

Johnson County, located in the eastern tier, is the sixth north from Oklahoma. It is bounded on the north by Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties; on the east by the State of Missouri; on the south by Miami county, and on the west by Douglas county. Its area is 480 square miles, or 307,200 acres, and in 1910 it ranked 33d, with a population of 18,288. It was organized in 1855 and named for Rev. Thomas Johnson, missionary to the Shawnee Indians, in what is now Shawnee township in the northern part of the county. In 1855 the Kansas river constituted its entire northern boundary but in 1859 the present boundary was established. The county is divided into ten townships: Aubrey, Gardner, Lexington, McCamish, Mission, Monticello, Olathe, Oxford, Shawnee and Spring Hill.

The general surface is slightly undulating prairie, more rolling in the north and east. The valleys of rivers and creeks average from one-fourth to seven-eighths of a mile in width. The bottom lands comprise about 10 per cent. of the whole area, the remaining 90 per cent. being upland, the highest of which is in the central and southwestern portion. Timber belts average from 40 rods to one mile in width, and contain oak, hickory, elm, walnut, mulberry, redbud, locust, wild cherry and sycamore, jack-oak and hickory existing in the largest quantities. The streams are not large but sufficiently numerous. The Kansas river flowing north of east forms more than half of the northern border, and receives as tributaries Cedar, Clear, Captains, Kill, Mill and Turkey creeks. Blue and Indian creeks run eastward. The soil is from one to six feet in depth and is very productive, being adapted to corn, winter wheat, oats, flax and hay. Johnson ranks among the foremost counties in the production of Irish potatoes. It also has a large number of orchards. In 1907 there were 150,000 bearing fruit trees. Along the streams limestone is found in great abundance and is used extensively for building and as ballast for railroads. Sandstone is plentiful in the north and east, and at Edgerton gray marble is found. Coal exists in a few places, where it is mined for local use. Previous to the coming of the Shawnee Indians in 1828, but little was known by white people of what is now Johnson county. In 1829 Rev. Thomas Johnson, a Methodist Episcopal missionary, went to the Shawnee country, to establish a mission and a school for the education of the Indians. This school was located about 6 miles west of Westport, Mo., between the Kansas river and Turkey creek. When the Shawnee lands were thrown open for settlement in 1851, a large number of people rushed in to secure claims. Among the free-state men who settled in the county in 1857

were Thomas E. Mulvane, William Williams, Rynear Morgan, William Holmes, Dr. I. James, J. D. Allen, J. C. Forrest and L. F. Bancroft. Among the pro-slavery men were Dr. J. B. Morgan, Col. J. T. Quarles, T. H. Ellis, Jonathan Gore, A. Slaughter, J. H. Nounan, C. C. Catron, M. T. Wells, Dr. Shuck and A. J. Turpin. Along with those who came as settlers were a number of speculators, who examined the Indian treaties and found that an Indian having selected his head right under the treaty could sell and convey a valid title to any person by complying with the rules of the interior department of the government for the sale of Indian lands. The first sales of such lands to speculators were in Oct., 1867, to Blunt, Irvin & Co. In Dec., 1867, the government made it impossible for the Indians to sell their property.

The close proximity of Johnson county to Missouri caused it to share the disaster and distress arising from the early political difficulties. The first election held in the territory was in the fall of 1853 before the organization of the county. At this election, Rev. Thomas Johnson of the Shawnee Mission was elected delegate to Congress to urge the organization of the territory. Being chosen without the authority of the law he was not admitted to a seat as a delegate. At the election of March 20, 1855, for members of the territorial legislature, Mr. Johnson was elected to the council and made its president. One of the first acts of that legislature was the organization of the settled portions of the territory into counties. Isaac Parish was appointed sheriff of the county and William Fisher, Jr., probate judge. At this session the road passing from Kansas City, Mo., west to Santa Fe, N. M., through the center of the county was declared a territorial road; a road was located through the northern part of the county to Lawrence, Lecompton and Fort Riley, and another along the eastern line of the county from Westport, Mo., to Fort Scott.

From the beginning Johnson county was the scene of many conflicts between the free-state and pro-slavery parties. The first ones were slight and unimportant owing to the fact the land was not open to settlement and the few early residents were practically of one mind. As the controversy waxed more intense, the conflicts became more cruel and insolent. The elections held were farces and were for the greater part managed by pro-slavery men. The methods used is evidenced by the election of October 5, 1857, for members of the legislature. (See Walker's Administration.) The continuous interference of Missouri border ruffians in Kansas affairs on the eastern tier of counties aroused the greatest feeling of animosity among the free-state men which resulted in the border wars, of varying degrees of importance. A battle growing out of politics was that called by some "the first battle of Bull Run," because it was fought on Bull creek, in the year 1858, when Gen. Lane, commander of the free-state men, met the pro-slavery forces of Gen. Reid. A few shots were exchanged and Reid retreated into Missouri. No blood was shed.

On Sept. 6, 1862, Quantrill made his well known raid upon Olathe,
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which was in a defenseless condition. With a band of about 140 men he entered the town, invaded and plundered houses and stores, and corralled the citizens in the public square. Hiram Blanchard of Spring Hill, Philip Wiggins and Josiah Skinner were killed in an effort to protect property. (See Guerrillas.)

In Johnson county 500 men were enrolled in the Thirteenth regiment, of which Thomas M. Bowen was commissioned colonel; J. B. Wheeler, lieutenant-colonel; William Roy, adjutant, and during the four years of war Johnson county furnished its full share of soldiers. In about three weeks after the first call for troops, a company of 50 men enlisted and organized, with S. F. Hill captain. This company was assigned to the Second Kansas infantry as Company C. Upon the second call for volunteers a second company was organized with J. E. Hayes as captain. For some time this company belonged to the Fourth regiment but in the spring of 1862 it became Company A of the Tenth regiment. Nearly an entire company was raised in the county for the Eighth Kansas infantry, and was assigned as Company F of that regiment, with J. M. Hadley as second lieutenant. In the late summer of 1862, William Pellet of Olathe was commissioned to raise another company of infantry. As Company H of the Twelfth regiment it performed garrison duty at Forts Leavenworth, Riley and Larned. Also for the Twelfth regiment a company was raised in the vicinity of Gardner and Spring Hill, with John T. Gordon as captain. After the Lawrence massacre, the Fifteenth regiment of cavalry was raised. Johnson county furnished one entire company. This regiment distinguished itself in 1864, fighting Gen. Price's army on its notorious raid.

The county was organized in 1855 but there was not a full corps of officers until March, 1857, when Gov. Walker appointed the following: Commissioners, John P. Ector, John Evans and William Fisher, Jr.; probate judge, John B. Campbell; treasurer, John T. Barton; sheriff, Pat Cosgrove. In March, 1858, the first county election was held with the following results: Commissioners, John P. Ector, John J. Evans and William Fisher, Jr.; register of deeds, J. B. Blake; clerk of the board of commissioners, James Rich; sheriff, Pat Cosgrove; county attorney, Jonathan Gore.

On Nov. 7, 1865, an election was held on the question of issuing \$100,000 in bonds to the Kansas City & Neosho Valley railroad. The bonds were voted, the road was commenced in the summer of 1867, completed to Olathe on Nov. 19, and to the south line of the county in 1869. On April 6, 1869, another election was held on the question of issuing \$100,000 in bonds as aid for each of two railroads—the St. Louis, Lawrence and Denver, and the Kansas City & Santa Fe. The bonds were voted. The Kansas City & Santa Fe was completed to Ottawa in 1870 and the St. Louis, Lawrence & Denver was built from Lawrence to Pleasant Hill in 1871. In 1910 a line from Holliday southwest through Olathe into Franklin county crossed the extreme northern part east and west along the Kansas river; a line of the St. Louis & San

Francisco enters in the extreme northeast, crosses southwest to Olathe, thence south into Miami county; another line of the same road crosses from the eastern border to Olathe; the Missouri, Kansas & Texas operates its trains from Kansas City over the tracks of the St. Louis & San Francisco through the county, and a line of the Missouri Pacific crosses the southeastern corner. There are 93.75 miles of railroad, main track, in the county.

At the organization of the county, the county seat was located where Shawnee now stands, which place was then called Gum Springs. Early in the summer of 1858 parties interested in the development of Olathe had an election held to change the county seat to that town. Under the territorial laws both elections had to be ordered by the governor, who had not heard of the desire to change the county seat, hence the election was illegal. Gov. Denver ordered it back to Gum Springs but in October of the same year at another election Olathe became the county seat.

The first school in Johnson county was the Shawnee mission school, 1 mile from the Missouri line and 7 miles south of Kansas City. Connected with the mission was a carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, shoemaker's shop, a steam grist mill and a saw mill. In 1834 the Friends established a mission on the Shawnee reservation. The few white children of the communities attended the Indian schools. The first schools for white children were established in 1857. The schools of Johnson county have developed into thoroughly equipped institutions of learning. In 1907 there were 95 organized school districts and a school population of 5,428. The first churches for Johnson county were the mission meeting houses. Churches for white people were organized from 1859 to 1870. The first newspaper published was the Olathe Herald, the first issue of which appeared Aug. 29, 1859.