

Edwards County.—On March 7, 1874, Gov. Osborn approved an act creating several new counties and defining the boundaries of some previously erected. By this act Edwards county was called into existence with the following described boundaries: "Commencing at the intersection of the east line of range 16 west with the north line of township 24 south, thence west with said township line to the east line of range 19 west, thence north with said range line to the north line of township 23 south, thence west with said township line to the east line of range 21 west, thence south with said range line to the north line of township 27 south, thence east with said township line to the east line of range 16 west, thence north to the place of beginning."

By the act of March 5, 1875, which abolished Kiowa county, two tiers

of townships were added to Edwards on the south, giving it an area of 972 square miles. Kiowa county was reestablished by the act of Feb. 10, 1886, when the original boundaries of Edwards county were restored, so that the present area of the county is 612 square miles. It was named for W. E. Edwards, one of the early settlers, who erected the first brick block in the county, which block was occupied as a courthouse for several years before a building was erected by the county.

Lieut. Zebulon M. Pike's expedition passed through the county in 1806, following closely the route which afterward became historic as the Santa Fe trail. In the fall of 1872 the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad was completed as far as Edwards county, and in March, 1873, a colony from Massachusetts settled where Kinsley now stands, W. C. Knight, who was elected county superintendent of schools in Nov., 1874, being the first man to erect a building. Soon after the first settlers located there E. K. Smart started a lumber yard, and a little later T. L. Rogers opened the first general store. A postoffice—called Peters—was established in May, 1873, with N. C. Boles as postmaster. The first school was taught the following fall by Mrs. A. L. McGinnis in a room 12 by 16 feet, a little over \$30 having been subscribed for a three months' term, the law requiring three months of school to have been taught in the county before it was entitled to participate in the public school fund.

On May 18, 1874, a memorial was filed with the governor, representing that the population of the county was more than 600 and praying for its organization. The petitioners also asked for the appointment of Charles L. Hubbs, Nicholas L. Humphrey and George W. Wilson as county commissioners, James A. Walker as county clerk, and that Kinsley be named as the temporary county seat. Robert McCause was appointed to take a census, which showed the population of the county to be 633, and on Aug. 1, 1874, Gov. Osborn issued his proclamation declaring the county organized, with the officers and county seat recommended in the memorial. One of the first acts of the board of commissioners was to divide the county into the townships of Brown, Kinsley, and Trenton, and designate voting places for the general election in November, when the following officers were elected: Charles L. Hubbs, representative; F. C. Blanchard, J. A. Brothers and T. L. Rogers, county commissioners; William Emerson, county clerk; J. H. Woods, clerk of the district court; E. A. Boyd, treasurer; V. D. Billings, sheriff; L. W. Higgins, register of deeds; Massena Moore, probate judge; Taylor Flick, county attorney; J. L. Perry, coroner; Frank A. White, surveyor; W. C. Knight, superintendent of public instruction.

Edwards county suffered greatly the year it was organized from grasshoppers. After investigating the conditions in the county, the commissioners met in special session on Sept. 15, when they made out a report to the governor in which they said: "Our crops are totally destroyed; not one bushel of vegetables or grain being saved for man or beast. Our people are mostly poor people, without wealthy relatives or

friends to assist them in their extremity. We have personally and carefully investigated each case and find six families, containing 22 persons, totally destitute; five families, containing 18 persons, partially destitute. The above are the only persons in the county that will need aid to carry them to another crop. We believe \$500, judiciously expended, will be sufficient with what they can earn, to keep them in the necessaries of life."

The commissioners also suggested that, if aid was extended by the extra session of the legislature then about to meet, the persons having charge of the distribution of such funds employ needy, able-bodied men to work on the public highways, etc. The grasshopper scourge of 1874 and the short crops of 1878 retarded for a time the settlement of the county, but in 1885, the reports of abundant crops and cheap land brought hundreds of new settlers to southwestern Kansas, and the population of Edwards county was nearly doubled during the year.

Along the Arkansas river, which enters the county near the southwest corner and flows northeast, the "bottoms" are about 3 miles wide, constituting about one-fourth of the area. The remaining surface is generally level or undulating prairie. Narrow belts of cottonwood trees are found along the Arkansas river and Rattlesnake creek, which flows across the southeast corner. These comprise about all the native timber, but many fine artificial groves have been planted. Building stone is found on the hills, which is the principal mineral of any kind. Transportation facilities are afforded by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R., the main line of which crosses the county from east to west a little north of the center, and a branch runs northeast from Kinsley to Great Bend in Barton county. Altogether there are a little over 37 miles of main track.

The population of Edwards county in 1910 was 7,033, a gain of 3,351, or more than 90 per cent. during the preceding decade. The county is divided into the following civil townships: Belpre, Brown, Franklin, Jackson, Kinsley, Lincoln, Logan, Trenton and Wayne. In 1910 the assessed valuation of property was \$15,220,616. The value of farm products for the year was \$2,137,608. The five leading crops in the order of value were: Wheat, \$1,442,741; corn, \$230,225; hay, \$62,247; Kafir corn, \$50,152; oats, \$46,444.