

Marion County, which at one time covered more than a third of the area of Kansas, including all the territory in the state south and west of the present northern and eastern lines of the county, is located midway between the northern and southern boundaries of the state, and is in the first tier of counties west of the 6th principal meridian. It is bounded on the north by Dickinson and Morris counties; on the east by Morris and Chase; on the south by Butler and Harvey, and on the west by Harvey and McPherson. The original location of the county was fixed by legislative act in 1860. It comprised less than the present area. The original boundaries were altered by an increase of territory on the west and a decrease on the east. In 1865 the legislature by special act fixed the boundaries to include all of southwestern Kansas. In June of that year, on petition of the citizens of the county, the governor restored the previous boundaries and ordered a separate organization of the county. There were 162 inhabitants at that time, and but 200 acres of land under cultivation. Under the name of Marion township the county had been attached to Chase county for judicial purposes since 1862.

William H. Billings, Levi Billings and Thomas J. Wise, Sr., were appointed the first commissioners. The first meeting was held at the home of William H. Billings at Marion, which at the election in Dec., 1866, was made the county seat. The first election was held on Aug. 7, 1865, when 23 votes were polled and the following officers elected: William H. Billings, probate judge and county commissioner; Thomas J. Wise, treasurer and county commissioner; Levi Billings, commissioner; R. C. Coble, county clerk and register of deeds; John C. Snow, sheriff; W. P. Shreve, county surveyor; Reuben Riggs, county attorney. Mr. Wise being ineligible to office A. A. Moore was appointed in his place. A second county seat election was held in 1881, which resulted in favor of Marion. The first court-house was in the same building with the school house. The county appropriated \$999 for this building. In 1881 another appropriation of \$5,000 was made and a new court-house built. A third building has lately been erected, which is one of the best court-houses in the state.

The first settlers in the county located on Doyle creek, near the present town of Florence. They were Moses Shane, who came in 1858, and whose death the next year was the first in the county; Patrick Doyle, in 1859, for whom Doyle creek and township were named, and a family by the name of Welsh, in which occurred the first birth in the county in Aug., 1859. In the spring of 1859 a trading post was established at Lost Springs on the Santa Fe trail and in the autumn of the same year Moore Bros. established a ranch near the present town of Durham. The first postoffice was established at this place with A. A. Moore as postmaster. Later in the same year a postoffice was established at Lost Springs with J. H. Costello as postmaster. Previous to this the nearest postoffice was Emporia. Thomas J. Wise settled on Clear creek and John Brenot on Brenot creek in 1859. The next year William H. Billings, George Griffith and William Shreve located where the city of Marion now stands. The population of the county in that year was 74.

The famous Santa Fe trail ran through Marion county, entering in the northeast corner, running through Lost Springs and southwest into McPherson county. The settlers were for many years in danger from

the Indians. In 1864 a man was scalped on the trail at "Cottonwood Holes," near the headwaters of the Cottonwood river, by a party of Cheyennes and Kiowas. At Marion there was a log house surrounded by a high stone corral, which was used as a fort. A ruling existed among the settlers to the effect that no gun was to be fired unless there was danger from the Indians. Many times those who were too far away to get to the "fort" hid in the cornfields and at times whole families remained in such concealment all night. In 1868 numerous depredations were committed in the northern part of the county by the Cheyennes, who stole horses and cattle, and were followed by white thieves committing the same offenses in Indian guise. The people in the outlying settlements flocked to Marion for refuge. David Lucas rode to Council Grove and secured relief, which in all probability averted an attack.

The first school in the county was taught in the winter of 1865-66 by Dr. J. N. Rodgers of Marion. The district took in the whole of southwest Kansas, which at one time was included in the county. The first term lasted four months and the assessor had to go clear to the west line of the state to collect taxes to support the school. Some of the pupils came from Larned, Fort Dodge and other remote settlements. The school house was of logs with a dirt roof, and the teacher's desk was a dry goods box.

The first store in the county was started by A. A. Moore and W. H. Billings at Marion in 1861. The first grist mill was erected in 1872 on the Cottonwood by Moore & Fuller. The first wheat that was raised in the county was grown by Silas C. Locklin in 1863. It was threshed by the old treading process used in Bible times and was cleaned by pouring it in the wind. It had to be hauled to a mill near Emporia to be ground, and the hauling was difficult, as there were no roads. The first sermon was preached in the school house above mentioned. The minister came 45 miles to hold the service, and he was clad in overalls and a woolen shirt.

The first railroad proposition was made by the Kansas & Nebraska company, and the agreement was that bonds to the amount of \$200,000 should be issued to the company on the completion of the grade to Marion. The grade was completed and the bonds issued, but no railroad was built. The railroads now in the county are the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific. The main line of the former enters on the east line of the county and crosses southwest through Florence and Peabody. A branch diverges northwest, which runs through Marion and Hillsboro, and another branch goes south through Burns into Butler county. Another line of the same road crosses the extreme northeast corner, passing through Lost Springs. Two lines of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific enter in the northeast from Herington. One runs south to Marion, thence southwest to Peabody and on into Butler county, the other cuts off the northwest

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corner passing through Ramona, Tampa and Durham and on into McPherson county.

Aside from the public schools there are three private institutions, the English-American preparatory school at Hillsboro, a German Lutheran school at Lincolnville, and the school of the Immaculate Conception at Burns. Physical culture is taught in a number of the schools in the county.

Marion county was originally divided into three townships, Marion, Cedar and Santa Fe. In 1870 the townships were Clear Creek and Doyle. In 1875 the additional ones were Branch, Grant, Peabody, Risley, Summit and Wilson; in 1880 four more had been organized, Catlin, Fairplay, Gale and Liberty; in 1882 Branch was divided into East Branch and West Branch, Durham was organized and ten more have since been organized, making 24 in 1910. The new ones are: Blaine, Clark, Colfax, Durham Park, Lehigh, Logan, Lost Springs, Menno, Milton and Moore.

Marion county is one of the beauty spots of Kansas. The main branch of the Cottonwood river rises in the northwestern part and flows southeast to Marion, where it is met by the south branch and continues in a southeasterly direction. It is a beautiful stream skirted with woods which form delightful natural scenery for many miles. There are a number of tributaries, among which are the Doyle, Cedar and Luta. Springs are abundant throughout the county, some of them containing minerals in medicinal quantities. The most notable of these are the Chingawassa springs, located 6 miles north of Marion in the midst of a beautiful natural park. The general surface is somewhat broken and hilly in the east and a gently rolling prairie in the west. The bottom lands along the streams average from one-fourth mile to a mile in width, and comprise 15 per cent. of the total area of the county. The timber belts comprise about 3 per cent. of the total area and contain cottonwood, hackberry, elm, oak, walnut, box-elder, sycamore, honey-locust, coffee-bean and mulberry. Gypsum and magnesian limestone are abundant, the latter being found along the banks of the streams.

This is an agricultural and stock raising county and ranks among the foremost in the state in the amount of money realized from the sale of stock sold for slaughter. The total value of farm products averages over \$5,000,000 annually. Corn, the heaviest crop, netted \$1,500,000 in 1910; oats, \$600,000, and animals sold for slaughter nearly \$2,000,000. Kafir corn, oats, hay, poultry, butter and eggs are important products, and there are 200,000 bearing fruit trees.

The assessed valuation of property in 1910 was over \$40,000,000, as against \$40,000 in 1870. In 1870 the population was 768, and in 1910 it was 22,415, which shows that the property values have not only increased a thousand fold in 40 years but the wealth per capita from \$52 to \$1,800. According to the figures presented by the Marion newspapers and real estate men there is more money per capita on deposit in the Marion county banks than in any similar district in the world.