

Sumner County, one of the southern tier, is crossed east of the center by the 6th principal meridian, and hence is but a short distance east of a line dividing the state into halves. It is bounded on the north by Sedgwick county; on the east by Cowley; on the south by the State of Oklahoma, and on the west by Harper and Kingman counties. It was named in 1871 in honor of the Hon. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. At that time many of his friends objected to applying the name of so great a man to what they deemed a worthless strip of territory.

Settlement began early in 1869 when John Degolia and A. Cadou started a ranch on Slate creek. This neighborhood was one of the first in the county to be settled. Those who came during the years of 1869 and 1870 were, in the order of their coming, J. M. Buffington, Lafayette Binkley, John Horton, Charles Wichern, Edwin Wiggins, Charles Russell, Frank Holcroft, J. D. Holmes, J. J. Ferguson, J. O. West, A. D. Clewell with his wife and six children, G. C. Walton, his wife Sarah and nine children, T. L. Cambridge with his wife and seven children, J. B. Leforce, Sr., wife and six children, their son J. B. Leforce and wife, William Leforce, wife and one child, W. C. Foraker, Nelson Holmes, Thomas A. Woodward, Thomas Fuller, James Sullivan, John F. Denogan, Capt. A. B. Barnes, Charles Russell, Harry Holcroft, Edward Wiggins, T. V. McMahon, John McMahon, Robert Symington, Albert Brown, John and Simon Bodkin, John P. McCulloch, John Bur-

(II-50)

nett and wife, Mrs. Lillie Wallace (86 years old), A. B. and A. E. Mayhew, Thomas, J. L. and W. B. McCammon, Samuel and Luther Spencer, William Meek and family, John E. Reid, George Pottman, George A. Jewitt, John Carpenter, H. H. and H. D. Coulter, with their families, Charles A. Phillips, John J. Abel, A. Moovil, and Perry Binkley.

This brings the settlements up to the last day of 1870. By that time a number of trading posts had been established; one on the site of Oxford, where a number of families had been located; one on Slate creek, and one at Ninnescah. In 1871 there was a large influx of settlers and a number of towns were founded, among them Belle Plaine, where David Richards put the first ferry in the county into operation. The Napawalla Town company was formed and a town of that name laid out on the site of Oxford. The Oxford Town company was formed shortly afterward, ordered a printing outfit, and attempted to make Oxford the county seat. Wellington also was founded early in 1871 for the same purpose and Sumner City had its beginning about this time. The Fourth of July was celebrated with a great deal of zest in all the new towns.

The first white child born in the county was Oxford Buft, born July 20, 1871, at the place indicated by his first name. The first recorded death in the county occurred on July 3, when George Peary was shot and killed by O. Bannon. In August a company was formed to build a bridge across the Arkansas. The first meeting of old soldiers was held at Wellington on Sept. 1, and the first marriage was in November between George W. Clark and Mary C. Wright, the ceremony being performed by Rev. J. C. Ferguson.

It seems from all accounts and records that Sumner county was unusually turbulent in the early days. A book by G. D. Freeman of Caldwell gives twenty or more cases of violence, ranging from single murders and lynchings to fights with whole gangs of desperadoes in which numbers of men were killed. Before the county organization the citizens had various committees for dispensing justice. One of these was the "Vigilants," which dealt out justice and sometimes injustice in a summary manner. In 1871 the citizens thinking a corps of county officers would better social conditions petitioned Gov. Harvey for organization. In order to frustrate the plans of Sumner City to become the county seat the petition asked that Meridian be named the temporary county seat, and that William J. Uhler, John J. Albert and John S. McMahon, three Wichita men favorable to Wellington, be nominated commissioners. This was done and the commissioners camped on the bare prairie, where Meridian was supposed to be, and awaited developments. Their first record was dated in June, 1871, and they ordered that, inasmuch as the county had failed to provide buildings at Meridian, the county business be transacted at Wellington until the permanent seat should be chosen by ballot. One of the commissioners went to another county and the remaining two appointed David Richardson in his place. Clark R. Godfrey was appointed county clerk. In August the county was divided into three election precincts and an election for county seat and officers

ordered for Sept. 26. The contesting towns were Wellington, Sumner City, Meridian and Belle Plaine. The total number of votes cast was 805. The officers chosen were: Clerk, C. S. Brodbent; clerk of the district court, W. A. Thompson; superintendent of public instruction, A. M. Colson; county attorney, George N. Godfrey; probate judge, George M. Miller; sheriff, J. J. Ferguson; register of deeds, J. Romine; county treasurer, R. Freeman; two of the three commissioners were A. D. Rosencrans and R. W. Stevenson. The county business was still transacted at Meridian, where a temporary county building had been erected. There was no choice for county seat and pending the second election, which was to be held in November, the citizens of Wellington took a wagon and went to Meridian to take possession of the county records. As they came to the place they saw a party from Oxford bent on the same mission just coming over the hill. Wellington secured the books without trouble but a hand to hand fight occurred over the persons of the commissioners. In the end the Wellington party secured two of them, minus some of their clothes. The November election failed to settle the matter and another was held in Jan., 1872, the vote of which was never canvassed on account of the sudden resignation of one of the commissioners. Another election was held in March in which Wellington received the highest number of votes and Oxford the second highest. A vote taken the next month resulted in favor of Wellington. A petition was presented in Jan., 1873, for relocation. It was denied and no further effort was made to change the seat of justice.

Settlement was so rapid that by 1874 there were fully 8,000 people in the county. That year proved to be a disastrous one in many ways. Added to the grasshopper plague, which was general throughout Kansas, were the drought and the Indian raids. While the Indians did not come into Sumner county, attacks were threatened at various times and the settlers were kept in a constant state of excitement for several months. They left their homes and gathered into the towns, hundreds being encamped at Wellington. Finally a great many became discouraged and left for the east, some of them in the most pitiable state of poverty and despair. This state of affairs did not last long. In 1880 there were 20,886 people living in the county, and 200,000 acres of land were under cultivation, half of which was sowed to wheat. Flour mills had been erected and the first railroads were built that year, so that the product could be marketed.

The first railroad to enter the county was the Cowley, Sumner & Fort Smith, an extension of the Wichita branch of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. Bonds to the amount of \$180,000 were voted and the road was completed to Caldwell in May, 1880. In 1879 Oxford, Wellington and Dixon townships voted bonds to the amount of \$54,000 for the Leavenworth, Lawrence & Galveston, which is now a part of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe system. It was completed to Wellington in March, 1880. Another road which later became a part of the Santa Fe was built during the same year between Wellington and Hunnewell.

At the present time there are 252 miles of main track in the county, which entitles it to rank among the first in the state as regards railroad facilities. A line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe enters in the northeast, crosses southwest to Wellington, thence south into Oklahoma, with a branch southwest from Wellington to Caldwell in the southwest. Another line of the same system from Winfield, Cowley county, enters in the east and crosses directly west through Wellington into Harper county. A branch of this road northwest from Winfield crosses the extreme northeast corner and west a few miles along the northern border. A line of the Missouri Pacific enters in the east and crosses northwest and west into Kingman county, and a branch of the same road from Wichita enters in the north and crosses southwest into Harper county. The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific enters in the north, crosses south to Wellington and southwest to Caldwell. The Kansas City, Mexico & Orient R. R. crosses the extreme northwest corner. The Kansas Southwestern, a railroad from Anthony, Harper county, to Arkansas City, crosses the southern part east and west.

Sumner county is divided into 30 townships, Avon, Belle Plaine, Bluff, Caldwell, Chikaskia, Conway, Creek, Dixon, Downs, Eden, Falls, Gore, Greene, Guelph, Harmon, Illinois, Jackson, London, Morris, Osborne, Oxford, Palestine, Ryan, Seventy-six, South Haven, Springdale, Sumner, Valverde, Walton and Wellington. The postoffices are Wellington, Anson, Argonia, Ashton, Belle Plaine, Caldwell, Cicero, Conway Springs, Corbin, Dalton, Drury, Geuda Springs, Hunnewell, Mayfield, Milan, Millerton, Milton, Mulvane, Oxford, Peck, Perth, Portland, Riverdale, Rome and South Haven.

The general surface of the county is prairie, which in many places is nearly level. Bottom lands comprise 20 per cent. of the total area. The timber belts along the streams vary from five rods to one-half mile in width and the principal varieties of wood are cottonwood, box elder, ash, willow, elm, hackberry, burr-oak, mulberry, coffee-bean and locust. Limestone, sandstone, gypsum and potter's clay are found in small quantities. Salt exists in large deposits and the county is noted for the number and quality of its mineral springs. Well water is found at a depth of from ten to forty feet. The principal stream is the Arkansas river, which flows south along the eastern boundary. The Ninnescah enters in the north and flows southeast to the eastern border where it joins the Arkansas. The Chikaskia enters in the west and flows southeast. Slate creek in the east and Bluff creek in the west are important streams.

The area is 1,188 square miles or 760,320 acres, of which about 600,000 have been brought under cultivation. From its early beginnings Sumner was always a leader as an agricultural county. It rivals Barton for first place in the state. In 1906 it ranked highest in corn and led all others in the production of winter wheat and oats. The wheat yield of 1901 was 6,812,102 bushels, more than was produced in the same year by the whole state of Texas, North Carolina, or in any one of 22 other

states and territories, and exceeded by over a million bushels the aggregate of the wheat raised in New England, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico and Wyoming all put together.

The farm produce per annum brings from \$4,000,000 to \$7,000,000. In the year of 1909 it brought \$6,870,000. The product for 1910 which was below the average was nearly \$5,000,000. Wheat in that year brought \$441,000; corn, \$951,000; hay, \$385,000; oats, \$1,178,000; live stock, nearly \$1,000,000. Other important products are rye, Irish potatoes, sorghum, Kafir-corn, poultry and dairy products. There are 250,000 bearing fruit trees.

The population in 1910, according to the government census, was 30,654, a gain of about 20 per cent. over the population of 1900. The assessed valuation of property was approximately \$53,758,000. This makes the wealth per capita a little more than \$1,700. Many of the farmers have been known to pay for their farms entirely with one crop of corn or wheat. There is room in Sumner county for 4,725 farms of 160 acres each.