

Kearny County, one of the newer counties of the state, is the second east from the Colorado line, and the third north from Oklahoma. It is bounded on the north by the county of Wichita; on the east by Finney; on the south by Grant, and on the west by Hamilton. It was named for Gen. Philip Kearny, an officer of note in the Civil and Indian wars. It was first created and the boundaries defined in 1879. These boundaries did not differ from those defined in 1887, which are the same as at present. The description was as follows: "Commencing at the intersection of the east line of range 35 west with the 4th standard parallel; thence south along range line to its intersection with the north line of township 27 south; thence west along township line to where it is intersected by the east line of range 39; thence north along range line to its intersection with the 4th standard parallel; thence east to the place of beginning."

In 1879 it was attached to Hamilton county for judicial purposes. In 1881 it was one of the unorganized counties to be attached to Ford for judicial purposes and was in the 16th district. In 1873 John O'Laughlin established a trading post on the Santa Fe trail at Lakin. This was the earliest settlement in the county. By 1883 Lakin had grown sufficient to have a newspaper (the Herald). Prior to 1885 there were few people in the county. At that time the Alameda Grape Growers association caused a boom by the purchase of 21,000 acres of land in the vicinity of Lakin, and in the spring of 1886 several thousand acres were planted to vines. The population of Lakin increased by about 400 people at the time this work was being done, and agitation for county organization was begun by the newspapers of the county, published at Lakin, Hartland and Kearney, all three of these towns being candidates for the county seat.

In 1887, in response to a petition, Gov. Martin appointed S. S. Prouty census taker. The enumeration of the inhabitants was not an easy undertaking, owing to the fact that each legal voter was entitled to sign the petition of some one of the towns for county seat. The promoters representing each of the towns did everything they could to have as many as possible enumerated who would be on their side and leave those uncounted who were opposed. This led to several confusing situations. It was charged that Lakin shipped in from 200 to 300 transient voters from Colorado, who were distributed all over the county. These charges came from Chantilly, which took the place of Kearney as the candidate in the northern part of the county, and was far ahead until the very last of the enumeration, which gave some color to the charges. Hartland openly offered town lots in exchange for signatures to their petition. Gov. Martin advised that no person be enumerated who had not been in the county at least 30 days before the beginning of the census.

When the report of Mr. Prouty was submitted to the governor in July it showed a population of 2,891, of whom 812 were householders. The valuation of property, exclusive of railroads, was \$1,079,091, of which \$799,824 was real estate. Lakin appeared to have the largest

number of names on her petition, but the attorneys of Chantilly appeared before the governor with charges of fraud and several hearings were held over the matter that summer. It was later taken into the court of Shawnee county. The charges of Chantilly were not sustained by the courts and in March, 1888, Gov. Martin issued a proclamation organizing the county, with Lakin as the temporary county seat and naming the following officers: Commissioners, W. J. Price, H. A. W. Cornfield and Samuel R. Hibbard; county clerk, J. H. Waterman; sheriff, R. F. Thorne. Price and Cornfield were arrested in 1889 on charges of forgery, and the charges were sustained by Judge A. J. Abbott. In Feb., 1889, a county seat election was held. Hartland won over Lakin, but the county officers were Lakin men and they refused to move the offices. Again the matter was taken into the courts and after considerable fighting the supreme court in Jan., 1890, ordered the records moved to Hartland. This town continued to be the seat of justice until Sept., 1894, when the county seat was again moved to Lakin, where it has since remained.

While all this was going on, the county was building up and prospering. In 1887 an irrigation ditch was projected in the northern part by C. J. Jones. He succeeded in interesting the farmers of that section and 100 miles of ditch was constructed. This was much more important for the future than the county seat fight. A few years ago the government established an irrigation plant at Deerfield, which makes this one of the important irrigating sections of the country. A reservoir for the storage of the flood waters of the Arkansas has been built in the southeast. It is 5 miles long and has a storage capacity estimated at 2,352,000,000 cubic feet, providing irrigation for 100,000 acres of land. One of the most important crops is broom-corn, which in 1910 brought \$225,048. Sugar beets are raised extensively and marketed in Garden City. This crop in 1910 was worth, \$97,000; the hay crop in the same year was \$108,094; wheat, \$50,000; and the total value of farm products was \$715,951.

The surface of the county is level or rolling, with an elevation of 3,000 feet. Water is easily accessible. The bottom lands in the valley of the Arkansas are from 4 to 6 miles in width. This river enters in the southwest and flows across southeast, east and northeast. Limestone and sandstone for building are plentiful. Blue limestone, from which lime is made, and gypsum are common.

Kearny is 24 miles wide by 36 miles long, having an area of 24 Congressional townships. The civil townships are Hartland, Hibbard, Kendall, Lakin and Southside. The postoffices are Lakin, Conquest, Deerfield, Hartland, Kearney, Oanica and Windsor. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. enters in the east and crosses southwest to Lakin, thence southwest and west, along the Arkansas river, into Hamilton county, a distance of about 27 miles. The assessed valuation of property in 1910 was \$5,961,662. The population in the same year was 3,206, an increase of 2,099 or nearly 200 per cent. over that of 1900.