



# Madison County Genealogical Society



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## First Ordinances

The newspaper, the New Era, published March 12, 1888, the first ordinances. Some that were listed were: A dog license tax was made. The duties of the Marshall were laid out. E. J. Crockett was appointed Village Marshall. Every male 21-50 is required to work or get a substitute for two days labor on the streets, alleys and highways. Failure to do so carried a fine. A prison was to be built at a cost of no more than \$100. Also the Plat fixing the territory of Newman Grove. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

## The Early School Years

The first frame school was built in 1899, replaced with a brick structure by 1907-08. A new grade school was built in 1919-20. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

## Population Census

A look at the population showed that in 1888 it was 200-300. In 1900 it was 696. Then in 1910 it showed it to be 850. The highest it reached was in 1920 with a population of 1260. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

## The Businesses in 1902

3 Doctors	1 Dentist	1 Lawyer
3 Real Estate Firms	3 Blacksmith Shops	3 Livery Barns
2 Newspapers	8 General Stores	3 Hardware Stores
2 Drug Stores	3 Elevators	1 Flouring Mill
2 Saloons	1 Shoe Shop	1 Tailor
2 Barber Shops	2 Millinery Stores	2 Meat Markets
2 Banks	2 Dressmaking Stores	4 Livestock Buyers
1 Photo Studio	1 Auctioneer	1 Hotel
3 Restaurants	1 Creamery	1 Jewelry Store
3 Confectionery Stores	2 Harness Shops	4 Implement Houses
1 Carpet Factory	1 Butter and Egg Store	1 Veterinary Surgeon
4 Carpenters and Builders		1 Manufacturing Company

Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

## Gas Lights

In December 1905, Newman Grove received gas for gaslights for stores and streets. The Gas Company closed in the late teens, when electricity came. Herman Quelvog did electrical wiring in 1918.

In 1887, Monroe Smith and Fuller sold lumber in "Old Town," then joined Herman Saare in a new location. Thomas Ostergard established a Grain, Lumber and Coal Business in the town's early days. He with Wm. Fried of Fremont built the largest elevator in 1887. Mr. Ostergard died in 1899. After Mr. Ostergard death, George Johnson took over the business. John Sanderson assisted with the elevator and grain, and Andrew Anderson was in charge of the lumberyard. Mr. Johnson came from Fremont and had been with the Citizen's State Bank. He was public spirited in helping the community to grow. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

## Furniture Store

It is reported that Charles Bosler operated a furniture store in 1887.

Canute John From established a furniture store in 1889 and operated until his death in 1947. Ted Jacobson began working in the furniture store in 1919. He assumed management upon Mr. From's death and became owner upon Mrs. From's death in 1952. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

Early in Newman Grove history Gunder Thompson had an ice business. He had large quantities to be sold to residents during the summer months. In June 1911 he sold his ice business to F. L. Widergren and Son but took it over in 1917. Ralph Cain purchased the business from Gunder Thompson when he had a restaurant and bakery in the late teens. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

### **A news item from the Newman Grove Era in 1892:**

The ice harvest on Shell Creek commenced the week of January 20<sup>th</sup>. It was of extra good quality about 16 inches in thickness and was shipped to neighboring towns. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book

## **The beginnings of Newman Grove, Nebraska**

(Source: Excerpted from Tri-County Pioneers by H. Halderson)

### **John W. Bloomfield**

The beginnings of Newman Grove started in 1867. The first homesteader in Shell Creek precinct, Madison County, Nebraska, was John W. Bloomfield, popularly known as "Johnny Smoker". His homestead entry for the S ½ of the SW ¼ of Section 28, Township 21 North, Range 4 West of 6<sup>th</sup> P. M. was made on May 17, 1867. It was claimed that this was the first homestead entry in Madison county, but on examination of the records it was found that William Boche had filed on a homestead northeast of Madison on May 14, 1867, three days prior. Bloomfield then obtained a Government Patent on November 20, 1874. Johnny Smoker was unmarried and lived a secluded life on this land for several years until it was sold to Syver Neilson (Field). Few facts are known about him as it seems he was more friendly with the Indians than with the white settlers. He lived in a dugout on the south bank of Shell Creek running through his land and another dugout was for his pony.

In 1873, Johnny Smoker asked Ole Texley to look after the pony while he went to Battle Creek for a short visit. While Johnny was gone, the highest flood in Shell Creek history came. While the water was rising, Ole Texley came across the dugout and saved the pony. Johnny agreed to sell some 160 acres of land to Syver Nelson (Field), and on February 7, 1876, Johnny, Syver Nelson (Field), and Gundeer Hamre went to Norfolk where the deed was delivered, and Bloomfield received \$800.00 in currency. The deed was acknowledged by Geo. B. Fletcher, a notary public, and witnessed by Geo. B. Fletcher and John Sonbessen. It is said that Bloomfield gave the money to a friend to keep for a day or so; that he went there one dark stormy night about ten or eleven o'clock, received the money from the custodian and walked on into the night alone. His disappearance has never been satisfactorily explained. Wm. Bickley headed a group of men who made an unsuccessful search in the Shell Creek region in an attempt to solve the mystery.

### **Lewis Warren and Newman Warren**

Lewis Warren was one of the first three settlers in Shell Creek precinct. Johnny W. Bloomfield was most likely the first one. Lewis Warren and Geo. A. Whitcher came about the same time about a year after Bloomfield. Lewis Warren filed Agricultural Script location No. 1673 for the S ½ of NE ¼ Section 33, Township 21 North, Range 4 West [City park location in 1949] for his minor son Newman Warren and filed No. 1674 for the N ½ of the NE ¼ of Section 33, Township 21 North, Range 4 West for himself. Both tracts were patented July 1, 1871. Lewis Warren was born in Killingsley County, Connecticut. He was married in West Day or Westdale, New York and came west to Red Oak, Iowa, where they lived until after the Civil War. He had enlisted in the Union Army, Company K, 15<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry, and served to the end of the war, after which he was awarded a pension for a service connected disability. About 1866, he arrived in an area east of Schuyler, NE. with some livestock, farm tools and

\$1.50 in his pocket. Then he moved to the Shell Creek location and built the first log home on the corner where the Lars Olson filling station is located [as of 1949].

The following is a quote from the book, Tri-County Pioneers.

“Mr. Warren took an intense interest in the affairs of this pioneer settlement, and being a man of means furnished work for, and helped many of the new settlers to make a living. In 1871, Geo. A. Witcher and Lewis Warren established the wagon road route from Newman Grove to Cedar Creek near Oakdale to the intersection of the Elkhorn Valley road leading to Wisner. They stopped at the dugout of F. L. Putney’s father, three miles south and one mile west of Oakdale. Warren marked the course of the road by plowing one furrow with a breaking plow. While living here, Warren’s son, Newman Warren, a very fine young man died at about the age of 20/21 years, (about 1873), leaving his father his homestead and other property. The town of Newman Grove was named after Newman Warren. The word “Grove” was added because there was a beautiful grove on Newman’s homestead.”

The Old Town was located on his timber clad land, and in commemoration of this young pioneer this town was named “Newman’s Grove”.

The log house built by Lewis Warren was used, rent free, as a schoolhouse for the purpose of the first term of school under the public school system in Shell Creek precinct. E. M. Squire was the teacher. Hellick G. Texley and E. G. Squire and five or six others were the pupils enrolled at that term.

Another quote from Tri-County Pioneers, “He (Lewis Warren) is described as a big man of fine appearance, energetic and versatile in business matters, surveyor, railroad contractor and lawyer. He was admitted to the bar, presumably in Columbus, removed from Newman Grove about 1879, practiced law in Oakdale and Neligh in partnership with G. G. Sparks, later with Tom O’Day, moved on to Bassett, and finally settled in Kent, Kings County, Washington, where he died on May 18, 1901.”

In another article from the book, Lewis Warren was very versatile, energetic, and had considerable financial means---a good farmer, surveyor, lay lawyer, and horse doctor. Mr. Warren served in Co. K, 15<sup>th</sup> Iowa and in Co. B, 13<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry during the Civil War.

### **Austania Warren**

Austania Warren was about seven years old when her father homesteaded in Shell Creek. She planted the cottonwood trees north of the Hauges Church, some of them now [as of 1949] measuring 16 feet around. Lewis Warren plowed furrows with an ox team while she planted the saplings as instructed by her father. In an article in the book Tri-County Pioneers about Mrs. Austania (Tania Warren) Shephard is the following information: “The giant cottonwood trees north of the Shell Creek church were planted by Tania Warren in about 1868 when she was eleven years old,” and “Some years later the walnut trees west of the church were planted by Chris Simonson who was employed by Lewis Warren.” The exact birthplace of Tania Warren is not known, but she was born someplace in Missouri in 1857. Her father moved from there to Red Oak,

Iowa, when she was three years old. The next move the family made was to a farm located a few miles east of Schuyler, NE. in 1866. Then about 1868 they moved to Shell Creek precinct.

Tania was of school age when her father married for the second time. She went to Columbus and found work and attended public school there. A Rev. Reed helped her while she was in Columbus. He secured a railroad pass for her to go to Hartford, Connecticut, where she visited her father's birthplace and his relatives [year not listed]. Later she went to Saratoga County, New York, where she visited with the relatives of her deceased mother. It was while there she married A. D. Shepard, on March 11, 1878, and lived in Saratoga County, New York for fourteen years. The family then moved to Woodbine, Iowa. On February 22, 1908, Mr. Shepard was killed in an accident. The widow and children continued their residence at Woodbine, Iowa. After she left for Columbus in about 1870, Tania was separated from the Warren family and from the strange events that subsequently occurred. The whereabouts of Austania was unknown to the Warren family. From all the information available all of the children of Warren's second marriage passed away and Austania was the only known survivor of the Warren family.

There is another story in Tri-County Pioneers that talks about the killing of cattle and the end result that finally took place to locate Mrs. Austania Shepard and give her \$152. This was the sum she received after expenses were paid from the settlement of \$190. This settlement was made 43 years after the claim was filed, 28 years after it was allowed and 65 years after the date of the killing of the cattle that belonged to Lewis Warren.

### **George A. Whitcher**

Our third resident in Shell Creek precinct was most likely George A. Whitcher. He was born January 22, 1844, in White County, Indiana, where he lived until he volunteered to join the Union Army. In 1862, at the age of eighteen he enlisted in Company A, Regiment 46, Indiana Volunteer Infantry. He served faithfully and was honorably discharged at the close of the war in 1865. He then returned to his original home in Indiana where he remained for a brief time. In 1867 he departed for the frontier of the Middle West. He related to the author of Tri-County Pioneers that he traveled through the Shell Creek region in 1867, but it seems he went on to other parts, looking for land and employment, and did not decide to locate here permanently until two or three years later.

On September 29, 1870, he made a homestead entry for the SE ¼ of Section 28, Township 21 North, Range 4 West and was issued a patent on June 30, 1876. It is said he was living in the neighborhood for a time prior to his homestead entry. The dugout was built on the west bank of Shell Creek on the southwest forty of the quarter now owned by H. Halderson, author of Tri-County Pioneers in 1949. Mr. Whitcher's nearest neighbor was John W. Bloomfield "Johnnie Smoker," about 80 rods west on the Sever S. Field land. Both of them were unmarried, and they spent a great deal of time together in hunting, fishing and visiting each other in the evenings. Mr. Whitcher was not satisfied with life in a dug out and made plans early to build a log house on higher ground. The

location that was selected was on an elevation north of the barn and windmill on the present [as of 1949] Halderson land. Some timber workers were employed to speed construction of the house, but he attended to the main part of it himself. This was a large house and it had a real board floor in it. When completed, he gave a general and public invitation to a dance—the first dance in Shell Creek, 1872.

He was married to Betsy Jackson in October, 1873. Mr. and Mrs. Whitcher were active in promoting the interests of church and school in the pioneer settlement. Their children were: Edith, Claude, Myrtle, Rose, Georgia, Grace and Willie. They all grew to adulthood in Newman Grove. Mr. Whitcher was clerk at the first election held in Shell Creek and was the school district officer at various times. He was also a bondsman. He was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic. They moved from the farm to Newman Grove and later moved to Wichita, Kansas. Mr. Whitcher lived in Wichita until his death on March 4, 1920. From the author H. Halderson, about Mr. Whitcher, "He had the spirit to defend the constitution in war and to live and exemplify its principles in peace, leaving to his children and succeeding generations a fine example of life and service." Source: Tri-County Pioneers

### **Builders of homes and business**

Builders of homes and business also played a role in the growth of Newman Grove and the area. N. A. Hagenstein was a carpenter in 1886. A. T. Rodman was also a carpenter and a Justice of the Peace in the area in 1886. E. J. Crockett and Wm. Hartwick arrived in 1887. Mr. Hartwick was a plasterer and mason until 1899.

S. August Johnson, arriving in 1909, built most of the concrete sidewalks in Newman Grove. Gust Brinell worked with Mr. Johnson. Mr. Sjoberg opened a carpenter repair shop in 1909 on Hale Street. Then in 1910, C. R. Vail started a cement block business west of the Opera House. Zieg Brothers purchased it in 1912 and then it was sold to Chris Knudson in 1914. Gunder Thompson had a brickyard in northeast Newman Grove around the time of 1914.

Newman Grove Milling Company, owners C. R. and Lex Gustafson and Joseph Johnson, put in a lumberyard and began as contractors in 1911. Lex Gustafson sold his share and went into the hardware business in 1918. Between 1911 – 1919 the milling company built the following business places in Newman Grove:

W. E. Harvey Garage  
C. J. From Furniture  
Farmers Union  
Marians Meat Market  
First National Bank

Newman Grove Post  
Office  
Sophia Linderholm Bldg.  
E. W. Hallgren Store

F. L. Widergren Garage

Bruenig Building  
Newman Grove State  
Bank  
City Cafe  
Loup Power building

The residences built in town and the surrounding area by the Newman Grove Milling Company were:

E. H. Gerhart	W. E. Harvey	C. J. From
Lew Jacobs	Dr. W. C. Hastings	Dr. Frank Jensen
Gus Nelson	Dr. Adamson	Ted Jacobson
Lex Gustafson	Joe Johnson	Fred Mellberg
George Gutru	C. E. Barrett	Henry Jacobson
Carl Olson	Matt Froistad	John E. Johnson
Theo Happ	Otto Eucker	Wm. Hodges
J. Kuchar	Fred Satler	Zakarius Nelson
Victor Nelson	J. V. Nelson	Albert Flood
Hans Lee	Pete Bruland	Alvin Johnson
Alfred Olson	Henry Knope	Charley Schmadeke
Leu Kvam	Joseph Nelson	Charley Swanson
S. August Johnson		

C. Sundell, a builder, and W. S. King, housemover, bricklayer and carpenter arrived in 1916. They were joined in 1919 by E. E. Anderson and Mr. Vallerstet. E. E. Anderson sold Kragstone Stucco. Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888-1988 Centennial book.