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An Early History of Decatur County, Kansas

Glenn Rogers

Fort Hays Kansas State College

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AN EARLY HISTORY
OF
DECATUR COUNTY KANSAS

by

GLENN ROGERS



Left

Glenn Rogers

An Early History
of
Decatur County Kansas

Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in par-
tial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science

by

Glenn Rogers, B. S.

F. H. K. S. C.

May 27, 1932

Approved by

E. H. Landrum

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Chapter I

The First Inhabitants of Decatur County Kansas and First Claims to That Territory

Decatur County, one of the one hundred and five counties of the State of Kansas, is located between the meridians one hundred and one hundred and one, west of the prime meridian and between the thirty ninth and fortieth parallels north of the Equator.

The elevation is from 2500 to 3000 feet above sea level. The streams (or creeks) flow from the southwest to the northeast. The important ones are the Beaver, The Sappa, and the Prairie Dog. The north fork of the Solomon river crosses a small corner of the southeastern part of the county.

One of the first written accounts concerning the territory that is now known as Decatur County was by Sternberg¹, a fossil hunter, who had received orders to go north to the Loup Fork river in Nebraska to search for vertebrate fossils in beds of the Upper Miocene, called by Hayden the Loup Fork Group. He happened to meet, however, an old line hunter, Abernathy by name, who had brought into Buffalo his last load of buffalo hides, and he told him that a little above his cabin, on the middle branch of Sappa Creek in what is now Decatur County, there was the skull of a Mastodon, sticking out of the solid rock.

But the whole country north of Buffalo was without human habitation until they reached the old man's cabin. About

1. Fossil Hunter in Kansas during the 70's and 80's.

sundown one evening, the old man pointed out, in the side draw of the middle fork of the Sappa, his Mastodon. The rocks in this part of the state usually consist of gray sand cemented together with washed chalk and soluble silica. The foundation on which these beds were deposited is the Niobrara Group of the Cretaceous. The river beds were cut in this soft lime, and later on the wash of the land mingled the whitening with the sand and gravel which the streams brought down from the mountains. The tops of the hills are capped with this conglomerate gray sandstone in ledges many feet in thickness, and as the materials composing it easily disintegrate, great masses of it lie at the bases of the cliffs, resembling old mortar. Mr. Sternberg called them mortar beds, and the stratigraphers have adopted the name.

Indeed, they are mortar beds not only in name, from a fancied resemblance to mortar, but in fact, as all the early settlers can testify. It was no trouble for them to find beds so soft that the material could easily be dug out, and when mixed with water and spread with trowels over the inside walls of a sod house, it made a comfortable home. When it comes to comfort, the settlers of the short grass country have gained nothing by building frame instead of sod houses. The early settler's sod house was cool in summer and warm in winter, and those who live in more modern houses in order to keep up with the times even now speak with regret of the change.²

2. Sternberg, Charles F., Life of a Fossil Hunter. pp. 32-60
extracts

Next to inhabit this part of Kansas and Decatur County as given by early historians were the Buffalo (Bison). But of the history of the buffalo before the coming of the Europeans nothing can be definitely stated. Had the priests of the Spanish not destroyed the written records of the Aztecs, historians would possibly be able to tell much of interest concerning the buffalo of the past ages.

However, since all of this is lost to history, we must be content to begin our story of the buffalo with the first mention by the early explorers.

The first buffalo ever known to any European was seen by the members of the Cortez expedition in 1521.

The next appearance of the buffalo in history was in 1530. Alvar Nunez Cabeza (Sabezade Vaca) a Spanish explorer and discoverer, was wrecked on the Gulf coast west of the Mississippi delta. (Some of the buffalo seen by this early explorer undoubtedly had wandered over what is now Decatur county Kansas, as buffalo were known to migrate for hundreds of miles.) Twelve years later Coronado on his famous expedition in search of the "Seven Cities of Cibola," encountered the American Bison (Buffalo). Pushing northward and westward he at length reached the land of the buffalo.

The people now living in Decatur County testify to the fact that buffalo were quite at home there, for there are still to be seen the buffalo "wallow" as it is quite commonly called. These "wallows" were caused by the old bulls tearing up the

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sod with their horns to cause the wet earth to stick to their coats so as to protect them from the flies.

Where the prairie sod has not been broken evidences of these depressions are still to be seen in Decatur County, in fact, all over the western plains.

The next inhabitants that had possession of this country which embraced Decatur County were the confederated Pawnees and the territory was known as Caddoan (Pawnee) country.³

Bellin's Map of Louisiana, 1744, marks the Pays des Causes (country of Kansas) extending from the Missouri river almost to the mountains, being quite a part of the present states of Missouri, Kansas and southern Nebraska.

Then the people who laid claim to Decatur County were the Pawnees, who later ceded all their right and title in and to all the land lying south of the Platte River. This embraced but a small portion of Kansas, a triangle tract bounded on the south approximately by Prairie Dog Creek, and on the west by the east line of range thirty-seven.

So passed the Pawnees from their ancient heritage in the future state of Kansas.⁴

The Pawnees were followed by the Cheyennes. They belonged to the great Alogonquin tribe and for a long period were closely associated with Northwestern Kansas.

3. History of Kansas state and people. Compiled and written by Wm. E. Connelley, Secy. of Kansas State Historical Society. Vol. I pp. 217.

4. "History of Kansas." Connelley, Wm. E., Vol. I. pp. 217.

The Cheyennes ranged far down the plains streams. They came from what is now Minnesota. They roamed from the Black Hills to the Arkansas.⁵

The first white men who laid claim to this country which embraces Decatur County were not the Spaniards, who had first explored this part of the Great Plains, but the French, who had laid claim to the entire Mississippi Valley.

THE CESSION OF LOUISIANA TO SPAIN IN AMERICA

The war between Great Britain and France was known as the "French and Indian War." It was decided by the victory of Wolf on the plains of Abraham, in 1759. Montreal fell in 1760 and the campaign that year convinced France that she was defeated in America.

On the 15th of July, 1761, she proposed terms of peace by which Canada and that part of Louisiana east of the Mississippi should be ceded to England. A treaty had been virtually concluded between Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal in 1762. It was made definite, as affecting these powers, at Paris on February 10, 1763. By its terms New France disappeared. The British bounds were extended to the Mississippi. The calamity of France was far greater than was realized at the conclusion of the treaty, for at Fontainfleur on the 3rd of November, 1762, the Island and City of New Orleans and all of Louisiana west of the Mississippi were ceded by France to Spain. This was a secret session and knowledge of it was not made public for more than a year.

5. Connelley, Wm. E., "History of Kansas." Vol. I. pp 218.

THE RETROCESSION OF LOUISIANA TO FRANCE

At the close of the war for Independence, the Americans poured over the Alleghenies in ever increasing numbers. Seated on the rich lands of the west, they soon produced a surplus of food and other commodities which they found necessary to carry to some market.

These could not be transplanted eastward across the Alleghenies. The natural outlet for this trade was by the great waterway - down the Mississippi. Spain restricted the navigation of the Mississippi.

The commerce coming down its mighty flood was burdened with imposts amounting to confiscation. Corn, wheat, tobacco, tallow, hides, furs, beeswax, flour, cured meats and many other commodities found unprofitable markets at New Orleans, and the right to deposit these products against more favorable times or for reshipment was denied. At the same time there was a suggestion that if the country could all come under Spanish rule, times and conditions would mend and all causes of complaint disappear.

In the hope of attaining complete sovereignty of the Louisiana of LaSalle, Spain entered upon a course of intrigue with the western settlers.

These were the conditions when European politics interfered and changed the sovereignty of Louisiana. France decided to again take over the wilderness province, and Spain was in no condition to resist. By the treaty of San Ildefonso, concluded October 1, 1800, Spain retroceded Louisiana to France.

THE PURCHASE OF LOUISIANA

The prospect that France would establish a colonial empire in America was not pleasing to the United States. To counteract its influence, President Jefferson believed it would be necessary to form a close alliance with Great Britain. For France was then at the zenith of her power. She did not take immediate possession of Louisiana, but left the administration in the hands of Spain. In 1802, the Spanish Governor suspended the right of the Americans to deposit commercial products in New Orleans.

This action caused intense excitement. President Jefferson was compelled to take notice of the state of mind in the west. He wrote Mr. Monroe that "it threatens to overbear our peace." The Federalist party advocated war with Spain and France. But the president determined to rely upon diplomacy. He instructed Robert R. Livingston, our Minister to France, to buy West Florida and New Orleans. In furtherance of this plan to satisfy the people of the west and protect the rights of the United States, he appointed, in January, 1803, James Monroe special envoy to France to aid Livingston.

Conditions favored the design of Jefferson. It had been the plan of France to suppress the rebellion of Santa Domingo and then take possession of Louisiana. The campaign against the Island failed. War with Great Britain was impending. Napoleon knew he could not retain Louisiana in a war with that

power. To sell the province to the United States would place it forever beyond the reach of the English.

The American Ministers had never thought of purchasing such a vast territory as Louisiana. It was the idea of Napoleon. So on the 30th day of April, 1803, our envoys to France without further instructions from home concluded a treaty by which all of Louisiana should pass to the United States for the sum of fifteen million dollars. On the 20th of December, 1803, the French put the United States in possession of Louisiana and the American Representative proclaimed to those assembled there:

"The cession secures to you and your descendents the inheritance of liberty; perpetual laws and magistrates whom you will elect yourselves."⁶

Thus passed into the possession that vast domain known later as the Great American desert of which Kansas is a part and Decatur County alone well worth several times the original purchase price of the entire territory.

6. Kansas History. Connelley, Wm. E. Vol. I. Chapt. III
pp 44 - 60 extracts.

Chapter II

The First White Men and the First Settlers.

Numerous early expeditions traversed western Kansas but the first of these early explorers known to have crossed Decatur County was Fremont in 1843. The old Fremont trail crossed the Sappa about the center of the southeast quarter of section twenty-one, range twenty-eight coming from the southeast and bearing northwest.

Lieutenant Bryan of the United States army used the same route in 1858.

Colonel Sumner in 1858 crossed what was later to become known as Decatur County on his way to Salt Lake to surpress a Mormon rebellion.⁷

The soldiers stationed on the frontier crossed this territory several times.

The old Texas cattle trail first crossed near Morcatour then was moved about seven miles west of Oberlin. This trail was the one the Indians used in 1878 when they committed their depredations in Decatur County.

The first standard parallel, which is the southern line of Decatur County was surveyed during March, 1869.⁸ The state line between Nebraska and Kansas had been run in 1854.⁹ During the summer of 1872, the buffaloes were plentiful in

7. Map by Headquarter Military Division, St. Louis, Mo.
Official Wm. E. Hammill - Major Eng. and Brev. Col. Jan. 16, 1868
8. Government Field Notes pp. 4.
9. Government Field Notes.

what is now Decatur County and home-stealers from further east came in groups to get buffalo meat for their families for the winter supply. These men also sold some meat in the eastern markets, which with the sale of the hides made profitable returns. The first men to really reside in Decatur County were trappers and hunters during the winter of 1872 and 1873. They were Col. J. A. Hopkins, Del Coburn and Henry Playford from Cawker City, Kansas. S. Porter and John Griffin from Nebraska joined those who had come from Cawker City.

In December of 1872 four men, Ben Lewis, H. P. Gandy, C. J. Lewis and W. D. Street came into Decatur County, selected land and became residents of Decatur County.

The party who first came also filed on land and the U. S. landoffice records show that the following filings were made:

Samuel M. Porter filed on SE $\frac{1}{4}$ 29-2-28. Dec. 16, 1872.
 Henry Playford NW $\frac{1}{4}$ 28-2-28. Dec. 16, 1872.
 John Griffin NE $\frac{1}{4}$ 29-2-28. Dec. 16, 1872.
 Del Coburn SW $\frac{1}{4}$ 28-2-28. Dec. 16, 1872.
 Col. J. A. Hopkins SW $\frac{1}{4}$ 12-2-28. Dec. 28, 1872.

When the Government surveyers were running the first standard parallel in March 1869, which was completed May 10, 1869¹⁰, a notation was made of a wagon trail that bears northeast and southwest across the south line of section 35 in Cook township. Despite all the writer's efforts no further mention of this trail is to be found, neither was I able to find any old settlers who could tell who used this trail. The supposition is that is

10. Government Field Notes.

44006



was a government trail from Fort Wallace to Fort Kearney, Nebraska, as that would be the general direction taken in traveling between these army posts.

The survey of the town and range lines was begun July 29, 1872. The range lines were run first.¹¹ The subdivision was begun July 22, 1872 in Allison township, the southeast township of the county¹², and was completed in Finley township, the northwest township of the county October 10, 1872 by Austin R. Miles, surveyor in charge.¹³

The Surveyer General for the state of Kansas was C. W. Babcock. The survey for subdivision into sections was let by contract to surveyors who evidently attempted to complete the work in the shortest possible time. The inaccuracy of some of the lines testify to that fact. The range lines were to be run from the first standard parallel north to the Nebraska line but the surveyors evidently thought no one would ever settle in this "Great American Desert" so no one would ever care for an accurate survey.

The following is a letter from G. Webb Bertram to the Oberlin Herald showing his early connection with Oberlin.

July 22, 1923

"I first saw the Sappa Valley, and the land now included in Oberlin, in September 1872. Three of us, buffalo hunters, Zac. Walling, a man named Landenberg, and myself with a two-horse team, camped for two or three weeks, on the land I took up in the spring of 1878, just east of where the stream

11. Government Notes pp. 71.
 12. Government Notes pp. 79.
 13. Government Notes pp. 395.

runs nearly due North and South. Buffalo were plentiful; at night beaver were splashing in the creek. In going to camp about sunset, from a buffalo killing two miles away, I have counted two hundred skunks. An occasional deer, antelope and turkey was encountered, and droves of wolves were all about. I considered it a hunter's paradise. We secured a load of flint dried hides, all our two horses could draw. We hauled them to Buffalo Station, and sold them; \$3.35 for bull and \$1.90 for cow hides.

On our way to the railroad, we run onto Abernathy and Fred Walters, residing on the head waters of the North Solcmon, twenty miles west of their nearest neighbor. Considering the times and locality, Abernathy was richer than Henry Ford or Rockefeller. He had six or eight rifles and shotguns, lots of ammunition, eight or ten sacks of flour, and same in sides of bacon and other eatables in proportion. We asked him if he was not afraid of the Indians. He said no, he had treaties with all of them. Well, we remained on the range nearly three months, and averaged \$75.00 per month each.

While camped on the Sappa, I went out one morning alone, and killed three buffalo on Johnson draw not far from where Oberlin now is, at a point where the draw runs almost due north and south. I was so impressed by the possibilities of the country, that I there and then evolved a scheme. That was for twenty or twenty-five young, unmarried men to come and settle on these lands, each taking a mile strip along the stream as a

pre-emption, leaving a like strip along side to be homesteaded later. That would give them a command of twenty to twenty-five miles of stream, and each one could during his six months residence on his pre-emption each the \$200.00 necessary to pay out and homestead again, and that the land a mile or more from the stream, would remain vacant and unoccupied for ages. My dream was that each man should possess a needle gun and plenty of ammunition. That a stockade should be built at some central point, and at least a section of land enclosed with barbed wire and the men go into cattle raising, co-operatively. So dreaming this dream, that winter I went down to Louisville, Pottawatomie County, in which county, from a youth of nine years I had grown up, and tried to enlist a force.

I found plenty of fit young men. One would be working as a clerk at \$20.00 to \$25.00 per month; he did not want to swap a certainty for an uncertainty. He did not wish to risk being killed by Indians, for all the money in the world.

Well, to make a long story short, I failed to impress enough men, to make the scheme advisable. I could have secured four or five, but I considered twenty or twenty-five, the least number advisable, and considered that with this number and proper caution, there would not be a particle of danger from Indians.

But from that fall of 1872, my thoughts were of that country, as a place to found a home. And while I am passing the declining years of my life very far from there, I have never ceased to be interested in its development."

The winter of 1872, two men, Joseph Dimmick and another trapper wintered on the Beaver near Cedar Bluffs. The next year, the summer of 1873, several settlers came to the Beaver including Joseph Dimmick's two sons, Clarence¹⁴ and Joseph O. Dimmick.

Clarence Dimmick carried the mail from Melrose, Nebraska to Cedar Bluffs. His pay was \$1300.00 per year. This job was sublet to him by Hopper and Hubbard, who had a great many contracts from the Government.

Melrose was 2 miles west of where Orleans, Nebraska now is located. The route taken by Mr. Dimmick was from Melrose to Spring Green, Beaver City, Hendley Post Office, Wilsonville, and Lebanon, in Nebraska, on to Cedar Bluffs, Kansas. He had to use a spring wagon as far west as Wilsonville, then he could complete the balance of the westward trip on horse back. Mr. Dimmick said that the Indians he met were always friendly but would of course steal anything they could find lying around loose.

The others who came to the Beaver the spring of 1873 were James Jones, Samuel Daniels, Ike Bowen and his father _____ Bowen, Dave Royce, Pat Rathburn, James Addes, Joe Turby, and Frank Kimball. On the Prairie Dog Creek, the early settlers of 1873 were Bill Rose, Sol Rees, Ed O'Brien, Bill Quinn, John

14. Clarence Dimmick is now working for Otis Relph on the farm just west of the townsite of Cedar Bluffs. The writer interviewed Mr. Dimmick concerning his early day experiences. His father named Cedar Bluffs and had the first post office established and acted as first post master.

Worval, George Schultz and two married men, _____ Win and Stuttering Smith. There were probably several others but the old settlers have forgotten their names.

April 17, 1873 a number of Bohemians from near Omaha, Nebraska settled on Big Timber creek that flows into the Prairie Dog. Among these early Bohemian settlers were Joseph Cilek, Wenzel Rohan, Wm. Heilman, Wenzel Skolak, Joseph Wenzel, Jacob, Joseph, Wendel, Anton, Frank, Louis and Joe Belcha.¹⁵

These Bohemians were a very good type of people for a pioneer country, as they are sober, industrious, good American citizens. They still preserve their racial identity although the younger generation is intermarrying with others, who have already lost their old country nationality and they are becoming amalgamated into just "Americans" having so many different strains of blood in their veins, they can no longer claim to be any distinct nationality.

David Sherrad and J. A. Rodehaver filed on land during the early spring of 1873. Mr. Sherrad filed on part of 27-1-27 and which he proved up on in Oct. 4, 1873. He was the first to prove up on land in Decatur County. J. A. Rodehaver filed on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ 1-3-29, Apr. 29, 1873 and proved up on the land December 1, 1873. He had the north one hundred acres platted and surveyed for a townsite, April 1874 and called it Westfield, which is now known as the original Oberlin townsite. This was the second claim to be proved up on.

15. The author is well acquainted with some of these people. The Cileks, Rohans, Heilmans are names quite familiar along the Big Timber at the present time.

On the Sappa, the spring of 1873 were Robert Bridle and family, Mr. Humphrey and family, John Justice and family, Sheppard Farren and family and Mr. Austin and family. The first white women to live in the county was Mrs. H. P. Gandy, who came to join her husband, who had come out to hunt and trap the year before.

September 12, 1873, several families arrived in Oberlin among them Robert Riley and family, John Stiner and family.¹⁶

In the spring of 1874, a number of immigrants came into the southesst part of the county and settled along the Prairie Dog creek. Warren Jennings was one of these, who arrived in April and for whom the city of Jennings received its name.

John Green and family also came into Decatur County at this time.

The land office was located at Cawker City at this time, but was later moved to Kirwin and still later to Oberlin in 1881.

The mail and supplies were obtained from Cawker City although a short time later buffalo hunters would bring mail from Buffalo Park, a station on the Union Pacific Railroad.

16. The following are still residing in Oberlin or near it at the present time: John Love, son of William Love, John K. Stiner, Mrs. Almira (Love) Ufford, Mrs. Bell (Stiner) Livingston, Mrs. May (Bridle) Wilson, Lawrence, son of Robert Riley, Mrs. Sarah (Rodehaver) Harvey, Mrs. Bertha (Rodehaver) Morgan (Living in Rexford, Kans.)

John K. Stiner homesteaded the following lands:
 $\frac{1}{2}$ of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of 29-2-28, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of 32-2-28,
SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of 30-2-28.

The hardships these early pioneers suffered were certainly a test of the courage of the American people. Some of these early settlers in their conversations tell about the food supply being corn cakes and molasses with what fresh meat the men could procure.

J. P. Rouse, who came to the Prairie Dog in 1879 told the author he had freighted supplies from both Kirwin and Buffalo Park. On his way over he would pick up Buffalo bones to sell as there were "bone buyers" at these railroad stations. He would receive from \$2.50 to \$4.00 per ton for the dry bones.

The grasshopper invasion during this early period (1875) caused the people of the country severe hardships, as the hoppers destroyed all the growing crops, even completely taking a narrow strip north and south through the county.

The summer of 1876, a number of the people of Oberlin had an epidemic of typhoid-malaria fever, which caused a great deal of suffering but no one died of the fever.

Chapter III
Indian Raid - 1878.

The spring of 1878 was a landmark in the settlement of Decatur County as many hundreds of settlers came into the county to make their future homes.

It was on Sept. 27, 1878 that the Indians killed one person and wounded another on the north fork of the Solomon River.

This group of Indians was traveling north evidently to the Pine Ridge Agency of the Sioux in South Dakota and were being followed by U. S. troops.

The troops so far as any records show did not catch up with the Indians, who continued on north and so far as is known remained in the Pine Ridge Agency.

This group of Cheyennes had their families with them. On Sept. 30, 1878, they arrived on the Sappa about seven and one-half miles southwest of Oberlin, approaching the creek from the south on section thirty-two.

"These Indians did not, as the writer had always supposed, ride up and down the creek on the warpath, yelling and murdering everyone they saw, but appeared to be friendly.

They separated into groups of three or four and rode out to where the settlers were at work in the fields, usually asked for some tobacco and then one rode up behind the white men and shot them in the back."¹⁷

"The reason for this slaughter of the whites by the Indians

17. Interview with J. E. Love and Billy O'Toole.

was no doubt in retaliation for the white folks mistreatment of the Indians in the year 1874 southwest of Oberlin by the 19th Kansas Cavalry - and later, when the Cheyennes had rolled their dead in blankets and laid them in a neat row under the bluff where they were killed, some white people stole the blankets off the bodies.

This happened twice so the account goes.¹⁸ So if the Indians killed in retaliation it is to be expected. The only sad part of the affair is that those guilty of the sacrilege of the Indian bodies were probably never made to atone for their deeds and innocent persons suffered.

Several white girls were outraged and mistreated but none were killed.

Oberlin Herald - October 3, 1929.

FIFTY-ONE YEARS AGO LAST MONDAY.

F. F. Bliss writes his personal recollection of the Indian raid of 1878.

The following incidents relative to the Indian Raid through northwest Kansas on Sept. 30, 1878 is simply the personal experience of the writer and is in no wise supposed to be a history of the event, and is simply one link of the happenings at that time. It was written only upon the request of his children that they might have some tangible record of some of the events.

There are several still living in this vicinity and else-

18. J. E. Love.

where who could write a much more readable account of their personal experiences which might be of interest in the future. "

Personal Recollections of the Indian Raid - Sept. 30, 1878

By F. F. Bliss.

"On Sept. 30, 1878, another young man by the name of Frank Hitchcock and a nephew of John Hitchcock, and I were baching in a dugout in northeast Oberlin, Kansas, on what was known as the Van Wormer quarter of section one, township three, range twenty-nine. The dugout was located east across the small draw from where John Hayward now lives, and near the southeast corner of the quarter.

John Hitchcock the owner, together with Geo. Colby, had gone back east after their families; The former to Iowa and the latter to Wisconsin. They had hired Will Ireland to take them up to the U. P. R. R. at Kearney and each had bought a cook stove and utensils and sent them back by Mr. Ireland. Hitchcock requested that we set up the stove when it arrived and to use it if we desired, but to have things in shape for his family to live in the dugout when they arrived.

John Hitchcock had picked up a sore-footed three year old pony during the previous summer, off the Texas trail, which then crossed the south Sappa creek some seven miles southwest of Oberlin, at what was known at "Keefer's Ranch." This pony he called "Case Knife", on account of its extreme narrowness

in form. He had, however, developed into a fairly good saddle horse and had been left in the care of Frank.

On the morning of September 30th, I put a couple of old "bachelor's biscuits" in my pocket as a lunch and went up town to the Jones log blacksmith shop to borrow a chisel as I intended, and did, go over to my claim (NE $\frac{1}{2}$ of 7-3-28) to make a windlass with which to dig my first well, Hitchcock going along up town on "Case Knife." He intended getting some cloth and taking it down to old Mrs. Harrison Fair and have her make him a work shirt. She then lived on what is now the Guy Ross farm, a little way down the creek below Oberlin.

This was the last time I ever saw Frank Hitchcock or "Case Knife." For while we were in Oberlin a man came riding in from the Solomon in quest of a doctor, saying he and his partner, who were in camp over there on their way west (land lookers, I think) had been attacked by Indians and his partner badly wounded.

Dr. A. W. Bariteau had just located in Oberlin as the town's first doctor, bringing a small stock of drugs with him, which he had up over the Bullard and Wilson general store. The doctor returned with the man and gave the medical treatment required by his partner, who I believe was soon able to return East and so far as I know recovered. But other things attracted our attention for the next few days and the incident was lost track of.

Frank Hitchcock was evidently somewhat frightened by the report of Indians so close, and on the warpath, as he mounted "Case Knife" and hit the trail for the Missouri River, which he reached as soon as possible and crossed into Iowa and never came back here. Although I understand he is now, or has been living in the west - in Oregon or Washington, I believe. He was the best 100-yard foot racer I ever saw, but the distance was too great, so he rode "Case Knife" in making his getaway.

I got the chisel from the blacksmith and went on out to my claim and made the windlass and came back to the dugout about 5 P. M. Needing some water, I took a pail and the chisel and went up town to get it, as there was no well on the place, and if I remember right, the only well in town was John Rodehaver's.

While putting away the chisel in the shop I noticed things had changed some in town since morning. One or two men were sitting on the peak of the roof of the Bullard and Wilson store, and a breastworks of rocks had been built around part of the Capt. Allen store. Allen had first intended building a stone store building instead of sod, and had some rock corded up nearby, which were used for the breastworks.

While at the shop George Wilson came over and I said, "What's up here?" He asked me if I hadn't heard that the Indians had killed nearly everyone up the creek that day, among them a man by the name of Hutton, a friend of James Smith, who lived near the forks of the Sappa, and who had just

come in from Iowa a day or two before, and that day was helping Smith and his sons put up prairie hay some distance up a draw south-west of Smith's place. And that Smith was missing and believed killed or badly wounded, and that his son Watt, who had managed to get away from the Indians, was then up the creek looking for his father.

I said, "If Smith is missing I will go and help look for him also." In explanation I would say I had been working with the Smiths' up to a day or so prior to this, building a stone house or dugout, which Smith intended using later for a basement for a frame house, and the walls were not less than two feet thick at any place. Temporarily he had put on a dirt roof and the family, consisting of his wife, himself, and some six or eight children had just moved in. I had mowed some two or three loads of prairie hay with a scythe and stacked it near his house. This together with most of the hay put up that season, was burned when the Indians purposely put out fires, as there were very few left on their claims to look after things.

A carpenter by the name of Nelson had come in and located on a piece of land adjoining the townsite of Oberlin on the northwest and lived at or near where Assistant Postmaster Raymond now lives. Nelson had a pair of long-legged 4-year-old mules which he was in the habit of bringing down to Rodehaver's well for water each day. That day he had brought them down as

usual, but hearing what the Indians were doing, had tied them to a post and rolled into John Rodehaver's hay rack with others, and started east to find a safer place for a few days.

I found an old piece of carpet and borrowed an old muzzle loading cap and bullet musket, with no bullets, however, but managed to dig up a few slugs with which I loaded the gun and putting the carpet on one of Nelson's mules, climbed on and started up the creek. I doubt if this mule had ever been ridden previously. It did not pitch with me, but was quite "mulish."

All this had taken some time and by the time I got up to town we met a party from Jennings and vicinity, who were on their way up to Keefer's Ranch on the trail. They wished some one of us to turn back and show them the way. The rest of our party had been out all day without anything to eat and none were anxious to make the trip, and began to make excuses.

I finally said I knew the trail and would go back with them if I had a saddle, but my mule was getting a little sharp for the old piece of carpet by this time. One man said I could take his saddle, which he proceeded to pull off and hand me (not much saddle, but better than none.)

Of course it was very dark before this happened and I knew none of the men in the dark but Sol Rees and Hels Brewner. I turned and went with them up to the trail. Riding with Sol Rees in the lead he told me some of his previous experiences with Indians as we rode along.

Arriving at Keefer's we found quite a number of settlers, who had gathered there including quite a number from the south part of the county, who were following the Indians' trail and had camped there for the night.

There had been a small herd of Texas cattle here that day when the Indians had swooped down on the log ranch house. Fortunately the family were inside and as the house was built in the bank, dugout fashion, with only one side exposed, they were comparatively safe; although the Indians were all about and on top of the house, which of course had a dirt roof, as was common at that time and could not be set on fire.

The man owning the herd had finally taken a shot from the house at one of the Indians, presumably killing him, as he fell and laid there until gathered up and taken away by his comrades. After this the Indians showed more respect for the house and occupants and moved on later.

This cattleman had graciously killed a yearling beef and donated it to those gathered there. The beef was being roasted when our party arrived. After eating, the men rolled up in what blankets they might have in the corral and got some sleep. The women and children and those wounded by the Indians occupied the house.

Guards had been placed out around the camp, and a very pathetic scene occurred during the night. One of the guards hearing someone moving, halted them and upon investigation found it to be old Mrs. Leing and two young daughters, who had

come from their home on the north fork some eight miles north-west of Keefer's ranch. After the Indians had destroyed their home and mistreated them, finally throwing the two young girls into a straw bed and were about to set fire to it, an old chief interfered and taking the mother and girls outside told them to go. They had traveled most of the night trying to find some place of refuge.

When the guard saluted them they did not know whether they were in the hands of friends or enemies and refused to go to the ranch until Keefer, who was a German and talked somewhat broken, and who was known to the mother, was sent for and convinced her everything was all right and took them to the house.

The following day we learned that all the men folks of the Laing family above referred to had been killed by the Indians. The father, a fine, portly old man, and I think a Scotchman, and a 16 year old son, were on their way to town when they met two or three of the Indians, who accosted them with, "How how", and the old man started to shake hands with them when one of the other Indians shot and killed both him and his son; and took their team.

Later, we found the other two young men of the family not far from their home on the north fork of the Sappa, where they had evidently been surprised while plowing and both men had been shot and killed; the traces cut off from the plow and of course, the horses taken by the Indians.

While speaking of the Laings, I might say, the mother and

two girls were brought down to Oberlin, where they stayed at the Rodshaver house until word could be sent to a brother of Mrs. Laing at Omaha, Neb., who came as soon as possible and took them back with him.

While here the brother made arrangements with me to have four gravestones erected to the four men who had been killed out of the family. These were the first stones put up in the Oberlin cemetery, and I made them from magnesia rock I quarried out some seven miles southwest of Oberlin; hauling them down to town where I later dressed, lettered and finally placed them at the graves in the cemetery, where they still stand close to the granite monument erected by the state and county, later to commemorate the Indian raid.

For all this I received the princely sum of two dollars for each stone, or a total of \$8.00 for all. Some have cost more since. I also made and placed a stone at each of the graves of James Smith and his friend, Hutton. This was a labor of love for which no charge was made.

But to return to Keefer's ranch. Early the following morning after eating some more beef we organized a company of further procedure, by electing Sol Rees captain and Lew Caley (or Kaley) lieutenant, and starting in the directions the Indians had taken. We followed them, I believe, to the north side of the north fork of the Sappa, when in passing around the head of a small pocket draw, we saw a dead cowboy lying beside the trail.

I will never forget how he looked to us at the time. He was lying on his back, his hat off his head, his gauntlet gloves on his hands and his quirt hanging on one wrist. He had evidently been shot from ambush straight through the heart and the blood had clotted around the wound. His horse, saddle and firearms were gone. We learned afterward his name was Ed Miskelly and that he was with a herd of cattle, I think, going north. He had evidently started down the creek for some reason, possible for Oberlin and a postoffice.

We looked closely at each draw crossed thereafter. Going on up the North Sappa, we soon came to the Laing homestead; the house in ruins and as stated above, the two young men lying dead a short distance away, where they had been plowing.

It was a common practice of the Indians at each house raided if a feather bed could be found, to take it out into the open, rip open the tick and let the feathers blow all about in the wind. This gave the surroundings a rather wierd appearance.

Continuing on the trail of the Indians northwest we had gone part way up a spur onto the divide and were riding two abreast with capt. Rees and Lieut. Caley in the lead. It so happened I was immediately behind Rees. I said we were riding in line, but Jack Brooks, a rattle-headed chap, that had been much with the Indians, could not be kept in line and at the time was riding out on the left of Rees, on a small flea-bitten grey pony.

All at once Jack let out a war whoop and wheeling around in front of us took off to the right after three horsemen that were trying to pass us and which he knew to be Indians. We all followed him. The Indians seeing they were pursued, turned and ran back to the Sappa and as it was nearer to them than us succeeded in getting themselves and horses down into the bed of the creek, which was dry at the time, and as they were well armed and very few of our party were, we did not succeed in dislodging them, and after some time gave it up and continued on the trail.

After getting pretty well up on the divide we came to where the Indians had camped the night before, and we were somewhat surprised at their evident numbers.

About this time the same three Indians were again sighted, but this time they were further from the creek and could not get back to the creek until some of our party, who were well mounted, also got there.

The Indians proved to be a buck, a squaw and a nearly grown young buck. The old buck was killed and scalped, but died game. The other two were let go.

They were thought to have been rear scouts. They were well equipped with guns and ammunitions; also had a good pair of field glasses. After this our party split up. Some of the more adventurous, who were fairly well mounted and armed, continued on the trail and were later joined by the U. S. Cavalry from Fort Wallace. The balance of us started back for town or home

as the case might be, and met the company of cavalry proceeding very leisurely after the Indians. I recall that John Love and I were riding side by side when we came to the Smith stone house. Here we were met by Smith's son Watt, who with others had succeeded in finding his father during the day, who was badly wounded but still alive. They had gotten him home and had brought his wife and children there.

Watt requested John and I to come back that evening and sit up with his father, which we promised to do, and continuing on down to the dugout, where I was baching, John going with me, and after getting something to eat we started back up the creek to sit up with Smith. Before getting quite up there we met a younger son of Smiths', George, who was on horseback, coming to town after a son-in-law of Smiths' by the name of Jones, and his family. George informed us his father had just died. John and I continued on to the Smith place and later Jones and family came. After the first spells of grief were over, John and I laid out the body of Smith and intended to stay with them until morning when arrangements could be made for the funeral.

All kinds of rumors were afloat, such as "eleven hundred more Indians were following these, etc." all of which were unfounded. But Jones was badly worked up and did not think it safe to stay there and kept telling the women and children so. John and I told them we were absolutely safe, for as I said earlier in this story, the stone walls of the house were

not less than two feet thick at any place. There were only two half windows and a door to guard - a fort in which three men could kill more Indians than could get through the openings, and of course it could not be set on fire. We would succeed in quieting all the balance except Jones, who would get a few of the family in a corner and look wild and tell them the only thing to do was to go to town where Jones had a sod house (he was the village blacksmith.) Finally John and I could do nothing with them and about two a.m. we loaded the corpse and as many of the family into the wagon as we could and went back to Jones' house in town, where John and I left them and he and I went back to my dugout and went to bed. I should have mentioned the Indians had taken Smiths' two best horses, which he had with him in the hay field, leaving only a pair of light pony horses which happened to be at the house and where the Indians could not reach them.

Later, I think, the family sold the farm and moved to Smith county."

The following is quoted from a letter written by G. Webb Bertram.

"I was then living on what afterward became the Ashcraft-Redd-Mosier land. On Saturday before, Elmore Allen had mowed the wild hay on the place for me and on Monday morning I had calculated to haul it in and stack it. Having no hayrack of my own, I drove to Peter Johnsons and borrowed his. A young

man named Hawes, was helping me. The rack had laid out in the suns of summer and snows of winter and needed repairs. On my way home with the rack, at the crossing of the draw between where afterward the Ireland and Street houses stood, coming down the hill from the south, headed for town, I met Uncle Bill and Aunt Mandy Love in a two horse rig. He hailed me. He said a man had stopped at his place early that morning, saying that his partner had been wounded by Indians, on the Prairie Dog that morning. "But," added Uncle Bill, "I guess they were trying to get away with somebody's horses, and got a shot for their pains."

Now as I had not heard of any Indians being loose before, I considered the guess about right. But before driving on, Uncle Bill added, "But you had better keep your eye peeled." But so thoroughly convinced was I that his guess was right that after we had driven to the house and repaired the rack, we drove into the hayfield without a thought of Indians. We had loaded two piles of hay, Hawes was on the wagon, when Smith's youngest son, my nearest neighbor on the west, rode a horse into the field, exclaiming, "The Indians have killed Pap and John Hutson." I asked, "Where were they killed?" He replied, "At the mouth of the Robinson Draw, but," he added, "they are coming right down the creek." "Where did you see them last?" I inquired. "At Joe Rabb's house." Hawes said, "Shall I throw off the hay?" I said, "No, let it be." So we drove to my house two or three hundred yards to the west.

My wife was washing; our baby, less than a year old was seated in a cheese box playing. I did not want to alarm the wife, and even then, I could not bring myself to believe that there could be any serious trouble from Indians. So I said, "Maggie, there is a story to the effect that Indians are about, I do not believe it, but I am going to take you and John to town until the excitement is over." She said that she was not dressed fit to go to town. "Well," I replied, "if there is any necessity of our going, we should go at once." So while she got ready, I gathered up some bedding, and what of the son's clothes I saw and piled them on the wagon, and the wife and babe mounted on them. The trip to town commenced. Few work teams ever made better time; grass did not grow under their feet. As I was making that drive, had anyone told me that I should arrive safely, and within an hour, I should be on the back track, I would have pronounced him a liar. I solemnly promised myself that if once safely in town, nothing should induce me to quit its protection till the Indian scare was over. But Watson Smith, my neighbor Smith's eldest son, was proclaiming, with tears streaming down his face, that his father was not killed, but lay out there in the hot sun, grievously wounded; his story would have melted the heart of a wooden man.

I examined and cross-examined him till I was convinced he knew what he was talking about, that he had been with his father at the time and had escaped by flight. The result was that six of us started out about noon, to find Smith. Watson had told

us that a team of horses was picketed in the low bottom in front of the Smith house. That there was a wagon and harness there and three or four guns and plenty of ammunition in the house. So we started on foot, except Isaac Cole rode his dapple grey mule. The party started out about noon and besides Cole, and myself, consisted of Will Ireland, Watson Smith, Gus Swirrinzer and Bill Cox, from Harvey's ranch in Rawlins County, on middle Beaver, above where Atwood is now.

When Cox was asked to go, he said he had no gun, but would go if someone would loan him a gun, but we could not obtain one in town. We were told that Streeter, a recent arrival from Connecticut, then living on Peter Johnson's daughter's claim, quite near, south and west of Oberlin, was over home, though his family was in town, and that he had a pistol, so we told him that we would secure that for him, or at worst there were guns at Smith's house. We went by and saw Streeter. He fished up a little .22 out of his vest pocket. Cox refused to take it. We went on to Smith's house found the horses, harness and guns all there. Soon after leaving Smiths, we picked up a boy, about 17 years old, who had been started from Keefer's ranch, to town for aid. A mile or two further south, we were overtaken by Lew Caley and Wall Trout, of the Sappa, below Oberlin. We made a thorough search for Smith, but did not find him. We noticed a smoke up the draw where Homer Colvin lived, and concluded either that the Colvin family had all been murdered and their house burned, or the smoke came from an Indian camp.

We now had three horsemen. They said that they could ride up where they could see what caused the smoke, and fall ^{back} upon us if necessary. The result was the rescuing of the Colvins, and starting them for town in his wagon, with the body of John Hutson. While the horsemen were gone, we continued the search for Smith. When they returned, the whole party went over to Keefer's ranch, where we found the bodies of old man Laing and his youngest son; Eddie Race and Elwin Judkins, and the two Van Cleave girls, alive, who had all been in the hands of the Indians, and we brought them all into what is now Oberlin that night.

The night before a man, Lynch, had camped near Keefers, and when the Indians first appeared there, was preparing to sit down to breakfast; he and the boy we had picked up. Breakfast was called off. Keefer being away, Lynch, the boy, Mrs. Keefer and the children assembled in the general living and sleeping room of the dugout. From the window of that room Lynch had shot and killed an Indian. He had hitched his two cow ponies out of sight from the window. Lynch in describing the loss of his horses, said, "If I had only hitched me ponies within range of that windey, there would have been some dancing before they got them, and I would have furnished the music."

Next day we went out about sunup, and found Smith about 9 a.m., still alive and he lived till about 9 that night."¹⁹

19. G. Webb Bertram's experience during the Indian Raid written to the editor of the Oberlin Herald, Sept. 25, 1923.

Mr. Billy O'Toole and Mr. Keefer were coming from the west on the trail just north of the Keefer house driving a team of oxen when they sighted the Indians. Mr. O'Toole and Mr. Keefer, by whipping the oxen furiously, got to the creek ahead of the Indians and hid under the vines that grew along the bank. Mr. O'Toole said he could have reached out and touched the Indians from his hiding place.²⁰

The Indians tired of attempting to get into the Keefer dugout, after one of their number had been shot (and killed) by Lynch, a cattleman, in the Keefer dugout, left and proceeded on to the divide between the forks of the Sappa.

As told in the account of Fred Bliss, one Indian was killed the following day by their party.

An Indian boy was evidently wounded, for about five weeks later, two brothers, who had the misfortune to have lost a cow during the raid, observed a path from the carcass of the animal to some rocks a short distance away. When this Indian lad, who had lived for about five weeks on the putrid flesh of the animal, was discovered, he made feints with a bone as though it were a weapon pointing it at his adversaries, who promptly shot him.

These, so far as I can learn, were all of the Indians who lost their lives in this raid.

But the Indians left a trail of dead in their wake, and committed brutal outrages on women and mere children. (The writer does not think it necessary to name those unfortunate

²⁰. Personal Interview by the author with Billy O'Toole.

women and children.)

The Indians continued on north and killed more whites on the Beaver the next day.

In all, thirty-one citizens of Kansas were murdered by this band of Indians, who were followed by United States troops "at a safe distance."

The names of those killed in Decatur County, to whose memory the State of Kansas erected a monument in the northeast corner of the Oberlin cemetery in 1911, through the efforts of County Representative, J. D. Flanagan, are as follows:

Names taken from the Monument in the Oberlin Cemetery.

E. O. Humphrey (father)
John Humphrey (son)
John C. Hutson
Geo. F. Walters (correct name Fred K. Waltzer according to Fred Bliss, who helped to bury the dead)

Moses F. Abernathy
Mr. Lull
Ferdinand Wespahlen and son
Marcellus Felt
John Irwin
John Wright
Edward Miskelly (buried at Buffalo Park)
Frederick Hamper (buried in field where he was killed)
John Young
James G. Smith
William Laing, Sr. (father)
William Laing, Jr. (son)
John G. Laing (son)
Freemen Laing (son)

The Indian raid did not drive the people from the county. In a few days nearly all of the people returned to their places of abode on their homesteads.

The following list will show in part the loss sustained by the people during the Indian raid. The amounts in this list were claims allowed by the United States Government.²¹

Susana Walters	\$145.00
Mary Abernathy	260.00
Peter D. Adams	60.00
J. B. Jennings	88.00
Jacob Stroup	50.00
G. B. Street	162.75
J. L. Peck	323.42
L. G. Rider	122.70
Patrick Drohen	491.50
G. F. Sledham	178.00
Byron Churchill	94.50
Mrs. E. J. Humphrey	623.00
Robert Bridle	585.85
Mary Hamper	55.00
Sarah Hudson	350.00
Margaret Smith	295.00
Thos. A. Robertson	93.00
Henry Rathbon	45.00
James Bailey	110.00
Sam Q. Robertson	180.00
N. W. Rider	61.50
Orin Judkins	65.00
J. C. Ufford	17.50
James A. Gaumer	224.25
Julia Laing	1793.56
John McKenzia	128.50
J. J. Keefer	70.00
Lea Shody	45.00
Ed. D. Stillson	40.00

The following printed in the Oberlin Herald issue of July 31, 1879 shows how the claims, filed by the people, who suffered losses in the raid, were handled by the Government.

The Indian commissioners created under an act of the recent Legislature to audit claims of persons, who suffered from the depredations of Indians last year, have filed their report with the Governor.

²¹. Taken from Oberlin Herald, Oct. 16, 1879.

The commission consists of Hon. R. E. Stevenson, Hon. W.R. Adams, and A. W. Mann, with Jas. Clayton as clerk.

During the progress of their labors they traveled two hundred and thirty miles across the state in eighteen days or made only thirteen miles per day on the average. From this report, we learn that the total number of claims presented was 116, which amounted to \$182,646.13. Of these there were 90 allowed in the sum of \$101,766.83. The total number of deaths by Indians - 32. Number of heads of families killed - 15.

Auditor Bonebrake says the report is one of the finest ever made to the Governor. It is clear and concise and rightly done.²²

A great number of settlers continued to come for homes in 1879 and a census showed 1500 inhabitants of the county.

Two hundred and fifty voters signed a petition to the Governor of Kansas, John P. St. John, asking that Decatur County be organized. The petition was granted naming Oberlin as the temporary county seat with J. B. Hitchcock, Frank Kimball and George W. Shoemaker, commissioners and Ed. Stillson, county clerk.

22. Oberlin Herald July 31, 1879.

Chapter IV

Decatur County Organized

As was stated at the close of the previous chapter, Mr. John Neve was appointed by the Governor of the state to take the census of the county.

The law at this time provided that if the return of the census showed that there were at least 1500 bonafide inhabitants in the county and that 250 of them were householders, it was the duty of the Governor to appoint temporary officers and name a place for the temporary county seat.

The census showed that the county had the minimum bonafide inhabitants so a committee called a mass meeting of the voters of Decatur County to be held in the Masonic Hall in Oberlin on Saturday, Nov. 4, 1879, for the purpose of selecting the names of four persons to recommend to the Governor, three for appointment as temporary county commissioners and one as temporary county clerk.²³

The following paragraphs contain minutes of the mass convention.

"Pursuant to the call made by the committee on organization and published in the Oberlin Herald, the people of Decatur County assembled in mass convention on the south side of Beckwith and McCall's store, the hall not being large enough to accommodate the vast assembly.

23. Oberlin Herald Oct. 23, 1879.

4

The meeting was called to order at 1P.M. Ed. Knowles was chosen chairman and S.L.Bishop, Secretary. The chairman stated that the object of the meeting was to select three men to recommend to Gov. St. John for appointment as temporary county commissioners of Decatur County and also one man for appointment as temporary county clerk of Decatur County.

G. Webb Bertram moved that the convention take a recess of fifteen minutes in order that the delegates from the Beaver, Prairie Dog and Sappa precincts might meet and select men to present to the convention as candidates for temporary county commissioners.

The motion carried.

After recess, the convention having been called to order the reports from the different delegations on nominations were called for; and Mr. Bowen for the Beaver delegation presented the name of Frank Kimball; John Neve for the Sappa, the name of J. B. Hitchcock; and W. A. Burnett, for the Prairie Dog, the name of Geo. W. Shoemaker.

G. Webb Bertram then moved that J. B. Hitchcock, Frank Kimball and Geo. W. Shoemaker be recommended by this convention to the Governor for appointment as temporary county commissioners of Decatur County. Carried.

Wm. Love moved that Edward Stiltson be recommended by this convention to the Governor for appointment as temporary county clerk of Decatur County. Carried.

G. Webb Bertram moved that a committee of three be appointed to draft a petition to the Governor, praying for the appoint-

ment of the men recommended by the convention. Carried.

The names of Bertram, Bowman, Henscom and Tompkins were suggested and the motion was amended so as to include the four.

John Neve moved that the convention take a recess of 10 minutes in order to permit the committee on petitions to draw up the same and present it to the convention for approval and signatures. Carried.

After recess the committee presented a petition which was unenimously adopted, and the chairman and secretary were instructed to sign it at once and cause it to be circulated for signatures.

Convention then adjourned."

- Sine Die -

Ed. Knowles - Chairman,
Syl. L. Bishop - Secy.²⁴

The following is the Governor's proclamation organizing the county of Decatur and locating the temporary county seats:

"Whereas, a memorial signed by 250 householders, residents of Decatur County, Kansas and legal electors of the State, whose signitures have been duly attested by the affidavits of three householders thereof showing that said county had 1500 inhabitants, and praying for the organization of the same: ssid affidavits setting forth that they had reason to and did believe said memorial be true, and

Whereas, it appears from enumeration by census return duly made and certified according to law by an officer regularly

appointed, commissioned and qualified that there are 1500 bonafide inhabitants in said county of Decatur.

Now, therefore, know ye that I, John P. St. John, Governor of the State of Kansas, by virtue of the authority vested in me by law, have appointed and commissioned Frank Kimball, John B. Hitchcock and George W. Shoemaker, County Commissioners and B.D. Stillson as County Clerk, of said county and do hereby designate and declare the town of Oberlin to be the temporary county seat.

In testimony whereof, I have here unto subscribed my name and affixed the Great Seal of the State."

Done at the City of Topeka this eleventh day of December, A. D. 1879, by the Governor.

John P. St. John

(Seal)

James Smith, Secretary of State.²⁵

The commissioners met and after qualifying proceeded to business by issuing a proclamation for an election to be held in the various townships on Tuesday, February 3, 1880, designating the voting precincts throughout the county and naming them as follows:

Grant township - towns one and two, range twenty-six; towns one and two, range twenty-seven; town one, range twenty-eight, voting place - Hamp Sherrard's.

Beaver township - town one, range twenty-nine and thirty;

25. Oberlin Herald, December 18, 1879.

town two, range thirty - voting place, Mrs. Mary Hamper's.

Bassetville township - towns three, four and five, range thirty - voting place, Bassetville schoolhouse.

Oberlin township - towns two and three, range twenty-eight, towns two and three, range twenty-nine - voting place, Oberlin schoolhouse.

Prairie Dog township - towns four and five, range twenty-eight; towns four and five, range twenty-nine - voting place, District No. 3 (Shoemaker) schoolhouse.

Jennings township - towns three, four and five, range twenty-six; towns three, four and five, range twenty-seven - voting place, Jennings schoolhouse.

They then adjourned to meet on Monday, February 6, 1880, at which time they would canvass the votes cast at the election held on Tuesday, February 3rd.

The following proclamation was issued for the election for February 3, 1880 to choose officials for the county and for the various townships.²⁶

Proclamation of an Election.

To the Legal Voters of Decatur County, Kansas.

There will be an election held in the various townships of Decatur County, Kansas on Tuesday, February 3, 1880.

For the County Seats

One Representative
County Attorney
One Sheriff

26. Grant, Beaver, Bassetville, Oberlin, Prairie Dog and Jennings

County Clerk
County Treasurer
Probate Judge
Clerk of the District Court
Register of Deeds
County Superintendent of Public Instruction
County Surveyor
One Coroner
Three County Commissioners

For the election in each of the townships of Grant, Beaver, Bassetville, Oberlin, Prairie Dog and Jennings:

Two Justices of the Peace
Two Constables
One Township Trustee
One Township Clerk
One Township Treasurer
One Road Overseer."

Done at Oberlin, the County Seat of Decatur County, Kansas, this 15th day of December, A. D. 1879.

Frank Kimball, Chairman
John B. Hitchcock
Geo. W. Shoemaker

By order of the Board of County Commissioners.

E. D. Stillson, County Clerk.²⁷

A call was issued, for a meeting of the people of the county without regard to previous party association, to be held on the 17th day of January, 1880, at Oberlin at one o'clock P. M., for the purpose of placing in nomination candidates for the various county offices.

This call also stated that the people of the various townships should meet on the 10th day of January, to elect their delegates for the convention on the 17th of January.

27. Oberlin Herald, December 25, 1879.

The townships were allowed delegates as follows:

Jennings - 11	Prairie Dog - 6
Bassetville - 5	Beaver - 4
Grant - 8	Oberlin - 11

This convention met and the following names were submitted as those nominated on the Peoples ticket:

County Commissioners

Henry Claar - Bassetville Precinct
J. C. Johnson - Jennings Precinct
Frank Kimball - Beaver Precinct

For Representative - M. A. Conklin
County Clerk - N. G. Addleman
County Treasurer - Geo. Metcalf
Sheriff - W. A. Frasier
County Attorney - Ed. M. Bowman
Probate Judge - Luther Brown
Register of Deeds - Geo. W. Keys
Clerk of District Court - W. A. Colvin
Superintendent of Public Instruction - D. W. Burt
County Surveyor - S. L. Bishop
Coroner - Dr. Street 28

The commissioners met on Friday, February 6, 1880 to canvass the votes cast the previous Tuesday and found that between eight and nine hundred votes had been polled. The People's ticket candidates were elected and Oberlin was chosen as the permanent county seat by a majority of 181 votes. The only opposition for the location of the county seat was by a group representing Decatur Center.

These men had a townsite platted June 2nd and filed for record June 14, 1879. The location of this townsite was as follows:

28. Oberlin Herald, January 22, 1880

Parts of SW¹/₄ section 22 town 3 range 28
SE¹/₄ section 21 town 3 range 28
NW¹/₄ section 27 town 3 range 28
NE¹/₄ section 28 town 3 range 28

The surveyor was George W. Boning.

The officers for the promotion of this town were Wm. H. Jackson, President, Wm. Wheeler, Vice President, Wm. Elliot, Treasurer, and Frank B. Lehman, Secretary.²⁹

The location for the county seat was not so much of an issue as it was in many of the western counties. Decatur Center was located just one mile south of the geographical center of the county.

The petition for locating the temporary county seat at Oberlin, had five hundred and twenty-five names, while that for Decatur Center had about four hundred names.³⁰

"Some of the citizens living near the Post Office on the hill called Decatur Center, nominated, last Saturday, the following parties for county officers. Representative, Wilson; County Clerk, John L. Parks; Probate Judge, Wheeler; Coroner, Hughes; County Superintendent, Wilcoxer; and Register of Deeds, Johnson, all of Decatur Center."³¹

In the same issue appeared an article to the effect that a petition was being circulated by the people of Decatur Center to have the United States land office located at Atwood in Rawlins County should a new land district be formed.

The editor of the Herald wrote, "It looks like the people of Decatur Center are working against the interests of the tax-

30. Oberlin Herald, Dec. 25, 1879.

31. Oberlin Herald, Jan. 15, 1880.

4

payers of the county. Voters, remember this when you deposit your ballot the 3rd day of February."

G. Webb Bertram received a letter from O. A. Hanscom, representing others from Decatur Center, in which he stated that Decatur Center had made her pledge, other points have said what they will do and they want to know what Oberlin will do. He further stated that unless Oberlin was willing to do as well as the other points proportionately with the benefit to be received, they should try to fix upon some point for permanent county seat where the county would reap a part of the benefit and Oberlin would not have the permanent county seat.³²

Mr. Bertram in his reply states that, "the people stood all right on all civic affairs, if they could be judged by the past, as the citizens had built a bridge across the Sappa at a cost of \$200.00, and had subscribed \$500.00 for a mill located in Oberlin."

There was talk also that prospective homesteaders going west through Decatur Center had been asked to sign a petition to have the land office located at or near the center of Rawlins County. The Oberlin Herald states in the issue of January 29, 1880, "The parties that are doing this ought not to be recognized by any respectable citizen."

A six column newspaper called the "Decatur Center Advance" was started at Decatur Center published by Bogart and Ackerman, but after two weeks existence was moved to Jackson and

32. Oberlin Herald, Jan. 22, 1880.

was known as the "Jackson Guardian."³³

The other towns of the county in 1879 were: Cedar Bluffs, Kalamazoo, Decatur, Lyle, Slab City, Shibboleth, Connersville.³⁴

A map of Kansas published by the State Board of Agriculture, copyright, 1879, by Rand, McNally and Co., Chicago, shows the following towns: Cedar Bluffs and Connersville on the Beaver, Decatur and Oberlin on the Sappa and Shibboleth on the Prairie Dog. The creek that is now known as Big Timber was designated on this map as Tom Cat creek.

The Oberlin Herald issue of March 4, 1880 states that a new town was started in the extreme southwestern corner of the county. The name of the town was Blaine.

Clayton, a town on the county line, about half way between Oberlin and Norton, in December, 1879 had two stores, a hotel and a church on the townsite.

At the town of Lyle, in February, 1880, a store building was under construction and a saw mill was in operation. Mr. Andrews was the postmaster.³⁵

Jackson, on the Prairie Dog, had two dry goods stores, one drug store and a post office with Wm. Tenant as postmaster. There was also a mill for flour making.

In September, 1885, a town known as Cleversburgh was surveyed and platted on the northwest part of the north east $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 12, town 5, range 29.³⁶

33. Oberlin Herald Feb. 12, 1880.

34. Cram Map published 1879 by Geo. F. Cram.

35. Oberlin Herald Feb. 12, 1880.

36. Record Book of Plats of Decatur Co. in Register of Deeds Office at Oberlin.

5

Kanona, located on the northeast $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 18, town 3, range 27, was surveyed and platted in September 1885.³⁷ Allison, located on the southeast $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 32, town 5, range 26, was surveyed and platted in September 1885.³⁸ Traer, located on parts of the following: southwest $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 26, southeast $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 27, northeast $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 34 and northwest $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 35, all in town 1, range 30, was surveyed and platted Mar. 1888.³⁹

Jennings, located on the corner of the northeast $\frac{1}{2}$ of Section 5, town 4, range 27 was surveyed and platted, May 1888.⁴⁰ Dresden was surveyed and platted, May 1888.⁴¹ Decatur, was surveyed and platted by the Lincoln Land Co. in 1885.⁴² The present townsite of Cedar Bluffs was surveyed and platted by the Lincoln Land Co. in May 1888.⁴³ Shibboleth, located on the southwest corner of the northwest $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 7, town 5, range 28, was surveyed and platted in April 1886.⁴⁴ Leaville, located on the southwest $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 27, town 5, range 28, was surveyed and platted November 1920.⁴⁵

The Republicans held a meeting in the various townships on February 21, for the purpose of electing a Republican County Central Committee. Each precinct was entitled to one member to serve on the county committee, which met on the 28th day of February at Oberlin for the organization and the transaction of political business.⁴⁶

37. Record Book of Plats of Decatur Co. in Register of Deeds Office at Oberlin.

38. *ibid.*

39. *ibid.*

40. *ibid.*

41. *ibid.*

42. *ibid.*

43. *ibid.*

44. *ibid.*

45. *ibid.*

46. O. H. Feb. 12, 1880.

The Democrats called a mass meeting to be held April 24, 1880 for the purpose of electing a central committee and electing a delegate to the state convention.⁴⁷

Immigrants continued to come into the county during the spring of 1880. A great many were from Austria.⁴⁸ The editor of the Oberlin Herald ventured the prediction that before the winter of 1880 all the vacant government land would be taken.

During the spring months, buffalo meat was selling in Oberlin for 7 cents a pound.⁴⁹

The Register of the United States Land Office at Kirwin, reported, on March 1, 1880, eleven thousand, two hundred (11,200) acres of land had been proved up on in the county.⁵⁰

The Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution on April 9, known as the "Herd Law", prohibiting all meat cattle, horses, mules, asses, swine and sheep from running at large.⁵¹ Decatur County was passing the first stages of the frontier. The cattleman was giving way to the agriculturist.

The newspaper, that was moved from Decatur Center to Jackson, changed hands, Mr. Bogart selling his interests to Sol Rees. The paper continued publication under the name "Jackson Guardian" with Rees and Ackerman as publishers.⁵¹

The county was divided into five districts, numbers 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, for the purpose of taking the census. Those appointed as census enumerators were;

-
- 47. O. H. Apr. 15, 1880.
 - 48. O. H. Apr. 22, 1880.
 - 49. O. H. Mar. 4, 1880.
 - 50. O. H. Apr. 1, 1880.
 - 51. O. H. May 6, 1880.

Dist. 55 - J. D. Wickham, Lyle
Dist. 56 - E. W. Ford, Jennings
Dist. 57 - James H. Barnes, Oberlin
Dist. 58 - W. H. Nelson, Oberlin
Dist. 59 - D. C. Floyd, Oberlin

They began work on June 1.⁵²

The "Jackson Guardian" in August contained this statement:
"Several Oberlin men had the audacity to come over here with
with land office petitions last week."⁵³

The summer of 1880 was very dry and great numbers of people
left the county. Of those who remained many were greatly in
need of the necessities of life. In August, the first aid to be
given, 7,200 lbs. of food and clothing, was received and distrib-
uted to the various townships. A carload of food, grain and
clothing was shipped to Grainfield, the nearest railroad point,
for distribution among the needy in Decatur County.⁵⁴

Although no crops were raised the summer of 1880, the people
were politically minded and two tickets were submitted to the
voters at the fall election. The election results were as follows:

Representative - J. B. Hitchcock
County Clerk - H. D. Colvin
County Attorney - L. G. Parker
Sheriff - C. E. Ayer
Supt. of Schools - D. W. Burt
Probate Judge - Luther Brown
Register of Deeds - Geo. W. Keys
Clerk of District Court - D. C. Floyd
County Surveyor - Wm. McKay
Coroner - W. A. Colvin
County Commissioners - F. H. Cornish
John Hayward
W. A. Burnett 55

52. O. H. May 6, 1880.

53. This refers to the petitions to get the land office located
at Oberlin.

54. O. H. Aug. 5, 1880.

55. Mr. Burnett was the only Democrat elected. The other success-
ful candidates were Republicans. O. H. Nov. 4, 1880.

The county had passed its first milestone, Organization had been completed and the first set of officers, elected at a general election, were to take over the affairs of the new county.

Chapter V

Early Schools and Churches

Usually the first thing pioneers in the new country do after locating a place to live and building some sort of a home, is to plan for the education of their children and the spiritual welfare of the community.

Historians tell us that among the first public buildings to be built in the new county are churches and schools. It seems that the desire for a place to worship is one of the dominant characteristics of Christian civilization.

The early schools in the county were of course subscription schools. Each pupil was required to pay for the privilege of attending, usually from \$1.00 to \$3.00 per month to some individual who would teach them the fundamentals of "readin', fitin', and 'rithmetic." Perhaps this has come down to our present civilization from the old "Dame Schools" which were quite common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe.

The first school at Oberlin was a subscription school, and a man by the name of Geo. Worthington was teacher. This school was held in a dugout and about ten pupils attended.⁵⁶ The cost of attendance was \$1.00 per month per pupil. The first school was held during the months of December, 1874 and January and February of 1875. The dugout used for a schoolhouse had been vacated by a man by the name of Van Wormer, who had built a frame building for a store and residence combined.

The spring of 1877 a log schoolhouse was built.⁵⁷

56. John Love was one of the Pupils.

57. Near the site of the Oberlin Mill, which was destroyed by fire in 1929.

5.

It was made of hewn logs obtained from Matthew Montgomery, who lived about twelve miles down the Sappa. J. E. Love and W. E. Ufford hauled the rafters and poles for the roof, from the South Sappa, near the west county line. The building was finished with four windows, homemade seats and door and had a dirt floor.

Oberlin school district No. 1 was formed August 9, 1879, and perfected June 2, 1880.⁵⁸ This was the first district school organized in the county.

The people of Jennings had a subscription school in 1879 with Miss Mary Aldrich as the first teacher. Then March 12, 1880, a school district was formed which was perfected April 14, 1880.⁵⁹

The Traer school was formed on July 10, 1880 and perfected Aug. 13, 1880. The first teacher to teach in the regularly organized school at Jackson was E. W. Ford in 1882.⁶⁰

Cedar Bluffs was also among the first to organize a school district. The district was formed May 17, 1880 and perfected April 14, 1880.⁶¹

The school district at Allison was formed October 20, 1885 and perfected November 28, 1885.⁶²

Kanona district was formed March 1, 1886 and perfected March 26, 1886.⁶³

There is no record in the county superintendent's office of the organization of the joint district at Norcatun.

58. Book A. Record in Co. Supt. Office.

59. *ibid.*

60. Diary by E.W. Ford permission of daughters, Ada Ford and Mrs. Grace Munson, Jennings.

61. Book A Record Book Co Supt.

62. *ibid.*

63. *ibid.*

The Dresden district was not formed until March 11, 1889 and organization was perfected April 20, 1889 after the Rock Island Railroad was built.⁶⁴

There are no special records to show when the school district at Leoville was organized, but it was supposed to be in the year, 1902.⁶⁵

We may see by this rather brief account that education had an important place in the lives of the early settlers. Perhaps this may account for the splendid schools in the county at the present time.

Early Church Meetings

The earliest recollection of church meetings in Jennings were those held in Warren Jennings' kitchen.⁶⁶

"The earliest record found of the Methodist Church organization at Jennings was given by W. A. Saville, who was pastor on the Norton circuit in 1878. He named Jennings as one of the seventeen preaching places which he had added to his charge during the year. He stated further that the town of Jennings was a large cattle ranch. Later in the year, he mentioned the "Indian Raid" and that "Jennings" and his men had a skirmish with the Indians.

He gave the membership of a number of classes which he formed, but unfortunately the Jennings class was not given.

Warren and H. L. Jennings were transferred from the Slab City circuit to the Leta⁶⁷ and Jennings charge, May 3, 1879.

64. Book A Record Book Co. Supt.

65. *ibid.*

66. Personal Interview with Ada Ford and Mrs. Grace Munson.

67. Leta was a town in Norton County.

That year the Conference Minutes gave E. R. Zimmerman as pastor of the Leota and Jennings charge. The next year Oberlin and Jennings constituted a charge.

The following men were at the Jennings charge up to the year 1892: G. W. Mosley, A. M. Lott, J. L. Daniels and Thomas Muxlow.⁶⁸

The Baptist movement at Jennings did not get started as early as the Methodist. The Baptist Church was built in 1899 and dedicated on December 24 of that year.⁶⁹

Another early Methodist class to be organized was at Lyle in 1877, by Reuben Bisbee, in a dugout belonging to Samuel Andrews, with eight or ten charter members, including the Andrews', the Wickhams', George Fossler, Sarah Shipton and Lizzie Sorrick.

Later that same year a log church was dedicated by the presiding elder, W. J. Mitchell. In 1879 the pastor was E. G. Carey, who lived at Oberlin, which at that time was the head of the circuit. The first parsonage was a dugout.

Following Carey as pastor of the charge was J. L. Langley and later in 1881, W. J. Meredith, a student from Baker University.

68. Sweet, Wm. H., "A History of Methodism in Northwest Kansas." Kansas Wesleyan University, 1920. pp 219.

The building was completed and dedicated October 15, 1893. At that time, it was said to be the best in the district, but not the largest. In 1916 an addition was built and a furnace and electric lights installed. The Jennings church reported 97 members: Supt. of Sunday School, Elmer Bartley; President of Epworth League, Clifford Rogers. (a brother of the author of this thesis.)

69. Diary of Ada Ford.

The American Legion Post No. 351 of Jennings purchased the building and have converted it into a Legion Hall.

5

During Rev. Meredith's pastorate, a new sod church was built at Lyle. In 1882, Lyle was without a regular pastor, but in 1884 it again became a part of the circuit under the pastorate of Rev. George Multon of the Oberlin charge. In 1887 Lyle was united with the Norcaturo charge, which had been organized in 1884 by Rev. Reuben Bisbee. This organization was formed about one and one-half miles east of the present townsite of Norcaturo. The charge was moved to Norcaturo and the meetings were held in the schoolhouse until September 1898 when a church was dedicated that had been built that year.⁷⁰

The Methodist Church at Oberlin was organized in 1877 by Rev. Reuben Bisbee in the home of J. A. Rodehaver. The services were held in the Rodehaver home until the schoolhouse was built during the summer of 1877.

The first Methodist Church in Oberlin was dedicated December 19, 1886 by Dr. H. D. Fisher and the Methodists moved into their own church. They had used the Presbyterian church since it was built in 1883.

The first church and Sunday School held in Dresden was in the waiting room of the depot and as the railroad did not go through until 1888 it was not one of the first Methodist charges to be organized.

Kanona was a circuit having two appointments when first organized, with Olive Chapel as the other charge. It is not known just when either class was organized or who the charter members were, but Kanona appears as the name of a charge in the conference minutes of 1891.

70. Sweet - History of Methodism. pp 237.

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The Cedar Bluffs class must have been organized for years before it was known in the Conference. The name is not found in the minutes until 1905. But it was mentioned that a class was formed at Cedar Bluffs on the Glade circuit about 1879.⁷¹

The First Baptist Church of Oberlin was organized January 31, 1880, with Rev. D. D. Banta as pastor, which position he held for a number of years. Rev. Banta had come to Decatur county as a Colporteur, and preached in many of the school-houses and in some of the private homes.

In 1899, the Baptist organization purchased the building erected by the Lutheran society in 1887, the Lutheran society having failed to grow as expected.⁷²

The First Presbyterian Church of Oberlin was organized January 11, 1880 with nine members. Rev. John Wilson was the first pastor. The Presbyterians built the first frame church in the county. The church was dedicated August 9, 1883 by Rev. Timothy Hill, D. D. of Kansas City.⁷³

"The Catholic faith was first brought to the county and Oberlin by Father Richard, a man who was past middle age. He traveled in the northwest counties in search of a scattered flock and his method of travel was slow. He traveled in a one horse buggy."⁷⁴ A church was built in Oberlin in 1886.

"The Leoville Catholic Parish had its start in the month of October 1885 when a band of gallant men led by Joseph Dempe-

71. Sweet, Wm. H., A History of Methodism, pp 211.
72. The Baptist Church federated in 1921 with the Church of Christ which was organized in 1900.
73. The first building was erected on the present church site.
74. The Kansas Knight of Feb. 1931.

wolf erected a small church in which Rev. Father Reichert offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the first time in November 1885. This church, though humble it was, served for several years when under the leadership of Rev. Father Wenzel. A larger frame structure was erected and used by him for three years and afterwards by his successor, Rev. Father Withoff for thirteen years longer.⁷⁵

The Christian church at Dresden was organized in 1893 and a building erected that same year.⁷⁶

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church located Northwest of Oberlin was founded in the year 1886 with seven charter members as follows: Paul Meyer, H. Thalte, John Rippel, Henry C. Enhus, Henry May, Henry Stier and Ernest Leyrer.

In 1887 a sod church was erected which served until 1904.⁷⁷

The people of Shibboleth community held their first meetings in Ira L. Peck's store building. Sunday School meetings were held quite regularly also.

After the North Valley Schoolhouse was built, the building was used for church services until the present church building was erected in 1899.⁷⁸

Lund Swedish Mission Church.

As early as 1880 the people of the Lund district held church meetings in the homes of the people and later used the

75. The Kansas Knight Feb. 1931. The Rev. Father Martin J. J. Schmitt, present pastor, has been a faithful worker and Leoville now has the most beautiful Catholic Church in Kansas. Total Cost \$118,000.00 entirely free from debt.

76. Book of record of membership 1893.

77. Information furnished by F. A. Wengener, Present Pastor.

78. Diary Ada Ford and Mrs. Grace Munson.

61

school buildings. A sod church was built in 1869, which was used for about ten years until the present building was erected in 1888.⁷⁹

The early church organizations in the southeast part of the county were at Allison and at the Glen Valley schoolhouse. These two organizations were united in 1908 forming the Allison Christian Church.

Quaker or Friends

Some of the early settlers were "Quakers" or "Friends" as they are sometimes called.

A "Friend" minister, Nathan Perry, in 1866 held a revival meeting in the Pleasant Valley schoolhouse, which was located two miles north, and two and one-half miles east of the present townsite of Jennings. A "Friends" organization was perfected, and in 1867 a sod meeting house was built near the schoolhouse.

The next year 1868, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad was built passing a few rods north of the church.⁸⁰

The Friends also organized at Mt. Vernon, northeast of Kanona and at Fairview, southeast of the town of Dresden. Among the early day evangelists and resident ministers appear the names of Nathan Perry, William Perry, D. H. Dillon, Anna Strange, Anna Winslow, Elming Howard, Mark Modlin, Rev. Jones, Geo. McGraw, Asa Folger, Cynthia Stanley, Edith Stanton, Rev. Puckett, Silas Crispin, Fred David and Elizabeth A. Carter.

During the dry years many of the Friends moved away and those remaining either transferred their membership to North

79. Lindenholm Bros. Topeka 1917. Mission Friends in Kansas and Missouri.

80. This made it easier for ministers to come from Jewell County, Kansas and other points east.

Branch, Kansas, where a strong organization flourished or united with other Protestant churches.⁸¹

Perhaps more church organizations were started in the early days but if the writer has omitted any it is because he has been unable to find any record or meet anyone who could give the information.

81. Interview with Jesse Carter, son of Elizabeth A. Carter, one of the early ministers.

Chapter VI

Early Industries

Agriculture, from the beginning of the settlement of the county, has been the chief industry. When the first settlers came, their meat supply, chiefly buffalo meat, could be obtained quite easily but all other supplies had to be freighted in wagons from Cawker City, Kirwin or Buffalo Park, Kansas, and from railroad points in Nebraska.

One of the early industries was a brickmaking plant southwest of Oberlin, which flourished for a few years. Brick made at this plant sold at one time for \$12.00 per thousand.

Just west of Cedar Bluffs, on the Beaver, there was a mill for the grinding of wheat into flour. The Rose Brothers had a flour mill at Jackson on the Prairie Dog, valued at \$2500.00 in 1881. The citizens of Oberlin in 1879 subscribed \$500.00 for a flour mill to be located at Oberlin on the Sappa.

The following report was compiled from the deputy assessor's records, in 1881 by the county clerks:

No. acres taxable lands under cultivation	2,276
No. acres taxable not cultivated	<u>14,070</u>
Total No. acres lands taxable	16,346
Aggregate value of lands taxable	\$46,573
No. improved town lots	74
No. unimproved town lots	<u>694</u>
Total no. town lots	768
Aggregate value of all town lots	\$17,771
Aggregate value of all personal property	95,156
Total Value of taxable property	159,501
No. of houses erected during the year, 1898 valued at	4,085

Acres

Winter Wheat -----	1,355
Spring Wheat -----	959
Rye -----	429
Corn -----	11,761
Barley -----	9
Oats -----	34
Buckwheat -----	43
Irish Potatoes -----	124
Sweet Potatoes -----	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
Sorghum -----	269
Flax -----	3
Tobacco -----	2
Broom Corn -----	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
Millet and Hungarian -----	2,596
Egyptian or Rich corn -----	40

Bu. old corn on hand Mar. 1, 1881 -----	1,324
No. tons prairie hay cut in 1880 -----	2,152
Whole No. acres in farms -----	72,720
Lbs. Cheese made in families -----	41,159
No. Horses -----	858
No. Mules and asses -----	149
No. Milch cows -----	790
No. Other cattle -----	1,259
No. Sheep -----	1,603
No. Swine -----	420

Value of animals slaughtered or sold for slaughter during the year.-----	\$7,891
No. lbs wool clip of 1880 -----	3,237
No. Apple trees not bearing -----	780
No. Peach trees not bearing -----	1,428
No. Pear trees not bearing -----	8
No. Plum trees not bearing -----	225
No. Cherry trees not bearing -----	122

No. Families -----	599
Total population -----	2,722
No. rods board fence -----	200
No. rods stone fence -----	6
No. rods rail fence -----	1,588
No. rods hedge fence -----	58
No. rods wire fence -----	5,775

The above report gives one a mental picture of the occupation of the settlers during that period. General farming was

to become the basic industry of the county in the next few years.

The State Board of Agriculture gave the following report of crops raised in the county in 1882:

	Acres	Bushels
Irish potatoes -----	75 -----	5,840
Sweet potatoes -----	8 -----	600
Castor beans -----	34 -----	340
Flax -----	2 -----	16
Broom corn -----	355 -----	213,000 lbs.
Sorghum -----	453 -----	40,770 gal.
Millet and Hungarian -----	2,111 -----	3,166 tons
Timothy meadow -----	20 -----	30 tons
Prairie meadow -----	268 -----	402 tons ⁸²

The following are the reports of the State Board of Agriculture for 1929-1930, which show the growth of various phases of agriculture:

Decatur County

Number of farms -----	1,347
Rank in population -----	74
Assessed valuation -----	\$15,669,094
Miles of railroad, main track -----	57
Population 1929 -----	8,235
1930 -----	8,211
Assessed valuation of property, 1930	
Land -----	\$ 9,131,780
City lots -----	\$ 1,233,890
Personal -----	\$ 3,272,540
Public service, etc. -----	\$ 2,030,874
Total -----	\$15,669,094

Livestock	1929		1930	
	Number	Value	Number	Value
Horses	7,370	\$353,760	6,946	\$291,732
Mules and asses	1,304	82,152	1,122	67,320
Milk cows	5,164	382,136	5,447	299,585
Other cattle	13,932	724,464	17,397	556,704
Sheep	1,805	14,440	5,130	25,650
Swine	19,600	235,200	19,770	276,780
Totals	49,175	\$1,793,152	55,812	\$1,517,771

Summary - Decatur County

Product and value for year ending March 1.

Products	1929		1930	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
Field crops, acres	285,055	\$3,411,067.78	299,244	\$3,133,724.00
Live stock	-----	1,812,697.00	-----	1,710,737.00
Poultry and eggs	-----	145,854.00	-----	180,343.00
Wool clip lbs.	12,088	3,022.00	35,910	5,764.00
Cheese lbs.	225	29.25	170	22.10
Butter lbs.	72,643	29,057.20	77,136	26,997.60
Condensed milk and Ice Cream	-----	6,670.80	-----	8,191.10
Milk	-----	149,333.00	-----	153,394.00
Honey and Beeswax	-----			
Totals		\$5,557,751.03		\$5,219,394.80
Number of tractors, March 1, 1929	-----			376
March 1, 1930	-----			393
Number of combines (harvester threshers) March 1, 1929	-----			108
March 1, 1930	-----			163
Number of threshing machines (not combines)				
March 1, 1929	-----			35
March 1, 1930	-----			35
Number of lister or furrow drills, March 1, 1930	-----			147
Pasture, March 1, 1930, Prairie grass, acres	-----			202,509

These reports show material gain in the past fifty years. No historian can adequately write of the hardships and sufferings of the early settlers. Words have not been coined that will tell of the courage of the pioneer in his continual struggle for existence. However, privations and hardships tend to build character and create a race of people that will forge ahead despite all difficulties.

This, in the author's estimation, accounts for the progressiveness in all phases of life in Decatur County.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

I Personal Interviews

Bliss, F. F., May 19, 1931.

Still resides on the land he homesteaded. Was the first barber in Oberlin.

Dimmick, Clarence, May 18, 1931.

Told of many interesting events that happened along the Beaver in 1873.

Hamper, L. J., May 17, 1931.

Son of Frederick Hamper, who was killed by the Indians Sept. 1878.

Love, John E., May 17, 1931.

Aided the author in obtaining material. Came to the Sappa Sept. 12, 1873. Walked all the way, bare-foot, driving milk cows.

O'Toole, Billy, May 18, 1931.

Hid from the Indians along the Sappa creek during the raid.

Riley, Lawrence, May 17, 1931.

Came to the county, Sept. 12, 1873.

Schmitt, Rev. Father Martin J., Aug.

Has been pastor of Leoville parish since Dec. 1907.

Stiner, John K., May 17, 1931.

One of the early homesteaders now living near Oberlin.

Tachs, Mrs. Kate, May 16, 1931.

Came to the Big Timber with her parents, April 17, 1873 - has resided in the county longer than any person, so far as the author has been able to find.

Wegener, Rev. F. A., Aug. , 1931.

Present pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church northwest of Oberlin.

II Letters

Bertram, G. Webb.

Letters to Editor of Oberlin Herald, July 22, 1923,
and Sept. 25, 1923, explaining his early experiences
in 1872 and his part in the Indian Raid in 1878.

Carter, Jesse.

Son of Elizabeth A. Carter, one of the early "Friend"
preachers, Aug. 24, 1931.

Rouse, J. P.

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Scott, B. C.

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