a great deal of interest in mechanical farm
power had been and was being aroused in Hamilton township by
reason of some farmer acquriements of, and brief experiences with,
the then-available tractor-type sources of farm draft power. Con­
sequently, throughout the following 40 years, manufacturers kept
those initial principles of farm tractor construction so abreast of
pertinent scientific advancements, and consequent farmer favor
and patronage that, by the springtime of 1961, practically all of
the great amount of farm draft power being used in the township
was of tractor-type concept variously modeled for adaptability. Over
most of the township's 20th-century years, tractor fuel, in the
aggregate, consisted of several kinds of petroleum derivatives each of
which probably had "best-seller" status for at least one period of
from one-half to a dozen or more years in length.

Internal-combustion tractors gained popularity from about 1915
onward.

Stationary Motor Power
During some of the years in which uses of farm tractors were
increasing, farm projects adaptable to stationary motorizations had,
in increased numbers, been so served. Following the mid-century
advownt of the R.E.A. (Rural Electrification Administration) into
Hamilton township, electricity as stationary motor power came into
considerable favor. Thus there ensued some decline in uses of
petroleum products as motor fuels.

The Automobile
When, rather early in the 20th century, the automobile was
introduced into Hamilton township, considerable interest in, and
enthusiasm about, its high potential for farm family uses, were soon
being manifested. Therefore, consequent acquriements of that inno­
vation were of such frequencies that, by the time the middle teen
year had arrived, family ownerships of automobiles were considerable
in number and, by a not so long later period, practically every
family's equipment included at least one automobile.

Agricultural Production
Prior to the year 1961, grains grown throughout Hamil­
ton township's years of political history had been corn, oats,
and wheat (spring wheat, until succeeded by the winter
variety). Flax, buckwheat, millet, and barley were early-day
grains. Individual family productions of garden products suffi­
cient for at least its own needs rated as near-standard pro­
cedure for the first 70 or more years of township history. Too,
for about that same length of time, considerable importance
attached to family goals for producing poultry and dairy
products, not only for home uses, but also for desired trade-
in values and somewhat regular expense incomes even though
necessarily variable in amounts.

During most of the township's 19th-century years, prairie pasture
and prairie hay were very important farm assets.

During the first half of the 1900's, the growing of alfalfa as
a perennial forage was begun and soon became a commonly-grown
crop, highly valued for uses in dairying, poultrying, and in the grow­
ing and feeding of livestock. Moreover, alfalfa's soil benefits soon
made it become very important as a rotation crop. The value of
clovers and some other kinds of forages were also being proven.

Early in the 20th century, sugar beets had a trial run and proved
financially profitable but required more tedious labor than most
farmers could conveniently provide. The growing of potatoes, melons,
onions, and popcorn as commercial crops had times of popularity.
Both cattle and hogs were commonly grown for family food
uses as well as marketing purposes. Sheep husbandry with emphasis
on wool production and lamb feeding phases was tried, proven
worthy, and continued by some.

The production and use of ensilage, begun about the year 1915,
soon developed into a veritable boon for the township's livestock in­
teres, particularly for its cattle-feeding phases.

During the 20th century's second quarter, grain sorghums came
into popular favor and hybrid corn was a strikingly worthy crop
introduction. Hamilton township's only large producers of hybrid
seed corn were the J. J. Biegerts of Sec. 17, who engaged in that
phase of agriculture during the years 1941-1944 inclusively. Near
the middle of the century, hybrid grain sorghums were successfully
grown. In Hamilton township seed for hybrid grain sorghums was
first produced in the year 1959.

During the herein-referred-to 88 years of Hamilton township
agriculture, available equipment for tillage, seeding, and harvesting
needs ranged from the first-used simple ox-drawn, manually manipu­
lated, seatless patterns through many stages of technical advance­
ments to the highly mechanized, multi-purpose types of machinery
eventually used.

Some "Firsts"
The production of turkeys upon a sizable commercial
scale, begun in the year 1933 by the Roy Kemptfs of Sec. 7,
was a "first" in Hamilton township and, also, in Fillmore
County. After the Kempf innovators had operated their
turkey business for 15 years on a one-family basis, joint
turkey partnership with the Wayne Kemptfs of Sec. 6 was
effected and the industry straightway expanded until the
said co-operating families were, together, annually maturing
approximately 5,000 poults all of which were products of
their own breeding flocks and hatching facilities. When
interviewed in January, 1961, the Roy Kemptfs reported the
partner families as having consistently maintained the afore-
said proximate of turkey production and, currently, were
expecting to likewise achieve in the new year.
Subsequent to the year 1933, township families, other than those of the Kempf partnership, that, in various periods of time and numbers of years, engaged in the growing phases of commercial turkey enterprises, included the Lloyd Troyers of Sec. 21, the August Frenzens of Sec. 26, the Maynard Merrymans of Sec. 5, the E. S. Thomases of Sec. 3, the Lowell Steiders of Sec. 24, and the Jay Kempfs of Sec. 6. The Jay Kempfs, largely by way of the turkey-growing route, earned the 1949 W. G. Skelly Agricultural Achievement Award.

Another "first" in Hamilton township and its county was an irrigation well put down on the Charles Florys' farm on Sec. 20 in the year 1936. In the March 9, 1961, issue of the Nebraska Signal, Conservationist Jim McDowell reported the number of irrigation wells in Hamilton township at that time as being 85. [By July, 1966, the number of wells had risen to 95.]

A further highly interesting and exciting addition of precedential significance was made to Hamilton township's agricultural history when, in 1947, certain of the township's field crops and other lands, as a part of a much larger area, were aerially sprayed by Max Biegert of the Sec. 17 J. J. Biegert family.

Adversities versus Benefits

Though agriculture, in Hamilton township aggregate, had, as of April, 1961, been brought through numerous stages and kinds of impressive development, the citizenries so achieving had, nevertheless, concurrently encountered a considerable number of adversities. Specifically, and in the main, the truly serious, more or less generalized, hardships experienced during that 88 years of township history had been hailstorms; grasshopper scourges; hog-cholera epidemics; chinch-bug infestation; blizzards (the chief one probably having been the monstrous visitation of January 12, 1888); damages wrought by wildlife; some excessive rainfalls; the June 5, 1908, tornado; the horse disease in the 20th century's early teens; droughts, particularly the one incident to the years 1893-1899 and the one that wrought havoc in the 1930's; and seasons when prices received for agricultural productions had been less than equitable.

Naturally, the adversities had, for the most part, been very trying. However, there had also been much that was highly conducive to the people's happiness and welfare. Some of those constructive phases, things, and situations, other than the previously-specified churches, schools, town hall, and topographical improvements, included: horseback riding; automobiling; agricultural successes; diets of home-
produced foods; electrification and intercommunity affiliations, adding to family togetherness; opportunities for doing much with little; round-the-calendar outdoor activities; animal, poultry, and songbird pets galore; timely acquisitions of conveyances such as lumber wagons, spring wagons, sleighs, buggies, carts, carriages, and bicycles; gradual improvements in housing, household furnishings, lighting and heating facilities; acquisitions of mail delivery and telephone services early in the 20th century, and subsequent to 1937, time-to-time advancement in equipments and techniques for acquisition and distribution of that marvelous “for-free” product, ground water. Thus, it seems timely for the writer, in closing, to say that, in her judgment, Hamilton township's benefits received during the 88 years immediately prior to that time, had far outweighed the contemporary adversities. Therefore, a spirit of thanks. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever.” (Psalms 106:1.)

SCHOOLS

District No. 56, also known as “Bluff School,” from adjacent terrain, was organized in 1872, with Eleazar Phillips as its first director. The schoolhouse was built 1/4 mile S of the NW corner of Sec. 24. This district was merged with those of Shickley, Strang, and Bruning on April 13, 1953. The last director was Lester Kennel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>H. F. Smith</td>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>Walter Thurlow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>H. F. Smith</td>
<td>1915-18</td>
<td>Peter Eggenberger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>Phoebe Davis</td>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Alice Beales</td>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>Alice Beales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-79</td>
<td>Mary Blood</td>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>Mary Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>Amy Dyson</td>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>Amy Dyson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Maggie Stewart</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>Maggie Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Alice Bailer</td>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>Alice Bailer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>Watson Weldon</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>Watson Weldon</td>
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<td>1883-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>C. C. Spangler</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>C. C. Spangler</td>
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<td>1930-31</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>Mable Strother</td>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>Tephrona Stickel</td>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>Ethel Harrington</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1933-34</td>
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<td>No record</td>
<td>1934-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892-93</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1935-36</td>
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<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1936-37</td>
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<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1937-38</td>
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<td>1895-96</td>
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<td>1938-39</td>
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<td>1896-97</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1940-41</td>
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<td>1897-98</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1941-42</td>
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<td>1942-43</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-00</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>No record</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

District No. 57, also known as “Eich School,” was organized in 1872; its first director was W. B. Grey. The schoolhouse was built on the NE corner of Sec. 11. On December 19, 1952, District 57 was attached to District 34 (Strang). The last director was Nick Eich.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>Walter Thurlow</td>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>Nova Pumphrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>Peter Eggenberger</td>
<td>1915-18</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Alice Beales</td>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-79</td>
<td>Mary Blood</td>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>Amy Dyson</td>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Maggie Stewart</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Alice Bailer</td>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>Watson Weldon</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1884-85</td>
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<td>1926-27</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>C. C. Spangler</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>Mable Strother</td>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>Tephrona Stickel</td>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1889-90</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>No record</td>
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<td>1892-93</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1894-95</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1937-38</td>
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<td>1896-97</td>
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<td>1940-41</td>
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<td>1898-99</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899-00</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1904-05</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
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<td>1906-07</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Mary Downey</td>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>Carrie Sauer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District No. 58 was organized in 1872; its first director was S. H. Holsinger. The schoolhouse, also known as “Summit School” was built on the SW corner of Sec. 29. The schoolhouse burned down in 1948 and was not replaced. The last director was Glen Birky. District 58 contracted with District 54 (Shickley) and in 1953 merged with that district.
Year | Teacher |
--- | --- |
1874 | Frank Smith |
1874-77 | No record |
1877-78 | Minnie Smith |
1878-79 | Maggie Stewart |
1879-80 | Mary Hart |
1880-81 | Amy Dyson |
1881-82 | Jennie Deshems |
1882-83 | Mary Height |
1883-84 | S. A. Orr |
1884-87 | No record |
1887-88 | C. C. Spangler |
1888-89 | Ella Davis |
1889-90 | No record |
1890-100 | Mamie Pinkerton |
1900-04 | No record |
1904-05 | Minnie Sissel |
1905-06 | Ethel Graves |
1906-07 | Elsie Graves |
1907-08 | Lulu Lichty |
1908-09 | Daisy Sissel |
1909-10 | Daisy Sissel |
1910-11 | Margaret Yarshaw |
1911-12 | Susie Rothrock |
1912-13 | Gertrude Freeman |
1913-14 | Emma Renken |
1915-16 | No record |
1916-17 | Bernice Logsdon |
1917-18 | Viola Wilson |
1918-19 | Mary Surber |
1932-33 | Ruby Merryman |
1933-34 | Lucy Fisher |
1934-35 | Lucy Fisher |
1935-36 | No record |
1936-37 | Zella Wagers |
1937-38 | Betty Wilson |
1938-39 | Betty Wilson |
1939-40 | Orfie Bergquist |
1940-41 | Aldene Reeb |
1873-74 | Emma Harvey |
1874-75 | Emma Harvey |
1875-76 | Elizabeth Flory |
1876-77 | No record |
1877-78 | Mary Blood |
1878-79 | J. A. Williams |
1879-80 | Millie Ballard |
1880-81 | Amy Dyson |
1881-82 | No record |
1882-83 | Samuel Logsdon |
1883-84 | James A. Flory |
1884-85 | Eli Mitchell |
1885-86 | No record |
1886-87 | Tephrina Stickel |
1887-88 | No record |
1888-89 | No record |
1889-1900 | John Johnson |
1900-01 | Carl A. Johnson |
1901-02 | No record |
1902-03 | Minnie Sissel |
1903-04 | No record |
1904-05 | Ellen Venell |
1905-06 | Ellen Venell |
1906-07 | Bertha Mathewson |
1907-08 | Raymond Flory |
1908-09 | Nora Wennersten |
1909-10 | Nora Wennersten |
1910-11 | Gertrude Suhala |
1911-12 | Mrs. Cora Foster |
1912-13 | No record |
1913-14 | Emma Davis |
1914-15 | Inez Braumieer |
1915-16 | No record |
1916-17 | Ruth Huston |
1917-18 | No record |


District No. 59, also known as “Schelp School” and “Arnganbright School,” was organized in 1873, and a schoolhouse was built on the NE corner of the NW ¼ of Sec. 8. The first director was Worthington Coffee. In 1953, District 59 merged with District 54 (Shickley). The last director was Roy Troyer.

Year | Teacher |
--- | --- |
1873-74 | Emma Harvey |
1874-75 | Emma Harvey |
1875-76 | Elizabeth Flory |
1876-77 | No record |
1877-78 | Mary Blood |
1878-79 | J. A. Williams |
1879-80 | Millie Ballard |
1880-81 | Amy Dyson |
1881-82 | No record |
1882-83 | Samuel Logsdon |
1883-84 | James A. Flory |
1884-85 | Eli Mitchell |
1885-86 | No record |
1886-87 | Tephrina Stickel |
1887-88 | No record |
1888-89 | No record |
1889-1900 | John Johnson |
1900-01 | Carl A. Johnson |
1901-02 | No record |
1902-03 | Minnie Sissel |
1903-04 | No record |
1904-05 | Ellen Venell |
1905-06 | Ellen Venell |
1906-07 | Bertha Mathewson |
1907-08 | Raymond Flory |
1908-09 | Nora Wennersten |
1909-10 | Nora Wennersten |
1910-11 | Gertrude Suhala |
1911-12 | Mrs. Cora Foster |
1912-13 | No record |
1913-14 | Emma Davis |
1914-15 | Inez Braumieer |
1915-16 | No record |
1916-17 | Ruth Huston |
1917-18 | No record |


Photo from Mrs. Virgil Eppler
### District No. 82

Known as "Monroe" and as "Albrecht" school, was organized in 1885, and a schoolhouse was built on the SW corner of Sec. 25. The first director was C. F. Brabham. On April 13, 1953, District 82 was merged, by petition, with District 94 (Bruning), in Thayer County. The last director was Robert Frenzen.

**Photo from Mrs. Ernest Heinrichs**

District No. 77 in 1936-37. The teacher was Wilma Mau (Heinrichs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>Anna Adams</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>Mrs. Maudeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Estella Estabrook</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>Hilda Slabyaug</td>
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<td>1881-87</td>
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<td>Hilda Slabyaug</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>Bessie Norton</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>No record</td>
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<td>1888-89</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>Clara R. Busse</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890-90</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-93</td>
<td>Ethel Wagers</td>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>Clara R. Busse</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>Annie Gilbert</td>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>Hilda Slaybaugh</td>
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<td>1895-96</td>
<td>Annie Gilbert</td>
<td>1933-34</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896-97</td>
<td>Myrtle Nichols</td>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>Arlene Limbach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>Myrtle Nichols</td>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>Arlene Limbach</td>
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<td>1898-99</td>
<td>Stella White</td>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>Wilma Mau</td>
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<td>1899-10</td>
<td>Stella White</td>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>Pauline Wagers</td>
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<td>1910-11</td>
<td>Ora Mitchell</td>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>Annalou Lucht</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>Hugh Garrett</td>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>Betty Widler</td>
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<td>1912-13</td>
<td>Bert McCaskey</td>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>Evelyn Geiken</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>Daisy Strayer</td>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>Doris Miller</td>
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<td>1914-15</td>
<td>Elsie Brinagar</td>
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<td>1915-16</td>
<td>Elsie Brinagar</td>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>Kenneth Stidler</td>
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<td>1916-17</td>
<td>Zoe Timmerman</td>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>Luella Wilson</td>
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<td>1918-19</td>
<td>Lois Ainsworth</td>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>Owen Depee</td>
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<td>1919-20</td>
<td>Mrs. Gorti Sissel</td>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>Norma Kennel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>Delma Maple</td>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>Joan Left</td>
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<td>1921-22</td>
<td>Alice Hedden</td>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>Delores Detmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>Maurine Flor</td>
<td>1953-54</td>
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</table>

### District No. 83

known as "Schelkopf" school and as "Hedden" school, in honor of T. K. Hedden, a board director in District 93 for 29 consecutive years, from 1900 to 1930. On July 7, 1953, District 93 was merged with District 54 (Shickley). The last director was Isaac Schelkopf.

**Photo from Mrs. Royal Jackson**

District No. 82 in 1917-18—Teacher Estelle Williams at door.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899-1900</td>
<td>Lola Craig</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>Helen McPeck</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900-04</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>Sarah Keller</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>Lucy E. Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Katharine Seibel</td>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>Lucy E. Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>Wardie Nippert</td>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Margaret M. Seibel</td>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>Doris Swanson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-09</td>
<td>Margaret M. Seibel</td>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>Burnice Russell</td>
</tr>
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<td>1909-10</td>
<td>Margaret M. Seibel</td>
<td>1932-33</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910-11</td>
<td>Happy M. Johnson</td>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>John K. Wagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>Carrie Maddox</td>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>Doris Swanson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>Alma Rousch</td>
<td>1935-36</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>Marcell Sullivan</td>
<td>1936-37</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-16</td>
<td>Lela Wilson</td>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-17</td>
<td>Fannie Lincoln</td>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>Beza Freeman</td>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>Mrs. Gayle Lauenstein</td>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>No record</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>Gladys Stanberry</td>
<td>1942-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>Gladys Stanberry</td>
<td>1943-44</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>Lesley Huntley</td>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>No record</td>
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<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>Leslie Huntley</td>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>Hazel Stansberry</td>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>Helen McPeck</td>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>No record</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### District No. 93

In 1914, Left to right: Dell Schelgel, Henry Lauber, Ira Tonkinson, Orve Hedden, Wesley Tonkinson, Harold Justice, Marcella Sullivan (teacher), Helen Schelkopf, Claude Tonkinson, Irene Justice, Cynthia Anderson, Lydia Lauber, Elmer Tonkinson, Elmer Lauber, Matilda Schlegel.

**Photo from Mrs. Ernest Heinrichs**

District No. 93 was organized in 1891, with Brook McMain as its first director. The schoolhouse was built ¼ mile S of the NW corner of Sec. 10. The school was known as "Schelkopf" school and as "Hedden" school, in honor of T. K. Hedden, a board director in District 93 for 29 consecutive years, from 1900 to 1930. On July 7, 1953, District 93 was merged with District 54 (Shickley). The last director was Isaac Schelkopf.

**Photo from Mrs. Royal Jackson**

District No. 82 in 1917-18—Teacher Estelle Williams at door.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899-1900</td>
<td>Lola Craig</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900-04</td>
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<td>1926-27</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>Sarah Keller</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>Lucy E. Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Katharine Seibel</td>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>Lucy E. Fisher</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>Wardie Nippert</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Margaret M. Seibel</td>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>Doris Swanson</td>
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<td>Margaret M. Seibel</td>
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<td>Burnice Russell</td>
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<td>1910-11</td>
<td>Happy M. Johnson</td>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>John K. Wagers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>Carrie Maddox</td>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>Doris Swanson</td>
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<td>1912-13</td>
<td>Alma Rousch</td>
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<td>1913-14</td>
<td>Marcell Sullivan</td>
<td>1936-37</td>
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<td>1914-15</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>1937-38</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915-16</td>
<td>Lela Wilson</td>
<td>1938-39</td>
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<td>1916-17</td>
<td>Fannie Lincoln</td>
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<td>No record</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**304**
FAMILIES

Theodore Keller Hedden was born May 5, 1859, at De­
witt, Clinton County, Iowa. He was the fourth son of Henry
and Eliza Douglas Minor Hedden. His wife, Eva Bell McBeth,
was born December 22, 1859, at Pleasant Grove, Iowa, daugh­
ter of the Robert McBeths.

Theodore and Eva were married November 13, 1884,
at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. They came to Nebraska and bought
80 acres of school land, the N1/4 of the NE1/4 of Section 16,
Hamilton township. Here they built a two-room frame house
(bedroom and living room). The living room contained the
dining table, a set of chairs, a cupboard, and the kitchen
stove which heated the house. Heating stoves were unknown.
Also a lounge which could be extended to make a bed for
two. Other buildings were a corn crib, a granary, stable for
four horses, and a hen house.

Mr. and Mrs. Hedden had six sons: Glenn D., Ronzo M.,
Earl J., Merritt M., Finis R., and Orve K. Hedden. One
daughter died at birth.

His first reaper was a self-rake, which raked the
grain of a 4-foot swath off the platform in bunches about the
right size for a sheaf. The sheaves from the self-rake were
tied by hand with straw taken from the sheaf. A lost art.
Then he got a Plano binder, which tied bundles with twine
and kicked them off in a row. That wore out. The next was a
Champion—6-foot cut with a bundle carrier. Carried three
or four bundles, then was dumped by foot power. Saved a
lot of walking for the shockers.

Mrs. Hedden helped with the shocking and cultivating.
Father used the walking cultivator and bought the first rid­
ing cultivator in the community for Mother to use.
The land was full of rattlesnakes, garter snakes, blue
racers, and bull snakes. The rattlers and the garters were the
most numerous. Sometimes animals and occasionally a per­
sion would be bitten by rattlers, but as a rattler usually
sounds a warning, most everything knew the sound and the
animals the smell. The snakes were sometimes gathered up
in the hay and hauled in.

For fuel, cobs and coal were used, when they were to be
had. Also buffalo chips. My brother and I often took the
bushel basket and gathered cow chips dried in the pasture,
when we were about big enough so the two of us could tote
it. Cornstalks were also used. Father bought some trees on
the South Blue River and would go down there, starting
about 4 a.m., with the wagon running gear, cut a load of poles,
and get back after dark. The poles were chopped to stove
wood with an ax. Later with a bucksaw. A good bit of this
job was for the boys.

The plowing was done with a walking plow with two
horses, sometimes three. The sod was broken with a special
sod plow, with three or four horses, generally. The corn
planted with a walking lister or a corn planter with a check­
row wire. Later a riding two-wheeled lister. A lister took
three or four horses. Usually four.

As the family grew, a bed was placed in the attic or up­
stairs, which was reached by a ladder. The upstairs was un­
finished. In a blizzard the snow blew in some. A binder can­
vass was brought in and spread over the bed and the boys to
keep the snow off. Sometimes there were four in the bed.
Later another bed was acquired. In the heat of summer the
boys slept downstairs on the floor and on the lounge. One
hot night came a big wind and hail storm. The corn was in
the roasting ear stage. The storm made such a roar we had
to shout to be heard. These hail were ragged, flat pieces of
ice. Some three inches in diameter. Punctured the weather
boards and riddled the windows and screens on the west
side. The turkeys roosted on top of the hen house. We found
one turkey hen beheaded in the morning. The crops were
mowed to the ground. Horses and cattle ran through the
fence. Still the folks held on and later, in 1901, purchased
the SW1/4 of the NE1/2 of Sec. 16.

When the boys got big enough, Glenn operated the walk­
ing plow and the two-wheeled sulky. Later he graduated to
the two-bottom gang plow. Before the riding plows, Father
would go right down the furrow for a long way without holding on until it struck a hard spot or a root. The team was a pair of gentle sorrel mares (Mamie and Julie). The harness, collars, and hames with inch rope with swivels on the lower end for tugs or traces. The lines ½” rope with snaps for attaching to the bridles. No back pads or belly bands. We all went barefoot from the first warm weather until cold weather. Whenever the plow rolled a rattler out, one quickly stepped to the other side.

Father had a threshing machine called an Agitator run by horse power, using six teams of horses—that is, 12 horses. The grain was fed in by hand by one man. Another stood by his side to cut the bands on the bundles. The grain ran out at the bottom. A man stood there with two half-bushel measurers to measure the grain. They set in a tally box which tallied each one as it was removed and emptied. Good yielding oats kept the man on his toes. Most of the oats was called Russian. Grew tall and yielded well. It was sown broadcast either by hand or a seeder if one was to be had; if by hand, from a tub on the back of a wagon. The seeder took the place of the endgate and was driven from the wagon wheel. One time the team ran away with the outfit. Sure did buzz. When the hay ran out, oats were mown with the scythe for the horses. Corn fodder was cut with a butcher knife, if you had a pair of legs.

Father was building the granary, a sudden snowstorm came up. He started for the house but went the wrong way. He ran into his stack which set his directions wrong, so he got to the house.

They had an apple orchard, and a couple big Richmond cherry trees that were loaded with cherries every year. Also a row of mulberry trees which furnished many a pie and dish of berries. A big garden, nearly always a watermelon patch. Pumpkins were planted with part of the corn.

Father often went to Hebron and bought garden stuff. Generally brought a big watermelon. The road to Hebron went across his pasture before the land was fenced and cropped. The wits were there for many years.

Bands of Indian shows sometimes came by. Covered wagons going West in spring, back East busted in the fall. They'd stop to water the horses and eat their meal in the shade of the mulberry trees which were beside the road. Progress has removed both the covered wagons and the trees. Roving gypsy horse traders were common. Always begging for sick baby.

Ronzo inherited the riding cultivator as soon as he got big enough to operate it. The seat was and still is adjustable. You guided the shovels with your feet or used the handles with your hand, or both together. The seat could be turned up and you could walk if you liked. A good way to develop a pair of legs.

A storage cave was built, a hole dug and roofed over with boards and covered with soil. Wooden steps to go down. A ventilator in the roof. The lumber rotted and the roof caved. After a couple of these a Russian cave was dug under the house. Twelve feet to the floor. Six feet of dirt over the top, then a 6-foot arched roof hole 16 feet long. It was dug with a spade and the dirt removed in a box hauled up the stair ramp by a horse and a rope. I don’t remember the year but I was just big enough to lead the horse (Old Fred). The cave stood without walling until the big bombers established a training flight just west of the house, when it had to be reinforced to stand the jar. Cement slabs on the side with brick arch.

The old house had one room added, which stood until 1918, when a large house was moved in and the two united. From then on the family began to scatter. In 1896, a neighbor who did carpentering was hired and a new barn was built with a lean-to. Stalls for 10 horses, built-in grain bin, and an overhead bin for oats in the lean-to. Later an addition was made to stall 8 more horses and an additional driveway and granary were built.

The dry weather took the orchard, except the mulberry trees.

Theodore Hedden died at his home on March 13, 1934, at the age of 74 years, 10 months, and 13 days. His wife Eva died June 18, 1941, at the age of 82 years, 6 months, and 24 days. The farm has been operated ever since by their son, Ronzo.

It was in the spring of 1871 that Joseph Jackson, 24, and a younger brother felt the lure of the western world, leaving northern England, county Yorkshire, the land of their nativity. In April, 1871, they sailed from Liverpool, taking three weeks to cross the Atlantic. A few years they spent working on farms near Clinton, Iowa.

Joseph came to Fairmont in 1875. He walked across country to Shickley, later buying out a relinquishment on the SW¼ of Sec. 35, Hamilton township.

Tired of bachelorhood, he started corresponding with a young lady from Davenport, Iowa, suggested by a mutual acquaintance. He walked to Carleton and boarded the train for Davenport, where he was married to Julina Alice Whisler in April, 1888. They returned to a one-room home which is still a part of the house where the family of the two daughters, Gertrude and Myrtle, and a son, Royal, grew up.

At the time of Royal’s marriage Mother and Father moved into Bruning, where Joseph Jackson died on June 7, 1926, and Mrs. Jackson on July 12, 1947.

Royal and wife continued to live on the farm until February, 1967, when they retired to Bruning. They have two children, Alice Saunders of Lincoln and Donald R. Jackson, M.D., of Omaha.

Daniel M. Lefever was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on March 22, 1850. He was one of 14 children. In 1874, Mr. Lefever moved to Illinois, where he lived for six years.
Daniel Lefever met with a fatal accident in 1907 and Mrs. Lefever was left to raise her family alone. Mrs. Lefever passed away in 1946.

Paul, the eldest son, still lives on the home place. Watson Weldon was born in Yorkshire, England, on February 25, 1836. At about 30 years of age, he came to America, where he met and married Martha Fisher, who was born in Knottsville, Missouri, on March 2, 1856. They were married in Wilber, Nebraska, March 2, 1872. Mr. Weldon came to Fillmore County in 1870 and took a homestead on the NE¼ of Sec. 2, Hamilton township. Their closest trading center was Wilber, where Mr. Weldon walked to work, and brought home supplies.

Mrs. Trenary recalls that her mother often told of the Indians walking by and wanting food, but if her mother told them she had none they would walk to the next neighbors south (the Sauers) and beg.

Mr. Weldon helped dig the first well in Geneva.

Mr. and Mrs. Weldon were the parents of 10 children, of whom two died at an early age. The children were Charley, born in 1873 and passed away at 18 months of age; Jackson, born in 1877 and died in 1948; James, born in 1879 and died in 1955; Thomas, born in 1882 and died in 1912; Dan, born in 1884 and died in 1957; Bessie, born in 1885 and died in 1953; Anna, born in 1887 and the only surviving member of her family; Katie, born 1890 and died in 1964. Another infant was born dead and is buried on the homestead.

George F. Woods was born in Jefferson County, Indiana. He married Mary L. Elliott, also born in Jefferson County, in January, 1876. They lived in Knox County, Missouri, for nine years. A water shortage in Missouri decided them to go west. In March, 1886, they came to Nebraska to visit the John Elliott family in Thayer County, who were cousins of Mrs. Woods. While visiting, they heard of an 80-acre farm for sale in Fillmore County and purchased it. The farm had a small house, a barn, a granary, and a good well.

When the Woods family moved to Fillmore County, District 82 was not completely finished, so the children attended Prairie Grove school in Belle Prairie township.

The day of the blizzard of '88 only a little snow fell at first. Later that day the blizzard struck with such force that it rattled the stovepipe. Mr. Woods looked out and saw it was a bad storm, and about 3 p.m. got a horse to go to school to get their son John from Prairie Grove school. They lived about 1½ miles from school. There was a hedge and mulberry trees they could follow to return home. They were fortunate not to lose any livestock during the blizzard. Mr. and Mrs. Woods brought two cows and a calf when they moved to Nebraska.

Mrs. Woods learned to like Nebraska and later when she visited Indiana she was glad to return to Fillmore County.

Mr. and Mrs. Woods had three children; John, Emma (Mrs. Edgar Miller), and James, who was born in Fillmore County. Mrs. Miller is the only surviving member of her family.

Mr. Woods died in 1901 and Mrs. Woods in 1924. They are buried in the Harmony Cemetery. —Mrs. Emma Miller
INDUSTRY

Biegert Brothers, Inc.—consisting of Max, John, Virgil, and Waldean Biegert—started in the airplane spray business in 1947 with one Stearman biplane. Their first job was spraying weeds in cornfields at Waverly, Nebraska. The first field ever sprayed for pay in Nebraska was on the farm of John Dondlinger, NW of Shickley, for the elimination of a small acreage of bindweed.

We sprayed many thousands of acres of corn and wheat in Kansas in the years 1947-1949. We acquired our first Government contract in Wyoming in 1949. With three light twin-engined Cessna aircraft, we covered 500,000 acres of rangeland with poisoned bran for the control of grasshoppers. On that job, we dispersed more than 5,000,000 pounds of bran. In 1950, for grasshopper control, we covered 600,000 acres of rangeland.

In 1951 and 1952, we covered many thousands of acres of cotton in Arkansas for pest control. In the fall of 1952, we moved our operation—by then we had seven airplanes—to Managua, Nicaragua, to work on cotton there. In the spring of 1953, we purchased a B-17 from the city of Stuttgart, Arkansas. The plane was in their city park as a war memorial and had to be disassembled and moved 300 miles to Springfield, Missouri, for assembly, which was quite a task. As the plane was badly mutilated after seven years in the park, it was almost impossible to assemble and fly it. After six months of constant work—14 hours a day, and 7 days a week—the plane was ready for ferry. At this time the U. S. Government gave us quite a time because of technicalities in the bill of sale and the titling of the aircraft. After many months of negotiations and two trips to Washington, D.C., with Robert Waring of Geneva, we finally acquired clear title to the plane.

As an airplane of this size and type had never been used for spraying, we were subjected to much ridicule when people learned that was the use we were going to put it to. After a year of outfitting the plane and attempting to get a spray contract, we acquired the job of spraying Lansing, Michigan, for gypsy moth, which is an insect that destroys trees. The job was such an astounding success that we were soon busy every summer with huge government contracts. In 1955, we sprayed 350,000 acres for gypsy moth control. In 1956, we sprayed 1,400,000 acres of citrus to control the Mediterranean fruit fly. In 1957, we sprayed 750,000 acres for spruce budworm control; also, in the same year, we sprayed 43,000 acres in Fillmore County for grasshoppers. In 1958, again for grasshopper control, we sprayed 800,000 acres in Colorado.

In 1959, we converted the airplane to fire-fighting and did considerable work fighting forest fires in the United States and Canada.

In 1960, we decided to retire from the aircraft application business and sold both airplanes. The original plane, N17W, was sold to a flying company in Arizona and is still flying in this type of business. The second plane, N117W, acquired in 1956, was sold to Bolivia and was later demolished in an accident there.

In their 14 years in the business, the Biegert Brothers sprayed approximately 8,000,000 acres of farm and rangeland.

—Data from Biegert Brothers
Liberty Township

Liberty township, located six miles east of Geneva, is bounded on the north by Exeter, on the west by Madison, and on the south by Glengary townships, and on the east by Saline County. Turkey Creek winds from southwest to northeast through its southeastern corner. This stream has running water the year round, and some of the best bottom lands lie along it. There are 35 irrigation wells in the township, and more coming up. There are also three sandpits which provide gravel for county roads as well as good fishing.

The township is crossed from north to south by Nebraska Highway 76, which follows the first section line east of the Madison township border. The Fairmont-Helvey branch of the Burlington slants diagonally from northwest to southeast across Secs. 19 to 34.

The main crops are wheat, corn, oats, milo, and alfalfa; alfalfa is raised for both feed and seed. Livestock consists mostly of stock cattle and hogs; feeding cattle is not a major operation in Liberty township. A few sheep are raised. Almost every farm has some poultry; many poultry raisers contract eggs to hatcheries.

A historical marker between Secs. 10 and 16 in Liberty township reminds us of a young mother who passed away and was buried there while they were en route west in a covered wagon. The inscription on the tombstone at the grave site reads:

Melissa Wife of
G. G. Montz
February 21, 1872 Aged 31 years 1 month and 12 days

The first Czechs came to Fillmore County in 1867. They came directly from Europe and settled along Turkey Creek in order to have firewood and water. Usually only one member of the family came; he would work at various jobs until he had money enough to send for another member of the family. It was often a long time before some of the larger families could be united again.

SCHOOLS

District No. 2 was founded on December 4, 1871, when G. W. Gue, county superintendent, set aside Secs. 29, 30, 31, and 32 of Liberty township and Secs. 35 and 36 of Madison township to constitute this district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872-73</td>
<td>Helen Loghrty</td>
<td>$12 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>F. A. Calven $30 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-74</td>
<td>Shadrack Doty</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>Sophia Lee</td>
<td>$72 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
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<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>William Dyer</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>L. L. Covel</td>
<td>$28 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>W. R. Wait</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Ellen Burke</td>
<td>$38 mo. for 1½ mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Jennie English</td>
<td>$38 mo. for 1½ mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-78</td>
<td>Samuel Browning</td>
<td>$35 mo. for 5 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-80</td>
<td>W. P. Evans</td>
<td>$35 mo. for 5 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>S. D. Purviance</td>
<td>$28.33 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>C. H. Bassett</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>Ella Kinrade</td>
<td>$25 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>O. D. Wilson</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Eva M. Dawes</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>O. D. Wilson</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>Samuel Browning</td>
<td>$37.50 mo. for 8 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>Anna Kinrade</td>
<td>$27.50 mo. for 8 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td>Anna Kinrade</td>
<td>$28 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884-85</td>
<td>Nancy Robertson</td>
<td>$28 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>Nancy Robertson</td>
<td>$28 mo. for 5 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>James Painion</td>
<td>$40 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>Celia D. Grier</td>
<td>$33 mo. for 2 mo.</td>
<td>A. C. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>Kithe Putney</td>
<td>$32.50 mo. for 2 mo.</td>
<td>R. B. Tucker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>Cyrus J. Trauger</td>
<td>$35 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>R. B. Tucker</td>
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<td>1897-88</td>
<td>S. D. Purviance</td>
<td>$37.55 mo. for 6 mo.</td>
<td>John Kennedy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are no records from 1889 to 1919, except of the school directors who were O. D. Wilson in 1896; J. P. Baroch from 1897 to 1900; Charles Ondrak from 1900 to 1903; and James Krejci from 1903 to 1908.

District 2 merged with the Milligan school system in 1966.

District No. 5 was founded on January 6, 1872. George W. Gue, county superintendent, set aside Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 of Liberty township to constitute this district.

Taken the day after a tornado, on June 14, 1924, destroyed the school house of District No. 5. The school board was going to build a new school and was trying to decide what to do with the old building when the tornado destroyed it.

Photo form Louis krejci
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1872-73</td>
<td>William Dyer</td>
<td>$16.60 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>William Dyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>William Shirley</td>
<td>$27 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>Peter Youngers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-77</td>
<td>Solomon Browning</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 4 mo.</td>
<td>Peter Youngers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887-78</td>
<td>Laura Bock</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>Peter Youngers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-80</td>
<td>M. Nicholson</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>John Hromadka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-83</td>
<td>Mrs. M. Youngers</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>D. H. Dillon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td>Viola Mosher</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 5 mo.</td>
<td>Frank Kucera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-85</td>
<td>Emma Gabel</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>Frank Kucera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-87</td>
<td>B. J. Ryan</td>
<td>$22.50 mo. 2 terms</td>
<td>John Hromadka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>Julia Reid</td>
<td>$35 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>John Hromadka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>M. J. Dwyer</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 3 mo.</td>
<td>Anton Becwar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>Hattie Madison</td>
<td>$30 mo. for 5 mo.</td>
<td>Anton Becwar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the summer of 1891, a new schoolhouse was built one-half mile south of its old location so as to make it more central.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March to June 1891</td>
<td>Emma Sage</td>
<td>$133 1/2 for 4 mo.</td>
<td>Anton Becwar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District No. 6 Schoolhouse (February 22, 1941).

On petition of Peter Youngers, County Superintendent G. W. Gue set aside Secs. 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, and 36 of Liberty township to constitute District No. 6. The election of officers took place at the home of D. H. Dillon on January 13, 1872.

On March 3, 1872, County Superintendent G. W. Gue set aside Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 of Liberty township to constitute District No. 25.

District 6 merged with Milligan in 1962.

On petition of Peter Youngers, County Superintendent G. W. Gue set aside Secs. 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, and 36 of Liberty township to constitute District No. 6. The election of officers took place at the home of D. H. Dillon on January 13, 1872.

On March 3, 1872, County Superintendent G. W. Gue set aside Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 of Liberty township to constitute District No. 25.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 1876</td>
<td>Grace Crooker</td>
<td>$100 for 4 mo</td>
<td>L. W. Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12, 1877</td>
<td>S. Browning</td>
<td>$90 for 3 mo</td>
<td>L. W. Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 10, 1877</td>
<td>John Beardsley</td>
<td>$90 for 3 mo</td>
<td>L. W. Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16, 1878</td>
<td>J. B. Sexton</td>
<td>$90 for 3 mo</td>
<td>L. W. Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10, 1882</td>
<td>Marietta Avery</td>
<td>$75 for 3 mo</td>
<td>S. O. Hubbard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 1879</td>
<td>Lou Nicholson</td>
<td>$120 for 4 mo</td>
<td>J. L. Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18, 1891</td>
<td>Ida B. Walton</td>
<td>$90 for 2 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 29, 1892</td>
<td>Ida B. Walton</td>
<td>$90 for 2 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 11, 1893</td>
<td>Charles S. Holmes</td>
<td>$40 for 4 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 21, 1893</td>
<td>A. J. Ryan</td>
<td>$100 for 60 days</td>
<td>J. L. Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 3, 1888</td>
<td>Lillian Donovan</td>
<td>$90 for 3 mo</td>
<td>Thomas Durkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 24, 1889</td>
<td>B. J. Ryan</td>
<td>$108 for 3 mo</td>
<td>Thomas Durkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6, 1889,</td>
<td>C. L. Tallmadge</td>
<td>$144 for 4 mo</td>
<td>Thomas Durkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 17, 1890</td>
<td>Ida B. Walton</td>
<td>$90 for 3 mo</td>
<td>Thomas Durkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 1890</td>
<td>Ida B. Walton</td>
<td>$210 for 7 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 20, 1891</td>
<td>Ida B. Walton</td>
<td>$60 for 2 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 21, 1891</td>
<td>Jennie Hyneman</td>
<td>$56 for 2 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 30, 1891</td>
<td>Jennie Hyneman</td>
<td>$120 for 4 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 29, 1892</td>
<td>Jennie Hyneman</td>
<td>$50 for 2 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 27, 1892</td>
<td>Jennie Hyneman</td>
<td>$50 for 2 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 5, 1892</td>
<td>Charles S. Holmes</td>
<td>$140 for 4 mo</td>
<td>G. Girch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before Convertibles and Snow Tires. As late as 1940, the teacher in District No. 6 sometimes got to school by this kind of emergency transportation. (Mr. John Hromadka and team.)

Sept., 1912, to May, 1913: Estella Krejci. $450 for 9 mo. James Stetina
Sept., 1913, to May, 1914: Edward Chudly. $400 for 8 mo. James Slezk
Sept., 1914, to May, 1915: Bessie Selment. $405 for 9 mo. James Slezk
Sept., 1915, to May, 1916: Bessie Selment. $405 for 9 mo. James Slezk
Sept., 1916, to May, 1917: Elizabeth Kelly. $450 for 9 mo. James Slezk
Sept., 1917, to May, 1918: Frank Votipka. $495 for 9 mo. James Slezk
Sept., 1918, to May, 1919: Mollie (Mrs. Frank)
Sept., 1920, to May, 1921: Agnes Ondrak. $1,035 for 9 mo. James Slezk
Sept., 1921, to May, 1922: Emma Kuska. $800 for 9 mo. James Prachell
Sept., 1922, to May, 1923: Katherine Kuska. $900 for 9 mo. James Prachell
Sept., 1923, to May, 1924: Catherine Kuska. $855 for 9 mo. James Prachell
Sept., 1924, to May, 1925: Alice Laun. $865 for 9 mo. James Prachell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 9, 1894</td>
<td>S. L. Bleuvelt</td>
<td>$195 for 6 mo</td>
<td>Frank Rozanek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sept. 27, 1895, to Sept. 1896: Charles Smrha. $50 for 2 mo. Frank Rozanek
| Sept. 6, 1896, to Oct. 26, 1896: Fannie Motis. $66 for 2 mo. Frank Rozanek
| Jan. 20, 1897, to May 21, 1897: E. J. Motis. $150 for 5 mo. Frank Rozanek
| Sept., 1897, to May 3, 1898: E. J. Motis. $240 for 8 mo. Frank Rozanek
| Oct. 1, 1898, to May 18, 1899: Anna Smrha. $240 for 8 mo. Frank Rozanek
| June 25, 1900: Emil Kubicek

Information is missing from 1900 to 1906.

Sept. 3, 1906-07: Maxie Holmots. $140 for 4 mo.

$190 for 5 mo.

Sept., 1907-08: Tom F. Hanabery. $360 for 9 mo. James Stetina
Sept., 1908-09: Iva A. Mitchell. $400 for 8 mo. James Stetina
Sept., 1909, to Jan., 1910: Tina D. Erving. $237.50 for 4.75 mo. James Stetina
Jan., 1910, to May 13, 1910: Iva A. Mitchell. $250 for 5 mo. James Stetina
### Date | Teacher | Salary | Director
--- | --- | --- | ---

### Families

It may be interesting to note that a father, mother, and daughter all taught in this school: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Votipka (both deceased) and their daughter Rita. They all graduated from high schools within Fillmore County. Mr. Votipka graduated from the eighth grade in District 33.

District 33 merged with Milligan in 1966.

On March 16, 1875, John A. Dempster, county superintendent, set aside Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of Liberty township to constitute District No. 72.

District No. 95 was founded on November 18, 1893, when County Superintendent J. J. Burke set aside Secs. 1, 2, and 3 of Liberty township and Secs. 34, 35, and 36 of Exeter township to constitute District No. 95.

On July 1, 1953, Districts 5, 25, 72, and 95 consolidated with District 20 of Exeter township. Districts 2, 6, and 33, as previously noted, consolidated with Milligan.

### FAMILIES

Mr. and Mrs. John K. Barbur came to Fillmore County in October, 1870, from Woodstock, Illinois, and located in Sec. 3 of Liberty township. They came with a wagon and team; they were five weeks on the road and were laid up one week because of bad weather. Upon recommendation, Mr. Barbur bought a filing without going to see the land. They used a sod shanty near Turkey Creek until their dugout home, dugout barn, and cellar were ready for occupancy in January, 1871.

The accounts of the Barbur, Coates, Downey, Dyer, Eberstein, Howarth, McGhie, Murphy, Nolan, Nugent, Ramsdell, Songster, Stephens, and Ziska families are taken, with minor alterations, from Pioneer Stories, by G. R. McKeith, of Exeter, Nebraska.

![One of the first frame houses in Liberty township](Photo From James Barbur)
The Barburs opened their home for religious purposes and had the first preaching service held in Fillmore County. The Rev. Mr. Whiting, a Free Methodist, was the preacher. In the Barbur home was organized the first Sunday School in the county. A Mr. Snowden came from Lincoln for that purpose, bringing with him 20 books to start a library.

The first year of farming was not very encouraging. They had planted sod corn, buckwheat, squash, turnips, and beans. Everything looked very good until a hailstorm struck the farm and dashed everything to pieces except the turnips. Then Mr. Barbur longed for home and wanted to go back, but Mrs. Barbur refused. She believed they could fight it out, and so they remained. In spite of drawbacks, they could at least at one time boast of "high living" in having venison for meat. This was considered so good that some hungry Esau came around when the Barburs were away from home and stole half of the precious deer.

Mr. Barbur killed several antelope and received a share of buffalo meat from Palmer Lancaster. Mr. Lancaster on one occasion secured, with his own gun and Mr. Barbur's shotgun, 13 out of a flock of 14 wild geese. During those early days, the geese and cranes were so plentiful that he paid a man a dollar a day to kill them, or they would have no crops.

The Barburs, like others, suffered from the grasshoppers. A black cloud appeared in the north, and soon grasshoppers began to fall. A cornfield of 100 acres quickly was nothing but a patch of short stalks.

Mr. Barbur helped to organize Fillmore County, at a meeting in Col. McCalla's dugout, and helped to secure the placing of the county seat in Geneva.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Becwar migrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia by sailing ship in 1868, arriving in November. They came by train as far as Lincoln. There they hired a wagon and driver to bring them and their possessions across the prairies to the Krai homestead north of Milligan (E 1/2, SE 1/4, Sec. 6). After paying their fare to the driver, the family had only 75 cents left.

The Becwars took a homestead on the 80 acres west of the Krai homestead (W 1/2, SE 1/4, Sec. 16). The family consisted of mother, father, son (Anton, aged 7), and two daughters (Josephine, 4, and Agnes, 2). Later three more children, Barbara, Mike, and Mary, were born to this union. On the homestead they made a dugout, using an animal hide to cover the doorway, for a home.

Mr. Becwar was a cabinet maker. On their way to Liberty township they had stopped in Pleasant Hill, where a mill was being built, and he was promised work the next week. He walked back to Pleasant Hill where he worked for some time at 50 cents a day. He helped build the first William Smith flour mill on Turkey Creek at Pleasant Hill. He walked 25
miles to work, staying during the week and coming home on week ends. At the end of his first week, he walked home on the Saturday night carrying enough lumber for a door for their dugout. On other weekends, he would follow the well-worn path across the prairie carrying groceries, once including a 50-pound sack of flour.

The first years of living in this country were very hard. Living in the dugout was unpleasant, as it was hard to heat. Beds were made on the floor, and often snakes were to be found living with them. They ground corn by using two stones; cornbread was one of their major items of food. A certain weed that grew along Turkey Creek was gathered to make into a tea, the only beverage available besides water. Their principal meat was prairie chickens, which were plentiful and were usually shot on trips home from work. The following spring they bought a heifer calf with Mr. Becwar's carpenter earnings. They broke the calf to yoke and used it, with a neighbor's horse, to break the sod. They planted corn and watermelons. Melons grew as large as half-bushel baskets.

In 1870-1871, Mr. Becwar was employed building the B. & M. Railroad. The main line was completed through Fillmore County in 1871, after which the towns of Exeter and Fairmont were laid out and grew rapidly. In 1871, Mr. Becwar bought from the railroad the SW ¼ of Sec. 23, Liberty township; this farm was handed down to Mike Becwar, Sr., who in turn gave it to Mike Becwar, Jr., in 1922. At present Leonard Becwar and family live on this farm. As of 1987, this farm has been in the same family for 96 years. Indians came through occasionally begging for food. Mrs. Becwar usually gave them homemade bread. The Indians, being friendly, would settle for that. However, usually several Indians would come to the place at once, and while one was at the house others would pick up whatever they could get, and the woman of the house would be too scared to do anything about it.

Rustlers were a real problem. They would come through stealing cattle. The Becwars' cow had a calf. The cow was turned out to graze and the calf was tied up at home. Rustlers came and took their cow, along with neighbor Zelenka's cow. During the night the Becwars' cow ran away from the rustlers and returned to her calf, but the Zelenkas never did recover their animal.

The children of the Frank Becwars married and lived in Kansas and Nebraska. Agnes and Josie settled in Kansas; Barbara went to Nelson, Nebraska, and Mary to Sunol, Nebraska. Mike Becwar, Sr., and Anton stayed in Fillmore County.

Anton Becwar, son of Frank and brother of Mike, Sr., was born in Czechoslovakia on June 16, 1861. He came to America with his parents and lived to manhood with them. He was united in marriage to Marie Bures on November 27, 1883. They had 11 children. After their marriage Anton and Marie moved into a new frame house on the parents' homestead. In 1895, they bought the SW ¼ of Sec. 23 for $10,000. This was a very modern farmstead for its day: the barn, corn crib, and hog house still stand. However, two Becwar children, Charles and Anna, contracted diphtheria on this farm from eating creek ice at a school picnic and both passed away on the same day. Their father, not wanting to live there any longer, sold this farm to Joe Domling. Anton and his wife then bought the NW ¼ of Sec. 19, Liberty township, and lived there the rest of their lives. Anton passed away January 31, 1937, and his wife Marie on October 9, 1933.

Children of this union still living are: Katherine Kuska and Antonia Stofer, of Fairmont, Josephine Menke, of Exeter, and Mamie Miner, of Dorchester.

Mike Becwar, Sr., was born in the family dugout in 1872. He was married in 1897 to Josie Beck. They had eight children: Mike, Jr., Frank, Barbara (Mrs. James Tesar), Mrs. Anna Foster, Mrs. Rose Svec, Mrs. Emma Koca, Mrs. Valasta Moore, and Gus (who passed away during World War II in Cairo, Egypt).

Mike Becwar farmed in Fillmore County until 1923, when he moved near Tobias, Nebraska, where he farmed for 21 more years. He and his wife then moved to Geneva, where they lived four years and were privileged to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. Then they moved to Milligan to be closer to their children. His wife Josie passed away in 1951; he followed her in 1962. His farming operations included the usual ones: raising cattle, hogs, and chickens, and wheat, oats, and corn. He served for more than 20 years on the school board in District 6.

He recalled his mother's telling them about the cattle rustlers who got, but lost again, their family cow, though the same rustlers took several steers from the near-by Kralis. He also remembered her account of the grasshoppers in 1874. They dropped from the sky, eating everything green, including his dad's jacket.

District 6 schoolhouse was first located in the northeast corner of the section where it is now. Mike Becwar, Sr., went to this first school on the corner. Mrs. Peter Youngers was his teacher. This schoolhouse was later sold to a Mr. Nichols, and a new one was built ¼ mile south of the same farm. The new schoolhouse served for many years, and in 1941 celebrated its 50th year in service.

Albert Biba came to America with his parents in 1878 at the age of six years. His future wife, Josie Kovanda, came in 1886 at the age of 18. They were both from Czechoslovakia. They were married August 18, 1890, at Geneva. To this union were born nine children: William, Albert, Anton, James, Edward, Fred, Mrs. Joe Kuska, Mrs. Earl Manning, and Alice.
bought the homestead rights of the NE ¼ of Sec. 2, in Liberty Township, Fillmore County, where they resided until the time of their deaths. Mr. Coates died in 1888 and Mrs. Coates in 1911.

We are indebted to Joseph Coates, the fourth son in the family, for the following information. He remembered very distinctly the farm home in England as well as experiences of pioneer life on the prairies. When they came to this country there was plenty of wild game. One day he came on a large herd of antelope lying in a ravine. When they saw him they made a rush which seemed to shake the earth. This was the apparent effect caused by that particular kind of animal as it ran. Prairie fires were the terror of their lives. A fire could be seen for three days before it reached their place and could be seen for three days after it had passed. This gave ample time to make fireguards, but these were often jumped.

He would often visit the campfires of the Indians and sit in their circles, watching their mode of life and listening to their war songs. The Indians always seemed happy as larks. Life seemed a real pleasure, and they made the best of their conditions.

Among the peculiar stories of early years are those about a tornado which completely destroyed the house and farm buildings on the Wadman place near Turkey Creek. When the tornado struck the house, Mrs. John Wadman (nee Mary Coates) and her two children had retired for the night. They were lying on a feather bed which lay on a mattress on the bedstead. They were carried away by the storm and afterward found in a ravine about four rods away. They were lying on the mattress, but the feather bed and bedding had disappeared.

The brother John and the hired man were also in bed. John was carried and thrown into a large pond four rods from the house. While he was in the water, a roof was pressed down against his neck and back, and then just as suddenly taken away. When found by his brothers, who had come to the rescue, he was clothed in the neckband of his nightshirt.

The hired man was found with a large cut over his eye. To show the power or mysterious force of a tornado, we mention the fact that a bull wheel from a large header, which would have taken some time to be removed from its place by a practical machinist, was instantly removed, without any other damage to the header, and was carried to a spot half a mile away. Mr. Wadman was raising white-faced cattle and had a thoroughbred bull tied to a hitching post in the middle of the yard. The bull was not touched or moved.

Mrs. Coates — “Grandma,” as she was usually called — will long be remembered for the great service she rendered to families in the district. She often acted as doctor and nurse. She visited the Old Country three times, and Mr. Coates also crossed the Atlantic three times.

William Downey, a native of New York State, went with his parents to Michigan, where he grew up to manhood. He came to Nebraska in May, 1871, with Messrs. Ramsdell, Stephens, and Krader, the latter settling in Dodge County. They traveled all the way with wagons and teams and were six weeks on the road.

Mrs. Downey and the children stayed near Lincoln about nine months. Mr. Downey and Mr. Stephens came to this district and sought claims. Mr. Downey homesteaded in July on the W ¼ of the NE ¼ of Sec 2, T7, R1W, but did not go onto the claim until June, 1872. A sod house was built, in which they lived for some time without a floor. Their frame house was built 15 years later.

On their way to Nebraska, they would camp over Sunday in some suitable place. Mr. Downey was careful not to travel on Sunday. One Saturday they camped near a woods in Iowa, where the women did a washing. They were told it would not be a suitable place to camp in case of storm. In spite of Mr. Downey’s protests, they decided to travel on Sunday. After traveling 12 miles, they camped about three o’clock in the afternoon near a large woods just before the coming of a storm, which they could not see coming up because of the trees. A spring wagon in which Mrs. Krader and her twins were riding was placed between two large trees. They had just got out of the wagon when a large limb fell from one of the trees and another tree fell, smashing the wagon. Mr. Krader was able to repair the damage, but the time lost for the repairs, to say nothing of the danger to life and limb, amounted to more than they had tried to gain by their Sunday travel.

On the claim, on one occasion a bed had been made on the floor of the sod house. A buffalo robe was placed beneath the bedding. On the following morning, when the bedding was taken up, a rattlesnake was found among the bed-clothes. The snake had evidently come into the house through a mouse-hole in the sod wall. During the great blizzard they found it necessary to bring the chickens into the house.

Mr. Downey died on March 30, 1901. Mrs. Downey then made her home with her son Herman, and spent some time with other members of her family, until her death on January 14, 1923.

We are indebted to Joseph Coates, the fourth son in the family, for the following information. He remembered very distinctly the farm home in England as well as experiences of pioneer life on the prairies. When they came to this country there was plenty of wild game. One day he came on a large herd of antelope lying in a ravine. When they saw him they made a rush which seemed to shake the earth. This was the apparent effect caused by that particular kind of animal as it ran. Prairie fires were the terror of their lives. A fire could be seen for three days before it reached their place and could be seen for three days after it had passed. This gave ample time to make fireguards, but these were often jumped.

He would often visit the campfires of the Indians and sit in their circles, watching their mode of life and listening to their war songs. The Indians always seemed happy as larks. Life seemed a real pleasure, and they made the best of their conditions.

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William Dyer was born in Hambridge, Somersetshire, England. He came to America in 1871, bringing with him his wife and child (Robert Dyer, later an implement dealer), and came directly to Exeter. He bought some railroad land in Saline County, but in the fall of 1872 he homesteaded on Sec. 29, Liberty township, where he farmed for several years and taught school in District 6 and other places. Railroad land at that time was worth about $6 or $7 an acre. They lived in a dugout until 1880, when he built a frame house; but in that year his wife died, leaving him with their five children.

In the early days, Indians were sometimes seen passing along on their hunting expeditions. The men rode their shaggy mustang ponies, which were fitted up with two long poles reaching behind, on which they carried their camping outfit. What they were unable to load on the ponies was carried. One day Mrs. Dyer had just finished bathing the baby and had placed it in the crib when she turned around and saw some Indians standing in the room. They came into the house very quietly. They wanted permission to hunt beaver along the creek and also asked for bacon and rice. It was her first experience with the children of the plains.

On another occasion, while she was busy making bread, she looked around and found three Indians in the room. They wanted bread, which she showed them was not yet baked, but she promised that they would receive some by night. When Mr. Dyer returned home from school, he heard and learned of the Indians' visit, he took them three loaves of bread. It was two miles east along Turkey Creek to their camp.

During a blizzard the windows and the door of the dugout were completely covered with snow. Mr. Dyer and his family lay in bed until 12 o'clock noon wondering when it would be daylight. They had no idea of how late it was until they noticed a streak of light shining into the stove, the chimney being a straight one.

Mr. Dyer gave up farming in 1887 and worked for the Home Insurance Company of New York. He located in Exeter, though his insurance interests extended over a very large area. He was recognized as a faithful and industrious worker, doing a large business, including auctioneering and serving in the J. N. Cox store. He was an active worker in the Congregational Church until his death in September, 1901.

Henry Eberstein, who settled here very early but later went to Wichita, Kansas, was born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan. In the winter of 1863-1864, he enlisted in the First Michigan Cavalry. He served as attaché of the Potomac under Custer and Sheridan until the close of the war. After the Grand Review at Washington, the Michigan Cavalry Brigade was shipped to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and began the march to Salt Lake City. Other parts of the brigade were sent by another route. During this expedition they protected the "Ben Holladay" overland stage line from the Indians, and when winter came they moved to the city.

The Mormons at that time were bitter enemies of the government and never missed an opportunity to insult the soldiers or the Flag. One incident was often recalled. A sermon was preached by Brigham Young, who knew that the colonel of the Brigade, Peter Stagg, was present. So he boldly proclaimed, "Brave boys are they! but a dozen of my women with broomsticks can put the whole regiment to flight."

It seems that the colonel challenged an attack from the broomstick squadron. The next day he mounted the regiment, strung the column out to a mile in length, and headed toward the city, which was an unusual act. Those who had heard the talk the day before understood and passed the word along the line, and there was fire in the air. They marched and counter-marched in the principal streets with colors flying, and for once the rule of "Silence in the ranks" was suspended. There were shouts of "Danger in front," "Danger in the flanks."

"There she comes!" "They have got the colonel," "The coward won't fight," etc., etc. Half of the brigade would have surrendered had they come.

On March 16, 1866, the men were discharged and became citizens. They were two thousand feet from home, with nothing but a daily stagecoach for transportation. There were no two-cent fares or cheap lunch counters in those days. Instead, it was 25 cents per mile and "Jump out and push, boys!" on the steep hills. After 13 days and nights, nine passengers landed at Atchison, Kansas, not much worse for the experience, Eberstein among them.

Two years later, he returned to Nebraska and on May 30 homesteaded in Glengary township, Fillmore County (NE 1/4 of Section 34). The family now consisted of three bachelor brothers who worked and lived together for some time. They built a log house on the claim, rolling the logs up to the place by horse power. Having no funds for glass doors, they hung a blanket over the entrance, and one night a rattlesnake came in without knocking. A sister, Mrs. Ramsdell and her child, were staying there and sleeping on a mattress on the floor.

They broke prairie with five yoke of oxen hitched to a 24-inch plow and often argued as to which of the three could drive them best.

With the advent of the railroads, other monopolies began to flourish in the West under the protection of the "Big Elephant." The Burlington "swiped" half of the land along its line for 10 miles on either side and wrote a freight schedule that charged poor "Rube" coming and going. To illustrate: An enterprising Grafton farmer who thought to cut out the "Elevator Trust" loaded and shipped a car of wheat direct to Chicago; but with the returns came a claim for $15 more to balance expenses charge.

The price of a pound of coffee at Taylor's pioneer store in Exeter equalled the market value of 3½ bushels of corn. If you were prejudiced against burning corn for fuel, you might swap 150 bushels of corn at Lou Robertson's elevator for a ton of coal; or you could step over with plenty of collateral and warm your family through the banks at 36 per cent interest.

The Henry Eberstein family spent their last winter in Nebraska booming in the snowbanks. A long horizontal tunnel was dug to the chicken house and a short perpendicular shaft on to the haystack. Theirs was a feat of engineering for a time. They could almost oil the windmill standing on a snow-bank, and the apple orchard was out of sight. They decided to leave and picked up and moved to Kansas. Afterward, they read of schoolteachers and children freezing to death on the way from school, and they wondered if it was foresight or providence that led them out of the wilderness.

Both parents of Herbert Howarth came from England. He was born in a dugout in Saline County; his parents also lived for a time in a one-room frame building. Brought to Fillmore County in 1882 at the age of two years, he lived in Liberty township until 1943. He was married in November, 1923, to Nell Pflug of Exeter; they had no children. Before their marriage his wife taught school for 17 years.

He farmed in northeast Liberty for more than 60 years, raising hogs and cattle, averaging 100 head of cattle and 200 head of hogs yearly. He was a member of the North East District Weed Board of Fillmore County and sprayed weeds for Exeter, Liberty, and Fairmont townships for more than 10 years after moving to Exeter. He was affiliated with the Congregational Church until his death on August 23, 1956.

Walter Howarth came to this district on April 1, 1872, and homesteaded half a mile north of Turkey Creek on the county line. A native of Bolton, Lancashire, England, he came from a densely populated community to live on the lonely prairie.

When Mr. Howarth landed there was no depot at Exeter or Frontier. They were merely flag stations. How different the country looked! Nearly all the settlers lived in dugouts or sod houses. In those days the Indians came up the creek every winter trapping, and often he went in company with other young fellows and would sit in one of their tents in the evening to see their mode of life although not to be edified by their conversation. Only some of their younger boys could speak a little English, and they never spoke unless spoken to; but they made them welcome and gave them a seat by the fire, more especially if they came with a gift of tobacco.
Nearly every time Mr. Howarth met with the Indians, their medicine man, a tall, intelligent-looking Indian, was orating it around the circle. Tobacco and always had the first pull at the pipe before passing it except to fill the pipe, as he seemed to have charge of the ceremony, occasionally breaking into a ripple of smiles. For an hour at a time the medicine man would talk on and on, never stopping except to fill the pipe, as if he seemed to have charge of the tobacco and always had the first pull at the pipe before passing it around the circle.

One of the settlers on the creek had lost a number of turkeys with cholera and had thrown them into the bushes, and this same lot of Indians — Omahas and Pawnees — found the turkeys and ate them.

One night he was sitting in the tent next to a particularly good-looking Indian maiden, when she got hungry. Putting her hand under a pile of buffalo robes on which they were sitting, she pulled out a big cow's liver which someone had given them, and, cutting off two or three slices with a dirty-looking butcher knife, threw them into the fire in the middle of the tent. When they were just barely warmed, she drew them out and began to eat. This, and other things he saw, crushed all the romance for Indian life out of Mr. Howarth: no such cooking for him.

Houses in those days were wonderfully elastic affairs; and though this house consisted of only one room, yet it held the beds and furniture of an average family, and, in addition, a stock of groceries. The Indians were taking these from the shelves and asking for them. After the rescue party got there, the Indians bought and paid for a few things and soon left; but there was no more school that day. The girl and her mother were in no personal danger; but no doubt, without the men, the Indians wouldn't have left without taking more; and, as one of the Indians was sharpening his hatchet on a little grindstone which stood near the door, poor little Jennie thought her last day had come.

The schoolhouse, crude affair as it was — with sod walls, homemade desks, and planks for seats — turned out two or three pupils who afterward became very successful teachers. They didn't have a little smattering of Latin or algebra or botany but were well grounded in the essentials, the Three R's.

One spring morning Mr. Howarth was busily at work in the yard. He had finished teaching the week before — here let us say that in the five years he taught, the school term was six months and $25 per month was the highest salary he received — and had just drawn all his back pay. It was a beautiful morning, the kind of day which makes one glad to be alive, and he was singing, at the top of his voice. "Come where my love lies dreaming," when he happened to turn around, and there stood a six-foot Indian close to him. The moment he saw him the thought of his money came to mind, and before he could beg, and proceeded to do so.

Walter Howarth died on March 22, 1926.

John Hromadka came to the United States in 1876, leaving his family of three brothers, two sisters, and his parents in Austria-Hungary (now Czechoslovakia). His destination was Exeter, Nebraska, then a small railroad town. He came as a laborer, and was met by a Mr. Sluka, whom he had known in the old country, but his trade was that of a blacksmith and horticulturist, which he had learned while serving in the Austrian army.

All the neighbors helped him put up a blacksmith shop and purchase tools. The anvil and hammer are still in use. After he was well established in his shop, located in Sec. 35 of Liberty township (where his grandson John Hromadka now lives), he started, from twigs, many cottonwood trees, which are still standing. There he also made a sod house. Blacksmith work was profitable, as many of his patrons came from miles away. He was able to purchase the land from his father-in-law (Joseph Kral), 80 acres for $600. Later he bought seven more 80's. He married Anna Kral in 1879, and the couple had seven children.

August Hromadka became a surgeon in Santa Monica, California. He received his early education in Milligan, and went to Iowa and Northwestern College. Before entering medical school, he taught District 6, his home district. During World War I, he served in France as a captain in the Medical Corps. His widow Ethel and his sons still live in Santa Monica. John Hromadka is also a surgeon, practicing in Santa Monica. The other members of the Hromadka family were Julia Zerran, Frank Hromadka, Jenny Kubicke, Pauline Bures, Mary Capek, and Rose Votipka.

John Hromadka, Sr., was a large raiser of pure-bred stock. He also produced vineyards and orchards. In later years he moved into Milligan. Mrs. Hromadka passed away in 1924, and Mr. Hromadka in October, 1931.

Frank Hromadka (son of John) married Anna Herynk of near Milligan; they made their home on a farm northeast of Milligan, on Sec. 36 of Liberty township, now farmed by Milo Hromadka. The original homestead is still in the family and is farmed by John Hromadka.

John Kolar was born in this country in 1881. His parents came from Czechoslovakia to America in 1871 and homesteaded in Sec. 10 of Liberty township. His father was married twice in the old country and had five children, three boys and two girls. John Kolar, whose father died in 1896, began farming in 1904. He was married to Emma Havell in June, 1905. Two daughters were born to this union, Viola and Helen.

He lived on the same place for more than 75 years. Among his prized possessions were two large illustrated Bibles, translated from the Hebrew language into the Bohemian, and a book giving biographical sketches of all the saints of olden times. He passed away on December 25, 1959.

Joseph Kral came to the United States (the promised land) in 1869. The trip across the Atlantic took six weeks in a sailing ship. Their first stop in Nebraska was Nebraska City. After they settled near Milligan, the Krels went to Nebraska City by ox team to do their shopping.

Mr. Kral served in the Union Army before taking a homestead, and then homesteaded the place that is known as the Hromadka place (Secs. 26 and 35 in Liberty township). They had two daughters. One (Mrs. John Jesse) came with them from Austria-Hungary; the other (Mrs. John Hromadka) was born on the homestead.

The settlers' hardships were many. Often their possessions were taken away from them during the night. Rustlers would take their oxen and many other valuable possessions. Wild game — deer, antelope, buffalo, and turkeys — roamed these prairies. Friendly Indians used to camp there near Turkey Creek.

Mrs. Kral was a midwife for many of the pioneer women in the locality. She also grew her own herbs and made her own medicines and ointments. In her later years she is said to have had a confection shop; but further information about this versatile pioneer woman seems to have been lost with time.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Krejci, Sr., with a family of 10 children, came to Omaha from Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1879. They lived in Omaha until June of that year, when they came to Fillmore County. They purchased the SW ¼ of Sec. 13 in Liberty township, 5 miles N of Milligan, from the Burlington Railroad for $4 an acre.

There was nothing but prairie land in all directions when they came. Mr. Krejci bought a yoke of oxen and broke the sod and built a sod house. They experienced all the hard
times known by the rest of the first settlers in the country. But after some two or three years times got better.

Frank Krejci, Sr., farmed the place until 1899 when he retired and rented the farm to his son John, who owned and lived on the NW ¼ of the same section. When his wife (Mrs. Frank Krejci, Sr.) passed away in 1908, he sold the farm to his son James, who then rented it to the James Betka, Sr., family, who farmed it until 1913. Then James' son Edward Krejci farmed it until 1917, when James sold it to his brother John Krejci. In 1939, John Krejci transferred it to his son Fred Krejci, who is the present owner. Fred Krejci became Fillmore County's “native artist;” the Sunday World Herald Magazine used 20 of his pictures for magazine covers between 1951 and 1961.

John Krejci

John Krejci was born in Czechoslovakia in 1868. His wife, Annie Kucerna, was born there also. His parents came to America in 1879, in a ship that was half steamer and half sailing vessel; they were 20 days at sea. They came to Omaha, where they stayed for three months. It was hard for them to get work because they could not speak English. They came to Fillmore County later in 1879.

Mr. Krejci, 11 years old, was put to work tending cattle. The cattle had to be staked out morning and evening. Water for them was drawn from a bored well with a bucket. At 13, he started to work for John Zelanka at $6 a month. There he had 16 head of cattle and 5 head of horses to water. John Zelanka had 160 acres of wheat; Mr. Krejci shocked the crop at the same rate of pay per month. A man named Lovegrove had 60 acres of wheat which Mr. Krejci and his two sisters shocked in two days; they received $6 for the whole job.

The parents of John Krejci had 10 children, six boys and four girls. A cousin named John Lukisik came with them. He had managed to get out of four years of compulsory military service there by paying the government $10. The elder Krejci had sold his land in Czechoslovakia for $4,000. In converting this sum to American money, he had to pay $2.60 for each $1 in return; this greatly reduced his cash. In Fillmore County he bought railroad land at $4 an acre. Then he bought two oxen for $100 and a cow for $17 and started farming. He broke 10 acres. Old man Ziska (John Ziska) helped him with meat and corn meal. They lived on this for two years; in the old country they had lived mainly on potatoes.

For four years Mr. Krejci worked for his father, and when work at home was finished he helped others with the harvest, feeding threshing machines. He was married at the age of 26 years, and to this union were born five children, three boys and two girls: Charles, the oldest boy, and Bessie, the oldest girl, and Fred, Louis, and Anna Mae. After he was married, he started farming for himself.

The first year he did not raise anything. It was a dry year, and the family ran out of money. Once his wife asked him to bring home 15 cents’ worth of raisins. He did not want to let his wife know how little money he had; he managed to buy the raisins on time, though the grocer was very reluctant to let him have them. On another occasion he was to bring home a sack of flour, and he also asked for this on credit. The grocer said he would let him have two sacks (flour then sold for 85 cents a sack) if he would pay for it soon. He got the sacks and went home and sold a horse for $2.50 to a man who agreed to pay for it right away. However, he did not; so Mr. Krejci told the man’s daughter, who was going to school, that if her father did not send the money for the horse by the next day, he would go down there and take the horse back. He sent the money, and Mr. Krejci paid for his two sacks of flour.

Louis Krejci still has pictures of the sod house that his grandparents lived in when they first came out here, of the oxen and cart which they used, and of an old-time binder. This was not a self-binder but one where two people stood and bound the bundles by hand as the grain was cut.

Anton Kucerna came to this country with his parents from Bohemia in 1883, when he was five years of age. His father, like other boys in the old countries, was required to take military training, which took four years. His parents, who farmed in the old country, settled in Liberty township, where they bought railroad land. Mr. Kucerna was married to Ebba Gephart in 1907. They have three children: one boy, Charles, and two girls, Edna and Ruth.

Mr. Kucerna remembers very well the Pleasant Hill Flour Mill, which was in Saline County, about 19 miles straight east of his place, from which they got their flour. Sometimes they carried it home by the sack. He also remembers vividly his sister Emma's taking a few dozen eggs to Exeter in a small pail and getting 25 cents' worth of sugar and other small articles. Eggs were then 10 cents per dozen. She walked the entire nine miles back and forth. He also remembers that famous Sunday School picnic on Turkey Creek, a never-to-be-forgotten event to this day. Some railroad workers, a bunch of toughs and roughnecks, who had also come to this picnic, were celebrating with beer and liquor. For some reason, they got into an argument and then a fight. Shooting followed, and Thomas Rook killed Frank and John Novak. The date, August 21, 1887, marks a grim highlight in the otherwise peaceful and rural annals of Turkey Creek.

William McGhie was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, and worked around the farms on the outskirts of Aberdeen. In the year 1878, he decided to try his fortune in America, and so he set sail with his wife and four children. They made their
way direct to Exeter and bought railroad land from Dr. H. G. Smith about three miles south of town, where they lived for a time; later they moved one mile west. His first experiences were not very encouraging, and he thought of going back to Scotland, but his wife refused to give up.

One of his first business transactions was the purchase of a team of horses, and for that purpose he returned to Lincoln the day after their arrival in Exeter. A man wishing to show interest in the stranger chided his friend Alexander for encouraging him to go to Lincoln for such a purpose, for, "Depend on it," said he, "the sharpers of Lincoln will skin him if he begins to buy a team there." Mr. Alexander admitted that the caution was not to be despised, but thought that "If the sharpers of this country are sharper than the horse-dealers in Aberdeenshire, and their word any less to be relied on, then his friend had a good chance of being skinned." But they did not skin him, for he secured a fine young team for which he paid $170—such as some of the young Scotch Lairds would fancy for carriage horses. His next experience was tethering them out to grass. This seemed accomplished all right; but the young horses fancied a dance through which they pulled up the stakes and made off like the wind. Fortunately, a party coming along caught one of the horses and Mr. Alexander, mounting one of his own horses, set off over the prairie to try to catch the other. However, the beast had about two miles' head start. But Mr. Alexander continued the chase and was fortunate enough to find him the next morning stabled by a friend.

Six years after their coming, Mr. McGhie's wife died, leaving a young family to care for. He was equal to the task.

His own death occurred on October 8, 1914.

Patrick Murphy came to this country from Dunmanway, County Cork, Ireland, in 1866, landing at Castle Garden, New York City. For four years he lived near Rochester, New York, and learned the nursery business. In April, 1870, he came to Omaha and worked for a time on the telegraph lines. Later in the same year, in company with three other young men, he bought an ox team, a covered wagon and bating outfit, and some tools and set out to look for homesteads. They journeyed to Lincoln, then to Beatrice, and along the Little Blue to Spring Ranch and Red Cloud on the Republican River. Not being satisfied with the country in those parts, they returned to the edge of Saline County and camped near Turkey Creek. Two were then appointed to stay by the wagons until fall. After landing on the prairie, they took off the wagon covers and used them to sleep under. They cooked their food by campfire and hauled all their water from Turkey Creek, a distance of two miles.

Mrs. Nolan made her first butter out on the prairie and sold it to Dr. Smith of Exeter.

Their house consisted of one room made out of logs, sod, and grass, and had one window and one door. The lumber to build the house had to be hauled all the way from Lincoln. Their well was dug with a spade. During the time they were digging the well, Mrs. Nolan's mother, 75 years old, who made her home with them, broke her leg. Their furniture had not yet come, and so a bed had to be made of logs and boards and a doctor called from Crete. One day after her bed had come, a little house dog insisted on barking and making a big fuss over something he saw under the bed. On investigation, they found that a large rattlesnake was coiled up on the floor. They knew it must be got out without letting the mother know. So some of them gathered around the bed and her son took it out with a pitchfork.

Fifteen acres were all that was broken up the first year, but each year more land was farmed and some trees and shrubs set out. Then a new sod house with a shingle roof was built.

One day in August, when Mr. Nolan was away from home, his wife saw a great prairie fire about a mile west, and, fearful for her mother lying helpless in the house, she went out to fight the fire. She worked hard all day. Then, when she reached home at sundown, she saw another fire close to the house, coming from the east. But by this time Mr. Nolan was home. He plowed a fireguard which saved them from harm.

The first snow came at night and sifted in all around the house and open spaces, so that when they awakened in the morning they found themselves covered with a blanket of snow.

Their first Christmas morning on the homestead found everything covered with about two feet of snow and not an ounce of flour in the house. Mr. Nolan had to go after pro-
visions on horseback. It was his custom to place a lantern on a pole in front of the house so that when he had to come home after dark his wife could light the lantern and he could find his way. At that time there were no roads.

The second year, they had 15 acres of wheat all ripe and ready to cut, and so Mr. Nolan went to Fairmont to buy a harvester. That night there came a heavy rain and hailstorm, and in the morning no harvester was needed, as all the grain was lying flat on the ground.

In the year of the grasshoppers, Mr. Nolan was fortunate in having his wheat in the shock; but his corn and the contents of a small garden were eaten in about an hour. Only stumps of cabbages remained. Mrs. Nolan’s brother, George Nugent, had a small patch of tobacco, and they took it all.

The first schoolhouse in the township was built on the southeast corner of their claim. It was used as a school, a church, and a place for public gatherings.

At that time, the Indians were roving over the plains. One day just at noon one of them came to the door and wanted his dinner, and so they gave him bread, butter, and coffee.

During the blizzard of 1873, they had in the house a calf, a colt, and two dozen chickens. The fuel got scarce and they chopped up the bed and other furniture to keep warm. Three times the Angel of Death visited their home and carried away their loved ones, but never did they think of leaving the place they called home.

Thomas Nugent came from County Galway, Ireland, in 1866, to Scott County, Iowa. In the spring of 1871, he settled on a homestead south of Exeter in Liberty township. When he came to Nebraska, he drove a horse team and wagon and brought some cattle. Money and employment were scarce when he came to the community, and so he walked for miles to such places as Beatrice and Lincoln looking for work. He worked for the B. & M. Railroad for some time, grading the line where the town of Fairmont in now located. He would at times seek work in the West, thus using up the time allowed off his claim.

During those trips he experienced some thrilling adventures. On one occasion, when returning over the prairies, his mate and he took turns driving the team, or sleeping in the bottom of the wagon. Once they were surrounded by a band of 300 or 400 Indians. He knew that two could do little in self-defense and thought that his end had surely come. To their great relief, one of the Indians rode up and presented a piece of paper by which they made it known that they were friendly Indians. They were begging, however, and would not accept buffalo meat; they could kill that for themselves. “Give us bacon,” was their request. It was no uncommon experience to meet with large herds of buffalo, from 500 to 1,000 strong. Mr. Nugent declared that it was a great shame the way these animals were killed off; the dead animals were seldom put to any practical use.

Mr. Nugent was caught out in the great blizzard of 1873 and had to take shelter for three days in a windowless and doorless dugout. It was simply impossible to get home through the storm.

William Ramsdell was a native of Michigan. His first visit to Nebraska was in 1865, when he came as a soldier assigned to deal with Indian depredations. He, with his company, arrived in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on June 17. From there they went to Fort Kearney, Nebraska, and then crossed the state to Fort Laramie, Wyoming. As soon as the Indians knew of the presence of the government soldiers, they wanted peace. It will be remembered that the Sioux Indians had taken advantage of the lack of soldiers in the West. They tried to drive out the white people and secure their ancient hunting grounds.

Peace was restored, and Mr. Ramsdell was soon able to return to Michigan, arriving there in December of the same year. While journeying from June to November they did not have enough rain to wet their shirt sleeves. In March, 1871, he returned to Nebraska, inspected land, and decided to settle here. There had been many changes during the five years since his first visit. He went back for his family and returned in July.

They lived near Walnut Creek until November. He secured a claim in Liberty township to the SE ¼ of Sec. 2, T7, R1 W. This is 3 miles S of Exeter and 3 miles E of Exeter. On November 14, 1871, he went up to his claim to build and make ready for settlement. Mrs. Ramsdell did not go until later. She was living in a log house that was “chinked” but not muded or plastered. The evening of that day saw a change of weather. It began to snow and snowed all the next day and next night. The snow drifted into the house and covered Mrs. Ramsdell, as she lay in bed, with a 16-inch blanket. She was finally liberated by her brother.

The cost of boring a well was one dollar per foot. If it had cost only 10 cents a foot, the Ramsdells could not have undertaken it, as they had no money. They got their water from Turkey Creek, a distance of two miles. They went 14 miles for firewood.

The Ramsdells had two sons, Dayo, the eldest, was in the first class graduating from the Exeter High School. He became a physician in Kansas City, Missouri. Glen became an optician in Moline, Illinois. The daughter, Gertrude, born January 8, 1872, was the third white child born in Fillmore County.

On July 26, 1876, Joseph Rozanek and his wife Mary purchased the W ¼, SW ¼, Sec. 27, Liberty township, from the B & M Railroad. On this land they built their home, a dugout.

On March 24, 1884, they purchased the adjoining 80 to the north. After the death of Joseph Rozanek in 1889 the title passed to his widow, Mary. In 1891 the farm was deeded to their son Frank. Since the death of Frank Rozanek the farm has belonged to his daughter Stella Hospodsky.

C. A. Songster came from near the town of Centerville, Appanoose County, Iowa, in 1871, and settled on a farm 2½ miles S of Exeter. He brought with him his wife and two children, a girl and a boy. We are indebted to this son, Mr. A. A. (Bert) Songster, for the information recorded here. The father died April 8, 1898, and is buried in the Exeter Cemetery.

Bert Songster was about four years old when they came to Nebraska. He remembers with interest their crossing the Missouri River in a ferryboat to Nebraska City. After they arrived on the claim, they lived in a tent until a dugout was made. Later a sod house was built, which proved to be a very comfortable home. It was plastered throughout and was warm in winter and cool in summer.

The first school of the district was held in the Songster home. At that time the cattle roamed the prairies at will, and grass known as bluestem grew as high as a horse’s back, which made it dangerous for children if they strayed from home. The chief bird music was the mournful tones of the prairie chickens, heard usually in the early mornings. These are about extinct and, like the antelope and deer, may soon be a thing of the past. Palmer Lancaster had a blacksmith shop south of the Songster place and kept a pet antelope.
which was of special interest to the children of the neighborhood. It would follow him to town, where it was sometimes frightened by the dogs and would run off at a lively rate and make its way home.

Mr. Songster hauled from Lincoln the lumber for the first house and store in Exeter, owned by Dr. H. G. Smith. A little girl of the Songster family was one of the first children to die in the area; she was buried in the Exeter Cemetery.

Chester C. Stephens, brother of Mrs. William Downey, was born in Pennsylvania but lived for some time in Michigan. He came to Nebraska in 1871 and located on the NW 1/4 of Sec. 4, T7, R1W. His first home was a dugout 10' x 12' square where he later built his house. Its construction was such that he might reasonably be called one of Nebraska’s early cave-dwellers. Before he made this cave, he used his wagon cover as a tent. One warm night he lay sleeping with the cover up, thoroughly enjoying the prairie air, when he felt something cold against his face. He discovered a prairie wolf with its paws upon his bed while another wolf was sitting on her haunches a short distance away. He reached for his revolver, but before he could fire a shot the unwelcome visitors had made their escape.

About two months after he came to the county, he had been busy at the Ramsdell home, and the return help was to be given at his place. Mr. Ramsdell had gone to secure the services of J. K. Barbur, and Mr. Stephens was coming home with Uncle Jim Horne and were traveling homeward in a northwesterly direction when they saw a herd of 12 deer coming in a northeasterly direction. Neither men nor deer changed their course, with the result that they came within 12 feet of each other. The deer seemed quite tame, and, as the men made no attempt to interfere with them, they walked quietly away. This was one of the most pleasing and interesting experiences of their prairie life. In these days the Ramsdells were living in the Henry Eberstein house. On one occasion in the springtime, they found a large rattlesnake under the bed. It was soon killed.

One of the worst windstorms ever experienced by Mr. Stephens was when he was trying to make his way from Camden to a place near Crete where he had previously camped. He failed to reach the place and had just crossed the railroad and unhitched his team when the storm came up. The wind was so strong that he had to use lariat ropes and chains to keep his wagon in place.

Haymaking on the Vavra Farm in 1925.

Mr. Songster hauled from Lincoln the lumber for the first house and store in Exeter, owned by Dr. H. G. Smith. A little girl of the Songster family was one of the first children to die in the area; she was buried in the Exeter Cemetery.

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Haymaking on the Vavra Farm in 1925. Joe Vavra (by team), Jim Soukup (on stack), Ora Miner (holding Melvin), Joe Sobota (on rake).
improvement on farming that he decided to sell his farm, stock, and implements and try mining. He made his way to the coal fields, where he worked for seven years. But at the end of this time he had made no progress; in fact, he was financially poorer as a result of his venture.

In the spring of 1869, he came up the Missouri River on a steamboat to Nebraska City and was nine days on the trip. He then bought two yoke of oxen, an old government wagon, and some other things, and started out West. He had met a fellow countryman in Nebraska City who gave him information about the country. He left his family near the Blue River and then made his way west on foot and secured some land on the county line, in Fillmore County.

Mr. Ziska returned for his family, and they came to the new location on May 10, 1869. They rented an old dugout in Saline County until their own dugout was ready. He soon began breaking sod and had 25 acres ready for sowing. When he went to Lincoln for provisions he filed a claim for his 80 acres on Sec. 24, T7, R1W. They moved onto the claim in September, and on their first night in the new home there was a great flood. Turkey Creek became 1 1/2 miles wide, causing the loss of much property and many cattle. One poor woman lost her cow and calf, which were all she possessed, and so the Ziskas and other neighbors helped her out. Two years later, this same woman, whose husband was a carpenter and working in Nebraska City, had her cow stolen and was again helped by these friends. There was another neighbor for whom Mr. Ziska plowed some land and mowed the wheat without making any charge, so as to help him along. Later, when Mr. Ziska needed the loan of a plow, this neighbor refused, saying he did not wish to have his plow dulled. How often it is that people fail to learn that "One good turn deserves another."

The last buffalo killed in Fillmore County was in 1868. Two Indians followed it down Turkey Creek and killed it — on the spot that afterward became the Ziska homestead. When they came, Dan Dillon, who homesteaded in 1868 on the same section, was the only white man they knew in Fillmore County.

Mr. Ziska had put in 15 acres of buckwheat. He then went to Lincoln, leaving Fred at home to drag the land. Dan Dillon had a pair of Texas cattle and two other large oxen which came over and hooked the Ziska cattle very badly. Mrs. Ziska was advised by the neighbors to get some turpentine to put on the injured oxen. So she sent Fred on a journey of 18 miles on foot to get 25 cents' worth of turpentine. He reached home again about nine o'clock that night and was so stiff and sore that he could not get out of bed the next morning. Fred never forgot the time when he was 14 years old and his mother needed turpentine for the oxen. John Ziska died in 1896 at the age of 84.

The Z C B J Lodge was organized in 1902. The first officers were Vaclav Krejci, Jim Matejka, Jim Svoboda, and James Stetina. Members from Rad Rabie in Milligan transferred to Z C B J to start the lodge in Liberty township.

The officers at present (1967) are Ed Krejci, president; Ed Biba, financial secretary; John Kuska, recording secretary; and Albert Biba, Jr., treasurer.

This lodge was organized and still meets in the hall in Liberty township.

LODGES

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Photo from Mrs. Mike Becwar Jr.

The wedding picture of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Becwar, married in Czechoslovakia.
Madison Township

Madison township, in the central part of Fillmore County, is bounded on the north by Fairmont, one the east by Liberty, on the south by Chelsea, and on the west by Geneva townships. Its western boundary is marked by U. S. 81. Turkey Creek flows from west to east across its southern half. The Fremont-Superior line of the Northwestern R.R. runs diagonally from the midpoint of its northern boundary to the midpoint of its eastern side. The two lines cross at Sawyer, once a town site, now no more than a place name. Most of the land is gently rolling. The principal industry is farming. The drouths of the 1930's and 1950's brought a considerable interest in deep-well irrigation. By the end of 1966, there were 39 irrigation wells registered in Madison township.

Madison township was named for James Madison, the fourth President of the United States, who had represented Virginia at the National Constitutional Convention and was one of the chief framers of the Constitution. When Fillmore County was organized, the election was held on the NE ¼ of Sec. 30, Madison township, on April 21, 1871. At that time, William H. James was acting governor of Nebraska. The county officers elected were: Elisha L. Martin, C. H. Bassett, and Jesse Lee, commissioners; H. L. Badger, Wilbur Deuel, treasurer; J. F. Snow, sheriff; H. L. Badger, surveyor; and T. E. Barnett, coroner.

Burress

The following account of early-day Burress was provided by the late Fred Wolter:

The first railroad was built into the township in 1887 by the St. Joseph & Grand Island R.R. This branch was known for a few years as the Endicott and Stromsburg line, and then for a few more years was known as the Kansas City & Omaha R.R. Since the late nineties, it has been part of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy system.

At the coming of the railroad, the Burress town site was surveyed on land owned by James Q. Burress, and a post office was established in his name. The first postmaster was John McLeese. The railroad property consisted of a nice depot, section house, and stockyards. The first station agent was Arthur Boyd. L. E. Davis & Co., of St. Joseph, Missouri, built what was called a scoop house on the siding for storing grain, from which the grain was later scooped into railroad cars for shipment. Boyd Davis was the first grain dealer.

There were three early business establishments. J. L. Davis kept a grocery store which also contained the post office. O. T. Wheeler, who was the country carpenter, put up a store building which was mostly used as a public dance room and for public meetings. Mr. and Mrs. John William Owens conducted a restaurant and boarding house. Living quarters were in the rear of the Davis and Owens places. The depot was the bachelor quarters for the single inhabitants. There were two residences in Burress, those of the J. Q. Burress family and of the section foreman, Hans Striggow.

There were two early businesses in Burress. As more prosperous conditions prevailed, Mr. Wolter added a lumber yard to the firm. He was in business there for 11 years and later spent three years in Ohiowa. Fred Wolter passed away on April 15, 1963.

As more prosperous conditions prevailed, Mr. Wolter enlarged his building and installed much heavy machinery equipment. His younger brother, Fred Wolter, learned the trade with him and then started a shop in Bruning in 1908. He was in business there for 11 years and later spent three years in Ohiowa. [Fred Wolter passed away on April 15, 1963.]
The Burress schoolhouse is now located in Chelsea township on the Wayne Garrison farm, 8 miles S of Burress. At one time, two teachers were employed in the Burress school. The Burress depot is now the Manning Grain Company.

This account of present-day Burress, by Dean Terrill of the Southeast Nebraska Bureau of the Lincoln Star, appeared in that paper in March 1965:

Burress isn’t exactly long on people (20), but its three houses rate better, best, and bestest. Every square foot smacks of prosperity: 15 grain-storage buildings, a grocery-service station, a cash register alternately ringing from feed and fertilizer and on-off sale beer.

“Yes, I suppose the investment here now is the biggest in the spot’s history,” said owner Earl Manning as matter-of-factly as his cigar would allow. In his 41-year manorship he has also learned to shrug off salesmen’s “Manningsville” title to his town.

In reality Burress is also the Sawyer (“had about five people”) which was consolidated into the Manning Grain Co. in the ’20s. Burress had once hustled as a trade center of 75, but “hasn’t shrunk a bit as long as I can remember.”

The present populace is mostly Manning, son Tom storekeeping with his father and Dick farming the town’s “outskirts.” Employee Don Samson occupies the third house with his family, and Earl would have to be classified a commuter since moving to Exeter in 1952.

Although the grocery is housed intriguingly in the old Burlington depot, it is the site’s former dance hall that sets Manning’s memories in real motion. Only bags of fertilizer nudge one another now on the big floor that “used to pack in 1,000 to 1,200 persons per night.”
"The bands got too big and high-priced, though, and a local era ended when we threw the last dance on the Fourth of July, 1949," Earl recalled. "We started filling the hall with grain the next day and found out it held 28,000 bushels."

Counting the mere 21 neighbors now scattered through 28 of Fillmore County’s sections, Manning figures little Burress has fared pretty well over-all. Its one big blight is a long-vacant house, picturesque but crumbling, at the hamlet’s edge.

"That belonged to the son of the Burress we were named after," apologized the unofficial lord mayor. "Doesn’t look so good, but of course it’s really sort of a suburb."

SCHOOLS

The first school district organized in Madison township was District No. 3, also called at a later date the Brick Schoolhouse. It was organized on December 8, 1871, at a meeting of qualified electors called by the county superintendent of Fillmore County for the purpose of electing officers, locating a site for a schoolhouse, and transacting such other business as might legally come before the meeting. The school board officers elected then were: William H. Blain, moderator; A. J. Beals, director; and B. F. Tibbitt, treasurer.

The site chosen was on the SE corner of the NE ¼ of Sec. 30, T7, R2W, on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Compher. It was decided to build a sod schoolhouse, and sufficient funds were levied to finish this. The first teacher was Robert S. Dye, who taught from 1872 to 1873 for $20 a month.

Later, after heated arguments, the schoolhouse was re-located on Sec. 28, T7, where a frame building not to exceed $800 in cost was built. School was to be held for seven months, four months in the summer and three in the winter. The board decided to get a "femail" to teach the summer school and a "mail" to teach the winter. Later they voted to have only three months of summer schooling, commencing the first Monday in May. The three winter school months were to begin in December. They also decided not to allow the schoolhouse to be used for anything but school, Sabbath, or religious meetings.

In April, 1876, the board agreed to have six months of school commencing the first of August. They voted to hire a woman teacher because she could be gotten cheaper than a man. In 1878, an agreement was drawn up employing Ella Kinrade for $75 — $25 a month for a three-month term—in 1879 (unless she violated her contract by being immoral or by committing other gross misdemeanors). In 1886, there were 29 boys and 19 girls attending the school. District 3 was dissolved into District 75 on May 17, 1961.

District No. 17 was organized January 3, 1872, near what is now the Fairmont Air Base. The first teacher on record was Miss C. C. Morgan, who taught from 1872 to 1873 for $20 a month. This district dissolved June 10, 1943.
N is for Nettie, who knows about the North Pole.
P is for Pete, who reaches the goal.
R is for Ralph, whom we call Pete.
T is for Tom who changed his seat.
B is for Bessie, who is a sweet girl,
Things around her are kept in a whirl.
It is also for Ben, with a dimple in his chin;
He's a good boy, so he never stays in.
This was made up by the "X-boss" and pupils of the Burress city school.

This piece of paper was put in an empty red-ink bottle and was placed at the root of a tree that was planted that day with an elaborate Arbor Day program. The tree did not withstand so much publicity and the bottle was exhumed the following year. The original paper is still in the possession of one of the pupils.

District No. 68, the Domling school, was organized June 9, 1873. Located 2 miles S and ¼ mile W of Burress, it was annexed to Districts 75, 20, and 19 on August 19, 1961. Sopha Lee, the first teacher from 1873 to 1874, received $20 a month. In most of these schools there was only a three-month term.

District No. 85, the Sawyer school, was organized September 28, 1886. The first teacher of record was R. J. Sloan (1888), who taught for $33 a month. This school was annexed to Districts 19 and 68 on March 17, 1953. Frank Betka purchased the school building and moved it to his farm ¼ mile W of Burress.

District No. 94 was organized in 1884. It was dissolved and annexed to District 20 on January 15, 1959.

Some of the early teachers in Madison township were:
Miss Nellie Field, later Mrs. John Shickley of Lincoln; Miss Nellie Fitch, later Mrs. Stephen Ambler of Weeping Water; Miss Endala North, a Southern girl; Miss Clara Martin, later Mrs. T. C. McCreery of Exeter; Simon Stuckey; B. W. Postlewait; Annie L. Jackson of Fairmont; Mary E. Burnett of Geneva, later Mrs. Will L. Coleman of Geneva; Miss Eva Williams of Burress, later Mrs. Sherman Moss of Grand Junction, Colorado; Miss Flora Carney of Fairmont, later Mrs. Beebe; Clarence A. Zaring of Geneva, later of Basin, Wyoming; Miss Rose Owens of Burress, later Mrs. Robert J. Sloan; Robert J. Sloan of Geneva; Miss Cora Owens of Burress, later Mrs. J. E. Jones of Exeter; and Miss Grace Porter, of Sawyer, later Mrs. Harvey M. Miller of Seward.

FAMILIES
Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Abbott came from Lebanon, Nebraska, to Madison township in 1912 and purchased 80 acres on Sec. 4. The late S. E. Ralston, then postmaster at Geneva, a longtime friend, was instrumental in their making this decision. They resided on this farm until failing health caused them to move to Fairmont, where Mr. Abbott died in 1939. Mrs. Abbott passed away on January 7, 1948. They had one son, Floyd, and a granddaughter, Betty, now Mrs. Robert Schelkopf.

Dr. Chauncey W. Amy and his wife, Dr. Harriette Bottsford Amy, after practicing in Cook County Hospital in Chicago, made their home in Decorah, Iowa. In 1886, the Drs. Amy, with John Williams, a brother-in-law, and John's son Clifton, went to Milligan, where the Williamses opened a drugstore and the Drs. Amy opened an office. Two years later, the Williams family moved to Syracuse, Nebraska. The Amys and their small daughter Abby Louise moved to Burress. Accompanying them was Margaret Dowley.
At Burress they rented the John Owens property and opened a drugstore in addition to their medical practice. Mrs. Amy taught in the Burress school for a time and later in the Sawyer school (District 85). In the spring of 1895, the Amys moved back to Decorah, Iowa, where they resumed their medical practice. Their daughter Abby Louise went to Cleveland, Ohio, where she graduated from Western Reserve University. Later she taught in the Cleveland public schools until her retirement, when she went to Whittier, California.
In the fall of 1893, Mrs. Amy, Abby Louise, and Miss Dowley went to Chicago with Mrs. A. L. Hart and her daughters Carrie and Joy to visit the Columbian Exposition, where one memorable event was riding on the famous original Ferris Wheel.
Ernest Fricke and his wife Anna Klusman were both born in the province of Hanover, Germany, on the same date, March 16, 1860. Ernest emigrated to America in 1874 at the age of 14 years, with an uncle, who located at Waukegan, Illinois. He went to school in the winter and worked in a dairy which delivered milk daily to Chicago. He returned to Germany at the age of 19, but came back to America after staying there one year. While there, he became interested in Anna Klusman, who came to America in 1882, locating at Elgin, Illinois. They were married on March 22, 1885, and left immediately for Nebraska, where they settled 4 miles S of Fairmont, and became the parents of two daughters and four sons.

Mr. Fricke was very proud of his American citizenship, having attained it in 1879. He passed away in Fairmont on November 21, 1924. Mrs. Fricke followed him in death on March 28, 1936.

—Caroline E. Plank

The Harvey Garrett family, about 1920. On the right: Harvey and Ida (Theobald) Garrett. On the left: Vernon Gaffney (cousin) and his wife Minnie. The children are Kathleen and Harlan Garrett.

Georgia Compher Hart was born near Rainsburg, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, December 18, 1852. She was the second daughter in a family of four daughters and two sons born to Alexander and Barbara Ann Compher. She attended school in a stone schoolhouse in Rainsburg and later at the Alleghany Male and Female Seminary in Rainsburg.

On December 25, 1868, she married in the Masonic Hall at Hollidaysburg to Alex L. Hart of Duncansville, Pennsylvania. The couple lived in Altoona, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Hart was a station agent, and later a clerk in the record offices, of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. When Mr. Hart’s doctor recommended that he take up outdoor work, he left this position and came West. In the spring of 1878, he bought railroad land in Madison township, the NW 1/4 of Sec. 11, T5, R2W, and settled on the farm where they lived continuously for 62 years.

As soon as their house was built, the family moved in. They put in a small stock of groceries and for a time conducted a store. The stock included McLaughlin coffee, chicory (a coffee substitute), Clark’s O.N.T. and Willimantic spool cotton, Fairbanks soap, Ayer’s Sarsaparilla, Hoyt’s German Cologne, blackstrap molasses, etc. When funds got low and payments on the farm became due, Mr. Hart obtained work at the Charlie Miller bank in Fairmont, making daily two six-mile trips on horseback. He frequently carried two, and sometimes three, neighbor children with him to attend the Fairmont school.

Mr. and Mrs. Hart lived on this farm for 62 years, until his death on October 27, 1940, at the age of 91 1/2 years. Mrs. Hart remained there until the fall of 1941, when she moved to Geneva to make her home with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Case.

Mrs. Hart was a charter member of the Sawyer Presbyterian Church, which was organized by the Rev. J. D. Harvey of Fairmont in 1889. She later transferred to the Fairmont Presbyterian Church, and still later joined the Congregational Church at Geneva. She was a member of the Geneva Tent of Daughters of Veterans of the Civil War, which she joined in 1930. She was also a member of the Geneva Woman’s Club and its Nature Study Department, and of the O. K. Kensington of the Order of the Eastern Star.

Mrs. Hart saw the coming of two railroads across the home farm, the Burlington and the Northwestern. In the early years, the railroads created a great fire hazard by not having spark screens in the smokestacks of the engines. A skating pond, a pony named Boxer, a black-and-tan terrier called Pansy, a tricycle and later a bicycle, and a thin black Banjo horse roosted here among the recreational assets of the Hart children and their neighbors. Gingerbread was a popular climax for the skating parties and sleigh rides.

Mrs. Hart celebrated her 100th birthday with a community-wide party at the Congregational Church on December 18, 1952. Her death occurred on February 21, 1953. The Harts had two daughters, Carrie Esther (Mrs. James Banton), who died August 2, 1926, and Joy (Mrs. Guy Case). The home farm is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Guy Case of Geneva.

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Perry Chapman came to Fillmore County in 1871 and settled on a tree claim, the NW 80 of Sec. 12, T7, R2W. Lewis Dudley Owens, John M. Hiskey, and James Hill came together by covered wagons from Jasper County, Iowa, in November, 1873. Mrs. Owens bought a relinquishment on the 80 east of O. P. Chapman. Mrs. Hiskey settled on S. E. 1/4 of Sec. 10. James Hill located on Sec. 34, T8, R2W.

The three men built sod houses on their claims, and on March 12, 1874, Mrs. L. D. Owens, Mrs. J. M. Hiskey, and Mrs. James Hill reached Exeter by Burlington train. At that time the Burlington ran no farther west than Grafton. They reached Exeter about 5 P.M. It was a lovely day and their husbands were there to meet them with wagons. They rode southwest across the prairie on a diagonal road, right into a gloriously beautiful sunset. They all liked the country. They stayed.

In 1881, O. P. Chapman and L. D. Owens bought the SE 1/4 of Sec. 11, T7, R2W of the Burlington’s land. L. D. Owens traded his 80 adjoining Mr. Chapman’s for the Chapman 80 of railroad land and moved to the SE 1/4 of Sec 11, T7, R2W. Mrs. L. D. (Harriet) Owens resided on the farm until 1907, when they moved to Geneva. After the death of her husband, on April 10, 1918, she moved to Exeter in 1923 and made her home with her daughter Claire. Harriet was one of Fillmore County’s oldest citizens; she observed her 97th birthday on December 19, 1945. She always enjoyed reading and kept well posted on national, state, and county affairs. She was active around the house until just before her 97th birthday. She died aged 96, on June 6, 1946.

Dr. Claire Estelle Owens and her sister and three brothers attended District 21 near Burruss. Claire lost her sight at the age of eight; but, fortunately, the blindness came on so gradually that Mr. and Mrs. Owens could point out colors and the things that would benefit her most after her sight would be gone completely. She was unable to attend school until she enrolled in the School for the Blind at Nebraska City at the age of 16. There she completed her grade-school
work in two years and high school in four. Music was included throughout the six years. In May, 1898, Claire graduated at the age of 22.

In September, 1898, Claire started teaching music in the Exeter public school and taught there for five years; for three of those years she taught in Fairmont as well. In 1903, she started to study pipe organ at the Nebraska School for the Blind. In 1904, she went to Carson, Iowa, and taught music in four neighboring schools. In 1907, her parents moved from Exeter to Geneva, and Miss Owens then taught music in Geneva and Exeter for five years, commuting by train each day.

In 1917, Miss Owens felt that she should further her education in order to remain self-supporting. In the fall of 1917, she entered the Des Moines (Iowa) School of Osteopathy. She graduated in 1921 and for the next two years practiced osteopathy in Geneva. She then moved to Exeter, where she bought a home. Her brother Al made his home with her.

In 1932, Dr. Owens, an active Democrat, was elected a representative to the Nebraska Legislature and re-elected in 1934, serving in two of the last sessions of the two-house legislature. She had the distinction of being the only blind woman to have served in any state legislature in the United States.

Dr. Owens visited 42 of the 50 states and visited Canada five times. She attended 18 national osteopathy conventions, making the trips alone. At various times she held every office of the American Association of the Workers for the Blind in the United States. She was a member of one of the oldest law firms of Geneva, known as Cooksey & Jensen. He was, for nearly six years, postmaster at Geneva, having been first appointed in 1885. His certificate of nomination and appointment, with the post office seal depicting the Pony Express, was signed by President Grover Cleveland, dated February 7, 1888.

Mr. Cooksey was also engaged in the drug business. He helped to organize the Geneva Iron & Windmill Company and was elected its secretary-treasurer.

The Cookseys moved to Burruss in the summer of 1897, where Mr. Cooksey was in the general-merchandise business for nine years. Tom Harvey had a grocery store south of Cooksey's store. Because Mr. Cooksey's health failed, they moved back to Geneva in 1907.

Mr. Cooksey served a term in the Nebraska state Senate, beginning in 1900, and was township assessor at Burruss. When his health permitted him to work, he helped Sisler & Hourigan in their store in Geneva. He was a member of the Odd Fellows and the A.O.U.W. He was also a commissary sergeant of Company "G," First Regiment, Nebraska National Guard.

Nine children were born to the Cookseys: Lulu, Maude, Sperry, Earl, Addie, Loren, Grace, Ruth, and Ralph. All but three of the children were born in Geneva. Ruth and Ralph died of diphtheria and scarlet fever in 1904. W. H. Cooksey passed away on March 28, 1912, and his wife followed him in death on July 15, 1933.

Oscar Alfred Ellison, born at Gothenburg, Sweden, January 17, 1847, came to America at the age of 21 and made his home near Chicago. Eliza Jane Iddings was born October 9, 1857, at Fairfield, Illinois. On January 22, 1880, Eliza married Oscar Ellison in Iroquois County, Illinois. While they still lived in Illinois, two children were born to them; in 1883, they moved to Ulysses, Nebraska, where the rest of their children were born. In 1903, they moved to a farm 5 miles NE of Geneva, which they bought from Joe Roesler. Mr. Ellison died on May 13, 1925; his wife Eliza passed away on January 17, 1948. Both were laid to rest in the Geneva cemetery. One of their sons, Roy, died in 1909, and their son Otto and their daughter Nellie passed away in 1958. Another daughter died in infancy. The remaining children were Alfred, Ernest, Mabel, and Melvin.

Ernest and his family moved to the Oscar Ellison farm after Melvin and his family moved to Geneva in 1926. Later, Ernest also moved to Geneva, and his son Ralph and his wife Elsie (Worley) moved to the farm, where they remained until 1948, when they moved to York County.

Roscoe Schlecty and his wife Mabel (Ellison) Schlecty, with their family, came from Lincoln, Nebraska, to take over the Geneva General Hospital in 1942. They operated the
hospital until 1946, when they moved to Kansas. While in
Geneva, the Schlectys set out the pin oak trees along the
sidewalk leading from the street to the hospital.

Melvin Ellison and Bessie Kennard were married in 1915.
Both were pupils in District 3 school, northeast of Geneva, in
1904 and 1905. Melvin and Bessie lived on the home farm
until 1926, when they bought a house and lot from Mr. and
Mrs. Lang in Geneva, on what is now the corner of U. S. 81
and G Street. Melvin moved the house to the back of the lot
and built a garage and filling station, which he operated for
more than 30 years until his son Orval took over.

David E. Garrett was born in Shelby County, Indiana,
March 1, 1862. While he was still a small boy, his parents
moved from Indiana to Cass County, Michigan. His mother passed away in 1874, and after
her death William went to Chicago, where he spent the winter
working in a wagon factory.

In the spring of 1875, William came to Fillmore County,
where he purchased 160 acres of railroad land for $8 an acre.
This farm was the SE 1/4 of Sec. 19, T7, R2W, Madison.
While building a two-room house and making other im­
provements, he boarded with the James Loghrys. There he
met his future wife, Louisa Loghry; they were married on
October 28, 1877.
William and Louisa Garrett experienced the usual hardships of all the pioneers, including blizzards, grasshoppers, droughts, etc. His first farming was done with oxen. In 1886, he added a room to the original two-room house; later, he added four more rooms, two downstairs and two up. 

Mr. Garrett farmed and raised cattle and hogs. When his eldest son, Harry, married in 1905, Mr. Garrett built a house just west of the home place and he and Harry farmed together. Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were the parents of eight children: Julia, Dora, Harry, Ada, Nellie, Amy, Hazel, and William ("Pete").

Mr. and Mrs. Garrett remained on this farm all their married life. Louisa Garrett died November 5, 1918, and William on November 23, 1926. 

Adam Huston was born at Richland Center, Indiana, October 9, 1851, to William and Nancy (Gables) Huston. He came to Nebraska in the spring of 1871 with the Vanslyke families. He took an 80-acre homestead 3 miles N of Geneva (SW 1/2 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 18, T7, R2W) in 1872. Adam could homestead only 80 acres because he and Daniel Vanslyke took jointly an 80-acre tree claim; the tree claim was the N 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 24, T7, R3W.

He hauled lumber from Lincoln by team and wagon to build his home and his farm buildings. On October 5, 1875, he was married to Helen Loghry at the home of the bride's parents by Judge William Blain.

Helen Loghry was a pioneer schoolteacher, having taught in District 2, Fillmore County for two terms. She taught a three-month term (April, May, and June) in 1872 and a three-month term in 1873, at a salary of $12 a month. The following comment appears in the records of the county superintendent:

"Friday, June 28, A.M. 1872

"Visited school in District No. 2. Taught by Miss Helen Loghry in a dugout. Twelve pupils present. School doing first rate."

John A. Dempster, County Superintendent."

Mr. and Mrs. Adam Huston lived on this homestead all of their married life and were the parents of seven children: Hugh, Jan., A. D., Ella (Mrs. Charles Pittard), Hattie (Mrs. Sam Lash), Pearl (Mrs. Prentice Murr), and Frank Loghry. They also raised a nephew, Clarence Loghry, from infancy.

They endured the many hardships and experiences of the pioneers of their day. Helen told of the many times she fed roving Indians, dealt with wandering gypsies, and kept many a traveler overnight in her home. She was a beautiful seamstress and, like all the pioneer women, did all the sewing for her family as well as piecing many lovely quilts. All who knew her can remember the flower bed south and west of the house, which was her pride and joy. During the garden season, she never failed to pick a bouquet of flowers for her visitors.

Adam Huston passed away at his home on June 21, 1923, at the age of 71 years. His wife Helen continued to live on the farm and rounded out 64 years there. In her later years, she spent the winters with her children. In 1938, she finally closed her home and went to live with her daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pittard, in Geneva township. She passed away there on January 6, 1940, at the age of 85 years.

The Huston farm is presently owned by Miss Anna Renken.

John S. Kennard was born in 1850 in Huron County, Ontario, Canada, near Toronto. When he was 10, his parents moved to Sterling, Illinois, and in 1878, to Exeter, Nebraska. In 1880, he was married to Elizabeth C. Given at Fairmont. Elizabeth was born in 1858 in West Virginia and moved with her parents to Morrison, Illinois, and later to Exeter, Nebraska. John and Elizabeth met after their parents settled near Exeter — Elizabeth's family, just west of Exeter, and John's 6 miles SE of Exeter, in Liberty township. After they were married, they settled on a farm adjoining that of John's father.

Money was scarce and there was much work to be done. Sod was used for their house and they used boards for the floor and roof. The walls were whitewashed on the inside. Later, they built a frame summer kitchen across one end of the house, and put up a partition to separate the kitchen and living room from the bedroom. A frame barn was built and a well was dug. A windmill near the well once had its mill wheel blown off during a windstorm. It was found within a few feet of the sod wall, resting on a wash boiler.
that had been standing under the eves to catch rain water. On one occasion, a cow broke out of the pasture during the night, came to the house, looked in through the low glass window, and decided that the corner of the sod shanty would be a good place to rub her neck. Around and around that corner she rubbed until the family awakened and drove her away.

Five children were born in the sod house. Twin girls were born in the frame house, built in 1891. Mr. Kennard passed away December 12, 1934, in Seward, Nebraska. Mrs. Kennard passed away April 24, 1947. Both were laid to rest in the Exeter cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. William Kinrade were both natives of the Isle of Man. Mrs. Kinrade was 14 when her people brought her to America; they were seven weeks crossing the ocean. When the wind waved the tall bluestem grass that covered the prairies in the late seventies, Mrs. Kinrade would lie down and cover her eyes. The sight made her seasick; she said that the wind had nearly died of seasickness when they crossed the ocean.

The Kinrades came here from Kewanee, Illinois. William Kinrade was born in 1835 and died in 1913; his wife, Margaret, was born in 1842 and died in 1927. Their family consisted of two sons, Henry (1869-1904) and William (1867-1948), and three daughters; Ella Kinrade married Joseph McDonald, who died July 16, 1916; she survived him and died on June 30, 1947. Anna Kinrade married Hezekiah Dennis, she passed away in 1951: Ida Kinrade married Bert Tice; she died in October, 1943.

Hiram Lathrop, a Civil War veteran, took a homestead on Sec. 26. While serving in Company “F,” Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, he was wounded and his mind was affected. He lived the life of a hermit in a dugout in a secluded spot at the corner about % of a mile N of what is now known as the Henry Schmidt farm. Once in a while he would sell a load of sand. He was born on October 24, 1839, and died on February 4, 1896.

Le Roy P. Loghry was born in Branch County, Michigan, December 17, 1856, and came to Fillmore County in 1871. His father, James F. Loghry, a Civil War veteran, in 1870 had homesteaded 2 miles N of Geneva on the SE % of Sec. 13. Later known as the John Larson place. Ida Platt, who became Mrs. Loghry, was born in Williams County, Ohio, July 28, 1859; she and her parents came to Nebraska in 1874. Older residents of Geneva will remember the Platt House, one of the first hotels in Geneva, owned by her father, J. T. Platt, and located on the west side of the courthouse square.

Mr. Loghry and Miss Platt were married at York on February 25, 1880. In November of the same year, they drove to Furnas County in a lumber wagon and settled on a homestead. They returned to Fillmore County in 1886 and lived on the Platt farm 3½ miles NE of Geneva; after the death of Mrs. Loghry’s parents, the farm was purchased by Mr. Loghry. This place was their home until 1916, when they moved into Geneva.

On February 25, 1935, Mr. and Mrs. Loghry were surprised by a group of their neighbors who came to help them celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary. At the same time, Jacob Kirst celebrated his 86th birthday. Those present were Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kirst, Mr. and Mrs. John Stephenson, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Russell, Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Bradley, and Mr. and Mrs. David T. Garrett.

Mr. and Mrs. Loghry continued to reside in Geneva until the combined forces of age and increasing illness impelled them to end their lives together (as they had lived for 59 years) on June 8, 1939.

Mrs. Minnie Evans, formerly Minnie Platt, Mrs. Loghry’s twin sister, was accidentally killed by a Northern-western train near the Loghry home. The Signal for April 30, 1895, reported:

Tuesday afternoon about 20 minutes past 4 o’clock, the regular eastbound Elkhorn freight train, when about 2 miles from town, ran over and killed Mrs. Minnie Evans, a deaf lady who was walking on the track from town towards home. The engineer noticed her when about % of a mile from her, and when about % of a mile, he gave the alarm whistle, and, she not seeming to notice this, he immediately gave the danger whistle, at the same time reversing his engine and applying the air brakes.

He followed the danger whistle continuously, but the lady being absolutely deaf the warning was in vain and as the train had been running at about the rate of 35 miles an hour it was impossible to stop it until the engine and five cars had passed over her body.

When struck by the train, Mrs. Evans was within a short distance of her home, and her brother-in-law, L. P. Loghry, with whom she resided, heard the whistle and observed her danger but too late to give her any warning and he was an eye-witness to the frightful accident.

Nathaniel McCalla, a son of Joseph N. and Sarah (Mothershead) McCalla, was born in Scott County, Kentucky, in 1827. After James died there, about 1834, Sarah McCalla and her children—Joseph, Nathaniel, and Nancy—moved to Marion County, Indiana. There Sarah later married John Chinn (the Chinn family was related to Mary Todd Lincoln). After John Chinn’s death, Sarah came West with her daughter Nancy and her son-in-law William H. Rhea (see Ray).

Nathaniel married Martha J. Smith at Indianapolis on August 9, 1848, and settled for some time in Iowa. He entered the Union Army as a captain in the Civil War, later returning to Polk County, Iowa. Some time before 1871, Nathaniel brought his family to Fillmore County and homesteaded on the NE¼ of Sec. 30, T7N, R3W. As related elsewhere (see Early History), it was in his dugout that the first election in the county was held, and his teen-age daughter, Emma, was responsible for the naming of Geneva, after one of her former places of residence, Geneva, Illinois.

Nathaniel later lived for a time in Clay County, and died on April 30, 1887, in Pueblo County, Colorado.

John and Caroline Niehaus—"Grandpa" and "Grandma" to everybody — came from Wisconsin in 1882. They lived a mile north of the Simon Carney family. They had four sons, Will, John, Lewis, and George. Will was grain buyer at Sawyer, John was postmaster there, and Lewis and George were farmers. According to the Nebraska Signal:

On Thursday, December 19, 1882, the friends of Mr. and Mrs. K. Tutty, numbering about 60, met together at their residence to witness the marriage of their daughter Aggie to Mr. Lewis Niehaus. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. R. G. Adams at 12 o’clock, after which they retired to the table, which was spread with all the delicate dishes of the season and to which all did ample justice.

A partial list of the presents received by the couple may perhaps be taken as typical of weddings of the time: "Linen tablecloth and towels, bedspread, caster and set of tumblers, glass set, vase, goblets, silver butter knife, silver knife and sugar shell, silver card receiver, dinner caster, lamps, silver tablespoons, work box, and rug."

1All the early Fillmore County sources refer to him consistently as "Colonel" McCalla; there is no way of telling whether this title may have come from a battlefield promotion or whether it represents the kind of "honorary" upgrading not uncommon among early settlers.
Lewis Niehaus died on March 6, 1911; his widow Aggie passed away on February 11, 1960.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew J. Porter and their children — Grace, George, Harry, and Ethel — came in a covered wagon from Dawson County, Nebraska, to Madison township in the late summer of 1876. They were originally from Pennsylvania. They lived the first year on the Stuckey farm 1/2 mile N of the Simon Carney farm. (The Carney home was where you got the big red Jonathan apples and the girls made chocolate fudge in big, oven-sized pans.) During that year Mr. Porter bought railroad land for the farm which became their home for many years and where their youngest child, Mildred, was born in July, 1888. In 1878, diptheria took the lives of Harry and Ethel Porter, Lottie Williams, and Louie Stuckey, a son of Joe and Lizzie Stuckey.

Mr. Porter taught school for one winter in the Thompson district north of Madison township for $35 a month, a sum which kept his family from starving. Mr. Porter and Mr. Stuckey felt the need for religious life in the community and organized a Sunday school in the schoolhouse across the road northeast of Mrs. Schneider's home. Sometimes itinerant preachers came along and held services. Once, two came at the same time. One couldn't read, and one couldn't preach, so they took turns. Sometimes preachers from other towns came. Mr. Porter served for many years as postmaster at Sawyer. He passed away in 1917, and Mrs. Porter in 1938.

About 1890, the Sawyer church was built from donations and for a number of years was the center of religious life. Mr. Porter was superintendent of the Sunday school and Joy Hart was secretary. On December 11, 1892, the members of the congregation were surprised when, at the close of the sermon, the minister announced that all were invited to remain seated and witness a wedding. The organist, Mrs. B. A. Merritt, played "Here Comes the Bride" as the bridal couple — Frank M. Owens, son of Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Owens, and Miss Eleanor Holmes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Holmes — marched up the aisle and took their vows.

The Sawyer church was Presbyterian and the Burress
Mr. Putlitz was born on March 8, 1852, in the Prussian province of Silesia. His parents, Franz and Augusta O. (Mast) von Putlitz, were also Silesian born and reared. His father, a member of the German nobility, served for many years in the Prussian army and rose from a subordinate position to the rank of major. Finally placed on the retired list, he spent his last years as an honored veteran of the struggles that raised his own country to the front rank among the German states.

Helmuth Putlitz spent his childhood and youth in his native town, where he was liberally educated, both in the village school and in a military establishment, where he was prepared for the life of a soldier. But his tastes did not lie in that direction, and at the age of 19, he shipped aboard a merchant vessel, "before the mast," and went to sea as an able-bodied seaman. His first voyage was a long and disastrous one, which took him to the Sandwich Islands. While rounding Cape Horn, the ship encountered such cold weather as to cause injury to many of the sailors. Mr. Putlitz froze one of his hands so seriously that he never recovered its perfect use. This misfortune was enough to convince him that seafaring was far from the ideal life; and when a later voyage brought him to New York City, his long-cherished desire to settle in America induced him to abandon his ship.

He remained in New York for about a year, experiencing considerable amounts of privation and hardship. As soon as he could do so, he moved on westward as far as Moomouth, Illinois, and spent two years working for farmers around there. By diligence and thrift, he reached a position where he could think about a farm for himself. He came on West, and found a desirable location in Fillmore County. He made his preliminary exploration in the fall of 1874, and in the following year he settled permanently on a quarter-section of railroad land in Madison township. Although this was wild prairie when it came into his hands, years of unflagging labor turned it into a beautiful and well-kept farm with solid and substantial improvements.

In 1875, he married Miss Wilhelmina Heiderstadt, the daughter of Frederick and Martha (McClimont) Heiderstadt. She was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where her parents lived for a number of years before becoming early settlers of Fillmore County. Her father was of German extraction; her mother had been born in Carew, Ireland. Mr. and Mrs. Putlitz had five children: Francis F., Helmuth W., Martha, Harry, and Venda.

Mr. Putlitz was for many years a prominent Democrat and influential in the party's councils in the county; but in later years he embraced and strongly supported the principles of the Populist party. In 1886, he was a candidate for representative in the Nebraska legislature; after a spirited contest, he was defeated, though his vote exceeded that of any other candidate on his ticket. In 1891, he was nominated by the Populists for clerk of the district court, and was endorsed by the Democrats. He was elected by a majority of 125 in a county which up to then had been largely Republican. In 1895, he was renominated and re-elected to the same position, this time by a considerably larger majority, and served until 1899.

He was a member of the Knights of Pythias and the Ancient Order of United Workmen. He and his wife were regular attendants of the Episcopal church, of which she was a member. They held a good place in the affairs of the community and took a full share in its social and benevolent activities.

The Nebraska Signal for December 10, 1925, reported:

On November 28, 1875, on a farm three miles east of Geneva, occurred the double wedding of Charles Meyer and H. F. Putlitz, the brides being the Misses Martha and Wilhelmina Heiderstadt. The Meyer and Putlitz families made their homes in Fillmore County continuously since that time, with the exception of about a year, when Mr. and Mrs. Putlitz lived in South Omaha.

On Thanksgiving Day, the double Golden Wedding anniversary was celebrated at the spacious and well appointed home of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Putlitz in Fairmont, with a dinner in every way appropriate to the occasion. The event was a most happy one. A wide circle of friends in Fillmore County and elsewhere extend sincere congratulations to the honored couples.

William H. Ray (originally spelled Rhea) was born near Knoxville, Tennessee, on April 17, 1820. On June 21, 1846, at Indianapolis, he married Nancy McCalla (born January 31, 1829, in Scott County, Kentucky). William, along with an older brother, was apprenticed to a tailor in Tennessee and followed this trade through his lifetime, as well as being a farmer.
John H. B. Renken, born in 1854, migrated from Aurich, Hanover, Germany, to Woodford County, Illinois, just as did Kate Vossler, born in 1866. In 1882, both families moved to Kramer, Nebraska. After John and Kate's marriage on February 24, 1888, they lived on a farm near Dorchester. In 1901, they moved to District 17, Madison township (N ½ of SW ¼, Sec. 18).

In 1936, Mr. Renken passed away on this farm, and Mrs. Renken passed away in Geneva in 1954. Their three daughters—Anna, Tena, and Emma—remained in Fillmore County and still own the original farmstead purchased in 1901.

Simeon Sawyer was born in Lacon, Illinois, on January 27, 1845. Frances Josephine Devalon was born in Henry, Illinois, on February 28, 1854. Mr. Sawyer, a farmer, and Miss Devalon, a schoolteacher, were married April 7, 1874. On April 12, they left for Nebraska and settled on a farm 3½ miles SE of Fairmont. For several years, Mr. Sawyer farmed and raised stock. He then moved to Fairmont to serve as postmaster. After two years, he was succeeded by John Shade.

Mrs. Etta Schroeder came to Nebraska in the early 1870's, at the age of 14, with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Schroeder from Buffalo, Iowa. They came in a covered wagon and stopped to camp for the night with some former friends who had already settled here. They intended to go on to Clay Center, but these friends—four or five families—persuaded them to stop and settle in Fillmore County.

There were families all around them, many from Pennsylvania—named Simpson, Riggs, Hickey, mostly men who had taken up homestead claims after the Civil War. They found the families that had come on ahead of them so hospitable and so willing to lend a helping hand that they decided to settle here.

In 1872, Henry Schneider homesteaded a piece of land 4½ miles SE of Fairmont. He bought the crop—corn, oats, etc.—and the right for $80. Mr. Schneider and another neighbor, who had also homesteaded and had had a sod stable for his horses but no house for himself, traveled with several others to Lincoln to record the deed.

The land upon which the town of Sawyer was later built was given by the Schneiders. The post office was then called Sawyer after Simeon Sawyer, the Fairmont postmaster. When the Northwestern R.R. came through, the station was named Buckston. Mr. Schneider built a store with living quarters overhead. The town also had a grain elevator, a railroad depot station house, a schoolhouse, a coal business, a blacksmith shop, and cattle-loading facilities. The Sawyer (Buckston) railway station was later purchased by the Geneva Milling Company, which moved it to Geneva, where it is still used as a warehouse.

Sunday School and church were held in the schoolhouse. In fact, the early settlers' first projects were planting trees and building schoolhouses, for the land was barren except for a few scattered rose bushes—wild, of course. Later, a church (Presbyterian) was built from donations and supplied by a minister from Fairmont, the nearest town. Services were always well attended.

The Burlington Railroad was completed as far west as Fairmont in 1871. Etta Schneider, as a young girl, became a waitress at the Gaylord Hotel, located one block south of the present depot, where it was not unusual to feed as many as 60 persons at one meal.

In 1874, William Schroeder came from Illinois and bought railroad land, being given 10 years to pay up on it. It was barren land, with only one wild rose bush on it. It took him an entire year to turn the sod on 80 acres. Later, he married Etta Schneider (December 31, 1875), and they established their home here. The farm is now tenanted by Leo Bures. All the buildings on this farm were built by Mr. and Mrs. Schroeder and are still in use, though they have been modernized.

The schoolhouse, which stood near the Schneider home, was later moved to Burress, which was named for J. Q. Burress, who owned the land when the town site was located. The old town house of Madison township was located in the NE corner of Sec. 21, later known as the Oscar Ellison home. The Sawyer church was moved to District 17, located one mile E and 2½ miles S of Fairmont, practically in the middle of what later became the Fairmont Air Base. When the Air Base took over the land, the structure was moved to Friend, where it was again used as a church. The Air Base took out approximately 2,000 acres of Madison township land. Now, although deactivated as a U.S. Air Force base, its remaining facilities, including a total of 160 acres in concrete runways and aprons, remain in use, under the control of the Nebraska State Department of Aeronautics.

William Schroder passed away on June 28, 1917. Mrs. Etta Schroder died on February 6, 1957, at the age of 98 years, 2 months, and 27 days. At the time of her death she was Geneva's oldest citizen.

John Shade was born in Germany in 1831; his wife, Sophia Wangelin, was born there in 1837. Both came to America in 1861. They were united in marriage at Princeton, Illinois, May 28, 1863. In 1872, they came to Nebraska and took a homestead in Madison township, (E1/2 of SE ¼, Sec.
ing no home, and having his mother to provide for, he took Horace Greeley’s advice to come West.

On Sunday, April 27, 1913, Mr. and Mrs. Shade celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at their home in Burress. Old friends and neighbors to the number of 81 sat down to dinner with them. They were presented with a purse of $23 as a token of esteem.

Mrs. Shade died in 1914 and her husband in 1917. Of their 12 children, six are buried next to their parents, all having died at an early age in the year 1879, apparently in a diphtheria epidemic.

This account is taken from a letter written to Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Russell of Geneva on February 28, 1929, by L. G. Stewart, then a resident of Tujunga, California.

“A poor kid 23 years of age living in Chicago lost his father. Having no one to provide for, he took Horace Greeley’s advice to come West.

“I put a cover on my wagon and on the 16th day of February, 1870, I started. All I knew was to keep the feed box on the east end of the wagon. I crossed the Mississippi on ice and the Missouri on a ferry boat. I arrived on Turkey Creek April 1, 1870.

“I built a dugout and wrote my mother to leave Chicago the 9th of May. I met her at Ashland, then the end of the Burlington & Missouri Railroad track. My brother Dwight came with her. He was not old enough then to take a claim, but in 1872, we went buffalo hunting and he took a claim on Prairie Dog Creek in Harlan County.

“My brother had brought me half a bushel of walnuts. I planted them and when the trees were about 15 years old I cut out forks and made two chairs. The first chairs mother had in the dugout were made of blocks sawed from cottonwood logs with pegs driven in them for legs. Bedsteads were made of small poles set on forks and we filled the ticks with last year’s grass. All I bought was stock boards for table and door and two-by-sixes for door and window frames.

“In regard to Madison township, I took the first claim and built the first house. Beaver Crossing was the post office and the nearest store, and 14 miles north to the Blue River was the nearest blacksmith shop.

“On my way out, I always got my team in a barn and slept in the wagon except for two nights when I got a warm breakfast. I ate frozen chuck out of the grab box because I did not have the price of warm meals.

“I am glad I did not have to witness the sale of our things after being the first settler within 10 miles of where Geneva now is. It was a hard blow on this old pioneer.”

Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Tatro came to Madison township from Clay Center, where Mr. Tatro had been working nights for the Orr Brothers Flour Mill. They decided that they would like to make their home on a farm; and in the county paper they found advertised for sale 40 acres, owned by F. B. Donisthorpe, 3 miles N and one mile E of Geneva. Mr. and Mrs. Tatro came over and bought the 40 acres on February 11, 1900. The buildings were in poor shape but could be repaired. They moved here on February 26, 1900. The roads were frozen and rough. The sun shone and made the going worse. There were not many homes on the road to their new place. A good neighbor with a team and wagon brought their household goods. They got to the place at 8:30 p.m. and found the kitchen door open and snow inside.

They built their one-story house in May, 1900. They had good years and bad ones, droughts and windstorms. They bought the W 40 of their quarter on April 16, 1908, and the N 80 on September 1, 1916. They had the first telephone in the community, which was installed on December 20, 1923.

As the years went by, Mr. Tatro became successful in raising pure-bred hogs, attending State Fairs and winning his share of prizes and several silver trophies. He was one of the first farmers to substitute alfalfa for the red clover and timothy of that day. He seeded his first field of alfalfa in the spring of 1908. It proved to be a crop relished by practically every creature on the farm—cattle, horses, hogs, sheep, and even chickens—and produced good returns. Eventually it came to be widely sown and under right conditions produced three crops of hay and feed through the growing season. It also proved to be a crop that restored fertility to land that had been long used for producing grain crops. Further, it enabled the farmer to care for a more diversified line of livestock and made the dairy business more worth while for those who raised or milked cows.

On September 23, 1933, Mr. and Mrs. Tatro bought the David Garrett farm adjoining their farm on the south in Sec. 19. This place is now owned by Duane Tatro, the older son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Tatro. Duane and his wife built a modern house and made many other improvements. A beautiful yard, surrounded by a white fence, contains many varieties of shrubs and flowers.

The schoolhouse, known as District 17, was at first very small. As more room was needed, about 1907 or 1908, the Sawyer church building was bought and moved to this location, where they also held Sunday School. Then a well was dug, and it was no longer necessary for the pupils to carry water from the homes of neighbors. Then, in 1942, the Fairmont Air Base took over, and that was the end of this country school.

Frank Tatro was the victim of a fatal accident on June 21, 1938, while he was cultivating corn. His team became frightened, apparently because of a broken singletree. He was found in the wreckage by his son Duane, who was working in an adjoining field. He was taken at once to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Lincoln, where he was found to have a broken back, a broken ankle, and

Diedrich W. Twitmeyer came to Nebraska from Jacksonville, Illinois, in the spring of 1882. He homesteaded the S 80 acres and bought the N 80 of SE ¼ of Sec. 2, Madison township. Six years later, he and Dudley Owens purchased 80 acres that lay between their farms, of which each took 40 acres.

Mr. and Mrs. Twitmeyer are deceased. They were survived by their son John and their daughter Elizabeth (Mrs. Gaston).

Grandfather Thomas Wheeler homesteaded the SW 80 of Sec. 12 in Madison township and made a pre-emption claim for Ozro Wheeler for him to homestead when he reached the
age of 21. Ozro was about 19 when his parents came to Nebraska. Frank Andrews homesteaded east of the Wheeler homestead on the SE ¼ of Sec. 12. Frank Andrews and Ozro Wheeler were half-brothers.

Robert G. Williams was born June 21, 1827, and served with the Union forces in the Civil War. Isabella Hollingshead was born in Zanesville, Ohio, March 1, 1844. Her father died while she was an infant and her mother passed away when she was a very small child. Her grandmother took the little girl and brought her to womanhood. The grandmother moved with her family from Zanesville into Kentucky and later went to Stark County, Illinois. On April 1, 1861, Isabella was married to Robert G. Williams in Toulon, Illinois, and they immediately removed to Henry County, Illinois. Seven children were born to this union: three daughters—Eva (Mrs. Sherman Moss), Anne (Mrs. Dennis), and Chilotta Jane, who died at the age of ten; and four sons—Edward P., Robert Jr., William T., and Frank C. Williams.

In 1870, the family came to Nebraska, homesteading on the NW ¼ of Sec. 14, Madison township. This homestead has never passed from the family's possession. Mr. Williams was reared as an Episcopalian and Mrs. Williams as a Methodist. They both joined the Fairmont Methodist Church in 1872, a few months after its organization. Mrs. Williams was a faithful worker in the local Red Cross chapter and spent many hours knitting for the soldiers of World War I. In the latter years of her life, she enjoyed relating tales of the relief work she had helped with while her husband was away fighting in the years from 1861 to 1865.

Mr. Williams passed away at his home in Fairmont on June 22, 1908. Mrs. Williams died at the age of 74 during the 1918 influenza epidemic.

One of the earliest settlers in Fillmore County was Human Wythers, who had been born in England on December 5, 1830. With his wife Rebekah (born March 3, 1834), he left England on June 26, 1867, and landed in New York City on July 10. They came on west to Morrison, Illinois, February 18, 1879, and arrived at Exeter, Nebraska, on February 22, 1879. They settled on a farm owned by George Sampson of Peoria, Illinois, located ¼ mile E of what is now Burress. There were seven children in the family: Mary Ann (Mrs. Sam Russell), James, Sophia (Mrs. Thomas Pester), Hugh, Sarah (Mrs. Joseph Bradley), William, and Anne (Mrs Ira Andrew). In February, 1886, Human Wythers bought a piece of railroad land, the SE ¼ of Sec. 1, Chelsea township, and moved there when his son Hugh married Nellie Pester. Human Wythers died on December 5, 1907, and his wife Rebekah on March 23, 1912.

Hugh and Nellie Wythers started housekeeping on the home farm east of Burress. They lived there for 19 years, and then moved to the Chelsea farm, which Hugh bought from his father, Nellie Pester Wythers often got so homesick to see her people that she walked six miles to spend the day with them on Turkey Creek. Hugh had only enough horses to carry on his farm work, and so there were none to drive. Hugh was born May 3, 1862, and died February 18, 1936; Nellie Pester Wythers, born April 12, 1865, died March 18, 1928.

Of the six children of Hugh Wythers, two still live in Fillmore County. Mabel (Mrs. Henry Foster), who attended the Lincoln Business College after finishing high school in Exeter, was a secretary in the office of Deputy Superintendent E. C. Bishop when he started Boys' and Girls' Clubs, a forerunner of 4-H Clubs. Mr. Bishop was enthusiastic about corn growing for boys and cooking and sewing for girls. When Mabel was about eight years old, she lived near Burress and took music lessons from her neighbors, Miss Alta M. Andrews and Miss Claire Owens. When the Burress Methodist Church was built, she served as organist. Her work was quite satisfactory despite the fact that occasionally the minister, at the close of his sermon, would announce: "We will sing the closing hymn without music." When this happened, it was because the young organist was asleep behind the organ.

Edna (Mrs. H. H. Roberts) also lives in Fillmore County. A graduate of Exeter High School, she too attended the Lincoln Business College. She was employed in Lincoln for several years by the Armstrong Clothing Company as Mr. Armstrong's private stenographer. She also worked for the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company.

James Wythers (born July 28, 1868) married Belle Alexander of Ohio and settled on the farm he bought near Sawyer, the NW ¼ of Sec. 15. The family lived there until they retired (February 22, 1906) and built a home in Geneva. In 1915, James' son Loyd married and lived on the place. It is now owned and occupied by a grandson, James Wythers, representing the third generation. James Wythers the elder died on December 11, 1942; his wife Belle (born December 29, 1867) had preceded him on August 9, 1937.
Momence Township

Momence Township,1 in the southwestern quarter of the county, is bounded on the north by Bennett, on the east by Stanton, and on the south by Bryant townships, and on the west by Clay County. Its northern boundary is marked by Nebraska Highway 41. The land is generally level, with a few trees along Turkey Creek, which zigzags from west to east through the center of the township. It is also broken up by a few widely scattered ponds. These are the Big Pond (also known as the Shickley Pond), in Secs. 33, 34, and 35, the Weis Pond in Sec. 26, the Post Pond in Sec. 20, and the Pete Larsen Pond in Sec. 31. Surface water supplies are augmented by a total (in 1966) of 61 irrigation wells.

The township must have been organized shortly after the organization of Fillmore County in 1871. It was named for a town in Illinois, the former home of C. A. Combs, one of the early auctioneers in the county.

Many of the early settlers lived in dugouts and sod houses. They broke out pieces of prairie here and there, with oxen and cows, for gardens. Their first problem was that of getting water for themselves and their stock. The first wells were dug wells, which were hard and often dangerous to dig. They were dug by hand with short spades, and the earth was hoisted to the surface. Some wells were 100 feet deep; several families would club together to accomplish the task and use the same well.

Then came bored wells. These were bored by hand, with an auger shaped like a carpenter's bit, but much larger. Two men, one on each side of the auger, pushed against handles projecting from each side of it. When the auger was full of dirt, it was hoisted up and cleaned. Another section was then added and cleaned like the first. When water was reached, the hole was cased with wooden tubing. A long cylindrical bucket

1 Much of the information about Momence township, and many of the family stories, were supplied by Mr. John Johnson (now deceased); it is now not possible to identify his contributions in detail—Editor.

Momence Township Homestead Map

[Map of Momence Township Homesteads]

[Key to Homestead Map]

[Legend for Homestead Map]

[Legend for Homestead Map]

[Legend for Homestead Map]

[Legend for Homestead Map]

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[Legend for Homestead Map]
3 or 4 feet long, with a check valve in the lower end, was lowered with a rope and then drawn to the top; the rope passed over a pulley and was attached to a cylindrical drum with a crank at one end.

The invention of pumps was a great boon to the farm woman. At first she carried water from a spring or a water barrel. Later, when a well was dug, a pulley with a bucket on the end of a rope, or a pulley with a chain and a bucket on each end, simplified matters somewhat; but the invention of the pump was the greatest boon to the farm wife. The next major improvement was the invention of the windmill, for it transferred the drudgery of daily pumping to the eternal winds of the plains. The windmill tower was described as "the unmistakable sign of human habitation throughout the Great Plains."

The settlers' early farm implements consisted of a plow, harrow, corn planter, and some simple harvester. Their first corn planters were of the hand check variety. They plowed the ground, harrowed it, and marked it. The marker was made of four or five 4" x 4s nailed together about 3½ feet apart. This was dragged over the ground crosswise to the direction of planting. Then the man checking the corn dropped the corn on these marks. This was done to provide for cross-cultivation. Later, the check rower and wire was introduced, and this inconvenience was eliminated.

Grain was harvested mostly by headers. The header made a 10 or 12 foot cut, and was pushed rather than pulled. The cutter was pushed by a long beam attached to its back side, with a team of horses on each side. The man running the header stood on a little platform behind the horses and steered it. The cut grain was elevated into header boxes and hauled away and piled into rick stacks.

The McCormick Reaper made a cut of 5 or 6 feet and had a reel that looked very much like a Dutch windmill. The reel slats, of which there were four, had tines or teeth on them. Three of these reel slats knocked the cut grain down onto the triangular platform, and the fourth was so geared as to brush it off. This left the cut grain in bunches which were later bound by hand with straw, picked up, and hauled away. This was called a self-rake.

Some of the early settlers also used a machine known as a Marsh harvester, which superseded the McCormick Reaper or self-rake. This machine elevated the grain and dropped it onto what was called a table or platform. Two people rode on the machine, standing on a lower platform. Each of these grabbed a handful of straw, divided it so as to make a double-length band, and tied a small armful of grain into a bundle. The bundles were then thrown or dropped to the ground, and were later picked up and hauled away.

The stacks of grain were later threshed by the old horse-powered threshing machines. Power was furnished by six or eight teams and conveyed to the threshers by means of tumbling rods. The horse power was staked down by heavy poles. A beam or sweep—one for each team—was socketed into the master wheel and braced. The horses did not pull from the ends of the sweeps, as there were pulleys in the end of each sweep. A chain passed through these pulleys, one of which was fastened to the doubletrees to which the horses pulled and the other end was hooked back into equalizing rods. The purpose of these equalizing rods, which lay loose in a circle upon the sweeps, was to distribute the pull evenly among the teams. The man standing on the horse power kept the teams going, and the "kids" kept the straw away from behind the separator, a very dusty and dirty job.

CHURCHES

The Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church had its origin in 1882, when the first regular services received by the Lutherans of Momence township were provided by the Rev. John Meyer, who came from Kiowa and conducted services every fourth Sunday. He drove his ponies over the roadless prairies, through the waters of the Blue River and Old Sandy Creek. In the summer of 1883, the congregation formally organized and, under his guidance, decided to build their first church. The site—the SE corner of the farm of Detlef Koch, in the SE¼ of Sec. 24—was donated by Mr. Koch. The church building, which cost $538 and was completed with no debts against it, was dedicated to God on Pentecost Day, June 1, 1884, by the Rev. John Meyer. Pictures pertaining to the history of the church are in the files of the Signal and were used in a historical booklet compiled by the church for its 50th anniversary in 1934.

Among the first members of the Zion congregation were Claus Franzen, president, trustee, and collector; Frank Otte, secretary; Chris Grattopp, trustee; Charles Grattopp, collector; Fritz Busse; Will Gehrke; Carl Gehrke; Pete D. Koch, collector; Ed Misch, treasurer and trustee; W. Engel; Ed Ohnesorge; B. Tobiasen; William Steinke; Henry Franzen; Chris Broderson, Sr.; William Schmuck; John Koch; Claus Roweder; Gus Ohnesorge; and Herman Gehrke.

The two factions were reunited on January 10, 1889, and decided to drop membership in their respective synods and join the Wisconsin Synod. In the early spring of that year, the Rev. Michael Wolff of the Wisconsin Synod was installed as pastor. Since Pastor Wolff also served another congregation near Grafton, services at Zion were conducted only in alternate weeks. A modest parsonage was erected, just west of the cemetery adjoining the church, in 1889.

Church services continued to be held in the Zion church after the congregation was organized. The church was dedicated in 1884. Among the first members of the Zion congregation were Claus Franzen, president, trustee, and collector; Frank Otte, secretary; Chris Grattopp, trustee; Charles Grattopp, collector; Fritz Busse; Will Gehrke; Carl Gehrke; Pete D. Koch, collector; Ed Misch, treasurer and trustee; W. Engel; Ed Ohnesorge; B. Tobiasen; William Steinke; Henry Franzen; Chris Broderson, Sr.; William Schmuck; John Koch; Claus Roweder; Gus Ohnesorge; and Herman Gehrke.

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The Rev. C. W. Siegler was then installed as pastor of both congregations in the summer of 1896, and served until September 30, 1900. The Rev. Kluge of Grafton served the congregation until the newly called pastor, the Rev. George Kirschke, was installed early in 1901.

In 1901, during the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Kirschke, the congregation decided to move into the town of Shickley. Six lots were purchased in the northwestern part of the town and a new and larger frame church was built on the east lots of the site. The new church—34' x 56' and with a steeple—was erected for a total cost of $3,181.56. The members of the building committee were H. Wittmack, Charles Gratopp, and Fred Hesse.

The parsonage was moved into town, enlarged a bit and repaired, and put on the west lots of the church site. The first church was also brought into town and placed near the new church, where it served as a schoolhouse and parish hall until it was replaced by a new educational unit and parish hall, dedicated on October 22, 1950.

The new frame church, which had been dedicated in September, 1901, was totally destroyed by a lightning-started fire on May 21, 1918. Although the members were stricken, they were not dismayed. They soon decided to build a new brick church on the old site. The members did much of the work themselves. The brick church was dedicated in the fall of 1918. Although the building was valued at $10,000, the actual cash cost was only $5,500. It was only a few years until the whole church was free of debt. During the winters of 1922 and 1923, the congregation built the present parsonage, at a cost of $5,500.

At the time of their Golden Jubilee in 1934, the Zion congregation numbered about 190 souls, including about 130 communicants and 47 voting members. The highest and most intimate connection with the congregation is the communicant membership. This is granted to confirmed men, women, and children of about age 13 and upward. The Zion congregation, still a vital force in Shickley, has reason to rejoice; and they voice it in the words: ‘The Lord had done great things for us, whereof we are glad,’ and ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.’

The pastors who have served the Zion church have been:

John Meyer
S. Meeske
William Thole
J. Bond
C. Huber
J. Buechsenstein — Maak
Michael Wolff
W. C. Siegler
George Kirschke
H. Zimmermann
F. L. Brenner
A. B. Korn
William F. Wietzke
D. Luebke (temporary)
John Raabe
Henry Ellwein
L. E. Vogel (temporary)
K. Schaaf (temporary)
Laurence E. Wachholz
Corliss Stokamp (temporary)
Otto H. Wittig
Enno Budde
Norman F. Seebach (1962-)

The German Evangelical Lutheran Church was founded largely because many of the Zion members found it difficult to travel to the Zion Church. A local Free Will Baptist congregation had merged with their brethren in Geneva; and so the new group purchased the superseded church building in 1894 from off the farm of Ed Role’s father in Stanton township and moved it to the NW corner of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 1, T6N, R4W. The building was duly dedicated, and a parsonage was erected beside it. Its work and services continued until 1917, when it was forced to disband on account of limited membership. Some of the members of this congregation were Claus Franzen, William Gosch, Charles Gehrke, and Mike Gehrke. After the congregation disbanded, the church building was sold to William Loghry and converted into a house, still standing, 4½ miles W of Geneva (NE corner of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 6, Stanton township).

St. Mary’s Church (Turkey Creek) started from small beginnings. Shortly after the coming of the Burlington R.R. to the county in 1871, 10 families from Wisconsin located in the west-central part of the county, most of them in Momence precinct. Many at first lived in dugouts and sod houses, had large families, and were buffeted by the hardships and adversities of pioneer life.

Being staunch Catholics, their first concern was for the ministrations of their religion and the welfare of their children; but for a time there was no possibility of obtaining a resident priest. There was no Catholic church nearer than Crete. The priest in charge there, Father Lechleitner, was already overburdened, having charge of all the missions from Crete west to Kearney. Mass was offered once a month in one of the homes southwest of Sutton. Many of the settlers made the round trip of 30 or more miles on foot or in open farm wagons—a long journey, especially in midwinter. Finally, in 1875, the first Mass in what is now St. Mary’s Parish, Turkey Creek, was celebrated by Father F. Lechleitner.

The first church edifice was built in 1879, a small building put up by parishioners Peter Gergen and John Marson. As more settlers came in, and as families grew, this became too small and was replaced by a larger building about 1892.

In 1916, Turkey Creek was made a parish and the present commodious rectory was built. The Rev. A. J. Lutz, appointed the first resident pastor, served here for nearly 20 years. He was succeeded in 1935 by the Rev. Paul Ulenberg. Under his administration, a barracks building was bought from the deactivated Fairmont Army Air Base and made into a parish hall on its present site. Since 1947 this recreational hall has added much to the social life of the parish and to the welfare of its young people.

Also during the administration of Father Ulenberg, the Rev. Charles L. Gergen, a grandson of Peter Gergen who had built the first church, was ordained in St. Mary’s Church on April 14, 1948. His sister, Gladys M. Gergen, had entered the teaching Sisters of St. Frances in September, 1940, her name in religion being Sister Marionita. Sister M. Jane Frances, daughter of early settler Peter Weis, joined the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph, who work amongst the...
poor and lowly. She is presently a pharmacist in a hospital in Colorado Springs.

Father Ulenberg was succeeded by Father Francis Pluta, who was in turn succeeded by the Rev. John Kozlik.

Better roads and larger farms have brought to St. Mary’s Parish the same fate as that suffered by many another rural parish. As late as the middle 1940’s there were 75 families in the parish; by 1967, the growing trend toward larger farms had reduced the number to 45 families.

SCHOOLS

District No. 48 was formed on September 13, 1872, when County Superintendent John A. Dempster set aside Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 of Momence township to constitute that district.

District No. 49 was organized on September 13, 1872, when Superintendent Dempster set apart for it Secs. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36. By a special election on July 17, 1953, District 49 was attached to the reorganized District 54 (Shickley).

On the same date, District No. 50 was designated as consisting of Secs. 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33. From the many sod houses surrounding it, District 50 came to be known as the Sod Town (or Sodtown) school.

On February 18, 1873, Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18 were set aside by the then acting county superintendent to constitute District No. 60, which came to be known as the Fairview or Combs school. Here Ella Oblinger attended after her first year in District 63, and the three Oblinger girls attended after their return to Fillmore County in 1883.


District No. 79 was formed on January 15, 1880, by detaching Secs. 3, 10, and 15 from District 48 and Secs. 4, 9, and 16 from District 60.


On March 12, 1889, District No. 92, known also as Sandburg school and Turkey Creek school, was formed by detaching lands from Districts 50 and 60. Many such detachments were made in various districts and added to other districts, from time to time, to give children the advantage of schools closer to their homes.

FAMILIES

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Alkire settled on a homestead 9 miles W of Geneva in the spring of 1872, with three sons and one daughter. Their homestead was on what is now the Clay Center and Geneva highway (Nebraska 41). In 1872 there were no roads. Mr. Alkire plowed a furrow for the children to follow to school, which was held in a room of a neighbor's house. They lived in a sod house for a few years, building a new frame house just before Agnes was born in 1879. Mrs. Alkire's maiden name was Nancy Ellen Jordan. Years later the grand-niece of the Alkires, called the Alkire's homestead.

I remember hearing my folks tell about the bad storm of 1873. My father had left fuel to last until his return (the had to go a long way to make a living until the homestead was in shape to raise crops). A family in the neighborhood was leaving, and they came to Alkire home to wash, iron, bake bread, etc. They used up the fuel and did not chop more wood. Mrs. Alkire. The wood had to be hauled from down on the river south of us. It took three days for each trip they made.

Mr. Alkire used to walk to Sutton or Geneva for necessities. He took a grain sack. We had horses, but he let them rest each day he made trips on foot. The children did not see much of town only at Christmas time, Fourth of July, or some such time.

In busy summertime they walked two miles to Sunday School, and later “Free Will Baptist” had services at a schoolhouse. The Alkires were always steadfast Christians and always strict with the children. There were three schoolhouses within two miles. When they needed shoes, Mr. Alkire got some twigs of lilac or something, measured the size by fitting one just as long as the old shoe, then another a little longer, which was taken for shoe size.

I remember the snowstorm of 1888 quite well. For some reason the goods would not let me go to school that day, but my two brothers, Jim and Frank, went. They had to face that storm for two miles home; but they arrived safely, with only frosted ears. After the storm, the drifts were almost like rock in our yard. All our wagon with side boards and our windlass well had to be tunneled out, with a bare space close to the house. I remember how I enjoyed hauling my brother Walter on his sled. He was two years old at this time.

I can remember how well off we felt when we got a pump to pump water instead of using a windlass well. I can remember how the men folks pumped water for horses and 20 head of cattle.

The Joseph Alkires lived on the NW ¼ of Sec. 4, T8N, R4W, Momence Township. They had 10 children (two of whom died in infancy). There were five older and four younger than myself.

Agnes (Alkire) Smock

C. N. Broderson was born on November 12, 1834, in Schleswig, Denmark, then a part of Denmark but later part of Germany. In the old country, he took military training and fought in the war between Denmark and Germany (1866). He was a cooper by trade, and followed this trade until he came to Nebraska. As a young man, he had many and varied occupations, including that of sailor and whaler. On one whaling trip he visited Greenland, of which he reported that it was so cold that when he spat, the spit would freeze into ice before hitting the ground. He came here in the fall of 1885 and bought his land, the SE ¼ of Sec. 28 in Momence township, of a man named Tower. Several of his first children died when quite young; two of them are buried on the place he farmed. His surviving children were Mrs. Jacob Frantz, Christian M., Lewis P., and Henry J. The first three are deceased, but Dr. Henry J. Broderson lives in Menlo Park, California. Mr. Broderson passed away in 1918 at the age of 84.

Miles Brotherton was born in New York State in 1840. He fought in the War of the Rebellion on the side of the Union, serving from the beginning to the end of the war, and was with General W. T. Sherman on his famous “March to the Sea.” He was married to Louisa MacBeth in 1868. To this union were born five children: May, James, Ed, Ethel, and Anna.

Mr. Brotherton came to Fillmore County in 1871 and homesteaded in Sec. 4, Momence township. He went through many typical experiences of the early settlers of the county. He experienced not only the blizzard of 1888 but also that of 1873. In 1873, Mr. Brotherton and another man named Russel Ferguson, leaving the women at home, had gone to Davenport and were caught in that fearful storm. They had to make their way home afterward through heavy drifts and difficult roads. In the next year (1874), they suffered from the grasshoppers which ate every green thing, and also ate the end out of an old cultivator tongue, because it had some particles of sweat on it from the horses which had been hitched to it.

Mr. Brotherton lived in a sod house for many years, and his elder children were born in it. He lived on this farm all his life until he passed away on February 7, 1925.
Peter Carl was born in Sinz, Rhein Province, Germany, on July 31, 1864. He was married on March 28, 1889, to Anna M. Nittler in Sinz. They came to America for their honeymoon and settled in Momence township. They lived in Nebraska all their married life except for one year spent in California. Mr. and Mrs. Carl retired from the farm in 1925 and made their home in Geneva. Mrs. Carl passed away in 1940 and Mr. Carl in 1956. They were the parents of 10 children. Two sons passed away in infancy. The other children were: John M., of Geneva; Otto M., of Sutton; Adolph A., of Omaha; Frank P., of Turlock, California; Mrs. Helen Dirkson, of North Hollywood, California; Cecilia (Mrs. William Kenny), of Savannah, Missouri; Mrs. Frances Dom, of Westville, Indiana; and Ann (Mrs. L. Ray Shickly), of Van Nuys, California.

William Fenske and his wife Amelia came to the United States in 1867 with their three sons, Otto, Emil, and William, from the province of Brandenburg, Germany, when William was six years old. They lived for a short time near Martland and for a year near Superior, and then bought a farm in Momence township.

The younger William Fenske married Caroline Simmons in 1901. They had one son, Leonard; but, shortly thereafter, Caroline Fenske passed away. In 1914, William married Christine Burmeister of Grafton. To this union were born three daughters: Beatrice (Mrs. Reuben Burbach), Gretchen and for a year near Superior, and then bought a farm in Momence township.

In 1920, the Fenskes moved to Sutton, but William Fenske and his son Leonard still farmed the home place, where Leonard still lives in 1967. For many years William was employed as a mechanic by the late William Sheridan Fairmont. All three daughters followed their mother's profession of teacher.

Claus Franzen came to Momence township in the fall of 1877. He purchased 80 acres, the W 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 2, for $350. His son, Henry Franzen, was born on December 27 of that year. Claus returned to Vermont, Illinois, where he lived for 2 years. On coming back to Fillmore County, he bought back the same piece of land for $870. He took an active part in organizing and founding the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sec. 24 and also in organizing the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sec. 1. He was also active in many civic duties and affairs of the township.

Peter Gergen was brought to America by his parents when he was about two years old. At the age of 20, he enlisted in the Union Army. He went through many skirmishes but suffered no more damage than a bullet hole in the end of his coat. After the Civil War he was honorably discharged; as a veteran, he was entitled to a pension, which he declined.

A few years later, he married Mary Lange in Wisconsin. To this union were born seven children: Nick, Mary J., Peter Gergen, Mike and Joe. Back row: Mary Gergen (Engelbert), Nick, and John P. Gergen. None other than Hatcliffs have owned or lived on their farm in Sec. 7, which they have occupied continuously. Mr. Hatcliff passed away in 1931 and Mrs. Hatcliff in 1951. Lester and Arthur “batch” and live on the home place, which they farm and keep in neat repair.

John Hokom was born in Sweden in 1839. He got only a meager education in the public schools, was confirmed in the Lutheran Church of Sweden at 15, and served for two years in the Swedish army. In the hope of bettering his financial condition, he emigrated to America at the age of 29. On landing in New York, he went at once to Knox County, Illinois. Later he spent a short time in Wisconsin but returned to Knox County, where he spent six years in farming, at first working for others by the month. While living there, Mr. Hokom was married to Olivia Anderson in 1872; they had five children: Martin, Henry, Hattie, John, and Ida. On leaving Galesburg (Knox County), he came directly to Fillmore County. In Bryant township, he purchased 160 acres south of Shickley for $6 an acre; but the family had to endure many hardships during their early residence here, and he at one time offered to trade the entire tract for a horse, as he had become very discouraged. However, a year later he sold this place for $1,800. In 1885, he bought his farm of 240 acres in Sec. 19, Momence township for $2,200. In time, this became one of the show places of the locality; all the improvements on it were put there by himself and his family.

John Katheiser, Sr., was born in Luxemburg on August 19, 1883. His mother had been born on the border between Luxemburg and Germany. He came to the United States.
shortly before the Civil War and served for three years in the Union army. Besides being in many battles, he was in the big explosion at Memphis and was in the hospital there for more than a year. He was in the battle of Mobile, August 5, 1864, where his regiment was so far wiped out that only 13 men survived. Here, too, he underwent his worst military hardships because supplies were cut off and for three days they had only a few crackers and a little water until help came. His brother Nick, who also fought in the Civil War, died in it.

After getting out of the army, he went back to Luxemburg and married Katherine Steiner. This union later produced eight children, six boys and two girls: William, Peter, Annie, Anthony, John, Jake, Mike, and Mary. Shortly after their marriage, they came to the United States on a ship that took 90 days in crossing the Atlantic.

They settled for a few years in Lockport, Illinois, where his two brothers were; their three older children were born there. On coming to Nebraska, they bought railroad land in Sec. 11, Momence township. Here Mr. Katheiser built a frame house, 12' x 16'; in the same year, he built a sod house onto the frame house and plastered the entire house. He farmed with a team of oxen the first year. He was justice of the peace and also kept the post office (known as Turkey Creek P. O.) in their home. He hired a teacher and had a three-month school for the surrounding families. The mail was brought from Fairmont on horseback twice a month. Their hardships and troubles were many and various. At one time they ran out of flour to bake bread. Not being able to drive the oxen the 18 miles to Fairmont, he took a basket of eggs and a roll of butter, walked to Fairmont, and returned with a 50-pound sack of flour on his back. Their best way of getting flour in those days was for the neighbors to go together and take a load of wheat to the Fillmore Mill north of Grafton and come back with a load of flour to divide up among them.

John Katheiser died on December 8, 1900.

Albert and Emma Krause in 1946

Albert Carl Krause, son of Henry and Louise Krause, was born in Germany on December 13, 1868. When he was six months old, his parents brought him to America; they settled in Henry County, Illinois. In 1872, they came to Nebraska and homesteaded in the western part of Fillmore County near Shickley (NW 1/4, Sec. 30, T6, R4W), where Albert grew up.

On September 26, 1895, he married Margaret Schnuerle. To this union were born three children, Ed, George, and Emil, and a girl who died in infancy.

By hard work and by such sacrifices as those of many other pioneers, he accumulated a substantial amount of property and at the time of his death (April 12, 1874) was one of the largest landholders in Fillmore County. He truly saw the whole change from barren prairies to fertile fields dotted with villages and cities. Besides his extensive farming operations, he built several homes and brick buildings in the west side of Geneva. He was always generous and kind, as well as keen and alert and ready to assist in any way toward the betterment of his community and his town.

John Mansfield was born in Sweden on February 4, 1829. Educated in the Swedish public schools and confirmed in the Lutheran Church, he served in the Swedish army for 26 years. At the age of 23, he was married to Sarah Johnson; they had 10 children, all born in Sweden, but only five then living were brought to America: William, Annie, Elsie, Julius, and Emil. In 1879, at the age of 50, Mr. Mansfield emigrated to America. After landing in New York City, they went to Portland, Connecticut, and then later to Omaha, where they lived for two and a half years before coming to Fillmore County in the spring of 1883. The year before, he had purchased 160 acres in Momence township, Sec. 19, for $1,200; when he came, the land was entirely unimproved. Although he had but $1.50 when he located upon the place, he prospered from year to year and was able to lay aside business cares and enjoy the fruits of his toil. He served for 10 years as school treasurer in his district. He died on November 20, 1911.

David Myers (William D. Myers) was another old settler of Momence township and, like Miles Brotherton, had fought for the Union in the Civil War. He may have been with General Sherman on his march "from Atlanta to the sea"; but little is known of this old soldier. After the war, he traveled as far west as Colorado before homesteading on the SE 1/4 of Sec. 18 in Momence. He made a gift of one acre in Momence township, Sec. 19, for $1.20; when he came, the land was entirely unimproved. Although he had but $1.50 when he located upon the place, he prospered from year to year and was able to lay aside business cares and enjoy the fruits of his toil. He was born on January 1, 1845, died in Fillmore County on May 9, 1915.

The following account of John Portwood was written by his daughter, Mrs. Eva Portwood Dodge:

I have been asked to write all I know about my father John Portwood's father's family, also John Portwood's own family, and the District 50 school, called the Sodtown school, and how it got its name.

To start with, my father, John Portwood, was born in Troy, Indiana, in the year 1867, the oldest in his family. When John was a boy of 12, in 1874, his father's family, together
covered wagons and oxen teams. I think most of those home­
steaders built sod houses and lived in them many years and
later built frame houses. Soon many more families came and
settled in the Sodtown district. These people came from
different states and all took homesteads, so of course
there had to be a schoolhouse built.

There were four families (Joe and Ambrose Parish, Ed­
win TePier, and Alex McNanus) living on homesteads 4
and 5 mile S of this schoolhouse. Each built a sod house on their
own quarter section of land, making all four sod houses right
close together like a small town. They dug a bored well, and
all used the same well, drawing the water by bucket, thus
giving this District 50 school the name of Sodtown. My
grandfather Portwood’s family was all sent to the Sodtown
school, together with the other families that had taken homesteads.
The names of a few living close by were Minnesota
Carlson, Olaf Berquist, Gene Jackman, August Bengston,
Oliver Warthen, the Post brothers, and Ambrose and Jim
Parish (SE i/4, Sec. 32, T6, R4 and NW i/4, Sec. 32). The
Post brothers (NW (4, Sec. 20, T6, R4 and NE (4, Sec. 20)
set out a tree claim of about 80 acres. I well remember those
trees. Those early pioneer homesteaders met with many hard­ships in those days.

Their closest doctor was Dr. Charles Snowden of Daven­
port. They had to prepare their eats to last nearly a week and
also for their oxen teams and go to the South Blue River and
cut down trees for their winter fuel. They hauled the wood by
taking off their wagon boxes and loading the wood on the
running gears of their wagons. I remember my father saying
that while on one of those trips from wood, together with some
of their neighbors, there was a total eclipse of the sun. It
became as dark as night in the middle of the afternoon. This
lasted about one hour, then began to pass off and looked like
dawn. The roosters all began crowing just like at dawn today.

To continue my story: All this homestead land was soon
taken up. One man by the name of Isaac Frey, and his son
Elam Frey and a granddaughter, Hattie Herbold, took a
homestead a few miles west of my grandfather’s homestead,
the Portwood place. This Frey family was from Erie, Penn­sylvania. In the year 1886, my father, John Portwood, and
Hattie Herbold were married and built a house and barn and
lived a short time on the corner of his uncle’s (Captain George
Anderson’s) place. During this time, I was born. I wasn’t
quite a year old at the time of the bad blizzard of 1888 which
I heard my folks and many of the old-timers tell about. Dur­ing
the fall of ’88, my folks and I and my great-grandfather,
Isaac Frey, went to the state of Arkansas to buy land, going
by covered wagons, driving horses. They located near a town
called Rosebud, a small town. They had lots of hard work
clearing trees, stumps, and rocks from their land. There were
many nice things there, nice warm climate, nice neighbors,
lots of all kinds of fruit and lots of wild game, such as wild
turkeys, deer, wild dogs, squirrels, coon, and opossum.

Most of our friends in Arkansas were very religious peo­ple,
going to church on Sunday and having what they called
“Singing School” one evening during the week, everyone
learning to sing the hymns by rote. In early fall every year
they would all attend a large camp meeting that lasted two
weeks. We would call it a convention today. My folks and
their neighbors would cook and bake up a lot of food and
stay for several days, driving there by horses and wagons.
Lots of ministers and folks would attend this big camp
meeting for miles around, hearing many good sermons and
joining in singing the old-time hymns.

The John Portwood family only lived in Arkansas four
years and then decided to go back to Nebraska, as there was
beginning to be so much malaria fever there. My folks wanted
to get back to Nebraska before we got it. On our way back
my sister next to me got the malaria when they had gotten
as near as Goodwin, Kansas. They rented a house and had
a doctor every day, but they couldn’t save her. She died. I
was five years old when we came back to Nebraska. A few
things I remember about Arkansas, the most outstanding
being their nice fields of cotton, and going along with my
daddy when he was picking his cotton.

At the homestead place, one mile S and 3/4 mile E of the
Portwood place, known as the Price place and post office, the
mail was brought once a week by horseback, star route, from
Fairmont. Everyone from far around came there for their
mail. I imagine this was in the 1870’s, before there was a
Shickley.

Warren J. Post was born in Vermont, where his parents
farmed, on March 14, 1883. The family later moved to
Illinois, where they continued farming until they moved to
Nebraska in 1872 and settled on the Sodtown school section
of Sodtown Township. For about nine years they lived in a
sod house and underwent all the privations and hardships
incident to life on the frontier. Their crops were destroyed
sometimes by grasshoppers, sometimes by drought and hail,
which caused hard times. By strict economy and untiring
labor, they overcame all obstacles, and success at length
crowned their efforts. Their nearest market was Sutton, 13
miles away; Geneva was just starting, and Shickley was not
yet thought of.

The following “Reminiscences of Nebraska Pioneer
Days” were supplied by Warren J. Post in 1899:

My parents were born in Vermont. After they were
married they moved to Green County, Illinois, in 1856. They
went to a farm that was nearly all timber. They cleared the
ground in order to raise a crop. The second year the army
worm destroyed all the small grain. They stayed there four
years. Then they moved to Woodford County, Illinois, and
bought a farm, all prairie. The estate of my grandfather was
not settled until the war broke out. Then the administrator
enlisted and was killed. His bond was worthless and every­thing
was then lost. So in September of 1873 we emigrated to
Nebraska. It took five long weeks. We landed in Beatrice
which was then a small town but lively all the same. When
we came on our land, father and I had $4.60 between us.
We put in 10 acres of wheat and 25 acres of corn. The grass­hoppers ate up the corn and I heard at the time that the
neighbors lost some of their plows and grindstones, but
ours were covered up and we did not lose them. We used our
fuel from the South Blue River. Had 20 miles to haul it.

In the autumn of 1874, L. D. Phillips, P. L. Lancaster,
and myself went buffalo hunting, as neither we nor any of
the neighbors had any meat of any kind and no money to
buy any. We started from home with 2 wagons and 8 large
barrels for the meat. We went by way of Hastings, a town
of only about 20 houses at that time, and from there to
Kearney. It contained about 100 houses and was a pretty
tough place. There were Mexicans and cowboys. They ran
the town almost as they pleased. We stayed there two days
and bought our supplies. There was a man killed while we
were there.

Next we went to North Platte. It was a very lively town,
too. We got 2 antelope while crossing the Platte valley. We
went south to the Republican River. In crossing the river,
we got mired down in quicksand. We had to unload and carry
everything. The water was 3½ feet deep. There was a gentle Nebraska breeze blowing from the north, and so we
had to build a fire and dry our clothes. We started on to the
Red Willow. Then our eyes began to get larger, for we could
see herds of buffalo in all directions. We camped on Red
Willow at noon. We were very anxious for some buffalo meat.
so after dinner we started moving out to see what we could do with them. They looked like sod houses moving towards us. We agreed to kill only animals one and two years old, so we would have nice, tender meat. We got 2 that afternoon. While going to camp, we got one wolf and one wildcat. To make a long story short, we got our barrels filled with nice, tender meat. I killed my first buffalo with my first shot. I have some very nice buffalo horns now and think a great deal of them as old relics. We were with the buffaloes two weeks. Just one mile from camp there was a fat Indian buried in a tree. It was wrapped in a blanket and was laid on poles laid across the limbs of the tree. A large number of names, such as beads and wristlets were also with it. All rivers and small streams were full of beaver and otter. There were many elk, deer, antelope, and wolves. We saw herds of buffalo that were 3 miles long and from ½ mile to 2 miles wide. We thought at the time there were 30,000 head in some herds. This may seem large, but it is all true. We killed 40 buffaloes, 4 elk, several deer and antelope. We saw where Indians had killed from 25 to 100 buffaloes in one place that did not even cover 15 acres of ground. We got arrows that laid where the remains were left.

Remember, we spent all our money at Kearney to buy our supplies. So when we started back we didn’t have any flour or tobacco when we reached Kearney. We had to hunt antelope and sell them to get provisions. It was straight meat three times a day for one week. Next, we concluded to ship our barrels of meat home from Kearney to Edgar. Father and the neighbors went and got it. They were very much pleased. Each barrel weighed over 400 pounds. We stayed in Kearney for two weeks and sold $40 worth of antelope and deer. We came home when winter had commenced. That winter was a hard one. My brother Harvey and myself killed 80 jack rabbits that winter. We shipped them to Omaha and got as much as 50 cents apiece for them. Then I went to Illinois and worked until it was time for me to be back on the homestead.

In 1938, Harvey Post set up a trust fund of $1,000 in the First National Bank of Greencastle, Pennsylvania, the interest to be used by the Fairview Cemetery Board for upkeep of the cemetery. Harvey Post died at Greencastle in 1945.

The parents of Warren J. Post and Harvey Post and their granddaughter Savilla Post sleep in Fairview Cemetery, Momence township.

Lewis Pratt came from Taylor County, Iowa, to Fillmore County in 1884 and purchased a relinquishment of a timber claim from John and Tom Ackland, in Sec. 4 of Momence township. He was married in Taylor County in 1880; he and his wife had 3 girls, Sylvia, Winifred, and Elva. He decided that the best way he could help them through life would be to give them an education, in spite of the fact that they had to go a long distance to school. Sylvia, the eldest, had the distinction of being the first girl in the county to take the eighth-grade examinations. A good part of the time, they had 9 miles to drive to school. Sylvia graduated from the Shickley High School in 1902 and taught school 3 years in District 63 (Mann school), one in District 50 (Sodtown), and 3 months in District 44 in Milligan. Mr. Pratt farmed all his life. He passed away in February, 1908, at the age of 57.

John W. Price was, in all probability, the first settler in Momence township. He was born in Ontario County, New York, in 1819, of Irish and Welsh parents. His parents took him back to Europe with them, but returned to America in 1845 and lived in Ohio. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and was sent to Texas, where he was promoted to sergeant and spent 3 years skirmishing in the region. He was then sent to Florida on an expedition against the Seminole Indians. He was mustered out in May, 1858, but re-enlisted on the breaking out of the War of the Rebellion. He took part in the battles of Perryville, Corinth, Stone River, Hoover’s Gap, Chickamauga, and Mission Ridge, and was discharged on the expiration of his enlistment, August 14, 1864. In 1866, he married Orinda M. Barrows of Madison County, Ohio. They moved to Iroquois County, Illinois, where they farmed until they came to Nebraska and located in Fillmore County on April 18, 1872, on Sec. 3, Momence township.

A native of Sweden, Charles Sanburg was born on February 21, 1845, and at 15 was confirmed in the Swedish Lutheran Church. For 12 years he worked for a farmer in Sweden at a wage of $9 a month, and served 2 years in the Swedish army. He married Edith Peterson in 1873. Eight children were born to this union: Carl (who married Mollie Spurling), Emma (wife of August Pearson), Anna, Ella, Oscar, Minnie, Grant, and Lena. The family came to Fillmore County in 1885 and purchased 160 acres in Momence township, Sec. 17, for $2,600 and an adjoining tract for $1,600. He was interested in raising stock of various kinds. He also served as justice of the peace for 2 terms and as school director for 13 years. He and his family belonged to the Swedish Lutheran Church of Stockholm. He died on October 29, 1916.

John B. Schommer was born north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His wife, Katherine, was also born in that vicinity. They were married on May 1, 1877, at Holy Cross, Wisconsin, 30 miles south of Milwaukee. Thirteen children were born to this union: Casper, John, Joe, Katherine, Mary, Margaret, Ben, Jake, Annie, Rose, William, Anthony, and Angela. All were born in February except Casper, the oldest. The Schommers came to Nebraska in the spring of 1878. When they arrived at Fairmont, a neighbor met them with a team and wagon. Because there were no roads, they drove across the prairie. As they crossed Turkey Creek, the water was so high that the horses started to swim and the wagon box started to float off the bolsters, so that the men had to hold it down. Mother often said that she was really afraid they would drown. It was quite an experience for her.

Mr. Schommer pre-empted the SE ¼ of Sec. 12 in Momence township in 1878. Later, John Gergen, a brother of Peter Gergen, took up the NE ¼ of Sec. 12 and they built their houses with only the line fence between them, and a footpath connecting the houses. Later, in 1884, Mr. Schommer bought the SE ¼ of Sec. 13, a piece of railroad land, on which he built a 5-room house. As the family was becoming larger, they needed more room in which to live as well as more acres to farm.

Mr. Schommer was an architect and builder, and he, Peter Gergen, and John Marson built the first St. Mary’s Church in 1879. The larger structure was built in 1894 and dedicated in the fall of that year. Some time later Mr. Schommer’s sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lecher, came from Wisconsin and Mr. Schommer leased an acre of land from Hans Weis, across the road south of the church, and built a general-merchandise store with living quarters in the back. The Lechers ran the store. Then the post office, known as the Turkey Creek P.O., which had been in the Kathesier home, was moved to this store.

About this same time, the Chicago & Northwestern R.R. had planned to run through Fillmore County and had surveyed and set stakes past the Turkey Creek Church. It was expected that a station might be established there and that
a town might grow around it; but for some reason the line was changed and built 4 miles to the east, through Martland and Shickley instead.

Schommer and Lecher sold the store to John Arendt of Le Mars, Iowa. Then John P. Thoma came from Le Mars and the two formed a partnership. The store was moved to Shickley and became known as the Thoma & Arendt store.

Mr. Schommer experienced the hardships and anxieties incident to pioneer life. One October morning he set out for Kansas to get his wood for the winter. When he woke up the next morning, it was snowing, and so he hurried back lest he be caught in a blizzard. In the meantime his wife and children spent many anxious hours praying and awaiting his return. Also, in those days, in case of sickness they had to go a long way for a doctor, and the trip had to be made by team.

In 1887, Mr. Schommer and his family moved to Humphrey, Nebraska, where his children had the advantage of a nine-month school. While there, Mr. Schommer built a number of large churches and schools in Platte and near-by counties. With the depression of the nineties, he came back to Fillmore County and shared with his fellow pioneers there counties. At some time before acquiring these lands, he was confirmed in this country. He rented land for some time in Bennett township before buying land in Momence, in Sec. 8. Mr. and Mrs. Schommer had seven children: John, Annie, Will, Lena, Emma, Louis, and Mary. He passed away on February 16, 1929, at the age of 88 years and 2 months.

— Mary (Schommer) Katheiser

Mr. and Mrs. August Stoldorf at their golden wedding celebration (1929).

August Stoldorf was born in Germany in 1856 and came to America in 1865. He had no schooling and was a self-educated as well as self-made man. He married Minnie Goesch on December 18, 1879, a native of Germany who had been confirmed in the Lutheran Church there; her husband was confirmed in this country. He rented land for some time in Bennett township before buying land in Momence, in Sec. 8. Mr. and Mrs. Stoldorf had seven children: John, Annie, Will, Lena, Emma, Louis, and Mary. He passed away on August 9, 1934.

Giles Thomas, son of William Paul and Margaret Thomas, was born in Cass County, Indiana, on December 16, 1840. He and his twin brother Sam were the oldest of a family of 10 children. He enlisted in the Union army at Logansport on August 12, 1862, and served as a corporal in Co. K, 99th Indiana Infantry, and in the 20th Company, 2nd Battalion, Veteran Reserve Corps. As color guard of his regiment, he was wounded on July 24, 1864, at Atlanta, Georgia, when the colors were shot from his hands. The staff was cut in two and the bullet entered his right hand. He was honorably discharged on November 14, 1865. He came to Nebraska in 1872 and underwent both the hardships and the joys of the pioneer. He passed away at his home in Geneva on February 16, 1929, at the age of 88 years and 2 months.

— Nellie and Annie Sheridan

Heinrich Vauck was born on December 8, 1835, in Mecklenburg, Germany, and arrived in the United States on May 22, 1867. After living for several years in east-central Illinois, he came to Momence township in 1873 and timbered the NE 1/4 of Sec. 18. His wife, Ernestine Lange, was born near Stettin, Germany, on June 16, 1847. They were married on January 21, 1875, and had two sons. One son, Heinrich, grew to manhood and lived in Sutton. Heinrich Vauck died on July 14, 1883, and his wife on February 17, 1898. They and the oldest son, August, are buried in Fairview Cemetery.

Henry Vauck

Henry Vauck, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Vauck, was born on November 22, 1876, in Momence township, and was gaining the distinction of being one of the first children born there. While yet a small boy, he had an accident which seriously crippled him. But in spite of his handicap he had the grit and determination to make the best of life.

He entered the ninth grade of Sutton High School in 1892, taught a two-month term in 1894, and graduated from Sutton’s 12th grade in 1895. After teaching another year, he attended the Rohrbaugh Business College in Omaha until October 1, 1897. He then taught in the rural schools of Fillmore and adjoining counties for four years. As a teacher, he won the love and admiration of his pupils, their parents, and the school patrons, and was soon called upon to assume greater responsibilities. He taught one year in Shickley, attended the Peru Normal School, and was elected county superintendent of Fillmore County in 1904, a position which he held until 1910.

Henry Vauck married Alice Oakley on March 12, 1902. To this union were born four children: Edward L., Earl A., Burnett E., and Bernice E. (Mrs. Orren L. Graves). The oldest son, Edward, became an expert for the Nebraska State Railway Commission; the second, Earl, a farmer near Sutton; and the third, Burnett, superintendent of schools at Duncan. The daughter’s husband became a member of the police force at Lincoln. All four children were graduated from Sutton High School and all attended the University of Nebraska.

Henry Vauck became county judge of Clay County on January 3, 1929, and served in this position with marked ability for 12 years. He also had the honor and distinction of serving as postmaster of the Nebraska Legislature in 1941. In 1938 he published a book called Blizzards, commemorating the blizzard of January 12, 1888, and the reunion at Fairview School (District 60) in Fillmore County, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the blizzard, a reunion of the pupils and teacher who had seen that terrible day. This celebration and reunion soon grew to greater proportions than first anticipated, and extra arrangements had to be made to accommodate the crowd. The anniversary proved to be a fair day instead of foul, and the many and varied reminiscences of past experience brought a good deal of cheer to all those present.

— Henry Vauck

Henry Vauck and his wife Alice were killed in an automobile-train collision at a railroad crossing in Sutton on November 11, 1957.

Peter Weis, Sr., born in 1811, came with his wife, Katherine (Smith) Weis, and their children, from Burmeisingen, Luxemburg, to America in 1867. They first located in Lasalle County, Illinois, where they farmed until 1871, when they came to Fillmore County. Here they homesteaded the SW 1/4 of Sec. 14 in Momence township, and lived for their first two years in a dugout. He prospered by hard work and the diligence of his sons, and was able to assist each of them in setting up their own farms. He died on March 28, 1891.

John Weis, Sr., a son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Burmeisingen on March 15, 1846, and came to America and Nebraska with his parents. His wife, Helen Magdalen Frick, was born in Belgium, Wisconsin, March 19, 1856. They were united in marriage on February 12, 1878, at Lake Church, Belgium, Wisconsin. To this union were born eight children: Kate, John, Nick, Clara, Peter, Joe, Ann, and Leo.

Like many of the early settlers, John Weis made his way by many years of hard work, patience, perseverance, and sacrifice. He became one of the largest landlords of Fillmore County. At some time before acquiring these lands, he went to Kansas and purchased 200 head of cattle which were driven on the hoof to Nebraska, where they were later divided up amongst himself and his three brothers.

John Weis also conducted a general merchandise store just south of St. Mary’s Church for several years. In 1910, he moved into Geneva to spend his declining years, and died there on February 20, 1929.
John J. (Hans) Weis, another son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Luxemburg in 1847. Coming to Nebraska with his parents in 1871, he homesteaded the SE ¾ of Sec. 14. He was married to Elizabeth Mertz in Holy Cross, Wisconsin, in 1878. To this union were born four children: Mary, Lena, John, and Nick. He died here in 1925.

Jacob Weis, another son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Luxemburg on August 11, 1856. Jacob was about 15 years old when he came to Fillmore County. After his arrival in Nebraska, he worked on the railroad for two years, assisting his parents in 1871, he homesteaded the SE 14 °f Sec. 14. He was a lad of eight years. He assisted his father on the homestead, improving and cultivating the land for 11 years. Then his father gave him 160 acres and he began farming on his own account. For seven years he and his brother Jacob worked together in the operation of their farms.

On January 7, 1899, he was united in marriage with Susan Sampont. They became the parents of five children: Charles J., Arthur, Lawrence, Peter, and Cordilla (or Cordelia). Both were devoted members of the Catholic Church. Mr. Weis having been confirmed at Sutton, Nebraska, and his wife at Port Washington, Wisconsin. Peter Weis devoted himself to farming for about nine years after his marriage. He then moved into Geneva and engaged in the livery business. He passed away on January 29, 1948.

The Alfred Yetman family came to Momence township about the year 1889 and settled on the NE ¼ of Sec. 22, Momence township. He married Kate Weis, a sister of the Weis brothers. Their children were Katherine, John, Nick, Peter, Jake, Clara, and Emma.

The Alfred Yetman family came to Momence township about the year 1889 and settled on the NE ¼ of Sec. 5, T6, R4W. At an early age, Mr. Yetman passed away, leaving a widow and two fatherless sons. With their aid, Mrs. Yetman managed to keep and run the family farm. Living about the year 1889 and settled on the NE ¼ of Sec. 5, T6, R4W. At an early age, Mr. Yetman passed away, leaving a widow and two fatherless sons. With their aid, Mrs. Yetman managed to keep and run the family farm. Living about equally distant from Geneva and Sutton, they chose Sutton as their school and church and market town. Neither winter’s cold nor summer’s heat could keep them from attending Mass on Sundays; they traveled the 10 miles by horse and buggy.

Grown to manhood, Bert Yetman married Minnie Schneider of Geneva, and until his mother’s death he and his family lived with her on the home place. Hard times and crop failures caused them to give up farming and move to Hastings, where for many years Frank served as a police officer. Most of his children and his wife still live there. Mrs. Bert Yetman and one of her daughters, Mrs. Mary McLaughlin, live in Geneva.

It is always heartening to witness the success of men who have emigrated to America without capital and from positions of obscurity have worked their way upward to prosperity, even to wealth. Such a man was John Zimmerman, who became one of the most prosperous farmers of Fillmore County, owner of 640 acres in Momence township.

John Zimmerman was born in Binduschen Kreis Bödingen, Hessen Darmstadt, Germany, on December 7, 1829, a son of John C. and Margaret (Schwab) Zimmerman. He was the youngest of their 11 children. Left an orphan at an early age, he was forced to earn his own living, and at the age of 14 he began to learn the shoemaking trade, which he followed for 18 years. He was educated in the public schools of his native land and was confirmed in the Reformed Church. At the age of 29, he married Miss Anne Mary Eiffert; to this union were born 11 children: Elizabeth, John, Henry, Emma, Samuel, Mary, Simon Philip, Sarah Eliza, Clara, Caroline, and Conrad.

Borrowing money to pay his passage, he came to America alone in 1860, on a sailing vessel which was 31 days crossing the Atlantic. He farmed on rented lands in Illinois for 13 years. In 1872, he came to Exeter, Nebraska, where he bought a few lots; but he returned to Illinois and did not locate permanently here until the following year (1873). When the family arrived in Fairmont, they lived for 2 weeks in the railroad car in which their goods had been shipped; then they came to Momence township, where Mr. Zimmerman located his homestead claim of 160 acres (NW ¼, Sec. 14, T6, R4W), for which he paid $200. For 13 years the family lived in a sod house while he broke and improved his land, meanwhile trading in Fairmont. His crops were almost totally destroyed by grasshoppers in 1874 and again, several years later, by hailstorms. But he prospered, and in 1883 he erected a large stock barn and two years later built a good two-story residence, 30 x 24'. His farm became one of the most desirable in Momence township.

Five Swedish families came to Fillmore County in 1878 and located in Sec 36, Momence township, buying school land for $7 an acre. Each family took a quarter section. Fritz and Axel Landberg took the NW ¼; John Gustafson the NE ¼; Frank Johnson the SE ¼; and Swan Johnson the SW ¼. Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Bowman were the parents of Mrs. Frank Johnson, and the SE ¼ was divided between these two families.

Joseph Reinsch, the second eldest son of Franz and Caroline Reinsch, was born June 15, 1851, in Neundorf, Silesia, Germany. Franz Reinsch, Joseph’s father, was born in the same area on January 30, 1816, and his wife, Caroline Krueger, was born there in 1828. They had nine children. In the spring of 1869, Franz came to America, arriving in Nebraska on July 29, and made application for a homestead in Seward County near Gurnantown (now known as Garland).

In the fall of 1869, Joseph Reinsch and five of his brothers and sisters sailed for America and came by train to
Nebraska City, arriving there on November 1, 1869. They joined their father, Franz, on his Seward County homestead and lived in a dugout until they built a sod house, 20' x 28', with one window and one door.

Joseph Reinsch came to Fillmore County in 1873, selected the W 1/4 of Sec. 10 in Momence township, and filed his claim in Beatrice on November 5, 1873, when he was 22 years old. He married Emma Kamler in Nebraska City on April 12, 1882. They had 13 children: Emil, Anna, Frank, Charles, John, William, Henry, Herman, Amalia, Emma, Fred, Ernest, and Caroline.

During his years of proving up, Joseph walked to Nebraska City for cottonwood switches to plant a windbreak. Fillmore County records at the courthouse show that by November 3, 1877, he had built a sod house 10' x 12', with one window and one door, had plowed and cultivated 55 acres of his land, built a sod stable 10' x 16', and planted five acres of cottonwood trees for a windbreak. This homestead is now the farm property of William Reinsch, fifth son of Joseph and Emma Reinsch.

In 1895, Emil Reinsch bought a threshing rig, delivered to Shickley, for $3,800. The separator was a 36" Avery "Yellow Fellow," with a 20 horsepower steam engine, make now unremembered. Shock-threshing season started in mid-July and lasted from 6 to 8 weeks; stack-threshing season began in mid-September and ended in December or January. A threshing day began at sunrise and ended at sundown. The charge for shock threshing was 8¢ per bushel; for stack threshing, 4¢ per bushel. Bundle pitchers were paid $4 per day for team, rack, and man. Stack-threshing pitchers were also paid $4 per day. At that time, No. 1 wheat sold for from 50¢ to 75¢ per bushel.
Stanton Township

Stanton township is located approximately in the center of Fillmore County; its northeastern corner includes a bit of Geneva, the county seat. It was named for Edwin M. Stanton, President Lincoln’s Secretary of War. It is bounded on the north by Geneva township, on the east by Chelsea, on the south by Hamilton, and on the west by Momence townships. Its northern boundary is formed by Nebraska Highway 41 and its eastern one by U.S. 81. It is crossed diagonally from its northeast to its southwest corner by the Fremont-Superior line of the Chicago & Northwestern R.R. It is also crossed from north to south by the Fairmont-Hebron line of the Burlington, which runs in a straight line down the middle of the six eastern sections (Secs. 1 to 36), and through Geneva.

The general lay of the land is quite level. As the township has very few streams, except the south branch of Turkey Creek, which zigzags from southwest to northeast across Sec. 6, it is practically all usable farmland. The soil is a heavy loam which will raise almost all crops quite well; the principal ones are wheat, corn, oats, alfalfa, and milo. The early settlers put in a good many orchards, but for lack of subsoil moisture these are now all gone. With the coming of pump irrigation, more fruit and gardens may again be raised. By July 1, 1967, there were 77 irrigation wells in Stanton township.

Stanton Township Homestead Map
The township contains four school districts. The first school was the Martland school; the other districts are Nos. 13, 46, and 47.

On Easter Sunday, April 13, 1873, the area was enveloped in a blizzard which lasted for three days. In the summer of the same year, the entire township was stripped of every green blade of grass and every green leaf by a horde of grasshoppers. In 1907, a spring cold snap caused some injury to fruit buds and other tender vegetation. The thermometer went down to -20° F., the winter's record.

Many changes have taken place in Stanton township. Today almost every home is modern, with a telephone, electricity, indoor plumbing, and all modern conveniences. The first telephones were installed in 1903. Electricity came (R.E.A.) in 1951.

**Martial and Community**

Nebraska in the early days was truly a wild and endless prairie, covered with buffalo grass, which thickened and waved in the western wind. Tumbleweeds and jack rabbits first telephones were installed in 1903. Electricity came from the sandbars of the shallow, slow, winding Blue River, where the richest men had little money, and courage was the sweat and tears dropped in those first long furrows which was difficult to tame the prairie, but our grandparents had the stamina to do just that.

There are nowadays no reminders on Nebraska farms of there were drouths, hailstorms, and blizzards as well as grasshoppers to fight, and our grandparents were some of the fighters. They were some of the early settlers who came westward to stake a claim for themselves and to build homes. It was difficult to tame the prairie, but our grandparents had the stamina to do just that.

There are nowadays no reminders on Nebraska farms of the sweet and tears dropped in those first long furrows which made the virgin soil into productive farmland. One cannot forget the spirit of helpfulness that existed in a new country where the richest men had little money, and courage was the strong man's creed.

Yes, our grandparents, the early settlers in and around Martland, triumphed over drouth and pestilence. They stayed and watched the cottonwood switches they had pulled from the sandbars of the shallow, slow, winding Blue River, grow into great trees; some of them are still standing, living monuments to them. They stayed on until their acres were converted into fields of wheat, corn, and grass. The comfortable farmhouse replaced the rude dugouts and sod houses. They used to tell about gathering a wagon load and dumping it beside the sod house for fuel. Later on, cow chips were used; then, as corn crops were raised and gathered, cobs became a staple. Also, on occasion, slough grass or coarse hay was twisted into tight rolls and used as fuel. And there came a time, one year or more, when corn was so plentiful and cheap—a load of corn hauled into town would bring back not more than a couple of bushels of coal—that we used corn for fuel. Grandma used to say, "Some day the country will pay for that sin!"

In the sod house, which was easy to keep warm, a small cookstove was used.

One winter Grandpa bought some trees from a man who lived near the Blue River. He saved even the small limbs and brush in our yard, piled helter-skelter and hard to separate. The boys had to chop up armloads of it into stove-lengths for the house. I fear Grandma had to go to the brush pile herself many times to get fuel with which to cook dinner! The neighbors used to call that brush heap "Aanlam's Crow's Nest."

One day, I heard Grandma relate that a "Home Comfort, Fort Wrought Iron Range Company" sent a salesman from St. Louis, Missouri, out through the new country, with a demonstrator range in his light wagon. He asked for lodging for himself and team for the night. The next morning he demonstrated how strong and durable the range was, and he stressed "always a supply of water in the reservoir."

Truly, Grandma deserved that kitchen range, but the price was the drawback—$95, which was an awful lot in those times. Easy payments were worked out, however, and in due time the new stove came by freight. It really proved to be a "Home Comfort," Grandma said, and it was a real pleasure to cook on it. That was 'way back in the 1870's. Who would have ever dreamed that nowadays we would be cooking with gas or electricity?

**Martin Danielson** and his wife Ellen, came to America from Sweden in 1884, and settled on a farm one mile west of Ong. Mrs. Wayne Churchill of Geneva was formerly Irene Hillgren, the daughter of Gus and Mary Van Buren Hilgren. After the death of her mother, she was adopted by her cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Hilgren. Roy's mother, Anna Danielson, was the daughter of Martin Danielson. Mrs. Charles Higginbotham, who passed away in Geneva on August 18, 1954, was also a daughter of Martin Danielson and came over to America with them. The Danielsons moved into Fillmore County and bought land northeast of Shickley.

Since it was "Mart's land," the folks who were interested in starting a little village thought it was only right and proper to name the village "Martland"; and so that's how Martland got its name.

It was surveyed in January, 1887, by V. A. Jones. Mr. Danielson was an instigator in starting the first store there. George Bates helped build it. It was a branch store. One of the first storekeepers was John Swails, father of Lonnie (Rastus) Swails of Geneva, Rastus's earliest recollections are from 1888 or 1889. It seems that W. R. Hitch and Rathbun backed up the store, and Mr. Swails ran it for a while. Though it didn't do well financially, the store carried on. It was not generally known who really owned the store.

![Photo from Nebraska Signal Martland Store](image-url)
Martland Church

The first church which served the Martland community was 1 1/4 miles S of Martland. It was a United Brethren Church and the first pastor was Preacher Cornish, as they called them in those years.

I wonder if the hardships of the pioneers didn't draw them closer to God and keep them praying more. We all know that the closer we live to God the happier and more satisfied we are. Maybe that is why those pioneer years were called the "Good Old Years."

The John Browns lived across the road west of the church, and across the road south of Browns lived the Chris Ackers. Some of you older folks will remember these families. George, Charley, and Homer Ackers were sons of the Chris Ackers. The church was moved to Martland in 1892, and placed about 20 rods west of where the former old schoolhouse stands.

Some of the later pastors from 1912 on were: Rev. Melville, Rev. J. C. Strickler, Rev. J. C. Mower, Rev. E. H. Pontius, Miss Esther Olewine, and Rev. A. B. Small.

This little church in Martland stood out for many years as a refuge and strength for those in the community; even though at times it kept us guessing as to how we could keep the expenses up, we always came out all right. The Ladies' Aid was always alive with new ambitions to keep up the interest that never seemed to lag in the Martland Church.

The Martland Church was remodeled and redecorated in 1949. On November 2, 1949, it was rededicated. The Rev. Walter Chittenden was the pastor. The Rev. W. P. Watkins, district superintendent, gave the address.

The fund for the redecorating was started when Rev. Walter Millett served the church. The "Lord's Acre" project was worked out at that time. Each person or family gave the amount that an acre would produce. The church men rented 80 acres and farmed it two years for the church. The fund continued, and building was done, while the Rev. John Reger was pastor.

It was used about two years after that. Then, as many had moved away from the community, there were only 10 families remaining who were regular attendants and could be depended upon to keep the church going. The merger of the Evangelical and the United Brethren Churches raised the salary of the student pastor beyond the amount that these 10 families could pay, along with higher benevolences. The merger of York College with the one at Le Mars, Iowa, removed local student pastors and those few families could not possibly support a full-time pastor.

This was the pressure that closed the church. The Geneva United Brethren Evangelical Church purchased the Martland Church seats and hymnals.

Later pastors of Martland were: Rev. Seth Jacobsen (1936-37); Rev. Ray Thompson (1937-39), Iowa student; Rev. Howard Himes (1939-41), Colorado student; Rev. Everett Tracy (1941-42), Nebraska student; Rev. Omar Wetherell (1942-43), Fulton, Mo., student; Rev. (Prof.) Walter G. Noll (1943-44), York College; Rev. Walter Millett (1944-47), Omaha student; Rev. John Reger (1947-49), Nebraska student; Rev. Walter Chittenden (1949-50), resident; Rev. Richard Shepland (1950-51), Nebraska student.

Martland Elevator

Of Martland, nothing is left standing except the elevator, still on its original plot and still serving the community. Mr. Camerman was the first manager. While there, he had some kind of fever which took all his hair and left him completely bald. Charley Conner operated the elevator in 1926. That was the year of a big corn crop, which sold at 10 and 11 cents a bushel. Some of the following managers were Al Russell, Jim Burke (1910), Anton Posvar (1917-1927), and Fred Worthington. The present manager is Robert Hall, whose family live in the former Fred Worthington house.

The following accident story is from the Nebraska Signal for August 7, 1947:

"Tragedy struck this vicinity Saturday forenoon about 11:30, when a bin filled with wheat at the Martland elevator suddenly gave way, snuffing out the lives of three men. Those killed were Fred Worthington, Sr., proprietor of the elevator; Glenn Richards, a farmer of near Martland; and Roy Carter of Branning. Mr. Richards and Mr. Carter had gone to the elevator to settle for wheat previously sold there.

"The accident was discovered by Virgil Stevens, who, about 10:30, had delivered a load of wheat at the elevator, then had gone on an errand. About 11:30 he returned to the Martland store about 1/4 mile from the elevator. He noticed wheat spilled over the driveway and out into the roadway. Accompanied by Reuben Lichti, proprietor of the store, Mr. Stevens went over to the elevator. They knew at least one man was buried in the grain as they could see the top of Mr. Richards' head.

"They hurried back to the store and called Sheriff Tobiasen and the first-aid truck of the Geneva fire department. The sheriff put in a line ring for men with scoops to come to aid in shoveling out the grain. By the time work began the wheat had settled so the top of Mr. Worthington's head was visible. Not much could be done in the way of reaching the men until farmers arrived with scoops, which was very shortly.

"Mr. Worthington and Mr. Richards were found in a standing position, close together, at the corner of the driveway and a runway that led east to the railroad track. The former received a head injury from flying timbers and his death is believed to have been instantaneous. Mr. Richards suffered internal injuries, but whether death was due to them or suffocation is not known. Mr. Carter was found about the center of the driveway under several feet of wheat. His legs were pinned down by parts of the bin. He was on his back.

"The bin that gave way contained 6,000 bushels of wheat and was a double bin along the west side of the driveway. The collapse must have occurred without warning, as the men apparently were trapped about where they stood. There are two more large divisions with two bins each west of the ones that gave way. The sound of the collapse was not heard at the Worthington home about 70 or 80 yards from the elevator.

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Martland School—District 55

The “Merryman School,” as it was called, was moved into Martland about 1889. It seems that it was moved in the night. It was placed a little west of the present schoolhouse, which was built about 1889. I remember Mr. Adams and Sheridan Owens were two of the earlier teachers in the new schoolhouse. L. O. Swails tells me that my mother (Mrs. Sada Heery, now deceased), Sada Davis then, was his first teacher in the Merryman schoolhouse, when it was across from Jim Merryman’s, and his father’s brother, Ed Swails, taught there one term. Teachers who have taught in the later-built schoolhouse are: Nelson Ronne, Ruth Schelkopf, George Rotter, Herbert Frank, D. D. Brown, Frances Pattin, Wilma Whittaker, Lucille Nicholson, Florence McCauley, Marion Kroll, Ruth Sutter, Clara Busse, Irene Gruenhage, Jeannette McNamara, Helen Schwab, Gladys Anderson, Helen Hedden, and Roine Kempf.

The Martland schoolhouse is presently being used as a community hall.

Depot

When word came to Geneva that the Northwestern Railroad would be built through here, the flag was immediately run up on the courthouse to let the people know the railroad would be built through here, the flag was immediately run up on the courthouse to let the people know. The railroad came through Martland in 1888 and the necessary depot was erected. The first agent was Louis Martin, Sam Saltzman (for a time), and Charlie Clements. Some of the section men working out of Martland were D. R. Martin, Sam Saltzman (for a time), and Charlie Clements, before he went into the depot.

Post Office

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Davis kept the Eden post office in their sod house, 2 miles S and ¾ mile E of Martland for a time. Mention was made in the “70 Years Ago” items of the Nebraska Signal (1956) of a hog belonging to Mr. Davis getting snowed in on January 3, 1886. He did not find the animal for 44 days. The hog was weak, but otherwise all right. Mr. Davis was the grandfather of Mrs. Edgar Schelkopf of Geneva, the former Essie Crowley. Edgar Schelkopf was the son of M. L. Schelkopf who was chairman of the county board in 1908.

After Mr. Davis, Ed Beach kept the post office in their sod house across from Martland for a year or so, after which it was located in the new depot. Later, about 1903, it was moved into a building which was built north of the store. The second story of this building was later used for a Woodmen lodge hall.
"When the Chicago Northwestern Railway surveyors were laying out the town site of Martland and doing other railway surveying, they got their meals at the home of our uncle, Swan Ekwall. "Mother, at that time, was taking care of the house. At the dinner table the question came up as to what to name the town site that had been laid out. Uncle Swan mentioned that the land on which the town site was laid out was owned by a man by the name of Martin Danielson. One of the men in the surveying party spoke up and said, 'Let's name the town site Martland.' So that's how Martland got its name. "I helped to unload the first load of grain that was brought into Martland. It was loaded into a railway box car before the elevator was built. After the elevator was built, I was in charge of it that fall and winter. "Many happy days were spent at Martland with our folks and friends, but no more Martland—just memories." —Signal, August 7, 1952

Martland Post Office No More

The Martland post office was discontinued as of Friday evening on orders from the post office department. The mail will go through Shickley rural route 1. Patrons of the office had become very few. Martland had a post office many years. It was formerly at the Northwestern depot and John Muir, the agent, was also postmaster. Later it was moved to the Martland store and the store proprietor was made postmaster. —Signal, October 6, 1949

Newspaper

The first newspaper published in the village was the Martland Midget, an 8" x 12" sheet of four pages, published by Bert Skinner and a man named Bushkirk. It carried news of local events, church notices, announcements of Woodmen lodge meetings, and liberal advertising.

Blacksmith Shop

Oxen were used by some in this early settlement. There was a blacksmith shop started up east of the store, which was run by John Shuster. After Mr. Shuster, Frank Kabley operated it.

Lodges

The Martland Woodmen lodge was organized in the early 1890's. Charley Crocker served as clerk for some years. In 1916, the Woodmen Camp annual reunion was held at the M. L. Schelkopf home. At that time the lodge was the only organization in Martland. Later there was a flourishing Royal Neighbors lodge.

Stanton Woman's Club

On the afternoon of Thursday, June 30, 1921, 22 women of Stanton township met with County Agent J. L. Thomas at the Martland schoolhouse and organized a Woman's Farm Bureau Club. The following officers were elected: Mrs. Milton Hoak, president; Mrs. William Wilkins, vice-president; Mrs. Ray Carson, secretary; Mrs. Clark Yates, treasurer; Mrs. Grant Bail, press correspondent. They voted to meet on the last Wednesday afternoon of each month. This club has proved to be a success and a big help to the community. It is still active today.

The following account of the local community program was written by Mrs. Roy Hilgren in 1926:

I am proud of my community: First, because of the Woman's Club organized five years ago in our township, called Stanton 'Woman's Club,' with a membership of 20. It has this past year 91 members. After organizing, our next question was a place to meet, many of the homes being too small to accommodate the gatherings. Through the kindness of the taxpayers, our township hall was enlarged and a stage put in; in fact, a good-sized community hall was the result. Our club bought dishes, an oil stove, and necessary utensils. Many times community dinners were held in the hall. It is fitted with chairs, benches, and a piano, all purchased by the club. This past summer a music teacher gave lessons on the piano there.

The club has a Community Chest, fitted with gowns, sheets, and almost everything necessary for a sickroom. All sick and "shut in" friends are remembered with flowers. We also have stock showers for all new babies. Boys' and girls' clubs both in canning and sewing have been organized and excellent work has been accomplished.

Second, because of the excellent 10-grade district school under the supervision of 2 very competent teachers, thereby enabling our young folks to be at home while they receive the proper training.

Third, because of the Martland Band of 12 young people in charge of a competent leader of our own community. This furnishes a pastime for our young people and there is nothing like good, clean music to build character.

Fifth and last, but not least, is the church, with preaching every two weeks and Sunday School every Sunday morning. The Ladies' Aid of our church is very active, and much good is done by these "Hand Maidens of God."

Band

A band was started in 1899 and continued until 1902. It was composed of 25 pieces. The bandmaster was Silas Camp. Later on, in 1926, a group of 12 young people in charge of a competent community leader, Anton Posvar, furnished music for our many entertainments that Martland was always working out. This furnished a pleasant pastime for our young folks and it had its part to play in building character. Martland always seemed to have folks in and around about who had talent and who enjoyed helping with community programs.

Literary Society

A literary society was organized at Martland in 1907 with Arthur Larson as president, Guy Carson as vice-president, Jesse Tomlin as secretary and treasurer, and George Cruse as sergeant at arms.
Community Hall

The little town of Martland, Nebraska, has only a church, school, store, elevator, and depot, but it has a woman's club of 60 members that has been responsible for the creating of unusually progressive community spirit and the building of a fine community hall. The woman's club, known as "Stanton Woman's Club," consisted of both town and country women.

When the organization began to grow, it was found that the little town hall as well as the schoolhouse afforded insufficient room for a meeting place. A larger place was needed. So, after threshing the problem out, it was decided to enlarge the old town hall.

A committee was appointed to meet with the town board and discuss plans for building an addition to the hall. The proposition took favorably and in March it was put to a vote of the people of the township—was organized on January 22, 1872. The election took favorably and in March it was put to a vote of the people of the community. There was only one negative vote. Work on building the annex began on a Wednesday in March, and by Saturday night of the same week, the extra section was up, enclosed, and shingled. Thirty men did the work and the Woman's Club members fed the workers. All of the work was given free and the material for the annex cost approximately $400, which was appropriated from the township fund for public improvements.

School District No. 13—comprising the S ½ of Sec. 1 and all of Secs. 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in Stanton township—was organized on January 22, 1872. The election of officers was held at the home of Daniel Lee on January 27, 1872.

In the early days the pupils ranged in age from 5 to 20 years, and most of them walked to school. The roads were little more than trails, and so some of the younger ones often were absent for weeks at a time. Many of the boys stayed out when farm work was pressing; some of the older ones did not start till the corn was cut and quit when spring field work started. The schoolhouse was crowded, with three in a seat, and sometimes with not enough books to go around. The children who were absent got behind in their work, so that a 20-year-old might be in a class with a 10-year-old.

It was thought to be a proper thing to run the teacher out of school, and so it sometimes took two or three teachers to finish a term. In the early 1860's, the board hired consecutively three men teachers who could and did use a bat to good effect. That ended the teacher bating.

As more graduates went on to high school, it became necessary to keep the work more in line with that of the town schools. Attendance became more regular, and as the farms became larger the number of pupils became smaller. Some went to the town schools and others went to town schools, so that the enrollment dropped to two or three pupils. In 1951, the district started contracting with District 75, and buses from Geneva picked up the children.

The first schoolhouse stood on the SE corner of Sec. 2, where it remained until the summer of 1888. To get it farther away from the railroad and nearer the center of the district, it was then moved to the SE corner of the SW ¼ of Sec. 11, where it remained until it was sold in 1954.

SCHOOLS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Salary</th>
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<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Pearley Reed</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>$30 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Emma Haney</td>
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<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Emma Haney</td>
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<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Maggie Stewart</td>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>A. D. Stevens</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Nettie Howe</td>
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<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>J. B. Sewall</td>
<td>2 months</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Erna McElba</td>
<td>2 months</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Frank Hoff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Mary Hart</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Sewell May</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Mary Hart</td>
<td>3 months</td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>S. A. Slaughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Mary Hart</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Lance A. Weed</td>
<td>1 month</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>W. P. Evans</td>
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<td>Flora Harbaugh</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Sadie Martin</td>
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<td>Kate Fisher</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>— Keegan</td>
<td>(Two Kennedy girls)</td>
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<td>1897</td>
<td>Stephens</td>
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<td>J. L. Adams</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Mill Austin</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>Mattie Heebler</td>
<td>(About this time)</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Ed Lane</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Irene Holister</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>Jessie Clark</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>R. A. Case</td>
<td>4 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Stella Wilson</td>
<td>3 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Hazel Combs</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Lydia Hafer</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>$35 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>(raised to $40)</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Margaret Kenney</td>
<td>(Six months; two months filled out)</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Eva Embree</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Della Yates</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Emma McGraw</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Margaret Kenney</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Ada Hutton</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Rhea Bumgarner</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Stella Gilmore</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Merle Colvin</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Angela Schmied</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Genevieve Rock</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Iris Kinney</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Eva Myers</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Audra Henry</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Velma Reichert</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Long Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Audra Henry</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>Doris Haver</td>
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<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Burnice Russell</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1937-39 Wilma Mau Not listed
1939-41 Marcella Kelly Not listed
1941-42 Marjorie Sinn Not listed
1942-43 Jean Stephenson Not listed
1943-44 Mrs. Apley Not listed
1944-48 Virginia Moor Not listed
1948-51 Maxine Bornschlegl Not listed
1951 School contracted with District 75, Geneva.

District No. 46, in the southeast corner of Stanton township, consists of Secs. 22 to 27 inclusive and Secs. 34, 35, and 36. This district was formed on May 20, 1872, at the Peter Yates home on the SE corner of Sec. 24. Robert Shields was notified to let the homesteaders and others interested know of the meeting. There is no record of the officers elected, or of school being held in the district before 1878. The first years after the district was formed, the pupils went to other districts (Nos. 13 and 45).

The first schoolhouse was built on the NE corner of Sec. 26. In 1892, it was moved one mile W to the NE corner of Sec. 27. It remained there one year and then was moved ½ mile S, still on the east side of Sec. 27. This first schoolhouse was used until 1907, when a new building was erected. The site remained the same until the schoolhouse was sold in 1952.

The last time school was held in District 46 was the spring of 1945. For two years they contracted with Martland, and since then have contracted with the Geneva school district.

The first teacher of record was Laura Welb (Mrs. John Yates) in 1878 and 1879. Those who followed her were:

1889 Eva Janes
1881 Flora Harbaugh
1882-83 Mary E. Deming
1884 Ella Merrill
1885 James Evans

From 1883 to 1890 the following teachers served: Mary Jaynie, Erma Stephenson, Lucy Kimbrough, and Ella Demaree.

1891 Ella Allen (Mrs. Al Kline)
1892-93 George Madison
1893-95 Miss Arrowsmith
1895-96 Miss Bumgarner
1896-97 No record
1897-98 Miss Jessie Morgan
1898-99 Clara Cole, C. H. Merryman
1899-00 M. P. Ames
1903 (spring) Verna Mowry (Mrs. Tom Wagner)
1904 Carrie Sauer
1907-08 Meda Welty (Mrs. Clark Yates)
1908-09 Mary Davis
1909-11 Delia Fisher
1911-12 Nora Dunn
1912-13 Mahle Benson (Mrs. William Hourigan)
1913-14 Raymond Kenney
1914-15 Nora Dunn
1915-16 Verna Johnson
1916-17 Verna Johnson and Ruth Stickle
1917-18 Verna Johnson
1918-19 Elsie Bender (Mrs. Gay Fisher)
1919-20 Maxine Schelkopf (Mrs. Jake Bornschlegl)

Mr. and Mrs. John Yates (about 1900), with children Clark Yates, Blanche Yates Pangle, and Harry Yates.

Section 22: George Barber NW ¼, William Hull NE ¼, William P. Friend SE ¼, and Preston R. Snowden SW ¼.

Section 23: Lyman Pardue NW ¼, George H. Hedges N ½ NE ¼ and John W. Yates S ½ NE ¼, Jared Yates N½ SE ¼ and James H. Kimbrough S ½ SE ¼, and Elizabeth W. Jaynes SW ¼.
District No. 47 was organized May 15, 1872, comprising Secs. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18. The first school meeting in the district was held on the banks of the creek, those attending sitting around on its bank. There were 8 present, J. H. Sager among them. Mr. Sager built the schoolhouse and taught the first term of school at $2 a month, boarding himself, and furnishing his own kindling.

District 47 dissolved and attached itself to District 75 (Geneva), effective June 1, 1959.

Working on his farm and at the foundry in the south part of Geneva, Mr. Bailor designed and built the first successful two-row cultivator in 1892. He sold this patent to the Dempster Manufacturing Co. of Beatrice. In 1912, he and others formed the Bailor Cultivator Co. in Atchison, Kansas. The achievements of this part of his life are summarized in this passage from a catalogue issued by the company in the late 1920's: "Mr. Bailor has given to the world the two-row cultivator and two-row lister by a lifetime spent in close attention to every detail and his familiarity with the use of these tools on the farm. The winnowing of a lifetime spent in hard study, many privations, discouragement, and finally success."

Cultivators, listers, harrows, and other machines designed and patented by Silas Bailor were widely used throughout the Great Plains area. They were especially popular in the southern part of the Great Plains and in the lighter-soil areas of the corn belt. The ideas of mechanization of corn and cotton cultivation which Mr. Bailor saw through to reality have contributed extensively to the general modernization of farming during the past 40 or 50 years. It is particularly interesting to note that the two-row cultivator designed by him and exhibited by the Midland Plow Co. at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis in 1904 was given the "Highest Award" in competition with other makes from all parts of the world.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Deming came to Fillmore County in 1871 by covered wagon and homesteaded in Stanton township southwest of Geneva. They lived in a sod house for several years. The family of 4 children—Ward, Wallace, Lucy May, and Ida—grew up locally. Besides farming, Henry Deming also taught school. Ida Deming married Emil Ellisson, the son of a neighboring pioneer.
John E. Eliason was born in Gothenburg, Sweden, and came to America at the age of seven years. He lived in Kane, Pennsylvania, until he met and married his wife, Cecilia. They came to Stanton township in 1881. The first year, they lived on the Swan Ekwall farm until they could build a sod house on their own land. In 1898, Mr. Eliason went to Chicago, where he lived for a while and worked for the City Railway Co. Later he came back to Fillmore County and farmed. After his retirement, his son Emil took over the place and farmed it until he moved to Clay Center, Nebraska.

(This account, by E. F. Huntley, titled "Pioneer Days in Fillmore County," appeared in the *Nebraska Signal*, April 13, 1939.)

I came with my parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Huntley, from Steuben County, Indiana, in 1867. My parents left in a covered wagon, along with four other relatives and their families, also in covered wagons. We left Indiana April 4, 1867. The sickness of my grandmother on my father's side forced us to stop at Waterville, Kansas, where she died. After a five-week stay in Kansas, we came on to Fillmore County and landed on Turkey Creek south of what is known as the Jim Lightbody farm.

Father homesteaded a quarter of land on Sec. 4 in Stanton townships. All of the uncles took homesteads southwest of us in Stanton township. In August, 1867, we built three sod houses, as one uncle was unmarried. Then we had to go to Lincoln, the nearest post office and town, to get our food. We got our fuel for winter on the North Bluestem with buffalo chips.

After we finished our sod houses, we had five good teams and we had brought our breaking plows with us. We had to cut hay for our horses with hand scythes, and you can know it took work. After they could unload in the first house they built, they took the wagons and went to Lincoln after food and feed for the horses. After they got the hay made, they had to make fire protection, or fire guards, as they called them, by plowing around hay and burning between strips of plowing. The blue stem was so rank and the grass so heavy that there was great danger of fire.

That was not a bad winter, but the next spring came the Easter storm that lasted three days and three nights. My folks' food supply ran out. There was food at our uncle's, 3 miles away, but the storm was so severe no one could get it, so we were without food for 24 hours. We had some homemade yeast and we children ate the yeast while Mother wept with sorrow and homesickness. The snow drifted until it covered the house, but it did not do any damage to the garden we had planted. We raised sod corn and garden that year.

They lived on the homestead until 1878. Then Father sold it and moved to Bennett township, where they lived four years, and then moved to Momence township.

After I was 21, I was in Colorado one year. Then I came back to my folks in Momence township.

I moved with my folks to Elwood, Gosper County, and stayed there two years. Then I came back to Fillmore County and was married to Miss Addie Mann in 1889. We lived in Bennett township until 1896, when we moved to Clay County, northeast of Edgar. We lived there seven years, then moved back to Momence and have lived in Momence and Bennett since 1903. So we have lived in Fillmore County 63 years and 72 in the state, taking out the year I was in Colorado. (Editor's note: "Mr. Huntley is past 78 and Mrs. Huntley is 70. They will have been married 50 years on September 9, 1939.")
The Charles Mau family in 1923. Back row, left to right: Gussie (Frantz), Charley, Anne (Otte), Walter C., Minnie (Salzman). Front row: Dorothea (Russell), Charles and Matilda Mau, Rose M. (Cruse).

Charles Mau came to the United States as a German immigrant at the age of 20. He came as far west as Omaha, where he found work milking 28 cows a day; after that, he worked in a brewery. In the fall of 1870, he came to Stanton township and took a homestead and moved onto it in the spring of 1871. He built a dugout on the bank of a stream that ran through his land and lived in that until he was able to afford a two-room house. His good friend and neighbor, Chris Gratopp, shared the hardships of people in a new country. Many times they kept warm by the same fire of buffalo chips during the hard and cold winters of those early days.

Mr. Mau was a livestock feeder of cattle and hogs. In the first days of his adventure in livestock, he would buy and herd them himself. Fences were very few in those days. He herded them himself. Fences were very few in those days. He sold the calves and hogs to a local buyer, and with the extra money, he returned to Ohio, having run out of funds to carry on. He worked there for a farmer, by the month, and in the fall season cut corn and shocked it, many hours by night, for extra money.

During this time he met Ida Haines, and they were married on October 6, 1876. He returned to Nebraska the same fall and built a small frame house for his bride, who came the following April. By this time, he had bought a small herd of mules and a wagon. With this rig, he met his new wife at Fairmont, where they bought scantly furnishings for their new home. Their hardships were the same as those of all the pioneers. Hot winds, grasshoppers, and other discouraging elements, but still they stayed on, determined. As the family grew, he and James Flory of near Shickley added their homes. The McPecks had two sons, Gilbert and John, and one daughter, Maude.

In the 1890’s, James McPeck bought 400 acres of land from James Holcomb across the road from the 160 acres he had pre-empted. He used 100 acres for pasture to feed his cattle and rent to neighbors for their stock. By 1903, his son John had married and was farming a part of the 400 acres, on which a farmstead had been built; and his son Gilbert, also married, was farming the original home place and the rest of the 400 acres. James B. McPeck had retired and moved into Geneva, where he and his wife spent their remaining years. His daughter, Mrs. Maude Flasche, now lives in Florida.

The children of James McPeck are Leslie, Francis, and Gladys, of Geneva, and Mildred, of Lincoln. Gilbert’s children are Helen and Lola, in Ohio; Ruth, in Indiana; Jim, in Omaha; Dwayne, of Malcolm, Nebraska; and Earl, of Harvard, Nebraska.
Mrs. Bail. James Merryman was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and went as a young man to Peoria, where he met and married Miss Jennie Mills on March 10, 1870. They homesteaded on Sec. 30, where they lived in a dugout from 1871 until they built a sod house in 1873-1874. Mr. Merryman had to go to Beatrice to get their homestead recorded. When he came out of the office, he met Charles Mau and Chris Gratopp going in to record their claims for land in Stanton township. J. O. Merryman, Sr., died February 17, 1917, at Towson, Maryland; his body was brought to Martland for burial. His wife Jennie survived him only eight weeks, passing away on April 14, 1917.

Besides Mrs. Bail, other children of the Merrymans were Mate, J. O., and Ray Merryman. Mate died January 28, 1913. Ray, born April 1, 1883, died in 1956. James Merryman, Jr., was accidentally shot while hunting pheasants on October 31, 1957. LeRoy's wife, now Mrs. Virgil Eppler, and his three children still live on the original homestead.

Mrs. Bail, other children of the Merrymans...
age of 70 and his wife at 65; both were buried in the Mason City Cemetery.

Mr. Tomlin was educated in Mason County, and taught school in both Illinois and Kansas. On December 25, 1884, he married Maggie Cruse, who had been born in Mason County on May 1, 1865, and educated there. She was the daughter of David and Hannah (Tomlin) Cruse. David Cruse was a native of Pennsylvania and Hannah Tomlin a native of New Jersey. Six sons and five daughters were born to the Cruses: Walker C., Matthew M., Elizabeth E., Maggie, Roxanna B., Sidney D., John S., Ora E., George L., Charles R., and Josephine.

From Illinois Mr. and Mrs. Tomlin moved to Kansas, and then in March, 1890, to Fillmore County. He bought 160 acres in Momence precinct, near Shickley, for which he paid $4,000, and 18 months later sold it for $5,000. He then bought 160 acres in Stanton precinct for $3,900, which he transformed into one of the best farms in the area. He was a member of the Prohibition party and of the United Brethren Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Tomlin were the parents of four children: Sarah Gertrude (Mrs. Gertrude Dever), Jessie May, Ora Alta (Mrs. Guy Brown, Sr.), and Golda (Mrs. Harper Anderson).

Jesse W. Walker and his wife, Adeline (Sager) Walker and their family left Lewistown, Pennsylvania, by train in 1871, stopping first in Illinois and then in Iowa. They came on from Iowa in two covered wagons, one drawn by a yoke of oxen and the other by their riding horse and the family milk cow. They reached Omaha on October 9, 1871, and came out to the home of Jesse's uncle in Saline County, where they spent the winter.

During the winter, Mr. Walker took a homestead on 80 acres in Sec. 6, Stanton, and built a dugout with a log front. The family moved into this home in the spring and lived there for 11 years. Mrs. Walker once killed a rattlesnake on the bed in which one of the children was sleeping. Later, Tom Walker, Jesse's brother, built them a frame house, which still stands.

They went to Fairmont once a week for mail. Grasshoppers came through the township, taking everything, even eating the curtains off the windows. At two different times, they had butchered meat stolen, and once lost half a barrel of beans. Many Indians stopped in but did no harm; they just wanted food. One day there was a dead pig on the roadside and the Indians ate it. Jesse Walker broke the ground where the Fillmore County Courthouse now stands, using his oxen to pull the plow.

A schoolhouse, District 47, was built one mile S and ½ mile E of their home, and there the Walker children went to school. One of the teachers was Jerome Sager, brother of Mrs. Walker, who made his home with the family. The Walkers retired to a new home in Geneva in 1910, located where the Geneva Post Office now stands.

Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Walker were the parents of 12 children. Three are still living: Mrs. Anna Dowis, 100 years old; Mrs. Maude McPeck, 86; and Mrs. Blanche Merryman, 84, all reside at the Sunset Home. A son, Cyrus Walker, with his family, moved onto the home place after 1910 and lived there until 1947, when they moved into Geneva.

Mrs. Anna Dowis, who celebrated her 100th birthday at Sunset Home, was born in Lewistown on April 6, 1887, attended District 47, and later married Ed Dowis of Geneva, where she spent the first half of her life. In 1917, the Dowises moved to Sherman County, near Arcadia, where they lived until Mr. Dowis's death. Mrs. Dowis then came back to Geneva to be near the rest of her family. The Nebraska Signal of March 30, 1967, reported her impending birthday party, described her as alert and by no means showing her 100 years. Her family consists of a son, Jess Vincent Dowis and wife, of Watertown, South Dakota, and a granddaughter, Velma, of Sue Bennet College, London, Kentucky.

Mabel Bailor Wernimont has lived in Fillmore County for 83 years, having been born (February 7, 1884), on the George Bailor farm SE of Geneva and at the age of two weeks taken to her parents' home just south of Geneva. Mrs. George Bailor and Mrs. Silas Bailor were sisters, and George and Silas were cousins. Her late husband, Henry Wernimont, had lived on the same Fillmore County farm for about 75 years. He had inherited 160 acres, had purchased the remainder of the original farm, and by the time of his death had increased its area to 480 acres.

Edward T. Yates came to Nebraska from Indiana in the spring of 1873. He bought the E ½ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 13, T6, R3, in Stanton township, from the Burlington Railroad. He took the NE ¼ of Sec. 24, T6, R3, as a timber claim. His brother John had homesteaded the NW ¼ of Sec. 24, so that they could live together while they proved up.

The brothers built a two-room shack over the dividing line. With a pit underneath and the walls banked to the windows with sod, they had a snug home on the wind-swept knoll. Ed used two yoke of oxen and a gang plow to break the sod and seed it to wheat, which they harvested with a header and threshed with a horse-powered thresher.

After proving up on the claim, Edward built a four-room frame house on the 80 and brought his mother and sister out from Indiana. They lived with him for a time before they got land of their own. Later, Ed rented his place to John H. Morgan, another Hoosier, who had taken an adjoining farm in Chelsea township.

John farmed Ed's land while he was building on his own farm. In the meantime Ed drove the hack for his brother Sam, who had a mail route between Fairmont, Geneva, and Belvidere. In the spring of 1883, Edward moved onto the farm and continued improving it. He raised a family of seven and lived there until his death in 1917.

After he died, his wife, Martha M. Yates, continued to live on the farm and worked it until the children were all of age.
age. Then Eugene B. (Bert) Yates took over the operation of the place, but the mother lived there until her death in 1944. The heirs sold the place in 1945, and Bert Yates bought it. Another house was added in 1947, and a nephew, Robert Yates and his family, live in that. The farm is operated jointly by Bert and Robert.

FILLMORE COUNTY POOR FARM

On June 17, 1872, the governor of Nebraska, Silas Garber, signed a document permitting the sale of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 16, T6, R3W. This land was originally given to the government by the railroad to be used for school purposes. A public auction was held and the land was sold for $1,280.

The land was cultivated and, on August 1, 1873, was rented to O. C. Brown for $1.50 per acre. Mr. Brown agreed to make payment on or before January 1, 1875, giving his note from date without interest.

The county board met on August 29, 1875, to consider building a poorhouse on this quarter, later known as the County Poor Farm, rather than renting out the land to a private party. Bids were to be taken for a specified construction project. On September 14, 1875, five bids had been received: W. C. Massey, $2,600; J. B. Thompson, $2,800; J. Lee, $1,775; J. H. Haughwout, $1,674.50; and W. H. Chapin, $1,473. On September 20, 1875, W. H. Chapin contracted to construct the building, within 60 days, for $1,169.60.

Payment for the building was to be made from the $806.74 already in the county's poorhouse fund, and from the sale of a $368 warrant issued by the county board.

J. B. Williams was contracted to drill a well at the poor farm. He was to be paid 80 cents in cash or 95 cents in warrants per foot, at the option of the county commissioners.

On October 5, 1875, Dr. G. R. Hart contracted to serve as the poorhouse doctor for $190 a year, payable quarterly. The single bid received for caretaker and lessee of the poor farm, that of Cyrus Marcy, was accepted on January 10, 1876. Mr. Marcy was to receive $1.30 per cultivated acre of land, and $3.70 weekly for care and board of each pauper. At the same time, a contract was let to J. C. Rosenberg for $50 to build a 13' x 20' x 7' four-stall stable to be used by the lessee.

On February 7, 1876, the poor farm was ready for occupancy. On November 8, 1876, Dr. Brazelton and Dr. Dailey agreed to take over the medical treatment of the paupers for $149 per annum.

Four dollars for conveyance to and from the poor farm to Geneva, Nebraska, was agreed upon June 15, 1878.

Cyrus Marcy asked for his release and was replaced by A. D. Stevens on December 14, 1878. Mr. Stevens was to receive $1.25 per acre of land and $3 per week for the care of each pauper. Doctors Hart and Oliver replaced Doctors Dailey and Brazelton on December 22, 1880. They continued their service until 1883, for $70 per annum.

Some minor changes and improvements were made, and caretakers and doctors were occasionally replaced as the years went by, but the poor farm largely continued in its original way under the supervision of the county board until 1937.

Some of the caretakers after 1890 were Deal Fletcher, Walt Trask, James McPheren, Ed Dowis, Albert Kline, John Parnell, Carl Hurless, and H. C. Huston.

The wives of the managers of the county farm usually belonged to the Martland Aid Society and Club. Consequently they were invited to hold their meeting at the farm home once a year.

In 1887 the Signal reported that John Williams, an inmate of the county farm, died as the result of a fall down the cellar steps. Another accident happened a few years later when one of the inmates, who was from York, a Mr. Owens, was gored by a bull and died soon afterward.

In 1937, the poor farm was discontinued. It then became the Fillmore County Assistance Home, managed by the County Assistance Office. All of the former poor farm residents became eligible for Old Age Benefit checks and were allowed to stay in the Assistance Home if they paid for their board and room and their medical care. Private patients were also admitted. The Assistance Home operated successfully for the next eight years. During this time, a cattle barn, a granary, a hog house, a two-car garage, an irrigation well, a silo, and windbreaks were built on the premises. The original two-story frame house was destroyed by fire, and was replaced by a new brick home. Behind the
cornerstone at the southeast corner of the new home is a bottle-sealed history of the Fillmore County Assistance Home. The new house was paid for by the fire insurance. The other improvements were financed by the farm's income. Few overhead expenses were necessary, since much of the farm labor was provided by relief-script labor and convict labor provided by the sheriff's office.

Throughout the operation of the Assistance Home, many people showed much generosity toward it, in giving both their time and their services. The county officers and especially Dr. Bixby should be commended for their faithful services.

There were about 15 residents there during this period. Since many of the patients were bedfast and in need of medical care, the home gradually developed into a nursing home. On April 6, 1949, the Assistance Home was sold at auction to the Mennonite Church and was renamed the Mennonite Sunset Home. Before reopening the Home, Joe Kennel of Shickley, Floyd Steckly of Beaver Crossing, and William Kremer of Milford were named as the board of directors. There was also a five-man Benevolent Board representing the Mennonite congregations.

The Home was opened on March 1, 1950, with Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Trower serving as first superintendent and matron and Mabel Gingrich serving as nurse. Later, Lena Schweitzer was employed as cook. Ernest Snyder of Shickley was the first guest. Dedication services were held on May 28, 1950.

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Shantz of Canada served as superintendent and matron for several years. On April 1, 1956, Mr. and Mrs. Chester M. Helmick of Finto, Maryland, replaced Mr. and Mrs. Shantz and served from then until 1958. Succeeding them were Mr. and Mrs. Abe Trower (1958-1964); Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Leonard (1964); Mr. and Mrs. Wes Stutzman (1964); and Mr. and Mrs. Orville Trower (1965-1967). In August, 1967, the operation was taken over by Mrs. Ivan Birkly. The Home has an average guest list of about 30, ranging (in 1967) from 58 to 100 years of age. A Geneva physician provides medical services for the guests.

Members of the local church board include Paul Oswald, Mennonite Church, Shickley; Milford Est, Fairview Church, Milford; Albert Hostetler, West Fairview Church, Beaver Crossing; Chris Hargleroad, Roseland Church, Ayr; and Dan Nitsche, Plum Creek Church, Beemer. In addition, a Board of Missions and Charities in Elkhart, Indiana, which supervises all Mennonite homes, helps with the operations at the Sunset Home.

**STORMS**

**Blizzard of 1888**

(This account was written by Mrs. Sada Heery, now deceased.)

The blizzard of January 12, 1888, took 200 lives in Nebraska and neighboring states. The weather changed in five minutes from a light snow from the south to an impenetrable sheet of blinding snow from the northwest. Several country schoolteachers in this county were compelled to stay all night in the schoolhouses with their pupils. I, with my pupils at the Bluff Schoolhouse, managed to get to a neighbor's house near the school, and spent the night and part of the next day there until the storm abated and roads could be cleared.

I will be remembered as Sada Davis if any of those old-timers are still living.

**Tornado of 1908**

There was great havoc on the night of June 5, 1908, when a tornado went through Stanton township. It started around Shickley. It killed Mr. and Mrs. Arganbright, who lived 2 miles S and 3/4 mile W of Martland. All their buildings were destroyed and the Baachmans miraculously escaped injury. The tornado moved northeastward, hitting farmsteads of J. O. Merryman, Sr., Pete Saltzman, Sr., Roy McPharren, J. O. Merryman, Jr., Henry Bohlen, Ernest Ekwall, Bill Carson, John Dondlinger, and John Shively.

At the J. O. Merryman, Jr.'s, all the buildings were destroyed and the family found shelter at the Herman Thole home 3/4 mile east. The tornado then went north and tore all the buildings down on the Bohlen farm. Next, at the Ernest Ekwall place, a short distance east, two legs of the windmill were blown out. At the Bill Carson place, the house was blown off the foundation. The storm, now going northeast, struck the John Dondlinger place and took out the middle section of the house. Last, the John Shively farm, about a mile west of Geneva, was struck.

At the John Shively farm, three people were killed and three were injured. The Shively family, noticing threatening clouds, had been in their cave for some time. They thought the storm was over and so came out and went back to bed. Soon a clap of thunder woke them. They started for the cave again, but the storm hit before they could get to safety. Killed were Miss Lulu Schmidt, 18, who was employed at the Shively home; Sarah Irene Shively, 9, and Ralph Donald Shively, 5, daughter and son of the John Shiveleys. Injured in the storm were Mr. and Mrs. Shively and Edward Fussell, who worked for them. John Shively's watch, which stayed in his pants pocket although its stem ring and leather chain vanished, was broken by some heavy object and had stopped at 9:22 P.M.

One of those interviewed after the storm was a neighbor, Henry Muhlenberg. His story was this:

"The clouds looked so bad we went to our cave. The cyclone struck about 9:30. We could hear a terrible roaring sound below, and apparently above that was a whistling noise. After the storm had passed we came out of the cave expecting to see our buildings blown away but they were not. We looked about and flashes of lightning did not reveal any buildings at John Shively's, about 1/4 mile E of my place. Irvice Zink and I took a lantern and went to Shively's. I told Irvice to go on town for help and I stayed there. Irvice walked to Geneva, where the fire siren was sounded for help."

Andrew Baachman and family lived across the road south of the Arganbrights. All their buildings were destroyed, but none of the family was seriously injured. Two of the children left in their beds were found on the floor of their bedroom. There were no injuries in the family.

Another interesting incident was reported about this storm. Conductor Hedburg and Brakeman Shoemaker, on a Burlington freight train, left Martland the evening of the storm about 9:30, just as the tornado broke out in all its fury. The twister turned west, and so the engineer kept going on toward Shickley, the next stop. Some of the wires had got badly tangled by the terrific wind and the train whistle would
not work; consequently, he coasted into Shickley, arriving safe and sound. No other damage was done to the train; everyone marveled at this.

This account of the 1908 tornado at the J. O. Merryman farm was related by Blanche (Mrs. J. O.) Merryman in 1957:

At our farm the storm took the house and all the other buildings. We had put the two children to bed and Grandma Merryman had gone upstairs to bed when Jim said that a storm was coming and he was going to call his mother down so we could all go to the cellar. I went and got the children up but Archie just sat down on the floor. I picked up Morris and went out in the kitchen to have Jim go after Archie but the door blew shut after me. By that time Grandma was down. She grabbed her shawl that was hanging on the stairway. She didn’t know what she was going to do with it. She put her hand on the wall of the stairway and felt the plastering give way, so she put the shawl over her head and sat down on the floor. By that time the kerosene light had gone out and the windows had blown in. Jim said, “We are going.” In a few minutes he called, “Where are you?” Grandma said, “Here I am, but I think Blanche and the children are dead.”

I said, “Here I am, but you will have to help me up because there is plaster on me.” A commode had fallen across my legs and I had Morris in my arms. Jim came and got Morris and gave him to Grandma. I got up and then Archie yelled, “Mama, where are you?” Just then a streak of lightning flew across the sky and I saw Archie running across the sky and I saw Archie sitting on the highest pile of rubbish.

By then the wind had changed to the northwest and it began to rain. There was a big elm tree out south of where the house had been. We got behind it to try to keep out of the wind. Jim went back and found a feather bed. He brought it over and we sat down on it. In a little while Jim went back and found a mattress which he dragged over and stood up against a tree to break the wind. We stayed there until it stopped raining. We found a bedspread and a quilt and we wrapped around the children. Then we could see the lights at the depot, so we started out to find shelter. The moon came out, and we could see the Herman Thole place a half-mile east of us.

Jim didn’t have any shoes on, and neither did I. Grandma only had on one. That was the way we walked over to the Thole place. We had to wade through a draw where the water was up to our waists. Jim was carrying Archie with a quilt wrapped around him and I was carrying Morris with a wet bedspread and a quilt which we wrapped around the children. Then we could see the lights at the depot, so we started out to find shelter. The moon came out, and we could see the Herman Thole place a half-mile east of us.

Jim and Mr. Thole went back to see if they could find any of the stock. They found some of the horses with their halter ropes tied to pieces of manger. Other horses had their halters, still buckled, pulled off their heads. Some of the horses were about 80 rods away from where the barn had been. One horse was standing in the creek with a cut 18 inches long in her shoulder, cut clear to the bone. Only 2 hogs were killed. The cattle got out of the pen in some way, though the gate was shut and the wires were broken. The chickens that survived were featherless.

Remains of James Merryman farm destroyed by cyclone June 5, 1908.

The next day, June 6, 1908, was like the Fourth of July because of the great number of rigs coming to see what had happened.

The storm went north from our place to the Henry Bohlen place, ¾ mile N and ¾ mile E, where it tore all their buildings down. Mr. and Mrs. Bohlen and two children of the John Shivelys, as well as Miss Lulu Schmidt.

The storm went west from the Bohlen place to the Ernest Eckwall place, where it did some damage. The strongest wind was the fact that the barn blew out in the barn and left the other two with the platform on them. They found Mr. Bohlen and took him over to the Eckwall place. The storm went northeast and struck the John Dondlinger house. The house had been built in three parts. It took the middle part and left the other two parts standing.

After striking the John Shively place about a mile west of Geneva it continued on to the Girls’ Industrial School, where it did some damage.

Another severe storm hit Stanton township about 6:30 p.m. on June 6, 1956. It did considerable damage but no lives were lost. Most of the damage was to barns and outbuildings and windmill towers. A good many telephone and electric lines were also damaged.

Accidents

Fern Geneva Schelkopf, the 18-month-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Schelkopf of near Martland, was drowned about 5 o’clock Tuesday evening, April 21, 1914. The child had been playing near the house while her mother was washing windows. When she was missed, the mother, father, and hired man promptly began a search. The child’s body was found in the stock tank a few rods from the house.

Dr. Wilson of Shickley was called. The parents applied artificial respiration, but when the doctor came he pronounced the baby dead.

It was supposed that the child had pulled herself up on some wiring near the edge of the tank, lost her balance, and fallen in. The funeral was held at the Martland church and interment was in the Geneva cemetery.

Another accident in the community caused the death of Harry Stoldorf, youngest son of Charles Stoldorf. He died in the Lutheran Hospital at York on Thursday, April 15, 1926, as a result of injuries received two days before, in a discing accident. It was guessed that the tongue dropped to the ground while the machine was turning, frightening the six-horse team and making them run toward the barns. The bouncing of the disc threw him forward in such a way that his right leg was caught between the braces and held tightly, while his body, back against the ground, was swept along under the heavy disc for nearly half a mile.

His wife, who happened to be outside, was alarmed by the noise and hurried to the halting team. She found her husband unconscious under the disc. After unhitching the horses, with almost superhuman strength she raised the disc and removed his mangled body. At the York hospital, where he was taken immediately, it was found that his skull was fractured and he had received fatal internal injuries. No operation was attempted. Although at first he regained partial consciousness, he was not able to give any details of the accident, and soon sank into a coma, dying in about 48 hours.

The following Thursday, neighbors with teams and tractors went into Mrs. Stoldorf’s fields and plowed them for her. Those helping were William Wilkins, Ora Brown, Roy Davis, Grant Bail, Albert Diederich, Fred Bartels, Frank Grote, Bert Stoldorf, Merritt Hedden, Warren Nickell, Lou Otte, George Grote, Harry Beavers, William Stoltzfus, Fred Reeb, John Augustine, Everett Ingels, George Hillgren, A. J. Sackenschewsky, J. O. Merryman, and Archie Merryman. The ladies served dinner at the hall.

The fire that burned the grandstand at the Fair Grounds on September 15, 1938, although not within Stanton township, touches Stanton history indirectly. A. A. Russell, a former resident of Martland who later farmed north of there, was president of the Fair Board in 1938, the year of that large but luckily non-fatal conflagration.

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On the Bailor farm in 1892.
Left—Adam Bailor plowing ½ row of corn with one horse. Norman Wood, riding the horse.
Right—Mrs. Silas E. Bailor riding the first two-row cultivator, invented and built by Silas E. Bailor in his blacksmith shop on his farm in Stanton township.

Vernon Pearson, chairman of Shickley Irrigators Ass'n, shown measuring the static water level in one of the 45 wells measured by the directors of the Irrigators Ass'n.

Fillmore County Poor Farm (June 17, 1928).

FILLMORE COUNTY ASSISTANCE HOME.

Fillmore County ‘Co-operative Farm,’ 1940.


Exeter Feeders' Tour, 1966 (at Schelkopf Brothers Farm).
West Blue Township

West Blue township is located on the northern edge of Fillmore County. It is bounded on the north by York County and on the east by Fairmont, on the south by Geneva and on the west by Grafton townships. It derives its name from the West Blue River, which winds in a northeasterly direction through its northern part. The land is gently rolling, except for some roughness along the river. There are large deposits of sand and gravel, which have been used to surface many of the county’s roads. By the end of 1866, a total of 45 irrigation wells had been drilled in the township.

The history of this township is especially interesting, as the first homesteads in the county were located here. In June, 1866, William O. Bussard and William C. Whitaker, natives of Ohio, filed on homestead claims. Mr. Bussard was first and filed on the NE ¼ of Sec. 8, T8, R3W of the 6th Principal Meridian. Mr. Whitaker, the second claimant, filed on the NW ¼ of the same section. These men then came onto their claims, making dugouts and shelter for their stock, thus preparing for permanent settlement.

In October, 1866, Nimrod J. Dixon filed on the SE ¼ of Sec. 6, T8, R3W and his fiancée, Miss Lydia Gilmore, filed on the SW ¼ of the same section. Mr. Dixon selected his land without seeing it. At that time he could homestead 160 acres; but the law was shortly to change so that one person could homestead only 80 acres. As he would not have had time to come and see the land and get back to Nebraska City to file on it before the law changed, he chose his claim and viewed it later.

The same season, J. H. Malick and Jacob Werts, both young natives of Ohio, and James Whitaker, twin brother of William, filed on claims, making a total of seven for Fillmore County in the year 1866. All of these claim-holders, fearing the severity of the winter, spent the time until spring farther east, with relatives or friends.

In the spring of 1867, the Whitakers and Mr. Bussard returned to their claims and broke some of the ground, and then went to Missouri to spend the winter of 1867-68 with their families. They returned in the spring, bringing with them their mother, Mrs. Elisha Whitaker, then over 70 years old. She filed on a claim adjoining that of her son William.

On February 28, 1867, after having to go all the way to Nebraska City, as that was the nearest railroad station, mail was brought by carrier from post office to post office, the offices being in the homes of the settlers. The mail was all carried in one sack and emptied at each post office, where the mail addressed to there was sorted out and the rest put back into the sack to be carried on to the next office for a repeat performance.

E. L. Martin laid out a town on his land and called it Fillmore. He was commissioned postmaster on March 10, 1871, and kept at Fillmore the first post office in the county. In the same year, Henry L. Badger was commissioned postmaster of an office known as West Blue. He kept the office in the dugout for two years and, for some time after that, in his log house, even after the establishment of the post office in Fairmont.

J. E. Porter was the pioneer merchant of the county. He opened a store in Fillmore City on February 10, 1871; but in the fall he moved his store to Fairmont.

On March 19, 1871, Henry L. Badger was appointed registrar of voters for the county by acting Governor W. H. James. He took the oath of office before William Ong, justice of the peace in York County, and proceeded with his duties.

As early in the history of the county as 1868, the little band of settlers along the West Blue River enjoyed religious services. The Rev. Isadore Caldwell, a United Brethren circuit rider, came up the river valley on horseback and preached in the dugouts of the Whitakers, Bussards, and Dixons.

The first marriage license in Fillmore County was issued June 27, 1871, to William C. Whitaker, the first homesteader, and Sabra Brumsey. They were married June 28 by County Judge William H. Blain. The names of Mrs. H. L. Badger and John Whitaker appeared as witnesses. The county judge came from his home some 15 miles away, in Madison township (Sec. 20), and spent the night in the dugout of H. L. Badger, who lived 1½ miles from the scene of the wedding. Judge Blain borrowed Mr. Badger’s coat to perform the ceremony.

The first white boy and girl of Fillmore County were born in West Blue township. They were Arthur Dixon, son of Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Dixon, born on their homestead January 9, 1869, and Emma Whitaker (Mrs. J. K. Hall), daughter of Mrs. and Mrs. James C. Whitaker, born in 1870.
given that on Tuesday the 17th day of December A.D. 1872, the legal voters of the various townships in the County of Fillmore will meet.” The voting for West Blue township was at the home of William Whitaker.

In the 1870’s, many more homesteaders came. A few of those whose records are available are the following:

Joseph Carney, a native of Pennsylvania, was born November 7, 1832. He enlisted for three months in the Pennsylvania State Militia in 1860 but saw no active service. In March, 1872, he came to Fillmore County and took up a homestead on Sec. 32, West Blue township. His first home here was a small frame house in which he and his family lived while he converted the wild land into highly cultivated fields. Mr. Carney and his wife Mary (Mills) had four children, William L., Margaret V., Mary A., and Susie M. Carney.

J. B. Cory was born in Wyoming County, New York, August 11, 1839. He came to West Blue township in 1872 and took up a homestead and a timber claim on Sec. 18. In 1881, he married Miss Nancy Sloniger; they had two children, Clara and Perry N. Cory.

Isaac Eastwood, a worthy representative of one of the prominent and highly respected pioneer families of West Blue township, was born in Yorkshire, England, December 21, 1855. He was the son of Thomas and Fannie Eastwood. He was reared and educated in his native land and there started to learn the machinist’s trade but was forced to abandon this because of his health. In 1872, he accompanied his parents on their emigration to America, where they became residents of Fillmore County. His father homesteaded on the W % of the NW % of Sec. 12, West Blue township. Their first home was a sod house, replaced some years later by a frame house. In 1882, Mr. Eastwood married Miss Inez Aldrich, who died in February, 1884. He was married again, to Miss Nancy F. Chambers, on March 11, 1886. He served as treasurer of West Blue township for two terms.

John B. Kaufman, an honored pioneer and influential citizen of West Blue township, was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, April 28, 1826. He was a son of John and Eliza Kaufman. In 1837 he accompanied the family on their removal to Ohio. At the age of 16, he commenced learning the blacksmith's trade, which he continued to follow in Ohio until April, 1870, when he came here and homesteaded on Sec. 8. He erected a log house upon his land and opened the first blacksmith shop in the county. In exchange for work in the shop, his neighbors broke his land during the first year of his residence here. He followed both blacksmithing and farming, meeting with marked success. There were still some Indians in this region at the time of his arrival, but none were hostile. While in Ohio, Mr. Kaufman was married, on December 31, 1854, to Miss Melissa Whitaker. Four children were born to them: Dora F., Martha J., Nellie E., and Lon S. Kaufman. Mrs. Kaufman died March 8, 1895, and Mr. Kaufman on March 14, 1904.

John Lindgren was born in Sweden in 1815. When he reached manhood, he married Christina Swanson, by whom he had five children.

He and his family sailed for the United States in 1868. After six months spent in Harlem, New York, he removed to Princeton, Illinois, where he lived until 1870. The family then came to Fillmore County, taking up a homestead on Sec. 4, West Blue. After constructing a dugout for the accommodation of his family, he began to break sod and improve the land. At the end of seven years, he traded it for 120 acres in the same township, where he made his home until his death on January 26, 1893. His wife died on February 26, 1895.

Elref Lindgren, the only son, owned and operated this farm after the death of his father. On November 24, 1887, he was united in marriage with Josephine A. Kron. He retired early and made his home in Grafton.

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George F. Marsh, who was born in De Witt County, Illinois, in 1840, saw active duty and was wounded in the Civil War. He settled on Sec. 20 in 1873. Mr. and Mrs. Marsh had nine children: Charlie, John, Mary E., Georgiana, Samuel B., Edward, May B., Julia M., and Eleanor B. Marsh. In 1872, John A. Martin and his wife Mary J. (Larmer) Martin, both natives of Ireland, settled in West Blue township, taking up a 160-acre homestead on the SE 1/4 of Sec. 20. The son, John Martin, Jr., lived on Sec. 22. On May 19, 1878, John Martin, Jr., married Miss Missouri Johnson, a daughter of Abraham and Sarah (Eckley) Johnson. Nine children were born to this union: Mabel E., Thomas L., Clara B., Dora A., Clarence L., Hattie E., Allen E., James H., and one who died in infancy.

Henry E. Oates, a well-known and prominent agriculturist of Fillmore County, was born March 1, 1839, on the Isle of Man, off the coast of England, and was reared and educated in his native land. In the spring of 1855, he sailed for America. He first located in Chicago, Illinois, where he learned the carpenter's trade. In 1860, he went to Colorado and engaged in mining until the fall of 1862, when he enlisted in Company I, Second Colorado Volunteer Infantry, and was assigned to the Army of the Southwest. He saw a lot of hard service in Missouri, Arkansas, and Indian Territory. At the close of the war he was honorably discharged.

He was married to Miss Mary Bernaster, a native of Stark County, Illinois, in 1872. Six children were born to them:

My father, Anson Cary Palmer, and my mother, Amanda Lewis Palmer, homesteaded on Sec. 14, T8, R3W, West Blue, 2 miles N and 2 miles W of Fairmont. My father, a Civil War veteran, had picked this location in the spring of 1869, and in 1871 brought my mother and my older sister May to Nebraska. The lumber for the house was hauled with ox teams from Lincoln. Part of the house still standing on the property is the original homestead.

A. C. Palmer was fatally injured in an accident at the Fairmont elevator in March, 1885. His widow was left to rear the six children: May Palmer, the oldest, aged 14; Clara Palmer (Beach); Eva Palmer (Reader); Charlene Palmer (Zumwalt); Earle Palmer; and the youngest, Clarence Palmer. Clarence, the only one of the children to remain on the home-
stead, lived there for 50 years, until he retired. He now lives with his wife Ethel in Fairmont. Their three children were Dorsey Palmer (deceased), Pauline Palmer Hurst, and Joyce Palmer Dean.

—Mrs. Clarence Palmer

The following history of the NE ¼ of Sec. 34, West Blue, was written by Ora A. Robbins, the present owner and resident since birth:

In 1874, my father, Fernando F. Robbins, a Civil War veteran of 1861 to 1865, his wife, a daughter, and a son migrated from the state of New York and settled on this place. He bought out a homesteader's right and proved up on the claim. The patent, No. 10,078, was issued November 1, 1881, and was signed by President Chester A. Arthur.

The only incumbrance ever on the place was a mortgage for $600, dated February 18, 1879. It was released January 22, 1880.

The only improvement on the place at the time my folks arrived was a dugout (if it may be called an improvement). It was just a hole in the ground for the tenant to live in, along with his wife and one young child. He was a lawyer by profession.

Going back to my folks, the daughter mentioned above, Carrie E., was born November 17, 1869. She is now Mrs. Carrie Avery who lives in the north side of Fairmont. The son, Earl D., died the year they came out here. He was one year and one day old and is buried on this place. The grave is marked by a large evergreen tree.

As to myself, I was born January 2, 1876, and have been a continual resident on this farm since. Nearly all of my schooling was at District 11, one mile west of here. I served on this school board for 33 years.

In 1905, I was married to Miss Berneice Nichols. In 1906, we built a house just across the driveway from my folks. The house was 16' x 28', one and three-quarters stories; I continued farming the quarter.

Two daughters were born to us: Florence M. was born on May 7, 1908, and Hazel B. was born June 6, 1913. Both daughters followed the schoolteaching profession. For six years Florence taught in Districts, 81, 11, and 3 in Fillmore County. In 1931, she married Everett Nichols and now lives 2 miles S of here. They have two boys, Gene and Marvin. Both have served their time in the Army—Gene, overseas in Korea, and Marvin, in three different training camps.
Hazel taught in Districts 3, 12 and 29. While teaching in District 29, she contracted scarlet fever from one of her pupils and died in 1936. I was in school on the day of that memorable blizzard of January 12, 1888.

My mother died in 1923 and my father in 1926. In my father's will, this quarter was left to me. I was appointed administrator of his estate. After the death of my parents, we wrecked most of my folks' house, dug a full basement 28' x 36', moved my house over to the basement and built to it a completely modern house. We installed a 10,000-gallon cistern for soft water, with the water under automatic electric pressure. All this project was practically done by our own labor. Laying up the basement walls, plumbing, wiring, painting, plastering, were the jobs hired.

We both belong to the Rebekah Lodge. I have been a member of the Fairmont Odd Fellows lodge for over 55 years, and was its secretary for 16½ years. We both belong to the Methodist Church.

In February, 1878, W. E. Smith left Berkshire County, Massachusetts, where he had been born and reared, and came straight to Nebraska, buying in New York a ticket to Lincoln. He was then 24 years old. Soon after landing here, he bought SE ¼ of Sec. 10 from Isaac N. Dille. Mr. Dille had homesteaded and broken 20 acres, but, as his wife did not like the county, they had gone back to Iowa. Mr. Smith built up the farm and fed quite a number of cattle and hogs. He served three terms as county supervisor. Three children, Harry, Hal, and Ethel, were born here and graduated from the Fairmont High School. Harry was born on this farm on July 9, 1882, and has always lived in Fillmore County. The couple had two children, Dale and Margaret (Mrs. Francis Nichols).

Miss Clara Stines, a longtime resident of Fairmont (died September 28, 1964) supplied this account of her father, Hal P. Stines, Sr., and his homestead. After stating that in 1878 Joe Rose bought the NE ¼ of Sec. 28, she continued: "In the spring of 1879, Mr. Stines went to Thompson, Illinois, and while there married Clara E. Rose on June 30, 1879. This is an account of the wedding published in the Fillmore County Bulletin:

"Married at the residence of the bride's parents, June 30, 1879, by Rev. Lower, Hal P. Stines of West Blue Precinct, Fillmore County, and Miss Clara E. Rose of Thompson, Carroll County, Illinois.

"The delighted couple arrived in Fairmont on July 11, and proceeded to West Blue, beginning housekeeping at once. Mr. Stines is one of our young and enterprising farmers, who very wisely made up his mind that it is not good for man to be alone. He has taken unto himself one of the most beautiful and highly prized varieties of Illinois roses and transplanted her to the more genial soil of his beloved Nebraska, where her fragrance will be daily and hourly upon Hal instead of wasted upon desert air. The Bulletin extends congratulations and wishes them a happy life."

"The next year I (Clara) was born and we lived there until 1886. I still own the farm. We then moved on the SW ¼ of Sec. 16, West Blue township. Father had bought this from the government during Grover Cleveland's first administration. The deed was signed by Cleveland. "My brother, Hal P. Stines, Jr., was born there and has never lived anywhere else.

"October 9, 1949, a windstorm blew all the buildings down except the house and crib.

"Six children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Hal P. Stines, Sr.: Clara R., Fletcher H., Hilda A., Ruth A., Hal P. Stines, Jr., and two who died in infancy."

Shelly Stines, a brother of Hal P. Stines, Sr., was reared in New York. He moved to Iowa in 1886 and farmed there until he came to Nebraska in 1880. After spending one year in York County, he purchased 480 acres of valuable land in West Blue township. He gave special attention to the care and feeding of livestock. In 1888, he erected upon his place, at a cost of $2,500, one of the best homes in the county. He married Miss Sarah A. Bennett in 1884. Their children were LeRoy, Archie, Amy, Helen, Maude, and Dorothy.

George W. Swartz was born in Brant County, Ontario, Canada, on November 9, 1842. His parents, William and Sarah Swartz, were natives of New York and Pennsylvania, respectively, but spent most of their lives in Canada. In 1864, he moved to Livingston County, Illinois, where he made his home for 19 years. On March 27, 1872, he married Miss Elizabeth Rook of Delaware. The children born to this union were Emma (Mrs. L. A. Frederick), William, Harvey J., Clara B., and Olive L. Swartz. Arriving in Fillmore County in 1883, he bought 225 acres of land in Sec. 6, West Blue township. He farmed and improved this land, which has ever since been in the Swartz family. In 1888, he built a large barn which is still in use. The farm is owned today by William Swartz, now living in New York.
J. A. Swartz was born in Brant County, Ontario, Canada, May 3, 1851. After being educated in the public schools of the Dominion, in 1870 he came to Fillmore, Nebraska, and rented land for one year, after which he purchased a farm on Sec. 5, West Blue township, for $6 per acre. It was under cultivation, and the first year he raised $2,000 worth of wheat, which more than paid for the farm. In December, 1875, he married Miss Sarah A. Pearson, a native of Illinois. Seven children were born to them: Carrie L., Ernest, Lillian, Carl, Roy, and Jessie.

Some of the earliest industries were milling and lumbering. When the town of Fillmore was laid out by E. L. Martin in 1873, in the valley of the West Blue River, the first post office was established. The first wagon road, which opened February 10, 1871, was run by J. E. Porter, who was also deputy postmaster.

In 1873, C. M. Northrup built the first flouring mill in the county. A notice in the Bulletin on April 21, 1873, stated that C. M. Northrup & Company asked the citizens of Fillmore, York, and adjoining counties to assist in building the mill dam, mill race, and mill on Sec. 1, T8, R4W. Mr. Northrup wanted volunteers to bring spade, shovel, pick, axe, wagon and team, or the one thing needful to procure a substitute. He had brought from the East a turbine water wheel, corn mills, a sawmill, and a lath mill, and had made arrangements with all other machinery as soon as needed. The village now contained a mill, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, store and 50 inhabitants. The mill continued to operate until 1921 or 1922, when it was torn down. L. A. Frederick was the last miller and owner. People from miles around hauled their grain to the mill and took home flour and meal.

The sand and gravel of the Blue River were used extensively in the building of bridges and roads. In the early years, it was hauled from the river beds by wagons and teams. Now, large pits are dug and the gravel is pumped out by machinery into gravel trucks, which carry it off for road and cement work. The large gravel deposits on the NE ¼ of Sec. 17 were once owned by Herbert Lauber of Geneva. They were for some time the property of the Overland Sand & Gravel Company of Stromsburg, Nebraska. The Nichols Construction Company of Geneva bought the area from Overland on February 16, 1946. It is estimated that the Nichols firm alone has pumped more than 250,000 cubic yards of gravel from these deposits.

The Budler brothers, Bernard and Wayne, in 1935 started a truck garden in the Blue River valley on the SE ¼ of Sec. 5, raising tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet corn, and potatoes. During World War II, their business particularly thrived, and they used three pick-up trucks to deliver their produce to the neighboring communities near the farm and Air Base. In 1952, another brother, Louis, took over the business; he continues to raise tomatoes, sweet corn, and cucumbers for sale to people who come out there to get the produce.

The growing of hybrid seed corn is one of the more recent industries in the township. The Lauber Seed Farms purchased the SE ¼ of Sec. 9 from the F. S. Ashby estate in 1942. The W. A. Biba Engineering Company then leveled 140 acres, using, for the first time, four new DW-10's, four-wheel tractors and scoops. After leveling, the Lauber Blue Valley Hybrid seed was produced on this land, irrigated from the Blue River. In 1945, the Laubers purchased the NE ¼ of Sec. 9—long the property of Isaac Beery, whose only daughter had married a man named Flick—from the Flicks' interest. This quarter had been in hybrid seed corn production, and this use has been continued. A 2,000-bushel ear-corn dryer was built in 1947 when R.E.A. came through this area. In 1955, when the Blue River was very low, a 1,200-gallon deep-well was put down to supplement the river irrigation.

In 1950, a 250-tree orchard, of apple and peach trees, was planted on a 19-acre plot, on a contoured and terraced hillside. But after seven or eight years this operation proved to be not economically sound; the orchard has been destroyed and the land put back into cultivation.

In 1956, Lauber's Blue Valley Hybrid Milo was grown for the first time; production from the hybrid milos has been very good. Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Smith, the tenants on this farm, have been in charge since this land was first purchased. This 320-acre farm is now owned by the Lauber Seed Company and leased to the Lauber Seed Farms.

In 1953, Roy King purchased the District 1 schoolhouse and used this building as a headquarters for raising bees and selling honey. He keeps more than 3,000 bees, and honey dealers offer a large territory purchase his product.

Cattle raising is carried on quite extensively in this township, as the areas around the river banks offer much good pasture. One of the largest cattle feeders in the area is the Nichols Brothers farm, located on the NE ¼ of Sec. 17 and managed by Mr. and Mrs. Howard Brower.

The history of West Blue township would not be complete without some mention of the landmarks many of us remembered as children but which are now gone. One such landmark was the beautiful cedar trees in the yard of the Ora Robbins farm. Clyde M. Husted, in his article "My Red Wheel and I" (Nebraska Signal, September 6, 1901), describes them:

Mr. Robbins' house is well set back from the road on rising ground. In the front yard is planted 30 just common old cedar trees. We may say the trees are "common old cedar trees," but the artistic manner in which Mr. Robbins trims them is very uncommon.

Mr. Robbins is an artist and these trees are said to be as fine as any in the United States unless it be those in the Italian Gardens on the grounds of H. H. Hunnewell at Wellesley College, Massachusetts. The 30 trees are trimmed in 28 different designs. We will mention a few of the designs, but it is impossible to know the beauty of these trees without once seeing them. One is trimmed in the form of a lantern. This is very nice and shows much artistic work. The one most people admire and the one that shows off nicest from the road is trimmed into the form of a gravy dish. We have another trimmed into the form of a wash bowl and pitcher and he is now fitting a watch-dog to stand guard on another. These are fine specimens of what is called topiary work, and add much to the value of the farm. Mr. Robbins has offered $25 if he would transplant a single tree to another ground.

Another landmark was the huge cottonwood trees on the Badger homestead. (These are described more fully in the Badger family story.)

The general appearance of the township has changed immensely in the last generation. Most of the roads are now gravelled. Farming has changed notably since irrigation. There are now 35 irrigation wells in this township, and the methods of farming have kept up with the times. There used to be threshing rigs run by steam engines at harvest time. Nowadays, large self-propelled combines can be seen in almost every wheat field. Tractors are getting larger, and have become easier to drive, with power steering, cushioned seats, and even radios to put a little music into the farmer's long outdoor day. He can also keep up with the news, weather, and markets even while out in the field.

When butchering time came in the good old days, several neighbors brought their hogs and had a butchering bee.
They didn’t choose bacon-type hogs, but rather the ones that would give them the most lard. Water to scald the hogs was heated in large iron kettles and the hogs were dunked into barrels of scalding water after they had been killed. The scraping was done as they hung from their hind legs from trees. One picture of the time is of a butchering scene at the home of H. I. Mills. Six neighbors were posing with eight large hogs strung up in the trees. All the available dishpans and kettles were brought out to hold livers, hearts, and tongues. The meat was cared for in the home by salt curing or smoking, and in later days, by canning. Now, most farm homes have freezers. The hogs and beef are taken to a butcher, and by the time the farmer sees the meat again it is all wrapped and sharp-frozen, ready for the freezer.

The coming of R.E.A. made life much easier in the farm homes. Cows are milked by electric milkers, electric motors are used for lifting, and ironing and washing machines are lifesavers for the housewife.

CHURCHES

No churches were built in West Blue township. However, almost every school district offered the public an opportunity to participate in religious training, as Sunday School and Bible Study classes were held on Sunday afternoons in the schoolhouses. A good many families in each local district could attend these lessons.

The West Blue Aid Society was organized on November 3, 1897. Its first meeting was at the home of Mrs. Jennie Burgess. The officers were: Mrs. Jennie Burgess, president; Mrs. Dreney Farley, vice-president; Mrs. Carrie Smith, secretary; Mrs. Carrie Avery, treasurer; Mrs. Julia Verry and Mrs. Susanna Hall, directors. The dues were five cents per month. Meetings were held in the homes of the members every two weeks.

Their objective was social intercourse and the making of church furnishings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. They didn’t choose bacon-type hogs, but rather the ones that would give them the most lard. Water to scald the hogs was heated in large iron kettles and the hogs were dunked into barrels of scalding water after they had been killed. The scraping was done as they hung from their hind legs from trees. One picture of the time is of a butchering scene at the home of H. I. Mills. Six neighbors were posing with eight large hogs strung up in the trees. All the available dishpans and kettles were brought out to hold livers, hearts, and tongues. The meat was cared for in the home by salt curing or smoking, and in later days, by canning. Now, most farm homes have freezers. The hogs and beef are taken to a butcher, and by the time the farmer sees the meat again it is all wrapped and sharp-frozen, ready for the freezer.

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The purpose of this club was to quilt, sew, carpet rags, or do as those for which the society was organized, with only a few changes. The officers are elected for a term of one year at the last regular meeting in each December. There are no dues. Meetings were changed from every two weeks to the first and third Wednesday of each month. There is one charter member, Mrs. Carrie Avery.

No community would be complete without some social life. Through the years several different clubs were formed.

In the early 1900’s, a group of some 30 young people formed the Jubilee Club, for young couples who were dating. They met in the homes of the members, and their entertainment was chiefly composed of parlor games.
West Blue Township Homestead Map

Bergstrand, secretary-treasurer. The other members were Mrs. Cal McElvain, Mrs. Ernest Softley, Mrs. Harry Bordner, Mrs. Frank Rolles, Mrs. Mike Griffin, Mrs. Roy Hull, Mrs. Tina Everetts, Mrs. Alex Ogden, and Mrs. Jim Smith.

On January 19, 1926, it was voted to change the name of the group to the West Blue Designers. New members at this meeting were Mrs. W. D. Smith, Mrs. Ed McCabe, Mrs. Edna Hildebrand, and the Misses Mary and Margaret Schmitz. Five more new members were enrolled on February 5, 1926: Mrs. Charles McMahon, Mrs. Mary McIntyre, Mrs. John Kelch, Mrs. Edgar Nichols, and Mrs. Harry Kelch. In September, 1926, the membership totaled 29. In that year they joined the Federated Club.

Interesting project lessons such as "Making the Living Room Attractive," "Refinishing Furniture," "Landscaping," "Gardening," and many more have been given over the years. Members won many premiums at the Fillmore County Fair for their collective agricultural exhibits and booths displaying project lessons. In 1941, when approved practice sheets telling how many quarts of fruits and vegetables canned during the year were handed in, Mrs. William Hofferber was the leader, with 840 quarts canned. During 1942-1943, many members did Red Cross knitting and sewing, and made bandages. The club donated home-canned fruits and vegetables to the Henderson Children's Home, and sent printed feed sacks to England.

Club goals for the year 1949 were to promote understanding and prevention of brucellosis and undulant fever, as well as to carry on charity work. The club celebrated its 25th anniversary with an open house at the Legion Hall in Fairmont on October 11, 1950. Over the years, average membership was 22, and the treasury was replenished in a variety of ways. One charter member, Mrs. Ernest Softley, is still (1967) active in the club. The club is now known as the West Blue Extension Club and has 25 members. In 1967 the officers were: Mrs. Ralph Softley, president; Mrs. Howard Miller, vice-president; and Mrs. Clyde Jacobsen, secretary-treasurer.
SCHOOLS

The first school in Fillmore County was taught in a dugout on the NW ¼ of Sec. 12, West Blue, by Mrs. Laura Phillips. She was employed and paid by the people. This school was finally known as District 4. After districts were organized, teachers were hired for a term of three months. If they proved satisfactory, they were contracted for another three months.

West Blue township was divided into five school districts, Nos. 1, 4, 11, 15, and 70.

District No. 1 was composed of Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18. It was organized under the supervision of County Superintendent G. W. Gue on December 4, 1871. He failed to make a record of this, but notified E. L. Martin that the first meeting for the election of school district officers would be held at Mr. Martin’s house on December 4, 1871, at 2 P.M. He instructed him to notify every legal voter in the district of the time and place at least five days before the date set for the meeting. On October 11, 1873, on petition of the voters in District 1, the county superintendent shifted Secs. 6 and 7, and the W ¼ of Sec. 5, to the newly formed District 70.

Year Teacher Months Taught
1872-73 Elva C. Lewis 3
1873-74 E. McCoy 1
1874-75 H. E. Wright 3
1875-76 Belle Fisher 3
1876-77 Fannie M. Bennett 3½
1877-78 Fannie M. Bennett 3
1878-79 Mary White 3
Harrison Palmer 3
1879-80 Mary Lyman 3
William Smith 3
1880-81 F. S. Jackson 3
H. C. Palmer 4
1881-82 Mary Masters 4
S. H. Holter 2
1882-83 Marion W. Barrett 3
Belle Richardson 3
1883-84 Mary Little 3½
L. P. Gouzy 3
1885-86 Ella Bennett 3
S. C. Cook 4
Marietta Avery 3
1886-87 Nellie Keith 3
Mary Avery 3
1887-88 Marietta Avery 3
1889 Nellie Rothwell 3
Bertha Crabb 3
1893 L. M. Farrar 3
1894 Lottie Bennett 3
William Moul 3
1895 Marie Farrar 3
William F. Moul 3
1896 Agnes Keegan 3
1897 Agnes Keegan 3
Mable Combs 3
1898 Agnes Keegan 3
1899 Eddythe M. Miles 3
Agnes Keegan 3
1900 Eddythe M. Miles 3
1901 Agnes Brady 3
Agnes Brady 3
Lillian Green 3
1902 Lillian Green 3
1903 Mary B. Stanard 3
Mary B. Stanard 3
Julia M. Marsh 3
1904-05 S. D. Purviance 7½
Lena Purviance 1½
1905-06 Margaret Seibel 3
1906-07 Margaret Seibel 3
1907-08 Thomas Keenan 3
1908-09 Leah Smith 3
1909-10 Lester Westbrooke 3
1910-11 Alda Bender 3
1911-12 Alda Bender 3
1912-13 Closed 3
1913-14 Closed 3
1914-15 Ruby Severson 3
1915-16 Pearl Murphy 9
1916-17 Pearl Murphy 9
1917-18 Pearl Murphy 9
1918-19 Anna Haorthy 9
1919-20 Sylvia May 9
1920-21 Wilma Whittaker 9
1921-22 Ethel Love 9
1922-23 Myrtle Philson 9
1923-24 Myrtle Philson 9
1924-25 Wilma Whitaker 9
1925-26 Jessie Whitaker 9
Wilma Whitaker 9
1926-27 Jessie Whitaker 9
Wilma Whitaker 9
1927-28 Marjorie Glenn 9
Esther Sughrue 9
1928-29 Esther Sughrue 9
1929-30 Edna Witte 9

Later a frame schoolhouse was built and remained in use until 1925, when a modern two-story building was erected. Grades from one to ten were taught, and two teachers were hired. Miss Jessie Whitaker and Miss Wilma Whitaker were the first teachers in the new school. In 1934, the ninth and tenth grades were discontinued, and only one teacher was hired after that.

On January 27, 1953, District 1 was dissolved and annexed to District 19. The last teacher was Mrs. Lindell Hawthorn. The schoolhouse was sold to Roy King and is now the headquarters for a thriving honey industry.
District No. 4 pupils about 1900. Left to right: Teacher, George Porter; Fordyce Moul, Earl Forbes, Harry Perkins, Earl Hall, Maggie Shaull, Grace Hall, Oliver Moul, Mable Perkins, Albert Baxter, Goldie Shaull, Mae Brewer, Hammond Shaull, Ada Moul, Nellie Perkins, Mary Badger, Mary Forbes.

At the annual meeting, April 7, 1873, J. S. Chamberlin was elected treasurer, and J. R. McCashland, moderator, to serve out the unexpired term of T. R. Wychoff. Every man over 21 was required to work two days building the schoolhouse.

An account of a visit made to District 4 by John A. Dempster, county superintendent, was published in the Fillmore County Bulletin:

June 26, P.M., 1872

Visited school in District Number 4. Mrs. Laura A. Phillips, teacher. There were nine pupils present, 12 on the list, nearly all small children and not very far advanced. This is her first term and she appears to be doing well with them. The branches taught, chiefly reading and spelling. School kept in a dugout, not built for the purpose and inconvenient, having no furniture.

The families living in the district when it was organized were those of J. S. Chamberlin, J. W. Smith, H. L. Badger, Wilson Matthews, J. R. McCashland, T. R. Wychoff, and E. L. Warner. On January 27, 1953, this district was dissolved and annexed to District 19. The last teacher was Miss Donna Hienz. The schoolhouse was sold to Tony Lowe, who converted it into a modern dwelling for his son John.

The following records of District No. 11 are from the files in the county superintendent’s office:

January 24, 1872

In accordance with a request of a majority of the voters of District 11, I have set apart the following described sections to constitute that district:

Districts 11 and 16, the SE 1/4 of Section 29 to Township 7, Range 3, West to District 11.

(Signed) J. B. Lewis, County Superintendent.

Geneva, Nebraska

December 24, 1886

By virtue of the powers in me vested by the school laws of the State of Nebraska, and in accordance with a petition signed by a majority of those qualified to vote at any school meeting in School Districts 11 and 14 of Fillmore County, Nebraska, I have this day detached from school District 14 and attached to School District 11, the N 1/2 of Section 4, Town 7, Range 3, West.

(Signed) J. B. Saxton, County Superintendent.

An account of a visit to District 11 by John A. Dempster, county superintendent, was printed in the Bulletin:

Friday, P.M.

September 27, 1873

Visited school in District Number 11 taught by Mr. George Barrows in his own house; five pupils present, six on the list, all small and not very far advanced. Mr. Barrows informs me that he has taught 22 terms in the Eastern states. Under the circumstances, with small school and inconvenient place, he has not the opportunity to display the ability of a teacher of so much experience.
The first frame school was taught by Miss Belle Perry and was known as the “Butterbaugh” school. Ora Robbins has in his possession the boards from above the door of the old schoolhouse, with this name on them.

During the years 1920, 1921, and 1922, Miss Sylvia May taught this school. She was instrumental in starting and organizing the Parent-Teachers Society in the district. Meetings of this group gave occasion for displays of local talent and for hearing well-known guest speakers such as Newton Gaines from the University of Nebraska and L. C. Oberlies of the Telephone Company. At one meeting, the Cotton Blossom Singers, a group of Negroes from Mississippi under the direction of Laurence Jones, was passing through the country and gave a program. All the families from miles around would attend these programs at the school; on such occasions the schoolhouse was always overflowing.

On January 27, 1952, this school was dissolved and annexed to District 19. The last teacher was Mrs. Caroline Stadler of Heartwell, Nebraska.

The following item, written by John A. Anderson, Sr., appeared in the Nebraska Signal for May 14, 1953:

This is a farewell sigh to old No. 11! The beautiful custom and tradition of the community dinner, the last day of school was observed today, and will be no more. The fine palatable viands served by the culinary women experts will be enjoyed, is now history. And the ball games in Don Galusha’s pasture passed out today. But as usual the men and boys motored to the contest. The game was, as always, much enjoyed and closely contested and to the credit of good upholding by Bob Halsey perfect peace and pleasure was enjoyed by all. The presence on both sides of athletic girl players added grace to please the spectators.

The school house in District No. 11 has been the scene of many community activities in the past, such as the P.T.A. for 12 winter occasions the schoolhouse was always overflowing.

District No. 15—last day of school year.

On January 25, 1972, in accordance with a request of a majority of the legal voters of School Districts Number 1 and 29, Fillmore County, Nebraska, I have set apart the following described territory to constitute District Number 70:

In accordance with a petition signed by a majority of the legal voters of School Districts Number 15 and 29, Fillmore County, Nebraska, I have this day set apart the following described territory to constitute District Number 70:

Sections Number 6 and 7 and west 1/2 of Section 5, Town 8, Range 3, West .

I notified Mr. E. L. Martin that the first meeting for the election of a moderator for three years, a director for two years and a treasurer for one year, would be held at Fillmore Post Office in said district on Tuesday, October 21, at two o’clock P.M.

I instructed him to notify every legal voter in said district of the time and place of holding said meeting at least five days before the day above mentioned and in advance of the notice a return showing each notification with the dates thereof and deliver it to the chairman of said meeting who should deliver the same to the director chosen to be recorded as part of the record of said district.

The school was built and operated on Sec. 6 for several years. Then the building was moved, County 6 for several years. Then the building was moved to rented land just across the road to the west in Grafton precinct. Here school was held until 1885, at which time a new schoolhouse was erected just south of it on Sec. 1 in Grafton.

The school was in operation until 1952, when it was discontinued and the building sold. Miss Norma Witte was the last teacher.

District No. 15, Back row, left to right: Harry Smith, Lottie Bennett (teacher), Clara Stines, Leah Smith, Hilda Stines, Front row: Leroy Stines, Ernest Laschanzky, Amy Stines, Clara Laschanzky, Anna Hartman, Arch Stines, unknown, Gus Laschanzky, unknown.

District No. 70, founded in 1873, was another school with a life-span of nearly 80 years.

November 19, 1954

In accordance with a petition signed by a majority of the legal voters in Fillmore County, Nebraska, I have this day set apart from District 15 and annexed to 19, the NE 1/4 of Section 13, Town 8, Range 3, West of the 6th Principal Meridian in Fillmore County, Nebraska.

(Signed) Lewis Goodrich, County Superintendent
Recorded by Henry Vauck, County Superintendent.

On January 27, 1953, this school was dissolved and annexed to District 19. Miss Genevieve Elward, now Mrs. Wayne Lefever, was the last teacher.

District No. 15—last day of school year.

Photo from Henry W. Smith

Date | Name | Months Taught
---|---|---
1873-74 | Anna Dillworth | 3
1874-75 | Anna Dillworth | 3
1875-76 | Dora Kaufman | 3
1876-77 | R. J. Mc Knight | 4
1877-78 | R. J. Mc Knight | 3
1878-79 | H. C. Palmer | 3
1879-80 | R. H. Saylor, treasurer. | 3
1880-81 | W. S. Stabler, treasurer. | 3
### Recollections of the West Blue Cornet Band

**Fillmore County, Nebraska**

by Edward David Perkins

Arlington, Virginia

June 1, 1957

Original organization sponsored by F. C. Bennett and Joshua M. Perkins

Date organized — 1883 or 1884

Date disbanded — Probably about 1907

Name — West Blue Cornet Band

First public appearance — Fourth of July celebration at Badger’s Grove in 1884—the day Mabel Perkins Baker was born

#### Original Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument Played</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lou Bullock</td>
<td>Tenor Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Bullock</td>
<td>Bass Tuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Chamberlain</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Chamberlain</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Perkins</td>
<td>E Flat Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Perkins</td>
<td>E Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mose Bennett</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Bennett</td>
<td>B Flat Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Farrar</td>
<td>Tenor Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baity (Doc) Farrar</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gus Lashansky</td>
<td>Alto Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Curtiss</td>
<td>Baritone Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Moore</td>
<td>Alto Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpheus Hall</td>
<td>Bass Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto Elliott</td>
<td>Snare Drum or Horn</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Henry Moore, leader** — (German watchmaker and jeweler)

#### Members Joining at Later Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument Played</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward D. Perkins</td>
<td>B Flat Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John A. Perkins</td>
<td>E Flat Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Perkins</td>
<td>Tuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnnie Brennan</td>
<td>Trombone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Walworth</td>
<td>Tenor Trombone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank B. Perkins</td>
<td>Baritone Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hall</td>
<td>Alto Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edson Hall</td>
<td>Snare Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Perkins</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester Perkins</td>
<td>Snare Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Finney</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmett Finney</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Little</td>
<td>Bass Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Little</td>
<td>Alto Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Farrar</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Gillin</td>
<td>Tenor Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto Gillin (leader)</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Gillin</td>
<td>Tenor Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Wallen (McCoid)</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wallen (McCoid)</td>
<td>Cornet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Reed</td>
<td>Alto and others. Also composed music. A fine musician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**West Blue Cornet Band—perhaps about 1888.**

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*Photo from William Swartz*

This is the building in which the first school was held in District No. 70. William Swartz attended school here in 1883 at the age of 7.

*Photo from Ora Robbins*
Band practiced — First, at the Bennett schoolhouse, District 15. Later, at the schoolhouse in District 4. Still later, built its own Band House on Father Joshua Perkins’ property right across from George Perkins’ house.

Uniforms — At first the Band just had caps. Later it was uniformed in blue coats and caps, braid trimmed. Still later the uniforms were red caps and coats, braid trimmed.

Band Wagon — The Band had a band wagon built like a circus band wagon, curved high to the back and with a low curve to the front. It was painted light blue and had the letters W B C B on the sides. The wagon was pulled by a matched team of spotted grey Normans called “Duke and Charlie” and owned by George Perkins, and a matched pair of Hamiltonians called “Doc and Deacon,” owned by John Little.

Banner — The ladies of the West Blue Church organization made a banner for the band which was carried in all the parades in which it marched. This banner, though somewhat frayed and worn, is in the possession of Edward Perkins and hangs on his bedroom wall. It is made of silk and is described as follows:

One side — Border (about 6 inch) of dark red, center of pale blue, about 17 inches square, 3 inch gold fringe on a scalloped bottom, beautifully hand embroidered with variegated flower clusters. In the center the letters W B C B and the date 1885.

Other side — Blue border, red center. Center embroidered with the words West Blue, Nebraska. Embroidered cornet in each bottom corner and a snare drum in center of bottom border. Some of the places and events at which the Band played:

Fairmont County Fair; All Decoration Day celebrations at Fairmont and Grafton; in Crete; at G.A.R. Encampments at Beatrice (week), Omaha (twice), Hastings (twice), at Fairmont and Grafton; in Crete; at G.A.R. Encampments at Beatrice (week), Omaha (twice), Hastings (twice), Grand Island, and Kearney.

When Frank Putlitz ran for clerk of the district court, the Band played at the meeting at which he announced his candidacy.

Played at the ceremonies at the founding of McCool.

Played at Republican Rally in York in 1896, when McKinley and Bryan ran. It rained so hard they could not go in the Band Wagon but had to go to McCool in lumber wagons and then to York by train. This was on a Friday. The Democrats had a rally on Saturday so they hired the Band to stay over and play for them too.

Played for a political rally at Fairmont when Teddy Roosevelt was there.

In 1892, the Band led the Fourth of July parade up around the park in Fairmont. Someone in the crowd threw a lighted firecracker which ignited Mrs. Treadwell’s dress; she later died as a result of the burns.

On a trip to play in Kearney the Band got off the train in Hastings to change trains. The crowd wanted music so all the bands played. The crowd liked the music of the W B C B and cried “Hurray for the Blues.”

The Vigilant Society

The constitution was as follows:

We, the undersigned, do hereby organize into a society to be hailed and known as the Vigilant Society of the Townships of Geneva, Madison, Fairmont, and West Blue of Fillmore County, Nebraska.

The object of this Society shall be to recover horses or mules and to detect and bring to punishment any person or persons who may have stolen a horse or mule or horses or mules from any member of this Society.

The officers of this Society shall consist of a President, a Vice-President, Secretary, a Treasurer, three Managers from each town, to be elected annually, and ten Riders to be appointed by the Managers.

The duties of the President shall be to preside at all meetings, and have a general oversight of the interests of the Society and see that the Riders perform their duties promptly when called upon.

The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the latter’s absence or inability to attend or act.

The Secretary shall keep accurate minutes of the transactions of the Society, and read the same at the annual meeting.

The Treasurer shall have custody of the funds of the Society and invest them under the directions of the Society. He shall pay out such funds only upon the written order of two or more of the Managers of either town, or under a resolution of the Society certified by the President and Secretary.

The Managers — It shall be the duty of each Manager, when complaint shall be made to him by any member of this Society, that such member has had a horse or mule stolen, to notify and call out a sufficient number of Riders forthwith to pursue the thief or thieves, and to recover such stolen horse or mule; to direct the Riders’ movement and in conjunction with any or none or all of his associates.

Managers, use such means and measures for the recovery of such horse or mule, and the arrest and conviction of the thief or thieves, as in their judgment will best accomplish these objectives. The Managers of each town, or a majority of them, shall audit the claims for services and expenses of the Riders called out by them or either of them, and draw an order upon the Treasurer for the sum so audited and allowed, and report the same at the next annual meeting.

It shall be the duty of each Rider to hold himself in readiness to go when called upon by the Manager of either of the four towns embraced in this Society, in pursuit of the horse or mule alleged to have been stolen, and the thief forthwith, and to use due diligence in the performance of his duties.

It shall also be the duty of the Managers of the Society to take some action that will best recover any stolen property or bring any criminal to justice who may commit any offense that would commit them to the Penitentiary.

Over the years many suspicious persons were investigated and much stolen property was recovered. On October 25, 1916, a special meeting was held in Geneva, called to order by the president, B. B. Ogg. The purpose of this meeting was to dissolve the organization and pay up all indebtedness, then pro-rata the balance to the eligible members. The sum of $275.68 was pro-rated to 47 members. F. F. Robbins held the office of secretary during the entire existence of the Society.
The first settlement in Fillmore County, Nebraska, was made in 1866 by Nimrod J. Dixon, a native of Pennsylvania. He was married to Lydia Gilmore, who had previously lived on a homestead adjoin his. Mr. and Mrs. Dixon continued to reside on their homestead until they moved to Fairmont, Nebraska, after living on the farm 40 years.

Mr. and Mrs. Dixon were married February 28, 1876, at the home of Mr. Dixon's father, Eliza Gilmore, near Blue Vale. Mr. Dixon got his license at Nebraska City. From that time until the summer of 1868 they were the only settlers in the home of Mrs. Dixon's father, Elias Gilmore, near Blue Vale, and helped them two or three miles from the nearest neighbor.

In relating her experiences, Mrs. Dixon said: "I was afraid to stay alone; so when Mr. Dixon had to go away, I went with him or my sisters stayed with me. At that time, we had to go to Milford for flour and 25 miles to get a plowknife. We had to go to Milford for flour and 25 miles to get a plowknife. At such times Mr. Dixon would stay at my father's home near Blue Vale and keep me company for three days with their breaking, in return for which one of the boys would come and help him.

"The Indians visited us frequently and I was afraid of them. Once a number of them came and two entered the dugout and asked for flour. We gave them as much as we could spare, but they could see the flour sitting on a bench behind the door and wanted more. We refused, but they became very insistant, so much so that Mr. Dixon grabbed a black-snake whip that hung on the wall and started toward them. This show of resistance was all that was necessary. It proved to the Indians that Mr. Dixon was not afraid of them, so they gave him powder and shot to regain his friendship.

"An Indian came in one day and gave me a lot of beads, then he wanted flour, which we gave him. He took it and held it out to me saying, 'Squaw cook it, squaw cook it!' This I refused to do, so he said, 'Give me the beads, give me the beads.'

"My baby, Arthur, born January 9, 1869, was the first white child born in Fillmore County. I recall one time that I was home alone with the baby. An Indian came in and handed me a paper that said he had lost a pony. I assured him that we had seen nothing of the pony. He saw a new butcher knife, that was lying on the table, picked it up, and finally drew out his old knife and held it toward me saying, 'Swap, swap!' I said, 'Yes,' so he went away with my good knife.

"The worst fright I ever did have was not from Indians. My sister Minnie was with me and we were out of salt. Mr. Dixon said he would go across the river to Whitaker's and borrow some. We thought that he wouldn't be gone long so we stayed at home. While he was away, a cloud came up and it began to rain. I never did see it rain harder. The river raised, and the water in the ravine in front of the dugout came nearly to the door. The roof leaked so we were nearly as wet indoors as we would have been out. The rain began about four o'clock in the afternoon. It grew dark and Mr. Dixon did not return. We thought that he would certainly be drowned in trying to cross the river. While we were in this state of suspense, the door burst open and a half-clad woman rushed in, saying, 'Don't let me scare you to death.' I was never so frightened in my life, and it was some time before I recognized her as my neighbor, Mrs. Fairbanks.

"Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks had gone to Whitaker's who were cooperation in the dugout and watched the chase, and after they killed one we went nearer and watched them skin it."

Mr. Dixon took his claim without seeing it. In October, 1866, he went to the land office and learned that he could then take a homestead of 160 acres, but the new law would soon go into effect providing that settlers could only homestead 80 acres. Mr. Dixon was afraid he could not go and see the claim and get back to Nebraska City and file on it.
in time to get 160 acres. In telling about it, Mr. Dixon said, "I thought it would, indeed, be a poor quarter-section that would not have 80 acres of farm land, so I took my chances."

"In the year 1868, the first year that we had any crops planted, it almost forgot to rain at all. The barley was so short that it fell through the cradle. There were no bridges so we had to ford the river. It was hard to haul much of a load across because the wagon would cut into the mud on the two banks while the sandy river bottom would stand a pretty good load. That difficulty I overcame by making bundles or sheaves of willow poles and placing them at the two banks and covering them with sand. Later the settlers made a bridge across the river near the homestead of H. L. Badger. This has ever since been known as the 'Badger Bridge.' The first bridge was made of logs which we procured along the river."

"I was making a hayrack of willow poles at the time of the total eclipse of the sun. It began to grow dark, the chickens went to roost, and it seemed that night was coming on."

"The year 1869 was rainy and we raised good crops and fine potatoes that season. That was the year they were driving Texas cattle up to eat the northern grass and then ship them east over the Union Pacific Railroad. The cattle stampeded, so they lost many of them and we saw them around for a year or more."

"My first buffalo hunt was in 1867. The country seemed to be covered with great herds and the Indians were hunting them. Twenty of us started out with five wagons. There were Jake and Boss Gilmore, Jim Johnson, and myself in one wagon. We had only about three days' supplies with us, expecting to get buffalo before these were exhausted, but the Indians were ahead of us and kept the buffalo out of our range. Our party crossed the Little Blue at Deweese. Beyond there we found carcasses of buffalo and a fire where the Indians had burned out a ranch. Realizing that it was necessary for us to take precautions, we chose Colonel Bifkin our leader and decided to strike another trail and thus avoid the Indians if possible. We traveled toward the Republican River but found no track of either buffalo or Indians, so we turned around and followed the Indians. By that time our food supply was exhausted, but by good luck we shot two wild turkeys."

"We were soon following the Indians so closely that we ate dinner where they ate breakfast, and by night we were almost in sight of them. We thought it best to put out a guard at night. My station was under a cottonwood tree near a foot-log that crossed a branch of the Little Blue. I was to be relieved at 11 o'clock. I heard something coming on the foot-log. I listened and watched but it was so dark that I could see nothing, but could hear it coming closer; so I shot and heard something drop. Colonel Bifkin, who was near, coming to relieve me, asked what I was shooting at. 'I don't know, perhaps an Indian; it dropped,' I replied. We looked and found merely something hanging on a tree."

"The Indians kept the main herd ahead of them so we were only able to see a few buffalo that had strayed away. We went farther west and got two or three and then went into camp on the Little Blue. We always left a guard at camp and all of the fun came when Boss Gilmore and I were on guard so we missed it. The others rounded up and killed about 20 buffalo. One fell over the bluff into the river and it fell to our lot to get it out and skin it, but by the time we got it out the meat was so spoiled that we threw it away. We were so full of alkali that we could not drink it, and neither could the horses, so we started back, struck the freight road and followed it until we came to Deep Well Ranch on the Platte bottom. We had driven without stopping from ten o'clock in the forenoon till two o'clock in the morning. We lay down and slept then, but I was awakened early by chickens crowing. I roused the others of our party and we went in search of something to eat. It had been eight days since we had had any bread and I was never so bread-hungry as then. We came to the Martin home about three miles west of Grand Island and although we could not buy bread, the girls baked biscuits for us and I ate 11 biscuits."

"That morning I saw the first construction train that came into Grand Island over the Union Pacific Railroad. If I remember correctly it was in November, 1867."

"We took home with us five wagonloads of buffalo meat. I did not keep any of the hides because I could not get them tanned. Mr. Gilmore got Indian women to tan a hide for him by giving them sugar and flour. They would keep asking for it and finally got all that was coming to them before the hide was done, so they quit tanning, and Mr. Gilmore had to keep baiting them by giving them some more sugar and flour in order to get it done."

"Mr. and Mrs. Dixon had eight children. Loyd Dixon, the youngest son, and his wife, still own the original homestead, but reside in Fairmont, Nebraska."

In the fall of 1870, with Mrs. McCashland and two children, Addie and Sammy, I left Livingston County, Illinois, and drove to Fillmore County, Nebraska. We started with two wagons and teams. I had three good horses and one old plug. I drove one team and had a man drive the other until I became indignant because he abused the horses and let him go. Mrs. McCashland drove the second team the rest of the way.

A family of neighbors, Thomas Roe's, were going west at the same time, so we were together throughout the journey until we got lost in the western part of Iowa. The road forked and we were so far behind we did not see which way Roe turned and so went the other way. It rained that night and a dog ate our supplies so we were forced to procure food from a settler. We found the Roe family the next evening just before we crossed the Missouri River, October 15, 1870.

East of Lincoln we met a prairie schooner and team of oxen. An old lady came ahead and said to us, "Go back, good friends, go back!" When questioned about how long she had lived here, she said, "I've wintered here and I've summered here, and God knows I've been here long enough."

When Mrs. McCashland saw the first dugout that she had ever seen, she cried. It did not seem that she could bear to live in a place like that. It looked like merely a hole in the ground.

We finally reached the settlement in Fillmore County and lived in a dugout with two other families until I could build a dugout that we could live in through the winter. That done, I picked out my claim and went to Lincoln to file on it and bought lumber for a door and for window frames.

I looked the claim over, chose the site for buildings, and when home drew the plans of where I wanted the house, stable, well, etc., on the dirt hearth for Mrs. McCashland to see. She felt so bad because she had to live in such a place that I gave it up and went to the West Blue River, which was near, felled trees, and with the help of other settlers hewed them into logs and erected a log house on the homestead.
While living in the dugout, Indian women visited Mrs. McCashland and wanted to trade her a papoose for her quilts. When she refused, they wanted her to give them the quilts. I had just $42 when we reached Fillmore County, and to look back now one would hardly think it possible to live as long as we did on $42. There were times that we had nothing but meal to eat and many days we sent the children to school with only bread for lunch.

I was a Civil War Veteran, which fact entitled me to a homestead of 160 acres. I still own that homestead, which is farmed by my son. After visiting in the East a few years ago, I decided that I would not trade my quarter-section in Fillmore County for several times that much eastern land.

The Badger Family

Lewis H. Badger drove with his parents, Henry L. and Mary A. Badger, from their home in Livingston County, Illinois, to Fillmore County, Nebraska. They had a covered emigrant wagon and a buggy tied behind. Lewis was 12 years old October 5, 1888, the day they crossed the Missouri River at Nebraska City, the nearest railroad station to their future home.

The family stayed with friends near Saltillo while H. L. Badger came on with the horse and buggy and picked out his claim on the north side of Fillmore County, it being the NW 1/4 of Sec. 2, T8, R3W of the 6th principal meridian.

At that time the claims were taken near the river in order that water might be obtained more easily, and also to be near the railroad which had been surveyed and staked out in the southern edge of York County near the West Blue River.

The Badger family came on to Lincoln, then a mere village, and stopped there. They bought a log chain, and lumber for a door; the window frames were hewed from logs. When they reached the claim, they did not know where to ford the river so they went on farther west to Whitaker's and stayed all night. There they forded the river and came on to the claim the next morning, October 20, 1888. There they camped while Mr. Badger made a dugout in the banks of the West Blue River, where the family lived for more than two years. The hollow in the ground made by this dugout can still be seen.

In 1870, H. L. Badger kept the post office in the dugout. He received his commission from Postmaster General Creswell. The post office was known as West Blue. About the same time, E. L. Martin was appointed postmaster at Fillmore. Those were the first post offices in Fillmore County. Before that time the settlers got their mail at McFadden in York County. Mr. Badger kept the post office for some time after moving into the log house and after the establishment of the post office at Fairmont.

In 1877 the Indians were all on reservations but by permission of the agents were allowed to go on hunting trips. If they made trouble for the settlers they were taken back to the reservations. While the Badgers were living in the dugout a party of about 1,000 Omaha Indians came up the river on a hunting trip. Some of their ponies got away and ate some corn belonging to a man named Dean, who lived farther down the river. The man loved trouble and decided to report them to the agent. The Indians were afraid of being sent back to the reservations, so the chief, Prairie Chicken, his brother, Sammy White, and 17 of the other Indians came into the dugout and asked Mr. Badger to write a letter to the agent for them stating their side of the case. This he did and read it to Sammy White, the interpreter, who translated it for the other 18. It proved satisfactory to both Indians and agent.

In August, 1869, while Mr. Badger was away helping a family named Whitaker, who lived up the river, to do some breaking, the son, Lewis, walked to where his father was at work, leaving Mrs. Badger at home alone with her four-year-old daughter. About four o'clock it began to rain very hard and continued all night. The river raised until the water came within 18 inches of the dugout door. The roof leaked so that it was almost as wet inside as out. Mr. Badger and Lewis stayed at the Whitaker dugout. They fixed the canvas that had been the cover of the wagon over the bed to keep Grandmother Whitaker dry and the others sat by the stove and tried to keep warm, but could not. The next morning the men paddled down the river to the Badger dugout in a wagon box. The wagon box was a product of their own making and was all wood, so it served the purpose of a boat.

It should be explained that the reason the roofs of the dugouts and log houses leaked was because of the material used in their construction. Shingles were out of the question as the settlers had traveled 100 miles from the railroad. There were plenty of trees near the river, so the settlers hewed out logs for ridge poles, then placed willow poles and brush across for a support. On top of that they put dirt and sod. When it rained the water naturally soaked through. The roof would leak for several days after a big rain.

The next dwelling place of the Badger family was a log house built on the south half of the quarter-section. For some time, they lived in the log house and kept their stock in the dugout stable on the river bank. Thus they were living during the great April storm of 1873, which lasted for three days. All the draws and ravines, even the river, were packed full of snow that was solid enough to hold a man up. There was very little snow on the level, it all being in drifts in the low places. The Badgers had a corn field between the log house and the river. While the storm raged, Lewis wrapped himself in a blanket, and by following the rows of corn made his way to the dugout stable and fed the horses once each day. It was impossible to give them water.

Henry L. Badger was commissioned by Governor Butler the first notary public in Fillmore County. Later he was appointed, by Acting Governor James, registrar of voters for the election to be held April 21, 1871, to elect officers for the new county. At that election he was elected both county clerk and county surveyor.

In the late sixties when the county was first settled, the country abounded in buffalo, deer, antelope, elk, prairie chickens, wild geese, ducks, and turkeys. The muddy stream known as the West Blue River was clear and the fish found in it were not of the same variety as those caught now. Wild plums grew in abundance along the river bank and were much larger and of finer quality than the wild plums of to-day. In those days glass jars for canning were not as plentiful as now, so they picked the plums late in the fall, put them in a barrel and poured water over them and kept them for winter use.

Lewis Badger tells of going on buffalo hunts with his father and seeing herds of thousands of the big animals, and driving for ten hours through the herd.

In early days the settlers did lots of trapping. The Indians were frequent visitors and one time an Indian went with Mr. Badger and his son to look at their traps. In one trap they found a mink. Mr. Badger remarked that they got a mink in that same trap the day before. The Indian said, "Him lucky trap." The Indian would not steal, but he wanted the lucky trap, so the next day that trap was gone and another in its place. The Indian seemed to get the best of the bargain, for it is a fact that they never caught a thing in the trap he left.

Although most painfully familiar to every early settler,
no pioneer story is complete without the grasshoppers. They came in herds and droves and ate every green thing. For days great clouds of them passed over. The next year they hatched out in great numbers and flew away without hurting anything. Mr. Badger had a nice young orchard that he had planted and tended. The grasshoppers ate the leaves off the trees and as it was early in August they leafed out again and were frozen so they died. Snakes feasted on the grasshoppers.

After seeing a garter snake at that time just as full of grasshoppers as it could possibly be, Lewis Badger never killed a snake or permitted one to be killed on his farm. Many people asked for and received the so-called "aid for grasshopper sufferers." In this section of the county it seemed absolutely unnecessary, as there had been harvested a good crop of wheat, previous to the coming of the hoppers.

In 1871, the railroad was built through the county. That season Lewis Badger sold watermelons, that he had raised, to the construction gang at work on the road. The town of Fairmont was started the same year. In those days the settlers would walk to town. It was nothing unusual for Mr. and Mrs. Badger and Lewis to walk to Fairmont, a distance of six miles.

When the Badger family settled on their claim, they planted a row of cottonwood trees around it. These trees made a wonderful growth. In 1911 part of them were sawed into lumber. There were two especially large cottonwood trees on the farm. One measured 26 feet in circumference at the base and 19 feet around five feet above the ground and ran up 40 feet before it began to branch out. The other was 33 feet around the base but branched into three trees four feet above the ground.

Mrs. H. L. Badger died January 11, 1894, and Mr. Badger July 21, 1905. Mrs. Mary Badger Halsey and son still live on the original homestead.

Fillmore County in the Seventies

by William Spade (written in 1915)

We came to Nebraska in October of 1870 by wagon and wintered a mile east of what is now the Red Lion Mill. We made several trips to Lincoln during the fall and winter and one to Nebraska City, where brother Dan and I shucked corn for a farmer for a dollar a day with team.

I moved on the William Bussard claim, later the Elof Lindgren farm, in March 1871, and raised a crop, then moved on our homestead in Sec. 24, T8, R3W. We built part dugout and part sodup for a house and slept in it the first night with only the blue sky for a roof. This was in October, and we lived in this dugout until 1874, then built a sod house.

In April, 1873, we had a three days' snow storm called a blizzard. In the spring of 1871, I attended the election for the organization of the County of Fillmore.

I followed farming as an occupation and in the fall of 1872 William Howell and I bought a threshing machine, which we ran for four seasons. Some of the accounts were never paid.

Our lodging place generally was the straw stack or under the machine and our teams were tied to a wagon, but the meals we got were good. Aside from farming and threshing, I did a bit in some carpentry, walking sometimes six miles back and forth, night and morning.

In July or August, 1874, we had a visit from the grasshoppers, the like of which had never been seen before nor since. They came in black clouds and dropped down by the bushel and ate every green thing on earth and some things in the earth. We had visits from the Indians, too, but they mostly wanted "hogy" meat or something to fill their empty stomachs. Well, I said we built a sodup of two rooms with a board floor and three windows and two doors, plastered with Nebraska mud. We thought it a palace, for some time, and were comfortable.

In June, 1877, I took a foolish notion to make a fortune and in company with 10 others, supplied with six months' provisions, started for the Black Hills. We drove ox teams and were nearly all summer on the road; at least we did not reach the mining places till August. In the meantime the water had played out in the placer mining district so there was "nothing doing." We prospected for quartz but that did not pan out satisfactorily, so we traded our grub that we did not need for gold dust and returned to our homes in better shape than when we left. However, we had all the fresh vension we could use both coming and going, besides seeing a good many Indians and lots of wild country that now is mostly settled up.

Pioneering in Fillmore County

The following account was written by Ella Louise Bennett Waring (Mrs. John K. Waring) of Geneva in 1911.

The first real settlement in our county was in 1864, when William Bussard and William Whitaker entered homestead claims on the Blue River in the northern part of the county. At about this time a few families located on Turkey Creek. These, however, were not destined to remain alone for long, for in the early '70's there was a "grand rush." C. H. Bane and J. W. Eller, attorneys, G. A. Hart and C. H. King, physicians, and E. R. Spear, the first minister, arrived about this time.

J. E. Porter, merchant, Nimrod Dixon, a farmer, and E. L. Martin founded a town called Fillmore City on the present site of Fillmore Mills. Its history begins in 1870. In the fall of 1871, when the B. & M. Railroad was completed through the county 41/2 miles S of the Fillmore Mills, the merchant J. E. Porter moved away and there was soon nothing left of the town.

In 1871, steps were taken to secure a county organization, for we were attached to Saline County and existed only in name. Acting Governor William H. James issued a proclamation ordering left of the town.

The different parts of our county were settled by different nationalities with their different ideals and characteristics. Liberty precinct was a Bohemian settlement, Momence a German, and in the southern part of the county were nearly all summer on the road; at least we did not reach the mining places till August. In the meantime the water had played out in the placer mining district so there was "nothing doing." We prospected for quartz but that did not pan out satisfactorily, so we traded our grub that we did not need for gold dust and returned to our homes in better shape than when we left. However, we had all the fresh vension we could use both coming and going, besides seeing a good many Indians and lots of wild country that now is mostly settled up.

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own conclusions as to their ideals and their part in making our county what it is today.

My father, hearing in 1873 of the rich soil and fine climatic conditions, determined to investigate the opportunities in the Far West. When the War of the Rebellion closed, thousands of men returned to their homes and civil life. Many found their places filled, their businesses either deserted or so much injured that they were unable to go on with their former occupations, others did not care to do so. Naturally they hurried toward the then "Great American Desert."

The government had passed the Homestead Act, giving special privileges and inducements to the returning soldiers and had granted large tracts of land to the Union Pacific, and later to other railroads, for building railways. Every other section of land in our county for a distance of 10 miles on either side of the proposed railroad was set aside for this purpose, except for Secs. 16 and 36, which were reserved to provide funds for school purposes. In the early '70's many ambitious young men from the Eastern states got together a few household articles, loaded the prairie schooner, and, with their wives, started out to make a home on this government land. You are familiar with the slogan "Nebraska or bust" painted on the white canvas—and, in common parlance, a great many of them were indeed elated when they reached their destination.

When we came from our eastern home among the Berkshire Hills, this country was a limitless expanse of blue sky and green earth, and here and there a darker green where they told us trees were planted and somewhere in those shadows someone had built a hut or dug a place in the ground and put huge timbers over it. The logs were drawn from the Blue River and then piled with brush, and dirt was shoveled over this, and it sheltered them. The only home these people had, their children were born in; they lived here for a few years, for most of the early settlers were very poor, often burning buffalo chips for fuel and cooking the insipid wild beans for food. They were so poor, in fact, that in 1874, the grasshopper year, a society of destitute citizens was formed in the East and many were thus tided over until a crop could be planted and harvested. Long trains of white-capped wagons drawn by thin, weak horses contained discouraged settlers and their families going East (if only to Iowa or Illinois) to spend the winter.

In the spring of 1875, long trains of prairie schooners traveled westward, and this year a bountiful harvest rewarded their labors; but rains, hard and continual, set in as the grain was being harvested. Much of it was completely spoiled or ruined; some were unsettled by their terrible experiences, others did not care to do so. Naturally they hurried toward the great man in the car. In a few years Mr. Shaw moved away. Where he went or what became of his family we never knew, but the land he homesteaded, although now owned by strangers, is still known as the Shaw land.

There were the Halls, Ohio people, who had located on a homestead four years before we came. Their two-room sod house was neat and comfortable. Their land was surrounded by hedges of cottonwood, honey locust, and box elder. The many-paned windows were filled with bright, blooming flowers, in both winter and summer. Their home was surrounded by trees and shrubs. We used to buy milk, butter, and eggs there, and Mrs. Hall was neat, capable, and thrifty.

The Crumscck family lived a half-mile farther on. They lived in a half-frame and half-dugout house. Not a tree or flower brightened the life of the little woman who worked like a man by her husband's side. Great barns soon loomed up on their farm, and they raised cattle and hogs, but not a tree or shrub did they ever plant. They lived unto themselves, never attended church or Sunday School, and, like Mr. Shaw, moved away.

[Apparently Mrs. Waring attempted to write a full narrative history of her family's settlement in West Blue. There is, at this distance, no way of knowing whether the following is part of a longer manuscript, part now missing, or undoubt-
edly reflects the experiences of many.]

In 1875, H. L. Badger and other settlers along the Blue sold father a section of land in West Blue precinct. Returning to Massachusetts, he chartered a car and loaded furniture, lumber, and such other things as he thought could be used in the new home, as there was not a tree or shrub on the whole 640 acres. But glowing indeed was the description of the prospects in store for us in this country with its wonderful climate and black rich soil, so different from the worn-out farms in New England. I think now he must have read Washington Irving's "Prairies" or "Astoria" or he
would not have been so enthusiastic. Certainly Mother did not share his optimism, but there was a schoolhouse only a few rods from where he planned his new home. The children would have educational advantages—and mother was determined that her children should have an education!

We came in the early spring. Our only real rest from travel after we boarded the train at Canaan, Connecticut, was an hour's walk in Chicago, where we changed cars, and another two hours at Council Bluffs before ferrying across the Missouri. Council Bluffs consisted of only a few houses. Mother and the children climbed up a hill, where a woman gave us all a drink of terrible-tasting water that she pulled up from a funny-looking well. After mother's talk with her she was greatly depressed. I often thought what must have been her feelings from Lincoln on.

The country became wilder, flatter and flatter, and when we reached our destination, there was nothing to be seen but green earth and blue sky. We had at last reached Fairmont, our goal.

In the spring of 1875 a passenger train came whistling and blowing into the little town of Fairmont. The train consisted of a town car, one baggage car, and two day coaches. As the. train stopped, a middle-aged man stepped from the train to the railroad platform. He was holding the hand of a little girl of ten. He was closely followed by a tall boy of perhaps 20, who was leading a smaller boy of 12 by the hand. He was followed by a boy of about 18, who clasped tightly the hand of a little boy of 2. Then followed three other groups of two each: a slim girl of 16 with a girl of 8, then one of 14 with a little girl of 6, and last of all, the end of this little procession, a tired worn woman of perhaps 35 with a sleeping baby of 4 months in her arms. All looked tired and dusty, and no wonder, for they had ridden three days and three nights in a day coach and now at last were near the place they were to call home. At least they were in the town only three miles from the farm lately purchased, which the parents of this group of children hoped to have for a home.

The train, with much clatter and rattle, passed out of sight and the group stood on the little wooden platform in front of a very small and very red building with the sign “Fairmont R.R.” in large white letters conspicuously located on a red board.

As the train became smaller and smaller until it was finally lost in the horizon, a young man of 22 stepped briskly up and, grasping the hand of the father of our little group, said in a hearty, loud voice, “Welcome, Captain Bennett!” Another man by this time was hurrying toward the platform and he too, evidently, was interested in our family, for, taking the toil-worn hand of Captain Bennett, he welcomed him in the same hearty western style. Then with twinkling eyes he remarked, “We got room enough here for all of you,” and waved his hand over what seemed an endless seat of green in every direction. Then he said, “You must be tired; come over to the hotel and we will divide up.” So the little procession went along in the same position as before—the father with his little girl whose hand he once more took in his, with the others following demurely in his wake and the mother bringing up the rear across the green plot of ground leading from the depot to the hotel.

“Captain Bennett, we will take three of the girls to our home,” said one of the men. A middle-aged, sick-looking man stepped forward and said, “The rest of them can come home with me.” So it was decided that we were thus to be disposed of. Father and three of the older boys went to the two-story building, the Burlington Hotel.

Will Chapin took hold of my hand, and Vie, who was 8, two years younger, and Fannie, 15, followed. On the path that led to the town proper, I noticed one large white house. I comforted myself by thinking, “There is where we are going.” This man that held my hand was friendly and pleasant, but we passed the house and went toward a building even smaller than the others. The door was open, and a happy-looking young woman with black hair and bright eyes smiled broadly. She kissed each of us on the cheek and said, “Come right in, supper is ready.” Then Will pulled up two boxes and Vie and I were invited to sit on one, side by side, at the little table that was set for five. Suala, that was her name, took one of the two chairs and gave Fannie the other, while Will sat on the remaining box. We were helped to potatoes, meat, gravy, and other foods just as we had had at home. These two were so lively and jolly, Fannie fell in with their chatter and my homesickness soon disappeared with the meal.

Afterwards, as Fanny helped with the dishes, Vie and I sat and looked around—such a tiny room with a big flat bed in one corner, that took over a fourth of the place, a cookstove in the other corner, and boxes for cupboards. There were two windows and the only door, the one we came in at. The table now was cleared, the dishes put away, and while I sat wondering where we all would sleep, Suala bade Fannie to get us ready for bed, while she turned down the nice white covers and I knew no more until I heard talking and laughter.

The sun was pouring in the window. Suala said Will had gone out to where Father was building a new house. He was a carpenter and rode out on a load of lumber. After breakfast Vie and I went out of doors. The houses seemed as small and poor as they did the day before, but the air was sweet and pure, and there were wild flowers in bloom near the house, small bright-colored ones without fragrance. We picked a bouquet and Suala put them in a cup in the windowledge. There was a rumbling sound and soon we saw a long streak of smoke in the distance. A freight train came puffing in and we all watched it as it maneuvered around, leaving cars and picking them up again. Suala said the train men were switching the cars on side-tracks, that were meant to be left. At last it sent great clouds of black smoke from the engine and with clatter and much loud shrieking, moved away. It was every day the same when the freight train came in.

In the afternoon we walked out to Mr. Taylor's, where Mother and the other children were taken upon arrival. This was about a mile away. The dwelling, which was very low and flat-looking, was made of boards, end to end. Inside, it was about a mile away. The dwelling, which was very low and flat-looking, was made of boards, end to end. Inside, it was quite comfortable, having three small rooms, most of which were filled by beds. Mr. Taylor took us back to town. Suala and Fannie sitting with him in the rattling lumber wagon. Vie and I sat in the box behind and bobbed around like marbles when the horses trotted over the rough, winding road.

Will came in for supper and said the frame of the new house was well started—Father was a skilled carpenter—and when our car came with the furniture we were able to move...
in. What a day that was! How impatiently we waited for the load of lumber to be there, so we could ride. Finally we started out over the prairie on foot, walking, walking toward the northwest. We could see the new house in the distance, but never seemed to come closer to it. Finally Fannie said, “When we get to that stump, we will sit down and rest.” The stump proved to be a bag half full of grain; a man was sowing in a field near by. There were no buildings until we reached our house. Mother was already there and had supper ready. After supper we sat around on piles of lumber and boxes and talked and planned and watched the beautiful sunset. The car had partly unloaded. The beds were up, the floor was only partly laid, but the house was enclosed and home.

Then the house was all there was. All raw prairie, green and bright with flowers, but not a tree, bush, or stone on the 640 acres of land! Truly it took a brave heart not to have many misgivings. But now Mother knew what she had and what she must do. She never complained in the months that followed. If she had any misgivings, we did not know it. She came to stay, and we did.

At first we bought milk from a neighbor, going with a three-quart pail for it, morning and evening. One day father came from the west, leading a cow. It was the handsomest cow a family ever had. We called her Corey. Father had bought her from a man by that name. Twin calves were born a few days later. They were named Bright and Dime. Father built a little barn for these and one day added two bay horses to our livestock, fine young horses, Snap and Dan, who served us many years.

It was time to plow or break the prairie. Snap and Dan made very little impression on that vast domain of green. Two yoke of white oxen were purchased. Strong and patiently they toiled that spring until long black fields appeared where only a few weeks ago was green prairie. It looked to me like a black patch on a large green garment. This was planted to sod corn and was again green and beautiful.

Father and the boys worked long hours on the house and in the field, and when winter came, considerable corn was harvested and hay cut and stacked for our livestock. Fences and yards were built and another good-sized barn, so the winter found us comfortable, but very, very homesick for the beautiful trees, the fine buildings, and the cultured life we had left behind. Mother made friends with the neighbor women. They gave her flower-seeds and she bought bunches of cottonwood sticks to put into the ground, when spring opened. We were sent to school in the little schoolhouse close by. Mother organized a Sunday School there, which met in long, lonesome Sunday afternoons. My sister May, a little girl of perhaps six, often led the singing, she being able to get the right pitch. “Hold the Fort,” “Pull for the Shore,” and “Little Band” were favorites and always sung, when Ezra Witter, a young man with a growing family, was not there to start the tunes with his tuning-fork. Mrs. Hall had a sweet, although shrill, voice. Her son Alfred inherited her love of music. He was a lad around 13, who took upon himself the duty of opening and closing the schoolhouse in summer and tending the fires in the great stove in winter and trimming and cleaning the kerosene lamps.

This schoolhouse was a community center for that region for many years. Long benches were made, that sat along the sides and back of the room under the blackboards. There were knots in these boards, and figures and characters made were greatly disfigured on their account.

One winter a young schoolman was engaged to teach the school. He wore a shock-cap with tails that were always fluttering in the wind, and acted and talked so differently from the rest of us.

[Mrs. Waring’s manuscript ends abruptly here.

—Editor.]
George A. Williams was born in Lafayette, Illinois, August 17, 1864. He married Mable Grubb October 22, 1888. In 1890 he purchased 240 acres of land in West Blue township, which became their family home. Mr. Williams served in the lower house of the State Legislature from 1919-23 and was co-author of the bill directing and construction of the new state capitol.

In 1924 he was elected Lieutenant Governor. He served two terms in this capacity under Governor Adam McMullen and Governor Arthur J. Weaver.

After retiring from active politics he was an active layman in church affairs.

Mr. Williams passed away July 7, 1946.
APPENDIX A
State legislators from Fillmore County (1866-1967)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Nils</td>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td>1882, 1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babcock, N. C.</td>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballard, John R.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1887-1889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford, Mervin V.</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>1855-1957</td>
<td>(Unicameral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkley, William H.</td>
<td>Ohiowa</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaine, Charles A.</td>
<td>Ohiowa</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, Clarence A.</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase, James S.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connell, W. H.</td>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooley, John F.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cromer, J. E.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, John P.</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dempster, John A.</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>1887, 1889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobson, Robert</td>
<td>Grafton</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dye, William</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggenberger, Peter, J.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1903, 1911</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foulois, James S.</td>
<td>Ohiowa</td>
<td>1913, 1917</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler, Charles A.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodrich, L.</td>
<td>Ohiowa</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill, Earl L.</td>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Walter</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins, John D.</td>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, John</td>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td>1925, 1927</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landgren, George</td>
<td>Ohiowa</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langhorst, Henry</td>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logsdon, G.</td>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B
Roster of Company G, First Nebraska Infantry, U. S. Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>年末, Leonard H.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Charles C.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittel, Loyd E.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Edward F.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, John</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodworth, Charles R.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, Robert O.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Williams served as Lt. Governor 1925-1931.

APPENDIX C

Some further notes on Manleyville, Geneva Township
Adoniram J. Manley bought a half-section of railroad land, the S 1/2 of Sec. 27, T7N, R3W, in November, 1872. Manleyville was platted in February, 1875.
Mr. Manley desired to establish a village, and to encourage the erection of homes and business houses, he promised to give settlers their interest and titles to said lots if they should erect a substantial dwelling or place of business within one year in the planned village. If they should fail to erect such structures within said period, their interest and titles to said lots were to lapse and become null and void. There were no other considerations for granting such deeds.

None of the deed holders ever erected a building there, and so Manley never parted with possession of the various tracts.

Thereafter Manley had his half-section of land, including the several lots and tracts, fenced, and he held possession of the land until his death. It was willed by him to his wife Doriska. He had a daughter Jessie (Cushman). A. J. Manley died on August 6, 1889, at either Dunkirk or Pomfret (both villages in Chautauqua County), New York. Doriska sold the farm to Mordecai Pangle on November 20, 1899.

Some who took deeds in Manleyville (all dated February 15, 1875) were the following: John G. Bigelow, Wilson Price, R. F. Livermore, L. F. Jeffs, Berry and Bedu, Henry J. Manley, Mead (or Meurl) Drake, D. Hanson Watt, Emerson Howe, G. E. Noble, John Hattis (Hart), Adahide H. Forbush (or Forbush, and Calvin Bane). Mr. Bane in turn deeded his lots to Milton Selby, T. L. Williams, John Chaise, and C. D. Camp.
APPENDIX D

Population of towns in Fillmore County from the first census after the founding of each town (figures from the U. S. Bureau of the Census):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Population 1880</th>
<th>Population 1890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>1,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairmont</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milligan</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strang</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shickley</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milligan</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strang</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milligan</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strang</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Official figures for 1877 gave the populations of the townships as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Population 1877</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belle Prairie</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryant</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glengary</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momente</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanton</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Blue</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX E

Some school districts not included in the text:

- District No. 22 was founded on February 17, 1872, by County Superintendent G. W. Gue, on petition of the legal voters, to include Secs. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36 in T8, R1W. At the election of officers, Fred Sturdevant was elected director. The first teacher listed in the annual report from April 1872 to April 1873 was Frank Hager. The second teacher listed was Clara A. Root.

- On February 1, 1879, Secs. 13 and 14 were transferred into this district. On April 4, 1885, the SE 1/4 of Sec. 25, all in T8, R1W, Fillmore County; these were annexed to District 68, Saline County.

- District No. 23 was organized by Superintendent Gue on February 17, 1872, to include Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, all in T8, R1W. On February 1, 1879, Secs. 13 and 14 were transferred into District 22.

- The first teacher listed was Mary Dunafon, in 1873-1874. The first director was J. G. Hainer.

- This district was dissolved and added to District 29 on January 15, 1953.

- District No. 24, organized by Superintendent Gue on February 9, 1872, consisted of Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 17, in T8, R1W. On April 4, 1885, the SE 1/4 of Sec. 16 was set into District 29, as was the SE 1/4 of Sec. 18 on January 3, 1889.

- The first teacher listed, in 1872-1873, was Elsie Meade. The first director was C. J. Orcutt.

- The entire district was dissolved and annexed to District 20 on January 15, 1953.

- District No. 26 was organized March 4, 1872. It was composed of sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and the N 1/4 of 16, 17, and 18, in T8, R2W, Fillmore County. It was dissolved and annexed to District 19, January 27, 1953. The first teacher was Jenny Bothwell and Henry Kahle in 1875-76.

- District No. 27 was organized March 12, 1872. It was composed of sections 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, in T8, R2W. It was dissolved and annexed to Districts 19 and 20, January 27, 1953. The first teacher was Daniel Keller, 1872-73.

- District No. 28 was organized March 12, 1872. It was composed of sections 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36 in T8, R2W. It was dissolved and annexed to District 19 on January 27, 1953. The first teacher was Ann M. Clark, April 1872-73.

- District No. 29 was organized November 13, 1876, and composed of sections 1, 2, 3, the N 1/4 of sections 11 and 12, the NW 1/4, N 1/4 and NE 1/4 of section 10, T8, R2W. It was dissolved and annexed to Districts 19 and 20, January 15, 1953.

- District No. 36 was organized May 16, 1873, to include Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, in T8, R1W. On January 27, 1953, it was dissolved and annexed to District 20, January 15, 1953.

- District No. 37 was organized May 16, 1873, to include Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, in T8, R1W. On January 27, 1953, it was dissolved and annexed to District 20, January 15, 1953.
# Fillmore County Officers

The following is a roster listing (along with the year in which they were elected) County Commissioners, Supervisors, and other county officers that have served the county since its beginning in 1871.

## Commissioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commissioner(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871 (April 21)</td>
<td>W. J. Hildreth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>E. L. Martin, C. H. Bassett, Jesse Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>J. B. Sherston, T. E. Barnett (3rd), W. T. Barnett (2nd), H. G. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Cyrus Macy—first district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>J. H. Springer—third district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>W. C. Henry—first district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>E. D. Place—second district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Elijah Shepard—third district</td>
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<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>W. J. Hildreth—first district</td>
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## Supervisors

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>W. M. Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>J. H. Rushton</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>J. M. Perkins, Peter Hony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>J. Donnelly, R. A. Matteson, H. Porter</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>J. J. Loyeva, W. A. Simms</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>M. F. Garrison</td>
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## County Commissioners

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>J. D. Mitchell, Charles Bassett, John B. Shumway</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>W. J. Hildreth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>W. J. Hildreth</td>
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## Notes

- This roster was compiled from Election Books and County Commissioners Records.
### County Commissioners, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commissioner Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>John A. Anderson (2), A. A. Russell (4), J. P. Moor (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>W. H. Sisler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Leo Murphy (1), Joe Walter (3), Frank Naimon (5), H. B. Thomas (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>John A. Anderson (2), A. A. Russell (4), Ernest Silvey (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>John A. Anderson (2), W. A. Churchill (4), Ernest Silvey (6), E. S. Thomas (7—fill vacancy)</td>
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### County Clerk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Clerk Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>(April) Henry L. Badger</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>(Oct.) J. E. Spear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Dr. Jensen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>George P. Wintersteen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>E. H. Cobb</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>W. C. Massey</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>R. A. Patterson</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Sid Donisthorpe</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Alvin N. Strickland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>E. J. Barbier</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>W. C. Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Uriah F. Stannard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Willard E. Goodrich (2), Guy Brown, Sr. (4), Norman Wright (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Willard E. Goodrich (2), Ed Myers (4), Norman Wright (6)</td>
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<td>James Biba (1), William Bohlen (3), Ed Krejci (5), Ed Johnson (7)</td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>Ralph O'Connor (2), John Kroll (4), Norman Wright (6)</td>
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<td>James Biba (1), William Bohlen (3), Ed Krejci (5), Ed Johnson (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Ralph O'Connor (2), John Kroll (4), Anton Ulrich (6)</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>Leo Murphy (1), William Bohlen (3), John Fahlberg (5), Edwin A. Johnson (7)</td>
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### County Sheriff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sheriff Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>(April) J. E. Snow</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>(Oct.) J. E. Snow</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>James Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>R. H. Wirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>R. M. Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>G. W. Whipple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Dr. T. C. McCleery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>C. F. Ballard</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>T. C. McCleery</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Dr. Dee Ransadell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Fred A. Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>T. C. McCleery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>E. L. Cumberland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>E. L. Cumberland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>T. C. McCleery</td>
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<td>Willard Foster</td>
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### County Assessor

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<td>1871</td>
<td>(Oct.) J. E. Snow</td>
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<td>1871</td>
<td>James Shepherd</td>
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### County Recorder

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<td>C. F. Ballard</td>
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### County Treasurer

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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
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<td>(Oct.) A. T. Hager</td>
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<td>J. M. Fisher</td>
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<td>P. D. Sturdivant</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Austin Adams</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>Arthur Murdock</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Emil Sandrock</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>Joseph W. Talmage</td>
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<td>Jacob Weiss</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>James Kriel</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>E. J. Dempster</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Charles F. Buehrer</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>E. C. McPherson</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>H. N. Swans</td>
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<td>Lester Donisthorpe</td>
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<td>Margaret Haughawaut</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>Elizabeth E. Schelkopf</td>
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<td>1950</td>
<td>Hannah Gilmore</td>
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### County Judge

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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>(April) William H. Blain</td>
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<td>C. M. Northrup</td>
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<td>1912</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Guy Hamilton</td>
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### County Attorney

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<td>W. E. Goodrich (2), Guy Brown, Sr. (4), Norman Wright (6)</td>
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<td>1906</td>
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<td>1922</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>Bert A. Lynn</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>W. H. Drinkwater</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>John G. Hays</td>
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### County Surveyor

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<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>V. A. Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>H. L. Badger</td>
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<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>W. S. Crawford</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>V. A. Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Peter Eggenberger, Sr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>C. H. Hanksyski</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>C. H. Hanksyski</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>C. H. Hanksyski</td>
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<td>1922</td>
<td>Henry W. Drake</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Ed Schelkopf (deceased)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Clay Co. Surveyor Everett Abbot (served jointly with Saugus Co., appointed)</td>
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### County Officer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Officer Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>James Biba (1), William Bohlen (3), John Fahlberg (5), Edwin A. Johnson (7)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
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### Public Instruction

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<td>(Oct.) W. G. Gue</td>
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<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>J. A. Dempster</td>
</tr>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>J. B. Lewis</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>J. B. Sexton</td>
</tr>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>John J. Burke</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>James Biba (1), William Bohlen (3), John Fahlberg (5), Edwin A. Johnson (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Henry Vauck</td>
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<td>John E. Ray</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Alice Bennett</td>
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<td>Lillian D. Green</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Margaret Haughawaut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Elizabeth E. Schelkopf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Hannah Gilmore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Emma Ronken (served jointly with Saugus Co., appointed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Dewey Ganzei (served jointly with Saugus Co., appointed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Emma Ronken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is not possible to index all the thousands of names that appear in such a book as this, it is necessary to set up some fairly consistent principle of selection, one which will combine maximum usefulness with maximum interest. This index, therefore, attempts to include the following: (1) All names of pioneer homesteaders whose names appear on the homestead maps of the several townships; (2) all names of early settlers who founded families, or stayed long enough to have significant influence on their townships; and (3) early county officers or founders of major pioneering businesses — if mentioned in the text — if course appear; these are primarily those of persons who, though figuring only slightly in the text, had significant or interesting experiences. For example, a person who was neither a “pioneer” nor the founder of a family may have left us an account of a blizzard or a storm — or may have survived, or perished in, some disaster such as a tornado.

Churches and schools, as too numerous to list by separate names, are grouped: Churches are listed by towns in alphabetical order under the heading “Churches”; schools are arranged by district number under the heading “Schools.”

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