

Ford County, located in the southwestern part of the state, is in the second tier of counties north of the line dividing Kansas from Oklahoma, and the fifth county east from the Colorado state line. It is bounded on the north by Hodgeman county, east by Edwards and Kiowa, south by Clark and Meade and west by Gray, and has an area of 1,080 square miles. Ford county was created by the act of 1867, which provided for the division into counties of all the unorganized part of the state east of range 26 west, and was named in honor of Col. James H. Ford of the Second Colorado cavalry. It was not organized until 1873.

One of the first parties to travel westward through this portion of Kansas with a pack train was the McKnight expedition in 1812, which followed the Arkansas river. A few years later Maj. Stephen H. Long's expedition passed up the Arkansas valley and by 1825 this route became known as the "Santa Fe Trail" (q. v.). One of the earliest military posts in Kansas was located in what is now Ford county. (See Fort Atkinson.) Fort Dodge, established in 1864, was on the north bank of the Arkansas, about 2 miles east of Dodge City. The old military reservation is now the site of the State Soldiers' Home.

During the rush to California in 1849 thousands of gold seekers passed along the Santa Fe trail, through what is now Ford county, but few located there. Among the first permanent settlers were A. J. Anthony, who located on a ranch 20 miles west of Dodge City, in 1867. He kept a few cattle and a general store for a year, then moved to Fort Dodge and engaged in the sutler business until 1874. Herman J. Fringer came to Fort Dodge in 1867 as quartermaster's clerk. Later he opened one of the pioneer drug stores and served as justice of the peace before the county was organized. H. L. Sitler came to the county in 1868, and was one of the pioneer freighters, before the railroad was built. Dodge City grew up not far from the fort.

In a few years the frontier moved further west and Ford county be-

came populated with industrious husbandmen, who established permanent homes and prosperous farms. On April 5, 1873, Gov. Osborn issued a proclamation providing for the organization of Ford county. He appointed Charles Rath, J. G. McDonald and Daniel Wolf as special commissioners, and Herman J. Fringer as special clerk. The commissioners met at Dodge City and elected Charles Rath chairman. James Hanrahan was appointed special commissioner in place of Daniel Wolf, who was not in the county. An election for county officers was ordered for June 5, 1873, when the following persons were elected: Charles Rath, A. C. Meyers and F. C. Zimmerman, commissioners; Herman J. Fringer, county clerk, and also clerk of the district court; A. J. Anthony, treasurer; H. Armitage, register of deeds; George B. Cox, probate judge; M. V. Cutler, county attorney; Charles E. Bassett, sheriff, and T. L. McCarty, coroner. P. T. Bowen and Thomas C. Nixon were elected justices of the peace in the two civil townships, Dodge and Ford. At the election on Nov. 4, 1873, A. J. Anthony, A. J. Peacock and Charles Rath were elected commissioners; William F. Sweney, clerk; M. T. Bruin, register of deeds; George B. Cox, probate judge; L. D. Henderson, county attorney; M. Collar, superintendent of public instruction; John McDonald, clerk of the district court; A. B. Webster, treasurer; Charles E. Bassett, sheriff; T. L. McCarty, coroner; John Kirby, surveyor, and James Hanrahan, representative to the state legislature.

In 1874, the old toll house was taken for a county poor-house. Up to 1875 rented buildings were used for court-house purposes and the county offices, but during the summer of 1876, a fine brick court-house was completed at a cost of \$8,000, and all the county offices and records were removed to it.

One of the earliest newspapers in the county was the Dodge City Messenger, established in Feb., 1874, by A. W. Moore, but the paper was suspended in 1875. On May 20, 1876, the Dodge City Times made its appearance. It was founded by Lloyd and Walter C. Shinn, and the Ford County Globe was started at Dodge City in Dec., 1877, by William N. Morphy and D. M. Frost. The Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians and Catholics all have churches in the county, most of them substantial edifices.

The surface of the county is generally level. Practically all the bottom land in the county is the valley of the Arkansas river, which varies from one to two miles in width and comprises about one-tenth of the area of the county. There is very little native timber, and what there is consists of narrow belts along the streams. The cottonwood is the most numerous, but hackberry, walnut and cedar are found. The Arkansas river enters the county about 8 miles south of the northwest corner, flows southeast nearly to the eastern boundary and thence northeast into Edwards county. Its most important tributary is Mulberry creek. Saw Log creek, a branch of the Pawnee, flows through the northern section. Magnesian limestone of good quality exists near Dodge City, and sandstone is found in the bluffs along the Arkansas river. Gypsum is

common in the northern portion, along Saw Log creek. Winter wheat, barley, oats and corn are the leading grains, Kafir corn, alfalfa and sorghum are extensively raised, and the county ranks high in live stock.

Excellent transportation facilities are afforded by the main line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad, which enters in the northeast corner, passes southwest to Dodge City, and thence west along the Arkansas river. The main line of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroad crosses the southeast corner, and there are nearly 90 miles of main track railroad within the bounds of the county, which is divided into the following townships: Bloom, Bucklin, Concord, Dodge, Enterprise, Fairview, Ford, Grandview, Pleasant Valley, Richland, Royal, Sodville, Spearville, Wheatland and Wilburn. The population in 1910 was 11,393, a gain of 5,896, or more than 100 per cent, during the preceding decade. The assessed valuation of property for that year was \$19,040,450, and the value of all farm products, including live stock, was nearly \$3,500,000.