

Neosho County, in the southeastern part of the state, is located in the second tier of counties from Missouri, and the second from Oklahoma on the south. It is bounded on the north by Allen county; on the east by Bourbon and Crawford; on the south by Labette, and on the west by Wilson. It was founded from the northern part of Dorn county (q. v.), which was changed to Neosho, by the first state territorial legislature in 1861. The actual organization of the county was in 1864. In 1866 the boundaries were fixed to include the territory of what is now Neosho and Labette counties. In 1867 it was diminished by the territory included in Labette county. It took its present boundaries in 1870.

The lands of Neosho county were occupied by the Osage Indians until the treaty of 1865, and were known as the "Osage Ceded Lands." There were a number of early missions among the Osages in this locality. The first missionary was Rev. Charles De La Croix, who

came to Neosho county in May, 1822, and established the Osage Mission. Upon the death of La Croix, two years later, he was succeeded by Rev. Charles Van Quickenborn, who in 1828 performed the first Christian marriage ceremony in the state. Trading posts were established among the Osages in 1837 by Edward Chouteau and Gerald Papin. A half-breed settlement was established between Canville and Flat Rock creeks. A. B. Canville, for whom the creek was named, started a trading post among the Indians in 1844, married the next year and settled on Canville creek in 1847.

The first settlements in the various townships were as follows: Grant township—Dr. W. W. Hill in 1851, killed by a mob in his own dooryard in 1866; Levi Hadden in 1858, and in 1859, Simeon W. and James A. Hadden, and Solomon Markham and his four sons. Big Creek township—J. L. Fletcher, S. Barbee, H. Schooley, S. and L. Hadden in 1859; in Tioga township in the same year—Darius Rodgers, Thomas Jackson, Benjamin Smith and S. E. Beach. The first settler in Canville township was T. R. Peters in 1859, followed by M. Kitterman, William Dox, David Lowery and J. C. Comstock in 1865. Walnut Grove township was settled in 1865 by E. J. Pierce and W. I. Brewer. Centerville in the same year by Reuben Lake, Joseph Cummings, Henry and John Wilkie and John Blair. Chetopa was settled in 1864 by George T. Shepard and A. A. Ashback, who were followed the next year by M. J. Salter and John Post. Ladore was settled in 1865 by I. N. Roach and family, W. C. Dickerson and S. Rosa; Lincoln in the same year by M. L. and Frank McCashu, Dr. Dement, M. A. Patterson and J. L. Evans; Erie was settled by I. M. Allen, John Johnson, D. T. Mitchell, P. Walters, R. Leppo, E. F. Williams, P. McCarthy and John C. Weibley in 1865. The first settlers in Mission township were S. J. Gilmore, J. M. Roycroft, D. Bronson, B. P. Ayres, J. P. Williams, Solon Marston, S. H. Ulmer and M. Barnes, all of whom had taken claims before 1866. The first postoffice was established in 1851 at the Osage Mission and the first church and first school buildings erected at that place in 1847.

On the organization of the county in Nov., 1864, the governor appointed three commissioners: R. W. Hadden, S. E. Beach and S. W. Hadden; declared the county seat at Osage City (Rodger's Mill), located 3 miles northeast of the present city of Chanute. The first election for county officers was held in Dec., 1864, and resulted as follows: Commissioners, R. W. Jackson, S. W. Hadden, T. Jackson; clerk, J. L. Fletcher; treasurer, William Jackson; surveyor, S. Jackson; county attorney, Darius Rodgers; probate judge, H. Woodard; sheriff, B. Vaughn; coroner, W. H. Davis; assessor, Wiley Evans; superintendent of public instruction, S. E. Beach. The county was first divided into four townships, Neosho, Big Creek, Canville and Mission. Changes took place at intervals until in 1871, when the present division into 12 townships was made. The names as they now stand are Big Creek, Canville, Centerville, Chetopa, Erie, Grant, Ladore, Lincoln, Mission, Shiloh, Tioga and Walnut Grove.

At an election held in June, 1867, the county seat was located at the geographical center of the county. The next year another election was held, in which factional feeling ran very high. The fight was between Osage Mission and Erie. Life-long enemies were made and business sacrificed in the struggle. Erie was declared successful by the commissioners. Court proceedings were brought to compel a recount of the vote, which was done in 1870, when it was found that Osage Mission had the majority. Considerable excitement was caused by the county records being stolen from Erie and conveyed to the Mission. They were never found, and the county lost several thousand dollars by the incident. No legal proceedings were brought to regain them, as Erie regained the county seat and the people there were willing to let it pass. In 1872 another election was held in which no choice was made, and another election was held a few days later to settle the matter. On the face of the returns, Erie received the most votes. Charges of fraud led to litigation which was settled in 1874 by the supreme court in favor of Erie.

A great deal of trouble was occasioned by a complication in land titles. After the treaty with the Osages, made at Canville trading post in 1865, it was supposed by the settlers that the lands were opened to settlement and 144 persons took claims with this understanding. However, when President Andrew Johnson declared a sale of the Osage lands in May, 1868, the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad company came forward claiming every other section for ten miles on each side of its road, according to a grant approved by the president of the United States in 1866, and the Leavenworth, Lawrence & Galveston made a similar claim according to a grant of Congress in 1863. Joseph S. Wilson, commissioner of the general land office, repeatedly refused the claims of the railroads, but O. H. Browning, secretary of the interior, reversed his decision and the lands were withdrawn from sale. Fearful lest they should be deprived of their homes and be obliged to buy of the railroad companies at high prices, the citizens formed an organization in 1868 known as the "Osage Settlers' Rights Society," through which they worked to get legislation in their behalf. They succeeded in 1869 in getting an act through Congress allowing bona fide settlers to buy any of the lands, but the act also protected "vested rights." A question arose as to what "vested rights" were. The matter was taken into the courts where the settlers finally won.

Neosho county is noted for its oil and gas wells. They were first discovered in 1885 at Osage Mission in drilling for coal. Not thinking that the gas was of value, the first wells were not turned to account, and it was not until 1897-98, when the Standard Oil company put in a pipe line that started an interest in the industry. (See Natural Gas.)

On account of the occasional overflow of the Neosho river and its branches, it was found necessary to construct levees along the banks of the streams. These levees were begun in 1890 by private enterprise.

When it was found that, although rude in construction, they protected the wheat fields from submersion, legislation was secured (in 1893) to authorize the public officials to build levees from public funds. The cost of this protection has been about \$5 per acre, and the increased value of protected lands from \$10 to \$20 per acre. The benefit from a sanitary point is also a great consideration.

During the Civil war Neosho county did her full part in furnishing soldiers for the front. She also had considerable trouble of her own with border raids and depredations of various sorts. The Osage Indians, who were being taught farming, met with so many discouragements in the way of the destruction of their crops and newly built houses by raiders who also drove off their live stock, that they ceded their lands to the government.

Thirty-five Neosho county boys enlisted in the Spanish-American war, five of whom were officers, viz: Clay Allen, adjutant and first lieutenant; Joseph E. Knight, first lieutenant; Logan H. Wells, second lieutenant; Albertus Priest, sergeant; Edward E. Berry, corporal. All the men except Allen were members of Company A, Twenty-second regiment. More than 20 Neosho county boys saw service in the Philippines.

Among the extinct towns, Jacksonville, on the corner where Neosho, Labette, Crawford and Cherokee counties join, had the distinction of having the first newspaper and printing office in the county. The paper was called the Neosho County Eagle and was printed in 1868. Later the office was moved to Erie.

The first schools in the county, outside of the missionary schools for Indians, were established in the latter '60s and the early '70s. They were taught in log buildings, sometimes stores and dwelling houses. In 1910 there were over 100 organized districts, and the school property was valued in the neighborhood of \$200,000. In the same year there were 24 rural mail routes emanating from the different towns in the county, and several entering from other counties, so that the country people are well supplied with daily mail.

The first railroad lines built through the county were the Leavenworth, Lawrence & Galveston, now the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, and the Missouri, Kansas & Texas, both in 1870. The line built at that time by the latter road enters the county on the east, crossing the line about 2 miles north of the center, and runs in a southwesterly direction, crossing the southern line about 3 miles east of the center. The stations on this line are St. Paul and South Mound. The road built first by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe crosses the county line and the Neosho river just north of Chanute, passes through that city, proceeds in a southeasterly direction through Erie, and out on the east line of the county. The line was built in 1883. A second line of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas R. R., also built in 1870, enters on the north line, runs in a southeasterly direction and crosses the southern line near the center. The third line of this system was built by the Kansas

City & Pacific company in 1886. It crosses the southern line about 2 miles east of the center, runs northeasterly, leaving the county near the northeast corner. The total mileage of the two systems in the county is 123.

The general surface of Neosho county is a gently undulating prairie, about 20 per cent. bottom land, which along the Neosho river averages over 2 miles in width, and along the smaller streams about a quarter to half a mile. There is an abundance of native timber and many groves of artificial forest. The Neosho, the principal stream, enters in the northeast and flows southwest through the county. Its principal tributaries are Rock, Canville and Big creeks. Limestone and sandstone of a superior quality are found in abundance. A stone resembling black marble has been found near Erie. Brick clay is plentiful.

The area of the county is 576 square miles or 368,640 acres, of which 252,000 acres have been brought under cultivation. The farm produce for 1910 amounted to about \$2,500,000, of which corn, the most valuable crop, contributed \$500,000; oats, \$150,000, and wheat, \$100,000. Other leading field crops are Irish potatoes, flax, Kafir corn and prairie grass. Animals sold for slaughter in 1910 brought \$500,000. The assessed valuation of property was nearly \$30,000,000, and the population was 23,754, a gain of 4,500 over that of 1900.