

Harper County, located in the central part of the southern tier of counties, is bounded on the north by Kingman county, on the east by Sumner, on the south by the State of Oklahoma and on the west by Barber county. It was first organized in 1873 and named in honor of Marion Harper, of the Second Kansas cavalry. As first described the boundaries of Harper included the southern tier of townships in what is now Kingman county. The bill fixing the final boundaries passed the legislature in 1879. The organization of 1873 proved to be one of the most gigantic frauds ever perpetrated in connection with county organizations. There was not at that time a single resident in the county, and it was heavily bonded immediately. In 1873 three men from Cherokee county named Boyd, Wiggins and Horner, having laid a scheme to organize some of the uninhabited lands of southwestern Kansas for the purpose of exploitation, came into the territory which is now Harper county, where they met a trapper by the name of George Lutz, who took them to his camp. Taking Lutz into their scheme, a petition was drawn up asking that John Davis be appointed special census taker, and that H. H. Weaver, H. P. Fields and Samuel Smith be appointed special county commissioners. These names were copied from a Cincinnati directory. The petition further asked that Bluff City, "centrally located in the county, and being the largest and most important business point in the county," be made the temporary county seat. To this petition was attached 40 names. The governor granted the petition and a census report was sent in which showed 641 names of persons declared to be "bona fide" residents. The county was then declared organized.

The next winter an investigating committee appointed by the legislature visited Harper county and found that it had not a single resident, that it had been bonded for \$25,000 and had a funded indebtedness of \$15,000. A. W. Williams, then attorney-general of Kansas, recommended that the organization be invalidated on account of fraud and that the county be attached to some other one for judicial purposes. Naturally these events gave Harper an unsavory reputation for some time, but which it has fortunately outlived.

The earliest settlements were made in 1876, when M. Devore and

family, H. E. Jesseph and family, John Lamar and family and William Thomas and family located near the east line of the county. The next year a colony from Iowa located on the site of Harper City. The party included J. B. and M. H. Glenn, R. Barton and A. T. Barton, who brought their families, Joseph Haney, C. H. Snider, M. K. Kittleman, G. M. Goss, C. C. Goss, Thomas Elder, B. L. Fletcher and H. C. Moore. They came to Hutchinson on the railroad and drove from that point. The first wedding was solemnized at Harper on Sept. 22, 1878, between Dr. J. W. Madra and Miss Mary Glenn. The first child was born to Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Jesseph.

The county was organized in 1878. In August Gov. Anthony appointed the following officers: Sheriff, E. McEnany; surveyor, B. F. Lee; treasurer, J. L. Rinehart; clerk, H. E. Jesseph; probate judge, R. B. Dawson; attorney, W. R. Kirkpatrick; register of deeds, H. C. Fisler; county superintendent of public instruction, R. H. Lockwood; county commissioners, T. H. Stevens, F. B. Singer and J. B. Glenn. At the first meeting of the commissioners Anthony was named as the county seat, the former county seat, Bluff City, never having had any existence except on paper. The first county seat election was held at the time of the general election in Nov., 1879. Although the county did not have at that time above 800 legal voters, there were 2,960 votes cast. The county commissioners refused to count the ballots and left them in the boxes. When they finally decided to count them they had all disappeared. The citizens of Anthony and Harper, the two contesting towns engaged in a legal battle over the matter, and although Justice Brewer of the supreme court held that 2,960 votes were too many for 800 voters to cast, the vote was finally counted and found to be in favor of Anthony, and that town became the permanent county seat. All the officers of 1878 held over till 1880.

In July, 1880, bonds to the amount of \$28,000 were voted for the Southern Kansas & Western railroad, Harper township voting \$16,000 and Chikaskia \$12,000. The road was built that year. The next year both townships disposed of their stock at 65 cents on the dollar. At present the county is a network of railroads. A line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe enters in the north central part and crosses south through Harper and Anthony into Oklahoma. Another line of the same road enters the east, somewhat north of the center, passes through Harper and crosses Barber county into Oklahoma, and a branch diverges northwest from Attica. The Kansas City, Mexico & Orient enters in the northeast, crosses southwest to Harper, thence to Anthony, and thence southwest into Oklahoma. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific enters from Oklahoma in the southwest and terminates at Anthony. Anthony is also the western terminus of the Kansas Southwestern, which enters in the southeast. The Missouri Pacific, from the east, crosses southwest to Anthony and terminates at Kiowa in Barber county just over the line. There are 167 miles of main track in the county.

There are twenty townships, viz.: Anthony, Banner, Berlin, Blaine, Chicaskia, Eagle, Empire, Garden, Grant, Green, Harper, Lake, Lawn, Liberty, Odell, Pilot Knob, Ruella, Silver Creek, Spring and Stohrville. The postoffices are: Anthony, Attica, Bluff City, Corwin, Crisfield, Crystal Springs, Danville, Duquoin, Ferguson, Freeport, Harper, Runnymede, Shook and Waldron.

The general surface of the county is rolling, with long gentle slopes. Bottom lands, which comprise about 15 per cent. of the total area, average a mile in width. The timber is very sparse, most of it being cottonwood. There are several artificial plantings. Red sandstone, mineral paint and salt are found in large quantities and are of superior quality. The largest stream is the Chikaskia river, which flows across the northeast corner. Bluff creek and its numerous tributaries practically form the water system of the county. This stream crosses the county in a southeasterly direction.

The total area is 810 square miles or 518,400 acres, of which nearly 400,000 acres have been brought under cultivation. The value of farm products averages from \$3,000,000 to \$3,500,000 annually. In 1910 the yield was not as large as in 1909, but the wheat sold for nearly \$1,000,000, the corn for \$356,000, and the oats for \$349,000, the total product, including live stock, being worth \$2,980,000.

The population in 1910 was 14,748, which was a gain of about 35 per cent. over the population in 1900. The assessed valuation of property in 1910 was \$29,272,300, which shows the average wealth per capita to be almost \$2,000.