

Nemaha County, the third west from the Missouri river in the northern tier, was one of the original 33 counties created by the first territorial legislature in 1855, and one of the 19 counties to be organized in that year. It is bounded on the north by the State of Nebraska; on the east by Brown county; on the south by Jackson and Pottawatomie counties, and on the west by Marshall county.

It is claimed by some historians that Nemaha was included in the region visited by Coronado and that he reached its northern boundary in Aug., 1851, but it is probable that the first expedition to cross the county was in 1842 when Fremont made his journey across the continent. His route entered the county on the east line, south of the present town of Sabetha, extended northwest to Baker's ford, turned south, passing near the place where Seneca now stands, thence northwest again and crossed the county line near the present village of Clear Creek. This road was used by the Mormons in the early '40s and by the California gold-seekers in 1849, later becoming the military road used by the government troops moving westward.

Nemaha county took its name from the river, which in Indian language means "no papoose," indicating the malarious character of the climate at that time. The earliest settlement was made in 1854, when W. W. Moore located near Baker's ford, 9 miles north of where Seneca now stands. In the same year, Walter D. Beeles, Greenberry Key, Thomas, John C. and Jacob B. Newton settled in the same vicinity. John O'Laughlin took a claim on Turkey creek and B. F. Hicks in Capioma township. The settlers in 1855 were James McCallister, William Barnes, Samuel Magill and Robert Rea, in Capioma township; David Locknane, in Granada township; James Thompson, John S. Doyle, Cyrus Dolman, Elias B. Newton, H. H. Lanham and wife, S. M. Lanham and Joseph Lanham, in Richmond township; William M. Berry and L. J. McGown, in Valley township; Horace M. Newton, in Richmond township; William Harris, on the creek that bears his name; Hiram Burger, George Frederick and George Goppelt, on Turkey creek. Along with these last named came a negro by the name of Moses Fatley, who took a claim which he sold the next year to Edward McCaffery for \$200. He bought his own freedom, the freedom of his wife, his sister and two of her children. C. Minger and wife settled in Washington township, and Reuben Wolfley in Wetmore township.

These early claims were taken without warrant, as there were no facilities for entry and no place at which payment could be made to the government. The earliest payments were made in 1857. Pre-emptions were made up to 1860 at the land office at Kickapoo, where entries were made for the district of which Nemaha county was a part.

The settlement and development of the county having begun during the time when the pro-slavery element had the upper-hand in Kansas, most of the early towns started at that time do not now exist, having given away to free-state towns before 1860. Among those to disappear were Central City, laid out in 1855 by William Dodge, for Thomas Newton and sons and H. H. Lanham, which had the first postoffice in the county; Pacific City; Lincoln, the dream of J. E. Hawkes; Ash Point; Urbana, the first town in the county; Wheatland and Richmond. The last was started in 1855 by Cyrus Dolman, a pro-slavery man and a member of the territorial legislature. Richmond was made the county seat by legislative enactment at the time of the organization of Nemaha county. The town company was given a right to enter by preëmption any quantity of land up to 1,000 acres, lay off the same into lots and sell it. Richmond was 3 miles north of the present town of Seneca.

The first officers appointed for the county were as follows: Cyrus Dolman, probate judge; James E. Thompson, sheriff; Edwin Van Endert, treasurer; Jesse Adamson, David P. Magill and Peter Hamilton, county commissioners. The legislature of 1857 passed an act fixing April 4, 1858, as the date upon which the people should choose a location for a county seat. By this time Seneca had been established and won after three elections had been held on the question. In the first election there were six contesting places—Ash Point, Centralia, Wheatland, Seneca, Richmond and Central City. The next election was held in May and some of the places dropped out. In June another contest was held in which only three towns entered—Seneca, Wheatland and Richmond. In August at the election on the Lecompton constitution the county seat question again came up, this time between Seneca and Richmond, the former being triumphant mainly through the influence of George Graham, president of the board of county supervisors. The county had become free-state by this time and turned down Richmond because it was a pro-slavery town.

The first election for county officers was held in 1859, all the officers having thus far been appointed. The result of the election was as follows: R. U. Torry, county clerk; Charles F. Warren, treasurer; Samuel Lappin, register of deeds; John S. Rodgers, sheriff; J. W. Fuller, county superintendent; Haven Starr, probate judge. Very little of the violence which was occurring at that time in Kansas over the question of slavery molested Nemaha county, although there were in the county both pro-slavery and free-state men who had come to Kansas to help their side win. The only slave holder in the county was L. R. Wheeler of Rock Creek township, who held two slaves until 1859.

The year 1860 was a particularly hard one for the settlers. The county had grown from a population of 99 in 1855 to over 2,000 without experiencing any serious backsets. But the drouth, storms, etc., have caused this period in the history of Nemaha county to be referred to as "the famine of 1860." The main articles of diet were corn bread and sorghum molasses, and the settlers who could even get enough of

that were lucky. F. P. Baker of Centralia was on the territorial relief committee and remained at Atchison during the winter of 1860-61 attending to the office of the committee. Through him many of the people of this county were relieved from suffering.

It is stated by some historians that John Brown spent his last night in Kansas at Albany, Nemaha county. The underground railway came through the eastern part of the county and one of the stations was at Lexington, 3 miles south of the present town of Sabetha. In 1859 Brown, in escorting 14 negroes to freedom over the famous "Lane Road," was held up on Straight creek in Jackson county for three days by those who hoped to obtain the rewards offered for him. He was relieved by Col. John Ritchie of Topeka who escorted him to Albany, Nemaha county, where he spent the night, proceeding to Nebraska the next day.

When the Civil war broke out A. W. Williams of Sabetha was commissioned as captain by the government and by Aug., 1861, had succeeded in raising 150 men from Nemaha, Marshall and Brown counties. As the volunteers enlisted they went into temporary barracks at Sabetha, where they remained for a month at the expense of Williams. In September they proceeded to Leavenworth, where 100 of them were made members of Company D of the Eighth Kansas and 50 were mustered into other companies. Nemaha county contributed about one-third of these men. A little later George Graham, who was a member of the legislature from Nemaha county in 1859, enlisted a squad of 30 men who went to Leavenworth and connected themselves with various regiments. Altogether there were 218 Nemaha county men enlisted, which included every able-bodied man in the settlements, Sabetha having but one man left.

Previous to the state election of 1866 there were stirring times over negro suffrage and woman suffrage and some of the leaders in both causes held meetings in Nemaha county, notably Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry B. Blackwell, Rev. Olympia Brown and Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The vote of the county on the negro suffrage amendment was 251 for to 421 against it, and the woman suffrage amendment was defeated by a vote of 427 to 227.

Some of the early marriages in the county were Charles Leachman and Mrs. Caroline Davenport in 1854; Samuel Crozier and L. A. Newton, July, 1855; Joseph Brown and Elizabeth Haigh in 1857. The first births were H. M. Randel, Oct., 1856, and Elizabeth Lochnane, 1857. The first death was that of Jacob B. Newton, son of Rev. Thomas Newton, in Sept., 1854. The first church was built by the Christian denomination in Granada township in 1856. The first schools were built in Granada township in 1856 and in America City, Red Vermillion township, in 1857. The first postoffices were Central City, 1856; America City, 1858.

There was one lynching and the one legal execution in the county, the former occurring at Baker's ford in 1865. The victim was Miles N

Carter, a horse thief, who shot and killed John H. Blevins. Carter was taken from the jail at Seneca at 11 o'clock at night by 20 men who overpowered the guard. The next morning his body was found hanging to a tree at Baker's ford. The legal execution was held near the jail on Sept. 18, 1868, Melvin Baughn being the victim. He had shot and killed Jesse S. Dennis in 1866 and had managed to escape punishment for two years though arrested several times.

The first railroad to enter the county was the Atchison & Pike's Peak, now the Missouri Pacific, in 1866. The stations along the route were Wetmore, Sother, Corning and Centralia. The St. Joseph & Denver City R. R. came through the county in 1870, entering at Sabetha and touching at Onedia, Seneca and Baileyville. This road is now the St. Joseph & Grand Island. Two other lines have been built since giving Nemaha county excellent shipping facilities. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific enters near the central part of the north line and extends across the northeast corner through Bern, Berwick and Sabetha. A second line of the Missouri Pacific enters from the west, 11 miles south of the Nebraska line, and extends southeast through Baileyville, Seneca, Kelly, Goff and Bancroft.

The growth of the county in population may be noted from the following figures: It was 99 in 1855; 2,436 in 1860; 2,638 in 1865; 7,296 in 1870; 13,486 in 1880; and 19,072 in 1910.

The increase in wealth has far out-distanced the increase in population. The value of property per capita in 1881 was a little less than \$24, while in 1910 it was over \$2,000. The principal wealth is in farms and the income is from products, which amounted in 1910 to \$5,307,178. The leading field crop is corn, which in 1910 amounted to \$2,338,953.84. The second crop is oats, third Irish potatoes and fourth wheat. The assessed value of all property in 1910 was \$40,652,775.