

Stafford County, in the southwestern section of the state, is the third county north of the Oklahoma line, and its western border is about 175 miles east of Colorado. It is bounded on the north by Barton county; on the east by Rice and Reno; on the south by Pratt, and on the west by Edwards and Pawnee. The legislature of 1870 defined the boundaries of Stafford county and named it in honor of Capt. Lewis Stafford, of the First Kansas infantry. In 1875, in an effort to obliterate it, the legislature gave a portion to each of three surrounding counties, Pawnee, Barton and Pratt. However, a strip 6 miles wide and 12 miles long remained and was still called Stafford. In 1879 the supreme court decided that the act of the legislature dividing the county was unconstitutional and the original boundaries were restored.

In the meantime the settlers had been coming in and improving the land. The first ones came in 1874, among whom were, John Birbeck, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Hoole, whose son, born the next year, was the first white child born in the county, Martin Fitzpatrick, James O'Connor, Elisha, Edward and F. Williamson, Abraham Lash, H. Campbell, J. C. Stone, R. M. Blair, Jesse Vickers, E. B. Crawford, Edwin Hadlock and W. Z. Nutting. Some dozen families located the same year in the

eastern portion of the county, forming what was known as the Missouri settlement, and a few families located near the site of St. John. In the spring of 1875 a colony of Mormons, comprising 40 families, located where St. John now stands and founded Zion Valley. A post-office was established there and the prophet of the community, William Bickerton, was postmaster. In 1876 a few people moved into the northeastern portion of the county, locating in the vicinity of "Salt Marsh." A company was organized to manufacture salt, but the enterprise did not pay and was abandoned. The first school house was erected that year and Miss Ella Miller was the first teacher. During the next two years a great many new settlers located in the county and by 1879 the population was sufficient for organization.

In response to a memorial Gov. St. John appointed a census taker. A public meeting was held in Zion Valley church on May 31 to choose men to be recommended to the governor for temporary officers and to decide upon a place for temporary county seat. The governor acted upon the choice made at this meeting and in his proclamation issued in July designated St. John as the temporary county seat and appointed the following officers: County clerk, Frank G. Fox; commisisoners, M. B. Walker, Frederick Baumgardner and J. C. Townsley. The first election was held in August and resulted in the choice of the following officers: County clerk, S. M. Nolder; treasurer, J. B. Smith; probate judge, George W. Hovey; register of deeds, Berlin Zenor; sheriff, J. W. Miles; clerk of the district court, George W. Bausman; attorney, F. M. Morgan; coroner, W. S. Tyrrell; surveyor, H. L. Fitch; superintendent of public instruction, N. L. D. Smith; commissioners, G. M. Detwiler, Frederick Baumgardner and J. C. Townsley; representative, C. M. Johnson. The candidates for county seat were, St. John, Stafford, Newburg, Livingston and Center. Out of a total vote of 822 St. John received 411, lacking one of having a majority. It was continued as the temporary county seat, and a special election was held on April 5, 1882, to decide the matter. A cyclone struck Stafford at 4 p. m. that day, destroying the ballot box, so that there was no returns from that township, and another election was ordered to be held on April 14. The candidates were St. John, Stafford and Bedford. No place received a majority. Another vote was taken on April 18, with Bedford eliminated. St. John received a majority and became the permanent county seat.

The storm which destroyed the ballot box at Stafford wrecked every building and scattered household goods and merchants' stocks to the four winds. It was followed the same season by a storm in Richland, which killed and wounded a large number of people, besides leaving many families homeless. Considerable property and growing crops were destroyed in Hayes and Cooper townships, but no lives were lost.

The first newspaper in the county was the Stafford Citizen, established by T. L. Kerr in 1877. At their first meeting the commissioners divided the county into 7 townships, Hayes, Seward, Lincoln, St. John, Clear Creek, York and Stafford. Cooper township was organized a few

months later. Since that time 11 more have been organized, Albano, Byron, Cleveland, Douglas, Fairview, Farmington, Ohio, Putnam, Richland, Rose Valley and Union. The postoffices are, Dillwyn, Hudson, Macksville, Neola, St. John, Seward, Stafford and Zenith. A cut-off branch of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad from the main line at Hutchinson enters on the eastern border and crosses west through Stafford and St. John into Edwards county. A branch of the Missouri Pacific northwest from Winfield enters in the southeast and crosses west and northwest into Pawnee county.

The general surface is rolling prairie, well adapted to cultivation. Bottom lands average one mile in width and comprise 15 per cent. of the area. The native timber is limited to a few cottonwoods along Rattlesnake creek, which is the principal stream. It enters in the southwest, flows northeast across the center of the county and leaves at the northeast corner. There is plenty of building stone, clay for bricks and gypsum, and a salt marsh is in the northeast.

In 1882 the number of acres of land under cultivation was 142,992. The area under cultivation in 1910 was 370,734. The value of the products in that year was \$3,303,412. Wheat, the leading crop, brought \$1,879,970; corn, \$626,769; Kafir corn, \$91,500; hay, \$157,636; animals sold for slaughter, \$265,071; poultry and eggs, \$76,440; dairy products, \$81,160. A great many more sheep were raised in the early days than at present. In 1910 the live stock numbered 42,566 head with a valuation of \$2,382,742. There were 35,000 head of live stock in 1882, 30,000 of which were sheep. The number of bearing fruit trees in 1882 was 7,191; the number in 1910 was 120,000. The acreage of artificial forest in 1882 was 1,244, the value of farm implements in use was \$23,496. The assessed valuation in 1910 was \$26,622,334. The population in 1880 was 4,746; in 1890, 8,520; in 1900, 9,820; and in 1910, 12,510, showing a steady increase by decades, although there were years during the '80s and '90s when the population decreased. The average wealth per capita is several hundred dollars above the average for the state.