

**Wichita County**, in the western part of the state, is the second county east from the Colorado line and the fourth south from Nebraska. It is bounded on the north by Wallace and Logan counties; on the east by Scott; on the south by Kearny, and on the west by Greeley. It was created in 1873 and named for the Wichita tribe of Indians. The boundaries were defined as follows: "Commencing at the intersection of the east line of range 35 west with the 3d standard parallel; thence south along said range line to its intersection with the 4th standard parallel; thence west along said 4th standard parallel to where it is intersected by the east line of range 39 west; thence north along range line to its intersection with the 3d standard parallel; thence east to the place of beginning."

Prior to 1885 there were only seven dwellings in the county and these belonged to cattlemen. One of the largest cattle owners was George Edwards, who was the first white settler in the county. He was shot by Ed. Rhoades in April, 1887. The settlement was so rapid during 1885 and 1886 that in July of the latter year the governor appointed W. D. Brainard to take the census. At that time Leoti was the chief trading point, with a larger population than any other town, and was likely to be the county seat. A company of professional speculators, some of them the same persons that had operated in other counties, bringing on bitter county seat wars, located at Coronado, a few miles to the east, built some fine business blocks and began trying to make their town the county seat. In order to do this they had to have time in which to work, and in some unknown way they managed to delay Mr. Brainard in making the returns. On two different occasions he left Wichita county to report to the governor, but each time he disappeared. The census and petitions did not reach Gov. Martin till in December, and when they did come to hand they were in such a condition that the governor was unable to ascertain which town was the choice of the people. He appointed a commissioner to go out and hold an election to find out. The books were opened in a sod shanty near Leoti. Each side insisted on a thorough canvass, and the voting took three weeks. Feeling ran high and from the first every man was armed. At times as many as 200 armed men surrounded the polls and it was with great difficulty and only by dint of considerable tact that an open outbreak and general slaughter were avoided. The commissioner proved equal to the occasion, but was heartily glad when the ordeal was over and he was safe on the train.

The governor issued his proclamation on Dec. 24, and Leoti, having received a large majority of the votes, was made the temporary county seat. Lilburn Moore was appointed county clerk; R. E. Jenness, S. W. McCall and W. D. Brainard, county commissioners. The census showed a population of 2,607, all acquired in two years, 1,095 of whom were householders. The assessed valuation of property was

\$510,572, of which \$193,776 was real estate. An election was ordered for Feb. 8, 1887, but on Feb. 4 the governor approved a bill passed by the legislature postponing all impending elections till March 10, in order that all voters might be registered. On the advice of the attorney-general the commissioners proceeded with the election, but not more than half the voters came out and another election was called for March 10, pursuant to the act above mentioned.

In the meantime a tragedy occurred which showed the extent to which the rivalry between the towns of Leoti and Coronado had been carried. On an urgent invitation from supposed friends to Coronado a number of Leoti boys drove over to that town to drink beer. They met their friends in a drug store, regaled themselves, visited awhile and had gotten into their carriage to go home when someone called to them. Two of the Leoti young men got out of the vehicle and some words were passed with a couple of Coronado young men who were on the sidewalk. Finally a shot was fired, then a whole volley from persons hidden in the second story of one of the buildings. William Rains and Charles Coulter of Leoti dropped dead. George T. Watkins was fatally shot, and Frank Jenness, A. R. Robinson, A. N. Boorey and Emmett Denning were seriously wounded. The wounded men got into their conveyance and went back to Leoti. Friends came after the bodies of the dead men and found them still lying in the street. Those under suspicion resisted arrest and the governor was appealed to for help, as well as for the militia to keep down trouble during the coming election. It was not found necessary to send the militia, but the governor appointed a commission to investigate the shooting. Eighteen men were arrested. It was found that more than 100 shots had taken effect upon the wagon, the horses and in the bodies of the Leoti men. At the election, held March 10, Leoti won by a large majority.

At that time there was a settler on every quarter section. Three years later the boom subsided and hard times began in earnest. In 1894 the farmers were in hard straits. Most of them had enough wheat for bread but none for seed. The population in 1890 was 1,827, a falling off of nearly 800 in three years. By 1900 there had been a still further decrease of more than 600. The revival began in 1902, and in 1910 the population was 2,006.

The county is divided into 3 townships, Edwards, Leoti and White Woman. The postoffices are Carwood, Leoti, Lydia, Marienthal, St. Theresa, Selkirk and Sunnyside. The Missouri Pacific R. R. crosses the center of the county from east to west through Leoti, a distance of 30 miles.

The general surface is undulating prairie with bluffs along Ladder creek. Bottom lands average a half mile in width and comprise 3 per cent. of the total area. Except for a few cottonwood trees that fringe the streams there is no timber. Ladder creek enters in the northwest and flows southeast and east into Scott county. Two branches of White Woman creek cross the southern portion. Small quantities of chalk, gypsum and building stone are found.

Barley was the leading field crop in 1910 and brought \$70,000. Wheat was worth \$42,801; sorghum, \$40,000; and corn, \$36,000. The total value of farm products that year was \$327,193. There were 13,280 head of live stock, worth \$521,685; the assessed valuation of property was \$3,615,467, two-thirds of which was in farm lands.