

NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 1036

Norfolk, NE 68701

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JULY, 1989

4TH QUARTER

Dear Members:

Dee Sewell and I made a trip back east. We found in one courthouse in Connecticut that they required a Genealogy Society Card before they would let us research. So be prepared if you travel to carry your State Genealogy Society membership card and your local society card.

If you are searching in Connecticut, be sure to write directly to the town. Connecticut has eight (8) counties but each town has its own courthouse where deaths, births, marriages, and land records are kept. The county court house has the wills. The town city limits run till it touches the next town's city limits. So any one in that city limits is registered in that town.

We found safety devices like at an airport in three court houses. One even kept Dee's camera until we were ready to leave.

Do try to take a trip. It's a thrill to be walking in a cemetery in Ohio and find the grave of your Great Grandmother when you had been told she was buried in Nebraska. Also to find her parents and possibly her grandfather. We also walked on the land where they walked and lived. Or as Dee did - to see and be in the church her ancestor built and then to be invited into the house they built with it's wide floor boards and hand hewn beams and the original fire place that was used by George Washington when he fought the battle of Princeton.

Do take a trip even if just to a Library.

Sincerely,

Joyce E. Barlow

* * *

An outstanding Genealogical Award from the Nebraska State Genealogical Association was presented to Mary Carlisle of Norfolk. She was acknowledged at the June meeting of our Society.

DUES ARE DUE

Individual - \$6.00

Family - \$8.00

DID YOU KNOW - The last Union soldier died in 1956 and the last Confederate soldier died in 1959?

It seems a fact that many a family tree has a certain sap that contributes little to its nourishment.

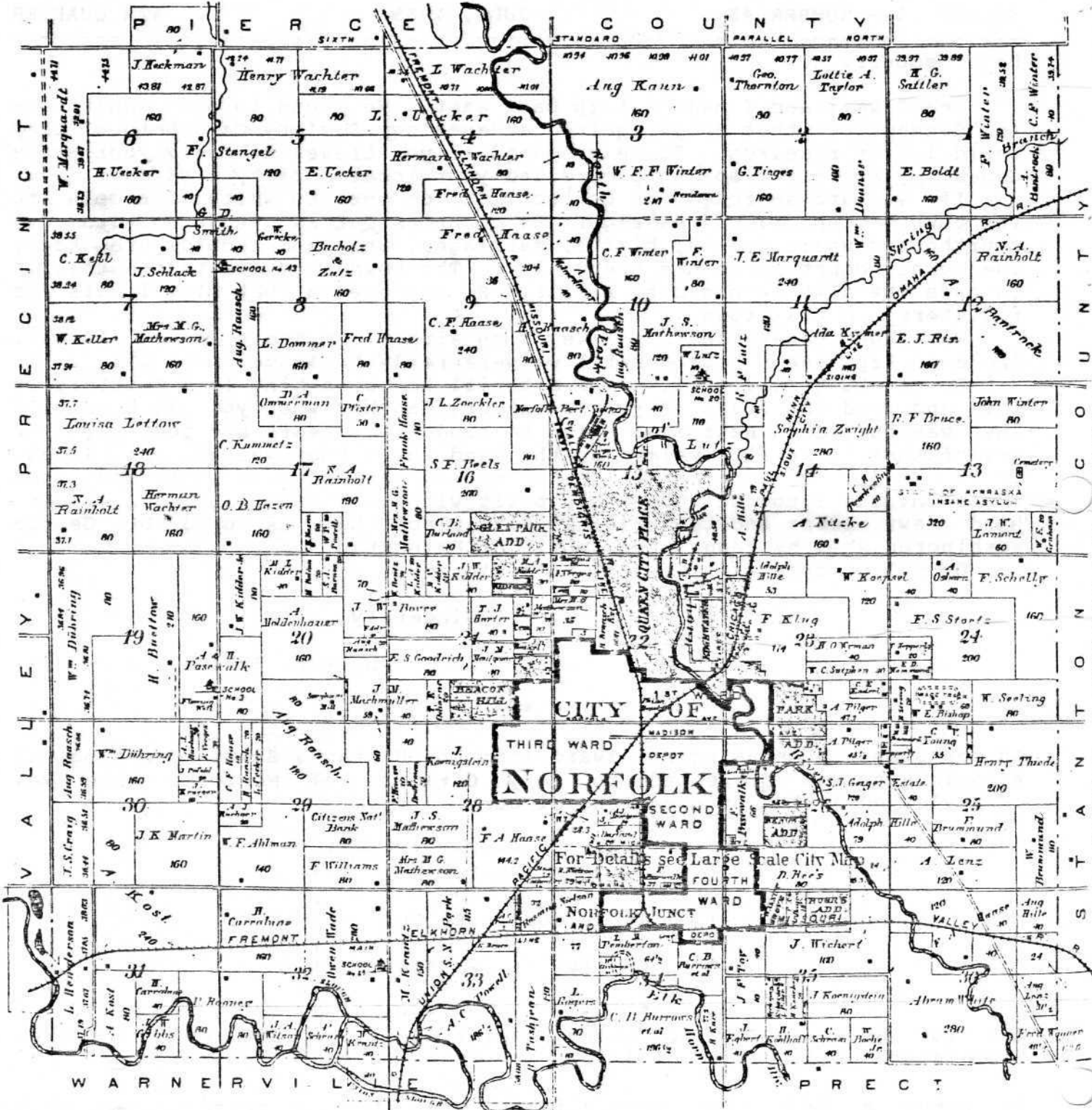
From the Lincoln-Lancaster County Genealogical Society Newsletter, Sept, 1988.

PLAT OF NORFOLK

Scale 2 Inches to the Mile.

Township 24 North. Range 1 West.

of the 6th Principal Meridian.



Norfolk. Peak population (1980). 19,449. Post office established June 9, 1868. Colonel Charles P. Mathewson, one of its founders, told the following story concerning the origin of the name Norfolk: When it was time to petition authorities for a post office, "Nor'fork," a contraction of North Fork, was agreed upon because the town was located on the north fork of a river. The petition was accepted, but postal authorities spelled the name Norfolk, assuming petitioners had misspelled the name. Norfolk lost the county seat election of 1875. According to Frank W. Barnes, a Mr. Wagner submitted a petition to postal authorities with the name "Nordfolk." A department clerk at Washington interpreted the name as "Norfolk."

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

Madison County was created in 1856, by the Territorial Legislature; its boundary lines were fixed by legal enactment and have never been changed.

A county organization was effected in December, 1867, a few months after Nebraska was admitted into the Union. The first election was held January 21, 1868, in a small frame house on Taylor Creek, where thirty-two votes were polled, resulting in the election of the following county officials: Herman Braasch, August Braasch and Henry M. Barnes, County Commissioners; Frederick Wagner, Probate Judge; Samuel H. Thatch, Clerk; Frederick Heckendorf, Treasurer; August Lentz, Surveyor; Horace J. Servance, Coroner; Fielding Bradshaw, Sheriff; Frederick Boche, County Assessor; John Allison, William Bickley, Justices of the Peace; Thomas Bickley and Fred Hasse, Constables.

The first meeting of the County Commissioners was held April 6, 1868, at which time C.W. Braasch was appointed as Probate Judge, to fill a vacancy. The same session, the county was divided into Commissioner Districts and the wheels of the newly formed county government set in motion.

Over the matter of a county seat, there has been no little amount of contention in Madison County, and the end is not yet! At the first election (January 21, 1868), it was located at a point near the present City of Norfolk, but as the newly platted place did not grow, the offices were removed, by a sort of common consent among the officers, into Norfolk. The act was not legalized, but was at the time the best thing to do and was not criticised.

During 1875, the relocation of the seat of justice came before the voters at several special elections. The first was held July 13, when a "three-cornered fight" was had, resulting as follows: Battle Creek, 286; Madison, 220, and Norfolk, 142. The law provided for a three-fifths majority vote, which did not materialize at the contest, so another election was held September 6, which gave Battle Creek, 256; Madison, 211; Norfolk, 205, which still lacked the required legal majority. Another election

was had in which Norfolk was debarred and the contest was between Battle Creek and Madison, and resulted in 362 votes for the former and 368 for the latter; thus Madison became the seat of justice.

Union and Madison precincts voted a bonded amount of seven thousand dollars and with the same erected a commodious brick court-house and gave the use of it to the county so long as the seat of justice remains there. This was done in 1887.

FIRST SETTLEMENT.

To two Germans belongs the honor of first looking upon this section of Nebraska with a view toward settlement. They were Herman Braasch and Frederick Wagner, who came in September, 1865, and established a colony near where Norfolk now stands. They came from Wisconsin. Having made their choice of a place to settle, these two gentlemen returned to Wisconsin, remained until the following spring and then Mr. Braasch headed a colony of twenty-four families, numbering about one hundred and twenty-five people in all. Among the foremost in this band of pioneers were: Martin Braasch, Gottlieb Rorke, Charles Ninow, William Rublow and William Wiuter. They were compelled to construct bridges over which they might cross the various streams from West Point to their destination.

Upon their arrival they found a little company of young men from Illinois; they had settled in the month of May a few weeks prior to the party above named. Among the last named colony were: William A. and L. D. Barnes, William H. Bradshaw, D. L. Allen and Matthias Kerr. It was found more congenial for both nationalities to divide up and live in different settlements, so they did that, in a great measure.

The first survey was executed by William Sharp, who employed a pocket compass and a pair of harness lines. After the laying out of claims along the stream, lots were cast, a blindfolded man drawing the numbers from a hat. All was fair and harmony was the result.

The families lived in their wagons until log-houses could be erected. Cotton-wood logs

were used for this purpose. All were nicely settled in rude, yet warm and comfortable houses of their own before the winter approached, which season proved one of extreme severity.

Other settlements were made by Samuel H. and A. J. Thatch, on the Elkhorn, south of Norfolk, in 1867. The Barnes settled on Union Creek near where Madison stands, in December, 1866. They were followed by Henry Hill, Horace Servance, William Bickley, Thomas Bickley, Henry Platts, Charles Huylar, and a few more in 1867.

In 1867 a settlement was made on Battle Creek, five miles above the present village. "Ponca George," or George St. Clair, was the first to locate there. Benjamin Speelman and Patrick Scully soon followed. These settlers were attracted thither by the fine groves of native timber, which consisted of burr oak, red and white elm, hackberry and ash.

The settlers of 1869 were chiefly former residents of Missouri.

POPULATION.

From various official sources it has been found that Madison County contained the following population, at various periods: In 1868 it had 140; in 1870, 1,133; in 1875 it had increased to 3,171; in 1880 to 5,587; 1884 to 8,995, and according to the 1890 U. S. census returns it had a population of 13,640, divided in the following precincts thus:

Battle Creek (and village), 785; Burnett, 847; Deer Creek, 415; Emerick, 530; Fairview, 547; Green Garden, 535; Grove, 541; Highland, 466; Kalamazoo, 571; Madison (including city), 1,336; Madison (city), 930; Norfolk (including city), 4,120; Norfolk (city), 3,038; Schoolcraft, 486; Shell Creek (with village, 931; Newman Grove, 330; Union, 655; Valley, 447; Warnerville, 457.

RAILROADS.

Madison County has several lines of railway—especially is the northern and eastern portions are well supplied with such facilities of

transportation. The Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley road traverses the northern tier of townships, having for station points Norfolk, Battle Creek and Burnett.

The Niobrara & Black Hills branch of the Union Pacific system passes through the eastern townships, en route from Lincoln to Norfolk. Madison is the station point on this line, in Madison County.

The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha railway, from Sioux City to Norfolk, enters the county from the northeastern corner, connecting with the other roads named, at Norfolk.

The construction of these highways was brought about as follows:

The F. E. & M. V. Railroad Company made a proposition to the people of Madison County to build their line through the county for the consideration of bonds to the amount of forty thousand dollars. This question was voted upon May 3, 1879, and did not carry. The vote stood 642 for and 399 against bonding the county. This being less than a two-thirds majority the measure was lost. The road was built, however, the same year without aid from the county, and reached Norfolk September 15. It now has twenty-eight miles of road in the county and is a part of the great North-western Railway system.

The Omaha, Niobrara & Black Hills (branch of the Union Pacific road) line reached Norfolk in 1880, and the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha (St. Paul & Sioux City) April, 1882.

The Omaha, Niobrara & Black Hills Company made a proposition to construct and maintain twenty-seven miles of road and three depots within the county, providing the county would vote bonds to them amounting to fifty-two thousand dollars. This measure was voted down, June 14, 1879. The same month and year, the precincts of Union, Fairview and Norfolk voted bonds to this company, respectively \$13,000, \$2,800 and \$13,000, and in this manner the present Union Pacific branch through Madison County was built.

COUNTY FINANCES.

Madison County has no indebtedness except a precinct debt for the building of the courthouse in 1887, and one set of railroad bonds voted by three precincts, amounting in all to \$2,500. The assessed valuation of real estate in 1892 was \$1,038,000; on personal property, \$808,225.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

NORFOLK

The chief commercial point of Madison County is situated chiefly on Sections 22 and 27, of township 24, range 1, west. The north branch of the Elkhorn River flows through the town plat. It is distanced four miles from the north and two miles from the east line of the county. Its railroads are the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley; the Union Pacific (branch) and the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha. The city stands on a level prairie plateau, where no street grading, by cutting and filling, is necessary. The population in 1890 was 3,038. The place was originally platted January 25, 1870, by Herman Braasch, on Section 22, township 24, range 1.

The first person to engage in trade at this point was Evan Jones, who kept a small stock of merchandise in a dug-out near the present Norfolk mills. This pioneer store was opened in November, 1866. The mill which was constructed by Col. Charles Matheson commenced grinding in February, 1870. The location of these mills seemed to fix the location for a town site. The first store building in the place was erected in the spring of 1869, by Chas. Matheson; his was also the first residence of the place. But little progress was made until after a decade had passed by, but at the end of that period—1879-80—a new era was ushered in and Norfolk obtained railroads and soon took first rank in the list of towns within northeastern Nebraska. To-day all branches of retail trade are fully represented; also a goodly number of small manufactures. Norfolk has long been trying to secure the

county seat, which at an early day she possessed, or rather the county seat was there prior to the platting of the town and subsequently removed to Madison. The factors that figure most conspicuously in the growth and development of Norfolk are the good railroad facilities, the State Insane Hospital and the

BEET SUGAR INDUSTRY.

The last named is one of great value and constantly growing. These sugar works were erected in 1890, by Mr. Oxnard, and cost two hundred thousand dollars. They employ a large amount of help and pay the producers of sugar beets a good return for their labor, and is the largest plant of the kind in the world.

From 1873 to 1881, Norfolk was the seat of the Government Land Office.

Incorporation.—The place was incorporated in 1881 and has enjoyed a good municipal government.

Schools.—The population take great pride in their educational and religious matters. The present enrollment of pupils shows 956, and nineteen teachers are employed. There are three brick and two frame school buildings, one costing \$25,000.

Churches.—There are seven churches at Norfolk, representing the Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran and Roman Catholic denominations. The first church in the place was a log structure built by the German Lutheran people in the autumn of 1867. There are four weekly and one daily papers published. The *Journal* was established in 1877, by Clarence Selah & Co.

The city is in a prosperous condition. It has a good system of electric lights, water-works and a horse-car line. Among her manufactures may be named a large roller mill, the sugar factory, two creameries and a planing mill. A spacious, three-story brick hotel, named the Oxnard, is now being completed.

This information from the
History of the Elkhorn Valley
Nebraska - 1892

'Diamond Dick' Last of a Group of Frontiersmen

Richard J. Tanner was born in Taylorville, Illinois in 1869, and came to Nebraska in 1878. He soon became known as a fearless rider and crack shot. He was with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and other shows for a time and in the nineties had his own attraction - Diamond Dick's Wild West Shows.

Thousands saw him on the vaudeville stage or in one of half a dozen circuses, shooting pennies from the head or from between the fingers of his assistant as he fired from the back of a galloping horse. He was one of those characteristic westerners who discarded the revolver trigger and 'fanned' the weapon with his thumb on the hammer.

In his early twenties, 'Diamond Dick' rode 5,500 miles without a change of horses, starting in Lincoln, Nebraska and riding to New York City and back. He had said that to the best of his knowledge, that was the longest ride ever made without a change of horses.

'Diamond Dick' dropped the glamour of show business in 1906. It was then that he hung up his buckskins, cut off his long hair, shaved his goatee and put away his rifles and revolvers. He became just plain Richard J. Tanner, a student in the old Lincoln Medical College at Lincoln, Nebraska. He was graduated in 1909 and nailed up his shingle in Norfolk in 1910.

In 1925, on the insistence of the Norfolk American Legion Post, Dr. Tanner revealed to the public that he was 'Diamond Dick' in order to promote a rodeo sponsored by the Legion. (Norfolk Daily News August 26, 1925) He appeared daily as 'Diamond Dick' and his guns, many of which were presented to him by famous gunsmiths in recognition of his extraordinary abilities as a marksman, were at that time placed on display in a store window in downtown Norfolk.

'Diamond Dick' was given credit for the closest head-shot ever made by any marksman, that of shooting a penny from the top of a human head with a nine-pound repeating rifle. He performed this feat for many years and never had an accident. He gave shooting exhibitions throughout the United States and in Old Mexico. He was the hero of countless western 'thrillers' during his early days, he did not claim all the exciting adventures attributed to him. Only once in Norfolk did Dr. Tanner have occasion to use his guns and then they were not handy. He responded to the call of a grocer who was being robbed. Unarmed, Dr. Tanner gave chase but the fleeing robber out-distanced him. Somewhat chagrined, 'Diamond Dick' unromantically telephoned the police.

Dr. Richard J. Tanner practiced medicine on Norfolk Avenue, in the 1930's he advertised as being a reliable root and herb doctor...his flyer read:

"DOCTOR TANNER, specialist in chronic diseases. A reliable root and herb doctor compounds the major portion of his medicines from roots, gums, barks, leaves and berries --Nature's own production--God's gift to mankind. Many of the roots and herbs used by Dr. Tanner were known to the Indians and used by the Indians in making their medicines long before a white man ever crossed the Missouri river."

Richard J. Tanner married Ruth Goodmann in 1906, they had no children. He died in a Norfolk hospital of complications resulting from a broken hip on July 2, 1943. He was laid to rest at Prospect Hill Cemetery...a plain red granite headstone marks his grave, RICHARD TANNER 1869 - 1943, DIAMOND DICK is inscribed on one side.

Mrs. Tanner presented all of Dr. Tanner's guns, buckskins, etc. of his early days of 'Diamond Dick' to the Nebraska Historical Society Museum at Lincoln.

'DIAMOND DICK' was a nickname given to this noted character of the plains because of the many diamonds he wore as shirt studs, tie pins and in every other possible place. In June 1927 the National Editorial Convention was to be held in Norfolk in his honor. Dr. Tanner brought together seven of the last remaining plainsmen to take part in the parade. It was the first time these men had ever assembled in the same place although they had known each other for years. It was a joyful occasion for the aging frontiersmen, 'Doc' Carver, 'Pawnee Bill', 'Deadwood Dick', Capt. Lute North, Maj. Gordon W. Lillie, 'Idaho Bill', and of course 'Diamond Dick'.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, the western frontier offered promise and adventure to the restless men. By an act of Congress on May 20, 1862, any citizen of the United States who was the head of a family and any person of foreign birth residing in the country, who had declared his intention to become a citizen, might enter and settle upon not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres of public land, and, after having resided upon it for five years, should receive a patent for the land.

German Colony Forms

In Ixonia, Jefferson County, near Watertown, Wisconsin, was a particularly discontented group of Germans. Farm land in Wisconsin was unproductive and expensive at thirty-five to forty dollars an acre, and although thrifty, most of these families had spent all their funds for passage to America. The density of the timber kept them too far from the schools, and the winters were unbearably damp and cold. The general sentiment was for moving on.

In their church, the St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran, they discussed the situation, and finally decided to leave. Where should they go? A few favored a northern trek to Minnesota where

some of their townspeople had gone. The Machmuellers had their bags packed and were ready to start north when the news of an Indian uprising and the death of their friends convinced them that Minnesota was not the place for their new home. The Rev. Mr. Heckendorf's cousin, Mr. Steifer, at West Point, Nebraska, had sent encouraging reports of the great public lands beyond the Mississippi. Dared they try that? The glowing report of the natural resources of the Elkhorn River Valley — plentiful timber, an abundance of good brick clay, fertile soil, and good water given by Gen. John Thayer on his return to Omaha after having subdued the rampaging Indians at Battle Creek in July, 1859, added impetus (Note 1). Eventually they voted to send three men to investigate that far country.

The chosen men set forth in the late summer of 1865. They were Ferdinand Wagner, Herman Braasch and John Gensmer. They traveled by train from Chicago to St. Joseph, then the western railroad terminus, and up the river in a ferry boat to Omaha. Then they walked until they reached West Point, the most western settlement at the time. They considered West Point too densely settled to accommodate their Wisconsin colony. Eight miles above West Point lived Mr. T. F. Sporn, the most advanced settler, and he took them farther northwest.



1859 map of Nebraska territory showing boundaries, townships and existing and proposed railroads. The route followed by Norfolk's original settlers can be followed by the black dots on this map.

On September 15, 1865, they camped at the junction of the Elkhorn River and its north fork. Here was virgin country, sufficiently open for grazing and cultivation, and yet plentifully wooded with elm, cottonwood, ash, boxelder, and willow along the creeks. The four men arranged signals to be used in case of being lost or in trouble. One shot was to be the call and two the answer. Several hundred Winnebago and Omaha Indians were camping about a quarter of a mile way (Note 2). The men found the Indians friendly. After having looked about for several days and deciding on a location for their colony, they returned to Wisconsin to make preparations for the trip back the following spring.

On May 14, 1866, forty-two families consisting of about one-hundred-twenty-five people started for Nebraska. They came in three trains under the leadership of Herman Braasch and Louis Heckendorf, and the third was made up of farmers from north of Watertown. Members of this original colony included Herman Braasch, John Braasch, Fred Dederman, Fred Boche, William Boche, Carl Hille, M. Machmueller, J. M. Machmueller, Martin Raasch, William Klug, August Nenow, Carl Nenow, Louis Heckendorf, Herman Wachter, Louis Wachter, William Seiffert, Christian Haase, Fred Haase, Frank Wichman, Ferdinand Wagner, Gottfried Winter, Carl Conrad, William Ruhlrow, August Melcher, Jacob Kaun, Gottlieb Rohrke, Julius Wichert, Carl Uecker, William Duehring, Frederick Sporn, Jacob Barnhardt, William Fischer, August Lentz, Frederick Lehman and Buettow.

Each family had a wagon drawn by four oxen. Each had two cows and some sheep. The men drove the oxen; the women and children herded the cattle and sheep. Only seven men had horses—the Machmuellers, the Rohrkes, the Raasches and the Braasches. August Lentz brought a couple of Chester White pigs and had to enlarge the box twice enroute.

The wagon trains moved slowly. On Sundays they paused for worship. Once a week they halted to allow the women to do the necessary washing, ironing, and baking. The women made their own starch by grating potatoes and letting them stand in water. The starch settled to the bottom.

It was not possible to bring many supplies. At Omaha all stopped to stock up with flour and other staple supplies and to make up one mile-long train of prairie schooners for the final lap of the journey. They expected to reach West Point on the Fourth of July but they could not find it. When they finally asked a lone homesteader they discovered they had missed the settlement and had to turn back. West Point was little more than a saw mill, a store built of perpendicular slats, and a few huts. Herman Braasch planted potatoes just north of West Point so they might bear that year.

There was a delay of four days when the party reached the Humboldt. Humbug Creek, as it was called, proved too muddy to risk fording, so a bridge had to be built (Note 3). They reached their destination July 17, thirteen days after leaving West Point and immediately joined in prayer.

NOTE 1 — A. E. Sheldon, Nebraska Old and New, p. 258 (published in Lincoln, 1937); Judge Chas. F. Eiseley, "Indian Massacres," Norfolk Press, Sept. 14, 1916. Judge Chas. F. Eiseley, later a resident of Norfolk, was a member of General Thayer's party. After the incident Judge Eiseley was a member of the Second Cavalry which was stationed near Fort Randall. (Printed in Norfolk. Filed in the State Historical Society library in the State Capitol, Lincoln).

NOTE 2 — Report of interview with Fred Braasch printed in The Norfolk Daily News, August 4, 1916. (The party recorded that Mr. Gensmer spent his time hiding in the bushes and wagon while the others scouted. The following year, after having taken land, Mr. Gensmer decided he liked it better in Wisconsin and abandoned the settlement. Mr. Gensmer's name isn't mentioned in most of the reports).

NOTE 3 — To construct the bridge the pioneers cut trees, hewed them into logs, laid them on sills of mud, and laid split willows for a floor. Nails were whittled out of ash wood.

Rural Development

Madison county had been set aside for an Indian Reservation and had not yet been surveyed as her neighboring counties, Stanton, Platte and Pierce had. The settlers brought William Sharpe of Cuming County with them and he made the first rude survey with a pocket compass and bed cord (Note 1). In October of the same year, Nicholas Paul made the government survey of the county.

Upon arriving at the North Fork of the Elkhorn River, the colonists found a small party of young men from Illinois had already settled there. These five Americans, William A. Barnes, L. D. Barnes, William H. Bradshaw, D. L. Allen and Matthias Kerr, had reached there the preceding May. They didn't care to live with the Germans so prepared to move. Mr. Kerr had a claim along the North Fork near the present site of King's Park containing one hundred sixty acres in the form of a rectangle four times as long as wide. Herman Braasch paid two hundred dollars for this claim to the quarter section, fifteen acres of which was broken and seeded to wheat. The purchase included a sixteen by seven foot unfloored log house which was thatched with sod. His fellow colonists thought him reckless but the wheat yield more than paid for the claim. The Braasches were not satisfied with spring wells at the creek so they dug the first real well in Madison County.

Draw Lots for Farms

The colonists then proceeded to take plots one hundred sixty acres in size similar in shape to that purchased by Herman Braasch and fronting on the river. The elders felt it more advantageous to have their homes near together in case of Indian trouble or prairie fire. This also afforded easy access to water. To prevent bickering, heads of families draw lots out of a hat for the farms. Those drawing sites north of the township line twenty-three had to make trips seventy-five miles northeast to Dakota City to establish their claims at the landoffice. Those living south established their claims in the land office in Omaha.

While these preliminaries were being arranged, the families lived in their wagons as they continued to do while the log houses were built. A few men built sod houses or seven by eight dugouts, but most of them took advantage of the plentiful timber along the river and constructed



Sod House, Home to the Original Colonists

one-room log huts. Cottonwood or oak logs served as corner posts. Slabs were nailed across for walls, and yellow clay was mixed with grass or straw for mortar. It was covered with sod and whitewashed on the interior. Nails and window glass came from Omaha. Most huts had only a half window. Several cabins had an extra half story, the loft, reached by a crude ladder. Roofs were thatched with reeds which grew in abundance to one-half inch in thickness in the low land along the river. The reeds were lashed together with willow thongs and covered the cottonwood rafters. A box for a table and tree stumps for chairs furnished the houses. Dishes, knives, forks, and cooking utensils had been brought from their old homes. Barns were little more than open shelters with slough grass roofs.

Old Plows Useless

The Germans encountered many hardships in founding their settlement. When the farmers first started breaking the prairie land with their cast iron stump plows, they found they were useless. Although the German farmers had been taught never to break land after the Fourth of July, a few of them did in the hope that it would yield a crop. The Braasch men broke ground with three yoke of oxen on the plow and planted corn. Their corn was good for little more than fodder, but the yield from the fifteen acres of wheat which had been planted by Mr. Kerr sold as seed for \$2.25 that first year. Others planted potatoes, corn, and beans, but the crop was far from sufficient to last throughout the winter.

The food supply was a real problem for these early settlers. There was plenty of grass for the horses, cattle, and sheep, but their own food which they had brought from Wisconsin or purchased enroute disappeared quickly. It was necessary for the settlers to travel long distances

for their supplies. Wheat could be purchased for \$2.00 a bushel in Wisner, thirty-five miles east. Columbus, fifty miles to the south; Fremont, eighty miles to the southeast; and Sioux City, eighty miles to the northeast were the nearest sources. Flour meant a three-day trip to West Point. Forging the streams with loads was hazardous. Sometimes there was a wait of a week or two before a farmer could get his wheat into the mill. The toll was six bushels per wagon load. From one bushel of wheat came forty pounds of flour, ten of bran and ten of shorts.

Hauling grain was a tedious task. The roads were so poor that the wagons had to be unloaded and reloaded many times during a single trip. Barley hauled to Sioux City sold for fifty cents a bushel. At two bushels to a bag, and twenty-two bags to a load, a trip brought over twenty dollars. Wheat ran about thirty-five bushels to the acre, and sold for \$1.18 a bushel at Dakota City. Eggs brought two or three cents a dozen, butter eight cents a pound, and hens \$2.50 a hundred dressed.

Only direst necessity brought the settlers to buy at the tiny dugout on the North Fork which was managed by Trapper Erastus Jones, then by Barney Barnes and a Dane by the name of Nelson. The stock in this Indian trading post, unattractively displayed and priced high, consisted of a poor grade of brown sugar, tobacco, brooms, overalls, matches, coffee, tea, two pieces of calico, and darning needles which cost 5 cents each. Money used for purchases was in paper of varying denominations from five to fifty cents, in three-cent copper pieces or gold.

Wild Fruit Was Help

Wild grapes and plums were picked in preparation for the coming winter. The fruit was boiled and dumped into barrels to keep until the sorghum was ready. In the fall it was made into butter in the huge iron kettles, sweetened with cheap molasses, and stored in jars. At Spring Branch the Hille family operated a sorghum factory. So many people came from miles away that the factory had to keep running day and night for three months. Making sorghum was a slow and tedious process. It took six or seven hours to cook a batch and required constant attention. Within a few years both August Raasch and Fred Boche had presses with which they made molasses for others on shares.

The large herds of antelope, deer, and buffalo that roamed the unbroken prairie proved a source of meat for the pioneers. Prairie chickens were abundant and particularly tasteful. Mein seined fish from the streams.

Money was very scarce and so necessary that all who could "hired out." Many of the men worked in the brick yards or mills in Fremont. Others found ready employment in the railroad yards in Omaha. The Union Pacific railroad, engaged in building its transcontinental line, was eager to hire cheap foreign labor. Some of the older girls did housework in this metropolis of nine thousand inhabitants. Those at home managed as best they could.

For fuel they burned what dry timber was available, usually cottonwood. When that supply was exhausted, they gathered sunflower stalks, corn stalks, and green willow. What little coal there was to be had in the northeastern part of the state was prohibitive at \$9 a ton. One woman was forced to chop up a treasured table and chair for fuel during a blizzard.

Indians Begged and Stole

Hundreds of Indians passed through the tiny settlement at the beginning of the winter. At one time several hundred came and frightened the women and children who were alone in the houses. Even the watch dogs disappeared into the Indian pots. The Poncas, Omahas, and Pawnees camped near the present location of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The German settlers shared as best they could with the destitute Indians. A few Indians did odd jobs for food. For a cake or a piece of bread spread with unsalted lard, they would turn a washing machine or chop wood. Most of them begged or stole what they could. A mysteriously poisoned cow of Herman Braasch's herd was carried off and eaten; dead dogs were taken; and three weeks after the white men had killed some timber wolves, the red men stripped the carcasses. From a kettle of boiling soap they snatched a dead lamb which Mrs. Lehman had thrown in for fat.

Blizzards and Floods

Blizzards increased the hardships of winter. The treeless prairie offered no resistance. The loss of livestock was frequently heavy. Occasionally deaths due to exposure were reported.

Floods were the usual result of spring thaws. They caused long delays for travelers and haulers. Property near the river was menaced and stock had to be moved to higher ground.

The pioneers lived in constant fear of prairie fires. They fought it with plowed ditches and counter fires. The women worked with the men pumping tubs full of water and fighting with water-soaked gunny sacks. Buildings, stock, grain, and hay were often burned. They worked hardest to save their homes and threshing machines. The prairie fire of 1873 brought death to the Machmueller home. Mrs. Machmueller had placed her baby girl on a pile of hay dropped on the road from someone's wagon while she helped her husband fight fire. The hay caught on fire and severely burned the child.

Death came to dishearten the people. Mrs. Ferdinand Pasewalk and a son died, leaving a young girl the care of a six months old baby. On September 19, 1868, Mrs. Herman Braasch died. Although members of her family had driven night and day to bring a doctor from West Point, they were too late. The next day she was buried, the first grave in the new cemetery west of the present Thirteenth Street. Around her grave was placed a still solid four-poster iron fence, and at the head a high marble shaft brought from Omaha.

First Threshing Machine

Farming in the west was undergoing a transition from hand labor to the use of machines. Father Herman Braasch, who was the first to have any small grain, and August Raasch got an eight-horse-power threshing machine from Omaha in 1868. It became almost a community affair for all the neighbors used it. Mr. Barnes came all the way from Union Creek to borrow it (Note 2). When some enterprising company brought in the first reaper, it occasioned a holiday. Farms were temporarily deserted. Everyone attended the demonstration which took place in a field just north of the present Granada block. The ladies dressed in white and provided food for the spectators.

Dr. Verges' Experience

It was a long, tedious task converting the unbroken prairie into productive farm land. Dr. Verges, typical pioneer farmer, after staking his claim and filing it with the land office receiver set about to improvise a rude log shanty (Note 3). As early in March as possible he plowed, harrowed, seeded in wheat and oats, and rolled the ten to fifteen acres of newly broken sod. Often the seed and machinery had to be bought on credit or borrowed. Next a small piece of land for potatoes and vegetables was prepared. Frequently it was necessary to burn off the prairie before plowing. Onions, lettuce, beans, peas, tomatoes, cabbage, kohlrabi, "Pitcher Korn," and potatoes were planted in quantities large enough to assure an adequate family supply. When time permitted he planted a few fruit and shade trees. Fire guards were plowed around everything. He burned off land intended for pasture. By working constantly he was able to make an excavation and cut the logs for the barn. The poles were covered with slough grass for a roof. His stock consisted of one or two hogs, several oxen, a cow, and some sheep. From time to time improvements were made. The shanty was blocked up and dirt thrown around it and on its roof. Paper was nailed up on the interior and a sod floor put in. A sod wall was put in the barn and a dugout made for a chicken house. More prairie was broken and seeded to corn and pumpkins by the first of June. The next few weeks were taken up with hoeing corn and vegetables. Fortunate was the farmer who had a neighbor with a cultivator he could borrow. Fortunate, too, was the homesteader who had a wife. Marriageable young ladies were scarce, for girls were married at an early age. Many bachelors had their choice of baking their own bread or going east in search of a bride.

From the Story of Koxie Comie,
Norfolk, Nebraska Centennial
1866-1966.

Church History

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN/LUTHERAN CHRIST CHURCH

Our centennial theme "In God's Hands for 100 Years" is best demonstrated by the history of our church. His hands have led us through a hundred years of trial and struggle to where we are today. He has given us strength and help through His Word and Sacrament. God's endless grace and mercy have been showered upon us since the beginning, when in the spring of 1870 a group of Lutherans, some of this vicinity, and others from near Pierce, requested the Rev. A. W. Frese of Cumming County to serve them with Word and Sacrament. This he did as circumstances permitted, until the following year, when we were organized as a congregation and resolved to call our own pastor. Candidate J. C. Rupprecht of Concordia Seminary accepted this call and was installed as the first pastor on July 23, 1871. Our formal organization took place on October 9, 1871. We chose to call ourselves Zion Evangelical Lutheran Congregation.

From Pierce to Norfolk was a considerable distance in the "horse and buggy" days, so some of our members who lived near Pierce received a peaceful release to form St. John's Lutheran Church of Pierce.

The following is a list of charter members who helped organize the church: Jacob Kaun, Wm. Buntrock, Aug. Buntrock, Wm. Koepsel, Gottlieb Brummond, Gottlieb Tiegs, Aug. Neitzke, Julius Degner, Friedrich Lukas and Rev. Rupprecht. The elders listed at this time were Aug. Neitzke, Julius Degner and Friedrich Lukas, in whose house we first conducted services. The first trustees were Joachim Bernhardt, Friederich Degner and Christian Bauermeister. The first treasurer was Julius Fenz. Some names which were later added to the roster were Wm. Dommer, Ludwig Maas, Wm. Leu, K. Linsteadt, Aug. Brummond, H. Brummond, K. Klentz, Aug. Pofahl, Wm. Donner, El. Boldt, Aug. Kaun, F. Gall, Wm. Siedschlag and Wm. Marquardt.

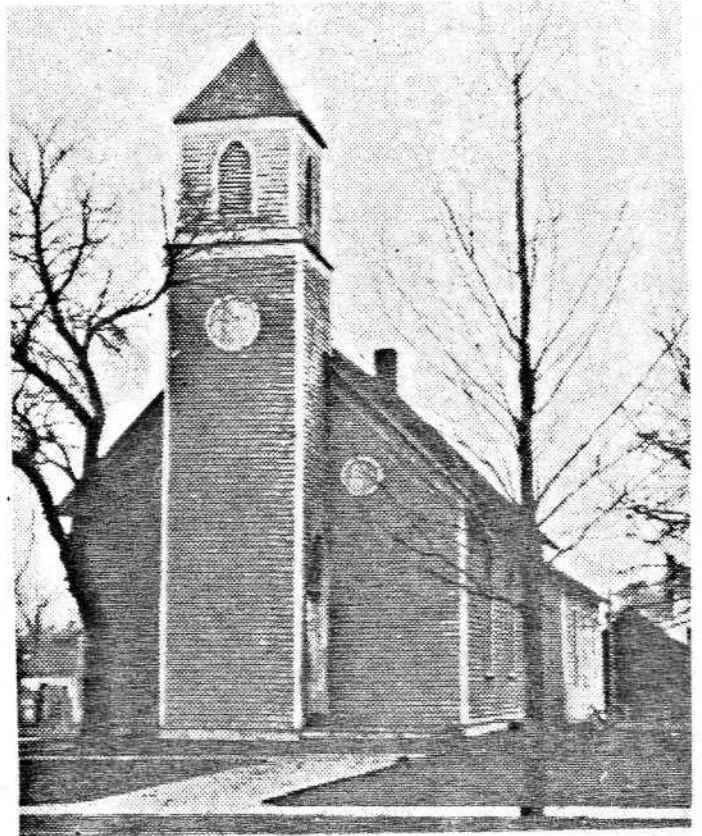
During our first organized year 81 persons communed, 4 were baptized and five confirmed.

In 1871, 36 acres of land were purchased about three miles northeast of Norfolk. At first services were conducted in a rented house. In 1872, a parsonage was erected on the church property with a room added to serve as church and school.

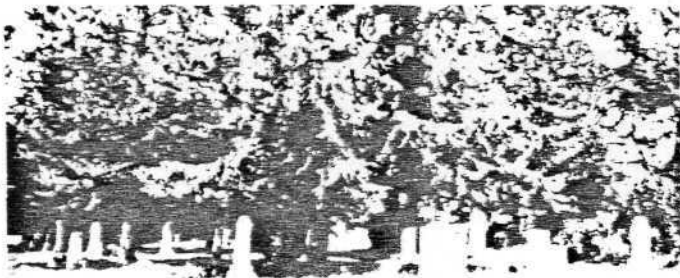
Before long, many felt that Norfolk itself was the place where our church should be located. Rev. Rupprecht began preaching in Norfolk in 1875, first in a private home, then in a school house, and finally in the Congregational Church. A new parsonage, which was erected on the southeast corner of Braasch and Second Street, was occupied by Rev. Rupprecht on January 1, 1876. Moving the church to Norfolk caused a split with approximately one-third of our members leaving the congregation and forming the Spring Branch Reform Church. Our remaining members reorganized and held the first voters

meeting on January 3, 1876 adopting the name of German Evangelical Lutheran Christ Church. We retained ten acres of the original property northeast of Norfolk which included about one-half of the cemetery. This cemetery is still being cared for by our congregation today. The Lord blessed the work of our pastor and people in their new location. Feeling the need of a church for our growing congregation the voters assembly in October, 1877, resolved to erect a house of worship on the southwest corner of Fourth and Norfolk Avenue. Plans called for a frame structure 40 feet long, 24 feet wide and 14 feet high. We were able to dedicate our new church to the service of the Lord on June 2, 1878.

The resignation of Rev. Rupprecht in March, 1879, left a vacancy which was filled when the Rev. August Leuthaeuser was installed as his successor in August, 1879.



FIRST CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH



CEMETERY NORTHEAST OF NORFOLK

In 1883, it was realized that the location on Norfolk Avenue was unsuitable for a church since business establishments were being erected all along the street. The location of the church was offered for sale. The highest bid was \$1,805 and this offer was accepted. We then purchased an acre of land from Mr. Pasewalk between Fourth and Fifth Streets and four blocks south of Norfolk Avenue. Under the direction of August Brummond our church was moved to the new location facing Fifth Street. A school house was also erected next to the church. East of the church and facing Fourth street, a parsonage and teacherage were erected. All of these buildings are still in existence. The old church now stands at 1113 South First Street, the school at 306 North Eighth Street, the parsonage at 805 South Sixth and the teacherage at 110 Park Avenue. These buildings have since been sold and relocated and are now serving as homes.

NSGS - 1989-1990 Calendar - WORKSHOPS

Sept 9, 1989 - Everton Workshop at Holdrege, Nebraska

Sept 30 - Fall Workshop

York American Legion Club, 225 W 5th, York, NE Hosted by Greater York Area Gen. Soc. (Complete registration info later.) 8:30 Naturalization Records; 9:45 Swedish Research; Noon lunch at Amer. Legion; 1:30 Church Records; 3:00 Land Records; Speakers are: Louise Baumann and Catherine Renschler.

Oct 14 - LDS Fall Genealogy Workshop at the Branch Library in Lincoln

Nov 3-4 - NSHS/NSGS Workshop, Lincoln. (Complete information later.)

May 4-5, 1990 - Annual Meeting, Omaha. Plans are being made to have a "style show" of old clothing & family heirlooms as a part of this meeting. We need the help of every NSGS member and members of local genealogical society and our genealogy friends to participate. Start searching the family trunk or ask relatives if you might borrow items to wear or display. Items over 25 years preferred. Information will be needed about who owned and their relationship. Contact Diana Faust, 12912 Old Cherry Rd., Omaha, 68137 for more info. or to advise her that you will participate.

From Nebraska State Genealogical Society, New Brass Key, June/July 1989.

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