

Graham County, in the northwestern part of the state, is the fourth county from the west line and the second south from Nebraska. It is bounded on the north by Norton county, on the east by Rooks, on the south by Trego, and on the west by Sheridan.

The first settlements were made on Bow creek in the northern part of the county in 1872. The first to locate was W. E. Ridgley in May. Following him were: Dr. A. D. Wilkinson, E. Poole, F. Schuler, M. N. Colman, John McGearry, Burris Harper, Robert Morrison, Joseph Morrison, Charles Smith, Peter Young, Paris Stevens, Frank Nickol, T. C. Deshon and some others. The first settler to locate elsewhere than on Bow creek was P. H. Collins, who took a claim 10 miles south. Z. T. Fletcher located on the site of Nicodemus and started the first grocery store at that place in 1872. Mrs. Fletcher was the first white woman in the county. On coming into Graham county the settlers found plenty of building material—stone, lime and sand. There was timber on Bow creek but the contractors for the army cut it off and in a few years fuel was very scarce. The bluffs along the streams formed natural stock corrals, and on the Solomon and on Brush, Spring and Bow creeks there were plenty of good mill sites. Up until 1875 the chief occupation was hunting, hauling buffalo bones and raising a few cattle. It was not until 1876 that there was a mill nearer than Glen Elder in Mitchell county, over 80 miles away. There were 75 people in the county at this time, but six years later there were 4,258.

The early towns were: Hill City, established by W. R. Hill in 1876, Nicodemus, Millbrook, Gettysburg, Roscoe and Smithville. Nicodemus, the second town in the county, was established by a town company in 1877 on the site where Mr. Fletcher had established his store on Spring creek. The other towns were established in 1878: Millbrook, by N. C. Terrell; Gettysburg, by A. J. Wheeler; Roscoe, by G. E. Higinbotham. The postoffices in all these towns were established in 1878, the postmasters being: J. W. Crawford at Hill City, Z. T. Fletcher at Nicodemus, N. C. Terrell at Millbrook, Joseph Getty at Gettysburg, G. E. Higinbotham at Roscoe. The first postoffice was called Graham and was on Bow creek. It was established in 1874, with H. W. Windom as postmaster. Houston, the second postoffice, was established in 1875, with Oren Nevins as postmaster. The first Sunday school was held at the home of J. A. Holliday in 1874, the first sermon was preached near the Houston postoffice by Rev. J. M. Brown in 1876. The first school district was organized at Nicodemus. The first drug store was opened by C. Fountain on the site of Millbrook in June, 1878. Three newspapers were established in 1879—the Western Star at Hill City in May, by Beaumont & Garnett; the Millbrook Times, a Greenback paper, by B. F. Graves in July, and the Graham County Lever at Gettysburg by McGill & Hogue in August. Another paper, the Roscoe Tribune, was established in May, 1880, by Worcester & Kellogg. In 1881 there were 22 postoffices, 22 church organizations, 40 organized school districts and 42 business houses.

County organization was effected on April 1, 1880, with Millbrook as the county seat. The appointed officers were: Clerk, E. P. McCabe; commissioners, E. C. Moses and O. G. Nevins. The first election was held on June 1. Hill City was chosen as the permanent county seat, and the following officers were elected: Representative, J. L. Walton; commissioners, A. Mort, G. W. Morehouse and J. N. Glover; county clerk, John Deprad; county attorney, J. R. McCowen; register of deeds, H. J. Harvi; treasurer, L. Thoman; surveyor, L. Pritchard; sheriff, E. A. Moses; coroner, Dr. Butterfield; probate judge, James Gordon.

The following incident is an illustration of the sufferings and privations of early days in Graham county: A man by the name of Allen was living with his wife and five children about 20 miles north of Millbrook in the winter of 1880. On Wednesday Mr. Allen went to Millbrook to get some coal. On his way back he was caught in a blizzard and lost his way. When he reached home Friday morning he found his family all frozen to death.

Graham county is divided into 13 townships, viz: Allodium, Bryant, Gettysburg, Graham, Happy, Hill City, Indiana, Millbrook, Morlan, Nicodemus, Pioneer, Solomon and Wild Horse. The postoffices are, Hill City, the county seat, Bogue, Gradan, Morland, Nicodemus, Penokee, Saint Peter and Togo. The Union Pacific R. R. runs through the central part of the county from east to west, passing through Hill City.

The largest stream is the south fork of the Solomon river which flows east through the central part. It has numerous tributaries. Several creeks in the southern part of the county are tributary to the Saline. The timber belts along these streams are narrow and contain the varieties of wood most common to Kansas. The bottom lands average one mile in width. Limestone, sandstone, and gypsum are plentiful.

This is a remarkable alfalfa section, and has some of the largest farms in the state. It is also a stock and grain county. The farm products are worth about \$3,000,000 per annum, that of 1910 lacking a few thousand dollars of that amount. Wheat in that year brought \$794,716; corn, \$872,060; tame grasses, \$213,854; wild grasses, \$91,259; animals sold for slaughter, \$604,652. Dairy products, poultry, sorghum, potatoes and Kafir corn are also important.

The assessed valuation of property in 1910 was \$13,146,430. The population in that year was 8,700.