

The story of the early life of  
**FORT HAYS and of HAYS CITY**

is dedicated by the

**HAYS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

to the Kansas Centennial, 1961.

It has been published by the

**Old Fort Hays Historical Association, Inc.**

**May, 1959**

*MGC-MOSGA  
Donation  
10 Jan 64*

## "Oh Give Me A Home Where The Buffalo Roam"



An early day artist's conception of the reign of the buffalo.

It was a peaceful paradise of lush grazing ground for the millions of buffalo that had moved onto the Great Plains from the south for summer feeding. There were miles of rich, nutritious grass, there were streams aplenty of cool, sweet water, there were wallowing grounds to loosen the long winter fur as the days grew warmer. Every prospect was pleasing and only man was vile as the buffalo grazed, produced their young and lived a life of ease and contentment, majestic in their acceptance of a kingdom that had no disturbing features. There were no enemies, the antelope and other small prairie animals skittering harmlessly about. The buffalo was, indeed, monarch of the plains.

But this was not to be for long. In the early history of the Great Plains region the American Indian, hunting for food and for sport, followed the buffalo to his peaceful haven, making numerous but not serious depredations on the herds. As a rule the Indian did not kill unnecessarily. He secured meat for his needs and hides for his protection but mass killing of buffalo was not his habit. However, he had a feeling the buffalo was his, exclusively, and his resentment was keen when civilization began moving in to his hunting grounds.

Settlers were beginning their trek to the West and stage coach and pony express were carrying them and their belongings to new homes where opportunity beckoned and where they hoped to lead free and independent lives. These intrepid pioneers, pushing westward were the immediate target of the Indians who made raids on stage and express lines and endangered the lives and the homes of the settlers.

To protect stage and express lines and the pioneer settlers the United States government ordered the establishment of several military posts,

one in the vicinity of Big Creek and the Smoky Hill river. This was Fort Fletcher, the site of which was about fourteen miles southeast of Hays. The fort was named for Thomas Clement Fletcher, governor of Missouri. October 11, 1865, the fort was established by Lieut. Colonel William Tamblyn with three companies of First United States Volunteers. According to record this regiment was an infantry organization of Confederate prisoners of war who had enlisted in the United States Army for service on the frontier.

### Fort Fletcher Established

Official establishment of the fort was in General Order 22 of the Department of Kansas which read:

"In obedience to instructions from the Major General commanding the Department of Missouri, Companies A and F of the 13th Missouri Cavalry will, without delay, proceed under command of the senior officer present, to the vicinity of Big Creek and the Smoky Hill River, about 60 miles above Ellsworth, and in the vicinity establish a post. This station will be known as Fort Fletcher."

The 13th Missouri Cavalry and First U. S. Volunteer Infantry were stationed at the post, their principal function being to protect stages of the Butterfield Despatch from hostile Indians. Troops were busy with this assignment and in their first engagement, November 20, 1865, killed seven Indians. Indian raids became too numerous and dangerous for the stage line to continue its activities and seven months later the post was abandoned, May 5, 1866.

Five months later, October 11, 1866, the post was again occupied, this time by regular troops, Company C, 3rd Infantry, under command of Lieut. G. W. H. Stouch, later re-enforced by Troop E, 7th Cavalry.

## General Alexander Hays



General Hays for whom Fort Hays and Hays City were named was killed in the Battle of the Wilderness during the Civil War.

### Name Changed To Fort Hays

November 17, 1866 General Order 22 was received from Headquarters Department of the Missouri, Fort Leavenworth which changed the name of the post. The order read:

"Subject to the approval of the Secretary of War, the Post being established at Camp Fletcher will be designated Fort Hays, in commemoration of the name and services of the late General Alexander Hays, United States Volunteers, who was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness.

By command of Major General Hancock,  
Chauncey McKeever, Assistant Adjutant  
General."

However, there was disaster ahead for the new post. On June 7, 1867, a destructive flood on Big Creek almost wiped out the first site of Fort

Hays. A number of soldiers were drowned and there was extensive property damage to stores and supplies of the fort. Mrs. Elizabeth Custer in her "Tenting on the Plains" has graphically described this flood with all of its drama and horror. She and her maid, Eliza, living off the main fort property while waiting for General Custer to return from a scouting expedition, attempted vainly to help rescue some of the soldiers who were thrown into Big Creek by the sudden deluge. The night of terror is an outstanding chapter in the life of the bride of a brave and spectacular soldier.

### New Location For Fort

The site of old Fort Fletcher and the newer Fort Hays had proved to be unsatisfactory even previous to the flood. The Kansas Pacific railroad, pushing steadily westward had been built this far and the fort was several miles from it. A new location closer to the railroad, was decided upon. A site was selected by Major Alfred Gibbs, upon approval by General W. S. Hancock and the fort was moved to the location where the blockhouse and guard house now stand. Major Gibbs became commander of the new Fort Hays on June 23, 1867 and on July 4, 1867 the first United States flag was hoisted on the military reservation of 7500 acres of rolling land, by Lieut. Charles H. Brewster. In the same month Lieut. M. R. Brown, chief engineer, Department of the Missouri, surveyed the reservation which was well wooded and had an abundance of water, although General Philip Sheridan in 1866 had written of it:

"These plains can never be cultivated, never filled with inhabitants capable of self government and self-defense, but at best can become one vast pasture ground."

Boundaries of the reservation were marked with stones. The greater portion of the reservation was south of Big Creek and the post itself was near the northern boundary, half a mile from the railroad.

There is not existing now an actual photograph of old Fort Hays as it was originally built but from records of the War Department at Washington, D. C., a plan of the fort has been made which is regarded as authentic. There are actual photographs, however, of "Officer's Row," a row of residences west of the blockhouse in which officers at the fort and their families lived.

Following the survey of the reservation, needed buildings were constructed. The only two of a really substantial nature are standing today, the block house and the guard house. Both of these were built of native stone and appear to be as substantial as they were originally. The block house is unique in construction and exceedingly interesting as a building. Used as a headquarters building it is hexagonal in shape with a 17-foot radius and two wings, 17 feet square. Loop holes in the second story appear to have been left there for protective measures or lookouts for Indians.

## The Block House



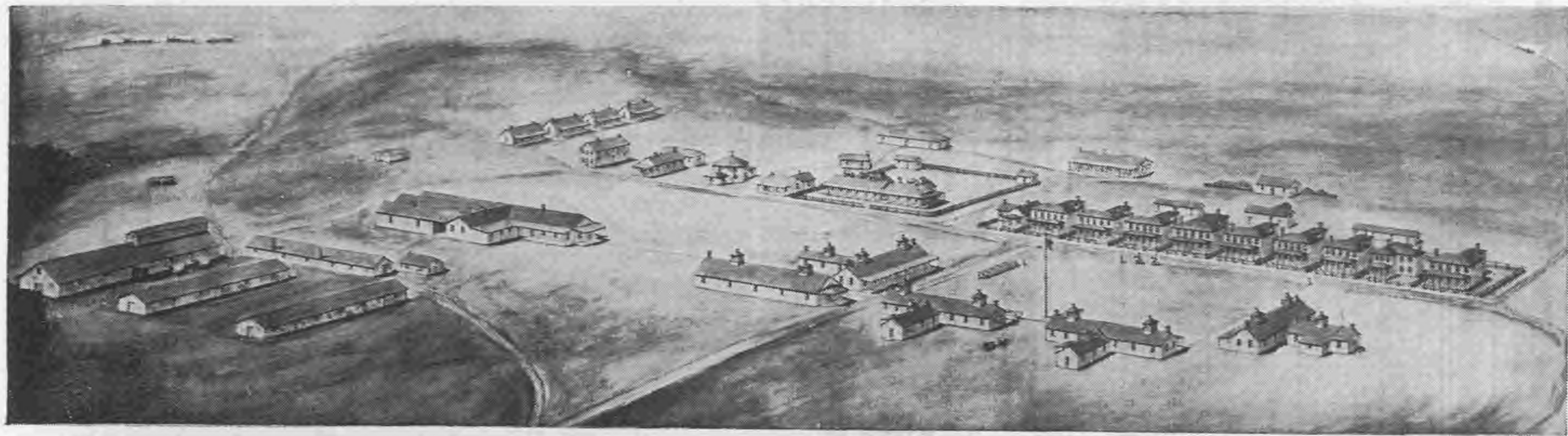
The Block House, an unusually well preserved structure, was used as a headquarters building at Fort Hays. Built in 1867, it is hexagonal in shape and evidently had lookouts on the second story for there are loopholes in the masonry. It was used for a golf club house for a time and now houses the Old Fort Museum.

## Officer's Row



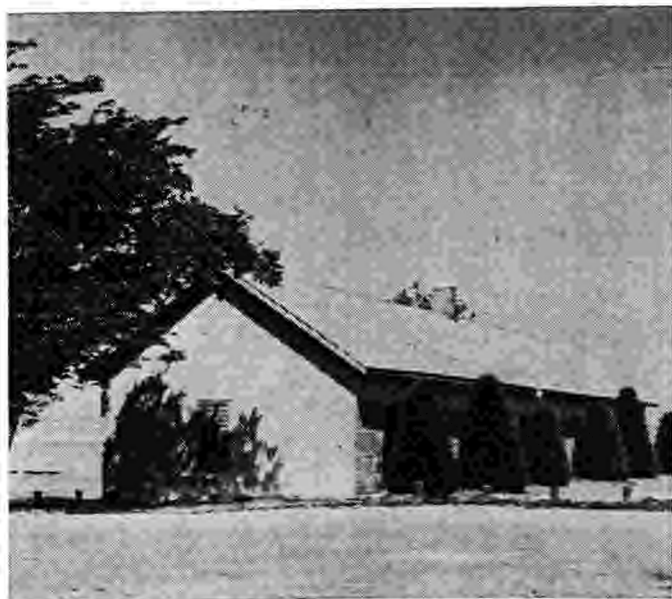
This was officer's row soon after Fort Hays was established. There are now none of these houses at the fort grounds but two of them remain in Hays and are occupied as residences. The houses boasted of walnut staircases and woodwork and contained, in many instances, beautiful hand carved walnut and rosewood furniture, the wives of officers bringing many of their personal possessions from the east to the western outpost.

## *Original Plan Of Fort Hays*



This is not an actual photograph but was accurately reconstructed from a United States survey. The buildings are accurately reproduced from photographs.

## The Guard House



The Guard House still stands on the military reservation. Disciplinary cells are intact in it and the building is practically in its original condition.

### No Indian Attacks

Doubtless they were not used for there is no record of Indian attacks on the fort or in the vicinity of the fort. The guardhouse, 90 feet long was used for quarters for the Officer of the Day and contained a guard room, a prison room and three sturdy cells which are still in a good state of preservation. There was a stockade attached to the guard house but it was torn down in the seventies. Indians were held prisoner in the stockade at different times and early day citizens tell of several having been killed when they attacked guards. They were promptly shot. How many of these episodes there were is not recorded but, generally speaking, the Indians who came to Hays City, unless they were brought here as prisoners, were on the way to the Indian reservations south of here and after having secured supplies, went on in peace.

There were 27 different types of buildings on the reservation, all of frame construction except the two mentioned. They included: four barracks, each 24 by 118 feet with an attached mess hall and a kitchen 20 by 81 feet. There were nine store houses, the largest 96 by 92 feet. There was a bakery, a work shop, 136 by 24 feet; a grain house 64 by 162 feet; an ice house, officer's store house and other smaller buildings. There was a hospital building, quarters for laundresses containing 32 rooms.

A photostat from Washington shows plans for band quarters for Fort Hays which include two buildings, one 45 feet long and 19 feet wide for a dining room and kitchen and a second one, 64 by 24 feet for a barracks, sergeant's room, store room and commissary. The commanding officer's quarters was a 9-room, 2-story house. There were seven others officers' quarters, the famous "Officer's Row" where officers and their families lived in comparative luxury, many of them having

## Sheridan's Home



This was General Philip Sheridan's home while he was at Fort Hays. No different in structure from other officers' houses, it was one of seven in "Officer's Row."

brought family treasures with them from their eastern homes. It is said by old timers the houses, all of which were architecturally identical and 2-stories, had solid walnut staircases and handrails and were comfortably arranged. However, there was no running water in any of them and a water wagon kept a supply in rain barrels outside the dwellings and buildings. A complaint regarding this situation is found in the letter of Captain F.

W. Benteen of the 7th Cavalry to Lieut. C. W. Baird, Post Adjutant:

"Sir:

I have the honor to request that the driver or the person in charge of the water wagon be instructed to fill the two water barrels situated at the troop stables and kitchens at least twice every day, so that they may be kept filled in case of fire, during the night, the present supply being inadequate for the purpose.

Very respectfully  
Your obedient servant,  
F. W. Benteen  
Captain, 7th Cavalry."

Heat for all buildings was from wood burning stoves or fireplaces. Later coal was used.

Two houses from "Officer's Row" may still be seen in Hays. Others were moved here but have been torn down. One, still occupied is owned by Martin Strohmeier and appears as it did originally. It is located on South Main Street. The second one on East 14th street, has been remodeled but the original outline of the rambling residence is still apparent.

## Busy Life At Fort

By August of 1867 life was teeming at Fort Hays. The railroad was pushing its way west rapidly, Rome had been established as had Hays City. There were about 2,000 railroad workers, camp followers and speculators who hoped to get rich quick in the two new towns. There were also hordes of outlaw Indians on the plains who were robbing and pillaging from railroad's end to the Colorado line. There were, of necessity, more soldiers at the post than there were at any one other time.

## Armed And Ready



A stage coach leaves Hays in 1867 with an armed guard numbering more men than passengers.

Captain Henry C. Corbin was the commanding officer and there were four Infantry companies and two cavalry troops on duty, a total of 564 officers and men. In reports from the fort for August of 1867, it is learned an 11-man guard was kept at the site of Fort Hays; a 13-man guard was supplied for an engineering party for the railroad; a 16-man guard was supplied for government land surveyors; a 6-man guard was kept at Fossil; a 9-man escort went with a second Fort Wallace wagon train; a 7-man guard was kept at Stony Hollow; 58 men were guarding the mail stations on the Overland State mail line; a 10-man escort was furnished for a wagon train to Walker Creek and 22 men were guarding workmen on the railroad. One private was killed in action on August 27 and this was the month a number of enlisted men died of cholera.

While this was one of the most active periods in the history of the fort it was actually five or six years before the danger of Indian hostilities was past. Settlers who had come west with the railroad were molested by the Indians who resented their encroachment on their hunting grounds, for there were still millions of buffalo

on the plains. They did not like the white man or any of his innovations and did everything they could to discourage him from settling on the plains. Because of this hostility soldiers were needed to guard, to scout and to protect the frontier.

#### **Indian Expedition From Fort**

Expeditions were organized at the fort to protect an area that extended from central Kansas to eastern Colorado and from Nebraska to Oklahoma.

In this same year the railroad was having more than its share of trouble with Indians and the establishment of the fort was an assurance of help when it was needed. In a railroad publication many years ago the story of one of the tragedies of the building of the Kansas Pacific as far as Hays is told:

#### **Victoria Massacre**

"On the south side of the track at Victoria, Kansas, on the line once known as the Kansas Pacific Railway, now a part of the Union Pacific railroad, stands a large granite block bearing a

### ***Killed By Indians***



In this small cemetery at the west edge of Victoria were buried six railroad workers who were killed by the Indians while laying track for the Kansas Pacific railroad which was pushing westward. The monument honoring the workers was erected by the Union Pacific railroad as was the protective fence surrounding it.



## General George Armstrong Custer



Custer here appears in full dress. He is reputed to have been fond of good clothes and missed no opportunity to "dress up."

copper-plate inscription reading: "This stone marks the burial place of six track workers who were in the employ of the Union Pacific railroad, Eastern Division. While on duty about one mile west of here they were massacred by Cheyenne Indians in October, 1867. Erected by the Union Pacific railroad'".

This memorial gives the key to the building of a railroad. Not even the main line of the Union Pacific had a more sanguinary history than the Kansas Pacific which ran through the heart of the choicest hunting grounds on the continent. Of the 306,475 Indians in the United States in the seventies, 94,720, or nearly one third, occupied the territory along the route of the Kansas Pacific between the Missouri and Colorado rivers.

The Indians recognized in the railroad the forerunner of civilization and naturally they fought with all the ferocity of savages driven to bay. In the desperate warfare they waged, one hundred and five companies or nearly one half of the soldiers in the entire West, were distributed along the proposed route. This force was so inadequate for protection they had to be reinforced by volunteers and General Sherman at one time had to take the field to enable work to go on. This was in June, 1867.

## Lively Life At Fort

Life at the fort in the early days had few dull moments. Expeditions against the Indians were sent out from here, General George Armstrong Custer having been at the head of the most spectacular campaigns. His brilliant work as a young officer made him one of the most romantic figures ever to have been attached to Fort Hays, although there were dozens of outstanding officers of the Civil War who were here for a few months or a few years at different times.

Mrs. Custer accompanied her husband from one post to another whenever possible although it was against regulations for her to do so. The fact she did, however, has left a dramatic record of activities, both military and otherwise of those early settlement days. For she wrote it all down, publishing her stories later in a series of books: "Boots and Saddles," "Following the Guidon," and "Tenting On The Plains"—all out of print now.

Lieutenant Tom Custer served at Fort Hays, probably to the embarrassment of his brother, the general, for Tom, was, according to record, a playboy, who was in trouble more times than not and his forays in Hays halls of pleasure were not recorded with pride by either the army or the government of Hays. He was a gay young blade in every sense of the word if stories told of him are true.

When General Custer was not busy planning or carrying out expeditions against the Indians, he was playing host to parties from the east or from foreign lands who came west to hunt buffalo, a sport as alluring as big game hunts in Africa are today.

There was plenty of work for the soldier to do in the first few years of the life of Fort Hays. They were detailed to escort those distributing stock to the different stations west of here on the Overland Mail Route and to scout the country for Indians as they went. On one such expedition in 1867 orders were for Captain George A. Armes Commanding Co. F, U. S. Cavalry, to march with all available men taking twelve days rations and at least 100 rounds of ammunition for each man. He was to be furnished with one ambulance and three wagons.

One order read:

"The Commanding Officer of "E" Co. 38th U. S. Infy. will detail five privates as guard to camp and working parties of Campbell and Clinton, Contractors Union Pacific R. R. Eastern Division. They will be rationed to include the 21st day of August, 1867. The Qr. Master's Dept. will furnish the necessary transportation."

## Custer Camp At Fort Hays



General George Armstrong Custer stands at the pole of his tent at Fort Hays, Mrs. Custer is seated at his left. The two figures at the extreme right have not been identified but it is thought they were General Custer's brother, Tom Custer and a companion.

"The Commanding Officer of "E" Co. 38th U. S. Inf. will at once detail one non-commissioned officer and six men to report to Mr. Fish, Contractor U.P.R.R. They will be supplied with twenty day's rations and one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition per man. The Qr. Masters Dept. will furnish the necessary transportation. He will also detail one non-commissioned officer and five men to return with the transportation. They will be properly armed and take their supper with them."

Another was:

"The Commanding Officer E. Co. 38th U. S. Infantry will at once detail two enlisted men of his command to carry dispatches to Fort Harker, Ks. and return. They will be supplied with 4 days rations and fifty rounds of ammunition per man. Quartermaster's Dept. will furnish two good riding mules."

### Cholera At Fort Hays

Between July 17 and August 7, 1867, 22 soldiers died at Fort Hays, the victims of an epidemic of cholera. Some reports give the number as much greater. They were members of the 38th Infantry and 10th Cavalry, both regiments having been colored soldiers. The bodies were buried in the fort cemetery and at a later date were moved by the War Department to a military cemetery at Fort Leavenworth. The cholera victims were:

Name	Rank	Co.	Regiments	Cause of Death	Date of Death and Burial
Samuel Warren	Pvt.	E	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 17, 1867
John Thaxton	Cpl.	E	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 17, 1867
Edmund Renick	Pvt.	C	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 18, 1867
James Chambers	Pvt.	E	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 16, 1867
Hugh Bruett	Pvt.	G	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 21, 1867
William Simpson	Pvt.	G	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 21, 1867
Andrew McMahon	Pvt.	C	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 29, 1867
James Brick	Pvt.	C	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 30, 1867
Robert Legitt	Pvt.	C	38th Inf.	Cholera	July 31, 1867
Edward Johnson	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 1, 1867
Henry Parker	Pvt.	C	38th Inf.	Cholera	Aug. 3, 1867
Willston Filmore	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 3, 1867
Charles Bruiser	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 1, 1867
August Wesley	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 1, 1867
Richd Lardridge	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 1, 1867
George Green	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 1, 1867
Petter Eickens	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 3, 1867
John Logan	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 2, 1867
John Humphrey	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 2, 1867
George Talbot	Pvt.	E	38th Inf.	Cholera	Aug. 5, 1867
Wm. Armstrong	Pvt.	F	10th Cav.	Cholera	Aug. 5, 1867
Hardin Ingram	Pvt.	C	38th Inf.	Cholera	Aug. 7, 1867

### Tragedy Of Mrs. Polly

Although there were many famous Civil war officers of the United States army stationed at Fort Hays through the years, their stories have not attracted the attention which has been given to the romantic and tragic one of Mrs. Ephriam Polly.

Mrs. Polly's husband was hospital steward and she was employed at the fort as hospital ma-



This picture, taken on "Big Timber," evidently what is now known as Big Creek, in 1869 is of General Custer and his friends. Reading paper, at extreme left, General George A. Custer; third from Custer is Lord Padgett of England, who was doubtless here on a buffalo hunt; seated with legs crossed is Lord Atnaick. Standing in front of the tent is Captain Tom Custer. Seated, with whiskers, is General Sturgiss of Civil War fame and next to him is Elizabeth Bacon Custer, General Custer's wife. Behind Mrs. Custer is Captain Calhoun.

tron. She was enchanted with the western scene surrounding the fort and when off duty would climb a hill a mile southwest of the fort where she would sit for hours gazing many miles across the valley and for many more miles up and down the valley of Big Creek.

So impressed was she with the spot, Mrs. Polly asked to be buried on top of the hill where she had spent so many pleasant hours, in the event of her death. She died while employed at the fort and there is some confusion as to the cause of her death, one story having been she contracted cholera while nursing soldiers who were victims of the disease and another that she died of tuberculosis.

At any rate she was buried on top of the hill, not in the spot she chose, for it proved to be solid rock, but nearby. It was requested that her body be moved to a military cemetery when the bodies of soldiers were moved from here but the government refused on the ground she was not of the military personnel. Hays persons owning the ground where the grave is, erected a marker and surrounded the place with a fence but vandals destroyed both and Mrs. Polly's resting place is now unmarked, in fact, the exact location of it is uncertain.

### More Indians

As late as 1870 the Indian menace was still plaguing the settlers as this letter from General Custer to Captain Ovenshine, commanding officer at Fort Hays, points out:

Headquarters Detachment  
Camp Sturgis, near Fort Hays, Kansas,  
June 4, 1870.

Capt. Ovenshine,  
5th U. S. Infantry,  
Comdg. Fort Hays:

General Woods telegraphed me this evening that he thinks the report of forty or fifty Indians being in camp on the Saline north of Grinnell station is probably true. I have telephoned the Superintendent of the road for an engine and cars and have received a reply that they will be here in the morning—the hour not stated. I propose to send every available man from my camp—which will not exceed thirty mounted men. I would like to get a detail from your post of at least thirty men, to make the entire force about sixty strong. They will go from here by rail to Grinnell, leave the cars there and march to the point near where the Indians are said to be, which is six miles from the station. Even if they are not there now, it is important to settle the point as to whether they have been there or not. The men should have four days rations and at least one hundred rounds of ammunition and one blanket, per man.

Blank No. 2.

**THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY:**

The rules of this Company require that all messages received for transmission, shall be written on the message blanks of this Company, under and subject to the conditions printed thereon, which conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

G. H. PALMER, Esq.

WM. GIBSON, Pres't.

Dated

*St. Louis Mo. 5th* 186*7*

Received at

*Kays City June 5th*

*Comd'g Officer*

*J. Hays*

Increase the guards at  
Monument Sennell Buffalo  
and Coyote Stations to five  
men If this endangers the  
safety of your Post call  
upon the Commanding Officer  
Seventh Cavalry for troops  
to protect the Post by  
Command of Maj Genl  
Dehafield

*Chas. McKenna  
a a y*

Blank No. 1.

# THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

The rules of this Company require that all messages sent for transmission, shall be written on the message blank of the Company, under and subject to the conditions printed thereon, which conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

ANSON STAGER, Gen'l Supt.,  
Chicago, Ill.

WILLIAM ORTON, Pres't.,  
O. H. PALMER, Sec'y, New York.

Date *Topeka May 1<sup>st</sup> 1860*  
Received for *Hays 200 Am Ind*  
*Commanding Officer*

Great Numbers of Indians  
are reported on the  
Sofomon above Asheville  
threatening the settlements

*James Harvey*  
Governor

*14. Paid 138.*

General Pope has sent me a copy of a communication addressed to the Post Commanders of Forts Harker and Hays, directing them to respond to the fullest extent to any request I might make upon them for troops. I would not make the above request but that I have not men enough of my own to send. The men should be in readiness to move upon short notice. I would be glad if you would assign a 2nd Lieut. to the Command.

Very respectfully  
Your obdt servt  
G. A. Custer  
Bnt Major Genl.

### Three Famous Men

Although many brilliant officers who had won distinction in the Civil War were stationed at Fort Hays for brief periods, no personalities were as vibrant or commanded as much attention from the military and civilian populations as did General George Armstrong Custer of the famous Seventh Cavalry; James B. "Wild Bill" Hickok and William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. All made their marks in Hays and while tragedy haunted their footsteps they were all known throughout the West for their bravery and daring deeds.

General Custer headed many expeditions against the Indians, taking supplies and military support from Fort Hays. The Seventh Cavalry of

which he was the commanding officer had a reputation second to none. Known as "Yellow Hair" and "The Boy General" Custer had entered the Civil War in 1861 as a "shavetail" just out of West Point. By war's end he had become a Lieutenant General. He was but 37 at the time of his death and was but 28 when serving as a scout out of Fort Hays. Persons here who knew him always insisted he was well liked, had charming manners, had a special interest in dress approaching the dandy as nearly as a soldier could, did not drink and made himself generally agreeable socially.

It is a matter of record he was chosen to entertain distinguished guests who visited the fort, particularly members of British nobility who came to Western Kansas for buffalo hunting. His tragic death, together with his entire command at the Battle of the Little Big Horn June 15, 1876, was a stunning blow to his comrades and to those who knew him in Hays. First news of the battle was printed in Kansas in the Ellis County Star, of which J. H. Downing was editor, on July 6, 1876.

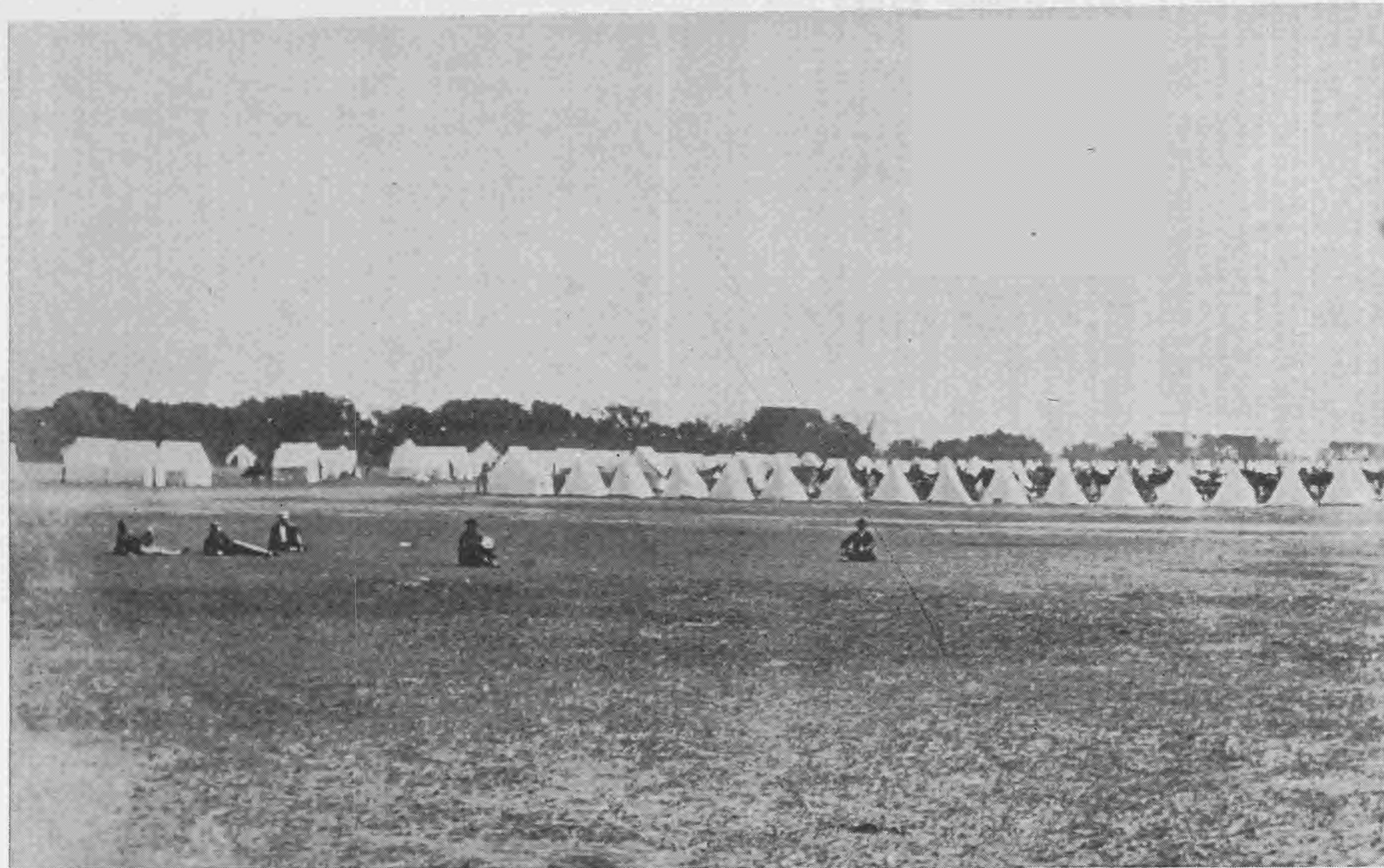
Since his death there have been attempts to debunk Custer by writers who claim to have indubitable proof of his weakness as a military genius. These are discounted by old timers in Hays who say he was a hero in the early days here and will doubtless always remain so.

### Comanche



Comanche, horse of Captain Keough, killed in the Battle of the Little Big Horn in which General Custer and his entire command were wiped out. Comanche was the sole survivor of the fray.

*Seventh Cavalry Camp At Fort Hays*



The Seventh Cavalry was encamped near Fort Hays in 1867.

## General Custer At Fort Hays



General George A. Custer having tea with Mrs. Custer at his headquarters at Fort Hays. At the rear is the general's orderly with the silver tea service which Mrs. Custer carried with her wherever she went. The general's favorite dog Rover is at his feet.



*Soldier With Family At Fort Hays*



It was not uncommon for the families of soldiers at the fort to join their men. When this occurred quarters were established off the military reservation. This picture may have been taken in the vicinity of Custer Island.

As intimately connected with the fort as any of the soldiers stationed there were "Wild Bill" Hickok—James B. Hickok—and "Buffalo Bill" Cody—William F. Cody, two men whose relish for life as it was lived in the turbulent days of the early history of Western Kansas, knew no bounds. Both were famous scouts of the plains, Hickok having been scout for General Custer on some of his most important campaigns against the Indians and Cody having had a leading role in the original settlement of Rome, the predecessor of Hays.

#### Famous Soldiers At Fort Hays

Among the famous men connected with Fort Hays during the 22 years of its existence were General Philip Sheridan, General George Armstrong Custer, General W. S. Hancock, Major Alfred Gibbs, General Winfield Scott and General James Forsyth.

Although there were 74 changes in command at Fort Hays, several officers having been in command at different times, there were 19 officers of importance who served at the fort as commanding officers in the 22 years it was active. These were:

Lt. Col. William Tamblyn, 1st U. S. Vol. Infantry, 1865-1866. Founder of Ft. Fletcher.

1st Lt. G. W. H. Stouch, 3rd U. S. Infantry, 1866, 1867. Re-established Fort Fletcher in October 1866.

Major Alfred Gibbs, 7th U. S. Cavalry, 1867. In command of post when moved to new site south of Hays, Kansas, June 23, 1867.

Capt. H. C. Corbin, 38th U. S. Infantry, 1867. In command when cholera epidemic was at post.

Capt. Samuel Ovenshire, 5th U. S. Cavalry, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1871, 1876. Capt. Ovenshire was in command of the fort six different times in the years given above.

Major John E. Yard, 10th U. S. Cavalry, 1868, 1886, 1889. Later Col. Yard of 18th U. S. Infantry. He died in Ft. Hays, Feb. 1889.

Lt. Col. Anderson D. Nelson, 5th U. S. Infantry, 1868, 1869.

Col. N. A. Miles, 5th U. S. Infantry, 1868. Later Major General in U. S. Army.

Lt. Col. Geo. Gibson, 5th U. S. Infantry, 1869, 1870, 1871.

Major Marcus A. Reno, 7th U. S. Cavalry, 1870, 1871.

Col. Wm. B. Hazen, 6th U. S. Infantry, 1871, 1872.

Col. O. L. Floyd-Jones, 3rd U. S. Infantry, 1872, 1873.

Lt. Col. Eugene A. Carr, 5th U. S. Cavalry, 1875, 1876.

Lt. Col. Richard I. Dodge, 23rd U. S. Infantry, 1878, 1879.

Lt. Col. Z. R. Bliss, 19th U. S. Infantry, 1880.

Lt. Col. N. A. M. Dudley, 9th U. S. Cavalry, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885.

Lt. Col. C. Rodney Layton, 20th U. S. Infantry, 1883, 1884.

Lt. Col. J. J. Coppinger, 18th U. S. Infantry, 1885, 1886.

Major Geo. K. Brady, 18th U. S. Infantry, 1889.

During its life history nineteen different military organizations were stationed at Fort Hays. Perhaps the most famous was the 7th Cavalry commanded by General Custer which was at the fort five years.

One infantry, the 37th, and one cavalry unit, the 3rd, were here but one year each. The 37th infantry was at the fort in 1867 and the 3rd U. S. Cavalry served here in 1874. The 5th United States Infantry had the distinction of being at Fort Hays the longest of any of the units, seven years, from 1868 to 1872 and from 1875 to 1876.

Organizations stationed at Fort Hays were:

1st U. S. Volunteer Infantry—1865-1866, (Civil War Unit).

13th Missouri Volunteer Cavalry—1865-1866 (Civil War Unit).

2nd U. S. Cavalry—1865-1866.

3rd U. S. Infantry—1866, 1867, 1872.

7th U. S. Cavalry—1866, 1867, 1869, 1870, 1871.

19th U. S. Infantry—1866, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1880, 1881.

37th U. S. Infantry—1867.

38th U. S. Infantry—1867, 1868, 1869 (colored).

10th U. S. Cavalry—1867, 1868, 1869 (colored).

5th U. S. Infantry—1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1875, 1876.

6th U. S. Cavalry—1871, 1872, 1873, 1874.

6th U. S. Infantry—1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875.

3rd U. S. Cavalry—1874.

16th U. S. Infantry—1877, 1878.

23rd U. S. Infantry—1878, 1879.

4th U. S. Cavalry—1879, 1880, 1881.

20th U. S. Infantry—1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885.

9th U. S. Cavalry—1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885.

18th U. S. Infantry—1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889.

For several months after the fort was moved to the new site a large number of troops for a frontier outpost were kept at Fort Hays. At one time there were 564, this was in August of 1867. By 1879 only a small guard was kept at the post, the smallest number having been seventeen men, during the summer months but in the fall the number was increased to 473.

## Fort Hays Band In 1881



Resplendent in uniforms with much gold braid and with plumed helmets, members of the Fort Hays band lent a dignified military air to many social and public events in Hays and at Fort Hays.

Numbers fluctuated according to necessity and the activity of the Indians in Western Kansas but the average number of men at the fort through the years from 1867 to 1889 was slightly more than 200.

Forays against the Indians were organized at Fort Hays and at times the fort here became the base for such campaigns as that of Custer against the Cheyenne and Kiowa Indians, directed by General Philip Sheridan in 1868. Hundreds of wagons of supplies were sent from Fort Hays to Oklahoma when Custer defeated Black Kettle at the Battle of the Washita.

### Fort Hays Abandoned

As the Indian menace became less a part of the life of the frontiersman, the maintenance of military outposts became less necessary and on April 7, 1889 the Fort Hays Military Reservation was deactivated, leaving in the minds of citizens of Hays City memories of a period when the famous Seventh Cavalry band was the center of every major social gathering in the area, when gallant officers and their wives lent a touch of aristocracy and elegance to the life of the city and when the actual safety of the community depended upon the judgment and military knowledge of the brave officers at the fort.

### Land Added To State

It was said to have been a very sad day, indeed, in Hays, when the last of the soldiers and officers entrained for parts unknown. A custodian was appointed to protect the physical property and then March 28, 1900 Congress passed an act granting the military reservation of 7600 acres to the State of Kansas, in these words:

"That the abandoned Fort Hays Military Reservation, and all the improvements thereon, situated in the state of Kansas, be and the same are hereby granted, to said state upon the conditions, that said state shall establish and maintain perpetually thereon;

First: An Experiment station of the State Agricultural College.

Second: A western branch of the Kansas State Normal School, and that in connection therewith the said reservation shall be used and maintained as a public park.

Provided, that said state shall within five (5) years, after the passage of this act, accept this grant, and by proper legislative action establish on said reservation, an experiment station of the State Agricultural College, and a western branch of the Kansas State Normal School.

And whenever the said lands shall cease to be used for the purposes herein mentioned, the same shall revert to the United States.

Provided further, That the provisions of this act shall not apply to any tract or tracts, to which a valid claim has attached, by settlement or otherwise, under any of the public land laws of the United States."

Thus were laid the plans for the Fort Hays Kansas State College campus and farm on a portion of the original reservation; the largest dry farming experimental station in the world "The Fort Hays Experiment Station" on another portion and the State Frontier Historical Park on the remainder of the thousands of acres which comprised the original reservation. Each has played a significant part in the development of Western Kansas, a part little dreamed of when Fort Hays was established as an outpost to afford protection from Indian raids when the West was being settled.

Order To Abandon Fort Hays

Headquarters of the Army,

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE.

Washington, August 31, 1889.

GENERAL ORDERS, )

No. 69 )

The following recommendations of the Major General Commanding, having been approved by the Secretary of War, are published for the information of all concerned:

The garrisons of Fort Laramie, Wyoming, Fort Hays, Kansas, and Fort Lyon, Colorado, will be withdrawn and the several posts named will be abandoned; and the troops thus withdrawn will be assigned to other stations by the Division Commander.

A regiment of Infantry will be ordered from the Department of the Missouri, or the Department of the Platte, to take station in the Department of Texas.

The Commanding General, Division of the Missouri, will give the necessary orders to carry these changes into effect, as soon as it can be done with due regard to economy.

By command of Major General Schofield:

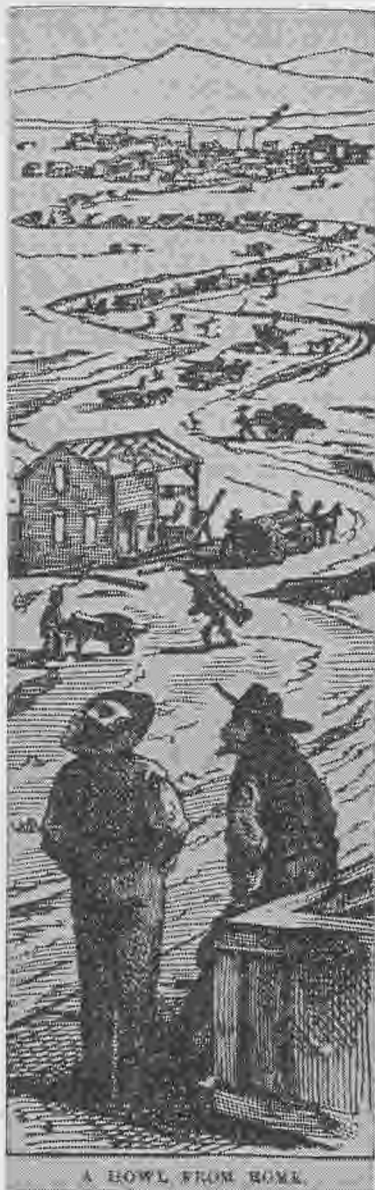
*Thomas Ward*

Acting Adjutant General.

*Wm. J. ...*

*Satisfactory to the M.G. Com-  
Manning.  
Aug. 31. 1889.  
M.G.  
M.G.*

## This Was Rome



A HOWL FROM ROME.

At least it is an artist's conception of that briefly famous city where Buffalo Bill hoped to win a fortune but which silently died aborning.

### Rome Is Settled And Deserted

William F. Cody claimed credit for having been one of the founders of Rome, the first settlement in Ellis County, one mile west of where Hays is now located. Simon Motz, one of the first to arrive in Rome to establish a trading post for Bloomfield, Moses & Co., in his history of Rome and Hays, fails to mention Cody as one of the founders although he does say Rose and Cody built the first stone place of business in Rome and that it was under construction June 7, 1867 when there were half a dozen other places of business and indus-

tries in operation with a population of 500 persons and each day bringing dozens more.

The principal street of the little town was "Front" street, extending from the bank of Big Creek on the west to a narrow neck of land between the creek and the road bed. With few exceptions dwellings and stores were built of canvass. It was about this time that there was talk of Fort Hays being removed from its original location to a spot nearer Rome. Joy was unconfined in the little mushroom city but it was short lived. Indian raids and the killing of railroad workers, location of a rival town, Hays City, on a section of land adjoining Rome and an outbreak of cholera all spelled the doom of Rome and the future of Hays City. The upshot of the situation was the abandonment of Rome and the quiet occupation of Hays City by former Romanites. This was accomplished in less than a year's time and Hays City was established to become one of the wildest settlements of the West.

The tragic little story of Rome as told by Mrs. William F. Cody who had traveled in a covered wagon from Fort Leavenworth with her husband and baby to his "city on the plains" reads:

"Up the hill we started toward the majestic entrance of our town of Rome. We made the top, and the two men dropped their arms aghast. The moon was shining down upon what had once been Rome, with its hundred or so shacks and tents. But Rome—Rome the glorious—had roamed away. Only the shack which sheltered the saloon remained, its light glowing out upon debris where a town had once stood.

Rose turned gasping. 'I wonder what's happened?' he said haltingly. Will rubbed his chin. "This is the place all right, he answered after a moment of gazing about him. "Everything's here; there's the butte over there and—everything. It's all here except the town."

And certainly the town had disappeared. Hurriedly we made our way down the hill, Will in the lead, carrying the baby. He ran to the door of the saloon and banged upon it, finally to bring forth the bartender. 'What's become of the town?' he excitedly asked.

The bartender grinned. 'Didn't you hear about it. It all moved away about a week ago. The railroad started up a better town over by Fort Hays and let it out that it wouldn't come anywhere near here. So everybody pulled up stakes and went over there. This is the only place that's left.'

Huddled in a wondering little group outside the circle of light we heard the news. For a moment none of us could say anything. Will and Mr. Rose walked up and down, looking at the bits of tenting, the scraps of tin, the scattered paper that told the story of their town that had disappeared."

**Buffalo Bill**



After his unfortunate real estate venture at Rome and his later work supplying buffalo meat for Kansas Pacific railroad workers, William F. Cody went into the show business having gained signal success for a time.

## Wild Bill



J. B. Hickok as he appeared when he was marshal of Hays in 1878. He had long fair hair which curled at the shoulders, no indication, however, of his prowess with gun and dagger.

### Beauty Of Prairies

Simon Motz, who arrived from the east with a stock of merchandise to set up shop at "railroad's end," was one of the first to arrive at Rome. His impression of the prairies of Western Kansas

he wrote in the first installment of a history of Hays which he undertook but which was never completed. The picture left in the mind of the pioneer who so recently had been mustered out of the Union army is one of contrast to the Pennsylvania hills which had been his home but the beauty of the prairies which was not lost on him. This is his description:

"As I reached the high point of elevation dividing Big Creek and Norfolk a full view of Big Creek valley was afforded. Immediately south and extending westward, the scene was one of absorbing attractiveness. While standing listlessly admiring this panorama of nature, my eyes chanced to fall upon a scene the landscape artist would devote years of time in transferring to canvas.

"It was a picture in and of reality. Not a living picture but a picture with living moving features. Down the gradual decline, approaching the level land toward the southwest, the spring blossoms were glittering with the morning dew, forming a sheen of silver brightness to the edge of a glittering, vibrating mirage, in which buffalo were moving about and feeding. The scene was almost completely framed by the rich, dark green foliage of the timber along the bank of the creek which described a full semi-circle in its meander toward the southeast.

"It was invested with enchanting beauty of a sublime nature. It was devoid of grandeur or stateliness. It was beautiful in perfection and perfect in beauty—the handiwork alone of the God of Nature. The impression of the scene is as clear and distinct in every feature as upon the morning it was photographed upon my mind."

### Hays City A Wild Town

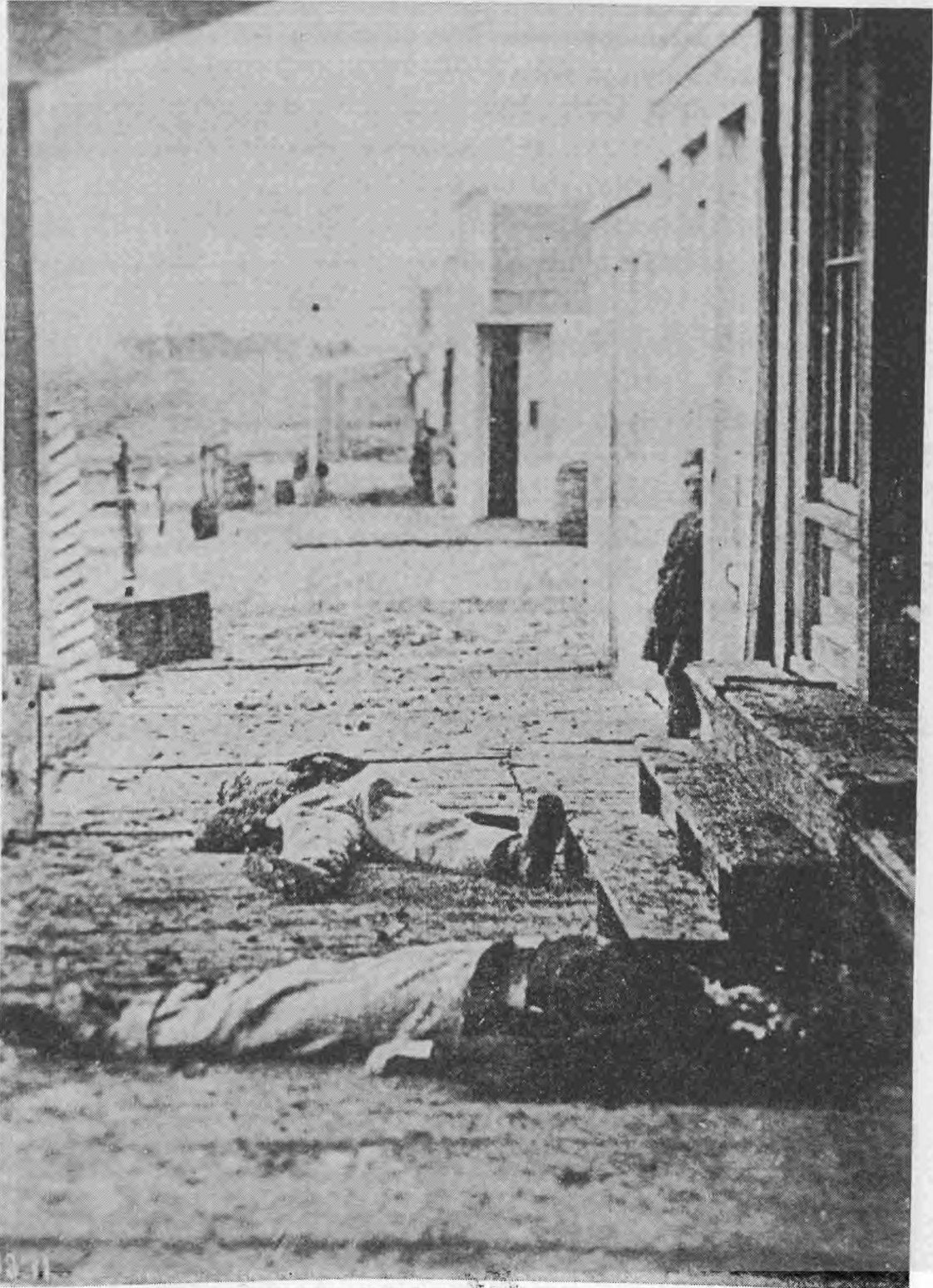
In the words of those who were here when Hays City became "railroad's end" in 1867, the place was a wild, lawless, turbulent spot. The majority of its citizenry, gunmen, women of ill repute, desperadoes, murderers and gamblers augmented by many soldiers at old Fort Hays who came to town to "whoop it up" when they had leave from military duty, gave credence to its reputation for being the worst town in Kansas. There was little regard for human life and Hays City was literally bathed in blood during the first few months of its life. Saloons and gambling houses were more numerous than legitimate places of business and there was practically no restraint on human conduct.

In his diary, dated July 1867, Matt Clarkson, who with his brother George arrived to cast his fortune with the West, wrote:

"There were 22 saloons, three dance halls, one little grocery store and one clothing store. We do not think anything of having one or two dead men on the streets nearly every morning. Some of them are soldiers from the fort. There is no law except the law of the six shooter."

The first three sheriffs of Ellis county had been killed in the discharge of their duty.

Early Morning Street Scene



In 1867 and for a number of years later it was no uncommon thing to see dead bodies on the sidewalk in front of saloons or house of ill repute in Hays early any morning. This scene was in front of what was known as "Nigger White's Barber Shop" on what is now West Ninth Street.



However, the pioneers had not come to Western Kansas to spend their time defying lawlessness and it was not long before they took things in hand and a "clean up campaign" set things in order.

This, however, is getting ahead of the story of Hays City, which was settled in 1867. Rome, as has been earlier pointed out disappeared when the "Big Creek Land Company" was organized for the purpose of laying out a town, the Kansas Pacific railroad having conveyed by deed to William E. Webb the original townsite of Hays on October 26, 1868. It was May 17, 1873, however, before all interest in the townsite was conveyed to a company of which C. H. Lebold of Abilene, Martin Allen, George N. Jones and Anna Augustine were members and the first and original plat of the city was filed for record, "Hays City" having been designated as the name.

In 1885 when the city was incorporated, it was under the name of "The City of Hays."

In the first year of its existence Hays City attracted a population of 1,000 persons, in spite of its unsavory reputation.

Those who had come to seek homes in the West and who meant to be permanent citizens soon realized the folly of trying to establish law and order when they were outnumbered by a lawless element with things pretty much in hand. A law and order committee of citizens lost no time in doing something to remedy the dilemma in

which it found itself and in 1869 employed "Wild Bill" Hickok to clean up the town and restore a peaceful way of life to Hays City where murders had been nightly occurrences.

#### Wild Bill Made Marshall

"Wild Bill," a two-gun man who had been an Indian scout for years, lost no time in carrying out his orders and for four months made the unwelcome sign to thugs and gamblers one to be respected in Hays City. Finally, however, when his duty led to an encounter with Tom Custer, brother of General George A. Custer, and a number of his drunken soldier friends from Fort Hays, it became necessary for the brave and spectacular Hickok, to escape by night, never to return.

Lawlessness in Hays City, however, did not disappear entirely with the Hickok period of activity for there are records showing that as late as the early 80's there was still bloodshed in Hays and that justice was a fleeting thing. There were frequent murders and there might have been many more had assailants been better shots. On old court records are many interesting stories of attempts at violence which died aborning. For instance:

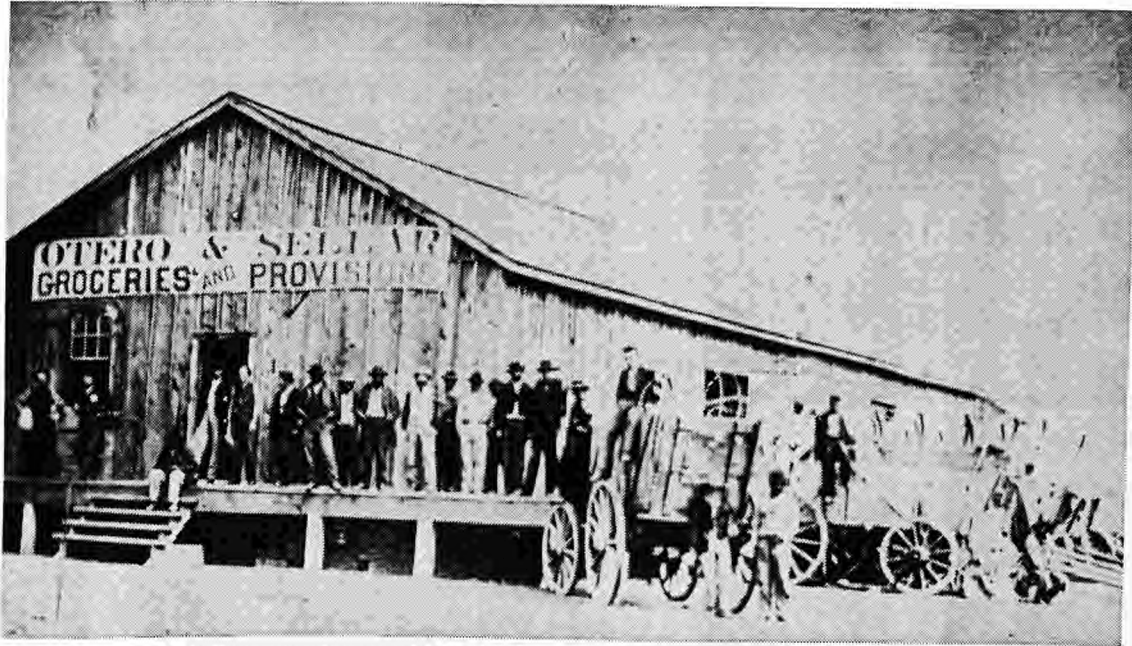
One man was charged with stabbing an acquaintance with the victim's own knife and then stealing the weapon as he escaped. Another man was assaulted, according to an 1878 docket, with a hatchet and a picket pin. He recovered, however, and filed complaint against his assailant.

### South Main Street In 1868



This street, now West 9th street, was one of the main thoroughfares of Hays in 1868. Opposite the Union Pacific depot it was the site of many thriving businesses and halls of pleasure. The buildings were burned in a disastrous fire of 1881 and was rebuilt with more substantial structures.

## *Trading Post*



Otero and Sellars warehouse which stood on the railroad right of way near Main street did a big freighting business out of Hays employing all Mexican labor. Supplies were taken by wagon train from this warehouse to all points in this area.



## *Hays In The Seventies*



North Main street, now Tenth street, as it appeared in the early seventies.

Hays City Kansas  
March 28<sup>th</sup> 1878

Capt Sam Crossin  
Comd'g Post of Fort Hays Kans

Sir:

I have the honor  
to request that a guard of a Capt and  
five men may be detailed to assist me in  
conveying the prisoners of the U. S. Marshal  
now in the Post Guard House to Topeka Kans.  
I would respectfully call your attention  
to the number and character of these prisoners  
and the feeling in their behalf in this com-  
munity which renders a guard of U. S. Soldiers  
absolutely necessary.

Dear Captain, very respectfully  
Yours obedt Servt  
J B HICKOK  
Deft U. S. Marshal

## Wild Bill Presents Bill

4636.  
Ellis County  
To J B Hickok Dr  
To Service as policeman  
1 month & 19 days at  
\$75 per month \$122.50  
I certify that the above  
account is correct and  
remains due and unpaid  
J. B. Hickok

A replica of a bill for services rendered presented to the Ellis county commissioners by Wild Bill Hickok.

There are countless records of fistic encounters, so many in fact that the justices probably did not take them seriously.

The accusations made against women in the dockets give a fair insight into the type and character of feminine inhabitants of the city in the early days here. The commonest charge was that the person arraigned was found in a state of intoxication and in several instances members of the fair sex attempted to settle their differences with their fists. It was also quite common should a male inhabitant for some reason become disgusted with a member of the opposite sex, also to employ his fists. Chivalry, if one takes the crime docket for a criterion, failed to flourish here in the late 1870's.

As the years passed, however, into the late 1880s and early '90s the docket pages become less bloodstained and the crimes recorded more petty as civilization came to Kansas. There are still frequent records of assault but they ended fatally less often. Stealing is found to become a more common offense in the later years than bodily conflict and the docket of the early 1890s' reads more nearly like the ones which may be found on the table of any justice of the peace today.

### Boot Hill

A monument to the lawlessness that persisted in Hays City was "Boot Hill" where 45 men and women who had died violently with their "boots on" were buried. Boot Hill, now a quiet, respectable residence block, was between Main and Fort Streets on West 18th street. In the late twenties and early thirties when foundations were being dug for homes in the block, the bones of many, who died violently, were unearthed. On one day, it is remembered the body of a presumably young woman who wore red shoes and also had red hair, was exhumed. Her garments were intact but disintegrated when exposed to the air. The county commissioners at one time had these bones gathered together and buried in one grave at Mount Allen cemetery.

In an old newspaper account of "Boot Hill" is this pathetic paragraph:

"There is one more, a little child, sleeping on Boot Hill, a victim, to the lawless society in which it existed. Innocent of any crime and fleeing for safety from a drunken street brawl—the little one had but scarcely crossed the thresh-hold of the building on the corner of Main & Fort streets, ere

it fell; shot through the brain, by a stray bullet from a pistol in the hands of one of the 'roughs' fighting on the street."

Old timers were fond of saying Dodge City had stolen Hays' thunder in the establishment of a Boot Hill which was not authentic as the one in Hays was. At this late date one wouldn't know.

Mrs. George A. Custer who spent some time as a bride with her husband, General George Armstrong Custer, encamped at Custer's Island where the Fort Hays Experiment Station now extends, wrote to friends in Hays in 1922 that "every night in Hays sounded like the Fourth of July," when she was here.

### Negro Trouble

For many years there was a tradition in Hays that Negroes dare not stop in the city, the threat being little short of extermination. This belief grew from an unfortunate episode in 1867 when military supplies arrived by freight in Hays faster than they could be transported to the fort. They were unloaded on the right of way near Fort and North Main streets—North Main is now West 10th street—covered with tarpaulins and two guards who relieved one another at 12-hour periods, stationed at the place to see that nothing was stolen.

One of the guards was a John Hays. One night near midnight while on duty he stepped across the street to Tommy Drum's saloon to see what time it was. As he opened the saloon door one of three drunken Negro soldiers, stationed at the fort, without any cause shot Hays, killing him. The three had come to town that night and after

drinking freely had attempted to enter a house of ill repute. Upon being refused admission they became quarrelsome, entered a barber shop with the intention of "shooting it up" and then decided they would kill the first man they met. Hays was the man.

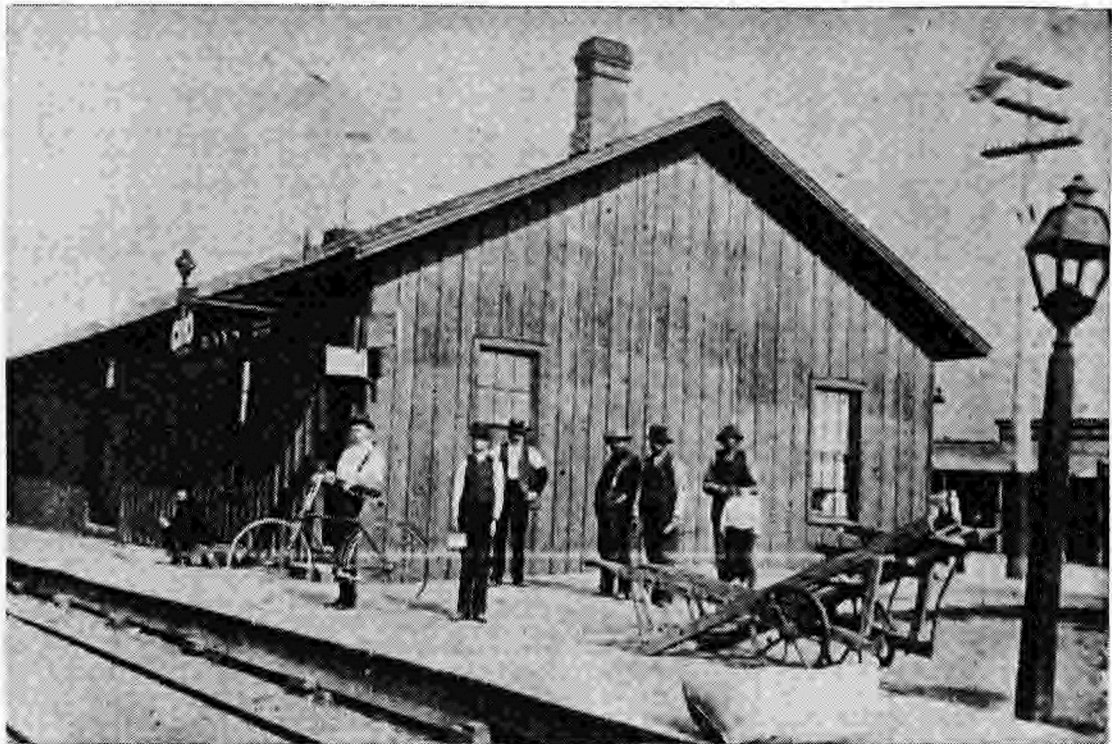
The barber accompanied the sheriff to the fort the next morning, identified the Negro soldiers, who were arrested and brought to Hays City where they were locked in a cellar for safe keeping until morning. The same night, however, a party of men broke into the cellar, marched the three to the railroad trestle half a mile west of Hays, placed ropes around their necks and dropped them between the ties where they hung until morning when they were cut down by section men and dropped into the bottom of the ravine. The bodies were later taken to the fort to be buried in the military cemetery.

Later in the history of Hays City (1874) Negro troops attempted a raid on Hays but were repulsed by townspeople who had been forewarned and the riot was quelled. Not, however, before six of the colored troops were killed. This episode marked a change in the character of Hays and afterward law and order prevailed to a greater extent than it ever had previously.

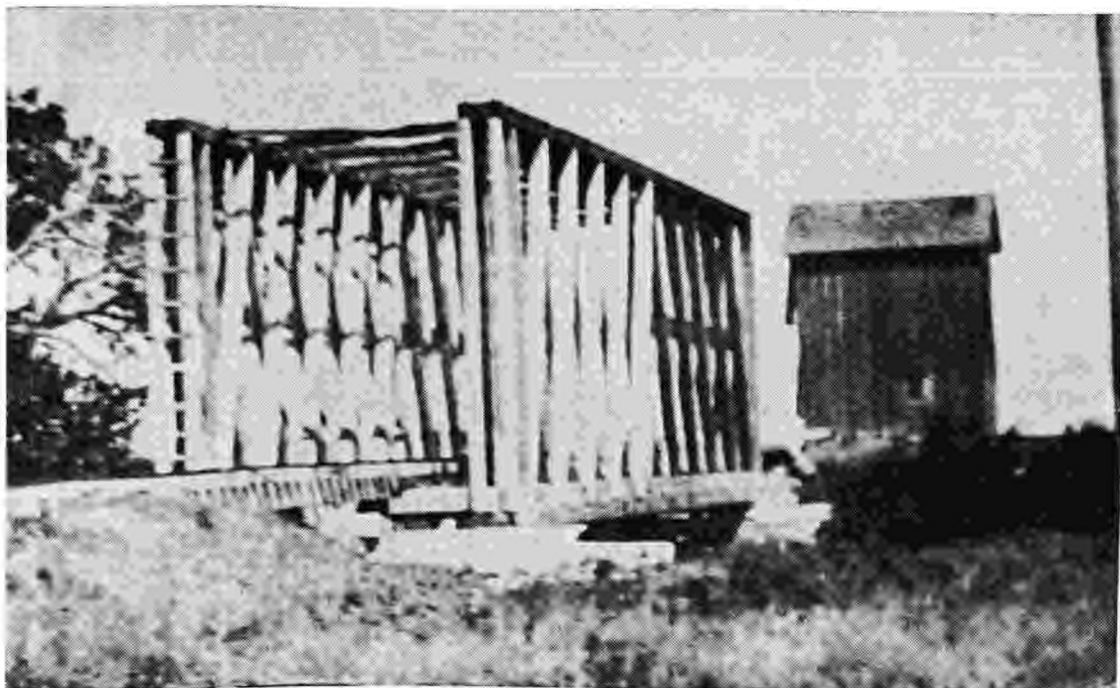
### A Desperate Character

There were many desperate characters in this city when it was young. Jim Curry was one of the worst. He had no regard for decency, for law or for order and murder to him was but a pleasant pastime. No person was safe from his attacks; his murderous weapons were aimed at all alike. Early

### The First Kansas Pacific Depot In Hays



## First Railroad Bridge West Of Hays



From this bridge, a mile west of Hays, three drunken Negro soldiers who had murdered a white man, John Hays, were hanged by an enraged mob of Hays citizens.

accounts of his crimes include the killing of several colored soldiers for no reason. He threw their bodies into a dry well.

A man by the name of Brady he killed by cutting his throat and throwing his body into a box car after which he fastened the door, but his most heinous crime was the murder of a youth of eighteen by the name of Estes. Curry met the quiet boy on the street and demanded that he throw up his hands. The boy begged for his life but Curry was ruthless, placed a revolver at the boys breast and sent a bullet through his heart, stepped over his dead body and walked away. This caused a wave of indignation in Hays City which led to a modicum of order, citizens demanding some form of protection of the law. It was several years, however, before the better class of people really felt safe.

### Early Religious Services

But not all of the history of Hays City was a series of hair-raising episodes. Not everyone in town was lawless. The elements of civilization, religion and education entered early. The first religious services were held in Tommy Drum's saloon on North Main Street in 1873, the bar having been covered by a sheet. However, prior to this time regular religious services were held at Fort Hays and ambulances from the fort came to Hays City on Sunday mornings to convey anyone interested in church services to the fort to listen to the chaplain who was known in town, by the irreverent, as "Holy Joe."

In 1873 the Presbyterian church was organized and in 1879 the first Presbyterian church of stone, was built on West Seventh street. A portion of that church still stands with the keystone bearing the date 1879, incorporated in the building.

First services of the Methodist church in Hays were those conducted by the Rev. Leonard Bell in Tommy Drum's saloon. During later years, however, services were held in the county court house, the city school house and the old stone building known as Kreuger's Opera Hall. The first Methodist church was built at the corner of Seventh and Oak Streets in 1886.

The First Baptist church was organized in 1883 by the Rev. A. L. King and the first services were held in the school house. In 1887 the first services were held in a new church, erected at a cost of \$4,000 on the site of the present Baptist church at the corner of 12th and Fort Streets.

Through the efforts of D. C. Nellis Trinity Lutheran church was organized November 10, 1878 and the first services were held in the school house. A new church was built at the corner of Fort and 13th streets which was dedicated on October 3, 1880.

St. Joseph's Catholic parish was organized in 1876, services at first having been held in one of the barracks at Fort Hays once each month, on the fourth Sunday. In 1879 a small frame building for church purposes was built on lots now occupied by the large, stone St. Joseph's church.

## First Church In Hays



The First Presbyterian church, built in 1879 was the first church in Hays. A part of the structure still stands and has been connected with a modern brick church building to the east.

### A Few "Firsts"

The first courthouse, a one-story frame building which included a jail in the basement, was built in 1868 on the site now occupied by the city building. Cost of the structure was \$240.

On April 20, 1870, in an election for the location of a county seat, Hays City won by a majority of 59 votes.

Justice, as has been mentioned, was fleeting. M. E. Joyce was the first Justice of the Peace in the county. In the winter of 1867 a murderer con-

fessed his crime and surrendered to the Justice. A day was set for the hearing. There was a crowd in the Justice's office when the murderer appeared. When the case was called Joyce asked "Guilty or not guilty?" To the surprise of the Justice and everyone else the man answer "guilty." Whereupon Joyce thundered "You are a d - - d fool and I will discharge you for want of evidence."

The first marriage in the county was in 1868—Elizabeth Duncan to Peter Tondell.

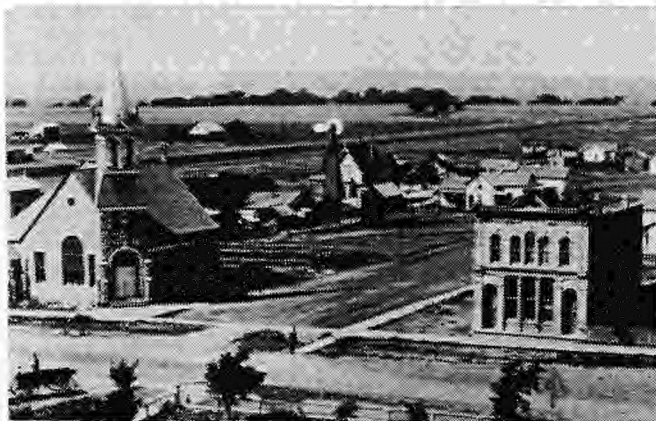
John Bauer was the first child born in Hays City on January 29, 1868.

The first real estate transaction of record was a deed from Hiram L. Cowdry to O. B. Taylor, conveying lot 23, block 5, for \$300. The deed was dated March 3, 1871.

At the first meeting of the board of county commissioners 37 licenses to sell liquor were granted in two days.

The first bank was opened January 1, 1880 by Hill P. Wilson; the first mill was built by Jacob Meier in 1876 on the Saline and was run by water power. The first mill near town was built by I. M. Yost in 1879, three fourths of a mile west of the city.

The first newspaper, "The Railway Age," established in 1867 by Joseph Clark lived less than a year. A copy of this paper is preserved in the Fort Hays State College Museum.



The first Baptist church building in Hays located where the present and newer church stands at the corner of Fort and 12th streets. The stone building at the right is the old U.S. Land office building in which J. H. Downing later had a furniture store.

*First Hays Hospital*



The original home of St. Anthony Hospital, the old "Beach House," now adjacent to the hospital grounds and used as a dormitory for nuns of the hospital staff. The hospital first occupied the house fifty years ago.



### Trial By Fire

Hays City, in its infancy was plagued by more than hordes of criminals and law-breakers, desperadoes and gamblers, however. In 1879 fire swept the downtown area destroying the first hotel, the Gibbs House, as well as other places of business. The spirit of Hays City, however, was well implanted in the settlers at that early date. They set about rebuilding the devastated buildings and added to them a number of new ones of substantial character. Hardly were these occupied, however, until a fire in 1881 took half a dozen additional places of business and in 1895 eighty business buildings in downtown Hays were razed by the most disastrous fire the city has ever known.

Between fires there had been hordes of grasshoppers destroying crops; prairie fires and blizzards to say nothing of drouths and searing heat to try the fortitude of even the hardiest of the pioneers. Many of them did leave, in fact to return to homes in the east but the men who made Western Kansas stayed to battle the elements because they felt the spell of the prairie and were sagacious enough to realize the potential of a vast fertile area that was yet virgin soil and that promised much for a future of freedom and independence.

### Martin Allen, Benefactor

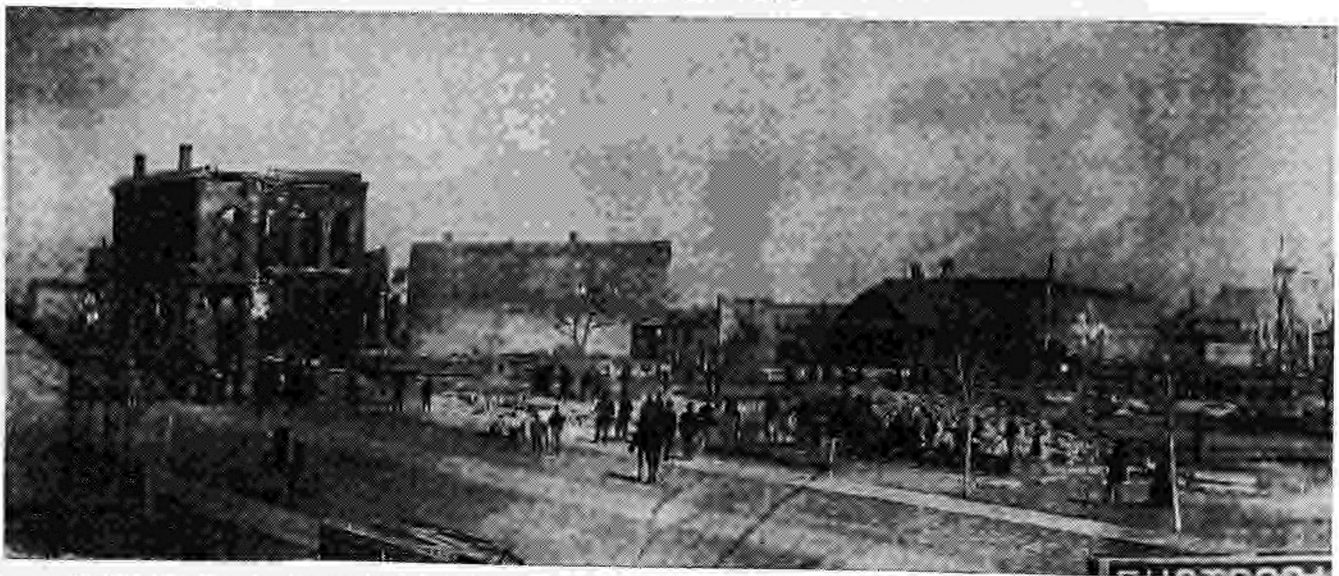
Among these Martin Allen stands out as one of the most imaginative and most determined to make Ellis county a land of promise. Of all the pioneers of Hays who sacrificed everything to make this a city of culture and beauty in the prairie region he is the only one who has a monument to recall to succeeding generations his unceasing efforts to do something he knew could be done but which seemed too much a dream to ever come true. Mount Allen cemetery in Hays is Martin Allen's monument.

He is credited with having given a plot of ground to the city for the cemetery but curiously enough Allen did not give the cemetery plot to the city, he merely persuaded the townsite company to set aside and give the ground where the cemetery now is, to the city. The first burial in the cemetery was that of Martin Allen's little daughter, Clara, on February 22, 1874. His second wife, Elizabeth, was buried there in 1881. Mr. Allen, himself died at Grand Junction, Colo., where he went to live with a son, Charles, following financial reverses, and was buried there.

However, it is not with Martin Allen dead that we are concerned, for Martin Allen alive was an energetic, vibrant person, and the mainstem from which tree planting, orchard culture and wheat growing in Ellis county, sprang. He came here from Ohio and immediately was struck with the possibilities of a garden spot on the prairies. In 1873 he and a group of men from his home state purchased every town lot then unsold, from the original town company of 1867. He formed a company and was resident agent for the others, many of whom lived in Stark county, Ohio or at Abilene, Kansas, and set to work to make Hays bloom. Backing up his theory by good example he set out a timber claim which is to be seen yet on Highway 40 east of Hays and south of the Union Pacific railroad. For the town company he set out a row of trees on each side of Fort Street from the court house north to city limits. For his own home he purchased a tract of land north of the cemetery and those who can remember it, and there are a few—say it was like an oasis in the desert. He had a nursery, gardens and fields that were surrounded by a well-tended hedge and the whole was the show place of Western Kansas.

He planted the first big wheat field in Ellis county on virgin soil which is now Fairview addition to the city. He was a horticulturist of reputation and wrote many articles on horticulture and

### The Fire Of 1895



In this fire the greater part of downtown Hays was destroyed, 80 business buildings having been consumed by the blaze.

## Martin Allen's Home In 1875



The home of Martin Allen, the man who probably did more for the agricultural good of this country in the early seventies than any other stands today and is in use. This picture was taken in 1875 and shows a small part of the orchard which he planted. He also planted a double row of fine trees from his home a mile north of downtown Hays to the courthouse, the trees having been on Fort Street. One of those trees still stands, it is at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jim McGuire at the corner of Fort and 16th streets.

irrigation for the press, always urging the planting of trees and the conservation of rainfall. He became the agent at Hays City for the sale of Union Pacific railroad lands and is said to have located more settlers in the county than any other man, the greater number having come in 1878.

He was county surveyor, engaged in the newspaper business, having established the second paper here, *The Hays City Times*, of which a woman, Maude Hartley Jones, was the editor. He was first president of the Hays City Lyceum, organized for cultural purposes in 1874 and there was also a Centennial Historical Society of Ellis county organized in May 1876 of which he was president and he wrote the first historical account of Ellis county in 1878 for the *Hays City Sentinel*. He also collected interesting geological specimens and natural curiosities, many of which are on exhibit in Forsyth museum on the campus of Fort Hays State College.

He was on the committee which organized a county agricultural society to sponsor county fairs each year and was president of the Farmer's Institute. He exhibited his grapes, apples, cherries cultivated on his farm north of the cemetery at state fairs and took first prize at Topeka state fair for the best exhibit of cultivated plums. In December 1894 he furnished all of the Christmas trees for the Sunday Schools of Hays, huge cedars, grown in his grove.

It was Allen's idea to use the military reservation when the government gave it up for an experiment station and college and he hammered away at his idea at every public meeting where he could be heard. It became known as "Allen's Hobby." He became a friend of the late Charles Curtis when the two met at an old settler's picnic in 1895 and eventually Curtis pushed the experiment station-college idea in places where it counted until finally it became a reality.

Ironically Martin Allen's last years were clouded with financial reverses and he eventually lost his fine home and estate to eastern mortgage companies. The big stone house, still intact, but with its surrounding verdure gone, is now owned by Roy Miller and is occupied. It has been kept in livable condition and is an attractive echo of a colorful past.

### Culture Comes To Hays

Despite the fact Hays City as a frontier town was more interested in progress than in culture, the substantial sector of the population had come from homes of refinement and it was not long before dramatic clubs, literary societies, church groups, and political parties to be sure, were lively in activity and accounts of the doings of the dramatic clubs are particularly interesting and revealing. There were tent shows, circuses and as

long as Fort Hays was here there was no end of entertainment at the fort to which townspeople were invited as guests.

There was a famous horse race in which Buffalo Bill Cody took part, there were buffalo hunts for the officers and men of Hays and there were soirees galore where the women were veritable fashion plates in gowns of velvet and stiff taffeta, with loops and bows, beads and ornaments which must have taken weeks in the making.

Hays City had its ups and downs of population gains and losses but after the abandonment of Fort Hays in 1889 and the setting aside of 7600 acres of beautiful rolling prairie, which had been the military reservation, for the establishment of a college for Western Kansas, a dry land experiment station and a public park, this area took on a different aspect and the future of Hays City was assured.

### Sheer Elegance



Etta and Emma White, daughters of an officer at Fort Hays in gowns of stiff taffeta and coiffures which defy description, living testimonials to the formality and elegance of the dress of Hays women in the 70's.

### Hays A Gay Matron

Notes written by one who was a boy in the middle period of the life of Hays perhaps best describe the city, its customs and activities:

"Strange prairie — schooner-like wagons in clumps of trees on Big Creek with lanterns hanging out the back ends.

The Old Round Hole — fights, swimming, smoking grapevine, cornstalk and buggy whip.

First electric lights. Windmills, Pumps.

Pranks on Halloween—carts on top of one-story buildings downtown. Outbuildings not securely tied down at the four corners and wired to posts could be found leaning at odd angles the next morning or maybe they'd been picked up and in another part of town.

Marathon running. Favorite race was down Chestnut street (now Main) from the Brunswick hotel to the old John R. Chittenden farm home about half a mile east of the cemetery corner. This sport ended abruptly one night when the boy who was just behind the two leaders fell exhausted a short distance west of the Chittenden place, had one hemorrhage after another, contracted a heavy chest cold in the chilly autumn night, developed incipient tuberculosis and spent the winter sleeping outdoors on a porch and all the next summer in a tent.

Dams across Big Creek in winter, skating parties with big bonfires, taffy pulls, "shows" at the opera house, the old G.A.R. Hall, now the A. O.U.W. headquarters.

World Series games coming in over the wire of the Western Union, about forty words to the inning and that was all and the fans crowding around the telegrapher as he read the returns which has been paid for by a handful of town sports.

Three weekly newspapers with editors and owners who nearly always were broke and owed money at one of the three banks. Four-page papers with patent insides (boiled plate) or ready-print as it was called, with Hall's Catarrh Cure, remedies for hog diseases, hair tonic guaranteed to restore hair on the heads of bald-headed men and consumption "cures" among the ads which paid the editors not a cent but profited the company printing up the insides of the 4-page weekly. And this awakens memories of tramp printers who filled in gaps now and then, got drunk on Saturday nights, slept under the printing press all day Sunday and were sobered up by the editor dousing them with a bucket of cold water on Monday mornings. So, excuse a printer's devil who sighs and says to himself, those were the days!

And lovely afternoons in late spring and early summer when the boys home from college saved enough money—or borrowed it from someone of great understanding—to hire a livery rig and take their girls out riding, with maybe a lunch basket the girls would "fix." And speaking of girls and sociables, there were the Saturday night dances at the town hall with Bissing's string orchestra furnishing the waltz music. But this was expensive and only young bucks a little older who had

### *Bridal Pair Of Early Days Hays*



Wedding picture of Mr. and Mrs. Simon Motz taken at the time of their wedding in 1881. Mrs. Motz, the former Bertha Hall wore a stiff plum colored taffeta dress, elaborately trimmed, a sealskin three-quarter length coat, a seal skin hat with a black plume for trimming. Mr. Motz was one of the first settlers at Rome.

steady jobs could afford such luxuries. And there were the hoodlums who ganged up outside, passed the bottle and ended the night's festivities with a slam-bang fist fight and bloody noses.

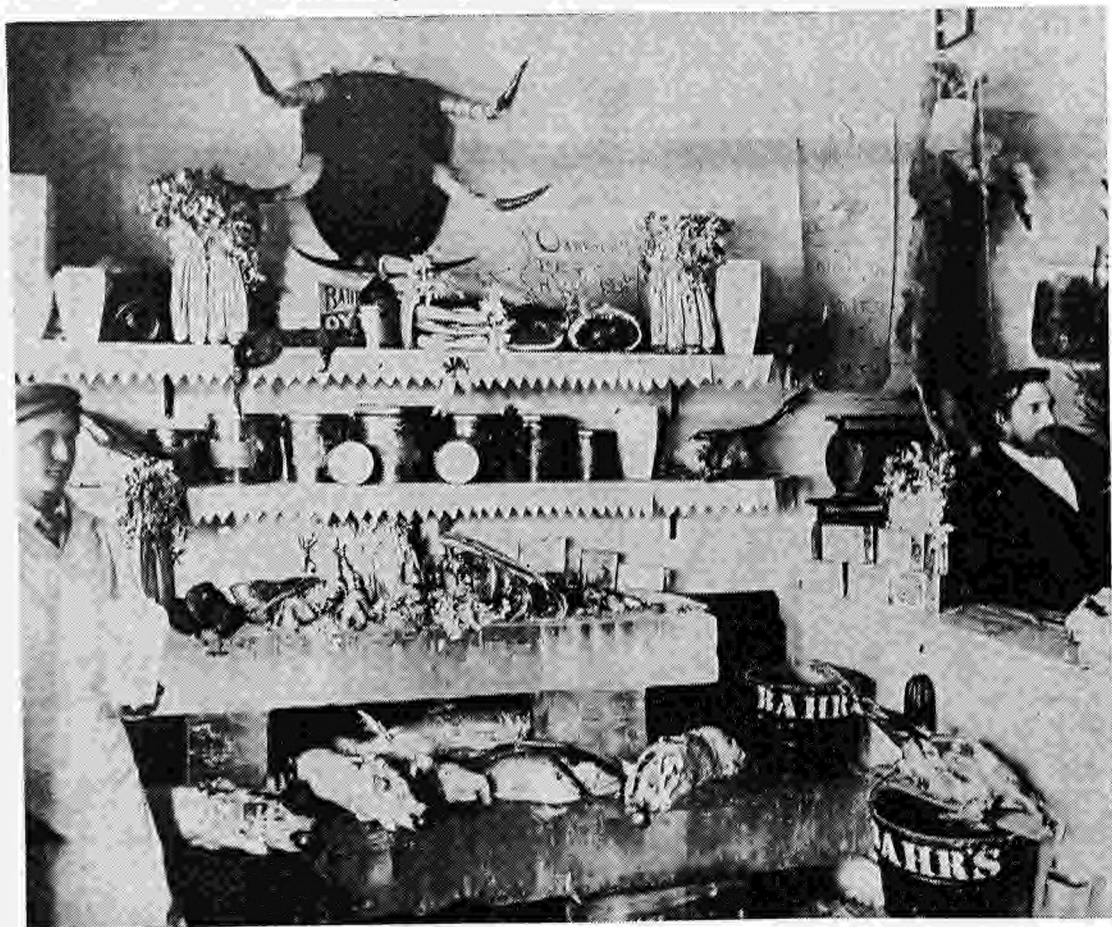
About this time the first silent "flickers" came to town with the professor showing mostly stills from far corners of the world with maybe half a dozen short, one reelers depicting the Black Diamond Express, girls in bloomer suits and with long, black stockings venturing into the surf at Long Branch, New Jersey, or was it Long Island?

Hot summer nights when the patent medicine doctor and his two Negro banjo players pulled their wagon in front of the Citizens State bank (a frame building on the site of the present First National) to put on their show. The doc wore a top silk hat, broadcloth frock coat, trousers that didn't button up the front and carried a white silk handkerchief to mop his perspiring brow. The doc opened the evening's entertainment with a brief announcement introducing his players. Followed a quarter hour of plantation songs or maybe popular music like "The Good Old Summertime" and

then business started with the doc selling a panacea for all human ills at one dollar a bottle. They called him a spieler and clever he was. After handing out a few dozen bottles of his medicine at the top price, he sold other remedies — after more music and monologuing—at 50 cents, then 25 cents and finally soap at ten cents a bar. One cake, he said, had a five-dollar bill wrapped around it that some purchaser would get and maybe you think that didn't mop up on all the small change left. Then the gasoline lights were turned out and the crowd which had pretty well thinned out by 10 o'clock, melted into the dark of the night.

Hays still was young in those days with its board sidewalks, false fronts over the stores to make them look like 2-story buildings, cinders from Yost's mill on Chestnut, so wagons and buggies wouldn't bog down in the mud when it rained, North and South Main streets, hitching posts or racks at the corners and vegetables in bushel baskets placed in front of the grocery store-butcher shops early every morning."

### *An Early Day Butcher Shop In Hays*

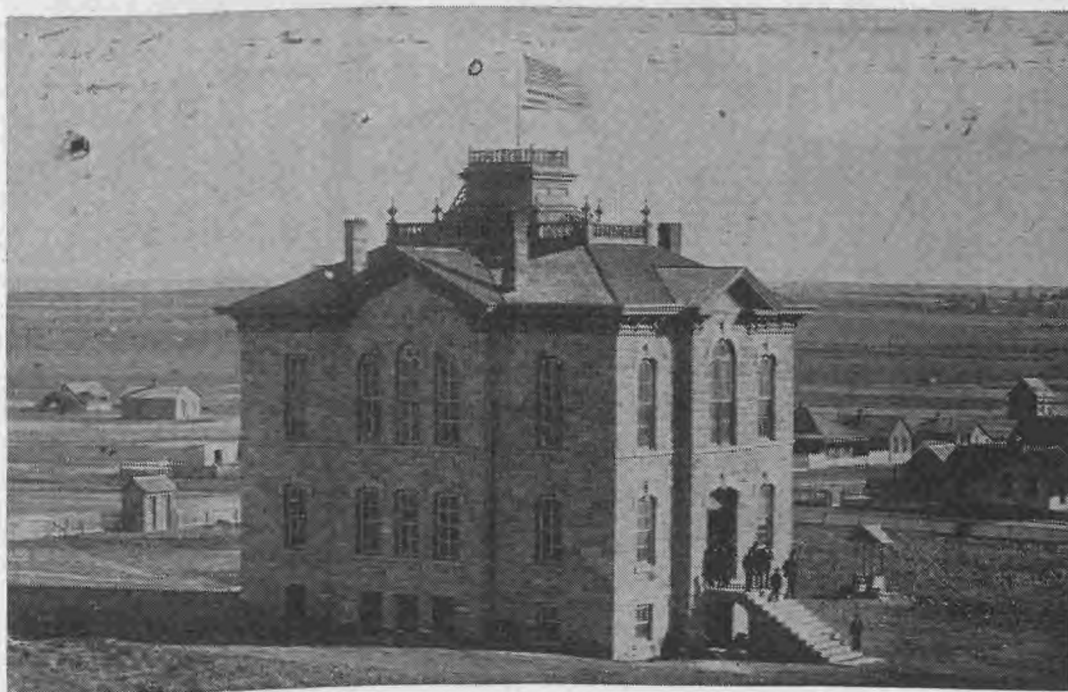


The late Thomas Carrick, who came to Western Kansas with the English colony in the early seventies, furnished young officers and their wives at old Fort Hays, as well as the aristocrats of Hays, every delicacy of the season. His shop here is ready for the Christmas holidays with suckling pigs, dressed turkeys, choice roasts of venison, fresh oysters, fish from eastern waters, reposing on great blocks of ice.

## *The Windsor Hotel*



Much of the social life of Hays was connected with the Windsor hotel which was located at the corner of 12th and Main streets where the Mulroy hotel building now stands.



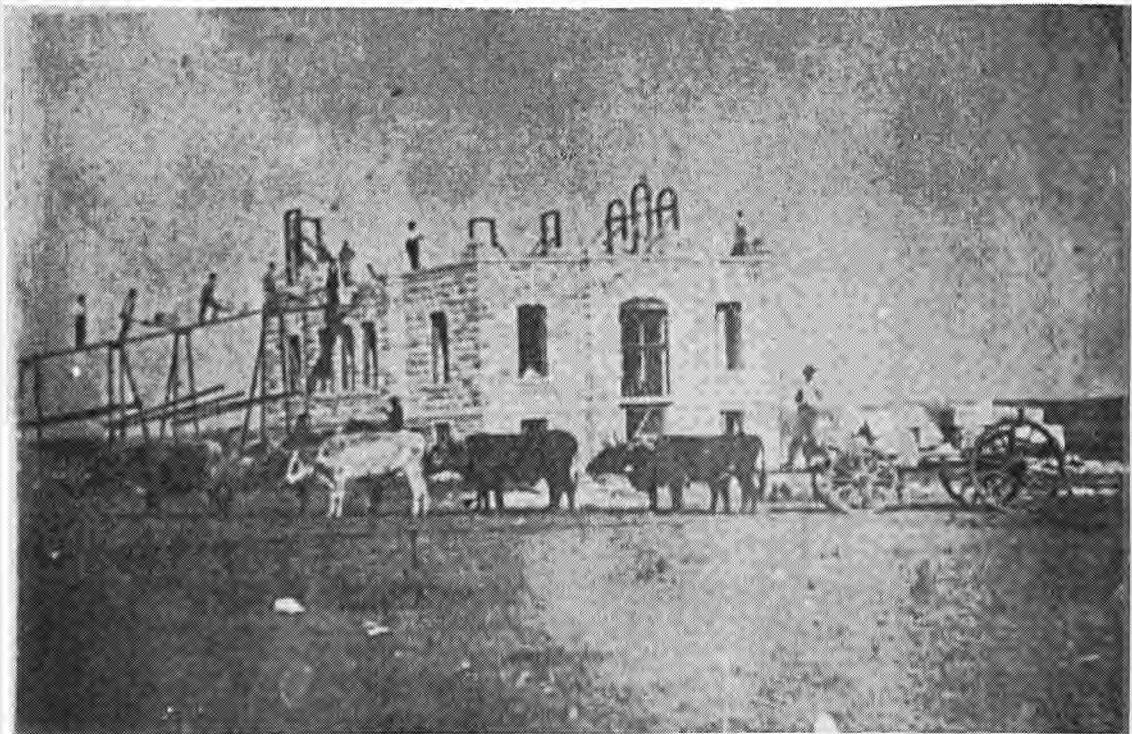
The third courthouse built in 1873 burned in the big fire of 1896. It was replaced by a larger structure in 1898. This fourth building was dismantled in 1942 to make way for the handsome building which stands today as one of the finest courthouses in the state.

### *An Early Day Hays Store*



The interior of A. S. Hall's hardware store on South Main, now West 9th street in 1872.

### *Third Courthouse, 1873*



After the first two courthouses in Hays were burned the county commissioners, for \$1 received a deed from Martin Allen and others for a new site—where the present courthouse stands. The building was of native stone, hauled to the location by oxen, as can be seen in this picture. The building cost \$4,200 and was finished in March of 1874.

## North Main Street



On this street the famous Drum saloon was the principal place of business although the New York House, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Casper Hawickholts, who changed their name to Cass for reasons of simplified spelling, was the best known hotel in the West. The Tommy Drum's saloon, marked by a cross probably saw more of the actual life of Hays in the early days of the city than any other establishment. It was here the first church services were held and it was here officers at the fort and courageous "Wild Bill" Hickok were frequent guests.

### Fort Hays Normal Opens

The Fort Hays Normal School opened its doors to students on June 23, 1902 with two faculty members, William S. Picken, principal and Anna Keller, assistant principal. An account of the occasion says "amid great rejoicing the flag was unfurled from the same flag pole to which Sheridan, Custer, Miles and other have lifted their hats to Old Glory floating over the parade ground which now has become the campus of the State Institution."

Thirty-four students enrolled on the first day of school, the late Jennie Ward Philip having been the first. The old fort hospital was the first school building and all classes were held in it.

From that day 57 years ago the college has grown to be an important educational institution with a faculty of more than 100 and with a student body of more than 2500. The campus is one of the loveliest in Kansas. Fine buildings are soon to be augmented by others. Every modern educational advantage is offered to the college student enrolled in its classes, and these students are on the campus from all sections of this state and many others, as well as a number of foreign countries.

Fifty years ago in April St. Joseph's Military Academy was established in a stone building on West 13th street, now the Girls Catholic High School. The academy, as it later became was first known as the "Catholic College" and was established to offer a Catholic education to young men

of this and other areas. There were very few enrolled in the college at first but it too, has grown to be an institution of considerable importance, winning honor recognition each year from the United States Army for its military training.

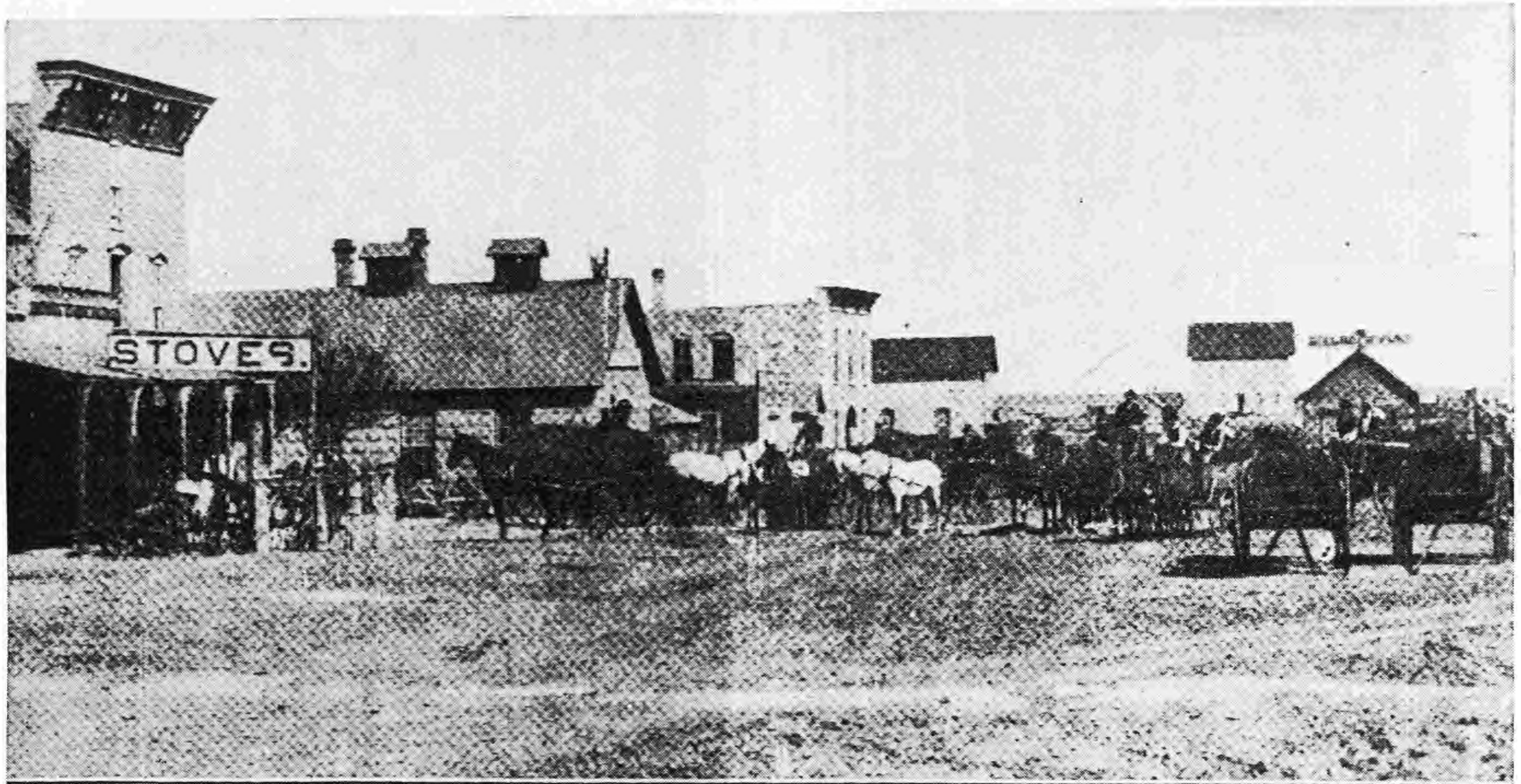
More than 30 years ago a million dollar college building and dormitory was built on the west edge of Hays and since that time an outstandingly fine field house has been added to its facilities. It is under the supervision and instruction of the Capuchin Friars and draws students from all parts of the United States as well as from several foreign countries. There are 25 priests on the faculty.

The Fort Hays State College, the Fort Hays Experiment Station, the largest dry land experiment station in the world, splendid churches, two of the finest hospitals in Kansas and a well staffed clinic have given impetus to the growth of Hays, making it one of the most progressive cities in the state with a population of close to 12,000 persons at this time in 1959.

In 1876, sturdy farmers from the Volga region in Russia, seeking new homes in America, came to Ellis county, settling in communities similar to their homes across the sea and gave to them the picturesque names of the homeland villages, Schoenchen, Herzog, Liebenthal, Munjor. These hard-working, freedom seeking men and women taught Ellis county farmers how to grow wheat, inadvertently adding much to the economy of Hays, reared large families and became an industrious segment of the population.



*Peach Tree Corner*



A busy day on Peach Tree Corner in Hays, Kansas, in 1873.

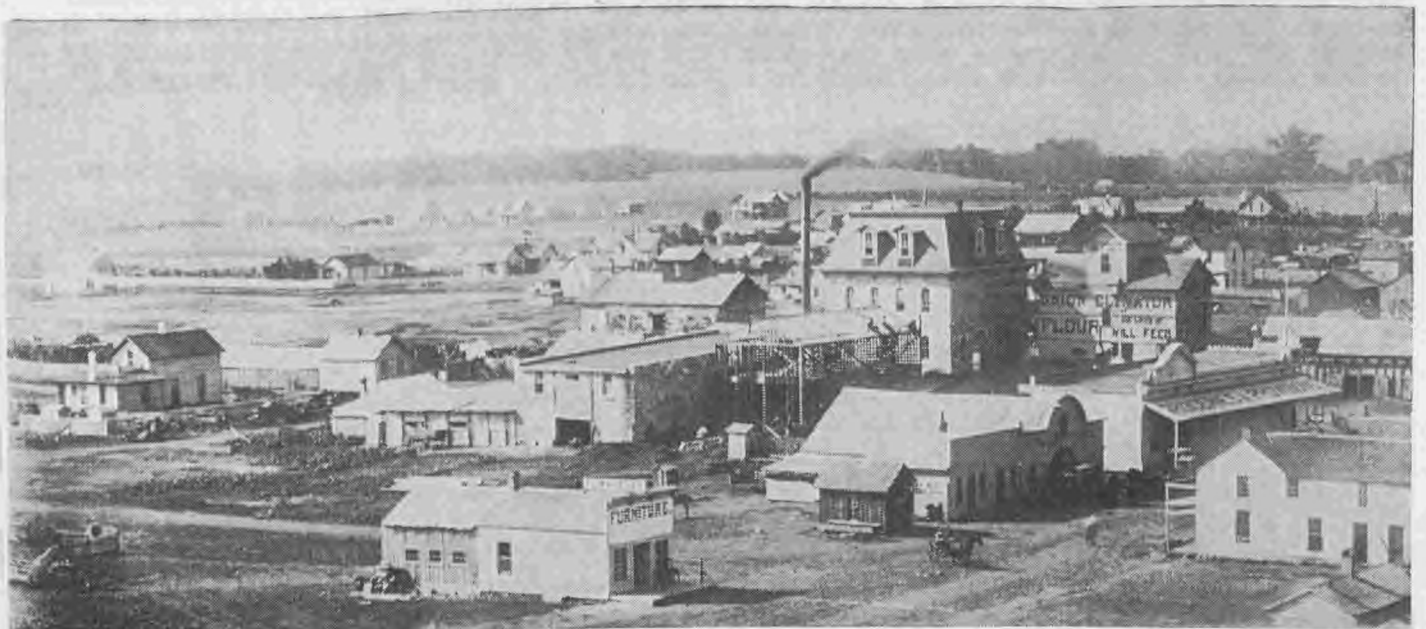
Taken in 1873 this picture shows the corner where the First National Bank now stands when it was known as "Peach Tree Corner," a spot on which many transactions, business and social took place and which became famous in this part of Kansas for the peach trees which grew there.

## One Of The Early Day Mansions Of Hays



Residence of the late A. S. Hall, a pioneer of Hays whose home boasted two fountains in the front yard, running water in the house and a conservatory. The site on West 15th street is now built up in modern homes and is directly across the street from the campus of St. Joseph's Military Academy.

## As Hays Was In The Early Eighties



An early day glimpse of downtown Hays. The team and wagon in the right center are turning south on Main street.

## The Krueger Building



This stone structure, standing today was built by Henry Krueger in 1877. It is still in good condition and is occupied by the Midwest Tobacco and Candy company, owned by E. J. Dreiling, a member of the Kansas legislature.

When oil was discovered in the county more than 30 years ago it was on many of the farms owned by these over-seas settlers that rich pools of the "black gold" was found. Many of them have moved away from their villages now and are living in Hays and other larger places reaping the rewards of many years of hard work and sending their children and grandchildren to schools and colleges. The fourth and fifth generations of these settlers who spoke only German when they came to Ellis County can now not be distinguished from

the children of American parents and have taken their places in community life with dignity and enthusiasm.

Hays has a daily newspaper, a weekly newspaper, a radio station, a TV station and is in the process of building several shopping centers in outlying districts.

In the city school system there is a large high school, four grade schools in use and a fifth under construction. In addition a Girls Catholic High School is operated by the Community of St. Agnes.

A number of business establishments in Hays have been in operation more than half a century, keeping step with the times in expansion and operation.

There is a large and shady park, a part of the old fort reservation, which attracts tourists and picnickers from all of Western Kansas by the hundreds on hot summer days. Hays has a fine swimming pool, municipally owned, a court house, built in 1949 which is one of the finest in the country and a public library with a total of more than 30,000 volumes. There are three moving picture theatres, two good hotels and an abundance of modern motels.

Hays has two banks with a total of more than \$15,000,000 on deposit, each has a building project at the present time, a Building and Loan company with assets of half that amount and a telephone building which is one of the finest and most complete in the West.

In 1920 Harry L. Kent, one of the early professors at the Fort Hays State College and later superintendent of the Fort Hays Experiment Station and later than that President of New Mexico State College, Las Cruces, wrote a prophetic poem which he called "Hays of the Golden Days." It was sent to the News at the time it was written and has not previously been published. It is a fitting finale to a story of Hays.



Old Fort Hospital on day school opened at the Fort Hays Normal School. The old hospital was the first college building.

## Hays of the Golden Days

Where the longhorn steer was king of the range,  
As he tramped on the buffalo bones;  
Where the teamster startled the dusty trail  
With his wagon's creaks and groans;

Where the plainsmen rough and the Indian scout  
Blew his wad in the first saloon,  
Where the cowboy's yell and the gunman's shot  
Broke in on the dance hall's tune;

Where the soldier and emigrant saw the great west  
From the Fort on top of the hill,  
Where the builder of homes in the heart of the plains  
Went out to their work with a will;

This was the Hays of the olden days.  
But what of the Hays of Tomorrow?

Where the Fort Hays Trail and the Golden Belt  
Cross in the fields of wheat,  
Where the Hereford steer and the Galloway cow  
Make the tenderest, juiciest meat;

Where the tourist may rest by the Big Creek banks  
In the finest park in the west,  
Where the emigrant's son with ambition to rise  
May come to the school he likes best;

Where the farmer and Station by efforts combined  
Grow the biggest crops ever produced,  
Where there's plenty for all and a little to spare  
And everyone's willing to boost;

Where business is booming and workmen content,  
And all are as busy as bees,  
Where merchant and banker and farmer are friends,  
And doing their utmost to please;

This is the Hays of the Golden Days,  
This is the Hays of Tomorrow.

—H. L. Kent

## A Real Pioneer

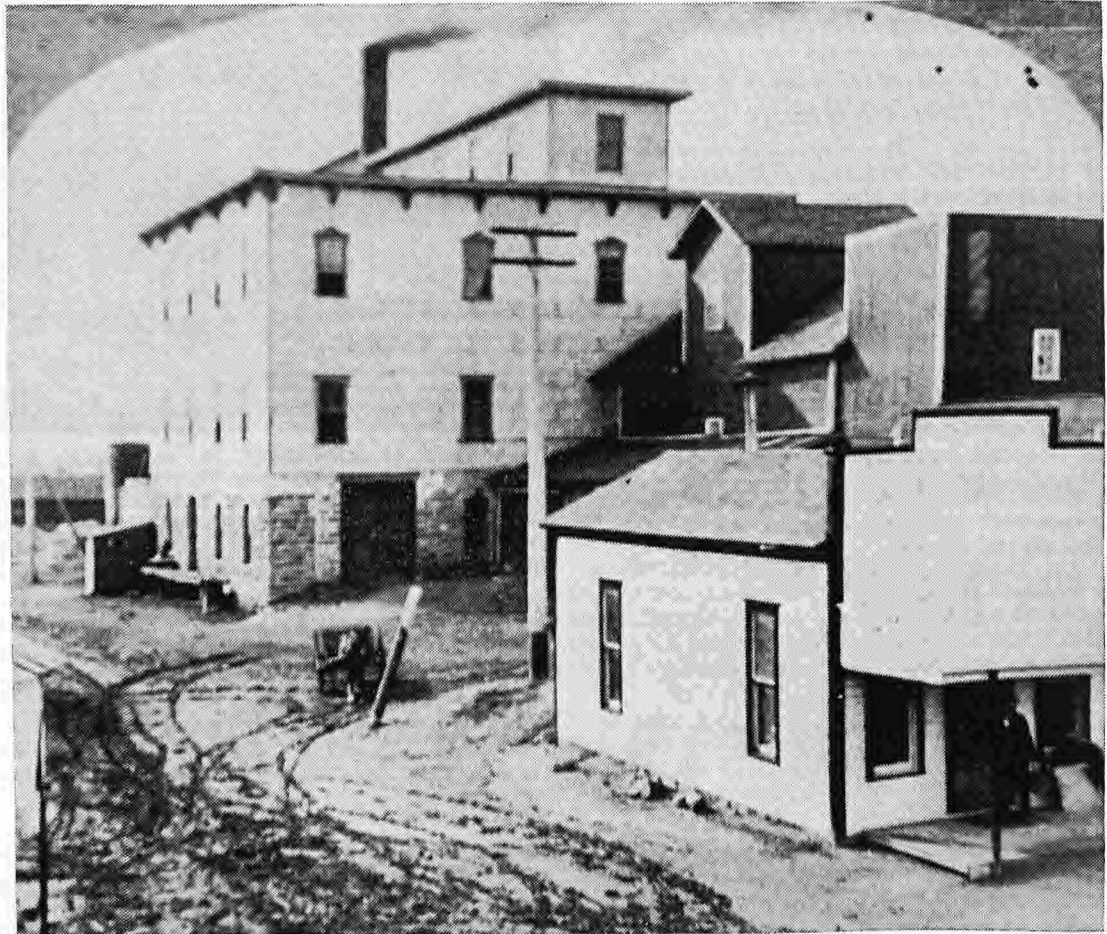


Mrs. J. H. Middlekauff, the only person living who was in Hays in 1867 when Fort Hays and Hays City had their beginnings. Mrs. Middlekauff was brought here by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Casper Hawickholst at the age of five and her memories of all that has gone between are sharp and accurate.



Trader's Store, Hays, 1869.

*One Of The Yost Mills*



I. M. Yost built three flour mills in Hays during his lifetime. Two of them were destroyed by fire, this having been one of them. It was located where the Hays City Flour Mill now stands.