

**Woodson County**, one of the counties created by the first territorial legislature of 1855, is located in the third tier of counties from the Missouri state line, and in the third tier from the Oklahoma line. It is bounded on the north by Coffey county; on the east by Allen; on the south by Wilson, and on the west by Greenwood. At the time it was created and named it contained very little of its present territory, but occupied almost the identical land which is now Wilson county. In 1857 the counties of the third tier were crowded northward until Woodson occupied about the same territory as at present. In 1861 a slice was cut off the southern part and given to Wilson. By act of the legislature in 1868 the boundaries of Woodson county were defined as follows: "Beginning at the southwest corner of Anderson county; thence south to the south line of township 26 south; thence west to the east line of Greenwood county; thence north to the corner of township 23 south of range 13; thence east to the place of beginning."

The county was named in honor of Daniel Woodson, territorial secretary. In common with the territory of that section Woodson county was

not open to settlement until 1860. However, this did not keep out immigration entirely, so eagerly were the lands taken up by the white men. The lands of Woodson county belonged to the New York Indians, who never lived on them, maintaining only a temporary headquarters at Fort Scott. The government finding that the Indians declined to settle upon the lands offered them for sale in 1860 and they were eagerly taken up by white settlers. As nearly as can be ascertained the first permanent settlement of white men within the county was made in 1856. It is impossible to know who was first, the following having located in that year: David Cooper in Toronto township; Reuben Daniels in Belmont township, and John Coleman in Owl Creek township. A trading post was established in 1856, by D. B. Foster, at Belmont, where he carried on traffic with the Osage Indians. Among those who came in 1857 were John Chapman, Jack Caven, John Woolman and a few others who located where Neosho Falls now stands; William Stockbrand, August Toddman and August Lauber, in Center township; and Thomas Sears in Liberty township.

The first school in the county was taught in Toronto township in 1858. Neosho Falls also had a school the same year. The first churches were the Methodist and the Baptist organized in 1859. The first business outside of the trading post was a store which was opened at Neosho Falls in 1857 by Peter Stevens, who was the first postmaster in the county, and had charge of the Neosho Falls postoffice established in that year. The first birth was that of Eliza Jane Tassel in 1857. The first marriage was between Dr. S. J. Williams and Miss Eva Fender.

Woodson county did its duty by the government during the Civil war. In Nov., 1861, a company of soldiers for service in the Union army was organized at Neosho Falls with B. F. Goss as captain and I. W. Dow as first lieutenant. This was part of what was called the Iola battalion and was consolidated with others to form the Ninth Kansas cavalry, which took part in a number of engagements in Missouri and Arkansas.

The board of supervisors in Woodson county, consisting of I. W. Dow, G. J. Caven and William Phillips, with Charles Cameron clerk of the board, met at Neosho Falls, in May, 1858, and ordered that all official county business be transacted at that place. N. G. Goss & Co. donated a jail building to the county for so long a time as Neosho Falls should remain the county seat. In 1865, the county officers being without a suitable headquarters, Dow's Hall was rented at \$36 per year. In 1867 an election was called to select a permanent county seat. The contesting towns were Neosho Falls, Center, Coloma and the site of Yates Center, which was entered in the list merely under its section, town and range description. Neosho Falls received 129 votes and Yates Center 118. At the second election held in Sept., 1868, Neosho Falls received 313 votes and Chellis, 199. The question was not revived again until 1873, when the vote stood as follows: Defiance, 506; Kalida, 530; Wal-drip, 1. This made Kalida, which was 2 miles south of Yates Center,



the county seat. Defiance was 6 miles east, and in the election held the next year it was victorious. In 1875 another election was called in which Neosho Falls and Yates Center were again the contestants. The first ballot gave no majority. The second ballot, which was hotly contested, was taken in Sept., 1876, and resulted in favor of Yates Center. The matter was never brought up again.

In the early days Woodson county like the other pioneer districts was a lively place in which to live. Men were shot for mere whims, most of the murders being committed for property or in drunken quarrels. One of the most notorious of the ruffians that infested the community was "Bully Smith," who had a long string of crimes laid at his door, and finally "died with his boots on" in California.

Efforts to build railroads in Woodson county began in 1867, but were unsuccessful for a number of years, owing to the failure of bonds to carry. Several different roads made propositions during the latter '60s and the '70s but all were turned down by the people. The first road to be built was the St. Louis, Fort Scott & Wichita (now the Missouri Pacific), which crosses the central part of the county in a northeasterly direction, passing through Toronto, Yates Center, Durand and Piqua. Another line of the same road enters the county from Kansas City and runs south to Yates Center, where it connects with the first line. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. crosses the county from the northeast corner to Yates Center, and a third line of the Missouri Pacific runs north from Wilson county. A line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe also crosses the southwest corner, and a line of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas crosses the northeast corner, passing through Neosho Falls.

In 1858 the county supervisors organized five townships: Neosho Falls, Liberty, Owl Creek, Belmont and Verdigris. There are at present 9 townships as follows: Belmont, Center, Everett, Liberty, Neosho Falls, North, Owl Creek, Perry and Toronto. The towns and villages are Yates Center, Burt, Coloma, Cookville, Finney, Griffin, Keck, Lomando, Neosho Falls, Piqua, Ridge, Rose, Toronto and Vernon.

The surface of Woodson county is largely upland, especially toward the center, being the bluffs which rise from the Neosho river which crosses the northeastern corner, and from the Verdigris which crosses the southwest corner. Owl and Turkey creeks are the principal tributaries of the Neosho, and Sandy and Buffalo creeks of the Verdigris. The bottom lands along these streams average one and one-half miles in width, and comprise about 10 per cent. of the area of the county. The principal native timbers which grow along the streams in belts of from one-fourth to one mile in width are oak, cottonwood, hickory, black walnut, elm, hackberry, honey-locust, pecan, sycamore, box-elder and maple. Limestone and sandstone are found in commercial quantities, and large shipments are made from the quarries to other parts of the country. Potter's clay and brick clay exist in considerable quantities and thin veins of coal have been found. The surrounding counties are oil and

gas producing districts and it is believed that Woodson is underlaid with these products.

The total area of the county is 504 square miles or 322,560 acres, of which nearly three-fourths have been brought under cultivation. The value of the farm products are very nearly \$2,000,000 annually. Corn, wheat, oats, potatoes and Kafir corn are the leading field crops. Animals for slaughter, butter, eggs, poultry and dairy products contribute a large sum to the total output. The total valuation of property in 1910 was upwards of \$15,000,000 and the population was 9,450.