

Cloud County, located just west of the 6th principal meridian, in the second tier of counties south of Nebraska, was created out of unorganized territory by the act of Feb. 27, 1860, and named Shirley (q. v.). On Feb. 26, 1867, the name was changed to Cloud in honor of William F. Cloud, colonel of the Second Kansas cavalry.

It is bounded on the north by Republic county; on the east by Washington and Clay; on the south by Ottawa; on the west by Jewell and Mitchell, and has an area of 720 square miles.

On Feb. 4, 1865, the boundary lines of Washington county were extended to include the counties of Shirley and Republic, provided, "however, that at any time in the future, when the territory now comprised either in the county of Shirley and (or) Republic shall contain the number of inhabitants that shall entitle them to a county organization, they shall be authorized to organize and become a distinct county."

It is believed that the first white men to visit the territory now included in Cloud county, were French traders, who passed up the Republican and Solomon rivers early in the 18th century. A Spanish expedition from New Mexico, passed through Cloud and Republic counties early in Sept., 1806, about the time Pike's expedition (q. v.) was encamped on the Solomon.

There has been much discussion as to who were the first permanent settlers in Cloud county. According to J. B. Rupe and the statements of Lew Fowler, he and his brother and John and Harlow Seymore came to Cloud county in 1858 to hunt and trap. They were followed by C. W. Brown. The Fowlers were single men, but Brown brought his family with him. At the time these men came to Cloud county, they are supposed to have been the only settlers west of the 6th principal meridian. Within a short time the Fowler brothers built what afterward became known as the "Conklin House," platted a town site and called it Eaton City. This was the first real house in the county and was located in the western part of the present city of Clyde. Brown and Seymore settled first on Peach creek and then on Elk creek. The surveyors who laid out Eaton City were Sylvanus Furrows and a man named Starr, but the Fowlers did not file on the claims before they enlisted in a Kansas regiment at the outbreak of the Civil war. In the autumn of 1865, they returned to the county but found that their claims had been taken by others.

Early in the spring of 1860, John Allen of Kentucky, and his son-in-law, Sutton McWhorter, took up claims north of Lake Sibley, on the military road to Fort Kearney, and laid out a town called Union City. Allen brought some fine blooded cattle with him, the first introduced into that locality. Some of the other settlers were Thomas Heffington, who later moved to Elk creek, Joseph Finney on Elk creek, and John Sheets on Elm creek. Philip and Carey Kizer and Newton Race, with their families, some hired help and 40 head of cattle passed up the Republican valley and located on White Rock creek about 3 miles from the mouth. Daniel Wolf and several sons from Pennsylvania settled a few miles

south of the present city of Concordia, on a creek that bears their name. Jacob Heller settled on Elk creek, and was followed by his father and brothers. J. M. Hageman, J. M. Thorp and August Fenskie made improvements on their land at once and were the first to raise crops that were marketed. In July, 1860, some of the settlers left on account of an Indian scare, and as the population was estimated to be only 80, it fell below that for a time. In Oct., 1860, the first white child was born in the county—Augustus, son of August and Ellen Fenskie.

In 1862, Richard Coughlen, John D. Robertson, Zachariah Swearingen and their families joined the frontier settlement. During the year Charles and Peter Conklin, with two sisters and an orphan child, took up their residence in the log house built by the Fowlers, which was the best in the county. These men were suspected of being members of an organized band of horse thieves, and as the county was yet unorganized, the settlers took the law into their own hands. A party of some 30 men of Washington and Cloud counties was organized to lynch the Conklins, but they heard of the design and escaped. The mob tore down the house sheltering the women and child, who soon left the county.

The Elm creek school house, the first in the Republican valley, was built in 1864. It was a rude structure of round cottonwood logs, 14 by 16 feet in size, with dirt roof and floor and slabs were used for seats and desks, but the "three R's" were well taught by Rosella Honey, who was the first teacher.

During the summer of 1864 occurred the second great Indian scare. Early in the spring, Company C, Seventeenth Kansas state militia, had been organized in this locality, with Col. J. M. Schooley as captain; J. M. Hageman, first lieutenant; J. C. Chester, second lieutenant; David Meyers, third lieutenant; G. D. Brooks, ensign, and 30 privates. This was the first military organization in the county and first saw duty in scouting that summer. Rumors were circulated that the savages were making war against the whites along the frontier from Minnesota southward, and though this report was not true, depredations had been committed in southern Nebraska. The settlers in Cloud county being few and defenseless, the appearance of the Indians in Aug., 1864, caused most of those living along the creeks to flee to Washington and Clay counties, where they banded together for defense. After remaining at Clay Center for some time, the fugitives returned as far as Clifton, and while there determined upon building a fort. A blockhouse was erected near G. D. Brook's claim and a scouting party under Capt. Schooley went as far as the White Rock, but finding no Indians returned. The people finally returned to their homes though a few abandoned their claims entirely.

The next year the Indians killed a party of hunters and J. M. Hageman in recounting it said, "One of the most diabolical crimes committed by savages on this border was the destruction of six hunters in the month of May, 1865. The party left home about the 4th of May, and were last

seen by the white men near Buffalo creek some two days later. Nothing more was ever heard of them except the finding of the bodies, but evidences were found that they had sold their lives dearly."

Parties from Cloud county assisted in the search for Mrs. Ward after the White Rock massacre in April, 1867. In 1868 threatening Indian bands appeared in the Solomon valley, and on Aug. 11, an outbreak occurred. They began pillaging on the farms of Henry Hewitt and John Batchie, who lived near the river. By a ruse the Indians suggested shooting at buffalo heads and had the whites shoot first, then, when their rifles were empty, shot them down. News of this event traveled through the settlement and the people began organizing for defense. The next day three more white men were killed at Asher creek, and while the settlers were gathering to move to a stockade the Indians swept down upon them. Two Missel boys were captured, John Wear was killed, and Mrs. Henry Hewitt wounded. A message was sent to Jennie Paxton, who was teaching school, and she managed to get all the pupils safely to a house near by except Lewis Snyder, who was in the rear and was overtaken. He was badly hurt by the Indians and left for dead, but recovered. Benjamin White, who lived on Granny, now White's creek, west of Concordia, was killed on Aug. 13, and his daughter, Sarah, carried into captivity. A Mrs. Morgan was also captured by the same band of Indians and the two women were together until rescued by Gen. Custer, after a winter campaign.

In the spring of 1869 the Cheyennes and Arapahoes again appeared in the Republican valley. Ezra Adkins, the twelve-year-old son of Homer Adkins, who lived about 6 miles up the Republican from Concordia, was killed by Indians within a short distance of his home while driving home some cattle he had been herding on the west side of the Republican. The Indians then destroyed the Nelson house, but the family had escaped.

The first attempt to organize the county failed, and a permanent organization was not effected until Sept. 6, 1866, with Moses Heller, G. W. Wilcox and Dr. Lear as commissioners and N. D. Hageman clerk. Elk Creek was named as the temporary county seat. The first political convention in the county, held on Sept. 1, 1866, nominated John B. Rupe for representative; Quincy Honey, sheriff; Zachariah Swearingen, treasurer; Matthew Wilcox, clerk; J. M. Hageman, probate judge; John Fowler, assessor; Dr. Lear, superintendent of schools; and Lew Fowler, Robert Smith and William English, commissioners. Moses Heller subsequently took Smith's place on the ticket. J. M. Hageman was elected a delegate to the state convention to be held at Topeka on Sept. 5.

At the first election to decide the location of the county seat Townsend's Point received the majority of legal votes, but nothing was ever done there. In the summer of 1867 the town of Sibley sprang up, and at the next election Sibley and Concordia held first and second place with Clyde third. Every vote south of the Republican river was for Concordia, and the 18 votes from Clyde were also thrown to Concordia.

The county business, however, continued to be done at Elk creek, or Clyde, until 1870.

At a convention in Aug., 1869, at Saunders' sawmill, a half mile below the site of the proposed city, it was suggested that the delegates visit the site. This was done, the settlers from the south side of the river, who were in the majority, approved and H. C. Snyder called it Concordia. The incorporators of the town company were J. M. Hageman, G. W. Andrews, William McK. Burns, Amos Cutler and S. D. Houston. The charter was filed with the secretary of state, and in Sept., 1869, word was received that the United States land office had been located there and orders issued for a building to be erected for the purpose. In Jan., 1870, the commissioners met in the building which had been erected and presented to the county. It was built at a cost of some \$275 and was used until the present court-house was erected.

On May 31, 1870, Henry Buckingham issued the first number of the Republican Valley Empire, the first newspaper in Cloud county and one of the earliest in the Republican valley. It was started at Clyde, but was later removed to Concordia. In 1881, the Republican Valley Agricultural and Stock Fair Association was organized. It has since become one of the important and flourishing institutions of the county.

The northern part of the county is watered by the Republican river and its tributaries, and the southern portion is watered by the Solomon river, which flows in a southeasterly direction across the southwest corner. In the northeastern part of the county there are some salt springs and marshes. Coal is found near the center of the county, south of the Republican river, and is mined to some extent for local consumption. Magnesium limestone of a good quality is found in abundance. Good building stone is quarried in the vicinity of Concordia. Potter's clay is plentiful in all portions of the county, and these deposits have been extensively worked in the northeast portion.

The county is well supplied with railroads, the Union Pacific, the Missouri Pacific, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy companies all have lines centering at Concordia; the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific crosses the northeast corner through Clyde; a line of the Union Pacific crosses the southwest corner; a branch of the same system runs east from Miltonvale, and a branch of the Missouri Pacific runs southwest from Jamestown into Mitchell county, making a total of over 125 miles of main track in the county.

Cloud county is divided into the following townships: Arion, Aurora, Buffalo, Center, Colfax, Elk, Grant, Lawrence, Lincoln, Lyon, Meredith, Nelson, Oakland, Shirley, Sibley, Solomon, Star and Summit. The population of the county in 1910 was 18,388, and the value of all farm products for that year, including live stock, was nearly \$5,000,000. Corn, wheat, oats, hay and Irish potatoes were the leading crops.