

Seward County, in the southern tier, is the third county east from Colorado. It is bounded on the north by Haskell county; on the east by Meade; on the south by the State of Oklahoma, and on the west by Stevens county. It was created in 1873 and named in honor of William H. Seward of New York, who was secretary of state during Lincoln's administration. The boundaries were defined as follows: "Commencing at the intersection of the east line of range 31 west with the 6th standard parallel; thence south on said range line to the southern boundary line of the State of Kansas; thence west on said southern boundary line of the State of Kansas to the east line of range 35 west; thence north on said range line to the 6th standard parallel; thence east to the place of beginning."

Ten years later the area was increased nearly threefold by the addition of territory from the adjoining counties, which for a time lost their identity. In 1886 the original limits were restored and the county was organized. C. L. Calvert was appointed census taker in March, and according to his returns, which were made June 5, there were 2,551 bona fide residents in the county, of whom 843 were householders. The taxable property amounted to \$421,985, of which \$182,719 was real estate. Gov. John A. Martin issued his proclamation on June 17, designating Springfield as the temporary county seat and appointing the following officers: County clerk, J. M. Wilson; commissioners, Walter H. Harwood, E. M. Campbell and Edwin A. Watson. Fargo Springs was the rival of Springfield for county seat honors and the governor, hoping to divide favors, appointed Fargo Springs adherents as com-

missioners. They divided the territory of the county into election districts in such a manner as to give their town the advantage over Springfield. The voting place for Seward township was at Fargo Springs. The night before the election, which was held on Aug. 5, 1886, it is said the Fargo men, 40 strong, took possession of the polling place, organized the election board early the next morning and began the voting an hour before the time fixed. It was charged that the Fargo people "voted early and often." The farmers, not approving the way the election was conducted, hauled a wagon up beside the building in which the polls were located and established a voting booth of their own. The commissioners refused to canvass the vote deposited in the ballot box in the wagon bed. There were 225 votes cast in this manner, of which a majority were for Springfield. The matter was taken to the courts, the commissioners were compelled to canvass the vote, and Springfield was declared the permanent county seat in March, 1887. Fargo Springs, which was located less than 4 miles south of Springfield, moved to the latter place.

The officers chosen at the August election were as follows: County clerk, Oliver Leisure; treasurer, Adam T. Ragland; probate judge, L. A. Etzold; register of deeds, George Ferner; sheriff, George Neeley; coroner, Dr. W. H. Dorsett; surveyor, A. L. Stickel; attorney, C. J. Traxler; clerk of the district court, W. E. McClure; commissioners, E. M. Campbell, W. W. Kimball and Charles Mayo.

The settlement within the present boundaries of Seward county did not begin until 1884. Among the first settlers, who afterward became prominent in the business and political life of the county, were W. J. Tipton, who came in 1884, and the following who came in 1885: Oliver Leisure, L. J. Fulton, L. P. Roberts, Harry C. Nelson, A. T. Ragland, E. M. Campbell, A. H. Saunders, L. A. Etzold, J. M. Adams and J. L. Lundsford. The immigration was heavy during the years 1885 and 1886. The Springfield Town company was organized in the fall of 1885, but the town was not laid out until about three weeks before the county was organized. The first newspaper was the Springfield Transcript, established in 1886 by L. P. Kemper. County buildings were not built for several years, but in a short time there was nevertheless a large bonded indebtedness. The county scrip was handled very extravagantly by the officials. In 1888 legal action was brought by the attorney-general of the state against Oliver Leisure, county clerk, and two of the commissioners, charging them with defrauding the county out of several thousand dollars.

In that year the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroad was built and the town of Liberal was founded. In August, four months after it was laid out, the population had reached 800 and it was incorporated as a city of the third class. The people of the south part of the county began a campaign to have it made the county seat. In 1890 the county records were burned at Springfield, and the facts then came to public notice that the county had a bonded indebtedness of \$100,000 with

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practically nothing to show for it. In 1892 the last county seat election was held. The candidates were Liberal and Springfield. The former won by 125 votes. So confident were the Liberal adherents of a victory that a large number of farm wagons were drawn up before the county offices, and as soon as the vote was announced the removal of the county property began. In less than three hours it was all on the road to Liberal.

The county is divided into three townships, Fargo, Liberal and Seward. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroad enters on the eastern boundary line, north of the center, and crosses southwest into Oklahoma, a distance of 30 miles. The general surface is undulating with but few hills, and there is practically no timber. The Cimarron river enters near the northwest corner and flows southeast into Meade county. Limestone of good quality is found in the southwest portion.

The total value of farm products in 1910 was \$885,529. Wheat, the most valuable crop, brought \$258,152; milo maize, \$138,270; broom-corn, \$110,022; corn, nearly \$70,000; Kafir corn, \$81,825; hay, \$55,634; animals sold for slaughter, \$80,701. The live stock aggregated 10,537 head, worth \$561,618, and the assessed valuation of property was \$6,117,868.

The population in 1890 was 1,503, in 1900 it was 822 and in 1910 it was 4,091. This large increase during the last decade was due to the improved methods of farming and to the fact that the farmers have learned how to handle the soil in the climate of southwest Kansas to the best advantage.