History of Antelope County
1868-1883

A. J. Leach

A HISTORY

OF

ANTELOPE COUNTY NEBRASKA

FROM ITS FIRST SETTLEMENT IN 1868 TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR 1883.

BY

A. J. LEACH

SECRETARY AND HISTORIAN OF THE ANTELOPE COUNTY PIONEERS.

Corrected and revised by the advice of a committee of five elected for that purpose.

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Dedicated

To the Pioneers, who were not dismayed by
winter storms nor summer droughts;
by Indian raids nor the scourge of grasshoppers;
but who had the grit and
courage to endure until they had converted
the Great American Desert
into a fruitful field.

I have carefully examined the statements of historical facts of a general nature in this volume; and, some changes having been made at my suggestion, I believe that they are substantially correct according to the best available data and authority. The painstaking industry of the author in collecting and compiling the local data of the history and the scope and form of his work are, in my opinion, highly commendable.

ALBERT WATKINS,
Historian of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

LINCOLN, NEB., *November 2, 1909.*

INTRODUCTION

IN the month of January, 1886, a number of old settlers held an informal meeting in Neligh for the purpose of taking into consideration the feasibility of organizing an old settlers' association.

After considerable consultation it was deemed advisable to organize without unnecessary delay, and the 22d day of February, 1886, was named as the date for another meeting, and a committee was appointed to draw up a set of rules to be presented at that meeting, for the government of the proposed association.

Accordingly, on the 22d of February, 1886, a large number of the Pioneers met at the court-room in Neligh and proceeded to organize by adopting certain Rules of Government, and by electing a full set of officers. These Rules of Government have been amended slightly from time to time as occasion required. At the present date — October, 1909,— they stand as follows:

RULES FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE OLD SETTLERS' ASSOCIATION OF ANTELOPE COUNTY, NEBRASKA.

ADOPTED AT THE MEETING FOR ORGANIZATION, FEBRUARY 22, 1886

ARTICLE I — NAME

The name of this Association shall be "THE PIONEERS."

ARTICLE II — OBJECTS

The objects of this society shall be to establish and maintain fraternal relations between the citizens of different parts of the county, to promote good-will, to revive and cherish old associations and recollections, to work for the general good, and to compile and preserve a correct history of the county from its first settlement to all future time.

ARTICLE III — MEMBERSHIP AND QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS

Any person of either sex, who is a resident of the county, and has attained the age of 18 years, may become a member of this

society by paying into the treasury thereof such a sum as shall be hereafter designated, to whom a certificate of membership shall be issued, which shall entitle the holder to all the rights and privileges of membership, except as in such cases as hereinafter provided.

No person shall be required to forfeit his membership during life, except by persistent neglect or refusal to pay his annual dues, or by removal from the county. Any member removing from the county may by a vote of the society retain an honorary membership, but shall not be entitled to a vote in any meeting of the society.

Any member neglecting or refusing to pay his annual dues for a period of three months after such shall have become due, shall not be eligible to office, nor allowed to vote until such dues shall have been paid, but he shall not forfeit his membership until he shall have allowed his dues to remain unpaid for two consecutive years, and then only by a vote of the society.

All members who have attained the age of 70 years, and have resided in the county at least 10 years, shall be excused from paying membership fees and dues, and shall always occupy seats of honor in all meetings of the society.

All resident members who have paid their dues as specified above, shall be entitled to vote upon all questions that come before the society, except upon additions to these RULES OF GOVERNMENT, or amendments thereto, which shall be voted upon only by members who have resided at least ten years in the county.

ARTICLE IV — OFFICERS AND HOW ELECTED

The officers shall consist of one President and three Vice-Presidents.

One Secretary, who shall also act as Historian.

One Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of five; all of whom shall hold office for the term of one year, except the secretary, who shall hold office for the term of three years. They shall be elected by ballot, a majority of all the votes cast being necessary to elect.

ARTICLE V — DUTIES OF OFFICERS

President.— It shall be the duty of the president to preside at all meetings of the society, and discharge all the duties usually devolving upon the presiding officer.

Vice-Presidents.— It shall be the duty of vice-presidents to assist the president in the discharge of his duties, and in the absence of the president the vice-president who is the senior of the others in years shall act as presiding officer.

Secretary.— It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep a careful and accurate record of the proceedings of the society in a book kept for that purpose, to be present at, and record the proceedings of the meetings of the executive committee, to fill out and counter-

sign certificates of membership, and receipts for dues, and to make a full and accurate report to the society at its annual meeting of its proceedings for the past year.

As Historian.— As historian he shall compile a history of the county from its earliest settlement to the close of the year 1885, which shall be read at the Annual Encampment of 1886; and thereafter each year he shall make such additions to said history as will make it complete to the close of each succeeding year, and such additions shall be read to the society at each annual encampment after the year 1886.

At the expiration of his term of office, he shall turn over to his successor all books, papers, and other property in his hands belonging to the society.

Treasurer.— It shall be the duty of the treasurer to take charge of all the funds belonging to the society, to sign certificates of membership and receipts for dues, and to report to the society at each annual meeting in writing a full and accurate statement of its financial condition. At the expiration of his term of office he shall turn over to his successor all funds, books, papers, and other property of the society in his possession.

Executive Committee.— The executive committee shall consist of five members, three of whom shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. It shall be their duty to have the general oversight of the affairs of the society, to make the necessary arrangements for holding the annual meeting, to call special meetings when they deem it necessary, to fill vacancies caused by the death, resignation, or removal of any of the officers except the president; to audit accounts, issue warrants on the treasury for the disbursement of funds, and settle at each annual meeting with the treasurer; to make arrangements for holding the annual encampment, and to attend to such other duties as shall be assigned them from time to time by a vote of the society. In the discharge of these duties they shall have authority to appoint from among the members such committees as may be necessary, and they shall appoint the marshal and his assistants for duty on encampment days.

ARTICLE VI — ELIGIBILITY OF MEMBERS TO OFFICE

The president and three vice-presidents shall always be chosen from members who have resided in the county at least ten years.

The secretary, treasurer, and members of the executive committee shall be chosen from members who have resided in the county at least five years.

The members of the executive committee shall be chosen from different localities as follows: One from range 5; one from range 6; one from range 7; one from range 8; and one from the county at large.

ARTICLE VII — ANNUAL AND SPECIAL MEETINGS

The first annual meeting shall be held on the 22d day of February, A. D. 1887, and thereafter on the 22d day of February of each succeeding year, except when the 22d falls on Sunday, in which case the annual meeting shall be held on the following Monday. At the annual meeting in 1907 the date of holding the annual meeting was changed to the first Saturday of September. Special meetings may be called at any time by the secretary on the order of the executive committee.

Annual Encampment.— There shall annually be a gathering of the members with their families and friends at such time and place as may be designated at the annual meeting, or by the executive committee, which shall be called the Annual Encampment. It shall be arranged for by the executive committee and shall be conducted under their supervision.

Notice of Meetings.— Notice of the annual or special meetings, and of the annual encampment shall be published in the different newspapers of the county for at least three successive weeks before such meetings are held.

ARTICLE VIII — FEES AND DUES

Every member except those exempted in Article III, shall, upon joining the society, pay to the treasurer the sum of one dollar, and shall thereafter at each annual encampment pay the sum of fifty cents, as annual dues.

ARTICLE IX — ORDERS FOR THE GOOD OF THE SOCIETY

Special orders for the good of the society may be adopted at any regular or special meeting of the society, or may be issued by the executive committee, provided they do not conflict with these fundamental general rules of government.

ARTICLE X — COMPENSATION

All officers shall discharge their duties gratuitously, except the secretary and treasurer. The secretary shall receive a compensation of $50, and the treasurer $10 for the year 1886, but thereafter the compensation shall be determined by the executive committee.

ARTICLE XI — AMENDMENTS

These General Rules of Government may be amended only at the regular annual meeting, by a vote of two thirds of those entitled to vote on such questions, present and voting.

ARTICLE XII — CHAPLAIN

It shall be the duty of the chaplain to take charge of the religious exercises of the association on encampment days, and at other public gatherings of the association, to keep a record of deaths and

removals, and report the same at each annual encampment, and in such report to give as far as practicable a short obituary notice of any member who has been removed by death during the year.—Adopted March 16, 1889.

By these rules it is made the duty of the secretary, who is also the historian, to "compile a history of the county from its earliest settlement to the close of the year 1885, which shall be read at the annual encampment of 1886; and thereafter, each year, he shall make such additions to said history as will make it complete to the close of each succeeding year, and such additions shall be read to the society at each annual encampment after the year 1886."

In compliance with the foregoing rule, the historian did prepare a brief history of the county, which was read at the annual encampment held September 20, 21, 1886, and a continuation of the same was read at the annual encampment held September 20, 21, 1887. Since the last date, however, no part of the history has been prepared and read before the members of the association, but the work of collecting the material for the history has continually gone forward.

Mr. A. J. Leach held the office of secretary and historian until 1892, and during that time he traveled over nearly all parts of the county, collecting material for the history by having conversations with the old settlers, taking notes on matters of interest, and also taking copious notes from the records of the various county offices and of the United States Land Office.

At the annual meeting in 1892 Mr. William B. Lambert was chosen secretary and historian, and at once set out to carry on the historical work begun by Mr. Leach. Mr. Lambert held the office until the time of his death in January, 1908, when Mr. Leach was again elected.

Mr. Lambert was a very careful, painstaking man, and a very diligent worker as historian. Without his work in this line the labor of preparing the present history would have been greatly augmented. Had he lived to complete the history himself, it is probable that a much more ex-

tensive work than the present one, and one of greater value, would have been presented to the public.

The present volume is intended to give a history of events from the first settlement in 1868 to the close of the year 1883. Rev. Charles H. Frady, however, in his chapter giving the Experiences of a Sunday School Missionary, brings his work down to the close of 1886, and Mr. F. L. Putney, in the four chapters on the District and County Courts, brings his history down to a recent date. It was intended at first to treat of some subjects that have been necessarily omitted. There was to have been one chapter on the mammals of the county, another on the birds, one giving a history of Gates Academy, and one chapter each to the various religious denominations represented in the county. These all had to be given up for the reason that those persons best qualified to write upon these topics were unable to give the time and work necessary for their preparation. Much work, however, has been done along these lines and should another volume appear later these subjects will then be taken up. Several chapters have been contributed by others, and these tell the stories of the early days for themselves, and better than could be done in any other way.

In order to make the work as nearly accurate as possible a committee of five was chosen by the executive committee to assist the historian in revising the work. This committee consisted of William Campbell, Robert Wilson, George H. McGee, Allen Hopkins, and John Hunt. They met at Neligh with the historian on October 4, 1909, and continued the work of revision until it was completed.

It is believed by the historian, and the committee that assisted in the revision, that the History of Antelope County from 1868 to 1883, as now presented, is as nearly perfect as care and diligence can make it.

Scores of Pioneers have assisted in this work by giving valuable information and brotherly encouragement — the newspapers, besides publishing a chapter from week to week as the history was written, have also been liberal

in publishing friendly notices, and the county officials have been courteous and accommodating in assisting to look up old records. Without these helps the work could not have been done. To all who have spoken encouraging words, or who have in any way given valuable help, the author returns sincere thanks.

A. J. LEACH.

OAKDALE, NEBRASKA, October 12, 1909.

HISTORY OF ANTELOPE COUNTY

CHAPTER I

Location, Area, Altitude, Topography, Streams, Native Timber, Soil

IF the state of Nebraska were divided into four equal parts by drawing a line through the center of the state north and south, and another line through the center of the state east and west, Antelope County would occupy the exact center of the northeast quarter of the state. From Neligh, the county seat of Antelope County, it is forty-four miles due north to the South Dakota line, eighty-nine miles east to the Iowa line, and one hundred forty-seven miles south to the Kansas line. The forty-second parallel of latitude is about five miles north of the south line of the county, and the ninety-eighth meridian of longitude runs through the county about one mile east of the center. Antelope County is thirty-six miles long north and south and twenty-four miles wide east and west, consisting of twenty-four townships, being townships 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28 north of the base line, and ranges 5, 6, 7, and 8 west of the sixth principal meridian, containing eight hundred and sixty-four square miles, or about 552,960 acres of land. The general surface of the county is an undulating or gently rolling slope, highest on the western border, and with a grade of about six feet to the mile, thus making the western part about one hundred and forty-four or perhaps one hundred and fifty feet higher than the eastern part. The elevation above sea level at Neligh, as given by the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Company, is 1,761 feet. The uplands throughout the county are from about fifty to about two hundred and

fifty feet higher than the valley of the Elkhorn at Neligh, making the average altitude of the county probably from eighteen hundred and fifty to nineteen hundred feet above tide water. About one quarter of the surface is valley land, lying adjacent to the streams, and about three fourths is upland. The valley of the Elkhorn varies in width from about one and one-half to three miles. The valleys of the smaller streams are generally from one-fourth of a mile to one mile in width, excepting towards the head, where they broaden out to two miles, and in some cases four miles in width. The valleys appear to be almost level, the slope from the hills to the streams being so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. The uplands in some parts are nearly level, in others gently rolling, and in other places somewhat hilly, but not often rough or broken.

There are no broken, rough lands, cut up by cañons and deep ravines, such as are found in some parts of the state. The nearest approach to this condition is found among the hills bordering the streams, where the land, though not extremely rough, is often too hilly for easy farming. In traveling through the county by railroad, a stranger would get the impression that the whole surface is either level or gently rolling, but in traveling by wagon road he would find generally a smooth, somewhat rolling country, with an occasional hill of considerable height, but of moderate slope.

The Elkhorn River, with a number of small branches, waters and drains about seven-ninths of the county, while Bazile and Verdigris creeks drain about two-ninths. The Elkhorn takes its rise in Rock County, about ten miles south of Newport. It runs thence northeasterly about fifteen miles to Stuart, in Holt County, thence southeasterly through Holt County about fifty-five miles and enters Antelope County, on the west line of section 7 in Frenchtown township. Continuing its southeasterly course through Antelope County, it leaves the county on the east line of section 12, Burnett township. Continu-

ing in an easterly course after leaving Antelope County, through Madison and Stanton counties, thence southeasterly through Cuming and Dodge counties and south through Douglas County, it enters the Platte River on the west line of Sarpy County, being about two hundred and twenty miles long from its source in Rock County to its mouth in Sarpy County. The Elkhorn River has five small tributaries in the county, on the north side, known as Al. Hopkins Creek, Crandall Hopkins Creek, Trueblood Creek, Belmer Creek, and Hall Creek. These are all small streams, some of them being mere rivulets, and contain running water only from two to four miles back from the river, but they generally have valleys of considerable size. On the south side are found seven tributary streams: Giles Creek, Ives Creek, St. Clair Creek, Cedar Creek, Antelope Creek, Clearwater Creek, and Cache Creek. Cache Creek, however, comes in on the west line of the county and flows only about half a mile in the county before it enters the Elkhorn. These are all small streams, excepting the Cedar and Clearwater, both of which are good-sized mill streams. The valleys, especially of Giles, Ives, and St. Clair creeks, are very fine and contain some of the best farming portions of the county. In addition to these streams there are three or four little creeks that have permanent running water in the hills, but that sink into the ground on reaching the Elkhorn valley. Cedar Creek heads in Cedar township and has running water for only about ten miles, but it is fed by hundreds of springs and is very uniform in its flow. Clearwater Creek rises in northern Wheeler and southern Holt counties, and flowing northeasterly enters Antelope County on section 30, Clearwater township, and empties into the Elkhorn River near the line of section 6, Ord township. The Clearwater is about twenty-four miles in length and is the largest tributary of the Elkhorn in the county. Bazile Creek is a fine stream that drains all of Bazile and a part of Eden and Crawford townships, and flowing north through Knox County enters the Missouri River a short distance east of

Niobrara. The Verdigris is a large, rapid creek that flows into the Niobrara River near the mouth of the latter stream. Three of its main branches rise in Antelope County, draining all of Sherman and Verdigris townships and parts of Garfield, Royal, and Eden. It is a clear, beautiful stream of pure, soft water flowing over a gravelly bed, and abounds in trout. Trout are also found in one or two of the little tributaries of Clearwater Creek, but there are no trout in the county excepting those found in the Verdigris and the Clearwater. The Verdigris affords abundant water-power, which has been improved only to a very limited extent. Big Springs, in the northern part of Royal township, is the head of one of the main branches of Verdigris Creek, and in early days was a famous camping ground for immigrants, hunters, and explorers. Crawford and Willow townships are each drained by small branches of Willow Creek, which flows eastward to the north fork of the Elkhorn. Nearly all the streams of the county are fed by springs and are of a permanent character, never failing in dry seasons.

The early settlers found in the country now called Antelope County, a handsome, inviting, rolling, prairie land, well watered by numerous streams, and a belt of timber skirting the Elkhorn River and most of the creeks, with occasional groves of considerable size. There was no timber, however, excepting in the immediate vicinity of the streams and along some of the ravines and pockets in the rough hills bordering the valleys. Some of the creeks also, as Antelope, Clearwater, and Willow creeks, were nearly destitute of trees. The native timber along the Elkhorn was mostly cottonwood, white elm, ash, and several kinds of willow. Along most of the creeks, in addition to the varieties named, were also found burr oak, red elm, hackberry, box elder, and linn or basswood. Wild plums, choke cherry, and sumach were abundant. There was plenty of timber to furnish the early settlers with logs for building log houses and stables, also for fuel and other necessary purposes. When a saw-mill was

started, lumber in considerable quantities was made from the cottonwood and oak timber.

Antelope County is strictly agricultural. It has two kinds of soil, known respectively as clay loam and sandy loam, both of which are very fertile and productive. Nine tenths of the land of the county is composed of either the one or the other of these two kinds of soil mentioned. About one tenth of the surface is strictly sandy land, too sandy for profitable farming, but this part has considerable value as pasture land. The largest tract of this kind is found on the south side of the Elkhorn River, opposite Neligh, and extending from near Cedar Creek, west of Oakdale, nearly to the Clearwater Creek, and is from two to four miles in width. The next largest tract of sandy, pasture land, consisting of about ten or twelve sections, is found in the northeastern part of Elm and southeastern part of Willow townships. Clay-loam soil is found exclusively in Grant and Cedar townships and in nearly all of Logan, Burnett, and Elm townships. It covers also the greater part of Oakdale township, the southeastern half of Elgin, the central part of Neligh, that part of Ord north of the river, and the extreme southern part of Blaine township. A large part of Bazile township and that part of Clearwater township south of the creek have mostly clay-loam land. The remaining parts of the county have mostly a sandy-loam soil, but not exclusively so, there being frequent tracts of clay soil in nearly every township.

CHAPTER II

LOCATION OF INDIAN TRIBES — TREATIES CEDING ANTELOPE COUNTY TO THE UNITED STATES — INDIAN RELICS — INDIAN GRAVES — GRAVE OF PAWNEE WARRIOR — INTERVIEW WITH BAND OF PAWNEES — BUFFALO — BUFFALO TRAILS — BUFFALO WALLOWS

THERE is not much evidence that Antelope County had been occupied as a permanent home by any of the Indian tribes for many years prior to its settlement by white people. When Lewis and Clarke passed up the Missouri River, along the eastern border of Nebraska, in July, 1804, on their trip of exploration to the Pacific coast, they found the neighboring tribes of Indians located in the following named places: the Otoes, with a remnant of the Missouris, were on the south bank of the Platte River, about eight miles above the mouth of the Elkhorn; the main band of Pawnees was located on the same side of the Platte, at a point probably nearly opposite the present town of Clarks. Another band of Pawnees was living on Wolf River, or Loup Fork, in the vicinity of the present town of Fullerton; the remnant of the Omaha tribe had their headquarters on Omaha Creek, in what is now Thurston County; the Poncas were located on Ponca Creek near its junction with the Missouri River, in Knox County. Lewis and Clarke do not mention any other bands of Indians as being found in central or northern Nebraska. Other authors, however, state that the Arapahos and Cheyennes roamed over the western part of the state, as did also some bands of the Dakota or Sioux tribe. The Pawnee Indians laid claim to a large tract of land lying in central Nebraska, and embracing with other lands the western three-fourths of Antelope County. This tract, excepting the portion now known as Nance County, was ceded to the United States by treaty September 24, 1857. The Omaha Indians claimed the east-

ern one-fourth of Antelope County, and all the country east to the Missouri River. This tract, excepting the Omaha and Winnebago reservations, was ceded by the Omahas to the United States by a treaty dated March 16, 1854. The Santees and Winnebagoes that now occupy reservations in north-eastern Nebraska were moved thither by the United States government in 1864 and 1866, and were not here when Lewis and Clarke made their trip up the Missouri.

There is no evidence to show that any of these tribes made a permanent home in any part of Antelope County. It is, however, probable that the Pawnees, Omahas, and Poncas, tribes that were generally on friendly terms with one another, used Antelope County and contiguous territory as a common hunting ground. There are also many evidences to show that some tribe of Indians used certain parts of the county as a summer residence or temporary headquarters. On section 34 in Oakdale township, on the east side of Cedar Creek, there were found, in the early days of the settlement of that neighborhood, many pieces or remnants of broken pottery, such as the Indians manufactured. Near the bank of the Cedar, on a high, dry table or bench of land, there were several excavations that had evidently been used to store their corn, or perhaps other things not needed for immediate use. Some of these excavations were four or five feet deep and somewhat larger than this in diameter when discovered in 1869 or 1870. They had caved in and filled up somewhat, but were still plain to be seen. They were evidently made by the Indians. Near this place, on section 3 in Cedar township, on a flat, rich meadow bottom, rows of small mounds four or five inches high were plainly visible, though overgrown with grass, and here, probably, corn had been planted and hilled up with a hoe or some other utensil. A mortar for cracking corn was found in the same vicinity. It was made from an oak log, ten or twelve inches in diameter, and about three and one-half or four feet high. The mortar part in one end would hold about four quarts. It was considerably damaged by prairie fire and had not been

used for several years. In the same neighborhood a farmer, while breaking prairie, turned up from a little pocket or cavity in the soil, where they had been buried or hidden, ten or twelve flint knives, such as were used in skinning game or cutting up meat. A flat, smooth stone was found, about twelve or fourteen inches long and about four inches wide by two inches thick, probably used in dressing skins.

No extensive burial places have been discovered anywhere in this county, which would not probably be the case if a permanent home had been made here by any of the Indian tribes. It was the custom of the various tribes of Indians occupying eastern Nebraska to bury their dead, usually selecting for a burial place the top of some high hill. The various branches of the Dakota or Sioux tribe placed their dead in trees, or, if trees were not convenient for that purpose, on scaffolds erected by placing in the ground four poles, eight or ten feet long, on which a platform was built. It was the custom to wrap the corpse in a buffalo robe and fasten it among the branches of a tree or place it on a scaffold. Mr. William Campbell, who was one of the first settlers on Verdigris Creek, found the body of a Sioux Indian fastened among the branches of a tree not far from his homestead, in the spring of 1878. There were occasional graves of Pawnees, or others who bury their dead, found in different places throughout the county, but these were isolated, there being only one or two in a place. In 1869, when the first homesteads were taken in Cedar township, there was found the grave of a Pawnee warrior that had been made only a year or two, as the grass had not yet grown where the sod had been removed. It was on the summit of a hill on section 3 in Cedar township. It was left undisturbed by the settlers, but sometime during the summer of 1870 or 1871 some cattle that were running loose on the prairie partly tore off the covering of earth, leaving the body exposed. The grave was about three feet deep, and a cover was made by placing two forked sticks in the ground, one on either side, and laying a ridgepole across these. Other sticks were set up leaning

against the ridgepole, and the whole was covered with a buffalo robe, and on this, sods and earth. The body was placed in a sitting posture and wrapped in a buffalo robe. Some years afterwards the body was exhumed and the bones removed by a young doctor from Oakdale.

In the fall of 1869, while three of the homesteaders on Cedar Creek were engaged in putting up hay, a small band of Pawnees called upon them and stayed for dinner. One of these Indians could speak a little English. He said they had been chasing a band of Sioux that had stolen a number of Pawnee ponies and were making off with them to the northwest. That somewhere in the upper part of the Elkhorn valley they came in sight of the Sioux Indians with the horses, but that the Sioux at once set fire to the prairie and escaped under cover of the smoke. These Pawnees were now returning to their village on the Loup River. Their moccasins were nearly worn out, and they had no provisions left excepting a little parched corn. They seemed very tired and all but one of them lay down and immediately went to sleep. The one who could talk a little English sat by the camp-fire and watched the whites cook the dinner, and at the same time gave the information about following the Sioux Indians. He said that the grave which was in plain sight on a hill about half a mile distant, was that of a Pawnee warrior who was killed in a fight with the Sioux not long ago. He pointed out the place where the fight occurred, which was in a bend of Cedar Creek on the east half of the southeast quarter, section 3, Cedar township, on the farm now owned by Jeff. C. Chapman.

Antelope County, in common with all Nebraska, had been the home of the buffalo for ages before the coming of the white people. Lewis and Clarke, in the summer of 1804, state that the Otoes, Pawnees, and Omahas were nearly all absent from their villages on a buffalo hunt. The first buffalo found by Lewis and Clarke were on the Iowa side just above the present site of Sioux City. From there on they were seen in large numbers in what is now

Dixon, Cedar, Knox, and Boyd counties, Nebraska. When this county was first occupied by white settlers the buffalo had entirely disappeared from this section of Nebraska, excepting an occasional stray band that was traveling across the country. In November, 1871, A. J. Leach, while hunting on Cedar River, in Greeley County, saw where a band of thirty or forty buffalo had been feeding a few days previously, but did not see any of the animals. Their beds were plainly visible where they had been lying down in the grass. About 1872, R. W. Smith of Ord township ran across four buffalo while out hunting in the vicinity of the present site of Clearwater. He succeeded in shooting one, the others escaping in the sand hills to the southeast. A few days later John Bennett saw three buffalo in the southwestern part of Antelope County and, not being prepared to hunt them himself, notified E. R. Palmer of the Cedar Creek settlement, who went out and killed two of them in Logan township, about two miles southwest of Elgin. Sometime in the seventies, D. E. Beckwith, while on a hunt in southern Holt County, being camped on Willow Lake, was awakened early one morning by the splashing of water in the lake. Looking out of the door of the tent he saw two buffalo wading out some distance in the lake. They took the alarm, however, and escaped to the sand hills. These are the only instances, so far as known, where buffalo were found in or near Antelope County since its settlement first began.

Evidences were abundant, however, that buffalo had been plentiful within a very few years. The skulls, horns, and bones of buffalo were found scattered about over the prairie in great abundance, and in some places the bones and skulls were very numerous on a tract a quarter of a mile or so across, where the Indians had surrounded and slaughtered them in large numbers. The skeletons of buffalo were often found in the streams where they had come to drink and had been mired down, or perhaps been trampled to death by others. Their bones were also sometimes found several feet under ground, in grading roads along the banks of streams.

Buffalo trails were very numerous, especially where the country was hilly, bordering the streams. These trails were made by the buffalo in going each day to water from their feeding grounds. They led straight to the watering-place, and, where the country is hilly or rough, always took the easiest grades. When the country was first settled these trails were mostly, but not wholly, overgrown with grass, but were still plainly visible.

Buffalo wallows were numerous in places along the Elkhorn valley and in the valleys of some of the creeks. The wallows were made by the buffalo in the summer time, by stamping and pawing the earth until the sod was removed, forming thus a little hollow a few feet in diameter. In wet weather these hollows, having been packed hard and solid by tramping, would hold water for several days after a rain. In these places the buffalo would lie down and wallow, carrying away with them a quantity of mud, thus continually making the wallow deeper. These wallows, where numerous, interfered with the cultivation of the land. Some of these are still to be seen on the north side of the river, below Neligh.

CHAPTER III

ELK OR WAPITI DEER — BLACKTAIL OR MULE DEER — WHITE-TAIL DEER — ANTELOPE — DISAPPEARANCE OF GAME — WILD TURKEYS — PRAIRIE CHICKENS AND SHARP-TAILED GROUSE — QUAIL — BEAVER — WOLVES — BADGERS — WILDCATS — HONEY-BEES

THE elk or wapiti deer had been very abundant in all this country not long before it was settled. Their horns, that had been shed, were often met with on the prairie, frequently only slightly decayed. Not a season passed that they were not seen by some of the settlers, sometimes a single one, sometimes in little bands of three or four, and at other times large droves of thirty or forty were met with. Lewis Warren, who settled where Newman Grove now is, in Madison County, at one time counted sixty in one drove in Boone County. A. J. Leach and J. H. King, while hunting in Wheeler County, counted thirty-six in one band, and about the same number were seen in the southwestern part of Antelope County. Several were killed within the borders of the county by the hunters among the early settlers. In a short time, however, they all disappeared, going farther west, where they were not so often disturbed. The elk will not remain long in a prairie country where they are hunted. The common deer will remain, although they will soon become very wild and hard to approach. The blacktail or mule deer were found here, but they were not at all abundant. Their home is in a rough, broken, or hilly country, and they are never found in a smooth region, except when traveling through from one rough tract to another. They are larger and considerably heavier than the common deer, darker in color, with much larger horns, and with ears almost as large as those of a mule, hence the name — mule deer. Two at least were killed in the rough part of Logan township, one in Lincoln township, and a few were seen on the rough

lands of the Verdigris, in the northwestern part of the county. On July 4, 1870, A. H. Palmer, S. P. Morgan, and one or two others were hunting in the southern part of Cedar township. Mr. Palmer crossed the line into Boone County, to a little patch of timber at the head of a ravine. From this timber a deer jumped out and was shot by Mr. Palmer. No one of the company had ever seen anything like it before, and they concluded it must be a cross between an elk and a deer. It proved to be a blacktail deer. This was the first time it was known by the settlers that they were to be found in the country. They were very numerous in the rough country bordering the Loup and Cedar rivers as late as the winter of 1880, but they have probably now disappeared from the state. The common or whitetail deer were very plentiful in an early day, and were found along the Elkhorn and all the streams of the county, especially wherever there was brush or tall grass for shelter. Hundreds of them were killed by the settlers, but they held their own pretty well and were not greatly diminished in numbers until the winter of 1880. This winter was very severe, beginning the middle of October by a very heavy snowstorm, with a terrific wind, and continuing for three days. Snow that fell in October still lay in drifts the next May, having been augmented by storm after storm throughout November and December. The deer were killed by hunters in considerable numbers the fore part of the winter, others were killed and devoured by the prairie wolves, and others perished from the severity of the weather and scarcity of food. They were scarce after this winter, and in five or six years more entirely disappeared from the county. There are none now found in the state, excepting an occasional one in the sand-hill country of the central northern part. The prong-horned antelope, the only representative of its species in the United States, were as abundant in Antelope County in the early days as sheep now are in Montana. There were thousands on thousands of them here from the date of the first settlement up to about 1875 or 1876. They are strictly an

animal of the plains, and are never found in a hilly country or in the timber, excepting for a little while in traveling through these places. In the spring they could be seen scattered about all over the smooth prairie country in little bands of three or four, up to a dozen or so. Later in the season, about August, they began to gather together in larger numbers and by September large droves of forty or fifty could be seen together. Most of the antelope went farther west to winter, and returned in the spring to rear their young through the summer. A few would remain here throughout the winter, but generally not many. In the winter of 1870 a large herd of two or three hundred spent the winter mostly in Lincoln township, where they were often seen, and several of them were killed. The winter was mild and they continued in good condition all winter. One killed in February that winter was very fat. The antelope have probably left the state entirely, and cannot be found this side of Wyoming. All of the first settlers of the county were familiar with all of these wild animals named, and depended on them to a great extent for food for the first five or six years. One of the sad things to call to mind is that now they are all gone. The elk is the grandest and most lordly of any of the deer family ever found in Nebraska. Next to the elk in size and grandeur is the blacktail deer, while the whitetail deer is the most graceful in form and movement, and the antelope the fleetest of all native wild animals. While it is to be regretted that they are all gone, there is no help for it and there could have been none. These animals cannot exist in a wild state in an agricultural community, such as we have in Antelope County. They must have such shelter as is afforded by rough or mountainous tracts of land, or by dense swamps, or by large tracts of barren land unsuited for cultivation.

There were a few wild turkeys here at first. They were found only along the timbered streams and chiefly on such creeks as the Cedar, the two Hopkins creeks, and St. Clair Creek, where oak timber abounded, the acorns forming one

of their chief articles of food. Mr. A. L. Kimball, one of the first settlers on Cedar Creek, counted twenty-two birds in one flock near that stream, in the fall of 1869. A few were shot by some of the first settlers, but they migrated to some other place as soon as they began to be hunted, there not being sufficient cover for them here.

Prairie chicken and sharptail grouse were found in great abundance for many years after the first settlement began. In the fall and early winter they would gather in large flocks of hundreds in a flock, visiting the tracts of timber for shelter in stormy weather to quite an extent, although often remaining on the open prairie, especially among the hills. Numbers of them were shot by the settlers and in some cases they were caught in traps made for that purpose. They were used extensively to supply the table, and sometimes the breasts were salted and smoked and packed away, late in the fall, for late winter and spring use. Their numbers did not diminish materially for several years, the increase each season equaling the number killed by the settlers.

There were no game laws in force in those days, and the settlers helped themselves to game of all kinds found here whenever their needs demanded, and it could be obtained. Prairie chicken were taken at all seasons, but elk, deer, and antelope were seldom killed from February to July, because they were poor in flesh at that time. Elk and deer killed in October, November, and December were often salted down like beef, for winter and spring use, or the hams of the deer and the thick parts of the meat of the elk were salted and smoked. Smoked or dried venison was common on the tables of many of the new settlers. Game was seldom, if ever, hunted for the market in those days, but was killed only to supply home demands. The prairie chicken hunters had not reached Antelope County in those days. These hunters, and the rats, came at the same time. They both came with the railroad, but not before.

Quail were found here in very limited numbers by the first settlers, but they soon rapidly increased, and are

much more plentiful now than in early times, while the prairie chicken are nearly exterminated.

There were beaver here along nearly all the timbered streams, but they were not numerous. Their cuttings were fresh and plentiful among the cottonwood and willow trees and bushes. One cottonwood tree on Cedar Creek was cut by them that was about fifteen inches in diameter. They usually made their nests in the banks of the streams, but sometimes built dams and houses. There was one beaver pond on section 10 in Cedar township from which two beaver were taken, one of them a large one, weighing fifty-two pounds. A dam was built by the beaver, across Beaver Creek, in Wheeler County, about five miles southwest of Antelope County, that flooded several acres of land, and appeared to be used by a large colony. The beaver remained but a short time. A few of them were trapped, and the others, becoming alarmed, soon left the country.

There were no wild honey-bees here when the country was new. Those here now are swarms escaped from the bee-keepers that raise them. There were few gray, or timber, or buffalo wolves here when the country was first settled. None have been trapped or killed, so far as it is known, but it is claimed that an occasional one has been seen. There were numbers of coyotes or prairie wolves, also some badgers, raccoons, and wildcats. These have nearly all disappeared, excepting the prairie wolves, which are still with us.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNTY AS IT APPEARED TO THE FIRST SETTLERS — EFFECT OF PRAIRIE FIRES — SCARCITY OF HAY — FIRST WHITE MEN IN THE COUNTY — STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN CLARKE — THE ELKHORN RIVER: WHY SO NAMED — THEOPHILE BRUGIER — INDIAN AND MORMON TRAILS — MODE OF TRAVELING BY THE INDIANS — STATEMENT BY JUDGE THOMAS L. GRIFFEY

THE general appearance of the county as viewed by the first settlers was quite different from what it was only a few years later. This difference arose not so much from changes caused by cultivation and the building of houses, as from the prevention of prairie fires. Before the county was settled, and at the time of the first settlement prairie fires prevailed extensively every fall. Sometimes even the Elkhorn River was not effective as a fire-guard, the fire having been known on several occasions during a strong wind to jump across the river and set fire to the grass on the opposite side. This burning over of the prairie in the fall of the year left the grass roots exposed, the ashes and cinders being swept away by the winds and deposited in the ravines and other sheltered places, leaving the ridges and all high lands swept bare and clean. The snow that fell during the winter was blown off the high lands and piled in great drifts on the low grounds. As a consequence, when the snow melted in the spring the water was nearly all carried into the creeks and rivers, and the high lands were left with insufficient moisture. Then when the spring rains came, there being no vegetation left to hold the moisture, it drained off quickly, producing freshets and doing comparatively little good. Evaporation also was rapid, owing to the fact that there was no covering of old grass or other herbage to hold the moisture. As a result, the grass, although consisting of the same kinds found years afterwards, was light of growth and comparatively thin on the ground.

Owing to these things hay was very scarce the first few years. There were some low tracts of moist meadow along the Elkhorn, an extensive tract of similar meadow land on the Willow, perhaps some small tracts on the Bazile and Clearwater creeks, and also little narrow strips of good hay along the sloping banks of the ravines. Generally speaking, however, grass fit to cut for hay was very scarce. The settlers found out that by keeping out prairie fires this difficulty was soon overcome. By plowing around large tracts and burning fire-guards in the fall, the fires were headed off and kept under control, and large tracts of land were prevented from being burned over. This resulted in holding the snow during the winter, prevented rapid drainage and evaporation of the spring rains, thickened up the grass roots, and caused a much heavier growth of grass. As a consequence, in a few years' time wild blue-stem hay could be had in great abundance, not only on the bottom and valley lands, but upon the high rolling lands as well.

This keeping out of prairie fires, together with the planting of trees and the cultivation of the soil, has tended to very materially modify the climate, but this subject will be taken up in a future chapter.

Nothing definitely is known as to just when this country first became known to white men. Probably the earliest authentic account of any definite knowledge is given by Lewis and Clarke in the narrative of their explorations in 1804. Captains Lewis and Clarke camped with their outfit, on the 22d day of July, 1804, on a high and shaded spot not far from the Missouri River and ten miles north of the mouth of the Platte. The narrative of Captain Clarke recites: "The present season is that in which the Indians go out on the prairies to hunt buffalo; but as we discovered some hunters' tracks, and observed the plains on fire in the direction of their villages, we hoped that they might have returned to gather the green Indian corn, and therefore despatched two men to the Ottoe and Pawnee villages, with a present of tobacco and an invitation to the

chiefs to visit us. They returned after two days' absence. Their first course was through an open prairie to the south, in which they crossed the Butterfly Creek. They then reached a small and beautiful river called *Corne de Cerf*, or Elkhorn River, about one hundred yards wide, with clear water and a gravelly channel. It empties a little below the Ottoe village into the Platte, which they crossed and arrived at the town about forty-five miles from our camp." The Butterfly Creek mentioned is now called the Papillion. The course taken by these two men was westerly, across what is now Sarpy County, to the Elkhorn, five or six miles above where it enters the Platte. That the trappers of that day had accurate knowledge of the Elkhorn country is certain. Captain Lewis states in his narrative that one of his Frenchmen attached to the expedition had spent two winters on the Platte. M. Durion, his interpreter, a Canadian Frenchman who had married into the Sioux tribe, evinced accurate knowledge of all the streams tributary to the Missouri in this part of the country.

The Elkhorn was named by the French Canadians *Corne de Cerf* or Horn of the Elk, because of its resemblance in form, with its branches, to the horn of an elk. This resemblance is not wholly imaginary; it is real. The main stream corresponds to the main beam of the antler of an elk, while its branches, especially Logan Creek, North Fork, and South Fork, represent the prongs of the horn.

In the summer of 1838 or 1839 Theophile Brugier, a Canadian of French descent, who had been in the employ of the American Fur Company and who had spent most of his time in trapping on the tributaries of the Missouri and trading with the Indians, passed through what is now Antelope County, on a trip from the mouth of the Verdigris to the Platte River. He crossed the county from north to south on an Indian trail that passed through range 7. This trail, like other Indian trails in a prairie country, was not of a permanent character; before the county had been settled it was nearly or quite obliterated.

An Indian trail in a timbered country, or in the mountains, is likely to be permanent, but on a smooth prairie it is different.

The Indians, in moving their villages from place to place or in going out on the hunt, arrange the lodge poles on both sides of a pony, where they are securely fastened by straps attached to the large ends of the poles, the small ends being allowed to drag behind upon the ground. On these poles are packed the lodge covers and other articles. In traveling through a mountainous, rough, or timbered country, they move in Indian file and make a distinct trail, or road. In traveling over smooth prairie they spread out over the country to a considerable distance, and the trail made does not long show plainly, and is soon overgrown with grass. This trail through range 7 was no doubt used by the Pawnees and Poncas in visiting back and forth, and by the Poncas when going on their annual buffalo hunt.

In the year 1846 a colony of Mormons on their way to Utah, numbering about twelve thousand, reached the Missouri River in June. Some of them remained on the Iowa side, but others crossed over to Nebraska and located temporarily at Florence, just north of where Omaha now stands. These Mormon colonists built bridges over the Papillion and the Elkhorn preparatory to pushing on west, and a number of them did go that year to a point opposite the Pawnee village on the Platte. Then from the Platte they went northward and wintered on the Niobrara, near its mouth. Afterwards, probably in the spring of 1847, they left their camp on the Niobrara and struck out for Salt Lake, passing through Antelope County. Their trail entered Antelope County a little east of the northwest corner of section 2 in Bazile township, passed southwesterly through Bazile, and entered Crawford township near the center of the north line of section 5 and entered Ellsworth township on the east line of section 1. It probably passed through the north tier of sections in Ellsworth township, but the plats on file at Lincoln do not show this. It then

crossed Royal and Garfield townships, leaving the county near the southwest corner of section 30, Garfield township. Later, probably in 1851, a company of Mormons passed through the county on their way to Salt Lake, by taking the divide between the Elkhorn and the streams running north to the Missouri. This was done because of high water and the difficulty of crossing the Elkhorn and other branches of the Platte. The trail made by this party met the one previously made near the west line of Antelope County. The plats furnished to William B. Lambert by J. V. Wolfe, commissioner of public lands and buildings, show only the first-named trail. These plats also show the Indian trail in Royal township, but the trail was not marked by the government surveyors in any of the other townships, probably because it had disappeared prior to the survey.

Soon after the discovery of gold in Colorado, probably in 1859 or 1860, a company of men from Dakota County, Nebraska, as told by Judge Thomas L. Griffey, who was with the expedition, went with teams from Dakota City to Pike's Peak. They entered the Elkhorn valley near Norfolk, and passed on up the valley through Antelope County to a point not far above O'Neill in Holt County. There they cut down cottonwood trees and bridged the Elkhorn, thence passing on southwesterly to the Platte valley.

When the first settlers came here in 1868 none of these roads or trails mentioned were visible, excepting those known as the Mormon trails, which showed plainly in some places. There was no road found by these settlers leading up the Elkhorn, but according to the observations of Allen Hopkins, who located the first homestead within the limits of the county, there were evidences that heavy wagons had passed some years before across a wet tract of land on section 4 in Burnett township.

CHAPTER V

ERRONEOUS OPINIONS — OLNEY'S GEOGRAPHY — QUOTATIONS FROM IRVING, PARKMAN, BRYANT, SAGE — OPINIONS OF OTHERS — DOUBTS OF SETTLERS

MANY of the first settlers came here with their minds filled with doubts as to the worth of this part of the country as a farming region. There was good reason for this feeling of doubt. The country was very fair to look upon and showed a good soil; from the character of the soil, the growth of the vegetation, and the general appearance of the country there seemed to be plenty of evidence that this land would make productive farms. But the testimony of nearly all the early travelers and explorers and geographers was against it.

Olney's geography was in general use in the schools of the country during the years from about 1845 to 1860. This geography had been studied by many of the first settlers, and some of them who had been teachers had taught it in their schools and had become very familiar with it. It was a standard work. On the map showing the present state of Nebraska, together with all the country between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains, north of Arkansas and the Indian Territory, there was printed this legend:

"GREAT AMERICAN DESERT"

in small capitals, and then beneath this, in Italics:

"*Covered with stinted grass, and inhabited by roving tribes of Indians and vast herds of buffalo.*"

Then, to make it more impressive, there was here and there a picture of an Indian on horseback, and of a buffalo.

Washington Irving, in his "Astoria," Crowell edition, page 162, has this to say: "A part of their route would lay across an immense tract, stretching north and south for hundreds of miles along the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and drained by the tributary streams of the Missouri and

Mississippi. This region, which resembles one of the immeasurable steppes of Asia, has not inaptly been termed the great American desert. It spreads forth into undulating and treeless plains, and desolate and sandy wastes, wearisome to the eye from their extent and monotony, and which are supposed by geologists to have formed the ancient floor of the ocean, countless ages since, when its primeval waves beat against the granite bases of the Rocky Mountains. It is a land where no man permanently abides; for in certain seasons of the year there is no food for the hunter or his steed. The herbage is parched and withered; the brooks and streams are dried up; the buffalo, the elk, and the deer have wandered to distant parts, keeping within the verge of expiring verdure and leaving behind them a vast uninhabited solitude, seamed by ravines, the beds of former torrents, but now serving only to tantalize and increase the thirst of the traveler. Occasionally the monotony of this vast wilderness is interrupted by mountainous belts of sand and limestone, broken into confused masses, with precipitous cliffs and yawning ravines looking like the ruins of a world; or is traversed by lofty and barren ridges of rock, almost impassable, like those denominated the Black Hills. Beyond these rise the stern barriers of the Rocky Mountains, the limits as it were of the Atlantic world. . . .

"Such is the nature of this immense wilderness of the far west, which apparently defies cultivation and the habitation of civilized life. Some portions of it along the rivers may partially be subdued by agriculture, others may form vast pastoral tracts, like those of the East; but it is to be feared that a great part of it will form a lawless interval between the abodes of civilized man, like the wastes of the ocean or the desert of Arabia; and like them, be subject to the depredations of the marauder. Here may spring up new and mongrel races, like new formations in geology, amalgamations of the 'débris' and 'abrasions' of former races, civilized and savage; the remains of broken and almost extinguished tribes; the descendants of hunters

and trappers; of fugitives from Spanish and American frontiers; of adventurers and desperadoes of every class and country, yearly ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness. We are contributing incessantly to swell the singular and heterogeneous cloud of wild population that is to hang about our frontier, by the transfer of whole tribes of savages from the east of the Mississippi to the great wastes of the far west. Many of these bear with them the smart of real or fancied injuries; many of them consider themselves expatriated beings, wrongfully exiled from their hereditary homes and the sepulchers of their fathers, and cherish a deep and abiding animosity against the race that has dispossessed them. Some may gradually become pastoral hordes, like those rude migratory people, half shepherd, half warrior, who with their flocks and herds roam the plains of upper Asia; but others, it is to be apprehended, will become predatory bands, mounted on the fleet steeds of the prairies, with the open plains for their marauding grounds, and the mountains for their retreats and lurking places."

Again, Irving's "Bonneville," Crowell edition, page 286, says: "An immense belt of rocky mountains and volcanic plains, several hundred miles in width, must ever remain an irreclaimable wilderness, intervening between the abodes of civilization and affording a last refuge for the Indians."

Francis Parkman, in his "Oregon and California Trail," A. L. Burt edition, page 57, says: "At length we gained the summit and the long expected valley of the Platte lay before us. We all drew rein, and gathering in a knot on the crest of the hill, sat joyfully looking down upon the prospect. It was right welcome; strange, too, and striking to the imagination, and yet it had not one picturesque or beautiful feature; nor had it any of the features of grandeur other than its vast extent, its solitude and its wildness. For league after league a plain as level as a frozen lake was outspread beneath us; here and there the Platte, divided into a dozen sluices, was traversing it, and

an occasional clump of wood rising in the midst like a shadowy island, relieved the monotony of the waste. No living thing was moving throughout the vast landscape, except the lizards that darted over the sand and through the thick grass and prickly pear just at our feet. We had passed the more toilsome and monotonous part of the journey; but four hundred miles still intervened between us and Ft. Laramie; and to reach that point cost us the travel of three additional weeks. During the whole of this time we were passing up the center of a long, narrow, sandy plain, reaching like an outstretched belt nearly to the Rocky Mountains. Two lines of sandhills, broken often into the wildest and most fantastic forms, flanked the valley at a distance of a mile or two on the right and left; while beyond them lay a barren and tractless waste — The Great American Desert — extending for hundreds of miles to the Arkansas on one side and the Missouri on the other. Before and behind us the level monotony of the plain was unbroken as far as the eye could reach. Sometimes it glared in the sun an expanse of hot bare sand; sometimes it was veiled by long coarse grass."

These quotations are taken from standard authors. Parkman's observations were made while on the south side of the Platte nearly opposite Grand Island. Irving got his information from Bonneville, Hunt, and dozens of others who had visited this country, and from the manuscripts of the employees of John Jacob Astor. But other authors of less note, and not so well known nor so generally read as Irving and Parkman, speak in the same strain as the quotations already given.

Edwin Bryant, an author often quoted in Morton's "History of Nebraska," and who in 1846 wrote a book entitled "Rocky Mountain Adventures," says on page 75 of that work: "Our route has been up the Little Blue which runs in a southeast direction. The soil of the bottom appears to be of a fertile composition, but that of the table-land or prairie undulations is sandy and gravelly, producing but little grass." On page 76 he says: "The

soil of the prairie is thin, and the grass and other vegetation present a blighted and stunted appearance. I did not notice a solitary flower in bloom between the Little Blue and our encampment." And again on page 77 he says: "June 8 — The prairie over which we traveled until we reached the bluffs that overlooked the valley or wide bottom of the Platte is a gradually ascending plain. The soil is sandy, and the grass is short and grows in tufts and small bunches. I saw no flowers." After entering the Platte valley, he says: "The soil near the river appears to be fertile, but next to the bluffs it is sandy, and the grass and other vegetation present a stunted and blighted appearance. Small spots in the bottom are covered with a white efflorescence of saline and alkaline substances combined."

The country referred to by Bryant in the foregoing quotations lies in the counties of Thayer, Nuckolls, Clay, Adams, and Hall, which are now considered to be among the good counties of the state.

Another writer, Rufus B. Sage, who visited this country in 1841 and who spent three or four years west of the Missouri River, and who wrote a book called "Adventures in the Rocky Mountains," thus gives his general opinion of the worth of this part of the country. On page 60 he says: "That this section of the country should ever become inhabitated by civilized man, except in the vicinity of large water courses, is an idea too preposterous to be entertained for a single moment."

It was generally admitted by authors, travelers, and explorers that a narrow strip along the Missouri, and extending a short distance west up the valleys of its principal tributaries, was fertile, but that the country as a whole was a vast semi-sterile tract, wholly unfit for cultivation.

When the writer landed with his family in Omaha, in May, 1867, the second state legislature was in session, the state having been admitted to the Union on the first of of the preceding March. One of the members of this legislature, hailing from the South Platte country, advised the writer to settle south of the Platte River, saying that

"There are not over two thousand inhabitants north and west of Washington County, and that the country is too poor and worthless to support a dense population." Another man who had visited the Elkhorn valley country informed him that the country was pretty good as far west as the sixth principal meridian, but west of that it was sandy and poor.

Opinions like these were commonly held by the old settlers in the Missouri River counties, and it is not strange that the first settlers of Antelope County should have come here with their minds filled with doubts as to whether this country was fit to live in. Reports said that it was semi-desert. Its general appearance on examination showed that it was a fertile and productive country. The prevailing fear of the first settlers was, that the rainfall was frequently insufficient for the growth and maturity of farm crops.

CHAPTER VI

TEMPORARY SETTLEMENT — MICHAEL J. HUGHES — GEORGE ST. CLAIR — CUTTING OF OAK TIMBER FOR THE NORFOLK MILL — CRANDALL HOPKINS LEAVES WISCONSIN — LEAVES ILLINOIS AND REACHES COUNCIL BLUFFS; HEARS OF THE ELKHORN VALLEY; ARRIVES IN ANTELOPE COUNTY; MAKES PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

IN the summer of 1867 J. G. Routson and J. W. Early of Columbus, Nebraska, being on an exploring trip through the Elkhorn valley, camped for a day or two on Al. Hopkins creek, about two miles north of the present town of Tilden. Just as they were finishing breakfast one morning they were surprised to see a man approaching, carrying a gun on his shoulder. It was Michael J. Hughes, who told them that he had located with his family on a claim about a mile above the camp on the creek. He stated that they were out of provisions and that he was hunting to procure food for his family, but had not succeeded in killing any game. At this time Mr. Hughes was the only settler on the north side of the river west of the German settlement on the north fork of the Elkhorn. Messrs. Routson and Early supplied Mr. Hughes with such provisions as they could spare, and he returned to his family. Mr. Hughes came from Pennsylvania to Illinois, and in March, 1867, moved from Illinois to Nebraska, stopping for a short time at Columbus. During the summer of 1867 he moved with ox teams from Columbus to the head of Battle Creek, in Madison County, where he camped for a few days. About August 1, 1867, he came with his teams and covered wagon to Antelope County and located on the southeast quarter of section 36, in Elm township, probably not knowing at the time that it was school land. Here he remained with his family until about October 1, when he moved to Cuming County, Nebraska. Mr. Hughes relates that they were visited several times during their

temporary stay here by Indians, and that although they were friendly and offered no molestation, his wife and children were frightened and persuaded him to go down the valley to West Point. By his yielding to their entreaties Antelope County lost a good citizen and Mr. Hughes was deprived of the honor of being the first permanent settler in Antelope County. Mr. Hughes became a prominent citizen of Cuming County and of the city of West Point, where he died November 26, 1897. While living within the limits of Antelope County Mr. Hughes built a shack of poles and grass, for a temporary residence, and cut some timber, but he did no plowing, nor did he make any permanent improvements. His shack was still to be seen when the Hopkins family located in August, 1868.

On the 25th of April, 1868, George St. Clair came to Antelope County and put up a little shack on the east half of the northwest quarter and north half of the southwest quarter, section 21, Burnett township, and on June 30, 1868, made a preëmption filing on this land at the Dakota City land office. This was the first tract of land filed on in the county. It lies on St. Clair Creek, and contained at that time the largest fine body of oak timber in the county. St. Clair was a Canadian by birth, but had lived several years in the United States, always on the frontier, and most of the time with the Indians, spending his time in trapping and hunting. He had trapped on the Elkhorn River and knew the country well before taking his claim. He was known among the frontiersmen as Ponca George, from the fact that he had lived a time among the Ponca Indians. He never proved up on his claim, but abandoned it in a few months, leaving nothing behind him but his name, which was transferred to St. Clair Creek.

As stated before, this St. Clair tract of land contained the largest fine body of oak timber in the county. There was another tract of oak timber equally good, but not so extensive, on section 16 in Cedar township. Both these tracts of land were stripped of their timber to be used in building flouring mills. Every stick on the St. Clair pre-

emption, fit for building purposes, was cut, hewed, and hauled to Norfolk in the summer of 1869, and used to build the Norfolk mill, where it is still doing duty. That on section 16, Cedar township, was put into the first Oakdale mill by R. G. King about two or three years later. This mill has since been dismantled, and the timber used for other purposes. The appropriation of timber was not unusual in those days. Timber found on government land, or on state land, was common property. It belonged to everybody.

The fertile, inviting prairies of the Elkhorn valley were not long to remain without permanent settlers. In the early part of February, 1868, Crandall Hopkins of Lafayette County, Wisconsin, where he had lived for about eighteen years, decided to remove to Whiteside County, Illinois, near Sterling, with the intention of buying a farm and permanently locating in that part of the country. After a residence of a few months, not being well pleased with the location and having considerable sickness in his family, he decided to move on and seek a location somewhere west of the Missouri River, where he hoped to find government land that would suit him. About the first of August, 1868, after having taken several weeks to prepare for the journey, he struck out west with horse teams and covered wagons without any very definite idea as to where he would locate, except that it was to be on the west side of the Missouri. In due time he had crossed the state of Iowa, and reached Council Bluffs. While being ferried over the Missouri River to Omaha on the steam ferry then in use, he got into conversation with one of the ferrymen, who appeared to be quite familiar with the country west of the river. In reply to the inquiries of Mr. Hopkins as to the best section of the country where government land could be found, this man advised him to go to the Elkhorn valley. He said that he had been all over this western country and he knew of no part of the country that excelled the Elkhorn valley in fertility of soil or healthfulness of climate. That there was an abundance of timber along the Elkhorn and the

creeks emptying into it, for all present uses. He strongly advised Mr. Hopkins at least to go and see the Elkhorn valley before locating. He directed him to take the military road leading west from Omaha, to follow it to the Elkhorn river, and then follow up the valley until he found land to suit him. Mr. Hopkins had never heard of the Elkhorn valley before, but he determined to follow this advice and at least see the Elkhorn country. On reaching Dennie's Ranch he encamped for the night, and finding that Mr. Dennie was an old-timer and familiar with the country, he asked his opinion as to where the best vacant land could be found. Mr. Dennie, without hesitation, said, "Go to the Elkhorn valley, follow it up until you find land to suit you, settle down, and you will never be sorry for it." The next day he reached the Elkhorn, and, following the valley on the north side, crossed the west line of Madison County and encamped on the southeast quarter of section 1, Burnett township, about August 31, 1868.

It is not definitely settled as to the exact date, but Allen Hopkins is quite certain that they left Whiteside county, Illinois, for the west on August 3, and that they were just four weeks on the way. At this time Mr. Hopkins' family consisted of a wife and twelve children, two of whom, Allen and William, were grown men. They had no very near neighbors. George St. Clair was still on his claim in section 21, Burnett township, but he abandoned it soon after and left the country. East of them there were no settlers above the German settlement around Norfolk. Southeast there were settlers on Shell Creek, about twenty-five or thirty miles distant. To the west the country was all a wilderness, while north of them the nearest white men were settled along the Missouri and Niobrara rivers.

There was a fine body of timber along the creek, just north and west of their camp. It was supposed that the section line ran through this body of timber and that part of it was in Madison County, and part in what is now Antelope County, but then unorganized territory. Crandall Hopkins decided to take a claim in Madison County, just

east of the line, and Allen would take the southeast quarter of section 1, on which they were encamped. Crandall at once began breaking prairie on his claim in Madison County, but having found in a few days that the section line ran entirely east of the body of timber, he abandoned this land and located two miles farther west, on the east half of the northeast quarter, section 3, in Burnett township, and on the south half of the southeast quarter of section 34, Elm township.

Allen Hopkins made homestead entry on his claim September 9, 1868, and Crandall entered his as a homestead on October 22 following. Allen Hopkins' land was the first homestead taken in Antelope County. They at once set to work to build a log house on Allen Hopkins' claim, and in this they all spent the winter. This was the first house within the limits of Antelope County. During the winter they built a log house on Crandall Hopkins' homestead and in March, 1869, he occupied it with his family.

CHAPTER VII

TIDE OF IMMIGRATION FOLLOWS THE VALLEYS — ROLLING LANDS SETTLED LAST, BUT ARE OFTEN THE BEST — ADDITIONAL SETTLERS IN 1868 — FIRST DEEDED LAND IN THE COUNTY — BIOGRAPHY OF CRANDALL HOPKINS

IN the early days, in settling a new country, the tide of immigration always followed up the valleys of the large streams, and afterwards the valleys of the tributary streams, leaving the intervening or adjacent high lands to be settled later. In more recent times this has not always been the case, for the reason that the railroad has now become the pioneer, and settlement now follows the railroad. When the first permanent settlement was made in Antelope County there was only one railroad in the state and that one, the Union Pacific, had only five hundred and forty miles completed on January 1, 1868, and had been running passenger trains as far west as Kearney only since the year 1866. Only one railroad at that time, the Chicago and North Western, had crossed the state of Iowa to Council Bluffs, it having been completed to that place in 1867. Immigrants had not yet become accustomed to travel by rail. They all, or nearly all, came by covered wagons, following the most generally traveled routes, which nearly always led up the valleys of the large streams. When Crandall Hopkins and family in 1868, and those who followed in 1868, 1869, and 1870, first stuck their stakes in the unorganized territory that afterwards became Antelope County, they passed by hundreds of thousands of acres of as fine unoccupied land as could be found in the state of Nebraska. This land, however, lay back from the streams and could not be seen from the traveled road. At that time there was still much vacant land in Cuming County, in the northwestern part of Dodge, in northern Platte, in the northern and southern parts of

Stanton, and at least three fourths of Madison County was still vacant. But the valleys had their attractions; they were easy of access, the streams afforded running water, and the groves along the banks and in the adjacent hills supplied timber for building purposes and for fuel. However, many of the first settlers in Antelope County, as in other places, took up inferior land for the purpose of securing water and timber, rather than go back a few miles for the finest of level or sloping prairie. An old settler once said to the writer, "I would rather settle twenty-five miles from timber, and have land to suit me, than to settle on a stream with timber and water and have inferior land." And he was right. Some of the farms along the streams of Antelope County, to-day, are of the very best quality, in every respect, but the great bulk of the finest farms of the county lie in the sloping upper valleys above the head-waters of the creeks, and on the fine, broad, undulating, and rolling divides between the streams. Some of the earliest settlers came from a timbered country, or from a country that was part timber and part prairie, where timber was plentiful, and these generally felt that they must have a patch of timber. It is true, therefore, that many of the settlers who came later secured better land for farms than some of the first settlers.

The settlement of Antelope County had now commenced, and Crandall Hopkins and family were not to be long without neighbors. George St. Clair, as previously stated, had taken a preëmption claim. This he changed to a homestead on October 22, 1868, and immediately thereafter abandoned it and left the country. Josiah McKerihan filed preëmption papers on the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter, section 4, Burnett township, and on the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter and the east half of the southwest quarter, section 33, Elm township, lived on it thirty days, proved up November 2, and went down to the Yellow Banks, in Madison County, where he took up a homestead. This preëmption claim of McKerihan was the first land proved up on in the county.

A year or two later he sold the land to Cyrus D. Buck, gave warranty deed, and this was the first real-estate sale and the first deed to be recorded in the county. On October 31 Thomas D. Mahan entered a homestead on land that cornered with the homestead of Crandall Hopkins, and on November 28 Albert Schlueter and August Liermann took homesteads about two miles farther up the valley. None of these settlers, however, occupied their lands until the next spring. Crandall Hopkins and family were the sole inhabitants of Antelope County from November, 1868, to about March, 1869. After this last date settlers began to come in rapidly, but an account of this will form the subject of another chapter.

It is not the purpose, nor within the scope, of this work to present biographical sketches of the early settlers, for two reasons. First, it would require too much space and time, and make the work too lengthy; secondly, if there are ten or twenty early settlers whose biographies should be given, there are a hundred or more equally deserving of notice. This feature of the work, therefore, will not be taken up.

Crandall Hopkins, the first settler, has been made an exception to this rule. He came nearly six hundred miles with teams and covered wagons, with a wife and twelve children, and without means except his teams, wagons, a few tools, and his household goods, to drive the first stake and plow the first furrow in an unsettled and untried country. He located twenty-five miles from the nearest permanent neighbor, thirty miles from the nearest store and post-office, over one hundred miles from the nearest railroad station by the traveled road, and seventy-five miles from the nearest mill. He located in the fall of the year, with no hope of raising a crop, excepting such as could be raised on sod ground, for two years. A brief biographical sketch will, therefore, be accorded the pioneer settler of Antelope County.

Amos Crandall Hopkins, son of Gardiner Hopkins and of Freelove Parker Hopkins, was born in the town of Virgil,

Cortland County, New York, May 22, 1825. It is related that three brothers bearing the name of Hopkins crossed the Atlantic from England in the seventeenth century. One of these brothers settled in Rhode Island, one in New York, and one in Virginia. The subject of this sketch is descended from the one who settled in Rhode Island. It is family tradition that the great-great-grandfather of Amos Crandall Hopkins was a brother of Stephen Hopkins, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The parents of young Amos Crandall Hopkins had followed the occupation of farming in Cortland County, New York, for several years, but were poor, and were not getting on as well as they wished. They therefore determined to pull up and go west, with a view of bettering their condition. When Crandall was eight years old his parents sold out in Cortland County and moved to Ashtabula County, Ohio, settling near Conneaut, on the Western Reserve. Here the father opened up a farm, assisted to some extent by young Crandall. A part of Crandall's time, however, was spent in working out for the neighboring farmers. He had very little opportunity for an education. Such education as he did receive was obtained from the country schools of the time by attending only a few months in the winter. In 1840, when only fifteen years old, he engaged as sailor on Lake Erie and followed this occupation for five and one-half years, becoming mate of a vessel before he was twenty years old. On November 20, 1845, he was married to Miss Thankful Otesia Ames, at Girard, Erie County, Pennsylvania. Of this union there were born fourteen children. Two were born in Ohio, ten in Wisconsin, and two in Nebraska. In the fall of 1850 Mr. Hopkins left Ohio with his family, removing to the vicinity of Gratiot, Lafayette County, Wisconsin. Here he engaged in farming until February, 1868, when he removed about one hundred miles south to Whiteside County, Illinois. and located near Sterling. It was his intention to remain here and buy a farm, but becoming dissatisfied with the country he again pulled out for the west, and crossing the

greater part of Illinois and all of Iowa, with teams, he located in Antelope County, Nebraska, about August 31, 1868. Here he opened up a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres, and afterward bought adjoining lands. These were improved until he had one of the finest farms in the county. Mr. Hopkins also purchased a small stock of such goods as were most needed by the settlers and kept a store for three or four years, or until about 1875. He also went to Sioux City and purchased an outfit of blacksmith tools and ran a shop for a few years, or until there was no further necessity for it. For many years before his death he attended strictly to farming. He died November 5, 1904, having been in failing health for about a year. He was buried in Neligh cemetery. His departure was greatly regretted, especially by the old settlers, to whom he was well and favorably known. Crandall Hopkins, or "Uncle Cran," as he was familiarly known, was a man of sterling worth, somewhat rough and uncouth in speech and manner, firm and positive in his convictions, a good neighbor and a useful citizen. He was of the material that the best pioneers are made. He was a typical pioneer. His widow, who is two years his junior, still survives, comfortably surrounded by her children and grandchildren, with a good home, and with everything that one could wish for that this world can provide to make her last days happy.

CHAPTER VIII

SETTLEMENTS IN 1869, 1870, 1871 — CROPS RAISED — PETITION TO THE LEGISLATURE — BILL PASSED TO ORGANIZE THE COUNTY — THE FIRST ELECTION; OFFICERS ELECTED; NUMBER OF VOTES CAST — PRECINCTS FORMED — FIRST JUSTICE OF THE PEACE — FIRST SCHOOL DISTRICTS

THE settlement of the county, having been commenced in the latter part of the year 1868, proceeded very rapidly on the opening of spring in 1869. By the middle of May all the most desirable lands on the north side of the river had been taken up, to a point opposite the present town of Oakdale. On the first of June settlers began to come in on the south side of the river, the settlements also continuing to proceed westward along the river valley until, by the last of June, Clearwater Creek was reached, and in August the main valley was settled on both sides of the river to some extent, throughout the county. The tributary valleys on both sides of the river also began to be settled before the close of the year 1869. Settlers continued to come in during the years 1870 and 1871, filling up the Elkhorn valley, or at least taking the best of the land and spreading out over the tributary valleys on both sides of the river. The Bazile country, in the northeastern part of the county, was also settled in the spring of 1871 by members of the Bruce colony. This colony originated in Omaha, and following up the valley of the north fork of the Elkhorn, located in Knox County at the present site of Creighton, some of its members also locating in Antelope County.

No crops were raised in the year 1869 except sod corn and garden vegetables, but these produced well for those who were here early enough in the spring to plant. In 1870 the first wheat and corn were raised on land that had been broken up the year before. The summer of 1870 was rather dry and the crops on new ground suffered some-

what for lack of rain, and the yield was light, but the quality was excellent, and gardens also produced well. A great deal of breaking was done in the summer of 1870. The season of 1871 proving favorable, there being sufficient rain, a good crop of corn, oats, and wheat was raised throughout the settled parts of the county. Wheat especially was good, producing from ten to twenty-five bushels per acre, and testing from sixty to sixty-two pounds. Corn and oats yielded rather a light crop, for the reason that in this country neither of these crops yields well, generally, on newly broken prairie. The quality was good, however, and there was an abundance of all kinds of root and garden vegetables and pumpkins and squashes beyond anything known in recent days, both in quality and yield. One farmer that year — 1871 — raised on four and one-half acres of new breaking sixty wagon loads of pumpkins and squashes, measured in an ordinary farm wagon with a top box on. Potatoes were so plentiful as to be of little value, as there were more than enough raised to supply the demand.

In the fall of 1870 the question of county organization began to be agitated, and sometime in February, 1871, a meeting was called at the house of Judge John H. Snider, on section 6, Burnett township, to take the matter under consideration. A petition was drawn up and signed by all the voters present, asking the legislature, which was then in session, to organize the territory west of Pierce and Madison counties, defining its boundaries, and giving it the name of Oakland County. This name was selected for the new county for the reason that the name was considered appropriate because it was believed that there was more oak timber in this vicinity than in any other part of the Elkhorn valley. The petition was sent through the mails and nothing more was heard of it for some time. The mails were rather infrequent in those days, the nearest post-office being at Norfolk, and it often happened that some of the settlers did not receive their mail oftener than once in two or three weeks. The matter of organization,

however, had already been taken up in the legislature before the petition reached that body.

Leander Gerrard of Platte County, who represented this part of the state in the senate, had introduced a bill defining the boundaries of Antelope County, and providing for its organization. This bill was approved March 1, 1871. The territory described in this bill has already been noted in Chapter I of this history. Mr. Gerrard was not aware of the petition that had been forwarded until after his bill had passed both Houses of the legislature. It was therefore too late to give the new county the name of Oakland, as petitioned for.

The naming of the county came about in this way. In the summer of 1867 or 1868 a number of Sioux Indians stole some horses near Columbus. Leander Gerrard and his brother, E. A. Gerrard, and S. C. Smith, and perhaps others, took up the trail of the Indians and followed them to the Elkhorn valley, near the mouth of Cedar Creek. Becoming short of provisions they encamped and, while hunting, Mr. Leander Gerrard shot a fine fat antelope. Calling this circumstance to mind when the bill was prepared, Mr. Gerrard suggested the name "Antelope" for the new county.

In accordance with a proclamation of the governor, an election was held on the 15th of June, 1871, to elect county officers to hold until the next general election in Otcober following. The election was held at the house of A. H. Snider. The judges were A. M. Salnave, Jeptha Hopkins, and E. R. Palmer; clerks, A. B. Elwood and A. H. Palmer. The following named officers were elected: county commissioners, L. A. Boyd, William P. Clark, E. R. Palmer; county clerk, J. W. Skiles; county judge, D. V. Coe; superintendent of schools, A. J. Leach; sheriff, Jeptha Hopkins; county treasurer, W. G. Rhodes; surveyor, A. B. Elwood; coroner, A. M. Salnave. Returns of this election were filed with the secretary of state on June 29, 1871, and commissions were immediately issued to the successful candidates. The returns do not show the number of votes

polled, but the highest number cast for any one office was seventy-two, and that is probably the whole number of voters participating in this election.

Immediately after receiving their commissions, John W. Skiles, county clerk elect, issued notices to all the officials to meet at his house, on section 18, in Burnett township, and qualify for their respective offices. They all did meet and qualify, excepting W. G. Rhodes, treasurer, and A. M. Salnave, coroner, who failed to appear.

At this time also the board of commissioners held their first meeting and proceeded to divide the county into three precincts, each precinct being also a commissioner district. The eastern precinct was named Twin Grove, and consisted of all the townships in range 5; the next was called Center, and took in all the townships in range 6; the third was named Mills, and consisted of the western half of the county. This arrangement was not at all satisfactory to the residents of the western part of the county, and before the October election the board had another meeting and changed the boundaries of the precincts as follows: Twin Grove was made up of the eastern third of the county, Center of the middle third, and Mills of the western third.

No justice of the peace had been elected, and as County Judge Coe resided west of the center of the county it was thought best to have a magistrate in the eastern part of the county. Accordingly, at the first commissioners' meeting Robert P. Elwood was appointed justice of the peace. He immediately qualified and became the first justice of the peace in the county.

These county officials had very little to do. There were no books in which to keep the records, no taxes to collect, and in general no records to keep. The board of commissioners had two meetings, possibly three, but if the county clerk kept any record of them he failed to turn it over to his successor in office. The county superintendent organized seven school districts, and the surveyor laid out one road. The record of the doings of this first set of county officers is made up chiefly from the memories of those par-

ticipating, and the recollections of other old settlers. There is one exception to this, however. The county superintendent kept a record of his work of organizing the seven school districts, in the back part of a private account book, and he still has that in his possession.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST COUNTY CONVENTION — THE FIRST GENERAL ELECTION — SET OF COUNTY BOOKS ORDERED — PART OF THE ORDER CANCELED — FIRST TAXES COLLECTED — SETTLEMENTS CONTINUE — NUMBER OF SETTLERS BY TOWNSHIPS — THE GRASSHOPPERS

IN September, 1871, a county mass convention was called at the house of J. W. Ploof, on the southwest quarter of section 7, Neligh township, to place in nomination candidates for county offices to be voted for at the general election to be held in October following. This convention was non-political and was pretty generally attended by voters from all over the settled parts of the county. The following ticket was placed in nomination and was elected in October: county clerk, W. W. Putney; treasurer, Robert Marwood; judge, D. V. Coe; sheriff, Jeptha Hopkins; county superintendent, A. J. Leach; surveyor, George H. McGee; coroner, A. B. Elwood; county commissioners, 1st district, William P. Clarke; 2d district, L. A. Boyd; 3d district, Zebulon Buoy. These officials-elect qualified and entered upon the duties of their offices immediately after the election, excepting Robert Marwood and George H. McGee, who failed to qualify in time, and they were accordingly appointed to their offices by the board of commissioners. It is probable that these officials should have waited until the January following before entering upon the duties of their respective offices, but there was not a copy of the statutes of Nebraska in the county to be used as a guide, and as there was no objection, they assumed the duties of their offices immediately. The county commissioners drew lots for the terms they should serve, Buoy drawing for one year, Clarke for two, and Boyd for three years.

There were no records to be turned over excepting such as had been kept on slips of paper and in private account

books. Mr. W. W. Putney, county clerk, found that his predecessor had kept no records whatever of the commissioners' meetings, and he was compelled to make this record from memory. The former county clerk had, however, ordered a complete set of blank books from Acres, Blackmar & Company, DesMoines, Iowa, but these had not yet arrived. On investigation Mr. Putney found that the cost of these books would amount to a much larger sum than the new county could afford. He therefore wrote to Acres, Blackmar & Company, requesting that a part of the order be canceled. His request was granted, and only such books were bought as were of absolute necessity. Several of the county officials were left without any books in which to keep their records, but this was considered better than to run the county heavily in debt at the start.

Before the county was organized, that part west of Madison County was attached to Madison for revenue and judicial purposes, and that part west of Pierce County was attached to Pierce for like purposes. The settlers, therefore, who were here on the first of April, 1871, or prior thereto, had been assessed in Pierce and Madison counties. These assessments were transferred by County Clerk Putney to the books of Antelope County, and in April, 1872, County Treasurer Marwood began the collection of taxes for the year 1871. Mr. Marwood opened his books for the first time at the house of W. W. Putney, on Cedar Creek, and there began the collection of taxes. His first receipt was dated April 4, 1872, for personal tax of A. J. Leach for 1871, and amounted to $8.60, two dollars of which was a dog tax. County Clerk Putney kept his office at his house on the north half of the northwest quarter of section 35, Oakdale township, and here the board of commissioners had their first meeting, and here most of the county business was transacted until the county seat was located in the fall of 1872.

Meanwhile the population continued to increase and the settlements to expand. Early in May, 1872, settlers began to come to West Cedar valley, both north and south

of the present site of Elgin. The valley of Willow Creek was settled in the fall of 1872, and during the year a number of new settlers located on Bazile Creek. The Elkhorn valley continued to fill up, especially in the western part, and the settlements both north and south of the main valley continued to expand.

It is not known exactly how many settlers were here in the spring of 1872, but a pretty close estimate of the number can be made. For this purpose a list has been made out from the county treasurer's personal tax list for 1872, showing the names of all permanent settlers who were assessed a personal tax for that year. Also there are added to this list the names of permanent settlers who had filed on homesteads or preëmptions prior to April 1, 1872, but who were temporarily absent when the assessment was taken. In Bazile township there were nine settlers, as follows:

Anderson, Wm.	Anderson, Isaac
Anderson, E.	Baldwin, Richard
Chappell, Jason	Hammerly, Isador
Ressor, Doc.	Ressor, Phil.

Steele, James

In Blaine township there were eight:

Bonneau, E.	Choate, James
Bunce, Thos.	Eldridge, R. C.
Crum, James	Snider, F. M.
Smith, J. H.	West, Joel

In Burnett there were forty-four:

Bausman, Jacob	Bowers, L. L.
Berry, Geo.	Ballett, S. P.
Cowin, J. C.	Daily, James
Fletcher, S. B.	Fletcher, J. P.
Gross, A. E.	Hopkins, Crandall
Hopkins, Jeptha	Hopkins, Allen
Hopkins, William H.	Ives, Nicholas
Ives, Isaac	Ives, Isaiah
Ives, Geo.	Liermann, August

Latta, M. F.
Means, T. W.
O'Neill, Arthur
Rollins, Renault A.
Rutledge, Wm.
Skiles, R. I.
Snider, L. J.
Snider, A. H.
Trueblood, Benarder
Whitwer, Bernard
Whitwer, Nicholas
Wilson, George
Mahan, Thos. D.
Masters, Winfield
Rollins, Mrs. Atlanta
Rollins, John F.
Skiles, J. W.
Snider, J. H.
Snider, L. L.
Scannell, Mrs. M. J.
Tims, Chas.
Whitwer, Peter
Whitwer, Frederick
Woods, Thos.

In Cedar township there were fifteen:

Bennett, Jesse T.
Derry, C. H.
Inman, Geo.
Leach, A. J.
Palmer. E. R.
Smith, Spencer
Shepherd, W. A.
Duncan, Wm. P.
Horne, Robert
King, J. H.
Morgan, S. P.
Palmer, A. H.
Seeley, C. M.
Trask, T. P.
Wilson, C. H.

In Clearwater there were four:

Lyman, T. J.
Stevens, Calvin
Michaels, Ernst
Tutt, Joseph

In Elm there were fifteen:

Buck, C. D.
Elwood, A. B.
Erskine, John A.
Eldridge, T. E.
Holbrook, Jacob
Mossbarger, William
Scannel, Tim.
Burton, John
Elwood, R. P.
Erskine, R. J.
Gillett, Emmett
Lee, Samuel
Manering, W. J.
Warner, Thos.
Warner, A.

In Frenchtown there were twenty-six:

Buoy, Z.	Brown, A. H.
Contois, L.	Duncan, James
Duncan, W.	Farrell, A.
Graves, L.	Grenier, J. B.
Holbrook, C.	Hemenway, C. E.
Hemenway, Prescott	Lessard, J.
Lessard, J. Jr.	Mummert, G. W.
Miller, E. G.	Miller, I. L.
Patras, Louis	Patras, Peter
Patras, F. X.	Saxton, J.
Sloan, A. A.	Stone, O.
Thibault, A.	Thibault, F.
Wyman, C. M.	Wingert, Peter

In Grant there were twenty-seven:

Blackford, E. M.	Blankenship, A. C.
Bliss, N. P.	Bliss, George
Bliss, Marion	Cossairt, David
Craig, James	Corkle, Frank
Dalrymple, E.	Eickhoff, J. H.
Fields, Rowena	Fields, Orson
Fields, Orville	Fields, J. S.
Irish, J. J.	Johnson, H.
Murphy, Maurice	Murphy, John
Murphy, Pat	Oelsligle, C. A.
Pearsoll, L.	Pearsoll, W.
Rouse, Chas.	Scott, James,
Rice, Adel	Wilkinson, W. W.
Wilkinson, Peter	

In Neligh there were twenty-eight:

Belmer, Alex.	Clarke, Wm. P.
Corby, Nat	Crawford, John H.
Connell, J. G.	Dugar, M.
Dworak, Chas. F.	Davis, Dresser
Fouts, Peter	Hills, Stephen
Hall, Stephen	Holbrook, Chas. S.

Minkler, James	McClure, Jacob
Nunnaly, W.	Potts, Thos. A.
Potter, Lewis	Ploof, J. W.
Reynolds, Francis	Reynolds, T. F.
Suter, L. H.	Stolp, Thos.
Stolp, Myron	Shambow, Levi
Trowbridge, Henry	Tubbs, Lester
Tousley, A. M.	Woolham, Wm.

In Oakdale there were twelve:

Bennett, J. H.	Eggleston, N. B.
Malzacher, John	Moffatt, Richard
Putney, W.W.	Rumsey, Byron
Salnave, A. M.	Swett, H. W.
Swett, L. S.	Sipp, James
Wolfe, A. H.	Wolfe, Marion

In Ord township there were twenty-five:

Beeman, Aaron	Beeman, J. T.
Beeman, C. S.	Boyd, L. A.
Bradeen, J. C.	Coe, D. V.
Corbin, Isaiah	Duncan, Geo.
Freeman, M. L.	Gillespie, J. M.
Gilbert, L. A.	Garlough, Jacob
Garlough, John	Garlough, Henry
Grow, S. P.	Hollenbeck, Aaron
Keith, I. E.	McGee, Geo. H.
McMullen, H. C.	Marwood, Robert
Smith, R. W.	Stevens, Elias
Stevens, Calvin	Tillotson, S. W.
Wight, A. G.	West, Amos

These make in all two hundred and thirteen persons in the county holding claims, or subject to be taxed. Many of these, however, were single persons, and it is not probable that the population of the county at that time, April 1, 1872, exceeded six hundred and fifty persons.

Up to the summer of 1872 the prosperity of the new settlements had been continuous, with the exception of the Indian troubles, which will be taken up later on. In 1872

the locusts, or migratory grasshoppers, came for the first time in sufficient numbers to do damage. It was related by J. G. Routson, whose visit to the Elkhorn valley was mentioned in Chapter VI, that in 1867 he found that the cottonwood, willow, and some other varieties of trees had been stripped of their leaves by the grasshoppers. There were none here in 1868 or 1869, and none in 1870, excepting in the Cedar Creek settlement, where they destroyed the gardens. There were none in 1871, but in 1872 they came in great clouds and completely stripped the country of everything green.

The writer, as secretary and historian of the Pioneer Society of Antelope County, read a chapter of Antelope County history before the first annual encampment of the Pioneers on the 21st day of September, 1886, from which is taken the following account of the grasshopper visitations.

"About the last of July, 1872, when the grain was nearly all cut, and stacking had just commenced, the grasshoppers came in great numbers and completely destroyed the growing corn, potatoes, and gardens. Not enough corn was raised in 1872 for seed. The crop of small grain was good, although very late wheat and oats were destroyed, and grain that was in the shock was shelled out, and wasted to some extent by the grasshoppers. There was enough raised in 1871 to live on and some to spare, but the immigrants who came in the spring of 1872, unless they brought means with them, were in a destitute condition, and many left permanently for the east, while many others sought work in eastern Nebraska or in Iowa, until such time as they could return to their claims.

"The spring and summer of 1873 were cold and wet, the yield of small grain was good and the quality was excellent, but corn did not ripen well. There were not so many grasshoppers as in 1872. In some neighborhoods they did little or no damage, but in others they did great injury to the corn and other crops. Hay was more abundant than ever before, and the settlers again took courage only to meet with bitter reverses and disappointment the next year.

"The year 1874 was known all over the settled portions of Nebraska as 'The Grasshopper Year.' The spring and early summer had been very favorable for growing crops; corn was looking well and promising an extra heavy yield; wheat and oats were mostly in the shock, when in the afternoon of a bright, sunshiny day a cloud was seen in the distance, to the northwest, as of smoke or dust. It was a cloud of grasshoppers. They came like driving snow in winter. They filled the air — they covered the earth, the buildings, the shocks of grain, and everything. They alighted on trees in such numbers as to break off large limbs with their weight. In a few hours' time they stripped the cornfields of every vestige of leaf. They denuded the trees of their leaves, and the twigs and smaller limbs of their bark. They severed the bands on the bundles of shocked grain, and shelled out the grain, on the outside of the shocks. Their alighting on the roofs and sides of houses sounded like a continuous hailstorm. Chickens and turkeys ran to hide from them. Their ability to devour was astonishing and nothing, scarcely, came amiss to them. Tobacco and tansy were choice morsels. Onions and turnips were eaten into the ground, leaving holes where they had been. If any were crushed under foot, or otherwise, the others immediately devoured them. If a harness or garment were left out it would be ruined in an hour's time. When at last there was nothing left for them to devour, and they rose in clouds that partially obscured the sun for hours, a scene of desolation and discouragement presented itself to the settlers that can better be imagined than described. About the only comforting thought was that it might have been worse had they come before the grain was cut and shocked.

CHAPTER X

THE GRASSHOPPERS CONTINUED — MANY SETTLERS LEAVE THE COUNTY — THE GRASSHOPPERS BECOME DISEASED; THEY FINALLY DISAPPEAR — DISTRIBUTION OF AID IN 1874–75 — BETTER TIMES COME AGAIN

THE grasshoppers came again in 1875, and did a great deal of damage that year, though not so much generally as in 1874. In the northern part of the county, however, the new settlers suffered more from their depredations than at any other time. The settlers in the Bazile neighborhood who had come in 1871 and subsequent years, and also the new settlers on the Verdigris, were all compelled to leave the county for a time, some of them returning in 1876 and others not until 1877. In fact, in the fall of 1874, and in 1875, many settlers from different parts of the county left for a while, and some of them did not return at all.

It is a notable fact that the grasshoppers came usually, though not always, from the northwest. After alighting and devouring whatever came in their way that suited their taste, they would always remain until the weather was fair and until the wind blew in the direction they wanted to go. They might stay two or three days or a week, drifting about over the country, but they never rose to bid goodbye without fair weather and a favorable breeze. Generally, they came about the last of July or the fore part of August, remained from two to six days, and then passed on to the southeast. In 1875, however, they came about the middle of June, and came from the southeast. Sometimes they passed over at a great height, looking like hazy clouds, or at times like clouds that were quite dense, so as to give the sun a dim, dull appearance, or at other times almost to obscure it, and would fail to alight at all. Only two or three times did any of them

remain here to lay their eggs and breed a new brood for the next year. When some of them did remain they would gather in great bunches like a swarm of bees, from a peck to a half-bushel in a bunch, as the nights became cool along in September. Throughout the day they would scatter to seek a place to deposit their eggs, and at night again gather together in bunches. For the purpose of laying their eggs they always selected a place where the surface of the ground was somewhat compact and hard, as where it had been trampled by cattle, or in an old road, or in corn or stubble fields, but never in mellow ground or in the sod. The new brood would hatch out in April and was very destructive to the green wheat and oats and growing corn. As soon as they had reached maturity they would leave for the southeast. They came again in numbers sufficient to do damage in 1876, and a few in 1877.

Since 1877 there have been no migratory grasshoppers in Antelope County. In 1874, for the first time, the grasshoppers began to show signs of disease. A small red mite appeared that year, looking like a very diminutive spider, not larger, when full grown, than a clover seed. It was noticed that year that many of the grasshoppers seemed to be specked with little red dots. These dots were little red mites and were found on the bodies of the grasshoppers, generally under the wings, from two or three to six or seven on each one so affected. These were brought here by the grasshoppers and were left here by them by the million. In plowing the next spring these mites could be seen in numbers wherever the ground was turned up. They not only preyed upon the grasshoppers, but also devoured their eggs. Place a number of these red mites under a tumbler and give them a cell of grasshopper eggs, and they would at once suck the juice out of them. These red mites remained as long as there were any grasshoppers here, and to some extent for some years thereafter. Many of the grasshoppers also were infested with little grubs about an eighth of an inch in length, that preyed upon their vitals, completely eating out the insides and leaving only a shell.

Others had a long, slender worm, not larger than a horse-hair, coiled up in the abdominal cavity. Catch any grasshopper, in any of the summers from 1874 to 1877, that did not appear lively, and it would be affected in one of the three ways mentioned above. What became of the grasshoppers that were here in greater or less numbers in 1867, as reported by J. G. Routson, and again to some extent in 1870, then in 1872, 1874, and every year up to and including 1877, is a question hard to answer. Some think they were entirely exterminated by their enemies; others, that those that passed on to the southeast finally perished in the Gulf of Mexico. Certain it is that one year, possibly 1875 but probably 1876, they passed over in clouds all day, coming from the northwest, from about ten o'clock A. M. until the sun was well down toward the west. They were at a great height and looked like fleecy clouds. One unaccustomed to grasshoppers would have thought nothing of it, but would have supposed them real clouds. These clouds moved slowly, exactly like ordinary clouds; when looked at through a glass it was plain to be seen that they were clouds of grasshoppers. These were not heard of again. Had they alighted anywhere in the United States they would have covered millions of acres and the newspapers would have published accounts of it.

The grasshoppers had a choice as to the kinds of their food. They would eat corn leaves, garden vegetables of all kinds, apple-tree leaves, also the bark of the twigs and small limbs, willow and cottonwood, and the leaves of some other kinds of trees. They would not only strip the big weeds growing in the ravines of their leaves, but would gnaw the stems also, leaving just a bare, naked stalk. In the cornfields they not only ate the corn but destroyed the weeds, if there were any. However, they would go hungry before they would feed upon growing sorghum, or leaves of the box-elder. The Indians at various times were troublesome; the blizzards and prairie fires were dangerous and had to be fought and guarded against; mills, post-offices, and markets were a long way

off and hard to reach, but the worst thing and the most discouraging that ever struck the early settlers of Antelope County was the grasshopper plague. When at last they were gone, and gone for good, they were still expected and looked for every year for several years. The men who had the grit and courage to stay by, and stick it out to the end, were made of the same stuff that genuine pioneers are always made, and are the only ones fitted to settle a new country.

Many of the settlers who remained here in 1874 were more or less destitute, and none of them had any seed corn, while very few had potatoes or garden vegetables. All who had been here long enough to have ground ready for it had crops of wheat and oats. These crops, however, were shelled out and wasted to a great extent and not many had any grain to spare. The legislature which was in session in the winter of 1874–75 made an appropriation to buy grain and corn and garden seeds for those who were destitute, and also to furnish the necessary provisions to carry the needy settlers through until a crop could be raised. Philanthropic people and societies in the east also sent supplies for general distribution, and many who had friends in more favored localities received boxes of supplies containing clothing, bedding, and provisions. General Ord, then in command of the Department of the Platte, designated Lieutenant W. F. Norris, afterwards Judge Norris of the district court, to oversee the distribution of these supplies among the counties of north Nebraska, and the several county clerks were to oversee the work in each county. W. W. Putney, at that time county clerk of Antelope County, had charge of the distribution here, and under him were assistants for the different neighborhoods appointed by the board of commissioners. Many, of course, got along without any assistance, but were compelled to go in debt for such things as they did not raise and must have. Others, as reported by the distributors, were really needy but too independent to accept of sup-

plies. It is also no doubt true that some were willing to accept and did receive more than they were entitled to. However, beginning with 1876, times began to get better again, and continued to improve without interruption for a series of years.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST INDIAN RAID — MRS. FREEMAN'S ADVENTURE — INDIANS FIRE INTO LOUIS PATRAS' HOUSE — THEY GET AWAY WITH TEN HORSES

THE Indians were the cause of a good deal of anxiety to the settlers for six or seven years. A number of times they raided the settlements and stole horses, and once they broke into a house while the owners were absent and carried off or destroyed everything of value. When the first settlers of Cedar Creek were making hay in the fall of 1869, they discovered two camps that had been recently occupied by predatory Indians. These camps had been used over night only, and both were very near the creek, under cover of a bank overgrown with brush, and hidden on all sides by growing timber, where they would not be easily discovered. The campfires in both cases were very small so as not to be readily seen in so secluded a place. Around these campfires were five or six beds in the grass, each one made by an Indian who had lain there during the night. No doubt these Indians were on a horse-stealing expedition. When out on the hunt the Indians go in large numbers with their ponies, their tepees, and their families, and make no attempt at concealment; when on a stealing trip, they go on foot in small bands, carefully secreting themselves, leaving no trail that can be followed, intending to steal horses to ride back home on. When on the war path, they, of course, travel on horseback, and in large parties. These war parties, however, never passed through Antelope County after the settlement began. In June, 1871, Colonel Mathewson, his son C. P. Mathewson, and Louis Sessions of Norfolk, while on a trip to capture young elk and deer, met one such war party of about one hundred Sioux braves. These men were in camp on the Cedar River, in Greeley

County, just below the present town of Spaulding. While the men were all in camp in a bend of the river they saw a number of men approaching on horseback. It was the advance guard of the maurauders, riding about a mile ahead of the main body. They came into camp and waited for the main body of Sioux, who soon came riding rapidly, singing and displaying on a pole the scalp of a Pawnee whom they had killed. In a few minutes the rear guard came up. They all remained sitting on their horses, many of them shaking hands with the whites and appearing to be in an exceedingly good humor. They told about killing the Pawnee and bantered the whites to trade for a span of mules they had stolen from the Pawnees. In a few minutes the advance guard struck out up the valley, followed by the main body, singing, and waving the scalp as they went, and lastly the rear guard followed on, keeping a mile or so behind the main body. The Poncas and Santees not infrequently came into the county from their reservations and spent some time in trapping along the Elkhorn, or passed on southwest to go on a hunt. These Indians brought their families and tepees along, as well as their horses and dogs, were always very friendly, and gave no trouble at all. The only Indians to be feared were the Brule Sioux, who occupied the White River country in South Dakota. They were always at war with the Pawnees, whose village was located at Genoa, at the junction of Beaver Creek with the Loup River. The route from the Pawnee village to the White River country lay directly through Antelope County. There was nothing to be feared from the Pawnees, but if the horse-stealing Sioux made an unsuccessful raid on the Pawnees, they were apt to carry off some horses from the new settlers of Antelope County rather than go back empty-handed. The first trouble from the Indians came the last of February, 1870.

Martin L. Freeman was one of the first settlers in the Elkhorn valley above Neligh. He first located in the summer of 1869 on the northwest quarter of section 26, Frenchtown township, on the farm now owned by V. M.

Switzer. Here he built a cabin and moved in with his family. Late in the fall a prairie fire burned up most of his hay, and, not having feed sufficient for all his stock, he took his team and started down the valley to find work, leaving his wife and baby in the care of his brother, Theron Freeman. During Mr. Freeman's absence the Indians raided the settlement and Mrs. Freeman had an interesting adventure with them, which is given herewith in her own words, as related by her to the writer in 1888:

"About seven o'clock in the evening of February 27, 1870, while about my work, the door suddenly opened and in stalked ten painted Indians, armed with bows and arrows and guns, and with feathers stuck in their hair. They grunted out some kind of salutation, shook hands with me and with Theron, and seated themselves in a semicircle around the stove. I think I must have been scared or excited, but I didn't mean to let the Indians know it. I tried to get Theron to go to Contois', about a half-mile away, where I knew there were four or five men camped, and get help, but he wouldn't do it. So I told him I would go. I laid the baby on the bed and took up a pail as though I was going after water, but when I got outside, I set the pail down and started on a run for Contois' place. I got more than half way there, when, hearing a noise behind me, and looking back, I could see in the dim light two Indians coming after me. I couldn't run away from them and I felt mad, and just thought I would make the best of it and wouldn't run another step. So I waited for them to come up. They took hold of me and made motions for me to go back. I said no. One of them could talk a little English and said, 'No go back; Indians get 'em papoose.' Well, I thought that I had better go back. When we got to the house, I tell you Theron looked pretty white. I believe he was scared. There were two who could speak a little English, — one small Indian and one old, big fellow. They told me, 'Hungry,' 'bread,' 'coffee,' 'heap cold,' 'stay 'em all night.' I told them I had

no bread, but would make some coffee. So I told Theron to put on the kettle and boil them some coffee. After they had drunk all the coffee they wanted they filled their pipes and took a smoke, each Indian taking a whiff or two and passing the pipe on to the next one. One of them partly lay down on the bed beside the baby. I made him get up. He laughed when I motioned him to get up, but he minded me. Another started to open a trunk, but I told him to shut it up and he did so. The big fellow who could talk a little English seemed to have some authority over the others, and I asked him if he was a chief. He said, 'Me chief.' They stayed until eleven o'clock, and then began to bundle up as if they were going away, and the big fellow said, 'Go 'way.' 'No come back.' 'Heap good squaw.' 'No hurt 'em squaw.' I tell you, I was glad when they were gone, but we packed up and went down to Judge Sniders' and stayed until Mart came home. I said I would never go back to that place to live, and we never did. We took a place farther down the valley, where we live now, and got a better one, too. Oh, these women who have come here the last few years and complain of hard times and privations don't know anything about it."

The next day, February 28, these same Indians came to the house of Louis Patras, one of the settlers about two miles down the valley from Mr. Freeman's place, and fired four of five shots into the building, one or two of the shots passing through the inside and lodging in the opposite wall. Fortunately, none of the inmates were harmed. They then killed a number of chickens, shot a cow, and after behaving for some time in a very threatening manner, went off toward the river and were seen no more.

That night they stole ten horses, one for each, and left before morning. Two of the stolen horses belonged to A. M. Salnave, one to Louis Contois, two to Louis Patras, one to Andrew Thibault, two to F. X. Patras, and two to M. L. Freeman. One of the horses escaped and came back in a few days, and seven were taken from the Indians by

the soldiers stationed at Fort Randall. These were advertised and were finally reclaimed by the owners. The other two horses were never recovered. This raid caused a great deal of uneasiness, and to quite an extent retarded the settlement of the county, especially in the upper part of the valley.

CHAPTER XII

INDIANS RAID THE HOUSE OF ROBERT HORNE ON CEDAR CREEK — THE TRAIL IS FOUND — PARTY ORGANIZED TO FOLLOW — ARMS AND EQUIPMENT OF THE PARTY — INDIANS ARE OVERTAKEN

ON the 9th of June, 1869, Robert Horne took as a homestead the northwest quarter of section 21, Cedar township. This was the farthest off of any of the homesteads in that neighborhood, his nearest neighbor being Jesse T. Bennett, who was located on the northwest quarter of section 9, two miles farther north. Mr. Horne was an Englishman and had always lived in the city, consequently was wholly unused to the ways of pioneer life. He was slow in getting his house ready to occupy, but by the help of the neighbors it was ready to be lived in about the first of November, 1870. Prior to this last date his family had remained at the house of Mr. Bennett while Mr. Horne was at work on his claim. The house being ready for the family, Mr. Horne had moved a part of his goods and all his provisions and supplies and stored them in the house, intending to move the remainder of his goods and his family the next day. The next day, on reaching his place with his family, he found that the house had been broken into, all his goods overhauled, and many things carried off. The sacks containing flour and potatoes had been emptied and the sacks taken. All the clothing and bedding was either carried off or destroyed. Everything not carried away was torn or injured in some way so as to render it useless.

While Mr. Horne and his family were waiting, undecided what to do, and not knowing what to think of it, Mr. J. H. King, who was located about three miles northeast, came along and at once discovered moccasin tracks in the flour. A number of the neighbors were called together as quickly as possible, but the Indians had so cunningly concealed

their tracks that nearly a day was spent before any definite conclusion could be reached as to which way they had gone. A plain trail struck out from the house toward the southwest, where they had gone back and forth in the grass, but after crossing a dry branch of the creek, about thirty rods distant, it entirely disappeared. Here they had evidently scattered, and could not be trailed.

Finally, about half a mile from the house a camp was found in a large thicket of plum brush, where they had cooked their supper and sorted over the stolen goods, throwing out such things as they did not want. They also threw away a lot of squaw corn which they had been carrying for their provisions, as they now were fully supplied with something that suited them better. This corn was gathered up by the whites and planted the next spring, being used in place of sweet corn. At this camp they had also roasted a piece of fresh pork by placing it on sticks with the flesh side to the fire. As fast as it cooked they had eaten it off, and finally had thrown away the skin, still covered with bristles. This pork, no doubt, they had obtained by killing a hog in some other settlement, as none were missed here. No trail left this camp in any direction. Finally, after circling around the camp in constantly increasing circles, the whites found an occasional moccasin track in the gopher mounds. These all pointed northwest, and by following on in that direction, examining every place where fresh dirt had been thrown up by the gophers, a track was found occasionally, but not often. These tracks showed plainly that the Indians had spread out over the prairie so as to make no trail, that they had left some time during the night, or they would not have betrayed the course taken by stepping on the soft earth, and that they were Sioux Indians, as no others were located in that direction. From certain other indications observed at the camp it was supposed that there were ten of the Indians.

Early the next morning five of the Cedar Creek settlers started in pursuit, taking a northwest course to the mouth of the Clearwater and picking up one man on the way, mak-

ing six in all. They took along one team to carry the bedding and provisions. Crossing the Elkhorn just below the mouth of Clearwater Creek, they camped for the night on M. L. Freeman's claim, where Mrs. Freeman had her adventure with the Indians some months before, as related in the preceding chapter. In the meantime Mr. E. R. Palmer had been sent from the Cedar Creek settlement to the Snider and Hopkins neighborhood to spread the news and get help to follow the Indians. Just as the Cedar Creek men were breaking camp the next morning, reinforcements arrived. These had started in the night from Crandall Hopkins' place. As soon as the new arrivals could eat breakfast, they all pushed on up the valley. There were now fourteen men, as follows:

Jeptha Hopkins	Alex Belmer
Crandall Hopkins	A. H. Palmer
Bernarder Trueblood	C. M. Seeley
R. A. Rollins	S. P. Morgan
Frank Cottle	L. A. Kimball
Allen Hopkins	Wm. H. Hopkins
J. C. Cowin	A. J. Leach

They had one heavy wagon, two light wagons, and three riding horses. The men were armed mostly with shotguns and squirrel rifles, old style and muzzle loaders. There were three exceptions. Trueblood had a fine heavy muzzle-loading target rifle, and Crandall Hopkins and Kimball each had a breech-loading carbine, one a Spencer, the other a Sharps, both good long-range guns; there were also a few revolvers and single-shot pistols in the outfit.

At noon they halted at Ash Grove, near where Ewing is now located Here it was decided to send Alex Belmer and A. J. Leach across to the south side of the river to look for signs of the Indians on that side, while the main body continued up along the north side of the valley. The party were also anxious to get a deer, as none of them, except part of the Hopkins party, had any meat. Several deer had been started during the forenoon, but every one had gone directly across the river. It was thought that by

dividing the party there would be a better chance of killing some game.

About an hour before sundown, as those on the north side were making toward a grove in a bend of the river, about a half-mile distant, where they intended to camp for the night, two or three of the men thought they saw smoke, as of a camp-fire just started. A halt was called and all looked for the smoke and examined the grove with a glass, but nothing unusual could be seen. Allen and Jeptha Hopkins and Kimball, being on horseback, rode on in advance to reconnoiter. Kimball, having the best mount, rode rapidly into the thicket and, coming back, soon reported that he saw one squaw fording the river, but saw no other signs of Indians. Allen and Jeptha Hopkins rode on slowly into the brush, near the river bank, and when near the middle of the bend in the river Jeptha Hopkins saw an Indian's head through the brush. Looking carefully, he discovered several Indians lying down flat upon the ground behind a bank of sand screened by willows. He called out "How," but there was no response. Again he called, "How," when one of the Indians answered, and all got up and showed themselves, there being eleven of them. By this time the other men and the teams had come up. The Indians could not understand English, or pretended they could not. Trueblood, who could speak the Omaha language, addressed them, but they made no reply. He knew something of the sign language and made use of it. One large, athletic Indian said he was a chief. He held up three fingers on one hand, saying in sign language that he was good for three white men. They were the right Indians, without doubt, for Palmer and Seeley recognized some of the garments they were wearing as those belonging to Mr. Horne; several Indians were wearing leggins made from the skirt of Mrs. Horne's black and orange ladies' cloth dress. They were armed with bows and arrows and some had guns.

CHAPTER XIII

A Talk with the Indians — Indians Begin the Fight — They are Driven Back — Result of the Fight — Return to the Settlements — Military Company Organized — Indian Version of the Fight

WHILE the chief was talking with the whites the others scattered out, and, slipping quickly behind the brush, forded the river. The chief was told to bring them back. This he agreed to do, and started very deliberately to the other side of the river, not trying to keep out of sight as the others had done. The opposite bank was five or six feet high and quite steep. On reaching the other side he shook the water from his leggins, climbed the bank, faced the whites, and, stooping forward, made ready to fire.

All the Indians began at once to jump from side to side so as to make it more difficult for the whites to hit them if they should fire. Just then Rollins called out, "Halt! Halt!" The Indians, not regarding the command or not understanding it, continued to jump from side to side and immediately fired on the whites. Several of the whites at once returned the fire, two or three firing at the chief. The chief fell forward on his face, his head lying near the edge of the high bank. This was the one who held up three fingers, saying he was good for three white men. The Indians then retreated a few rods, turned, and charged up to the bank, giving the war-whoop and shooting their arrows. Again they retreated and again charged up to the bank. Before the first charge the whites had found cover behind the trees and wagons, or their loss would no doubt have been very serious. The Indians made a mistake when they charged. At least three of them fell from the return fire of the whites, one on the bank and at least two farther back, and some of the others were

wounded. Belmer and Leach were hunting for a deer they had wounded when they heard the firing and the war-whoop of the Indians. They were on low, swampy ground covered with willow brush and tall grass, and could see nothing, but could distinctly hear the noise of the fight. They came out on the run, and as soon as they reached higher ground could plainly see the Indians shooting their arrows, but the whites, being lower down, could not be seen.

The Indians soon retreated in haste, carrying with them one of the wounded, and one of them was limping badly. When back some distance from the river they dropped the wounded one in the grass and went on about a quarter of a mile to the top of a knoll, where they sat down and began singing their death song, supposing, no doubt, that their chief was killed.

The whites suffered considerably. Crandall Hopkins was shot with an arrow through the upper muscle of the right arm while drawing an arrow from a wounded horse; S. P. Morgan was shot with an arrow in the right hand while loading his gun; John Cowin had a slight wound in one finger; Jeptha Hopkins had a fine young horse killed, having been struck both by arrows and buckshot; A. H. Palmer and Crandall Hopkins each had a horse wounded with arrows. The Indians made a mistake when they charged. Had they continued to retreat, as at first, probably only the chief would have been hurt. The whites had time to take cover, and were ready when the Indians charged back. The Indians probably expected to stampede the horses, but did not succeed.

There was no one to command the whites; no consultation was had as to who should command in case a fight occurred. This was a mistake. They should have elected officers after all were together, before going on up the valley. Only one command was given to the whites during the fight. When Crandall Hopkins was shot, he said, "Give 'em h-ll, boys, I am shot!" The command was obeyed. It was now beginning to be dark. The fight

was over, but the Indians might be only a few of a large party, and they might soon be reinforced. An election was held and Jeptha Hopkins was made captain. He gave orders to move down to the French settlement, where the wounded men and horses could be cared for, and stated that he would get reinforcements and come back next day. The party started down the valley just after dark, leaving the Indians singing their death dirge. They reached Louis Contois' place about eleven o'clock P. M. and remained there until morning, keeping a guard out during the night. The settlers all followed down to Contois' place and remained through the night. Of course the settlers were badly frightened, the women and children crying and not daring to go to bed for fear of an attack. There was good reason for this. These settlers in Frenchtown had not forgotten their experiences with the Indians the previous February. All the men who were not wounded were ready to go back up the river the next day, and Bernard Whitwer and Pat Ford, who were there, were ready to join them. But the French settlers were unwilling to take the risk, and declined to furnish horses, fearing they would lose them. It was therefore decided to come on down the valley and arrange a meeting for the next day to organize a military company to protect the settlements.

On the next day, therefore, a meeting was held and a company organized, twenty-six men joining the company the first day, and in a very few days nearly every able-bodied man in the settlements had enrolled his name. The company, which was named the Elkhorn Guards, was constituted as follows:

Jeptha Hopkins, *Captain*
R. A. Rollins, *First Lieutenant*
E. R. Palmer, *Second Lieutenant*
Bernarder Trueblood, *First Sergeant*
A. J. Leach, *Second Sergeant*
A. M. Salnave, *Third Sergeant*
D. V. Coe, *Fourth Sergeant*
Allen Hopkins, *Fifth Sergeant*

Wm. H. Ives	George Inman
I. E. Keith	F. M. Snyder
James H. Smith	W. W. Putney
J. C. Cowin	Wm. H. Hopkins
Crandall Hopkins	Aaron Hollenbeck
Chas. M. Wyman	J. Saxton
T. P. Trask	Louis Patras
M. L. Freeman	Chas. T. Gunter
Robert Marwood	J. C. Bradeen
Alex. Belmer	Geo. W. Ives
Frank Patras	A. H. Palmer
C. M. Seeley	J. H. King
S. P. Morgan	J. T. Bennett
W. Nunnaly	Elias W. Ives
John W. Ploof	L. A. Boyd
Frank Cottle	Chas. E. Belmer
John F. Rollins	Wm. P. Clark
Louis Contois	R. Beckwith
W. H. Brown	Patrick Ford
J. E. Richey	Arthur O'Neill
L. A. Kimball	Bernard Whitwer

In this fight the Indians did much greater execution with their bows and arrows than with their guns. Only one gunshot took effect, the one that struck the horse that was killed. After discharging their guns they did not reload, but began immediately to shoot arrows. This they could do as rapidly as one can fire a Winchester magazine rifle, and the arrows flew very thickly for a little while.

The white men's version of this fight has been given; it will now be only fair to give the Indians' version. Frank Cottle, one of those participating in the fight, afterward went to South Dakota and located near the Brule reservation, where he engaged in trade, a part of his business being with the Indians. He became acquainted there with some of the Indians who were on this raid. They claimed that none of their number were killed, but admitted that several were wounded. The horse the whites supposed was dead

was only badly wounded. They went back to where the fight occurred after the whites had gone, and finding the horse still alive and able to travel, they took him along with them, and he finally recovered. The wounded Indians also all got well.

A few months after this fight occurred Jeptha Hopkins, Ben Trueblood, and Allen Hopkins took a trip to the place and looked over the battle-field. They found a great many arrows on the ground held by the whites during the fight, every one of which was broken in two. They also found a bundle of sticks, eleven in number, one large one, nearly an inch in diameter, the others considerably smaller. These were about eighteen inches long, each one painted red and blue in spiral stripes, and to each one was tied a little sack filled with tobacco and kinnikinick, and all were bound together with strings. On the side of the river where the Indians were when the fight occurred, there were nine sods of turf turned over. Where the chief fell the sod was a large one, about a foot square; the other eight were smaller and farther back from the bank.

What these things signified is not known. It is strange that they should have come back and have broken all the arrows that they had discharged that could be found, but it probably was in compliance with some superstition. They found no Indians fastened in the trees, as was the Sioux custom of disposing of the dead, nor did they find any signs whatever of the dead horse. It is quite probable, therefore, that the Indian account is correct. The whites supposed surely that the chief, who was lying perfectly still on the edge of the bank, and in plain sight, was killed. He no doubt was badly wounded and had either swooned or was shamming death, believing that if he moved he would be killed. It was at the time supposed that it was for the chief especially that the Indians were singing the death song, and doubtless at that time they did think him dead.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INDIANS CONTINUED — PLANS OF DEFENSE — ARMS AND AMMUNITION FURNISHED — THE CEDAR CREEK SETTLEMENT GUARDED — FALSE ALARM — MORE HORSES STOLEN — END OF THE INDIAN TROUBLES

AT the meeting called to organize a military company as related in Chapter XIII, the question of the best method of defending the new settlements from Indian raids was taken up and fully discussed. Twice within ten months the Indians had raided the settlements. It was believed that they would come again before spring, especially if the winter should be mild and open, and that they would come in force. It was therefore decided to send some one to Omaha to lay the matter before General Augur, the commander of the Department of the Platte, and ask for arms and ammunition and a company of cavalry to protect the frontier settlements. It was decided to send A. J. Leach upon this mission, for the reason that he had resided in Omaha and was therefore somewhat acquainted with some of the leading citizens whose influence could be had in behalf of the settlers, if needed. He started the next morning and drove to Norfolk, which was at that time the county seat of Madison County. At Norfolk Mr. Samuel Thatch, county clerk of Madison County, drew up a paper setting forth the facts in the case. This paper stated that the settlers were wholly without protection; that they were poorly armed, many not being armed at all; that the settlements were very much scattered, and that they had twice been raided recently by marauding Indians. The paper was signed by Colonel Mathewson and by nearly all the county officials of Madison County. Armed with this document, Mr. Leach drove to Fremont, where he left the team and proceeded to Omaha by railroad. On reaching Omaha he first called upon Brigadier-General O. P. Hurford, who

was in command of the state militia. General Hurford strongly recommended that the Elkhorn Guards should join the state militia, saying that he could then arm them with Springfield rifles and furnish them with all the needed ammunition. This proposition did not suit, chiefly because the Springfield rifles were old, muzzle-loading guns, and further because there would be a good deal of delay, as the guns could not be issued until the company was regularly mustered in and a second trip would have to be made to get the guns and ammunition. General Hurford then agreed to go with Mr. Leach to see General Augur.

At first the meeting with General Augur was not at all satisfactory. He said he had received orders recently to issue no more arms to the settlers, and that he had no soldiers under his command that could possibly be spared through the winter. However, on hearing that the settlers had recently been in a fight with the Indians, and that one or more of the Indians had been killed in the fight, he took a different view of the matter. He said he would do what he could for their protection; that although he could issue no new arms, there were a lot of guns already out that had been issued to the settlers of Merrick County before this order was given, and that he would call these in and ship them to Fremont, with ammunition, at once. He therefore immediately dispatched Colonel Litchfield to Lone Tree to gather up the guns. He directed Mr. Leach to wait at Fremont for them. General Augur, however, blamed the settlers for getting into a fight with the Indians. He said that they should have reported the matter at once to him instead of taking it into their own hands. But since they did follow and overtake the Indians he did not blame the settlers for giving them all the punishment they could. He greatly feared that the Indians would return to Cedar Creek for revenge, and advised that a guard be kept all winter in that neighborhood. He also promised to send up a company of cavalry at any time it should be needed and requested, that the settlers should keep him posted as to how things were going.

Only two or three days later fifty stand of needle guns and two thousand rounds of cartridges were shipped to Mr. Leach at Fremont and thence were taken by him to Antelope County by team. These guns were the old-style three-band rifled muskets, caliber 50–70. They had been made over into breech-loading guns and were a very effective arm, but too long to be handily used on horseback. These guns were never recalled by the government, and some of them are still in the possession of members of the old military company and are greatly valued by them as mementoes of the by-gone days. The guns and ammunition were left with Captain Hopkins and by him distributed to the members of the company.

There was no more trouble with the Indians that winter. In the more exposed settlements some of the settlers moved down the valley for the winter, and others got together, two or three families occupying one house, for mutual protection. In the Cedar Creek settlement there were eight men who remained through the winter, six with families and two single men. These got together and occupied three houses in this settlement. A man was sent out on horseback every day all winter to scour the surrounding country, looking for signs of Indians.

But everything passed off quietly, excepting on one occasion. John Beeman of Ord township, while out hunting one day, came in greatly agitated, saying that he had been shot at by Indians. He showed where one bullet had passed through his cap, just missing his head, and one or two others had hit his clothing, but luckily he was not wounded. Captain Hopkins called out thirty-two of his men, and, with Beeman as guide, spent about two days in an effort to trail them, but without success. Finally, on going into camp at night, some of the men, suspecting that it was a "put-up job," placed Beeman on the witness-stand and made him own up that he had seen no Indians. He stated that he had taken that course to get one of the government guns. It was intended to go to a near-by pond the next morning, cut a hole in the ice, and put Bee-

man under a time or two. However, early next morning he eluded them and was nearly half a mile from camp, pointing for home, before he was discovered. They let him go.

There was no trouble from the Indians from this time on until the spring of 1872, when Richard Moffatt lost three horses and A. H. Brown two, and it was supposed at that time that they were taken by Indians, but there was no positive evidence of it. Sheriff Hopkins summoned a number of men and followed the trail to where they had forded the Niobrara River, when the chase was given up. These horses were not recovered. There was at least as much evidence to indicate that the thieves were white men as that they were Indians. Moffatt lived just north of the present site of Oakdale, while Brown lived in Frenchtown, and the country was pretty well settled for twenty-five miles up the Elkhorn River beyond Moffatt's place. No Indians had been seen anywhere in the country, and there were no signs of them anywhere in the settlements. Besides, Indians would hardly have ventured twenty-five miles into the settlements to steal horses. They would have taken those nearest to the frontier.

In the spring of 1874 there were six horses taken from the French settlement, three belonging to F. X. Patras, two to Eugene Grenier, and one to A. A. Sloan. They were taken to the Rosebud reservation and the Indian agent, hearing about it, took them from the Indians and turned them over to the military authorities at Fort Randall. They were afterwards turned over to A. A. Sloan, who brought them back and delivered them to the owners. After this there were no more depredations committed by marauding Indians, and all fear of them soon passed away.

CHAPTER XV

"Doc" Middleton Makes His Appearance — The Niobrara Gang of Horse Thieves — They Rob a Detective and Send Him Home on Foot — They Raid an Indian Camp — Charley Fuget, a Leader, and Two Others Captured

SOMETIME during the seventies, probably about 1876, a single horseman, just at evening, rode up to the house of Mr. Caldwell and asked to stop for the night. This request was readily granted, for in those days a traveler was always welcome at the home of any of the settlers. Mr. Caldwell lived in Beaver Creek valley, just at the west line of Boone County and about three miles from the southwest corner of Antelope County. The stranger was a good looking young man, of slender build, somewhat above medium height, and had a gold tooth that plainly showed when he smiled or when engaged in conversation. His horse, a good one, appeared tired and jaded, as though he had been ridden a long way. The horse being cared for, and supper served, the young man, complaining of being weary, was shown to his bed. The next morning Mr. Caldwell's son, on going to the stable to look after the horses, found the stranger's horse in the stall all right, but their own riding horse was missing. On going to the house to report the fact, the stranger's bed was found empty. He had gone in the night without disturbing any one, leaving his own tired horse and taking Mr. Caldwell's fresh one instead. Mr. Caldwell, thinking he had no great cause to be dissatisfied, the horse that was left behind being a better one than the one taken, let the matter go and made no effort to recover his own horse.

That same morning, just after the family of D. E. Beckwith had finished breakfast, a stranger rode up to the door and asked for something to eat. He stated that he had lost his way, and had slept in a straw stack the latter part

of the night. Mr. Beckwith, at that time, lived on his claim just six miles south of Neligh. The horse was taken to the stable and fed, and Mrs. Beckwith at once prepared breakfast for the stranger. She noticed that when her guest removed his coat to wash and comb, which he did with great care, that he carried a belt filled with cartridges and a revolver attached. These he did not remove. She also noticed that in talking he exposed a gold tooth. Her guest was the same who had stopped the night before at Mr. Caldwell's, on Beaver Creek. After breakfast he offered to pay for his fare, and, asking the distance to Neligh, mounted his horse and rode away. Mr. Beckwith's boys observed, however, that he followed the Neligh road only about half a mile, and then, turning to the west, struck off over the prairie at a gallop. This was the notorious "Doc" Middleton, or "Gold tooth Jack," or just "Jack," as he was known to his confederates.

After the Indians had given up making raids on the settlers it was no uncommon thing for some settler in Boone or Antelope County, and especially in Holt County, to lose a riding horse or sometimes a team. Usually the theft could be traced to some member of a gang of horse and cattle thieves who had their head-quarters somewhere on the Niobrara River, and this "Doc" Middleton was the head man of this gang of thieves. Middleton and his gang conducted operations somewhat on the Robin Hood order. While they did not rob the rich to give to the poor, after the manner of the renowned Robin Hood, they did manage generally to keep on good terms with their near neighbors, and their neighbors were in turn expected to keep quiet and never betray any member of the gang to the officers who might be looking for them, or to give any information that would lead to their arrest. The country in western Holt County was filling up somewhat with cattle ranches, and an occasional settler.

The members of the Middleton gang made themselves friendly with these stockmen and settlers, and at the same time gave them to understand that it would be for their

interest to keep quiet. It is said, too, that they paid very liberally for meals or other accommodations which they received from settlers who were poor. Any who were suspected of being unfriendly to them were notified to leave, and if this notice was not quickly obeyed their stock would be driven off and their lives threatened.

At the same time the mills at Neligh and Oakdale were sending supplies of flour and feed to these cattle ranches, and also to the Black Hills. The teamsters, in making these trips, had become more or less acquainted with Middleton and his men and of course kept on good terms with them, as it was to their interests to do. If, however, any one traveled through that country who was thought to be a detective or a spy, he was at once sent out of the country. One detective who succeeded in getting into the haunts of this gang, was caught by them, his horse, saddle, and revolver taken from him, and he was told that "the walking was good — he had better get out." He took the hint and walked down to O'Neil, where he took the stage.

Just at what time this gang began to operate in this country is not known, but it probably was as early as the year 1874. It is certain that they had confederates in Holt and Antelope counties, and men in Boone and Madison counties were strongly suspected of being in league with them. After the gang was broken up it was found that they had confederates as far east as central Iowa, but nothing definite is known as to the number of men actually engaged in this business. Their plan of operation was to steal horses and cattle, going a considerable distance from their headquarters for them, driving them to their rendezvous, branding them, and afterwards sending them to market farther east; but they never trespassed upon their immediate neighbors provided, of course, that these neighbors were friendly. After marketing their stolen stock, they were very apt to steal horses from some of the settlers in the border counties to ride back home on.

In making their raids to steal stock they did not always meet with complete success. At one time they found a camp of Yankton Indians, who were on a hunt, being camped on a tributary of the Loup River in the sand-hill country. Waiting until after dark, when all was quiet, they "rushed" the camp, firing their revolvers and endeavoring to stampede the Indians' horses. They did succeed in getting away with thirteen of the horses, but they lost Tom Brown, one of their men, who was killed by a shot fired at random in the darkness by one of the Indians. This circumstance was related by Longfoot one of the Indians who was in the fray. Some effort was put forth to procure the arrest of "Doc" Middleton, not only by the settlers of Antelope and adjoining counties, but by other sections of the country as well, for the depredations of the gang extended at least as far south as the Platte River and northwest to the Black Hills. These efforts, however, were at first unsuccessful. Any move for the capture of the gang was pretty sure to be reported by some of their friends along the line. Besides, it was not safe for a small party to penetrate to their haunts with hostile intent.

In the spring of 1878 Sheriff Hopkins was notified by A. H. Snider of three horses that had been stolen from the Black Hills. Mr. Snider had just returned from the Hills, and having seen the owner of the horses, had received from him a minute description of them which he turned over to the sheriff. It was thought that the horses were held by parties this side of the Niobrara River. Sheriff Hopkins took with him two men, D. V. Coe and Lauren Means, and made the trip to the Niobrara River in search of the stolen property. Two of the horses were found at or near Carberry's ranch, where Atkinson now is, and the other was caught at Morrison's bridge, on the Niobrara. They were all brought down and afterwards restored to the owner. This was an unexpected visit, or it would not have been successful. Middleton sent word to Hopkins, advising him not to come again.

The character of the country on the Niobrara and its

tributaries was favorable to these outlaws. The country was extremely rough and well timbered, affording shelter and hundreds of hiding places. If a small force were sent against them, it was easy to waylay and to kill or capture them all. If a large force should invade their territory, they could scatter out among the hills and timbered cañons and elude capture easily.

Being emboldened by their success in eluding pursuit and capture, they became less vigilant, and this led to the capture of three of them. Four of their number had stolen a span of horses and two mules from two German settlers of Holt County, who had not shown as much friendliness to the gang as was demanded and expected. With these they made across the country to the Platte valley. It was no doubt their intention to dispose of this property and then make a raid on some ranch, gather up a bunch of horses, and run them across the country to their rendezvous on the Niobrara. They stopped at North Platte and at night attended a dance. The sheriff of Lincoln County, getting wind of their presence, raided the dance-hall and captured three of them, one of them being Charley Fuget, who was reputed to be the second in command of the gang. Middleton himself escaped. He supposed, however, that the bridge across the North Platte was guarded and expected a fight there if he resisted arrest. He made up his mind to fight it out, and on approaching the south end of the bridge, took the bridle reins in his teeth, a revolver in each hand, and spurring his horse to a run, crossed the bridge, firing the revolvers as he went. The ammunition was wasted; the bridge was not guarded. These facts are partly obtained from Lauren Means, who had become quite well acquainted with Middleton while teaming to the Niobrara ranches and to the Black Hills. Afterwards, when Middleton himself was captured, he talked freely of these things.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HORSE THIEVES CONTINUED — STOLEN STOCK CAPTURED AND RECLAIMED — "DOC" MIDDLETON ARRESTED AND CONVICTED — DISTANCES TO THE MARKET TOWNS — MANNER OF GOING TO MARKET

THE Oakdale "Pen and Plow" of December 21, 1878, in its news columns contained the following:

"In an interview with Sheriff Hopkins we have ascertained the real facts of his recent raid on the horse thieves' nest on the Niobrara. In obedience to a warrant placed in his hands to serve, he started out with a force of eighteen men, including Cassidy, the interpreter, and Longford, a guide and scout, from the Yankton tribe. They proceeded to a point thirty miles from the Niobrara, on Turtle Creek, which is about one hundred and thirty miles from Neligh, and came upon the real headquarters of this nest of horse and cattle thieves. They captured eighty-one head of cattle and eleven head of horses, all of which have been since reclaimed. Sheriff Hopkins supposes that there are about fifty men engaged in this nefarious business of horse and cattle stealing, who have headquarters on Turtle Creek. They are freebooters — bandits, like those of Italy and Spain. No United States marshal dares to penetrate that nest, although they can have, if they wish, the whole United States army to back them."

The foregoing is substantially correct, only there was no interpreter along, and none was needed. Longford, the Yankton Indian, was Longfoot, mentioned in the preceding chapter, who was with the camp of Indians that was attacked by the Middleton gang sometime before, when Tom Brown was killed. He acted as guide and scout, and had no love for the Middleton gang. There was also a man along by the name of Frank Tappan, who was employed as foreman by a cattle company who had suffered

from the depredations of this gang. It was through this man Tappan that Sheriff Hopkins first obtained definite information as to the probable headquarters of the gang. Tappan got the most of his knowledge from Longfoot and other Yankton Indians, who had harbored a spirit of revenge ever since their former experience with this gang of outlaws. The Turtle Creek mentioned is the Keya Paha, the latter being the Indian name. At the same camp they caught four of the men, but Middleton himself was away, and only these four were seen.

The sheriff proceeded to follow down the Niobrara River to Niobrara city, in Knox County, where he turned over most of the stock to the owners, and gave the men into the charge of the sheriff of Knox County. Seven head of the cattle were brought to Oakdale, as will be seen by the following notice taken from the "Pen and Plow":

"NOTICE"

"Notice is hereby given that I have seven head of cattle, six yearlings and one spring calf, captured along with other stock on Turtle Creek, October 5th, 1878. The owners are requested to prove property, pay charges and take them away.

"Dated at Oakdale this 14th day of November, 1878.

"J. HOPKINS,

"Sheriff of Antelope County."

Middleton himself was suspected of having had a hand in robbing a post-office, and on this charge United States Deputy Marshals Llewellyn and Hazen were instructed to capture him. To do so they employed a ruse, as it would have been foolhardiness to have attempted his arrest in that country with a small force, and no large party could have penetrated that region without information being sent along the line in advance, so that not a man wanted could have been found. They sent word to Middleton that they wished to meet him and that they had a proposition to submit, — that if he would quietly surrender he

would be pardoned and protected and would be given a prominent place on the detective force. He agreed to a consultation and set a time and place for the conference.

The detectives met with him as agreed, and as they were proceeding along on horseback, Middleton riding between the two detectives, one of them gave him a letter to read, containing the proposition. A third man was concealed at a certain place they had to pass, and when the party reached this place this man fired at Middleton, wounding him in the hip. Middleton was thrown from his horse, but, at once drawing his revolver, he fired twice at Hazen, both shots taking effect and severely wounding him, Hazen at the same time falling from his horse.

Llewellyn put spurs to his horse and got out of the way as fast as possible. He went directly to Fort Hartsuff on the North Loup just below the present site of Burwell, and got a squad of cavalry to go back with him to the scene of the encounter.

Middleton went to his father-in-law's cabin, which was not far away, as his wound did not hinder him from dragging himself along. He supposed that he had killed Hazen. He was taken by friends into a timbered cañon where he was cared for in a tent. Hazen crawled to a settler's cabin and was brought to O'Neill. He subsequently entirely recovered. Llewellyn returned with the soldiers. They hunted up Middleton and placed him under arrest. He passed through Antelope County, in charge of Llewellyn and a squad of soldiers, July 30, 1879, was tried, convicted, and served his time in the "pen." This completely broke up the gang and for many years the settlers were free from trouble from horse thieves.

From the time of the first settlement of the county, in August, 1868, to the coming of the railroad, in November, 1879, a period of eleven years, the settlers were at a disadvantage by reason of the long distance to market. Counting the distance from Neligh by the most direct traveled roads it was sixty-five miles to Wisner, sixty-seven miles to Columbus, seventy-two miles to Yankton, one hundred ten

miles to Sioux City, and one hundred twenty-five miles to Fremont. At the first there was only one road leading out of the county. This road followed down the north side of the Elkhorn River to Norfolk. At Norfolk it divided, one branch leading northeast to Sioux City, the other keeping on down the valley to Fremont. From 1868 to the fall of 1871 all the travel to and from the county passed over this road on the north side of the Elkhorn. The Norfolk flouring mill was completed and began grinding in the fall of 1869. This gave the settlers a chance to have their grain ground into flour and meal and also furnished a supply to those who had to buy. Norfolk was thirty-seven miles from Neligh by this same road.

In the summer of 1871 the merchants of Columbus, having heard that the middle Elkhorn valley had been settled to some extent, took steps to open a road from the present site of Newman Grove to Cedar Creek. From Newman Grove to Columbus there was already a road that had been used about two or three years. This road was first made by the soldiers in their trips through the country for the purpose of keeping the Indians quiet. The road followed down Shell Creek valley, and the soldiers had bridged the small streams tributary to Shell Creek. As Shell Creek was settled, this road had been used and the bridges kept in repair by the settlers. Lewis Warren and George Whitcher of Shell Creek were employed to extend this road, and this was done in July, 1871. Lewis Warren and George Whitcher had homesteads on Shell Creek near the present town of Newman Grove, a part of Newman Grove, in fact, being on Mr. Warren's old homestead. These men came to Cedar Creek and remained over night. The next morning, after procuring a quantity of oak stakes from the timber along the creek, they began on the west line of section 2 Cedar township, and staked out a road to connect with the one already in use on Shell Creek. These stakes were placed about eighty rods apart and were plainly marked by mounds of sod and earth. Other roads were marked out from St. Clair and from Ives Creek valleys to connect with this Shell Creek road, and in a short time

it became the main thoroughfare. These were not regularly established roads, but were marked out and used by the settlers for their convenience until county roads were legally established.

The Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad was begun in 1869, extended to West Point in 1870, and in a year or two more was extended to Wisner. The trade of the county was divided after 1872 between Columbus, Wisner, and Yankton. The settlers in the southern part of the county did their marketing at Columbus; those in the northern part went to Yankton; while those in the Elkhorn valley divided their trade between Columbus and Wisner. It took from four to seven days to make the round trip to any of these market places.

In going to market in warm weather it was customary to camp out, a camping outfit being carried along for that purpose. In the winter, stops were made over night with ranchmen who had the necessary accommodations. All the accommodations needed, however, were a stable and hay for the horses, a chance to make coffee on the kitchen stove, and a place inside the house to make a bed. Every one was expected to carry his own bedding, and usually his grain for the team and provisions for himself. In the winter, when bad snow-drifts were likely to be encountered, and icy, slippery hills to be traveled over, it was usual and necessary for two or more to go in company, so as to render mutual assistance. Shovels were always taken along at that season, to be used in opening a road through the snow-drifts. Scarcely anything was taken to market except wheat. Spring wheat was the only variety raised, and, the ground being new, the grain was nearly always of extra good quality, and brought in the Columbus market from forty to ninety cents per bushel, the usual price being from fifty to sixty cents. Sometimes a few loads of fat hogs were marketed, but not often, the haul being too long. Cattle were not fattened for the market to any extent, but were sold to drovers, who were in the habit of coming around two or three times a year, buying up the feeders and driving them to points on the railroad farther east to be fattened.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MARKETS — LOG HOUSES — DUGOUTS — THE FIRST FRAME HOUSE — SOD HOUSES — THE FIRST SAW-MILL — A HAPPY COMMUNITY — CARRYING THE MAIL — THE FIRST WEDDING — THE FIRST BIRTH — THE FIRST DEATH

NOTWITHSTANDING the great distance to market towns on the railroad, the settlers had about as good a market for what they had to sell as those living farther east. This market was furnished by the great cattle ranches on the Niobrara River and tributaries, and by the mining country that was opening up in the Black Hills. Beyond Holt County nothing was raised except cattle, horses, hay, and perhaps a few garden vegetables. Not much grain was raised as yet in Holt County, and none to spare. The ranchmen depended wholly on the farmers of Antelope County for their supplies of flour, mill feed, corn, and oats. The Black Hills country got part of their supplies from Sidney on the Union Pacific Railroad, which was nearer than Antelope County. But there was nothing raised around Sidney, and all the supplies found there had to be shipped to that place over the railroad. For these reasons, a great trade began to spring up with the country northwest, about the year 1873 or 1874, which continued to increase until the coming of the railroad. This northwest country, extending to the Black Hills, took all the surplus corn and oats raised in the county and much of the wheat and rye, the two latter being, of course, first ground by the mills of the county. This trade also furnished employment for many men and teams, as nearly, or quite, all the hauling was done by Antelope County people.

The common belief that nearly all the first settlers of Antelope County lived in sod houses is erroneous. Not a sod house was seen or heard of in the county until it had been settled about four years. There were three kinds of dwellings known in the county in the early days — the

log house, the dugout, and the frame house. The first frame house in the county was built by Jonas J. Irish on the northwest quarter of section 3, Grant township, in the spring of 1871, the material having been hauled from Sioux City. The dugouts were sometimes made in a bank, the front part being walled up with logs, and sometimes a front room of logs would be added, making the house half log and half dugout. Another style of dugout was made like a cave or outdoor cellar, the top, or roof, being of logs on which brush and hay were first placed, and the earth taken out of the excavation was thrown on top for a cover, making it rounded enough to shed rain perfectly. The dugouts, which were not numerous, were commonly occupied by bachelors, the women generally objecting to a life underground, even as a temporary expedient.

The groves along the Elkhorn and the timber creeks furnished logs for building purposes in abundance for three or four years, when they began to grow scarce. Most of the houses built at first, therefore, were made of logs. Generally they were covered with a roof made of poles on which was placed fine straight brush, and over this sods and earth. The cracks were chinked and then plastered inside and out with clay, which filled all the crevices, making the houses warm and comfortable. Some of the best houses were covered with shingles, but as they had to be brought from so long a distance, earth roofs were by far the most common. There were at first no floors, as lumber was too high in price and had to be hauled too far. Lumber was used only for the doors and windows. The ground being used as a floor, it would wear out unevenly; about the door and around the stove, where most used, it would become hollowed out by constant use, and occasionally clay would be brought in and pounded down to level up the holes. Furniture was neither abundant nor expensive. Some people had chairs, bedsteads, and tables that they had brought with them, but more had none until they had furnished themselves with home-made substitutes. For chairs they provided themselves with three-legged

stools. Bedsteads were framed into the sides of the wall and covered with slats rived from the native timber, and on this the straw or hay tick and bedding were placed. The tables were made of the most convenient home material, or perhaps in part from a pine board brought for that purpose.

Some time during the year 1871 a portable steam saw-mill was brought into the county by C. P. Mathewson of Norfolk and set to work on Judge Snider's homestead, on the southeast quarter of section 6, Burnett township. In May, 1872, a water-power saw-mill was built by George H. McGee on Clearwater Creek, on section 6 in Ord township. These saw-mills were a great convenience to the settlers, as they furnished lumber suitable for many purposes. They both continued running as long as a supply of logs could be had. In 1872 the mill at Snider's was sold to Jesse T. Bennett, who moved it to Oakdale in the fall of that year, where it continued to do business for several years, when, the supply of saw logs giving out, it was moved out of the county. McGee's mill still continued to do work for several years.

A few of the settlers built log stables for their teams, but most of them used a stable built of poles and covered with hay or straw. These were warm and convenient if kept in good repair, and if the covering was sufficient properly to shed the rain. As the settlements began to spread out over the dry valleys and the rolling prairies, the logs gave out and sod houses began to come into use. A good sod house is the best and most comfortable of any that can be built by the settler of a new country in this climate. The walls should be at least three feet thick at the bottom, and not less than eighteen inches at the top. If properly constructed they will last for many years, especially if they have a shingle roof with eaves that project well over the sides. Such a house is absolutely frost proof, and, if plastered inside, it is clean and presents a neat appearance. It is warm in winter and cool in summer. The only lumber used is for floor, roof, doors, and windows. It seems almost

a pity that the day of the sod house has gone by. The old settlers who are here to-day in Antelope County are wont to refer back to the early times with pleasure and affection. It is doubtful if with all their convenient, modern surroundings they are as happy as in the early days with all the inevitable drawbacks and inconveniences. To illustrate the conditions that prevailed in those days the following quotations are made from an address delivered to the Pioneers September 21, 1886, by the secretary:

"In those days hospitality was known and practiced. The stranger was never turned away. The land-seeker was kept without charge and told where to go to look for the best vacant land. If a house was to be built, the whole community for miles around turned out and did the work in a day. The settlers of a neighborhood helped each other in harvesting, threshing, and making hay. In going to mill or to market they went, two or more neighbors in company, so as to assist each other in fording streams and drawing loads up steep hills. Occasionally it was necessary to go to Sioux City or Fremont for supplies, there being as yet no road to Columbus or Yankton, and on such occasions several would go in company, camping out at night and sharing each other's beds and rations. Prior to the establishment of a post-office in the county, the mail was brought from Norfolk for the whole county by any one who happened to have business there. This was distributed along the way, and what remained on reaching Judge Snider's was left there for future distribution. At first one's coat pockets sufficed for a mail sack, but later, as the population increased, a grain sack was used. Whenever two or three made a trip to a distant town or to mill they took pleasure in transacting business and doing errands for their neighbors. Sometimes hunting parties were formed both for pleasure and profit. The proceeds of the chase were commonly distributed throughout the neighborhood. When there was a meeting or a Sunday school, everybody went. If in warm weather, boys and girls were barefoot, as were some of the men. The men

were dressed in jeans or blue or brown denims, the women in calico. People listened to the sermon and were glad to hear it. Everybody was invited to sing. The congregation was the choir; there were no jealousies, and no one felt slighted. What was a joy to one was a pleasure to all, and what was a grief to one family was a sorrow to the whole community.

"When on the 14th of August, 1869, the first wedding was celebrated, at which Mr. Allen Hopkins and Miss Francis L. Riley and Mr. Elias Ives and Miss Nancy Freelove Hopkins were united in wedlock by C. P. Mathewson, Esq., of Norfolk, the few settlers then in the county looked upon it as a family affair in which all were interested. And again, when in the early part of May, 1870, Mrs. L. A. Kimball of Cedar Creek gave birth to a little girl, the first child born in the county, it was a happy event for the whole settlement. And then again, when on the 6th of October, 1870, death for the first time invaded the ranks of the little band of pioneers and Fanny Snider was laid away to rest in the one lonely grave near her father's house, the whole community was present to weep with the stricken family."

The early pioneers showed a commendable spirit of brotherly love and helpfulness. It might be better if more of this spirit prevailed to-day.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STORMS OF APRIL, 1873, AND OF JANUARY, 1888, COMPARED — STORM OF 1873 DESCRIBED — WILD ANIMALS AND BIRDS KILLED BY STORM — CAPTAIN MIX'S COMPANY OF CAVALRY — ART. MERRIMAN'S STORY

THE great storm of 1873 was the worst ever known in this part of the state. It is yet spoken of as "the April storm" or the "Easter storm," as it began on Easter Sunday and continued without abatement for three days. The terrific blizzard of January 12, 1888, was worse for a short time, by reason of the intense cold, but it was of short duration. This January storm came without warning at about one o'clock P. M., and continued for about twelve hours only, when the wind died down, but the severe cold continued.

In 1888 the county was well settled in every part, houses were much nearer together, planted groves, cornstalks, and stubble fields caught the snow and prevented such tremendous drifts as came in 1873, and besides, the prairie had not been burned over. Then, too, people were well prepared, with better houses and good stables and sheds to shelter the stock. The next morning, too, the wind had gone down, and the farmers could get out to look after their stock. Everybody had plenty of hay and grain on hand and were more or less supplied with fuel. The storm of 1888 was much less destructive in this part of the state than that of 1873.

The storm of 1873 commenced on Easter Sunday, April 13, about four o'clock P. M., with a strong wind from the northwest and a light rain. The rain soon turned to sleet, and the wind continued to increase in violence until it became almost impossible to face it. In an hour or two it began snowing and continued to snow for the greater part of two days. It was not easy to tell, the second day of the

storm, whether snow was falling or not, as the air was so filled with drifting snow that one could not see the distance of a few rods, and at times objects a few feet away were not discernible.

The settlers were not prepared for such a storm, and were not looking for anything of the kind. The winter had been mild, and for some days the weather had been warm and pleasant. The spring wheat was all in the ground, and some of the fields were beginning to look green. The oats were mostly sown, and people had begun to make garden; some had commenced to break prairie. Some of the settlers were located in sheltered places, where their buildings were protected by native timber, and others had good log stables and hay and grain convenient. These got through all right, excepting that in some instances their stock, if running out, drifted away with the wind and part of it perished before it could be recovered. The majority of the settlers had stables made of forked posts and poles, covered with hay or straw, which had been allowed to get out of repair, as the winter was supposed to be over.

Prairie fires had swept over the country the fall before, leaving the ground black and barren, with nothing to catch and retain the snow as it fell. As a consequence the terrific wind that continued to blow constantly, swept the hills and all high lands bare, carrying the drifting snow to the south slopes and filling up the ravines and all low and sheltered places with great snowdrifts. The snow was piled on the south side of buildings as high as the buildings themselves, stables that were out of repair were drifted full, and the horses were taken into the houses to be kept from perishing. In some cases cattle were taken into the houses, but generally only the teams, the cattle being left to shift for themselves. Cattle that were loose drifted before the wind until some sheltered ravine or patch of brush or timber was found, where they could have some protection. Many brought up in some deep snowdrift and perished from lack of food and exposure.

The wild animals and birds alike suffered from this storm. The writer at that time was engaged in surveying and appraising land for the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Sherman County, Nebraska. After the storm was over and the snow melted sufficiently so that he could resume work, he found on the prairie numbers of antelope and deer that had been driven before the wind until, becoming exhausted, they had lain down and died. Generally, these were found lying with their legs folded up underneath, as if they had lain down to rest, but some were found stretched out at full length, as if they had run until entirely exhausted and had then fallen.

The birds had many of them already returned from the south, and great numbers of them perished, especially the larks and robins. Prairie chickens suffered very severely, and were not so numerous afterward.

The writer, during the storm, was stopping with a man by the name of Humes, whose house was built in a heavy body of timber about one and a half miles west of the present site of Loup City, Sherman County. The snow did not drift at all in the timber, excepting at the north side, where the drifts were at least fifteen feet deep. Neither did it get very cold, only a few degrees below freezing.

Loup City at that time consisted of about four log houses and two dugouts. Just after the storm had commenced Captain Mix of the United States Army came down the valley of the Middle Loup with his company of cavalry, having been in pursuit of a predatory band of Indians. They encamped under a low, steep bank near the creek, in the southern part of what is now Loup City. This bank at first afforded some shelter, but soon the snow began to cover the wagons and tents, and the soldiers were compelled to seek shelter in the houses and dugouts. The horses and mules had no shelter whatever, and most of them no feed, and thirty-seven of them perished. Afterward, a man by the name of Hayes was employed to haul the carcasses away, which he did by dragging them with

teams about a half-mile up the creek and dumping them over a high, steep, clay bank. It was intended to cover them with earth from the bank, but before this was done a heavy rain melted the snows up the creek; the carcasses were brought down again by high water, and many of them were deposited along the bank of the creek within the present limits of the town. This gave the name "Dead Horse" to the creek, and it is known as such to this day.

These last incidents are related, not because they belong to the history of Antelope County, for they do not, but because they give the writer's experiences in the same storm that swept over all Nebraska, and that was especially severe in the central and northern parts of the state. Some of the snowdrifts formed during this storm did not melt away entirely until the next June.

A. G. Merriman, commonly known as Art. Merriman, was not only the first settler in Eden township but the first to take up a claim on any of the branches of Verdigris Creek. He was a member of Captain Jacob M. Miller's colony of old soldiers. Captain Miller himself, who was well known in Antelope County, settled just over the line in Knox County, but several members of his colony settled in Antelope County. In a letter from Mr. Merriman to William B. Lambert, dated Waterloo, Iowa, April 4, 1899, Mr. Merriman thus gives his experience in the great April storm:

ART. MERRIMAN'S STORY

"March 14, 1873, I left Independence, Iowa, for Nebraska, with a small team of mules, in company with J. A. Davis and John and Isaiah Miller.

"We arrived at Creighton on April 1, and drove west to old Mr. Palmer's about four miles, which was the last or frontier house in the settlement. Creighton consisted of Bruce's sod house and sod store, and Quimby's log cabin, where he kept the post-office, and one or two more log or sod houses.

"The next day we hunted our claims, which J. M. Miller had filed on for us the previous year, partly in Knox and

partly in Antelope County. Mine was eight miles from Creighton and four miles from Mr. Palmer's house (it was the northwest quarter, section 4, Eden township).

"In a few days we set our three wagon boxes, with covers, where Millerboro is now, to live in until we could get material to build a house. We had been to Yankton for lumber with two teams, and got back on the 13th of April. That night it began a drizzling rain and before morning it turned to snow. The weather had been very fine, and gardens were partly made. We had built a pole and hay stable, but had little hay on it yet, and we set up some boards on the north and west sides to break the storm and wind from our horses. The next day was bad and snowed all day and all night, and the next day in the forenoon it was storming and blowing so bad we could scarcely see anything outside. We got out from our wagon covers about eleven o'clock and found some of the horses loose, some down and nearly buried in the snow, and one had packed the snow and kept getting higher until his knees were up to the roof. He had climbed clear up through the roof and eaten what covering he could reach. We turned them all loose, but could get nothing to feed them, for what little grain and hay we had was buried so deep we could not get at it. The air was so full of snow that we had hard work to find our wagon covers again, which were about four rods from the stable. The storm kept up all night, but on Wednesday, the 16th, it was not so bad, so we dug out a harness and hitched up a span of horses to a wagon and started for the settlement, four miles away. We went about twenty rods, when both horses got down in the snow, and we had to unharness them there to get them back. We left the wagon there. This was some time in the afternoon. We had had nothing to eat but some bread and crackers since supper on Sunday. So we dug out some meat and potatoes and the stove, which were all buried in the snow, and cooked supper — the first warm meal in three days.

"The 17th was perfectly clear. We managed, by picking

our way, to get our horses through the snow to the settlement and into a stable, where we kept them and hired our board for nearly two weeks. Then the snow melted and made high water and mud and very bad roads. I went to Yankton the first week in May to bring my wife and Fred and some goods. We had a hard time, though.

. . . . . .

"I first made some garden on my claim, then I went to breaking, and planted about seven acres of sod corn; then broke out twenty acres more. Just after harvest I made a good dugout, thirteen by twenty feet inside, and moved into it; and made a good sod stable for my mules and cow. (Mr. Merriman and family lived in a house built by one of the Millers until the dugout was finished.)

"That winter the Millers all went away, so our nearest neighbor was Paul Thibadeau, about three miles northeast. West there were no settlers for about thirty miles, and south, for over twenty. The next spring the Miller boys came back and went to breaking and sowing wheat, etc. I sowed thirteen acres of wheat and planted about thirteen acres of corn. The grasshoppers came and damaged it, but I got sixty-four bushels of wheat and enough corn to feed.

"In 1875 I rented my land and moved to Neligh, leaving my dugout in very good shape; the settlers there used it as a schoolhouse, and on Sundays they had Sunday school and preaching in it.

"I proved up on my land in 1875, and in the spring of 1876 moved back to Independence, Iowa."

CHAPTER XIX

THE APRIL STORM CONTINUED — WILLIAM A. SHEPHERD'S STORY — THE LOCATING OF THE OLD SOLDIERS' COLONY — D. V. COE'S STORY

WILLIAM A. SHEPHERD, one of the early settlers of Cedar township, lived on the south bank of the west branch of Cedar Creek, on the south half of the northeast quarter of section 4. This west branch of the Cedar, unlike the main creek and the east branch, was devoid of timber, so that there were no groves to catch and retain the drifting snows, as there were in other places along the creek. Here, in the fall of 1872, Mr. Shepherd had built a little log house, which he finished up in good shape, having plastered up the cracks with clay so as to make it tight and warm. Mr. Shepherd was away most of the winter, and as the plastering was done late in the fall, freezing weather coming on had loosened it and much of it had fallen out, leaving the cracks open to some extent. Mr. Shepherd gives his experiences during the April storm as follows:

WILLIAM A. SHEPHERD'S STORY

"The April storm was very severe. The snow fall was considerable and the wind was terrific, but the weather was not very cold. I had not repaired the house, as I had lots of other work to do and supposed the winter was over. The snow drifted in through the open cracks and began to fill up the inside pretty fast. I had a scoop shovel, and with this I began to shovel up the snow on the inside of the house against the north wall until I had it banked clear up to the roof. This was packed solid and firm and made a complete wind break.

"I had not as yet built a stable, but had my two yoke of oxen tied to the wagon outside. The oxen soon became

coated with snow and ice and I thought it the best way to bring two of them into the house. The house was too small for myself, the bed and stove, and all the oxen, so I brought two of them inside, leaving the other two tied to the wagon. There was a kettle of oats on the stove that was cooking for the oxen, and as soon as they were inside the house one of the oxen made a dive for the oats. I grabbed the broom to drive him away, and he at once began to eat the broom; then he stuck his nose into a sack of flour. But at last I got them securely tied up. The storm growing worse, I thought the other oxen would be better off if turned loose to shift for themselves. Accordingly I untied them and let them go. One of them got through all right, but the other perished in a snowdrift. I had plenty of firewood and plenty of provisions, and so managed to get along all right myself, and of course the oxen that were in the house fared pretty well.

"Wednesday evening Will Wright and his father came to my house, bringing robes and blankets, and wanted to stay until the storm subsided. I told them, 'All right! If you can find a place to sleep.' They shoveled out some snow and got a place to curl down in one corner. They had begun to break prairie on Will Wright's claim, one and one-half miles west of mine. When the storm got bad they took their four oxen into their shanty, which was only eight by twelve feet. This, with two men and a stove, made it somewhat crowded and left the men no place to sleep; besides, as they were living on pancakes instead of bread, the ox hairs were too plentiful in the batter. So, as the drifting snow was not so bad by Wednesday evening, they concluded to pay me a visit. They thought my quarters very commodious and comfortable. By Thursday morning the wind had gone down a good deal and the snow had ceased to drift.

"We began to wonder how Al. Wolfe was getting along. A. H. Wolfe had a dugout just at the head of a ravine, across the creek from my house, and about a quarter of a mile away. We could see nothing of his dugout, and only

a snowdrift where it ought to be. Will Wright then went up to Ed. Palmer's and got another scoop shovel, and we all went over to Al.'s place to dig him out if necessary. It was just one big snowdrift all the way, and we could not even tell just where the creek was. It was all drifted over and packed as hard as ice, so that we never broke through once. We could tell by the lay of the land about where the dugout ought to be, and selecting what we thought the right place, began to dig. After going down about six feet, we found it too much work to throw the snow out, and so made a platform, or bench of snow, and one would throw the snow up to this, and the other would throw it out. After going down about twelve feet we struck the chip pile. We knew that the dugout was just west of this. So we began to drift in toward the door. Just then a gun was fired inside the dugout and we knew Al. was alive.

"When we got to the door and pushed it open Al. was standing up, but as soon as the fresh air struck him he fell to the ground. He had fired the gun because he had not strength enough to call. Much of the time had been a blank to him. He had lain down on the bed, and that was the last he knew until he heard us digging. He had fallen off the bed and come to himself again only just about the time we began to dig. Probably falling from the bed was what saved his life, as the air was not so foul near the ground as higher up. His face and head were considerably bruised and discolored, where he had lain against the ground. His dugout was very close and warm and admitted very little air even when not covered with snow. The snow, being so very compact and hard, had entirely shut out the air, which had become so foul and impure inside as to be unfit to breathe. He could walk with our assistance in a little while. We took him to my cabin, where he stayed three weeks before he was able to get out much. He never entirely recovered his health."

The following interesting narration of the locating of the Captain Miller colony in the southern part of Knox and the northern part of Antelope counties is given by

D. V. Coe, one of the early settlers in Ord township. Captain Jacob M. Miller and D. V. Coe both came from Buchanan County, Iowa, where they were acquainted.

D. V. COE'S STORY

"In the fall of 1871 Captain Miller, accompanied by his son John, came to my home in Ord township in a two-horse spring wagon. Captain Miller told me he had come out from Iowa to look up a location for a soldiers' colony, which would probably, in case they found a suitable location, grow to be a colony of a hundred families — that the colony then numbered about fifty families. He inquired of me if I knew of any such location where no claims had been taken and the land was good, adding that they all wanted to settle in a body. I thought over the matter until the following day. The best location I could think of was in the northern part of Antelope County. I had been over on the Verdigris and also on the Bazile and knew the lay of the land and quality of the soil. In going there I had followed the Indian trail from Hackberry Hollow near Jim Smith's, to Walnut Grove, and felt confident I could go direct from my place to the land that would suit his purpose. I finally agreed to go with him and locate his intended colony for two dollars per day and expenses. When my wife had cooked and baked what we supposed would be sufficient in the provision line, we started out.

"We struck a bee-line for the Big Springs at the head of the east branch of the Verdigris, in what is now Royal township. After looking over the land in that vicinity and north of there for some time, we finally camped on section 22 in the present township of Verdigris, on the land subsequently taken by Jacob H. Hockensmith. Leaving both the Millers in camp, I started afoot directly east, as near as I could tell, to hunt up a government corner. I went nearly a mile without seeing a corner or seeing any object to attract my attention. Finally, on stopping to look around, I saw a stake and mound probably half a mile away to the east. Supposing it to be a section corner,

I started for it with a view of reading the numbers on the stake so as to fix my exact location. When within a few rods of the mound I was surprised to see the corners of a red blanket sticking out from under the corners of the mound.

"When I got to the mound I did not know what it meant, still thinking it to be a government corner. I stooped over and pulled up one corner of the blanket and looked under it. The sight caused me to shudder. There, in a square hole, sat an old Indian with a red blanket wrapped around him and as 'dead as a door nail.' He had a ring about three inches in diameter in his nose and a ring in each ear, and moccasins on his feet. A red pipestone pipe, nicely finished but not bored out, and another pipe with stem unfinished lay in his lap. The hole wherein he was sitting was about three feet wide by four feet long and four feet deep. He faced the east and his head came within about twelve or eighteen inches of the surface of the ground. The skull was smashed in and at the time I supposed that was what had caused his death. The mound over the grave was about three feet high, with a pole at each end, one at the east and one at the west. Sticks were laid crosswise over the grave and over these a red blanket, and on these the earth from the grave was piled to make the mound. This grave was on section 23, in what is now Verdigris township. I left him without disturbing anything.

"Some years afterwards, in company with others, I visited this grave. The sticks had rotted and the mound had caved in. The skeleton was exhumed, and we found that he had been shot with three arrows — one had pierced the thigh bone in front and two had entered the backbone. The arrow heads had entered the bones about three quarters of an inch and were still sticking there. These arrow heads were not of flint, but were iron or steel, such as the Indians used in those days. The skeleton, the last I knew of it, was in the possession of a Neligh doctor, and the rings were kept by some Neligh parties. I learned soon after that

the Indian was a Ponca who had been killed just a few days before in a fight with the Sioux.

"After hunting around a while longer I found a corner stake with the numbers plainly marked. This gave a starting point. We followed the line north and finding land to suit began locating claims for the Miller colony."

CHAPTER XX

THE NARRATIVE OF ANDREW P. BENNETT, ENTITLED "AN OLD SETTLER'S EXPERIENCES IN THE EARLY DAYS IN ANTELOPE COUNTY," AS PUBLISHED IN THE ELGIN CLIPPINGS, 1889

ANDREW P. BENNETT was the first settler in what is now Logan township, and in all that part of the county, in fact. He wrote for the Elgin "Clippings," a newspaper published by Lafe Loper, in 1889, a series of articles entitled "An Old Settler's Experiences in the Early Days in Antelope County." These articles ran through fourteen numbers of the "Clippings," and are exceedingly interesting and instructive. In large part it is a personal narrative of his own experiences, but this narrative also describes in the minutest detail many things of general interest.

Mr. Bennett was a peculiar man. He was large of frame, rawboned, muscular, with a countenance indicating decision and strength of character. He was somewhat slow and deliberate, thoroughly honest and conscientious. He was of the disposition to make the best of everything and would stick to a thing and get along somehow, when many men would get discouraged and quit. When he came here in the fall of 1871, the land was all vacant west of Oakdale and the Cedar Creek settlement and south and west of Neligh. The Elkhorn valley northwest of Neligh, of course, was settled. He was urged by the Cedar Creek settlers, and especially by his brother, Jesse T. Bennett, to take land either in or near the Cedar Creek settlement, but "Uncle Andy," as he was called, was obdurate. He wanted not only a good quarter of land for himself, but he wanted it where all the surrounding quarters had rich soil and a smooth surface. Accordingly he went four miles beyond everybody and located on the northeast quarter of section 14, Logan township,

just a half-mile south of the present village of Elgin. Time has vindicated his decisiom. His brother Jesse was provoked and called him a lunatic and named the neighborhood where he located "Luna Valley." This name it retained for several years.

Such parts of the narrative of Andrew P. Bennett as are suitable for this history will be given here. The incidents that he relates and the personal experiences that he gives, with some variations, are applicable to scores of others of the early settlers. Such portions as are not applicable will be omitted, but no changes will be made in the phraseology. The quotations will be given verbatim, except where the writer gives a name of a settler in order to locate a tract of land, the numbers of the land will now be given. This is for the reason that in most cases the settler has moved away and in many instances the name even is forgotten.

THE NARRATIVE OF ANDREW P. BENNETT

"I resided in Ringgold County, Iowa, for a few years previous to coming here. Having a small farm with a six-hundred dollar mortgage on it, it seemed about all that I could do to pay the interest and keep up other expenses. My youngest brother was out here, having for his homestead the northwest quarter of section 9, Cedar township, three miles east of Elgin. He had written me of the good chances to get government land out here so I resolved to come and look. Accordingly my oldest brother from Michigan and my nephew, John Bennett, got a light spring wagon, they furnishing one horse and I one, and we prepared for the trip.

"On the 5th day of October, 1871, we set out on our journey to the 'far west.' We made fair progress on our journey till we arrived at Council Bluffs, where we crossed the Missouri River, and for the first time in our lives saw farms with growing crops on them without any fences around them, which looked very odd. Our first night's camping ground in Nebraska was by Old Man's Creek,

about twenty miles from Omaha; a night well remembered by our little party, for one of our horses took sick and died and we had no money to buy another and proceed on our trip. Some of the party were in favor of giving up the journey and going back home, but I said 'No, we are half way there or more and we can get the other half some way. We can fix a spring pole to hold up the wagon tongue and one horse can pull the load, by some of us walking up the hills, till we can find some man who will trade us a yoke of cattle for the other horse.' We commenced inquiring for a trade but could hear of no broken cattle being owned near where we were, but found a man having two pairs of young unbroken steers he would trade us; one pair two years old past, and one pair of one year olds past. We looked at them and told him if he would find timber to make yokes and bows and give a chain apiece we would take them. He said 'All right,' he would do it, and we found material in his wood-pile that would answer the purpose, so we went right to work and by noon the next day we had them completed, and in the afternoon yoked the cattle up and chased them around awhile.

"The next day, which was Sunday, we let them run in the yoke in the yard, and Monday morning we got the man we traded with to pull our wagon to the top of the hill, so we would have a tolerable level piece of road to start on. With a rope on each near steer and a man at each rope with a good gad in his hand, that left one to ride, at a time, to whip and hollow behind, we hitched on and commenced hollowing and whipping and the wheels began to roll, and twelve miles ahead found us at a good camping place at early camping time. We stopped, tied up and unyoked, fed our cattle and ourselves, and enjoyed a night's rest very well.

"On looking around our camp in the evening, it looked a little suspicious that there might be some coons living living around there, and having my old coon hound along, about four o'clock in the morning I got up and in company with the old hound, went to a cornfield near by, and the

hound was not long in finding the tracks of one, and soon he had it treed, within a hundred yards of our wagon. The old hound watched the tree, and the coon was kept from coming down till it got light enough to shoot. Meanwhile we got our breakfast, fed our cattle, and were ready to roll as soon as we got our coon. We rolled seventeen miles that day and from seventeen to twenty till we got through. By that time we had our cattle well broken to pull and to follow the road. Two of us could ride in the wagon considerable the second day, and after the third day, and we got a whip long enough to reach the lead cattle, we could all ride except when we wanted to turn out of the road or to stop; then one of us had to get to the lead cattle, whose rope we kept hanging on the yoke of the hind cattle.

"We got through all right and liked the country better than we had expected, and when we had concluded to take claims we found the cattle just what we would want to break prairie with. After looking over the land thoroughly and finding all the real nice land in Taylor valley north of here being in the Dakota land district and in town 23, the land office being at West Point, which was right on my way to Iowa, I resolved to take my home in town 23, range 7, the northeast quarter of section 14, just half a mile south of where Elgin now stands. We resolved to manifest our titles to our claims by putting an unmistakable mark on them, so we procured a yoke of old cattle to put behind our young steers, and a good large breaking plow, a lot of cottonwood edgings from the sawmill on the Elkhorn, three miles below where Oakdale now stands, for stakes to run a line by. We drove out, and setting a row of stakes a mile long, we started up our awkward young team to plow the first furrow that far west between the Elkhorn and the Beaver. With a driver to each yoke of cattle and one to watch the stakes and cattle and plow, and hollow 'Gee,' 'Haw,' etc., we went through the first half-mile and stopped to rest and take a backward look. When we did so, we pronounced it pretty

well done. We took courage and persevered until we had gone around the half section; the east half of 14, now owned by C. M. Seeley and A. J. Perry. (A. P. Bennett took the northeast quarter and J. H. Bennett the southeast quarter.) Night came on before we got around and got to our boarding-place, having to travel four miles for supper and lodging, mostly after dark, without the sign of a road anywhere; but we made it all right, the weather being fine.

"We then concluded if the weather continued favorable we would go out and break some sod and try our hands at building a sod house. Up to that time the weather had been nice ever since we had arrived here, only the nights were a little frosty, but as the ground was not frozen we thought we could work at our sod house. We little thought of seeing the worst snowstorm we had ever witnessed so soon, but most assuredly we did. It commenced with rain, then turned to snowing with the wind in the northwest, on Friday (about November 17) and never ceased until Sunday evening. In the gulches and on the sides of the hills that lay sloping to the southeast where the snow could lodge at all, there were great drifts. We gave up sod-house building until spring. We never saw our claims any more until about the next June."

CHAPTER XXI

CONTINUATION OF A. P. BENNETT'S NARRATIVE — FATALITIES OF THE NOVEMBER STORM OF 1871 — PARTICULARS OF THE BUFFALO HUNT

NOTE.— The narrative of Mr. Bennett in regard to the misfortune that befell David Cossairt has been slightly changed, for the reason that his information was incorrect in one or two particulars.

A. P. BENNETT'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED

"THOSE who were caught away from home any distance and attempted to go home in the storm either perished or were badly frozen. Mr. David Cossairt, living in St. Clair valley as it is now called, but was then known as the Blankenship settlement, was down to the steam saw-mill on the Elkhorn, a distance of about six miles, with his team, getting out saw-logs. He started home, little realizing while working in the timber how bad the storm was out on the prairie. He was told by some that it was dangerous for him to start home, but he thought that he could make it all right with an empty wagon. He got within a mile or two of home and dark came on. He got into a snowdrift and his horses got down and the snow was flying so thick that he could not see any distance, nor where he was, nor which way to go. So he took the harness off the horses and let them go to look out for themselves, and for himself found a place under a bank that gave some shelter from the wind. Here, with a quilt for a cover, he went into a snow camp for the night. But the dawn of day brought no relief; the storm was raging, if possible, worse and worse, and getting colder all the time, and another day and night had to be passed in that camp of snow and until late the next day before the storm ceased. His horses drifted with the wind and brought up at a neighbor's four or five miles away. He was badly frozen, hands

and feet, and had crawled out and was trying to find his way homeward when first discovered."

[NOTE. — He was rescued by A. C. Blankenship, who saw him wandering around on the prairie some distance away. He would have gotten home all right alone, but just after leaving his snow camp he was attacked with snow-blindness, so that he could not see his way. By careful and intelligent nursing he recovered. He got over his blindness in a day or two.]

"Two men living over near the head of Battle Creek (Madison County) perished in the same storm. Two brothers they were, and married to two sisters, each having a young babe near the same age. It so happened that less than two years after, I stayed all night at their father's and they were both there with their children, so I got the story from their own lips. Their statement of the facts I will relate.

"When it first commenced snowing the men, with a neighbor, thought it would be a good time to kill a deer in some of the brush thickets along the Battle Creek breaks, so they each took a blanket to wrap around them and their guns and set out for their hunt, perhaps as fearless of getting lost as a company would be to start out on a chicken hunt. But the storm increased in violence and the snow accumulated rapidly. They hunted until they got a deer and then started for home, as they thought, but night came on and no home was found. They then gave up that they were lost. They then traveled on for some time, but no signs of home. They became wearied and discouraged, and coming into the head of a narrow, steep gulch, where the wind did not seem to strike very hard, the two brothers declared they would go no farther. They argued that they each had a blanket, and they could kick a hole under the snow, wrap up in their blankets, and stand it until morning or till the storm ceased. The other man thought he would rather risk his life traveling, so he went on and left them. He studied the matter over and thought it was not near so hard walk-

ing to go straight with the wind, and several miles' travel in that direction would take him up to the settlement on Shell Creek. So he kept the course straight as he could and about four o'clock in the morning he found a house. The other two perished and their bodies were not found until the following spring when the snow melted away."

[NOTE.— The men who lost their lives were the Moon brothers; the man who was saved was James McMahan.]

After the storm was over Mr. Bennett went to Iowa, returning to Antelope County again in the spring of 1872, but without his family, as he had not been able to sell his farm in Ringgold County, Iowa. He built a combination house, half sod and half dugout, on his place, and leased thirty acres of ground in the northwest quarter, section 5, Cedar township, and put in a crop, and while cultivating corn in July took part in the buffalo hunt mentioned in Chapter II of this history. He thus, in his own quaint way, gives his experiences:

"The first settlers kept coming and going till but few of them are here to-day. But when we consider the hardships and privations that had to be endured, so far from market for produce and needed supplies, it is not so surprising that the more tender footed ones that couldn't stand traveling on hard roads should abandon their chances here and go back to Egypt. For my part I had been used to hard roads and hard times and expected it when I came here.

"We got our house so we could live in it before we commenced plowing corn, for we had to tend it in the old style — one-horse double-shovel plow, going two or three times in a row — and it being broke so late the sod was very tough and required considerable scratching. One day while we were out there plowing corn, in the fore part of July, 1872, we spied some strange looking animals coming toward us from the west. They were three in number — two large ones and one small one. They were about half a mile away, but feeding and walking straight toward us. They were in the valley or flat on the northeast

quarter, section 6, Cedar township, and we were on the height on the northwest quarter, section 5, and by driving a few rods farther over the slope of the hill we were out of sight, though they had not yet seemed to notice us. We stood where we could just peep over and watch them, and we soon discovered they were buffalo. They came straight toward us till they came near the plowed ground, and, strange to say, the two large ones turned south and the small one turned north and went out of our sight in that direction. The other two kept on walking and feeding until they had gone south about half a mile and then turned back west. We had no guns with us, but wanted some buffalo meat and consulted as to the best way to get it. I told my nephew (John Bennett) to watch them, but not go near to scare them, and I would go over east to Palmer's and get them to help us. So we threw the harness off our horses and I galloped away on one for help. After a two-mile ride I found both of the Palmers plowing corn. I told them that if they wanted some buffalo meat to throw the harness from their horses and get their guns in haste, as I had a man watching the buffalo.

"It was but a few minutes till we were galloping toward the battle-ground. Our watchman had got on the highest peak so he could watch for us and still keep in sight of the buffalo. When we came together the buffalo were over a mile ahead and still feeding west — going right toward where Elgin now stands. We consulted and planned for the attack. Two of us not having any guns with us, and not knowing how fast the buffalo could run when they were frightened, and each of us having a gun at the sod fort, we thought it best to go that way and get the guns and ride away around, get ahead of them, and attack them about the top of a hill a couple of miles or so southwest of Elgin. E. Palmer went around on the north side, A. Palmer and J. Bennett on the south side, and I followed in the rear with the greyhounds, so if they were likely to outrun our horses we would try the greyhounds to bother them. But when they raised the hill, E. Palmer wounded

both of them, breaking a foreleg of one above the knee. They kept their course, right on. The other two hunters got in ahead of them, but they had to shoot and fall back, for the buffalo followed them right up. After about twelve or fifteen shots they got them both down about a quarter of a mile apart, and they had them both dead before I got to them. It was a hot day, and while they took the entrails out and kept the flies away, I went home and got the wagon — something over two miles. I drove to the farthest one, took the hind wheels off, let the hind end down, pulled one animal in, pulling its neck up to the foregate, and then, putting up the wheels, rolled back to the other one and done the same way, pulling it in far enough to get the endgate in, put up the wheels, and rolled for the shanty. By the time we got there and got our buffaloes skinned it was night. We kept one and the Palmers one, and I hauled theirs right over while in the wagon. We cut the bone mostly out of ours, put it in brine for three days, and then hung it up in the back end of the sod shanty, hanging some quilts in front to darken and keep the flies out, keeping a little smoke in the daytime. When dried we thought it excellent. Both were males about three years old."

CHAPTER XXII

A. P. Bennett Continues His Narrative — Tells about the Antelope; the Grasshoppers; the April Storm; Hunting the Lost Ox; Crossing the Elkhorn on a Snowdrift

"THESE were the last of the buffalo family getting this far east, to my knowledge — July, 1872 — but that summer and the next antelope and deer were very abundant, and, in some instances, very tame. Antelope stood around on the heights, staring at us while at work, much of the time. One day while my nephew, Luty Bennett, was driving the breaking team, — our two yoke of young steers, with a horse on the lead, the ground being dry — we were breaking clear across the quarter east and west to and from the house. We had been to the west line and turned back, when here came an antelope, running along the side opposite to us, about seventy yards off. It would stop and stand looking until we got a piece ahead, then it would run up even; sometimes a little ahead. We kept quietly moving along till we got over half way through, when I told Luty to go to the house and get the needle gun and I would move slowly along with the team, and did so till he came up with the gun. We stopped the team — the antelope stopped also. I laid the muzzle of the gun on the plow rung, took aim at his heart, only seventy-five yards away, standing broadside to me, and fired, never touching it. The gun, being sighted for a long distance, overshot. So much the better for the antelope, but some disappointment to the plowman. However, it was an advanced lesson in antelope hunting; but plenty as they were we didn't get much of their meat. But we got about thirty acres broken on our claims.

"Just about that time the grasshoppers began to light down, and like the falling of large snowflakes they con-

tinued to drop until the earth seemed literally covered. There could be no place found where they were not, and in twenty-four hours every stalk of corn, potatoes, cabbage, turnips, beets, beans, melons, and pumpkin vines were all destroyed. Watermelon vines were eaten so clean we could scarcely find enough stem to the vine to tell where the hill was. Our small grain was quite good, and as we had it in the shock they did not damage it at all. It was too ripe and dry for them — they liked something green and tender. They would not even feed on prairie grass if they could find something that suited them better. They would keep flying low and hunting till they got what they wanted, and got well rested, then in from three to five days, when the wind got to blowing the direction they desired to go, they would rise and fly away, generally going south."

The following is a part of Mr. Bennett's description of the April storm:

"It began with rain on Easter Sunday toward evening, April 13, 1873. It found the settlers poorly prepared for such severe weather, and not suspecting a bad storm so late in the spring, all the stable we had was a twelve-foot space cut out of the east side of our straw pile, some forks stuck up and poles laid into them, then poles and brush laid on and covered over with straw; the front banked up part way only. My nephew had a team of horses and I had two yoke of oxen, a cow, and a calf. The cattle were running loose to the hay stack.

"By Monday morning the snow was flying about as thick as it could, apparently. It had swirled into our stable until the horses stood belly deep in the snow, and the cattle had all left the haystack, come to the stable, and crowded in among the horses. We took the cow, horses, calf, and chickens into the sod house, thinking the oxen would stand it all right in the stable, little dreaming the storm would last so long and get so terrible bad as it did; therefore, it was toward evening before we went out to look after them. Starting in the direction of the stable,

which was nearly northwest from the house, we had to face the storm, and by the time we would get a couple of rods from the house we could not see it, and did not dare to go farther for fear of getting lost. Having a lot of poles we had hauled up for wood — three or four inches thick and ten or twelve feet long — we concluded to try a row for a guide. So one of us stood by the house, and the other took a pole and went as far as he could and still see the house, stuck the pole upright in the snow, and then went ahead as far as he could see back to that one and stuck another, and kept on doing so till we found the stable; taking six poles, I believe. On arriving at the stable we found it chuck full, of snow and the oxen buried in it. We happened to have a shovel and a spade both handy, and the snow, being damp, packed hard enough so that we could cut it out in chunks as large as a man could lift and tumble out of the way. We soon opened a channel into where the cattle were, and then consulted a little as to what was best to do with them to save them, as it was evident we had to get them out or lose them, as there were no signs of the storm ceasing, but it was if possible getting worse.

"My nephew thought we had better take them into the house, but I could not see how we could get along with them all in the house. Our doorway being in the east end, near the south side, the wall being four feet thick, the door large and hung near the inside, made room for two of them to stand quite well sheltered from the wind and storm, so I led them to the house, one by one, along the stake row, and gave them a good feed of corn, having just before the storm hauled a load from down toward Norfolk. They crowded up close together and seemed to stand tolerable quiet and comfortable, as it was not very cold. We thought that, or rather hoped, the storm would cease before morning. One of us had to stay up all night and keep the lamp burning, to keep what animals we had in there quiet, and to keep up a fire to melt the fine, sifting snow that was constantly being driven by the wind through the crevices of our slab roof, and to dry away the water,

and each took our turn standing guard till daylight appeared.

"This was Tuesday morning, and upon stepping out into the wind, a man could scarcely stand or keep his breath; and his eyes, in a moment, would be filled with snow so he could not see any distance at all, and the wind got around more into the north and was very cold. It had driven my oxen around south of the house, and one of them was gone, the other three were shivering with cold and were very uneasy. I could now see no way to save them but to take them into the ark, and they didn't need any driving,— only to show them an open door; they went in as freely as did the animals into Noah's ark. We drove pegs into the wall to tie to, and kept them as quiet as we could for twenty-seven hours longer. This was Wednesday morning and the wind had lowered and the storm ceased so we could see the surrounding valley, but the wind was cold and the snow, being damp and compressed by the wind, then frozen solid, made it like ice, so that man or beast could walk on it with safety, no matter how deep it was."

Mr. Bennett next proceeds to relate his experience in hunting for his lost ox. He started out on Thursday morning and hunted all day without finding him, or hearing anything of him, and stopped over night with Jim Stanton in Rae valley. He then continues the narrative thus:

"Friday morning the sun rose bright and clear and it was a very warm day. Soon after we got our morning refreshment I set out again on my ox hunt. I thought I would go back two or three miles farther east than I came over, so I started eastward, passing near where Petersburg now is; sun shining very warm. When I reached the summit of the Beaver divide I came to a pile of sod about two feet high, and each way I could see more right along the highest points of the divide. I followed it southeast to where it turns down a point toward the Beaver valley, then changed my course and steered for the Cedar settlement right across the hills; sometimes on

bare ground, for by this time the hot sun had melted away the thin places of snow. I came up on a ridge from where I could see down into a ravine ahead, and I saw two deer feeding in a place where the snow had melted away and the green grass had started before the storm. I pointed toward them and hissed the dogs a little, and they saw them and went for them, getting tolerably close before they saw the dogs coming.

"They did not go far till the dogs stopped one of them, and when I got there the greyhound had it by the throat and the shepherd dog by the nose. I took out my pocket-knife and was going to cut its throat, when it made a flounce, striking the shepherd dog with its front feet and knocking him loose, and started to run, with the greyhound hanging to its throat. It did not get very far till it was anchored again, and when I got to it that time the shepherd dog had it by the ear. I caught it by both hind legs and threw it, holding to one leg with one hand, my knee across its neck, and both dogs holding fast. With my other hand I took out my knife, cut its throat, and when it was dead, dressed it in good order, dug a cave in a snow-drift, buried the meat and hide in it, and then traveled on for the settlement. About dark I found my way to William Duncan's on Cedar Creek, both tired and hungry. There I heard of my lost ox. He had got back to my brother's, where he had been wintered, the evening the storm ceased, so weak he could walk only a few rods without resting.

"Now comes the most remarkable part of my story, yet it is true. To tell you that a snowstorm in the middle of April filled the Elkhorn River so much above the banks that it could not be told where the river was, and that solid enough to drive horses and wagons over, and no ice underneath either, is a hard story, but true. David Duncan, brother of William Duncan, stayed over night at Mr. Duncan's the same night I got there on my ox hunt, and he told me he crossed that day not far from where Neligh now is, with horses and wagons, and could not tell where

the river was. Saturday being another nice, warm day, I led my ox to the sod mansion. In the afternoon we got our horses and went after our venison. The snowdrifts were getting so soft we were afraid to try the wagon. On the way we saw quite a large drove of antelope. The wolves had not disturbed our meat. As the snow melted we found lots of dead prairie chickens, meadow larks, and spring birds that had perished in the storm. Also cattle and horses perished; some in stables and some out."

[NOTE.— Mr. Bennett seems to fear that his account of the crossing of the Elkhorn with a team on a snowdrift might be doubted. This fact was, however, well known to many old settlers. The place where Mr. Duncan crossed was on section 34, Neligh township. Other parties are said to have crossed the Elkhorn on a snowdrift near the Yellow Banks in Madison County. Mr. C. H. Frady, Sunday school missionary, also states that he crossed the Elkhorn on a snowdrift, on foot, in the Hopkins settlement, the same year, and that the snow was so solid he could easily have driven over it with his team. The writer also conversed with Mr. Duncan and got the facts from him personally.]

CHAPTER XXIII

A Chapter of Incidents.

Note.— The incidents related in this chapter are perhaps not very important, but they are interesting and illustrate the olden times perhaps better than can be done in any other way. These few are selected from a large number on file.

THE following is taken from the West Point "Republican" of June 17, 1873:

THE FISH QUESTION

"Thus discourseth the Lincoln 'Journal' upon the accident which let thirty thousand dollars' worth of fish, great and small, into the waters of the winding Elkhorn.

"A car of little fishes collected in the east at a cost of $30,000 was precipitated into the Elkhorn River by the Sunday accident. The oysters were fished out and roasted by the wrecked passengers. The tautogs will not survive, but there is a large assortment of escaped swimmers that will live and flourish. We suggest to those fish a trip down the Platte and up Salt Creek. We can give them a little brine, and cool shady retreats, and if a few county bonds would be an inducement we'll vote some. We should like to see the mighty shad, and the salty cod, the silver eel, and the Massachusetts cat, sporting in the depths of our tawny river."

Some time in the early seventies, probably in 1872, the legislature of California made an appropriation to be expended by the state agricultural society to stock the waters of that state with choice varieties of fish of such kinds as were not then found in California. Accordingly, a carload, consisting of three hundred thousand in number, was purchased from Seth Green, the famous fish breeder of New York. These consisted of such varieties as the tautog, the black bass, the striped bass, the perch, the wall-eyed pike, the silver eel, oysters, lobsters, and trout. The

car was in charge of Livingstone Stone, Assistant United States Fish Commissioner. The bridge over the Elkhorn was weakened from the great flood that followed the April storm of 1873, and when the train drawing this car was crossing the bridge a trestle gave way and the car containing the fish was precipitated into the Elkhorn, breaking the car to pieces and liberating the fish to our advantage and at California's expense.

The first settlers found the Elkhorn stocked with such varieties of fish as pickerel, catfish, two or three kinds of suckers, buffalo fish, bull-head, sun-fish, and possibly some other varieties. This accident added to the waters of the Elkhorn the black bass, silver eel, perch, and wall-eyed pike, and possibly one or two other kinds. The trout did not survive, and recent efforts to plant trout in the Elkhorn have not been successful.

In an early day, before the native groves along the Elkhorn and its tributaries had been stripped of their best timbers, a very fine grove of cottonwood saw timber was standing on the south half of section 20, of Neligh township, adjacent to what is now the city of Neligh. This was one of the best groves anywhere along the river. It was on state land, and, as stated in Chapter VI, timber found on state or government land was in those days considered common property. A party of nine men from St. Clair valley and vicinity, consisting of Peter S. Ballatt, Jonas J. Irish, Orson Fields, Orville Fields, W. W. Wilkinson, N. P. Bliss, Sidney Frink, J. H. Eickhoff, and Peter T. Wilkinson, arranged to cut this timber, believing that they could form it into rafts and easily float it down the Elkhorn to Bennett's saw-mill. Mr. Bennett agreed to do the sawing for one half the lumber, and money being a scarce article in those days, it was thought that each one of the party would come into possession of a nice lot of lumber without expending and money. W. W. Wilkinson and N. P. Bliss were to do the team work, and the others were to cut the logs.

About July 1, 1871, they had the logs all cut and ready

to float, but being about out of rations they arranged to go home, attend the fourth of July celebration to be held on section 7, Burnett township, and return with supplies on the 5th. On their return the river had fallen about eighteen inches, and was still going down. Rafting was impossible. They therefore determined to float the logs down singly, using the teams when necessary to roll them off the sand bars. On reaching the mill, which was done after a vast amount of labor, Mr. Bennett declined to saw the logs on account of the great amount of sand lodged in the bark, which he claimed would ruin his saw. Finally, however, it was agreed that the owners should remove the bark from the logs, and for this labor they should be entitled to the slabs. To this all agreed except J. J. Irish, who declared he didn't want any slabs, The others barked the logs, the sawing was done, and each one of the nine men received two wagon loads of good lumber for his share, and eight of the party received each his share of slabs besides.

The prairie fire of October 15, 1878, was the most destructive fire ever known in the history of the county. The village of Neligh was barely saved from being wiped out, and only by the most strenuous efforts on the part of its citizens. In some neighborhoods nearly every one lost something in the fire, either hay, grain, buildings, or stock. Gildon Donner of Taylor Valley, where the fire was especially destructive, lost his house, bedding, clothing, stable, and grain.

The "Pen and Plow" of October 19, four days after the fire, had the following: "A Christian has turned up in Antelope County, one of the born again sort, with a halo around his head. His name is Potter, and he sojourns until life's fitful fever is o'er on Antelope Creek. He was offered since the fire eight dollars cash per ton for his hay, but he declined, and let a burnt-out neighbor have it for three dollars per ton. We feel lonesome. Send him up here that we may bless him, may weep over him, and press him to these palpitating bosoms." The old settlers will

recognize the foregoing quotations as very characteristic of the editor of the "Pen and Plow."

Jacob Isele came to Antelope County in 1872 from Fort Dodge, Iowa, by the way of Sioux City, bringing along with him a woman, with whom he was living and whom he intended to marry at Sioux City. However, on arriving at Sioux City the weather was cloudy and thinking that a bad omen, put off the intended marriage. For some unknown reason he also failed to get married on arriving at Dakota City. He brought along with him quite a number of cattle and located in Clearwater township, on a homestead. In the spring of 1873, he lost part of his cattle in the April storm, they all having drifted over to Beaver Creek, and only part of them could be found again. In June, 1874, Isele and his woman came to M. A. DeCamp's house, DeCamp being then a justice of the peace, and asked to be married, but had no money to pay for the ceremony. They were duly united in wedlock, and Justice DeCamp received for the job three bushels of millet seed as pay.

In the early days, probably in 1871, but the date is not certain, four families, consisting of fourteen persons, all lived for a time in a log house, sixteen by twenty-four feet, located on the northwest corner of section 22, Neligh township, and did not quarrel. They were: Emmet B. Gillett, his wife and son Willie; Henry Trowbridge, his wife and children, Albert, Mary, and George; Stephen Hills, his wife and children, George and Retta; John H. Crawford and his wife.

Marshal Dugar settled on section 14, Neligh township. He used to spend his winters, for a number of years, in burning charcoal. This he sold in part to the blacksmiths and tinners of Antelope County, but hauled the most of it to some market point on the railroad. He burned charcoal for several years on what is now Riverside Park, adjacent to the city of Neligh.

In the winter of 1874-75 there was great destitution in some neighborhoods, especially where the country had been settled only a year or so. Willow Creek was settled in the fall of 1872, and of course the settlers in 1873 raised sod crops only. In 1874 the grasshoppers destroyed everything they raised and left the settlers without much to live on. John Hunt was appointed by the board of commissioners to look after the Willow Creek settlement, together with his own neighborhood, which was in somewhat better shape. Mr. Hunt on his first trip to the Willow called at the first house he came to and making known his business, asked if they were in need of any supplies of any kind, saying, "There are provisions and clothing on hand ready for distribution." The lady informed him that "We are not hungry, and when we are we will let you know," and shut the door in his face. However, before spring, she came with her husband and, apologizing for her rudeness, declared she was hungry, and asked for aid.

In the spring of 1877, while the Ponca Indians were *enroute* from their old home on Ponca Creek to the Indian Territory, in charge of an agent, they stopped for several days in camp near Neligh on account of rainy weather and the bad state of the roads. While there an Indian child died and was buried in Neligh cemetery. The agent employed Stephen Hills to make a cross of oak lumber to place at the head of the grave. On this cross was placed the following inscription:

"White Buffalo Girl, died May 23, 1877, aged 18 months, daughter of Black Elk and Moon Hawk, of the Ponca Indian Tribe *enroute* to their new home."

At the grave the father made the following address, speaking in his own tongue, which was interpreted to the audience: "I want the whites to respect the grave of my child just as they do the graves of their own dead. The Indians do not like to leave the graves of their ancestors, but we had to move and hope it will be for the best. I leave the grave in your care. I may never see it again. Care for it for me." The mother was not present.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECOND GENERAL ELECTION — OAKDALE SURVEYED AND PLATTED — NELIGH SURVEYED AND PLATTED — THE COUNTY SEAT LOCATED — BUILDING OF THE OAKDALE AND NELIGH FLOURING MILLS

WHEN the first general election was held in the county after its organization, the question of the location of the county seat should have been submitted to the voters. This election occurred in October, 1871, but the question of the location of the county seat was not considered at that time. It is probable that few if any of the voters of the county at that time knew of the provisions of the statute, requiring that the question of the location of the county seat should be submitted to the voters at the first general election after the organization. As mentioned, in Chapter IX, there was not a copy of the statutes of Nebraska in the county, and the county officials were acting solely on their own judgment. Very fortunately they did not go far wrong. Besides, the question of the location of the county seat had hardly been talked about at that time, and there had been no place suggested as suitable.

The second general election occurred in October, 1872. There were three county officers to be elected at this time, namely: commissioner for the 3d district, county treasurer, and surveyor. Robert Marwood had held the office of county treasurer for one year, and George H. McGee that of surveyor. Both had been elected in 1871 for two years, but failing to qualify in time, they had held their positions by appointment. At this election in October, 1872, Zebulon Buoy was re-elected commissioner of the 3d district. Mr. Marwood, whose work as county treasurer had been very satisfactory to the people, absolutely declined a renomination as treasurer, and J. M. Callison was elected

to fill the vacancy. It was a poor trade for the county when this exchange was made. George H. McGee was re-elected surveyor to fill the vacancy. The location of the county seat was also submitted to the voters at this election.

Prior to this, however, the Omaha & Northwestern Railroad had received from the state of Nebraska a grant of Internal Improvement lands for building their road from Omaha north to Tekamah, in Burt County. About thirty-two thousand acres of these Internal Improvement lands lay in Antelope County, being on both sides of the Elkhorn River, and extending up the valley from the county line on the east to a point about five miles above Neligh. Two separate parties purchased some of these lands with the intention of laying out townsites and of getting the county seat.

In the early part of the year 1872 Mr. I. N. Taylor, of Columbus, Nebraska, who was also at that time a member of the state board of immigration, with his office in Omaha, made a visit to the Elkhorn valley and looked over these lands, and on his return made a report to others interested. He recommended the northeast quarter, section 11, and the northwest quarter, section 12, in what is now Oakdale township, as a suitable location for a townsite, Accordingly five men, namely: Chas. F. Walther, F. W. Hohman, Frank M. Jenks, I. N. Taylor, and John Rath, purchased these lands of the Omaha & Northwestern Railroad Co., and proceeded to lay out the townsite of Oakdale. The townsite was surveyed and platted by J. G. Routson, county surveyor of Platte County in July, 1872, assisted by I. N. Taylor, and the survey was certified to by I. N. Taylor. The plat was filed with the county clerk, August 28, 1872.

The name "Oakdale" came about in this way. In Chapter VIII it is related how the settlers met at J. H. Snider's and petitioned the legislature to organize the county of "Oakland," and why it came to be named Antelope instead. Mr. Taylor, having heard of this, intended to name the town-

site Oakland, but finding that there was already a post-office in the state by that name, he named his townsite Oakdale.

The townsite of Oakdale as originally platted contained a good mill site, and this was sold the following winter to R. G. King of West Point, Nebraska, together with the west half of the townsite, Mr. King also contracting to improve the water-power and erect a flouring mill. The steam saw-mill, before referred to, which had been running for about a year and a half at Judge Snider's, was moved over to Oakdale, a large quantity of oak and cottonwood saw logs having been delivered in anticipation of its coming. Thus the town of Oakdale was started. The following is taken from a manuscript of Mr. Lambert as to the way in which the town of Neligh was started.

"A party of four men from West Point attended district court at Norfolk in August, 1872. The party was composed of John D. Neligh, John B. Thompson, Allen D. Beemer, and Niels Larsen. After the adjournment of the court they concluded to take a trip up the Elkhorn to view the country, as none of them had ever been up the river farther west than Norfolk. They left Norfolk and traveled west as far as the French settlement in Antelope county. After crossing the Belmer Ravine, on their way up, they were all so favorably struck with the lay of the land for the purpose of a townsite that on their return they stopped and gave the place a thorough examination, in company with D. V. Coe, Alexander Belmer, and others, and also took into consideration the feasibility of damming the river, and the amount of water-power that could be obtained. On examination, everything proving satisfactory, they determined on their return to West Point to purchase the land, lay out a town, erect a flouring mill, and also open up a store of general merchandise. After canvassing the matter with rather unsatisfactory results, Mr. Neligh determined to go to Omaha and purchase the land of the Omaha and Northwestern Railroad Company. On Mr. Neligh's arrival in Omaha he found the company had the very tract of land he proposed buying marked out as a townsite on

their plats and that it was reserved from sale. After examining their plats under pretense of buying, with apparently no particular tract in view, he succeeded in having the numbers inserted in the contract under which he bought the present site of the town. Mr. Kountze, the vice-president of the road, before signing the contracts in duplicate, made particular inquiry as to whether it embraced the tract they had reserved as a townsite, and being assured by a careless clerk that it did not, he affixed his signature to the contracts, and Mr. Neligh came out victorious."

The land thus purchased by Mr. Neligh embraced the south half, of the southeast quarter, and the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter, section 17; the northeast quarter and east half of the northwest quarter, section 20; and the northwest quarter of section 21, in what is now Neligh township and includes the present city of Neligh. This purchase was made October 4th, and as the election was to be held October 8th, Mr. Neligh hurried back to West Point, and the next morning sent Anton Psota,a young Bohemian in his employ, with a letter addressed to Judge Coe, notifying him that he had bought this land and that he intended to lay out a town, and erect a saw-mill and grist-mill thereon as soon as possible. He asked Judge Coe to confer with L. A. Boyd and others and to use their best endeavors at the coming election to have the county seat located on the northeast quarter of section 20. Unfortunately young Psota, who could scarcely speak English at all, lost his way and did not reach Judge Coe's until noon on the day of the election.

The county seat was located at Oakdale by a large majority, considering the number of votes cast, but as the returns were burned with other records at the burning of the court-house three years later the result cannot now be given. There are those, however, who think that if this information had reached the voters in time the result would have been in favor of the northeast quarter of section 20. This view is probably incorrect, as at that time the

country tributary to Oakdale had more settlers than that around Neligh.

A memorandum found among Mr. Lambert's papers states that the townsite of Neligh was surveyed and platted by Niels Larsen, county surveyor of Cuming County, in February, 1873, and Charles E. Fields' "History of Neligh," published in 1880, makes the same statement. However, Mr. McGee, who was well conversant with the facts, thinks that Niels Larsen came up to do the surveying about December 1, 1872, and that he was stopped by the inclemency of the weather. Mr. Larsen did not complete the work. The final survey was made by George H. McGee in July, 1875, and the plat filed September 30th of that year. However, Larsen had done enough work so that some of the lots could be located and offered for sale. The town was not named until the summer of 1873, when it was called "Neligh," at the suggestion of William B. Lambert.

Mr. Neligh arranged in the summer of 1873 for the building of a brick flouring mill, and with this in view contracted with John H. Crawford to burn the brick. He also built a frame dam across the Elkhorn River and put in the machinery for a saw-mill and began to saw cottonwood lumber. The financial panic of 1873 coming on, Mr. Neligh was unable to proceed with his plans. He therefore sold the unfinished flouring mill, the saw-mill with all the machinery and material, to William B. Lambert and William C. Gallaway.

Both Oakdale and Neligh continued to develop rapidly. In the fall of 1873 the Oakdale flouring mill began running, and the Neligh mill commenced to grind in September, 1874. These two mills were appreciated by the settlers. They were the greatest convenience, without exception, that they had known up to this time. There were no mills west or south of these for several years. Their customers came fifty miles or more from these directions. Both mills also did a large business with the cattle ranches at the head of the Elkhorn and on the Niobrara, shipping hundreds of wagon loads of flour and feed to these points, and also to the Black Hills mining country.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DEATH OF WILLIAM P. CLARK, COUNTY COMMISSIONER — A. WARNER APPOINTED TO FILL VACANCY — ELECTION OF OCTOBER, 1873 — DEATH OF B. C. PALMER, COUNTY TREASURER — ELECTION OF OCTOBER, 1874 — TAYLOR PRECINCT ESTABLISHED — VALLEY PRECINCT — THE COUNTY REDISTRICTED INTO FIVE DISTRICTS — ELECTION OF OCTOBER, 1875 — CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION — FIRST BRIDGE OVER THE ELKHORN — OTHER BRIDGES BUILT

ON the 24th of May, 1873, William P. Clark, county commissioner from the first district, lost his life while returning home from Oakdale. The water in the Elkhorn was still very high from the effects of the flood that followed the April storm. There were no bridges as yet over the Elkhorn and the river had not been fordable for five or six weeks. Mr. Clark had kept a boat for crossing the river in making his trips to and from Oakdale. He came over on the morning of May 24 to Oakdale, leaving his skiff at the south bank of the river until his return. Having transacted his business, he started for home, carrying some small packages in his hand. Before reaching the bank of the river, where his boat had been left, he had to cross a slough through which some of the overflow water from the river was running. The wagon road also crossed this slough at a place where the water was shallow. Here Mr. Clark had taken off his shoes and stockings to wade the slough at the shallow crossing, but in some way got into the deep water and was drowned. When found, he was in the edge of the deep water, but only a few feet from the road, still grasping, in his hands the packages and shoes. The slough is still called by his name, Clark's slough. There is something strange about it, as it was very plain to see where the road crossed the slough, and Mr. Clark was very familiar with the road and had crossed in safety in the morning. He might have had a paralytic

stroke or a fainting fit just at the moment when he was wading the shallow water and in his struggles had gotten into the deeper part. The proper authorities at once appointed A. Warner to fill the vacancy on the county board caused by Mr. Clark's tragic death.

In March, 1873, A. J. Leach, county superintendent of schools, resigned and the board appointed B. C. Palmer to the office to fill the vacancy.

At the general election in the fall of 1873 the following county ticket was elected:

Clerk, W. W. Putney.
Treasurer, B. C. Palmer.
Judge, D. V. Coe.
Sheriff, Jeptha Hopkins.
County Superintendent, J. E. Lowes.
Surveyor, George H. McGee.
Coroner, J. C. Bradeen.
Commissioner 1st District, A. Warner.

These officers-elect all qualified, but all did not serve out the full term for which they were elected. B. C. Palmer, county treasurer, died in the fore part of November, 1874, and M. S. Bartlett, the publisher of the Oakdale "Journal," was appointed, November 17, to fill the vacancy occasioned by Mr. Palmer's death. J. E. Lowes, county superintendent, resigned and Robert Wilson was appointed to fill that office November 24, 1874, and R. G. King was appointed county judge May 26, 1875, in place of D. V. Coe, who was absent from the county.

At the October election in 1874 only one county office had to be filled. L. A. Boyd's term of office, as county commissioner for district No. 2, expired, and S. S. King was elected to that position.

At a meeting of the county board September 1, 1874, a new precinct was established, called Taylor precinct, consisting of the southern part of Center precinct and being twelve miles long north and south and eight miles wide east and west. Some time prior to this last date a precinct called Valley had been formed out of the northern

parts of Twin Grove and Center precincts, but owing to the grasshopper raids it was nearly or quite depopulated, and on September 6, 1875, was discontinued by an order of the county board, the territory comprising it going back to the precincts from which it had been taken.[1]

On the 6th of July, 1876, the county board reorganized the county into five precincts as follows: Twin Grove, Elm Grove, Cedar, Center, and Mills. Twin Grove and Elm Grove precincts occupied the eastern third of the county, the division line between them being a zigzag line following as near as practicable the course of the Elkhorn River. All south of this line was known as Twin Grove, and all north as Elm Grove. Cedar and Center precincts constituted the middle third of the county, the division line between them being the north line of township 24, Cedar lying south, and Center north of this line. Mills precinct was left the same as before, being the west third of the county.

At the general election held October 13, 1875, the following ticket was elected:

Clerk, Robert Wilson.
Treasurer, M. S. Bartlett.
Sheriff, Jeptha Hopkins.
County Superintendent, H. J. Miller.
County Judge, Wm. Lawrence.
Coroner, H. M. Cox.
Commissioner, 3d District, Robert Marwood.

At this election also a vote was taken throughout the state upon the adoption of the new state constitution. The vote in Antelope County resulted as follows: For the adoption of the constitution, 235; against the adoption of the constitution, 8.

Reuben C. Eldridge represented Antelope County in the constitutional convention which completed its work on the 12th day of June, 1875. The result of the vote in

[1] The record showing the formation of Valley precinct was destroyed by fire at the burning of the court-house, but the record showing when it was discontinued is clear.

the state on the adoption of the constitution was as follows: For adoption, 30,202; against adoption, 5,474.

The county officials who were elected at this October election all qualified and served the full term for which they were elected, with the exception of H. M. Cox, who failed to qualify as coroner, and April 29, 1876, the board appointed E. M. Blackford to that position.

Prior to the summer of 1875 there was no bridge over the Elkhorn River anywhere in Antelope County. The small streams in the county had been bridged on all the principal roads throughout the most thickly settled parts, but the bridging of the Elkhorn was a big undertaking for a new community that was already in debt for a set of county books and for the regular expenses to keep the county business in running order. A petition was presented to the county board June 2, 1874, asking for a special election in Twin Grove precinct to vote bonds to the amount of four thousand dollars for the purpose of building a bridge at Snider's ford, in said precinct. The petition was granted and the election called for the 15th of July, 1874; the bonds were voted, but were never issued. The county board, having some doubt about the legality of the transaction, submitted the question on the 25th of July to E. A. Gerrard, of Columbus, attorney for the board of commissioners. Mr. Gerrard rendered an adverse opinion and the project had to be given up. On February 16, 1875, a special election was held, by order of the county board, to vote bonds for the construction of bridges at three different places across the Elkhorn River. These bonds were defeated by a majority of 157 votes.

The latter part of February, 1875, the citizens of Neligh held a meeting and decided to bridge the Elkhorn at that place, the funds to be obtained by subscriptions of labor, money, and material. A subscription was at once started and about everybody in Neligh and vicinity signed it. The following quotation is from a memorandum found among Mr. Lambert's papers: "After a sufficient subscription had been obtained to justify the commencement

of the enterprise, W. C. Gallaway and Company drove the piling while the ice was yet on the river, and quite a large amount of work was done by several parties who subscribed, when the work came to a halt, owing to the funds being exhausted. In July following W. C. Gallaway and Company finished the work at their own expense. This was the first bridge erected across the Elkhorn River in Antelope County, being also the first one west of Norfolk." This bridge was made entirely of home material and without cost to the county.

On the 6th of January, 1876, R. G. King and others filed a petition with the county board for a bridge across the Elkhorn at Snider's ford, in Twin Grove precinct. Snider's ford was near the south line of the southeast quarter of section 6, in Burnett township. The petition was granted, the board providing that three fourths of the road levy in road districts Nos. 1 and 2, for the years 1874 and 1875, could be used for that purpose. The work of building the bridge was to be left to the oversight of the road supervisors of these districts. The board also granted aid from the county to the amount of two hundred and fifty dollars with a proviso that the warrants should not be expended for less than seventy-five cents on the dollar. The remaining expense for building the bridge was to be paid by private subscriptions. The piling for this bridge was all hauled from the pine timber found along the banks of Long Pine Creek, in what is now Brown County, Nebraska. The other timbers and the plank were cut from the timber growing along the Elkhorn and Cedar creek.

In October, 1881, a bridge was completed over the Elkhorn on the county line between Antelope and Madison counties, Antelope County bearing four hundred dollars of the expense. On June 18, 1883, the committee on bridges reported that the iron bridge across the Elkhorn, on road 48, near Clearwater, had been completed according to contract, and the bridge was accordingly accepted. Thus bridges had been built over the Elkhorn in four of the most convenient places in the county, but it took almost thirteen years from the first settlement of the county to accomplish it.

CHAPTER XXVI

The County Seat War

As was related in Chapter XXIV, the county seat was located at Oakdale at the general election held in October, 1872. The legality of this election was doubted by many, who took the view that since the county seat should have been located at the first general election held after the organization of the county, which election was held in October, 1871, and as this was not done, but went over by default, the county board had no right to order an election for the location of the county seat except upon the petition of the voters. The county board did, however, order that the question of locating the county seat should be voted upon at the election held October, 1872, without any petition being presented. It was also held by some of those who wanted the county seat at Neligh that there were other informalities or irregularities attending the election of 1872 that would render the location of the county seat at Oakdale of doubtful validity. Accordingly, on the 1st of September, 1874, a petition, signed by D. V. Coe and two hundred fifteen others, was presented to the board of commissioners praying for an election to locate the county seat. This petition was granted and the election held. The friends of Neligh voted for the location of the county seat on the northeast quarter of section 20, township 25, range 6 west. This quarter section was named in the petition because as yet Neligh had not been fully surveyed and platted, nor had any plat been filed. Those favoring Oakdale did not vote at all.

Immediately after the election and before the votes were canvassed, the friends of Oakdale procured the following injunction:

"Upon presentation of the within petition, and after

reading the same, and it appearing that there is a probable cause therefor, a temporary injunction is allowed, restraining said defendant board of county commissioners from doing any other act or thing in furtherance of said county seat election, except upon and after a petition signed by twothirds of the voters of said county is presented to them for action, on giving bonds for one thousand dollars with approved security.

"SAMUEL MAXWELL, Judge.

"October 10, 1874."

This was the beginning of the county seat war, a war that lasted until the special county seat election of October 2, 1883, when the county capital was finally removed to Neligh.

There was no politics in this county seat fight. Men still continued to vote the party ticket for President and members of Congress, also for state officers and for members of the state legislature. For all the county offices, however, no questions were asked as to a candidate's politics. "Is he a Neligh man or is he for Oakdale?" The answer to this question nearly always decided the matter for the voter.

This county seat question was always a burning, living issue. It was always with us. It might quiet down for a time, but it would break out again and rage as violently as our Nebraska blizzards in the early days. Oakdale had the county seat and meant to keep it. Neligh wanted it — knew she would get it sometime, and felt as if she could not wait for that time to come. Both towns reserved a block for the county buildings, and a little frame court-house had been built in the spring of 1874, on Court House Square, in Oakdale, at a cost to the county of seven hundred and fifty dollars. The county seat question quieted down after this for a while, only to be revived again in the fall of 1875.

On the 7th of May, 1874, Mr. M. S. Bartlett had started the publication of a newspaper at Oakdale, called the

Oakdale "Journal," it being the only newspaper published in the county. On November 17, 1874, as previously stated, Mr. Bartlett was appointed county treasurer to fill vacancy, and in October, 1875, was elected for the full term of two years. The friends of Neligh now took a new tack on the county seat question. About October 1, 1875, they induced Mr. Bartlett to move his printing press to Neligh and to continue the publication of the paper as the Neligh "Journal," leaving Oakdale without a newspaper. As soon as this became known it created a great commotion at Oakdale. On October 6, 1875, Bartlett was burned in effigy at Oakdale, and that night parties unknown set fire to the court-house and burned it to the ground with all it contained.

On the 13th of October the county board came together and made an examination of the county records and papers. They reported that no portion of the commissioner's records could be traced prior to July 25, 1874, that since that date a part could be traced. That the clerk's tax list was at the clerk's residence and was unharmed, that the treasurer's books were at the treasurer's residence and were unharmed. Nearly everything else was destroyed by the fire.

Like every other rash or unwarranted act, the burning in effigy of M. S. Bartlett did not help the cause of Oakdale. The act was condemned generally by Oakdale's friends and was made use of by her enemies, to Oakdale's disadvantage. The people of Neligh then proposed that to any of the business men of Oakdale who would remove to Neligh they would provide transportation for their effects without cost to the owners. One business man did accept this proposition, his building being taken to pieces and erected at Neligh and his stock of goods removed, all without cost to himself. However, he remained there only a short time when, not being satisfied, he came back to Oakdale again.

The question of relocation of the county seat now rested rather quietly until the spring of 1876, when, on the

petition of John W. Getchell and others, the board ordered an election to be held on the 6th day of June which resulted as follows:

For relocation of the county seat at Neligh	182
Against relocation of county seat	131
For relocation of the county seat	1
Total	314

Oakdale, having received more than two fifths of all the votes cast, was declared to be the county seat. The matter of the removal of the county seat was now allowed to rest until the fall of 1878. On October 1 of that year a petition, signed by B. R. Barnes, and others, was presented to the board. On the 7th of October the board acted upon the petition and ordered a special election to be held on November 14, 1878, which resulted as follows:

For relocation of the county seat at Neligh	270
Against relocation of county seat	181
For relocation of the county seat at Frenchtown	1
For relocation of the county seat at the geographical center of the county	1
Total	453

The vote necessary to relocate at any specified place was 272, therefore, Neligh lacked two votes of having the required three fifths. But three fifths of the whole number cast were for relocation. It was therefore the duty of the county board, under the laws then existing, to proceed to call another election. Before this could be done the Oakdale people sued out a temporary injunction in the county court, Judge S. D. Thornton presiding, restraining the county board from calling another election. This injunction was dissolved by Judge E. K. Valentine of the district court, but another election was not ordered. The

question came up before the board of commissioners, but was postponed from time to time for about two years, when it was finally dropped. Oakdale was afraid to have the election called lest they would lose, and Neligh was afraid to have it called lest they might not win — so it was a drawn battle and the final decision was postponed.

Again the question came up in the winter of 1880. On December 21 of that year a petition containing 583 names was filed with the county board by Thomas O'Day. Both parties were ably represented before the county board on this occasion. It was contended by Oakdale that many of the names were not signed by the owners, and they brought witnesses to endeavor to prove this. Also that many of the signers were non-resident. The county board, after taking ample time to examine and consider the matter, rejected 54 names, for the reason that these men lived in Boone and Wheeler counties. After rejecting these they found that the petition contained more than three fifths as many names as the voters at the last general election. They accepted the petition and called an election for February 1, 1881. The votes cast were as follows:

For relocation of the county seat at Neligh	746
Against relocation of county seat	519
Total vote	1,265
Necessary to relocate	759

And so Neligh lost again.

There were some queer things about this election. First, the total population of the county by the census of 1880, then recently taken, was 3,953, and a vote of 1,265 showed that 32 per cent of the population voted at this election. This was a very large ratio of actual voters, without counting those that stayed at home. Secondly, the people of Neligh knew that a large number of fraudulent votes were cast in Twin Grove precinct, and could easily have

proven it, but they were timid about contesting the election, for their own polling list would not bear inspection. There was a good deal of talk, but no action. It was a repetition of the old story of the pot and the kettle.

Things were quiet again until the summer of 1883, when petitions were filed by the board of commissioners to call another election to relocate the county seat. These petitions contained the names of 984 electors, giving name, age, place of residence, and length of residence in the county. The election was held on the 2d of October, 1883. The electors of Neligh held a public meeting about two weeks before the election, at which time they chose a committee of five to confer with a like committee from Oakdale, to devise measures to have an honest vote and an honest count. The committees held a joint meeting, at which they arrived at a definite conclusion as to the best method of attaining the desired end. An agreement was made in writing, which all the members of the joint committee signed, substantially as follows: The Neligh committee chose O. R. Elwood and A. J. Leach of Oakdale to guard the polls at Oakdale, and to challenge on behalf of the Neligh people every vote that was offered that was suspected of being illegal. The committee from Oakdale chose F. H. Trowbridge and Charles Fisher of Neligh to perform a like duty at Neligh for the people of Oakdale. Illegal voters were to be arrested on the spot at both places, and complete arrangements were made to have the program fully carried out. The election passed off all right, and very few, if any, doubtful votes were cast. The result was:

For relocation of the county seat at Neligh	1,061
Against relocation of county seat	573
For relocation of the county seat at Clearwater	1
For relocation of the county seat	1
Total vote	1,636
Necessary to relocate at Neligh	982

Neligh therefore had seventy-nine votes to spare.

The following is the vote for Oakdale and Neligh by precincts:

Precinct	Neligh	Oakdale
Center	224	1
Twin Grove	5	223
Burnett	18	80
Cedar	11	73
Harmony	44	33
Clay Ridge	24	47
Mills	89	16
Frenchtown	97	3
Sherman	55	9
Royal	51	1
Verdigris	58	9
Eden	43	25
Gurney	55	0
Custer	76	1
Bazile	49	33
Willow	105	3
Elm Grove	57	16
	1,061	573

The board of commissioners ordered the county officials to remove the county records to Neligh on January 1, 1884. This was done, and the war was over.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTY CONTINUED — THE CENSUS, 1874 TO 1883 INCLUSIVE — THE CENSUS BY PRECINCTS IN 1880 — ATTEMPTS TO INDUCE IMMIGRATION — CONDITIONS UNFAVORABLE TO THE SETTLING OF THE COUNTY — ELECTIONS 1876 TO 1883 INCLUSIVE

AFTER the county first began to be settled, in the fall of 1868, it continued to fill up rapidly during 1869, 1870, 1871, and the spring and early summer of 1872. Then the grasshoppers came in the summer of 1872 in such numbers as greatly to discourage and retard settlement. The trouble with the Indians in the fall of 1870, and their horse-stealing raids in subsequent years, no doubt kept many away who otherwise would have located here.

As before stated, the settlements were chiefly confined to the valleys of the Elkhorn River and its tributaries, and the Willow and Bazile creeks. The various branches of the Verdigris creek also began to be settled in the spring of 1873, and by 1876 there were settlers scattered all along the different branches of the Verdigris both in Sherman and Verdigris precincts. South of the Verdigris and the Bazile, however, there were no settlers, excepting on Willow Creek, until the settlements adjacent to the Elkhorn were reached. A similar statement also applies to the southwestern part of the county known as the Clay Ridge country. Crawford township was all vacant land until the year 1878, when the first settlers came in. Garfield, Lincoln, and Stanton were not settled until the summer of 1879 and Ellsworth in 1880. It is true also that the greater part of Custer and Blaine, a large portion of Willow, Clearwater, Eden, Royal, Verdigris, and Sherman were vacant up to about the year 1880. There was also at this last date more or less government land in

some of the older settled parts, such as Elgin, Neligh, Oakdale, and Ord townships.

Prior to the year 1885 the assessors were required to take a census of the population in their several assessor's districts. It is probable that the assessors did take the census in Antelope County in 1872 and 1873, but if so, the returns were burned at the burning of the court-house in 1875. It is also a fact that very many papers relating to census reports, election returns, and other matters that have occurred since the burning of the court-house and prior to 1883, and that should be on file, cannot now be found. In some way they have been lost. This is to be regretted as in many cases exact figures and dates as to certain matters of interest cannot be given. The writer, however, in the year 1886 examined the census reports then on file in the office of the county clerk, for all years that could be found, from 1874 to 1885 inclusive, to be used in the brief history that was read at the Pioneers' reunion in September, 1886. This was published in the Oakdale "Journal" of October 22, 1886, and is copied herewith, up to and including 1883, as follows:

POPULATION OF ANTELOPE COUNTY

Year	Population	Loss	Gain
1874.....	1,387	....	.....
1875.....	1,289	98	....
1876.....	1,303	....	14
1877.....	1,036	267	....
1878.....	1,575	....	539
1879.....	2,178	....	603
1880.....	3,953	....	1,775
1882.....	5,239	....	1,286
1883.....	6,407	....	1,168

The year 1880 is taken from the United States census. These show that there was no material increase in population from 1874 until 1878. In 1877 the loss of 267 should be attributed probably wholly to the fact that Holt

County was organized December 26, 1876. The part of Holt County lying west of Antelope County had been attached to Antelope, and prior to 1877 its inhabitants had been enumerated with Antelope County.

The United States census report for 1880 shows the population of the county by precincts as follows:

Cedar precinct	530
Center precinct	864
Elm Grove precinct and Bazile, which were taken together	892
Mills precinct	534
Sherman precinct	295
Twin Grove precinct	838
Total	3,953

In the year 1878 an effort was made to induce immigrants to settle in the county. At a meeting of the board of county commissioners held April 2, 1878, the following resolution was offered by L. A. Boyd and unanimously adopted:

"*Whereas*, Antelope County being desirous of securing a portion of the immigrants now pouring into Nebraska, and also her just portion of the immigration that may come to our state in the future, we feel such immigration cannot reasonably be expected without some effort on the part of Antelope County through her officers and citizens:

"*Be it therefore resolved*, that R. Wilson, county clerk, be instructed to contract with the Pen and Plow Co. for one thousand copies of a certain pamphlet written by A. J. Leach for gratuitous distribution, and that said R. Wilson be instructed to prepare one or two folios of statistics showing the number of acres of different kinds of grain raised, the average yield per acre, etc., etc.

"*Resolved*, that we also agree to furnish a guide free of charge, to land hunters seeking homesteads or preëmptions, to assist them in finding suitable locations.

"*Be it further resolved*, that we appoint three men in different parts of the county, to-wit: One man in Twin Grove precinct, one in the vicinity of Neligh, and one in the vicinity of Frenchtown, to act as guides to those parties seeking homes in Antelope County, to be paid at the rate of $3.00 for each head of a family that they actually locate on government land."

The following persons were appointed as guides: For Twin Grove precinct, S. D. Thornton; for Neligh, A. F. Wilgocki; Frenchtown, G. W. Mummert. These guides were honorably discharged April 14, 1879. Nothing ever came of it.

Conditions were such in Antelope County that the flattering representations contained in the pamphlet and the offer of free guides were of no avail. The best of the available lands had already been taken up in the vicinity of the settlements. It was yet too early in the development of the county to induce people to go back away from the streams and away from the settlements already formed, to take claims to any great extent on the tablelands and rolling divides of the interior. They believed they could do better elsewhere. Then besides, Antelope County was handicapped in another way. The Burlington and Missouri River Railroad Company had selected in Antelope County 57,526 acres of indemnity lands, and the state authorities had selected 32,800 acres of internal improvement lands, making in all 90,326 acres or enough for 564 homesteads of 160 acres each. These could only be had by purchase and it was yet too early for land to be put upon the market and sold in Antelope County. These lands all lay in that part of the county that was settled first and in general were of good quality, embracing some of the finest farming lands in the county. The discussion of these land grants, and their effect upon the settlement and prosperity of the county will be taken up in another chapter.

At the election November 7, 1876, the following were elected:

County commissioner 1st district, J. N. Story.
Coroner, to fill vacancy, R. W. Smith.
Representative in the state legislature, William B. Lambert.

Mr. Lambert was the first man ever elected to the legislature from Antelope County.

The election of November 13, 1877, resulted as follows:
Clerk, Robert Wilson.
Treasurer, B. R. Barnes.
Sheriff, Jeptha Hopkins.
Judge, S. D. Thornton.
Surveyor, George H. McGee.
County Superintendent, H. J. Miller.
Coroner, H. M. Cox.
Commissioner 2d district, L. A. Boyd.

B. R. Barnes resigned as county treasurer and on February 3, 1879, S. S. King was appointed to fill vacancy. H. J. Miller resigned as county superintendent in October, 1879, and J. F. Merritt was appointed.

Election November 5, 1878, resulted as follows:
Commissioner 3d district, Louis Contois.
Representative state legislature, F. H. Trowbridge.

Louis Contois resigned and William Campbell was appointed February 8, 1881.

Election November, 1879:
Clerk, Robert Wilson.
Treasurer, S. S. King.
Judge, M. A. Decamp.
Sheriff, A. M. Cool.
Superintendent, J. F. Merritt.
Surveyor, Geo. H. McGee.
Coroner, H. M. Cox.
Commissioner 1st district, Lorenz Thomsen.

M. A. Decamp resigned October 25, 1880, and S. A. Sanders was appointed county judge.

Election November, 1880:
Commissioner 2d district, E. Carkhuff.
Representative state legislature, W. W. Putney.

Election, November, 1881:
Clerk, Robert Wilson.
Treasurer, S. S. King.
Judge, G. C. Palmer.
Sheriff, A. M. Cool.
Superintendent, S. S. Murphy.
Surveyor, J. L. Seeley.
Coroner, H. M. Cox.
Commissioner 3d district, C. E. Hemenway.
Election, November, 1882:
Commissioner 1st district, Lorenz Thomsen.
Representative state legislature, J. J. Roche.
Election November, 1883:
Clerk, Robert Wilson.
Treasurer, J. M. Coleman.
Judge, J. H. Gurney.
Sheriff, M. B. Huffman.
Superintendent, T. H. Pollock.
Surveyor, J. L. Seeley.
Coroner, J. B. Wait.
Commissioner 2d district, Orange Brittell.

M. B. Huffman resigned August 15, 1885, and W. H. Van Gilder was appointed sheriff.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONDITION OF COUNTY FINANCES — COUNTY BONDS ISSUED — TWIN GROVE AND CENTER PRECINCTS ISSUE RAILROAD BONDS — THE RAILROAD COMES TO THE COUNTY — GREAT INCREASE IN POPULATION — BURNETT, AFTERWARDS CALLED TILDEN, PLATTED — CLEARWATER PLATTED — NELIGH AND OAKDALE INCORPORATED — THE COUNTY DIVIDED INTO SEVENTEEN PRECINCTS

WHEN the county was organized in June, 1871, it was of course entirely without funds, and no taxes were collected until the spring of 1872. The board of commissioners therefore had to run the county in debt for a set of books for the use of the county officials. As mentioned in a previous chapter a full set of county books was not purchased but only such as were of prime necessity. It cost something, too, to pay the fees and salaries of the several county officials and to keep up the running expenses of the county offices. Taxes came in very slowly and by July, 1875, there was a floating indebtedness against the county amounting to about eight thousand dollars. This was not caused by waste or extravagance on the part of the county board, but chiefly because the taxes due the county were unpaid. The personal taxes generally were paid up quite promptly, but the real estate taxes were nearly all delinquent. The taxes on the Burlington and Missouri Railroad lands, of which there were 57,526 acres, were wholly unpaid, and the taxes on the 32,800 acres of state lands, which had by this time passed into the hands of non-resident parties, were also mostly delinquent. These land taxes constituted more than two-thirds of the entire revenue of the county, and being unpaid crippled the county's finances badly. The county board therefore decided to issue bonds to fund the floating debt of the county. At a meeting of the

county board held July 5, 1875, the following action was taken:

"Upon consideration it is hereby ordered that bonds be prepared for the purpose of funding the indebtedness of Antelope County, Nebraska, according to an act of the legislature of the State of Nebraska, entitled 'An Act to authorize the commissioners of the counties of Colfax, Platte, Boone, Antelope, Howard, Greeley, and Sherman, Nebraska, to issue bonds for the purpose of funding the warrants and orders of said counties. Approved February 18, 1875."

It was decided by the board to issue at first bonds to the amount of five thousand dollars, these to be dated July 1, 1875, and to draw interest at the rate of ten per cent per annum. This amount proving insufficient, an additional issue of three thousand dollars was ordered May 6, 1876, to be dated the same as the first issue, but from which the first coupons were to be detached before the bonds were sold. These are the only bonds ever issued by Antelope County.

In the early summer of 1879 it became evident that the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad, which was already completed to Norfolk, would continue on up the valley through Antelope County. Both Neligh and Oakdale were anxious to get the road. The road could easily miss one of these two places, but could not so easily miss them both. The railroad company could, however, if it chose, ignore both the towns and purchase townsites of its own. The railroad officials caused it to be given out that bonds might be voted, in which case the location for the depots could be designated by the people. Acting on this suggestion a petition was presented to the county board by I. N. Taylor and others, asking that an election be called to vote bonds in Twin Grove precinct to the amount of ten thousand dollars, said bonds to run twenty years at seven per cent, annual interest. The petition was granted and the election ordered for October 3, 1879. The railroad company agreed on its part to construct the

line to Oakdale by July 1, 1880, and to establish and maintain a depot at that place, and also to construct and maintain a depot at the east line of Antelope County. The bonds carried as follows:

For railroad bonds and tax	143
Against railroad bonds and tax	13
Scattering	2

The board of commissioners examined the newly constructed railroad March 3, 1880, and reported that the road was completed to the county line December 1, 1879, and to Oakdale December 7, 1879, and that the cars were running to Oakdale on that date, and that all conditions of the contract had been complied with.

November 6, 1879, B. R. Barnes and others presented a petition to the county board praying for the calling of a special election in Center precinct to vote bonds of said precinct to the amount of seven thousand dollars to the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad to build to Neligh. The election was held December 6, 1879, and resulted as follows:

For railroad bonds and tax	198
Against railroad bonds and tax	10
Scattering	1

The road having been completed to Neligh, the county board inspected it October 6, 1880, and reported that the road was built to Neligh, and the depot completed and the cars running to that point prior to August 1, 1880. The building of the railroad west from Neligh was continued without interruption, but Neligh remained the end of the passenger division for about ten months. On May 31, 1881, the first passenger train passed through Clearwater on its way to O'Neill, and returned the next morning, June 1.

During the summer and fall of 1882 that branch of the railroad running northwest from Norfolk was completed to Creighton, in Knox County. This branch passed through Bazile township and gave railroad facilities to the

settlers in all the northeastern part of the county. No depot was established in Antelope County, but one was placed at Plainview, about two miles east, and another at Creighton, about two miles north of the county line.

The coming of the railroad gave a great impetus to the settling up of the county. As shown in Chapter XXVII there was little material increase in the population of the county for the four years from 1874 to 1878, the actual gain being only about fourteen per cent. In the year 1878 there was quite an addition to the immigration, and it was still greater in 1879, and continued to be large for a number of years, or until the government land was practically all taken. The increase for the five years from 1878 to 1883 was about 294 per cent.

The railroad company having established a depot on their line of road at the east line of the county in accordance with a contract entered into with Twin Grove precinct, proceeded in October, 1880, to survey and plat the town of Burnett. This was located on the southwest quarter of section 18 and the northwest quarter of section 19, township 24, range 4, Madison County, and the southeast quarter of section 13 and the northeast quarter of section 24 in Burnett township, Antelope County, the depot being in Antelope County, but the principal part of the village in Madison County. The name of the village of Burnett was afterwards changed to Tilden, because of its similarity in name to Bennett, in Lancaster County, this similarity causing some confusion in distributing the mails. Another townsite was surveyed and platted by the railroad company in October, 1881. This was named Clearwater, and was located on the northeast quarter of section 1 in Clearwater township, thus giving Antelope County four depots within the county lines.

At a meeting of the board of commissioners held June 27, 1881, the board having under consideration the petition of J. F. Hecht and others praying for the incorporation of the village of Neligh, it was ordered that the petition be granted and that the village of Neligh be incorporated.

The following trustees were appointed: W. E. Adams, H. B. Hauser, J. J. Roche, N. Burr, William Lawrence.

On the 31st of December, 1881, a petition signed by D. A. Holmes and others was presented to the board of commissioners, praying for the incorporation of the village of Oakdale. The petition was acted on favorably and the following were appointed trustees: F. H. Green, W. S. Smith, M. W. King, Robert Wilson, and D. E. Beckwith.

It was related in Chapter XXV that the county was divided into five precincts on July 6, 1876, by the action of the county board. These precincts were called Twin Grove, Elm Grove, Cedar, Center, and Mills. This arrangement continued until August 4, 1877, when Sherman precinct was formed out of the northern part of Mills and part of Center, consisting of all the present townships of Royal, Verdigris, and Sherman and the north one-half of Garfield. This made six precincts in all. This continued until April 1, 1879, when Bazile precinct was established. It was formed out of the northern part of Elm Grove, and consisted of the north one-half of the present township of Crawford and all of Bazile. December 15, 1880, Willow precinct was added to the list. Willow was composed of the south one-half of the present township of Crawford, all of Willow, the east one-third of Custer, and sections 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, and 36 of Ellsworth township, thus making eight precincts in all. This arrangement continued until January 11, 1882, when another precinct was added, called Clay Ridge. This precinct was in the southwestern part of the county and consisted of the south two-thirds of the present township of Stanton, all of Lincoln, the west one-third of Logan, and sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, and 32 of Elgin, making in all, at this last date, nine precincts named as follows: Twin Grove, Elm Grove, Willow, Bazile, Cedar, Center, Clay Ridge, Mills, and Sherman.

All parts of the county were now settled and although there was still a good deal of government land left, the new arrivals of immigrants were taking it up rapidly. The board of commissioners, therefore, thought best to redis-

trict the entire county. This was done August 15, 1883, and seventeen precincts were formed, described as follows:

Burnett — The east two-thirds of the present townships of Grant and Burnett.

Elm Grove — All the present township of Elm and the east one-third of Neligh.

Willow — All the present township of Willow and south one-half of Crawford and the east one-third of Custer.

Bazile — All the present township of Bazile and the north one-half of Crawford.

Twin Grove — West one-third of the present townships of Grant and Burnett and east one-third of Oakdale and Cedar.

Cedar — West two-thirds of the present township of Cedar and east two-thirds of Logan.

Harmony — West two-thirds of the present township of Oakdale and east two-thirds of Elgin.

Center — West two-thirds of the present township of Neligh and east two-thirds of Ord.

Custer — West two-thirds of the present township of Custer and east two-thirds of Blaine.

Gurney — Same as the present township of Ellsworth.

Eden — Same as the present township of Eden.

Royal — Same as the present township of Royal.

Verdigris — Same as the present township of Verdigris.

Clay Ridge — All the present township of Lincoln, the south two-thirds of Stanton, the west one-third of Logan, and sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, and 32 in Elgin.

Mills — All the present township of Clearwater, the north one-third of Stanton, the west one-third of Ord, and sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 in Elgin.

Frenchtown — All the present township of Frenchtown, the south one-half of Garfield, and west one-third of Blaine.

Sherman — All the present township of Sherman and the north one-half of Garfield.

After this no changes were made in the precinct lines until the 16th day of August, 1886, when the county was redistricted as at present, by making each congressional township a precinct.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ASSESSED VALUATION OF THE COUNTY FOR SEVERAL YEARS — THE INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT LANDS AND HOW DISPOSED OF — THE BURLINGTON AND MISSOURI RAILROAD LANDS — HOW THEY WERE ACQUIRED — HOW THESE LANDS AFFECTED THE FINANCES AND SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTY — HOW REGARDED BY THE PEOPLE

IT has been shown in Chapters XXVII and XXVIII that the increase in population was very meager from 1872 until about 1878 or 1879, when it became evident that there would soon be railroad communication with the rest of the world, after which the county filled up with people rapidly. The increase in property valuations, however, was much more constant and rapid than the increase in population. The assessed valuation of personal and real estate and the tax levies are given herewith for several years, in order to show the growth of the value of property for these years.

Year	Personal Valuation	Real Estate Valuation	Total	Amount Tax Levy
1869	.....	$ 360.00	$ 360.00	$ 8.94
1870	$ 2,525.00	520.00	3,045.00	59.71
1871	24,301.00	1,150.00	25,451.00	590.46
1872	46,707.00	109,960.00	156,667.00	5,034.29
1875	74,350.00	266,705.00	341,055.00	12,587.42
1880	204,266.00	309,582.00	513,848.00	20,999.77
1883	486,992.39	422,599.00	909,591.39	48,740.09

The figures for 1869 to 1871, inclusive, were copied by County Clerk W. W. Putney from the books of the counties to which Antelope County had been attached prior to its organization. The year 1872 the first assessment was taken in Antelope County proper. The figures from 1872

to 1883, inclusive, show a regular and rapid increase in values, both as to personal and real estate.

Antelope County, as stated in Chapter XXVII, was greatly handicapped as to growth, both in population and wealth, on account of the large amount of state and railroad lands within its borders that could be had only by purchase.

These state lands referred to consisted of 32,800 acres of internal improvement lands. Under act of Congress approved September 4, 1841, there was a grant of land to each of the several states of the Union of 500,000 acres, to be used for works of internal improvement. These lands for Nebraska were selected by commissioners appointed by the governor of the state and were patented to the state October 13, 1871. Of the 500,000 acres of these lands belonging to the state of Nebraska as stated above, 32,800 were selected in Antelope County, located in the several townships as follows:

Burnett township	12,000	acres
Elm township	3,840	"
Willow township	1,280	"
Oakdale township	8,000	"
Neligh township	5,120	"
Ord township	2,560	"
Total in these six townships	32,800	"

The five hundred thousand acres thus donated to Nebraska by the general government were disposed of by the state legislature by an act approved February 5, 1869, by which a grant was made of 2,000 acres per mile to any railroad that should be built under certain restrictions, and within a certain limit as to time. Under this act four or five railroads were started in the state, and the lands were divided up among them. Two of these railroads, the Omaha and Northwestern, running from Omaha north to Tekamah, and the Omaha and Southwestern, from Omaha south to the Platte River, selected a portion of their lands

in Antelope County, the greater part of them going to the Omaha and Northwestern Railroad.

The Omaha and Northwestern Railroad was built by certain capitalists of Omaha. After the road was built they sold it to the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha, which is a part of the Chicago and Northwestern system, but the lands were divided *pro rata* among these capitalists who built the road. After there began to be a demand for the lands they were placed on the market and sold at prices ranging from about $3.50 to $25.00 per acre, the greater part selling at from $6.25 to $10.00 per acre. At $8.00 per acre, and probably that is a low average price, these lands brought $262,400.00 for principal, and probably one third as much for interest, that had to be paid by the citizens of Antelope County before they became the owners in fee simple.

There is little doubt that the law granting these internal improvement lands to the several states was a wise one, and that it was for a beneficent purpose. Whether the legislature disposed of these lands in such a way as to insure the greatest benefit to the state is another question. At any rate, the railroads that were more than paid for by Antelope County people from the proceeds of the sale of these lands did not benefit Antelope County in the least, the nearest depot on the Omaha and Northwestern being a good hundred miles in a straight line from Neligh. The Omaha and Southwestern Railroad, mentioned as having been built with the aid of these lands, passed into the hands of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company, and with it the remainder of the state lands in Antelope County. These state grants must not be confounded with the general government railroad land grants. That is another thing entirely, which will now be taken up.

As stated before, the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company acquired title in Antelope County from the United States to 57,526 acres of land. These lands all lay in the southeastern part of the county and were distributed among eight townships as follows:

Grant township	8,025.95	acres
Burnett township	1,524.96	"
Elm township	7.905.44	"
Cedar township	9,109.41	"
Oakdale township	5,898.97	"
Neligh township	5,676.66	"
Logan township	11,471.40	"
Ord township	7,913.92	"
Total in the county	57,526.71	acres.

It was never well understood by most of the people of Antelope County how it came about that the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company, a south Platte institution, whose nearest station to Neligh was one hundred and five miles distant in a direct line, could acquire title to 57,526 acres of some of the best government land in the county. The process of the acquisition of this land was peculiar, and probably the inside workings of it can never be explained in full. The Burlington and Missouri Railroad in Nebraska was built with government aid. Its starting point was Plattsmouth, on the Missouri River, running thence west along the Platte to Ashland, thence southwest to Lincoln, thence continuing southwest to Crete, thence directly west through Hastings to Kearney Junction, where it connected with the Union Pacific. Its total length was one hundred and ninety and one-half miles. This railroad received a grant from the government of lands on either side of the road bed, similar in most respects to that of the Union Pacific, the Northern Pacific, and other land-grant railroads. These other roads received a donation of the odd numbered sections on either side of the road bed for a distance of twenty miles, thus making ten sections on either side of the road for every mile constructed.

Here comes in the peculiar thing in the charter of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company. After the clause in the Burlington and Missouri charter granting the

odd numbered sections for twenty miles on either side of the road, there comes the clause "or an amount equivalent thereto." The grant of land to the Burlington and Missouri overlapped the grant to the Union Pacific, as the two roads for a long distance were less than forty miles apart, and for several miles east of the junction were very near together. The matter as to whom the land belonged, where the grants conflicted, was left to the secretary of the interior to decide. His decision was favorable to the Union Pacific, but he also decided that the Burlington and Missouri was entitled, by the conditions of its charter, to select other lands as indemnity, both north and south of its line of road, in lieu of those taken by the Union Pacific. These indemnity lands were selected chiefly in the counties of Franklin and Webster, south of the Platte, and in Madison, Antelope, Boone, Howard, Greeley, Valley, and Sherman, north of the Platte.

When Mr. A. E. Touzalin was Burlington and Missouri Railroad land commissioner he told the writer that he did not know, neither did the directors of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad know, how these words "or an amount equivalent thereto," came to be inserted in the charter. Doubtless some one knew how it came about. It could not have been an accident. One William T. Steiger whose headquarters were in Washington, is mentioned in the patent from the United States to the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company, as the agent of the Burlington and Missouri Railway Company, who selected the lands for the company and who represented the railroad company at Washington in the matter. This is not quite correct, however, for these indemnity lands were all selected by J. D. Macfarland, at that time a head clerk in the Burlington and Missouri office at Lincoln, but who afterwards became Burlington and Missouri Railroad land commissioner. It can scarcely be doubted, however, that this William T. Steiger had charge of the manipulations at Washington by which this indemnity deal was accomplished. At any rate, soon after the business was consummated by which

the railroad company became possessed of these lands, and before the lands had been appraised and placed on the market, Mr. Steiger received from the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company a grant of several sections of fine lands in Madison and other counties.

The people of Antelope County were never satisfied with this deal. It took from the government lands in that part of the county most easily accessible and that was first settled, a large body of lands that were among the best in the county. They did not believe it a "square deal" to give to a railroad that was more than a hundred miles away, and that did not benefit the county in the least, enough government land to make homesteads of one hundred and sixty acres each for three hundred and fifty-nine families. These statements show how Antelope County was handicapped for many years. But this is not all. Soon after the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company acquired title to these lands a suit was brought against the company in the United States court to annul the title, it being alleged in the petition that the lands were acquired by fraud. This case was carried finally to the United States Supreme Court, where a decision was rendered February 19, 1879, in favor of the railroad company.

During all the time this suit was pending, and for several years thereafter, the company failed and refused to pay taxes on the lands. After the land suit had been decided in favor of the railroad company they made several offers to the county to compromise by paying a portion of the taxes. These offers were accepted by Madison, Boone, and several, if not all, the other counties, where the company owned lands. Antelope County, however, steadily refused to listen to any kind of a compromise. On May 5, 1879, the county board entered into a contract with C. J. Phelps, W. A. Marlow, and J. A. Grimison, attorneys, to employ said attorneys to collect by suit the taxes against the Burlington and Missouri lands for the years 1873 to 1878, inclusive, agreeing to pay said attorneys

ten per cent of the amount so collected. Several efforts were made by these attorneys to induce the railroad company to pay the taxes without suit, but without success. The best offer made by the railroad was to pay sixty per cent. of the amount. This offer on April 5, 1881, was rejected by the board. Finally, on March 10, 1882, the board of commissioners instructed the attorneys to begin suit against the railroad company. The suit was accordingly begun in the district court for Antelope County, but was taken on petition to the United States Circuit Court at Omaha. At a session of the United States Circuit Court for the district of Nebraska, held at Omaha on the 22d day of November, 1884, Judge Elmer S. Dundy presiding, in the case of the County of Antelope *versus* The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company, a decree was rendered in favor of Antelope County for the taxes for the years 1873 to 1878, inclusive, amounting to $30,230.20, and declaring all other taxes for the years named to be illegal and void. And further, that the taxes for the years 1879, 1880, and 1881, and interest thereon, amounting to $12,925.12 were legal, making a total of $43,155.18 due the county for the years 1873 to 1881, inclusive, and directing the railroad company to pay said amount to the court within five days of the date of the decree. This order was complied with and the amount was turned over to the county on December 10, 1884. The amount paid to the county for the years 1873 to 1878, inclusive, was seventy per cent of the amount claimed by the county as due. The amount for the years 1879 to 1881, inclusive, was paid in full in accordance with the county's claim. On December 31st the railroad company also paid the taxes for 1882 and 1883, amounting to almost $12,000, thus making about $55,000 collected from the railroad company for taxes in the month of December, 1884, and covering the years from 1873 to 1883, inclusive. Immediately thereafter the lands were placed upon the market for sale. The payment of these taxes placed the county in excellent financial

condition. The buying of these lands, however, from the railroad company by the people of the county, cost about three quarters of a million dollars, principal and interest, which they had to pay for 57,526 acres of land that they ought to have had free from the government. This was not thought by the people of Antelope County to be a "square deal."

CHAPTER XXX

A Brief Sketch of the Schools of the County from 1872 to 1883

SOON after the organization of the county in July, 1871, the county superintendent of schools took steps to organize the settled portions of the county into school districts. With this object in view he started out on foot to visit the different neighborhoods, inquiring into their needs and learning the views of the different settlers as to the district boundaries and the probable location of school-house sites. He did this work on foot for the reason that, like very many of the settlers, he was using ox teams to open up his farm, and at that time he kept no riding horse. In doing this work he always found a hearty welcome at the homes of the settlers in every neighborhood. He reports that during all the time he held the office, from July, 1871, to the time of his resignation in March, 1873, he was never charged for a meal of victuals or a night's lodging by any of the pioneer settlers. He organized the districts, examined teachers, visited the schools, and always found a generous welcome wherever he went. Besides this, his services were rendered without any compensation from the county. He furnished his own stationery and postage, an unused part of a private account book being used for keeping the records, gave his time and never submitted an account to the board of commissioners or received any remuneration except the satisfaction derived from the knowledge that he was doing a necessary work. People were willing in those days to sacrifice something for the public good. There was no money in the county treasury, there had been as yet no apportionment of school moneys and no enumeration of school children. Everything had to start from the beginning.

The people of some of the school districts arranged to

have the first school taught in a private house. In others they got together and cut and hauled logs for a little log school-house, and when all was ready they came together and in one day erected the building and then the work of one or two days more would put on the roof and fit it out with a door and a couple of windows. A floor was wholly unnecessary, and for a summer school a stove was not needed.

On September 16, 1871, notices were prepared and addressed to residents in districts Nos. 1, 2, and 3 to call meetings for organization in these districts. Districts Nos. 1 and 3 did meet and organize, but district No. 2 failed and a new notice was served February 1, 1872. In like manner notices were served for the organization of the other districts as follows: Districts Nos. 4, 5, 6, and 7, September 18, 1871; district No. 8, January 24, 1872; district No. 9, January 25, 1872; district No. 10, February 1, 1872. When district No. 10 had been organized, all the settled portions of the county were covered by these several districts. In April, 1872, the first school census was taken, showing 206 children in the county of school age.

The superintendent continued his work of organizing school districts as they were needed, until sixteen were organized, these sixteen taking in the whole territory of the county. District No. 11 was formed January 3, 1873; Nos. 12 and 13 were formed January 7, 1873; No. 14 was formed January 10, 1873; No. 15, January 13, 1873; No. 16, January 16, 1873.

The first school-houses were built in districts Nos. 4, 6, and 8. All three were little log buildings, covered with earth, and all were in process of construction at the same time. It is not certain which district has the honor of having its school house ready for occupancy first. The first schools were taught in districts Nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8. All had school at the same time, but the school in district No. 6 began a few fays before the others. Prior to this date, however, Mrs. R. W. Smith taught a private school in what was afterward district No. 16. This was in the summer or fall of 1871.

The first certificates were issued as follows:
May 3, 1872, Miss Fannie Muhm.
June 3, 1872, Mrs. Susan Decamp.
June 4, 1872, Miss Ella Wyman.
June 4, 1872, Mrs. Mary E. Choate.
June 4, 1872, Miss Emeline A. King.
September 1, 1872, Mr. A. E. Gross.
December 21, 1872, Mr. Lewis H. Suter.
December 28, 1872, Mr. Myron Stolp.
January 1, 1873, Mr. A. Warner.
March 1, 1873, Mrs. E. H. Leach.

It is a remarkable fact that of the first ten teachers commissioned to teach school in Antelope county, seven are still living in the county at this date — March, 1909 — namely:
Mrs. Susan Decamp.
Miss Fannie Muhm (now Mrs. Cyrus Grant).
Miss Ella Wyman (now Mrs. George Romig).
Mr. Lewis H. Suter.
Mr. Myron Stolp.
Mr. A. Warner.
Mrs. E. H. Leach.

The number of school districts in the county for several years, also the number of pupils of school age, together with the state apportionment for these years, is shown in the following table:

Year	No. of Districts	No. of Pupils	Amt. of Apportionment
1872.....	16	206	$ 853.05
1874.....	17	405	1,629.54
1876.....	24	469	1,330.21
1878.....	27	621	1,245.61
1880	44	1481	2,831.02
1883.....	81	2387	4,963.57

The apportionment for 1876 and 1878 includes also the dog tax for those years, and for 1880 it includes dog tax, fines and licenses. The first teacher's institute of which there is any record was held in the school-house in Oakdale in August, 1882, at which time S. S. Murphy was county superintendent and C. D. Bon and Mrs. C. L. Austin were in-

structors. There were other institutes held, however, on several occasions prior to this one. There was one held in the summer of 1874 while J. E. Lowes was superintendent. It is also remembered that one, and perhaps two, were held while H. J. Miller was superintendent, and a largely attended and successful institute was held in the summer of 1881 while J. F. Merritt was superintendent. These statements are made from the recollections of the teachers and others who attended.

The wages paid teachers in those days would hardly give satisfaction at the present time. Miss Ella Wyman, now Mrs. George Romig, taught her first school in district No. 8 at $8.00 per month and boarded herself. Other teachers received generally from $12.00 to $25.00 per month. By the year 1883 wages were a good deal higher. In that year there were three country districts that paid $30.00 per month for a winter school, namely: districts Nos. 1, 2, and 41, other districts in 1883 paid from $12.00 to $28.00 per month, the average in the country being about $20.00 District No. 9 in the last-mentioned year had three teachers who were paid respectively $30.00, $35.00, and $40.00 per month. District No. 11 had two teachers that were paid $32.00 and $50.00 per month.

In 1883 district No. 68 reported four pupils, the lowest of any, and district No. 53 reported 7 pupils, it being the next lowest. District No. 24 reported 73, the largest number in any country district, and district No. 2 reported 62 pupils. The same year district No. 9 reported 205 and district No. 11, 161 pupils.

In 1883 sixty-seven teachers took the examination and were granted certificates. There were two certificates granted of the first grade, thirty-six of second grade, and twenty-nine of third grade.

A graded school was established in district No. 11 in 1883, and probably in district No. 9, also the same year. It is a little uncertain, however, as to the year a graded school was established in district No. 9, as the records are incomplete. These were the first graded schools in the county.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Experiences of a School Teacher in Antelope County, in the Early Days

BY C. D. BON OF OAKDALE

IT is a far cry back to the summer of 1879, thirty years agone, and yet some incidents of my first visit to Antelope County are still clear and vivid. Settlements lay here and there — houses built of logs, lumber, sod — improvements and stock of pioneer quality, stretches of unsettled prairie lying between, everything new, strange, and interesting. But what struck me most forcibly was the sincere cordiality and hospitality of the people. There was no home so crowded (and many had but one room) but had room for the wayfarer, no table too small nor too poor for his supping.

I had about two months previously, with my young wife, located upon a claim in Madison County about six miles from the Antelope County line, and having heard of Oakdale and Neligh, set out on foot to look over that field for a school. I passed through St. Clair Valley, stopping at A. B. Dillion's to inquire the way, and taking dinner at Mr. Blackford's. In the afternoon I got as far as Mr. Gibson's, about three miles out of Oakdale, where I stayed all night. How distinctly I recall the pleasure their hospitality gave me. The children were attending school in Oakdale village, and we talked school, and teacher, and arithmetic to our hearts' content.

The next forenoon Oakdale was reached and canvassed. I learned that the village school had one department, one teacher, a short school year (seven months, I think), and what I thought was small pay. Oakdale was lively that day, even livelier that it is now, for a ball game with the Neligh "club" — it was not called "team" then — was played, and civic pride had brought out the entire poula-

tion. Of course Oakdale won, which fact did not lessen the gulf already too wide between the two little sister communitites.

On my way from Oakdale to Neligh that afternoon I had to wade the Elkhorn as I did on my return. Near Neligh I sought shelter from a small thunderstorm in a log house near the town. That evening I met among others, Mr. Merritt, who was afterwards superintendent. We talked school interests some, though school affairs were at no whiter heat there than at Oakdale. After considering the matter over night I concluded not to place an application for teacher either at Oakdale or Neligh. The pay and the brevity of the school year I thought would not warrant my leaving my claim to teach, and so I did not enter the Antelope County teacher's field until over a year later. I had already visited three schools in Madison County and one in Antelope, two of them being held in sod houses, neither having floors or blackboards. At that time there was not a graded school in the counties of Wayne, Pierce, Stanton, Madison, Antelope, and Holt, but one in each of the counties of Dixon, Dakota, Cuming, and Boone, and some of these would not now be called "graded," and north of the Platte there were probably but four "high schools" in the entire state, and they would not be so classed now. I let the intelligent reader make his own comparisons and contrasts, and determine for himself the amount and rate of progress educationally made during the last thirty years.

In the fall of 1880 I engaged to teach the Bunker Hill school, district No. 10, for a term of three months at a wage of thirty dollars per month, which was considered very good pay for country school teachers. The members of the school board were Turner Gardner, H. B. Thornton, and Orson Fields. These men were very pleasant to work with, and during the two terms I taught there we had no differences of any kind, and I became their debtor for many kindnesses shown me. They must have had a great deal of confidence in me as a teacher, for none of them

visited the school during my two terms' work for them. My pay, though not very large, was promptly paid each month, and my orders were never discounted. My certificate was from Superintendent Merritt of Neligh. I had made a trip to Neligh to take an examination, but the superintendent was away for the day, so I took the matter up by correspondence and he kindly endorsed the credentials I held from Wisconsin. It may be of interest to the new generation of teachers in this county to have a picture of the school-house which stood on a hill where it received the full benefit of every wind that blew and all the rain and sunshine that fell. It was built of sod, having two windows and one door but no floor, except the earthen one made and provided by nature. Having been built for some time, the walls, had settled, making cracks through which the snow freely sifted during storms. After one severe storm I was just one hour taking the snow out of the room. The seats and desks were rather rude — made by the carpenter who put in the windows and door. Some of the pupils furnished their own chairs. Needing a blackboard, Mr. Gardner had one made in Oakdale per plans and specifications we furnished. In all my teaching I never had another board of equal size to do the service and afford the good that this one did. The stove was a "box" one, a type but little used now, and for wood only. In speaking of this I cannot warm up to my subject, for, in the three months that stove was never hot. It was such a sociable old piece of iron! It courted familiarity, and never repulsed one by a burst of heat. Hundreds of times that winter that stove was blessed, by pupils and teacher, by the "laying on of hands." How many times I looked into its depths in hopes that symptoms of fiery zeal might be noted only to meet with the discouraging sight of a feeble fire at the back end and water oozing and dripping from the front end of a mass green elm wood.

This was the "hard winter," the winter which opened with a three days' blizzard October 16, 1880, and lasted

until May, 1881. Bitter cold and howling storms were the order of the days and months. Farmers could not move their crops, much small grain was still unthreshed, and a great deal of corn still in the fields under from eight to ten feet of snow. Fuel was scarce and thousands of bushels of corn were burned. Though there was general hardship and no little suffering, one heard very little complaining or fault finding. It was a fine spirit of endurance, grit, and hope that pervaded the snow-bound communities. My school enrolled something over thirty pupils, ranging in age from five years to nineteen, pursuing studies all the way from the alphabet to physiology and algebra. These boys and girls nearly all lived from three-fourths of a mile to two miles from the school-house. All the pupils came on foot, except the Saxton boys, who drove a little white horse and housed him in a hay stable they had made. The attendance was excellent, and tardiness infrequent, the older pupils seldom being absent or tardy. The pupils were studious as a whole, some of them being remarkable for their earnestness and zeal. They were very pleasant in disposition, easily controlled, and very susceptible to good and inspiring influences. The previous instruction must have been of a solid character, for those most advanced were above the average in attainments. I look back upon that term of school with nothing but pleasure. While the discomforts were many, they were all incident to physical environment and now serve as a background to throw into more vivid and distinct relief the cheerfulness, hope, good-will and nobility of character of the fathers and mothers, and all the sweet, endearing charms of childhood.

My second term was that of the winter of 1881–82, and was as pleasantly passed as the other, without the physical discomforts. The winter was very mild compared with the previous one and coal was furnished for fuel. During this time the entire school went out twice to fight prairie fire. In one place where the fire ran there had been fifteen feet of snow the winter before. The county super-

intendent made but one visit during the two winters. Superintendent Merritt spent about one and a half hours with us one afternoon and found every one on his good behavior, lessons well learned and well recited. His visit had a happy effect, for, as the teacher stepped for a few minutes out of the room "to speed the parting guest," one of the largest boys gave expression to the exuberance of his feelings by cutting some fantastic "pigeon wings" in the middle of the room, much to the amusement of his audience. Caught in the act by the sudden and noiseless entrance of the teacher, he was arrested in the half completed execution of a difficult number, at once pleaded guilty, and thereafter enjoyed the distinction of being the only pupil in that school in two terms who, in three minutes' time, had passed through the states of active transgression and adequate punishment with all the varying emotions incident thereto. To this day I do not know Superintendent Merritt's opinion of that school and its teacher.

The writer's acquaintance with other schools and teachers widened somewhat during this second term. The weather being pleasant and the roads good, pupils and teachers went about more, visiting the "lyceums" held in St. Clair school-house several times. To this time I have respect for the abilities, as debaters, of some of the hard-working farmers that used to gather at the debates. They were bright, intelligent, resourceful, and often eloquent, and I would again enjoy the exhilaration I used to feel while listening to them, could I hear them now.

This school district, No. 10, which has been described at some length, was no better nor any poorer than some others in the county. It stood as a type, and was representative. The hardships of one locality were the lot of pupils, teachers, and parents in other communities. School-houses were usually poor, accessories meager, and opportunities for pedagogical training were entirely wanting, yet all things considered, the teachers would compare favorably with those of this generation. They were unusually

bright, and, on account of circumstances, were resourceful and apt in getting the education necessary to teach and in the application of that knowledge as teachers.

Let me here pay a sincere tribute of honor to the fathers and mothers who were the "power behind the throne" in those country districts. When I think of them and of what they did and endured, my heart is filled with a sense of profound honor for them. Many of them lived in sod houses or dugouts, containing the most meager furnishings; all were not so fortunate as to own a team and tools sufficient to farm with; many were struggling with debt, which was like a mountain in the path of their prosperity; bank interest was two or three per cent a month; proper clothing and even food was out of the question; what they had to buy seemed dear and what they had to sell appeared cheap; fuel, food, clothing, shelter, and public taxes had to be provided for out of a financial budget that was always shrunken and sometimes empty. And yet the rights of children to acquire the rudiments of education — the right to possess "the three R's"— was carefully guarded and provided for. The schools were evolutionary; as to location, private house, sod school-houses, frame houses; as to pay, eight dollars, twelve dollars, twenty dollars, thirty dollars; as to the teacher's alma mater, country school, graded school, high school, and at present, normal school, college, university. Sometimes the year's school was only three months, and the district that could afford to have six months of school was both fortunate and affluent. Under all of these discouragements and hardships these parents were cheerful, hopeful, helpful, and stout-hearted. God bless those that are still with us, and may their sunset years be full of peace — of that peace that comes only to those that have nobly endured severe trials and tribulations — and may this later generation be glad that they have such a noble heritage.

It was no misfortune for the boys and girls of that period to be sent to school "beset by these severities." I often wonder at the proficiency and capacity of many of those

children. Some of them who had only three or four months' schooling would "fairly drink up their books." It was astonishing how much and how easily they would learn in a single term. Principles would be grasped, reasoning comprehended, and an amount of work turned off that was surprising. There is a psychological reason for this. During the years of deprivation and privation their minds had not remained dormant. Though deprived of the mental *pabulum* given by school they had other that was as nutritious. Their physical activities had been many and these were always in association with the mental. From early childhood all must be helpful, in working about the house and barn, the care of the stock about the premises and upon the prairies, the plowing and sowing and planting, the harvesting of the crops, the preparation for wintering the stock, the observation of nature in all her different moods of changing seasons, the learning of habits of insects, birds, and wild animals, hunting and fishing for necessary meat food, — all these activities were educative and made the mind open, receptive, impressionable, keen and alert; hence their surprising capacity to acquire "book learning" when the opportunity came. The lack of school privileges had been in some homes compensated for in part by good books and periodicals such as Youth's Companion and St. Nicholas. Papers and books were freely loaned and eagerly read so that the outside world was frequently brought within the home horizon. Everything in the nature of information that came from books, papers, visits to town, conversation with visitors and chance acquaintances was "grist" to the mental "mill" of these boys and girls, and busily and profitably did they grind. Boys and girls of those far-off years — young citizens of a splendid period of empire-building, our land will never see your like again, for all the hard conditions that made those times heroic have passed away; to-day I greet you in love and admiration and believe wherever you help in the world's work that work will be the better done and that your community will be the better because, "poverty cradled you and adversity was your playmate."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE EXPERIENCES OF A SCHOOL TEACHER IN ANTELOPE COUNTY IN THE EARLY DAYS — CONTINUED

BY C. D. BON OF OAKDALE

KNOWING that some changes would be made in the Oakdale school, I became acquainted with the members of the board, Messrs. W. W. Putney, S. C. Fairchild, and I. N. Taylor, and made an application for a position, to which I was finally elected. I do not say "principalship," as there were but two departments, and so there was in the schools a very mixed and chaotic condition, and but little chance for grading. During the year up to the time I began teaching, in April, 1882, there had been four different teachers, I making the fifth. Miss Lettie Cooper taught through the entire year and was efficient in the work and well liked by pupils and patrons.

I found the educational interests of the community divided between the public school and a seminary which had been planned for Oakdale, and which plan had been carried out to the extent of holding a short term in the unfinished hotel building. It was in the plan that the public school should do the lower grade work, and that the seminary would finish the product in this so-called higher institution. This seminary had but one instructor, the principal, who was also the pastor of a local church. During the first week of April, 1882, the corner-stone of the seminary was laid with impressive ceremonies. I can vouch for the high quality of the addresses, for I heard them all, having dismissed my school to attend. Great were the expectations of the founders and sponsors, and I felt "blue," for I had seen, in another state, in a community much more thickly settled than this, a long, tedious and wasteful struggle between a small denominational school and the public school — a struggle in which the

public school was for years dwarfed and the other one finally crushed out.

Gates College had just been started at Neligh and by some of the projectors of the Oakdale Seminary it was thought imperative that Oakdale should have a denominational school of a high grade in order to compete with her rival commercially, politically and educationally. The result was even worse than had been forseen, for the seminary lived a puny, weak, forceless life for a number of years and finally ceased to struggle; the building was torn down and the site sold, and nothing now remains but the memory of a fruitless undertaking that should never have been begun. The Oakdale community, in its attitude towards and interest in the public schools, suffered for years and was not entirely united until the last decade.

I remained in the Oakdale schools three terms, resigning at the close of the winter term, 1883. Miss Cooper had been unable to complete her winter term with me on account of severe sickness, so her sister, Mrs. Campbell, finished her school — six weeks — and we were succeeded by Mrs. Olmstead, of Wisconsin, and Miss Compton, from Holt County. Miss Compton resigned before her term was out and was succeeded by Miss Lettie Cooper. The following teachers had been in the Oakdale schools in two years: Thomas Huntington, Miss Mina York, Professor Wilson, Madge Wilson, Miss Pettigrew, Lettie Cooper, C. D. Bon, Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Olmstead and Miss Compton, ten in all. Is it any wonder that the grading was in a jumble and slow progress was made?

Another hindrance to good work was met,— the un-uniformity of text-books. While there was a sad want of uniformity in the country districts, the mixture in the Oakdale schools was grotesque. Some classes, arithmetic for instance, had as many as three different texts, with subject matter differently arranged and somewhat differently treated. The unifying of this dissimilarity was laborious for teacher and unsatisfactory to pupils. A legacy from the seminary combination plan of the terms before

was a college arithmetic and a physiology, and a class recited in each. Of course the work in such texts was too difficult for most pupils, and a change in text and in the grade of work meant some friction, and the chaotic condition of texts and grading necessitated too large a number of recitations. A part of the year I had twenty-four recitations per day. Perhaps some teacher at the present time, sitting in a well graded room, may have the time and talent to estimate the quality of the instruction and the benefit to the pupils. My present judgment is that the country schools of that period, 1880-83, as country schools, were superior to the village schools of Oakdale and Neligh, as village schools. The quality of the teaching generally was good, the classes not so crowded, the text-books were more uniform, and the course not so mixed nor the recitations so numerous.

I visited the Neligh school during the mid-winter of 1882-83. Mrs. Olmstead, who taught at Oakdale the following spring, occupied the one-room school-house that Neligh then had, with the more advanced classes, and Miss Mary Nichol taught the primary classes in a little room down town. This little woman was a superior teacher and her primary work would be called good even now. Upon the whole I thought that the Oakdale schools were not any behind those of Neligh, unless it was in the matter of uniformity of books; in some particulars I thought them ahead.

The public schools of Neligh were handicapped by Gates College, which was then, I think, in its initial year. Gates College was doing some work that should have been done by the lower grades of a good public school. Some of its work was far below college preparatory work, and the public schools suffered in consequence. Parents sent their children to Gates, first, to help a struggling school, and next, because it sounded so loud and large to say, "My son is in Gates College," "My daughter has just begun her college course." Schools of the grade of the Oakdale seminary and Gates College, in their primitive years can-

not successfully compete with good public schools in doing the class of work that the public schools are designed to do. Years ago Gates was reduced from a college to an academy rank, but as long as it pursued a legitimate preparatory and college work it ranked high, measured by the best standard, its product. During this year I became acquainted with President Holt and Professor Gregory of Gates, both young, able, and enthusiastic teachers. These remarks upon Gates College are made with no intention to criticise, but merely to show the educational conditions of the time as I saw them.

Perhaps some of the "old timers" still remember a debate upon woman suffrage that was held that winter, 1882-83, in Neligh. The question was stated affirmatively and was maintained by I. N. Taylor and C. D. Bon, of Oakdale, and denied by President Holt and Judge O'Day, of Neligh. There were at least three earnest, vigorous, cogent arguments from the speakers' respective view points. Three of these speakers still live and I wonder if time, experience, and knowledge have modified their views upon that question which is not settled yet, but is still alive!

The county records make no mention of teachers' institutes prior to 1882, but investigation shows that at least two were held before that year. The first held in the county, probably, was one held in the school-room in Oakdale in September, 1874, and lasted three days. Robert Wilson, now our county judge, was the Oakdale teacher and dismissed school to accommodate the teachers' gathering. J. E. Lowes was the county superintendent, and F. A. Cogswell, county superintendent of Madison County, and Ephraim Squires of the same county were the principal instructors. Lectures were given on two evenings, one by some speaker whose name cannot now be recalled, and on the second evening by J. M. McKenzie, state superintendent. He also gave some entertaining readings, some of which Mr. Forest Putney quoted to me the other day, remembering them after a lapse of almost

thirty-five years. Mr. Suter tells me that this lecture was one of the grandest he ever heard. He also says that the attendance was good and much interest manifested. At that time Mr. Suter was teaching one and one-half miles north of Oakdale. This record is indebted to Mr. Suter, Mrs. Thomas Warner, and Mr. Forest L. Putney for interesting data. Former County Superintendent Merritt now of Seattle, Washington, in a recent letter to the Neligh "Register," furnishes the data of an institute held during his term of office, but does not say just when. Mr. Merritt was county superintendent from January, 1880, to January, 1882, a term of two years, so that his institute must have been in the summer (presumably) of 1880 or 1881. The place of meeting must have been the school-room that did service for several years and would hold about fifty people. The length of its session is not mentioned, but the conductor was Miss Merritt, of New York, the superintendent's sister. From all that I have heard of her, aside from what Mr. Merritt in his brotherly praise says of her, she must have been a lady of fine culture and high ability as a teacher. I regret that the names of the lecturers, as well as other items of interest, are not obtainable.

The third teachers' institute, as far as we can learn, was held in Oakdale, August, 1882, in the Methodist church, and lasted two weeks, It was held in the church, as the school-rooms were too small. S. S. Murphy had succeeded Mr. Merritt as superintendent and was desirous of having a large institute. Times were getting better, schools increasing in numbers, wages of teachers advancing, and interest in schools was keeping pace with progress in other ways. He made, in some respects, large plans, to-wit, to have a large attendance and to furnish an ample program of study, but his funds being very "short" he did not have enough help. The writer, who was teaching in Oakdale, was engaged as conductor early in the year, and an elaborate plan of study and recitation, based upon the Wisconsin institute system, was scheduled and published. If Mr. Merritt's institute was the high-water mark one, this one of Mr. Murphy's was the deep-

water one, for conductor and teachers were flooded with work. In scope the curriculum covered everything from spelling to geometry, including algebra and botany. Both study and reciting were done under high pressure, and I think that the mental digestive apparatus of the teachers must have worked over time the rest of the year to dispose of all the material that their intellectual maws were crammed with during that nine days' meeting. Bear in mind that all the recitations were conducted by one teacher, except a few in spelling conducted by Mr. Murphy. Mrs. C. L. Austin was employed by the superintendent to teach music, which consisted largely of chorus work, and was a pleasant restful relaxation from the strain of the text-book grind.

The only official record of this institute is the following, which I saw for the first time the other day: "Paid C. D. Bon for nine days, institute work, twenty-seven dollars; paid Mrs. C. L. Austin for nine days' institute work, twenty-five dollars." On reading this I fell into a train of reflection which is not necessary to record here. During that session Mrs. Doctor Roberds gave some demonstrations in vivisection, which were interesting and instructive. From time to time the institute was addressed by visitors, among whom was W. W. Putney. Mr. Putney was capable of making a strong address upon any subject that he had studied, and upon this occasion he was at his best. State Superintendent W. W. W. Jones lectured the evening the institute closed. He was a real able lecturer and his address was inspiring and uplifting.

In closing I may be pardoned for saying that the forty odd teachers composing that institute, about two-thirds of them young women, could not be overmatched in this or any other county, then or now, for brightness, earnestness, zeal, and hard work. I bestow no fulsome praise when I say they were a fine, a splendid company of young men and women. I appreciated them then, and was honored with their friendship; I still hold them in affection in my heart of hearts.

To the pupils, parents, and teachers whom I knew in those far off years I send sincere and heartfelt greetings.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A Mother's Experiences in Raising a Family in the Early Days

BY MRS. CATHARINE E. BECKWITH OF NELIGH

THE early settlers in the county had many difficulties to contend with, that those of more recent date can hardly understand or realize. Not alone in raising their families, but in various other ways; but that this could be done, and most successfully too, has been fully demonstrated to the people living here to-day. Parents that settled on raw homesteads with young and growing families have, many of them, lived to see their children grown to manhood and womanhood — men of enterprise and integrity, filling positions of trust and some of them taking the lead in the highest affairs of the county. The daughters are women of modest deportment and refinement; esteemed and respected by all who know them.

Glancing back thirty-five years in the history of the county, you will see these same people coming on their homesteads, with their families and household goods in immigrant wagons, with only the naked prairie before them. A hard proposition it looked to many, but there was no time for idle speculations or regrets. The first consideration was some kind of a habitation, which at that time was composed principally of logs cut from the scrubby timber that grew along the banks of Cedar Creek and the Elkhorn, and ravines that ran back from those streams. Many of the dwellings were cabins of one room, and the housewife that had two, with perhaps a loft above, was considered most fortunate. As the country filled up with new settlers they had to go back from the streams and very soon found there was not enough building timber for all, and some other means must be resorted to, which they did by plowing up the sod where the coarsest and rankest

grass grew, the roots of the grass helping to hold the sod together, and this was laid up like brick and formed the walls for their homes, which were more comfortable than an outsider would suppose possible, being cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter then a frame house would be. But the walls were not all. The brush and saplings that could not be used for the body of the house were very useful for roof covering, laying the brush lengthwise on the ridgepoles and using the saplings for rafters, spreading coarse grass over the brush, and finishing the whole with a thick covering of earth. Floors were found to be a luxury that many people, for want of means, were obliged to dispense with, and lived for the first year or two on the bare earth. Some of the settlers dug cellars or eaves and covered them over with dirt; these were called dugouts. Some dug into the side of a ravine; the front was walled up with logs or boards with a window and door cut in them. A stranger passing would take notice of the improved fields and look in vain for a dwelling and discover it first from the smoke coming out of a stovepipe sticking up through a little mound of dirt. It would be useless to enter into all the details of opening up a new prairie farm, there being so much to be done and seemingly all at the same time. All have heard the old song, "Everybody Works but Father," but this was altogether a different proposition. Father struck the pace usually with a team and breaking plow, and every one else fell in line as their age and strength would permit.

After many months of hard toil and the rush was in a little measure over with, as the family gathered together, evening after evening around the humble board, fond parents looked with pride upon the happy, smiling faces of their children, freckled and tanned by the wind and sun, but bright and wide awake withal. They deeply felt the need of doing something more for them than could be obtained from Antelope County soil. Husbands and wives held long serious talks together upon the wisdom of having placed themselves in a position that would debar their

children from all school privileges. Neighbors, when they met, talked the subject over and consulted each other upon the advisability of trying to build a school-house. There were many difficulties in the way, but they were a brave people, full of courage and push; for them to feel a need was, if possible, in some way to meet it. This agitation not long after resulted in the calling of a meeting of the parents interested, the organizing a board and agreeing upon a location. This last was perhaps one of the most difficult things to do, as it was impossible to locate where it would be convenient for all and be near the center of the district. Taxes were voted, that there might be money to pay a teacher, and a day appointed for the men of that district to come with their teams to work on the school building.

Now all great institutions of learning are built out of various kinds of material. It was just so with these people — some built of sod, some of logs, a few mostly of tar paper with boards enough to hold together. It usually took weeks and perhaps months before all this could be accomplished and the building ready for use. But accomplished it was, and in the course of time an instructor duly installed in the district building, which was not at all handsome or very comfortable, but like many of the homes that the children came from it was habitable, and here many of the children received their first instruction in book-learning. It was all right during the warm weather, and if some of them did have to go a long way they were well, happy, and carefree and rather enjoyed the change. At recess and noon the hot sun did not hinder them from playing ball and tag with just as much vim and enjoyment as the boys that play these same games on the perfect grounds of Harvard College, and with far less fear of spoiling their clothes or wearing out their shoes. The winters were different, and it took brave hearts that looked forward to their future good to send those thinly clad children two or three miles to school when the snow lay in drifts and piles and not a house upon the way. And when the short winter day was

drawing to a close, how anxiously did the mother watch along the frozen way for the coming of the little forms that had been absent since the early morning. But these winters were not all days of sleet and storm and cold winds. Far from it. Many of them were bright and beautiful, with soft, balmy air and refreshing breezes when you felt it a delight to live. It was the sudden extremes that made the climate trying and dangerous, not alone to the children but to their fathers, who had to be out at their work, let the weather be what it would.

The grain had to be marketed mostly in winter, hauling to Columbus, the nearest market town, a distance of sixty miles, and more for some of the settlers, making a trip of four days for every load of grain. There they bought their groceries and clothing, or rather the cloth that was intended for clothes for the family. The mother living here to-day can take her choice of half a dozen towns in the county, where she can purchase a complete outfit for herself or family, and can hardly realize what it was for the mothers of former years when there were very few sewing machines, and every garment was fashioned by the mother's unceasing labor. Often till the small hours of the morning could these patient and unselfish creatures be seen toiling over the little half-worn garments, renovating and repairing, putting new thumbs in the mittens, knitting new heels and toes in worn-out stockings, that her family might be more comfortable the succeeding day, for many times there was no change of outside garments and what they had must suffice for week days and Sundays. My readers will begin to say, "What an unhappy people they must have been, living in such straitened circumstances." Not at all. They were a cheerful, joyous people, taking them as a whole. They did not, as now, need the whole world with a fence around it to make them happy or contented. They took whatever good that came in their way with thankfulness of heart and when adversity came, as it many times did, in the form of drought, hail, and grasshoppers, they bore that with patience and fortitude, looking forward to something

better in the future. It was remarkable, the unselfish feeling of good comradeship and kindly interest that existed among them. If any one met with losses all were sympathetic and helpful as far as circumstances would permit. If any one was in distress, every one was anxious for their relief. If any were sick, there were plenty of willing hands to nurse them back to health and strength. This was just as it should have been and surely pleasing in the sight of the Lord. But how sad to contemplate that this unselfish interest in each other is so much a thing of the past. The very privileges they were deprived of and the difficulties which they overcame have helped to make them the prosperous and energetic settlers of to-day.

To illustrate how little it took to make the children have a good time I will relate an amusing little incident that happened under my own observation. It was early in the spring when one of the neighbor boys came to spend the day with a family of friends where they were all boys. He was greeted with enthusiasm; they were so rejoiced to have a companion and playmate that all began at once relating the news of the farm. Among other things, that one hen had begun to lay, and that old Cherry had a red calf. Now old Cherry was an all white cow and had at one time been owned by this boy's father, and they felt, of course, that he would be interested. Very soon they all went trooping off to the stable to inspect the red calf. Coming back after a little while, they brought with them a few eggs which they asked to have cooked for their dinner The winter had been long and cold, vegetables were scarce, and table delicacies were rare. No wonder they were desiring a change for dinner. The mother told them that there were not eggs enough for five sturdy boys, which was very disappointing. She came to the rescue and suggested that she make a custard pie instead, in which there would be a plenty for all. The vote was unanimous. The pie was made and baked in a long bread or dripping pan, the rest of the dinner prepared, and the boys were seated by themselves around the table that stood on the bare dirt floor,

and was drawn up close to the bed, upon which two of the boys sat. The dinner progressed rapidly and very soon there was a call for the pie, which was served out to each in large squares by the mother's willing hands, serving the little guest first and returning to her work. There was a moment's hush, then two or three voices asking all at once, "What's the matter with Miley?" The sight that met the eye on looking around, was enough to bring a smile to any face. There sat the company with his bright, curly head thrown back, his eyes closed, and his mouth open, drawing in long breaths of cold air and shaking his head from side to side, in an effort to cool that mouthful of burning pie so he could swallow it, which he did, saying in a tone of relief, "There, I saved it." The boys said, "Well, why didn't you spit it out?" He replied with a little laugh that he didn't want to waste it. This boy is now a man of enterprise and integrity engaged in the lumber business at Raymond, Washington.

As yet there has been no mention of religious privileges and some may think that the settlers were too busy to look after those things, or that they were a secondary matter. This would be a grave mistake, for from the time there were a half a dozen families settled along Cedar Creek, a Sunday school was organized and held regularly from house to house, and as the country settled up and school-houses were built, there were more and better privileges, there being among the early settlers of the county, living on homesteads, two Congregational ministers and one Methodist, who preached to the people occasionally or regularly, as seemed best. One of them held meetings regularly at his own house for more than a year, preaching the gospel to all that came. This was the Reverend Henry Griffiths of West Cedar valley and one of Antelope County's most worthy pioneers.

Those who have read Samantha Allen's works will remember how passionately fond she was of "episoding," and I hope that if I do a little of this and relate my own personal experience during the first blizzard we encountered after

moving into the county, I may be pardoned for so doing. It was in the month of February, 1873, that we arrived, a family of seven, with all the livestock and household goods that we possessed, three loads in all — children, furniture, feed for the family and horses — and moved into a log cabin of one room, twelve by fourteen feet. This had been walled up hastily in the fall and roughly chinked and plastered with mud, which as it dried had fallen out in many places, through which the cold wind was blowing. The roof had been covered with green boughs, the leaves still clinging to them and covered over all with dirt. The prairie mice, thinking this a good refuge from the blasts of winter, had congregated there, I may safely say, by the dozens. There was the bare earth for a floor with the grass still standing on it; the rough logs, with the cracks partly stopped with mud, but more where there was none; a half window in each end, with a door in the east, made of rough boards, and the threshold we had to step over every time we passed in or out was the biggest log in the whole building. I stood there with my baby in my arms, taking in the situation. A person who has never had any experience of that kind can hardly imagine what one's feelings would be under like circumstances. After a little, I went and sat on a pile of boards that were lying in the snow, and took myself well in hand. Had I not the courage to endure what other mothers had endured before me? At any rate, here we were under these conditions and the comfort and happiness of my family, I knew, depended largely upon me, and I went into the house perhaps a sadder, but wiser woman, with a firm determination that whatever lay before me I would do my best. I asked my husband to take off the wagon sheet, which we tacked overhead on the side of the roof where we put the beds, the two beds filling one end of the room. This would keep the leaves and dirt out of our faces while we slept. The other things we arranged as best we could in the space that was left, putting some under the beds and hanging some upon the logs. Here we passed the remainder of the winter, which proved

to be fine and so warm that my husband rented land on Cedar Creek and sowed his wheat the last day of February and the oats in March. The grass on the prairie was pretty good the first of April and as feed was scarce nearly every one turned their cattle out on the prairie to pick their living.

Easter Sunday that year came on the 13th of April. What a lovely, soft, sunshiny morning it was, and after breakfast, as we were expecting friends to spend the day with us, we went out for a walk over the prairie, the children running ahead hunting for flints and arrow heads. About ten o'clock, as we were on our way back to the house my husband remarked that the wind was getting around in the north and that it was beginning to cloud up. About eleven o'clock the company came in the midst of a slight shower of rain and a few claps of thunder. This was not unusual at that season and caused no surprise, but the showers continued and during the afternoon we had three, always accompanied with some thunder. As toward night it grew colder and the rain increased, the guests went home to look after their stock that was running out. We had not yet been able to get a well put down on our place and had to haul our water in a barrel, about a quarter of a mile, from a little creek. My husband said, "I believe I will get a barrel of water to-night, we don't know what the weather will be in the morning." I walked along to hold the horses while he dipped the water and as we came back it began to sleet. We saw a flock of brants flying around as if lost. He ran on ahead after his gun and killed two of them. It continued to rain and snow until bedtime, the wind blowing cold from the northwest. In the morning when it seemed about the usual time to arise, there was very little light in the room, and it continuing just the same we arose and looked out of the door and found snow everywhere. The windows were almost snowed over and it was so damp that it clung to everything it touched. The wind was terrible, We ate our breakfast in the gloom and then my husband made an effort to reach the barn, but

had to come back after several vain attempts, and the wind not subsiding, he gave it up for that day. And what a day it was — dark and dreary inside, and cold winds and storm outside. The water in the house gave out, and going to the barrel we found it blown full of snow and frozen over, and we had to melt snow from that time, for after the storm was over the ravine where we got water was full of snow for several days. There we sat the whole day through, listening to the wind as it blew the snow against the house with great force, and thought of the poor stock that was without food and very little shelter from the storm. We had plenty of fuel where we could get at it so we did not suffer from cold or hunger, but it was the dread and suspense that were so terrible. The children hovered around the stove and whittled — they made all the litter they chose without reproof. My husband kept the fires, melted the snow, and scolded about the weather. I tried to repair some of the children's clothes but the light was so poor that toward evening I lighted a lamp and prepared the evening meal, which all ate with relish regardless of the raging storm. We went to bed early and the night was passed in quietude.

On Tuesday morning we did not wait for the light when we thought it time to arise, but found no change in the weather. Nothing could be seen but snow whirling and drifting, rising high in the air, then dashed back to earth with cold and cruel fierceness. About the middle of that forenoon the wind seemed to abate somewhat, and another attempt was made to reach the suffering stock. He was gone a long time, and a very trying time to the waiting ones, anxious for his return, when finally we heard a call, and opening the door, he staggered in with a young colt in his arms, which he placed on the floor, and after he had recovered his breath a little he made the trip a second time after the mother which he led in shaking with cold and snow balls clinging to her mane. He told me to take the bedding off the bed farthest from the stove. On this there were two ticks filled with hay; one of which he opened and

spreading the hay over the floor said "Come, Nellie," and she walked up to the hay and commenced to eat. He placed her colt near her and she stood there, untied, without once trying to leave the corner in the twenty-four hours she was with us. Not so the colt. In his effort to stand on those awkward legs he blundered against everything he came to. One of the other horses had broken loose and stumbled over a bank into a snowdrift and smothered. The other two and the cow stood there shivering with cold, the snow having blown into the hay so that it was almost impossible to get enough out for them to eat. One of the children was sick that day and had a high fever. How to manage the sleeping that night was a puzzle, there being one bed for seven of us. I began by placing folded comforters between the bed and the wall, to make it as wide as possible, and then set chairs along the front side of the bed with a feather bed and plenty of covers. On this I put two of the boys, two more at the foot of the bed, and that left three for the head. In this way we passed the night. The Scripture tells us that "weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." It was so in this case. When we got up it had stopped snowing, the sick child was better, but a trackless waste of snowdrifts, such as I have never seen before or since, and some of these drifts lasted until the middle of June. Clear and pure looked the earth as far as the eye could reach, but this was the 16th of April, and when we looked at it that way, it was rather disheartening.

There was no time to indulge in a fit of the blues, every one had work to do, and all were glad they had the privilege of getting out again. Some of my readers will perhaps think they could not patiently have borne what I and many others did, some being compelled to lie in bed for lack of fuel. Others lost every head of their stock, and scarcely a family that did not meet with some loss. As for ourselves, we thought it a happy termination to so dreadful a storm, and have never in all these years ceased to be thankful that it came upon us at a time when every

member of the household was safe beneath the shelter of that humble log cabin that I once so heartily despised. The following summer and fall we were amply rewarded with abundant crops. My husband raised six hundred bushels of wheat of excellent quality on twenty acres of rented land, two thirds of which was his share. We also had a large crop of oats, and an abundance of everything else that this country produced at that time. We have experienced no more such terrible storms, and when there have been bad storms, we have been far better prepared for them.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A Little Girl's Life in Antelope County in the Early Days

BY MRS. KATE M. BRAINARD OF OAKDALE

I WAS not born in Antelope County. That is not my fault, but it is my misfortune. It is a good place to be born in. I was born in Dodge County, Nebraska, October 27, 1868, and came to what is now Antelope County with my parents in May, 1870, at the age of one and a half years. My earliest recollections of the county history are therefore rather dim, with the exception of a few incidents which I recall very distinctly. I can see the little old log house with its tiny windows, and the floors made of basswood puncheon which warped so badly that my baby feet could not step over their edges, and shrunk so there were great cracks between the planks. So the puncheon floor was soon torn up and thrown out of doors. After that we lived on an earth floor with strips of rag carpet spread down to make it look more homelike. I can see the deep ravine which was back of the house, which was a source of mystery and delight to us children as long as we lived on the old homestead. It was about half a mile or more in length, with steep, high banks, and filled with timber. Here many kinds of delicate wild flowers grew, such as the yellow and blue violet, wild honeysuckle or columbine, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and many other favorites. Here we learned our first lessons in botany long before we went to school. My brothers were great lovers of everything in nature and so we soon knew not only the names of every tree, shrub, vine, and flower in the old ravine, but much about the nature and habits of the same, and the same way with the birds and animals that we saw.

I have often thought that while the children of the earliest settlers were deprived of many advantages of an

older settled country, still they had many privileges and pleasures that do not come nowadays. Every Sunday afternoon that was pleasant we would coax father and mother to take a walk up the ravine. We played there all the week by ourselves, but it was always new and more interesting when papa and mamma could go, too. We always learned something new, heard new stories, so that all the beautiful things took on new beauties, and every badger hole was fraught with new mysteries. We learned, or at least my brothers did, to know the track of every animal from the tiny mouse and rabbit track to the track of a deer or antelope. About half way up the ravine and near where it branches off in two deep cuts, stood the old cedar tree whose lower branches furnished us with a number of Christmas trees. Farther on there was a clay bank where nothing grew, but which furnished a clay excellent for moulding. There we made all kinds of funny figures, built railroads and bridges, forts and cities, and spent many long, happy hours.

Our pets were numerous and of great variety. We usually had anywhere from one to half a dozen rabbits, either the small gray variety or the jack-rabbit, in the summer, which we would keep a few days, when they would either get away or we would get to feeling so sorry for them, seeing them shut up all the time, that we would let them go, only to replace them in a few days with others. At one time my brother brought home a full grown fox squirrel. I suppose he was too old to be taught new tricks. At least he never took very kindly to confinement and never got very tame. He was always gnawing out of his box and racing all over the house, knocking things off the shelves and stirring things up generally. So we soon turned him loose to take care of himself. Another favorite pet with my youngest brother was a large horned or hoot owl. I don't know why he wanted them, because, living entirely on small animals as they do, it was hard to get food for them. But I suppose they were an interesting study to him; at least he had several at different times.

One of these, I remember, caused me considerable grief. It was after our new house was built, the old log one being fitted up and used for a granary. The owl was kept upstairs in the old house while down stairs in an empty bin was an old mother cat with her family of four baby kittens. I visited the kittens many times during the day, but kept away from the owl unless the boys were there, as I didn't like to hear him "crack" his bill at me. What was my astonishment and rage on one of my visits to find Mr. Owl in the kittens' nest. Two of the kittens had already disappeared down his capacious throat while the third was all down but the tail, which was fast disappearing. I gave one scream, seized the remaining kitten and fled to the house to pour out my trouble in my mother's arms.

Another entertaining little pet was a young wildcat. This the boys obtained by trading some flour for it with some Ponca Indians who were camped on the creek, trapping. He was as playful and affectionate as any kitten, and we soon grew very fond of him. But one morning while a neighbor waited at the door with a heavy lumber wagon the kitten got under the wheel, and, the horses backing up suddenly, his short life was ended. But of all our pets the best loved by not only the whole family but by the whole neighborhood were Frank and Fanny, our antelopes. I can see them yet so plainly, although I was only a tiny little girl when father brought them home. Queer, wobbly little fellows they were at first — could scarcely stand alone— but with good care they grew rapidly and were soon running all about. They were never tied up or kept in confinement in any way, but roamed all over the place and neighborhood at will. But they knew where home was and who was their protector, for if, as it frequently happened, a neighbor's dog gave chase, they came flying home and up to old Captain (our dog), who immediately sent Mr. Dog home about his business. Fanny was a quiet little thing and never gave any one any trouble, but Frank was a "rake" and was full of pranks that he was always trying to play on us. When

the garden was planted he would sneak up quietly from behind and paw the seeds out of the ground as fast as they were put in, until he was discovered at his mischief, when he would go bounding away out of reach. I couldn't go out of doors alone without he would knock me down — never hurt me but seemed to delight in seeing me tumble over, for I would no sooner get on my feet than down I would have to go again, until my screams would bring some one to my assistance, when away he would fly again, just out of reach, where he would stop and bound up and down, fairly quivering with delight. But his favorite trick was always reserved for strangers, — strange men. I believe he was quite gallant to the ladies, but let a strange man come there and Frank would always keep his distance, feeding quietly just as any respectable antelope should, apparently taking no notice of anything until father, becoming interested in the conversation, would forget to keep watch of Frank, who would slip up quietly from the rear — Whack! and over would go Mr. Man like a ninepin and before he could collect his scattered senses and pick himself up the antelope would have put a good distance between them and be quietly waiting for a chance to repeat the performance. The boys decided that they would break him of this disagreeable trait. So one day, when some one was there, they borrowed his coat and hat and arranging them on a post as lifelike as possible, waited for Frank. He came, full tilt, but to his amazement the supposed stranger never moved. He tried it again, this time a little harder. Same result. This was something he had never met with before, and evidently he could not understand it. He backed off, shaking his head, took a run and another bout with the post. I do not remember how many times he butted his head against the post, but after a while, tired out, he stopped, a sadder if not wiser antelope.

The spring that they were a year old, Fanny grew restless and uneasy and seemed to want to go away, but Frank wouldn't leave. She coaxed him for a week or two, going

away for a day or two at a time and then returning, but as Frank evidently couldn't be prevailed upon to leave home, she finally gave up and took her leave without him. After Fanny had gone Frank stayed closer at home, following the members of the family around like a dog, and if possible, he grew more mischievous than ever. I could scarcely play out of doors at all, he bothered me so, and one day I overheard father tell some one that he was afraid he would have to kill Frank, he was so mean to his little girl. Now I had no idea what the word kill meant, but if it was something that would fix Frank so that he couldn't knock me over every time I went out of doors I wanted it done. So every day after that I would tease to have Frank killed. One day as I ran around the house I came suddenly upon a sight that struck me dumb with horror. There hung our antelope, head down, throat cut, and father just ready to dress him. Now I knew what "to kill" meant, and my baby heart was torn with sorrow and remorse to think I had been the cause of my troublesome playfellow's death. It is needless to add that none of us could eat a mouthful of the meat, tender and sweet though it was, but we gave it all away.

Fanny stayed away all summer, but returned in the fall, bringing a strange antelope with her, which followed her clear down into the cattle yard, just across the creek from the house; then becoming frightened, he ran back over the hills and out of sight. Fanny acted pleased to see us all and stayed all winter, leaving again the next spring just before the big April storm. We never saw her again and as so many antelope and deer perished in that storm it is more than likely that such was her fate.

In those days we usually had plenty of wild meat, such as elk, deer, antelope, with prairie chickens at certain seasons of the year. We children were used to it and liked it, but mother used to get tired of the wild meat and was always telling how much better beef was and wishing we could have some beef. Finally Mr. Putney, a neighbor, killed a beef and of course divided with his neighbors,

sending us a liberal supply. We children were delighted and could hardly wait until dinner for mother to prepare some of that steak. But oh, how disappointed we were! It seemed so tough and tasteless, and I wondered how any one could prefer beef to venison.

We were always quite proud of our school. Our district was No. 1, and that of itself was considered a distinction. We had a frame school-house while the other school-houses, with one exception, as far as we knew, were sod or log. As this same school building was afterwards bought by Mr. Eggleston and used for a chicken house, I hardly suppose it was as fine a building as it seemed to our childish eyes. But we did have a good school and pleasant surroundings, for the school-house stood in a cozy little nook, not so very far from the creek, where there were lots of timber, wild flowers, and many delightful places for play. When I commenced going to school, and for some years afterwards, I was the only scholar that was born in Nebraska. The other children used to twit me of this fact and rather poked fun at me for never having been out of the state.

In the year 1878, when I was ten years old, I took a trip with my parents and little sisters to the southern part of the state, a distance of four hundred miles there and return, to visit an aunt. We went in a covered wagon and camped out at night. What a trip that was! A journey across the continent in a Pullman car couldn't compare with it. I learned the name of every county visited, and every stream we crossed, and every town that we passed through or any where near. It may be interesting to some to know that in that whole distance we only saw two or three frame houses outside of the towns. At Kearney I saw the cars for the first time, and father bought some pears, the first we had ever seen. I remember that I got out and walked across the bridge over the Platte River, which is a mile wide at that place. But my greatest joy was that when I arrived at my aunt's there was a high hill back of the house where I could see over into Kansas.

I know now that if father had had any idea how I longed to step across that state line he would have driven the five miles farther to have gratified me. But I kept my thoughts to myself and we came back home without my having been "out of the state." But thereafter when the children would taunt me of that fact I would toss my head and say, "Well, I guess I have seen over into Kansas, anyway." And I really believe that that gave me some prestige.

It was during my twelfth year that we bought an organ and I commenced taking lessons of Mrs. Leduc in Oakdale, going back and forth, a distance of six miles and return, on horseback. But the same year the railroad reached Oakdale and Antelope was no longer a frontier county.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Pioneers of Antelope County as I Knew Them

BY E. P. M'CORMICK, OF CAVE CREEK, ARIZONA

THE honorable secretary of our Pioneer Association has greatly honored me by assigning to me the preparation of one or two chapters of the proposed history of Antelope County. He has accurately sounded my heart; he knows that though I have been bodily absent from that county for many years that my heart, my affections, have remained there, to yet cling to old-time associates. Our pioneer experiences were the golden ones of the lives of all of us. In our several ways we did about our best, and now that peace and rest which God giveth to His beloved is reflected on the evening twilight of our lives.

It is my recollection that most of us who settled in Antelope County in the early seventies and before, were veterans of the Civil War. And I include among such veterans those who had not borne arms, but had stifled personal ambitions and dispositions for war, to remain at home to engage in the indispensable duties of protecting the homes of us as of them; to cultivate the fertile farms, and thus raise food for the armies, and to engage in the resolute defense of the government against the Copperhead element whose penchant for murders and rapacious anarchy was not palliated by the soldierly magnanimity of the rebels in the field. Indeed, our brothers who remained at home for the above purposes were as brave and as devoted as we were out in the front, and when the war closed and these stay-at-home fighters had accomplished and discharged their pledges we were more than willing to divide honors with them.

The services of these home guards put the same grim, martial stamp on their faces as that on ours, powder-smoked.

It is my recollection that these veterans came mostly out of the besieged homes and indomitable commands of Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin. There were veterans also from other states, but Iowa furnished the most of them, and then some less the other states above named. I recall them as I first came in contact with them, as strong, heavily bearded men, calm in manner and indomitable in purpose. Then these veterans but vaguely suspected that which later they knew, that when they migrated from their Iowa and Wisconsin homes to Nebraska and to Antelope County, they thus reënlisted in a war of conquest of empire that for them would end only with their lives. After a while those veteran immigrants realized what a solemn thing it was to be specially set apart for life-long fighting in a conquest of empire.

When first they came from their eastern homes they were calm, silent, taciturn, and resolute in mood, but after inhaling that intoxicating ozone of the plains for a few years their manners changed; they became easily excited and almost insanely enterprising and altogether too venturesome. The intoxication of that prairie ozone was exhilarating, but not bestially inebriating; enthusiastic, but not depraving. It made us too enthusiastic in community and county and municipal enterprises and too neglectful of private interests. There was a daring disposition to contract debt because the ordinary processes of industry and economy were too slow. God seemed to goad all of them to their utmost capacity, mental and physical. Thus they did in one year more than their sires did in five; and more than their brothers left in Iowa could do in three years.

As to the pioneer women, they had to have level heads. The Lord had no more reliable material out of which to provide brakes and restraints on the delirious enthusiasm of the husbands and fathers. No wonder the home women of Nebraska declined the right of suffrage; it was all they could do to control the votes of their husbands and sons. I clearly realized after I had been here in Arizona a few

years that God never especially needed my advice as to running the world, that my departure and leaving the "Old King" and the venerable judges Decamp and Thornton as Antelope County's representatives in the celestial cabinet thereafter, enabled heaven and earth to move along more smoothly. For years I have not in the least offered advice to the Almighty.

But while I lay back in the super-calm enjoyment of this climatic paradise my appreciation of the almost superhuman capacity of pioneer associations increases with each passing year, and I come near worshiping the restless heroism of the pioneer women.

The entrance of most of us veteran pioneers into Nebraska was more or less dramatic; mine was tragic; and why not relate it here and thus clear up some old-time mysteries?

During the holiday week, 1876, I was laboring afoot on the seventy miles intervening between Columbus and Oakdale. As I left Columbus I was inexpressibly wretched. I felt myself not only an outcast from human habitations, but God-forsaken. Then I knew the agony of the soul dropped quick into hopeless perdition where the soul, crying out, "Oh, my God! my God! grant but once in a century of time one instant of thy kindly consideration," is answered only with mocking echoes. That was not only a *via doloroso* but a sheer drop from the higher trail through purgatory deep in black perdition. I was a ruin, physical, mental, and moral, and no other hand than that of God could lift me up. What an experience was that! To realize while one's feet sank deep in snow the flames of hell leaped from his head and soul. No wonder that I was meditating suicide. But just then I looked up and to my left saw the little Catholic church of the Shell Creek Gleason settlement. Not my will but something else led me off that road towards that church. I found it unlocked; I went in and fell prone upon my face before the altar. I cried out, "Oh, my God, behold me a human sparrow fluttering wounded on the earth. Is another chance for me possible, even to Thee!" For a half-hour revolving only

that thought in my mind I lay face downward; my attitude was a prayer. At last I felt a beatific assurance suffusing my entire being, and stood up to gaze on the image of the crucified Christ reflecting the rays of the setting sun. I knew that some angelic presence was there and I felt (not heard) this, "Go forth now, for after a while complete renovation will be yours." And I knew that ere long some rehabilitation would come to me; as it did in a way that I had not dreamed of. The whole thing seemed supernatural. Robert and Mrs. Wilson can recite how suddenly success and glory enveloped a wretchedness and misery that was unspeakable. But I gained then that worth beyond Rockefeller's capacity to buy. A realization that God is, and that that grand originator of this era of time was indeed and in truth a materialization, a phase of the Godhead. Having attained to such faith and such fruit of the cross I had that immeasurably, by any standard of this life. A life eventful and romantic makes a basis for pleasing reading, but, Oh, my God, it is an awful one to live. I am glad that mine is now in its evening twilight.

I wish that I had space to mention by name all the pioneers as one by one I came on them, but even the names are becoming elusive as I grow old. The first I came on near the county line was Hosea B. Thornton and wife, and they fed me, almost exhausted by hunger and fatigue. Then next the Fields brothers, Motter and son, the Palmers and Krygers. I need not mention more in and about Oakdale. The next to encounter were A. J. Leach and sons, Eggleston, Inman, and Swett. Next I met the Perry brothers and Clark brothers of Taylor valley; John Story and others of the Willow; the Contois and Patras of Frenchtown and Uncle Wilyum, then Duke of Neligh.

Let me make a brief special mention of a few old pioneer notables. Lambert, a lovable and universally popular man, has been some years with God. Uncle Wilyum is still living and I presume as much averse, as in old time, to me being mentioned as his nephew. I am thinking now of a day when the county clerk's office was on the first

floor of Taylor's brick block of Oakdale, and Sol King's office was just above. Sol got up to thump, thump that wooden leg of his on the floor. For a moment Robert Wilson clawed nervously at his bald head and then murmured, "How can I stand that!" And then he exclaimed, "Help, Lord!" Next, as Sol came down the stairway like a load of brick, he called out, "Here I come Robert! What do you want?"

A few years ago I got a letter from Sol, who was then at Rodondo Beach, not far from Los Angeles. He wanted to know of me if southern Arizona climate might help or increase his rheumatic ailments. I replied, "Sol, I love you, but aren't you forgetting that I am in — well, Arizona is hot in midsummer and I don't want to share my misery with you. You be content to play seven-up with Doctor Cox awhile longer." And I am recollecting how Putney used to haul his grists past the Oakdale mill on the way to the Neligh mill and James Crum hauling his grists past Neligh down to the Oakdale mill.

Then there were Judge Decamp and Lambert who never did seem to appreciate the fact that they were fathers to two of the handsomest young women in Nebraska. Those girls were types of the femininity that that climate could mature. The Nebraska girl has an intellectual beauty that shines through a perfect complexion. The Spanish type of this region, ripe and luscious at too tender an age, soon fades, but the beauty of such Nebraska belles does not begin to fade until middle age, and at thirty is in full bloom, while the Arizona Spanish at twenty is rapidly fading. Our sons and daughters reared in that climate, I think, will be in many respects superior to us.

Some persons reviewing as I am now the reckless debt contracting and real estate mortgaging of too many of these Antelope County pioneers, might condemn, and indulge in moralizing that is offered too late in life. But I am not condemning; for it seems to me that when those veteran pioneers enlisted in the Civil War, that they got a training in those unconquerable regiments of Iowa,

Wisconsin, etc., that shaped their very souls for lifelong fighting; and they died fighters, and some yet survivors are no less fighters now. I claim that God set them apart to make conquest of that Plains Empire, and that no other sort of men had such indomitable courage and restless energy to ignore privation while engaging in a struggle with inimicable climatic conditions. The latest chapters of Mr. Leach's history give some idea of the unconquerable spirit of those pioneers. Young men, our sons, as you look on the pinched, deeply lined faces and gray heads of those surviving Antelope County pioneers, consider that God's hands were laid on those gray heads. Thanks be to God, they are all now close to the sleep which God giveth to his beloved and honored. Treat Grandma with studied kindness and veneration for she, like the mother of our Lord, was set apart by the Holy Spirit to do all that women can do; and on each recurring Decoration Day lay lilies by handfuls on her tomb. During her life few and short were her periods of rest, and she had next to none of the adorning trifles which the heart of woman craves; but now, dozing in her rocker, she dreams happy dreams, or passed out and into the other life she, reclining in the bosom of Divine Providence, smiles down on us her eternal contentment. Oh, blessed, blessed forevermore be the memory of Grandma, the Antelope county pioneer.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Reminiscences of the Early Days

BY L. H. SUTER OF NELIGH

IN 1871 while in Iowa I conceived the idea of going west to get a homestead. As I have no time or space to go into details, I will say that I landed in Norfolk, which was then thirty miles beyond the terminus of the railroad. Here I formed the acquaintance of Allen Hopkins, who told me that there were good opportunities in Antelope County, and I came with him and shared the hospitality of his home for the first night in the county. The next morning I started out on foot. The valley was very sparsely settled and there was no house between the John Nies farm on section 35 and the Trubadour Reynolds farm on section 7, in Neligh township. After passing the cabin of John Cowin, on section 5, Burnett township, I noticed a cow that had become entangled in a picket rope and had fallen on her back in a helpless condition. I retraced my steps to inform Mr. Cowin and helped him to extricate the animal, and then passed on. I came to where P. D. Thompson now lives, on section 22, in Neligh township. Here a dim road ran north over the hill. Through curiosity I followed this trail and found the residence of Alexander Belmer, on section 15, in Neligh township. He told me that there was some fine land up the creek and if I would stay to dinner he would take me up to see it, and of course I acquiesced. He made the trip on a pony while I walked by his side, and being suited on section 10, in Neligh township, I retraced my steps for the land office at Dakota City.

About where John Malzacher now lives on section 31, in Elm township, I met two covered immigrant wagons. They stopped and plied me with all manner of questions, and when they could think of nothing more we passed on,

and after going some distance I chanced to look back and the men were leaning from their seats looking after me. This was renewed several times with the same result and after my return to Antelope County I recognized Lewis Potter and W. Nunnaly as the persons whom I had met. They had been here and homesteaded the northeast quarter of section 14 and the north half of the north half of section 22, Neligh township, and had just returned with their families. They informed me that when passing Mr. Cowin's he hailed them with a warning to watch their horses that night, as a young man had passed by that forenoon on foot, on a pretense of hunting land, that he had stopped to help get up a cow that was cast and he was a very suspicious looking character, and of course they recognized me by the description when we met. They camped the ensuing night in Salnave's grove on section 36, in Neligh township, and took turns to sit in the brush all night with their guns to watch their horses while the writer was sound asleep at the log cabin of Mr. Rollins, on section 1 in Burnett township.

Well, I went to Cuming County and worked through the summer at fourteen dollars per month and taught school in the winter, but had taken pity on others who had families to support and let them have money, and in spite of blizzards, storms, grasshoppers, and other calamities I found at the end of four years that I had held my own financially that I had had nothing to begin with, and was still in the same boat. Well, I went to Iowa in the summer of 1875 and worked for a time and then concluded that what I lacked was a wife, and I got married, and then found that I lacked everything but a wife and upon our return to Antelope County in December I had two dollars and a half in money, no house except the little dugout unfit for habitation, no team, nothing with which to go to housekeeping, and the hoppers having taken the crop that season, the parties whom I had accommodated had left the county and moved to their wive's folks. I felt as though we should follow suit. Well, Samuel Lewis was batching on Samuel

Lee's claim on section 14, in Neligh township, and he allowed us to move in with him. Early next morning as I went to Neligh to get the mail W. C. Gallaway asked me if I wanted to help to fan wheat in the mill that day, saying that he would give me a dollar and board or a dollar and a half and board myself. I had had my breakfast, a nickel's worth of crackers would suffice for dinner, and think what a joyful supper I would eat with my wife, but imagine her thoughts, newly married, and in a strange country, out on the frontier, husband promised to be back in two hours. Well, that dollar and a half pacified matters, and when I said that I had the promise of another day's work happiness reigned supreme. Such enormous wages at a time when there was a dearth of money, and cottonwood lumber and breaking were the medium of exchange, it really seemed that providence had come to our rescue. Well, one dollar was invested in sugar, and we used the last of that sugar the next fourth of July.

The settlers were poor but very kind, and helped us build a log cabin twelve by fourteen feet in which we lived for many years, and one neighbor offered us the use of a pair of steers and a wagon, providing I would break the steers to work. The offer was gladly accepted and we managed to get in fifty acres of crop, worked two days for one to get my corn cultivated, and between times I cut cord and stove wood for J. W. Getchell in Neligh, making from fifty to sixty cents per day, and just as the small grain was ripening the grasshoppers came so thick that they obscured the sun, and in less than an hour there was neither silk, tassel, nor blade left in our twenty-acre field of corn.

We smudged the small grain as best we could, and borrowed an old-fashioned cradle and worked day and night until we had the thirty acres harvested. I did the cutting and Mrs. Suter the raking, and between us we bound it and took turns stacking. I stacked it first but the hoppers had trimmed off the blades which made it slippery and I put it all in one stack and then had it half way up, and

larger at the top than the bottom, and the succeeding night a heavy rain fell and wet it to the ground. We then hauled it out and dried it, and my wife built four splendid stacks, and while we had lost our corn, potatoes, and vegetables we felt extremely grateful to think that we had flour. I have hauled wheat to Columbus and sold it for thirty-five cents a bushel, hauled hogs and sold them for one dollar and fifty cents per hundred, but in spite of all the disadvantages and hard times my early days in Antelope County were the happiest of my life. There was sociability on all sides. Everybody was on an equality. They were all neighbors and ever ready to assist each other. I could come to Neligh barefooted, with patched trousers, driving a yoke of oxen, and not feel embarrassed. I also recall going with a crowd of young folks to a dance at Frenchtown, fifteen miles northwest of Neligh, in a lumber wagon drawn by a yoke of oxen.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CHARACTER AND NATIONALITY OF THE EARLY SETTLERS — THE COWBOYS — RELIGIOUS INTERESTS — SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES ESTABLISHED IN THE EARLY DAYS

IT is a matter of common belief that the frontier settlers consisted in a large degree of a lot of lawless, reckless adventurers, caring little or not at all for the usages of a well-ordered law-abiding community, having no interest in schools, churches, and other civilizing and refining influences. Such an opinion is wholly incorrect as applied to the early settlers of Antelope County or in fact to the whole rural population of the state of Nebraska in an early day. The first settlers of Antelope County were distinctly American by birth. The census of 1880 makes the following showing as to nationality and nativity:

Whole population of the county by the census of 1880, 3,953. Of this number 3,440, or a little over 87 per cent, were born in the United States and 513, or a trifle less than 13 per cent, were born in foreign countries. Those born in the United States were furnished chiefly by the following named states, to-wit:

Iowa	614
Nebraska	603
New York	374
Wisconsin	345
Illinois	338
Ohio	278
Pennsylvania	252
Indiana	148
Michigan	145
Missouri	40

The foreign born population was distributed chiefly among other countries as follows:

British North America	116
Sweden and Norway	92
German Empire	91
England and Wales	85
Ireland	65
Scotland	29
Denmark	14

Our home-born immigrants came almost wholly from the progressive western and middle states directly east of us, Iowa giving the largest number of any, while New York, Wisconsin, and Illinois came next in order as to the number furnished. Of our foreign born immigrants Canada furnished the largest number, followed closely by the Scandinavians and Germans. Our foreign born settlers were as intelligent, progressive, law-abiding, and in every way as desirable as our own native born people. There were no more indications of lawlessness among the early settlers than are found in any of our well ordered neighborhoods of the county at the present time.

For two or three years both Neligh and Oakdale were the headquarters for a portion of the year during the winter months of some of the cowboys who were employed by the cattle ranchmen farther west. These cowboys were a careless, happy-go-lucky sort of fellows, spending their money freely and somewhat given to drinking and gambling, but were not of the criminal sort, nor were they bad men at heart. Once they shot up the town of Neligh, firing their revolvers and Winchesters up and down the principal street, the citizens meantime thinking it prudent to stay indoors. Once at Oakdale they had a little fun among themselves by shooting off their revolvers just as they had all mounted their horses to ride to a dance, doing no damage except to kill one horse on which one of their number was mounted, the ball striking the horse just back of the rider's legs. They were here, however, only a short time,

making their headquarters farther west as soon as the railroad was extended on up the valley.

It has been told in Chapter XXX how the county was divided up into school districts immediately after its organization in July, 1871, and how school-houses were built and teachers employed and schools established throughout the entire settled portions of the county. But before any move was made to establish common schools, Sunday schools had been organized and the preliminary steps taken to organize churches. In the month of June, 1870, the settlers on Cedar Creek gathered one Sunday at the house of H. W. Swett and held a prayer meeting. This was the first religious gathering in the county so far as it is known. At this meeting there were present members of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and Free-will Baptist churches. The first steps were taken that day to organize a Sabbath school, and before the close of the month a Sabbath school was established, which has continued to the present time and is still known as the Cedar Creek Sunday school. The first home missionary to come to the county for the purpose of organizing a church was Rev. George H. Wehn, a Methodist Episcopal minister whose residence was at Fairview, near the center of Madison County, and who had for his circuit all of Madison County and all the settled portions of the territory west of Madison. He made his first visit to the county in the spring of 1871, and appointed preaching places and held meetings at Judge Snider's, in Burnett township, and at the Cedar Creek settlement. He organized a church at Cedar Creek, the old class-book which is still in existence reading as follows:

Cedar Creek class, organized September 24, 1871, by George H. Wehn of Madison Mission, Covington District, Nebraska Conference. The members of this class at the organization were Jesse T. Bennett, Helen L. Bennett, Samuel P. Morgan, Margaret Morgan, William A. Shepherd, Norman B. Eggleston.

This was the first church organization in Antelope

County. The Cedar Creek class, however, was short lived. In the spring of 1872 Reverend Mr. Wehn organized a class of nine members at Judge Snider's, which soon became known as the Oakdale M. E. church. Soon after this the Cedar creek class was given up, most of the class uniting with the Oakdale class.

Although Reverend Mr. Wehn was the first missionary to take up the regular work of the church in Antelope County, he was not the first to preach or to hold religious services. The first sermon preached in Antelope County was in August, 1870, at the house of James H. Smith, in Blaine township, by Elder Thomas Dobson of the church of the Latter Day Saints. Elder Dobson also preached at the home of I. E. Kieth, in Ord township. These two were the first religious services held in the county at which there was a sermon preached.

At the time of the funeral of Fannie Snider, mentioned in Chapter XVII, which occurred October 6, 1870, there was no preacher nearer than Buffalo Creek, in Madison County, where Reverend Mr. Harvey, a local Methodist minister, had taken a homestead. Reverend Mr. Harvey was accordingly sent for and conducted the funeral services. This was the first funeral service held in the county, and Reverend Mr. Harvey's sermon was the first preached in the eastern half of the county.

Some time during the year 1872, although the exact date cannot be positively stated, Rev. J. W. Kidder of Norfolk came by invitation of the settlers of Cedar Creek and organized in that settlement a Congregational church. This was the first Congregational church in the county. In the spring of 1872 Rev. Henry Griffiths came into the county direct from England. He was a minister of the Primitive Methodist Church in the Old Country, but after settling on a homestead in West Cedar valley, he cast in his lot with the Congregationalists and in 1873 organized the West Cedar valley Congregational Church. He traveled and preached extensively both in Antelope and Boone counties, organizing churches wherever there was a favorable opening.

As early as the year 1872, and possibly in 1871, a Catholic priest, Rev. Peter James Bedard, came to Antelope County from Sioux City. He was a French Canadian by birth, and cast in his lot with the Canadians who had settled in Frenchtown, taking a homestead, and becoming one of their number. He preached and visited not only among the Catholics at Frenchtown, but also at Oakdale and as far east as Battle Creek, in Madison County. When General John O'Neill founded his Irish colony in Holt County in 1874, Father Bedard served the settlers of that locality for a time.

In the fall and winter of 1873, through Father Bedard's exertions, the material was prepared and hauled to the grounds for a church which was built early in the spring of 1874. It was built of logs cut from the timber along the Elkhorn, and was the first church building erected west of Norfolk.

In the year 1881 the Methodist church building was completed at Oakdale, it being the second church built in the county and the first by a Protestant denomination. It was dedicated December 18, 1881.

It appears, therefore, that the Methodists, Congregationalists, Latter Day Saints, and Catholics were the pioneers in church work in Antelope County. These were, however, quickly followed by others and we find that by January 1, 1884, in addition to those named above, the Baptists, Presbyterians, United Brethern, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and United Presbyterians, were all well established in the county.

It is the recollection of the writer that a spirit of good fellowship prevailed generally among the Christian people of the county in the early days, and that little attention was paid to sects or creeds or denominations. They were glad of the chance to go to church and Sunday school, and it was a very common occurrence to travel five or six miles on Sunday to attend a religious meeting.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Sunday School Work of Antelope County in the Early Days

BY REVEREND C. H. FRADY OF BILLINGS, MONTANA

OUR concern for the future too quickly casts a shadow over the things of the past. People, generally, do not care so much for the things of the past, its achievements and failures, as they do about the opportunities and allurements of the future. However anxiously we may be rushing on for the things of the future, let us understand that we cannot detach ourselves from the past. Every one filleth a niche in the bulwarks of time, and each generation buildeth a stepping-stone between the two eternities.

Preceding the main subject of my article for Antelope County history, I wish to give a few instances of my connection with the county of earlier date. During the summer of 1871, as surveyor in Pierce County, I located some claims for homesteaders in the northeastern part of Antelope County. One day, in the summer 1871, looking southwest from my home, located on Willow Creek, near the present townsite of Pierce, I saw a mirage in which appeared a grove of timber. I could see the trees distinctly. The day following, together with my hired man, we took my teams, a span of horses and a yoke of cattle, started for said grove, thinking it was not far distant. On and on we went, across the stretches until nearly night before we reached the grove, which was located about one mile northwest of Mr. John Hunt's present home in Antelope County. I think it was called "Elm Grove." We saw no ax marks in the grove. We secured two wagon loads of fine hackberry wood for our prize.

Again, during the summer of 1871, a state road was located between Columbus, Platte County, and Niobrara,

Knox County. The counties through which the road ran bore a proportionate part of the expense. The northeastern part of Antelope County was crossed. Afterwards I bought up the claims against Pierce and Antelope counties from George W. Quimby, the surveyor. It was in April, 1873, just after the terrible snowstorm and blizzard on the 14th, 15th, and 16th, that on horseback I undertook to go to Oakdale to present the claims before the honorable board of county commissioners. It was a hard jaunt for my horse on account of the deep snowdrifts. I reached the bulffs north of Crandall Hopkins' place and rode across the deep gulches over the hard-packed snow. My horse sank but little in the drifts, and picked the twigs off the tops of some oak-trees which were nearly buried in the snow. I rode down into the valley at the Rollins ranch. There I saw a memorable sight. It was a large number of fresh cattle hides all stretched out on a fence. The Rollins people had lost heavily in cattle during the late blizzard. I kept on up the valley until I reached the home of Judge Snider near the Elkhorn, opposite Oakdale. I had to leave my horse there. The river was gorged with snow, over which I crossed afoot. Arriving at Oakdale, I found the board of commissioners in session. They considered my claim and allowed the same. I sold the warrant granted to Judge I. N. Taylor.

In 1873 to 1876 I was superintendent of public instruction of Pierce County. Among those who applied for certificates to teach in the county were Thomas Warner of Oakdale, Mrs. Waterman of Willowdale, and Miss Lizzie Wright of Elm Grove township. Each received a certificate and taught in Pierce County.

In 1875 I was a member of the Nebraska Constitutional Convention held at Lincoln, together with R. C. Eldridge of Antelope County, and sat in the legislature in 1877 with William B. Lambert of Neligh. In both assemblies I did all in my power for the benefit of my constituency as well as for that of theirs.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK

May 1, 1881, under the auspices of the American Sunday School Union I began work for the society, having northern Nebraska and territory west for my field. The first month I worked in Knox County. Then was detained by the sickness and death of my wife at Plainview. I moved to Neligh the latter part of June and canvassed Antelope County at once. I found in the county sixteen regularly organized Sunday schools, having seventy teachers and six hundred scholars, viz;

Neligh Union, 9 teachers, 75 scholars, William Lawrence, superintendent.

Oakdale Union, 9 teachers, 75 scholars, Mrs. P. E. Ritz, superintendent.

Elm Grove Union, 3 teachers, 25 scholars, G. S. Mills, superintendent.

Pebble Creek Union, 3 teachers, 28 scholars, Mrs. D. J. Taylor, superintendent.

Divide Union, 3 teachers, 27 scholars, J. L. Whitney, superintendent.

Pleasant Valley Union, 3 teachers, 25 scholars, A. J. Seaberry, superintendent.

Ives Creek Union, 3 teachers, 25 scholars, C. K. Motter, superintendent.

Bethel Union, 3 teachers, 30 scholars, C. M. Seeley, superintendent.

Clear Creek Union, 3 teachers, 20 scholars, S. S. Murphy, superintendent.

Millerborough Union, 9 teachers, 75 scholars, H. Miller, superintendent.

Saint Clair Union, 4 teachers, 30 scholars, C. K. Motter, superintendent.

Cedar Creek Union, 4 teachers, 30 scholars, William H. Whitmore, superintendent.

West Cedar Valley Union, 3 teachers, 30 scholars, O. Eggleston, superintendent.

Clay Ridge Union, 4 teachers, 50 scholars, H. Stebbins, superintendent.

Frenchtown Union, 4 teachers, 30 scholars, Alex Graybiel, superintendent.

Glenalpine Union, 3 teachers, 25 scholars, W. B. McQueen, superintendent.

Professor Wightman, Sunday school missionary, York, Nebraska, in 1880 visited Antelope County; while present he organized a Sunday school, at the Horne school-house. The school closed in the fall. It was reorganized by I. P. Gage in July, 1881, with 4 teachers and 35 scholars, Mrs. Palmer, superintendent. During the remainder of the year 1881 I organized five other Sunday schools in the county. The first at Clearwater station on July 3, enrolled 3 teachers and 21 scholars, Mrs. J. H. Kelsey, superintendent. The sessions of the school at first were held in the residence of Mr. Snider. The second school, organized July 17, six miles northwest of Neligh in a little, board house belonging to James Crum, consisted of 4 teachers and 35 scholars; I. E. Keith was chosen superintendent. Mr. Crum named the school "The Grecian Bend," which name the community bears to date. The third school was started at the New England Valley schoolhouse July 24th, having 4 teachers and 31 scholars, Mr. George Gatenby acting as superintendent. On the same date, I also organized the fourth school at Willowdale, with 3 teachers and 36 scholars, Mrs. Morrison, superintendent. And the fifth school was commenced at the home of Grandma Aken, 7 miles north of Neligh, with 5 teachers and 40 scholars, J. L. Whitney, superintendent.

At the close of the year 1881 Antelope County had 22 Sunday schools with an enrollment of 75 teachers and 800 scholars. October 6 to 7, 1881, a largely attended Sunday school convention was held at Oakdale. The county Sunday school association was reorganized.

During the year 1882 the Sunday school work throughout the county developed very satisfactorily. Twelve new

schools were added to the county list, having an enrollment of 45 teachers and 377 scholars.

Sunday schools organized by others: the Welcome, Rev. D. S. Hulbert, superintendent; Center Park, E. Harlan Clark, superintendent; Sunnyside, J. C. Johnson, superintendent; Union Valley, C. Olliver, superintendent; Antelope Creek, O. Eggleston, superintendent; Little, A. Curtis, superintendent.

Organized by C. H. Frady: Eureka, Mrs. J. W. English, superintendent; Royal, J. H. Womeldorf, superintendent; Jessup, John Gardner, superintendent; Swedish American, Charles Nelson, superintendent; Moran, L. Rice, superintendent; Pleasant Dale, W. A. Chumbly, superintendent. Also reorganized the St. Clair school February 12th, Mr. C. K. Motter, superintendent. Gain in the school over the past year, 3 teachers and 30 scholars. Reorganized the Pebble Creek school, C. L. Grover, superintendent. The schools generally in the county increased in attendance, especially at Oakdale and Neligh. By the close of the year there were in the county 34 schools having 150 teachers and 1,350 scholars; total, 1,500 persons. The Sunday school association promoted the standard of work in the county and held its annual convention at Neligh.

The year 1883 was a marked one. Several of the pioneer union schools were reorganized into denominational schools. Those at Oakdale and Neligh were subdivided, the Oakdale Union to the Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal, the Neligh union to the Congregational and Methodist Episcopal. I organized three new schools in the northern part of the county. On June 29th, the Kemple, 4 teachers and 35 scholars. William Dunn, superintendent; August 12th, the Hammond, 3 teachers and 35 scholars, Samuel Skeen, superintendent; September 9th, the Simmons, 4 teachers and 40 scholars, William Armstrong, superintendent. September 16th, I visited a new school that had been organized at Council Hill, conducted by S. Kirk, having 3 teachers and 30 scholars. The year closed with 40 Sunday schools in the county; attendance

180 teachers and 1,620 scholars; total, 1,800. The county Sunday school association was very alert to the general welfare of all the work and held a rousing convention in the fall.

Seven new schools were added to the county's roll during the year 1884: The Highland, P. Ashleman, superintendent; Plainfield, N. M. Johnson, superintendent; Lawn Ridge, Frank Todd, superintendent. Those organized by C. H. Frady: March 30th, Grand Prairie, Joseph Ball, superintendent; April 6th, Little Daisy, John Curtis, superintendent; April 13th, Elgin, E. A. Shain, superintendent; May 25th, Rural, Frank Moore, superintendent. The enrollment of the above seven schools was 28 teachers and 295 scholars. Grand total of the attendance in the county, 2,113; number of Sunday schools in county, 47. The association's work in the county was very beneficial.

The year 1885 was a very successful one, 18 new schools being organized throughout the county. Organized by others: La Beau, S. P. Baldridge, superintendent; Hoskins, Clayton Bibb, superintendent; West, Miss O. E. Rice, superintendent; Rayner, John Rayner, superintendent; Mitchell, U. P., Thomas Shaw, superintendent; Gloversville, Mrs. E. M. Libby, superintendent; Mentorville, Elias Smith, superintendent; Bethel, George Lefever, superintendent. Started by C. H. Frady: West Cedar Valley Congregational, J. F. Smith, superintendent; Royal No. 2, William M. Fannon, superintendent; California Valley, F. M. Housh, superintendent; Crawford Valley, Mrs. T. C. Lewis, superintendent; Glendale, H. S. Wetherby, superintendent; Pleasant Ridge, C. R. Kirk, superintendent; Maple Grove, Fletcher Scott, superintendent; Mount Olivet, Thomas Todd, superintendent; County Line, Frank Weaver, superintendent; Eureka, Charles, Swanson superintendent. The attendance of the above eighteen schools was 73 teachers and 630 scholars, which raised the total enrollment of the county to 2,816 persons; number of schools in county, 65. The county Sunday school association was active in its work during the year.

The year 1886 was one of gracious results. Earnest work was done in all the schools. Twelve more new schools were added to the county list, viz: Chicago, W. H. Van-Gilder, superintendent; Lakeside, J. R. Nichol, superintendent; Eden Valley, Frank Weaver, superintendent; Verdigris, Mrs. C. H. Jearison, superintendent; Pleasant Hill, E. F. Skinner, superintendent; Pleasant View, W. N. Sutton, superintendent; Oakdale, German Evangelical, Samuel Clingman, superintendent; Neligh Episcopal, Frances Earl, superintendent; Bunker Hill, T. M. Olin, superintendent; Warner, S. D. Taft, superintendent; Star, Calvin Pratt, superintendent; Little Pilgrim, Mrs. Emma Barrows, superintendent. The above schools had 46 teachers and 410 scholars, making the number of schools in the county 77 and the grand total attendance of 3,272. The county Sunday school association held its annual convention and did effective work along its line. This brings my present chapter to a close. It can easily be seen that the number of Sunday schools had increased in five and one-half years from sixteen up to seventy-seven, and from an attendance of 670 up to 3,272. Antelope County at the close of 1886 had a larger per cent of its population in Sunday schools than any other county in the state, and the second place of any county in the United States, Harrison County, Iowa, holding the record. I shall always have a fond recollection of the many faithful co-workers in the county, and will ever praise the Lord for His wonderful blessing on our mutual work.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE FIRST MAIL ROUTE IN THE COUNTY — THE FIRST POST-OFFICES — THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE COUNTY FROM 1873 TO 1884

ABOUT the year 1866 a German colony from Wisconsin made a settlement in the northeastern part of Madison and the southeastern part of Pierce counties, the settlement extending at that time about four miles up the valley of the Elkhorn above the present site of Norfolk. These settlers received their mail from West Point, which was then the nearest post-office. In the year 1867 a mail route was established from West Point to Norfolk and a post-office established at the last named place. This Norfolk post-office served the settlers of Madison, Pierce, western Stanton and southwestern Wayne counties for three or four years, and all of the unorganized territory west of Madison and Pierce counties. The post-office thus established got its name in the following manner, as told to the writer many years ago by old Colonel Mathewson, who was one of the founders of the city of Norfolk. When the time came to send a petition to the post-office department to have a post-office established, the question of a name came up for consideration. After considerable discussion it was agreed upon by those interested to call the new post-office Nor'fork, a contraction of the words North Fork, and accordingly the petition went in this way. The post-office department granted the petition and established the post office, but gave it the name of Norfolk, evidently assuming that the petitioners had misspelled the name. From 1868 to 1871 the settlers of Antelope County got their mail at Norfolk, but as early as the year 1869 they began to agitate the question of securing an extension of the mail route from Norfolk west up the valley of the Elkhorn, Judge John H. Snider taking a leading part in this

movement. John Taffe, at that time the sole representative of Nebraska in the lower house of Congress, was written to, and becoming interested in the matter, he secured the passage of an act to establish a mail route from Norfolk northwest to the northwest corner of township 24, range 5 west, the last named point being also the northwest corner of Burnett township.

He also secured the passage of an act to establish a mail route from Norfolk to Niobrara, this last named route running through the northeastern part of Antelope County, which was as yet wholly unsettled. Through the influence of John M. Thayer these acts passed the senate and were approved March 5, 1870. Early in the year 1871 a post-office called Twin Grove was established on section 6, Burnett township, with John H. Snider post-master, and weekly mail service began in July of that year on this route. By act of Congress approved March 3, 1873, the route was extended to Frenchtown and by act of June 3, 1874, the route was extended from Frenchtown to the northwest corner of the state of Nebraska.

The first ten post-offices to be established in Antelope County, with the postmasters appointed, were as follows, coming in the order named:

Twin Grove, in Burnett township, John H. Snider, postmaster.

Gillespie, in Ord township, J. M. Gillespie, postmaster.

Antelope, in Blaine township, J. H. Smith, postmaster.

Frenchtown, in Frenchtown township, Jay Saxton, postmaster.

Ogden, in Burnett township, Crandall Hopkins, postmaster.

Neligh, in Neligh township, J. B. Thompson, postmaster.

Clyde, in Cedar township, E. R. Palmer, postmaster.

Willowdale, in Willow township, A. W. Waterman, postmaster.

St. Clair, in Grant township, E. M. Blackford, postmaster.

Jessup, in Verdigris township, Alex. McCollum, postmaster.

About the time that Ogden post-office was established, Twin Grove post-office was moved to Oakdale and the name changed to Oakdale and R. P. Elwood was appointed postmaster. As the county settled up new post routes were formed and new post-offices established until by the year 1880 nearly all parts of the county were supplied. Recently, however, all post-offices not directly on railroad have been discontinued, the rural free delivery taking their places.

Among the papers of the late William B. Lambert has been found the following memorandum relating to the first newspaper published in the county: "To Antelope County belongs the honor of having a newspaper established within its boundaries at an earlier date after the first settlement than any of her sister counties in the Elkhorn valley. This possibly can be accounted for from the fact that her population up to 1880 was almost exclusively American born, speaking the English language. Up to the date named Antelope County was the most distinctively American county in the state." The first newspaper of the county was the Oakdale "Journal," owned and edited by Robert P. Elwood. Mr. Elwood was a young man of good ability, well known and universally liked by the early-day settlers. He enjoyed the distinction of being the first justice of the peace, the first storekeeper, and the first editor of the county. His newspaper was a semi-monthly and was printed in the office of the West Point "News" and was sent up to Antelope County for distribution, its items for publication being prepard by Mr. Elwood and sent to West Point by mail. The first number of this paper was issued in June, 1873, but after the publication of five numbers Mr. Elwood was taken sick and died suddenly September 23, 1873, at the age of twenty-three years. The publication of the paper was continued by Dr. A. B. Elwood, a brother of Robert P. Elwood, until the spring of 1874, when it was discontinued.

In the month of April, 1874, Mr. M. S. Bartlett came to the county from West Point, Nebraska, and established the

second Oakdale "Journal," issuing the first number May 7, 1874. Mr. Bartlett employed Rev. Charles E. Sale, the first resident Methodist minister of the county and who was preacher, teacher, lawyer, farmer, or teamster, as occasion required, to move the printing press and office fixtures from West Point to Oakdale. Mr. Bartlett states that this removal was made by ox teams in April, 1874, just after a bad storm that left the roads in a very muddy condition and the poor fellow earned his money twice over. The Oakdale "Journal" continued to be published regularly every week at Oakdale until October, 1875, when, during the fierce county-seat war then raging, the proprietor was induced to move his paper to Neligh, where its publication was continued as the Neligh "Journal" until some time in the year 1879, when it was taken to Norfolk and published as the Norfolk "Journal." After the removal of the press and fixtures to Neligh in 1875 the Neligh "Journal" continued to be the only paper published in the county until April 7, 1877, when the "Pen and Plow" was started at Oakdale by Taylor and Noble, with I. N. Taylor as editor. The "Pen and Plow," however, soon changed hands, E. P. McCormick becoming owner and editor. In 1883 Mr. McCormick sold out to Boyd Brothers, who changed the name to Oakdale "Journal," and continued its publication at Oakdale. The Neligh "Journal," and the "Pen and Plow" continued to be the only papers published in the county until October 3, 1879, when Charles F. Bayha started the Neligh "Republican," which was afterward sold to R. K. Beecham, who continued its publication at Neligh. In January, 1881, the publication of the Antelope County "Eagle" was begun at Neligh by Wellman and Leake, but on August 6th of the same year the paper was sold to Judson Graves, who established the Neligh "Advocate" and issued the first number August 13, 1881. There were no other newspapers published in the county until the year 1885 which takes us beyond the limit of time that this present history is intended to cover.

Nearly all these early newspapers were ably edited and

well printed. M. S. Bartlett of the Oakdale "Journal," and afterward of the Neligh "Journal," E. P. McCormick of the "Pen and Plow," C. F. Bayha and R. K. Beecham of the Neligh "Republican," and Judson Graves of the Neligh "Advocate" were men of ability and experience in the newspsper business, and their publications were a credit to the profession, as well as an honor to Antelope County.

CHAPTER XL

The District and County Courts of Antelope County and a Sketch of the Members of the Bar

BY F. L. PUTNEY OF TILDEN

NOT unlike others who are contributing to the history of Antelope County, I have been disappointed in not getting information from sources that would make this narrative more interesting. In but few instances have attorneys responded to inquiry and I have no other resource than memory of both men and events. Writing the lives of men, if nothing else, is hazardous to the popularity of the writer, especially if the persons written about are yet alive. Legendary history, while often exaggerated, in most instances finds firm footing in some facts from which the legend sprung. In these memoirs I have attempted to write impartially. I became acquainted with most of the men of whom I write in the formative period of life, and what I say of them and contemporaneous events is fairly accurate. However, as amazing as it may seem to others, to discriminate between imagery and fact requires constant vigilance. In moments of abstraction there are conjured up by the brain many phantasies. To illustrate, in times of reverie and reflection the image of R. T. Maxwell, who once practiced law in Oakdale, appears and disappears like a phantom of delirium, until I am doubtful if he had an existence.

Forty-one years intervenes between the past and the present in the general history of the county. Amidst desert wastes and a productive commonwealth lie the extremes; but what of the interim? Mr. Leach, who is a volume of fact and energetic in research, is putting the events of that interval into history with painstaking accuracy and detail. But I ruminate. Away back on the break-line of memory, shadows are coming and going. I

see men and women at not quite middle age, stumbling, struggling, advancing, beaten back, and again encouraged to a last effort to preserve the nucleus of a home. They are fighting, bravely fighting,— builders of empire, fit objects for hero worship. I see boys making toward stalwart manhood, girls budding into womanhood, with no other thought but the simple life, innocent and pure as the wild nature about them. It may be fanciful, but I think of them as being as much a part of Antelope County as its streams and prairies. The Acadian life, the primitive habitat, the Johnny-cake like mother made, the lyceums, the school teachers and school mates, the wearing apparel so scanty at times that it approached the paradisical abbreviation, the ball games between Oakdale and Neligh, the protracted meetings in the old school-house, where that good old patriarch, Father Lawton, so often prayed for both spiritual and material blessings, and where Uncle Jesse Bennett, with tears streaming down his cheeks, asked for absolution from sin — and I never heard of his committing any — here in this hallowed atmosphere followed the dance, which in those days was as pure as any parlor social, and I hear even now strains of Mike Wolf's violin and the voice of Doc Snider as he calls out, "Salute your partners and all promenade."

Yes, I see and hear all of this and more. I see seams of care, chiseled into the cheeks of parents in 1872 in a single day, when they witnessed, after a year of hope and expectancy, a bounteous crop consumed by unwelcome marauders from the skies. These and kindred thoughts are well in the foreground of memory as I write these lines, and I would like to span the intervening years and take by the hand at least all the pioneers of the first decade. Intermingled with these struggles a species of grim humor often would flame up to brighten the pathway of hope. I shall mention two incidents at the risk of becoming tiresome. In 1874, when the grasshoppers had eaten everything but the earth itself — for they were not epicureans by nature — there appeared a number of poems over the signature of Hans

Fritzer. It is related that the day following the visit of the hoppers, Hans went out where his growing corn had been, viewed the skeleton stalks that stood like grim sentries of his dead hopes, and epitomized the tragedy in the epigram published in the Oakdale "Journal," in its next issue:

"Die hoppers komm down like a wolf on die fold,
Und dere vings dey vos shining mit silver und gold,
Und before you could told vot der schamps vos apout,
Hans Fritzer, his cornfield vos gone up der shpout."

This humorous comment was so at variance with the general feeling of gloom that I was almost glad that the hoppers came. The Hans Fritzer poems were generally accredited to R. C. Eldridge, who was a member of the constitutional convention of 1875.

In the winter of 1875-76 I attended school in district number one, Mr. A. J. Leach, teacher. I "batched it" with Charles Derry on Cedar Creek. The only reliable item on the bill of fare was pancakes — a mixture of cornmeal and what the women of those days called "sourings" — and the larder seldom afforded more fat than sufficient to grease the girddle. Charley had a cat that proved undesirable as a roomer and he killed it, rendered the fat, and preserved the oil in a can for boot grease. The following Sunday we were absent and Hyrum Smith, George Derry, and another party visited the dugout and with the spirit that was in accordance with the times, prepared their own dinner, washed the dishes, and went on their way. When Charley went to grease his boots that night the can was empty of oil and we could not account for it. The next day Charley mentioned it to Hyrum Smith, that is, how his cat oil had disappeared. At first the end of Hyrum's nose grew white, then the whiteness gradually traveled around his mouth and — well, an attack of sea sickness would have been a pleasantry to Hyrum. The cat grease had been used by the visitors as griddle grease in frying pancakes. These were indeed halcyon days and to turn to them in memory is to discover the fountain of youth.

Under the provisions of the organic act approved May 31, 1854, the judicial power of the territory was vested in a supreme court, district courts, and other inferior tribunals, and this provision was merged into the state constitution in 1866 and prevails until this time. The supreme court consisted of a chief justice and two associate justices, who served in the dual capacity of supreme and district court judges until the adoption of the present constitution in 1875. This constitution provided for the election of both supreme and district court judges. The organic act authorized the governor of the territory to define the boundaries of the three judicial districts and when appointed assign the judges.

In 1854, under the provisions of the organic act, President Pierce appointed as judges of the territory of Nebraska James Bradley in June, Edward Randolph Harden in July and Fenner Ferguson, chief justice, in October. Governor Cuming, by proclamation, fixed the boundaries of the judicial districts and assigned the judges. The first district, embracing the entire south Platte region, fell to Chief Justice Ferguson; the second, comprising the counties of Douglas and Dodge, was assigned to Mr. Harden, and the counties of Burt and Washington comprised the third, with Mr. Bradley as judge. This of course was provisional and was only to endure until the territorial legislature defined the boundaries of the districts. I do not know how the first legislature apportioned the state, but I conclude from subsequent legislation that the territory now Antelope County was always in the third judicial district until 1883. In 1866 the third district comprised about one-third of the area of the state and included this territory, and in 1873 the district embraced nearly all of the north Platte country and was known as "The Big Third." In 1883 Antelope County was placed in the ninth district, in 1885 in the sixth, in 1887 the seventh, and in 1891 the ninth, where it yet remains.

The first session of the Supreme Court in the territory was held in Omaha, February 19, 1855, and was the first court

of record held in the state. Morton's History is authority for the statement that the first term of court held in the third district was at Florence, on the third Monday in April, 1855, by James Bradley. If this is correct James Bradley was the first judge to preside over the territory now in the limits of Antelope County and the first term of court was held at a distance of about one hundred and ten miles from Neligh, the present county seat.

CHAPTER XLI

The District and County Courts of Antelope County and a Sketch of Members of the Bar, Continued

BY F. L. PUTNEY OF TILDEN

As the population of the state increased, the work of the supreme court accumulated until in 1900 there were eighteen hundred undecided cases before the court. Many interests were jeopardized by this condition, as it necessarily required about five years between a decision of a district judge and its being reviewed by the supreme court. This subject was so much discussed that the commissioner system was evolved which from its incipiency was neither satisfactory to courts nor litigants. Last November the electors voted favorably on an amendment to the constitution increasing the number of supreme court judges. As late as 1875 three judges discharged the combined duties of supreme and district court judges. At this time there are seven judges of the supreme court and twenty-eight district judges in fifteen judicial districts.

HISTORY OF THE SUCCESSION OF DISTRICT JUDGES

As associate justice of the supreme court, Samuel Maxwell convened the first term of district court in Antelope County. Thomas L. Griffey succeeded him in 1876. The old settlers will remember that there was a very bitter contest between Mr. Griffey and E. K. Valentine, the republican nominee. On the face of the returns Mr. Griffey was elected; Mr. Valentine, contested the election and his contention was sustained. Mr. Valentine succeeded Mr. Griffey in 1877. Frank Welch, member of Congress, died at Neligh in 1878 and Mr. Valentine was elected to that position, J. B. Barnes advancing from the office of district attorney to district judge. Judge Valentine made his last order January 30, 1879, and Judge Barnes his first, March 3, 1879. In 1883,

owing to a change in the boundaries of the district, F. B. Tiffany was appointed judge and was reëlected in 1885. In 1887 J. C. Crawford and Isaac Powers, Jr., were associate judges and in 1888 Isaac Powers, Jr., and W. F. Norris were similarly associated. William V. Allen was judge in 1892 and resigned his office to accept a seat in the United States senate. In 1893 Governor Crounse appointed N. D. Jackson to succeed Mr. Allen. At the November election, 1893, John S. Robinson defeated Judge Jackson. In 1898 Mr. Robinson was elected to Congress and William V. Allen again elected judge. He served but a short time before United States Senator-elect Hayward died, and Mr. Allen was appointed to fill the vacancy, and Douglas Cones was appointed to the judgeship in 1900. In November, 1900, J. F. Boyd was elected over Judge Cones, and in 1903 was reëlected and served until he resigned to take his seat in Congress in 1907. A. A. Welch was appointed by Governor Sheldon to succeed Mr. Boyd, and in 1907 was elected to both the short and long terms as judge.

DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

M. B. Hoxie was district attorney in 1874; J. B. Barnes, 1877-79; C. C. McNish, 1879-83; E. M. Coffin, 1883-85; N. D. Jackson, 1885-87. The legislature of 1885 abolished the district attorney system and inaugurated that of county attorney.

COUNTY ATTORNEYS

J. H. Gurney was the first county attorney, being elected in 1887; J. F. Boyd, 1889; O. A. Williams, 1891; J. F. Boyd, 1893; Herman Freeze, 1895; Charles H. Kelsey, 1897; E. D. Kilbourn, 1899; S. D. Thornton, 1901; S. D. Thornton, 1903; George F. Boyd, 1905; S. D. Thornton, 1907; J. W. Rice, 1909.

COUNTY CLERKS AND EX-OFFICIO CLERKS OF THE DISTRICT COURT

W. W. Putney, from October, 1871, to January, 1876; Robert Wilson, January, 1876, to January 6, 1885.

CLERKS OF THE DISTRICT COURT

H. E. Kryger, appointed January 6, 1885; E. P. McCormick, appointed December 23, 1885; William M. Fannon, elected in 1887; T. H. Pollock, 1892; M. M. Abrams, 1896; R. H. Rice, 1900, 1904, 1908.

SHERIFFS

Jeptha Hopkins was elected sheriff in June, 1871; was reëlected in October, 1871, and served continuously until January, 1880. A. M. Cool was elected in 1879 and served until January, 1884. At the election in 1883 M. B. Huffman was elected, afterward leaving the state. The office was declared vacant and W. H. VanGilder was appointed August 15, 1885. At the election of 1885 W. A. Elwood was elected and served two terms, giving way to George P. Haverland, who was elected in 1889 and who succeeded himself in 1891. J. G. Crinklaw was selected at the election in 1893, completing his two terms in January, 1898. J. H. Stevenson, elected in 1897, died soon after taking the oath of office, and John Maybury was appointed August 6, 1898. At the election of 1898 Nial Brainard was elected for the unexpired term of Mr. Stevenson. C. B. VanKirk was elected in 1899, serving one term, and was succeeded by E. E. Frisbie in 1901, reëlected in 1903, and his successor was J. D. Miller, the present sheriff, who was elected in 1905 and 1907.

With the exception of the bailiffs and court stenographers, this includes the officers of the district court from the organization of the county, omitting J. W. Skiles, who served from June, 1871, to October, 1871, but who performed no official act.

COUNTY JUDGES

D. V. Coe was judge from the organization of the county until May, 1875. Judge Coe was a good man in every respect, but had no special fitness for this office, and his acceptance of the same was more to please others than

himself; in fact, he resigned before the end of his third term. R. G. King was appointed May 26th to succeed Judge Coe. Mr. King's history in Antelope County is known to all the pioneers. He gave way in January, 1876, to W. M. Lawrence, who was elected in 1875. S. D. Thornton succeeded Mr. Lawrence in January, 1878. Mr. Thornton was the first lawyer to serve as judge. He retired in January, 1880, giving way to M. A. Decamp. Mr. Decamp was a farmer living near Clearwater, and was held in high esteem by the early settlers. He discharged his duties satisfactorily but tired of the office and resigned in November of the same year. His successor, S. A. Sanders, was immediately appointed and entered upon the duties of his office and served until January, 1882. Mr. Sanders had been admitted to the bar and was also at one time editor of the Neligh "Journal." G. C. Palmer succeeded Mr. Sanders in 1882. Mr. Palmer was one of the old settlers. He had been a merchant and was for some time in the county treasurer's office. He was a man of good brain power, quick to discern, and of good impulses. His life was one of almost continuous suffering from rheumatism, which eventually caused his death. He was succeeded in January, 1884, by J. H. Gurney. Mr. Gurney was an attorney of much experience and was deemed a good lawyer. His usefulness was impaired by a stroke of paralysis and he never reached that prominence at the bar that was due him. S. D. Thornton's first administration of the office and the fact that he was an attorney secured for him the election in 1885. He qualified the following January and served until January, 1888, when he was succeeded by W. H. Holmes. Mr. Holmes had practiced law in Iowa, but at the time of his election lived on a farm south of Oakdale. He was well qualified and discharged his duties conscientiously. M. M. Case was a farmer. He took the oath of office in January, 1890. He had no special qualifications for the office, his son-in-law, B. F. Bomar, doing the clerical work. Mr. Bomar was elected in 1891 and served two terms with credit to himself and surrendered

the office to B. F. Admire. Mr. Admire served from January, 1896, to November, 1897, when he resigned. He was an attorney of many years' practice in Oakdale, but was given more to the accumulation of property than to the law and directed his energies in that direction. Ill health caused him to resign. J. S. Fields was his successor by appointment and was twice elected, retiring from office January, 1902. Mr. Fields had lived in Antelope County nearly all of his life; he is a son-in-law of the first county judge, D. V. Coe. His business was that of a barber but he served many years as a justice of the peace, which work prepared him in a measure for his new duties. His career as a judge was along the course of his predecessors, and he acquitted himself with credit. J. M. Finch, who succeeded Mr. Fields in January, 1902, was a school teacher and a conscientious judge. He was alive to all the advanced ideas of the times and refused to become a candidate for the third term. In fact, he resigned December 23, 1905, and R. Wilson, who had succeeded him at the election, was appointed the same day. Mr. Wilson has been in the public eye since he located on his farm near Clearwater in 1873. He taught the second term of school in Oakdale, is a man of liberal education and a good logician. He was appointed county superintendent to succeed J. E. Lowes in 1874, and served until January, 1876, when he succeeded W. W. Putney as county clerk and served as such officer for ten years. He was admitted to the bar in 1890. He gave his attention mostly to examining real estate titles and probate work. At the time of his appointment as judge he was well equipped for the office. His methodical habits and general disposition to do things right has made him a valuable officer. The first of next January he will be fifteen years in office. He is the historian of the court-house and has the events of all of the offices well in hand.

CHAPTER XLII

THE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COURTS OF ANTELOPE COUNTY AND A SKETCH OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BAR — CONTINUED

BY F. L. PUTNEY OF TILDEN

THE first lawsuit in the county was between the Norfolk Mill Company, as plaintiff, and John W. Skiles, defendant. The action was before D. V. Coe, county judge, and was for the recovery of the sum of $250.00 due for merchandise. This suit was brought before an attorney had settled in the county. The affairs of the mill company were conducted by John Olney as manager. This company for many years controlled the somewhat stinted trade of this period from Stanton to Frenchtown, east and west, and from half way to Sioux City on the north to an equal distance toward Columbus, on the south. The company in addition to the milling business were extensive dealers in merchandise suitable to border life. Here it was that the venturesome homesteader replenished his diminishing supplies before continuing his journey farther west, and here he returned when this supply was exhausted. Thus it was that Norfolk became historic in the early development of northern Nebraska and its business men had an extended acquaintance.

John Olney was as well known in Antelope County as William B. Lambert or R. G. King became years afterwards in the same line of business. I think I knew every business man in Norfolk in 1872, and now, when there between trains, I get a glimpse of some of these old-timers, side-tracked, vanishing from the memory of the present generation. Yet these grizzled frontiersmen are the survivors of an age that is almost past, the markers and milestones in the beginning of the utter extinction of nature's wildness. Looking into the retrospective, we of that time see that wild expanse of almost unhabitated

prairie stretching westward until it finally rolls into billows, losing itself in the lofty peaks of the mountain chains. Far up the trail a lonely deer vanishes in a friendly plum thicket and bands of antelope vanish in the foothills. Vanishing, vanishing, always vanishing. In this mood do I hear a "call to the wild"? Yes, but there is no wild to be called to. Wild life made its last stand on the west bank of the Missouri River. Tragic? Yes. The fauna has disappeared, and the Indian is an alien in his own country.

The real parties in this first lawsuit were John Olney and Colonel John W. Skiles, though the mill company was plaintiff and Robert I. Skiles was the relator in the injunction proceedings. As both Mr. Olney and Colonel Skiles were characters in different ways, I cannot refrain from a little matter descriptive of them.

John Olney had a good appearance. He was hot-headed, erratic, impulsive, arrogant, and egotistical; whimsical in methods, and thought himself born to command and not to obey. Counsel that even breathed opposition to his policies was not received by him with the slightest degree of tolerance. To say that Mr. Olney did not have a warm side to his nature would be unjust. There are many families along the Elkhorn to-day, living in affluence, that could hardly have held down "the claim" had not Mr. Olney credited them with the necessities of life.

Colonel Skiles was the opposite of Mr. Olney in every phase of life. He assumed the airs of a Crœsus, when in fact he was a Colonel Sellers. His stature was that of the average man, but symmetrical; his features regular; eyes dark and expressive. His dress, even in those days, was faultless, having a regard for the prevailing fashions. In short, the Colonel was always well attired, from the crown of his Grand Army hat to the soles of his well polished shoes. He was gracious in manner, hypnotic in his urbanity, aristocratic in his tastes, a voluptuary in desire, and a very clever conversationalist. He always spoke in a well modulated tone of voice, suggesting his assumed eugenic

origin, but was never offensive. Even now I am enraptured with the melody of his enunciation. I have often regretted that a man so singularly a favorite of nature should have been so lacking in integrity. Flattery was his most effective weapon and but few there were who did not come under his spell.

Have I given him a prominence not his due? If the reader could understand the delirium of popularity that attached itself to his personality for a few months this elaboration would be excusable. Of all the men who settled in Antelope County in those days, he is the only one that the term adventurer will apply to. He was a colonel in the Civil War, in the command of Rutherford B. Hayes, who afterward became President of the United States, and his left arm had been shot away above the elbow.

The foundation of this suit was laid when he gave a check on an Ohio bank for two hundred and fifty dollars in payment for merchandise. The check went east, the Colonel went west. The check came back, but the Colonel never did. The check was dishonored. John Olney had a brain storm when this occurred. He employed Jim Keyner, the only attorney in Norfolk at that time, and associated with him Squire Ames, a farmer living up the Elkhorn from Norfolk, who had been a justice of the peace "back in the states," and assumed to be well versed in the law, and proceeded to avenge his wrongs. In the original suit there was no appearance on the part of Skiles, and Keyner and Ames procured judgment by default. If there had been nothing done to collect the judgment this narrative would be void of interest. Olney, however, proceeded to collect his money on the judgment. An execution was issued and was put in the hands of Sheriff Hopkins with instructions to levy on the property of Skiles at all hazards. When the sheriff arrived at the Skiles homestead the Colonel called him aside and informed him that the personal property was his son Robert's, bought with money that Robert had inherited from some namesake

in Ohio. However, tales of this kind proved abortive. The sheriff had been fortified with an indemnifying bond and he made the levy and soon the Skiles farm was denuded of its stock, about twenty-five head of cattle and a number of hogs. Later the coroner took possession of the property under a writ of replevin from the sheriff, and afterwards the sheriff got it back and advertised it for sale.

Here the Colonel's active brain became busy and he remembered that there was an attorney at Schuyler by the name of Butler, who formerly lived in Ohio, and thither Robert I. Skiles directed his steps. This man Butler was a good attorney, shifty in getting the vantage ground, and wily as a fox. I think, under the circumstances, it is proper to notice him in this history. I saw him but once, in Oakdale, in 1874. At this time he must have been at the zenith of his powers. He was about five feet, ten inches in height, rather inclined to obesity. From the dome of his head to the lobes of his ears there was not a stray hair to mar its polished surface. His head was massive; the frontal bone extended so far forward that if eyes ever flashed from out "cavernous depths," they were his. Not so much from my own knowledge, but from what other attorneys said, he was a formidable adversary in the trial of a case. He had not much of the grace of oratory, but talked freely, in a high, rasping voice that affected his hearers disagreeably. In accounting for an attorney of his standing being here on the frontier in those days, it was said that his partner in Ohio wished a dissolution of partnership, but so dreaded Butler's ability that he hesitated, but finally gave him ten thousand dollars, Butler signing an agreement never to practice law again in that state so long as his partner lived. Mr. Butler lived up to his agreement, and his partner dying in the early eighties, Mr. Butler returned to his old home in Ohio, as I understand, taking up the practice of his profession there after years of absence.

As soon as Butler became acquainted with the facts

he hastened to Fremont, where Samuel Maxwell, who was then judge, resided, and procured a restraining order stopping the sale of the stock under the execution. This writ included Jeptha Hopkins, sheriff, John Olney, and Attorney Keyner, and notice was duly served. Government by injunction had not been discussed then as now; the sheriff knew nothing about it; Olney neither knew nor cared at the time. Keyner did not know, and even the oracle, Squire Ames, had but little knowledge of the writ. However, Keyner and Squire Ames proceeded to Mr. Hopkins, labored with him all night, finally overcoming his caution, and the following day the sale proceeded, the mill company buying in all the stock and keeping the same pending further developments.

It was not long before an attachment was issued and Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Olney, and James Keyner were arraigned before George B. Lake, in chambers at Omaha, for contempt of court. Judge Maxwell, for the time being, was out of the state. The case having gotten in this posture, Mr. Olney secured the services of General Manderson, who afterwards distinguished himself as United States senator. This availed nothing, as it stood out in bold relief that all three were guilty of contempt of court. Mr. Manderson directed his energies to securing a minimum fine and the avoidance of a jail sentence, in which he was joined by Mr. Butler, who had no concern for the lacerated feelings of the court. They showed that but little was known about injunctions along the Elkhorn; that at least Hopkins and Olney had acted on legal advice; and that they never had dreamed of looking upon the court with contempt. All was said that could be said in mitigation of the offense, but Judge Lake was not easily mollified. The court had been brought into ridicule; the law outraged; and ignorance of the law was no excuse. Accordingly, he passed sentence that the mill company restore the stock to Robert I. Skiles; pay the costs, amounting to $237.45; pay Robert I. Skiles damages in the sum of $354; and each,

Jeptha Hopkins, John Olney, and James Keyner, pay a fine of $250.

This, so far as I know, ends the history of the first lawsuit in the county, except the return of the stock. It is said that when the mill company returned the stock the Colonel was on hand with his polished shoes and white vest, and that after it had been driven into the yard and the bars put up, the Colonel was profuse in his thanks to the mill company for having kept the stock for his son Robert for quite a year without any expense to him. The total cost to Olney or the mill company of this suit, as appears from the record, is $1,341.45. In addition to this was the loss of the amount due on the judgment without cost, amounting to $250, also the personal expenses and attorney fees. Mr. Olney paid the bill at the bar of triumphant justice, without the quiver of an eye or a word of rebuke. In the presence of the court he was as subdued as a conquered bronco.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COURTS OF ANTELOPE COUNTY AND A SKETCH OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BAR — CONTINUED

BY F. L. PUTNEY, OF TILDEN

THE time fixed by Samuel Maxwell for the first term of district court in the county was October 9, 1874, at Oakdale, and court convened on that date. This action of the judge was pursuant to the request of L. A. Boyd, Z. Buoy, and A. Warner, county commissioners. The statute of 1873 provided this procedure where the dates for terms of court had not been determined by the legislature. The court officers were Maxwell, judge; M. B. Hoxie, district attorney; W. W. Putney, clerk; and Jeptha Hopkins, sheriff. For nearly three years prior to this the dugout of the clerk, on Cedar Creek about four miles southwest of Oakdale, had been the court-house. I remember that Robert Marwood, treasurer; A. J. Leach, county superintendent; Jeptha Hopkins, sheriff; and Zebulon Buoy, county commissioner, took their oath of office there following the election of October, 1871. The county commissioners, for the convenience of the public, usually met at some point on the Elkhorn River and generally at Elwood's store, about thirty rods west of the present residence of Jeptha Hopkins. The first tax levy was made here. From the time of the construction of the Elwood hotel, in Oakdale, which was the first hotel in the county, until the erection of the little frame court-house in Oakdale, about sixteen by thirty-two feet, the commissioners held their sessions in the office of the hotel. This court-house was inadequate for court purposes and the first term of court was held in the old school-house. The grand jurors were Amos West, R. C. Eldridge, Byron Davis, Louis Contois, E. M. Blackford, C. G. Rouse, John Hunt, Jacob Garlough, A. J.

Motter, Thomas Stolp, Orville Fields, James Gillespie, H. P. Davis, R. G. King, M. S. Bartlett, and Bernarder Trueblood. The petit jurors were G. W. Mummert, G. H. McGee, Henry King, Aaron Hollenbeck, J. W. Skiles, Stephen Hill, Robert Beeler, William Woolham, N. B. Eggleston, C. H. Derry, L. L. Bowers, John W. Ploof, James Craig, F. W. Richardson, Alex Belmer, A. G. Wright, A. D. Allen, William Rutledge, Robert Marwood, Thomas Grenier, Henry Brown, Ernst Michael, Charles E. Sale, and Edward Bonneau.

To a time about contemporaneous with railroad construction through the county, but few attorneys had settled here. There was but little litigation; fees were small and decidedly intermittent. Many of the pioneer lawyers were forced to perform manual labor for subsistence. One combined harness making with his profession, another worked on the brick-yard, another in the saw-mill, and yet another in the harvest field. In fact, at this time there was a universal prayer among all classes that the favors bestowed upon the widow of Zarephath might be repeated and that the barrel of meal would not waste nor the cruse of oil fail. The early attorneys had but small libraries, there were no books to borrow, the lack of business begat indolence, and if a case did come to them the interval between that and the one preceding had been so long that court procedure had been quite forgotten. Consequently, non-resident attorneys were familiar features of the courts of the county in the earlier days. Railroad activity stimulated all the fields of human effort and opened the way to future possibilities, and with this stimulus came another and a different type of attorneys. Conspicuous in this class and who have reached more than local distinction as attorneys undertaking law as a science are Ben White, N. D. Jackson, and Thomas O'Day.

The following persons have been resident attorneys: B. F. Admire, R. K. Beecham, C. F. Bayha, J. F. Boyd, George F. Boyd, H. P. Davis, W. P. Eaton, Herman Freeze, J. W. Getchell, J. H. Gurney, C. M. Herrig, D. A.

Holmes, C. F. Huntington, N. D. Jackson, C. C. Jones, E. D. Kilbourn, Charles H. Kelsey, George T. Kelley, W. A. Lytton, M. H. Leach, W. F. McGinitie, R. T. Maxwell, Alexander McKinstry, Thomas O'Day, W. E. Pilling, F. L. Putney, M. B. Putney, W. W. Quivey, J. W. Rice, S. A. Sanders, S. G. Sparks, J. B. Smith, S. D. Thornton, O. A. Williams, B. B. Willey, Robert Wilson, Lewis Warren, Benjamin White, and H. W. Zink, This is nearly accurate, though there have been attorneys located at Elgin whose names I do not recall. I am not familiar with the history of all these attorneys, nor is it necessary to the purpose of this chapter, as their being here was transitory and not of interest to the general public.

With the exception of S. D. Thornton, attorneys written of as county judges will not be included in this chapter. I mentioned W. P. Eaton, as he was the first attorney to settle in the county. He followed the fortunes of R. G. King from West Point to Oakdale. So far as I know his antecedent history is obscure, excepting that he was a veteran of the Civil War. He was of more than average appearance, a fair lawyer with an unfortunate habit which caused his death. He had no relatives here and was buried in the Oakdale cemetery.

John W. Getchell was the first resident attorney at Neligh. Sizing up the situation as it then existed, he soon abandoned his profession and entered upon a mercantile career which proved in the end successful. He lives in Neligh in affluence, with large interests in the county and elsewhere.

S. D. Thornton enjoys the distinction of being the attorney longest in practice in the county. He came to Oakdale in 1873, studied law with W. P. Eaton, and was admitted to the bar in 1875, Judge Griffey administering the oath of office. His long and almost continuous service as county judge and county attorney is evidence of his standing as an attorney and measures largely the confidence people have in his integrity and ability.

O. A. Williams won his degree of LL. B. in the law

department of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He began his practice of law at Neligh in 1888. He so grew in public esteem that in 1890 he was elected county attorney and served two years. He was appointed court reporter by John S. Robinson and occupied that position from 1894 to 1900. This occupation laid the foundation for a future greater practice in his profession. At the close of his service he again took up his practice in Neligh. He is a good student, careful of interests intrusted to him, and has an increasing clientage.

C. C. Jones was a native of Illinois, a graduate of Lombard University, was admitted to the bar in 1882, was prosecuting attorney of Marshall County, Illinois, in 1880, and located in Neligh in 1883. He had a successful practice at the time he was appointed register of the United States Land Office at Neligh by President Cleveland. After the appointment of his successor he reopened an office in Neligh but never recovered his former practice. He died in Omaha and is buried in Neligh.

Charles H. Kelsey is one of the youngest members of the bar, was born at Waterloo, Iowa, came with his parents to this county in 1881, graduated from the law department of the Nebraska University in 1895, located in Neligh, elected county attorney in 1897, and enjoys a lucrative practice. Mr. Kelsey has been prominent in republican politics and is considered an important factor in the deliberations of his party.

E. D. Kilbourn was the seventh county attorney; has lived in the county for several years. As county attorney he acquitted himself in such a manner as to gain in public esteem. He enjoys a good practice in which he is quite successful.

J. F. Boyd located in Oakdale about 1882, as a practicing attorney. Mr. Boyd's reputation rests largely upon his skill as a politician. He was twice county attorney, a district judge, and represented this district in Congress one term. After the close of his congressional career he reopened his law office in Neligh, to which place he moved from Oakdale on becoming judge.

George F. Boyd located in Oakdale about 1893, was admitted to the bar here and began the practice of law. He became county attorney, and at the close of his term seems to have quit law practice and taken up banking. He is president of the Antelope County Bank and his management of its affairs is giving that bank deserved popularity.

C. F. Bayha was at one time prominent in the affairs of the county, but gave the most of his time to land-office practice.

R. K. Beecham made some pretense to the practice of law but gave the most of his time to journalism at Neligh and was widely known in the county.

W. E. Pilling was an attorney at Oakdale and at one time had his share of practice there.

D. A. Holmes gained some prominence at the bar in the county, with his home in Oakdale. He moved from there to Norfolk, thence to Sioux City, then to Chicago, and later to New York City.

Ben White came from Iowa to Oakdale, where he formed a law partnership with D. A. Holmes. Later the firm moved to Norfolk, where the partnership was continued for some time. On its being dissolved Mr. Holmes went to Sioux City and Mr. White remained in Norfolk, forming a partnership with H. C. Brome, who was at that time local solicitor for the Northwestern Railway Company. This partnership relation brought Mr. White in contact with Mr. Hawley, the general solicitor of the company, and arrangements were afterward made whereby Mr. White was appointed as assistant solicitor with an office first at Fremont and later in Omaha. Some years afterwards Mr. Hawley died and Mr. White was made general solicitor. From a country law practice in Oakdale to general solicitor of the entire Northwestern Railroad system is a record seldom equaled and makes Mr. White's influence second to that of no man in the state. Mr. White's career as an attorney in Oakdale had nó promise in it of such a future. He was studious but not aggressive in practice. I think,

perhaps, that he had a wider range of information than his compeers, other than his knowledge of law. I remember while editing the Oakdale "Journal" of publishing one of his addresses which was exceptionally pertinent to the occasion and was well written. He was pleasing in his manner of address and a ready talker when master of his subject. His mannerisms invited friendship and he was courteous and entertaining. I think Mr. White is the evolution of the law office and not of a law school.

Thomas O'Day was a familiar character in the courts of Antelope County from July 3, 1879, at which time he located at Neligh, until 1889, when he sought another location, settling at Portland, Oregon, in 1890, where he continues to reside. Mr. O'Day was born at Goshen, Connecticut, July 4, 1852, later moving as a member of his father's family to Moline, Illinois. He acquired a liberal education and taught school in Iowa and Bellevue, Nebraska. He graduated from the law department of the University of Iowa in 1877. He commenced the practice of law at Bedford, Iowa, but changed his location, coming to Nebraska in 1878, teaching school in Sarpy County until June, 1879. Mr. O'Day, from the time of his first lawsuit in the county, took rank as one of the leading attorneys of this section of the state. I recall that he had quite an extensive practice in Pierce, Madison, Holt, Knox, Boone, and Wheeler counties. I remember at one term of court that Mr. O'Day was temporarily absent and that Judge Crawford told the clerk that if it was possible to find a case on the docket in which O'Day was not interested on one side or the other to call it so that the court might transact business. Tom O'Day, I suppose, was of Irish descent and he had the ready wit of his race. He was apt in repartee, a fluent talker, and of good presence. He had unbounded faith in Tom O'Day, which always gave him confidence under trying circumstances. I remember that he acquitted himself with credit in the case of the state against Billy Reed, being associated with John C. Cowin, of Omaha, as junior counsel. Mr. O'Day was

nominated for supreme judge of Nebraska in 1879, but was defeated. In his new home in Oregon, he started a successful career as a lawyer and was nominated for judge of the supreme court and again defeated. These defeats were owing to the democratic party being in the minority. In August, 1907, Mr. O'Day was appointed one of the circuit judges for the Fourth Circuit of Oregon which included the city of Portland, and nominated for the position again, but his party went to defeat at the election, carrying him with it.

M. B. Putney studied law with W. E. Pilling, and was admitted to the bar in Antelope County. He possessed to a marked degree the elements of an orator. His powers of analysis were good. He abandoned the practice of law temporarily and became a lecturer both for the Ancient Order of United Workmen and the Modern Woodmen. Later he settled in Cleveland, Ohio, and resumed the practice of law and is building up a lucrative practice.

C. F. Huntington gave great promise as an attorney, but his unsuccessful contest with F. B. Tiffany for the district judgeship in 1883 proved disastrous and in some manner he came to an untimely death in New Orleans.

F. L. Putney was born at Strawberry Point, Iowa, in 1857, and came with his parents to Antelope County in December 1870. His school privileges were confined to the schools of the county and did not embrace more than fifteen months scattered over a period of eight years. In the fall of 1885 he purchased and successfully edited the Oakdale "Journal," studied law in the office of Thornton and Huntington until that partnership was dissolved, then alternately with Mr. Huntington and Mr. Thornton, and was admitted to the bar in 1889. The same year he went to Pacific County, Washington, and there commenced his practice of law and also purchased an interest in the Pacific "Journal" with John W. Phillips, and edited that paper. In the spring of 1890 he established the Willapa "Republican" and edited this paper until the fall of 1890, when he was joined by M. H. Leach, who purchased a half

interest. Mr. Putney represented Pacific County in the state legislature in 1891 and 1892 and returned to Nebraska in 1893 and settled in Tilden, where he now resides.

In the year 1879 N. D. Jackson walked into Antelope County from Norfolk, spending his first night at the farmhouse of A. Warner. He located first in Oakdale, moving to Neligh in 1881. He was born at Rugents Pond, in the state of Maine, in 1854. He graduated from Cedar Valley Seminary, Osage, Iowa, in 1877, and from the law department of the Iowa University in 1879. As district attorney, district judge, member of the legislature, and court commissioner, to which office he was appointed April, 1905, Mr. Jackson won distinction as an attorney. His election as district attorney gave him an opportunity to develop his natural talents and to widen his acquaintance. In subsequent years he had an extensive practice throughout northern Nebraska, being chief counsel and assistant counsel in many leading cases. His history as court commissioner takes rank with that of any member of the supreme court. Judge Jackson has established an enviable reputation for honesty and integrity in his profession. Every act of his as an attorney and jurist has had a tendency to exalt instead of tearing down and bringing to ridicule a noble calling. During an intimate acquaintance of thirty years I have never heard him accused of betraying a client or breaking faith with a brother lawyer. In the practice of his profession he exercises good judgment and conducts his cases along the lines suggested by strong common sense. He possesses none of the arts of a trained orator, but is a forcible speaker, and is not given to high sounding periods. His argument follows the evidence, and his logic is good. I think that all members of the bar will agree with me that Mr. Jackson has stood for years past at the head of his profession and is the peer of any attorney in northern Nebraska. I regard his recent change in location as a loss to the community. His knowledge of the law, ripened experience, and professional integrity may not be replaced at the bar of Antelope County for many years.

CHAPTER XLIV

A Chapter on Botany

BY H. L. McGINITIE, A. M., OF NELIGH

WHEN Antelope County was first settled the fires in the spring and autumn had swept the prairies and uplands with great regularity and prevented the growth of forest trees and shrubs so that they were only to be found in the narrow valleys along the watercourses. Along the Elkhorn River, where they were in some measure protected from these fires, some varieties of trees had attained a very considerable size, and the settlers set up saw-mills and cut them into lumber with which they built houses and roofed sod houses. The common cottonwood (*populus deltoides*) grew to the greatest size along the Elkhorn valley, but the settlers in Antelope and the counties to the south soon carried them away for buildings and wood. The box elder (*acer negundo*), black willow (*salix nigra*), almond willow (*salix amagdaloides*), sand bar willow (*salix flavitalis*), and some diamond willow (*salix missouriensis*), were generally distributed through the valleys along the streams in the south part of the county. The red cedar (*juniperus scapulorum*) was quite plenty along Cedar Creek and other small streams. The hackberry (*celtus occidentalis*) was so plentiful along one of the northern tributaries of the Elkhorn River as to give its name to the stream. The crab apple (*malus Iowensis*) was found along the Elkhorn and on the Verdigris, one of the tributaries of the Niobrara River in the northern part of the county. The choke cherry (*prunus Virginiana*) and the common plum (*prunus Americana*) were found along the streams and in the depressions on the uplands. The black walnut (*juglans nigra*), burr oak (*quercus macrocarpa*), linden (*tillia Americana*), red elm

(*ulmus fluvia*), white elm (*ulmus Americana*), and red ash (*fraxinus lanceolata*) were quite generally distributed. The ash and elms were utilized by the early settlers for posts and supports for their sheds and stables. All of these are still here and have greatly increased in number wherever protected from the fires, and elms, box elders, cottonwoods, lindens, and soft maples have been transplanted to beautify the country homes and dwellings in the towns, until scarcely a farm dwelling is without its pleasant groves and beautiful shade trees. Indeed, many of the groves planted by the early settlers have in the last few years grown so large that they furnish lumber for improvements on the farms and wood for a lifetime. Many other trees have been added to the above list since the settlement of the county, notably Osage orange, white birch, silver, soft and hard maples, catalpas, locusts, and Lombardy poplars.

Many shrubs were here and native to the country. Two species of dogwood (*cornus canadensis* and *cornus stolonifera*), sumach (*rhus glabra*), sand cherry, and *rosa blanda* and in the northern part of the county the buffalo berry are found quite generally, and many others have come in with the settlement.

Many fine groves of black-walnut trees, planted from seed gathered from the native trees, are to be seen in the county and walnuts are no longer a great luxury. Since the fires have ceased a great transformation has taken place in the face of the country. When fires were permitted the trees were destroyed, except in a few depressions where a few stunted specimens of plums and clumps of choke cherries had withstood the ordeal of fire, and the dwellings of the farmer stood out in the sunshine and heat of the summer, and exposed to the wide sweep of the winds in the winter. Now the farmers' dwellings stand in beautiful groves and the streets of the towns and villages are lined by rows of beautiful shade trees, and we often hear the older settlers remark that the winds do not blow so constantly or so hard as in former years.

In the earlier settlement of the country, whenever the ground was broken or roads were traveled, the annual sunflower (*helianthus annuus*) and *helianthus maximiliana* grew in great profusion and to a very considerable height, often for miles lining the roadsides as by a grovel. The perennial grew more along the water courses and still retains its vigor, but the annual plant has become greatly dwarfed by the general cultivation and the apparent change of seasons. The flowering plants were and are still found in great variety and embrace varieties common to the east and west regions. The pulse family, or pea, with at least twenty-eight varieties, is probably the most numerous. The most frequent of this family are the *astragalus*, *psoralea*, and *trifolium*, on the prairies, and *amorpha* along the streams. The *ranunculus*, or crow foot, show fourteen varieties, the *rosaceæ* furnish eleven species with *rosa blanda*, the common wild rose, in the lead, but its habits are similar to the sunflower and it is gradually disappearing except where new ground is broken, when it has a run for a time. The *crucifereæ*, or mustard family, furnishes twelve species; the *umbelliferæ*, eight; *onagraceæ*, or evening primrose, seven; *saxifragraceæ*, five; *schrofulariaceæ*, six; mint family, twelve; lily family, eight; euphorbia, six; night shade, five; verbena, four, and the buckwheat family many species. Many other families are represented by from one to five species. Among the novelties are five orchids and yuccas. In the early spring the face of the country is colored by the pea family, with many shades of blue, the puccoon and other yellow flowers, and the graceful *yucca filamentosa*, with its pyramid of beautiful white flowers, succeeded by the liatris, primrose, sunflower, shading off in the late fall with asters of all shades of color, fringed gentians, and other purple flowers. In the eighties, when the writer was a teacher, he made a very complete collection of the flowering plants of the county, classified them, and has since placed them with Gates Academy to be cared for while it remains a live institution.

No collection of sedges or grasses has been made and no accurate list preserved. However, the buffalo grass (*buchloe dactyloides*) was found to be present generally and was a valuable forage plant for a time, but it has quite generally disappeared through cultivation and close pasturage. The gramma grasses still remain on the uncultivated pastures and meadows. The wild oat, wild rye, tufted grass, fescue grass, meadow grass, hair grass, bent grass, foxtail, and panic grass were widely distributed and still remain. The sedges are numerous and various, but I have not made them a subject of special examination and classification.

Many plants have come, flourished for a time, and then gradually disappeared; notably the Russian thistle. It came with seeds and for a time was a serious menace to crops, but it seemed very soon to have absorbed the constituents of the soil necessary to its growth and has almost disappeared from the county. Many other plants have come in with garden and lawn seeds and for a time flourished, then languished, and again flourished when conditions and seasons became favorable. The eastern dandelion (*dens leonis*) has had a run for some years, but it varies with the seasons. There are some common varieties of ferns to be found in shady groves along the water courses, but not generally.

It is not possible to include all the varieties of trees, flowering plants, and grasses within this article and only the most salient points have been covered. The flora is much more extended and varied than it is possible to state and seems to embrace a larger variety than is commonly found in so restricted a territory.

CHAPTER XLV

THE CLIMATE AND CLIMATIC CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE COUNTY WAS FIRST SETTLED, AND THE PROBABLE REASONS THEREFOR

AS stated in Chapter IV, the climate of Antelope County has been modified to a considerable degree since the first settlement was made in 1868. Perhaps as good a brief description of the climate of Nebraska as it was known in the early days as can be found anywhere, is the one given in the New American Cyclopedia, published in 1863, page 155, Volume XII, which reads as follows:

"The altitude of the country, considerable greater than that of the Mississippi Valley, secures to it a dry, pure, salubrious atmosphere, free from fogs and humidity. The climate is remarkable for the number of bright, clear, sunny days throughout the year. Rain is not abundant, the summer and autumn being comparatively dry. The extreme heat is one hundred degrees. This is tempered by the prairie breezes, and the nights are always cool. The winters are usually mild and open, with but little snow. The extreme cold is from ten degrees to fifteen degrees below zero in moderate winters, and from twenty to thirty degrees below zero in severe ones. High winds prevail in the spring and at times throughout the year, sweeping unobstructed over the plains."

It was generally known that the annual rainfall throughout the state was light and that it gradually diminished toward the west. It was supposed by the pioneers who first settled along the Missouri River that the country was fit for farming only for a distance of from fifty to sixty miles back from the Missouri River, unless it might be the valleys of the larger streams. One of the very early settlers of Dodge County, Mr. L. H. Rogers, who came to

Nebraska in 1857, told the writer that when he settled near Fremont he supposed that his cattle and those of his neighbors would have perpetual free range over the high lands adjacent to the Platte valley. It was thought at that time that the table and rolling lands of the state would never be cultivated, excepting those lying within fifty or sixty miles of the Missouri River. This same idea was pretty generally held by the pioneer settlers, even by those who came as late as the sixties, only the limit of cultivable high land was constantly being pushed farther and farther west. Many, if not all, of the first settlers of Antelope County had grave doubts about the climatic conditions and it was a question often discussed as to whether there was rainfall enough, except in favorable years, for successful general farming. There were certain conditions then existing that were not at all encouraging. In digging wells and cellars, the subsoil was generally found to be perfectly dry; there was no grass heavy enough for hay anywhere on the high lands, and generally scarcely enough on the low lands to supply the wants of the settlers. The first crop of wheat in the county was raised by Crandall and Allen Hopkins in 1870, on land broken in 1869. Crandall Hopkins' wheat yielded ten bushels per acre, and his corn was almost a failure. Sod corn in 1869 was a pretty good crop, but 1870 was a dry year and it looked bad for Antelope County, especially as the crops at Norfolk and farther east were good. It looked as though we might be beyond the limit of a good farming country. High winds were frequent, especially in the spring months, and often blew for three days at a time. The snows of winter were blown by the severe winds into the ravines and low grounds and when melted were carried off into the ravines and streams. The rains were apt to be more violent than those of recent years and not of as long duration. Vegetation being comparatively scanty, there was little to retain the moisture as it fell, and the air being dry, evaporation was rapid. Severe storms both in winter and summer were more frequent than at the present time.

Gradually a change came. Cultivated lands absorbed the moisture as it fell. It was found that by keeping out the prairie fires, the vegetation thickened up and greatly increased, enabling the soil to retain the moisture by preventing evaporation and by holding it from running off into the ravines. As a result, the subsoil gradually became saturated with water until now it is never in the dryest seasons as devoid of moisture as it was forty years ago. New springs have broken out in many places, and the little tributaries of the Elkhorn have permanent water farther up their courses than formerly. The native blue stem grass grows rank on the high lands, affording abundant hay, where before it was fit only for pasture. The air is more humid and dews more frequent and heavier than formerly. Dry winds in summer and severe blizzards in winter do not now occur as often, nor are they as severe as in former times. A three weeks' drought in the growing season, while it is still injurious, is not nearly as destructive as formerly, for the reason that the subsoil gives back the moisture that it has been collecting in the past, and which before the country was improved would all have run off into the streams or been absorbed by the thirsty atmosphere. Hence it is seen that there has been a considerable change in climatic conditions. And yet it is not probable that there has been an increase in the rainfall. The changes in climate that have taken place are due to the fact that a much larger part of the moisture that falls now soaks into the subsoil than formerly, the reason for this being already given. The United States government began to keep a record of the rainfall in Nebraska in the year 1849, but the record was not made full and complete until 1866. From these records the rainfall throughout the state does not seem to have increased. According to these government reports the line showing a mean annual precipitation of twenty-six inches passes through the southeast corner of Antelope County, running in a northeasterly and southwesterly direction, while the line indicating a precipitation of twenty-four

inches runs through the northwestern part of the county, thereby indicating for the county a mean annual rainfall of about twenty-five inches. Mr. George S. Clingman of Oakdale has kept a record for the government since the year 1888, reporting daily, and has furnished such items as are necessary for this chapter.

Table showing the monthly and annual precipitation at Oakdale for 21⅔ years, 1888 to 1909 inclusive:

TABLE I

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
1888	.35	.57	1.35	1.44	9.70	3.86	3.06	5.98	.30	.70	.07	.88	28.26
1889	.88	.13	.20	1.68	1.57	4.90	4.03	.39	1.47	.29	.78	.60	16.92
1890	.85	.41	1.38	1.69	3.00	3.23	1.24	1.62	.82	2.39	.85	.01	17.49
1891	.85	2.13	1.37	6.08	1.32	10.24	8.06	2.06	.77	1.05	.31	1.39	35.63
1892	.43	.49	1.20	3.51	4.35	1.36	2.38	2.76	.10	.98	.21	.39	18.16
1893	.15	.89	1.96	2.23	4.22	1.02	3.26	1.20	1.02	.33	.40	1.52	18.20
1894	.49	.30	.58	2.57	1.13	1.14	.78	.92	.84	1.75	.10	.88	11.48
1895	.20	.35	1.50	3.81	3.62	5.01	.38	5.07	3.06	.05	.79	.01	23.85
1896	.11	.05	1.14	6.94	2.51	4.50	6.17	1.12	1.76	2.39	2.66	.07	29.42
1897	1.61	.51	1.78	3.36	1.12	4.87	2.98	3.38	1.15	2.33	.64	1.44	25.17
1898	.55	.78	.69	1.88	5.75	4.82	2.15	2.92	.93	1.15	.53	.44	22.59
1899	.08	.47	.80	1.42	5.47	5.42	1.35	2.18	1.57	.88	.43	.74	20.81
1900	.13	.53	.77	5.32	3.83	2.05	4.80	3.61	3.14	2.88	.20	.10	27.36
1901	.09	.33	1.29	2.24	2.86	7.34	1.02	.80	6.83	1.78	1.05	.63	26.26
1902	.46	.25	1.23	2.07	2.56	5.29	6.29	3.28	3.74	.76	.09	1.08	27.10
1903	.06	.82	1.50	2.24	9.58	4.30	8.12	5.01	1.57	2.08	.66	.13	36.07
1904	.25	.30	.48	2.00	2.90	5.90	4.87	3.11	1.98	5.26	.15	.33	27.53
1905	.78	.58	.75	2.60	8.36	5.70	2.74	2.20	7.79	1.41	1.69	Tr.	34.60
1906	.47	.98	.99	4.90	2.16	3.91	1.49	3.53	5.12	3.25	.87	1.49	29.16
1907	.37	.77	.40	1.01	1.87	3.44	5.15	2.23	1.72	.01	.02	.97	17.96
1908	.10	.65	.59	1.41	3.33	10.20	4.52	4.01	.82	1.37	.64	.31	27.95
1909	.83	1.93	.20	1.34	5.78	2.53	3.59	5.34					
Mean.	.46	.64	1.01	2.81	3.95	4.59	3.56	2.85	2.21	1.57	.62	.64	24.91

From this table it will be seen that the mean annual precipitation at Oakdale for 21⅔ years has been 24.91 inches; that the greatest rainfall is in June; that next in order come May, July, August, April, and September.

It also appears that a little over 71 per cent of the

moisture of the year falls from April to August inclusive, coming when needed during the growing season, and that a little over 80 per cent falls during the six months from April to September inclusive; that a year like 1907, which had less than eighteen inches of rain, may be a year of good crops, when preceded by a year of bounteous rainfall, and when the rain that does come is given when needed. It has come to be a matter of general belief that with the kind of soil we have in Antelope County, with its ability to absorb and retain moisture, the normal amount of rainfall is ample to produce and mature good crops.

Table II shows the monthly and annual mean temperature at Oakdale:

TABLE II

January	18.8	July	73.2
February	19.6	August	71.7
March	31.9	September	62.7
April	48.1	October	49.5
May	58.3	November	33.7
June	68.3	December	25.2

Annual, 46.7 degrees.

The coldest month on record, January, 1888, mean 4.6 degrees.

The warmest month on record, July, 1901, mean 81.6 degrees.

Coldest year on record, 1888, 2.4 degrees below normal.

Warmest year on record, 1900, 3 degrees above normal.

Highest temperature on record 110 degrees, July, 1894.

Lowest temperature on record, 40 degrees below zero, January, 1892.

The following table shows the date of the first autumnal frost and of first killing frost.

TABLE III

Year	First Autumnal Frost	First Killing Frost
1888	September 18	September 18
1889	September 15	September 18
1890	September 13	September 13
1891	September 3	September 29
1892	September 14	September 14
1893	September 16	September 16
1894	September 11	September 11
1895	September 23	September 23
1896	September 6	September 19
1897	September 17	October 9
1898	September 7	September 7
1899	September 17	September 26
1900	September 29	October 7
1901	September 17	September 17
1902	September 4	September 12
1903	September 16	September 16
1904	September 14	October 22
1905	September 4	October 10
1906	September 27	September 30
1907	September 25	September 28
1908	September 28	September 28
1909	September 24	
Average date	September 16	September 24
Earliest date	September 3	September 7
Latest date	September 29	October 22

There is only a difference of eight days between the average dates of the first frost of autumn and the first killing frost, and the average of the two is September 20th. The frosts, however, have almost never occurred on an average date. Note that no September in the twenty-two years has been free from frost; that when the first killing frost is deferred till October a light frost may have occurred weeks before.

THE END