

**McPherson County**, one of the best wheat producing counties of the state, is located a little to the south of the center of the state, and in the first tier of counties west of the 6th principal meridian. It is bounded on the north by Saline county; on the east by Marion; on the south by Harvey and Reno, and on the west by Rice and Ellsworth. The Santa Fe trail ran through McPherson county and the first ranch for the accommodation of travelers was established on the east branch of Turkey creek, about 7 miles east of the present city of McPherson, in 1855. It was kept by Charles Fuller. The first settler was Isaac Sharp, who took a claim in the winter of 1860 on the creek which bears his name. He brought with him his father and mother from Pennsylvania. Mrs. Sharp died and was buried on the creek. Sharp trapped, hunted and traded with the Indians. When the war broke out and the Indians became troublesome he moved to Council Grove. It is interesting to note that when Sharp became a candidate for governor ten years later that out of 198 votes cast in McPherson county he received but one or two. From the time of Sharp there were no settlements of any consequence for several years, although the county was visited by trappers and traders. One of these, Lewis by name, located a claim on the Smoky Hill river, which he improved to some extent. A man by the name of Peters located on Sharp's creek, but died shortly afterward. A man by the name of Wheeler built a stone corral at the crossing of the Santa Fe trail over the Little Arkansas river in 1865. The next year Col. Grierson with the Seventh Kansas cavalry encamped with his troops at this place. They built a stockade of cottonwood logs for a headquarters, and put up huts to live in.

In 1866 settlers came in considerable numbers. In January Milton and Jefferson Harper and S. Delano located on Sharp's creek; in May ten Swedes—A. Klingbery, F. Lundstrum, J. Ericson, A. Lend, J. F. Huldquist, P. Ahlquist, N. Sponberg, G. Johnson, B. Johnson and Andrew Hanson, located on the Smoky Hill river. The same month H. B. Tolle and Sanford and Lowell Reese settled on Gypsum creek.

Others who located in various parts of the county that year were, D. B. Ray, Robert Minnis, J. G. Maxwell and family, E. R. Falley, G. W. and S. D. Shields and William Brown.

In 1867 the Pawnee Indians made a raid on Gypsum creek, murdered a man by the name of Temple and hid his body in a ravine. The next year the Osages raided the vicinity of Sharp's creek and carried off a Mrs. Bassett and a child a few days old. The woman was too weak to ride a pony so was left on the open prairie, where she and her baby were later found by the searching party, in a pitiable condition. The baby died from exposure.

The year 1868 saw the advent of several colonies of Swedes. One colony purchased 13,000 acres of the Kansas Pacific Railroad company in the vicinity of the present town of Marquette, and settled on it. The Chicago Swedish company made heavy purchases especially along the Smoky Hill river and located the town of Lindsborg. Other smaller colonies located in different parts of the county. The town of Sweadal, now extinct, had its beginning. A postoffice was established with L. N. Holmburg, the first store keeper, as postmaster. The first marriage ceremony, which united F. Lindstrum and Miss Larson, was performed by Mr. Holmburg. In 1870 he was made captain of a military company organized for protection from the Indians. Solomon Stephens was first lieutenant of the same company and G. W. Shields, second lieutenant.

In 1871 the Ashtabula colony, the officers of which traveled nearly all over Kansas in search of a location, came to McPherson county and settled in King City township. They founded the town of King City, which was at one time a dangerous rival of McPherson for the county seat, but which is now extinct. The colony took its name from Ashtabula, Ohio, the town in which it was organized. In Feb., 1873, a colony from Ashland, Ky., located 3 miles east of McPherson. They hauled the timber for their houses from Salina. In September of that year the first Mennonite colony came to the county and bought a large tract of land in the southern part from the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. company, besides making extensive purchases from settlers.

The first birth in the county was that of Andrew Brown on Sharp's creek Aug. 19, 1869. The first destructive storm after the settlement of the county occurred on June 17, 1876. It passed over the northern part wrecking a great deal of property and injuring a number of persons.

McPherson county was originally a part of Peketon county, which was established in 1860 and contained all the territory in Kansas west of the 6th principal meridian and south of township 16. This county was abolished in 1865 and McPherson was made a township of Marion county, which covered a territory similar to Peketon, except that its eastern boundary extended to the west line of Chase county. Solomon Stephens and L. N. Holmburg, who were appointed justices of the peace in 1868, were the first civil officers in what is now McPherson county. A township election was held in 1869 and the following ticket was

elected without opposition: Justices of the peace, J. G. Maxwell and L. N. Holmburg; constables, R. D. Bagley and David Ray; trustee, D. H. Page; treasurer, David Stephens; clerk, John F. Hughes.

The county was organized in 1870 by proclamation of Gov. Harvey in response to a petition prepared by a mass meeting of citizens held at Sweadal. The population at that time was 738. John H. Johnson and Samuel Shields were appointed commissioners and John Rundstrum, clerk. Sweadal was made the temporary county seat. The commissioners organized the following townships, Gypsum, Turkey Creek, Smoky Hill and Sharp's Creek. At the election held on May 2, 172 votes were cast. Sweadal was made the county seat and the officers chosen were: Commissioners, T. E. Simpson, James Weir and John Ferm; clerk, J. R. Fisher; treasurer, Solomon Stevens; probate judge, Nathan Bean; register of deeds, S. D. Shields; sheriff, M. E. Harper; coroner, John Rundstrum; county attorney, D. H. Page; clerk of the district court, S. J. Swenson; surveyor, J. D. Chamberlain; superintendent of public instruction, O. Olsson. Sweadal was located less than 2 miles from Lindsborg, and in Sept., 1870, the commissioners moved the county seat to the latter place. In April, 1873, a petition for relocation was filed. The election was held on June 10, the contesting towns being McPherson, King City, New Gotland and Lindsborg. The McPherson town company had offered the county the use of rooms for county offices for ten years, and ground on which to build a court-house. It is said that there was a great deal of illegal voting on the part of the McPherson people. L. N. Holmburg of New Gotland would have put a stop to the practice, but before he had an opportunity to do so he was arrested on a spurious charge and taken to King City, where he was detained until evening. Out of 934 votes cast McPherson received 605. The county commissioners picked out the grounds in accordance with the offer of the town company and the company erected a two-story frame court-house, which was used for ten years when a large stone structure was built.

The next winter after the grasshopper disaster of 1874, the grangers of McPherson county asked the government for rations for 10,000 people for six months, 10,000 blankets, and 10,000 of each article of clothing. T. D. Wickersham, who was the promoter of this request, helped to distribute the goods and got into serious trouble for supposed theft of money and supplies. Wickersham was an ill-starred name in McPherson county, a James Wickersham having fled the country in 1870 to escape lynching, and another James Wickersham having been shot, but not killed, by James Abercrombie in 1876. In 1875 the sum of \$3,300 was stolen from the county, there being no safe place for the treasurer to keep the funds collected.

In 1877, McPherson was the foremost county in the state in agricultural products and a great celebration, attended by 5,000 people, was held at the county seat. Although agitation for railroads had been going on since 1872, these products were still being marketed at Salina and other towns outside of the county. The first railroad was built in 1879.

It was the Marion & McPherson branch of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe. A great celebration took place at McPherson on its completion to that point. The Kansas & Southwestern was completed to McPherson on Jan. 1, 1880. This is at present the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, which enters the county midway on the east line, extends west to McPherson, where it turns southwest crossing the southern line into Reno county. About the same time the Salina & Southwestern road was built from Salina to McPherson. This is at present the Union Pacific. A branch of the Missouri Pacific R. R. from Newton terminates at McPherson, and another branch of the same road crosses the northwestern corner.

The county is divided into 25 townships, viz: Battle Hill, Bonaville, Canton, Castle, Delmore, Empire, Groveland, Gypsum Creek, Harper, Hayes, Jackson, King City, Little Valley, Lone Tree, Marquette, McPherson, Meridian, Moundridge, New Gotland, Smoky Hill, South Sharp's Creek, Spring Valley, Superior, Turkey Creek and Union. The postoffices are, McPherson, the county seat and largest town, Canton, Conway, Dolespark, Elyria, Fremont, Galva, Groveland, Inman, Lindsborg, Marquette, Moundridge, Roxbury and Windom.

The general surface of the county is rolling prairie, somewhat broken in the north and level in the central part. Bottom lands, which comprise 7 per cent. of the total area, average from one-half to one mile in width. The timber belts along the streams are a few rods in width and contain cottonwood, box-elder, ash, oak, mulberry, hackberry, coffee-bean and willow. The Little Arkansas crosses the southwestern corner, and the Smoky Hill river flows through the northwestern section. There are a number of fair sized creeks, among which are Sharp's, Gypsum, Blaze, Turkey, Black Kettle, Emma and Crooked. Limestone, sandstone and gypsum are abundant.

Stock raising and agriculture are the chief occupations of the people and this locality is second to none in the state in products of this character. The annual output of the farms is over \$5,000,000. The corn crop of 1910 brought \$1,500,000; oats, nearly \$1,000,000; barley, \$100,000; sorghum, \$100,000; Kafir corn, \$80,000; wheat, \$77,000; tame grass, \$300,000, and wild grass, \$100,000. The total value of field crops was \$3,500,000, the value of livestock for slaughter \$1,600,000. Other important products are poultry, butter, milk, fruit, eggs and broom-corn. McPherson county makes a specialty of the latter crop and it is manufactured locally.

The assessed valuation of property in 1910 was \$44,589,000. The population in the same year was 21,521, which makes the wealth per capita nearly \$2,100.