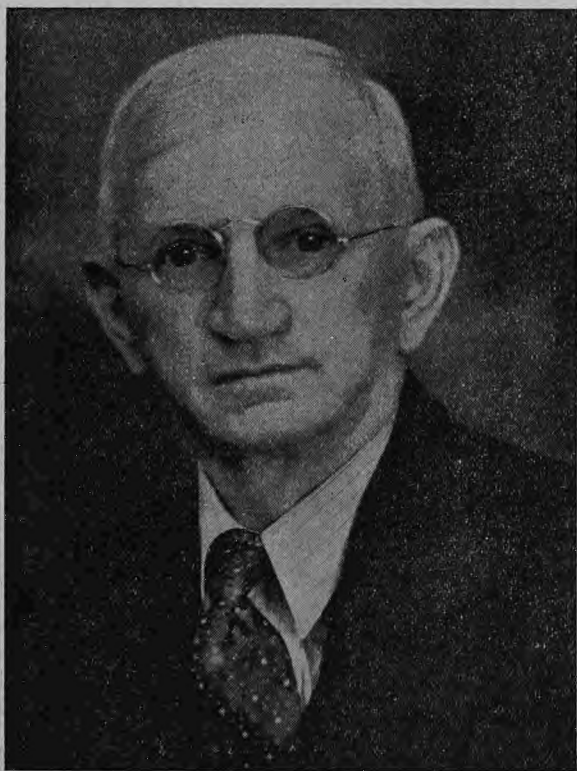


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Seventy Years in Norton County,
Kansas, 1872-1942



The Author - - D. N. Bowers

Seventy Years in Norton County,
Kansas, 1872-1942

BY

D. N. Bowers

Teacher, 1899-1928

«»

Written and compiled from the records, newspaper files
and personal interviews. Special articles
contributed by local writers.

«»

NORTON, KANSAS
THE NORTON COUNTY CHAMPION
1942

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Dedicated to the
Pioneers
Who made Norton County

INTRODUCTION

As a Norton county "country editor" for the past twelve years, it has been my melancholy duty to record in print nearly every week the passing of another of our very earliest pioneers; and of recent years, especially, the thought has repeatedly occurred to me that, within a very short time at best, Norton county will be left without a single resident who can tell first-hand of the county's earliest days—that nearly forgotten era of 70 years ago in which the very first settlers began to arrive.

Even now only a few hardy souls are left whose memories span the period between the early '70's and today—sturdy pioneer stock like "Johnnie" Rosborough, Mrs. F. M. Duvall (the former Alice Newell) who came to the county with the first settlers in 1872, and her husband, Fred Duvall, for half a century the dynamic, yet beloved, editor of *The Norton Courier*.

By far the greater number of the settlers of '72 came to Norton county as men and women in their 20's or 30's—or younger; and the 70 years which have intervened between then and now have taken their toll of all but the youngest of the early arrivals. Even for those remaining few, the Biblical limit of "three score and ten" has been far overrun.

It is for this reason that I have often said (and so have many others) that somebody ought to set about writing a thorough history of the county right now, while there are still those present who can link us, through their eyes, their ears and their memories, with things as they were in the glamorous days of the homesteader. Being of a congenitally indolent nature, I have never assumed the task myself; but on more than one occasion I have tried to persuade others to compile a good history of Norton county which would preserve for those to come the actual facts about our earliest days—facts which have already been warped almost beyond recognition by the forces of hearsay.

Thus, it is only natural that I was more or less personally interested when the author of this book, D. N. Bowers, told me nearly two years ago that he intended to weld the findings of four years' historical research, and contact with the real pioneers themselves, into a volume to be entitled "Seventy Years in Norton County, Kansas". Since that time, when not regularly employed otherwise, and working holidays, during his spare time and at night, Mr. Bowers has continued his exhaustive research of all

INTRODUCTION

available historical records in the county and elsewhere in the process of compiling this volume; and the combined six years of effort he has thus spent have served well to make this book the scholarly and accurate, yet intensely interesting treatise you are about to read.

Perhaps if I tell you a little about the author's background, you will be able to understand better why he has taken such pains to make this volume a thoroughly accurate, authentic and dependable history.

For more than 23 years of his life, Mr. Bowers has been a teacher, having taught school at various times in Kiowa, Seward, Haskell, Edwards, Norton and Wichita counties. For nine years, from 1913 to 1922, he was principal of the grades in the Almena City School, first coming to Norton county in 1911, and having lived in the county for 24 years. From 1922 to 1928 he was principal of the Leota City School. Throughout his lifetime, he has attended schools in Tennessee, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bowers has been either student or teacher for virtually his entire life. It is therefore easy to see that he comes naturally by his love for accuracy and scholarly thoroughness—so convincingly demonstrated in this volume.

Not a man to force his personal opinions or beliefs upon the reader, Mr. Bowers' own words take but little space in the book. Virtually every statement made is taken from records actually existing, with ample references as to where those records may be found. At no place in the book does he take personal responsibility for any statement of fact. Typically a scholar, Mr. Bowers says, "The records are good enough for me—they were here then, and I wasn't!"

Hesitant to take the spotlight, he has even turned over a sizable share of his book to the efforts of other Norton county writers, efforts which give the book a pleasing touch of variety. I refer to the excellent historical sketches written by Charles A. Rose, Ernest M. Wheeler, Byron F. Salisbury, Dewain L. Delp, R. E. Getty, A. E. Schafer and E. E. Nelson.

I will confess that, although Mr. Bowers has been a frequent visitor at The Champion office for the past six years, reading the 57-year-old files of this newspaper hour after hour in search of contemporary substantiation of various facts for which no basis could be found in city, county or state records, I really did not get acquainted with him until after he brought his manuscript to me for reading. Since then, in the four months in which the

INTRODUCTION

book has been in process of printing, I have come to know him as a good-natured, mild-mannered sort of fellow—and to admire him as a scholar; a stickler for detail; exactly the type of person who could do a finished job of historical writing.

However, I will also confess that when I sat down to read his manuscript, I did so with tongue in cheek—doubting that the author could resist the temptation which always confronts the novice historian; that of foregoing absolute fact in favor of more colorful, though not always accurate, fiction. Suffice it to say that I began the reading with doubt, and finished it not long before sun-up, missing out on several hours of sleep—for which I have an undeniable fondness. To say that I was pleasantly surprised is understatement—and I believe the average reader will experience the same reaction.

It is my opinion that Mr. Bowers has done a job that needed doing, and has done it well. "Seventy Years in Norton County, Kansas" is a book which will live long after all of us are dead—and one which will be looked upon by future generations as the true story of our earliest days as a county.

M. R. KREHBIEL, Publisher,
The Norton County Champion,
May 10, 1942.

CONTENTS

Introduction	viii
I Exploration and Settlement	1
II Organization of the County	16
III The County Seat, Norton City	35
IV The Prairie Dog Valley—East of Norton	60
V The Prairie Dog Valley—West of Norton	88
VI The Solomon Valley—East	117
VII The Solomon Valley—West	132
VIII Long Branch and the Sappa	156
IX Growth and Development	169
X Schools and Education	183
XI Pioneer Tales and Times	207
XII Concluding Words	225
Appendix—County Officers 1872-1942	235

CONTRIBUTIONS

1 Personal Memories of Pioneer Days	Charles L. Rose	77
2 The History of Oronoque	Ernest M. Wheeler	96
3 Old and New Clayton	Byron F. Salisbury	105
4 The Story of Lenora	Dewain Delp	138
5 History of New Almelo	R. E. Getty	145
6 Norton County Agriculture	A. E. Schafer	178
7 Changing Educational Program	Byron F. Salisbury	193
8 Early Schools and Education	E. E. Nelson	197
9 Education or Teaching, Which?	E. E. Nelson	204

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

p., pp.	page(s)
sec., secs.	section(s)
ch.	chapter
L., R.	left, right
N. C.	Norton county
co.	county
G. S.	general statutes
- -	to the present time
bsmt.	basement
ibid.,	in the same place
op. cit.	previously cited
Res.	resigned
App.	appointed

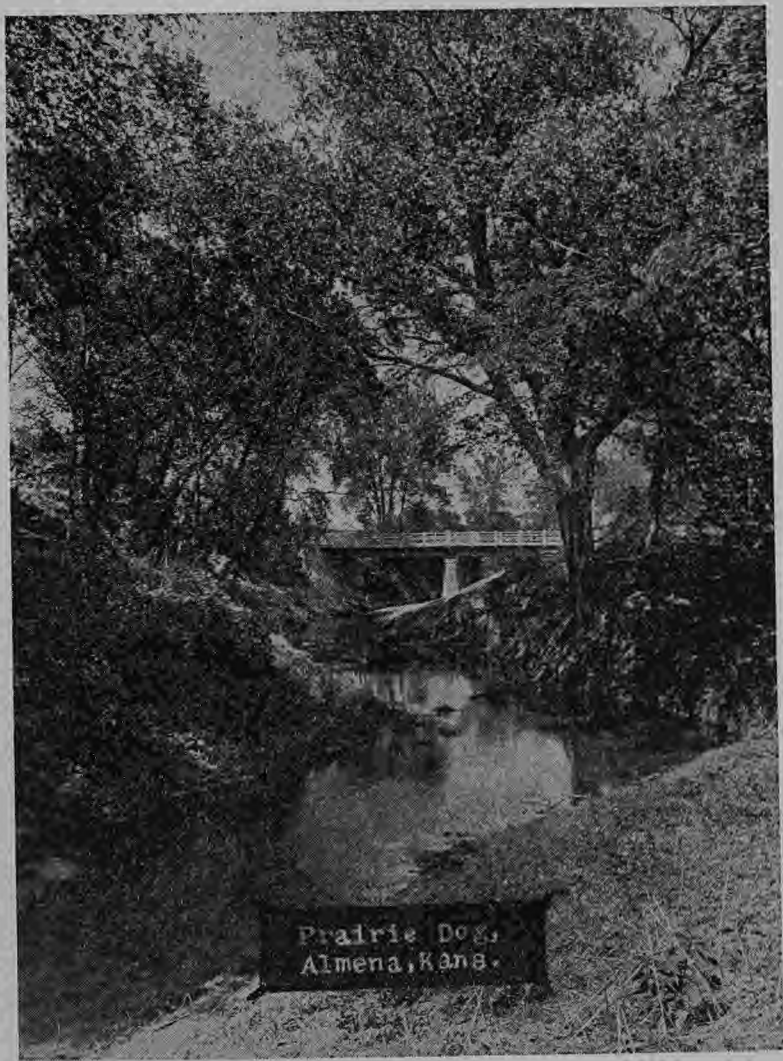
ILLUSTRATIONS

1	The Author - - - - -	iv
2	The Prairie Dog Creek - - - - -	xvi
3	Pioneer Sod House - - - - -	13
4	The Old Norton County Court House - - - - -	21
5	The New Court House - - - - -	25
6	Bird's Eye View of Norton, Kansas - - - - -	34
7	Billingsville and Norton, 1872-1873 (drawing) - - - - -	38
8	West Side of Square in 1881 - - - - -	44
9	North Side of the Square in 1881 - - - - -	45
10	Methodist Church (Norton) - - - - -	48
11	Trinity Episcopal Church (Norton) - - - - -	49
12	The Norton Community High School - - - - -	52
13	Norton City School 1888-1916 - - - - -	54
14	View of Kansas Avenue (Norton) - - - - -	58
15	Group: Norton postoffice, Library, City Schools - - - - -	59
16	The Railroad Overpass, (Norton) - - - - -	61
17	Group: State Sanatorium Buildings - - - - -	65
18	Bird's Eye View of Calvert, Kansas - - - - -	68
19	Bird's Eye View of Almena, Kansas - - - - -	71
20	A View of Main Street, Almena - - - - -	73
21	The Almena Rural High School - - - - -	81
22	The Close Mill - - - - -	89
23	The Leota Bluff - - - - -	91
24	The Stone House - - - - -	91
25	The Leota Cemetery - - - - -	91
26	Bird's Eye View of Clayton, Kansas - - - - -	104

ILLUSTRATIONS

27	The Clayton Rural High School	-		108
28	The Densmore Rural High School	-		119
29	Densmore Free Methodist Church	-		121
30	The Old Hedgewood Post Office	-		122
31	Street Scene, Edmond, Kansas	-		125
32	The Edmond Rural High School	-		126
33	The Cutting Lake, Lenora, Kansas	-		133
34	Street Scene, Lenora, Kansas	-		135
35	The Lenora Rural High School	-		142
36	Bird's Eye View of New Almelo, Kansas	-		146
37	The Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. B. Vornholt	-		151
38	Fragments of the Gentry house (cyclone picture)	-		155
39	The Immanuel Lutheran Church	-		157
40	The Maple Grove Church	-		160
41	The Devizes Store 1942	-		164
42	School house, District Number 17	-		165
43	The Meyers house (cyclone picture)	-		168
44	The last wheat harvest with cradle in Norton county	-		173
45	Norton County's first Oil Well (VanPatten)	-		182
46	Frontier Sod School	-		185
47	The Norton County High School	-		187
48	Rural School Graduates—Class of 1941	-		196
49	District Number 35 School	-		203
50	The Norton Auditorium	-		222
51	View of Norton City, 1899. Taken from the top of the Court House	-		229-234

SEVENTY YEARS IN
NORTON COUNTY, KANSAS



PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. L. FEARING, 1919

Exploration and Settlement



CHAPTER I.

THE territory comprising Norton county is a small part of the vast domain once called the "Great American Desert." This territory was claimed by the French as a result of the explorations of La Salle and his proclamation made at the mouth of the Mississippi river in 1682. The title was transferred to the Spanish at the close of the French and Indian War and remained with them until the year 1800 when by a secret treaty it came into possession of Napoleon who at the time was seeking world conquest. This was displeasing to the United States and President Jefferson purchased the entire tract, known as Louisiana, for \$15,000,000.

Soon after the United States came into possession of this large expanse of new territory the government sent explorers westward to view the country, to learn more about its geography, its resources, and its inhabitants.

We do not know who were the first white men to cross this section of Kansas. The historians tell us that, "John C. Fremont, with a band of thirty-nine men—consisting of Creoles, Canadian French and Americans, crossed the Smoky Hill, and from this point set out up the Republican."¹

Fremont says in his Journal, "At noon on June 23, 1843, we descended into the valley of the principal fork of the Republican, a beautiful stream forty feet wide and four feet deep, with a dense border of wood consisting principally of varieties of ash. We continued our route up the valley, which was populous with Prairie Dogs (the bottoms being entirely occupied with their villages) and late in the afternoon camped on its banks. We gave to this stream the name of Prairie Dog River."²

Mr. Fremont passed through what is now Norton county. He

came up on the south side of the creek and crossed one-half mile east of where Norton is now situated. From here he bore to the northwest, crossing the Sappa creek about where Devizes now stands. F. M. Lockard gave this information on authority of F. G. Adams of Topeka who was secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society. Mr. Adams visited the county in 1872 and located crossings on the Prairie Dog and the Sappa from field notes left by General Fremont. He claimed that the old trail was plainly visible at that time.⁷

KANSAS ORGANIZED, 1854

There were different things that affected the settlement of Kansas: The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill threw the state open for the agitation of the slavery question; Emigrant Aid Societies were organized in some of the eastern states for the purpose of encouraging free state people to come to Kansas and help make it a free state; Pro-slavery people crossed the border from Missouri and other points to swell the ranks of the pro-slavery side.

As a result of these moves the population of Kansas increased very rapidly and Kansas became the battle ground for the long struggle which followed.

The Act organizing Kansas as a territory was approved May 30, 1854, and Kansas was admitted as a state January 29, 1861. Up until this time the settlement had been confined, largely, to the eastern one-third of the state.

EARLIEST INHABITANTS

So far as we know the Indians were the sole inhabitants of this region for many years. A map representing this territory in 1541 shows the northwest section of what is now Kansas occupied by the Comanche Indians. A later map shows that the Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Kiowas and Plains Apaches also roamed over these plains. These were, largely, tepee dwellers. They lived in tepees made by stretching buffalo hides over a frame-work of lodge poles. This made a cone shaped tent, called a tepee. The

tepees were easy to move from place to place and convenient for roaming tribes. Marks of Indian villages have been discovered in Norton county.

When the settlers arrived they found four different tribes occupying what is now Norton county: the Sioux, Pawnees, Cheyennes and Arapahoes. The two last mentioned belonged to the Algonquin family, and were closely associated together. They were plains tribes and wandered far down the valleys, coming in close contact with the settlers.⁴

The Indians caused no real trouble in Norton county during the period of settlement. There was a scare in 1878, at the time they made a raid in Decatur county, killing a number of people near the town of Oberlin. When the news reached Norton county, the citizens formed stockades in different places and congregated at these points for protection.

INDIAN BATTLES

(By F. M. Lockard)

On October 11, 1868, Major Carr with Company L of 5 cavalry was camped on the Prairie Dog near where Calvert now stands, perhaps on the bend of the creek on George Kingsbury's old homestead. The location of this camp is given from a letter just received from Major William Valkamar, who was in command at that time. His description of the surrounding country warrants me in locating their camp at this place.

A bloody battle ensued which lasted all day in which two soldiers were killed and several wounded. A great many Indians were also killed, but the exact number is not known. During the night eleven of the soldiers got away by abandoning their wagons and supplies and returned to Ft. Hays.⁵

On October 16, 1868 an account is given of a fight that occurred on the head of a small tributary of the North Fork of the Solomon between Lieut. William J. Valkamar with three companies of 5 cavalry and Whistler's band of Sioux, in which twelve soldiers were killed and several wounded. In this engagement

the soldiers were surprised while in camp at daybreak in the morning, they not knowing there were any Indians near, and Lieut. Valkamar reports that it was a brilliant victory for the troops as they drove the Indians off and killed many of them, besides capturing two hundred of their ponies. From the description given we are able to locate this fight on the head of Skull creek in this county (a tributary to the Solomon which heads ten miles south of Alma.) It is evident that the dead were not buried on either side as the bones and skulls of a good many men have been found there since the county has been settled and for this reason the creek was named "Skull" by the early settlers. Tom Morris plowed up a cavalry saber on this old battle ground in 1891 which he now has.

Whistler's band was an off-shot of the Ogallah Sioux and he was considered one of the most treacherous and barbarous chiefs of the native plains."

On September 26, 1869 Colonel Duncan with a detachment of the 5 cavalry with Major Frank North, two companies of Pawnee scouts encountered Whistler's band of Sioux at the mouth of the South Fork, near where Alma now stands. They drove the Indians off, killed many of them and destroyed their village.

The location of this fight we get from Hon. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) who says in a private letter under date of January 1894, "On September 16, 1869, while enroute from Ft. Hays to Ft. McPherson with dispatches, as I rode down on the Prairie Dog, I heard firing and riding up to a high bluff overlooking the valley, and being within a few hundred yards of the river and about thirty-five miles above the mouth of the stream, I discovered a band of Indians massacreing a surveying party. I was discovered by the Indians, a party of them numbering about twenty mounted their ponies and started after me. I started south at no slow pace, I assure you; being well mounted I soon left them far behind. I returned to Ft. Hays and escorted three companies of the 5 cavalry and two companies of Pawnee scouts back to the place where we found an Indian village, consisting of five hundred lodges with more than a thousand warriors, besides squaws and papooses." Colonel Duncan says in his report that the sur-

veying party, consisting of thirteen men, were all killed, their bodies were all found by the troops and given a decent burial. These men were in charge of a man by the name of Buck. This incident was later referred to as the "Buck Massacre".⁷

HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS

By the year 1870 the hunters and trappers, who were slowly moving up the streams to engage in fur trade with the Indians, as well as hunt and trap, had reached the border of Norton county. Due to the lay of the land this was an ideal hunting ground for years or until the game was made extinct by the ruthless hunters. Thousands of buffalo fed on the dense prairie grass, except where it had been thinned out by destructive prairie fires. The hunters could climb to the summit of the hills skirting the valleys and from these vantage points locate the buffalo feeding in the valley below and back up in the ravines.

One of the most noted vantage points in Norton county was "Eagle Point". In his reminiscences of pioneer days, A. K. Mills says, speaking of Ame Cole, "I can see one, as I first saw him, standing tall, erect and a perfect specimen of physical manhood; his hair was black as jet and being unshorn, hung well to his sholders. His eyes were black as coal and as piercing as an eagle's. His entire dress consisted of a shirt, cartridge belt and moccasins, while his ever present and ever ready Maynard rifle hung loosely balanced over his left forearm with the muzzle inclined toward the ground. This man was Ame Cole. He settled on the Prairie Dog Creek on the eastern edge of Norton county in the winter of 1870-71. He first came there to trap beaver and otter, thousands of which lived in the Prairie Dog Creek at that time. He was accompanied by two brothers, Smith and George. The beauty of the valley appealed to them and they all located and settled on claims, George's being just over the line in Norton county, and it was the first claim taken in the county on the Prairie Dog. We have a monument left to the memory of Ame Cole: The high prominent peak about a mile and a half south-east of Aimenas was named by him. Due to the fact that a bald

eagle frequently soared above its summit. Ame piled stone on the highest point and called it "Eagle Point."

While the Prairie Dog Valley was being settled hunters and trappers were moving up the Solomon. F. M. Lockard says, "In 1870 a quartette of buffalo hunters and trappers came in; they camped near Logan that winter, but went up the river in 1871 and took land near where the Cheeseman mill now stands (1894). During the years 1871 and 1872 they were camped at different times between the Arickaree on the north and the Arkansas on the south; but they at all times called the dugouts on the North Solomon the home camp. Their names were: Daniel McLaren, James Forbes, Henry Gordon and William Darling."

The following account was published in the Norton County Advance under date of June 12, 1874, and copied by F. M. Lockard for his history of Norton County: "We, yesterday, had the pleasure of meeting a man without doubt probably the oldest inhabitant of Norton county, at least he is spoken of as such by old settlers, and how it is that history has it different we know not. Daniel McLaren, or Uncle Dan as he is known, came to Norton county in 1870, with two other men, and ever since that time he has made this county his home. He was in the county nearly a year before he saw a white man, excepting his own party, and after staying here three years he selected a tract of land on the Solomon river that took his eye at first sight. For two or three years he hunted and trapped over this country from the South Solomon to the Republican and Arickaree rivers on the northwest. The first winter he was here he caught over eighty Otter on what he named, and which name it still retains, Otter Creek, about ten miles south of Norton."¹⁰

Having traced the first settlements made in two of the principal valleys in the county, we now turn our attention to the northwest. The Sappa valley comprises the northwest corner of the county. Very early in the history of this section of the county, settlers crossed over the high land and began the settlement of this fertile valley. The name Devizes is associated with the early history of the county. The first settlement near this point was made in December 1872, when Henry Zimmerman and Herbert

Shaw, coming from the east, settled on claims one mile west of where Devizes is now situated."

REMINISCENT

By J. H. Simmons

During the first days of April, 1872, the writer in company with W. E. Case, entered Norton County and established residence therein. It was an early spring and the valleys were green with verdure. After leaving Kirwin, a frontier villiage with one store and a log stockade, we journeyed up the Deer Creek valley which had a few straggling settlers. Following a dim trail we passed by a noted landmark, Sugar Bowl Mound, crossed the monster divide and from a commanding height south of where Almena now stands, had a splendid view of the Prairie Dog valley and its numerous timbered tributaries.

"Field, stream and valley spread,
Far as the eye could gaze;
With summer's beauty overhead
And sunlight's brightest rays."

Reaching the Prairie Dog we saw no trace of settlement, but as we had been informed that settlers lived on that stream in Norton county we started down the valley, to locate them. Soon we heard the stentorian tones of Jim Hall, who with a yoke of oxen was plowing a garden spot near a dugout where he and his brother-in-law, D. C. Coleman, had settled. The wives of these two men were sisters and the only women living in the county at that time.

The next day Coleman went with us to select homesteads, our destination being near the center of the county. A short distance west we saw a small herd of buffaloes. Nearing the herd Coleman and Case, having needle guns, fired upon them and a monster bull was wounded in the fore leg. The firing squad hurried after the retreating bunch, while the wounded buffalo started in an opposite course down the draw. Armed with a navy revolver only I ran after the wounded buffalo, getting in close range and firing rapidly until all cartridges were gone. I then went back to

the wagon for more ammunition and returned to the chase only to find the buffalo dead, thirteen of my shots having taken effect. Sometime later I spent six months on the range and there learned that to chase a wounded buffalo in the manner I had done was not only a daring, but a foolhardy feat. Large game was plentiful at that time and the streams and ponds were alive with wild geese, brant and ducks.

Our homesteads were taken three miles east of where Norton now stands, on April 13, 1872, at the Concordia land office and were some ten miles farther west than any others in the state at that time. In the fall of '72, after a visit east Case and I returned to our homesteads to become permanent settlers. We found the valleys covered with homesteaders and every man a booster for the county. "In the desert" saith an eastern proverb, "no man meeteth a friend." In this part of the "Great American Desert", as the old geographers termed it, all were friends and cordial welcome was extended to all settlers who arrived. I remember on one occasion my nearest neighbor, Tom Brown, came to my dug-out and said with enthusiasm: "Settlers are coming in by squads, only today three squads stopped at my place, five in one, three in another and one in the third."

Frank Williams and I, together with Coleman, assisted Case in building his dugout. One morning after its completion Case and Williams took their guns and went out south for game, I remaining to prepare their dinner. When they returned with a fat turkey they were accompanied by Ben Rawlins, whom they had found asleep on the prairies. He had left the K. P. railroad at Ellis, on foot, headed for the Prairie Dog Valley. Night overtook him, the country was wild and unsettled and the howling of wolves caused him to trudge all night, his eyes fixed on the North Star. Exhausted and hungry he had dropped down on the buffalo grass and was dead asleep when the boys found him. Never before did I see a man devour a meal as Rawlins did on that occasion.

Later the settlers established a "rural route" possibly the first in existence extending from Norton to Republican, Nebraska, a distance of fifty miles along the Prairie Dog valley; Rawlins

made trips weekly on foot, carrying the U. S. mail pouch safely locked but the key in his pocket, dispensing mail all along the entire route.

In Lockard's history, page 26, mention is made of Rawlins. Not long since an agent of the pension department at Washington called upon me, his mission being to establish the fact of Rawlin's marriage—a fact known by me for years. He stated that Ben had died in the Soldiers Home at Sawtelle, Cali., he having been a soldier in the Civil War, that his wife was applying for a pension and that she had named me as a witness to whom his marriage was known.

In those early times every nomeseeker carried his blankets and cooked his own meals. These glowing campfires were always visited by nearby settlers for the double purpose of friendly greeting and to caution against the spread of fire. Despite all such precaution fires were numerous, leaving in their wake landscapes blackened and desolate.

Along the streams were trees girdled by beaver, which were plentiful. Many of these trees had fallen into the streams, forming drifts, or flood jams, as they were called locally. Others stood dead and bare, ready to burn at the touch of a spark. I have seen the Prairie Dog from Norton eastward for several miles, forming a "Great White Way" at night for a week or more. "Self preservation is the first law of nature". Many times I have seen those pioneers battle to save their homes and their feed until here and there one would fall utterly exhausted and swallow eagerly the turbid waters brought from buffalo wallows and filthy pools.

In later years, when Anthony was governor of the state, a courier arrived at Norton from Ft. Hays with the terrible message that Indians were on the warpath, having left their reservation in the territory south and were nearing the Prairie Dog valley. Little time was given for defense. My neighbors gathered hurriedly at the home of Uncle Dick Williams, four miles east of town, north bank of the Prairie Dog. Barbed wires were stretched across the stream at all nearby crossings, a score of men armed

with Winchesters, needle guns, shot guns and other fire arms stood guard, throughout the rainy night, ready to meet the savages as best we might. Toward morning the continued rain had softened the earth banks of the large dugout, a prop had given way and fallen upon the head of Grandma Williams, who screamed from pain and fright and the many women and children were panic stricken, thinking the Indians were upon them. It was well that the excitement came, for the roof of the house was fast settling and only the prompt action of the men on guard in getting necessary supports, prevented a collapse of the building and the probable death of many sleeping within. The following day the settlers were better fortified at Norton, but the Indians passed west of us, committing frightful atrocities, murders and destruction of property along the upper Prairie Dog, the Sappa and the Beaver.

When the next legislature convened I sat one day beside Hon. J. R. Hamilton, our member, in Representative Hall and heard various members denounce the Governor bitterly, because of his not calling upon the soldiers at Forts Leavenworth, Hays and Wallace to meet and drive back the Indians, whom, he had been advised, were crossing the state on their murderous mission.

Topeka, Kansas, Sept. 22, 1914.¹²

By Robert Lough

We came from the state of Illinois to Jewell county, Kansas in 1870 and on to Norton county in 1872. Father located on the quarter where Almena now stands. The dugout was placed on the south side of the creek, and father returned to Jewell county to get the family, placing his filing on the land on the return trip. I was a lad thirteen years in age and very anxious to come west. We had one team of horses and brought a plow so we could break the prairie and plant a crop on arrival.

We arrived at the dugout and had hardly got settled when the Prairie Dog came down on one of its rampages overflowing the bottom. We had to move to higher ground where we lived in the covered wagon for a while. This being a wet year, the creek was

out of its banks at least three times during that summer. We built a dugout on the north side of the stream where high water never reached. At the proper season we broke some prairie land and planted the same to corn, pumpkins, water melons and turnips. At the end of the summer we gathered our belongings and returned to Jewell county for the winter. The following spring we returned with the horses and a yoke of oxen. After getting settled in the dugout we began to construct a ford across the Prairie Dog. Logs were cut the proper length and placed along the lower part of the bank and dirt filled in over them, rocks were used to fill the bed of the stream to make it solid and prevent washing.

Our furniture was very simple—to make beds, Father secured poles along the creek, cutting them in the proper length to make the frame. After the frame was constructed, bed cords made of rope were used to complete the bed. Our chairs were made similar in construction. We cooked out of doors on a fire place for a year or two.

Our food consisted of corn and light bread, meat, hominy and beans. The hominy was made by burning a basin in the end of an elm log and using this as a receptacle in which the corn was hulled after it had been scalded.

In the fall of 1872 we had sown six acres of wheat and this made from ten to twelve bushels per acre. We cut the wheat with a cradle and tramped it out with horses. In order to get money to buy the necessities, we hunted and killed buffalo and sold the hides which brought from one to one and one-half dollars each.¹³

By Cornelius Gross Page

I was born at Monmouth, Illinois, October 8, 1852. I attended the common schools and in addition an Academy one term. I worked at the moulders trade for three years and started west in 1873, accompanied by a fellow named Walter Parks. We reached Lowell, Nebraska and from there walked to old Melrose, which was located near where Orleans now stands.

We didn't find anything that suited us there and started out again. We got lost and staid all night on the head of Turkey Creek. We spent the night in keeping from freezing, finally reaching a ranch where we remained the remainder of the night. Having no blankets, and discovering that we were supposed to furnish our own, we borrowed an overcoat from a freighter. We got too close the stove and burned a hole in the coat, but this caused us no trouble. We found that the freighter lived at Long Island. The same day we met a man by the name of Ed Newell who was on his way to Lowell after freight. He gave a glowing description of Norton county and persuaded us to return here with him. We arrived at Norton March 6, 1873 with a limited wardrobe and very little money. I secured work on a milldam that was being constructed by Lige Collins and in a short time purchased a yoke of cattle and wagon to begin freighting. The cattle and wagon were purchased on credit but paid for in six months. I took a homestead northeast of Norton where I have lived since that time. J. H. Rosborough took a claim near and we batched together for a long time.

I was elected Sheriff in 1874 but early that winter froze my feet. I started on a trip with the mail to North Platte, Nebraska for W. B. Jones, who was a sub-contractor at that time. I was laid up for two months and while away my deputy resigned the office. In the fall of 1875 in company with others we started with teams to Kearney, Nebraska after freight. Out in the sand hills between Walker's ranch and the Platte river all our cattle died with Texas fever. This left me without a team and no money and I had to make a new start.

About the year 1880 my homestead was converted into a stock-farm where many cattle were fed and hundreds of carloads shipped to the markets. As high as seven hundred were fed at a time and eighty-five carload shipped in one week.

The volume of business reached above two million dollars in a year during the peak of business. The farm at one time comprised eight hundred acres of good farm land. I kept an office in Norton and bought livestock from a large territory, shipping to market from other points when more convenient.

During the county seat fight between Norton and Leota I was a strong supporter of Norton, believing it was the place for the county seat. There were many interesting incidents that happened during those early years, one of which was the Indian scare which I remember well.

The Prairie Dog Creek had plenty of water in those days and the trees were about as large then as they are today. I was secretary of the Norton County Fair Association for years and have never missed a fair."



Pioneer Sod House, home of the Rev. J. T. Wright family, 1899

(By Frank E. Whitaker)

I was born in Iowa on March 1, 1872. My father, Isaac Whitaker was born in Clinton County, Ohio, October 28, 1834. He came to Kansas in company with John R. Hamilton and family and Albert Graves and family, arriving in Norton County in 1874.

We settled on Spring Creek, three miles northeast of Norton.

on land later owned by John Rosborough, but late the same year we moved to the east side of the county where we lived for years.

We drove sixty head of cattle with us from Iowa when we came expecting to run them through the winter on grass but the next spring they all died. Destructive prairie fires had destroyed the grass. These fires did not stop for the creek, they would follow the weeds down the creek and then cross to the opposite side by burning the dead grape vines that clung to the branches of trees that hung across the creek.

The first winter here we lived on buffalo meat and lived in a sod house. We got our mail two miles east of our home place at the home of Will Demick. I do not remember the name of the post office. A little later a post office, known as the Lee post office, was established on what is now known as the Charley Linnell place and we got our mail here for some time. The mail was carried on horse back from Republican City, Nebraska. My half brother, Nat VanWinkle, carried it for several months.

We were living on the homestead during the Indian scare of 1878. The Indians were reported to be making a raid further west and moving in this direction. When a report like that got started it never got any smaller. A large Stockade was formed around our house by placing the wagons end to end in a circle. The horses were placed on the outside and the women and children on the inside of the circle. Here they congregated from all up and down the valley. We had four hundred bushels of rye in the bin and this was all consumed by the settlers while there. The grass was all eaten from the pasture. We had to drive our stock a distance of two miles to get grass after that.

About six hundred Indians came through on foot in 1877 or about a year before the scare. They came through carrying their papooses on their backs. They had a few ponies and dogs. They killed the rabbits up and down the creek for miles by using clubs to scare the rabbits from beneath the brush and the dogs catching them.

My first school days were spent in the Farmingdale district (District No. 15). The school was held in Eugene Mills' little log

house, a little west of where the school house is now situated. D. W. Mills was the teacher. Later a sod school house was built where the school house now stands. I attended here quite a while. I later attended the Pleasant Hill district. School was conducted in the log house of Charley Smith located where Harry Dole now lives.

I started barbering in Almena with George Shriver on August 1, 1892. Some time ago I was asked by Mr. Rose, the local editor, to make a list of the old timers, that I shaved regularly, who have passed to their reward. I made the list from memory and no doubt missed many. In the list compiled were: business men, bankers, farmers, editors, preachers, doctors, railroad men, bootleggers, cowboys, Indian fighters, civil war veterans, mayors and barbers. The list totaled near five hundred.¹⁵

Stories reminiscent of pioneer days could be multiplied many fold but space will not permit. The men whose stories we have given have all passed on and the ranks of the pioneers grow thinner each succeeding year.

¹ Connelley, History of Kansas, State and People, 1, 148.

² Lockard, The History of the Early Settlement of Norton County, 2.

³ *ibid.*, 2.

⁴ Interviews with Pioneers.

⁵ Lockard, *op. cit.*, 123-124.

⁶ *ibid.*, 124-125.

⁷ *ibid.*, 124.

⁸ The Norton County News, His-

torical Number, Oct. 1916.

⁹ The Norton Champion, Febr. 22, 1894, Lockard *op. cit.*, 89.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 89.

¹¹ The Norton County News, *op. cit.*

¹² The Norton Champion, Oct. 1, 1914.

¹³ A Personal Interview.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

Organization of the County



CHAPTER II

THE organization of Norton county began March 3, 1868, when an Act of the legislature was approved fixing the boundaries of the county as follows:

"Commencing where the east line of range twenty one, west, intersects the fortieth degree of north latitude; thence south with range line, to the first standard parallel; thence west with said parallel, to the east line of range twenty six, west; thence north with said range line, to the fortieth degree of north latitude; thence east with said parallel to the place of beginning."

COUNTY NAMED

The legislature of 1859 named the territory that now comprises Norton county "Oro", and it retained that name until 1867.

The county was named "Norton" in memory of Orloff Norton, who was captain of the fifteenth Kansas cavalry. Captain Norton was killed at Cane Hill, Arkansas in 1865. The name was suggested by Preston B. Plumb, who at the time, was speaker of the Kansas house of representatives."

N. H. Billings, who was a member of the legislature at the time, succeeded in having the legislature of 1873 change the name from Norton to "Billings county". The legislature of 1874 changed it back to "Norton."

The county was hurried into a premature organization by N. H. Billings who came here from Cloud county in February, 1872. He presented a petition to the governor June 21, 1872, asking that the county be organized with Billingsville as the temporary county seat. The petition stated that to the best of their knowledge there were more than six hundred inhabitants within the county,

when there were actually less than one hundred. This petition was rejected. Billings presented a second petition July 3, 1872, which the governor accepted and he issued an order for a census to be taken.

PROCLAMATION OF GOVERNOR JAMES M. HARVEY

(Issued August 22, 1872 organizing Norton County.)

"Whereas it appears from the records in the office of Secretary of State that a census of Norton county has been taken and properly certified according to law, showing a population of over six hundred inhabitants, citizens of the United States. And whereas more than forty inhabitants, free holders of Norton county, have petitioned for the appointment of three county commissioners and one special county clerk and named a place as the temporary county seat of said county. Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority invested in me as governor of the state of Kansas, I, James M. Harvey, have appointed and commissioned the special county commissioners and clerk asked for in that petition, and do hereby declare Billingsville the temporary county seat of Norton county. In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and caused to be affixed the great seal of the State, Signed by the governor, James M. Harvey. W. S. Smallwood, Secretary of State."

"The governor issued four other proclamations, all the same day, appointing separately: James W. Vance, Shelby D. Reed, and James Hall special county commissioners and David C. Coleman special county clerk."

LOCATING THE COUNTY SEAT

The special board of county commissioners met in their first session at Norton September 16, 1872. The governor had designated Billingsville as the temporary county seat. Some time previous to this by agreement of the settlers 640 acres of land, where Norton now stands, had been set apart as a town site for the purpose of making it the county seat. By unanimous consent the town was to be called Norton. When the proclamation came calling it Billingsville the commissioners rejected it in their official capacity and this was approved by the settlers. The 640 acres

mentioned evidently was located west of State Street and extended south as far as Billingsville.

At an election called at the first session of the board of county commissioners and held September 24, 1872, Norton received thirty-eight votes and was declared the permanent county seat.⁷

This election did not settle the location of the county seat. A second petition was presented by M. A. Morrison, signed by 149 residents of the county, asking for an election to relocate the county seat. The election was held February 23, 1875. At this election Norton received 95 votes and Weston received 86.⁸

A third election was held October 30, 1875. Following the election the friends of Norton got out an injunction forbidding the votes being counted by the commissioners. It was taken to court where the injunction was made permanent as it was found that the notices calling the election had not been posted in a legal manner. "As nearly as can be determined Weston won the election by about twenty votes."¹⁰

The fourth attempt to relocate the county seat failed. M. W. Pettigrew presented a petition April 25, 1878; but it was laid over until the May meeting. The board remained in session for several days striking names from the petition and hearing remonstrances. The people were getting tired of the long struggle and the commissioners did not take it up at their July meeting. No further effort was made to relocate the county seat and it still remains on the Journal as unfinished business.¹¹

NORTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE

We do not know where the commissioners met in their first session. The Journal states that they met in Norton. At that time Norton was very small consisting of a store and two dugouts. At a meeting of the board July 17, 1873, they rented a small building of the Newells which was located on the northeast corner of the public square. The building was twelve by twenty feet and they agreed to pay at the rate of \$72.00 per year, quarterly in advance. The contract was for one year.¹²

This building was used until the following year. At the session of the board held October 7, 1874 they signed an agreement with R. M. Smith, J. R. Hamilton, B. F. Williams, and W. E. Case, agreeing to rent a building, sixteen by thirty feet, on the north side of the public square. They accepted the building for a period of six months agreeing to pay \$8.00 per month, quarterly in advance.¹¹

A bond, signed by Will Simpson, W. W. Robinson, John F. Madden and others for the erection of a court house in the town of Norton within ninety days after date, was accepted. The conditions of the bond in the sum of twelve hundred dollars were: The court house was to be located in Norton; the building to be twenty four feet by thirty feet, two stories high, and to be conveyed to Norton so long as it was used for county purposes. It was accepted by the board February 27, 1875. At a meeting held July 7, 1875, they agreed to accept the court house for three months from date, and if the parties erecting said court house would plaster and concrete the lower story within a period of three months from date, they would accept the building for the use of the county, otherwise pay a reasonable rent for the use of the same.¹²

A petition was presented asking the commissioners to accept, in behalf of the county, a block in the town of Norton, known as the public square and the building thereon known as the court house, whenever the Norton Town Association presented a warranty and unconditional deed for the same. The deed was accepted January 14, 1878.¹³ This deed was filed for record in the office of Register of Deeds and no filing date given. The date of the instrument was April 25, 1878.¹⁴

Due to the lack of a suitable building at Norton that could be used for county purposes, the Board of County Commissioners at a meeting held July 3, 1877 directed M. A. Morrison, County Treasurer, to hold his office place of business at Leota in said county until directed.

At a meeting of the Board held January 14, 1878, the Register of Deeds stated to the Board that there was no building at the

county seat suitable for him to keep his office and asked that he be permitted to keep his office at his place of business at the town of Leota. On motion the permission was given.

The records in the office of Probate Judge show that Marriage Licenses were dated at Leota during the greater part of the years 1878-'79.

THE VOTING OF BONDS

The county had grown to the point where a much larger court house was needed. Bond elections were being called to vote money for the construction of a suitable building. A petition, asking that an election be called to vote fifty thousand dollars in bonds to build a court house, was granted and the election set for November 8, 1887. The bonds lost by a large majority: For the bonds 335; against the bonds 1414.¹⁷

A second petition, asking for a special election for the purpose of voting bonds to build a court house, was presented January 8, 1888. An election to vote twenty-five thousand dollars in bonds was ordered held March 27, 1888.

There was a general feeling among the people that if they voted the twenty five thousand dollars asked for in the petition, the commissioners would go beyond that amount when they began to build. In view of this the commissioners published the following statement in the Norton Champion under date March 15, 1888.

"In view of the proposition now pending wherein it is proposed to vote twenty five thousand dollars for the erection of a court house, we deem it proper to state that the safety of our records certainly demands the erection of a better house than the one we now have. We will state that the cramped condition of our present offices is such that our officers are greatly hindered and restricted in the discharge of their official duties. We will also add that in our judgment the sum is quite sufficient to meet the present wants of our county and will be ample for a number of years at least. We pledge ourselves that in the performance of our official duties, as servants of the people, we will use every possible effort to erect a building as safe and commodious as possible for the

money voted, not going beyond the twenty five thousand dollars contained in the proposition." David Close, Ch'm.; Elias Foland and Mark J. Kelley, Commissioners.

The election was held and the bonds lost. The vote was: For the bonds 625; against the bonds 943.¹⁸

The bonds at the last election having failed to carry, the need was so urgent that the matter was not dropped even though it had been defeated at two elections. A petition was presented asking that an election be held to vote twenty six thousand dollars for the purpose of erecting a suitable court house for the county. The motion was granted and an election ordered to be held at the time of the general election November 6, 1888. The vote was taken and the bonds carried 1197 to 1029.¹⁹



The Old Norton County Court House, 1889-1926

BUILDING THE COURT HOUSE

The board of county commissioners were now ready to receive

bids for the construction of the court house not to exceed the money voted at the election.

The terms and specifications for a twenty six thousand dollar court house were presented by Geo. E. McDonald and accepted with the understanding that they be prepared and left on file at the county clerk's office. At a meeting of the board February 11, 1889, the bids were opened and the contract awarded to Kuhn and Waller of Norton, Kansas for the sum of twenty four thousand eight hundred seventy five dollars.²⁰

On October 28, 1889, at a meeting of the board with Elias Folland, chairman; M. B. Pogue and B. A. VanMeter, commissioners present, the court house was examined and found to be completed to the true intent of the plans and specifications and in a workman-like manner and was by unanimous vote accepted.²¹

CARNIVAL POEM

(last stanza)

"Last but not least, the pride of us all,
The grand Court house furnished last fall
May justice e're reign within its walls,
As the janitor does in its spacious halls;
And the officers the people have selected,
Be competent, honored and respected;
And with joy we will think of '89,
When Norton was in its very prime.
And the wonderful progress we made,
When the corner-stone to the Court House
we laid."

(The Norton Champion, February 13, 1890)

This court house served the county for many years and until it was destroyed by fire on the night of December 1, 1926. In the meantime the public square had been improved by planting trees, seeding to blue grass, laying sidewalks, making it a convenient and restful place for the people who come to the county seat to transact their official business.

The county officers were left without a place to house the county records and transact the county's business. In a few days the county commissioners entered into an agreement with the American Legion, renting their building, located on the S.E. corner of E. Main Street and S. Wabash Avenue. A lease was obtained for the use of this building as a court house for one hundred dollars per month, until a new court house could be built.²²

At a meeting of the board of county commissioners June 25, 1928, the board adopted a resolution "Concerning The Erection of a Permanent Building to be Used as a Court House, and Calling an Election in Norton County, Kansas, to vote Thereon."

At the time of holding the State Primary election August 7, 1928 the people were given a chance to vote on the following propositions: First, shall the county erect a court house? Second, shall the funds required for the erection of said improvement be raised by the issuance of bonds or by levying a special tax? The vote on the propositions was: for the court house 1250 votes; against the court house 836 votes. For the bonds 958 votes; For the Tax 342 votes.²³

The vote for the court house and a bond issue having carried, the commissioners sold the bond issue to the State School Fund Commission and received bids for the construction and furnishing of the court house. The general contract was let to Gurtler & Co. Topeka, Kansas December 27, 1928 for One-hundred forty eight thousand four hundred fifty dollars. The contract for the Standard Art Metal Furniture, Woodwork and Vault Work was awarded to the Lockwood-Hazel Company, Atchison, Kansas, for the sum of Twenty four thousand nine hundred ninety six dollars by commissioners P. B. Deeter and Sam Sweely. The contract for heating and plumbing was awarded to Noah Garrett, Norton, Kansas on his bid of Thirteen thousand six hundred dollars.²⁴

THE TOTAL COST OF THE COURT HOUSE

General contract, Gurtler & Co.	\$147,985.00
Heating and Plumbing, Noah Garrett	13,600.00
Electric wiring	6,050.00

Extra on wiring and heating	768.97
	<u>\$ 20,418.97</u>
Pauly Jail Co., Jail contract	\$ 3,434.00
Extra work	223.00
Stewart Iron Works, Iron Bars	1,110.00
	<u>\$ 4,767.00</u>
Lockwood Hazel Company, Atchison, Kansas	
Furniture and Fixtures	\$ 24,996.00
Scott Furniture Store, Norton, Kansas	
Window Shades	\$ 346.50
Cuthbert & Shuerk, Architects, Topeka, Kansas	
Fees, 5% of contracts	\$ 8,604.16
F. E. Benton, Norton, Kansas	
Builders Risk Insurance, Premium	\$ 716.02
Return Premium	84.02
	<u>\$ 632.00</u>
	<u>\$208,576.20⁰⁰</u>

The bonds issued to build the court house were ten year bonds—the last bond due on August 15, 1938. This bond and interest amounted to \$7,106.38 and was paid August 9, 1938. The county was now free from debt so far as the building of the court house was concerned.

At a meeting of the board of County Commissioners, arrangements were made for the County Officers to start moving into the New Court House at Noon, December 20, 1929.

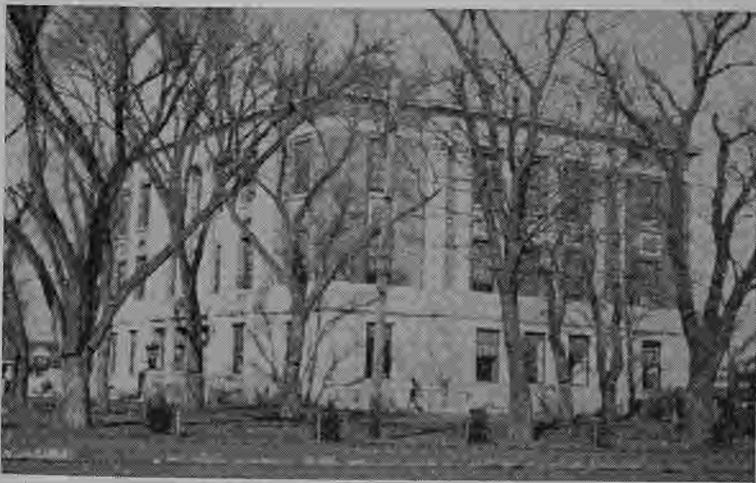
COMMISSIONERS' DISTRICTS

September 16, 1872. The county was divided into three commissioners districts as follows:

District No. 1. "Commencing at the northeast corner of the county, running west on the state line between the state of Kansas and the state of Nebraska to the northwest corner of said county, thence south on the west line of said county to the southwest corner of section eighteen, township two south, range twenty five west, thence east on the section line to the southeast corner of section thirteen, township two

south, range twenty one west, thence north on the east line of said county to the place of beginning."

District No. 2. "Starting at the southeast corner of section thirteen, township two south, range twenty one west, running west on the section line to the southwest corner of section eighteen, township two south, range twenty five west, thence south on the west line of said county to the southwest corner of section seven, township four south, range twenty-five west, thence east on the section line to the southeast corner of section twelve, township four south, range twenty one west, thence north to the place of beginning."



The New Court House, 1929--

District No. 3. "Commencing at the southeast corner of section twelve, township four south, range twenty one west, running west on the section line to the southwest corner of section seven, township four south, range twenty five west, thence south on the west line of said county to the southwest corner of said county, thence east on the county line to the southeast corner of said county, thence north on the east line of said county to the place of beginning."¹²⁰

The commissioners districts were changed October 7, 1881 and again January 5, 1887.²⁷

The final districting was done July 3, 1895 dividing the county as follows:

District No. 1. To comprise Harrison, Almena, Emmett, Grant, Lincoln and West Union townships.

District No. 2. To comprise Aldine, Center, Belle Plaine, Orange, Sand Creek, Modell and Solomon townships.

District No. 3. To comprise Crystal, Rock Branch, Rockwell, Garfield, Leota, Noble, Highland, Almelo and Lenora townships.²⁸

Clayton township was a part of Leota township until July 3, 1901, and was a part of commissioners district No. 3.

ORGANIZATION OF TOWNSHIPS

Almena Township. September 16, 1872. Organized to include all of commissioners district No. 1.

Center township. September 16, 1872. Organized to include all of commissioners district No. 2.

Solomon township. September 16, 1872. Organized to include all of commissioners district No. 3.²⁹

Aldine township, July 7, 1879. Organized to include all of township 1, ranges 22 and 23.

Grant township. July 7, 1879. Organized to include eight miles off the east end of Center township.

Leota township. July 7, 1879. Organized to include the west half of Center township.³⁰

Rock Branch township. October 6, 1879. Boundaries as follows: "Commencing at the northeast corner of section 1, township one south, range twenty four west, thence west on state line to the northwest corner of the county, thence south on the county line to the southwest corner of Almena township, thence east to the southeast corner of section 24, township two south, range twenty four west, thence north on section line to the place of beginning."³¹

West Union township. October 7, 1879. Boundaries as follows: "Commencing at the southwest corner of Grant

township, thence east on said township line to the county line, thence south on the county line to the southeast corner of Norton county, thence west on the county line to the southwest corner of section 35, township five south, range twenty two west, thence north on the section line to the place of beginning."³²

Lenora township. April 15, 1880. Organized to include all of township 5 range 24.

New Almelo township. April 15, 1880. Organized to include all of township 5 range 25.³³

Modell township. July 6, 1880. Organized to include all of township 5 range 23.³⁴

Noble township. January 3, 1881. Organized to include all of township 4 ranges 24 and 25.³⁵

Emmett township. January 10, 1881. Organized to include all of township 2 range 22.³⁶

Sand Creek township. May 23, 1881. Organized to include all of township 4 range 22.³⁷

Garfield township. (Clyde). August 5, 1881. Organized to include all of township 2 range 24.

Lincoln township. August 5, 1881. Organized to include all of township 4 range 21.³⁸

Crystal township. August 7, 1882. Boundaries as follows: "Commencing at the northeast corner of township one south, range twenty five west, and running south on said range line nine miles, thence west to county line, thence north to state line, thence east to place of beginning."³⁹

Orange township, October 4, 1886. Boundaries as follows: "Beginning with section 13, omitting 17, 18, 19, and 20 and including sec's. 1 to 12 in township 4 south, range 23 west." It was the intention to organize the south part of township 3 south, range 23 west, and a part of township 4 south, range 23 west.⁴⁰

Belle Plaine township, October 4, 1886. Organized to include all of township 3, range 22.

Rockwell township, October 4, 1886. Organized to include all of township 2 range 25.⁴¹

Highland township, October 3, 1887. Organized to include

all of township 4 range 24. To be formed out of the east half of Noble township.⁴²

Harrison township. October 23, 1889. Organized to include all of township 1 range 22. To be formed out of the east half of Aldine township.⁴³

Clayton township. July 3, 1901. Boundaries calling for a division of Leota township as follows: "Commencing at the north east corner of section 1, township three south, range twenty five west, running west five and one half miles to the west line of Norton county, thence south along the county line six miles to the southwest corner of section 31, thence east five and one half miles to the southeast corner of section 36, thence north six miles to the place of beginning." Township three south, range 25 west.⁴⁴

TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES CHANGE

Originally the county was divided into three townships as has been previously shown, namely: Almena, Center and Solomon.

Solomon Township comprised approximately the southern one-third of the county and extended the entire distance across the county from east to west.

On July 7, 1879, a new Township, named Twin Mound, was organized to include the west half of Solomon Township. This Township was disorganized April 15, 1880, and two new townships, Lenora and New Almelo were organized to include this territory.

Clyde Township was organized August 7, 1881. Its name was changed to Garfield Township on January 2, 1882.

Center Township originally comprised the central one third of the county. The boundaries have been changed as follows: Record of County Commissioners, 1872-1887, p. 135. October 7, 1879—A petition was presented by W. E. Case and others asking that a strip one mile wide running the whole length of Center Township on the west be added to that township. (This strip had been taken from Center Township and made a part of Leota Township on July 7, 1879).

ibid., p. 237. January 10, 1881—The portion of territory known as Middle of Almena precinct, the north half of township two, range twenty-three, consisting of sections: 1 to 18 inclusive is ordered attached to Center Township.

ibid., p. 316. April 1882—A petition was presented asking the board to attach the following sections to Center Township: Sections 19, 20, 29, 31 to 33 of township two, range twenty-three, and sections 5 and 6, township three, range twenty-three.

After due consideration the prayer of the petition was granted and sections 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, of township three, range twenty-three and sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 of township four, range twenty-three, was also attached to Center township.

Ibid., p. 237—A motion prevailed ordering that sections: 16 to 21 and 28 to 33 of township four, range twenty-three, formerly belonging to Twin Mound Township be attached to Modell Township.

Later maps and the Tax rolls indicate that sections: 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20, Township four, Range twenty-three are now a part of Orange Township. The Transfer has been omitted from the Commissioners Journal.

CARE OF THE POOR

County Commissioners have been required to provide for the relief of the poor and unfortunate at county expense since early in the state's history. Township trustees, mayors and councils of cities were designated as overseers of the poor by the legislature of 1862.

NORTON COUNTY POOR FARM

At a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners held January 31, 1882, settlement was made with W. T. Shoemaker, Ex County Clerk, for excess salary he had drawn in the amount of six hundred twenty-five dollars, while he was county clerk of Norton County. W. T. Shoemaker transferred and delivered the Board of County Commissioners a Warranty Deed conveying the following described tract of land situated in Norton County, State of Kansas: SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 23, Township two south, Range twenty-three west, containing 160 acres. The land was valued at \$725. Mr. Shoemaker was allowed \$100, the difference between the value of said tract and his indebtedness or excess of salary allowed un-

der the special law of 1877. After several unsuccessful attempts to sell the land by auction or otherwise it was decided to use this land for a Poor Farm.

Bids for the erection of a County Poor House were opened by the Board of County Commissioners April 28, 1888. The contract was let to Stoddard and Falkner for \$975. David Close was appointed to oversee the erection of the building. The same was completed and accepted by the board July 3, 1888.⁴⁵

Bids for caring for the poor were opened by the Board of County Commissioners August 7, 1888, and the contract let to Fred Keene and wife for \$33.33 per month, the county to furnish all needed supplies.⁴⁶

POOR COMMISSIONER

At a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners January 7, 1875, we find the following entry in the Journal: "On motion the Clerk was authorized to issue Relief Bonds to the amount of five, one thousand dollars each, payable twenty years after date, bearing seven percent interest. Said interest payable semi annually. No interest to be paid until two years after date."

The Clerk was authorized to draw on the Treasurer for the Relief Fund in favor of those persons, severally, reported by the trustees of the respective townships. Townships apportioned as follows: Almena, \$2133.50; Solomon, \$1283.50; Center \$1521.50.

At a meeting of the Board December 27, 1890, we find the following entry in the Journal: "Board of County Commissioners met in special session. Members all present to appoint a County Aid Commissioner to receive and distribute Aid consigned to the county."

"On motion S. W. Betts was appointed at a salary of \$40 per month, said salary to commence when his bond was approved."

"On motion J. M. Shuey and Granville Sheley were appointed as aid solicitors at a salary of \$40 per month, their service to continue at the discretion of the board."

January 5, 1891. "Ordered that the Creek Implement Building be used as an office and wait room for S. W. Betts, Aid Commissioner, at a rental of fifty cents per day, commencing from January 7, 1891, the county to have ten days notice by owner before compelling to vacate."

Pursuant to the requirements of the law passed requiring the appointment of a poor commissioner for each county, F. C. Healea was appointed by the board for such commissioner, June 15, 1933.⁴⁷

Floyd Reed was appointed August 7, 1933.

Gilman Bishop was appointed July 25, 1934.

By an act of the State Department the officers of Poor Commissioner and Case Supervisor were combined.

Marian Rychel was appointed November 8, 1935, resigned May 4, 1936, effective May 11th.

Lucille Jackson was appointed acting Poor Commissioner until a further appointment was made.

Roland P. Rogers of Garden City, Kansas, appointed June 1, 1936, to begin work June 15th.

The county has a complete set-up and now operates in harmony with the Social Welfare Law adopted in the State. The cost runs into thousands of dollars each year.

COUNTY ENGINEER

J. C. Newell was appointed the First County Engineer of Norton County January 8, 1917. To meet the requirements of a new Road Law he was reappointed May 8, 1917.⁴⁸

THE DISTRICT COURT

The fifteenth judicial district, comprising Mitchell, Jewell, Osborne, Norton, Phillips, Smith, Rooks, Graham and the undefined territory of the state lying west of Graham and Norton counties, was organized by the legislature in 1873.⁴⁹

Court was to be held in Norton county in May and October.⁵⁰

The seventeenth judicial district, comprising Phillips, Rooks, Ellis, Trego, Graham, Norton, Decatur, Sheridan and the unorganized counties of Gove, Wallace, Thomas, Sherman, Rawlins, and Cheyenne, was organized in 1881.⁵¹

The first session of court was held May 1873 in a log building brought to Norton from the Edgar Page farm in the country. The building was moved to town on Saturday and made ready for court on Monday.⁵²

The seventeenth judicial district was changed in 1889 as follows: "That the counties of Phillips, Norton, Decatur, Rawlins and Cheyenne shall constitute the seventeenth judicial district."⁵³

NORTON COUNTY JAIL

At a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners on October 7, 1879 the records show the following entry: "Whereas, it appearing to the Board that Norton County is paying considerable money for quartering prisoners and that the money paid out in the last few years would erect a jail. Therefore, it was ordered that a proposition be submitted at the next general election to authorize the Board to erect a jail in Norton county to cost for erection not to exceed one thousand dollars."

The vote at the election held November 4, 1879 resulted as follows: For building jail 427 votes. Against 356.

At a meeting of the Board held April 15, 1880, F. M. Duvall was appointed overseer of the construction of the jail building and A. S. Burroughs was appointed superintendent of the construction.

¹ G. S. Kansas, 1868. Ch. 24, Sections 53 and 83.

² F. M. Lockard, History of the Early Settlement of Norton County, 2.

³ Record of County Commissioners, 1872-87, 29.

⁴ F. M. Lockard, op. cit. 15-19.

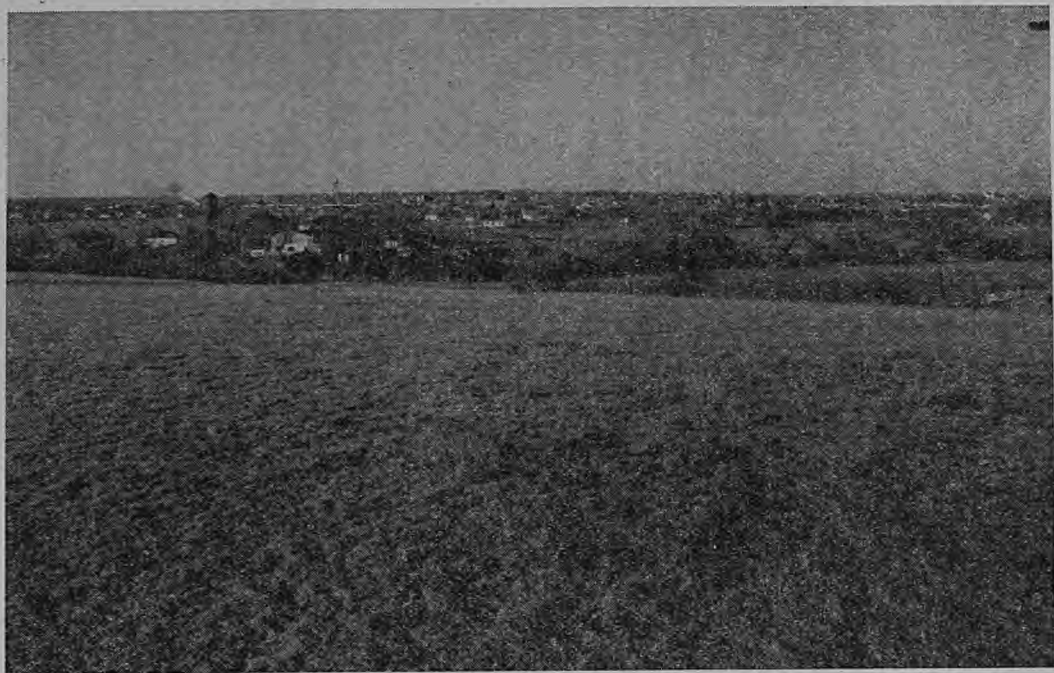
⁵ Record of County Commissioners, op. cit. 1-2.

⁶ F. M. Lockard, op. cit. 21.

⁷ Record of County Commissioners, op. cit. 5-6.

⁸ *ibid.*, 46.

- ⁹ *ibid.*, 54-55; F. M. Lockard, *op. cit.* 218.
- ¹⁰ The Telegram, Special Edition, Norton, June 6, 1906.
- ¹¹ Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 97-103, 106-109; F. M. Lockard, *op. cit.* 231.
- ¹² Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 15.
- ¹³ *ibid.*, 38.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, 51.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*, 94-97.
- ¹⁶ Deed Record, vol. 1, 125.
- ¹⁷ Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 15.
- ¹⁸ Norton Champion, March 29, 1888; Abstract of Votes Cast. 1.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, 4.
- ²⁰ Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 77.
- ²¹ *ibid.*, 114.
- ²² Commissioners Journal 4, 1919-27, 441-442.
- ²³ Commissioners Journal 5, 1927-39, 39-40 & 52.
- ²⁴ *ibid.*, 63 & 75.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, 133.
- ²⁶ Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 4.
- ²⁷ *ibid.*, 286 & 529.
- ²⁸ Commissioners Record, 1888-98, 355-356.
- ²⁹ Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 4 & 5.
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, 125.
- ³¹ *ibid.*, 133.
- ³² *ibid.*, 134.
- ³³ *ibid.*, 191.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*, 203.
- ³⁵ *ibid.*, 229.
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, 237.
- ³⁷ *ibid.*, 255.
- ³⁸ *ibid.*, 285.
- ³⁹ *ibid.*, 333.
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 510.
- ⁴¹ *ibid.*, 510.
- ⁴² *ibid.*, 600.
- ⁴³ Commissioners Record, 1888-98, *op. cit.* 115.
- ⁴⁴ Commissioners Journal A, 1898-1909, 159.
- ⁴⁵ Commissioners Record, 1888-98, *op. cit.* 27 & 34.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 41-42.
- ⁴⁷ Commissioners Journal, 5, 1927-39, *op. cit.* 301.
- ⁴⁸ Commissioners Journal 1909-18, 377.
- ⁴⁹ Laws of Kansas, 1873, Ch. 76, Sec. 1.
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 293.
- ⁵¹ Laws of Kansas, 1881, Ch. 100, Sec. 1.
- ⁵² The Norton Champion, December 14, 1893.
- ⁵³ Laws of Kansas, 1889, Ch. 118, Sec. 13.



Bird's Eye View, Norton, Kansas. Taken in 1942 from the hill south of town.

The County Seat, Norton City

CHAPTER III

THE city of Norton, (alt. 2272 ft.; pop: 2703, 1941)¹, is situated in the Prairie Dog Valley in the center of the county approximately half way between Denver and Kansas City. It is situated on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroads, 3 US and 4 County highways giving excellent transportation facilities.

The town was laid out on a section of a State Road projecting from Belleville to Norton, and State Street extending from north to south through the city marks the course of the old road. This road was the dividing line between two additions when the town was platted, and made historic by the spirited fight between the sponsors. As finally established the city lies on both the east and west of State Street.

The court house stands a block east of State Street and on the block adjoining Main Street on the south. This block was designated the Public Square at a time when the townsite was a broad expanse of vacant prairie land. Business houses surround the public square and line the business streets. The Government postoffice stands on the southeast corner opposite the court house, and Elmwood Park extends along the Prairie Dog in the southeast part of the city.

EARLY HISTORY

The history of Norton dates from the winter of 1870-71. It was about this time that hunters and trappers, slowly moving westward along the streams, reached Norton county. There were others who came seeking new homes, and still another class who came for the purpose of speculating, looking for easy money and

office. Among this class was N. H. Billings. We quote from F. M. Lockard in his History of the Early Settlement of Norton County: "In February, 1872, N. H. Billings came here from Cloud county; he at once commenced to make preparation to start a town and organize the county. He represented to Coleman and Jim Hall, the only settlers here at that time, to be at the head of a syndicate of capitalists who would spend their money liberally in building a city. Billings was a man of over weaning vanity and succeeded in convincing them that he was their Moses. In a historical sketch written by J. H. Simmons and published in the Norton County Bee, (published by A. F. Harmer at Norton) under date of March 12, 1877, he says of Billings: 'About this time a long, lank specimen of the genus homo made his appearance in the county introducing himself as Col. N. H. Billings. He was a character possessed of fair education, some legal lore, a deal of egotism, and some degree of cunning. Chiefly through his exertions the county was hurried into a decidedly premature organization. He formed an alliance with Coleman in the locating business in which Coleman did the principal work and Billings eagerly shared the profits.'"

In the organization of new towns the first thing was to organize a town association to promote the town in advertising and the sale of lots and encouraging new enterprises to be established within the city. Norton was no exception to this rule and instead of one town association there were two organized in the early history of the town. Since the names were the same, "Norton Town Association", they must not be confused.

For a copy of the charter of the Norton Town Association organized in 1872 we are indebted to R. D. Bower, Secretary of the Norton County Abstract Co., Inc., and we herewith present a transcript of the same: (This charter does not show on the Norton County Records. It was recorded in the office of Secretary of State and was sent to F. W. Kidder through a mistake when he asked for a copy of the Charter of "The Norton Town Association". It seems to have been considered a kind of gentlemen's agreement at that time, and explains the field notes of the Government Survey; and throws light on the Second Charter and the early history of the town.)

CHARTER OF THE NORTON TOWN ASSOCIATION

The following named persons to-wit, R. E. Allen, L. J. Crano, F. P. Nash, S. H. Pratt, Philo E. Doolittle, Florence Marks, C. C. Cooper, D. C. Coleman, W. H. Wright, W. E. Crano, D. H. Judy, and P. H. Maloney, having associated themselves together as a town association agree to be governed by the terms and conditions of this charter.

FIRST: The name of the corporation shall be the Norton Town Association.

SECOND: This corporation is formed to purchase, locate and buy out a town site in the county of Norton in the state of Kansas on the following described land, to wit: the south half of the northeast quarter and the southeast quarter of section thirty four in township two, and the northeast quarter and the east half of the northwest quarter, and the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter, and the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of section number three, in township three south, range number twenty three west, and to hold the same with power to sell and convey the property in lots, tracts or subdivisions and the erection of buildings for sale or rent.

THIRD: The business of the corporation shall be transacted at the town of Norton in said county of Norton and state of Kansas.

FOURTH: The duration of the corporation shall be for and during the term of eight years.

FIFTH: The number of directors of this association shall be five for the first year and annually thereafter the same number shall be chosen. Those appointed for the first year with their places of residence are as follows, to-wit: L. J. Crano, Gransdale, Cloud County, Kansas; S. H. Pratt, Concordia, Cloud county; W. E. Crano, Concordia; D. H. Judy, Concordia; W. H. Wright, Concordia.

SIXTH: The capital stock of this corporation shall be Twelve Thousand Dollars and the number of shares shall be One Hundred Twenty to be divided into twelve equal parts and to be distributed equally among the several stockholders.

In testimony, we hereunto subscribe our names this twenty third day of September Anno Domini One Thousand eight hundred seventy two. (Signed by L. J. Crano, S. H. Pratt, W. E. Crano, D. H. Judy, W. H. Wright.)

State of Kansas, Cloud County, ss.

I, Wm. E. Reid, Clerk of the District Court of the Twelfth Judicial District of the State of Kansas sitting within and for Cloud County do hereby certify that L. J. Crano, S. H. Pratt, W. E. Crano, D. H. Judy, and W. H. Wright are personally known by me as the persons whose names are subscribed to the foregoing charter as having executed the same as the directors of the Norton Town Association appearing before me this day in person and acknowledged that they signed, sealed and delivered the said instrument of writing as their free and voluntary act for the uses and purposes therein set forth.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said Court at Concordia in Cloud county, this twenty third day of September, Anno Domini One thousand eight hundred seventy two.

Wm. E. Reid, Clerk District Court.

SEAL

Filed in office, Oct. 3rd, 1872,

Secretary of State Kan.

This certified copy was signed by Frank J. Ryan, Secretary of State, February 1, 1923. Seal affixed.

BILLINGSVILLE AND NORTON, 1872-1873

R-23			R-22			
21	22	23	24	19	20	T-2
28	27	26	25	30	29	
				Road		
33	34	35	36	31	32	
		State				
		Present Court House				
Reedtown	560 a					
4	3	2	1	6	5	T-3
	Billingsville					

The State Road was surveyed May 30th & 31st, 1873 under the direction of A. J. Godfrey, F. W. Wagner and D. W. Hamilton, State Road Commissioners. W. M. Stone and John Persinger sworn chainmen. George A. Bishop, Surveyor. Length of road in Norton county: 19 m. and 3 chains.³

The charter granted the (first) Norton Town Association covered the 560 acres indicated in the diagram. The field notes for the State Road stated that the road extended south on the east boundary of the Norton townsite to the NE corner of sec. 3-T-3-R-23. This located the townsite west of State Street. This was five years before the Original Town of Norton was platted by W. B. Rogers.

The location of the town of Norton has been definitely fixed west of the line now comprising State Street by the charter of the Norton Town Association organized in 1872 and by the field notes of the government survey establishing the State Road in 1873. There is no record to show that the Norton Town Association ever gained legal title to any of the land designated in the charter.

When the county was organized August 22, 1872, the governor designated "Billingsville" as the temporary county seat. Since Billingsville never existed in fact and was only a paper town, it is impossible to locate it. It is generally agreed that the Billings Dugout was located on the northeast forty of the southwest quarter of section three, township three south, range twenty-three west.⁴

Opinion has been divided as to the date of the establishment of the Norton post office and the first postmaster. The following communication from the Post Office Department fixes the date and names the postmaster as follows:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
First Assistant Postmaster General
Washington

Mr. D. N. Bowers,
511½ W. Washington Street,
Norton, Kansas.

My Dear Mr. Bowers:

The Fourth Assistant Postmaster General has referred to this Bureau for appropriate attention your letter of April

24, 1941, requesting information concerning the history of the Norton, Kansas, post office.

According to the records of the Department, the post office of Norton, Norton County, Kansas, was established as Billingsville on June 10, 1872, with Nathan H. Billings as postmaster. The name of the office was changed to Norton, October 28, 1872.

Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE O'CONNELL

First Asst. Postmaster General⁶

The Billingsville postoffice was established eleven days before N. H. Billings presented his first petition to the Governor, asking that the county be organized with Billingsville as the temporary county seat.

The following statements of facts were published in The Norton Daily Telegram the week the New Government Post Office was dedicated, February 2, 1936:

"Norton's first postoffice, established about 64 years ago, was not a postoffice in the present sense of the word, for while it was an established institution, no provision had been made by the government to supply it with mail, according to Lockard's History of Norton county.

"The Billings postoffice was located three miles east of where Norton now is located, on land of Benjamin Rawlins. After learning they had a postoffice but no mail could come through it, the settlers hired Rawlins to carry the mail once a week from Republican City, Nebr., walking there and back with his little cargo, excepting that occasionally he borrowed a saddle horse from John Bieber, a neighbor.

"Norton's first actual postoffice was in charge of William Elroy Case, who arrived here in April, 1872, with Benjamin Franklin Williams, who later married the present Mrs. C. G. Page of northeast of Norton, and Joel H. Simmons, who married Grace Ella Curry, sister-in-law of Mrs. Julia Curry, living on North First avenue and who celebrated her 100th birthday anniversary on March 22 this year.

"In 1873, Mr. Case bought the Newell store, the old "Cottonwood" store, located about in the quarter block to the southwest of the corner of Main and First avenue, where he became the postmaster and conducted the postoffice while also serving as clerk of the district court from 1872 to 1875."

(The records show that W. E. Case was clerk of the district court in 1873 and again from 1880 to 1888.)

REEDTOWN

The map indicates a small village named "Reedtown" located on the E $\frac{1}{2}$ of the N. E. quarter of section 4, township 3 south, range 23 west. Shelby D. Reed, who had been hunting and trapping on the Solomon, near Logan, during the fall and winter of 1871-72, came across to Norton in May 1872 and settled on a strip of land comprising four forties along the west side of Norton townsite. He started a town with the idea of making it the county seat. His town was first called "Norton Center" but was later changed to "Reedtown".

In the absence of any record showing that Reedtown was platted, the Deed Records were examined and the following excerpt was taken from a recorded deed: "The following real estate, to-wit: the undivided 2/67 part, excepting the blocks - P, Q, and R of the town of Norton, situated in the county of Billings, State of Kansas on the E. $\frac{1}{2}$ of the N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 4, township 3 south, range 23 west of the 6th P. M." This plat was located one mile west of State Street and south of W. Washington."

Richard Felton came here in the fall of 1872 and placed a filing on the forty acres where the Rock Island depot stands, and he remained here until 1876.^s

Just what happened to the Norton Town Association, we are not informed in any of the records. It could be that these men were the supposed "Syndicate of Capitalists" that N. H. Billings claimed to represent as they too came from Cloud County. They disappeared just a little ahead of Mr. Billings.

A new corporation was organized November 1, 1873, known

and styled the Norton Town Association. Just what relationship (if any) existed between this association and the one chartered in 1872 we do not know. We herewith present a copy of the Charter of the Norton Town Association of 1873:

CHARTER OF THE NORTON TOWN ASSOCIATION

This corporation shall be known and styled The Norton Town Association.

The purpose for which this association is organized is the purchasing and laying out in town lots and other subdivisions an addition to the town of Norton in the county of Billings and State of Kansas, and for the transfer of the same.

The business of this association shall be transacted in the said town of Norton.

This association shall exist for the term of twenty years from the date of filing this charter in the office of Secretary of State.

The number of directors of this association shall be five, two of whom shall be the President and Secretary of the Association. The names and residences of those appointed for the first year are as follows, to wit: Richard Williams, President, Norton, Billings County, Kansas; J. H. Simmons, Secretary; Alva Smith; all of Norton, Billings County, Kansas; John O'Brien, John Demott, both of Buena Vista, Billings County, Kansas.

The Capital Stock of this association is two thousand dollars which is divided into shares of One Hundred Dollars each.

Signed:

Richard Williams, Pres.
George N. Kingsbury, Vice-President.
J. H. Simmons, Secretary.
W. E. Case, Treasurer.
John O'Brien, Director.

Alva Smith, Director.
John DeMott, Director.
B. W. Rawlins.
David C. Coleman.
B. F. Williams.
H. F. Brown.
Philip Bruner.

Subscribed and sworn to before me a Notary Public in and for Billings county, this 1st day of November, 1873.

N. H. BILLINGS, Notary Public.
(SEAL)

Be it remembered that on this 1st day of November A. D. 1873, personally came the persons whose names are written in the within instrument of writing and acknowledged the same to be their free and voluntary act.

N. H. Billings, Notary Public,
Billings County, Kansas.

Filed for record Nov. 14th, 1873
Secretary of State, Kansas.

Filed for record March 5th, 1923 at 11 A. M.

Edna R. Weldon, Register of Deeds.⁹

James M. Maggard proved up on the land where the court house now stands in 1873 and sold approximately sixty acres to Richard Williams September 26, 1873.¹⁰ While the Norton Town Association began operating as a corporation in November 1873 and were issuing deeds as early as 1874, the title of the townsite remained in the name of Richard Williams until August 31, 1878. As President of the Company he held the title in trust. The deed was acknowledged March 19, 1880 and filed for record on that date.¹¹

The site was platted while the title was in the name of James M. Maggard or some time before July 17, 1873. This fact is established from an entry in the "Record of County Commissioners" as follows: "At a meeting of the board July 17, 1873, the board rented from S. B. and E. M. Newell a building, twelve by twenty feet, located on the northeast corner of the Public Square". This shows that the town was platted and the Public Square established at that time.¹²

In the year 1877 a case came up in court where a man was accused of selling intoxicants, and to prove the place where the alleged crime was committed, the plat of the town was introduced as evidence. The defense objected to the plat being introduced as evidence on the ground that it had not been properly certified. The objection was sustained by the court and the plat declared worthless.¹³ From this time on for a year or two the Norton Town Association met with some legal reverses in establishing their Addition to the town of Norton.

W. B. Rogers, who was well known to many of the citizens of Norton today, secured relinquishment on eighty acres of land adjoining State Street on the west. He platted four blocks of this land—Blocks 1 and 2, 7 and 8, and filed his plat as the "Original Town of Norton." This was a part of the land that was included in the Charter granted the Norton Town Association in the year 1872. This led to a fight between Mr. Rogers and the Association. It was fought in the court, according to Mr. Lockard. There are no records that throw any light on the subject. Some of the



West Side of the Square in 1881

earliest Court Records are not complete, and this may account for the omission. The nature of the fight would depend upon the relationship existing between the two Town Associations. If they were separate and distinct as the charters indicate it is difficult to see where there was ground for legal action on the part of the Town Association. If, however, the new company was simply a reorganization of the old, they might have claimed some rights granted by the first charter. Whatever the trouble was, it is reported that the Association lost and Mr. Rogers' plat still stands.



North Side of the Square in 1881.

Mr. Rogers filed his plat in the office of Register of Deeds at 3 o'clock P. M. on December 7, 1878." In the meantime the Association was busy reorganizing their company and refiling their plat. The plat book shows that on the same day that Mr. Rogers filed his plat, J. R. Case, president of the Norton Town Association, made the following acknowledgment: "I, J. R. Case, president of the Norton Town Association of Norton, County of Norton, State of Kansas, do hereby acknowledge that the within plat is a true and correct plat of the Addition to the town of Norton." Signed, J. R. Case, president. He appeared before the County Clerk, M. J. FitzPatrick February 18, 1879 and acknowledged the execution of the same. Filed for record on December 28, 1878, at 10 o'clock A. M. Refined October 20, 1886 at 12 M. by request of Albert Graves, president of the Association; William Simpson, secretary of the Association; L. H. Thompson, county attorney; and L. K. Pratt, Judge of the Circuit Court.¹⁵

For some time there was a bitter fight between Mr. Rogers and the Norton Town Association. State Street was entirely closed, the east side being used as an alley by the Association; backhouses were lined up against the street, as well as other buildings.

While the reason for the Norton Town Association establishing Kansas Avenue so close to State Street is a matter of opinion, it does account for the short block and the fact that the business houses face both streets. Legend has it that this was done deliberately to shut off State Street from the court house square.

The row of buildings lining State Street on the west and extending from where the First State Bank is now situated north to Main Street, constituted what was termed "Banana Row". Some old timers insist that the name originated from the tendency of the proprietors of stores fronting Kansas Avenue to throw old banana crates and other refuse out of their back doors, thus creating an unfavorable atmosphere for the struggling State Street proprietors.

The fight with Leota for the permanent county seat had been

long and spirited, it had divided the people of the entire county into two groups: Norton vs Leota. Political questions or any other issues that came up were divided along that line and were bitterly fought out. One effect of this struggle was to unite the people of Norton, they had banded together and fought hard to hold the county seat. The Norton Town Association took a leading part in the battle, and through the leadership of such men as Richard Williams, J. R. Thompson and others, won out. The fight over organizing and platting the town was of short duration; they soon forgot it and have since worked harmoniously to build a larger and better Norton. The town has continued to grow and now comprises a city of twenty four additions.

In the spring of 1878 emigration poured in from all points of the compass, new buildings were erected and new business houses opened. On March 1, 1880 there were over seven thousand inhabitants in the county and about two hundred in Norton.¹⁶ The real growth of the town began in 1885 when the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad was built through the county.

INCORPORATION OF THE CITY

Third Class: Norton was incorporated as a city of the third class by the District Court in session at Phillipsburg, Phillips County, Kansas, September 12, 1885. W. H. Pratt, Judge of the 17th Judicial District of the State of Kansas.¹⁷

Second Class: Recommendation of the Norton Commercial Association received and census enumerators appointed March 5, 1907.¹⁸ Ordinance No. 234 passed by the City Council, March 6, 1907. C. H. Griffin, Mayor; T. W. Simmons, Clerk.¹⁹ Governor's proclamation incorporating Norton as a city of the Second Class issued at Topeka, State of Kansas, March 29, 1907.²⁰

NORTON VIEWED FROM THE WEST

Editorial in Norton Champion, July 16, 1885

We often regretted that Norton had not some expanse of water at her side, so boating and fishing might be indulged in to a comfortable degree. Our regrets were founded upon an im-

aginary want. Riding from below the bridge west we discovered a large skiff at the milldam near town, and a marvelous delegation of ladies stepping cooly into the boat preparatory to a ride up the stream. The water is deep enough to float a skiff and give ample oar stroke a distance of three miles. The willows and other trees bordering the Prairie Dog give coolness and shade nearly the whole distance. The scene dead to itself is placid enough, but enlivened by the laughter of ladies boating, or mermaids splashing, charms one. If the stream is left, and a ride taken along the level road westward, a picturesque view may be had of Norton in her beauty. The noise of falling waters, even over a milldam has an influence over us to make us dream of our native Genesee or the more superb Niagara. While Norton may never become a summer resort strictly, it has her own charms for those who love scenery.

CHURCHES



METHODIST CHURCH, North State Street, established in March, 1876. Above church erected 1905. Among charter members were David Close, Eli Dopps, Lizzie Dopps, D. M. Robinson and Mrs. D. M. Robinson. Rev. M. C. Brooks, Pastor, 1940--

ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH. Corner E. Washington Street and Wabash Avenue, established in 1879. Rev. E. D. Weigel, Pastor, 1939--

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH. N. Kansas Avenue, established at Neighborville (Now Calvert) in September 1875. Later moved to Norton where the church was erected in 1884. Services were conducted in the court house and in a school house for some time. Elder Stephen J. Epler, minister. 1924-1930; 1937--

CHURCH OF GOD. 301 N. State Street, conducted first services in the county at Oronoque in 1896. Have held Camp Meetings in Norton since 1905. Present Church established in 1916. Rev. G. C. DeVorss, Pastor, 1940--



Trinity Episcopal Church, Norton

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH. Corner of N. State and Waverly, church erected in 1923. Rev. C. E. Wilcox, Pastor, 1936--

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. Corner of W. Main and Second Avenue, established February 20, 1889. Board of Trustees at that time: N. A. Johnson, C. G. Page, T. A. Rogers, E. N. Stump, J. C. Latham. Officers: N. A. Johnson, clerk; Mrs.

Ellen Day, treasurer; A. J. Thompson and E. D. Owens, deacons. Charter Members: N. A. Johnson, Della Johnson, T. A. Rogers, Susan C. Rogers, Harry T. Thompson, Mary A. Thompson, Albert J. Thompson, Sarah M. Thompson, John C. Latham, Allen Day, W. R. Smith, Mary Mather, Joseph O. Fleming, Mary E. Corfman. Rev. F. H. McKinney, Pastor, 1936--

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE, 309 N. Kansas Avenue, established in 1907.

THE COMMUNITY FULL GOSPEL CHURCH. W. Lincoln, established 1940. Rev. Gordon K. Peterson, Pastor, 1940--

OFFICERS, CITY OF NORTON, 1942

J. F. Bennett, Mayor.

Officers:

Chas. W. Campbell,
Treasurer.
R. W. Hemphill, Attorney.
Frank E. Palmer,
City Clerk.
L. C. Johnson,
Supt. Power Plant.

Councilmen:

J. B. Wray, president.
C. F. Drake
L. V. Mason
W. W. Isaac
Ernest Bright
W. S. Gochenaur

ENVIRONS

Belle Plain Church. The Belle Plain Methodist Church is situated on the southwest quarter of section 23, township three south, range twenty-two west. It is reached by following highway N. C. 563 southeast from Norton.

The land where the church stands was deeded to the church by H. W. Curry and wife on May 7, 1917. The board of trustees at the time were: Mrs. M. J. Stevens, H. W. Curry, C. W. Bisbee, C. I. Alexander and H. P. Pittaway.²¹

The Country Club. The Country Club occupies a high tract of land approximately 3 m. southeast of Norton. The location is ideal and the Club House and Grounds are well equipped. This is a favored Golf Course in this part of the State.

North from US-36 on Us-283 the junction with N. C. 541 is reached at approximately .3 mi.

Norton Municipal Airport. On the N. W. corner of the intersection of these highways is the Municipal Airport. On December 30, 1929, the city purchased the southeast quarter and the east half of the northeast quarter of section 27, township two south, range twenty three west, a 240 acre tract, and laid out a landing field of ample space. The field was put in condition as a Work Relief Project and at one time was valued at \$30,000.00.²²

Norton Cemetery. Eli E. Dopps bought a soldier's bounty scrip to the southwest quarter of section 26, township two south, range twenty three west, in the late 1870's. He received the government patent on this quarter June 30, 1882. The Norton Cemetery Association was organized about 1880 and began the sale of lots at six dollars each. Eli E. Dopps deeded the original cemetery, consisting of ten acres, to the Norton Cemetery Association October 31, 1887.²³ The Association deeded the same to the City of Norton on June 19, 1890.²⁴ Additional land has been purchased and the cemetery now consists of thirty acres.

Historic Stone House. L. on N. C. highway 541 at 1 m. is the Robinson Draw which has been associated with the history of Norton since the beginning. D. M. and W. W. Robinson took claims on the creek northwest of Norton in October, 1872. Numerous springs were active along the creek, which was lined with native timber. Wild life, such as elk, antelope and buffalo came to the creek for water and shelter.

To the R. just this side of the creek is an old Stone House of considerable historic interest, since it is one of the very few buildings that remain which were built in the 1870's. This was the only building along the old trail for several years. Besides serving as a landmark for travelers, it was the home of the W. W. Robinson family for years and was at one time converted into a creamery, being the first creamery established in the county.

The stone were taken from the quarry a short distance to the southwest. The Rock Spring on the bank of the creek is out of the ordinary and adds to its interest.

Highland Christian Church. The Highland Church is situated on the southwest corner of section 9, township two south, range twenty-two west, on N. C. highway No. 563 northeast from Norton.

B. W. Ooton and wife deeded to the Trustees of the Highland Christian Church the land where the church stands on August 14, 1922. The Church is a substantial brick building.²³



The Norton Community High School, 1942.
Gerald Travis, Principal, Jan. 1934--

NORTON, THE QUEEN OF THE PRAIRIE

(An essay read by Miss Grace Lane at the Commencement Exercises in 1888. Published in the Norton Champion May 31, 1888.)

In the early spring of 1872, the lonely and adventurous James Hall, with his brave little wife, invaded the hunting grounds of

the terrible Pawnees, and established the domicile in that part of the "Great American Desert" as it was then called, now covered by the map of Norton county.

The prophet who might have been hardy enough to foretell the existence of the city, which we are proud to call our home in 1888, with all its wealth, and social and religious privileges, would have been ridiculed and ridiculous indeed. But from the time when the birth of Kate Kelley inaugurated the natural increase of our population and the death of Minnie Stiles began the necrology of Norton county—a period of sixteen years—the record of births, and the sleeping places of the dead, have multiplied a hundred fold.

Where are the pioneers? Where are the vast herds of buffalo and antelope they hunted? Where is the "Great American Desert" made famous by Lewis and Clark's narration and the Atlases of forty years ago? Gone! and gone forever!

The memory of the gentle, sweet faced Minnie Stiles and the living presence of Kate Kelley in her young womanhood, have outlived the red man, the bison and the antelope who roamed these once desolate plains and to the next generation their histories, however truthfully they may be told, will appear as incredulous as Munchausen's tales or the story of Jack, the Giant Killer.

Sixteen years! Why, we live longer in sixteen years than our fathers did in a hundred! And today, the little baby Norton of that date is a blooming young belle of "sweet sixteen"—a little "Queen of the Prairie" with hundreds of admirers in her train—courted by railroad magnates—courted by capitalists from the far east, who lavish their hoarded treasures upon her. Courted by preachers and teachers and merchants and manufacturers both of high and low degree. And how does our charming young lady city of "Sweet Sixteen" demean herself? Has she bathed her fair face in scented waters—has she braided her glorious tresses and adorned her willowy form with silks and satins as a bride for the coming of the bridegroom—has she made and is she making the most of her opportunities—cultivating her mind, beautifying her person and adding to her grace? If she has, all is well; but if

not, let her beware! Natural grace of face and form, unrefined and uncultivated, attracts only the base, the sensual, the low. It is a curse to its possessor and leads to those associations which pollute the body and degrade the soul.

Natural grace, refined, adorned, cultivated, attracts the refined, the cultivated, the noble and becomes a thing of beauty and a joy forever—fit crown for an imperial mistress—fit adornment for a happy future. A woman may make herself beautiful—a city may make herself attractive. Even the plainest face, lighted up by purity, intelligence and smiles, finds scores of admirers and the least favorable location improved and commended by the enterprise, the hospitality and care of its citizens becomes desirable as an abode for the better class who visit it, the recipient of their wealth and the beneficiary of their society. How much more when fertility of soil, beauty of location and

advantages for manufactures have drawn toward her the attention of the two most powerful railroad companies in the country, when morning, noon and night the whistle of the locomotive and the thunder of the train is ringing in our ears bringing to us the products of every clime and bearing away our homely products of corn and cattle and swine to rejoice the hearts and feed the mouths of the manufacturing east. Has Norton improved her opportunities? Compare the beautiful dwellings, the stately banks and the solid business blocks of today with the



Norton City School, 1888-1916

(This building was being built about the time Miss Lane was writing "Queen of the Prairie".)

one log house and the two dugouts of sixteen years ago. Compare the schools with their six teachers and 320 pupils with the first school in the little dugout over whose very cavity the great Rock Island has lately spread its embankments, and its single teacher and 16 pupils. Compare the little congregation, a union of all creeds and beliefs, which met in the little log house, and the three stately churches with their overflowing congregations, besides the other two who use the school house and court house as their places of worship. Compare the first hotel, a single room 12x14, still standing in the rear of the Windsor House, and that cupacious hostelry and the still more elegant Grier House. Compare the old oaken bucket of sixteen years ago and the darkness of our streets with the magnificent system of water works now in construction and the electric lights soon to shed their rays over our city and finally compare our superb court house—alas my fellow citizens, comparison is exhausted. I charitably drop the veil and leave the rest to your imagination and the guilty consciences of this county. But in spite of this lamentable failure, which was no fault of the citizens of Norton, we may safely say that our little city has improved her opportunities, though there is still a work to do. Witness our public square, our dilapidated fences, neglected side walks, the bottomless quagmires in our principal streets, the reeling sots that daily testify to the efficacy of prohibitory amendments and city officials, and the multitude of children who roam our alleys whose parents should see that they are in school. We must be up and doing. Self interest, if nothing more, should teach us that if we wish an increase of intelligent, virtuous, orderly, refined and enterprising citizens, we must make our city cleanly, attractive, orderly, refined and enterprising. Those who have wealth should remember that parsimony is the bane of its possessor as well as others, let him ponder the words of the wise man: "There is, that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty".

Let every citizen of Norton exert himself that our city may be a fit monument to the memory of the gallant soldier who fell on Caney Hill, and whose honored name we bear. Who can foretell the growth of the next sixteen years? What blocks of solid

brick, what ranks of dwellings, what groves and parks, handsome avenues and graded streets may greet the eyes of the admiring stranger and draw to us crowds of the good, the wealthy, the energetic from older but less favored places. So shall our sweet miss of sixteen, our proud little "Queen of the Prairie" become the stately matron of thirty-two, and the Metropolis of Western Kansas. Three cheers for Norton, "The Queen of the Prairie."

TO THE OLD AND THE NEW YEAR

1887 By A. K. Mills 1888

Fare thee well, old year, forever;
All thy pilgrimage is o'er;
All thy sunshine and thy shadows
Fall now on another shore.
On a shore where we have lingered
Mid its dreams and summer flowers,
Till a wave of time has borne us
To the New Year's untried hours.

As we look back o'er the river,
To the shore we've left behind,
We can almost hear its echoes,
As with memory they're entwined.
Short may seem the league that severs
Twilight's blush from morning's ray;
Still we cannot turn time's current,
And drift back to yesterday.

Every sunset drifts us farther
From the isles where now we stand;
Every sunrise finds us treading
On some new and unknown strand:
Onward flows time's rapid river,
With its current deep and strong,
And we're drifting on forever;
Dreaming back but drifting on.

Toll the solemn knell at midnight:
Softly tread and whisper low;
God forgive all our transgressions,
For the dear old year must go.
Thus the old year drifted from us,
And the setting sun's last ray
Drew the shroud of night about it,
And ere morn it passed away.

Ring the glad joy bells and hail the glad morning;
 Banish each care and each trace of a tear:
 Lo! in the east see the crimson adorning
 Woodland and snowfield to hail the new year.

Chime merry bells, chime your gayest glad ringing:
 Beat faster, sad heart, and dispel every fear;
 List to the anthems which thousands are singing.
 Praise to God for the happy new year.

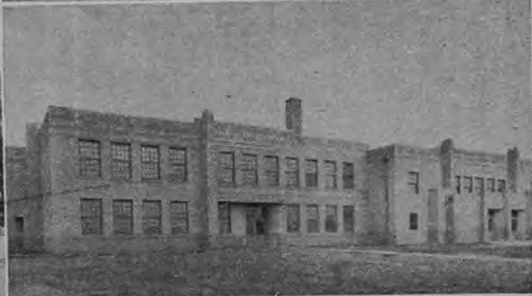
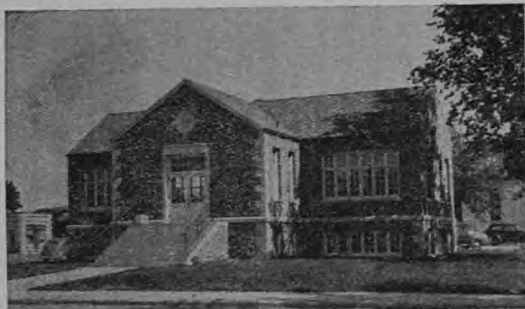
What will it bring to us, gladness or sorrow?
 Ah! angels, whisper and tell me I pray.
 Hush! God alone only knows of the morrow;
 It will soon dawn; do thy duty today.

Patiently bear all its pain and its sadness,
 Trusting in God who forever is near;
 Doing each duty will bring to you gladness,
 And now I wish you a happy new year.²⁰

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- ¹ Abstract of Agriculture, Population, and other Statistics, Norton County, Kansas. 11.
- ² F. M. Lockard, History of the Early Settlement of Norton County, 1894, Norton, Kansas. 15-16.
- ³ Engineer's Office, Norton. Road Book, O.
- ⁴ Norton County News, Historical Number, October 1916.
- ⁵ Personal Letter from First Assistant Postmaster General.
- ⁶ The Norton Daily Telegram, February 1, 1936.
- ⁷ Deed Record, vol. 1, 89.
- ⁸ The Norton Champion, December 14, 1893.
- ⁹ Miscellaneous Records, vol. F. 126, Register's Office.
- ¹⁰ Deed Record, vol. 2, 127.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*, 128.
- ¹² Record of County Commissioners, vol. 1, 1872-1887, 15.
- ¹³ The Telegram, Special Edition, 1906.
- ¹⁴ Plat Book, No. 1, 1.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*, 2.
- ¹⁶ F. M. Lockard, *op. cit.*, 256.
- ¹⁷ Journal Dist. Court, vol. A 137.
- ¹⁸ Record of Council Proceedings, vol. B. 302. Norton, Kan.
- ¹⁹ Ordinance Record, vol. B. 209.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, 213.
- ²¹ Deed Record, vol. 48, 258.
- ²² *ibid.*, vol. 57, 338.
- ²³ *ibid.*, vol. 8, 630.
- ²⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 17, 106.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, vol. 53, 48.
- ²⁶ The Norton Champion, Jan. 5, 1888.



View of Kansas Avenue, Norton, Kansas, 1942.



Upper Left—Norton Public Library
Lower Left—Norton City School.

Upper Right—Norton Post Office.
Lower Right—Junior High School.

Jess Vague—Supt. Norton City Schools, 1941--

The Prairie Dog Valley

East of Norton



CHAPTER IV

THE rural section of Norton county comprises four natural divisions, namely: The Prairie Dog Valley, The Solomon Valley, The Sappa Creek Valley, and the Highlands which include the North and the South Divides.

The county has a good system of roads which connect with both State and Federal highways. The Prairie Dog Valley is traversed by US Highways 36 and 383 from Norton to the Phillips county line. US 383 is paralleled by the Republican City - Oberlin Branch of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad from Norton to the Phillips county line, and by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific from Norton to Almena. The Santa Fe Trail System of bus lines operates daily over US 36. The bus station is located in Norton.

The highway between Norton and the Phillips County Line is reached from US 383 and US 283 by following US 383 east from their intersection in Norton.

HIGHWAY OVERPASS

US Highways 36 and 383 cross the two railroads over the overhead pass (viaduct) which was completed June 15, 1937, at a cost of \$150,000. The structure proper is seven hundred feet in length and is of continuous eyebeam reinforced concrete construction, having a clearance of twenty two feet.

The project, which has a total length of 1500 feet, was built as a Works Project Grade Elimination Highway Project, requiring one year and fifteen days to complete the work. The money was furnished by the government for the elimination of hazardous crossings.¹



The Railroad Overpass, Norton

THE NATIONAL CORN HUSKING CONTEST

(Editorial, *Almena Plaindealer*, Nov. 20, 1930)

Providence smiled on Northwestern Kansas last Friday, sending us ideal weather for the greatest National Corn Husking Contest that has ever been held. The day dawned cloudy and somewhat windy, threatening possible rain or snow in the morning as had been predicted by the weather man, but by 10 a. m. all signs of inclemency had disappeared and the sun came out in all its splendor to accelerate the enthusiasm and hospitality with which Northwest Kansas was saturated.

As early as 7 a. m. thousands were pouring into Norton from all points of the compass to witness the parade which was scheduled for 9 o'clock. For two solid hours after the parade had passed, traffic was congested all the way from Norton to the

Frank Palmer farm, a distance of 9 miles, and a fleet of traffic officers was required to keep the oncoming army moving with a minimum of delay. At the same time thousands of cars were arriving at the contest field via Almena and points north and south.

The Norton Chamber of Commerce and Communities that cooperated with this organization in the work of arranging the program are to be highly complimented upon the efficiency with which all details were carried out and for the royal way in which the vast throng was entertained. Accommodations at the contest site were remarkable and the events took place on schedule time.

At 12.30 it was estimated that 10,000 cars were parked on the grounds and adjoining property, with 40,000 visitors in attendance. Even then, more cars were steadily arriving. In our estimation this estimate was conservative.

SEVENTH NATIONAL CORN HUSKING CONTEST

(Editorial, Norton Champion, Nov. 20, 1930)

Now History that will never repeat itself. Norton County Acknowledges the Corn.

Contest Notes

Mr. Butterworth of Chicago did the broadcasting here, not Sen. Kaney, who could not come.

The floats were all good; that of Almena representing Uncle Tom's Cabin - built of corn, the best. Phillipsburg's Cornucopia was a close second. Other floats were:

Long Island—immense ear of corn with yellow ears representing the kernels and with a display of many varieties of fine corn at each side. Large banner "Banner Corn Township of the U. S. A. for 20 years."

Edmond—corn was featured but many other crops were represented, especially the fuel problem of the farmer—electricity, natural gas, limbs of trees, stovewood, coal and buffalo chips—if the cow will pardon us for buffaloing her.

Lenora—display of corn in the shock, ear corn, kaffir and garden products centered about a sign: "Lenora, the city That Does Things. The Peace of the Solomon Valley."

Norton City School—three floats, one with the band, one depicting various school activities and one showing the "Schools of Yesterday."

Colby—large transcontinental bus with banners, among others one announcing "Colby, the Taxless Town. Home of Marion Talley."

Phillips County—miniature old time log cabin boosting the annual rodeo.

Cheyenne County—great corn display in form of a house, with numerous banners reciting the county's resources and the announcement that the county's acre yield for 1930 is the largest in Kansas.

Sherman County—a huge ear of corn with regulation yellow ears forming the kernels. Beneath was a modern farmstead located on native buffalo sod. A lower drape carried the words: "Represented in the Seventh Annual Corn Husking Contest and Home of the Largest State Contest Ever Held."

Phillips County made the most medicine in the parade. Logan had a giant ear of corn made of muslin to represent the county's principal crop. A poster bore the words "The Peace of the Solomon Valley" and another carried the motto of all Phillips County floats: "Phillips County, Banner Corn County in Kansas, 1929, 1930."

Phillipsburg—a large truck with signs as large bearing the words: "Phillips County, Banner Corn County of Kansas; 3,346,679 bushels in 1929, 3,772,000 bushels in 1930. Kansas State Board of Agriculture Estimate, Report of October 1, 1930."

Stuttgart—side drapes bore the name of the town formed in letters made from corn cobs cut crosswise. An American Flag of corn.

Not the least among the attractions on parade were the bands in uniform but out of step and jazz for standard marches. The Kilties were the showiest. They punctuated the parade line in the following order:

Norton Community High School immediately following a mounted escort; Oberlin, Colby, Phillipsburg, Goodland, Atwood, Hill City, Lenora, Beaver City Kilties, and Norton City School.

This was a great event for Norton county and all northwest Kansas. The people of Norton county felt highly honored in having this national event take place in this county.

Fred Stanek of Fort Dodge, Iowa, won the championship victory with 30.34 bushels of corn husked in eighty minutes.

The site of the contest can be reached by following N. C. highway 563 from its intersection with US 36 and 383 east of Norton.

BEAVER DAMS

Numerous beaver have made their homes for many years along the larger streams in Norton county. This is due, largely, to the winding course of the stream, causing the water to move slowly and making it ideal for the construction of dams which the beaver build along the streams.

They make these dams by cutting the trees in such a way as to fell them across the stream, forming a foundation to be filled in with sticks and mud. Their homes are on the bank with two openings below the water line but the floor well above.

It is unlawful for anyone to trap beaver excepting authorized trappers that are sent out by the State on request. The beaver pelts trapped by the Game Warden and other State Trappers are sold at auction at selected points and the money turned into the fish and game department to be used in protecting wild life.²



Kansas State Tuberculosis Sanatorium

Dr. C. S. Kenney, Supt. 1914-30.

Dr. C. F. Taylor, Supt. 1930--

KANSAS STATE TUBERCULOSIS SANATORIUM

The Kansas State Tuberculosis Sanatorium is situated in a beautiful spot on the Prairie Dog Creek four miles east of Norton. The location is ideal for an institution of this character. The air is invigorating, there is an abundance of pure water with a near perfect drainage system. The climate is good, with an abundance of sunshine throughout the year.

The State of Kansas owns an L-shaped tract of land on the northwest corner of the intersection of US 36 and 383 with K-67. This tract comprises 240 acres of good bottom land on which the Sanatorium buildings are situated. The grounds situated in the bend of the creek are appropriately landscaped, with the buildings arranged around the Administration Building, which stands near the center. Pleasing drives and walks leading to the different parts of the grounds with evergreens and flowers at intervals make it very beautiful. The trees skirting the creek to the north make a fitting background for the landscape. The buildings and grounds are brilliantly lighted by night and can be seen for miles.

To the north of the creek are the barns and dairy herd which supply the institution with milk. Chickens are kept to supply the patients with fresh eggs throughout the year. The farm produces feed which is fed from several large silos built for that purpose and belonging to the institution.

The history of the sanatorium dates back to the year 1913. The corner stone was laid and the dedicatory service held on June 14, 1914. The corner stone bears the inscription: "In the health of the people lies the strength of the nation".

As an inducement to have the institution located in Norton county, the citizens of Norton subscribed \$7,200. to purchase the site. As the institution continued to grow, more land was needed. In the year 1934 the State of Kansas purchased a square tract of land consisting of 160 acres, less the railroad right-of-ways, just north of US 36 and 383 on the northeast corner of the intersection with K-67. This with an additional tract of 3.94 acres east of the buildings, make a total of approximately 400 acres owned by the State of Kansas.³

SETH TOWNSITE

The Time Tables of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad that were issued during the 1890's show a station about where Calvert is now situated by the name of Seth.

When this railroad was built through they put in a siding, depot, and stock yards. A few residences went up, together with a few business establishments. The land was owned by David F. McFarland and Ida H. McFarland and the town platted September 13, 1887.⁴

For some reason the people did not take an interest in the town and after Calvert was platted it was soon abandoned and later the townsite was vacated. The townsite was just south of where the Calvert school is now situated. There remains one house on the site.

CALVERT

The first settlement made at this point was called Neighborville. The Bieber family settled here very early in the history of Norton county. Charles D. Bieber settled on the homestead where Calvert stands.

The postoffice was established in 1875 and named Neighborville. Abraham Bieber was appointed the first postmaster, but died before his commission arrived. Charles D. Bieber was appointed postmaster to fill the vacancy.

The records show that Calvert was platted January 16, 1888 at the time the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad was built through. The plat bears the names of: The Kansas Town and Land Company, James VanNotric, Drazilla VanNotric his wife, Charles D. Bieber and Eliza B. Bieber, his wife.⁵

At one time Calvert had a newspaper published in the town and was a prosperous little village. We quote from the Norton Champion—"The Calvert Gazette, by Messrs. Rhanny and Felt, is the latest. Every town in the county will soon see the importance



Bird's Eye View of Calvert, Kansas, 1942.

(Taken from the Hill south of town)

of a newspaper as a mascot. Seth will soon become jealous of Calvert's rapid growth and start a paper in self defense."

Mr. M. A. Pache settled here about the year 1906 and engaged in the lumber business, and since that time has built up a good business when there are good crops. Today the interest of the town centers around a church, two-room school, lumber yard, store, and facilities for mining and shipping Silica.

PILOT KNOB

This rock capped hill stands south of the highway approximately one mile east and a little south of Calvert. It has worn down and is of little interest excepting as an old landmark in this part of the valley. For many years it looked out over Indian battles and many long trains of prairie schooners as they made their way westward. It was a landmark for hunters and trappers when operating up and down the Prairie Dog in this section of the country. From its summit a far-reaching view of the country north and west is afforded.

ALFALFA INTRODUCED

The Kansas Magazine, under date of June 1910, published the following account—"There has been some dispute from time to time as to who deserves the honor of having first introduced alfalfa into Kansas; that the distinction is an honor and a long step in the development of a great state admits of no doubt. There now lives at DeQueen, Arkansas, a man, John Gishwiller by name, who is entitled to at least a share of the distinction: If he was not the pioneer alfalfa grower, he certainly gave the great forage plant to the northwest portion of the state, having planted a five-acre tract on his farm southwest of Almena, Norton county."

John Gishwiller settled in Norton county at its very beginning and was well known to many of the people who live here at the present time. Not being strong physically, he traveled over the western states to regain his health, and while in Ogden, Utah, purchased eighty-five pounds of alfalfa seed and brought

it back on his return to Norton county. He seeded a five acre tract just north of the Prairie Dog from which he sold five thousand dollars' worth of seed alone before the year 1895. Alfalfa proved to be adapted to this soil and climate and added to the wealth of the valley from year to year. He supplied seed for all up and down the Prairie Dog Valley, and it was also taken across to the Solomon and the Sappa.

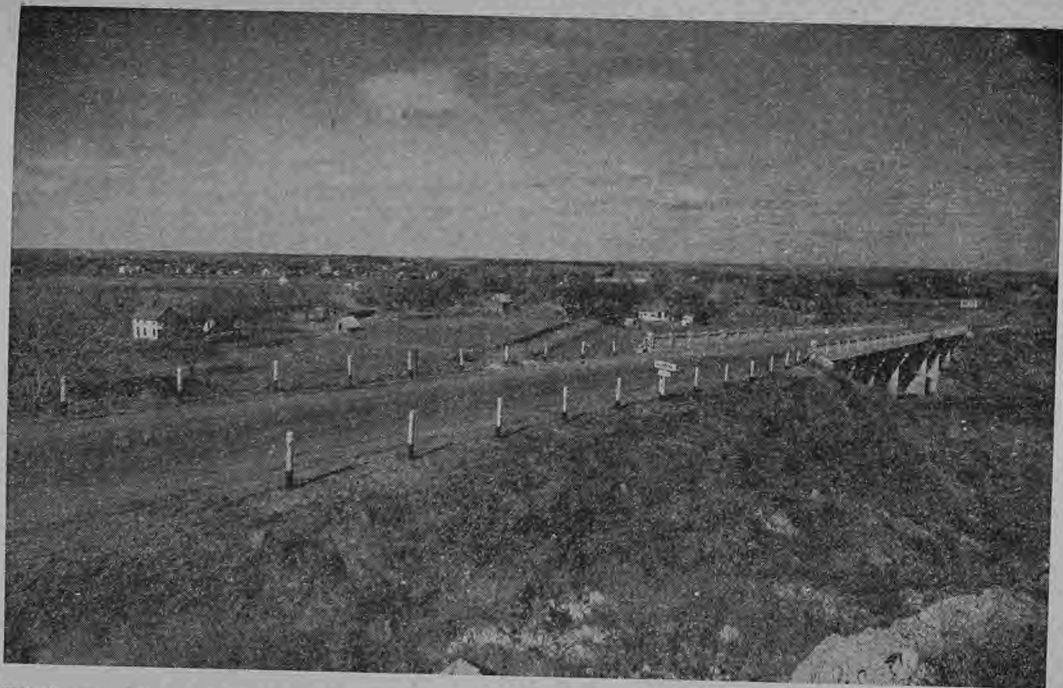
SOUTH FORK

The south fork stream empties into the Prairie Dog Creek at Alma. It is opposite the north fork which winds its way in from the northwest. The creek is lined with native trees: elm, ash, hackberry, willow and cottonwood.

The south fork is spanned by a bridge made of reinforced concrete and crossed just before reaching the city limits of Alma. According to the late F. M. Lockard, historian for Norton county, an Indian fight took place here September 16, 1869. We referred to this battle in Chapter I as the "Buck Massacre".

ALMENA VIADUCT

A panoramic view of Alma and the farming country lying in a half circle to the west, north and east, may be had from the highway as one passes over the stony hill just before entering the city. This high hill was graded down on its western slope to allow the road to pass over the viaduct across the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad on the south limits of the city. This overhead pass was completed September 13, 1932 at a cost of \$30,000. It required 132 days for the work of construction. It is of reinforced concrete deck girder construction, 290 feet in length with a clearance of 24.5 feet. The viaduct eliminates a hazardous crossing at this point.⁸



Bird's Eye View of Almena, Kansas, 1942. (Taken from the Stony Hill south of town giving a view of U.S. 383 as it passes over the viaduct).

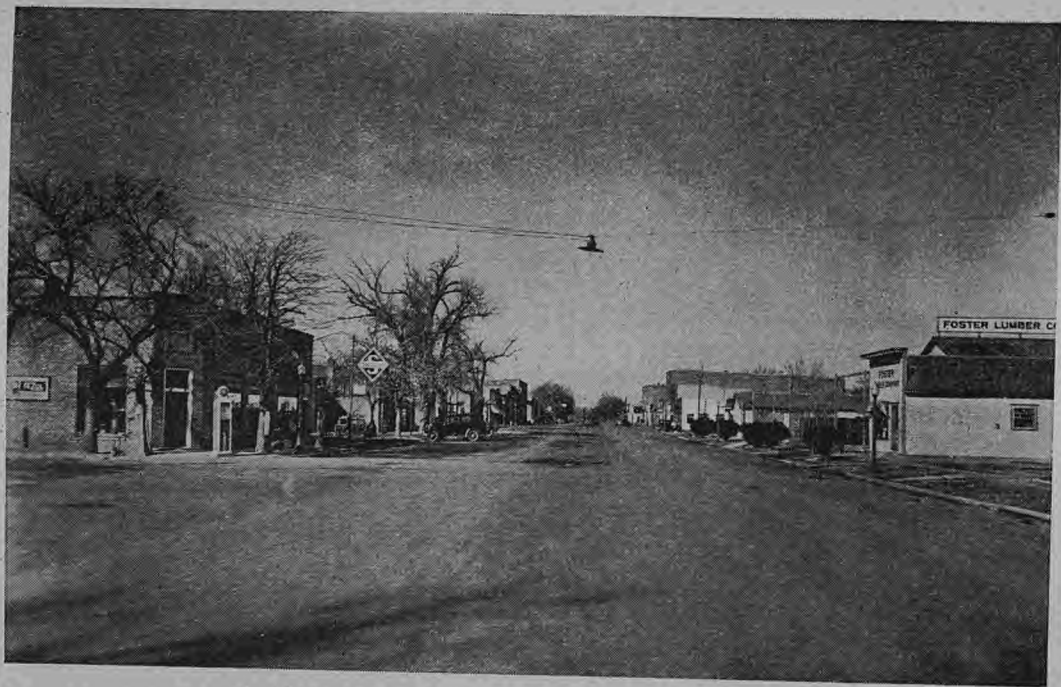
ALMENA

Almena, 11.14 miles east and north of Norton, (alt. 2157 feet; pop. 593, 1941 census) is the second city in the county. The city is situated mainly on the north side of the creek, and the buildings are nestled among the fine shade trees for which the city is noted. No richer soil could be found anywhere than is found in the valley at this point.

The rich bottom land was seeded to alfalfa very early in the history of the county. The soil proved to be productive and yielded a good crop of the forage plant from year to year. This induced feeders to ship in sheep to be fed and fattened for the market. The Walters brothers of Denver, Colorado, wrote John Thomas Harmonson and his father, who established a store in Almena in 1881, asking about securing a place to feed sheep and securing feed for the sheep. The Walters purchased a tract of land bordering the Prairie Dog and erected sheds and feeding places where a large number could be handled. As many as fifty thousand were shipped in a single year and fed on the hay, which was worth about \$3.00 per ton at that time. The hay was hauled and stacked on the bottom south of the creek. This continued for several years. At one time one of the most prolific producers of alfalfa in northwest Kansas, Norton county, however, has lost much of her alfalfa acreage, especially in the years of extreme drouth, 1932-1941.

Almena, situated on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroads, US Highway 383 and K-60 Highway, was established south of the Prairie Dog in 1877. The little hamlet consisted of a mill, blacksmith shop, a boarding house, two stores and a few dugouts.

The Rickards, father and son, operated a boarding house with a lean-to addition built on in which they had a stock of merchandise, a little of everything, but not a large stock. John Bartles had a blacksmith shop. The Harmonson store opened in 1881. The Ayers Brothers came with their families and started a general store in 1884.



A View of Main Street, Alma, Kansas, 1942.

The Almena Burr and Flour Mill stood on the Prairie Dog near the other business houses. This mill was built in the Seventies and changed hands several times. It was purchased by John Wallace in 1882. Mr. Wallace, an experienced mill man, turned it into a roller flour mill. He turned it to his son, Al H. Wallace, in 1891, who operated it until his death in 1907. Mr. Wallace was caught in the machinery and killed. This was one of the most tragic deaths in the history of the county. The mill burned later and was never rebuilt.

The Almena postoffice was established farther down the Prairie Dog five years before there was an Almena where it now stands. This information was established by a communication from Mr. Ambrose O'Connell, First Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, D. C., under date of June 10, 1941. Mr. O'Connell gives the information that the "Almena post office was established June 10, 1872, with David C. Coleman as postmaster. Mr. Coleman served until his successor, Charles Brinton, was appointed on May 30, 1873." The office was moved several times.

The town was moved to the north side of the Prairie Dog when the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad was built through. The new town was platted by the Lincoln Land Company June 15, 1885 and the plat was filed July 7, 1885.

The Main Street extends north and south and is paved from a few hundred feet south of the creek to the north limit of the city. The residential streets are surfaced and well maintained.

The land east of Main Street was purchased by the Lincoln Land Company from Charles B. Lough who settled on this homestead in 1872. The Indians had used this ground as a dumping ground and for a place to cure hides. The land in west Almena was settled by Rube Stevens. The Lincoln Land Company gave choice lots to the merchants as an inducement to move their stores to the new townsite north of the Prairie Dog. They were also given residential lots on which to build homes. The real growth of the town began at this time.

The Ayers and Harmonsons each took advantage of the free lot offer and moved their stores to the new location. The Ayers

store stood on the southeast corner of Main and Ryant Streets on the site now occupied by the "two story brick" now housing the post office. The building occupied by this store burned down and a small blacksmith shop took its place. The lot was purchased later by Andrew Dyatt, who built "the brick" in 1907. The First National Bank was located here until it was merged with the Almena State Bank.

The Almena State Bank on the southwest corner of Main and Ryant Streets stands on the site of the Harmonson store. The store occupied the first floor and the Masonic Lodge the second floor of a frame building.¹⁰

INCORPORATION

Almena was incorporated as a city of the Third Class by the Board of County Commissioners April 10, 1893. At this time the Board issued the following order:

"It is therefore ordered by the Board of County Commissioners that said village be and the same is incorporated as a city of the Third Class by the name and style of the city of Almena and that said city shall include as city and commons all of section eight, township two south, range twenty one west, from now henceforth with all the inhabitants in said bounds and such other territory as may from time to time be lawfully added thereto, shall be a body politic and corporate and they and their successors (except such corporation be lawfully dissolved) shall have a perpetual succession."¹¹

The petition presented to the Board of County Commissioners asking that the town be incorporated as a city of the Third Class contained the following names:

Joseph M. Armstrong, William Malcolm, G. W. Bronson, D. W. Brown, D. H. Kimple, J. S. Young, L. A. Aplington, W. Harmonson, L. Walkel, T. E. Newby, A. Neiswanger, I. P. Henthorn, James Dodson, Wallace Tupper, George E. Shriver, J. W. Handley, S. C. Youngman, A. S. Haworth, S. H. McVay, W. H. Cart, J. B. Welpton, S. W. Besse, A. Johnson, N. A. Johnson, Matt Peterson, J. H. Showers, C. D. Boyd, William L. Howe, E. B. Harris, R. D. Irwin, Scott Burnap, R. F. Legg, Ed Burnap, W. D. Ayers, John Templeton, Henry Clay, A. L.

Tromp, C. R. Besse, C. L. Lyman, J. B. Dyatt, H. Beauchamp, John Dyatt, R. B. Ray, S. W. Taylor, A. C. Jones, J. Holmes, J. W. McPeck. -- Staus, G. Bright, James Hall, J. W. Urschell, N. Barham, Warren Showers.

ENVIRONS

The Morning Star Church. This church was organized as a member of the "Northwestern Christian Association". The church is located on the northeast corner of section 22, township one south, range twenty two west. The land where the church stands was deeded to the "Morning Star Christian Church" by Geo. S. Colip and Emma V. Colip, his wife, on August 30, 1909.¹²

The Baker Evangelical Church. The Baker Evangelical Church was first organized at the "Hays School House", District No. 52, about the year 1881. At this time there were several families settled here. The Roeders: William, August and Herman, came in 1878-79, also John Berkhoise and Frank Jakes. Rev. Suhr settled in the community in 1888 and preached for them in German.

The services were moved to the Baker School House, District No. 105, about the year 1916. After the Methodist Church at Birkville burned, the two congregations worshipped together. The Evangelical Church was built and dedicated in 1919.

Fannie King deeded the land where the church stands to the trustees of the Baker Church of the Nebraska Conference of the Evangelical Association of Norton County, in the State of Kansas. The church is located on the K-60 highway south of Almena.¹³

Mt. Olive M. E. Church. The records show that John G. Palmer and Matilda Palmer deeded a tract of land, consisting of a part of the southeast quarter of section 15, township three south, range twenty one west, to the trustees of the M. E. Church on January 11, 1888. There was a cemetery established on a part of this tract and a church was built. The church is no longer used for regular services.¹⁴

Birkville Church and Townsite. The Birkville M. E. Church was located on the southeast quarter of section 9, township three south, range twenty-one west, two miles south of the junction of K-60 with US 36.

J. R. Thompson and M. B. Thompson, his wife, deeded to: A. Altman, C. W. Bisbee, S. Work, G. L. Barr, D. A. Morgan, J. R. Thompson and M. B. Thompson, trustees of the Mt. Olive M. E. Church, the land where the church was built.¹⁵ The church was destroyed by fire in the Spring of 1918.

The Birkville Townsite was located across the section line south on section 16, township three south, range twenty one west.

At one time Birkville consisted of a store, post office, feed mill, blacksmith shop, church and parsonage. The church and parsonage burned and the other buildings have been moved away. The church burned in 1918 and the store closed about 1920.¹⁶

The Fair Haven Post Office. The Fair Haven Post Office was established in 1879 on the northeast quarter of section 1, township three south, range twenty one west. J. C. Wilson was appointed postmaster and Mariah Wilson deputy. When the Hedgewood post office was discontinued March 15, 1898, the mail for that office was ordered sent to Fair Haven. The Fair Haven post office was discontinued February 29, 1904 and the mail was ordered sent to Densmore.¹⁷

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF PIONEER DAYS

By Charles L. Rose

Editor-Publisher The Almena Plaindealer

Since authentic facts and figures have been given by Mr. Bowers in his book of Norton County history I will confine myself to relating some personal memories and impressions of pioneers and pioneer days.

Much could be written on this subject but as space is limited I shall present only a few things of interest and perhaps not generally known.

Back in the '70's, when the West was young, all of what is now Norton County was open for homesteading. From the Missouri River west people were scarce, land was cheap, and taxes low. Large numbers of Civil War veterans, as well as others, in search of farms and homes for themselves and their families, wended their way to Norton County and westward in covered wagons, called prairie schooners. I well remember an Iowa family in a covered wagon that stopped to camp for the night near our house, in 1888. Painted in red letters on the wagon canvas were these words: "Kansas or Bust". The fall of 1890 the same family stopped again on their way east, but a new line was painted in red below the other. It read: "Busted, by God". And so it went. Some stayed and won; others, lacking the pioneer spirit and grit, couldn't make the grade and returned east to live with "wife's folks".

Early maps show that the first homesteaders filed on land along the Prairie Dog Creek, seeking first running water and timber, then following along the tributaries, gradually working back to the divide and upland.

Coming to Almena from Fon Du Lac, Wisconsin, with my parents, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Rose and my brother, Frank, in 1887, it was my privilege and pleasure to meet and know personally many of the earliest settlers in the northeast part of the county. Father, a Civil War veteran, had bought the Cale Vance homestead in 1879, one mile northeast of Almena, later named Valley View Farm because of its commanding view up and down the Prairie Dog valley. My grandfather, Chester Clark Rose, also a veteran, homesteaded three miles north of Almena in 1878.

Lost on the Prairie

Late one evening he went to bring the milk cows from the pasture along a deep draw running through the farm. Darkness came quickly and he was soon lost. When he failed to return his wife thought he might have fallen over a bank, been bitten by a rattlesnake, or attacked by coyotes. With a lantern she walked to a neighbors for help. After searching most of the night he was

found next morning at the sod house of Byron Huff, two miles northwest, uninjured, after wandering all night.

Our First Days in Almena

Our first few days in Almena were spent at the Commercial Hotel, run by Conrad (Coonrod) Straus, a jolly Dutchman, while our household goods were taken to the three room sod house, with dugout kitchen, on the farm. Coming down stairs for our first meal "Coonrod" asked father whether the family would "sit on" the commercial table or the regular table. "What's the difference?" asked Dad. Well, a meal at the commercial table, used by traveling salesmen, was 50 cents, the regular boarders table was 25 cents. The one had a white table cloth and a bowl of oranges, the other a red checkered cloth, but no oranges. We "sat on" the commercial table once and after that at the regular table. "Coonrod" had a son-in-law, I. P. Henthorn, a photographer, and kept a cow in the back yard. I'll never forget hearing "Coonrod" call out, "Hendorn, go trow de cow over de fence some hay."

About a week after our arrival we settled in the "soddy" on the east slope of the farm. In the fall we moved into a large frame house completed on the hill overlooking Almena.

Our Neighbors

Cornering our farm on the northeast was the homestead of Mr. and Mrs. James Hall. Mrs. Hall gave Almena its name. Mr. Hall, tall, heavy set and handsome, was Norton County's first Sheriff. Robert Hall, his son, now living in Almena, has a tax receipt issued to his father on December 22, 1876, for taxes on the homestead, amounting to \$19.20 on 160 acres. They came to Norton county in 1870. He was appointed by the Governor as one of the Commissioners when the county was organized.

There were but few roads, travel following trails along the divides and in the valleys. A much traveled section line road passed our new house, east and west. It was here I first met Ame Cole, pioneer, buffalo hunter, and Indian scout. He lived about five miles down the valley. Father pointed him out to me one

Saturday as he and his wife were going to town. He drove a team of mules hitched to a buckboard. He was about six feet tall, had high cheek bones, black hair, a full beard, piercing black eyes, and wore a wide brimmed, black slouch hat.

I Meet Ame Cole

A few Saturdays later Ame and his wife came along about noon. I was afraid of him. As they reached the corner of our barnyard he drove in. I saw him coming and headed for the house. "Hey, kid," he yelled in a high pitched voice, "Begod, my mules are thirsty, can I get some water?" "Sure, there's the tank," I said, pointing toward the barn and backing toward the house at the same time. I wasn't taking any chances.

When he was ready to leave he said: "The little mules get pretty thirsty these hot days. This is pretty handy, believe I'll stop next time I come along." He talked for several minutes, in short, jerky sentences, punctuated with a steady flow of profanity. Finally he said: "Well, Begod, I'll have to be goin' kid, Gidap", and as he cracked his whip the mules lunged forward, nearly jerking Mrs. Cole over the seat backward. On that day I lost my fear of Ame Cole and was always eager to hear him talk and tell pioneer stories.

Ame Cole was known far and wide as a crack shot with a rifle, and it is said many a marauding Indian "bit the dust" when they came prowling around his "soddy". There was a footlog across the Prairie Dog creek near his house and I've heard him say Indians would start to cross on it, then all of a sudden, "Begod, they'd take a header into the creek". Use your imagination for the rest.

Mose Cole, Ame's son, lives a half mile south of the Rock Island depot in Almena, near Eagle Point, the high limestone hill having been named by his father.

The First Homestead

Sam Sorric, Civil War Veteran, traded a team of horses for the first homestead taken in Norton county. In February, 1873,

Mr. Sorric traded with George Cole who had settled on this land in September, 1871. Will Sorric, a son, still owns and lives on his father's homestead. Will informs us that his father's sister, Mrs. Hollingsworth, started the Wayside Inn in Norton.



The Almena Rural High School.
Verne B. Archer, Principal, 1941--

The First Schoolhouse

The first schoolhouse for Almena was a dugout on the west bank of Horse Creek, near a log bridge, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile northeast of town. The seats were cottonwood logs sawed in half, with two legs at each end placed at an angle. A wide cottonwood board served as a crude desk for the teacher. This information was given us by Mrs. Julia Lamb, daughter of Charles B. Lough, who homesteaded the land on the east side of Main Street. Mrs. Jessie Dunn of Almena says that she got her first experience in declamation and stage performance in this dugout school house. Her father, T. J. Davis, was an early homesteader. Two sons, James and Walter, live in Almena. This school was followed by a log

school house a quarter of a mile east of Almena on the Jerome Shepherd place.

The first frame school building was built at the north end of Main street, which was the first school attended by the writer in 1888. A few years later a two story brick school was built where the Grade School is now. The frame building was bought by Fred Jefferay, Almena banker, moved to a lot one block west of the present State Bank corner, remodeled and converted into a hotel, called the Fuller House. It was sold later to Mr. and Mrs. S. M. Case. When Mr. Case came here in April, 1875, he bought the Ed Collins homestead two miles northwest of Almena for \$350, where he lived in a log house. He now lives with his daughter, Mrs. Fred Jacobs in Norton.

The First Library

When we came to Kansas mother brought along a lot of books. There was a dearth of reading matter in the community and in the drouth year of 1890 her books were in great demand. Unable to supply all applicants she wrote to a Congregational Aid Society in Boston, explaining the situation, and asking for help. In due time two large boxes of books arrived. These, with mother's own, were the foundation of a free library conducted by my mother at the farm home.

What to call the library was a puzzle. Sitting around the dining table in the kitchen one evening, looking over the books, I spied the name on the oven door of the cook stove. Pointing to it I exclaimed, "Mother, why not call it 'Happy Thought'?—the name on the oven door." "That's an idea," she said, and so the Happy Thought Library was dedicated to the people of the community. In 1894, another drouth year, mother gave the library to the city grade school, as it was becoming too much of a burden to handle on the farm.

When the women's Quotation Book Club was organized by Mrs. Will Howe in 1903, the members sponsored a free public library. Mrs. K. B. Clay and her daughter, Florence, traveled about the country with a horse and buggy, soliciting books and finan-

cial help. The city furnished a room and the club members cared for the books. It was burned out two or three times but the Q. B. Club kept it going until it was thoroughly established. Today the free city library is located in the Community Hall and is supported by a city tax levy. It is free to city residents; country patrons pay a small annual fee. A library board of twelve community women is in charge.

The Prairie Fire Demon

Prairie fires were the deadly scourge of the early settlers. The present generation has no conception of how terrifying these fires were to the people of those early days. Driven before gales of wind they traveled at frightful speed, jumping roads, narrow fire guards and even creeks, burning everything in their path.

The writer saw four prairie fires, helping fight two of them. One morning in 1888 a peculiar, pungent odor came in from the north on a light breeze, a yellowish, gray cloud rising rapidly. Looking to the north, Father sniffed the air, went to the sod stable and harnessed a team, then got a walking plow ready. Hitching to the plow he went out about two hundred yards north of our buildings and started plowing a fire break, four furrows about half a mile long. I followed along behind the plow. Then about a hundred yards farther north he plowed two more furrows. By this time the wind had risen steadily and the air was hot, and heavy with the pungent smoke. Taking the team to the stable he returned to the first plowed furrows and we started backfiring. This consisted of starting a fire and stringing it along the first set of furrows, letting it burn back against the wind till it met the second set of furrows, where another backfire was started and left to take its course. We returned to the stable, gathered up several grain sacks, shovels and spades, filled all the pails with water and prepared to beat out any stray sparks that might jump the fireguard. Fortunately, father had sensed the situation in time and our fireguard held. The fire had started near the state line and on the wings of the gale swept swiftly over hills and draws, burning a strip from two to four

miles wide and about ten miles long. Much wild game, livestock and feed was burned. The heat was terrific and for a time we feared our stables and feed would go. Every settler clear to the state line was fighting fire that day.

The Ghost Town of Rayville.

The old Rayville postoffice, near the state line, was established by petition circulated in 1884 by George Washington Rhamey, who asked that it be named Rhameyville but as that was too much like Reamsville, in Smith county, the postoffice department named it Rayville. Mr. Rhamey was postmaster several years, and also had a general store. When he sold the store to Mrs. Austin Savage, the postoffice was moved to the Charles Starks sod house a mile west and a mile south where Mrs. Starks was postmistress for several years. Jacob Reitzel was the Star Route carrier.

Rayville boasted the postoffice, a general store, a millinery store, a blacksmith shop and a drug store, the latter two being on the Nebraska side. The drug store was owned by one Charley Perry. Nebraska was wet, Kansas dry, and neighbors tell us the drug store did a large liquor business on the side.

Rayville was a good rural trading point; the old store building still stands, filled to the rafters with all sorts of stuff accumulated by Charles Savage, a bachelor, who owns the place and still lives in the old soddy, probably the oldest inhabited pioneer sod house now in Norton County.

All that remains of the once popular Rayville is the sod house, the store building, Charley's junk yard and a small building where Charley sells gasoline and oil to nearby farmers.

In those early days dances, "literaries", and Christmas tree programs furnished enjoyment to large crowds there. But those days are gone forever.

Almena's Newspapers

The Almena Star was Almena's first newspaper, started in the

fall of 1885 by E. J. Garner and George Shook, a short time after the Burlington railroad came. Garner is now in Wichita, owner and editor of Publicity. Shook went to Jennings and started the Jennings Echo.

In the spring of 1888 Dr. W. H. Taylor started the Plaindealer. The Star was sold to a man named Munday who soon sold it to the Plaindealer. In 1889 Garner returned and started the Almena Advance. When the Farmers Alliance came into existence in 1894 he changed the name to The Farmers Advance and moved the plant to Norton where it became the organ of the Populist party. W. G. Smith started The Almena Lantern in Populist days but it flickered out in about three or four years. The Plaindealer has survived three fires and still serves the community well. Since buying the paper in 1919, I have gathered and published a great deal of historical and biographical material, obtained direct from the life of pioneers. The available files are thus of inestimable value.

Brief Mention of Pioneers

J. H. and T. C. Thompson homesteaded north of Almena in 1878. Claud Thompson still lives on the former's homestead. Ed Gowdy and wife homesteaded in Belle Plain township in 1879, now live in Almena. A son, John, lives here. Albert Fisher and H. S. Van Horn started the first bank. One of Almena's streets is named VanHorn Street. Frank Mellor was the first cashier. George and Fred Jefferay started a second bank in 1886, built three fine houses and otherwise aided in building the little settlement. J. H. Welpton had the first harness shop, later bought by J. A. M. Young who ran it half a century. His son, Glenn, owns the Western Auto Associate Store in Norton. A daughter, Maud, still lives in Almena. Moses S. Runyan came in April, 1884, and homesteaded where the Rock Island railroad cuts through the big hill southeast of Almena. Four children, Mrs. C. E. Brown, Mrs. R. D. Irwin, Mrs. H. S. Whitaker, and a son A. I. Runyan, still live at Almena. John Templeton came in 1887. He was a carpenter and built many of the houses in Almena. A daughter, Lizzie, still here, clerked for many years in local stores. Abe

Neiswanger was manager of the Foster Lumber Company when the writers family came to Almena. "Stub" VanWinkle ran a butcher shop in the rear room of The Commercial Hotel in 1887. Numbered among the earlier settlers were John Gishwiller; Elias, George and Joe Foland; Gus Cook, Oliver Grose, Reuben Stevens, Al Aplington, Wallace Harmonson, John Wallace, Jerome Shepherd, John Wald, Wallace Tupper, Solomon Winklepleck, Isaac Whitaker, W. L. Howe, Nat VanWinkle, Doc Bronson, F. B. Rumsey, John Kelley, J. R. Dole, L. A. Lovejoy, R. D. Irwin, Mat Peterson, Major Warner, John Warner, J. H. Rickard, J. A. Wicker, Isaac Blackford, George and Willis Hall, George Smith, Scott and John Coulson, I. H. Reeves, John Bartles, Byron Churchill, and many others that space forbids mentioning, most of whom I knew personally and could write much about.

A man who came to Almena a little later was Dr. A. Bennie. He was the Mayor of Almena for years and was a great booster for the city.

Dr. S. W. Sullivan was an early teacher, and after completing his medical course, settled in Almena, where he practiced for years.

Norton county is no longer a frontier. Those of us, or even whose parents came here in the 70's or 80's, can look back over the years and see the vast changes that have taken place. From sod houses and dugouts to mansions; from wagon trails to railroads and paved highways and automobiles; from raw prairie to fertile fields; from great herds of buffalo to herds of purebred stock; from one room school houses to modern high schools; and, shame on us, from Bibles to licensed booze.

We look back in retrospect to those pioneer days and wonder at the changes time has wrought. It required patience, suffering, privation and grit to subdue the West, but it is no small degree of satisfaction to me to realize that I had a part in conquering the Great American Desert.

To have been privileged to witness and have a part in the transition, to have known so many fine, sturdy pioneers, and to have helped bring prosperity to the Plains, is worth all it cost in blood, sweat and tears.

CHARLES L. ROSE.

ALMENA CHURCHES

Free Methodist Church

Organized some time before 1884 when they secured title to the lot where the church was erected in 1890. The church has operated since that date. Rev. Sherman Archer, D. E. in charge, 1941--.

Congregational Church

The Congregational Society secured title to the lots where the church and parsonage stand December 31, 1886. The church which has been enlarged, was erected in 1887. Rev. O. T. Meador, Pastor, 1941--.

Methodist Church

The Methodist Society worshipped in the little church now occupied by the Church of God for some time. They secured a Charter in 1891. Purchased the lots and erected a frame church in 1897. Moved to the present location and erected the brick church in 1921. M. W. Markwell, Pastor, 1941--.

Church of God

The records show that the lot now owned by the Church of God was purchased by the "United Brethren in Christ" in April 1886. The church was later disorganized. Joseph M. Armstrong secured title to this property from School District No. 2, in 1908. He donated its use to the church for church services and after his death the title was transferred to the church.

¹ State Highway Commission, Norton, Kansas.

² Almena Plaindealer.

³ Deed Record, vol. 44, 123; vol. 48, 448; vol. 61, 107.

⁴ Plat Book, No. 1, 29.

⁵ Plat Book, No. 2, 13.

⁶ Norton Champion, Nov. 9, 1893.

⁷ The Kansas Magazine, June 10, 1910.

⁸ State Highway Commission, op. cit.

⁹ Plat Book, No. 1, 9-10.

¹⁰ The Norton County News, Historical Number, October 1916.

¹¹ Commissioners Record, vol. 2, 1888-1898, 220-222.

¹² Deed Record, vol. 54, 410.

¹³ *ibid.*, vol. 45, 592.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 10, 282.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, vol. 32, 309.

¹⁶ D. O. Wilson, Prairie View, Kansas.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, First Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.

The Prairie Dog Valley

West of Norton



CHAPTER V

NORTON county, located in what was spoken of as a great desert and considered too far west to be habitable, would not be expected to be densely timbered. What timber there was skirted the creeks and consisted of: cottonwood, soft maple, elm, black walnut, willow, boxelder and hackberry.

Some of the timber grew to considerable size and showed that it had been here for many years. The largest cottonwood in the Prairie Dog Valley stood on the bank of the Prairie Dog three miles northeast of Almena. Due to the ravages of wind, lightning and insects it was necessary to cut it down in January 1933.

The tree stood seventy five feet high, nine feet in diameter and was approximately thirty feet in circumference. It required eight hours of steady chopping and sawing by several strong men to bring it down. This was an unusual tree and perhaps the oldest along the Prairie Dog.¹

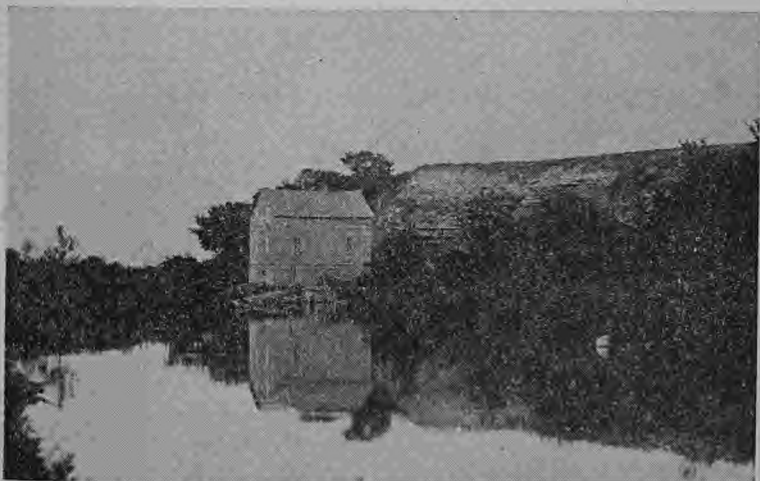
A settler could plant sixteen acres of his claim to trees and after three years could take title to a quarter section providing the trees had lived two years. Plantings of cottonwood, white ash, boxelder and black walnut, were made on the uplands and many of them did not withstand the ravages of wind, drouth and insects. The majority soon died and a very few widely scattered trees mark the site of a few of the old tree claims.

THE CLOSE MILL

Returning to Norton and continuing westward we enter a historic section of the county. There is a road south of the creek

following up the valley to the intersection with US 383 east of Oronoque. In recent years this road has been changed to follow section lines the most of the distance.

In traveling west from the milldam, Major Conway traveled a section of this road when he described the landscape and ladies boating in 1885. The milldam washed away several years ago, yet it is possible to locate the site of the dam and mill which was situated near the southwest city limits of Norton.



The Close Mill, 1880. (This mill served the community for many years, and stood near the site of the present City Dam.)

The first attempt to locate a mill here was made by Elijah T. Collins who came from Cloud county in 1872. The dam was completed in 1872 but washed out in 1873, in fact it washed out several times before the mill was built. Mr. Collins erected a sawmill in 1873 and burrs for grinding corn in 1874. A part of the dam washed out and the burrs fell into the creek in 1875.

Dave Close bought a half interest in the mill in 1878 and the other half from Collins in 1880. He soon changed it into a roller mill and made high grade flour for several years. The mill burned down about the year 1904.²

Much of the community life centered around the mills that were located along the streams. It was here they brought logs to be sawed into lumber to build the home and corn to grind for bread. In some instances the town followed the mill. The mills were active during the days of settlement.

THE BAKER VANMETER MILL

Up the creek approximately four miles the belt of timber was wide enough to form a beautiful grove which was used for picnicking and general outings during the years of settlement. The Baker VanMeter Mill was located on the Prairie Dog at this point.

John Wallace came to Norton county in 1876 and purchased the southwest quarter of section eight, township three south, range twenty-three west. He brought a sawmill with him and set it up on the Prairie Dog. He put up a gristmill in 1877 which the creek undermined and it fell into the creek in 1879. Mr. Wallace pulled it out and set it up on the Solomon four miles below Lenora. He built what was later known as the Baker VanMeter or Upper Mill in 1883. This mill changed hands several times during a few years, Mr. Wallace owning it at least twice.

B. A. VanMeter bought the quarter of land with the mill in 1887, the mill was leased at the time, the lease expiring in 1888. He sold to Charles M. Sawyer of Norton in 1895.³

The following local item appeared in the Norton Champion, May 16, 1895: "Baker A. VanMeter will this week start with his family to the northwestern possession to look up a future home. Baker came here in the fall of 1871 on a hunt and may be said to be a resident since. He owned the VanMeter Mill which seems to be out of water now owing to the number of dams employed in irrigation."⁴



THE LEOTA BLUFF

The early hunters kept a flag flying from the summit of this bluff to guide them on their hunts, long before the days of settlement. The bluff is located south of the Prairie Dog about six miles southwest of Norton.

THE STONE HOUSE

Leota, Kansas

This house was owned and occupied by M. A. Morrison, and the plat shows that it was used as a hotel by him in 1879. It is still standing, just south of the Rock Island right-of-way, about six miles southwest of Norton.



THE LEOTA CEMETERY

This cemetery is located on the section line approximately one-fourth mile south of the Bluff. Some of the pioneers who helped establish the town and their children are buried here.

THE TOWN OF WESTON (LATER LEOTA)

This new town sprang up three and one-half miles west and two and one-half miles south of the junction of State and West Washington Streets in the city of Norton. Isaac Newton Cope came to Norton county in 1872 and made final proof on the northeast quarter of Section 18, township 3 south, range 23 west, before the US Land Office on December 12, 1872. This was the first proof made from Norton county. He started the town of Weston on the southwest forty of this quarter in 1873. The town was situated at the foot of a high bluff overlooking the valley.

Hunters and trappers operating up and down the valley long before the county was settled kept a flag flying from the summit of the bluff to guide them in determining their location.

It would be difficult to find a more beautiful location for a town than in the valley here south of the Prairie Dog. Continuing south on the summit of the bluff the section line is reached at approximately one-fourth mile. South of this line is the abandoned cemetery. Among the graves that are marked will be noted the graves of children belonging to pioneer families who took an active part in the county seat fight.

Among the prime movers in establishing the town of Weston were: I. N. Cope, M. A. Morrison, Dr. Green, Nora Weaver and others. When the government established the postoffice October 22, 1874, the department refused to call the office Weston because there was an office in Kansas by that name at the time. From this time the town was called Leota. The postoffice was discontinued October 17, 1881.^o

Another point of interest is the old trail over which the freight was hauled from Wakeeney and points south. To view this trail it is necessary to climb to the summit of the bluff and follow its summit south where the tracks are plainly visible, showing where the old trail came down from the high land and along the west side of the bluff, reaching the townsite near the stone house.

A visit to this abandoned townsite, once inhabited by early

pioneers and visualizing the conditions under which they lived, the things they hoped for and the Utopia they planned to build here on these prairies cannot fail to interest one in pioneer life as it was lived here in the seventies.

THE DEAD VILLAGE

By Edwin Arlington Robinson

Here there is death, But even here, they say,
 Here where the dull sun shines this afternoon
 As desolate as ever the dead moon
 Did glimmer on dead Sardis, men were gay;
 And there were little children here to play,
 With small soft hands that once did keep in tune
 The strings that stretch from heaven, till too soon
 The change came, and the music passed away.

Now there is nothing but the ghosts of things,—
 No life, no love, no children, and no men;
 And over the forgotten place there clings
 The strange and unrememberable light
 That is in dreams. The music failed, and then
 God frowned, and shut the village from his sight.

THE COUNTY SEAT FIGHT

The settlement of Kansas was a continuous fight from the beginning. Bleeding Kansas was heard of, far and wide. Men came here to fight for a principle as well as to get homes. In addition to the struggle over the question of slavery there were other difficulties as the pioneers moved westward: Numerous counties had long and bitter county seat fights, a few of which were marked by violence.

The fight in Norton county over the county seat did not reach the stage of violence due to the high character of the men who led the two factions, yet it is said to have been a very spirited fight. More than sixty years have passed since that momentous struggle was at its height, making it difficult to determine all the factors which influenced nearly all of the people in the county to take sides, as they did, for either Norton or Leota.

The contest for the county seat began in 1872 and was finally dropped in 1878. Among the towns that took an active part,

Norton and Leota were the principal contestants. Billingsville and Reedtown played minor parts but they soon dropped out of the fight.

Early in 1874 Leota had made considerable growth and had begun to aspire to the county seat honors. Norton had been voted the permanent county seat by receiving thirty eight votes at an election held September 24, 1872.

In the contest with Leota strong men headed each side and made brilliant fights for their respective towns. The fight was not always centered around the struggle for the county seat, but was carried into school and other matters.

In Chapter II of this volume, we gave from the records the different elections to relocate the county seat, giving the date of the election and the result in each. The fight was carried on with neither side losing an opportunity to gain an advantage. The years from 1875 to 1878 were marked with political maneuverings, each side claiming to represent the Republican Party, and having their ticket appear as the main ticket in the field."

The financial argument was used by friends of Norton. They claimed that Norton was financially able to make good all its promises to build and maintain a good town. Leota countered with the claim that Norton was bankrupt and the school district heavily bonded. The bond scandal at Norton, where forged bonds were discovered early in the fight, reacted against Norton.

During the year 1878 the people finally became tired of the long struggle and asked the board of County Commissioners to accept the public square and the building called the court house at Norton. They did that and the fight ended at that time. The records were never cleared and some of the business was never completed and remains on the books as unfinished business to this day.

These were days when people lived in dugouts in primitive style. They furnished their own amusements and congregated in the principal towns for celebrations on special days. Many such celebrations are recorded in the early newspapers.

The friends of Leota established a newspaper on two occasions which worked in the interest of the town during the county seat fight.

The town of Leota was platted June 5, 1879 and the plat filed the same day by I. N. Cope. The county seat had been permanently located at Norton in 1878 and the little town soon went down, a few of the buildings were moved to Oronoque when that town sprang up.

The Leota townsite was vacated by the Board of County Commissioners at a meeting of the board held July 3, 1882. The following motion was adopted: "On motion the prayer of the petition to vacate the townsite of Leota was granted. I. N. Cope agreeing to pay the sum of thirty dollars to Norton county for the county's interest in said townsite."

REAGER

Reager, (pop. less than 25; alt. between 2600 and 2700 ft.) is situated on the Republican City-Oberlin Branch of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad six miles from Oronoque and the same distance from Norcatour. Highway US 36 has been routed through the little station.

In August 1907 A. L. Hicks sold the Methodist Episcopal Church the one-half acre tract where the Church, known as Reager's Chapel, stood for several years. The Church was organized with the following as a board of Trustees: Charles Oare, A. L. Hicks, D. H. Steele, J. B. Shepherd and Frank Young.

In May 1915 Henry Westerman purchased the land north of the Burlington Railroad, a part of the northeast quarter of section two, township three south, range twenty-five west. He built the grain elevator and a store on this tract.

In June 1918 Henry Westerman sold the same tract with the improvements to the Reager Farmers Business Co-operative Association. The Association still owns the elevator and store which they rent to other parties to operate. The store has changed hands at different times.

Due to drouth, dust storms, nearness to other towns and good roads, Rezger has gone down like other small towns. The Church was sold in May, 1924 to H. A. Linton and the building has been changed into a dwelling house and now stands at 609 West Washington Street in Norton, Kansas.

The little station was never platted, but has been a shipping point for this part of the county, which is devoted to agriculture and stock raising.

ORONOQUE

The Town of Oronoque, (pop. less than 100; alt. approx. 2360 feet) is situated on the Oberlin Branch of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad eight miles west of Norton.

Oronoque was promoted by the Lincoln Land Company and platted by them July 25, 1885. The plat was filed for record August 10, 1885.⁹

THE HISTORY OF ORONOQUE

By Ernest M. Wheeler, Teacher,
School District No. 3, 1941-1942.

The story of the rise and ebb of Oronoque, as an important trading point in the county, is one which could be applied to any number of small towns, gathered from all parts of the United States, in which, fire, the automobile, the depression and the relocation of arterial highways, have vied with each other to reduce them to nothing. I present this brief obituary of a little village which at one time bid fair to become a thriving commercial center.

After the Burlington railroad was built through Norton and Leota had lost the county seat fight, the townspeople transferred their interests to Oronoque. There was an attempt to establish a postoffice, known as the Slater Postoffice, one and one-half miles east of Oronoque. This was discontinued when the town of Oronoque was established.

The townsite was laid out on the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 16, township 3 south, range 24 west. This was owned by the Lincoln Land Company and surveyed by Anselmo Smith, June 22, 1885. R. D. Morrison, whose father operated the Leota Hotel, was appointed townsite agent. The town started with a boom, lots selling for one hundred fifty dollars each.

Tom Campbell moved his stock of goods from Dallas, where he had been in business, and became Oronoque's first merchant. The Burlington railroad was built through Oronoque in 1885. From the first store to the fire in 1909, the town made steady progress.

Ben and Ezra Wyatt and C. Chesbro, who was the first postmaster, were early vendors of merchandise.

Isaac Keener and his son, Jake, both of whom came to the community in 1878, bought Chesbro's interests and took over the postoffice in 1885. They continued here until about 1905.

Dr. Corns, a brother of the late Tom Corns, practiced in Oronoque for several years before moving to Norcatour.

William Cole built some of Oronoque's first dwelling houses and ran a drug store for a period of years.

The Redd Postoffice was located on the farm of B. P. Rule's father (now the Bent Doolittle farm) before there was a town of Oronoque.

A sorghum mill operated by Will Rogers, on what is now a part of the Addison Pack farm was the scene of many an old-fashioned "taffy pull" in the "good old days".

I. N. Cope came to Norton county in 1872. He started the town of Weston, later called Leota, and when Norton won the county seat fight moved his business interests to Oronoque. Records show that he was still in business here in 1897. I. P. Burke was in business also at that time.

John Shay bought Cope's interest which he later disposed of to Howard Noyes, who left here shortly after the fire in 1909.

Hoyt Linton's father had a store here prior to 1909, and Hoyt was engaged in business here at different times for several years.

Blanche Eighmy was in charge of the postoffice at the time it was merged with the Dellvale Postoffice.

The hardware business started with Nye and Bonner and was continued by John Eagleburger and J. S. Eighmy. Carl LaRue took over the hardware business in 1907 and continued until 1916 when he transferred his interests to Norton.

P. A. Cope operated a grocery and meat market prior to 1909. He returned about 1916 and continued in business until 1935.

J. S. Eighmy became rural carrier for Oronoque and served until he was retired because of age. Charles Coomes is the present carrier for the combined Oronoque-Dellvale route. Mrs. Eighmy operated the Consolidated Telephone Exchange until it was discontinued. The Eighmy girls, Blanche and Lela, took a prominent part in community activities.

Mr. Chadwick operated the first blacksmith shop in Oronoque. Ame Garret, Charlie Coomes and Elmer Eighmy were other early smiths.

G. A. Fought, who came to the county in 1885, established a shop here in partnership with his son Forrest in 1903. Forrest later entered the garage business. At present he is engaged in large scale farming activities in this community. Forrest has in his possession the first printing press used in Norton county.

A newspaper was published in 1885 for about five months but was discontinued when the editor died. His grave was the first in the Oronoque cemetery.

C. E. Huff edited the "Oronoque Orient" until the fire in 1909 when it was discontinued.

J. G. "Jake" Porter came to the county in 1874 and homesteaded east of town. He drove for the surveyors and helped to choose the route of the Burlington railroad, between Oronoque and Oberlin. He and I. N. Cope established the first lumber yard.

Early records show one of their transactions in 1887. The large copper kettle, in which Mrs. Porter cooked "stew" for the railroad crew, in 1885, is still in the possession of J. R. Porter of Dellvale.

Mr. Brown was the first Burlington station agent here and Hunnicut was the first section boss.

Noyes and Kump built a lumber yard here which was last operated by George Tubbs, with Loyd Madden as manager. Loyd was here from 1915 to 1934, when the yard was discontinued.

R. W. Ellis homesteaded here in 1875, spent some time at Leota and served as county treasurer in 1877. He built the east half of the Oronoque Hotel. Jim Gaff, John Humphrey and James Atkins were early-day proprietors of the hotel.

Albert Blood came here in 1898 and has served the community as justice of the peace for forty years of his residence here.

Mrs. Alma Duncan, with her husband Albert and daughter Effie moved here in 1907, and with the exception of two or three years has been the operator for the Farmers' Telephone Exchange.

A disastrous fire in 1909 destroyed almost a solid block of business buildings and probably marked the end of a concerted effort to promote the growth of Oronoque, with one exception which I shall mention.

A two story frame building, in which Jess Cope kept a store until 1914, a brick store building built by W. E. Emahizer, in which he operated a general store, and a small store built and operated by Harold Atkins, and later occupied by Blanche Eighmy and Floyd Eagleburger, in turn, were all new buildings erected in Oronoque after 1909. These, together with most of the other business buildings and many of the dwellings, have either burned or have been torn down and moved away.

The Oronoque Bank was established in 1916 as a branch of the National Bank of Norton. Later it was reorganized under local ownership, with John Foley, president, and John Ankenman, vice president. Charles Strickland, Carl Smiley, Betts, T. W. Wil-

trout and Frank Root were cashiers. The Bank was absorbed by the State Bank of Norton and discontinued in 1929.

This account would not be complete without mentioning the phenomenal expansion of the Farmers' Cooperative which started in 1914. Clarence E. Huff was manager; Henry Nedrow, president; L. O. Mustoe, vice president; N. E. McMullen, secretary; and John Foley, treasurer. C. G. Minshall, J. M. Wheeler, Harry Hager and M. A. Davis completed the board of directors. In 1916 the total business of the store and elevator reached three-fourths of a million dollars. The business closed out in 1928.

Mr. Huff, who has since served as president of the Kansas Farmers' Union, president of the National Farmers' Union and manager of the Farmers' National, a grain cooperative, is now in Denver.

A. B. Shoemaker operates the only commercial enterprise still in Oronoque, a filling station and grocery. Harry Shoemaker, mail carrier between Dellvale and Lenora, also lives here. The present population of Oronoque is about fifty, as compared with better than 400 before the fire of 1909.

James Campbell came through the Prairie Dog Valley about 1865 on one of his many buffalo hunts. He brought his family here in 1872 and homesteaded on what is now the Coomes place, west of Dellvale. He was captain of the state militia in 1876. Associated with him on many of his hunting trips were J. J. Van-Meter, John Humphrey, John Campbell and Sol Reese.

The Denver City Park has a large mounted buffalo which Mrs. Jim Campbell shot when it stopped to drink from the Prairie Dog, near her home.

Adam Campbell came here with his son, John, and Ennis Pack, on a buffalo hunt in 1873 and brought his family from Missouri in January, 1874. He homesteaded the claim now owned by Alvin Schoen and John's claim adjoined that of his father. The other members of the family were: Mary, Sarah, Tom, George and Samuel.

Adam and John got the last buffaloes to be shot in Norton County. These were brought down on the Solomon River about three miles west of Edmond, after the two men had followed them on foot from the Prairie Dog.

Four buffaloes were bagged and Joe McKee, father of the late James McKee of near Densmore, took one carcass and hauled the extra hide and the other three carcasses home for the Campbells.

The following are the names of pioneers who settled in the Oronoque-Dellvale community: I. N. Cope and James Campbell settled in 1872, Adam Campbell and J. G. Porter in 1874, R. W. Ellis, 1875, J. W. Atkins, 1876; John Eagleburger, Isaac Keener, Nathan Huff, Joe Gehrett, Asa Eddy, Ashel Davis, Marion McMullen, A. Stringham and D. A. Brunson, 1878. A. C. Wheeler, Rufus Youngs, John Boles, Ike Camp, Tom Corns, the Rule family and the Hatchers came in 1879. B. W. Mulkey, Oscar Crank, E. D. Rountree and Doan Hobbs came in 1880. G. A. Fought, 1885; James McCabe, 1888; Lafe Holeman, 1894, and Andy Gaylord in 1900.

SCHOOL HISTORY

The first school in the Oronoque-Dellvale community was held in the Hopewell sod church, one-fourth mile south of Dellvale, and taught by Miss Percy Ellis. Eva Huff and Ashel Davis also taught here. This was a "subscription school".

When the Dallas district was organized, a sod school house and later a frame building was constructed a mile west of Dellvale. This was a community meeting place for several years. Church services and the good old literary societies and singing schools held sway there.

District No. 40 held its first sessions in the Porter "dugout" east of Oronoque. The first teacher in the frame school house was Eva Huff in 1882. Later teachers were: Homer Hale, 1885; A. S. Kingsbury, 1887; R. F. Rogers, Belle Wilson and Mancil Johnson taught here in the 1890's. Mrs. Sylvia Youngs is the present teacher and has a nine-year continuous record.

At District No. 14, Mrs. Mabel (Cole) Hager was the last teacher in the "soddy" and the first to teach in the frame building.

Oronoque District, No. 99 was organized in 1885 and a school house erected. Belle Wilson (Mrs. James McMullen) who lives in Dellvale, was the first teacher. A two room school house was built in 1917. Mrs. Clara Wheeler is teaching her eighth term here. Miss Mabel Coomes, a resident of this community, is one of the outstanding rural teachers of the county. She is teaching in District No. 66 at the present time.

School at Calvary Hill began in the sod church at the four corners, one mile east and four south of Oronoque. The frame building is one-half mile east of the old stand. Charles Bull was the first teacher in the frame building in 1887 and 1888. He also taught Dallas and District 40. He is now eighty-eight years of age and lives in Freewater, Oregon. I believe he is the oldest living Norton County teacher.

CHURCHES

Church services were held at the R. W. Ellis home until the Hopewell church was built. The Adventist held services at the Porter "dugout" and at District 14. In 1879 a union Sunday School was organized welcoming every denomination. Later, church services were held at Dallas until the Oronoque Christian Church was organized in 1905. A church building was erected in 1907. Clarence Huff was the pastor. Due to fire, the building was replaced by the present structure in 1924. W. C. Elliot is pastor in 1942.

The Oronoque Baptist Church was erected in 1906. It was discontinued some years ago and the building is now a part of the Norton Baptist Church.

B. W. Mulkey was one of our pioneer ministers.

SOUTH ORONOQUE (DELLVALE)

Dellvale was platted as South Oronoque by John K. Gray and Phoebe E. Gray, his wife, on September 17, 1888 and filed for record on September 18.¹⁰

The Rock Island Railroad went through here in 1888, and as trading centers were being established about ten miles apart, John M. Gray gave ten acres on the west side of the road, and Jim Huff the same amount on the east side, since this spot was approximately 10 miles west of Norton.

Frank Gilder moved a building here from Lenora and put in a stock of general merchandise. Emereth Wray, who came here in 1879, was the next in line. He was followed by Andy Maxwell, who served the community until his retirement in 1919. He lives with a son in Cheyenne, Wyoming at the present time.

M. A. Davis, whose father came here in 1878, took over from Mr. Maxwell and continued until he moved his interests to Rexford.

In 1926, James McMullen established a business, which he continued until his death in 1937.

M. A. Davis is again in business here in the store and elevator, and his son, Dale, is the present postmaster.

Sam Paxton operated the first and only hotel in Dellvale, which was regularly patronized by Rock Island train crews for more than twenty years.

CLAYTON

Clayton (pop. 124, 1941) is a small town located on the Norton-Decatur County Line. The postoffice was established March 31, 1879 with John Cameron as postmaster.¹¹

The town was platted by the Kansas Town and Land Company, M. A. Low, president, on March 7, 1888.¹²

INCORPORATION

The city of Clayton was incorporated as a city of the Third Class by the Judge of the District Court, Norton, Kansas, on February 4, 1907, metes and bounds thereof as follows, to-wit:



Bird's Eye View of Clayton, 1942. (Taken from the hill south of town.)

"Commencing at a point 40 rods north of the northeast corner of section 6, township 4 south, range 25 west of sixth P.M., Norton County, Kansas, running thence west about 200 rods across the county line between Norton and Decatur counties in said State to a point 40 rods west of county line, said point being 40 rods north and 40 rods west of the southeast corner of section 36, township 3 south, range 26 west of 6 P. M. Decatur county, Kansas, running south parallel to aforesaid county line to a point 40 rods west and 40 rods south of the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of Section 1, township 4 south, range 26 west of sixth P. M. Decatur county, Kansas, running thence east to a point on the section line south of the place of beginning, and 40 rods south of the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 6, township 4 south, range 25 west of sixth P. M. Norton County, Kansas, running thence north along the section line to the place of beginning; The same being and containing a strip 40 rods wide off the south of the southeast quarter section 31, township 3 south, all of the northeast quarter of section 6, township 4 south, range 25 west of sixth P. M. Norton county, Kansas, and a tract 40 rods square in the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 1, a strip 40 rods wide off the east side of the northeast quarter of section 1, township 4, and a tract 40 rods square in the southeast corner of section 36, township 3 south, range 26 west of the sixth P. M., Decatur county, Kansas."¹³

GOOD HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Good Hope Community Church is situated on the northwest corner of the Northwest quarter of Section 13, township four south, range 25 west.

Josie Marsh deeded a one acre tract to the Trustees of the said Church on June 29, 1929. The deed was filed for record on October 19, 1929. The Trustees purchased the Methodist Church in Clayton and moved it to the new location.¹⁴

OLD AND NEW CLAYTON

By Byron F. Salisbury

Quite early in the summer of 1877, John Cameron and two sons J. J. and Roderick, started west from Beloit, Kansas with a team of horses and covered wagon in search of government land on which to establish homesteads. They camped under a friendly and wide-spreading cottonwood tree located on Prairie Dog Creek

near the County Line of Norton and Decatur counties. Records show that a few white men had already arrived in the vicinity, such as Linden E. Burroughs, who came in the early seventies. His son, Vince Burroughs, resides in Clayton at this time. William Miller and Andy Morrison settled along the creek in 1876.

Closely following them in the late summer of 1877, Marion Salisbury, John Seymour Salisbury and family, John and Elizabeth Thorn and the Frank Higgason family established sod houses. Frank, Edward and Calvin were sons of Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Salisbury. Edward, my father was a pioneer farmer, a good citizen and a very devout man. He married Lydia Brooks in 1885 and died in 1917.

The Jacob R. Brooks family left the rough undesirable farming country of Fayette County, Pennsylvania in 1875. As they moved westward seeking a promising location, they settled one year in Carroll County, Northern Illinois, and two years in Marion County, Southern Illinois. From this location, they decided to migrate to Kansas and on this journey were accompanied by the Dennis Gibbs and Jap and Clint Worrall families. They arrived in the summer of 1878 and settled within a close proximity of the Cameron Store, which was located one mile north of the present site of Clayton, on the Norton and Decatur County Line. Mr. Cameron called the new settlement Clayton, largely because the settlers encountered clay as they followed the winding and hilly roads along the creek bottoms. The name Cameron was desired by some but that name was already used in the State of Kansas.

By this time other sod houses and dugouts commenced to dot this Virgin Wilderness. The names of pioneer families well known at this particular time were: Dr. John W. Thomas, Gettys, Hopkins, James Kirk, Robert Vessey, Sr., D. C. Moser, Lorrimer, Joe Hughes, Sr., Eli Wiltfong, George Martin, Bell, Everett Doom, John Howland, Joe and Amon Butler, Copeland and Phillips families. With this group we can associate the names of E. L. Pease, Happy Jack Latham, Mr. Chapman and perhaps a few others. They became frequent callers at the Cameron Store, Post Office and the Seymour Salisbury Hotel in Old Clayton. They

were a happy, courageous band of pioneers and truly represented the Old Puritan New England Stock.

The need of providing a religious environment for the growing families was keenly felt by those pioneers. The earliest record that we have of a religious gathering was in the Pleasant Hill Dugout School House, now known as School District No. 71. This was in the spring of 1879. Jay C. Forncrook, a pioneer minister of God and always zealous in the work of the Kingdom, found a golden opportunity to stop on his circuit over the new country and bring these children of the Wilderness the "Bread of Life." Many found their way over the prairie to this pioneer Sunday School. This rugged group were early missionaries of the "More Abundant Life."

Quite a few members of early pioneer families still live in the Clayton vicinity: The following are members of the Jacob R. Brooks family: Lydia Salisbury, George, Lloyd, Frank, William and Carl Brooks. Ellen Brooks, William and Albert Kirk, Bertie Mizell and Pearl Rowh are members of the James Kirk family. Mattie Vessey and R. B. Leichliter are members of the J. W. C. Leichliter family. Lena Milner, Charles, Edward and Richard Gibbs are members of the Dennis Gibbs family. Homer Butler is the son of Amon Butler, a former sheriff of Norton County. O. J. Wiltfong is a son of Eli Wiltfong and Joe Hughes, Jr., is a son of Joe Hughes, Sr. These families have figured prominently in the agricultural and business development of the Clayton Community.

Buffalo herds roamed the prairies at this time but the last big hunt was made in the autumn of 1878. About this time a band of 250 Indians broke away from their reservations in Oklahoma and started north to their old stamping ground near Rapid City, South Dakota.

Reports of many depredations and stealing of cattle reached the settlers. In less than two hours, the families along the creek had their children, bed clothing and cooking utensils loaded on their vehicles of every description, drawn by ponies and horses. They started east, some not stopping until they reached the Re-

publican River, a distance of seventy miles. This was the last Indian Raid.

Daniel T. Starrett and F. H. Romans came to Clayton vicinity in the fall of 1878. Mrs. Ed VanSant is a daughter of Mr. Starrett.

The first sod house used for church services in Old Clayton was erected in 1879. Rev. John Wilson, a Presbyterian minister, located at Oberlin, was the first pastor who preached in the sod church.



The Clayton Rural High School. Paul Harvin, Principal, 1939--

The first school was held in this same sod church. The teacher was Mrs. Libbie Blazer. She received ten dollars per month for a three-month term. The pupils still living at Clayton are: Will Kirk, George Brooks and Lydia Salisbury.

Dr. Thomas, Clayton's first Doctor, arrived in 1878. He married Bertie Butler, daughter of Amon Butler.

Many new-comers settled on the South Divide in the year 1879. Their extensive farming activities contributed much to the growth of the Clayton Community. They are as follows: J. B. Garton, father of Fred Garton, A. E. Good, H. C. Bernard, Ab and Joe Waters, Wall Weaver and James Patterson, father of George Patterson, now residing at Norton.

J. B. "Cap" VanSant settled on the south divide in the spring of 1880. "Cap" VanSant had been a Captain in the Civil War. Ed VanSant, his son, carried on extensive farming activities until recent years. Mr. and Mrs. VanSant moved to Norton where Ed is engaged in the insurance business.

Fred, Frank and A. A. Castle arrived from Galesburg, Illinois in 1883. Fred is still remembered as a circus man of unusual distinction. Mr. A. A. Castle engaged in farm activities. He became Bandmaster and served as Postmaster for a number of years. He died in December, 1935. Forrest, the older of two sons, is a popular musician and at present is engaged in dentistry at Norton. Asa Castle, active in politics, resides in Clayton with his mother.

The years 1881-'82-'83 and '84 were very prosperous years. Good crops were raised and several frame residences were built. During these years a number of eastern farmers migrated westward and settled in this community. Many land changes were made at this time. J. W. C. Leichliter and family arrived and purchased the J. J. and Roderick Cameron homestead. Mr. Leichliter later operated a general store in New Clayton. A. O. "Bert" Norris, arrived in the year 1885. Leland, a son and Mabel Griffith, a daughter, still reside at Clayton. New Clayton grew to be a frontier village. E. L. Pease built a store room used as a variety store and later as the Post Office. A well 130 feet deep was dug in the center of the main street intersection.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Pease came in 1885. They farmed extensively and "Uncle Charley" who died in 1925 is still remembered for his fine ability as a singer. Two daughters are living, namely: Mrs. Fred Garton of Norton and Mrs. Georgia Shreves of Colorado Springs. Mrs. Pease died in 1909.

Two brothers, William K. and Jim Goodman arrived from Illinois in 1885. Their farming interests were many and very successful. Jim's death occurred in 1939 and "Uncle Will" still manages and operates his own farm.

Mr. and Mrs. William W. Hoover came from Pennsylvania and settled north of Clayton in 1885. They were successful farmers in the vicinity of Clayton until 1913 when they moved to Norton. Mr. Hoover died in 1924 and Mrs. Hoover in 1942. Mrs. Nellie Vandiver of Norton is a daughter. Three sons, Charles, Jake and Frank live in other states.

John Warrick arrived in the community in 1886. His farming activities were very successful. Mr. and Mrs. Warrick reside in Norton. Two sons, William and Cleve Warrick are continuing the farming operations.

During the summer of 1888, the Rock Island Railroad completed their road west to Colby. It followed along the south side of the Prairie Dog Creek. In the spring of 1889 passenger and freight trains were making regular runs. In 1888 it was considered advantageous to move Old Clayton south to the Railroad in the Prairie Dog Valley. The New town of Clayton was plotted out on land purchased from John Pathamor in Norton County, adjoining Decatur County. The first residence was built by John Diemer, Sr., a section foreman. The second house was built by Frank and Robert Vessey and used for a time as a boarding house and hotel. Seymour Salisbury built a large square hotel which was a popular hostelry for several years.

The first store building was erected by Frank Castle and Dr. John W. Thomas. One side was used for hardware and the other side for drugs.

Hebrew and Hebrew operated the first general store and Mr. McKee the first bank. L. B. Hixson known as "Daddy Hixson" opened a blacksmith shop. Mr. Hixson came in 1888. E. L. Pease moved the Post Office from Old Clayton. A United Brethren Church and also the first school building in New Clayton was erected in 1889.

Many others contributed to the growth of New Clayton through the intervening years. Owing to limited space I shall mention only a few of the builders whom it was my privilege to have known personally.

William Gallatin settled near Clayton in the year 1886. His farming activities were extensive until a few years ago, when he moved to Norton where he and his wife reside at the present time.

W. E. Griffith settled west of Clayton about 1890. He farmed extensively until 1922 when he moved to Clayton where he and his wife now reside. His son, Charles, has carried on farming activities.

W. J. Gray located here in 1884. For several years he farmed and later engaged in Real Estate Business in Norton. He retired from these responsibilities several years ago and resides in Clayton at this time.

Hiram Nickells, a farmer, settled near Clayton in 1892. He united in marriage with Maude Hollar, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Hollar, early day settlers. Mrs. Nickells and her mother reside in Clayton.

Elmer E. Gallentine and wife came to the vicinity of Clayton from Pennsylvania in 1893. He was a widely known and very successful farmer and stock raiser. He died in 1923. Mrs. Gallentine and a daughter, Ella, reside on the home place. Other children on near-by farms are: Mrs. Ida Goodman, John, King and Ivan Gallentine. Jim Gallentine, another son, is manager of an implement company in Norton.

Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Guy, parents of John Guy, Mrs. R. B. Leichliter and Mrs. S. T. Hagan, came from Nebraska in 1895.

S. T. "Sam" Hagan and wife came from Nebraska in the year 1898. He engaged in farming for several years. At present Mr. and Mrs. Hagan live in Clayton. Mr. Hagan is always busy being actively engaged in the carpenter's trade.

The first depot agent was Charles Stevenson in 1888. He was succeeded by Enos Moore. Roscoe Strain succeeded Moore. W. S.

Connor followed Mr. Strain in 1898 and remained in this position for 32 years. J. A. Draelants is the present agent.

Joe Gallentine came from Pennsylvania and settled on a farm near Clayton in 1897. Mr. and Mrs. Gallentine moved to Clayton in 1929 where they reside at the present time.

Rolle and Elias Ward arrived in the year 1898 and engaged in farming. Ross Ward is the only one of Mr. and Mrs. Elias Ward's children living in the Clayton Community at the present time.

J. E. Rule located here as a grain buyer and lumber dealer in 1898. He helped to incorporate the city and contributed much to its growth. He became a great friend of Jacob R. Brooks who was an extensive and very successful farmer living two miles north of Clayton. They formed a partnership and erected the Brooks and Rule elevator.

G. W. Bressler came to Clayton in 1898. He engaged in the hardware business for a few years and later became the postmaster. Later, he engaged in Real Estate.

William Stong came in March, 1899. He owned much of New Clayton north of the railroad. These tracts were sold and later known as the Stong Addition. Mae Stong who married Ross Eakin, was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Stong.

M. E. Nelson and son, Charles, came about 1900 and operated a mercantile business until 1903. Mr. Nelson retired from active business and Charles became manager of the Chicago Lumber Company. He later moved to Portland, Oregon where he died in 1940.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Eakin came to Clayton in July, 1903. Walter went into mercantile business with his father, Allison Eakin, who retired soon after and moved to California. Walter remained in the same business until 1926 when he retired from active duties in the store. At present he manages several farms and is engaged in the insurance business.

Ross Eakin came in 1904 and in conjunction with his brother

Walter engaged in helping to manage the store. He devoted his time to extensive farm operations for a number of years. He died in February, 1935.

J. H. Howell and wife came in 1903. He served as a Rural Mail Carrier for 30 years. Mr. and Mrs. Howell celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on Christmas Day, 1941.

J. R. F. Standard arrived about 1903. He operated a drug store for several years. His son, S. C. Standard, a Doctor in Clayton for several years, is at present located in Seattle, Washington.

N. G. Kelley came to Clayton in the year 1904 and operated a hardware and undertaking business. He was elected the first mayor of Clayton.

G. W. Folsom came in 1904. After a short time in the mercantile business he became cashier of the Clayton State Bank.

Mr. and Mrs. B. M. Rowh arrived in 1904. They successfully operated a farm near Clayton for a number of years. After a few years they moved to Clayton where Mr. Rowh operated a harness and shoe repairing shop. Mr. Rowh died in 1939.

Rev. A. G. Blackwell, father of John Blackwell and Mrs. Lucy Hagan, came to Clayton in the year 1905. Mr. Blackwell was a pioneer minister of the Methodist Church. It was largely through his efforts that a Methodist Church was organized and a new building constructed in the year 1911. The organization flourished for a number of years. A number of ministers filled the pastorate as Mr. Blackwell, a retired minister, usually preferred not to act in the capacity of a regular pastor. He was a very forceful and inspirational speaker and was secured on numerous occasions. Mr. Blackwell died in June, 1923.

Leadership in the Clayton Community soon realized that two separate church organizations were not conducive to the best interests of a small community. Thus the Methodist Church discontinued in the year 1928.

Albert Schoen came to Clayton in 1908. He settled just east of Clayton and was well known for his extensive farming opera-

tions. He became president of the Clayton State Bank and remained its president until bad business conditions caused the bank to discontinue. He was also honored as County Commissioner of the third district of Norton County. Mr. and Mrs. Schoen reside in Clayton.

George Hixson moved from his farm in the year 1909. He became cashier of the State Bank of Clayton, remaining in that position until his death in 1920.

I recall the following people who contributed much to the growth of Clayton: A. E. Warner, Moze Miller, father of Grant and Flora Miller, Charles Wallack, Charles Sandlin, Fred Garton, Dee Butler, C. C. Milner, R. R. Matthews, Dr. F. E. Gaither, W. T. Hendrickson, Benjamin Wiley, Col. C. R. Tapp, James Riggs, A. E. Rolland, Chas. Pool, Lonnie Brooks, Fred Goldsby, Clair Davis, John Blackwell, Blakey Rule, Lloyd and Lester Green, Rosie Butler, L. T. Hixson, Carl Rowh, Leonard Hicks, Forrest Castle, O. P. Ecord, James Brooks, Clarence Frank, Lee Broyles and Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Thiesen.

It was my good fortune to have been a pupil of the following teachers in Clayton: Leila Luckey, Elwood Brooks, Leigh Dowling, T. M. Johnson, Victor Lechlitter, Estella Kirk, J. E. Bates and L. D. Reynolds.

The official directory of Clayton at the present time is as follows: Blakey Rule, Mayor, James Riggs, Treasurer, Roscoe M. Salisbury, Clerk. The council members are: G. W. Brooks, Cleo Rolland, J. F. Nickells, Percy Davis and Asa Castle.

Being exclusively an agricultural community, we naturally think in terms of the settlers and the difficulties they often encountered proving up and developing their newly acquired holdings. Space does not permit this added and colorful bit of history. It is interesting to note however that New Clayton largely lies in Noble Township and Old Clayton was located in what is now known as Clayton Township. Records show that Mr. and Mrs. Colin Thomson, parents of Mrs. Mabel Salisbury came from Cromarty, Scotland in November, 1905 and later completed papers on the last piece of government land in Norton County, located

in Clayton Township. Mr. Thomson served twenty-five years as a volunteer soldier in the British Army and was decorated with a medal by King Edward VII for honorable service. He was present at the coronation of King Edward. Mr. Thomson died in November, 1936.

It has taken considerable time and effort to collect this historical data for Clayton and vicinity. I sincerely hope that you have found this brief history both enjoyable and understandable. May it help to arouse interest among the future citizenry to zealously protect all records of historical importance.

We are fortunate to be descendants of those hardy pioneers who possessed enough determination and ingenuity to think and work themselves out of difficult situations.

From these recorded fragments of history that I have gathered from reliable sources, it is strikingly evident that our fathers and mothers really did conquer a land flowing with milk and honey. In doing so, they suffered much, sacrificed greatly and endured nobly.

Our local poet, Mrs. D. M. Shaw, expresses the following beautiful sentiments as a tribute to the pioneers:

OUR PIONEERS

We speak about this land of freedom,
Of America, land of the free;
Who fought and died for this country of ours,
To make it safe for Democracy.
Our Pioneers!

Who fought the desert step by step,
Through weary days of strife,
Who hewed the logs and laid the rails,
Who drove the shining spikes.
Our Pioneers!

The breast-works of our nation are trembling today,
We are threatened on every shore;
Will we pause and parry, or face the fire,
As our fathers did before?
Our Pioneers!

- ¹ Almena Plaindealer, January 1933.
- ² F. M. Lockard, History of the Early Settlement of Norton County, 62. Eli E. Dopps, Norton, Kansas.
- ³ Deed Record, vol. 20, 1.
- ⁴ The Norton Champion, May 16, 1895.
- ⁵ First Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.
- ⁶ F. M. Lockard, History, op. cit. 230.
- ⁷ Original Plat Book. 13.
- ⁸ Record of County Commissioners, 1872-87, 325.
- ⁹ Plat Book, No. 1, 28.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, Book No. 2, 14.
- ¹¹ First Assistant Postmaster General, op. cit.
- ¹² Plat Book No. 2, 2.
- ¹³ Journal District Court, vol. G. 142-143.
- ¹⁴ Deed Record, vol. 57, 284.

The Solomon Valley -- East



CHAPTER VI

THE United States Land Office was moved from Cawker City to Kirwin in 1875. Due to the large amount of business transacted at the office at that time, Kirwin was a thriving town and all principal roads led in that direction. From Norton the Kirwin road took off to the southeast reaching the Solomon Valley near where Densmore is now situated. This section of the county is now reached by N. C. highways: 336, 559, 563 and 567.

The Solomon Valley is one of the historic sections of the State. Many incidents of importance happened throughout the valley during the days of settlement and before. The valley is traversed by the Kans-9 highway from east to west, and by the Missouri Pacific Railroad from the east county line to Lenora.

This was the first railroad to reach the county and was built in 1831. The first passenger train crossed the county line between Logan and Densmore on January 1, 1832. This road was first known as the Atchison, Colorado and Kansas, but was soon taken over by the Missouri-Pacific company.

This was the first railroad to penetrate northwest Kansas and the new towns that sprang up along the road enjoyed a large trade from all sections to the north and west. Many interesting stories are told in connection with the building of the road and the first train arriving in the more important towns. Instances are given where settlers drove for miles to witness the arrival of the first train. The Kansas Prohibitory Amendment had not been in force very long and the saloon preceded the railroad. We have noted accounts where some, who went very long distances to see the arrival of the first train, were so occupied at a near-by saloon that they failed to see the train when it arrived at the depot.

NORTON COUNTY AND PROHIBITION

There has been a sentiment favoring prohibition in the county from the beginning. The Kansas Prohibitory Amendment to the State Constitution was adopted in 1880. This amendment carried in Norton County by a vote of 512 for the amendment and 407 against.¹

Prior to the adoption of this Amendment, there was a saloon operating approximately $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles east of where Densmore is now situated. This was in the vicinity of the West Union Post Office.

The women of Norton county are deserving of much credit for the work of promoting the cause of Temperance in the county through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. They have consistently fought the liquor traffic from the very beginning and, today they have a strong organization in the county. Among the women who helped to establish the ideals back in the 90's, and even before, we will mention Mrs. Margaret Bruner, Mrs. Mahulda Newell, Mrs. Rilda Lockard Curry, and Mrs. Carrie Boddy Stapp. Mrs. Katy Kingsbury and many others could be mentioned. These women kept the movement going and today others have taken the work up and are carrying it on in many parts of the county.

Norton has been a progressive county and has been behind every movement for the betterment of the people. The men were willing that the women be given the right to vote and Norton was the first county in the Sixth Congressional District to send a woman as a member of the Kansas State Legislature. Mrs. Ida M. (C. B.) Walker was elected in 1920 and again in 1922.

THE WEST UNION POST OFFICE

The West Union Post Office was established approximately $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles east of where Densmore is now situated, on June 24, 1874, with Alfred J. Coleman as postmaster. The name of the office was changed to Densmore, December 20, 1880.²

DENSMORE

Densmore (pop. less than 100), is situated in the Solomon Valley on the Lenora Branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad,

and highway Kan-9. The town is connected with other parts of the county by highways N. C. 559, 563 and 567.

The town was laid out and platted by John T. Densmore who settled here in 1874. The plat was drawn April 13, 1881 and filed for record July 1, 1881.³

Mansville and Heck Addition to Densmore was platted by Albert M. Mansville and Mrs. M. J. Heck on June 27, 1885. The plat was filed for record the same day.⁴

From the Norton County People, Norton, Kansas, Issue of December 20, 1880: "The name of the West Union Post Office has been changed to Densmore, and Mrs. Elizabeth E. Densmore has been appointed postmistress." The post office was located in a dugout near the bank of the Solomon River at the time.



The Densmore Rural High School. Fred A. Daniels, Prin., 1939--

Issue of July 7, 1881: "The town plat of Densmore was placed on Record last Friday. This town is located at the mouth of Big

Timber, on the Solomon, in the southeast part of the county. Everything is going along encouraging at that promising point, and they are expecting a rush upon the completion of the railroad to that place. A steam saw-mill has just been located there by Messrs. Wiltrout, Hanson and Company. The store is under the sole control of Robert Coats, who by good bargains and agreeable manners is building up an extensive trade."

Among the early settlers who helped to establish the town were: B. B. Glass, townsite agent; Albert Mansville, owned and conducted the first general store; Jim Reins, opened the first blacksmith shop; O. B. Cackley, built the first hardware store and later sold out to John Taylor and George Harris; Sam Baxter, built and conducted the hotel, which is still standing, in 1886."

The Catholic people first conducted a week day mission in Densmore. Rev. Father Hoeller of Cawker City had charge of the mission and conducted services once a month. The church was built in 1899.

"The following are the names of the charter members of the church, many of whom have passed to the great beyond: David Geary, wife and family; Patrick Conway, wife and family; Daniel Regan; Peter Donely, Sr.; Anthony Farrell and mother; Thomas Mullen and wife; James Donely; Mrs. Margaret Mullen and family; Peter Donely, wife and family; F. C. Stenger, wife and family; David Ferris, wife and family; Jack Conarty and wife; R. D. Cashman.

St. Marys parish has a cemetery named Calvary Cemetery, three quarters of a mile north of Densmore. The ground was donated by Peter Donely, deceased."

Cyrus Archer came to Norton County in 1879 and settled southeast of where Densmore is now situated. Other members of the Archer family arrived and settled in this community. The Free Methodist Church organized a class and built a sod church on Mr. Archer's land and he was the first pastor. The services were transferred to Densmore in the early 1900's where a stone church was built. This church served the community until the

new brick church was erected in 1930. The debt on this building was paid and the church dedicated in 1941.



Densmore Free Methodist Church. Erected 1930.
G. Ray Phillippi, Pastor, 1937--

The late G. J. Archer, son of Cyrus Archer, conducted a lumber yard and bought grain at Densmore for many years. He was active in school and church work and did much for this community. He was elected to the State Legislature in 1932 and again in 1934. He died in November, 1940.

George Stepper was born in Phillips County in 1877. He came to Norton County in 1911, and started in the hardware business at Densmore where he has continued since his arrival.

John Kitzke is well known in this part of Norton county and conducts a general store in Densmore. Some of the former business men have moved to other places since the depression and years of drouth and dust storms.

Much could be said to the credit of Densmore, the little town has been outstanding in educational and religious work. It has been a good trading point for many years.

ENVIRONS

Hedgewood, Norton County, Kansas. The Hedgewood post-office was located in section three, township four south, range twenty two west, $8\frac{1}{2}$ mi. northwest of Densmore, on Big Timber



The Old Hedgewood Post Office, Home of D. E. Stevens

Creek. D. E. Stevens was the first postmaster and conducted a store for several years. The following information was obtained from the Post Office Department, Washington, D. C.:

"David E. Stevens	May 18, 1882 (Established)
William Dobbie	September 20, 1893
Elizabeth Adams	April 27, 1897

This office was discontinued March 15, 1898, and mail was ordered sent to Fair Haven. The Fair Haven postoffice was dis-

continued February 29, 1904, and mail was ordered sent to Densmore, which office is still in operation."

(Signed) "Ambrose O'Connell,
First Assistant Postmaster
General."

The Cactus Valley. Cactus Creek is a tributary to the North Fork of the Solomon River and traverses the eastern part of the county through parts of Grant and Lincoln Townships. The stream gets its name from the numerous wild cactus growing throughout the valley. The Star Cactus with its rose pink flowers, and the Prickly Pear with great clusters of wax like flowers are numerous on the pasture land in the valley.

The soil is fertile and has been devoted to agriculture and stock raising since the 1870's. The Cactus postoffice was established in 1874. William Grant came to Norton county in 1873 and he was the first postmaster.⁷

Cactus Free Methodist Church. Rev. Cyrus Archer of Densmore, Kansas, and Rev. G. Delimont of Stamford, Nebraska, conducted a revival meeting at the Cactus School House in about the year 1900. As a result of this meeting a class was organized and regular preaching services established in the school house. On January 17, 1917, Dana N. Hewitt and Eva Hewitt, his wife, deeded a tract of land, which is a part of the S. W. Quarter of section two, township four south, range twenty-one west, to the church for a site for the church.⁸ The church was erected at a cost of approximately \$3,000 and dedicated in 1917. Trustees at the time the church was built were: Rev. Sherman Archer, C. W. Minor, W. H. Sides, Dana Hewitt and John Karnopp.⁹

The Church of God. (Fair Haven) The Fair Haven Church of God is situated on the N. E. quarter of section thirty one, township three south, range twenty-one west.

Charles O. Bailey deeded the land to the trustees of Church of God: J. W. Stewart, Jr., G. T. Neal, P. A. Harper, J. D. Wright and Sarah E. Glenn, on November 17, 1917.¹⁰

There is a deed on record from the above mentioned board of trustees to the trustees of Church of God, Grant Township, dated May 10, 1930. Trustees comprising this new board were: P. A. Harper, R. C. Smith, Clara McFarland, Hazel Alexander and Sarah E. Glenn.¹¹

The Gudgell Ranch. Continuing westward the highway traverses the center of the valley between Densmore and Edmond. The lay of the land to the south of the valley is suited for pasture and for this reason there has been extensive stock raising in the past. The Gudgell Ranch, formerly known as the Baker-Crowell Ranch, was noted for years for its quality of Hereford Cattle. At one time they were shipped to many parts of the world. In recent years the ranch has been broken up and the land divided into smaller blocks.

The North Fork of the Solomon is well skirted with native timber of cottonwood, elm and ash. Animals similar to those found along the Prairie Dog are common here. The Valley at one time was a favorite resort for wild turkey. They wintered here until 1872; then left and never returned.

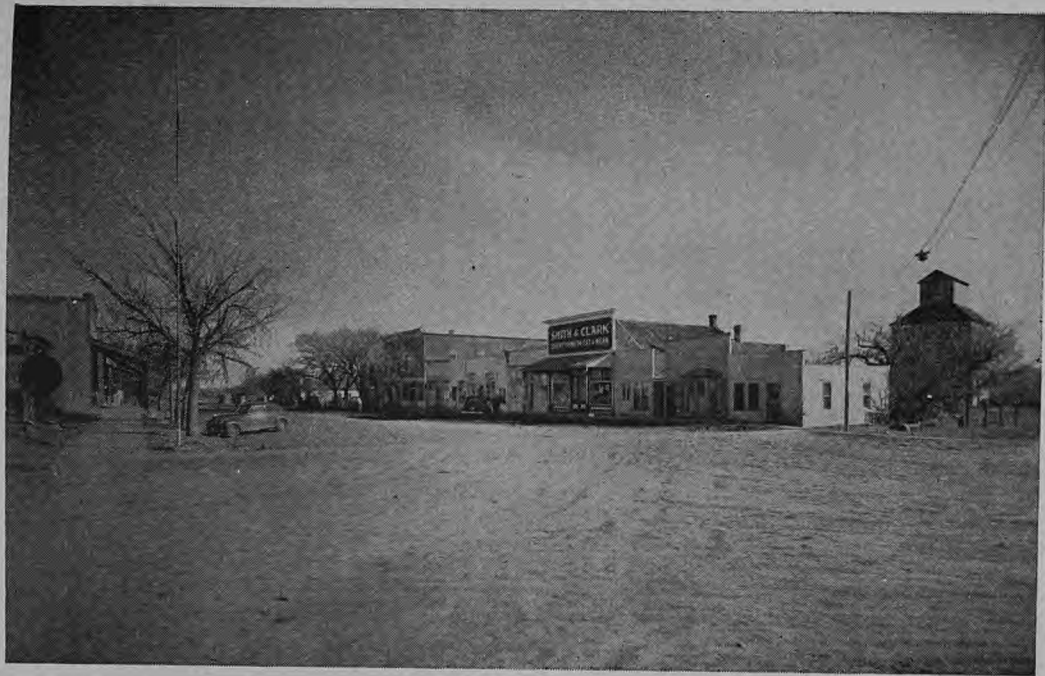
The largest fossilized fresh water turtle was discovered by Roy Patton about two and one half miles south of Densmore. It measured 42 inches in length, 32 inches in width, and was 16 inches in height.

The shell was presented to the Fort Hays Teachers' College by the three sons of Mr. Patton.

EDMOND

Edmond (alt. 2140 ft.; pop. 154, 1941) is situated approximately five miles west of Densmore on the Lenora branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and K-9 highway. It is connected directly with Norton by US highway 283 and N. C. Highway 563.

The town of Edmond was platted by John D. Edmond, September 3, 1879. The plat was filed for record September 10, 1879. Purviance Addition to the town of Edmond was platted September 6, 1881. The plat was made by E. S. Purviance and P. J. Purviance, his wife, and filed for record September 8, 1881.¹²



Street Scene, Edmond, Kansas, 1942.

Port Landis Post Office. The Port Landis post office was established June 24, 1874 with Evan S. Purviance as postmaster. The name of the office was changed to Edmond June 3, 1879.¹²

Much of the history of Edmond centers around the school. The people who settled here were interested in the education of their children. We will learn later about the fight they made to have the County High School located at their town. They lost the fight but did not lose interest in a high school, and later established one of their own.

Edmond observed the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of their school a few years ago, and at this meeting reminiscences were read from the pen of Dwight M. Smith of Kansas City who was a member of the first class attending the school.



The Edmond Rural High School. O. G. Ingham, Principal, 1941--

We cannot do better than give excerpts from a letter from Mr. Smith addressed to the Principal of the Edmond School under

date September 8th, 1931, and written to be read at the anniversary:

"If the old stone school house is still standing across the road from the two-story frame, you will note, between the front doors, cut in the stone wall, the figures '1881'. The stone school house was built in the Winter and Spring of '81. It was built, as I recall by Otto Dannevik."

"How many of the pupils who answered the bell that Fall of '81 may be among the living, I, of course, do not know. In any event, there are but few of them who would be known to the present generation of Edmondites. Grace Conkey, now Grace Stickney, was one, and her sister, Nettie, now Mrs. Kelly Mack, another. I have heard in recent years that Luella Williams (known in her school days as "Lear",) now I believe, Mrs. Hazlitt or Hazelton, still lives at Edmond, and that she and her husband run the hotel, (1931). I do not know that I can tell the complete roll of first year pupils, (it is a little difficult to avoid confusing with the first year those who came later), but these names come to me: John, Charley, Lee, Addie and Emma Hogue (they lived across the river, southwest of the mill, a half mile or so); Frank Shields, who lived west of town a mile, on what was later known as the Strickler Farm; "Nick" Dannevik, Mary Dannevik, Grant Williams, "Lear" Williams, and I think her younger sister, whose first name I have forgotten; Lot and Eva Higganbotham, and possibly the younger brother, Charley; two Purviance girls, who are only a dim memory. The Purviance family left there about 1882. Mr. Purviance, I think, built the first frame residence in Edmond—on Main Street, across and a little west of the old stone hotel; Charley and Maude Wilcox, whose father ran the mill for Noah Weaver, the town's first merchant; Edith Cox, possibly Belle Davis and a sister, and possibly Maggie Sproul, now Mrs. Lew Dean, and my older brother, Alph."

Valena Dannevik was the teacher this year and the following years until she married. Following Miss Dannevik, Mr. Smith gives the following as teachers; Prof. Goff, followed by Prof. McGee and Mary Christ. The two Means girls substituted at times. It was about the year 1884 that Eva Lisenby began teaching in

Edmond. Her home was in Illinois. She taught here three or four years. A new school house was built while she was here.

The years '83 to '87 were what may be termed boom years, this was true of other sections of Kansas. Edmond enjoyed its only boom during this period. We again quote Mr. Smith: "The surrounding country was being settled up. Every train brought new people. The road leading west through Edmond was lined with "Prairie Schooners". Herds of wild horses were driven in from the southwest and shipped out of the corral east of the depot. Cow-boys were returning from the western ranges, well decked out with six shooters and spurs on their boots. There was plenty of excitement when the McKee-Mullin gang from Big Timber and the Belmont-Zimmerman gang up the river, met in Edmond to settle their feuds."

The town of Edmond was named for and by Jack Edmond. He was a young grocery salesman and he told Noah Weaver that he would include 1000 flour sacks if he would call the town Edmond after him. Mr. Weaver did this and the name has never been changed. The railroad built through in 1881. Mr. E. P. Davidson who was postmaster for some time ran the first newspaper. Mr. Lock from Toledo, Ohio, ran a newspaper called "The Badger". Wm. Wells and J. T. Smith bought him out and they sold to M. J. Kelley, and he changed the name to "The Edmond Times". Kelley afterward left his wife and went to Texas, and she continued the paper. W. J. Wills later owned the "Edmond New Leaf", an up-to-date newspaper.

In 1915 Edmond was swept by a disastrous fire, but bigger and better buildings were erected. The First National Bank of Edmond was organized in 1904. It has been discontinued.

Among other early business enterprises were: Furniture and Undertaking, Perry L. Cobb; First Store, James Lobsity; The first hotel, Albin Cox; The first minister to preach in Edmond was Rev. Bonnet who preached for the Congregational people. The first white child born in Edmond was Cora Watson. She was born in 1881 and her mother was Emma Watson."

Incorporation of Edmond. The city of Edmond was incor-

porated as a city of the third class April 4, 1916, the metes and bounds thereof are described as follows:

"Beginning at a point 250 feet east of the southwest corner of section nine, township five south, range twenty two west of the 6th P. M., Norton County, Kansas, thence north eighty rods, thence west to a point one hundred feet east of the northwest corner of Purviance Addition to Edmond, Kansas thence north three hundred feet, thence west to the half section line running north and south in section eight, aforesaid town and range, thence on west two hundred fifty feet, thence south six hundred feet, thence east to the aforesaid half section line, thence south to the south line of the Missouri Pacific Right-of-Way, thence following the same easterly to the east line of said section eight, thence south to the southwest corner of said section nine, thence east to the place of beginning."¹⁶

The following named persons were signers to the petition asking that Edmond, Kansas be incorporated as a city of The Third Class:

Roy Woodward, G. M. Jaquis, J. H. Stephenson, Roy M. Deever, F. W. Nelson, I. P. Williams, C. D. Sanborn, E. C. Edgar, H. Jones, A. Personett, J. W. Woodward, C. C. Bishop, W. T. Newbold, C. H. Merriweather, H. C. Pace, J. A. Weatherly, Mrs. Maggie Woodward, L. A. Newbold, Mrs. C. H. Merriweather, J. W. Conarty, W. W. Boyd, Letta Cowling, Geo. Cowling, Chas. Stelzer, Clara Gross, A. C. Staus, Rosa Rockover, Oliver W. Holmes, Mrs. James Williams, Ora Alsdorf, Myrtle Newbold, Eva Newbold, Mrs. M. Spurlin, Will R. Dannevik, H. H. Woodruff, Harvey Price, M. M. Personett, P. A. Personett, Clyde Weatherly, W. J. Wills, Mrs. G. M. Jaquis, Jessie Wills, Mrs. Roy M. Deever, Mrs. J. H. Stephenson, Mrs. E. C. Edgar, Mrs. A. L. Personett, Mrs. J. W. Conarty, Mrs. Mary Alsdorf, Mrs. R. E. Sanborn, Mrs. S. C. Boling, Mrs. Carrie Coursey, Grover Smith, P. J. Larson, Mrs. I. Walser, Jessie Woodruff, Mae Larson, C. Conklin.¹⁶

CHURCHES IN EDMOND

Congregational Church. School District No. 11 deeded a one acre tract of land to the Congregational Church of Edmond on August 6, 1887. Trustees at the time: O. D. Hershiser, J. Y. Geyer, C. W. Higganbotham, Charles D. Cowan and James Libsitz. The church was sold to the United Brethren October 1, 1903.¹⁷

United Brethren Church "The United Brethren Church was organized by Rev. Haresnipe, May 31, 1888. The first board of trustees were: John W. Horn, Wm. L. Green, Samuel B. Richardson, W. H. Cummings.

They worshipped in a stone building originally built for a school house, but transferred to the Congregational people and later sold to the United Brethren, and this continued to be their place of worship until February, 1916 when it was sold."¹⁸

New church was erected near parsonage. Lots were purchased in 1898.¹⁹ Rev. Ralph Walters, Pastor, 1941—.

Christian Church. "The Christian Church at Edmond was built in 1904. George Long, L. D. Wells, James Hoffman and C. I. Griffith were the early workers and to them and a few others are due the credit. The first pastor was Charles Early. The church had a membership of seventy-five in 1916."²⁰

The Church secured title to the land where the Church is situated, April 15, 1905.²¹ The Church may have been erected in 1905 instead as above stated.

PORT LANDIS TOWNSITE

The Port Landis townsite marks a historic spot in Norton County History. It was on the Solomon River at this point that John Landis was murdered September 2, 1878. Landis was a man of very positive convictions. He came here from Kentucky and was very hot tempered. He made his boast, "That when his southern blood was fired he feared no man." It was this characteristic that cost him much trouble and finally resulted in his murder. He was a leader in one of the factions here on the Solomon and naturally made many enemies. He was fired upon while talking to a man whom he was assisting to locate on a claim about two miles south of the Landis home.

Port Landis townsite was platted by O. M. Dannevik and Fred A. Barlow who organized a Town Company. The new town was located on the Township line about one and one-half miles west of Edmond.²²

J. W. Langford had settled on a homestead one and one-fourth miles west of the Barlow Store at Port Landis and opened up the Modell postoffice in his home. The postoffice was later moved to the Barlow store and the little town called Modell.

The town consisted of the store and postoffice, blacksmith shop, a town hall constructed of sod and used as a school house, and a few sod dwellings. A Jew by the name of James Lobsitz ran the store at Modell for some time.

The Mail was brought once each week from Fort Kearney and carried on through to the south into Trego County.

¹ Record of County Commissioners, 1872-1887, 225-226.

² First Assistant Postmaster General, Washington D. C.

³ Plat Book, No. 1, 23.

⁴ *ibid.*, 24-25.

⁵ Norton County News, Historical Number, October 1916.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ F. M. Lockard, History of the Early Settlement of Norton County, Kansas.—74.

⁸ Deed Record, vol. 47, 257.

⁹ *ibid.* 257.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 48, 239.

¹¹ *ibid.*, vol. 57, 463.

¹² Plat Book, No. 1, 21-22.

¹³ First Assistant Postmaster General, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Norton County News, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Commissioners Journal, 1909-18, 366.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Deed Record, vol. 32, p. 428.

¹⁸ Norton County News, *op. cit.* Deed Record, vol. 46, p. 486.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, vol. 28, p. 176.

²⁰ Norton County News, *op. cit.*

²¹ Deed Record, vol. 34, p. 132.

²² Plat Book, Original. 25.

The Solomon Valley -- West



CHAPTER VII

THE animal and plant life is similar in all parts of the county. We would expect to find the same kind of wild life along the Solomon as is common along the Prairie Dog and the Sappa Creeks farther north.

Among the predatory animals were wildcat, badger, skunk and coyote; along the banks of the creeks were: beaver, otter and muskrat, while the grasslands were alive with jackrabbits and cottontails.

Of the game birds, prairie chickens and quail were found in flocks. Late in the evening during the fall months it was common to see them fly in from the prairie lands to feed upon the ripened corn and kaffir fields. The ruthless hunters have thinned them out until there are but few left in this part of the state. The pheasants have been brought in and have taken the place of the prairie chickens to a large extent.

When the settlers began to arrive in 1870-71 they found the Wild Turkey wintering along the Solomon, but in a year or two they left never to return.¹

There are many song birds left which thrive best on land that is under cultivation. By destroying millions of insects they make it possible to grow crops that would be destroyed without them. The western meadow lark, chosen by the school children of the state as the Kansas Bird, are numerous in all parts of the county. The cardinal and robin, competitors in the contest, will also be found heralding the coming of spring. Birds that may be classed as undesirable are: the crow, chicken hawk, English sparrow and blackbird. In addition to these are many classes of migratory birds throughout the summer months.

The early settlers spent considerable time in hunting; not only to get meat for the family, but for general sport. No license was necessary during the early years as this was one of the most common forms of amusement. Later when the game became scarce more stringent laws were put in force.



The Cutting Lake, Lenora, Kansas,
A favorite spot among the hunters and fishermen of today.

When the wild flowering plants are mentioned, the one most generally thought of is the native wild sunflower, designated by the legislature of 1903 as the state flower of Kansas. It is very hardy and makes a conspicuous growth wherever it can get a hold in the Kansas soil. Flowers of various kind and color will be seen dotting the prairies of Norton county from early spring to late fall. Flowers are common not only along the creeks, but the uplands are brightened by many varieties of prairie flowers. As the season progresses the predominant color is yellow. Among the varieties will be found: the daisies, wild rose, yucca (soap weed), wild onion, prairie poppy, prickly pear, violets, buttercups and golden rod.

Many varieties of ornamental flowering plants and shrubs have been introduced and have proven a success where given a chance.

LENORA

Lenora, (pop. 536, 1941), is situated in the Solomon Valley on highway K-9 and is the terminus of the Lenora Branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Highway N. C. 537 connects Lenora directly with points north and south through the county.

The town was originally platted in four additions by establishing a town corner at supposed corners of sections 14, 15, 22 and 23 in township five south, range twenty four west.

Lenora (NW) was platted by Cornelia Burwell on June 28, 1879.²

Hoods Addition to Lenora (SW) was platted by George W. Hood on August 18, 1879.³

Lansings Addition to Lenora (NE) was platted by C. H. Lansing on September 13, 1879. Filed the same day.⁴

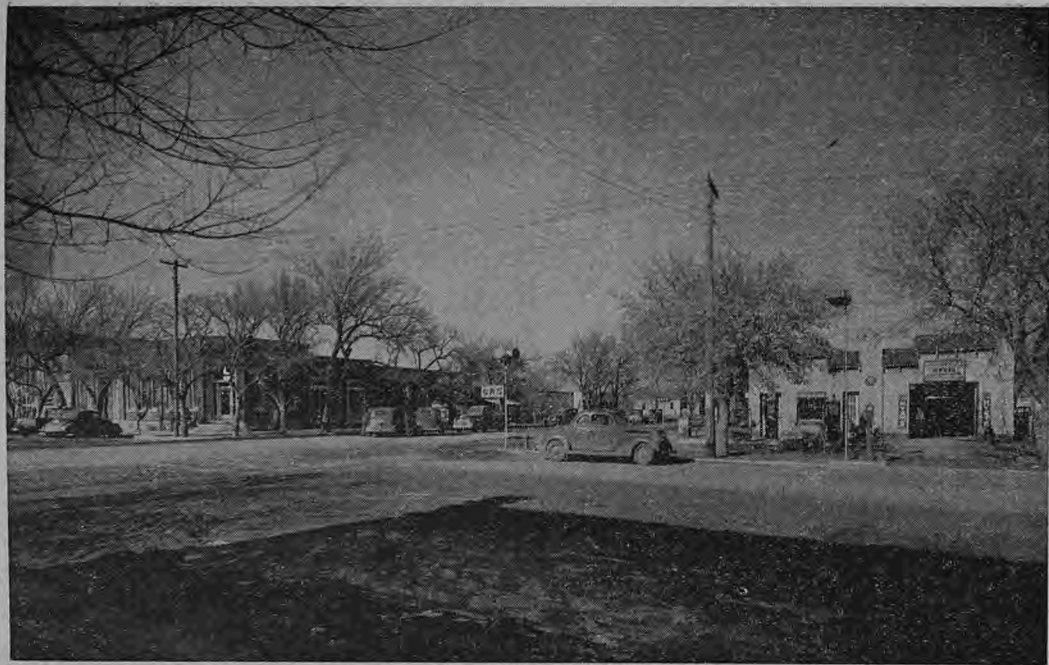
Hendricks Addition to Lenora (SE) was platted by L. A. Hendricks on December 16, 1880.⁵

Each of these additions have had additions added to them and Lenora comprises the land added from time to time.

Incorporation of Lenora. The city of Lenora was incorporated as a city of the Third Class by an order of the County Commissioners of Norton County, Kansas, July 4, 1887 as follows:

"Now therefore we the duly elected and authorized Board of County Commissioners of Norton County, Kansas do hereby declare, order and adjudge that the said town of Lenora be and hereby declared to be an incorporated city of the Third Class by the name and style of "The City of Lenora" with boundaries as follows:

"Commencing at a point in the section line 1190 feet east from the common corner of sections 14, 15, 22 and 23 in township 5 south of range twenty-four west of the 6th P. M. in Norton County, Kansas, thence south 1550 feet, thence west 1190 feet, thence northwest about ten (10) rods to the



Street Scene, Lenora, Kansas, 1942.

south east corner of George K. Mooney acre, thence west 208 feet, thence north 208 feet, thence about seventeen (17) rods northwest to the southeast corner of G. Gatlins acre; thence west 220 feet, thence north 443 feet, thence west to the southwest corner of Block C, White's Addition to the town of Lenora, thence north to the section line, thence east to a point 730 feet west of the common corner of sections 14, 15, 22 and 23 aforesaid, thence north 727 feet, thence east 380 feet, thence north 660 feet, thence east 300 feet, thence north till this line intersects the south line of the Right-of-Way of the Missouri Pacific Railway Company, thence west 300 feet, thence south 979 feet, thence east 380 feet, thence south 675 feet, thence east twenty-eight (28) rods, thence south twenty (20) rods, thence west on the section line to the place of beginning."⁸

THE LENORA POST OFFICE

The Lenora post office was established on June 24, 1874, with Ole H. Peterson as postmaster.

The Lenora office was discontinued November 11, 1874, and reestablished November 30, 1874.⁹

LENORA CHURCHES

Congregational Church

"Rev. Bonnet held a revival in the little log school house in the winter of 1883 at which time he organized the Congregational Church. The next summer, 1884, the first church building was built in Lenora, being the Congregational Church. The M. E. people worshipped in the same building for two years before they built their church."¹⁰

The records show that the Congregational Society purchased Lots 13, 14, 15 and 16, Block A, Lansing Addition to Lenora in August, 1884. The new Brick Church was built about 1925.¹¹

Among the early pastors of this church were: Rev. Bonnet, Northrup, Gorge, Buck, Everts, Cirley, Kirns, Brown, Wood and Maston. O. T. Meador, Pastor, 1941—¹²

Methodist Episcopal Church

The Methodist Society in Lenora secured title to Lots 19 and 20, in Block C, Hendricks Addition to Lenora, February 12, 1883. The Board of Trustees at the time were: O. J. Burwell, E. H. Darnell, William S. Decker, Peter Priest and Harris Webb.¹¹

"It was at first a part of a circuit of which Kirwin was the head and was supplied by Rev. Dalton who came from Kirwin nearly sixty miles east down the valley."¹²

The records show that a new location was secured August 13, 1885 when they purchased Lot 2, Block A, Whites Addition to Lenora. The Board of Trustees were increased to seven members at this time as follows: E. H. Darnell, O. J. Burwell, S. F. White, John McManus, J. N. Carver, Peter Priest and W. B. Still.¹³

The church was erected in 1885. They have no pastor, 1942.

First Christian Church

The Christian Church of Lenora was organized May 5, 1905, with B. W. Mulkey as Pastor; John Epperson and William James as Elders; Carrie Smith and Henry Tuggle as Deacons.

The church purchased Lots 11 and 12, in Block A, Burwells Addition to Lenora, April 10, 1906.

The following were members at the time the church was organized: J. C. Epperson and wife; William James and wife; D. S. Logan, wife and three children; Amos Huff, wife and three children; E. P. Edgerton, wife and one child; Edward Eagleberger and wife; Henry Tuggle and wife; Ora Hickman and wife; J. W. Moye, wife and two children; Fannie Bozarth; Frank Bozarth and wife; Mrs. John Hayes; High DuBois and wife; William McCready; Thomas Morford and wife; Edward Morford, Miss Grace Frazier; Mr. Heines; Carrie Smith; Samuel Bangle; Jesse Bangle; Mrs. Samuel Hodge; Mrs. C. A. Taylor; Mrs. Govsbery. The church has no Pastor, 1942.¹⁴

The Church of God

Purchased the East 65 feet of Lots 14 and 15 in Block C, Burwells Addition to Lenora in November 1926. The Society purchased the old Congregational Church Building and moved the same to the new location. They have conducted services here since that date. E. P. Edgington, H. E. Teel, Mrs. Mollie Mosier, Minnie Personett and Noah Frederick, trustees.¹⁶ Glenn Jackson, Pastor, 1941—.

THE STORY OF LENORA

By Dewain Delp, Attorney

To put the story of the early growth and development of the community of Lenora into an essay of a few hundred words is indeed a difficult task. The best one can hope to do is give a kaleidoscopic picture of part of the thrills of success and the pangs of sorrow that have accompanied the rise of its economic and social institutions. It is my sincere hope that this short piece will inspire some individual or group of individuals to uncover and record the colorful and romantic past of our community, and do that before it is too late—the curtain and shadow of oblivion is fast falling over these all but forgotten events. Even now only a paltry few of the pioneers remain who can give facts.

An erudite historian once said to me while we were discussing the early history of England, "Before one can possibly grasp the picture of life and times of people long past—before one can have true perspective of the significant events and names he must make every effort to feel and see what their work-a-day lives were like—to place himself mentally in those times."

So then in our mind's eye let's turn the pages of history back to 1872 where our history begins. There were only a few people living in Norton County, probably around 200. Ninety nine percent of these were men—a rough and motley crew they were, not the "noble pioneer" that historians have glorified, but men of the world, adventurers, opportunists, and even thieves—hard, rough and cunning. They were for the most part men who had not been too successful in the home community back east, so had moved on further west with the philosophy that "the early bird

gets the worm" and the worms are "easy picking". Some were trappers and hunters, others traders along the line of a huckster, who carried his stock of goods in his wagon—salt pork, flour, salt, whiskey, gun powder, shot, perhaps guns and a few clothes. Then there were the "horse traders" and the "land scalpers"—men who had staked out the best claims along the rivers and streams in the hope of selling it to the real homesteaders whom they knew would soon be arriving. Most of these men lived alone in hastily constructed dugouts along the creek banks, they needed nor wanted anything better for their stay was to be short. There was no Lenora then, in fact it had not been conceived in the minds of these few men. But those who had staked out claims knew that if they were to sell them, they had to attract settlers—real homesteaders or home makers, and most of all, these had to bring a little money with them. Well they had to have a "town", an address—some place to come to—not just an X on the map of bare unbroken prairie. Accordingly as the need for a "town" arose, so it was. One evening in September 1873, several men met in the part log, part dugout hut of a Mr. Sedaris on the north bank of the Solomon river about 2 miles west of the present city, on the present farm of Mac Leidig. This log dugout which was destined to become so famous was the logical meeting place; its owner had a small stock of goods and his was the first and only trading post. On that historical evening amid the clinking of whiskey glasses and the thick blue smoke of long-green tobacco, a town company was formed and the log-dugout christened Spring City.

Although no official recording of their action ever took place, these enterprising men lost no time in petitioning the Federal Government for a postoffice. But that was not to come until many months later. However the settlers and homesteaders did come in large numbers, and by 1874 all the choice claims along the rivers and streams were taken. This was the first wave of immigration, the second seemed to begin about three years later in 1877. The extreme drought and grasshopper invasion during the intervening years had little appeal or drawing power to settlers.

Few were the luxuries of a housewife in these days, the first

real settlers. Their cooking utensils consisted of an iron kettle, two or three pans, and a water bucket—just whatever there was room for in the covered wagon when they had packed to go west. Very few homes had wells and so water was carried from the closest spring. All supplies had to be freighted over-land, a three day journey, from Cawker City or Wakeeney—the closest railways. The houses were sod, with native poles, brush, grass, and more sod for roofs. Of course, the roof leaked when it rained—worse yet these roofs were favorite haunts of mice and snakes. The furniture was, for the most part, home-made from boxes or any handy material. A few were able to bring some furniture with them. For all the poverty these houses were clean and comfortable. Their usually white-washed interiors were cool in summer and warm in winter. Paradoxical as it seems, these people were happy—tingling with the thrill of new adventure, their wants were few and their appreciation of blessings great.

A reorganized town company, of which Mr. A. Hendricks was a member, again applied for a postoffice in the spring of 1874. On June 24, 1874 the application was granted and Ole H. Peterson was named the first postmaster. While the location was in Sedaris' store at so-called Spring City, the government named the office Lenora. A bitter argument ensued when the natives insisted that the name be changed to Spring City. Late in June of that same year O. J. Burwell, G. W. Hood, G. N. Cheeseman, C. H. Lansing and G. S. Burroughs formed the first official town company of the new city of Lenora. By contributing \$5 each, and selling stock shares to many others, they were able to build a store 30x40 feet. It was said to be the first log and frame building with a shingle roof west of Cawker City. After the Rue Brothers, a Cawker City firm, failed to go through with their agreement to put a stock of goods in the store, Mr. A. Hendricks did, and became Lenora's first merchant.

As the feud between the two town sites was growing more bitter, the government settled the whole matter by abolishing the postoffice on November 11, 1874. From that date to November 30, 1874 the people were without a postoffice, at that time the postoffice was reestablished as "Lenora" and at the new town site

with Hendricks as postmaster. During the interval mail was brought from the West Union postoffice which was later changed to Densmore. Thus as far as the government was concerned the matter was a closed issue and ever to remain so. But in the minds and hearts of the Spring City group the matter remained very much alive for several years. However, despairingly, they moved to the new town in the summer of 1876, thus "Lenora" and "Spring City" were united forever.

Just where the name "Lenora" came from is a controversial issue. Rumor has long whispered that "Lenora" was named for the only white woman living west of Kirwin on the Solomon River during the winter of 1872. The woman, some say, was Mrs. Lenora Harrison and that the name was suggested by J. S. Peak. Others say that the town was named in honor of Mrs. Lenora Hanson, relative of one of the members of the first town company. Still others that it was a name arbitrarily assigned to the postoffice by the government postal authorities, who of course, had to pick a name entirely different from the name of any other postoffice in Kansas. In view of the fact that every effort was made to name the town "Spring City", and that effort was a continuing one—the latter theory seems the more plausible—namely the U. S. Postal authorities assigned the place the name "Lenora" in spite of the wishes of the people, and that it is not named in honor of anyone.

In the fall of 1877 Hendricks' store was moved across the street to about where the Young's Coffee Shop now stands and became the first school house. This building was used until 1884 when a new two story structure replaced it, the latter was on the site of the present grade school.

In 1878 the second wave of settlers was at its highest. Scores of homesteaders were arriving every day—time was an important factor to these former Missourians, Iowans and those from almost every middle eastern state. Already the choice up-land was taken, and of course, the bottom land or that with running water had been taken several years before. The livery and feed barn, owned by Ryan and Decker, and which stood where Bills' Garage now stands was the busiest and most prosperous place in

town for the first act of a newly-arrived was to hire a team and driver and scout the uplands for a prospective place to homestead. The first question was always, "Can I get water here?" If he could and there was enough level land to farm on that particular quarter, he would stake it out and leave the next day for Kirwin or Cawker City to file his claim. Competition was keen and each knew that "first there, first served."



The Lenora Rural High School. Hobart Rader, Principal, 1940—

One of the most colorful chapters in the history of this period of settlement deals with "taking and proving" of these homesteads. The majority were honest and sincere in attempting to follow the letter of the law, but there were others who were artists at evading it. The law made these requirements among others, "there must be a house with glass in the windows, water in a well, growing trees on the farmstead, and the owner must use the place for his actual domicile."

Well, when it came time to "prove up" on the homestead the claimant would take two witnesses with him and they would

spend the night in the sod house—thus they were able to swear that the claimant slept in the house on that particular land. The next morning they would see "water in the well", (which had been placed in the ten foot hole in the ground a few minutes before, and had been hauled from the river in a barrel). They could also swear that there was glass in the windows for in plain sight there hung by a string a swinging beer bottle. For trees, petite willow branches had been stuck in the ground—green leaves—sure they were "growing trees."

I sincerely believe that the homesteaders were far happier than we today—they had a sense of humor and a true sense of values. They made their own entertainment—church, Sunday school, pie socials, basket suppers, parties, dances, "literaries", debates, husking bees, house raisings, and house warmings, all were genuine entertainments and good times. The secret of these was that all participated in the event. At our entertainments today, movies and ball games, we are spectators, not participants. What delightful reading a detailed description of each of these old time entertainments would make.

Lockard, in his book, a History of Norton County, describes a Fourth of July picnic held in 1878 at Cedar Gulch, five miles east of Lenora. He says that people came from a radius of fifty miles, most of them gathering the night before. The next morning the men went out and shot two wild elk and prepared them for the barbeque. In the afternoon the District Senator gave an address. What a celebration that must have been!

In the spring of 1879 Lenora had its last Indian scare. The report came in that the Pawnees were on the war path and had killed a farm family near Lucerne and burned their home. Excitement was high and fear great as the alarm was spread. The winter of '78 and '79 had been a hard one, the few crops that were planted the summer before had failed, money was scarce so it was necessary for most of the men to go "back east" to find work and send food and money to their families who had remained on the homestead near Lenora. Hence, it was decided that since there were so few men in the community it would be easier to protect the women and children if all were in a group. Kir-

win was decided upon as a meeting place. With the women, children and a few provisions loaded into wagons, buggies and carts, everyone started east.

The scare lasted about three days in all. It seems that there really were some Indians but they were being moved from the reservation in Western Nebraska to Oklahoma. These Indians had stopped at the farm house where they were seen and not finding anyone at home went in and helped themselves to food and drink. The only damage they did was in the rather humorous prank of taking the feather bed out into the wind and ripping it apart—they liked to see the feathers blow across the prairie. It was while this was going on and they were dancing about in childish glee the neighbor who spread the alarm saw them and assumed that they had murdered the occupants of the house—which incidently was stone and couldn't burn.

Probably the greatest single contributing factor in the growth and development of Lenora was the coming of the railroad. The Missouri Pacific Railway Company extended its line from Logan to Lenora in 1881. The road being completed by January 1, 1882, that day was the occasion for a great celebration climaxed by the appearance of the first passenger train. The grading for the track bed was let by contract and paid for by bonds which were sold locally to townships and individuals. Since the contract called for a grade through Lenora township it was so built, albeit it was well known that the track would stop at Lenora City. Lenora thus became the end of the line and having good stores and a very good mill, it became the trading center and supply post for people living as far west as Goodland.

A few of the firsts for Lenora were:

1. Mrs. Alice Pugh was the first school teacher.
2. Rev. Mr. Graham preached the first sermon, 1879.
3. Dr. Smith was the first physician, 1878.
4. W. L. Johnson, first hardware store, 1881.
5. Commercial House was the first hotel, 1879.
6. Dr. Thomas started a drug store, 1879.
7. Charles Lathrop started a mill, 1879.

8. The first funeral was for two children, one a child of J. McGearie, and the other of G. N. Cheeseman, on October 15, 1879.
9. The Howell Lumber Co. was started in 1882.
10. The first bank by Mr. Moody in 1884.
11. The first newspaper by Garrison & Topliff, 1882.

By 1886 the era of homesteading was over. Every quarter had been taken, then 80 acre plots, and last the forties. Few had any delusion about being able to make a living from the tilling of forty acres, or even eighty acres of land. Their only purpose in coming to Norton County (and I hope I am not debunking the "noble pioneer" too much) was to make a quick profit—prove title to a piece of land, mortgage it to an Eastern Mortgage Company and return to the place from whence they came.

The next few years saw the influx of our most stable type of settlers—the ones who have remained and prospered by the application of the principles of hard work and frugal living. The "gay nineties" found our community on a stable economic basis. Banks, schools, professions, churches and merchandising concerns were well established, and the people on the farm were builders.

With the turn of the century our story ends—the long succession of drouths, good crops and depressions and their attendant repercussions on our economic and social institutions I leave for others to record.

HISTORY OF NEW ALMELO

By R. E. Getty, County Commissioner

New Almelo (population about 50 in 1942) is the church, school and trading center of a Catholic community whose members occupy most of Almelo township and scattered farms around it. The town occupies 40 acres (NE-NE-27-5-25) 6 miles west and one mile south of Lenora. This tract is located on the upland just north of the Solomon river valley. The location was originally chosen (1879) for its ideal church site which offers an attractive view of the valley, and makes the church outstanding for miles.



Bird's Eye View of New Almelo, 1942.

(Taken from the south)

The first settlers in this section were Catholics from Canada, who homesteaded along the Solomon in 1873. The Dunlaps and James Gilleece came from Renfrew, Ontario, living a few years in Iowa enroute. At first, this was known as the French Settlement, but except possibly in the 70's, Catholics of German and Irish descent have predominated. Among the earliest settlers, according to the church records were: John Case; Gabe, James, John, Sarah, and William Dunlap; Henry Fink, John Fisher, James Gilleece, Joseph Homan, John Lunney, Edward McKenna; Austin, Edward, George and Peter Miller; Fred Mindrup; Dan, Edward, and Thomas Nettleton; Peter Schmucker, Andrew Standfast; Al, Clem and William Sterner, Albert Waller, Michael Walter and Joseph Wilson.

The first child baptized in the parish was Agnes Miller, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Miller, on November 3, 1878. She is now Mrs. Charles Spiess, mother of 5 grown children; Mr. and Mrs. Spiess and the younger children live about a mile southeast of New Almelo.

The first marriage entry found in the church records is that of Michael Campbell and Miss Marie Gurthy June 19, 1879. The Campbells later settled near Leoville, Decatur County, and raised a family, still represented there. Another marriage in 1879 was that of Sarah Dunlap and Edward McKenna. They made their home and raised 6 children on the McKenna homestead, about 8 miles up the Solomon, a mile east of Allison. Mrs. McKenna, active at 81, has lived on this farm continuously. Her brother William Dunlap, 85, of Concordia, is the only other survivor of the original settlers.

The first community center of the homesteaders was a sod stockade or fort called New Elm, large enough to take in teams and wagons during Indian scares. This was located just southwest of the center of Sec 28-5-25, north of the Solomon, in the

north central part of the James Dunlap homestead. The farm is now owned by William Gilleece, a nephew of Mr. Dunlap. This farm has been owned since 1913 by the John and William Gilleece families.

Next a townsite called Almelo, (after Almelo in Holland) was laid out around the fort. It contained 8 blocks, about 27 acres. A detailed plot of this ambitious project was recorded April 18, 1879. (Original Plat Book of Norton County, page 15). During 1879-80 a large general store and postoffice was built there by Henry Meibergen and operated by him until 1882. At that time Almelo also had a blacksmith shop, a saloon, and plenty of hitching posts. Mr. Meibergen built a 2-story frame house and hotel across the road north of Almelo on 40 acres he owned there. (SE-NW-28). This house, at present occupied by the A. J. Otter family, still stands on the Mrs. Fern Gilleece farm.

Almelo quickly faded out in the early 80's. A few graves still mark a cemetery of this period, a quarter mile southwest on a high ridge along the east side of the NW-SW-28. The failure of Almelo was due to hard times and to the local Catholic church being established at the same time $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles east. The church project developed steadily, and the present town of New Almelo eventually grew around it.

The church history is fully recorded in books kept by the priests, and housed in a fireproof vault. The records cover building programs, subscribers, other financial matters, names of pastors, lists of baptisms and marriages, and much other interesting data. The pastor is glad to make the records available, as for example, in securing birth certificates.

Before 1878, Catholic services in the county were limited to the visits of Father Molier to Norton once a year to receive the sacraments. On October 9, 1878, forerunners of the county's first Catholic Church, Father August Reichert and Father Fred Schalk of Cawker City, visited the Almelo community. October 29, 1878,

in a dugout, the George Miller home, the first Mass was celebrated by Father Reichert. He took a homestead (S $\frac{1}{2}$ -SE-22 and W $\frac{1}{2}$ -NE-27), attending missions also from Logan and Prairie View west to Goodland and Kanorado.

After other transfers, 155 acres of the Reichert homestead, bounding New Almelo on the north and west sides, was bought in 1897 by John W. Mindrup, present owner and occupant. The other five acres in the northeast corner of SE-SE-22, was early set aside by Father Reichert for a cemetery, still retained by the church for that purpose. Among the oldest graves there is that of Fred Mindrup, who died March 24, 1880. Two children of George Miller and one of August Miller were buried there a little earlier. The cemetery was surveyed and plotted in June, 1904, by the County Surveyor. The plot is not on record with the Register of Deeds, but is available in the church records.

Christmas week, 1878, Father Reichert, after living two months with the George Millers, moved into his own dugout 12 by 14 feet located near the west line of the cemetery. Another dugout was constructed nearby and used temporarily for school and for Sunday Mass. In 1879, a sod house 16 by 24 feet was built in the same vicinity, and used as dwelling and church until August 15, 1880. On that date, the first stone church, 40 by 24 feet, of semi-basement type, was completed a quarter mile south on what became the permanent church grounds. January 27, 1879, Father Reichert had bought for the church this 40 acres (NE-NE-27-5-25) from Daniel McGarry for \$100. A small frame house a few rods south of this church was built for the pastor in 1884, enlarged in 1886, and used by the pastors until 1906 when the present fine two and one-half story Rectory was built northwest of the other buildings. The old rectory was used at times up to 1922 as a lady teachers' home, after which it was sold and moved east across the road to what is now the pastor's farm. A rock pile still marks the former site.

Outgrown after 20 years, the church of 1880 was remodeled in 1900 for a parochial school. The floor and walls were raised several feet at that time; in 1922 a second room of similar size was added on the south, bringing the building to its present form. The parochial school was first opened in 1901 by Father Wahlmeier, but soon discontinued because the attendance was too small. The school was reopened by Father Vornholt in 1908 with 60 enrollment, and taught by him until 1917. In 1922, a 1½ story frame residence was built in the south part of the church grounds for the Sisters of Concordia, who have since conducted the school.

The second stone church, a finer and larger building, 40 by 70 feet, was dedicated May 26, 1900. On Easter Sunday, April 19, 1908, this church was destroyed by fire believed caused by a lighted match dropped on the carpet as the people were leaving services. Work began May 5, 1908, rebuilding on the same site, using the old stone walls that were still standing, extending the walls eastward to 105 feet in length, and adding a tower 75 feet high. This building, the present St. Joseph's Church, was dedicated by Bishop John F. Cunningham of Concordia, December 2, 1908, with Msgr. John Maher preaching the sermon.

In 1920, the Gilleece family and Mrs. Philomena Mindrup placed the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the graves of Mrs. James Gilleece and daughter who perished from burns received in the prairie fire of October, 1878. This fine memorial is located on the church grounds a few rods north of the church entrance.

The list of pastors serving the New Almelo parish is as follows: August Reichert, resident pastor 1878-1888; Fred Schalk, to June 1889;—Seraphim, Aug. and Sept. 1889; B. Fitzpatrick, in 1890 until November; W. Wenzel (from Dresden) to Nov. 1, 1893; K. J. Withoff (from Dresden) Nov. 1893 to June, 1901; Louis Wahl-

meier, resident pastor, June 28, 1901 to Jan. 1, 1904; J. B. Vornholt, resident pastor, Jan. 1, 1904, to the present time.



The Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. B. Vornholt
Pastor, Jan. 1, 1904--

Father Vornholt came to New Almelo after 11 years at the Plainville parish and mission. A devout church man, a most widely read scholar, a keen student of public affairs, an able leader and tireless worker, declining calls to larger parishes, he has led the New Almelo parish through more than 38 years of service and progress. In recognition of his labors, he has received the title of Right Reverend Monsignor, conferred April 10, 1930, by Bishop Francis Tief of Concordia.

Development of New Almelo as a town came in two overlapping stages: (1) 1888 to 1915, when the main general store was on the extreme southeast corner of section 22, across from the northeast corner of the church grounds; (2) 1905 to the present, the development of business and homes on that part of NE-NE-27 not occupied by the church block.

New Almelo post-office history helps greatly in connecting up facts about the town. The post-office has usually been at the main general store. All postmasters and dates of service are here given verbatim from a letter by Ambrose O'Connell, First Assistant Postmaster General, dated Dec. 5, 1941.

NEW ALMELO, NORTON COUNTY, KANSAS

POSTMASTER	DATE APPOINTED
Harlog Meibergen	September 20, 1880 (Establ'sh'd)
Henry C. Davis	August 24, 1882
Joseph E. Siefke	February 9, 1888
Joseph J. Gardill	May 3, 1890
Orris T. Rockwell	December 18, 1894

This office was discontinued, March 15, 1901, and re-established July 5, 1902.

Antonius G. Wahlmeier	July 5, 1902
Antonius M. Schmitt	March 10, 1904

This office was discontinued, April 29, 1905, and re-established October 31, 1917.

Anthony J. Mindrup	October 31, 1917
Nicholas E. Dellere (Acting)	June 27, 1931
Nicholas E. Dellere	February 19, 1932
Alva A. Carpenter (Acting)	April 18, 1936
Alva A. Carpenter	August 13, 1936

This office is still in operation.

Apparently the Postoffice Department used the name "New Almelo" while the postoffice was at the Meibergen store on the old townsite of "Almelo". Henry C. Davis, postmaster 1882-1888, lived $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of "Almelo", and a little south, on the NW-SW-28. The postoffice was at his farm house. Mr. Davis was a County Commissioner, 1880-1883. The same farm was later owned by two other County Commissioners: Levi J. Register, 1908-1912, now 90, living at San Leandro, California; and R. E. Getty, elected 1940. Almelo township has had one other Commissioner: T. A. Costello, 1920-'24, Spanish-American war veteran, whose farm is about a mile farther up the Solomon.

New Almelo arrived officially near its present location when Joseph E. Siefke became postmaster. He bought a lot 125 by 175 feet at the Section 22 corner from A. Reichert (recorded 4-18-88) and put up a frame store building 20 by 40 feet. Title passed to S. Larrick, 10-30-89, and back on 1-7-93 to Maggie Siefke, who moved the building away. She was the widow of Joseph Siefke (deceased 7-6-92) and is now Mrs. John Gilmore of Norton. She sold the lot to A. G. Wahlmeier 2-22-02, who re-established a store

by moving the former District 13 school-house in from its site a quarter mile north and a half mile east. Additions were made to enlarge the store and provide living quarters. A. H. Schmitt bought this property 3-7-'04, and Philomena Mindrup bought it from him 9-2-'10. Wahlmeier and Schmitt each operated the store during approximately their terms as postmaster; they were followed as store-keepers by L. M. Leonardi, 1905; F. J. Mindrup, 1907; John W. Mindrup and A. J. Mindrup, 1910-1915. The three Mindrups were sons of the late Philomena Mindrup, a widow.

Across the road east of Siefke's, Joseph J. Gardill during his term as postmaster, had a store which soon became vacant and eventually burned. Joseph Barbo, Lenora merchant after 1880, had a branch store at New Almelo for a short time around 1885 or 1886, located on the northwest corner of the present church block. Orris T. Rockwell, postmaster 1884-1901, kept the office at his house just south of the present townsite. Rocks lying in the field corner now mark the site on the west side of the county road.

In November, 1905, Bishop John F. Cunningham of Concordia had the Norton County Surveyor plot the present 40-acre townsite of New Almelo (NE-NE-27) into blocks and lots, most of which have since been sold to private owners. (Plat Book No. 2, page 20, Norton County).

The church buildings already described occupy Blk. 1 containing 7 acres reserved in the northeast corner. The town includes 13 blocks, most of which contain one or more homes, a total of about 20 residences, besides the living quarters in each store. Improvement of the main streets was completed in 1938 through a W.P.A. project which included 13 linear blocks of concrete curb and gutter, and crushed rock surfacing. Rural electric service from the Norton-Decatur Cooperative Electric Company was established February 1, 1941.

The business section of New Almelo has developed just west of the church, occupies the east half of Block 2 (6 lots) and faces east on St. John Street, the town's principal north-and-south

street. It includes five businesses, as follows: Lot 1, filling station, built 1931 by A. J. Mindrup, owner and operator to date; Lot 2, general store and postoffice, moved up from the section 22 corner in 1915, since operated in turn by Mindrup, Dellere, and Carpenter, the present owner, during approximately the term of each as postmaster. Lot 3, hardware store, built 1911 by F. J. Mindrup, owner and operator to date; Lot 4, garage and blacksmith shop, built 1915, now owned by Bernard Schandler, operated by Moritz Hahn; Lot 5, vacant since 1924; Lot 6, general store built in 1908 on lot 5 by L. M. Leonardi, moved to lot 6 and enlarged in 1924, present owner and operator, Mrs. D. A. Leonardi.

A township hall, 40 by 70 feet, of native rock, one story and basement, not yet completed, was begun in 1940 as a N.Y.A. project on Lot 1, Block 5, just across St. Joseph Street, south of the Leonardi store. Almelo Township as local sponsor, voted \$1,000 in bonds May 22, 1941, 85 to 11, as a part of its contribution to the project. Monsignor Vornholt donated the lot for this building.

This hall is expected to be used in place of District No. 13 school house (built 1903) $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north of New Almelo, which is too small for many public meetings and recreational activities. It succeeds also the large privately owned hall built in 1925 at the farm home of William Gilleece, discontinued for public use since 1937, and since remodeled for granaries. A large meeting place is frequently needed for holding showers and wedding dances, much enjoyed local customs of long standing.

New Almelo people have had many live community interests. Going back to the late 20's, one recalls the Tri-County Band and the Almelo home talent players. The latter activity has continued in the Womens' Farm Bureau unit organized 2-23-'34; this club has been especially strong and active in its various projects; it has an average membership of about two dozen, but has had up to 32 members. Its presidents have been: Mrs. John W. Hickert 1934-35, Mrs. R. E. Getty 1936-37, Mrs. Cora Organ 1938-39, and Mrs. Frank Osthoff 1940-42. The New Almelo baseball teams are always leaders in that sport. John Mindrup Park, about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of town, east of the County road, and north of the Solomon, offers an excellent playing field.

- ¹ The Fourth Annual Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.
- ² Plat Book, No. 1, 12.
- ³ *ibid.*, 12.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, 13.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, 13.
- ⁶ Record of County Commissioners, 1872-87. 550-551.
- ⁷ First Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.
- ⁸ The Norton County News, Historical Number, 1916.
- ⁹ Deed Record, Vol. 4, p. 168.
- ¹⁰ Norton County News, *op. cit.*
- ¹¹ Deed Record, Vol. 3, p. 279.
- ¹² The Norton County News, *op. cit.*
- ¹³ Deed Record, vol. 5, p. 629.
- ¹⁴ The Norton County News, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁵ Deed Record, vol. 54, p. 334.



Fragments of the Gentry house, northwest of Norton, demolished in the tornadoes of June 24, 1909, discussed on p. 167. Orin Gentry, with his family, was on the way home in a wagon when he saw the storm strike, and stayed with a near neighbor while the storm demolished his home.

Long Branch and the Sappa



CHAPTER VIII

THE fertile valley to the northwest offered opportunity to settlers where there was an abundance of timber for house building and much needed fuel. To reach this part of the county the settlers followed a trail which extended from Norton across a large expanse of prairie farm land reaching the valley near the northwest corner of the county. By-roads led to different parts of the valley. This old trail has been replaced with modern highways, namely: N.C. 541 intersects US 283 just north of the hospital in the city of Norton and terminates on the state line at the Rothschild ranch; N.C. 537 leads from U. S. 36, six miles west of Norton north to the Devizes store; and N.C. 513 intersects US 36, eleven miles West of Norton and extends north through the Long Branch vicinity.

This section of the county is adapted to agriculture and stock raising and the up-land is the greatest wheat section of Norton county.

There have been two groups of people with strong religious principles who settled in this section and have engaged in agriculture. They are classed as successful farmers.

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Norton County Highway No. 537 passes through a Lutheran Settlement northwest of Norton. Among the first Lutherans to settle here was August Wegener who came in 1906. Mr. Wegener has been a very successful and extensive farmer and owns a large acreage. He was classed a Master Farmer in the year 1927. Fremont Slefel received that distinction in 1933. Mr. Slef-

fel lives southeast of Norton and was the second Norton county farmer to be so honored.

Other Lutheran families to settle northwest of Norton were: George Ruff and Paul Wudtke came in 1906; Richard Wodtke, Herman Braun, and his father, H. A. M. Braun came in 1907; William Werner and a Mr. Finke came some time between 1907-1912. The settlers came in groups from Nebraska, Illinois, and eastern Kansas. The approximate number of Lutheran families today is twenty-five.¹

The church was established in 1908. The records show that a lease was secured on a three acre tract located on the northeast corner of section sixteen, township two north, range 24 west. A new lease was taken one mile south on the southeast corner of section 16 in 1917.²

The first sermon was preached by Rev. Batz. He also preached the sermon on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the church. The following ministers have served as

pastors: Theodore Norden, Ed H. Schulenberg, John Cohrs, O. W. Ninke, E. Klawitter,

Henry D. Wagner, H. F. Pennekamp, Edwin H. Kreuz, Alvin R. Lade, Rev. Lamprecht and Arnold G. Griesse. At times when a pastor was called away the congregation was served by neighboring pastors from Hoxie, Stuttgart and other points. The school was started in 1908 and has continued uninterrupted except for a brief time during the first world war.

The school has always taught church doctrines beginning in the first period in the morning.



The Immanuel Lutheran Church
Rev. Arnold G. Griesse, Pastor,
1939--.

THE COLONY

Garfield and Rockwell townships, located northeast of Norcatour on the divide between the Prairie Dog and Sappa Creeks have an interesting history dating back to 1878-1879.

Immigrating to this section were families from Nebraska, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and other eastern points. Among the early settlers who came with families were: Isaac Harrider, S. R. Holsinger, Mike Lichty, Chris Strayer and G. W. Bishop who came in 1878-79. Others arriving about the same time were: Homer and Albert Hale, Henry Howard, the Jonathan Blue family and a Mr. Boles.

Garfield township was organized in 1881 and Rockwell township in 1886. Lumber for building homes was hauled by ox team from the Kansas Union Pacific railroad at Wakeeney, sixty miles south from Norton, and it required from six to eight days to make the trip there and return home.

The settlers who arrived from the eastern points were of a religious type of the Dunkard Faith. The settlement was known as Rockwell City for many years and played an important part in the development of Norton county. Being interested in the education of their children, they erected a sod school house, which was also used as a place to worship, on the southeast corner of section twelve, township two south, range twenty-five west. Five acres of land was donated for a cemetery and a church to be built later. A store was established on the opposite side of the road and a post office was opened in the store. The post office was named Bell.

In the winter of 1884 William Rockwell, wife and two daughters, came to Norton county on account of failing health. They settled near the church and store which Mr. Rockwell purchased and operated for a time. It was rumored that a railroad was to be built through this part of the county and Mr. Rockwell conceived the idea of a town for the community. He moved his store a mile west and one-half mile south where he had erected a building and had a townsite surveyed.³

The following account of the founding of the city appeared in the Norton Champion under date of February 28, 1884:

"Dr. Rockwell, has laid out and platted a new townsite, to be called Rockwell. It is located on sections thirteen and fourteen, township two south, range twenty-five west, in what is known as the Dunkard Colony. The townsite consists of sixteen blocks of twenty four lots each, making in all, three hundred and eighty four lots. The plat will soon be filed for record, when the sale of lots will commence.

"The Doctor has commenced the erection of a mammoth building, which he will occupy as a general merchandise and drug store. Mr. Armsburger from Guide Rock, Nebraska, has commenced the erection of a building for a hardware store. A lumber yard will be immediately located there and will be under the management of John Murphy as salesman. A good blacksmith has already been secured and will locate there in a few days, his goods have already arrived. They have commenced work on the public well which will be pushed to completion as rapidly as possible.

"Lots will be for sale under the restriction that no intoxicating drinks shall ever be sold thereon, nor gambling houses, or houses of ill fame shall ever be erected on them. Mr. Ramage, county surveyor, finished the survey of the townsite, Wednesday, last. We predict that the new town will soon come into prominence, being located as it is in the best and most beautiful part of Norton county, and being already surrounded by a thriving, industrious class of farmers. We cannot see why it should not become a live town. We wish the new undertaking success."

The following local news item appeared under the heading, "Rockwell City" in the Norton Champion May 22, 1884: "At last after a prolonged struggle we have been granted the name for our town. Dr. had a hard time of it in getting the name but at last the department had to grant his request as he would not give them any rest until they did. Mr. Rockwell has been commissioned as postmaster, Mrs. Rockwell as assistant and V. C. Wheeler as Clerk."

"Dr. Rockwell died at his residence in Rockwell City, September 1, 1884, aged 59 years and 1 day."

The spring following Mr. Rockwell's death, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad built through to the south and Mrs. Rockwell then began to realize her husband's hopes of building a town here were fading. She moved the store to the newly laid-out town of Norcatour.

The little town was soon abandoned, leaving nothing to mark its location except a high point in the road where the windmill stood as a friend to a parched populace. The post office was continued in farm homes until a mail route was established.

The Maple Grove Cemetery Association was organized in 1888, with H. J. Howard as president and S. R. Holsinger as secretary. The cemetery was platted and filed November 24, 1888.⁷

A church had been erected near the cemetery and Bell Postoffice. There was a division in the church which divided the congregation into the progressives, called the Brethren, and the old line Dunkards who were later know as the "Church of the Brethren". The latter built a fine church, pictured herewith, a mile east and one half mile north of the old church in the year 1893. The old church building is no longer used and they all worship in the new church which is supplied with a regular pastor.⁸



The Maple Grove Church.
Rev. Dennis Kessler, Pastor,
1937--

LONG BRANCH

Long Branch Creek extends from south to north along the west part of the county, emptying into the Sappa Creek in Crystal township. This section of the county was settled by pioneers who preferred homes where there was timber for building homes and shelter from the storms. The valley is a tributary to the Sappa and very similar in every way.

Trade has been carried on with Norton since the county was organized; for years they traveled what was called the Norton-Long Branch Trail, which was later known as the Norton-Lyle Stage Line over which the U. S. Mail was carried between Norton and Lyle and on to Oberlin.

The valley has lost some of its former beauty; many of the trees have died and the once noted orchards of cherry and apple are gone. Some of the finest timber in the county grew along Long Branch Creek when the valley was settled.

It was over this region that the fleet footed pronghorn, commonly called the antelope, roamed during the days of settlement and before. They are described as having a color of a yellowish tawny above and white below, with a rump patch and tawny collar. A full grown antelope weighed up to one hundred pounds; and they were esteemed for food.

N. C. 513 traverses a section of comparatively level land east of the creek which is dotted with farm homes and buildings reminiscent of prosperous years gone by. Tractors have taken the place of horse power in farming to a considerable extent.

The Hillmon School House stands to the L. of N.C. 513 at approximately 22 m. This is school district No. 6 and was organized in the summer of 1873.⁹ Richard Lackey Hillmon was born in 1828 and came with his family to Norton county in the seventies. Emma Hillmon, a daughter, was born in 1865 and after completing her early education and teaching a year or two she became interested in missionary work and was sent as a missionary to Africa by the Free Methodist Church.

The early newspaper files show that Miss Hillmon attended Normal Institute in Norton in 1882. She taught in the Seminary at Orleans, Nebraska about that time. After going to Africa she was stationed at Natal where she married a young minister by the name of Haviland. She labored there until her husband's death, and then returned with her two children to the United States and settled in the state of Washington where she died in January 1941.

THE SAPPA CREEK VALLEY

The winding Sappa crosses the northwest corner of Norton county from the southwest to the northeast. This valley is a historic section of the county. The early settlers were lured here by its fertile soil, pure water and plentiful timber. Sappa Creek is lined with elm, ash, boxelder, cottonwood and hackberry. Saw mills were stationed along the creek and some of the timber was sawed into lumber for building purposes.

In the historical number of the Norton County News published in 1916 the valley was described in the following language:

"The valley is rich in alfalfa lands, and the soil is the best to be found in the county, and as one stands on the high land to the south and views the miles of pretty country, dotted with groves of timber, and pleasant, prosperous homes, he is prone to wonder whether or not in all the wide world, there is another landscape nearly so beautiful as that before him, wrought out by the hand of God and that of the sturdy pioneer."¹⁰

The history of the Sappa Creek valley is interwoven with incidents of pioneer hardships and suffering. Indian scares played an important part. Traveling long distances for medical aid, sleeping out on the prairie, swimming swollen streams and the lack of food were among the hardships the pioneers had to endure.

INDIAN STOCKADE

At the time of the Indian massacre in Decatur county in 1878, the settlers formed a stockade on section eleven, township one south, range twenty-five west on the creek west of the Hillmon School House. A young man, riding an Indian pony, rode down the valley and notified all the settlers that the Indians were on the warpath farther west and were moving down the valley.

The entire population began making preparation for a centralized defense and congregated on the creek at this point that evening. This was one of the wild nights in the history of the valley. Well into the night wagons continued to arrive, some bringing seriously sick persons for protection. The rattle of the

wagons, the whooping and swearing of teamsters were climaxed at night by the screaming of women and children when a colt accidentally broke through the roof of a dugout where they were sheltered.

The next day a scouting party was sent up the valley as far as Oberlin to find out about the Indians. They returned to camp the second night bringing the news of the massacre in Decatur county, and reported that the Indians had moved on north.¹¹

BUENA VISTA PRECINCT

At the meeting of the Board of County Commissioners held in July 1873, the following motion was adopted:

"On motion it was ordered that a voting precinct be established on the Sappa in Almena Township to be known as the Buena Vista Precinct in said township. The first election to be held at or near the John O'Brien home. The precinct to be bounded as follows: 'Commencing where the range line between range 23 and range 24 intersects the state line between the state of Kansas and the state of Nebraska, running west on state line to the northwest corner of the county, thence south on the county line to the town line between the townships of Almena and Center, thence east on said township line to range line between range 23 and range 24, thence north on said range line to place of beginning'.¹²

THE MAGERS FARM

Reuben Bisbee Sr., came from Canada in 1873 and settled on land south of where Devizes now stands. The Devizes post office was established in his house and he became the first postmaster, naming the office Devizes after a post office by that name in Ontario, Canada. The first store in the community was opened in the Bisbee home, where L. M. Sheburne kept a small stock of merchandise. Mr. Bisbee gave the land and laid out the cemetery. He was buried here January 1887.¹³

THE DEVIZES STORE

The Devizes store is located on N.C. 537 at approximately 20.5 m. This inland trading center is situated just north of the creek,

and consists of a store, garage and shop. Recreational activities are provided. There are a very few dwellings situated near.



The Devizes Store, 1942.

Devizes was platted by the owners of the land, Reuben Marvin and Lucinda Marvin, his wife, August 7, 1889 and the plat was filed for record January 4, 1890.¹⁴

John Dermott settled on the land where the store stands in December 1872. The second mercantile business established in the community was operated in a log shanty near where the mill was built by Bates and Lindsey in 1877. The postoffice was moved here after the little village was started.

Devizes was a community center for years and became a lively trading center during the 1890's. The mill was patronized by farmers living in distant parts of northwest Kansas and southern Nebraska. It burned down later and was never rebuilt.

On special occasions the settlers were attracted here by matched ball games, horse races and other sports. They all had a good time together in the days when people created their own

amusements. The facilities for picnics, boating and swimming were excellent.¹⁵

Changing conditions have destroyed much of the community spirit. The automobile and good roads have made it possible for people to travel long distances for trading and amusement. The general appearance of the community has been changed by more modern buildings taking the place of the primitive dugouts and sod houses.

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17

This school, known as the Devizes School, is one of the older schools in the county. The following interesting account of the first school held in the District is furnished by Mrs. Mildred Persinger Bright, Principal of the Calvert School 1941-1942:

"A reminiscence of early school days in Norton county, particularly in the immediate part of said county where Devizes is located. The first school in the district of Devizes was taught by J. C. Pettyjohn, during the fall and winter of 1878-79. The school house was built of sod and was located some distance west of where the present school house now stands.



District Number 17 School.
(Cracker Box Type)

Some of the patrons of the district during that time were the Marvins, Nelsons, Railsbacks and Lindseys. Will Nelson, now living in the Devizes community, attended the school while J. C. Pettyjohn was teaching. The total enrollment was between forty and fifty pupils.

Mr. Pettyjohn, whose home was in Furnas County, Nebraska, boarded with the parents of the pupils during the school year.

J. C. Pettyjohn was my great grandfather. Fifty-five years later, 1933-34, I taught Devizes, District No. 17. The total enrollment was thirteen. I boarded at the Will Nelson home which is about two miles west of the school house.

Patrons of the district at this time were the McCalls, Skiles, Beatys, Nelsons, Magers and Gregorys.

This data pertaining to J. C. Pettyjohn and his teaching was sent me from B. W. Pettyjohn, a son of J. C. Pettyjohn and great uncle of mine, Canon City, Colo., Dec. 9, 1941."

Among the other settlers of the northwest section of the county who arrived in the 1870's were: Reuben Bisbee; G. B. Wray; R. F. Hudsonpillar; I. P. Burke; Archie Hewitt; Joseph Collins; Fred Foote; H. B. Hannum; George A. Hannum; Mary H. Deal; George C. Post; Michael O'Toole, father of John J. O'Toole, who now resides in Norton; Peter Applegate; Ira Applegate, father of T. E. Applegate, who now lives in Crystal township; and Homer Applegate, who lives in Rock Branch township.

THE ROTHSCHILD RANCH

A sectional map of Norton county published about the year 1900 indicates a large tract of land as "The Brunswick Stock Ranch". Albert J. Brunswick purchased this large tract of land in 1892. Mr. Brunswick conducted a stock ranch here for eighteen years, handling a high grade of livestock and produced many acres of alfalfa for both the hay and the seed crops.

This ranch, consisting of more than four thousand acres and extending north to the state line, was purchased from Mr. Brunswick by Louis P. Rothschild on April 1, 1910. Mr. Rothschild operated the ranch until recent months when it was leased to the Foster Farms interests.

N. C. 541 crosses the ranch and reaches the state line where the Sappa crosses the state line into Nebraska.

THE HERD LAW

At a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners in session at Norton, Kansas, July 8, 1873, the following resolution was adopted:

"We the Board of County Commissioners, Billings County, Kansas, sitting at the county seat of said county, Tuesday, July 8, 1873, in accordance with an act passed by the legislature of the State of Kansas in 1872 known as the Herd Law, do hereby order that the following kinds and classes of stock shall not run at large in said county, to wit: horses, mules, asses, cattle and sheep.

This act shall take effect on the 10th day of August, at 12 M., A. D. 1873."

When this law went into effect it caused trouble and was difficult to enforce.

KANSAS TORNADOES IN NORTON COUNTY

Norton county has had very few destructive tornadoes during its seventy years of history, but what may be termed an exception to this statement occurred on June 24, 1909. The Norton Champion on July 1, 1909 described Norton county as "The Champion Performer in the Manipulation of Cyclones", because no less than seven twisters performed here in a small area in a short time. The area covered was approximately fifteen miles square—beginning about 10 miles northwest of Norton and extending northwest.

Thousands of dollars in property, including a dozen farm homes and two school houses were lost. Not a person was killed and only a few injured, but scores of horses, cattle and chickens were destroyed. Very few residents of the county have been able to observe a tornado, close at hand in its destructive work, but from vantage points in the city of Norton hundreds watched the formation of the tornadoes striking at different points that afternoon.

³ Elmer Griesse, Norton, Kansas.

² Miscellaneous Record, vol. D, 547.

³ Norton County News, Historical Number, October 1916.

⁴ The Norton Champion, February 28, 1884.

⁵ *ibid.*, May 22, 1884.

⁶ *ibid.*, September 1, 1884.

⁷ Plat Book, No. 2, 7.

⁸ Deed Record, vol. 19, 507.

⁹ Record of County Commissioners, 1872-87, 15.

¹⁰ Norton County News, *op. cit.*

¹¹ A. C. Neal, Alma, Kansas.

¹² Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 13.

¹³ Norton County News, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Plat Book, No. 2, 11.

¹⁵ Norton County News, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Record of County Commissioners, *op. cit.* 14.



Another view of damage done by the tornadoes of June 24, 1909, discussed on the preceding page. (See also p. 155). This was the Meyers house, occupied by a Mr. and Mrs. Garrison at the time, who held the door (shown in center) shut while the tornado ripped the remainder of the house away. Miraculously, neither was injured seriously.

Growth and Development



CHAPTER IX

NORTON county has a rural population (including unincorporated towns) of 5090, and a city population of 4110, making a total population of 9,200, (1941).¹

The population is less than in 1897 when it reached 9,617 the highest to that date. The highest ever reached was 12,269 in the year 1906. It went down to 10,129 in 1914 and up to 12,212 in 1933. Since that date it has gradually declined, especially in the rural areas.

THE BUILDING OF RAILROADS

The Atchison, Colorado and Kansas was the first railroad to build into Norton county. It was extended into the county in 1881, passenger service beginning in January 1882. The road was taken over by the Missouri Pacific Company and they still continue service to the south part of the county.

The second railroad to enter the county was a branch of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy which was extended from Republican City, Nebraska, to Oberlin, Kansas, in 1885. The Lincoln Land Company was organized and was active in promoting new towns along the line. This railroad has been a great help in hauling grain and livestock and giving local passenger service.

The Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska Railroad started building this way from Fairbury, Nebraska in July 1886. The grading was let by contract to the lowest bidder, and the work was done by steam and shovel. The crew laying the steel followed up laying on an average two and one half miles per day. When the crew laying the steel reached Norton there was a large celebration.

John Pollard of Almena, who was a member of this crew and was later road foreman, gave this information.

THE C. K. & N. R. R. ARRIVED IN NORTON

The best town in western Kansas on Friday,

January 27, at 2:41 P. M.

(Editorial in the Norton Champion, February 2, 1888).

At 2:45 p. m. on Friday last January 27th, the Rock Island laid its first rail and drove its first spike inside the city limits of Norton. A thousand people adorned the Brook Bank Farm to watch the westward march of iron. When the tracklayers penetrated the heart of the city, no less than three thousand spectators lined the borne of the car and track of the great Rock Island, the pioneer of railroads traveling under the assumed name of C. K. & N.

Norton was prepared to meet the tracklayers with its excellent band; and rails, spikes, whistles and horns made such a harmonious din as to make the echoes of the Prairie Dog Valley from Bert Williams' to Newt Cope's. The city council came out in full regimentals and to deliver to the tracklayers the freedom of the city of Norton. At a slight lull in the spike driving Mayor White, exposing his level head to the afternoon sun inclining its rays about 62 degrees above zero, raised his right arm as for silence when even the puffing engine held its breath in quietude. The mayor began:—"You men of iron! In olden times when such an invading army besieged a peaceful city, the women and children, unlike these days, fled to the cellars believing that there undisturbed, they might like wine, grow old and strong. These engines, steel clad wheels and cars, not wheels of torture nor battering rams, have rolled into our city without due challenge at our warden's gate. Now from the minaret of this castle of sand (here the mayor was sliding from the unfirm top of a mole hill) I challenge you to answer truly: What seek you here armed to the teeth with crowbars, picks and catapults? (Silence) No answer. Our fate is sealed. Your silence is ominous and we are doomed. Norton is a peaceful city. War to us is a dire calamity. Something we do not court and something we must avoid upon the slightest pretext. You are the enemy that last fall came to us for money. We gave you twenty five thousand doll-

ars and, moreover, ceded to you under duress, be it spoken, our tropical province of Penn Street. Now you come again. Let us capitulate. We hoist the white flag of peace, and will sign any treaty or subscribe to any terms proposed for peace. For the purpose of capitulation I am authorized, as mayor of Norton, to tender to you, Rock Island the Great, tracklayers and all, the freedom of the city."

After the address, with a tiger turned loose in the crowd, the band continued with music. Following this Mr. Sweeney, foreman of the tracklayers, stepped to the rear of the car and taking off his hat accepted the honor and responded to the Mayor's address. He said: "Citizens of Norton and vicinity. You have the thanks of the C. K. & N. Tracklayers for the friendly interest manifested in our work as well as for the enjoyable serenade given us by the cornet band, and it is our wish that these people may profit by our road to the fullest extent of their most sanguine expectations."

When the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific was surveyed through much interest was taken in the route it would take west from Norton. There had been one survey made through to Oberlin, but no doubt the Burlington building through to that point two years previous caused that route to be given up. Five small towns took an active interest in the route the new road was to take, each hoping it would go through its town.

The three railroads that built into the county have served its interest now more than half a century. They have hauled millions of bushels of grain to the markets and also millions in dollars of livestock. Nothing has enhanced the value of land more than the railroads. They have paid thousands of dollars in taxes which has helped carry the county through years of drouth, grasshoppers, windstorms and depression. Norton county owes a debt of appreciation for the benefits received.

MINERAL DEPOSITS

Norton county has not occupied a prominent position in res-

pect to mineral development due largely to a lack in demand for such minerals as are here.

Building Stone: The stone quarries were opened primarily to get stone for building purposes. Stone is now quarried for foundations, concrete, road surfacing and rip-rapping. The principal stone consists of limestone, sandstone, flint and magnesia.

Sand and Gravel: Sand in the middle third of Kansas is found in stream beds and disintegrated sand rock. The good roads program has caused the opening up of a large number of these sand pits and rock quarries. In Norton county some of the sand pits are made by removing several feet of the surface soil in places along the streams. The sand varies from very fine sand to coarse gravel.

Volcanic Ash (Silica): Although Kansas has never had an active volcano so far as the geological record goes, the state does contain some large deposits of Volcanic Ash (pumice) and is one of the leading states in the Production of this important Abrasive. Next to Oxygen, Silicon is said to be the most abundant element in nature, composing about sixty per cent of the earth's surface.

Large deposits of silica are found in Norton county, but it is not extensively mined. At the town of Calvert a few hundred cars are loaded each year. The facilities for loading the silica have been improved the past summer. Two companies operate mines near Calvert the greater part of the year.

FARMING AND FARM METHODS

Farming is the chief occupation in the rural sections of the county. The first settlers arriving and settling on homesteads brought breaking plows with them and broke the prairie by using either horse or ox teams. Two acres were considered an average day's work for a team.

After the sod was turned the corn was planted by slitting the sod with an axe or a spade; into the slit the farmer dropped kernels of corn and closed the slit by stepping on it with his foot. In a short time the hand planter came into use and this was



John Bartles and son, Claud cutting last wheat harvested with cradle in Norton County, 1919, just southeast of Almena.

followed by the horse drawn planter which planted two rows at a time. Still later the lister came into use, which method is still used. Small grain was broadcast and covered with the harrow.

The small grain was harvested with a cradle and threshed with a flail or trodden out by animals.

The cultivation was more simple at that time than it is today and was generally done with the hoe. Sod corn needed no cultivation and was considered a fairly sure crop.

As the county developed new and improved methods were used in keeping with the times. The riding plow, the cultivator, the corn lister, the binder, the header and, later, the combine have made farming more pleasant than it was in the early years of the county's history.

With the improved farm methods, better seed is furnished, which has improved the quality of grain. The livestock raised on the farms are better quality with increased value. More pure bred herds of cattle and hogs, improved dairy herds and flocks of poultry have helped the farm industry.

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS BY DECADES

Years	1911	1921	1931	1941
Acres in farms		505,561	513,704	515,357
Acres in wheat	148,101	117,446	82,025	77,535
Acres in corn	72,010	91,500	164,947	70,983
Acres in oats	10,255	1,231	2,117	3,750
Acres in barley	1,023	18,244	10,217	31,895
Acres in alfalfa	14,875	3,192	4,224	2,393
No. of tractors		76	226	616
No. of combines			107	218 ^a

THE FARM BUREAU

The Norton County Farm Bureau was organized in 1930. Some 4-H Club work had been done prior to this. The Extension Work was organized August 1, 1930. The Major program for 1931 was outlined as follows: Crop Improvement, Grain Marketing, Crop Insect Control, Crop Disease Control, Pork Production, 4-H Clubs, Home Health and Sanitation, Women's Organizations.

Minor Projects for that year were: Poultry Production and Dairy Herd Management.²

The local Farm Bureau Organization is friendly toward and cooperates with all organizations which are interested in the agricultural program, such as: Civic Clubs, Farmers' Co-Operatives, Local Bankers' Associations and Commercial Clubs.⁴

Extension organization in the county is organized on a membership plan through the County Farm Bureau Organization. Each of the townships of the county has a township Vice President elected by the township members. From this group of Vice Presidents, ten are selected as an Executive Board, and from this group a president, vice president and secretary-treasurer are elected by the entire membership of the county.

The membership dues are fixed at \$1.00 for each member. At the start it was \$5.00 for each man and \$1 for each woman. The membership (1941) is as follows: Men 461; Women 167; 4-H Clubs 7, Members 120.

COUNTY AGENTS

Fred Sykes	1930-35
John G. Bell	1935-37
A. E. Schafer	1937--- ⁵

ELMWOOD PARK AND THE NORTON COUNTY FAIR

From the Norton County News, Historical Number, 1916:

"The Norton County Agricultural Association was organized in 1876. The first officers were: Albert Graves, president; R. F. Hudsonpillar, vice president; George H. Griffin, treasurer; M. J. Fitzpatrick, secretary.

Fairs were held on the old fair grounds just north of the Municipal Light and Water Works, on land now owned by Mr. Wallgreen.

The association was disbanded in 1888 and nothing was done toward reorganization until 1900 when a few prominent men of the county held a meeting and organized the present

association. M. F. Garrity was elected president and J. L. Miller secretary."

From the SE corner of Wabash Avenue and Park St., the Elmwood Park extends south and east to the Prairie Dog Creek. The park was created on May 15th, 1900, when the Norton County Agricultural Association leased twenty five and one half acres of land from Ve Broquet Delcourt. The lease was to cover a period of ten years. The Association had the privilege of buying the land any time at a price not to exceed one hundred fifty dollars per acre. The land was purchased in 1910. Other land has been added and the park now comprises approximately fifty three acres.

The grounds were turned to the city of Norton in 1935, the city assuming all indebtedness and the general upkeep of the grounds. The Norton County Agricultural Association retained the right to use said real estate for the purpose of holding a free fair each year."

The creek is held within its banks by dikes along the east and south sides of the park. Bonds were voted to purchase more land and improve the park at the City election, April 7, 1942. The park is well equipped for the fair. The Forty First Annual Fair was opened here in 1941, but due to a large flood it was removed to the airport north of the city. The grounds will be made ready for the fair this year.

Officers of the Association, 1942: President, Roy Bullock; Secretary, W. W. Isaac; Treasurer, R. E. Ambrose; General Manager, Jean Kissell.

NEWSPAPER HISTORY

A list of the early newspapers published in Norton County prior to 1880 were published in "The First Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture", 1877-78, Topeka, as follows:

"The Norton County Bee was started at Norton, January 1st, 1877, Harmer and Baker, Proprietors, Nat L. Baker, editor. In November that year, Harmer sold his interest to Baker, who removed the establishment to Leota, January 1st, 1878.

September 15th following he returned with his office to Norton, and issued three numbers, when it was discontinued."

"The Norton County Advance was established at Norton, June 1878, Pettigrew & Collins, publishers and proprietors. It is still published and Republican in politics." (Note this was recorded in 1878. For later history see below).

"The Free Press was established at Norton, October 7th, 1878, Dr. A. A. Baker, editor."

"The Norton County Locomotive was established at Leota, October 15th, 1878, Nat L. Baker, editor."

Those interested in a complete list of Norton County papers throughout the 1880's and 1890's will find them recorded in the Norton Champion, issue of June 10, 1897. The list is complete to that date. We quote from that list:

"Advance,—Consolidated with Norton County People Nov. 29th, 1882.

"People,—Established July 15th, 1880. Name changed to Courier in issue of 8th of Feb. 1883.

"Subsequent Courier Editors: J. H. Simmons and J. A. Littel to April 10th, 1883; J. H. Simmons & W. R. McCredie to April 15th, 1886; J. H. Simmons to Jan. 6th, 1887; F. M. Duvall from Jan. 13th, 1887."

One of Norton County's most noted and respected pioneers is F. M. Duvall who resides in Norton at the present time. Mr. Duvall was born November 10, 1850 and came to Norton county from Chicago in March, 1877. He engaged in the hardware business in Norton. In the fire of Jan. 2, 1886 he lost everything and had to make a new start. He bought the controlling interest in the "Courier", in which he had been part owner, and continued its publication until September 24, 1931, when he sold to Harry L. Covert & Son. Mr. Covert & Son published the paper for a few months and sold the establishment to the Daily Telegram September 8, 1932.

PUBLICATIONS, 1942

NORTON—

The Norton County Champion, established Feb. 28, 1884. (Thursday); M. R. Krehbiel, editor and publisher.

The Norton Daily Telegram, established (weekly) February 23, 1906; (daily) February 11, 1907. (Evenings except Sunday); C. L. Jacoby, editor; The Telegram Publishing Co., publishers.

The Norton Nugget, (fortnightly, during school year) School Students of Journalism Class of Norton Community High School, editors and publishers.

ALMENA—

The Almena Plaindealer, established 1888. (Thursday); Charles L. Rose, editor and publisher.

LENORA—

The Lenora News, established 1901. (Wednesday); Warren W. Morford, editor; M. R. Krehbiel, publisher.

NORTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE

By A. E. Schafer, County Agent

Norton county is located in the Great Plains Area where the soil has been developed from deposits formed by wind erosion. The soil is very fertile and is capable of abundant crop production when a sufficient amount of rainfall is received and adequately distributed during the growing season. As in most of the Great Plains Area the annual rainfall varies quite widely, from the extremely dry years to the years with an abundance of rainfall. The normal annual rainfall for Norton county is about 22 inches; and approximately three-fourths of the rainfall comes during the growing season. Therefore, there is a serious problem of the proper soil and moisture conservation to maintain the productivity of the land. Norton County has a little more than one-half million acres of farm land, of which approximately 55% is crop land. There is an average of 3 acres of crop land to 2 acres of pasture.

The topography of Norton county is rolling to rough, with a small percent of good level bottom land along the three major streams, namely: The Solomon River Valley, across the south side of the county; The Prairie Dog Valley, bisecting the county from the southwest to northeast; and the Sappa Valley, cutting across

the northwest corner of the county. Approximately one-fourth of the county is relatively level upland.

During the last several decades, from the time Norton county was settled and the sod broken to the present time, a great amount of the top soil has been lost from most of the upland farms. This loss has been caused by both wind and water erosion. Following two or three years of sub-normal rainfall and a complete crop failure in 1934 which left very little vegetative growth on the ground in the fall of 1934, the county, as well as much of the Great Plains Area, experienced the worst dust storms in the history of the county, starting in the fall of 1934 and continuing until the summer of 1935, and recurring in a lesser extent in the early part of 1936. During February, March, and April 1935, there were many days in which the dust storms were so bad that visibility was very poor and by the middle of the afternoon on some of the worst days, complete darkness resulted. Due to these conditions, there was a very small supply of livestock feed and it was necessary for the farmers to reduce their livestock numbers to a complete minimum; and with livestock prices very low, this condition caused extremely heavy loss to the farmers in Norton county as well as other parts of the Great Plains Area.

The water supply seems to be plentiful in the county with the exception of an area in the southeast part of the county covering possibly four townships. The water is furnished by relatively deep wells on the upland in Norton county. The wells range from 120 to 200 feet in depth; however, they can be located where they are most convenient. During the drought years, from 1933 to 1940, many of the trees on farmsteads and windbreaks have died, and as a result there is a need for an extensive tree planting program.

The type of agriculture carried on in Norton County varies from upland farms to the bottom farms along the streams; however, it can be stated that the farms are both grain and livestock. The principal crops grown in the county are wheat, corn, sorghums, barley, alfalfa, and some oats and rye. The major livestock enterprises consist of beef cattle, hogs, sheep, and dairy cattle. For the purpose of distinction, the county, as far as agriculture is

concerned, can be divided into more or less definite areas as determined by the Land Use Planning Committee.

Area I is a stretch of land along the north side of Norton county in Harrison and Almena townships. This area takes in the breaks of the Republican River which continue across the state on the south side of the river. It is rough, broken land with slopes up to 10%, and partly wooded. Too much of this hilly land has been cultivated and as a result erosion has occurred and caused some abandonment. This area is more suited for livestock farms with the rough land kept in native pasture. Crops consist of row crops, small grain and feed crops, and alfalfa.

Area II occupies all of the county north of the Prairie Dog Valley except the Sappa Creek bottom and the Republican River breaks. Approximately 60% of this area is under cultivation. The east part of this area has been devoted more to corn and the west part more to wheat. The productivity of this area is above average for the county. This is considered a general farming area with some cash grain, feed crops, legumes, and livestock.

Area III is the Sappa Valley across the northwest corner of the county. It is approximately 75% cultivated land devoted to corn and alfalfa, although wheat replaced corn during the dry years. Under normal crop conditions corn will do much better than wheat. The type of farming in this area is more or less of an intensive livestock nature where most of the crops produced are consumed on the farm. These farms are a little smaller than the average for the entire county and where the farmer expects to produce his own cattle, his farm must include some of the adjoining pasture land.

Area IV is the Prairie Dog Valley. It is very similar to the Sappa Valley in all respects. About 75% of the land is under cultivation and will grow corn, alfalfa and wheat. Although wheat has replaced corn during the last few years, it is expected that many farms will go back to corn with a normal amount of rainfall. Therefore, the type of farming in this area is more or less livestock farms with the crop products consumed on the farm.

Area V is the rough area south of the Prairie Dog Valley and Sappa Valley. It is about 75% pasture land and due to the topography of this area, it cannot be profitably used for any other purpose. In some instances, this land is connected with the bottom land to furnish the pasture for the livestock farm.

Area VI is rough land between the Prairie Dog Valley and the Solomon Valley in the west part of the county. This area includes some acreage south of the Solomon River. It grows more wheat than corn and is about the same type of land as that found north of the Prairie Dog along the west part of the county.

Area VII is the east part of the county between the Prairie Dog Valley and the Solomon Valley with the addition of a strip of land about one mile wide extending about 15 miles west along the south side of the county. This area is separated from the west side of the county because here about 50% of the land is in native pasture and is considerably rougher in topography. Corn, sorghums, wheat, and barley are the principal crops grown in this area, which make the farms more or less of a livestock type.

Area VIII is the rough broken land south of the Solomon Valley. The crops grown are similar to those in Area V and are used in connection with Area IX very much as Area V is used in connection with Area IV. This area is approximately 60% grassland.

Area IX is the North Solomon Valley. It is similar to the Prairie Dog Valley except the soil is much sandier; therefore, is not quite as favorable for alfalfa as the Prairie Dog Valley. The farms in this area are very similar to those in Area IV.

As a result of the dry years and low livestock prices following 1933, the type of agriculture shifted from livestock to cash grain; however, with both livestock and grain prices on the upswing at the present time, coupled with a more favorable moisture and crop condition, the trend is starting to swing back toward the type of agriculture which includes hogs, cattle, sheep, feed crops, and cash grain. With this type of agriculture coming back, the farmers of Norton County should find themselves in a more stabilized position than they have enjoyed for many years.

¹ Abstract of Agriculture, Population, and Other Statistics, Norton County, Kansas. 11. Office of County Clerk.

² *ibid.*, Report for: 1911, 1921, 1931, 1941.

³ Annual Report, Norton County Extension Agents, August 1, 1930 to October 31, 1935, 5. Farm Bureau Office.

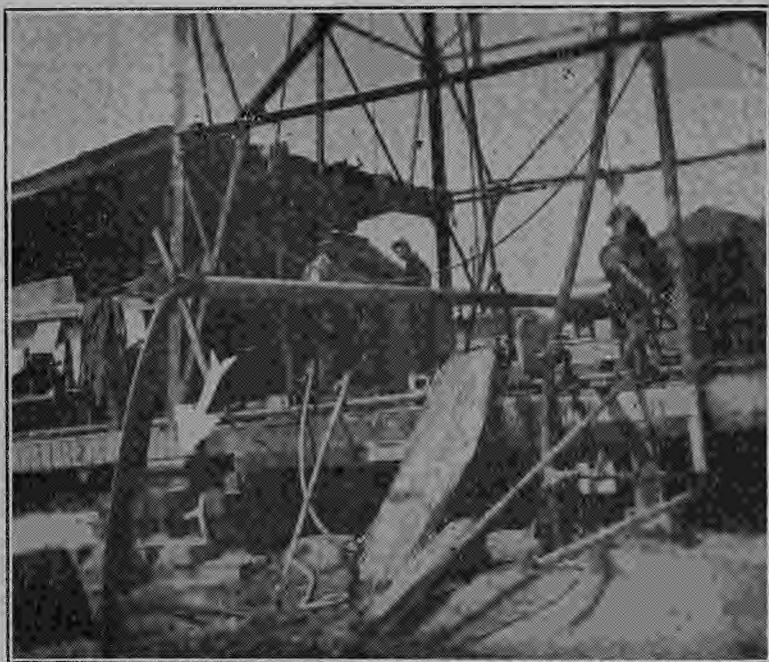
⁴ *ibid.*, 5.

⁵ A. E. Schafer, Farm Bureau Office.

⁶ Miscellaneous Records, vol B, 543. Office of Register of Deeds.

⁷ Office of the Daily Telegram, Norton, Kansas.

⁸ Office of the Norton Champion, Norton, Kansas.



Norton County's first Oil Well, the Power Oil No. 1 VanPatten, northeast of Densmore, "brought in" on May 17, 1939, but never pumped commercially because of the low gravity of the oil encountered.

Schools and Education



CHAPTER X

UNFORTUNATELY there are but few records available pertaining to the early schools of the county. This is partly due to the fire destroying the court house in 1926. We are told that before that date there were none that gave data on the organization of school districts.

The dates that are given in this chapter are taken from the records of the County Commissioners, The Agricultural Annual and Biennial Reports, the County Treasurers' Ledgers and the Tax Rólls.

THE FIRST COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

The organization of schools and school districts in Norton county begins with the name of N. H. Billings. The special Board of County Commissioners appointed by the governor to organize the county called a special election to be held September 24, 1872 for the purpose of electing county officers. At this election Mr. Billings received thirty three votes for Superintendent of Public Instruction and was declared elected.

He served a very short term from September 25, 1872 to January 1873. At the election held in November 1872, Mr. Billings was elected to the legislature and D. W. Mills was elected to the office of superintendent of Public Instruction.¹

ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

One of the first duties of the county superintendent was to organize the county into school districts.

District No. 1 was organized in the fall of 1872 while N. H.

Billings was county superintendent. The only record of the organization of the district and the voting of bonds is found in the History of the Early Settlement of Norton County by Frank M. Lockard. According to Mr. Lockard there were no records of the bond issue when he wrote his history. He infers the records had been purposely destroyed.

At the general election held in November 1872, for county superintendent, D. C. Coleman received 10 votes. William Gibbon received 11 votes, and D. W. Mills received 12. D. W. Mills having received a majority was declared elected and conducted the office in an honorable and efficient manner."

Mr. Mills continued the organization of school districts through the year 1873. There is no way to tell the month and day each district was organized, but the following entry was made in the Commissioners' Journal at the July meeting 1873:

"D. W. Mills, County Superintendent, presented bills for putting up notices for formation of school districts and calling for the first district meetings as follows: No's 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The next day districts 7 and 8 were added."

This establishes the date of organization in the summer of 1873. The districts were larger and covered the settled parts of the county at that time. As other districts were organized they were smaller. Originally, district No. 2, Almena, was 12 miles long from north to south and comprised territory that was later cut up into eight or nine districts.

Concerning the organization of school districts, A. K. Mills wrote of his father, D. W. Mills:

"Again imagination calls up another picture that is somewhat peculiar, taken in connection with the vocation. I see a man of medium build, light complexioned, diligent in person and seldom idle. He came to Norton county, located on a homestead in May, 1872, in the Prairie Dog Valley just below Almena. He ever felt a deep interest in the progress of the county and its people. In imagination, I can see him astride a little white faced pony riding over the county from its northern to its southern and from its eastern to its western boundaries, through the scorching heat

of summer and the blizzards of winter. This man was one of the county's pioneer Superintendents of schools, riding the little sorrel pony around organizing school districts. The man was the writer's father, D. W. Mills. This was certainly a primitive way of organizing school districts, but it was not without its fruits, for some of the most prosperous districts now in the county owning beautiful school buildings and school property, were organized by Mr. Mills on the sorrel pony and the schools have never ceased to exist since their organization back in the early Seventies."



Frontier Sod School, (Dist. 47, 11 miles north, 3 east of Norton)
This building has been replaced by a state approved
frame building.

The Fourth Annual Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, published in 1875, gives the number of school houses in Norton county at that date at 2, and the number of organized school districts at 17.

The First Biennial Report, 1877-78 gives the following data concerning the schools of the county: Organized school districts 24; School population 642; Average salary, male teachers \$22.55;

female teachers \$15.13; Value of school property, \$975.00; School houses built in 1878, log, 2. Total school houses in the county at that time 11. Of this number there were ten log and one frame building.

The years 1879-80 were the banner years for the organization of new districts and it was in the early 1880's when the schools began to develop. The bond issues began to show up on the records and new school houses were erected.

Districts up to 83 were on the records by 1880; also districts: Jt. 1, N&P and Jt. 1, N&D. The number had increased to 103 in 1888, and to 115 in 1893. The last district organized was 116 about 1902 or 1903.⁵

Some school districts did not appear on the tax rolls when first organized due to the fact that there were no taxes to collect. Subscription schools were conducted and paid for by parents who were financially able to pay a teacher.

The original district No. 10 was organized in 1873 and located in the New Almelo vicinity. The district disappeared from the Tax Roll in 1883. The territory was added to other adjoining districts.

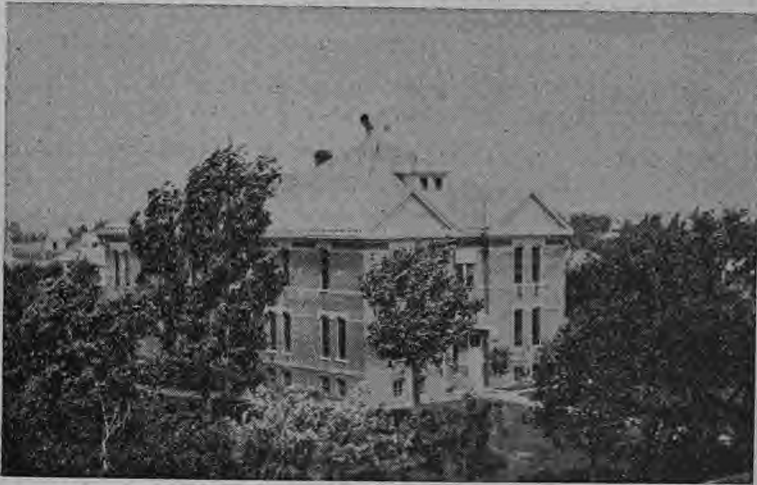
A new district No. 10 was organized in what is now a part of Harrison Township. This new district appeared on the Tax Roll in 1884.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NORTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Prior to the establishment of the Norton County High School and for several years afterward, the incorporated cities in the county each conducted a high school in connection with the city school. This practice continued until the Rural High Schools were established.

The Norton County High School was organized under an act relating to the establishment of a County High School in Norton

County. The act was introduced in the legislature of 1899 by Senator Dan Hart and Representative M. P. Pogue."



The Norton County High School, Norton, Kansas.

The first building was completed in 1902 and four additional rooms and a gym were added in 1907, completing the building as it appears in this picture. This building served the county until it was replaced by the present Norton community High School building in 1923.

Several years previous, the town of Edmond made strong bids to have a County High School established in their school district. The legal residents of the district presented the board of County Commissioners the following petition:

"To the Honorable Board of County Commissioners of Norton County, Kansas—

—WHEREAS, the population of Norton County exceeds six thousand persons, the number required by law for establishment of a County High School and WHEREAS the electors of School District Number 11 have offered to donate the use of the upper rooms of their school house for the purpose of

said County High School, the rooms above mentioned being ample for that purpose.

Now we the undersigned electors of Norton County, Kansas do hereby pray your Honorable Body to call a special election for the purpose of submitting to the electors of said County and State aforesaid the proposition whether said High School shall be established at Edmond in School District No. 11, Solomon Township, Norton County." Signatures.⁷

As an inducement to have the High School located at Edmond the electors presented two propositions to the Board of County Commissioners as follows:

Proposition No. 1

"We the electors of School District No. 11, county of Norton and State of Kansas do hereby direct that the proposition made at a special meeting of said District held on the 8th day of January 1894, be amended to read as follows:

The Board of School District No. 11, State and County aforesaid, is hereby authorized and directed to deed the present school house and school house site belonging to said school district to Norton County, State of Kansas for the purpose of a County High School, forever, or so long as it shall be used for such purpose; Provided that the electors of said county shall establish said County High School at Edmond, in District No. 11, Norton County, Kansas, and provided further that possession shall not be given before the first day of May 1895."

Proposition No. 2

"We the electors of School District No. 11, Norton County, State of Kansas, do hereby authorize and direct the District Board of District No. 11, State and County aforesaid, to accept the donations made, or which shall be made, for the purpose of erecting a new school house in and for said School District, and to proceed to collect the same as soon as it shall be due, and to erect said new school house and complete it before the first day of May 1895."

"I do certify that the two foregoing propositions were voted on and carried at a special election in District No. 11, Norton County, Kansas by a vote of 42 for and 1 against."

Katie E. Ferris, District Clerk.⁸

The city of Lenora presented a Remonstrance as follows:

"WHEREAS, We the undersigned legal voters of Norton County have signed a certain petition asking the Board of County Commissioners to submit to the voters of Norton County a proposition to locate said High School at Edmond; and WHEREAS, we now desire to have submitted to the legal voters of the aforesaid County a proposition to locate the High School at the city of Lenora; therefore we respectfully request your Honorable Board to not count our names now upon said petition and that our names be counted upon a certain petition asking to have submitted the said proposition to locate said High School at the city of Lenora."

Signature of petitioners."

To the Board of County Commissioners of Norton County, Kansas:

"The undersigned legal voters of Norton County respectfully request your Honorable Board to call an election, for the purpose of submitting a proposition to establish a County High School at the City of Lenora." Signatures of petitioners.¹⁰

The above petition was presented to the board of County Commissioners January 20, 1894.

At a meeting of the Board under date July 5, 1894, The High School question was brought up and upon a petition from Edmond, Kansas, signed by 780 voters and citizens of Norton County for the location of said High School at Edmond, Kansas, it was decided to let the proposition come before the people at the general election.¹¹

The vote was taken at the general election held in November with the following result: For the establishment of a County High School at Edmond, Kansas—258 votes; Against 1398 votes.¹²

Through the untiring efforts of H. M. Culter, who had been principal of the Norton City Schools for six years, a petition bearing 1180 names was presented to the Board of County Commissioners following the Act of the Legislature of 1899, authorizing the Commissioners to establish a County High School on petition of a majority of the voters.

Commissioners' Order:

Norton, Kansas, April 15, 1899.

"Be it known that at the regular April meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Norton County, Kansas, A petition signed by 1180 of the legal voters of said county praying for the establishment of a County High School in said county and WHEREAS:

We find that said petition contains a majority of the legal voters of said county as shown by the votes cast for County Superintendent at the general election in November 1898.

Therefore the said Board of County Commissioners does order that a County High School be and the same is hereby established in said Norton County, Kansas in accordance with the provision of the session laws of 1899 providing for the establishment of a County High School in said County, and said Board of County Commissioners does hereby appoint the following named residents of said County as a Board of Trustees for said County High School to wit:

I. N. Cope, Oronoque; L. A. Sproul, West Union Township; J. C. Brown, Aldine Township; M. F. Garrity, Norton; F. B. Rumsey, Almena; and R. A. Richmond, Lenora."

The following were elected a permanent Board at the General Election in November 1899: M. F. Garrity; R. A. Richmond; F. B. Rumsey; F. Wray; Julius Bridegroom, and I. P. Burke.

The following year H. J. Milz and Wm. Howe succeeded Bridegroom and Burke. F. R. Snyder was County Superintendent.

The following courses were offered: College preparatory; Normal; Business; and General.

In September 1899, H. M. Culter was elected Principal; Assistants: T. B. Moore, C. D. Long, Laura Branson, and May Whims.

First year's enrollment: 70.

The board met August 13, 1901. Five mills were levied for bldg. Wray, Garrity and Milz were made a building committee. Architect was W. L. Woods of Topeka, Kansas. The contract was let to J. W. Berry of Jewell City, Kansas for a seven room building at \$10,050. The building was completed

in 1902. Four additional rooms and a gym were added in 1907.¹⁴

ESTABLISHMENT OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

The Norton County High School was located by ballot at the general election held in November 1899. At this election all of the smaller cities and towns received some support for the location of the County High School at their respective cities. At this election Norton received 742 votes, Almena 414, Edmond 255, Devizes 4, Densmore 2, Lenora 4, and Calvert 3.¹⁵

After the County High School was definitely established at the city of Norton, Almena, Lenora, Edmond and Clayton continued to conduct a High School in connection with their city schools. This placed a heavy burden on the taxpayers as they had to help support the County High School.

THE NORTON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Organized July 1, 1923 under an Act disorganizing all County High Schools and creating in their stead Community High Schools including all territory in said counties not included in territory of other accredited High Schools.¹⁶

LENORA RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

A petition for the establishment of a Rural High School at Lenora was presented on May 6, 1919. On the same day the Board of County Commissioners granted the prayer of the petition and called an election to be held at Lenora, Norton County, Kansas, on June 12, 1919.¹⁷

Election: Proposition No. 1—Organization and Establishment of Rural High School, For 310 votes; against 125 votes.¹⁸

CLAYTON RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

A petition for the establishment of a Rural High School at Clayton was presented on April 5, 1920. On the same day the Board of County Commissioners granted the prayer of the peti-

tion and called an election to be held at Clayton, Norton County, Kansas on April 20, 1920.¹⁹

Election: Proposition No. 1—Organization and Establishment of Rural High School, For 199 votes; Against 137 votes.²⁰

EDMOND RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

A petition for the establishment of a Rural High School at Edmond was presented on May 2, 1921. On the same day the Board of County Commissioners granted the prayer of the petition and called an election to be held on May 31, 1921.²¹

Election: Proposition—Organization and Establishment of Rural High School, For 176 votes; Against 11 votes.²²

ALMENA RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

A petition for the establishment of a Rural High School at Almena was presented on June 8, 1921. On the same day the Board of County Commissioners granted the prayer of the petition and called an election to be held on July 19, 1921.²³

Election: Proposition—Organization and Establishment of Rural High School. (The rural and city districts voted separately). Rural Precinct, For 158 votes; Against 145 votes. City Precinct, For 151; Against 15. Total For 309; Against 160.²⁴

DENSMORE RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

(After two previous attempts to establish a Rural High School at Densmore which failed due to legal difficulties the following petition succeeded).

A petition for the establishment of a Rural High School at Densmore was presented on April 3, 1922. Said petition was considered on April 10, 1922 and the prayer of the petition was granted by the Board of County Commissioners. An election was ordered to be held on May 18, 1922.²⁵

Election: Proposition No. 1—Organization and Establishment of Rural High School, For 162 votes; Against 156 votes.

Proposition No. 2—Location of Rural High School, For 161 votes; Against 152 votes.

Proposition No. 3—Bonds for Rural High School, For 159; and Against 161.²⁰

In this election the voters in the district voted in favor of the Organization and Establishment of the Rural High School by a majority of 6 votes, and rejected the bonds by a majority of 2 votes. The building was constructed by issuing warrants.

CHANGING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

By Byron F. Sallsbury, County Superintendent of Schools

In the schools of yesterday, the major emphasis in education was mastery of the "three R's". Often these skills were taught with little reference to life interest or pupil needs.

A transition has taken place, with shift in emphasis from learning the "three R's" in the old sense, to "growing up" in terms of maturation and learning. In this process the "three R's" are recognized as an indispensable means to richer, fuller, more ready experiencing. The present day schools in Norton county set up conditions that will provide the best possible pupil growth in various skills and technique.

In our present day schools the skills are taught chiefly for their practical value, rather than for any supposed mental discipline. They are introduced nearer to the time when the child needs the technique.

In modern schools, skills grow out of activities and take their meaning from experience. For example, in writing, my pet subject, the children have something to write about, some purpose for writing. The meaning and purpose come first. In other words life necessities and comforts, rather than abstract matter are found to be sufficient in building the basis of the new curriculum. An activity program provides a functional background for the "three R's".

In our present day schools we hear much, of the "whole method," "the activity program," "creative effort," "centers of interest," "units," "projects," and "integrated and correlated courses." Many people in the midst of this changing program inquire, "At which point do the skills come into these new programs? Are reading, arithmetic, and spelling still taught?" I would answer this in the affirmative. The best progressive practice achieves a balance between formal instruction in skills and a

rational program of educationally worthwhile activities. Few educators suggest the complete elimination of all systematic instruction in reading mechanics or arithmetic fundamentals in the elementary school years, though many prominent educators have advocated a more natural learning program. Everything possible is done by the progressive teacher to enrich the program, to give meaning to activities, and to promote curiosity and interest in learning and finding facts. Progressive teachers utilize all the features of the immediate environment that contribute to skills and make real problems, for example, the dimensions of a new building being erected, or prices at the local grocery store.

The place of the text book is somewhat different in modern schools. In our lower grades, school texts are more often in the hands of the teachers than in the hands of the children. We seldom speak of a basic reader or arithmetic, but instead provide suitable material in any form appropriate for the child's learning level. Many so-called text-books contain nonfunctional material and provide for over-learning of non-essentials.

In the place of textbooks the following are quite often used: charts, the children's own drawings and writing efforts, scrapbook collections, graphs, diagrams, radio, movies, lantern slides, flash cards, picture and story books, cutting and pasting materials, construction work, workbooks, games and puzzles, numerous hobbies, and many other varied devices.

In the more progressive schools a transition has taken place from teacher control to teacher guidance.

The standards of teacher preparation are being advanced rapidly as more skill in teaching is required to obtain superior results in skills through the activity program.

The formal methods of teaching once so popular did naturally possess some advantages over the present day procedures. After close analysis I have decided those methods did satisfy the need of their day. I am of the same opinion that the new procedure in our modern schools quite satisfactorily answers the needs of today.

Much could be said in defense of both the old and new methods in educational procedure, but space is limited and I take the position that each individual that reads this article has a right to his own belief and as a result should make his own decision.

When all is considered, I contend that it is the business of every unit in this county to enable the pupils to think constructively, and to act properly in the dynamic society of the present day.

The following is a brief yet interesting picture of the present day schools in Norton County:

1. Number of Organized Rural Districts	107
(Districts 34, 67, 80 and 85 are disorganized)	
2. Number of Grade School Districts	6
3. Number of Rural High School Districts	5
4. Community High School	1
5. Second Class City Schools	1
6. Total Number of Organized Districts	120
7. Average Monthly Salary (Rural Teacher) 1941-42 -	\$60.55
8. Average Mill Levy for Rural Schools Operating	4.09
9. Average Mill Levy for Rural Schools Operating and Non-operating School Districts	3.15
10. Total Rural School Enrollment	483
11. Total Grade School Enrollment not including Nor- ton schools	308
12. Total Enrollment Norton City and Junior High School	424
13. Total Enrollment of Norton Community High School	308
14. Total Enrollment of the five Rural High Schools	286
15. Total Enrollment (Norton County High Schools)	594
16. Total Rural Schools Closed	44
17. The 107 Rural School Districts have no bonded indebtedness.	
18. Total Number of Teachers in our Schools at the present time	146

A progressive competitive school activity program is being provided for the boys and girls of Norton County. It is in brief as follows: A County-Wide Spelling Contest is held in April each year. This reaches many boys and girls in various parts of the county.

A School Festival Day is also provided each spring. This reaches students in all the eight-month schools. The participating events of this special day consists of declamations, dialogues, vocal solos, group singing, bands, culminating unit activities, manuscript writing, parliamentary law and an American Flag Demonstration.

The Rural School Track Meet is always a big day in Norton with Schools participating from all parts of Norton County. This is also an Annual Spring Event.

Another very interesting feature of our school event program is the general school exhibit at the Norton County Fair held in September. This includes exhibits in practically every field of the educational program. The purpose of this exhibit is to show



Rural School Graduates — Class of 1941.
(County Superintendent Byron F. Salisbury standing at the left.)

the actual accomplishment that is being made in the schools of the county and to reward pupils for superior achievements.

The Norton County Teachers Association meets three times each year. A very carefully planned program is provided for each meeting and the teachers return to their respective teaching units well informed and inspired to carry on their work with greater zeal and efficiency.

The Normal Institute has been changed from the former four-week academic type of institute, usually held in the month of June to the present one-week professional type held in August. The former was quite largely a training school for teachers desiring a certificate. Since counties can no longer issue certificates naturally the need for an academic type of institute no longer exists. Summer school attendance is required in our colleges and Universities in order to satisfy certificate requirements imposed by the State Board of Education. The present type of professional institute sets up a rather unified and planned school program throughout the county, and also, if properly conducted provides inspiration to the teacher that is really determined to succeed in this noble and most important phase of human endeavor.

Probably the most helpful service provided by the office of the County Superintendent is the fine circulating library consisting at the present time of over fifteen hundred books. It is provided by districts that participate and pay their five-dollar fee each year. The average number of books checked from this library in one year by a district school is about one hundred books. The average rural school has limited library facilities. This present circulating library has unlimited possibilities as it provides library facilities to rural children on a basis that compares favorably with present day libraries in our more modern and well equipped grade schools.

EARLY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

By E. E. Nelson, Former Co. Supt. of Schools

In a general way the growth of education and development of educational institutions in Norton county has been coincident with the growth of democracy. Here as elsewhere in our state and nation education has been an evolution. Pioneer conditions with us have always meant first, homes and a living; then, churches and schools. The early settlers, realizing the importance of educational training and skill, demonstrated profound wisdom in

providing educational facilities to meet their requirements and to constitute an adequate basis upon which to build for the future educational progress and success of their posterity. Around the cabin and the dugout "on the far horizon," was erected the local school district. Like the home, the first schoolhouses were dugouts and log cabins with dirt floors; then came sod houses; while twenty years after the settlement of the county began, the prairies were ornamented with good frame buildings of the box car type as representing the simplest and cheapest form of architecture. Other settlers came and other districts were formed, irregular in shape, unequal in size, and varying in valuation, but always with the one oblong, cross-lighted type of building. With the exception of the rural district schoolhouse the buildings have been improved to keep pace with the best in the state until today the city grade and high school buildings are of the best material and construction obtainable and are provided with the most modern conveniences and equipment. Special efforts have resulted in securing the most efficiently qualified teachers for thorough courses of instruction articulate with the requirements of the higher institutions of learning.

The sod house and the ox team have vanished with the Indians and the buffalo. In their place have come the modern farm home and the automobile. But the rural school of the pioneer, which could be and was used for school, church services, neighborhood meetings, and for all other gatherings of a public nature lingers with us yet—a monument to the early educational enterprise of the people of Norton county and the last survivor of a by-gone age. "New occasions teach new duties" in time, however, and there are abundant signs that the god of "Things as they are" will not much longer be able to dictate educational conditions to the boys and girls in these schools.

Norton county was in no particular essentially different from other counties of the State. The same spirit manifested itself here as elsewhere. The pioneer settlers came with a purpose in their hearts. That purpose was to help maintain a free State and build up institutions of freedom. They intended to build after the old pattern, with religion, education, and civil order as the foundation stones. They came with the open Bible and the open

spelling book. Their purpose was to place the one upon the pulpit of the free church, and the other upon the desk of a free school. A free school was their ideal. They wanted a system of schools open and free to all children. Their purpose has never been better expressed than by the prophet bard, Whittier, in his "Song of the Kansas Emigrant":

"We cross the prairies, as of old
The Fathers crossed the sea,
To make the West, as they the East
The homestead of the free.

"We come to plant the common schools
On distant prairie swells,
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of their bells."

The first school in the county opened in December 1873 by J. H. Simmons, in a dugout at Norton, there being 16 pupils enrolled, some of whom lived 50 miles distant. Another school was begun soon after near Devizes, by M. J. Fitzpatrick. J. B. Shepard began teaching near Almena, J. W. Langford near Edmond, and A. J. Davis near Clayton. Among the pioneer teachers were: T. J. Beaumont, Alonzo Simmons, Ed Huger, Mrs. C. E. Hilsinger, and Mrs. A. T. Rogers.

Aside from the county superintendents named elsewhere in this volume may be named a long list of teachers of excellent ability, who have left an indelible impression for good upon the schools of the county. While all cannot be named in this brief sketch we feel impelled to name Miss R. D. Kiner, D. C. Nutting, W. H. Hiles, Mrs. M. J. Davies, O. M. Becker, Nellie Cline, C. D. Long, W. G. Riste, L. D. Griffiee, H. H. Gerardy, D. N. Bowers, Minnie R. Harmonson, W. L. Porter, John W. Gleason, C. H. Starrett, Riley Tadlock, Chas. Bull, A. V. Hedges, E. E. Kintigh, Ida M. Walker, and Belle Snyder (now Mrs. C. E. Reed).

The writer was born in Norton county in 1880 and received his common and high school education in its schools. From 1898 until 1918 he was identified with the schools of the county as teacher or principal of schools for fourteen years, and as county superintendent for six years. His experience as pupil and teacher in

these early schools reflects something of the conditions common to the schools and teachers of those days. We have a fairly vivid recollection of our first teaching experience in a rural district for a period of five months more than 40 years ago. We boarded with the Director of the board, a large, jolly fellow, who had not yet completed the construction of his new house, and the attic to which we were assigned for our nightly repose was so hot in the Fall that we suffered with the night sweats and in the depth of winter nearly froze our feet in bed. But this was compensated to some extent because we learned to like the tomato, a garden fruit we had never before cared for. This farmer raised a large bed of tomatoes which provided about all of his living that Fall. While the garden lasted we had tomatoes for breakfast, tomatoes for dinner, and tomatoes for supper. We learned that the taste can be cultivated.

Our salary was \$25. per month. Experienced teachers sometimes received as much as \$35. We experienced some homesickness—enough, so that we counted the days on the calendar and walked home, a distance of 14 miles, on Friday evenings and back again on Sunday afternoon. It put us in good training for the next year when the round trip was one of 36 miles.

The teacher was expected to maintain a high professional dignity at all times, and was looked upon as the ideal in cultural and intellectual attainment. In addition to academic attainment, an important qualification demanded of the teacher was physical ability and courage, and fortunate was the disciplinarian who was thus well equipped. It was incumbent upon the teacher to emphasize "Order as heaven's first law".

The first schools of the county were four or five month terms with an occasional district able to maintain a term of six months. Sometimes the term was divided into a Fall and a Spring session. In some districts the school was financially supported by subscription and was called a subscription school. Often the teacher "boarded 'round" and thus became well acquainted with the patrons. The spirit of hospitality and the bond of common interest resulted in many happy associations and ties of lasting friendship—a source of joy for years after, as teacher, pupil and patron re-

called in pleasant memories those events of bygone years, the lingering echoes of kindly words, the visions of first pupils, and of scenes which shall endure while life remains. Of course, we can recall also a few scenes that were not the happiest in those days when there were frequently enrolled students who had reached their twenty-first birthday and desired to know, most and first of all, whether the teacher was as courageous, qualified and ready to meet personal and physical encounters as he was to attack educational problems.

The anxiety of fathers and mothers that their children receive such education and training as might spare them much of the struggle, drudgery and sacrifice they themselves had experienced, together with the establishment later of a county high school including normal training and college preparatory courses, and the addition of high school courses in the more advantageous graded city schools have so stimulated promotion and graduation that the rural school has become one of small enrollment in which pupils are rarely found beyond fourteen years of age. As a result the high cost per pupil of maintaining these schools has encouraged consolidation or transportation of pupils to larger and better schools.

In 1888, under the leadership of Dr. Ely, a series of educational meetings was inaugurated, and stirring addresses were made in all the cities and villages of the county, as well as in a number of country districts. By means of these meetings, which were continued for many years, the teachers became zealous, the patrons interested, and the schools greatly benefitted. Very prominent among the speakers were O. M. Becker, W. G. Riste, and particularly F. H. Baker who lived and worked at a tremendous nervous expenditure and was probably the most enthusiastic, magnetic and socially popular personality ever connected with Norton county and her schools.

An important factor in the educational work of the county has been the summer Normal Institute for teachers under the charge and responsibility of the county superintendent. For the instruction of teachers and those desiring to teach the county superintendent employs such persons as he may think best fitted

to act as conductor and instructors in the institute. The institute for many years presented a four weeks course of study which contained an outline of each day's work in each of the several branches for the entire month. This method of systematizing the work of the institute, thereby suggesting, and, to some extent, directing the reading and study of the teachers, proved of the very highest value. The great majority of the teachers actually engaged in work each year pursue a definite course of reading and study looking toward the approaching session of this four weeks institute. Probably no other factor in our educational system has secured such satisfactory results in the elementary training of teachers for the work to be done in the common public schools. For many years the institute furnished the teachers of the county special training for their work which they could get in no other way. The teachers obtained their inspiration and training from the county normal institute, and it would be impossible to estimate at its full value the good these institutions have done for the teachers and superintendents, and through the teachers and superintendents to the boys and girls of the rural and grade schools. In 1879, Miss Ida Alhborn conducted the first institute held in Norton county. In recent years this county teachers institute has been limited to a single week's course consisting mainly of professional lectures on methods of instruction and administration.

The educational meetings inaugurated by Dr. Ely led to the organization of the "County Teachers Association". The enthusiasm gained at the summer institute was kept alive during the winter by the association which numbered among its members practically the entire teaching force. The association meetings for conference, discussion, and mutual improvement were held at various points in the county and were well and enthusiastically attended by school patrons and officers.

For many years following the organization of the early school districts of the county, school programs, or "exhibitions" as they were called, consisting of songs, dialogues, plays, and pantomimes was a very popular way of marking the end of the school term. Special platforms were erected and properly furnished for the

"occasion" which constituted the chief annual event in many communities. These programs together with the "spelling bee" and "ciphering match," in which the pupils, and sometimes the parents, of several districts united and contested for district and individual honors in spelling and mathematics; the weekly literary programs; and later, when the schools became graded and written examinations were given, the local commencement exercises, consisting of graduation essays by the graduates and a class address by the county superintendent, provided the principal entertainment and educational activities for the public.

The county alumni association was organized in 1898. On its roll, from year to year, could be found the names of all the county graduates, a large number of whom welcomed the graduating class at each annual banquet.

District No. 35 School

This is the Highland Class 'A' Rural school, located three miles north and four east of Norton, and is one of Norton County's most modern rural schools, a far cry from the early "soddies" and log school houses in which the earliest pioneer children were taught "the three R's".



As early as 1893 graded schools, in excellent buildings, were maintained at Norton, Almena, Lenora, and Edmond. The people of Norton county have always been fully alive to the cause of education, giving it first place in their support, and, as a result of this, her teachers and her schools rank among the best in the State. The newspapers of the county cheerfully bear their part, and space is always granted for the publication of any matter that may assist in promoting the interest of the schools.

Within 20 years after the organization of the county our educational institutions had grown from 4 to 113; their valuation from a few dollars to more than \$90,000, with an annual outlay

of approximately \$37,000, not including the income from the state school fund. Concerning the condition of our rural and village schools at that time: Oronoque had a fine school of 50 pupils. Edmond had a large, two-story frame building, an enrollment of 80 pupils, and employed two teachers. Prof. R. D. Emery, an experienced educator and well known as an institute worker, was the principal. Densmore had a flourishing school of 40 boys and girls; the teacher, W. L. Porter, was one of our oldest and best instructors. Calvert schools were among the flourishing schools of the county.

To those who have been more closely related to the schools of later years we leave the task of writing concerning their historical and educational activities and relationships. But the educational system of Norton county has attained a very high and commendable state and our young men and women are graduating from our schools, fairly well fitted to be at the helm of the ship of state to guide us through the social and economic difficulties of this rapidly changing world.

Our reminiscent reflections bring to us these lines:

"Let fate do her worst, there are moments of joy,
Bright dreams of the past which she cannot destroy;
Which come in the night time of sorrow and care,
And bring back the features that joy used to wear."

EDUCATION OR TEACHING, WHICH?

(The following lines are the concluding words of an address given by Mr. Nelson at the fiftieth Anniversary of the Baker School, District No. 105).

As I have developed somewhat with the passing years through study, experience and observation and reflect upon my early years of teaching, I am impressed more and more that teaching and education in many school rooms are not as synonymous as many teachers especially young ones think.

Have you, gentle listener, ever thought of the difference? Perhaps you have. Education, for short, is the preparation of your child for complete living. Teaching is the preparation of your boy or girl for counting and writing and reading the news.

Education concerns itself with those subtle changes, whether of body or temper or habit, which adjusts the child to its world, while teaching is concerned chiefly with habits of language and number. Teaching is an affair of books and teachers and school houses, while education is a matter of living, of mental, moral and bodily functions, an unfolding of all that makes up the balanced human life.

Education is as broad as all relations of the child. It escapes a school house, and touches the street and the play ground, follows the child from game and task to the home and the table, an ever present from which no ringing of school bells can deliver either the child or the guardians of the child.

The home plays a larger part in education than the school, because its influence is vitalized by mother-love and father-strength. It is a sacred task from which there is no escape, no delegation of responsibility to a teacher or officer of state. The true father and the true mother furnishes not merely shelter and food and physical care, but is alive to the fact that the golden threads of character and of manpower are spun from mother's devotion and father's example and care.

There are no vacations in education. The teacher may close her book at four, and count the day's task done; Education goes on in spite of clocks and time. The school bell may sound the holidays or summer rest, but though every book is locked and letters be utterly forgot, yet the subtle touch of school and home, of street and game, of flowers, and song of birds, of night and day, is registered on the plastic soul; and their impress plus the soul's response, that is education. From these things and others of their kind the child draws his hopes and dreams of life. From the men and things he touches, he frames his habits and ideals, and weaves at last the warp and woof of life.

And again the contrast between education and teaching may be seen in the tests they make of their results. Teaching aims at skill with letters, education seeks power of living. Teaching unlocks libraries, the thought store-house of man, and deems its task well done when its learner may browse with ease and profit at his need; Education unlocks the very fountain heads of living power, and feels its task accomplished only when it has built a man who has mastered both himself, and the art of living well.

For the parent, the teacher, and the friend of youth the difference between education and mere teaching is vital and fundamental. The best of the modern teachers, let us hope, are slowly joining hands with the best of the thoughtful parents, and to-

gether placing their shoulders to the task, united as home and school ought always to be, as co-workers, Educators of the twentieth century child.

- ¹ Record of County Commissioners, 1872-87. 7.
- ² *ibid.*, 7.
- ³ *ibid.*, 15.
- ⁴ Norton County News, Historical Number, October 1916.
- ⁵ Norton County Tax Rolls, 1875-1902. Treasurer's Ledgers.
- ⁶ Laws of Kansas, 1899, Ch. 229.
- ⁷ High School Petitions; 1 Steel File Drawer (part), North Wall; Overflow bsmt. Vault.
- ⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁹ *ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*
- ¹¹ Record of County Commissioners, vol. 2—1888-1898. 267.
- ¹² Abstract of Votes Cast; Vault in Office of County Clerk. 14.
- ¹³ Commissioners Journal A. 1898-1909, 56 & 57.
- ¹⁴ Office of Daily Telegram, Norton, Kansas.
- ¹⁵ Abstract of Votes Cast, *op. cit.* 24.
- ¹⁶ Laws of Kansas, 1923, Ch. 187.
- ¹⁷ Commissioners Journal, vol. 4, (1919) 20 & 21.
- ¹⁸ Abstract of Votes Cast, *op. cit.* 237.
- ¹⁹ Commissioners Journal, vol. 4 (1920) 57 & 58.
- ²⁰ Abstract of Votes Cast, *op. cit.* 236.
- ²¹ Commissioners Journal, Vol. 4, (1921) 113 & 114.
- ²² Abstract of Votes Cast, *op. cit.* 235.
- ²³ Commissioners Journal, vol. 4, (1921) 122 & 123.
- ²⁴ Abstract of Votes Cast, *op. cit.* 233.
- ²⁵ Commissioners Journal, vol. 4, 169 to 171.
- ²⁶ Abstract of Votes Cast, *op. cit.* 232.

Pioneer Tales and Times



CHAPTER XI

THE VANCES SETTLE ON THE PRAIRIE DOG

Each community has its legends, stories based upon incidents which happened long ago. They may be associated with ruined castles, historic battle fields, streams graced with Indian names, human suffering, or anything made famous by a historic event handed down by tradition. The traditional stories relating to Norton county have been inspired by incidents of pioneer life as it was lived here in the early history of the county.

One such story, pertaining to a pioneer family which settled on the Prairie Dog just below Almena, has been related in recent years and throws light on some phases of pioneer life as experienced by the earliest pioneers.

It was in April, 1872 when James P. Vance, a pioneer minister, with his wife and two sons, Jim and Fred, settled on a homestead $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles northeast of Almena. The Vances lived on the creek alone during the summer of 1872 and well up into the winter of 1873. The dugout in which they lived had no floor and they were exposed to many hardships too severe for people so old. The pioneer neighbors lived far apart and enjoyed but few conveniences.

In February 1873, another son living in Illinois decided to come west. C. C. Vance and wife came and settled on the opposite side of the creek on what was later known, as "The Valley View Farm". This Mr. Vance was an attorney and very prominent in the early history of the county. He was at one time elected to the Legislature.

Life began to take a brighter aspect for the family, but along in the Spring when the settlers were preparing to plant their crops, the death of Mrs. Vance cast a gloom over the valley. In those days death meant problems to a small group of pioneer neighbors because there was no lumber to build boxes for burial purposes. C. C. Vance had driven to Kearney, Nebraska, and bought the lumber to floor his dugout. His wife, who was said, "To have had a heart of gold", gave the lumber from the floor of her home to make the coffin. There being no regular burying ground, it was the custom to bury the dead near the home. It is said that Mr. Vance planted a sapling at each corner of the grave. At any rate, it is true that in later years a clump of trees marked the site of the grave of Mrs. Vance, which was on the east bank of the Prairie Dog just north of the bridge now spanning the creek at this point.

Following the death of his wife, Rev. Vance was cared for in the home of his son, C. C. Vance. It is said that he wore a path from the house to the grave by his frequent visits which were generally made about the time the evening shadows would begin to cast a gloom around the grave.

Following an accident, Mr. Vance died February 22, 1886 at the age of 89 years. He was buried in a country cemetery 3½ miles northwest of Kyd, near the Norton-Phillips county line. The remains of Mrs. Vance were, later, moved and buried in the cemetery beside her husband.

The following stories reminiscent of pioneer days, unless otherwise credited, were written at the request of J. W. Conway and published in the Norton Champion in 1914. Mr. Conway was devoting considerable space to historical data at this particular time.

"(CUTTING LUMBER ON SKULL CREEK)"

I have been interested in the contributions furnished by other pioneers and have concluded to offer the following thots upon a subject never before published to my knowledge, viz. the building of the first court house in Norton county.

Those were strenuous days to the pioneers of Norton County—the winter of '74 and '5. The political questions of the day were not known among the settlers for the all absorbing topic of County Seat, and where the permanent location would be, was being threshed out in every dugout in the county.

An election had been held in the fall of '74 and Norton had won; but we realized that our Leota combatants, (I was always a Norton man) had only retreated to replenish their ammunition, i. e. to wait the expiration of such time as was necessary to legally circulate another petition to call another election. We had the county seat located in Norton, but the county offices were in some instances held at the homestead or the place of business of the officer, viz. The County Surveyor at his homestead east of Almena; the Probate Judge at his on Long Branch in the northwest part of the county; the County Treasurer at Leota, 4½ miles southwest of Norton. All this was discouraging to the Norton forces as we had the county seat in form; we wanted it in fact, and our meetings to devise ways and means to bring this about were held almost daily among the Chiefs, and the warriors were called in whenever one appeared upon the scene.

It was finally decided that if we had a court house we could bring about an order upon the part of the County Commissioners to compel all officers to remove to the County Seat and hold their offices there, although Leota had a majority of the Board in sympathy with them. Consultation developed the fact that Pete Hansan a homesteader and former County Commissioner, had a sawmill at Logan, Phillips county, one of those kind working a Saw up and down (as Sol Marsh said, "up one day and down the next") driven by water power.

Thus a call was sent out for volunteers and a plan formulated to cut timber on the government land, Skull and Buck Creeks in the southeast part of the county, have the lumber cut for a two story frame building about 24x36 ft., to be sheeted diagonally and floored with same quality of lumber. The doors, windows, shingles and siding to be procured and hauled from Hastings, Nebr., and when the building was completed to be presented to the County Commissioners for County purposes and Court House.

(Mr. Editor, may I say that even today such an enterprise would be looked upon with a great deal of reluctance in undertaking). On the other hand volunteers were on hand, viz. D. M. Robinson, Henry Oliver, (our Squire), Sol Marsh, John Bieber, Jim Mittan, John Humphrey, Al Curry, and Jesse Wright.

With Camp outfit and five teams (two yoke of oxen) included we moved to Skull Creek, camped and commenced the work as planned, continued in dogged determination until logs enough had been cut and delivered to the mill for the amount of lumber required.

Our first plan was to cut and haul enough logs to cut an equal amount of lumber for the payment of sawing. But Sol Marsh, being appointed a committee of one, took up a collection among our members and raised \$21.65. The \$1.65 being Jim Mittan's "whole pile" with possibly others having no more reserve at home. Thus with our possessions in cash Sol invaded the private office of Hansan and returning proudly displayed a receipt for the whole bill for sawing.

Of course we had a varied experience of hard work and story telling round our camp fire, and to this day it would be interesting to hear Squire Oliver tell his "Bean Story".

When the last day came and our work finished, except hauling the lumber to Norton, we started upon a return to camp light-hearted and feeling our work well done. The horse teams driving the faster soon left Squire Oliver and the writer behind with our oxen and a light load of lumber, and upon arriving at camp we found we had been visited by a fire and practically everything we had was destroyed, only a few pieces of bedding and a small amount of provision saved. This the boys placed in a plum thicket beside the trail and as a Nor-wester was promising, headed for the Prairie Dog valley and settlement, believing we would find enough to keep us warm and from hunger until the storm was over.

Long after the storm had developed into one of the worst known in this country, they succeeded in pulling into Charley Hilsinger's place finding plenty of feed and a warm stable for

their horses and grub for themselves, which in Charley's absence they appropriated; and they were comfortable and well fed.

Not so with us who were left behind. Arriving at the old camp we found all deserted, and the storm gathering force every hour. No feed for our cattle and nothing for ourselves; and as we had eaten nothing since an early breakfast and were thoroughly chilled, we felt the necessity of heroic action. Oliver remembered he had a friend living on, as I now remember, Buck creek, John Taylor, the farm now owned and improved by Jack Conarty and one of the finest in Norton county. Nothing else for us to do but try to force ourselves through the storm and find shelter with him.

Fortunately just after dark we pulled into his place and found him at home, but no feed for our cattle or shelter. Providing us with an ax we cut out an opening in a plum thicket, led our cattle inside, and with a butcher knife cut bunch grass for bedding and leaving them there returned to the dugout to find Taylor without any food except a little coffee and a small amount of sugar. But oh! that fire and blankets!

Next morning we awoke to find the sun shining, still and cold outside with about 6 inches of snow covering the prairie.

Hitching our cattle to the wagons we started for Norton, many places there being no sign of any trail, but with a thorough knowledge of the country and directions, we arrived on the hill south of town with the feeling that Norton would never look better to any traveler to the end of time. Arrived upon the town site about 2 o'clock and found the other boys awaiting us with one of the richest banquets we had ever known, for hunger made it so.

Thus the beginning of the end in building our first Court House.

Jesse W. Wright,
Norton Champion, March 19, 1914.

"(COUNTY SEAT TROUBLES)"

County seat troubles began for Norton county in its earliest history, with Norton and Reedville as rivals. Reedville, laid-out

and platted by Shelby D. Reed, who located a mile or more southwest of the present county seat.

One rainy May morning in the early 'seventies consternation spread among the Norton forces when they learned that Story Briggs had traded the only building on the Norton Town Site to a party who was busily preparing to move the same to Reedville, thinking that Reedville might profit by the fact that Norton had no shelter in that damp weather for the county records and paraphernalia.

The Norton forces arose to the occasion by placing a hay rack on four posts and covering it with sun-dried buffalo hides, to which shelter the precious records were transferred. Then almost the entire population of the east half of the county went down the Prairie Dog Creek a few miles to bring a log cabin, erected by Edgar Page, to Norton for a court house.

J. H. Simmons and the writer were left at the county seat to guard the records the first night after the transfer; John Kelley, a giant weighing well over two hundred pounds, Colonel Hopkins, a rugged, grizzled frontiersman of like proportion to Kelly, and the writer hereof occupied the uncomfortable leaky quarters the second night.

Sandwiched between the two, the writer, a stripling lad of 16 years, was aroused from sleep near two o'clock in the morning by a controversy between his bed fellows. The night was so dark that eyes were useless. Both men being hot tempered the talk soon changed from controversy to a quarrel. The said Hopkins, grasping a knife, reared on one elbow and declared he would cut the heart out of said Kelley, while the said Kelley, on elbow and grasping his Spencer carbine, notified the said Hopkins that if he made a move he would shoot his d--- skin full of holes. The writer, paralyzed with fear, each hair perpendicular to planes tangent to his contracted scalp, awaited a clash, the result of which no one could foretell. Owing to the cramped quarters, in which neither could stand erect, both men showed judgment by making no attack. Recriminations became less vitriolic, the wordy war died out like the rumble of a retreating thunder

storm, and both men turning their backs to me dropped off to sleep.

Not so the writer who lay with staring eyes and strained ears, listening to the beating of the rain on our poorly constructed shelter and the drip, drop through its numerous openings, awaited with fear and trembling the coming of the morn.

But he was pleasantly surprised to see his bed fellows arise and assist each other in cooking breakfast over the same fire, amiably and jointly wondering if the boys would reach Norton that day with Page's building.

An Eighteenseventytwoer.

“(THE OLD CATTLE TRAIL)”

During the latter part of the 70's and extending into the 80's immense herds of cattle were driven from Texas and other southwestern ranges into the vast unsettled country to the north and east. One of these trails crossed the Prairie Dog just east of Norton and, as a consequence, the little border town was often thronged with cow-boys. These boys were not bad ordinarily, but inclined to be reckless and when under the too frequent influence of liquor were in a measure devilish.

On the occasion to which I refer there were two saloons in the town and a number of the boys had given them most liberal patronage. They became noisy and rampant, but not specially violent. For diversion they rode their ponies through the hotel on the corner where Bowers Tavern now stands and did other stunts in keeping with their reputation. . . . A saloon on the south side of the square was operated by Christy Martin, a giant in stature, but an Irishman so good natured that it took a great deal of annoyance to arouse his fighting spirit.

Into this saloon the boys filed during the evening and began the pleasant pastime of shooting out a light here and there, picking off a bottle from the shelves now and then with unerring aim, and using the broad brim of Christy's sombrero as a target. Martin got tired of such fun and, finding an opportunity, requested

some one to step out and find if Vining (the sheriff) had returned and, if so, ask him to come over. Jim had returned and the messenger met him near the saloon and headed that way. The situation was explained and without a moment's warning the door was opened and Vining, revolver in hand and leveled for business, faced the leader and commanded him to drop his gun. It dropped and so did those of the other boys, on the instant. Gathering up the guns from the floor Vining asked the boys to come with him and they went without resistance. They were cared for during the night, paid their fines the next morning and were released.

I was postmaster at the time and took my meals at the restaurant in the postoffice building. The boys were there for breakfast, looking somewhat crestfallen."

J. H. Simmons, Topeka, Jan. 19, 1914.

"(A BUFFALO HUNT)"

In May 1875 Albert Graves and Isaac Whitaker organized an expedition to the western range for the purpose of catching buffalo calves. A bunch of milch cows were driven along so that proper nourishment for the young buffalo might be at hand. George Chord and Charlie Rhodig accompanied the expedition for the purpose of securing a supply of meat. Nat VanWinkle and the writer completed the personnel of the party.

Driving the cows and later doing the important stunt of the trip, catching the calves, devolved on Nat and me. We were all tenderfeet, except Rhodig who was a buffalo hunter and a fine shot. A recent reading of that Brownville story in the Telegram reminds me that George Chord above named was also a snake charmer. Many a time have I seen him pick up live Rattlers with his bare hands; I might describe the horror and nerve wrecking antics of other members of the party when he carried them alive into camp, but I desist, because this is not a snake story. Mr. Peterson I believe holds the belt for that kind of literature, I am neither a contender nor pretender in that line.

Neither Nat nor I had ever had any experience with the lasso, so we devised a simple method by using a forked stick 10 or 12 feet long, with a short piece of rope 4 or 5 feet long tied from prong to prong. We would ride up along side of Mr. Calf and drop the loop over his head and then twist up. We also found this stick served another very useful purpose, that of holding the calves off, as they would turn and fight when caught. We found buffalo at head water of South Solomon and made our permanent camp near where Hoxie is now located. It was here the incident connected with this trip that I want to relate, occurred. If the Norton "Movies" could secure a true picture of Charlie Rhodig saving Nat VanWinkle's life as it occurred over on that prairie 40 years ago, it would surely be a drawing card.

About 200 buffalo had come down to water about two miles from our camp. They had then gone a short distance up a point of high land where they were quietly grazing; the calves meantime had lain down along the brow of the ravine.

Rhodig who had previously spied out the situation, planned the attack by sending Nat and me on a detour of five or six miles with instructions to approach the herd from the west, taking advantage of a big draw on that side to get close up before our presence would be disclosed. In the meantime he and Albert Graves were to conceal themselves in another draw about 80 rods east of where the buffalo were feeding, expecting us to chase the herd in that direction so that they might get a shot at close range.

Contrary to the usual rule in such cases our plans all worked out beautifully and an hour later when we came out of the draw we found ourselves within a short distance of the herd. Away they went in the direction of our Nimrods, Nat and I in hot pursuit. At the brow of the last ravine and not more than 20 rods from where Rhodig stood Nat caught his calf. He slid off his horse and stood holding the calf in one hand, the horse in the other, when the shooting began. The herd turned and came thundering back over the same ground. They divided, some passing on either side of us. An old cow spied Nat and the calf, and came for him in full tilt. Albert Graves came running yelling at

the top of his voice at Nat to let go of the calf. But instead he let go of the horse which had become badly frightened. By this time the infuriated cow made a pass at Nat but he sidestepped, and just as she was turning for a second encounter Rhodig shot her dead. Some of the boys were unkind enough to say that Nat was paralyzed with fright and could not let go; while others said he was cool enough to rely on Rhodig; but at this late day I am here only to relate that he held the calf and afterward brought it to Norton. He was riding a fine Morgan colt that belonged to John Graves. I followed that colt until dark on a fleet pony but he gained on me all the time and when I turned toward camp he was many miles ahead. We never expected to see him again but when we returned two weeks later we met Eli O'Brien, a buffalo hunter and partner of Sol Reese, riding him along the road somewhere near where the town of Jennings now stands. He had caught him on the south prairie the next day after he left us. I suppose he would have gone home if he had not been molested. We brought home with us an abundance of meat and a wagon load of calves, but most of them died that summer. We had little trouble in breaking them to the pail, but that long ride in the wagon seemed to be the cause of their undoing."

F. M. Lockard, *The Norton Champion*,
March 5, 1914.

"(SQUIRE OLIVER'S JUSTICE COURT)"

The Justice of the Peace practice, during the earlier settlement of Norton County, was a great deal more extensive than at the present time. Some of the most interesting law suits were tried in Justice's Court. At that time Judge L. K. Pratt and the late Judge Hamilton were the leading members of the bar and when arrayed against each other there were SOME law suits!

Henry Oliver was the Justice at that time and resided across the Prairie Dog. Quite an important case was tried before Squire Oliver, and Pratt and Hamilton were the contending lawyers. The scrap had lasted all day and after the evidence was all in and both sides had rested, Squire Oliver said, "Do you want to

make any harguments?" Both lawyers signified their desire to argue the case, when the Squire said:

"I am going home to feed my 'ogs and you can make your hargument while I'm gone and if you get through before I get back you will find my decision in the drawer." and Henry started home to feed his 'ogs.

L. H. Thompson, The Norton Champion
Feb. 26, 1914.

"(THE PASSING OF N. H. BILLINGS)"

The settlers of Norton county were uniformly persons of character, yet occasionally an undesirable was found. Among the latter class was N. H. Billings, a man so thoroughly out of harmony with the best interests of society as to become a menace to the community in and around Norton. His lack of character in the organization and as the first member of the legislature has been so thoroughly shown up in Senator Lockard's History that no further mention need be made here.

The purpose of this incident is to give some of the unpublished story relating to the passing of Billings.

Every early settler of the county was a booster, the idea being to occupy the government lands as rapidly as possible. Billings was a "locater" and it was soon evident that many who put their land office business in his hands were not only robbed of their entries, but the money left with him appropriated to his own use. The settlers were indignant and a preliminary meeting was held in the store of Case & Williams to discuss the best method of dealing with the matter. A committee was appointed to gather all the facts obtainable and to meet on the following evening at Jim Kenyon's dug-out north of town. At the hour appointed the dugout was filled with Settlers and the damaging reports read, showing conclusively that Billings was not giving the prospective settlers a "square deal". Some present advocated immediate violence, but the fact was plain that the relatives of Billings' wife were highly respected settlers and for their sakes milder measures should be employed. It was finally decided to adjourn

the meeting, repair at once to the home of Billings, order him to quit the county at once and for good. About this time a furious storm was gathering in the heavens, the play of lightning was incessant and drops were beginning to fall.

The committee of information went to the door and called for Billings. His wife informed them that her husband had left the city and, almost at the same instant, a settler appeared and said that by the lightning's flash he had seen a man whom he thought to be Billings, coatless and hatless, headed south at a furious pace. Some one had evidently attended the meeting and being of a peaceful nature had hurried ahead and given the "Colonel" the tip. At any rate the fleeing fugitive must have been Billings for he was never more seen in this part of the country.

J. H. Simmons, Topeka, Kansas
Jan. 19, 1914.

"(THE ARRIVAL OF AN EARLY BANKER)"

In December 1884 I left Champaign, Ill., and went to Hastings, Nebraska, where I engaged in business. The following March, Raymond Bros., wholesale Grocers of Lincoln, Nebr., and H. Yeazee, stockholders of the Exchange Nat. Bank of Hastings, proposed to me to go to Norton to look over the ground with the view of establishing a bank.

I took the cars to Red Cloud and then changed cars and went to Arapahoe when the following morning I took a stage for Norton. We came through Beaver City and stopped there for dinner. Beaver at that time was a sod house town, at least a large number of its inhabitants were living in sod houses. The country was sparsely settled and mostly raw land. The buildings about 100 per cent were built of sod.

We passed many prairie dog towns and some coyotes. The prairies were frequently strewn with buffalo and cattle horns and bones.

We reached Norton about dusk. It took me ten days to drive 140 miles. The stage driver guided me to the Seymour Hotel.

This hotel was shortly after purchased by John Grier, was enlarged and improved and called the Grier House and is now known as the Bowers Tavern; the only other hotel which occupied part of the ground now occupied by our magnificent Auditorium, was called the Windsor Hotel and was owned and run by George Griffin. Norton was then as it has been since a good "trading point". It had a good number of fine business houses. Among others were Cannon and Kennedy, Phil Bruner, Hugh Kirkpatrick in general merchandise; Graves Bros. and F. M. Duvall in hardware, Doc. White and Peter McCrea in drugs, Chicago Lumber Co., and Mr. Kuney in lumber. The early settlers, those who had lived here for about a decade, called themselves, "the old citizens" and felt proud of their name and of the village of Norton and surrounding country.

We rented a lot of Morgan Heaton, president of the Norton County Bank, put up a small one story, two room frame building, put in a safe and counters and opened a bank with a \$25,000. capital, calling it "The First State Bank". In 1887 we converted this into The First National Bank.

In July '85 I had my household goods shipped from Champaign, Ills., to Edmond over the only railroad in the county at that time and then had them hauled by wagon to Norton.

In January 1886 Norton had the most disastrous fire in its history the row of frame buildings which occupied the ground now occupied by Mr. Kennedy's store to the First State Bank building, were all burned. I believe now we can call that fire a blessing in disguise. The ground is now occupied by a fine class of business buildings filled with as good stocks of merchandise as you will find in any city the size of Norton.

In January '86 we had the worst snow storm and blizzard I ever experienced. There was much suffering for people living in sod houses, and a few driving over the open prairie lost their way and were frozen to death, there was a heavy loss of cattle. The Burlington did not run its trains for about two weeks and we had no mail during that time. During one of those stormy days, a Dutchman living near the Solomon came into our bank near closing time and said to me, "My son is way up in Winona, Minn-

esota, and he is out of money and I am afraid he will suffer. I want to send him fifty dollars, how soon can you get it to him?" I answered, "Tomorrow morning." He said, "O you don't understand me, he is away up in Minnesota." "Yes," I said, "I can telegraph a bank in Winona to pay your son the money." "Can you send money by telegram?" he asked. "No, I will wire your son to call at the bank for money and I will wire the bank to honor your son's draft on us for \$50. The telegrams and our trouble will cost you two dollars." He looked about as confused as if I had told him I would send his money to the moon, but said "I will gladly pay the two dollars but I can't see how you can do it." I told him to give me the \$52, and I will attend to it.

In three or four days the Dutchman come in and asked, "Did my son get that money?" I said, "I think so, I have not heard" and before me stood one doubting Dutchman. A few days after he came in the second time and held up a letter and said, "He got it". "Got what?" I asked. "Why, my son got that money, got it just like you said he would; but how he got it I don't know," and shaking his letter above his head said, "I will take that home and show it to the old woman and ask her who is the old fool now." I suppose his wife called him an old fool who had allowed the bank to rob him.

Norton county has had its trials, its ups and downs, its joys and sorrows, all counties have the same, but it is settled today by a good class of citizens of good habits, energetic, industrious, frugal, temperate and fairly well to do. Long may they live and prosper.

I once heard a citizen of Norton say that when traveling he was almost ashamed to say he was from Norton, Kansas; that was a time when our county, and the people of Western Kansas were subjects of charity, sometimes begging for aid, begging for labor, begging for clothing, begging for bread. Thanks to a fertile soil, thanks to our staying powers and industry we have outgrown these things.

In 30 years Norton has grown from a shanty and sod house town into a beautiful and prosperous city, teeming with the elements of enterprise and social culture and abounding with the

institutions of religion and learning; with a growth so elevated and abundant that we have provoked the admiration and even the envy of other cities and states.

When away from home if I am asked where I am from, I say, Norton, Kansas. I say it with pride, for I feel I am a citizen of no mean city. Norton is not only a prosperous city, it is a city of high moral and religious character. It is a temperance city where the laws of our state and nation are well enforced.

Its jail is nearly always empty, rare indeed for one of our own citizens to find lodging there; few cities of its size have generally so small a criminal docket.

By E. V. Peterson, *The Norton Champion*
Oct. 1, 1914

Author's Note—The "State Bank" established by E. V. Peterson was located on Lot 13, Block 20, on the north side of the Public square on the lot adjoining the "Norton County Bank" operated by Morgan Heaton. The two banks are shown on page 45. Mr. Peterson established the State Bank in 1885 and according to an official document published in the *Norton Champion* it was converted into the First National Bank in the Spring of 1887. It continued in this building until 1889 when it was moved into the brick building on the corner.

The illustrations on pp. 44 and 45 are supposed to have been photographed the same year and we are told that the year was 1881 as we have indicated. Since the State Bank was not organized and the building erected until 1885, it seems evident that the illustration on p. 45 should not be dated earlier than that year. It is also clear, that since the illustration of the West side of the square shows the buildings before the fire early in 1886, that the photograph was taken before that date. If they were photographed on the same date, the date would be some time during the summer or fall of 1885.

THE NORTON AUDITORIUM

In 1906, after the old opera house had been condemned as unsafe, a few of the progressive citizens, headed by M. F. Garrity, decided to raise money for the erection of a new Auditorium for Norton. When they had raised \$25,000, the Norton Auditorium Company was organized, and preparations were made to build.

Lots were purchased, on the southeast corner of Block 20, for \$2,500.

The following were elected as a board of directors: M. F. Garrity, C. M. Sawyer, Geo. Moulton, W. H. Marsh, C. L. Bower, G. H. Griffin, E. A. Lyons, J. W. Vining and Jesse Wright.



Norton Auditorium, Built in 1907

Shares were sold at \$100 each, and January 28, 1907, officers were elected as follows: M. F. Garrity, President; W. H. Marsh, Vice President; L. H. Thomson, Secretary; and Geo. Moulton, Treasurer.

Work on the construction of the building was begun in the early spring of 1907, and on the evening of December 17, of the same year the Auditorium was formally opened. It served for many years and for different purposes: school entertainments, Memorial and Decoration Day services, lectures, religious services, and political meetings of every kind.

THE LANDMARK RAZED

(An Editorial in the Norton Champion July 30, 1914)

The Opera House is now gradually vanishing from the landscape, being removed—brick and mortar veneer, tin roof and frame of wood, to give place to a less stately structure of solid brick one story in height, to cost \$7,000. The new building will be a garage and store room, in architecture a model affair.

John W. Graves has the job to tear away what his father and uncle built twenty nine years ago (1835). Graves Bros., Albert and John Wesley, let the contract to build that opera house the day the B. & M. laid its tracks into Norton, August, 1835.

Previous to its appearance upon the scene, court room, school

room and churches were transformed into play-houses for home talent or strolling theatrical nomads.

Consulting the files of the Champion we recall that the Opera House was opened Thursday, December 31, 1885, by Robert Buck, Dramatic Co. in "Fanchon, the Cricket."

A review of the play at the opening is absent, because the Champion printery was in ashes in the cellar of the Graves Bros. hardware store two days after the performance, having had the January 7 issue printed by wire in Kansas City.

The last farce pulled off in the old Opera House was by a band of strollers who put on "Kansas Commercial College of Norton."

Out of the ashes of the fire of January 2, 1886, we dug up some brass rules and dashes and our Model Jobber, all of them still on the job. These, with a few cases of type later purchased, were moved into the west store room of the Opera House, our office a corner spared to us by West & Penquite, hardware merchants.

Cannon & Kennedy bought this hardware store shortly after the fire. Imagine our indignation one morning when coming upon our press and type out on the sidewalk blanketed by a falling snow! . . . Later when Mme. Broquet became owner of the Opera House, The Champion occupied the east store room.

Thus associated in memory, as well as for being its next door neighbor over a quarter of a century, we regret the disappearance of the grand Old Opera House as if it were a being conscious of pain and wounds, responsive to praise and pleasure.

Many a tender association will loom up in the vision of our readers to endear the Opera House to memory. Possibly, some reader therein secured his or her first triumph in song, declamation, stage performance, dance, masquerade, lodge work, banquet, eloquence, oratorio, address, or commencement.

Upon its stage we caught for the first time a dramatic note from the lips of Helen Peterson as Esther in the oratorio of the

Asiatic queen. Now she shines in Paris married to art, dramatic reading, under the name of Penelope Peterson.

Her stage contemporaries, Agnes Granger, Mrs. Joel Simmons and others beyond recall, have filled the world with song.

Review the glories of home talent on that stage illuminated with kerosene and the brilliancy of their smiles, in the production of Galatea, Damon and Pythias, An Alibi—Pause right here!

The touch of personal interest in An Alibi we forego for the privilege of recalling that never in the cast of any play staged here, was there such an aggregation of talent, home or foreign.

Name them lovingly over: Cerena Moulton, Ida Case, Ivalee Snyder, Gertie Taylor, Catherine Jones, Beatrice Wheeler, Charley Hamilton, Willard Simmons, Bill Hiles, Charley Kennedy, Bert Harmonson, George Kingsbury and Art Cooper.

Pity it is to demolish and wipe out of existence an Opera House whose vibrant walls thrilled when people like these spoke their little piece.

Pardon a fitting quotation from "The Tempest:"

"The Cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

Concluding Words



CHAPTER XII

IT IS regrettable that in compiling this book so little space could be given to the pioneers, themselves—the men and women whose unquenchable desire to build a new land brought them through privations and adversities—the fathers and mothers of the Kansas and the Norton county in which we live.

“Seventy Years in Norton County, Kansas” has been, of necessity, a factual discussion of the early history of Norton county as found in the records. Facts are sometimes boresome, but no worthwhile history was ever written on a hearsay basis. The real history of Norton county and its people, their desires, their hopes, and their fortunes is filed away in the offices and the vaults of the court house. Very few people have the opportunity to consult the records and learn at first hand just what took place in the years gone by. This has made it imperative that the facts be brought out into the open, fully accessible to the people.

In order to do this it has been necessary to read practically every page of the Commissioners’ Journals, covering a period of time which has now reached the seventieth year. The examination of hundreds of volumes of records in the various county offices in the court house, supplemented by the reading of many volumes of newspapers, has also been necessary. As far as space has permitted, stories of pioneer life have been added to make the book interesting for general reading.

In closing we want to pay tribute to the pioneers who settled here and remained to make Norton county what it is today. When we speak of the pioneers we have in mind that noble group of men and women who actually did something that helped to make Norton county a better place in which to live.

If the pages from the past could be opened fully, and the lives of these people, with their ideals, their hopes and purposes, could be seen as they lived them throughout the years covered by this history, there would be revealed an indomitable spirit which could not be repressed by the greatest hardships and adversities. This is a characteristic which most writers of Kansas History term the "Kansas Spirit".

There is something about Kansas, the people and the weather that is distinctly different from other states. The people are said to be changeable and the weather-man speaks of the idiosyncrasies of the weather. But when it comes to principles, taking a stand on moral and progressive issues, they are unyielding and ready to fight for their convictions. Kansas has been spoken of as the "State with Individuality".

The pioneers in the settlement of Kansas have been recognized as possessing "High Ideals". That the early settlers of Norton county belonged to this class is shown by the magnificent school system which they built and the churches they established. They came here to build for themselves homes and surround themselves with environments for the educational and moral interests of their children. They proved to the world that with but few conveniences and little money real homes could be established here on these parched prairies. The memory of those homes is dear yet to some who will read these lines. They will recall the days when the boys and girls gathered in the schools from those pioneer homes and for their opening exercises would sing in unison those beautiful words written by John Howard Payne:

"Mid pleasures and palaces, though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!"

Another characteristic of the "Kansas Spirit" is patriotism. The people of Norton county have always manifested a patriotic spirit. During the early history of the county, the Fourth of July was celebrated in a great way: People congregated at the county seat from all parts of the county. The Declaration of Independence was read and there was always a speaker for the occasion.

That spirit of patriotism still exists, but it is manifested in a different manner. We still have that love for country, for town

and community. If this is not true, how came these new and better school and church buildings—the paved streets—modern highways, and the many modern conveniences?

In time of war Norton county has sacrificed some of our very best young men, and today (1942) in the midst of great peril, Norton county boys are once again located in different parts of the world in the service of our country.

The last characteristic of the "Kansas Spirit" that we would mention is Progress. Have we made any progress during the seventy years of Norton County's history? We will now lay down our pen and let this question be answered by one of the earliest pioneers.

(A. K. Mills was born in New York City in 1860. He was one of the earliest settlers of Norton county, the son of a pioneer County Superintendent. He was a musician and writer of some note. Mr. Mills died a few years ago.)

Speaking of progress in a reminiscence he wrote in 1916, Mr. Mills said, "Many are the pictures that come up of those early pioneer days when Norton county and its destinies were being builded. There are many faces that flash out in these imaginary fire-light pictures, each of which had their part in the early history of Norton county. Those of us who are still here, can look back over the drift of years and realize the many changes that have been wrought. The hillsides that were then covered with buffalo and antelope are now cultivated fields pouring their rich harvest into the granaries of many distant lands. The buffalo and antelope have given way to the farmers' herds, the deep worn buffalo trails to the well-worked public highways, the white topped prairie schooners to swift and elegant automobiles. We can now stand on Eagle's Point and as far as eye can see, the entire landscape is dotted with prosperous farm houses where reside the men and women who are the very bone and sinew of our great commonwealth. We look from the summit of Eagle's Point into the Prairie Dog Valley and there we see, nestled among the foothills, the little town of Almena. We see the smoke and hear the roar of the incoming trains on the two bands of steel that connect us

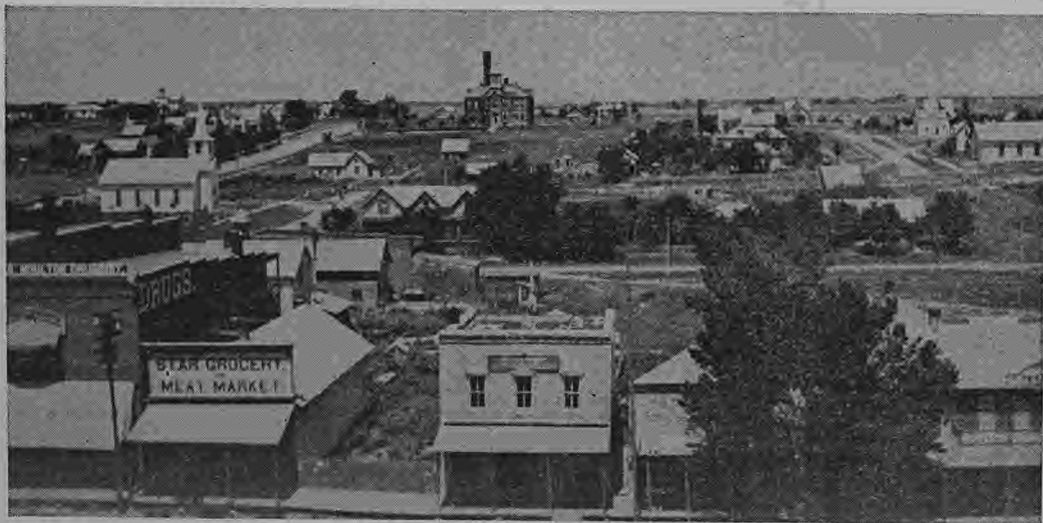
with the eastern and western world. We hear the bustle and noise in the little town below us where hundreds of people now dwell, each pursuing his busy vocation. Then again, in imagination, we look back to those early pioneer days and wonder at the change that has been wrought. It has taken patience, suffering and privation, but we cannot help feeling glad that we were one of the early pioneers and have possibly helped in some slight degree to change the short-grass country to a land of prosperity. Then as we look again over the landscape from the summit of Ame's old Eagle Point, the past and the present seem to stir the deeper emotions within us and we cannot refrain from saying, God bless you, dear old Kansas.

Yes, the pictures come and go in quick succession and we might go on writing indefinitely. I see one so distinct in the play of the firelight on the wall that it seems not to fade away, but to see this picture, we must know the whole and that would be impossible. Possibly we should not dwell on the past but think more of the present. The past at times seems like an eventful dream, the future an undeveloped enigma; but the present is a waking reality.

Why is it that we love to dream
 (When we should struggle to forget),
 Of things that touch a slumb'ring string
 That thrills and trembles with regret.
 Ah yes! Why is it? Ask the gods
 That know the restless mind of man.
 Go ask them once, then twice, yes thrice
 And bid them tell you if they can
 But hark! the wind has lulled,
 the embers have burned to ashes
 and the pictures fade, so we will
 say goodnight."

From the Norton County News. 1916

This view was photographed from the top of the old court house by W. B. Stapp in 1899.



Looking North—Buildings facing Main Street, left to right, were Geo. Moulton Drug Store (now Garrett's plumbing)—Grocery originally run by Mathes and Renoe, later by Fleming and Spencer—vacant lot original site of E. V. Peterson's State Bank—next, to the east, Morgan Heaton's Norton County Bank (later Umpherman's Shoe Shop)—Building behind trees was Miller Land Agency—next, Peerless Hotel (earlier Commercial House and Windsor House), east part of this lot now covered by Auditorium—left, above drug store, Christian church, Catholic church in extreme background—City School and water tower, center—far right, old stone Methodist church (three tall windows).

This view was photographed from the top of the old court house by W. B. Stapp in 1899.



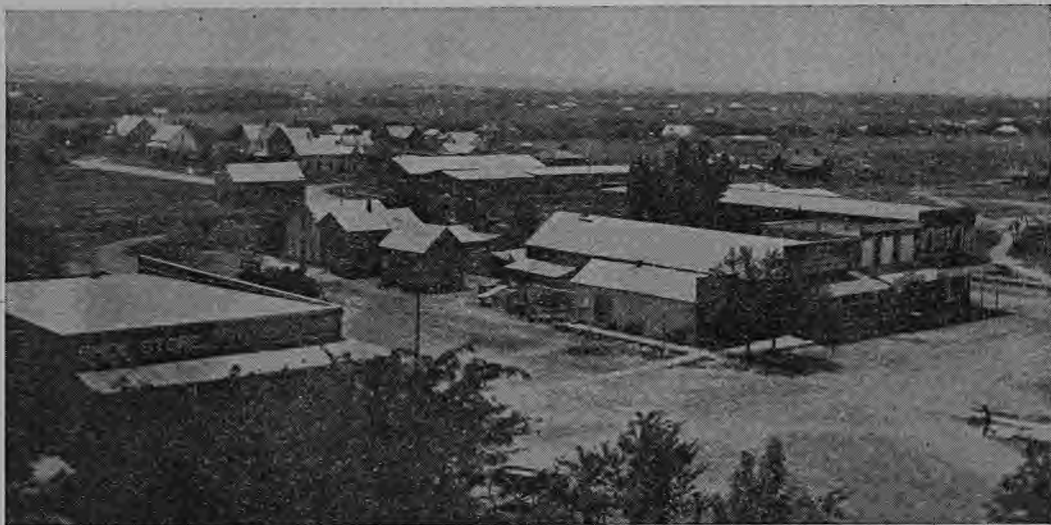
Looking Northeast—In left foreground is Peerless House—lean-to next door was Mrs. E. Gay's Millinery—corner building was Tony Schovenhoven's cigar factory and tobacco store (present auditorium covers site of corner buildings and part of hotel). Across intersection of Main and Norton, where Standard Service Station now stands, was the all-important Land Office. Above it in background is Presbyterian church with parsonage in trees at left. Above parsonage can be seen Burlington overpass, still in use today, with only a very few houses beyond, giving some idea as to the expansion of Norton since these pictures were taken in 1899.

This view photographed from top of old court house by Jos. H. Young, court reporter, 1899.



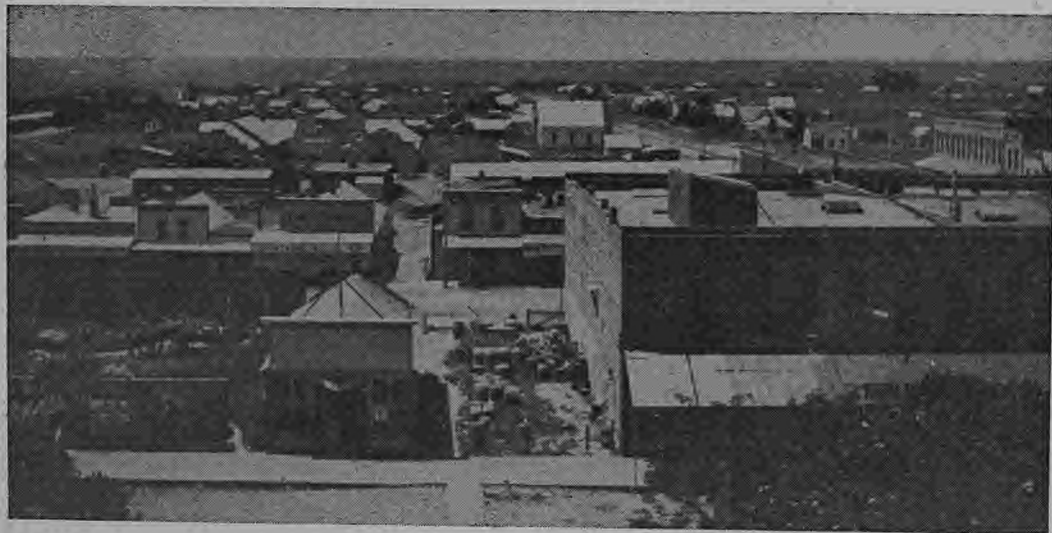
Looking East—Intersection of Main and Norton, left foreground. At left of block was Charles Posson Livery Barn, established on this location in 1879. Next building is present Cox Apartments, once William Simpson's Grocery store, and later used by Dr. E. M. Turner as the "City Hospital". At right end of block is the old Seymour House, purchased by Grier Bros. in 1885 (later Bowers Tavern and now Hotel Norton). Livery barn at extreme right was used in connection with the hotel for convenience of guests in horse and buggy days. Note board sidewalks in front of build ngs. Note also that east part of Norton boasted most trees in that day.

This view was photographed from the top of the old court house by W. B. Stapp in 1899.



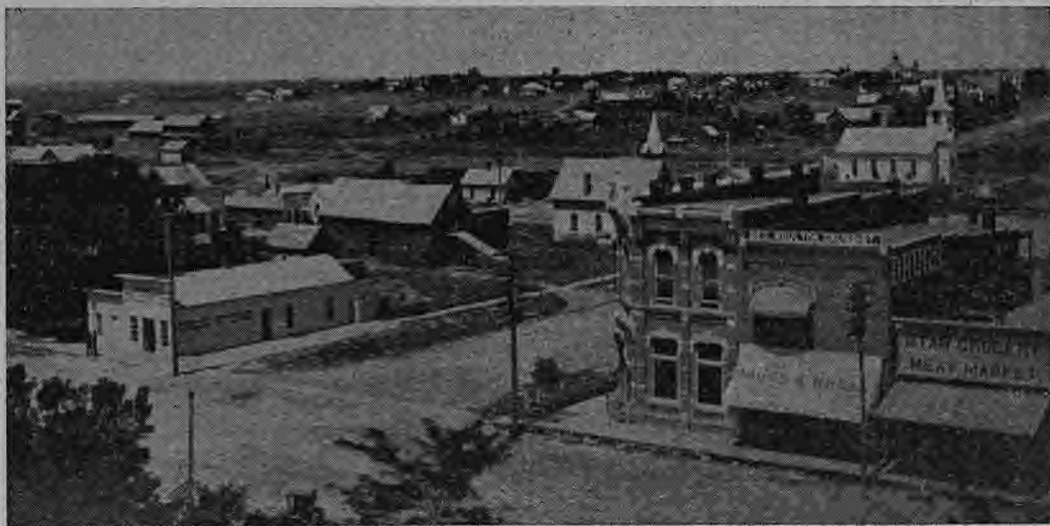
Looking Southwest—Junction of Kansas Ave. and Washington. Left foreground, C. F. Shimeall clothing and shoe store, where Ward Grocery now stands. The small building where Penney Store now stands was a produce house. Next to the west is the A. J. Stybr general store, and in next building was a millinery and Dr. E. A. Lyons' dental office (earlier Dr. M. L. Bancroft's). W. J. Bower Furniture on corner. The path at extreme right, meandering across vacant lots, leads to the depot, and crosses the corner where the Gleason Garage and Gingham Inn are now located.

This view was photographed from the top of the old court house by W. B. Stapp in 1899.



Looking West—South half of "short block" still vacant after fire of January, 1836. Small building in foreground is post office. Brick buildings to the right were built by local men (later occupied by The Norton Mercantile Co.) and are still in use today. On west side of State St., at far left, was bakery, Snyder Ice Cream Parlor next, then meat market, small shops, and Vining Bros. store just south of alley; grocery north of alley, then drug store. West side of First Ave.; Harlan Dey Livery Barn at left, then Gross Page Barn, Baptist church near center; old Auditorium (home of C. D. Long's Commercial College) visible at extreme right, on site of present Ward Garage.

This view was photographed from the top of the old court house by W. B. Stapp in 1899.



Looking Northwest—Dr. White's Drug Store on present site of Western Auto bldg. Part of J. H. Browne Store visible in trees at left. U. B. Church in foreground, later moved to present site of Church of God. Christian church in background. Catholic church above it on horizon (later used as high school dormitory). At right of Main and Kansas intersection is First National Bank. First National was organized by E. V. Peterson as State Bank, 1885; changed to First National, 1887; and, in 1889, purchased Farmers' Exchange State Bank, organized in 1885, together with this brick building, built by Farmers' Exchange in 1886.

APPENDIX

COUNTY OFFICERS — 1872-1942

(First year given is year first appointed or elected. Second year given is last year elected. Intervening years of election are not given. A few were elected in November following appointment earlier in the year.)

Representative

N. H. Billings	1872	C. D. Jones	1902-1904
C. C. Vance	1873-1874	R. A. Richmond	1906
S. L. Green	1875	Charles Darling	1908
J. R. Hamilton	1876-1878	J. F. Wray	1910
Albert Graves	1880	W. R. Dowling	1912
Major Warner	1882	A. L. Drummond	1914
W. H. Hollenshead	1884	N. L. Johnson	1916-1918
D. B. Kuney	1886	Ida M. Walker	1920-1922
F. M. Duvall	1888	H. R. Tillotson	1924-1926
Wright Hicks	1890	R. W. Hemphill	1928
W. L. Kerr	1892	H. R. Tillotson	1930
Dan Hart	1894	G. J. Archer	1932-1934
A. C. Foley	1896	R. W. Dole	1936-1938
M. P. Pogue	1898-1900	Guy L. Allen	1940

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Appointed by the governor August 22, 1872 as a special board to organize the county: James W. Vance, Shelby D. Reed, and James Hall.

Elected at a special election held Sept. 24, 1872 to serve until after the regular November election 1872: James W. Vance, Almena District; A. Louk, Center District; and Peter Hanson, Solomon District.

Commissioner	District No. 1	A. L. Tromp (App. July)	1903
James W. Vance	1872	Elias Foland	1904
John DeMott (resigned)	1873	W. L. Porter	1906
Lewis Logan (App. Nov.)	1874	R. W. Dole	1910-1918
Jerome Shepherd	1875	F. M. Rhoades	1922
R. F. Hudsonpillar	1877	F. B. Rumsey	1926-1930
Hugh Lindsay (resigned)	1878	R. W. Davison	1934-1938
H. A. Brooks (App. Feb.)	1881	Commissioner District No. 2	
I. P. Burke (resigned)	1881-1884	Geo. N. Kingsbury (never	
L. A. Lovejoy (App. Feb.)	1885	qualified)	1872
Elias Foland	1887	Solomon Marsh (App.)	1873
J. H. Ireland	1890-1893	Geo. N. Kingsbury	1873-1875
Samuel Teaford	1896	William Grant	1877-1879
R. D. Irwin (resigned)	1899-1902	David Close	1882-1885

Commissioner (2) Cont.

B. A. VanMeter	1888
C. E. Hatcher	1891-1894
C. F. Shimeall	1897-1900
J. G. Miller	1904
H. A. Sleffel	1908
M. V. McCall	1912
A. H. Calfee	1916
John Donovan	1920
Sam Sweeley	1924
N. L. Johnson	1928
Alex Sanderson	1932
E. P. Griffith	1936
S. E. "Ed" Jeffers	1940

Commissioner District No. 3

Peter Hanson (Res.)	1872-1873
Elijah Worthington (App.)	1875
A. S. Burroughs	1875-1877
H. C. Davis	1880
W. F. Godsey	1883
George E. Wilson (Res.)	1886
Mark J. Kelley (App. Jan.)	1888
M. P. Pogue	1889
W. H. Hendricks (died 9-9-'98)	1892-1895
E. H. Adamson	1898
J. O. Huff	1901
O. K. Groves	1904
L. J. Register	1908
Albert Schoen	1912-1916
T. A. Costello	1920
P. B. Deeter	1924
Albert Schoen	1928
W. M. Marquis	1932-1936
R. E. Getty	1940

County Clerk

D. C. Coleman (Special, Aug. 22)	1872
J. H. Simmons (moved from county)	1873
M. J. FitzPatrick (App. Jan.)	1875-1879
W. T. Shoemaker (App.)	1880
A. H. Harmonson	1881-1883
J. L. Wallace	1885-1887
Jesse S. Wright	1889-1891

D. W. Grant	1893-1895
John C. Cornell	1897-1899
R. G. Brown	1902-1904
C. I. Griffith	1906
Arthur Saum	1908-1910
Robert H. Rhoades	1912-1914
Lulu J. Hamilton	1916-1918
Lewis A. Milz	1920
Glenn F. Hicks	1922-1924
O. W. Green	1926-1934
G. V. Sarvis	1936-1940

County Treasurer

Henry Oliver (Special) Sept. 24	1872
B. F. Williams (Resigned)	1873
M. A. Morrison (App.)	1874-1875
R. W. Ellis	1877
W. D. Littel	1879
Ed. I. Jones	1881-1883
F. M. Snow	1885-1887
N. L. Johnson	1889-1891
W. H. Hollenshead	1893-1895
Katie E. Johnson	1897-1899
C. H. Starrett	1902-1904
Katie E. Johnson	1906-1908
James B. Shepherd	1910-1912
Della S. Boddy (died)	1914
R. W. Hemphill (App.)	1916
Maud Hollenshead (short term)	1916
M. A. Conklin (regular term)	1916-1918
Glenn E. Bennett	1920-1922
Ruth Bisbee (Res.)	1924-1926
Glenn E. Bennett (App.)	1927
Glenn E. Bennett (App. Oct.) (Resigned)	1927
Emmett Powell (App.)	1928
Emmett Powell (reg. term)	1928
Edith M. Bower (sht. term)	1928
Edith M. Bower	1930-1932
Howard L. Stevens (Died in Office)	1934-1936
Edith M. Bower (App. Oct.)	1937
Edith M. Bower (reg term)	1938
Violet Sargent (short term)	1938
Edith M. Bower	1940

County Supt. of Schools

N. H. Billings (Special)	
Sept. 24,	1872
D. W. Mills	November 1872
M. J. Fitzpatrick	1874
J. W. Langford	1875
J. H. Simmons	1876-1878
Samuel Means	1880-1884
J. H. Simmons	1886-1888
G. W. Blaine	1890
F. H. Baker	1892-1894
R. D. Emery	1896
F. R. Snyder	1898-1900
H. M. Cúiter	1902-1904
E. E. Nelson	1906-1908
D. O. Hemphill	1910-1912
E. E. Nelson	1914
Pearl Wyrill	1916-1918
Myrtle Newbold	1920-1924
Irene Hadley	1926-1928
Byron F. Salisbury	1930-1936
Glenn L. Archer (Res.)	1938
Byron F. Salisbury (held over)	1938-1940

Register of Deeds

Samuel Newell (Special)	
September 24,	1872
G. W. Cole Nov.	1872
Thomas Beaumont	1873
E. R. Worthington (Moved)	1875
Geo. N. Hood (App. Oct.)	1876
B. A. VanMeter (Nov.)	1876
Nat. L. Baker (Res.)	1877
Louis K. Pratt (App. Dec.)	1878
J. A. Littel	1879
P. H. Loomis	1881-1883
A. K. Mills	1885-1887
J. C. Newell	1889-1891
J. T. Smith	1893-1895
D. F. Bruner	1897
B. R. Boddy	1899-1902
B. R. Boddy (Died)	1902
Della S. Boddy (App. Jan.)	1904
R. B. Graves	1906-1908
Frank W. Kidder	1910-1912
B. W. Carr	1914-1916
John L. Fleming	1918-1920

Edna Weldon (Res.)	1922
Alta E. Sarvis (App.)	1924
Maud Hollenshead	1924-1926
Marjorie E. Campbell	1928-1930
Glenn Murphy	1932-1934
D. A. Jordan	1936-1940

Probate Judge

Edward M. Newell (Special)	
Sept. 24,	1872
William Gibbon	1872
John P. Dopps	1874
George C. Post	1876
John Wallace	1878
Wilson Adams	1880-1886
Samuel Means	1888
W. S. Gray	1890-1892
James H. Hurst	1894-1896
Wilson Adams	1898
A. J. Baker	1900
G. N. Kingsbury	1902-1904
Granville Sheley	1906-1908
A. L. Drummond	1910-1912
J. L. Bower	1914-1916
W. H. Hollenshead	1918-1920
J. B. Garrison	1922-1926
H. M. Palmer (Died)	1928-1930
Lottie Palmer (App. July)	1932
W. A. Hendrickson	1932-1940

Clerk of District Court

Solomon Marsh (Special)	
September,	1872
John A. Gishwiller	1872
W. E. Case	1873
A. F. Harmer	1874-1878
W. E. Case	1880-1886
N. A. Johnson	1888
Dan Hart	1890-1892
Wm. H. Calloway	1894
J. E. Gleason	1896-1898
A. A. Davis	1900-1904
R. I. Fullerton	1906-1908
Page Guthrie	1910-1912
R. A. Holmes	1914-1916
W. A. Hendrickson	1918-1920
Pearl Thompson	1922-1930
Ethel Bechtoldt	1932-1938
Pearl Thompson	1940

County Attorney

N. H. Billings (Special)	
September 24,	1872
James W. Vance	1874
John R. Hamilton	1875
Thomas Beaumont	1876
M. W. Pettigrew	1878
L. H. Thompson	1880
Hugh McCredie	1882
L. H. Thompson	1884
Hugh McCredie	1886
L. H. Thompson	1888
L. H. Wilder	1890
Charles D. Jones	1892-1894
L. H. Wilder	1896
Charles D. Jones	1898
H. R. Tillotson	1900-1902
L. H. Thompson	1904
L. H. Wilder	1906-1908
Rob. W. Hemphill	1910-1912
L. H. Wilder	1914-1916
A. L. Drummond	1918-1920
R. W. Hemphill Jr.	1922-1924
J. F. Bennett	1926-1930
Thelma Boatman	1932
J. C. Tillotson	1934-1940

Sheriff

James Hall (Special)	
Sept. 24,	1872
John W. Bieber	1873
Gross Page (Res.)	1874
J. R. Hall (App. July 7)	1875
Charles W. Posson	1875
Jack Conarty	1877
James W. Vining	1879-1881
Isaac Keener	1883
Amon Butler	1885
Henry Joint	1887-1891
George B. Betterton	1893-1895
William H. Croco	1897-1899
W. Hatcher	1902
Amon Butler	1904
W. L. Robbins	1906
C. M. Saum	1908-1910
C. H. Payton	1912-1914

Len Lovejoy	1916-1918
Lyman A. Graves	1920
E. F. Cox	1922-1924
C. H. Payton	1926-1928
J. E. Frame	1930
C. H. Payton	1932-1934
Chas. W. Holland	1936-1938
Earl W. Moody	1940

Coroner

William Gibbon (Special)	
September 24,	1872
E. H. Collins	1872
John Keller	1873
Dr. Newton	1875
J. E. Morris	1876-1877
R. E. White	1879
E. C. Williams	1881
E. M. Turner	1882-1904
F. E. Gaither	1906
E. R. Wilson	1908
S. W. Sullivan	1910-1912
F. D. Kennedy	1914-1916
A. Bennie	1918
F. D. Kennedy	1920-1924
C. C. Fuller	1926
F. D. Kennedy	1928-1930
W. Stephenson	1932-1940

Surveyor

D. W. Mills (Special)	
Sept. 24,	1872
S. D. Reed	1872
John Landis	1873
A. Hendricks	1875
D. W. Mills	1876-1877
J. A. Blauvelt	1879
E. Trescot	1881
Cyrus Ramage	1883-1885
C. E. Worthington	1887-1889
C. H. Starrett	1891
J. C. Newell	1893-1908
Fred E. Foote	1910-1914
J. C. Newell	1915

Appointed County Engineer
May 8, 1917