

Harvey County, named for James M. Harvey, who was governor of Kansas at the time it was organized, is located in the western part of the eastern half of the state, the third county from the Oklahoma line and the sixth from the State of Missouri. It is bounded on the north by McPherson and Marion counties; on the east by Marion and Butler; on the south by Sedgwick, and on the west by Reno, and is crossed a little east of the center by the 6th principal meridian.

The first bona fide settler in the county was H. Nieman, who came in 1869. He was followed in the same year by Walter M. Munch, William Lawrence, Hubbard Wilcox, William McOwen, Charles Schaefer, John N. Corgan, W. T. Wetherel, John Wright and S. Decker. About 60 new settlers came the next year, and the list of members of the Old Settler's association gives the names of 51 persons who located within the bounds of the county in 1871. In the fall of that year agitation for organization of a new county brought about a division in the Republican party in Sedgwick county. The delegates from Newton, which was at that time in Sedgwick county, were cut down in the convention from 7 to 3. This caused the whole delegation, together with those from Black Kettle and Grant townships, to withdraw. They nominated a separate ticket, which was partially elected.

In December of that year a convention was held at Newton to arrange plans for a separate organization. The plan of taking three townships from McPherson, three from Marion and ten from Sedgwick county, with Newton as the county seat, was adopted by those present and was carried into effect by act of the legislature a few weeks later. Gov. Harvey appointed the following officers to serve temporarily:

Clerk, W. H. Baily; treasurer, C. D. Munger; probate judge, A. Markwell; register of deeds, R. H. Brown; sheriff, W. B. Chamberlain; coroner, C. C. Furley; county attorney, C. S. Bowman; clerk of the district court, J. B. Cunningham; county surveyor, W. Brown; superintendent of public instruction, Ellen Webster; county commissioners, A. G. Richardson, Amos Prouty and J. R. Skinner.

The first election was held in May, 1872. Newton was made the county seat and all the officers appointed by the governor were elected with the exception of J. R. Skinner, county commissioner, whose place was filled by B. Thompson. The first act of the commissioners was to divide the county into civil townships and give them names. Each one was made the size of a Congressional township, and they were named as follows: Alta, Burrington, Darlington, Emma, Garden, Halstead, Lake, Lakin, Macon, Newton, Pleasant, Richland and Sedgwick. On a petition, signed by three-fourths of the citizens in the townships of Highland and Walton, they were added to Harvey county by act of the legislature in March, 1873.

From the time of organization until the fall of 1875, the county affairs are said to have been very badly, if not criminally, managed. No records were kept of the transactions of the officers, even the minutes of the meetings of the commissioners being omitted, and most of the important papers which should have been on file were missing. It was charged that large amounts of money had been wrongly used, and warrants paid without the sanction of law. Indignation meetings were held all over the county and attempts were made to investigate the matter, but it was found impossible to do so on account of the way the books had been kept.

In 1872 the immigration of the Mennonites began. The large influx of these people followed an investigation on the part of advance committees, which determined upon Harvey county as a suitable locality in which to settle. This was a very important circumstance in the growth of the county, as they are a thrifty and industrious class of citizens, and they have contributed toward the general prosperity of all lines of business.

The first church building was erected in Halstead township in 1877 by the Mennonites. The first school house was built in Sedgwick in 1870, the first flour mill erected by the Sedgwick Steam Power company in 1871, and the first death was that of of an unknown man who was shot in 1870. The first births occurred in the summer of 1870, one being in the French colony on Turkey creek, and the other being Rosa A., daughter of Charles Schaefer. The first marriages were in 1871, one in Lake township between H. Baumann and a Miss Wheeler, and the other in Richland township between Horace Gardner and Hettie Thero. Among the first business concerns was the grocery store of James McMurray, established in 1871, in Lake township. The first postoffice was established in 1870 in Sedgwick with T. S. Floyd as postmaster.

There were numerous destructive prairie fires in the early '70s. One in Richland township in 1871 did a great deal of damage, and another in Emma township two years later destroyed considerable property. A terrific storm visited the whole county in June, 1871, destroying the growing crops, and another on Oct. 30 of the same year killed hundreds of cattle which were grazing in the open. In common with other parts of the state the settlers were made practically destitute by the grasshoppers in 1874.

As early as 1872 the Harvey County Agricultural and Mechanical society was organized. Its first fair was held at Newton in 1873. The Old Settler's association was organized in 1888, with Walter M. Munch, who came in 1869, as its first president. Lodges, fraternal organizations and churches were formed early throughout the county. School buildings were erected so rapidly that in 1877, seven years from the time the first one was built, there were 66 school houses.

The first railroad built through the county was the main line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, completed in 1871. This road enters in the northeast from Marion county, runs in a southwesterly direction to Newton, and thence west into Reno county. At Newton a branch diverges southward into Sedgwick county. Bonds to the amount of \$200,000 were issued by the county for the building of the branch to Wichita, which was constructed in 1871, by the Wichita & Southwestern Railroad company, made up of local capitalists. A branch of the Missouri Pacific R. R. from Eldorado enters in the southeast, crosses due northwest through Newton and into McPherson county. A line of the St. Louis & San Francisco system crosses the southwest corner, passing through Burrton and Patterson, and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific crosses the extreme southeast corner.

The postoffices in Harvey county are as follows: Newton, the county seat, where there is a fine government building, Annelly, Burrton, Halstead, Hesston, Patterson, Sedgwick and Walton.

The general surface of the county is prairie, with sand hills in the extreme northwest, and somewhat rolling in the southeast. It has an unusual abundance of streams, its water system consisting of the Little Arkansas river and its numerous branches. The Little Arkansas enters in the northwest corner and flows east a few miles where it is joined by Crooked creek and other streams. From this point it flows southeast, being joined at different points by Black Kettle, Emma and Sand creeks. In the eastern part of the county are Jester and West creeks. The bottom lands along the streams average from one-fourth to three-fourths of a mile in width and comprise 30 per cent. of the area, which is above the average in Kansas and makes this a fine farming district. The timber belts are from a few rods to one-fourth of a mile in width and contain a number of varieties of wood—walnut, cottonwood, elm, hackberry, ash, elm, box-elder, mulberry and sycamore.

Magnesian limestone is found in limited quantities in the northeast and clay of a good quality for brick near Newton. Gypsum abounds in

the eastern portion, and salt in large quantities underlies the southeastern section.

As an agricultural county Harvey ranks high, although its area is much less than those surrounding it. It covers but 540 miles or 345,000 acres, three-fourths of which have been brought under cultivation. The annual output from the farms averages above \$3,000,000, which would do credit to a much larger county. The oats crop in 1910 was worth \$500,000; wheat, \$200,000; corn, \$500,000; tame grass, \$200,000; wild grass, \$150,000; animals sold for slaughter, \$800,000. Other important agricultural items are poultry and eggs, dairy produce and potatoes. The assessed valuation of property in 1910 was \$34,248,225, and the population was 19,200.

The financial matters of the county government are in a remarkably fine condition, it being one of the few counties in this or any other state to have absolutely no indebtedness. This condition of affairs has not been brought about by failure to make public improvements, as a new \$60,000 court-house was built a short time ago without bonding the county.