

Reno County, in the central part of the state, is bounded on the north by Rice and McPherson counties; on the east by Harvey and Sedgwick; on the south by Sedgwick and Kingman, and on the west by Pratt and Stafford. Its boundary lines were fixed by the legislature of 1868, and it was named in honor of Gen. Reno, who was killed at the battle of Gettysburg. It was not settled until three years later. The first settlers were not at that time within the confines of Reno county, as the lines have been changed, but all those which shall be mentioned were settlers in Reno county as it now exists. The last change was made in 1872 when range 4 on the east and a tier of townships from Rice county on the north were added, while a large tract on the south was detached and given to the new county of Kingman.

River township in Nov., 1870. The next month he went to Lawrence to purchase provisions and on his return was accompanied by John Hunt, who located in the valley of the Little Arkansas. About the same time J. H. D. Rosan came to the county, and early the next year he located a ranch. He and his brother, Charles W. Rosan, and a man by the name of Charles Street, drove in a large herd of Texas cattle. They procured a surveyor from Salina and had their lands surveyed—the first in either Rice or Reno counties. George W. Watson located in the valley of Cow creek in March, 1871. Others who located in this year were: A. S. Demock, Luther A. Dodge, John Swenson and a party of Swedes in Clay township; Charles Collins, D. B. Miller, A. Smith, L. S. Shields and his two sons, Samuel and George, Peter Shafer, George Mills, E. Shafer, B. F. Evarts, George Laferty, Dr. A. S. Crane, William Lockhart and John Curley. Another party was composed of John Shahan, William and Robert Bell, William Caldwell, a Mr. Haverlin, John Butcher, P. Welch, William Kacy, F. Foley, Isaac Ijams and wife, James Freese, William Shoop and wife, Wesley Ijams, Hannah and Mary Freese. All these settlements were made in the northern and eastern parts of the county along the rivers.

In June, 1872, a bridge was constructed across the Arkansas river at Hutchinson, which opened the lands beyond to settlement. During the remaining months of 1872 and the year 1873, that part of the county was settled very rapidly. The sand hills in the northeastern part of the county were covered with a heavy growth of timber, which was rare in that part of Kansas. The trees were cottonwood, some of them were 6 feet in diameter with their lowest limbs 50 feet from the ground. The belt was 4 miles wide and was a great boon to the early settlers, who used it up so rapidly that the supply was nearly exhausted by 1873. This was one county in which there was no real damage suffered from the Indians, except on a few occasions when they drove away live stock. Reno was not, however, exempt from Indian scares, the worst one happening in April, 1871, on the occasion of a threatened attack by the Cheyennes.

The first crops were planted in the spring of 1871. The buffalo, which were still plentiful, took most of the sod corn. It was in this year that W. H. Caldwell built the first traveler's inn—near the mouth of Cow creek. The first postoffice in the county was established there and the place was called Queen Valley. It was expected at the time that the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. would strike the Arkansas river at that point. The first business establishment in the county was at Queen Valley. The first birth was that of a son in a family named Johnson at Hutchinson. The first death was that of a character known as "Mountain Jack," who was shot by accident while preparing for a buffalo hunt. The first threshing machine was brought into the county in 1873 by John N. Shahan. The first political convention was held in 1872. The ticket nominated was afterward elected. The Hutchinson news was established in 1871 and is still published.

County organization was effected in 1872, the census showing the requisite 600 inhabitants. A provisional organization was formed the first day of the year. A. C. Kies was chosen temporary county clerk and the following were appointed special commissioners: C. Bemis, W. H. Bell and Thomas Allen. A special election was held on Jan. 6 and C. C. Hutchinson (founder of the town of that name) was elected to the legislature. The election was irregular, but he was given his seat. On Feb. 3 a county seat election was held and the vote was almost unanimous for Hutchinson. An election of officers was held on March 12 and the following were chosen: Commissioners, C. C. Bemis, W. H. Bell and W. J. VanSickle; county clerk, A. C. Kies; sheriff, Charles Collins; clerk of the district court, Harry Hodson; superintendent of public instruction, W. E. Hutchinson; register of deeds, S. H. Hammond; probate judge, W. W. Updegraff; county surveyor, Luther Dodge; county attorney, L. Houk; coroner, C. S. Martin. About 150 votes were cast.

No subdivision of the county into municipal townships had been made at this time, and in April an election was held at which were elected township officers who should have jurisdiction over the whole county under the name of Reno township. These officers were: Peter Shafer, trustee; D. B. Miller, treasurer; S. N. Parker, clerk; J. Rhoades and D. D. Olmstead, justices of the peace; John McMurray and J. Brown, constables. The first bond election was held in April, when three propositions were submitted and carried, the first for \$15,000 to build a court-house, the second for \$35,000 to bridge the Arkansas river, Cow creek and Little river, and \$10,000 for current expenses pending the collection of taxes. The first term of the district court was held in Aug., 1872, in a temporary court-house, W. R. Brown presiding. In the fall the first regular election was held and a non-partisan ticket was elected. The first school district was organized early in this year. It included Hutchinson and vicinity.

The first division of the county into townships took place on April 12, 1873, when the following were organized: Nickerson, Valley, Little River, Haven, Castleton and Clay. In September Lincoln and Center were organized, and the next March Salt Creek, Melford, Westminster, Troy and Langdon were organized. The following were organized out of the ones already mentioned: Grove, 1876; Grant, Reno, Loda, Sumner and Hayes, 1877; Albion and Bell, 1878; Enterprise, Roscoe and Plevna, 1879; and Arlington in 1881. At present there are 30 townships, the following having been organized since 1881: Huntsville, Medora, Miami, Ninnescah and Sylvania. The postoffices in the county in 1910 were Abbyville, Arlington, Bernal, Buhler, Castleton, Darlow, Haven, Hutchinson, Langdon, Medora, Nickerson, Ost, Partridge, Plevna, Pretty Prairie, Sylvania, Turon and Yoder.

The first railroad built through the county was the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, which extended its main line west from Newton in 1872, striking the Arkansas river at Hutchinson and following the course of

the river northwest, leaving Reno county about mid-way on the north line. All lines of railroad operating in the county center at Hutchinson, except a branch of the St. Louis & San Francisco northwest from Wichita, which crosses the northeast corner, and a line of the Missouri Pacific which crosses the southwest corner into Stafford county. Besides the main line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, mentioned above, there are two other lines of the same system, a "cut off," which diverges west at Hutchinson and meets the main line at Kinsley, and another south from Hutchinson through Kingman and Harper counties. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific enters in the northeast and crosses southwest through Hutchinson into Pratt county. A line of the Missouri Pacific railroad enters in the southeast and crosses northwest along the Arkansas river into Rice county. There are nearly 200 miles of railroad in the county.

The surface of the county is undulating prairie, in some places nearly level. There is abundant drainage, the water system including the Arkansas river, the Little Arkansas, the north fork of the Ninnescah, Cow creek and their tributaries. The valley of the Arkansas river has an average width of 5 miles, in some places spreading out to 10 miles. On the smaller streams the bottoms average about one-half mile in width, the bottom lands being 15 per cent. of the total area. Growths of natural timber, mostly cottonwood and box-elder, flourish along the streams, and artificial plantings dot the county in every direction. Limestone is found in the northeast and southwest; red sandstone in the northeast and on the forks of the Ninnescah river; mineral paint is also found along this stream. The salt which places Kansas third in the production of this commodity, is mostly taken from the great beds underlying Reno county. The industry has been developed on a large scale and the source is seemingly inexhaustible. One of the largest salt plants in the world is in operation here.

Reno county is at the outlet of the great wheat and corn growing district, handling most of the grain grown in the surrounding counties and of those southwest as far as the state line. Aside from this the wheat and corn grown within the county places Reno in the front rank among the counties of the state in this respect. The value of the farm products runs from \$6,500,000 to \$8,500,000 annually. In 1910 the wheat and corn crops were each worth over \$1,600,000; hay, \$240,000; oats, nearly \$600,000; the live stock sold for slaughter brought \$1,316,000; dairy products, over \$500,000, and poultry and eggs nearly \$200,000. The year before the crops were somewhat better, the corn alone in 1909 bringing nearly \$3,500,000. When this wealth is added to the immense income from salt, and the commerce which passes this way is taken into account, this locality appears to be an unusually favored spot.

The population of the county in 1910 was 37,853, and the assessed valuation of property \$77,877,210, which shows the per capita wealth to be about \$2,100.

Republic, an incorporated town of Republic county, is located in Big Bend township on the Republican river and the Missouri Pacific R. R., 16 miles northwest of Belleville, the county seat. It was founded in March, 1878, by a town company composed of A. B. Young, H. S. Stone, Milton Grim, J. B. Pollard, Fred and William Elliott, and T. F. Marlett. The first building erected in the town was a blacksmith shop, which was put up in Oct., 1878, by E. B. Duncan. About the same time the Gomeria postoffice was removed to Republic, and in May, 1879, a man named Capers erected a business building, the town company donating him two lots for a site. In June, 1879, the town was surveyed and the first lots offered for sale. The following spring the railroad was completed and Republic began to assume a position of some importance. In 1910 it had 2 banks, a money order postoffice with three rural routes, a weekly newspaper (the News), express and telegraph offices, several good mercantile establishments, good schools and churches and a population of 450.