

**Dickinson County**, located near the central part of the state, is in the third tier of counties south from Nebraska and the sixth west from the Missouri river. It was created by an act of the legislature in 1857, with the following boundaries: "Beginning at the southwest corner of Clay county, thence west along the southern boundary of said Clay county to the southwest corner thereof; thence south along the 6th principal meridian to the corner of townships 16 and 17 south; thence east along the township line to the range line between ranges 4 and 5 east; thence north along said range line to the middle of the main channel of the Smoky Hill fork of the Kansas river; thence up the middle of the main channel of the Smoky Hill fork to the southwest corner of Riley county; thence north with the west boundary of Riley county to the point of beginning." It was named after Daniel S. Dickinson, United States senator from the state of New York. The boundaries at present are practically those established by the act of creation and it is bounded on the north by Clay county, on the east by Geary and Morris, on the south by Marion and on the west by Saline and Ottawa counties. Its area is 851 square miles.

It is supposed that the first white men to pass over the territory now embraced in Dickinson county were Coronado (q. v.) and his followers, and the Bourgmont expedition probably passed through the county in 1724. A family named Lenon located on Chapman creek in 1855, but

did not stay. In the fall of the next year T. F. Hersey located on a claim on Mud creek near the present city of Abilene, but there was an impression that land so far west was not fit for habitation and settlement was slow. By some authorities it is estimated that there were not more than half a dozen families in the county at the time of its organization. Prior to that time the county was attached to Davis (now Geary) county as a municipal township for all civil and military purposes. C. W. Staatz settled on Lyon creek in 1857 and in 1858 a number of settlers arrived, locating along different streams. Among them were William Lamb, who took a claim on the Smoky Hill river; A. J. Markley, who settled on Turkey creek; William Breeson, on Lyon creek; E. W. Bradfield, on Mud creek. Although white settlers were coming into the county, the Smoky Hill valley and the prairies were still the hunting grounds of various Indian tribes, and the pioneers being far apart had more frequent red than white visitors. The Indians committed some depredations and at one time were caught and punished by Capt. Sturgis. Settlement was retarded by the Indians, who, while they professed friendship, could not be trusted. Supplies were brought this far west only at a great risk and inconvenience by slow ox teams. Kansas City and Leavenworth were the nearest points where grain could be ground and supplies purchased. Trips were usually made to these cities twice a year to market and mill, the whole family going along as it was unsafe to leave a few members alone, distant from other settlements.

Soon after the creation of the county in 1857, H. M. Rulison, Dr. Gerat and Nicholas White formed a town company and located what was known as Newport, the site of which was section 3, town 13, range 3, about a mile east of where Detroit now stands. The site was platted and a cabin built on each quarter section. In 1860 C. H. Thompson moved to Dickinson county from Leavenworth and located on land east of and adjoining T. F. Hersey. He laid out a town on Mud creek, which Mrs. Hersey named Abilene, and a few log houses were erected there. Another town, called Union City, was laid out south of the Smoky Hill river, on Turkey creek.

The first white child born in the county was C. F. Staatz, son of C. W. Staatz, who lived on Lyon creek, his birth occurring on June 24, 1857. The first death known to have occurred in the county was that of his sister Julia, who died in Oct., 1857. The first marriage was that of David Beigart and a Miss J. F. Staatz in 1859. The first school was organized on Lyon creek, in what is now Liberty township, in 1859, and was taught by William Miller. In Dickinson county the pioneer religious services were held by the Methodists, who erected a log church on Lyon creek in the spring of 1861, which was used for a school house on week days. Peter May was the first pastor of this pioneer congregation. A man named Jones opened the first store in the county at Abilene in 1860, and the first hotel opened was the Drover's Cottage at Abilene in 1866, owned by Joseph G. McCoy. The Chronicle, the first newspaper of the county, was established at Abilene in Feb., 1870, by V. P. Wilson.

Dickinson county was organized in 1858 with the following officers: Commissioners, William Lamb, James Long and William Mulligan; clerk, Dr. Gerot; treasurer, John Lamb; sheriff, Henry Long; register of deeds, John Long. The county board declared Newport the county seat. The records of the territorial era were burned in 1882, but it is known that in 1859, a voting precinct was established at Newport and 20 votes were cast at the November election. By 1860, the population of Dickinson county had increased to 378 and the first regular election was held in the fall.

The Smoky Hill river divides the county nearly in equal parts—the northern and southern. To accommodate the voters on both sides of the river the county commissioners established two voting precincts, one on the north side at Newport and one on the south side at A. J. Markley's house in Union City. The officers had hardly qualified when the county seat agitation began, the contesting points being Union City on the south and Smoky Hill (now Detroit), Abilene and Newport on the north side of the river. The settlers on the south side were fewer than those on the north side, but were united, while those on the north side were divided. Thompson and Hersey saw that, unless the people north of the river united, the county seat would go south of the river. A compromise was effected by which the settlers on Chapman's creek withdrew their support from Newport in favor of Abilene, and thus it became the seat of justice. The election took place in 1861. In 1870 a brick and stone court-house was built at the corner of Broadway and Second streets. On Jan. 17, 1882, the court-house burned and nearly all the county records were destroyed, except those of the register of deeds, which were in another building. A new court-house was soon contracted for at a cost of \$30,000 and was ready for occupancy late in the year.

The first railroad to enter the county was the Kansas Pacific, built along the valley of the Smoky Hill in 1866. At the present time the Union Pacific railroad crosses the county from east to west, passing through Abilene, with a branch south from Detroit. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe crosses the southern boundary a few miles west of the southeast corner, traverses the county in a northwesterly direction, and at Abilene branches, one line running west into Saline county, the other running northwest to Concordia. A line of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific system crosses the southeast corner of the county, with a branch from Herington to Abilene and Salina. A line of the Missouri Pacific crosses the southern part of the county, east and west, passing through Herington. These lines give the county more than 152 miles of main track road.

Dickinson county is divided into the following townships: Banner, Buckeye, Center, Cheever, Flora, Fragrant Hill, Garfield, Grant, Haynes, Holland, Hope, Jefferson, Liberty, Lincoln, Logan, Lyon, Newbern, Noble, Ridge, Rinehart, Sherman, Union, Wheatland and Willowdale. The surface of the country is gently rolling prairie which breaks into

bluffs along some of the streams. River valleys average 2 miles in width while the valleys of the creeks are only about a mile in width. This "bottom land" comprises about a quarter of the total area and the soil is rich and deep growing somewhat thinner on the upland. Timber—mostly walnut, ash, elm, hackberry, burr oak, cottonwood, hickory, honey-locust, box-elder and sycamore—is found along the streams. The largest water course is the Smoky Hill river, which flows across the county from west to east, a little north of the center. This stream, with its tributaries, the most important of which are Chapman's, Turkey and Vine creeks, waters all of the county. A few springs exist and good well water is found at a depth of 30 feet. The county is well adapted to agriculture, the principal crops being winter wheat, corn, and other grains. Tame grasses and prairie hay are also important products and Dickinson ranks high as one of the great stock raising counties. There are more than 225,000 bearing fruit trees, about half of which are apple. An excellent quality of limestone is abundant; mineral paint and clay for brick and pottery is found near Abilene; gypsum is plentiful in the southwest and is extensively utilized. Salt water is found at Solomon, in the western part of the county and in Hope township in the southwest. There are two mineral springs at Abilene supposed to have medical properties and the water is bottled and shipped to some extent.

Abilene, on the north bank of Smoky Hill river 169 miles west of Kansas City, is the county seat and largest town. The population of the county in 1910 was 24,361, a gain of 2,445 during the preceding decade. The value of farm crops in the same year was \$3,293,338, and of all agricultural products \$5,610,505.