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PIONEER STORIES

OF

FURNAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

COMPLIED FROM
THE FILES OF THE

[FURNAS COUNTY]

BEAVER CITY TIMES-TRIBUNE

CLAFLIN PRINTING COMPANY
UNIVERSITY PLACE, NEBRASKA

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FOREWORD

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Clark

Fifty years is a short span in the life of Nations and of States, but it marks more than the average length of man's life. Nebraska is young in years as the age of Nations and States is counted, and it seems fitting that in her comparative youth her history be written in large part by the men and women who have made that history. Fortunately there yet remain upon the scene of action many of these pioneer men and women—men and women who braved the dangers of the wilderness, and who through dark days and bright days, through storm and sunshine, through privation and prosperity, have kept their faith and have lived to see the fruition of their hopes. They found Nebraska a barren wilderness; they are leaving it as fruitful as a garden. They endured privation almost unspeakable, yet never faltered. And today they may point with pride to the work they have accomplished, to the state they have builded.

Two years ago I conceived the idea of having these pioneers write the stories of their early days in Nebraska. The idea met with a ready response—and this volume is the result. Originally the intention was merely to publish the sketches in the Beaver City Times-Tribune, but as the series continued many requests came in that it be published in more convenient and permanent form. Accordingly I have gathered them into this book. My earnest hope is that these stories of the Pioneers, written by themselves, may become an indelible part of the written history of Nebraska.

To those who have contributed these sketches I return my grateful thanks, and I believe I also voice the thanks of every citizen of Furnas county.

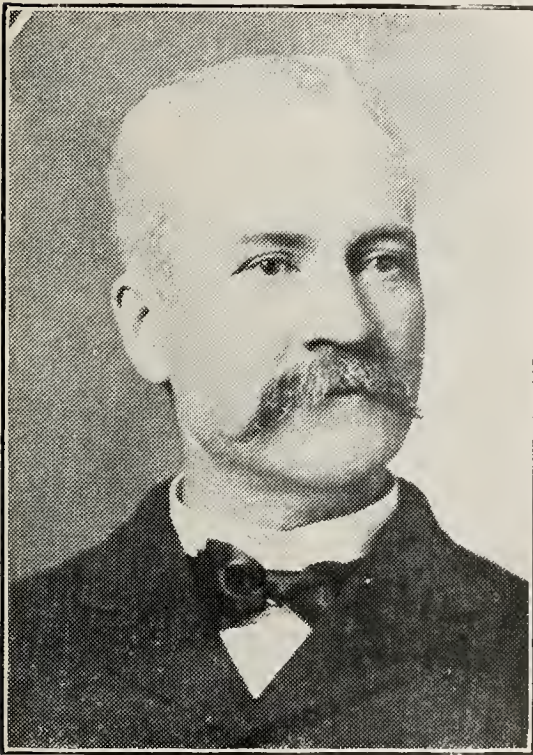
H. H. Merwin.

CHAPTER I

W. E. Crutcher, a Pioneer of 1874, Starts an Interesting Series of Articles Covering the Early Days of Furnas County.

The love of adventure and the desire to acquire possession of a part of the earth's surface were the incentives that lured a great number of the pioneers to the West.

Animated partly by each of these motives, in March, 1874,



W. E. CRUTCHER

E. D. Jones and this writer blew into Beaver City and found that a number of soldiers of Fortune had preceded us. Jake Young had that day moved out of the lone hotel, having become weary of the duties of landlord in the long tenure of two months, and A. J. Spahr and Mrs. Sweetland were just installed as managers of the hostelry.

Some of those who had preceded us into the Land of Promise were Robert Denham, who was running a livery stable; J. H. McKee, postmaster, had a store; Mondell & Lashley, a store; Captain J. R. Brown had a store. The last named we

purchased, and it soon became known as 'The Boy's Store.' We watched the incoming settlers build their sod houses, played croquet, hoped and prayed for rain, and incidentally sold some supplies. The sod houses were very interesting and likewise eco-

nomical and comfortable, except on rare occasions when the rain actually came and poured down through the dirt roof. Then the good wife would spread a waterproof over the bed, hoist an umbrella over her Sunday hat, and wait for the sun's rays to appear, while the husband would light his pipe from a dying ember and stroll out into the field to revel in the rain and keep from getting wet in spots. The sod house was warm in winter and cool in summer, and surely a blessing to the early settlers of the prairies. A. D. Allen was seen industriously following a sod plow across some perfectly good town lots one day, and was asked what he was doing. His reply was, 'Ripping out my weather boards.'

Some weeks after our advent, grass began to sprout, and very soon thereafter the buffalo appeared. During our first summer there I have stood in the street and seen buffalo killed on the hills south of town, and a few times small squads ran across the townsite. The main herd, however, was some distance west, and hunting parties were numerous. Buffalo were killed in large numbers, the flesh dried and brought to Beaver City for sale. Dried Buffalo meat was then a staple commodity and was exchanged in the stores for groceries just as butter and eggs are at this time. Many stories of hair breadth escapes from enraged buffalo were told by the late Elder S. B. Mayo. He wounded a buffalo and followed it up a draw to a point where there was a branch draw. Up this branch the buffalo went and the parson continued up the main draw, not having noticed the deflection of the game. The buffalo returned to the main draw and proceeded up the same in the rear of the hunter. Finally they reached a point where the banks of the gulch were so steep that neither hunter nor game could scale them, and for once the parson felt cornered. An angry buffalo glared menacingly at him and no means of escape open. Mayo said that he had never felt so lonesome in his life. After keeping him in fearful suspense for a while, the buffalo charged, and Mayo stepped to one side, seized the infuriated animal by the tail as he passed and uttered one wild whoop. The buffalo alarmed by the fearful sound and the unexpected tug upon his scandalous appendage, turned and made off down the gulch, leaving the hunter safe.

In December, 1874, a party of nine, including the writer, started west to find the main herd. We journeyed to within about 80 miles of Denver, and killed plenty of buffalo. But the trip be-

ing longer than we anticipated, we ran out of provisions, and for two weeks lived on buffalo meat—straight. This diet was apparently wholesome, but it did grow somewhat monotonous. This was an unusually cold winter, and being beyond timber a part of the time and having deep snow to contend with, five of the party were badly frozen, but we all got back to the settlement alive.

The hope of the early settlers had been that with cultivation of the soil the rainfall would increase, but, so far as I know, we spent much time in wishing for rain, and as J. H. McKee so often remarked, as he caressed the bald spot on top of his head, 'If we could only have plenty of rain we would be alright.'

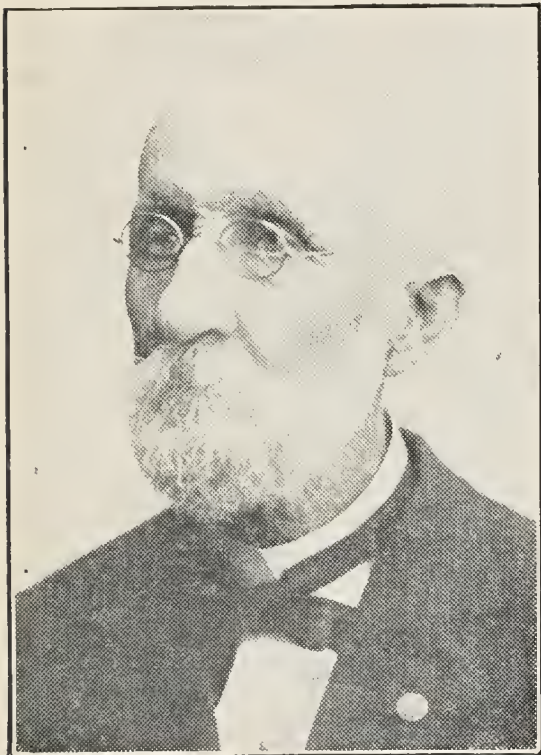
The grasshoppers then came to us for two successive years and devoured everything green, not excepting the Holland shades on the windows. The appetite of those little red legs was wonderful, and their gastronomic capabilities almost beyond belief. They came about the time the corn was in roasting ears and the farmers' hopes of a good crop were high, but it was only a few days until these hopes were dissipated, and the fields stripped to abject barrenness, leaving only the stubs of the cornstalks to tell the tale of the once luxuriant cornfields whose abundant harvest constituted the pride and wealth of the state. Much of the grass, too, was eaten, and the trees stripped of every particle of foliage. The whole country presented a scene of desolation distressing to look upon. The loss of all means of sustenance made so much suffering and destitution that Uncle Sam had to be called upon, to which appeal he generously responded, providing both provisions and clothing for a time for all those in real need. Many were the hardships endured during those trying years, but of those pioneers who remained, and are still in Furnas county, nearly all are enjoying a comfortable degree of prosperity, and it is the earnest wish of the writer that this fortunate condition may continue for many years to come.

W. E. CRUTCHER.

CHAPTER II

J. H. McKee, Beaver City's First Postmaster, Tells of the First Days of the Furnas County Metropolis

J. G. Struve and I started with teams from Lincoln about June 1, 1872, headed for the Republican and Beaver valleys, and arrived on the Republican Valley, where Oxford now stands. Mr. Struve thought that he liked the places at Oxford and



J. H. McKEE

First Postmaster in Beaver City

would take land there. We went across to the Beaver and there I found the location that suited me. I made a choice of the land that I hoped to locate on. From there we returned to await for the U. S. land office to be opened, which would not be until the next September. The B. & M. railroad was then being built west from Hastings, but had not reached Lowell, where the road expected to stop for a while. In due time the land office was opened and we filed on our land. R. J. Denham and J. Tiger accompanied me from Lincoln. Mr. Denham and I took quarters north of Beaver City and Mr. Tiger pre-empted the land on which East Beaver City is now located. As soon as Mr. Tiger proved up on his claim, Denham and myself bought the quarter, and soon after had it surveyed and platted into blocks, streets and lots.

In the meantime the Hadley Bros., who had taken the land west of the Tiger claim, joined in and helped to plat the town. Denham and I, to boost the town, thought that there should be a store. We got two teams, one of oxen and the other of horses—Denham driving the former and I the latter. We drove seventy-five miles for our lumber, Lowell being the nearest railroad station, and the end of the line at that time.

We had heard that Lowell was a pretty tough place. It was said that there were several graves in their cemetery and not one natural death and we believed that it was bona fide. Before we were there three hours a man was shot in a saloon by a man who said that he was from Melrose, a town that was situated west of Orleans and has since become extinct. We managed to put in the night without any stray bullets harming us. In the morning we loaded up with lumber for a 16x20 building and started home. We had a tedious time getting through with our loads, many times having to double teams to pull over and thru the canons. If I remember rightly, it took us three days to reach home. In the meantime people were coming in very fast, and it was but a short time until all of the timber and water claims were taken up. Our mail was lacking. We had to devise some way to get it. We organized a committee of the whole and agreed to take turns once a week and go after the mail. The distance to the nearest postoffice was 25 miles, being one mile east of Alma, but I do not remember the name of the office, but the postmaster's name was Painter. We managed under this arrangement to get our mail pretty regularly, but soon the postoffice department came to our rescue and established a star route from the Painter office, via Precept, and Richmond to Beaver City and on west to Wilsonville.

Our county was as yet unorganized, and the legislature was to meet the first of January, 1873. We got together and they appointed me to go to Lincoln to see about getting the county properly organized. Through the help of the representative from our district, Captain Garber, who was elected governor the next year, we got our county bounded and named Furnas, and a special call by proclamation by the governor for an election to be held for the purpose of electing county officials to hold until the general election in November. Two voting places were named in the proclamation, one at Beaver City and the other at Arapahoe. At this election the following officers were elected: N.

M. Ayers, county clerk; — — Sharp, county treasurer; Herman Jenkins, county judge; M. H. Johnson, sheriff; W. B. Bishop, C. W. Mallory, and James Parmenter, county commissioners, and Mrs. J. B. Whitney, county superintendent. Then to provide a place for the new county officials was the quandary, but the little store building came to the rescue by the proprietors offering what little spare room they had. The commissioners willingly accepted the offer and took possession and utilized it for county business for several months.

There was some contention some years ago about where the first court house was located. I thought then if I had been referred to I could have told that it was in our little store building. I think that N M. Ayers would verify my statements, as he was county clerk and met with the county commissioners many weeks.

Beaver City continued to grow. Every man in and around the place did all he could to help secure a good class of people to locate. The townsite owners made it interesting to some Lincoln people. Among them were Morrell and Lashley, who contracted with the townsite company to build a hotel and store, fill the store with goods, put in a saw mill and lumber yard, all of which they did as agreed.

We had many families who settled in and around town who worked together to boost the country. Among these were C. A. Danforth, J. T. Sunny, T. M. Williams, Armstrong Bros., A. D. Allen, W. E. Crutcher, E. D. Jones and others who came later.

Our first Indian raid was made by a band of Chief Whistler's tribe, which came trooping down the Beaver Valley, and pitched their tents near where the



MRS. J. H. McKEE

Beaver City Mills are now located. Dashing Charlie, who was a conspicuous character in a long continued story in the New York Weekly, about that time, was with them and seemed to be rather a leader of the band. He was said to be Chief Whistler's son-in-law. It was also reported that Chief Whistler was killed shortly before they started on this trip, and some of our people did not feel very safe while there were so many prowlers going into houses without leave to beg for something to eat and to see what could be seen. Our store was quite a loitering place for them. They came generally to trade butcher knives for sugar, coffee, bacon, tobacco, or anything that they could use. Butcher knives seemed to be their chief commodity for traffic, except a few furs. We traded goods for a good many of their knives and some furs, as the knives were of ready sale to the inhabitants. The Indians stayed for a few days, and then pulled stakes and moved on down the Beaver and pitched their tepees near Melrose. The Melrose people were prepared for any emergency. They had recently built a stockade, but they did not occupy it, knowing that our people had gotten along with the Indians without any trouble.

During the year 1873 we raised but little crops, as there was but little land broken. The year 1874 was dry and the grasshoppers came in myriads, and all of the crops were destroyed. So poor were the settlers and discouraged that many of them left the country. It looked very discouraging to those who were left, as actual starvation seemed to stare them in the face. Although there were thousands of buffalo scattered over the prairies in herds, they were soon killed or run out of the country by hunters who killed them principally for the hides, so that the settlers could get but little buffalo meat to appease hunger. Various means were devised to tide us over until another crop. Finally the government got to know of our needy condition and a shipment of provisions was made to Beaver City to be distributed to the needy. An army officer accompanied the shipment to see that the provisions were properly divided and receipts were taken for settlement with the government. When all had been given out and the receipts handed to the officer by the sub-committee, all seemed to be satisfied that they could pull through until another crop. When the next crop came it was rather short, but with a little help the settlers managed to live.

Our town did not improve very fast, although quite a number had come to make a home with us. W. E. Crutcher and E. D. Jones had come to put in a stock of goods. T. R. Armstrong and family had come to put in a drug store. Brown and Cluster put up a store building. Others came in to find homes: L. Kinsman and family, H. C. Fletcher and family, B. F. Maple and family, D. H. Lashley, J. A. Gibson, J. R. Downing and families, and others too numerous to mention, helped to share the privations of a frontier life, coming in along from 1872 to 1877.

In the fall of 1878 we had another Indian scare, when the Cheyenne Indians escaped from their reservations—Oklahoma. They crossed the Beaver creek near the headquarters, committing many atrocities, murdering and stealing from the settlers. The people became so frightened that they left their homes, taking their stock and as many of their belongings as they could and came down the Beaver Valley as far as Beaver City. Here we stopped them and provided the women and children a comfortable house to stay in. The men barricaded a space of an acre about the house with their wagons, which made it quite impregnable in case of an attack. It was but a short time until a scouting party of fifteen or twenty men, gathering what firearms they could find, started on a reconnoitering expedition. They went up the valley for fifteen or twenty miles, but found no enemy. The Indians had continued their course north, and the danger being over, the settlers dispersed and returned home, not much worse for their scare.

Again turning to give a fuller account of the little store, before referred to, I have thought that if there is any honor in the title of Historical Land Mark, the first building is certainly entitled to it. This little building was the first frame building, the first store building, the first post office, the place where the first election was held when the county was organized, the first courthouse where the commissioners held their first session, and where Judge Jenkins opened his first books to docket the first cases tried in Furnas county. The commissioners, after occupying the building for several months vacated, store and post office remaining. In the course of two or three years the post office was moved to a room on the west side of the square. The building was then leased to the druggists for three or four years, in which time about five different firms were in command. It was again vacated and Cope Bros., bought both the building and

lot, and put in a stock of goods bought of J. Clafflin & Co., of New York. They soon failed.

The building, goods, and lot were turned in toward the debt.

The Clafflin Co. transferred the property to their attorney, Lyman Mallory, the same being vacant T. R. Armstrong rented it for a residence for a time. It was then occupied by W. E. Crutcher and T. R. Armstrong, for the publication of the *Western Leader*, which was a bright, newsy little paper. Crutcher was editor and Armstrong manager. But as other business required their attention, they sold the paper to L. C. Chase, who changed the name to the *Beaver City Times*, which many vicissitudes is today the *Times-Tribune*. The people generally thought the name of *Western Leader* was good enough. The paper was continued to be published in the now historic building for a short time. When it was again vacated I moved the postoffice from the west side of the square back to the old building, where the postoffice department made Beaver City a money order office. This property was sold to W. F. Crutcher after about 35 years of continual service. The building was finally sold and moved off the lot and taken to another location on the square, and was used, I believe, by S. S. Allen as an implement warehouse. The building being gone, the lot is the land mark, which is lot 17, block 25, according to the recorded plat of Beaver City.

These reminiscences of the early days of Beaver City are pieked up from past recollections by the subscriber in his eighty-second year

JOHN H. MCKEE.

CHAPTER III

C. A. Danforth, the First Settler in the Beaver Valley, also had the First "House Raising."

The third article of this series is from the facile pen of C. A. Danforth, of Tacoma, Washington. Mr. Danforth was undoubtedly the first of the early settlers to set eyes upon the Beaver Valley. He also claims the distinction of being the first postmaster. He held the commission, but J. H. McKee was the first active postmaster, and as the first deputy postmaster had entire charge of the office. Mr. Danforth has always been a great hunter, and the halftone which accompanies this article shows him after a return from the chase at his home at Fern Hill, and was taken soon after his return to his home from a visit to Beaver City.

Mr. Danforth pertinently asks that a woman furnish an article concerning the early days from a feminine standpoint. The Times-Tribune has the promise of such a contribution, and it will be forthcoming before this series is completed.

Mr. Danforth says:

About noon on the 28th day of August, 1867, I first saw the Beaver Valley at a point perhaps ten miles west of the present site of Beaver City. Seven companies of Custer's famous Seventh Cavalry, and two companies of the Eighth Kansas, to one of which I belonged, were camped there after following a band of 3000 Indians north from near Saline to that point. Steadily, the trail had grown dim, until now in this valley not a sign of an Indian could be found. They had scattered to avoid us, and to meet again, probably, somewhere. One of the boys foolishly remarked that "some day people will live right here." The idea was ridiculed. It was even intimated that the poor soldier might be crippled under the hat. But the beautiful valley, better than any we had seen, had made an impression on me, and some day, I thought, I would have a home here.

So when Victor Vifquain, about the last of August, 1869, organized a party of fifteen at Lincoln to investigate the Republican Valley, I was one of them. Out past Milford, the last settlement, over the divide to the Platte, up the valley to old Fort



HOME FROM THE HUNT

C. A. Danforth at Right

Kearney, and then southwest to the Republican, where we camped on the high bank of the river just south of the present site of Orleans. How clean, and wild, and beautiful it all looked to me. There were buffalo by the thousand, (I'll not come down one buffalo,) elk in herds of an acre or more, along the lower Sappa, antelope everywhere on the upland, black tailed deer in the canyons, white tails in the main valley, and turkeys most always in sight along the Beaver and Sappa. It was a veritable hunter's paradise. It was then known that stock would thrive on buffalo grass, and we believed that the tall blue-joint, the rank sunflowers, and the great areas of timber, indicated agriculture. And as for horticulture, why, there were plums and grapes in abundance.

Next year the Byon and Vifquain colony settled at old Melrose. I could not go that year or the next. But about April 1st, 1872, Philip French, Felix Lester, Will Haney and myself, were

at the mouth of the Sappa going west. I crossed over to see my German friend Tceppfer, who, at my request, had taken the claim I had picked out in 1869. Said he, "I know all the valleys to the west. Go up the Beaver to Sec. 20, T. 2, R. 22, and pick out your claims, there are no better, invite your neighbors as they come, to help you, and go after the county seat. It will be near the center of the new county, and will have the most good country tributary to it. Now do as I tell you." While some others may have accomplished more, surely no one will say I ever failed to follow this advice to the best of my ability. The next morning I had decided very early on the location of my future home. It was on the N. E. 1-4 of Sec. 19, T. 2, R. 22, now owned and occupied by C. L. Courtright. Lester took the next claim east and Haney the one east of that. I am sure there were no claims taken west of these or east within two or three miles. The evening after we had taken the customary steps to show the location of our claims, we met Galen James with quite a party coming up to locate among them, Jesse and Manley Hadley. The next morning several located near us, and in the next few weeks settlers came thick and fast, generally taking claims with timber and water. All were invited to help hold in reserve the S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 17 for a town-site, and all were in favor of it. But the W. $\frac{1}{2}$, together with the E. $\frac{1}{2}$ of the S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$ was found to be a better location. Jesse Hadley, who had selected the S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$, was "agreeable" and this was finally made the town-site. And now came John H. McKee and June Denham with the promise of a little stock of goods (just what we were looking for), and they were invited to set up on this said S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$. Our offer was accepted, and now I am through with the town-site business. John H. McKee is better qualified than any other man ever was to write up the early history of the town-site of Beaver City.

Before the coming of Mr. McKee, I had circulated a petition for a postoffice, and finally received a commission from A. J. Creswell, dated January 15, 1873, conferring powers, privileges and emoluments. Said emoluments consisting of twelve greenback dollars per year, my share of the same being turned over to my first deputy, John H. McKee, afterwards postmaster. I never did know just how John managed to spend so much money. It took me six months to transfer that office to McKee when everybody in this world was willing so far as I know, and some of us were anxious. I never wanted the office or a town-site, or a mill by

that other kind of a site. I only wanted to help the "town to be" the coming county seat. Creswell, the name recommended for the new postoffice, would not go, so, at our request, Beaver City was substituted, and that was the way the town got its name.

About July 1st, Williams bought out Lester, and Haney sold to Moore, and later Moore sold to Denham. Nat and Ed. Ayers came with Williams. About this time or a little later came Caleb Jones, Howell, L. Kinsman, Cap. Freas, Jake Downing, J. Gould J. T. Sumney, Lawson, Laverack, the Sturtevents, Clark and Trent, Doc. Hobson and others, who settled on good claims close to Beaver City, with little or no timber.

Women were scarce in the new settlement. Who will write up the pioneer women? Early in the fall Jesse Hadley and I, saying never a word to each other about our private affairs, drove down to Lincoln together, where we separated, he going to eastern Iowa and I to Lawrence, Kansas. It so happened that both of us were married on the same day, November 7th, and in the early winter brought our brides out to share our fortunes and misfortunes of the new country. We were not the only ones. Others brought their wives and daughters, and soon there was school, and church and civilization. What woman will write an article about her pioneer sisters? About their "old Colonial furniture," the rattle-snakes under the bed? (My wife found a lively one in bed one evening.) About the pretty centipedes, and that ferocious animal, the flea? About the make-shifts for clothing, and the substitutes for meals? I once stopped for dinner at the house of a well known citizen on the Sappa, where there was nothing on the table but muskmelon and cream, and there was absolutely nothing else in the house to eat. Yet it was nicely served and the lady made no excuse or complaint, and it really tasted good to me.

How many remember old Mr. King, the harness maker, and his matrimonial troubles, or Wm. "Edge" Lebo, or the soft little French tailor who worked for me, blistered his hands and learned to be a farmer, or Homer Carpenter who usually rode a Texas steer, and afterward became a fine haired drummer for a wholesale house in Omaha, or Eads the shoemaker, with his, "now you see it and now you don't," or Bachelor Smith and his story of cooking the rice—a nice little five pound package for his breakfast. How it boiled over, and he filled his cup, spoon, plate, skillet, and finally the wash basin. How it came out again over the stove, onto the floor, and out of the door, and he ran

for Beaver City for dear life. He was not sure, could not say positively, that it followed him. And there was good old Mrs. McCormack, who found three babies, at three different houses, before breakfast. It was in this prolific community a few years later, that the over worked editor was obliged to refuse to publish birth notices for Arth Allen and Man Hadley, without pay. Unlike unhappy France, the stork was always with us.

There were many freaks, yes, but we had many good substantial citizens. Some of these were McKee, Denham, Jesse and Manly Hadley, D. H. and A. H. Lashley, Crutcher and Jones, Laverack, T. M. Williams, J. T. Sunny, N. M. Ayers, Doc. Hobson and L. Kinsman. These men may not have been all pure gold, but they were pushers, and if their hearts had been less stout, Beaver City would not now have been in the front. Whatever their luck in later life, there should be, and doubtless is, only friendship and good will between those living and the many good business men who followed and continued the good work. But they were the true pioneers, the men who blazed the way.

I shall have very little to say about the county seat fight. McKee and I, slightly disguised, visited a rather rabid spot over in the river valley, and while I attended a public meeting, McKee talked sweet to the lady postmaster (he was unmarried then), and obtained a complete list of all voters in that locality. The meeting was for the purpose of devising ways and means to down Beaver City. As a newcomer in that vicinity, I promised to help, so the story was told. But other stories were told. One was that Arapahoe gave town lots each to certain persons in the Beaver Valley for votes for their county seat. Another, that Beaver City traded away certain county offices, including the county judge, for county seat votes. However that may be, I never was jealous of those who received the lots or of the judge who received the fees, because, all told, the price of the lots, and the fees of the judge, did not probably amount to so much as my afore-mentioned emoluments. Anyhow, we had a long, fierce scrap, and the "boys squad" of Beaver City won out.

Possibly mine was the first old fashioned house raising in Furnas county. I furnished the meat, it was turkey, and Mrs. Anna Williams kindly furnished the dinner. Everybody seemed happy that day, but I was probably the happiest one. In the evening I could see the beginning of the new home, a hewed log

house, 16x20, a story and a half high, with corners nicely laid. This became our home till 1880, when the new house was built.

And now, perhaps my story is too long. But I have written nothing about fishing and hunting, the many foolish Indian scares, the grasshopper raids, hot winds, hail storms, blizzards and other "set-backs," the destruction of the buffalo, the settlement of the "divides" and of the days when aid came from the east. Nothing about the first hotel, the many little stores, the mill, the little broom factory that turned out sixty thousand dozen brooms, and other industries that helped start Beaver City. A letter is too short. I could write a book. But no, your other afflictions have been too numerous and severe.

Allow me to say in closing, the old pioneers have a friendship, a love for each other, second only to that existing among comrades of the Grand Army. It is this feeling that has caused me to visit Beaver City twice, in the last few years, to shake the hands and look in the eyes of the boys and girls of "Auld Lang Syne," and wherever those living are, I hope they may receive this, my greeting and best wishes, through the Times-Tribune.

C. A. DANFORTH.

CHAPTER IV

Hubert Pettijean's Trilling Experience in a Blizzard of the Early Days

It is the purpose of the Times-Tribune to include in these Pioneer Stories reminiscences of old settlers relating some strange or thrilling incident of the pioneer days.

We have been favored with one story by Hubert Pettijean, who resides on the state line in the southern part of Maple Creek precinct.

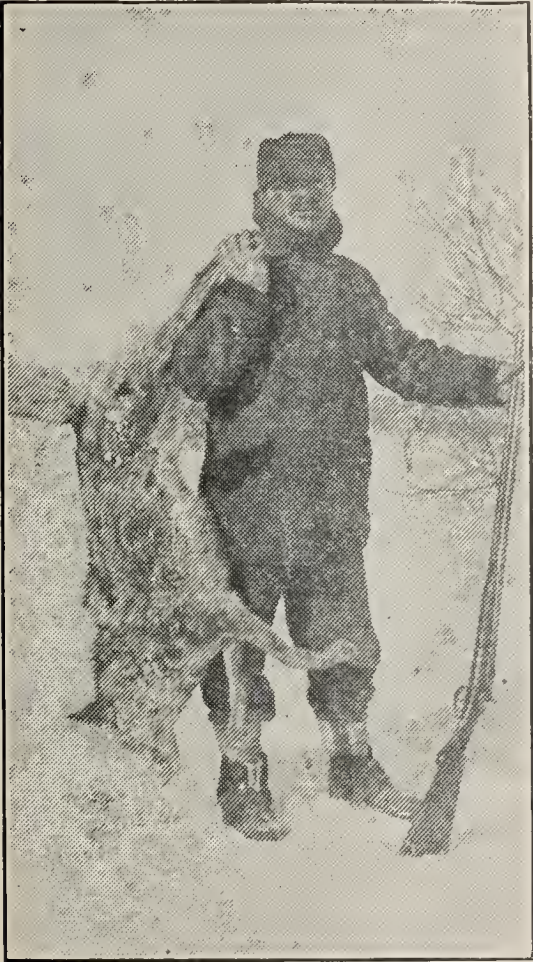
He moved to Furnas county in 1878, and for many years lived in a sod house. He now owns a fine, large farm house and is enjoying the fruits of his industry and frugality.

Mr. Pettijean is of French extraction. His mother was the daughter of a French soldier who served gallantly under the immortal Napoleon for fourteen long years. The family came to America and located in the big pine forests in the northeast corner of Wisconsin, and it was here that Mr. Pettijean was born. And as above related, he immigrated to Furnas county along with the grasshoppers in 1878. To tell the rest of the story we give Mr. Pettijean's own version of it:

"I landed in Nebraska some time in November. The grass had all been burned that fall and everything was black, and there were no houses to be seen. The few there were scattered about were down in the draws out of sight. The traveler was liable to walk onto the roof of a dugout without knowing it. On the 17th of December, 1878, it commenced to snow and the wind blew a gale from the north. I started for a flour mill on the Sappa, called the Burrs mill, I think. The road was crooked, and I got lost in going, but I finally got to the mill in the afternoon all right, and started back home with my pack of flour. I got along pretty well until I was about two miles from home. At that place there were two draws, and I took the wrong one of them, and I was lost for sure. The wind blowing bad by this time and it was bitter cold.

“When I left Wisconsin, my mother had put in a pair of the old country wooden shoes with my other stuff. That morning when I started to the mill, I thought that I had better put those shoes on as they would come handy if I had to stay out all night. I had some horse blankets with me. I made a wall with the sack of flour. On it I put a blanket and crawled underneath. But my feet got so cold that I was afraid that they would freeze. I had some matches with me and I found some straw, which I put

in the wooden shoes and set on fire. When the shoes got warm I put them on again and they felt mighty good. How many times I did this I have forgotten, but I kept it up all night and come out in the morning safe and sound, and found that I had wandered to within about forty rods of my own house. If it had not been for those wooden shoes I would certainly have frozen to death—so I claim that my mother saved my life when she started me out from Wisconsin with those wooden shoes.”



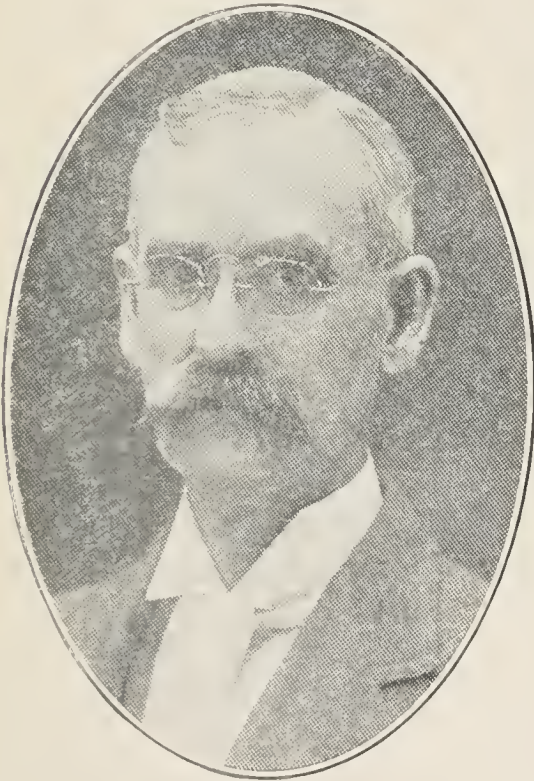
HUBERT PETTIJEAN

**With Coyote, Weighing 33 Pounds,
Which he Killed in 1910**

CHAPTER V

Jesse Hadley Relates How He and His Brothers Failed as Breeders of Buffalo.

I think I was the first man, or boy, rather, to take advantage of the offer of Uncle Sam to bet \$14 that one could not live five years on a quarter section of land in western Nebraska.



JESSE N. HADLEY

In the spring of 1872, my brother, Manly R. Hadley, and I, were victims of the fever to "Go West and Grow up With the Country." I was 19 years old on April 2 and my brother was three years older. We started west April 12 in a prairie schooner. We had three horses, four 2-year-old heifers and three pigs, the latter being tied on the back of the wagon in an Arbuckles coffee box. There were three other wagons in our party. We soon sold the heifers, as it was slow work driving them, and we were all anxious to get to the wild and woolly west before good land was all taken. We didn't have any particular place in view when we started except

to go to Nebraska. We stopped at Crete for a couple of days, and there heard of the Republican valley, and decided that there was the place where we wanted to locate. We went south from there to the old town of Meridian where we left the rest of our crowd

except Wm. Kinzer. At Meridian they told us that this was the last place we could buy anything, so we bought a sod plow, a small cooking stove, and some grain. From there to the place where we located there was but one house with a shingle roof, and that was at Franklin.

The next place we stopped at was Stockdale, afterward called Melrose, about a mile west of Orleans. We were told that if we crossed over to the south side of the river that the Indians would sure get us. A man by the name of Cheasman said that for \$5 he would locate us on good land with fine timber. He took us up on Spring Creek, 20 miles north of Oxford. The timber was good but the land adjoining was rough, so while Cheasman was out with a man by the name of Cream and his sons, we went back to Stockdale. From there we went back to the forks of the Beaver and Sappa Creeks, and there met Galen James, who had been with the government surveyors when southwest Nebraska had been surveyed. We told him that we would like to locate where we would be near the county seat, and he said that Harlan, Franklin and Webster counties to the east were 24 miles square and that the next county would likely be the same size. We secured him to go with us. There were no roads and we had some trouble in crossing draws, but we arrived at about where Beaver City is now located May 10, 1872, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

While we were up on Spring Creek, C. A. Danforth, Bill Haney, and a man by the name of Lester had located and started back to the land office at Beatrice. My brother, M. R. Hadley, took the claim where the Beaver City Mill is now located, Kinzer the quarter just west of town and known as the C. M. Lewelling farm, and myself the S. W. quarter of Sec. 17, being the west half of the present site of Beaver City. I built a log house, 16x18—not a nice hewn log house like C. A. Danforth, but of straight, round logs, sod roof and dirt floor. This was on the southwest corner of section 17. On September 13th, I started back to Iowa to get married. Got a free ride to Lincoln with C. A. Danforth, and there took the train. As stated by Mr. Danforth, it so happened that we were married on the same day, November 7, 1872.

I told my bride-to-be just what kind of a home I had prepared to take her to—the wild country and the danger of Indians, and she bravely said she could go any place that I could.

That was forty years ago, and that same girl and I are going together yet.

We started on our honeymoon trip November 21, with a span of good horses and a double-covered wagon. When we drove into Red Oak, Iowa, on a bright, clear morning at 9 o'clock, it was 30 degrees below zero. In a day or two it had warmed up, and we had pleasant weather and fine roads. We arrived at Beaver City on December 13, and found that brother M. R. and Bill Kinzer had supper ready for us.

On Christmas Day, 1872, Mrs. T. M. Williams, had a wild turkey dinner, with all the neighborhood invited. On New Year's day Mr. and Mrs. Henry Moore had the same crowd, and when we got together in those days we had a jolly good time.

Early in 1873, the Armstrong boys, M. R. and myself started to Lowell where the new land office had been opened for the western district, and made proof on our pre-emptions, paying Uncle Sam \$1.25 per acre. At the same time all of us took out papers on a quarter section homestead and a quarter section tree claim. I then had in my name 480 acres of Uncle Sam's land, and was not 20 years old, and had not violated the law either, as I was "the head of a family." After paying out on our pre-emptions brother M. R. deeded to me the east half of 80 acres of his pre-emption, and I deeded to him the north 80 acres of my pre-emption.

The following summer, 1873, J. H. McKee, R. J. Denham, M. R. and myself laid out the town of Beaver City, A. Coppom doing the surveying.

I will say nothing about the long bitter contest that we had over the county seat, but as my friend Danforth said, the "boys" won. I never held a county office or had the postoffice, but the last of August, 1873, I carried a petition to have the county organized and bounded, and got every settler in the south part of the county.

Shortly after laying out the town, we negotiated with Monell and Lashley of Lincoln, who built the Lashley block and the mill. As a bonus, McKee, Denham, my brother and I deeded them one-sixth of the 320 acres which we had layed out for the town. My brother and I also gave five acres each for the town site, and brother M. R. gave the ground for the cemetery. Our little girl, Oral, 14 months old, was the first person buried there, and Mrs. J. A. Cluster, the second.

I must tell you more about those pigs we brought out with us. They were the first swine brought to southwest Nebraska, and as my brother and I had been brought up on a farm, we thought that the only way to make money was to raise corn and hogs. We had fine luck with the hogs. I never saw hogs increase so fast, and one died. The first year we had a pretty good crop of corn, and the second year fine prospects until July 8, when a hail storm came and cut everything to the ground. Then we had hogs but no corn. We had to pay \$1 per bushel for corn, and so let some of the hogs out on shares. We kept a few over and raised more next spring, thinking that we would have a corn crop, but the next three years, 1874-5-6, the grasshoppers came and took everything. However, by that time we had scattered hogs pretty well over the south part of the county.

When we first arrived, we were somewhat disappointed in not seeing any buffalo, but our guide, Galen Jones, said, "Don't worry about that, boys. It has been a late spring and they are late coming from the south, but you will see plenty in a short

time." We had been there about a week. One of us kept a plow going, while the other two built our first house, a dug-out with a pole front and sides, located on the north side of the sand knoll, close to the creek and a short distance from where the mill stands. We let our horses run out at night and usually found them out in the valley to the northwest. One morning Kinzer went up on the raise back of the house to



"Dick," an Early Settler

look for the horses and called to brother and me to come up and see a sight. About one-half mile to the northwest there was a herd of about 500 buffalo. We got our horses and started on our first buffalo hunt. My brother had a squirrel gun, Kinzer a cap and ball revolver, and I had an old Spencer carbine, that would not hit the side of a barn 200 yards away. Before we got in shooting distance, the buffalo galloped off to the northwest and up a big draw. We followed them up, and the boys held my horse while

I went up the draw to get a close shot at the buffalo. I was trying to keep out of sight, and in making a turn in the draw, came right onto a dozen big, shaggy fellows, the closest not over 15 or 20 feet away. I was too scared to run and stood and looked at them. They took a good look at me, and then scampered up the draw, while I ran the other way without ever firing a shot. We followed them up the draw until we could see buffalo to the north, east and west. I finally picked one about 75 yards away, and fired. He came partly down and I thought that I had him. But he recovered himself and started on. We followed him to the next draw west where we shot at him, one at a time. I had only what cartridges the cylinder would hold, brother had four or five for the squirrel gun, and Kinzer six in the revolver, all of which we used, and then left the buffalo standing. From there we went north to the top of the divide and west to about north of Hendley. When we started south for the creek, we were in a seething mass of buffalo coming from the south. They would part about 50 yards for us, and the balance of the country was one solid mass of buffalo. I think that all of us had serious thoughts of home and friends, and we all felt much safer when we got down to the creek where we were protected by the timber. We found out from some trappers that the buffalo had been crossing the creek all the night before. I am not going to try to tell you how many buffalo we saw that day, but suffice it to say that when we were on the high divide they covered the ground in every direction that we could see.

By the next day the main herd had pushed north across the Republican and on north, but all of the rest of the summer one could go out on the prairie and see in any direction from a few hundred to thousands in a bunch. Many times during the next few months I have gone out to get our horses and could not see them for the buffalo, but when I would approach the buffalo would scamper off. The horses and the buffalo had been grazing side by side.

In June, 1872, a man by the name of Craig settled 3 or 4 miles west of us on the creek. He had not been there long when some government scouts rode through the country warning the settlers to be on the lookout for Indians. Mrs. Craig became so frightened that she told her husband that if he would not leave that she would go a foot and alone. So he loaded their stuff and started back east. When they got to our place he was still

pretty mad. He had six cows and two 2-year-old heifers he had brought from Iowa with him. We were wanting some cows and my brother and I looked them over and finally bought them for \$200. Our next big idea was to catch buffalo calves, raise them on the milk of which we had a plenty, and drive them back east and make our pile. We had caught a few previous to that time, but they had died in a day or two, but we thought that with so much milk we could raise quite a herd.

My brother and I didn't know anything about throwing a lasso, and had never seen anyone throw one at that time. We would start out on our horses after a bunch, and run them 4 or 5 miles until the calves fell behind, pretty well fagged out. Then one of us would jump off his horse and catch the calf by the hind legs, get a rope around it and start the other way quick to get out of sight, while the other would keep after the herd to prevent the mother buffalo from turning on us, which she sometimes did, when we would pour the lead into her. We caught thirty or forty calves that summer, sometimes one, never over two or three, in one day. We could have caught many more, and at last we did it more for sport than for gain. Some of them would die before we could get them home, others in a day or so, and others lived for a week and then died. We caught them from a few days to six months old. The larger ones sometimes gave us a pretty good fight, after which they would give up and afterward die from fright or a broken heart. We only raised one calf. At one time we had five for a month or more, and were doing fine. We had them in a pen where the pigs could go in and out, and every morning and night we would put in a couple of pails of fresh milk in a trough. After the calves had drunk what they wanted, the pigs would clean up the rest. One very hot day the pigs didn't drink up the milk and it soured, and the calves drunk it and all died but one. So we gave up trying to make a stake raising a herd of buffalo.

The one buffalo that we raised we worked with one of the cows, as we had bad luck with our horses. In August, 1872, we had two of our horses stolen and never heard from them. When I went east to be married I brought out another good team. Soon after I got back I traded one of the cows to Elder Mayo for a horse. Only had him a few days when one of the other horses kicked him, and he died. In the spring, when the grain got green, one of them took the colic and died. Then the other

one which I brought from Iowa ran out on a cow shed that was dug in the bank, and she died. Brother M. R. then traded a cow for an old horse, and in a short time she fell in an old well and died. That left us with but one horse. In the spring of 1875 M. R. rode the remaining horse up to North Platte and worked while I put in the crop with the buffalo and cow for a team. I put in ten acres of wheat, broke the ground and harrowed it, and took my wife buggy riding with this same buffalo and cow. In the fall of that year I went back to Iowa and brought out another team. Started back in February. The same fall brother M. R. took the buffalo yoked with an ox, bought another team of oxen, and went up to old Fort McPherson, where he baled hay for the government. One night the buffalo strayed away from the oxen, and a hunter shot him, thinking that he was a wild one.

Brother M. R. then went to the Black Hills for a couple of



THE LATE M. R. HADLEY

he got loose he frightened some of the newcomers so that they would not go out for fear of him. When he was loose he visited sheds and gardens and helped himself to vegetables, and peo-

years. When he came back, he secured two more buffalo and broke them to work, and with a yoke of oxen freighted from Plum Creek and Kearney, using trail wagons in coming across from the Platte to the Republican. On one of his trips, one of the buffalo became footsore, and he left him, going back in a few days to find him dead. The other one, which he called "Dick," and will be remembered by the old timers, he kept until 1882. He was not cross nor vicious, but the town by that time had a population of 300 or 400, and it was a hard matter to keep Dick fastened up, and when

ple were afraid to try to drive him away. Brother M. R. concluded to kill him, and led him down to N. M. Ayres' slaughter house, where I shot him and Nat Ayers dressed the carcass. After keeping what meat we wanted and supplying our friends, we sold the balance at the store. Brother M. R. had the head mounted and the skin tanned. The head was burned when the Hadley Opera House Block burned. I think that my brother's family still have the robe at this time.

I will say nothing about the various Indian scares and prairie fires, except that at one time we fought fire for two days and nights, only stopping to get a little something to eat, just to save some winter pasture.

In September 1876, my wife and I went back to Iowa to recruit financially, and stayed until September, 1879, on my father's farm, then drove back to Nebraska, this making five trips I had made back and forth in a covered wagon, 550 miles, my wife making four of them with me.

In 1880 I made up my mind I would let other people till the soil. My brother and I were in the mercantile business for five years, when I bought him out and continued the business with the help of my wife. How well we succeeded some of my friends back there know. For ten or twelve years we made money, not as much as one man wants, but as one man needs. Then with bad speculation and a Cleveland administration, it went like it did with a great many others. We are now happy and contented at Florence, Colo. We still have a warm spot in our hearts for Beaver City and friends back there, many of whom traded with us for sixteen years.

I enjoyed very much the articles of my old pioneer friends, W. E. Crutcher, J. H. McKee, and C. A. Danforth, and hope to read many more in your good paper, which we receive and all read every week.

JESSE N. HADLEY.

CHAPTER VI

Mrs. N. M. Ayers Relates Interesting Incidents in the Life of a Woman Pioneer of Nebraska

Words fail to express my thoughts as I gazed for the first time upon the beautiful valley of the Beaver, thirty-nine years ago. The following news item printed in the Nebraska State Journal, July 13, 1873, explains the reason of our being so far from home.

**MRS. N. M. AYERS**

say "good bye," and remarked, "I'd not give up \$50 a month, and go and live among the Indians for any man." But that didn't discourage our going to the Great West to build a home and seek our fortune.

"We are most happy to chronicle in another place the wedding of our friend, N. M. Ayers, clerk of Furnas county. Mr. Ayers, being a rising young man of the new country, has done well in taking to his homestead, in the great Republican valley, a bride to walk the prairie pathways with him. We bespeak long life and happiness to the fortunate couple."

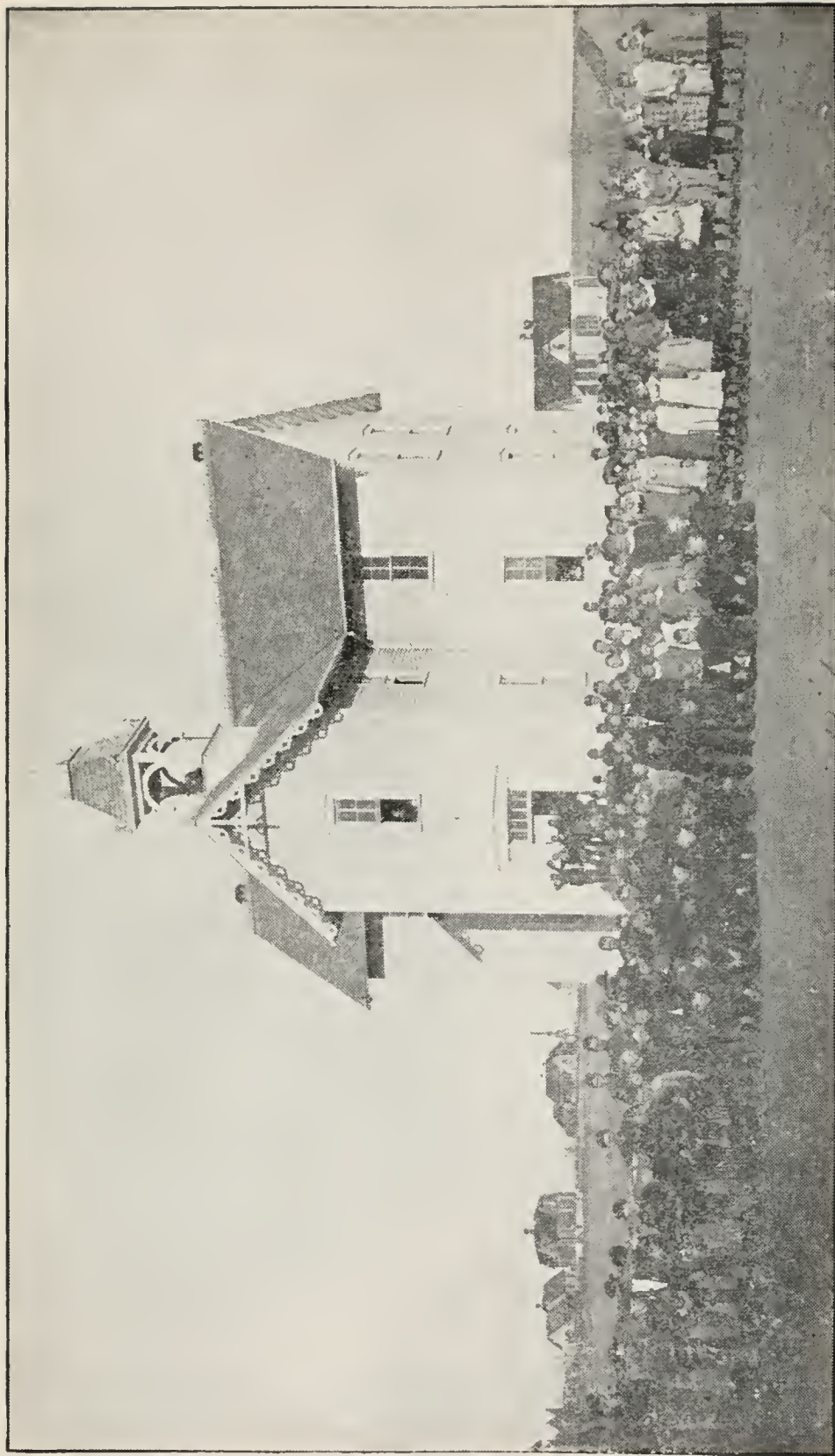
West seemed farther away, thirty-nine years ago than it does at the present time, and eastern people thought of it to be the home of the Indian and buffalo. A neighbor came in to

Our nearest railroad point was Lowell, 80 miles from Beaver City, and from that point we proceeded overland on our journey. We camped at noon for dinner. My husband did the cooking, for I was not yet accustomed to camp life, and we ate our first meal in the shade of the covered wagon. We traveled all day over the vast prairies without seeing a tree or shrub, not even a sage brush. I never longed to see a tree as I did that day. The monotony was broken to some extent by seeing the beautiful wild flowers, a variety that I had not seen in Iowa, and Nat had to stop the team many times for me to gather some. There was but one house, and that was at Walker's ranch, between Lowell and Turkey Creek, a distance of 45 miles.

When the boys came out the year before to take their claims, they could have had their choice of land in this part of the country. Not even a house was on the present site of Holdrege or Minden, but they wanted claims with timber and water.

Our second day's drive brought us to Turkey Creek at noon, and there for the first time since leaving Lowell we beheld the beautiful native trees for which we had been longing. A few hours' drive brought us to the great Republican valley, and then on to Melrose, a small town one mile west of the present town of Orleans, and at that point we looked upon the Beaver for the first time. I shall not attempt to describe the picturesque valley. We were two and one-half days going from Lowell to Beaver City. I had heard much about the place, mostly prospective. And then for the first time I saw the town—one small frame building occupied by McKee & Denham as a store and post office, and a log cabin, the home of the bachelors, McKee & Denham. These were the only buildings on the present town-site of Beaver City.

My husband had prepared a home before coming after me, and of course I was anxious to see it. I knew that it was a log house and stood on the farm now owned by Mr. Aldrich. This was our homestead, and we lived there for seven years. I took as much pride "keeping house" in that log cabin as I have in any house in which we have ever lived. I remember one evening W. Z. Taylor, now of Culbertson, called at the door and asked the distance to Beaver City. He said "excuse me," and looked around the little room and remarked, "how nice this looks." I had just finished papering with newspapers, hung up some pictures and other bric-a-brac, and really it did look home-



Beaver City High School Building as it appeared in 1888. It is now the home of the Times-Tribune.

like and cosy. Many were the happy days spent in that little log cabin. We hear much about the high cost of living now, but if people would economize as we did in those days—yes, for many years—in living, dress and means of conveyance, there would be no occasion for talking that way. We would look at the sugar many times before using it to bake a cake or a batch of cookies, wondering whether we had better keep it to sweeten our coffee, which consisted of parched corn and rye with a few grains of coffee to flavor it. Two calico dresses a year replenished our wardrobe, and many had but one. Many of the women carried their shoes and stockings in their hands until they came near to Beaver City and then put them on. A top buggy in those days was as much of a curiosity as an auto was in Beaver City twelve years ago. A. E. Harvey and Mr. Blackmer were the first ones to come to Beaver City with a top buggy and everybody went to the door to see it.

We had been "at home" only a few weeks, when one day a very unwelcome visitor came unbidden and found his way into the house before I was aware of it. Nat had made some large wooden pegs, for nails were scarce, and driven them into the logs, to serve as wardrobe hooks. I chanced to look in that direction, and there on two of those pegs hung a big snake. It took me only a few seconds to go to J. R. Downing's, our nearest neighbor at home that day, and got him to go and oust the monster. Mr. Downing's brother, Charlie, was there too, and they both came and found the reptile had secreted himself behind a cupboard, but it took only a few minutes to get him out and end his life. I don't know whether the Downing brothers remember this incident, but it is as fresh in my memory as though it had happened but yesterday. Governor Furnas was on his way to Beaver City that same day, and stopped with us for supper. We were very much interested in the snake story, and after supper took its measure, which was five feet and seven inches. Several years after the governor told my husband that he had related that snake story many times as an incident of pioneer life.

In the spring, Nat broke some strips of ground, and planted watermelons and corn. I never saw such melons, for size and flavor, as grew on the virgin soil. The corn was good too. In writing home one day I had much to say in praise of the watermelons, but did not mention anything else. When an answer came the folks said they did not care to live in a country where

they grew nothing but watermelons. I was more interested in the melon patch, as that was about the only source of revenue we had at that time. Large herds of Texas cattle were often driven through, and it required several cowboys to do this, and they paid us very liberally for the melons and did not try to steal them.

Our principle amusements were quiltings and all were invited. We had no cliques and clans, but were like a large family. It was a novel way for me to pass the time, as I had spent the greater part of my life in the school room. Many were the pleasant days spent in the home of "Tommy and Anna." That home is now the dining room of Mrs. G M Warner. The bed would be taken down, the quilt put in the frames, and we quilted until dinner was ready to serve, then the quilt was hung up, the table set, and all did ample justice to the good dinner that Anna had prepared. One seldom heard, "Mr. and Mrs." It was "Tommy and Anna," "Nat and Hattie," etc.

In 1874, Nat took as a timber claim the farm now owned by J. H. Wischmeier. He broke the required number of acres, went to the Republican river, secured trees, set them out, and watched and waited for rain which failed to come. The trees died, and he did not think it advisable to reset. A man by the name of Snodgrass came to Beaver looking for a claim, and went out to see the land. He knew that he could take it as a homestead, but before doing so said that he would give us a cow for the land. We took the cow, and she was blind in one eye. Some time after, Rev. Bushnell bought the cow, fattened, killed, and sold her for beef, and we had a piece of the meat to eat. Just think of selling a 160 acre farm for a blind cow. That was 38 years ago.

Every day we looked for covered wagons. We were anxious to have the country settle up and we were glad when we learned that a large family had settled. Almost the first question asked when we heard of a "new comer," was, "How much of a family have they?" How well do I remember when Capt. J. H. Freas came with his family. It was the topic of conversation for several weeks, and we were so glad to have them with us. Later when Mr. and Mrs. Yoe came with their nine lambs we were delighted.

Late in the fall of 1873, Cluster & Brown opened a small store in Beaver City, which was sold the following year to Crutch-

er & Jones. The Cluster family was small, there being but two children, but well do we remember the name of the eldest, the initials of whom would exceed those of C. E. V. Smith. The full name was Latino Casabianca Harry Fulton Cluster. It took some time to remember the order in which the names came, but it was indelibly stamped on our memories.

Our first Sabbath School was organized in 1874, with T. M. Williams as superintendent. Soon after a singing school was organized with Mrs. Garlinghouse as teacher. She is now Mrs. L. H. Rust, of Red Cloud. The first school in Beaver City was taught by a lady living on the Sappa, by the name of Dunham. I had the pleasure of teaching the second school, which was held in the Jake Young hotel. No doubt but the Freas boys, Fred Downing and others remember those school days. T. K. Clark was county superintendent.

It is needless to tell how our hopes were blasted when crops were destroyed by hot winds, grasshoppers, bugs, drouths. The time that "aid" was sent to those who could not get away to their "wife's folks." The prairie fires that threatened our homes. The scourge of diphtheria that came and took so many of our little ones. Let me say that the day that our little daughter was buried was the nearest I ever came to seeing the Indians that my friend had told me that we were going to live among. As we were on the way to the cemetery, as far as the eye could see the road was lined with teams coming to Beaver City for protection from the Indians. That was the time of the Indian massacre on the Sappa in 1878.

I might add more but for fear of trying your patience I will close, with best wishes to all of the friends in Beaver City and those in distant places who are reading these pioneer stories.

Sincerely yours,

MRS. N. M. AYERS.

CHAPTER VII

Mrs. M. A. Freas Relates Incidents of Early Days When Snake, Prairie Fire and Indian Scares Abounded

I have been reading the letters in the Times-Tribune written by the pioneers of Beaver City and Furnas county, and have enjoyed them very much, as they bring back to memory a few of the scenes we have passed through, and know that it is all true.

Talk about snakes! Here in an early day they had taken possession of all the homesteads, pre-emption, and timber claims, leaving little room for the pioneers. But we had come to stay, we commenced battle against our enemies with poles, pitchforks, and other weapons that we could strike with. We fought bravely to hold the fort and came off victorious and held our claims, afterward our happy homes. The first rattlesnake that I killed was in the fall we came west, September, 1875. This rattler was a very large one. I was getting dinner and just stepped outside to get some wood, when I almost trod on it. I jumped back and looked around to get something to kill it with. There was nothing very near but a ridge pole, which was about twenty feet long. I picked this up with the strength of a Sampson, and killed the snake with some mighty blows. The snake was a furious fighter, and my arm was so badly sprained that I could not finish getting dinner, but waited until my husband came home to dinner, which he finished getting. He scarcely believed that I killed the snake with the ridge pole but I did not tell a lie. This is part of a snake story, but I am not through yet. That same fall I was across the prairie and near where F. G. Downing lives now, which was all unbroken prairie then, I saw a big snake. I had been up to Mrs. Trent's, who lived where Turners used to live, and I thought I would come right across to the bridge west of our shanty on the claim. I happened to look around and there was a large snake standing up running after me. You better believe that I ran, too. I could run fast those days. I kept on running, trying to look back to find out if I was gaining any headway. I surely

thought that my time had come. Finally I reached the bridge, and then I missed the snake or it missed me, for which I was very thankful. I then went up to the house and rested, and never since have I raced with a snake of that kind. The snake story is finished, and it is all true.

But Indian scares! They were something I thought at the time were worse than anything I had experienced. I looked for them night and day, and in September 1878 it was trying times for all of us, more especially the women, who had to stay at home and look out for their families. The people west of us were

fleeing from their claims to escape from the Indians, which were a sad reality, in some cases taking their stock and whatever they could. I remember one Sunday I baked bread all day, and packed what clothing I thought that we could take, if we had any chance of getting away. L. Kinsman came over in the afternoon to see my husband, who was very sick at the time, being the same fall that he died, November 6. Mr. Kinsman told us not to worry. If the Indians came nearer he would send and take us farther east, as they had horses and wagons. I felt greatly relieved to know that we had a good true friend who



MRS. M. A. FREAS

would look out for our safety.

I gave bread and butter and what I could to the family who were going east with five small children. They camped near the bridge west of our place. The woman told me that the Indians had murdered her husband and eldest son, 18 years old, who were herding their stock, and wounded her in the shoulder, and took all her money, \$500. She said that they had a span of mules hitched to a wagon and she thought they could get away,

but the Indians cut them loose from the wagon. She then escaped with the children to the timber on the Beaver and went about 2 miles to a brother-in-law's, and he was taking them back to near Omaha, where they had lived before coming west. They had an ox team. I felt sorry for them and did what I could, which was little. The children needed clothing.

And the grasshoppers! They were very hungry at times, settling down and eating everything green. (Some of you will perhaps say that it is a wonder that any of us were left.) They were too numerous to count or say much about; but we knew after they had eaten everything in sight that they would go on and we would stay on our claims. We wanted homes in the lively west even though we had to fight for them.

The prairie fires too! They were something to contend with. The worst one which I remember coming was in 1879. We had very high winds coming from the north. A perfect hurricane. The fire started up north of the Republican river. At times it appeared as if the very heavens were on fire. At that time we had very little breaking done or plowed ground. The flames came rolling up so high and so swiftly we thought best to try to get to some breaking about eighty rods from our shanty. We all ran for our lives and arrived safely on the plowed ground, the flames rolling on around us, and left us safe on the ground that had been plowed. I said let us pray God in his goodness and mercy to save our little home. We did pray. Some will say that God had nothing to do with it, but I shall always believe that He did. And when the flames and dense smoke cleared away somewhat, and the burned grass had cooled off so that we could get back where our shanty, as we thought had burned, (some of us were in our bare feet) to our surprise and happiness our little home was standing, but all burned black around it. I for one felt like shouting for God's mercy and goodness to my family. As soon as some of the men could get across from Beaver City they came to see what had become of us. Among the number were W. E. Crutcher, E. D. Jones, A. E. Harvey, A. D. Allen, J. H. McKee, and others. They supposed we had been burned and asked me what I thought when I came back to the house about 1 o'clock at night and found all safe. My answer was, "It looked to me like a golden castle filled with

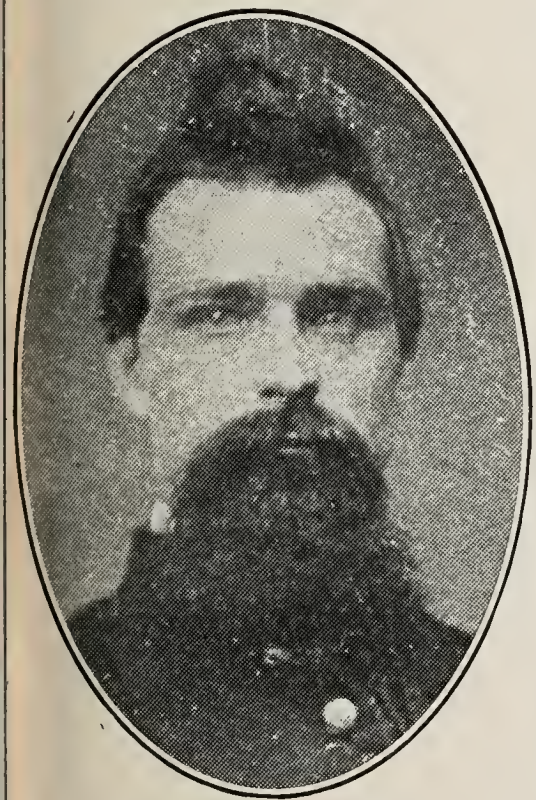
priceless attire." We always had a great deal to be thankful for.

As for furniture! We had plenty to suit the houses. Tables and chairs made of pine boards. Charles Clark made our table. I think that he lives at Fairbury now. The table was very nice. Most of us women were our own carpenters. I thought that I could make a very nice cupboard and chairs to match. I liked matched furniture; it was so stylish. I had almost forgotten that Mr. McKee gave us one real chair, made "back east."

As for dress! We had plenty, not caring to display any finery or diamonds at that time, our aim being to get homes in this garden spot, the "lovely west," and more, we succeeded!

Now we sing, "Home, Sweet Home. Nothing great is lightly won; nothing won is lost."

As the women would uphold me in what I say if I could but see them. Some have moved away, some are still here, and many are sleeping their last sleep. But they were all true, good women. Among the number were Mrs. J. R. Downing, Mrs. N. M. Ayers, Mrs. Ed Ayers, Mrs. T. M. Williams, Mrs. J. T. Sumney, Mrs. H. C. Fletcher, Mrs. C. A. Danforth, Mrs. Charles Clark, Mrs. J. N. Hadley, Mrs. M. R. Hadley, Mrs. Cyrus Trent, Mrs. James Lawson, Mrs. C. Laverack, Mrs. A. D. Allen and her mother, and others who were always kind and good to us when in need or sickness.



CAPT. J. H. FREAS

I could write many more pages about those early days, our trials, joys, disappointments, and accomplishments, but will close with my best wishes to all those who have written these pioneer stories, and to the many more whom I hope will follow.

MRS. M. A. FREAS.

CHAPTER VIII

**Judge J. T. Sunny Taught School, Hunted Buffalo, Broke Prairie
Ran for Office—All in the Early Days.**

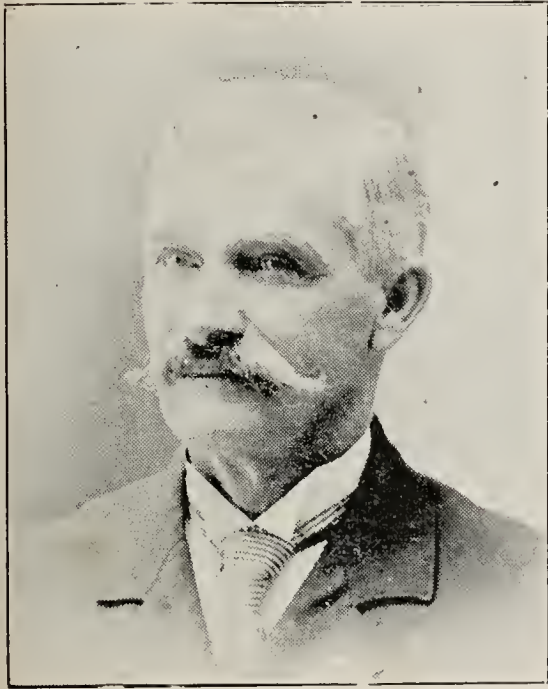
I left my home and wife in Washington County, Penn., in October, 1872, to go to what was then termed the far west. A neighbor and his family had preceded me, and I had corresponded with his sons, one of whom served in the same company with me in the war. He gave a glowing account of Nebraska. I arrived in Plattsmouth by train and was soon with my friends 7 miles south of that place. About the first thing I did was to cast about and get employment, and being a school teacher my friends told me of a school director who was formerly a resident of Washington County, Penn., who had been looking for a teacher. I soon met him and secured the school at \$40 per month and board. I had been teaching in Pennsylvania for from \$25 to \$35 and boarding myself. I had nearly two months to look around before school was to commence.

I went west as far as Crete, and looked over the southwest part of Clay county but I could find no good claims that had not filings of some kind on them, and fearing a blizzard, I gave up finding a claim at that time. I taught one term of school and another in an adjoining district, which occupied my time until nearly harvest in 1873. In the meantime Mrs. Sunny had come on from Pennsylvania and we had rented a house in Rock Bluffs, Cass County. I worked during harvest, and then made arrangements to go farther west in search of claims. S. E. Clemmons, whose mother-in-law and her family were living on the Sappa, agreed to drive his team and take three young men, former neighbors, and myself to the Sappa valley. But one of the young men and I being anxious to see the Republican valley first, went by rail to Crete, then afoot, except when a team overtook us and gave us a lift.

We had our grips, a Colt's revolver and a double barreled, muzzle-loading shotgun. On our way, Mr. Graham, my compan-

ion, was carrying the gun when a jackrabbit jumped up, the first one we had ever seen. I told him to shoot it, but he said that it was crippled and that he would catch it. And so after it he ran, and when it got down to running it was out of reach of shot.

We journeyed along until we came to the Republican river below Red Cloud, where a brother-in-law of S. E. Clemmons lived, with whom we stopped part of a day and night. We had a nice trip to Melrose, near Orleans, where we learned that Frank Gapen, brother-in-law of Mr. Clemmons, was mowing on the



JUDGE J. T. SUMNY

Sappa and we were soon with him. When his day's work was done he took us in his wagon to his mother's—and we soon learned that she was a mother indeed, and that she and her daughter, now Mrs. John Rea, were as much our friends as though they had known us all their lives. We also found that the sons, John, Joseph, Daniel and Frank, were kind hearted and accommodating young men. They had been here some time and were ready to give us much information about the country.

Frank said that he was glad that we had a shot gun, as he wanted to shoot some wild turkeys. He and Mr.

Graham started out and soon returned loaded down with turkeys, and though it was a little early we had Thanksgiving for some time.

They told us that the county seat would be located at Beaver City and gave me the directions. I could not wait for those coming in the wagon, but started to tramp across the divide, and soon found my way to the future capital of Furnas county. I was desirous of getting claims as near Beaver City as possible. T. M. Williams told me of one west of the mill on the south side

of the creek, but it did not suit me. I was advised to go to Wm. Bishop, who was living on the land owned now by Mr. Holmes and his son was living on the land afterward owned by O. W. Clark. Mr Bishop showed me some nice land there, and I decided that I would take some of it. I went back to Gapen's and found that Mr. Clemmons had arrived. Mr. Clemmons and Mr. Graham picked out claims near Gapen's, and my two other friends took claims, one that was afterward owned by Geo. Dusenberry. Then we made up our minds to take a little hunt.

We went west up the Beaver to Cedar Bluffs, then across to the Driftwood and the Republican river and down to Arapahoe. When we arrived at the latter place they wanted us to vote on the county seat question, but we did not as we were Beaver City-ites. Upon our arrival at Beaver City they wanted us to vote there.

We met several persons who were after us to locate, but I told them that I was not fully satisfied. Joe Armstrong told me of a claim that had been filed on by a young man who was but 18 years old, and who could not possibly hold it until he was 21 years of age, and that Ed. Ayers would show me the corners. Mr. Ayers told me that he was friendly with the young man and his parents and would do nothing, but for me to see Al. Kinsman and make satisfactory settlement with him, as he was the young man who had filed. I told him that I would do so and then he showed me the corners. I then saw Mr. Kinsman and bought his improvements and good will. Soon after I went to Lowell and filed on my several claims, and then returned home.

My time to make settlement on my claims was April 6, 1874, and on the afternoon of that day we pulled into Beaver City in a prairie schooner drawn by a pair of mules with most of our personal effects. When I had seen the land the fall previous it was covered with a coat of buffalo grass and an occasional patch of blue stem, but during my absence it had been burned off, and only the bare and blackened soil could be seen, and on it was the crude dugout which Al Kinsman had constructed. When I viewed our future home and realized how it would look to Mrs. Sunny, who had never seen a sod or a dugout until we had come into the western counties of the state, I asked her if we should turn around and go back to civilization. She bravely answered that we would stay.

During my absence the wood rats had collected all kinds of sticks, weeds, and grass for a nest, and weeds and thrash that the wind had blown into the dugout, were all there, so it was partly filled up. Then there were no windows or doors, and none nearer than Lowell, 75 miles away. There was no barn or shed or well or spring nearer than one-half mile. The dugout was 12x14, covered with willows and coarse grass, sod, and dirt. The floor was also made of dirt. The first thing that I did was to unload our effects, which were not many, and go and get some hay, which I obtained from J. G. Armstrong, on the Beaver Creek, north of our claim. As soon as I could get ready I went to Lowell for some household goods, which I had shipped there, and to get lumber for a door and sash for windows. I had to dig a hole in the bank and put a roof over it for a shelter for the mules. I also dug a well, but not knowing the high water mark in the draw where our improvements were, I dug it too low down, and when the floods came it was filled up and made useless. I soon went to farming, and by the last of June had some corn growing fine and Mrs. Sumny had a nice garden. As our money was running short, I struck out for Cass county to find work during harvest and left Mrs. Sumny to look after the crop. She had to fight prairie dogs to save the corn. Everything went along pretty well until the grasshoppers came in great swarms. Mrs. S. thought to save a bed of onions and covered it with bed clothing, but as the grasshoppers ate off the clothing too, she let them have their way and everything green soon disappeared. When I returned there wasn't enough left to make one feed for the team.

The patrons of the school which I first taught in Cass county urged me to come back and teach the school that I taught in 1872, and I told them that if I had any crop worth while that I could not do so. When I returned home I wrote that I would teach the school.

W. B. Bass and his son, Frank, came back with me from Cass county, as they wanted to do some buffalo hunting. They had an ox team and I took my team. We started up the Beaver and when we came to Cedar Bluffs crossed over to the Republican, and up that stream to Ariekaree and North Fork, where we found some buffalo. We killed thirty-five, dried a wagon load of meat, and Mr. Bass pickled a barrel of the meat. We dried the hides and had a wagon load of them, which we sold near McCook for nearly \$100.

After digging our potatoes, which were about the size of walnuts, and burying them, and getting up some wood for our use when we returned, we started back east in our prairie schooner, taking a lot of the dried buffalo meat to chew at and to trade at the stores on the way for groceries and other things.

I must now relate an incident that happened in the summer, that I had forgotten. I had occasion to go to Mr. Bass' place on an errand. Mr. Bass said to Mrs. S. that he was hungry for some fresh meat, and she said that we were, too. He gave me his needle gun and told me to look out for an antelope. I went home and went to breaking prairie near the house, and I noticed the mules prick up their ears as they did when they scented any kind of a wild animal. I looked around in the south about a mile away I saw an antelope. I tied the mules to the wagon, got the gun, and started toward the antelope and succeeded in killing it. I then went to Bass with part of it, but he said he had just killed one on the north divide and had taken part of it to M. M. Sturdevant, and told me to take mine to the Ayers family, which I did.

We returned to our homestead at the end of six months with provisions, seed, and feed, and commenced putting in a crop and breaking more prairie. When the corn was knee high the grasshoppers began to light down and get busy, and I could see a stalk now and then topple over as it was cut off by the hoppers. I drove to the house and told Mrs. S. that we would go over to Gapens' for a visit, which we did. We went fishing and hunting. While there we went to some sort of a gathering and there met Dan P. West, and since then he has told me that he thought Mrs. Sunny and I were the slimmest couple that he had ever seen. I weighed then about 140 pounds, and now about 190. We returned home in a day or two, and the hoppers had gone north and I went to plowing the corn again. As soon as the corn was laid by I started east again, Ed Allender going with me, to find work during harvest again, which we did in Seward county. The hoppers came again in August, but soon left and the corn was good. I went east again in 1876 to harvest, and John T. Brown went with me, and we worked together. This year I had some wheat which T. E. Ayers cut on the shares. Mrs. Sunny wrote me to come home as we had a splendid show for corn. But the next mail brought the word that the grasshoppers had come in greater numbers than ever, and for me to stay as long as I could get

work. I returned in a short time and found the corn crop destroyed, but the small grain had been cut and was in the stack before the pests came.

Now another trouble met me. We had quite a nice lot of hogs and no corn to feed them. T. E. Ayers and I started east peddling hogs, trading them for corn or anything that we needed. I traded one at Riverton to a hardware man for a dishpan. We finally got rid of our hogs at White Rock, Kans., and loaded up with corn and returned home. We began to raise better crops and I could stay at home. I was elected county judge, much against my will, and employed to teach the Beaver City school, acting as judge during the noon hour and during the evening and farming when school closed. I found that there was not enough to pay to justify me continuing as judge and at the end of a year I resigned in favor of Captain Brown, who had run against me. He lived in town and wanted the office. I was then nominated for county commissioner and was elected. This did not interfere much with farming.

The year 1879 was a good crop year, but we had hard work to save the grain as it was so wet. That fall Crutcher & Jones prevailed upon me to go into their store as salesman, and I remained with them for nearly five years. I was then appointed deputy county clerk by Wm. Howard Phelps and later by C. H. Pierce. At the close of the term of Mr. Pierce, I was elected clerk of the district court.

I must tell a good joke on my friend, J. H. McKee. Many would remark that this would be a great country if we only had a little more rain, and Mr. McKee had a fixed habit of it. He was visiting with J. A. Gibson at Wilsonville, who lived in a sod house, and in the night there was a heavy rain and the water came into the house and the folks got onto the tables and chairs to get above it. While perched there Mr. McKee remarked that "this would be a fine country if we had a little more rain."

As we had no pasture fenced, we generally staked the mules out in the draw near the house. One night there was a heavy rain, and Mrs. Sumny heard the water roaring and looking out she could see when there was a flash of lightning that the mules were at the end of their rope and trying to get to higher ground. I had to get up and go out and swim out to them as they were on the farther side of the draw. There had been hail and the

water was so cold I could hardly swim back again. Stock was lost in this way occasionally.

I must relate an incident that happened when I was asked to teach the Beaver City school. I went over to T. K. Clark who was then county superintendent, to be examined. I showed him my certificate from Cass county and asked to be examined. He said we would have dinner first. After dinner I asked him again, and he said it would be more like me examining him. So he got out his certificates and issued me one without further examination.

I want to say in conclusion that there were many more incidents that would be of interest, as there were many funny things that happened, and some serious things as well. Prairie fire did considerable damage and caused great fright for some people, as did one that came from the north one night. They say that it jumped the Republican. We backfired from the Beaver, but it jumped the creek northeast of the Freas farm. Some of us hastened to see how Mrs. Freas had fared. She said that she had taken her family to the center of a piece of ground that had been plowed, and prayed that they might not perish, and had escaped unharmed.

We had many good neighbors and friends, and often had good times visiting each other. I have already written more than I fear will be published. I hope to meet those who still remain of the old settlers the coming summer, but will feel sad to see some vacant seats in the church, lodge, and post.

I am cordially your friend,

J. T. SUMNY,
Los Angeles, Cal.

CHAPTER IX

C. F. Wheeler Admits Coming Too Late for Buffalo, but in Time to Resort to Rabbit Tracks for Grub.

Paonia, Colo., January 20, 1913.—Editor Times-Tribune, Beaver City, Nebr.—Some time ago you asked if I would write you something in regard to early days in Nebraska, and I presumed that you did not understand that my Nebraska experience only began in 1878. The entire Sappa valley was settled when I arrived at Precept postoffice, kept by H. H. Clason, who had been a resident for three or four years prior to my time. If you would divide Furnas county history into chapters it might be possible for me to give a few pointers on later events

Like J. N. Hadley, I located in Furnas county by accident rather than by design. As a boy, my health was very poor, and mother considered that it would be better for me to leave school and try a change of climate. A friend of ours, Horace G. Clason, suggested that we make a trip to Nebraska, and that he would go along as his people lived somewhere out there. Clason had a team and mother and I fixed up a team, new wagon, and camping outfit. We were to start from Freeborn, Minn., on a certain Monday morning, but as fate would have it, we met George Scott, a boyhood friend, and he wanted to join the party if we would only wait a few days. Of course we waited, and I have never regretted our action, as in him I found one of life's best friends—true, honest and forgiving. You may rest assured that we three boys picked up all the fun that was left along the road by others.

We arrived in Council Bluffs one day in September, and in looking over the town we ran across an immigrant outfit with fourteen wagons, all headed for Furnas county. They were going to cross the Missouri river to Omaha that day, and we decided to go with them. The crossing was made on cars at that time. The transfer cars were like ordinary box cars, perhaps higher, with the ends removed. You drove into the end of the car, the lead team going through to the extreme end of the train. Heavy

chains were arranged so that the wagons were chained fast to the floor, so that it was not necessary to unhitch the teams. The women and children remained in the wagons, and the vacant space in the cars was filled with loose horses and cattle. At the west end all that was necessary was to unhook the chains and drive out.

Clason had left Minnesota with a soft place under the left lapel of his coat, and Scott had taken advantage of the fact and

had painted on Clason's wagon cover in large letters, "What is Home Without a Mother-in-law?" Some cub reporter on the Omaha Bee got his eyes on this work of art, and the Omaha Bee gave us a write-up.

We camped that night four or five miles east of Fremont. Along in the night sometime, came up one of those storms that is a conglomeration of wind, rain, hail, lightning and more wind, and you can talk about moving picture shows of later date, but we had one that night that had some action to it. Tents were blown down, wagon covers blown



The Wheelers in Colorado

away. Men, women and children were hunting cover under the wagons, many without enough clothing for a bathing suit for a bumble bee. Geo. Scott was a very bashful young man, and he blushed so hard at the sights revealed when the lightning flashed that his hair turned red and it remained that color until time whitened it. We left those people the next morning, and in twenty-four years' residence in Furnas county I never found a man, woman or child who would admit that he was one of that party, and I am thinking that they turned back and followed their clothing back to Iowa.

We took our leisure and arrived at Hastings about October 5, and just west of there we overtook Frank Gapen, who was ill and

on his way home. He had lived in the Sappa Valley for several years, and being well posted on life in the west, he explained to us the meaning of "draws," "buffalo hollows," "two-bits" and a few other expressions that had been causing us some mental trouble.

Just north of Walker's ranch we came up with a covered wagon and found those in charge to be a man and wife and their two children. We camped with them during the noon recess, and discovered our first prickly pears. Gapen insisted that the pears were good to eat, I expressed some doubt. Scott and Gapen remained non-committal, but the stranger was of an inquisitive disposition, and after removing the long needles from the pear, he took a mouthful of the delicious fruit. It would not be possible to state in numbers the quantity of small needles remaining in his mouth and tongue, but as William Pruitt, an old buffalo hunter of Furnas county used to speak of great numbers, there were "dead oodles of um." To the best of my recollection, after the man got through trying to spit them out, he clawed awhile with his hands and then put his feet in his mouth and tried to kick them out. When we left him he was down on his back and the lady was working on him with a sewing needle, a pocket knife and a monkey wrench.

As we neared Orleans, the wind came up strong from the north, and the northwest sky showed a heavy smoke. Gapen remarked that we might be compelled to seek shelter from a prairie fire, but I could see no danger from fire in that short grass. It came on all at once, it seemed to me, and was perhaps half a mile from us when we came to a field of fall plowing, and we could see a homesteader's improvements on the west side of the field with six or eight large grain stacks north of the buildings. We left mother and the teams in the center of the field and hastened to help save the property. The only person on the place was a little girl, about 12 or 13, and she was drawing water from a well over 100 feet deep with two buckets hung over a pulley. She informed us that there were fourteen head of fat hogs in the pens which were located south of the grain stacks, which were by this time in flames. Scott and Clason pulled the pens down, drove the hogs out and then hunted for a cooler place. We did not know hog nature then as well as we do at present, or we might have headed them onto the plowing, but as it happened we let them have their way and they went back into the pens and were

burned up. We saved the house and granary, and as we drove away the little girl was sitting on the ground, resting her arms and head on her knees sobbing her heart out. If I were an artist I would draw a picture of the scene as I have it in my mind and name it "Desolation."

That night we reached Orleans and found the town filled with people who were running away from the Indians. It seemed that the Indians had committed some murders on the head creeks as they were passing north to Dakota. While so many people were fleeing east the Indians were making the best time possible for the north. Scott and I were quite determined to go on to Colorado, but mother did not like the idea of going on farther west, so on October 11, 1878, we located on the Sappa at the Precept postoffice. Scott and I made arrangements to put in a store, and returned to Kearney for lumber to put up the building, and were hauling lumber and merchandise off and on all winter. It was on one of these trips that I met my first—and last—wife. She had been a resident of the Sappa valley for eight or nine years at that time, and I have often told her that eating so much jerked buffalo meat is what made her hair curl and gave her such a dark complexion. She admits that buffalo steak was the steady diet and often speaks of one hunt taken with her father when he killed a buffalo just north of where Beaver City now stands. Her father, A. C. Robbins, told me in after years that he had the place marked in his memory, because he could call to mind looking south and west and seeing the clay bluffs near which the Lashley Mills were afterward built. This must have been in 1870 or 1871. The lady does not care to give the date as it might disclose her age.

You well know that there is a time each year when we are between hay and grass, and it is always a trying period with stockmen. I came to Furnas county when the people were between buffalo and beef. Up to that time in my life I had a strong dislike for fat pork or bacon, and I got so hungry for beef that I could kiss the cow every time I went out to do the milking. It might be called the rabbit period in Furnas county's history. Jackrabbits were very plentiful and fences were few, so that a greyhound was good property. Your standard of citizenship was measured according to the speed of your dog. C. E. V. Smith owned the fastest hound living, with Dan West's string coming a close second. Smith's dog was black in color, and

when she started a rabbit if you looked straight in the direction she had taken, fixing your eye on the horizon, it would appear that some one had drawn a black line clear back to the starting place. Some of the boys used to say that this hound would sometimes go over the hill and catch the rabbit on her way back. Of course I don't vouch for these stories. You know Jay Clason and Ben Reed as well as I do. But I do know that Ed Smith was one of the high livers, while I had to satisfy myself with eating rabbit tracks while they were hot and fresh.

My first visit to Beaver City was made one cold day in October, and the only person whom I met that day to remember in after years was M. R. Hadley. Of course it was only a few months until I knew all of the business men, as we got acquainted easily in those days. As I call it to mind, E. D. Jones has grown considerable since that time. He could have hid behind a lead pencil when I first met him, and of my last meeting with him here in Colorado it would have required a brick block to conceal him from view.

There were many strange things to me, one of which was a herd of long horns being fed by N M. Ayers on hopes and perhaps. These were the first Texas cattle I had ever seen, and they were a great curiosity to me, and they came up to recommendations.

Another of the strange sights was the large quantity of bones one saw collected for shipment at the railroad stations. Coming out from Kearney one would meet team after team loaded to the limit with bones. Most of the wagons had two extra sideboards, and the white bones would show up a long distance before you would meet the teams. I was told that the bones were shipped east and ground into fertilizer. What a testimony to the slaughter and natural death toll that must have taken place on the prairie. Every time that I saw one of those white skulls I used to speculate to myself as to its history and wonder how it met death. What a history was hidden there if we could only have read it. It would have told of cold and heat; storms and sunshine; plenty and famine; floods and drouth; battles for life when starvation had made flight impossible. If one had known enough to have inaugurated the breakfast food fad at that time and used bone dust for a foundation, what a fortune he could have made and what a field for the ad writer.

One of the sad features of the early days was the death toll among children. The spring of '79 witnessed a terrible run of diphtheria and many deaths resulted. Galand Northup lost all his children, and he and his wife returned to their old home in the east, and their recollections of pioneer life must be sad indeed. When I think of these cases I feel thankful that I have nothing of that kind to mar our recollections of the past.

In looking back over the changes that have taken place in Furnas county during the thirty-four years that I have known the country, I wonder if the theory of theosophy is not true, and and that we are living in another life. Note the changes from Timothy Hedges' oxen to the automobile. And the old mixed train and your through passenger, that comes and goes the same day. I used to wonder that my wife didn't get a divorce on the grounds of desertion while I was going around to Oxford and return. But then the Burlington made it up on the main line. I think that it was W. T. Ager who told me about an incident that happened on the main line. Some fellow grabbed a purse from a by-stander at the Oxford depot and boarded the flyer just as it started west. The thief was arrested at McCook ten minutes before the crime was committed. W. T. thought that the Burlington and Justice were working hand in hand, until he learned that Fults made the jury believe that the prisoner had a perfectly good alibi.

It used to be that if you had a pop jury and a republican defendant, or vice versa, that you could almost guess on the verdict with a hope of finding it.

And what a change in your political field. The white and yellow have again blended with J. W. in the state house, and W. J. in the cabinet. Norris wins his way to the U. S. Senate by cut-popping the pops, and old Nebraska has the initiative and referendum, when but a few years ago they hooted John O. Yeiser, its lone advocate, wherever he attempted to mention the subject. And it is true that you are to have an election but once in two years? Such is life in Colorado, and it is very tame. During two years of idleness we often forget our own party affiliations, but having woman's suffrage we get back nearly right, because you can depend upon the wife to remember when the kids had the measles and how you claimed to have voted at the last election. Colorado always elects a fine looking bunch of officials. The men vote solid for the handsomest lady candidate, and the

ladies for the best dressed and best looking man on the ticket. The ladies make more distinction as to dress than we men do. One or two progressives just missed an election by wearing the wrong colored ties. Some of the ladies mistook them for republicans. I see that I am getting back to the present, so I had better close this letter.

As to my life in Furnas, I don't think I would make many changes if I had to live it over. The friendships formed there were more than any hardships or discomforts that I may have met, and my only hope that is that I may live to repay some of the kindnesses I have received at the hands of my Nebraska friends.

C. F. WHEELER.



Old House Home of Frank Brouhard and Family

CHAPTER X

**Mrs. O. A. Harvey Relates Experiences in Her Pioneer Days of
Thirty-five Years Ago**

Beaver City, Nebr., January 30.—Editor Times-Tribune.—Among the first settlers in Furnas county were the Wilsons, from whom Wilsonville derived its name. The brothers engaged in stock raising and merchandise, the goods being hauled from Plum Creek and Kearney. In 1878 Carlos Wilson returned to his home at Hopkinsville, Iowa, to visit his parents. Being intimate friends of the Wilsons, we were invited to spend a day with them, and were highly entertained by the adventures and possibilities of Furnas county and especially Wilsonville and Beaver City. Mr. Harvey caught the fever to go West, and in October 1878, he left us for Wilsonville, and was soon busy at his trade, which was blacksmithing. Believing that Beaver City was a more desirable place, he moved the next spring and opened the first blacksmith shop here, Charles Laub being his first customer. Each letter I received from him contained encouragement to come to this new country, and the thought of 160 acres of land, all our own, made me willing to come. In the meantime he had made a deal with J. H. McKee for 30 acres on the east side of his quarter section in exchange for our home in Hopkinsville, Iowa. A new frame house had been built on this, and is now a part of the house owned by Mr. Crommett. It with an addition that was built later was our home for many years.

The next June, with my three little girls, I started for this new home, Mr. Harvey meeting us in Kearney. He had hired a team from June Denham to bring us and our trunks and some bedding. At the foot of the first steep hill the horses refused to pull, and all of the whipping and coaxing would not make them, so we unhitched. I led the horses and Eugene rolled the boxes and trunks up the hill. This performance we repeated several times in the journey. Night brought us to a sod farm house where we obtained shelter but no bed. So, throwing down some

bedding on the floor, we hoped to find sleep and rest. But oh, oh, we soon had so much company that we had to sit up and hold the children in our arms until morning. This was my first night in Nebraska. The next day, just in time to witness a prairie sunset with tints of blue and gold, casting its reflection over the valley, we arrived in Beaver City, and I saw my new home. I was favorably impressed. Mr. Harvey found plenty of work. There was more rain than usual and everything seemed prosperous.



MRS. O. A. HARVEY

We founded a Sunday school. T. M. Williams was superintendent and Mr. Bushnell preached. We took our organ to the little church which was played by Marie Harvey, and Mrs. Garlinghouse leading the singing. We had a good Sunday school and laid the foundation for the future church.

When we all seemed well, prosperous, and happy, a woman died in Kearney, leaving a child. Some friend brought the little one here, and it sickened and died with diphtheria. From that time the disease spread, and the next few months was a time of sorrow. Many homes were bereft of their loved ones. Who shall question God's wisdom, power or

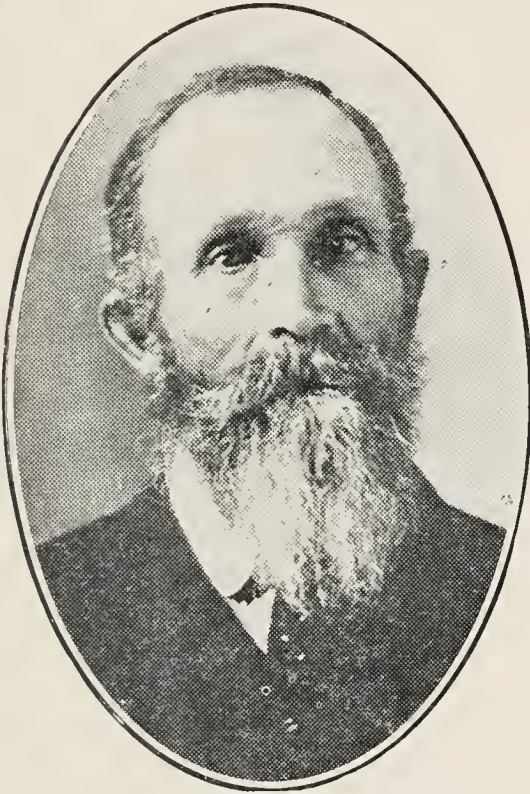
plan, but the human heart longs to know why it seemeth good to deal with us this way.

In this new country we found friends. Mr. Danforth, meeting Eugene one morning asked after our financial condition. He offered us the means to pay the expenses of the sickness and deaths that had so suddenly come to us and taken our two girls. It was several months before we could pay it back.

One morning after Christmas, the giving of a doll to a little

girl who said they were so poor Santa Claus did not come to their house, will never be forgotten of Jesse N. Hadley.

The first teachers' institute in the county, was held at Beaver City, E. N. Allen and Miss Nellie Rankin being instructors. There were twelve teachers in attendance, and all boarded with me, paying \$1.50 per week. Again the organ came into play to help in the exercises.



THE LATE EUGENE W. HARVEY

Our homestead is now owned by Henry Hester, and I had there my first experience of living in a sod house. Its walls were plastered and it had a good floor. The crops being a failure that year, I took up my trade with a needle, walking 2 miles, cutting out my work, taking it home and finishing it and often returning it. This I did for two years and took anything that we could eat, drink or wear for pay—except alfalfa. This came later by progressive farming.

The first school in the district was taught by Miss Samantha Whities, in my sod house. My breadboard, after being painted black, was used for a blackboard, and Wm. Robinson's older children received their first lessons in mathematics therefrom.

There was a large immigration of people to this country about that time. Some of our best citizens came. Among them were the Gareys, Ehrnmans, Hicks, Stubbs, Strattons, Inmans, and many others, who have lived here and raised families, who have graduated from our city schools, and are holding good positions. They are Furnas county products, and we are proud of them.

Among those who came to us at a later day was the editor of the Times-Tribune, who has spared no pains to keep us in touch

with all that was good and little that was bad. And his father and mother who have been a help and an inspiration to all of the good enterprises of the city.

As I look back, it seems to me that there has been a great army moving steadily to the cemetery. There have been many changes. Where the sod house now stood, now can be seen good substantial farm houses, and where the buffalo roamed, feeding on wild grass, the lovely alfalfa fields bloom in season.

I never had any experiences with snakes, and I never saw but one buffalo, and that was M. R. Hadley's tame one. My Indian scare was when the cellar filled with water and the loose boards and canned fruit bumped against the floor.

As memory links us to the past, so hope binds us to the future. Our trials and hardships have made us more thoughtful, kind and tender. The experience of the past and the hope of the future are the strong pinions by which every life is up bourne toward the goal of its ambition.

Many kind regards to all who have helped to make the greater Beaver City.

MRS. O. A. HARVEY.



Lashley Mill Pond Near Beaver City

CHAPTER XI

John Keiser Came in 1872 and Has Seen the Beaver Valley's Growth—and Has Been a Factor Therein

It is said by those who have studied the question that the early settlers in a country have the moulding of the character of that country in their hands. That generations after, a stranger could go into a locality and there read the responsibility of the

men and women who had build-
ed their homes and cultivated
the soil of that place.

We question if there is another locality in all the mid-west where people are so knit together in all the truer, deeper elements of life than are those of Furnas county. Friendships count above money—kindness to fellow way-farers is prized more than earthly advantage.

If it be true, and there is no reason to doubt it, that this present brotherhood spirit is but the fruiting of the early seed planted in Furnas county, then we shall give a large portion of our thankfulness to those early sowers who distributed the seed unstintingly in the rich soil of Furnas county and among those who scattered



JOHN KEISER

his priceless heritage of wealth there is none who was so lavish as John Keiser, one of the very first upon the new soil and one who

has been faithful to all that is for the good and the uplift of the county during all the years since. He alone, of all the early pioneers, is still living upon the original homestead and has continuously dwelt there since first he staked out his claim in the early part of 1872.

Changes have come to the country in the way of development. The Keiser homestead does not look to the eye as it must have looked forty-one years ago but still there is the same spirit of generous hospitality, the same "friendliness to man" pervading the home, and will continue as its atmosphere so long as the true and staunch homesteader remains to bless with his presence.

In company with W. B. Bishop and B. F. Whitney, we left Ashland, Nebr., for the Republican valley on the 18th day of March, 1872. Our first stop was at the U. S. land office at Beatrice, where we got plats of town 2, range 21, and town 2, range 22. We came through Jefferson and Thayer counties, crossing the Little Blue river at Hebron, and came into the Republican valley some distance east of Guide Rock.

Sammie Garber had a grocery store at Guide Rock and there were half a dozen other buildings, all made of sod, on the town-site. At Riverton there was an abandoned stockade, the settlers having moved onto their claims.

Tom Ashby had a small grocery store where Franklin is now located. In this store one could purchase tobacco or a limited variety of canned goods, and in the back, if you needed it, a barrel of "fire-water" was on tap.

McPherson held down all of Republican City, and there was a postoffice located about half way between where Orleans and Alma are now. At this place the first settlers on the Beaver and Sappa received their mail.

We met Eugene Dolph and Galen James near where Orleans now is, and James said if we came over on the Sappa he would show us a fine country.

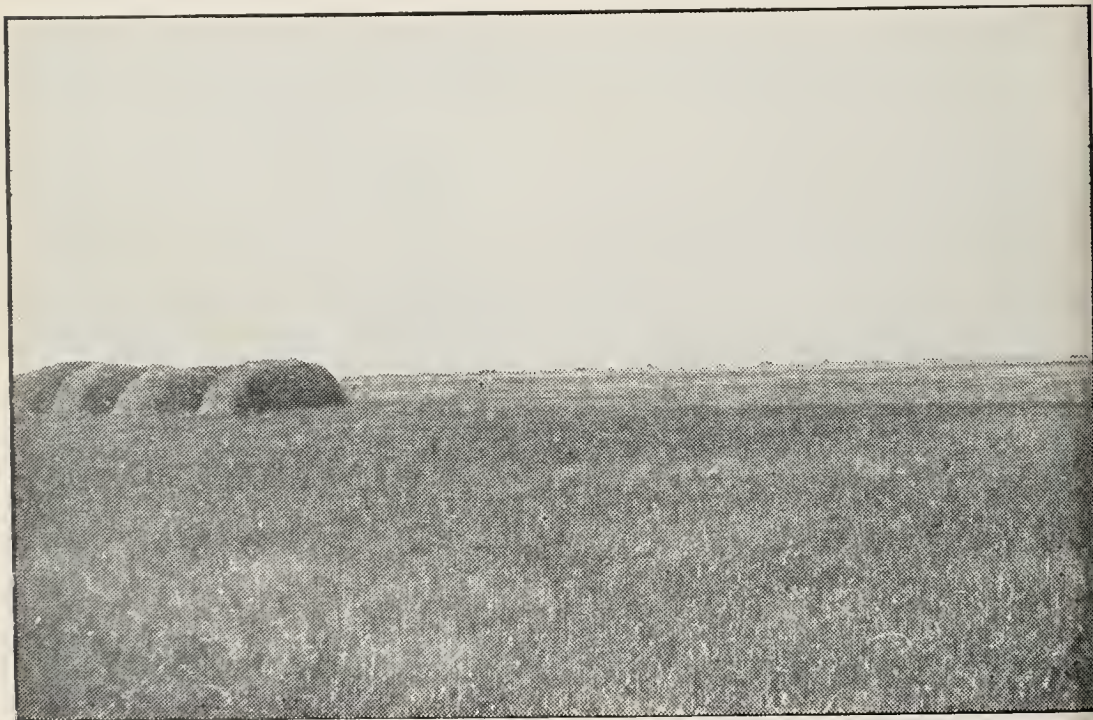
It might be of some interest to some readers why one creek is called Rope creek and one Flag creek. Rope creek is so called because the first immigrants had to pull their wagons up the steep banks with ropes, and Flag creek was so named because a certain man became dissatisfied with the way things were done at the stockade and left its shelter to camp down on the creek, where he raised the United States flag above his camp and fired a salute

every morning to let the settlers know that he was still alive, even if he had abandoned the protection the stockade afforded.

The winter of '71 and '72 was a very cold winter. It froze up early in November with rain and sleet and snow on the ground several inches thick, and then one snow came after another lying on the ground till late in March.

That fall there were about 2000 head of Texas cattle driven in on the Republican valley between Arapahoe and Red Cloud and in the spring of '72 there were only a few remnants of the herd left, the rest of them having succumbed to cold and hunger. The valley was white with gleaching bones for many months afterward.

We passed the sod stockade where Ayers in his book "Building an Empire," says they had to thin the bean soup the second time to make it last till the provisions got up the river.

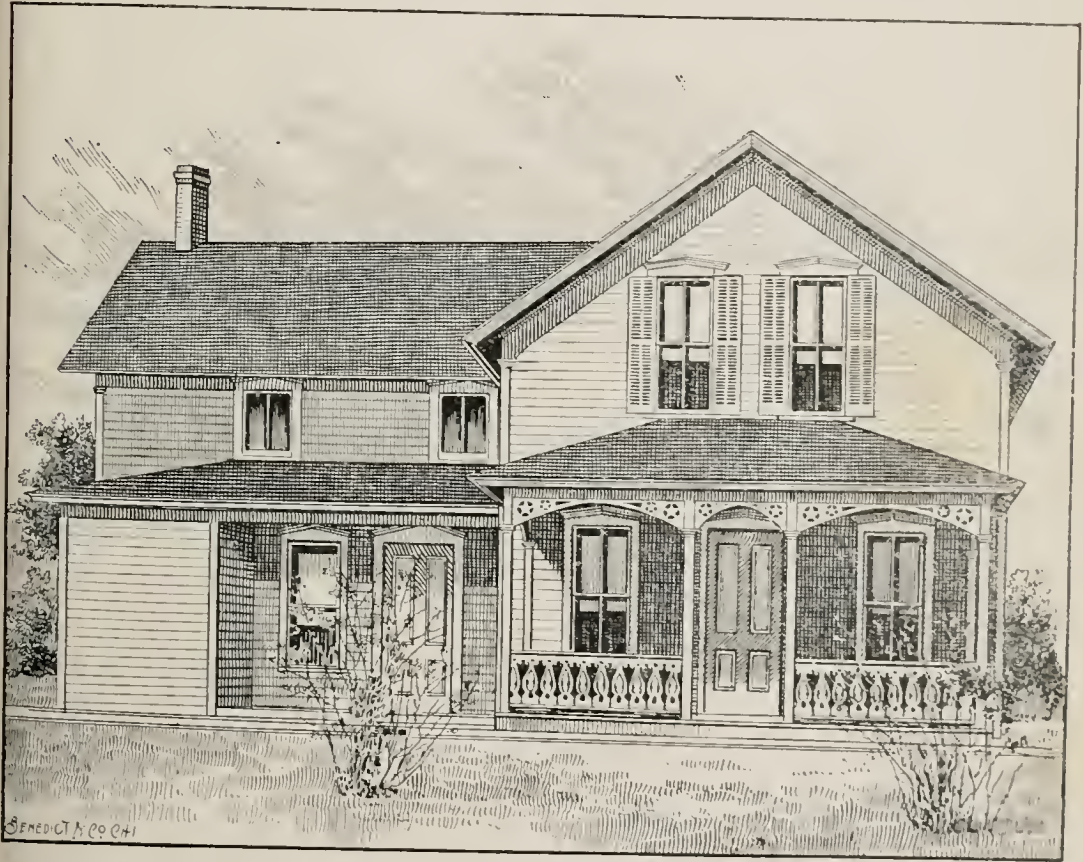


Alfalfa Field in Beaver Valley Where Buffaloes Formerly Roamed

We crossed the Republican river above the mouth of upper Turkey Creek. There were no fords and Whitney questioned the safety of crossing but I told him I would wade across and test the bottom of the river for quicksand and I thought there would

be no danger if he followed me. In writing Pioneer stories for the Times-Tribune some years ago, Whitney said: "Keiser was a unique figure in piloting us through the river."

We crossed the divide that afternoon and camped on the Beaver that night. The next morning while eating breakfast, Old Man Sutherland came to our camp. He had a homestead not far distant and had seen the smoke from the camp fire and had come to investigate. He was a Scotchman, sixty-two years old, and the most courteous old fellow one could find in any of the old country houses. We gave him a big cup of coffee and he drank it with many thanks and went on his way literally rejoicing.



Present Home of John Keiser

In due time we found Galen James and commenced running out section lines and locating our claims. James had been over the country the year before with the surveyors and knew the land.

The second noon we were here we camped near where the

B. & M. depot now stands in Beaver City, though we had no way of forecasting the future destiny of the spot where we ate our noonday meal.

We went back down the valley that afternoon and camped for the night on the Sutherland claim, where Sim Woodruff now lives. We went to the forks of the Beaver and Sappa the next day and re-located our claims. At this time there were only three claims taken on Beaver Creek. Galen James had the northeast of 23, Eugene Dolph, northwest of 13, and the Sutherland claim, now owned by Sim Woodruff.

Mr. Bishop said to me: "Keiser, you take your choice of these claims," so I re-located the two middle eighties of section 14, town 2, range 21 for my own and I want to say right here that I was not looking for a townsite, because there was a townsite and a future town located in the owner's mind on almost every quarter section in the whole valley as soon as the claims were located. Neither was I looking for a county seat, postoffice, or a county clerkship, but I was looking for a place that would make a home and I thought when I located my claims I had found that place, and I am still foolish enough to believe I was right in my selection.

We started back to Ashland the next morning, going back about the same way we came, except the stopping at the land office to put papers on our claims.

We moved up here from Ashland that same spring, coming with ox teams, which was a very slow and laborous way of traveling at the best, but Bishop had a little herd of cattle which he brought along, and you can see this made the going even slower, as the cattle had to graze along the way. But we finally reached the Beaver on the 9th day of May 1872, and I at once hired a man to help me build a house, part dugout and part sod, 14x16 feet, which we completed in four days.

With a place to shelter the family, the next question was a crop. The weather was ideal and the ground in fine shape. I commenced breaking sod and planting corn as soon as we got moved into our new home.

We planted the corn with an ax or a spade by striking the ax or spade into the sod and then dropping three or four grains of corn into the mark thus made and then setting our foot over the place to press down the soil into a covering. If anyone wishes to know one of the differences between that early plant-

ing and the present system of corn planting, he has but to compare the machinery used. The ax or the spade, every grain dropped by hand and every hill firmed down with the foot, and the present four horse listers and planters with driving the most strenuous demand made upon the human. We planted, besides corn, beans, watermelons, tomatoes, pumpkins, and about two bushels of potatoes.

In June that year Elder Mayo and family camped with us while the elder put in some crop and built a log house on the claim he located just a mile west of me on the west end of section 15. Elder Mayo was the first preacher to come to the country, but he was too busy for the first few months locating his new home to do much preaching. It was not till the fall of that year that he preached, and then there was a little sod school house in the Harman neighborhood, where the elder first held services, and he preached to a good sized audience at each service. I think that these were the very first religious services ever held in Furnas county. A little later than this Elder Mayo conducted a revival over on the Sappa near where Dan West homesteaded. One Sunday during this meeting the elder was baptizing some converts in the Sappa, and Dan West stood on the bank and laughed at him. The elder shook his finger at West and said: "Never you mind, I'll have you down here yet." And it was not long until the prophecy was fulfilled.

Mayo was a unique character. He said he did not preach to the man who had two coats. He preached only to the fellow with one coat.

So far as I know, this revival, conducted by Elder Mayo on the Sappa, was the first meeting of the kind ever held here.

Talk about buffalo! The spring of '72 they were late in coming on account of the hard winter and the lateness of the spring. We did not see many until about the 20th of May. We first saw some dark objects on the hills south and west and the immigrants said they were buffalo. One day while I was "breaking," the oxen I was driving threw up their heads and commenced to snort. I looked over toward the creek and there were from three to five hundred buffalo going east to a crossing on the creek about a half mile from where I was.

One morning my little boy came running to the house and said:

"Pa, Pa, there's a buffalo out here on the creek bank big-

ger than old Buck. ("Old Buck" weighed sixteen hundred pounds.) I went out to see and there on the bank stood a buffalo that looked as big to me, as a covered wagon. I walked out toward him and he scampered off north to where the main herd was feeding.

Elder Mayo returned from a trip to his homestead one day earlier than usual and he said:

"Keiser, the buffalo will take you. They are coming right down on your place five thousand strong, but if you will give me your needle gun, I'll go and kill one and we'll have some fresh meat, anyway.

He was gone till about noon when he returned and said he had killed a fine two-year-old. After dinner I hitched the oxen to the wagon and took the women and children along and we went and dressed the buffalo which we found to be as fine as the elder had said, and we had plenty of fresh meat.

The day we raised Elder Mayo's house we began work at 8 o'clock in the morning and the buffalo were crossing the Beaver on the Southerland place, crossing in single file, but as if they were being driven along all the time and in the evening, at sundown, they were still crossing and there seemed to be as many left on the divide as there had been in the morning. All these numberless herds that once covered the prairie are no more. The buffalo never became a part of civilization. With the wild freedom of the prairie disappeared the buffalo.

We put in the summer breaking out prairie and hunting buffalo. I raised on my sod over 100 bushels of corn and some very good garden and a lot of melons. The Omaha and Pawnee Indians, coming home from their annual hunt, helped themselves to all the melons they wanted and fed their ponies on sod corn.

In contrast to the winter of '71 the winters of '72 and '73 were exceptionally fine, scarcely a cold day during the whole of the seasons and we could work all through the winter if we chose.

I got out logs for a house and in the spring built a log house. The first of April I sowed about ten bushels of wheat and the 12th of April came the big April storm which all the early settlers have cause to remember. W. H. Harman had come down to my place that day for a visit. In the afternoon a thunderstorm came up and the wind blew a regular hurricane. It was almost impossible to see anything a few feet away, but Harman

said he would go home by following the creek around to his place and would return for the family the next day, after the storm was over. But the storm was not over the next day and Harman did not come for the family till the afternoon of Wednesday. The storm was much more severe in other parts of the state, but we had as much of it in Furnas county as we cared about and enough to make it remembered by all.

The summer of '73 was a very fine growing season, and I raised a fine garden and a good crop of corn, and my wheat turned out well. This was, so far as I know, the first wheat raised in the Beaver valley. I hired a Mr. Marker to cut it with a McCormick self rake and we stacked it up in fine shape, but there was no threshing machine within a hundred miles and no chance of getting the wheat threshed. We cleaned off the grass and made a threshing floor on the sod and tramped out the wheat with horses and cleaned it in the most primitive way by throwing it up against the wind to allow the blowing out of the chaff and dirt.

I told one of my neighbors, David Brown, if he would take a load of the wheat to the mill and get it ground, I would give him half the flour. He said he would do this, though it was something of a journey to go to a mill in those days.

The nearest mill was in Thayer county at Meridian, and when Brown reached this, he found the mill out of repair and unable to grind the grist brought so many miles to its door. The next place was Grand Island, where the wheat was ground into flour. Think of a 1913 housekeeper waiting while the good man made a trip to Grand Island for a grist of flour and forget about telephones and automobiles in connection with such a journey, too. Brown was gone just three weeks to a day, but we had flour all the same when he returned, and we appreciated it to the fullest.

The winter of '74 was also a fine winter and the spring opened up early and the settlers were all in high glee and happy to begin the planting of crops in the new land. I sowed wheat again and there was a good deal of wheat sowed in the valley and a good yield realized. We planted corn and had a fine garden, but on the 6th of August, in the afternoon, a cloud came over the sun that darkened the earth, making it almost as dark as night for a time, and then the hoppers began to light and such an army that it was. Before morning there wasn't a green thing left - all had been devoured by the hungry millions of grass

hoppers. In twenty-four hours they completely changed the landscape and the prospects of the settlers.

Fortunately I had my wheat cut and stacked before the grasshoppers came and later some men came up from Clay county with a threshing machine and threshed the wheat in the valley. I had seventy-five bushels of nice, clean wheat that year. One of the men running the threshing machine was called home on account of sickness and I took his place with the threshing crew.

We threshed at Beaver City and on up the creek above Hendley, then across to Arapahoe and on down the Republican valley to Oxford, when we crossed the river and threshed some on the south side of the Republican. I was with the threshers about eighteen days and received two dollars per day for myself and team.

The settlers were leaving the country pretty fast, two of my nearest neighbors going to Iowa and others to other points.

As I was going to Lowell for supplies, I took a small load of farming tools to the station for the neighbors who were going back to Iowa and they gave me three hogs to pay for the hauling. Two of these hogs I fattened on wheat and the third I kept for a brood sow. Talk about wintering hogs on alfalfa. I wintered this hog on prairie hay and in the spring had a nice litter of pigs to pay for the keeping.

There are many stories told of the struggles and the victories



Sod House formerly on the Buchanan farm in Maple Creek, now owned by D. P. West, at one time one of the best houses of its kind in that Community

of those early pioneer days, but there was much happiness and many pleasures as well.

There is one story that will interest Bob Scott. It is told about the reason for abandoning the old stockade which was built near where Orleans now is and for the protection of the settlers in this part of the valley.

It is said that the whole country was in the midst of the greenback agitation at this time and everyone was discussing greenbacks, as to whether they should or should not be specie.

Even a new country must keep up with national issues and the settlers of the valley were not behind in the question then before the people of their country and knew all about the value and disadvantage of greenbacks, but it was not greenbacks. No, it was not the greenback question, but the grayback agitation.

Philip French took the claim directly east of us two days after we arrived here, and we soon got pretty well acquainted, as acquaintance and friendship develop rapidly in new lands. French had a horse team and when we saw buffalo on the hills south and west of us, French proposed that we get Mr. Bishop and that we go out on a buffalo hunt. We drove to Bishop's bright and early one morning and left the women and children there and, accompanied by Bishop, B. F. Whitney and one or two hired men, we struck out for the south divide. We found only straggling bunches of buffalo, but Bishop assured us that if we went down one of those long "draws" to the Sappa we would find plenty of buffalo. This we did and when we came where we could see over the valley, there was an even eighty acres of solid buffalo, and Bishop advised our following the draw farther down so we could get a closer shot. We did this and I was fortunate in singling out a fine cow. The first shot broke her shoulder blade. When we came near her she showed fight and came for us. Bishop said: "Don't shoot again, I'll finish her," and he began pouring the shell out of his Henry rifle and the buffalo soon lay dead on the prairie. We each cut a chunk out of a hind quarter, as much as we thought we could carry, strung it on our rifles and started for the top of the divide. When we reached the place where we had left our team, we found nothing but a few straggling buffalo, the team and the remaining hunters had vanished. We then concluded that we had twice as much meat as we could carry and so divided it, leaving part on the prairie. When we came back to the Bishop's, we found that Whitney and the hired man had

killed two buffalo and had taken the hind quarters home in the wagon and we had a fine dinner of fried buffalo steak. That was the first and last time I helped to lug buffalo meat for ten miles only to have more than we could use and then have to throw away the supply we had so carefully carried home.

The Carrisbrook postoffice was established in 1873, on section 24 in Lincoln precinct with James Lumley, uncle of W. C. F. Lumley of Beaver City, as the first postmaster. The office was named after the Lumley estate back in England, Carrisbrook. In connection with the postoffice Mr. Lumley had a stock of merchandise such as the new settlers might need, and he did a very profitable business during the years of '72 and '73, or until the grasshoppers came and the settlers had to take aid, so there was no more need of a store.

The postoffice was moved south on section 36 and Mr. Mitchell became the second postmaster, with C. E. V. Smith as deputy. The Lumleys, the Mitchells and C. E. V. Smith were the first Englishmen to find homes in Furnas county and some of the original families, many of the children and a number of the grandchildren are still Furnas county citizens.

But the salary of the early postmasters was not very remunerative. Mr. Smith informs the writer that in one quarter that he remembers the office took in 49 cents and paid out 75 cents to get the report certified, but it would be hard to trace the influence of that 49 cents and to gather up its results today.

Carrisbrook was moved north to the southeast of section 13 some time in the fall of '75 and M. Z. Schoff was the new postmaster. Then we had a mail service three times a week, from Orleans to Beaver City. This office was not abandoned till after the railroad came through. A. K. Crawford was the last postmaster at Carrisbrook, and in connection with the office, he kept a nice line of merchandise and groceries which was a great benefit and convenience to the settlers.

It was in 1887 that Carrisbrook postoffice was discontinued and the new town of Stamford, two miles east of it, became the postoffice for that section of the county, but Carrisbrook holds a unique place in county history as a point of contact between the new homes and the old.

The first school taught in Lincoln precinct, and so far as the writer knows, the first one taught in the south half of the county, was a subscription school, taught by Mrs. David Brown during

the summer of 1873. The school house was located on the corner of the S. E. quarter of section 8 and was in dimension 14x16 and built of sod by volunteers who believed in starting out right in a new country. The school house had one door and two half windows of six panes, one window on each side of the house. There was a dirt floor and a dirt roof and the benches were made of cottonwood slabs sawed at Carl Bochl's sawmill in the mouth of Sappa creek in Harlan county. Mrs. Brown received \$20 a month pay for her work and took most of her pay out in "breaking" and from this humble beginning and the education of Furnas county's youth has been developed.

In 1875 I went to Fillmore county for a load of furniture for a Mr. Spehr. I left home at noon and drove 8 miles north of Orleans that afternoon. The next forenoon I drove to Walker's ranch and the afternoon to "Dirty Man's Ranch," intending to take a new road just opened to Hastings. The next morning there was a regular blizzard on and the new road not being much used I concluded to go by way of Lowell. The next morning was clear but oh, how cold. I stayed with a farmer between Inland and Harvard that next night and the next I reached the home of Mr. Spehr's father, about four miles from Geneva. For four or five days it stormed every day but I managed to get over to Geneva and have my horses rough shod. The first good day that came I started for home and reached Harvard where I stayed with a Mr. Smith, brother-in-law of S. S. Therwechter, during another two days of storm. Then I started on and reached Juniata, where I took the new road to avoid the sandhills. The second day from Harvard I arrived at about where the city of Minden now stands. Here was a group of four sod houses on the corners of four claims. I asked here to stay all night but the woman who came to the door told me they did not keep anyone but that a Swede, a half mile farther on, kept travelers and that I could stay there. I drove to the Swede's and watered my horses, but I could see no one around, but found that there were three children in the house. They told me their folks had gone to the Blue River for wood and would not be home that night and that they could not keep me. It was 14 miles to the next ranch and a blizzard was on, but I drove back to the four houses and when a woman came out and asked what I wanted, I told her I wanted to stay all night and that I had gone to the Swede's and could not stay there and it was 14 miles to the next ranch. I

anhitched my team, dug some straw out of a snow bank to feed them after putting them in the barn and went into the house. I was well entertained. The men returned about 10 o'clock that night from the Blue River where they had gone for wood, and they said it was fortunate for me that I did not attempt going on to the ranch, as I would have lost my way over a new road in the blinding storm and would probably have frozen to death. I reached the ranch the next day at about 11 o'clock and Charley Boehl and the late Judge Robbins of Harlan county arrived soon after and we journeyed together for the larger part of the rest of the way. The next day at noon we camped on Turkey Creek and that evening, just as the sun was going down, we crossed the Republican river on the ice west of Orleans. Here Charley turned east to go to his ranch on the Sappa and the judge and I journeyed on till we came to his home on "High Toned Flats," where he left me and I came on alone to the Keiser ranch. One mile west of where Stamford now is I had to cross a draw and the banks were so steep and my horse's shoes so worn that I could not pull my load over and had to unhitch and leave my load in the draw and lead my team home. The next morning I got a neighbor to help me and we got the load safely home but this is a picture of some of the vicissitudes of early travel and of what it cost to have "store furniture" in your homes.

There were many laughable incidents of those early days and I will relate a few of them as I recall them. A man who was once well known in Beaver City shot a buffalo and he thought he was dead. The man laid his gun down on a little mound and with butcherknife in hand ran to the fallen buffalo. He laid the knife on the wooly hump and stepped back to shed his coat preparatory to the skinning when the buffalo jumped up and away he ran and was out of sight before the hunter could reach his gun.

One man came from the east to hunt buffalo with a squirrel rifle.

After I had lived on my homestead four or five years and had made some improvements so that it looked a little homelike, a man drove up one day with a fairly good team and wagon. I was just watering my team at the end of the day's work and he asked: "Do you live here?" I said yes. "How long have you been here?" was the next question. I said I had always lived here. "Did you homestead?" and I said yes I had homesteaded. Then he declared: "I wouldn't mind taking a homestead if I

could get as good a one as you have," and drove off without further comment.

A good many years ago we used to grind cane and boil sorghum molasses. One day a moving wagon stopped and a man came in with a jug to get some sorghum. While I filled his jug he related a story about as follows:

"I came from Iowa. Left there on a certain day. Lived there all my life till then. Am so many years old. Was married so many years. Have three children. Iowa is not as good a state as it used to be. Am going to Kansas to get a ranch. Think we will like it all right."

I had a neighbor girl helping with the sorghum making that day and she said:

"Mr. Keiser, if that man had told you one more thing, you could have written his biography."

I asked what that one thing would have been and she replied:

"If he would have told you the name of the woman he married."

In conclusion I would say that I did not think the Garden of Eden was ever located in southwest Nebraska, but I do believe that this was the hunter's paradise of America. The writer has hunted in the woods of Ohio, Indiana and Michigan in the early '50s, and we thought it was great hunting and it was, but it was no comparison to southwest Nebraska. Here were herds and herds of buffalo; droves of elk and deer in every grove and thicket; antelope on every flat and hillside; turkey all along the creeks; geese, brants and wild ducks in season; grouse and prairie chicken in endless numbers. And what a field for the trapper. There were coyotes and timber wolves and along the creeks were beaver and otter, mink and raccoon, badger and skunk and, if you wished, you could trap the festive prairie dog. But the white man is a destructive animal and in a few short years this immense aggregation of wild animals was all wantonly destroyed—was wiped off the earth as if it had never been, so that man might be satisfied in his desire to slay.

On a Monday morning, the latter part of November in 1875, Philip French, Charley Rosenberg, Orin Ross and myself started down the Republican valley for corn. We arrived at Riverton Tuesday afternoon and inquired of a merchant if he knew of

any corn for sale in that vicinity. He told us there was a man in town who had corn and potatoes for sale. We soon found the man and he said he lived four miles down the river and that his corn and potatoes were yet in the field, but that we could help him husk his corn and dig the potatoes if we wanted them. We accepted his invitation and began husking Wednesday and by Friday night we had his corn all husked and his potatoes all dug and were started for home on Saturday morning with full loads. Up to this time the weather had been fine but Saturday morning was cloudy and the wind was from the east, which soon developed into a mist, and when we camped in an oak grove near Naponee that night it was snowing and by morning we were snowed under and it was cold with the wind from the northwest. We got breakfast, fed our teams and in all due haste started homeward. We drove down to the river next morning but did not think the ice was strong enough to hold up our teams and loads, so we unhitched and led the horses across on the ice and then we run the wagons out on the ice as far as we thought it would hold, when we tied a long rope on to the end of the wagon tongue and hitched a team to the other end of the rope. In this way we could keep the wagon going pretty fast so it would not break through. My wagon was first, then French's, and then Rosenberg's and all three were brought across in safety. Finally Ross' wagon was drawn across till the front wheels were on the bank when the hind wheels went through the ice and we had to unload part of the load before we could pull the wagon out but this was finally accomplished and we reached home with our loads about noon that day.

JOHN KEISER.

CHAPTER XII

**Byron F. Whitney, Now of Ashland, Was One of Beaver Valley's
Earliest Pioneers, and Writes of
the Old Days**

(The following series of articles were written by Byron F. Whitney of Ashland, Nebr., who was one of the pioneers of Beaver Valley, than whom there is none better able to give a vivid recital of the stirring times of early settlement and the early settlers:)



BYRON F. WHITNEY

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things and conditions which occurred and existed in those early days of the settlement of Furnas county, even as they happened, it seems to me, also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most esteemed editor, that those might know the certainty of those things of which thou hast been instructed.

The first time that the writer visited the territory afterward organized as Furnas county, was by horse and wagon in company with Wm. B.

Bishop and John Keiser, in the latter part of March and April, 1872. Leaving Ashland, Nebr., we passed through Lincoln and Beatrice, and struck Hebron, reaching the Republican valley east of Guide Rock, and following the valley west as far as Oxford. The weather was moderate most of the journey, although some

days were very windy and cold. The journey presented many novel and interesting sights for the writer, as he had never before been in a country composed entirely of prairie land. Soon after passing Guide Rock, we found the country's surface spotted with the carcasses of hundreds of dead Texas cattle, and the air disagreeably impregnated with the effluvia of their decaying bodies. They had been driven from Texas the preceding autumn and herded there to winter through, being designed for Indian supplies or to stock some cattle king's ranch in Wyoming or Montana the following spring. But the winter of 1871-2 was one of the most severe ever experienced, and for several months the country west of the Missouri river was covered with a sheet of ice, preventing all stock from grazing and these poor cattle had starved and frozen to death. Besides this nearly the entire route after reaching the eastern border of the short grass country region, was thickly dotted with the bleaching bones of mules, horses and oxen near the trail, which we followed the remains of teams belonging to immigrants and overland traders between river points and Denver, while on every side in all directions were the bones of countless buffalo. These were all gathered by the settlers, after the advent of the railroads, and shipped east, and converted into fertilizer.

I was interested and amused when I first saw the prairie dogs. The little fellows appeared so bright, so intelligent, and yet so wary and cautious, and withal so indignant at having their communities invaded by strangers, that, sitting at the entrance of their dens, they would vigorously protest by a short, sharp bark, resembling the bark of a young puppy—and accompanying each yelp with a comical jerk of the tail that excited my mirth. John Keiser asserted that the barking was produced by the jerking of the tail. Perhaps he believed it—being of German descent—but it failed to convince me.

We also passed many evidences of Indian encampments, and at one time the site of an Indian village, long since abandoned. A huge pile of buffalo skulls, fully ten feet in height, occupied a prominent position visible a long ways, and at a distance resembling a monumental pile of marble.

At or near the present town of Franklin we visited John Harman, a brother of William and Otto Harman. We remained with him over night, and we had for breakfast the next morning, some steaks of elk meat, a trophy of Mr. Harman's rifle.

We continued westward on the north side of the river, diligently inquiring of the few settlers for land claims containing timber and water, with hay land, such being our desire, until we reached the present town of Oxford. We concluded to cross the river and search for vacant land in the Beaver and Sappa valleys. Finding a place on the river bank that appeared to offer a chance for fording, Keiser removed his boots and pants and carrying them in his hand, with a dry stick for a staff in the other, proceeded to wade into the stream, trying the depth with the stick as he cautiously advanced. Finding the bottom safe for the team and wagon, Bishop drove in and by vigorous driving succeeded in crossing safely without any mishap. As soon as Keiser had been "reinvested of what he had been divested" he climbed into the wagon and we struck out in a southerly direction until at the setting of the sun we descended into the valley of the Beaver, and went into camp on the present site of John Keiser's homestead.

The country had been burned over by a band of Indians on a hunting expedition and presented a blackened and entirely desolate prospect. However, with tired bodies and ravenous appetites, we built our camp fire in a sheltered grove, prepared our supper, spread our blankets and slept the sleep of the just.

Just as we had finished our breakfast on the following morning, we were surprised by the appearance of an old man, venerable in aspect and polite in bearing, coming to us with a cordial greeting. His few scattering locks of hair were silvery white, his cheeks ruddy with health, his eyes keen and sparkling with intelligence. His voice was modulated and his countenance wreathed in smiles and his steps quick and active, as those of a young man of thirty. He informed us that his name was Sutherland and his speech betrayed his nativity to be of Bonnie Scotland. He said that he had been in search of land and had selected a claim one or two miles farther up the creek. He had slept there the night previous and was now on his return journey to the land office at Beatrice and to his people in Iowa. In reply to our inquiries he told us of another man still farther down the creek who was well versed in the location and numbers of the government survey whom we could readily get as a guide in selecting our claims. At our offer he readily accepted breakfast and offered to show us the way to find our guide. Bishop and Keiser left camp in his company, while I remained to pack up

and await their return. While they were absent I took the rifle and proceeded to reconnoiter the vicinity.

As I emerged from the shelter of the grove and climbed on to the higher land I saw a deer spring from the woods on the creek south of me and disappear again in the timber. I started in that direction hoping to obtain a shot at it, but as I descended into a small draw or ravine I discovered a number of footprints made by feet wearing moccasins, and it occurred to me that perhaps I might be an object hunted as well as the deer, so I deferred following the deer and contented myself with a very cursory survey of the locality, and returned to the camp fire to quietly await the return of Bishop and Keiser. They soon made their appearance, and with them the guide. I was rather fascinated by his appearance. A tall, slender form, straight and erect as an Indian; a face lean and gaunt, eyes of steely grey, steady and calm in their gaze; hair of an auburn tinge and complexion to



From Photo Taken From Court House Cupola in 1888

Residence of Mrs. Mary Simmons in foreground. Hadley Opera House on right and buildings of Wade & Davis in the center, below which is the livery stable burned in 1889. West and south sides in distance.

match; in speech slow and deliberate. He was thinly clad as to nether garments, and with a threadbare army overcoat, minus the capes and skirts and buttoned closely up under his chin. Keiser told me afterwards that the poor fellow had no vest or shirt beneath the fragment of an overcoat. This was Galen James, remembered I presume, by all of the earliest settlers on the Beaver and Sappa creeks as the first white settler in the then unorganized territory, afterward named Furnas in honor of the governor of the state, but it was to James that this honor rightfully belonged. While he was not be counted among the refined and cultured, yet nature had endowed him with a keen intellect and a brave heart as well as a generous nature. His early life, as he related it to me, had been spent on the high seas and mostly on board of whaling ships, with the exception of three years' service on a man of war during the civil war. As an index to his character I will relate an incident that he told to me. While serving in the navy he was placed in the "gig" as a punishment for a break of discipline, for which he alleged he was not to blame. He submitted, of course, as he had to, but there ever rankled in his heart a bitter enmity toward the officer who sentenced him. He served his time and when he was discharged from the services his papers of discharge were tendered him he refused to accept them, and when asked why he replied, "I want nothing to show that I was ever fool enough to enlist in the United States service."

Our team was soon hitched and with Mr. James we started up the creek to inspect some claims that Bishop had obtained the numbers of at the land office in Beatrice. At noon we stopped and cooked our dinner on or near the land afterwards entered by Bishop. After eating our dinner, Bishop, Keiser and James proceeded to locate corners of the government survey, while I amused myself by simply looking at and admiring the beautiful landscape. Off to the south and east appeared some rocky headlands or "Bluffs," and near their base several large "lagoons" or ponds, with their surfaces slightly ruffled by the gentle breeze, and their margins thickly covered, and the air above filled with apparently hundreds of wild waterfowl. Taking the rifle and finding a place to cross the creek, I went to investigate the rocks. As I came near the waters, the wild fowl took alarm and rose in the air in myriads, each trumpeting their fright in their own peculiar manner, with notes and sounds rivaling the

confusion of tongues at the dispersion of the Builders of Babel. I found the rocks to be a sort of decomposed limestone, unfit for building purposes, or any other, except to help maintain the bulk of mother earth. Yet I noticed mingled in this rock evidences of the remains of marine life, consisting of fragments of shells, and even petrified forms of once living creatures, and in imagination I could behold the distant past, when this beautiful land gradually rose from among the rolling billows of an ancient ocean, and the receding waters formed the beautiful valley that now lay spread before me.

We went still farther west and ate our supper on the present site of Beaver City. Keiser took the numbers of the claim where we first camped, and we returned to the location of James' domicile, and I with the others continued the search on the Sappa creek above its juncture with the Beaver. Our progress had been very slow, as we were obliged to make long detours in order to find places to cross over the various ravines. We went into camp in the shelter of timber not far below the junction of the Sappa and Beaver near the James dugout. It had begun to snow with a cold wind from the northwest. The next morning, Easter Sunday, 1872 with chilled and shivering bodies, we started on our return to Beatrice, over a landscape white with snow. We filed at the land office on our claims, I taking the ne $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 35, town 2, n range 21, W. 6th p m., at present owned, I believe by Mrs. Deaver, mother of Mrs. C. E. V. Smith of Beaver City.

After reaching Ashland, rapid preparations were made for moving families and goods to the new country. This was accomplished by ox teams, and was a slow and tedious task, a weary journey of about two weeks, cooking our meals by the roadside. However, in due time we reached the beautiful valley of the Beaver, finding it changed from a blackened, desolate waste to a country of lovely verdure. Trees were putting on their coats and the prairie a velvety green carpet decorated with many new, strange, but really beautiful flowers.

On the 6th of May we halted at the end of our journey, with hearts full of happiness and minds filled with visions of the future. And why not? Here is a land of surpassing beauty, a soil of the highest fertility, pure water, plenty of timber, and a most salubrious climate, and all merely waiting for the hand of industry to convert the whole into happy, prosperous homes for thousands.

On every side beauty reigned supreme, with gentle and frequent showers, balmy breezes, the trees vocal with the songs of birds. Drove of antelope always in sight, occasionally a deer swiftly fleeing across the creek lowlands, and wild turkeys showing themselves occasionally, and each morning ushered in by the crowing or booming of the prairie chickens. A land to rejoice the heart of a sportsman, to interest the naturalist, to enrich the homeless, to exchange the glory of the country, to become a power in the future of the nation. Why should not our hearts be happy with all these pleasing prospects and the reward to be gained, sustain us with courage to dare and to do? With such sentiments we worked with energy to build our new domiciles, to break our



Looking south from the court house cupola in 1888. Schoolhouse, built in 1884,—now Times-Tribune office—in center. Former residence of Judge J. T. Sumny—now occupied by W. C. F. Lumley—in foreground. First brick building in Beaver City, built by W. J. Kinsman in 1886, at northeast corner of the square. Across the square, at the southeast corner, is the old frame building on the present site of the Bank of Beaver City or Norris block. This building was used for offices for county officials and various commercial purposes until it was torn down in 1893.

lands, to plant our crops, with hope and faith in our hearts and songs on our lips, rejoicing every day.

We had reached our future home and now it behooved us to build houses of some sort. The only available building material was either a clay bank, prairie sod or logs. As I was fortunate to have timber I determined to build a log cabin. Before doing this I assisted my brother-in-law, Mr. Bishop, to complete a dug-out and then left my family to go to the land that I had selected to break out some land and plant sod corn. This was seven miles distant from Bishop's. I had an ox team, a covered wagon, a few loaves of bread, some coffee, a chunk of salt pork, a rifle and a breaking plow; also about a bushel of seed corn and a hand-planter, as well as camp utensils. At night, after staking out the cattle and eating my supper I would sit by the camp fire smoking and building castles in the air while I listened to the howling of the coyotes. One day I found a man with a rifle awaiting my arrival at the end of one of my furrows. He told me that some scouts from Fort Hayes in Kansas, had passed, and were sent to inform the settlers that a band of Indians had left their reservation, had killed one soldier and several settlers in Kansas, and were on the warpath. On this information, I hitched the oxen to the wagon and returned to my family at Bishop's. I learned that the scouts, so-called, had stopped at Bishop's the day before, had had dinner there, and told practically the same story. Many settlers had arrived in the country, and had located their claims, all on the streams. A council was called and means of protection discussed. Among the number gathered was an Englishman named James Lumley, who claimed that he had held a captain's commission in the English army and had seen service in Cashmere in the East Indies. Another man named Charles Rosenberger had served as a private in the civil war, and Galen James had served in the navy. These three were the only ones at that time who had any military experience. It was the opinion of the majority that a stockade should be built where the women and children could be protected. But there came the division, as every one seemed to desire the location of the stockade to be very convenient to his own claim. Finally, I appealed to the Englishman for his opinion. He gave it, but it met with no more hearty endorsement than any of the others. I then proposed that we select some one of us as a commander and obligate ourselves to obey his orders, and proposed the name of Mr. Lumley, but he declined the position. We

then elected Mr. Rosenberger and dispersed with the agreement to meet the next day prepared to go to work under his orders. However, the next day arrived with less than six men reporting. Some had started east with their wives and children rather than take the risk of an Indian massacre. Others professed to believe that there was no danger from Indians. Rosenberger was disgusted and manifested it. He was an Indiana Dutchman, and as he left our company he expressed himself, "If dey don't want to obey orders dey can go to h—l. I can take care of mine own folks and dey can do de same." So occurred the first general Indian scare, and so it ended.

As my corn was now planted, I began to cut timber for the cabin. The talk of Indian outbreaks and my belief in their methods, induced me to select the highest elevation on my claim for the location of the cabin. From it I had a perfect view of the surrounding country, and felt sure that no lurking savage could approach without observation. Buffalo had made their appearance and could be seen every day grazing in herds and gradually traveling northward. Settlers continued to arrive and the country was being taken along the borders of the streams. Many spent much time in slaughtering the buffalo. A great deal of it was done in mere wantonness and the innate love for killing. It is true that we all feasted on buffalo steaks and used the hides to make ropes wherewith to stake or tether our stock. But it was so easy to go out any time and enjoy the excitement of killing, and meat was so abundant that it was useless to be sparing of it. So we took the choicest cuts and left the bulk of the carcasses for the wolves and buzzards. The air was so dry that we used to simply hang a ham of buffalo meat to the branches of a high tree and it kept perfectly sweet until we used it all, and then went after more from the herds all about us. It was a carnival of feasting, bragging, and adventure—and so time passed.

I finally had enough logs gathered to complete my cabin, and called on my neighbors to help erect it. In less than a day the enclosure was completed, and afterwards Mr. Keiser helped me cover the roof with sods and dirt. The earth formed the floor. While I was completing the cabin, I was impressed with the intense heat of the wind from the southwest. It seemed as hot as the heat from an oven and the grass on the prairie became brown, dry and brittle. Nothing on the uplands remained green except the cactus plants. The flowers disappeared, and the

country appeared a brown waste with no verdure except on the borders of the streams. I moved my family into the cabin and continued to work at "chinking," filling in the interstices between the logs.

One day I had occasion to go to Bishop's, 7 miles away. It was a very hot day, and as all thoughts of Indians had passed out of my mind, I went without a gun or other arms. On my return, as I neared the headlands at the junction of the Sappa and Beaver Creeks and almost in view of my cabin, I saw what I thought to be an Indian sitting at the head of the ravine some distance to the south of me. Presently he stood up and I know that he was looking at me. He descended into the ravine, and I did not feel that I desired any closer acquaintance. I saw that he had a bow, but I had no gun. So I simply walked along until I came to a point where I could see for a mile or more down the Sappa valley on the south, and beheld Indians on foot and on horseback, hundreds of them, and traveling to the northeast in the direction of my cabin, but they were already between myself and that—and see, there goes Mary and the children running away from it, and going in the direction of Rosenberger's. I can not save them or myself. An Indian on horseback is close by me. He stops. He has a bow and arrows, but he does not unsling them. He has a tomahawk. Evidently he considers me his victim without resistance as I am unarmed. I walk up near him looking at his face. He sits calmly. I say "How." He replies "How." I say "Pawnee." "No, Otoe." I say, "No, I believe Pawnee." "No, no," and patting his breast he says, "Otoe good injun," and fumbling in his bosom he pulled out a paper and with a grunt, handed it to me. It stated his name, which I can't remember, but said he was a good man, and it was signed by some one alleged to have authority. I said, "Where is your chief?" He pointed to the rear of the column of Indians filing past. I felt much better and returned the paper, and as he took it he said, "watermelon." I shook my head, but he grunted and said "watermelon," making a motion of eating. I had no melons planted but Rosenberger had, so I pointed toward his patch and said, "There is watermelon," and turned my steps in that direction myself. I passed or was passed by many Indians, and most of them said "how," and asked for watermelon. I simply pointed to Rosenberger's melons and passed on. I found my wife at Rosenberger's and badly frightened. I asked

her what she had done with my rifle and bottle of alcohol on the shelf in the cabin. She said that she had not moved them, but that she had thrown all of the knives, forks and spoons into my tool chest, and closed the lid. It had a spring lock, so the contents were safe unless the Indians took chest and all. As I looked toward my house, I saw a large group of Indians about it. There was nothing to prevent their entering if they chose to do so. I feared that they might, and I did not want them to take the rifle or drink the "firewater." Assuring my wife that the Indians were friendly and would not harm any of us, I went to our place and greeted those there with "How" and a handshake with several, opened the door and said, "come in." Several of them complied. I said "Indian hungry?" "Uhh! Heap hungry." "My squaw gone away. Heap afraid Injun." "Uhh, Injun no hurt white squaw, good injun." I took the cover off from the wash boiler where my wife had put several loaves of bread, and proceeded to feed them. They continued to eat until there was but one loaf left, and I told them that there was no more. They smiled, and wanted to swap buffalo meat for salt pork. I made several exchanges. An old grizzled, white-headed Indian, a giant in size and build, came in and offered a large piece of elk meat for a small piece of salt pork. I changed with him. He talked at me in Indian, patting me on the breast, and then patting himself. I asked some of the others what he said, but they only smiled and would not reply. Finally he shook hands and pointing toward the reservation got on his pony and left. Two of them placed their hands on their stomachs and said, "Sick, heap sick." I mixed one of them a dose of Ayer's Ague Cure and he swallowed it. To the other I gave a dose of Ayer's pills. They nearly all shook hands as they left, and one said, "Good white man." They were the cleanest Indians that I have ever seen that still wore blankets. They were Otoes and were on their way home from their annual buffalo hunt. Their reservation was then in the southern part of Gage County.

The weather continued hot and dry. I noticed my corn on the opposite side of the creek seemed to have changed its color to a light tinge but had not taken time to visit it. Finally one day it began to rain. I sat at the window gazing at the corn, wondering what had changed its appearance. A flock of wild turkeys came into view west of the corn. I took my rifle

and crossed the creek, coming out on the east side of the corn. I soon knew what was the matter with it. Every blade was eaten except the central stem and every ear except the tiny cob. Grasshoppers! Grasshoppers by the millions. My heart went to the bottom of my boots. Not an ear of corn in spite of my labor and happy anticipations. But I got one of the turkeys, although I didn't carry it very exultantly.

It was a serious case to me. I had relied so much on that crop of corn. But it was gone and the season over and provisions for the winter and seed for another season had to be provided for.

I obtained some work during the winter helping settlers build sod houses, dig dugouts, and sold some hay, and managed to live through until spring when I obtained some work with my carpenter tools on buildings in the town of Melrose, one mile west of the present town of Orleans.

And so ended the first year in Furnas county to the writer.

It was during these first months that the writer for the first and only time felt the impulse of murder in his heart. It occurred through the following incident. A young man working for Bishop was set at breaking land with a yoke of oxen. Bishop had returned to the eastern part of the state on business, and only this young man, myself, wife and children were left on the land selected by Bishop. The young man told me he needed a sharpened plow share. I prepared one for him and took it to him where he was breaking, accompanied by two of my children, a little girl 8 years old and a boy about 5. While adjusting the plow share the man said he would go to the camp to get a drink of water and some tobacco. While he was absent I started the team and went one round on the land he was plowing, followed by the children. As I was turning the oxen at the corner I saw him returning mounted on the herding pony, with a rifle in one hand. I asked him what was the matter, and where he was going. He said, "There are five Indians armed with guns coming from the hills towards our camp, and I am going to get out of here." I said, "You are not going to leave Mary and the children here with no one but me to protect them, are you?" He said, "I am going to take care of myself," and giving the horse the spurs he started off on the run. It was then that I wanted to kill him and if I had had my gun I fear I would have done it—but, thank God, I was only armed with an ox goad. Stepping to the head of the cattle I unhooked the chain from the yoke, and taking

each child by the hand, I said, "Come, let us go to mamma," and we started for the camp, situated on ground higher. The children kept saying, "Pa, you wont let the Indians kill us, will you?" "Pa, are the Indians going to kill us?" "Will the Indians kill mamma and all of us?" My feelings can be more easily imagined than described. Reaching the camp, I met my wife with the baby in her arms, and our oldest girl by her side. My wife was as pale as a corpse. I said, "Where are the Indians?" She pointed southwesterly without speaking. I could see and count five men coming towards our camp, single file, as is customary with the Indians. I thought they carried guns—they did—but they were too distant to tell positively. I picked up the Henry rifle and filled the chamber with sixteen cartridges and buckled my belt, with a Remington revolver with six loads in its chamber, about my loins. I then sat down on an empty box and watched the approaching men. I believed they were Indians and believed they would kill all of us. I knew we could not escape, and I expected to die pretty soon too, but I was determined to die the first one, before Mary or the babies. I thought of my friends in the East. How will they feel when they hear of the manner of our death, and when will they hear of it? There are five of the Indians and one of me. I cannot fire rapidly enough to escape them all. I thought of the stories I had read and heard of the Indians torturing their victims—all this and much more passed through my mind as I sat there watching—and singular as it may seem—I felt no fear. I was not afraid, I realized there was very slight hope for us—I expected to die—and that the family would be killed or reserved for a worse fate, but my nerve was steady and I thought of it and knew that I could take a steady aim when the moment came for it, and I watched—waiting. The men had ceased walking, they gathered in a group and stood. I saw they had guns. I saw them point with their hands towards us, and they pointed westwardly, and eastwardly, and stood. They moved on again in single file and continued to approach. They are about 80 rods from us, they again stop, they stand, they sit down on the ground in a group. I can see they have guns. They continue to sit. Perhaps they are waiting for another party from another direction, but they still sit. I tell Mary I am going out to meet those Indians. She protests and begs me not to go. The children join with her. I tell her I can shoot as well there as here, and you can see us, and if you see I am gone, you can do the best you can.

I can do no more for you if I remain here than if I go, and you will have a better chance than if I stay here until they get here. I started toward the Indians, as I drew near my rifle was cocked and my finger on the trigger, with my eyes on the Indians. They remained sitting. I came still closer and could see that they had caps and hats on their heads. They are not Indians! I walked up to them and said: "Men, are you aware that you came near being fired upon." Several of them laughed. One of them said: "Boys, didn't I tell you, not to do it, that you would frighten the settlers." And to me he explained that the others had persisted in acting as they had against his protest. This man's name was Mattack. He claimed he had lived with the Indians and was an experienced trapper. That he was a good trapper he demonstrated while he sojourned in our neighborhood. All of these men took claims in the vicinity of what was afterwards Beaver City. Singular as it may seem—and I was surprised myself—after I discovered that we had been in no danger whatever, I found that my nerve suddenly collapsed, and I was trembling and felt that I was in danger. At other times since then I have had the same experience. I am more excited and nervous after a danger is past, than during the existence of the danger. The reader may explain this seeming inconsistency in his own way, but I am sure it is true in my case.

During the winter of 1872-3, I worked for John Mannering digging dugouts on four claims filed on by four of his sisters, and also built a small frame house for Mrs. Matthews, a very estimable woman, who with her son, Park Mathews, came in during the fall months. During this time our mail was sent to Alma City, a distance of eighteen miles. We sent Galen James with our mail, and received it sometimes in one and sometimes in two weeks. Our nearest railroad station was at Lowell, about sixty miles.

In the early part of the winter there was another excitement in regard to Indians. Some time in January, 1873, three Sioux Indians were killed by two white men, partners known as Wild Bill and "Jack" somebody. The Indians were a Sioux Chief, "Whistler," and his son, "Fat Badger." Wild Bill claimed that the Indians had run off his mules, but the hunters recovered them and moved their camp. Then three Indians came into their camp at night and ordered supper and coffee. Bill put the coffee pot on the fire but did not put in enough coffee to suit Whistler.



A view from the Court House cupola in 1888, looking east. Residence of C. D. Stearns in the foreground

Whistler then tried to open the provision box and take coffee out, when Bill jumped on it and pinched the Indian's fingers. The Indians muttered in Sioux, not thinking the whites could understand but they did, and to save themselves, killed the Indians first. The Sioux then tried to throw the blame onto the Pawnees, who were hunting in the same country. In the meantime the Sioux had run off thirty or forty ponies from the Pawnee and scalped one Pawnee. The Pawnees fled down the river and camped in the vicinity of Melrose, a mile east of the present town of Orleans and twelve miles east of my claim. It was reported that the Pawnees had killed the Sioux, and a company of cavalry came out to return the Pawnees to their reservation, but on arriving at the camp it was learned that it had been the white men who did the killing, so the Pawnees were unmolested. The Sioux then demanded that the government deliver Wild Bill to them. But that could not be done until he could be caught, and I do not believe that any very strenuous efforts were made

to catch him. The Sioux threatened revenge, and there were some who feared danger, but most of us apprehended no danger.

“Dashing Charlie,” Whistler’s son-in-law, a white man, came down with the soldiers, and said that he did not think that the Indians would make trouble. The Pawnees remained camped at Melrose a large part of the winter. The squaws tanned buffalo hides for many of the settlers, while many of the men trapped along the river and begged of the settlers. They were crest-fallen by their misfortunes at the hands of their hereditary foes, the Sioux, but would not talk about it. At this time Melrose seemed destined to be a permanent station on the hoped-for railroad to Denver. Several buildings were erected there. I was employed here as a carpenter during February and March. On Easter Sunday, 1873, there occurred a blizzard lasting nearly three days, and was only exceeded by the blizzard of 1887. Many cattle were lost during the storm, and it was reported that there were human lives lost also. With a companion I was compelled to remain confined in a harness shop in Orleans during the storm, and suffered much agony of mind solicitous for the condition of the family left alone on the homestead twelve mile away. As soon as the storm passed I went home and found the family all safe. I merely mention this to illustrate some of the trials of the pioneers.



A view from the Court House cupola in 1888, looking west. Residence of John Plowman in the foreground

That spring I hired more ground broken and planted it to corn. I sowed the previous year's breaking to wheat, planted potatoes and garden seeds, and worked for other settlers as they needed me.

The buffalo returned this season, but in greatly diminished numbers, and their meat was more of a rarity. Settlers continued to arrive, and but a very few took claims on the uplands. A few gangs of antelope still lingered, and occasionally a flock of wild turkeys were seen. Rattlesnakes and prairie dogs still maintained their numerical strength. A man named Jacob Wolfe settled on a claim one mile east of me in Harlan county and put up a sod house and a blacksmith shop. One of his children, 4 years old, passing from the shop to the house, was bitten by a rattlesnake and died from the effects of it. This is the only death from snake bite that I recollect.

Like the previous season, April and May and part of June gave us plenty of rain, and the country assumed all of the beautiful and fascinating appearance of the previous year. But the dry, hot winds from the southwest again set in, and the country became crisp and brittle, and so continued for weeks, only varied at long intervals by terrific thunder storms. The ravines would become raging torrents and the creeks overflowed their banks. These storms afforded but temporary relief. During July, by looking towards the sun, the air could be seen filled with locusts or grasshoppers winging their way northward. In August the wind shifted slightly to the north, and straightway the "hoppers" descended upon our crops, and what slight hopes still remained for a light crop of corn vanished in a few short hours. Again, after a year's struggle and hopes, I found myself really in a worse condition than the year previous. Our clothing was worn out and all our means exhausted, except my individual efforts, and no opportunity in sight for even an effort. I had harvested enough wheat to provide bread, and I had a large stack of hay, some of which I could sell.

In the fall of 1873 an election was held for county officers and the selection of a site for the county seat. The rivalry was between Arapahoe and Beaver City. I was appointed clerk of election for our election district. The place of election was at the old Spring Green postoffice, eight miles up the Sappa from my place. I was late in arriving and another had been sworn in in my place. I went to work writing ballots. I soon went outside

to electioneer for Beaver City, but learned that the parties with whom I had ridden to the polls had returned home as the whole country south of us was on fire. Sure enough, dense columns of smoke were rolling up driven by that strong south wind. Filled with fear and anxiety, I lost no time in starting on a run for home, and continued to run until I had reached within about a mile of home when I saw fire ahead of me, and all means of escape apparently cut off. I felt that my time had surely come. I was in despair, when a few rods south of me I saw a team and wagon with several men in it. I yelled and put on all speed possible to attract attention, and succeeded. Frank Gapen, a neighbor was driving, and slackened as he saw me. I clambored in and he again applied the whip to the already frantic team, and seizing an opportune moment, rushed through the burning grass onto ground already burned over. Gapen's stables and stacks were on fire, and they lost all of their crops in that fire. I hurried on home to find my house still standing, but deserted, my wife and children having gone to a neighbor's across the creek, where the fire had passed. This was a Mr. Spencer, who lost his stables and stacks. Another neighbor, Mr. Lathrop, seeing me at home, came over, and with his assistance we succeeded in burning a guard around my stack of hay before the fire reached it. Galen James and Ellis Hewitt, on their way to the election, when arriving at my place, had seen the approaching fire, and had kindly set a back fire around my wheat stack and thus saved it. I was the only settler in the neighborhood who lost nothing in that fire.

Many families loaded their goods in wagons, and left the country permanently. Others returned to the eastern part of the state and worked for farmers until the following spring, or lived with relatives, returning the following year to renew the struggle of subduing the wilderness.

That winter I resorted to many expedients to obtain the necessities of life. I remember, during a mild spell of weather, I took off my clothes and waded into the cold waters of the Sappa clear to my chin in order to set trap for beaver. I would hurry into my clothes and take a run along the creek to warm myself, and then repeat the operation at the next discovery of a beaver sign. I would not do so again for all the beaver that ever bore fur. I was glad to even get a shot at a rabbit or a prairie hen, anything to help satisfy the hunger of the family. We lived

through, and again planted in hope in the spring of 1874. Hope that ever springs eternal in the human breast was surely the sheet anchor of our souls, and thus in raggedness, but withal also ruggedness, I began the third year of my pilgrimage in the land of my air castles and ardent aspirations.

The year 1874 opened with as delightful and brilliant promises as any of the preceding. With hope still strong, and with undiminished ardor, I again succeeded in putting in crop all the land I had broken, and worked for other settlers in breaking new land, and with my tools at whatever trifling little jobs were available, waiting and hoping for an abundant return at the end of the season. Vegetation grew most luxuriantly, and occasionally a stray and lonely buffalo made an appearance, only to be soon killed or scared out of the country by the hungry settlers. With an occasional wild turkey, and an antelope killed to diversify the staple diet of biscuit, bacon and beans, we struggled on, hoping and longing for the maturing of vegetables, and watching the "hoppers" that returned with the southerly winds that set in with the usual regularity, and accompanied with the same sultry heat, with only, if any difference, an additional intensity.

Again the refreshing and verdant colors of the prairie changed to the sombre brown and gray, and the crisp and dry buffalo grass would, and did, burn and turned the surface of the country, for long distances, into the dismal color of the mourners for the dead. The brilliant, glittering wings of the "hoppers" bespangled the blue vault of heaven with their silvery sheen, as they in countless millions, winged their journey northward, with the steadily blowing winds from the parched plains of the southwest. With anxious and fearful hearts we could only watch and wait, with mental prayers that we might by some unknown and miraculous means be delivered from their rapacious jaws but as we contemplated the corn withering under the hot and dry blasts of the wind, we felt little hope of garnering any fruits of our toil, even if the "hoppers" disappeared as suddenly as the locusts of Egypt during the oppression of the Hebrews. We had not many days to wait and watch, and as our prayers were not accompanied with faith, they availed nothing. The wind shifted and the "hoppers" halted and began a forage on everything green that remained. The country was full of them; they covered the short cornstalks with such numbers that they bent under their weight. The trees along the streams were

soon denuded of their leaves and stood as bare of foliage as in the depths of winter, and the waters of the creek assumed the color of strong coffee, stained with the excrements of the insects, and could even be smelled, and cattle refused to drink, until compelled to by extreme thirst. "Hoppers" were so thick in the air that I could succeed in grasping several by a quick motion of the hand. They remained longer this season than at either of the previous ones, and the females began to deposit their eggs in the ground, and in many localities the earth was honey-combed with the holes made by them for this purpose. People became frantic. Many immediately abandoned the country never to return. Three failures in succession, all attributed to the same cause, had entirely disheartened them. Many more would have left if they had had the means wherewith to go. Meetings were called to devise means of relief, and it was determined to appeal to friends, relatives, and all people, and also to the state and general government for aid. Committees were chosen to go to the eastern states and appeal for and receive contributions for the stricken and suffering settlers. Committees from the east also visited the state and reported the situation as it presented itself to them. Letters were sent to friends, and it was not long ere words of encouragement and contributions were received from our countrymen, who—God bless them—have never yet failed to respond with generosity to appeals for help from those who have been the victims of unavoidable distress and suffering. The contributions, while gratefully received, did not consist of many delicacies, but of substantial food, mostly of low grades of flour, corn meal, bacon, cast-off and second hand clothing, old blankets, cheapest kind of dry goods and groceries. But whatever came was welcomed and thankfully received by those who were the recipients. It is truly said that the best sauce is hunger. I know that during this distressful time many ate with a relish food that in ordinary circumstances they would have spurned with disdain. Some few of the settlers had the fortune to possess a hog or two, and as there was not wherewith to feed them, they were slaughtered, and actually they were so lean and void of fat, that the only method whereby the meat could be rendered eatable, was to boil it. It could not be fried, baked or broiled. Water was the only means of preventing it becoming an indigestible mass of burnt charcoal.

In the latter part of winter the government sent an army

officer to investigate and report the amount and kind of seeds the country would need to replant in the spring. We received most of our seeds the ensuing spring from Washington. Brigham Young, the Mormon leader at that time, also contributed liberally to the needs of the settlers. The government also sent in army clothing and shoes for the settlers and many received gifts from relatives and friends in the east, and thus the vast majority of us subsisted on the charities of our countrymen until we could once more demonstrate or try to demonstrate whether we could wring a subsistence from the delectable land of false promises, and thus we began again the campaign of 1875.

During the winter of 1874-'75, I taught the district school in our home district, and by this circumstance was more fortunate than many others. It is not always an agreeable reflection to realize in such times of mutual distress, the selfishness of humanity, as was sometimes manifested, and yet such reflections are often enlivened by recollections of generous deeds of self-denial and kindly acts. But it is not surprising that envy, jealousy and false views should become visible, and undoubtedly many accusations of partiality and preference should be made, and perhaps in some few instances be well founded. But in a general way many of the noblest attributes of the human heart were revealed among the earliest settlers of Furnas county and will ever abide in my heart as refreshing fountains of water in a desert. Many deeds of mutual kindness, as well as many of the basest ingratitude and despicable selfishness could be related. But thanks to Fortune, fickle as she may be, or to Providence, whose charity never fails, those days are past, and though in turning memory's tablets, they again reveal some things sad and lamentably wrong, it is but to remember that they are past, and in the dead past to let them remain.

I hope in reciting incidents of the following year, 1875, to be able to present brighter colors to the reader.

I believe my former chapter ended in the year 1875. In the spring 1876, I rented part of my land to Silas Clemons, to plant in corn, and planted the balance myself. As during all the preceding years the corn made a vigorous and promising growth, but in the latter part of June and early July, the "hoppers" again made their appearance, bespangling the sky with their shining wings and we waited with anxiety whether they would again repeat their ravages. But the wind was propitious and they re-

remained in the air, and the corn grew, tasseled and gave good promise of yielding a fair crop. I am a member of the Masonic order and at the time was an officer in the lodge at Melrose, and at one of our regular meetings in August, the brethren deferred the opening of the lodge, awaiting the arrival of several of the brethren from Beaver City. Myself and several others were in the lodge room passing the time in conversation, when a brother entered the room and announced, "The boys from Beaver City have arrived and report that the grasshoppers have alighted." On my way home that night I rode with Brother A. C. Robins as far as his home and refused his invitation to tarry with him until morning, but walked on in the moonlight toward my own cabin. Coming to Brother Robins' cornfield adjoining the road, I walked into it a few paces and heard the roar of the hoppers' wings as my presence disturbed them, and they flew blindly among the corn stalks. The next day was Sunday and early I began to carry old hay, chunks of wood, and place them on the eastern side of my corn field, and set fire to them, and as the wind bore the smoke among the corn, the insects arose in clouds from off the corn and for a short time I thought the victory was mine. But I was soon undeceived. I noticed that the smoke soon arose entirely above the corn and underneath that the hoppers remained undisturbed, and that those who had been first disturbed, immediately settled down again on the corn, as soon as they were out of the cloud of smoke. It was a vain attempt. I gave it up, and turned my attention to fighting fire on the dry grass that had carried it into the timber of my neighbor, but I did not even succeed in saving much of his timber. Afterwards I called on him and asked him how much I owed him for the damage the fire had done to him. He replied, "I don't think it would have done any damage if it had burned the whole d——d country up." I felt very much the same way myself, and besides some relief that I would not be called on to pay for it. I remember talking to Elder Mayo shortly after the last visitation of the grasshoppers. He insisted with much vehemence and earnestness that it was a judgment of God upon the people for their many sins. I referred him to my belief that the sins of the people in other localities were, in my opinion, as great as ours, and yet they escaped, while we suffered, and that he himself, as righteous man, leader and teacher of holiness, had been included in the condemnation, as well as the rest of us, but my words failed to

change his attitude as my efforts had failed to save my corn. Many people left the country, thoroughly disgusted, and never returned. I remained because I had to, but I told my wife I would never put in another crop in that country, and I did not. I struggled on the best I could, and during the next year succeeded in living as well as I had during the preceding ones, and made final proof and received certificate of same, and sold the homestead with the intention of permanently leaving the country.

I had now made arrangements to emigrate to the western coast, even to an agreement with John Keiser to move my family and goods to Kearney, where I was to take the train to San Francisco. As I have stated before, Mrs. Whitney had long been in poor health, although she had apparently improved during the two first seasons after coming to Nebraska, but at this time, just prior to our intended departure, she took a severe cold and was attacked with lung fever, and could not be moved. I was under obligation to give possession of my house to the purchaser, and as soon as the physician would allow us, I obtained another and we moved, but the cold season was far advanced and my wife was not in a condition to endure so long a journey, so we concluded to wait until the following spring.

I taught school in our home district thinking thus to pay our expenses during the winter. During the winter my two youngest children were for a time under the care of the doctor, and also my eldest daughter. In the spring, after paying my doctor bills, I had just enough money to pay our fare to Portland, Oregon. I dared not attempt, with an invalid wife and five small children to land in a country of strangers, without money. I moved into a sod house in the neighborhood of Wm. Harman, bought some cows and worked with my tools in Beaver City, and lived in more comfort than ever previously in that country. But in the summer of that year, an epidemic of that dread disease, diphtheria, prevailed, and my children were attacked with hundreds of others. I can not remember of scarcely a family who escaped. Some lost every child in the household. It was indeed a time of mourning. My children all recovered. We were one among the very few who escaped without a death in the family. Any of the early settlers who may still remain in that vicinity surely can recall this sad calamity that left so many hearths desolate. During this time I had filed on another claim as a pre-emption, and had partly completed a dug-out, but

during the sickness I was detained from completing it and the time elapsed allowed for having a residence upon it, and ere I could arrange to move on it, a former trusted friend filed a contest on my claim, and proceeded to build a sod house and moved his family on it. This occurrence caused a wave of indignation among the neighbors, who knew all the circumstances and after much consideration I consented to defend my claim before the land department. It resulted in the department's decision in my favor and confirming my prior right.

During the fall and before the epidemic had ceased, there occurred another Indian scare, and the greatest of any. Wild accounts reached us of the number of Indians and of murders they committed. And some of these stories were afterwards confirmed. Some settlers were killed on the headwaters of the Beaver. The settlers became frightened. Many moved into Beaver City, camping on the public square. One evening when I came in from work my family were much excited over reports they had heard of the Indians. I had but little faith in the stories, but to satisfy myself and them, I went to the house of Frank Matthew, which was situated on the traveled road, to make inquiries. I found no one there except the women and Will Mayo. Both Matthew and his father-in-law, Elder Mayo, had gone to Beaver City to learn the news. I returned home and found my own house deserted, the beds robbed of everything; dishes gone; and the lamp left burning on the table. I soon discovered that my carbine had been left. I took it and stepped outside the door, wondering where my people were and what had happened during the brief hour of my absence. I heard a confused noise of voices on the opposite side of the creek in the direction of a neighbor's house, Patrick Kennedy. I went there and found several wagon loads of women, children, beds, blankets and excited men, and all talking and urging each other to hurry. I asked the reason, and was told they were running from the Indians and were going to cross the river and camp on the opposite side, and I heard my wife calling me. I told her that she must not go to the river and made them all promise to leave her and our children at John Keiser's if Keiser had not left when they got there, and I returned home with my carbine to look after our cattle. While engaged in this work, Henry Keiser came to me on horseback telling me that my people were at his brother's and wanted me to come there. So, I went. I asked Henry if his brother in-

tended to leave. He said "No." I asked him if they had any ammunition. He said "No." I had none either. I wondered how we would fight without, but at the same time I did not think we would have the chance to fight. And I am confident that if the Indians had been in such numbers as reported, and had been inclined to do so, they could at this time have scalped every settler in the county, with slight loss to themselves. And I believe this to be true at all times during the early days of that settlement. Few of the men ever had but a scant supply of ammunition, and much of what they had was wasted in wanton and reckless shooting. However, I went to Mr. Keiser's and we all sat awake all night, except the children, waiting to hear the war whoop of the savages, and surrender our scalps gracefully, after making as huge a bluff as possible with our empty rifles. It is true that the state did supply several cases of rifles and a supply of ammunition, but I believe the guns were ruined by neglect, and most of the cartridges used to kill buffalo.

This was the worst and the last Indian fright. On June 18th, 1880, in company with Daniel Kimes, I started for the eastern part of the state to obtain work if possible. At that time, June 18, 1880, the plowed and seeded fields in Furnas county were as bare and void of vegetation as they were when the farmers drove their harrows off of them at seeding time, and the unbroken prairie as brown and gray as in the middle of December. No verdure or green thing except along the borders of the creeks, and the wild cactus plants of the prairie. I was absent during the summer until called home by the illness of my wife. No rain to any amount fell in the vicinity of our home until some time in July. Many sowed millet and that was all the crop worth mentioning that year. I again taught school the winter of 1880-1881. During the winter, which was very severe, we lost our youngest child, and the following May, Mrs. Whitney died.

I took my tool chest and went to North Platte to obtain work, leaving my children in care of a sister-in-law, who promised to remain with them until the following August. I came home in the fall, settled my children in the care of another and for some time was employed by L. Kinsman, then county clerk, to assist his deputy in keeping the records of the office. My work comprised the copying of the transfers of real estate and the mortgage records—mostly mortgages—and mostly in favor of

eastern loaning companies. The amounts usually loaned on 160 acres was in the neighborhood of \$300.00. The fact is simply this, these mortgagors had obtained papers on their land, and thus could mortgage them, and they did it with the intention of obtaining sufficient funds wherewith to leave the country, and many of them did thus leave and are still away. And I believe many of these mortgaged lands were forfeited to the mortgagees.

I sold my preemption to the man who wanted it, and again endeavored to go west, but again was held back by the sickness of the children, and finally returned to the eastern part of the state, where I still remain, without a regret for leaving Furnas county, and have never since revisited the place but twice. I have heard much of the prosperity that now abounds there. If it is true, no one rejoiced more over it than I, but I am content that the residents there shall enjoy all of it.

I have hastily drawn these chapters to a close. Many incidents of a thrilling nature I have left out, and many a tearful one, and some of the most ludicrous character. I can truthfully say that during my sojourn there I came in contact with as noble characters as I have ever met, and some of the most base. Humanity in all its phases was revealed. While the recollection of some is ever accompanied with a feeling of pleasure, I am sorry that it is not true of all.

BYRON F. WHITNEY.

CHAPTER XIII

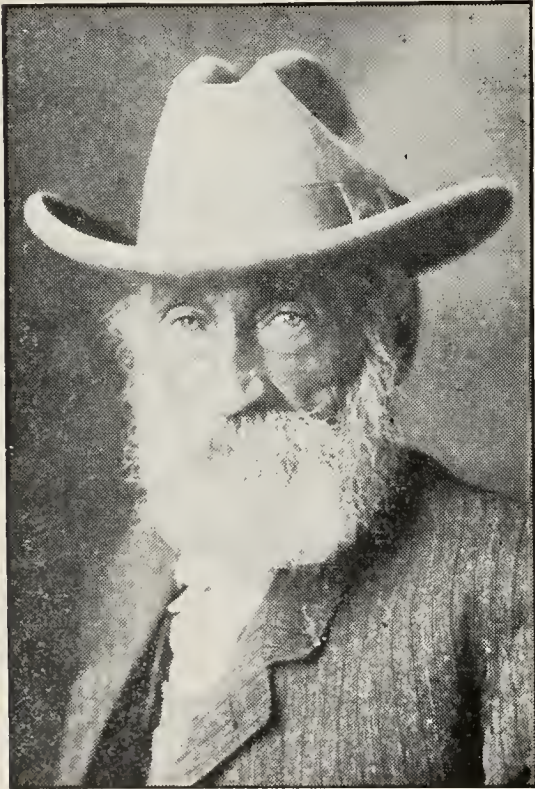
**Rufus Trowbridge Lost Everything Coming West in 1873, So
Traded Buffalo Meat for His Filing Papers**

Grand Junction, Colo., February 21.—Editor Times-Tribune. —The spring that I was twenty-one, I crossed the plains with a company of thirty-five. We all had ox teams. When our company got within 3 miles of Fort Laramie, we camped, and some of us heard that Horace Greeley had been there and made a speech, and some of our company wanted to join the exodus for California. This divided the company and seventeen of us went to Boulder, Colo., which was the starting of that place. Eighteen started for California. Horace Greeley was honest but of course he was deceived about finding gold.

We had trouble with Sioux Indians. They came upon us and demanded our grub, but we were brave and would not give it up, and finally bluffed them out. But it did look scary for a while, as they had fresh scalps attached to their saddles, and it looked as though our time had come, especially when they surrounded us.

I returned to Iowa, and in 1873, with my wife and four children, started from Black Hawk, Iowa, for Furnas county. When we reached the Republican river I had the worst time in my travels. I had had bad luck all the way, and only had fifty cents left to help get us across the river. The river was coming up but it was told us that the crossing was safe, and so in we went, team, wagon and load. I saw that I would have to jump out and swim, which I did, hanging on to the lines. My team, the front wheels, and myself got ashore, but the rest of my new wagon had gone down the river and settled in quicksand. I and the ferryman got that out piece by piece all but the king bolt. Of course the wagon box tipped over and all of my goods had gone down the river and were never recovered by me. In this were my tools, worth \$100. besides my other goods. We got rigged up and reached my claim in Furnas county, December

18, 1873, which was section 27, range 24, town 2, east of Wilsonville. I went to the land office without a cent of money, but took 105 pounds of dried buffalo meat. I must tell you how we got this meat. There were nine of us in the company who went on a hunt and were gone three weeks. We killed twenty-five buffalo, dried the meat and took care of the hides to sell. When I went to the land office with my meat I went to several stores and finally got 5 cents a pound for it. I told the register of the land office that I had come to file and on account of hard luck and sickness that I had no money, but could get him a due bill from one of the stores on account of the buffalo meat. After studying a while he said that he would make out the papers for \$3.25. So I went and got a due bill for that amount.



RUFUS TROWBRIDGE

I hauled back a load of salt and lumber to Orleans and got \$12 for that and had \$2 left from the meat, which I traded out for groceries as we were so far from a trading point, and we had to watch out for provisions in those days. I have seen the time in my house that we would have cooked bran to eat if we had had it. But something would turn up before night and we got something to eat.

About July 4th, '400 Pawnees came and camped on my claim four days. I talked with the guide and he told me that the first day 300 warriors in a circle of ten miles had killed 150 buffalo. People always had

better luck hunting buffalo on the Beaver than anywhere else.

Millie Trowbridge, now Mrs. DeWitt of Omaha, was the second white girl born in Furnas county.

Now for a snake story. I had made a Lincoln bed for the boys. My wife went to make up the bed, and there was a big

rattler in the bed, and by the time she could get a stick it had crawled out through the cracks in the log house. Another time Baby Millie was just so she could toddle, and we found her out playing peek-a-boo with a big rattler over a log. This one was curled ready to strike, and we got him in time. Another time my wife and a neighbor woman killed a big rattler with an ax.

Well, one thing I can say and that is that my children never had to cry for bread, and I would rather face Indians and snakes than to hear children crying for bread.

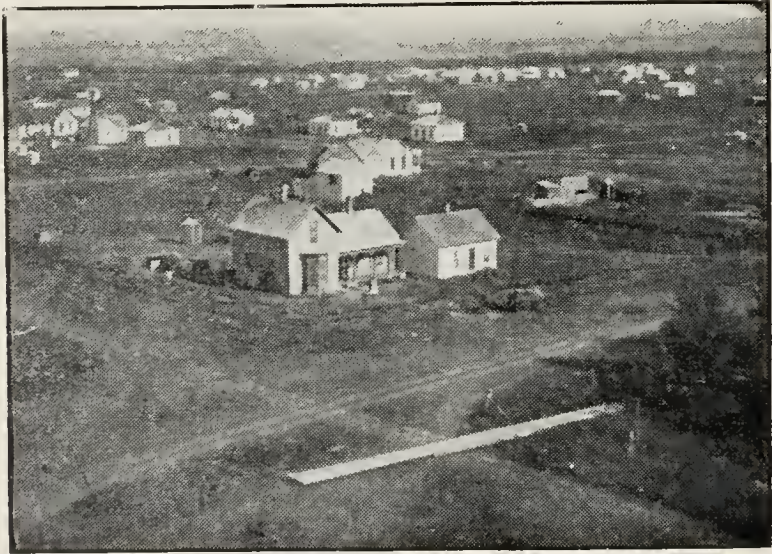
I will wind up by saying that I am well and can use myself pretty well after having such a siege of rheumatism.

RUFUS TROWBRIDGE.

CHAPTER XIV

**William T. McGuire Was a Boy When He Sailed Into the Beaver
Aboard a Prairie Schooner**

William T. McGuire grew from early childhood to sturdy manhood in Furnas county. He passed through all the stirring times of the early days. He also was a stalwart among stalwarts in political activities after he arrived at manhood's estate. The Times-Tribune requested him to write the political history of the county, but instead he gave us a most vivid and interesting account of his earlier years, touching upon the settlement of a section of the country not hitherto described by our intelligent and truthful historians. We are glad to get it and print it. But we shall be pleased to receive another article from his pen relating



**Looking Southeast from the Court House Cupola in 1888. Present Home
of Postmaster Boyd in the foreground**

some of those other victories—no less renowned than war—when the activities of the pioneers turned from the plow to that no less honorable profession of “saving the country” at the county convention.

Editor Times-Tribune.—I have been reading with interest and profit the Pioneer stories written by the boys and girls who first resolved to change the buffalo trail into the plow furrow

and the paradise of the hunter and his game into productive fields and herds of thoroughbreds fed on alfalfa. Though miles separate and high mountains divide many of us now, those letters bring back to memory thoughts of the strenuous days when we were satisfied with little and endured much. Your request to write about my early days reminds me that I was 11 years old when I first set eyes on Beaver City.



Looking east along the North Side
in 1888

When the summer began to fade into fall with its murky days and starlight nights there were some that viewed with alarm the near approach of a long, dreary winter, with perhaps no mail at all, and 80 miles to the nearest railroad. But there was a large number of live, social wires who did not entertain one gloomy thought.

Their presence was like a ray of sunshine and their hospitality knew no bounds. There were no clans in those days. All were on equal footing. The purpose of one was the purpose of all—to make a permanent home, the woof and warp of the fabrics of civilization. The reader may be interested to know who our neighbors were the first winter. On either side along the creek for a distance of 6 miles from memory's roster I will supply the list: John O'Brien and family, John Huff and family, Billy DeForest, John Wines, Edgar and Billy Page, Mr. Severn and family, John DeMotte, who homesteaded the land on which old Lynden mills were located and Devizes now stands, Mr. Coleman and family, John P. Dopps and family, John Stevenson, a sturdy young Scotchman who developed staying qualities, Mr. Brightman who homesteaded what was Chas. Crommett's old place, Stukeley Harding and family, and his father's family, the McKaster family, John and W. T. McKinny and families, the latter has made good and is still on the job.

In the spring of 1874 there was much sickness among the settlers. The scurvy was the most prevalent, caused by a lack of vegetable food, but wild onions, which grew in abundance over the prairies, proved to be a panacea for this ill. About this time, Mrs. John O'Brien, one of the first settlers, after a short illness

died, which cast a gloom over the settlement. In sickness and need she was a ministering angel. The darkest shadow cast by clouds of grasshoppers could not change the lustre of her cheery smile. The community followed all that was mortal of their friend to a point on the prairie where they laid her to rest beneath the earth of the hillside. This was the first grave of what is now the Devizes cemetery.

One and a half mile east of our house the Texas cattle trail crosses the Sappa over which many thousands of horses and hundreds of thousands of those long horns wended their way to the Indian agencies and the big ranches of the northwest. It seemed to me that the horns and the head would weigh more than the body. This specie of cattle is now almost extinct. Such noted cattle kings of the south as the Olives, Holliday, Richard King, Joel Collins, Sam Bass, and many others followed this trail. The latter two named sold their herd at Custer City. After a gambling, drunken debauch, they squandered the price of the herd.



Livery Stable at Northwest Corner
of Square, burned in the
winter of 1889

On their return they robbed a Union Pacific Express at Big Springs, east of Ogalalla. The unique way in which a part of the plunder was recovered and two of the party captured I speak of later.

Cowboys, scouts and plainsmen in passing often stopped for refreshments. buttermilk, notably Buffalo Bill who would empty his glass with a relish and ask for another. Many troops of

cavalry passed close to our place. Aside from being pleasing to look at, they had a very salutary effect in impressing the settlers with confidence that Uncle Sam was looking after their safety.

During the early settlement of the Sappa a farm had no more of a cash value than a barrel of water on the bank of the Platte river during a flood. When some people became discouraged and could stand it no longer, they would load their personal effects and hike out to their wife's folks, and in time new settlers would

take their place. You ask how they could do this and avoid a contest? For the reason they did not file, but held their claims by the right of squatter's sovereignty. They could file at a more convenient time, which they never did. I have in mind a settler who traded his right, improvements, and good will for a \$20 Texas pony. The new man got the blues and moved away, only to be laughed at for being shy a small horse. But I am sure you would make the present owner of the farm very angry if you offered him less than \$6,000 for it.

A view of the settlement of the tributaries and divides is too lengthy for a newspaper article, however, it is amusing to recall how the first settlers talked about the valleys might be settled by stockmen, but that the divides never would be. Westward the tide of home hunters wended their way and long since the government has issued letters patent to every foot of it.

Much excitement was caused when it was reported that a young man who had just settled on one of the tributaries of the Sappa had been found dead under his wagon. After reviewing

the remains it was decided that an inquest would be unnecessary, for it was plain that during the night, when a rain had come up, he had reached out for his gun and pulling it toward him it had been discharged with fatal effect. Out of his wagon box a rough casket was made, and then strange but kind hands buried him on his claim he had chosen for his home. The creek is known to this day as (Will) Jones' branch.



WM. T. MCGUIRE

I will omit speaking about my pioneer school days, but in passing I cannot refrain from paying a compliment to Mrs. John Brainard, Mrs. Cornelius Decker, and Miss Ally Hill-

man, who were my instructors for five years. They labored hard, faithfully, and capably in teaching me the fundamental principles of the three R's, and wasted no time on the fads and ge-gaws as teachers do today. After a few months at Norton under Prof. Joel Simmons, conditions made it necessary that I quit the common school and finish my education in the academy of experience and the university of hard knocks.

Lest I forget I will state how two of the Sam Bass bunch were captured as told to me in later years by Tug Wilson, one of the detectives. (Perhaps W. T. Collings will recall Wilson who worked for the Anglo-American Cattle Co.) In substance he said that one afternoon a number of men were seated on the porch of a hotel in Hayes City, Kas. Among them was a U. S. Marshal. Two cowboys, heavily armed and leading a pack horse, rode up. Dismounting, they threw the bridle reins to the ground, walked in and ordered something to eat. Soon they reappeared, mounted and rode away. It was then noticed that the pack horse, the largest and fattest of the trio, showed great weariness, almost to the point of collapse. This should not have been as the bed-pack was small compared with the riders, saddles, and trappings which the two smaller horses carried with ease. The marshal said, "Boys, we'll have them return as our guests for tonight and get better acquainted." He swore in four aides, armed and dressed in the role of cowboys, to throw off suspicion of attack. They made a big detour far in advance of the riders, and then turned and met them from the front with a cordial greeting of cowboys. After a brief talk they were invited to spend the night at the cow camp, a few miles away. This they consented to do. Well at ease, chatting, rolling cigarettes, completely off their guard, six-shooters clicked with the order "hands up." There was nothing to do but obey. Disarmed and searched, two deputies led their horses while three rode behind. Arriving in town the bed pack was removed and found to contain \$60,000 in gold in the original sealed packages. The two men captured, without the firing of a gun, proved to be Joel Collins and "Old Dad," two of the most desperate characters that ever camped on the Sappa or that Texas ever knew.

The Indian scare of 1878 has been spoken of by other writers, and I would not allude to it had it not been for an incident of much concern to me. In that raid I lost a boy comrade, as fine a lad as I ever knew. The fall of that year was featured with

ideal weather. Sister and I were going to school at Norton. It was at this time a small pioneer village without railroad or telegraph communication, but no longer will her people be startled with the thrilling news that "the Indians are coming," as they were thirty-five years ago. It has been reported for several days that about 300 Cheyennes had left their reservation in the Indian territory with their war paint on, and were coming north to help their old friends, Setting Bull and Crazy Horse, who were



Looking southeast from the Court House cupola in 1888. The C. D. Stearns residence in the foreground. The E. D. Jones residence, surrounded by trees, is now occupied by W. O. Butler. Residences of C. H. Wilson, G. S. Williamson, and H. F. Merwin in the distance.

getting what they richly deserved from Generals Terry and Miles. Early in the morning scores of teams began to come into town on a dead run. Some drove on through to beat the band and never did return. From north, west and south people continued to flock in during the day the seare was on. About 1 o'clock my mother and brother, a lad of eight years, drove in. By this time mother had caught the fever and was as much excited as any of them. She asked me to get a horse and go out after father, who would not come with her. Some thought it dangerous, and others said it would be alright if I had a gun. So Mr. Kenyon, the blacksmith, offered me his six-shooter, and said.

“Kid, if you’ll get powder and caps I’ll mould some bullets.” When ready, he handed me the gun and I rode away. I met more teams coming pell mell. They had some bedding in, with the family piled on top, who were getting the joy ride of their lives. Some stopped and inquired where I was going and advised me to turn back. Others seemed to have troubles all their own and drove hurriedly by. The twenty-one miles was made in short time. I forded the Sappa on a gallop and rode up to the house. Father was not there. I noticed that the chickens were digging around on a plot of ground where they did not dare trespass before. The cattle were scattered. I went to several of the neighbors. All were gone. I hastened back, and, going down a draw, the head of Robinson branch, I rode upon two antelope. They jumped up not more than ten feet away and gazed at me with their black beady eyes. I thought how nice it would be to give my seat in the saddle to a dead antelope, and walk to town a few miles away. I slipped off and took sure aim. There was an awful report followed by a cloud of smoke that made one think of a prairie fire. After collecting myself I discovered that the antelope was unhurt, although all six shots had gone off at once. Disgusted with such a gun in a supposed Indian country, I caught my horse and rode to town. Later it developed that father, in company with others, had gone west as far as Oberlin to reconnoiter. There was a great hub-bub in town. The fall term of court was on. That day they had on trial the Cummings and Landis murder case from the Solomon. Court had just convened for an evening session when two men rushed in and, in an excited way, told the judge that in coming down the Prairie Dog from old Leota they had passed south of the Indian camp of about 100 lodges and tepees. The usual dignity of court was abandoned, and all joined in the fright of the moment. Women and children were ordered assembled at the rock house of William Rogers. Men got their teams and grouped their wagons around it. The attack was not looked for before daylight. Outside guards were posted. I have no idea of the number of people there, but it was a helpless mass of humanity in the event of an attack. An inventory of the firearms emphasized the fact that the energies of the people had been more devoted to the development of a new country than that of war. There were two shotguns of the loose powder type, and the Colts I have spoken about. Louis K. Pratt, afterward district judge, had the dis-

tion of being the only man who carried a Spencer carbine, that had in its magazine only two shells, which, happily, he did not have the occasion to use. Many amusing things happened that night, but I will spare the mirth of the reader by not referring to them. After sun up a detail accompanied the two men to the place where they had seen the Indian camp. And lo, there stood the silent objects of their scare—about 150 shocks of cane.

During this time the Indians passed north and about fifty miles west. They did not travel in a body, but in squads, which gave them a wider range for pillage. At one schoolhouse they cuffed the little ones about and maltreated the teacher, whose name I will withhold. When found she was more dead than alive. After long suffering in a hospital in Kansas City, she recovered. They crossed the Beaver in the morning at head water, where Mr. Abbott and his son Arthur, my friend, were holding a bunch of cattle. It was the custom to keep up one saddle horse at night, which Arthur used to round up the day horses while his father got breakfast. Shortly after Arthur rode away, Mr. Abbott went to the spring, a few rods from the dugout. Suddenly leaden pellets began to buzz around him. Looking south he could see the reds on a hill. Stepping inside the house he worked his Winchester rapidly as long as there was an Indian in sight. Then he waited and watched for Arthur to come, but Arthur did not come. In the afternoon some boys from the K. P. ranch rode up to break the news to the gray-haired father that they had found Arthur down the valley shot and scalped, his new Denver saddle cut to bits, and a poor, sore-backed pony the Indians had left instead of his horse. At a deserted homestead they cut feather ticks open, in which they mixed flour and molasses. At another place they picked the feathers off of chickens and those that had not died were running about in a nude condition when the owners returned. This was presumably the work of the squaws for they seem to have that cruel desire to torture and mutilate. At still another place, where the people fled, on their return they could locate their former home by the several heaps of ashes. So it was across the states, a distance of over 500 miles, the rascals left a trail of murder, arson and theft. In the summer of 1879 the renegades were taken back to the Indian territory under a colored military escort, Major North in command. They camped for the night on Squaw creek in full view of our place. The Indians received no greater punishment

er all of their deeds than told to be "heap good," and they would be clothed and fed by the generous hand of Uncle Sam.

Father sold his farm near Waukon, Iowa, and, being a reader of the New York Tribune, assimilated enough of its teachings to undertake the task of chasing the setting sun toward the free government lands. He had no particular destination in view, but a slight leaning for Colorado. On May 2nd, the start was made west. A long tedious trip across the state to the Missouri river opposite Nebraska City. A boat landed us on the Nebraska side. After many stops and delays, we camped one night at the forks of the Beaver and Sappa. The next morning the large prairie schooner, drawn by four big oxen, moved slowly westward toward the divide between the creeks last named. The day was very hot, and the water supply on hand limited, so the thirst of three "kids" grew amazingly. At a point directly south, father stopped the team and pointing north said to mother, "That is Beaver City over there in the Beaver valley, the only town between here and Denver." For a better view, I got up on a wheel and looked with eyes keener of vision than now, and could see no churches, brick blocks, high school building, or court house with well kept grounds. Through the hazy mist of the prairie I could not discern the stars and stripes floating from the cupola of the Times-Tribune building, or the beautiful park with its stately trees and the bandstand where Bryan stood, or other evidences of thrift and progress that would attract the eye of the stranger now. I could see only a few small objects that father said were houses, and that was Beaver City in August, 1873.

Some buffalo, elk and antelope crossed the trail ahead of us that afternoon, but I didn't see any moose. (I'm told that they are plentiful now.) We made a dry camp for the night about six miles southwest of where Hendley now stands. The night was musical with the sound produced by buffalo or lobo wolves. The morning dawned hot and sultry. More buffalo were in sight and many antelope. Father thought best to pull farther south on the creek and wait a few days until the weather got cooler, and then continue our trip to Colorado, Denver being the initial point. We went down the ridge where the fine farms of John Jones and S F. Parsons are now growing crops more valuable than prairie dogs, prickly pears, and buffalo grass, into the Sappa valley. The only habitation in sight was that of John O'Brien, a log house on the creek. This place is now owned by

Ben Miller. There were a few dugouts up and down the stream, but could not be seen until you were upon them. For some reason the days lengthened into two weeks. In the meantime hunters brought the news that a hunting party of Pawnees had met their old enemy, the Ogalallas, one of the seven branches of the great Sioux nation, on the headwaters of the Frenchman. After two days of fighting the former were defeated and many of their ponies taken. Sore and sullen over the misfortunes of war, they headed west and south and tried to cover their loss by stealing stock from the immigrants. So father concluded that he might go farther and fare worse, and to use his own words, "The longer I stay in this beautiful valley the better I like it." In it he made his home for nearly forty-one years, until the final summons came to cross the Great Divide.

Father pre-empted a quarter section less than eighty rods from our camp. It is now owned by Mrs. E. Broquet. A few years later he homesteaded a quarter on the Sappa, which is still owned by mother. Between looking after the stock afoot, swatting rattle snakes, and picking cactus out of my feet, I got pretty well acquainted with all the swimming pools for quite a distance along the creek. Many of these plunges were more than fifteen feet deep; something that would hardly seem possible now. This deep water was the home of good sized fish, otter and beaver. The creek contained many drifts of wood, and the busy beaver kept adding to them every night, by cutting trees along the banks. A very rank growth of bluestem covered the first bottom, out of which wild turkeys would come to take a strut on the short grass of the upland. The Sappa was the most heavily timbered of all of the tributaries of the Republican, and a few years later portable saw mills worked the largest trees into lumber.

One day when father was building our first log house, we heard shooting. Looking south we saw a herd of buffalo coming. Some hunters were concealed in the timber on the Sappa, and shot into the herd as it crossed. On they came and passed west of the house a few rods. We watched the big shaggy fellows lope by. One big one stopped, walked in a circle and fell. The rear of the herd was made up of cows and calves. The cows were pushing some of the younger calves along with all of their might. The last one no sooner passed, than I scampered out to what I supposed was a dead one. I no sooner jumped on his wool hump, than up he jumped and with high, uncertain step made another

circle, and then crashed to earth to rise no more. I shall not forget my first buffalo ride, and a good warming that night for being so adventurous helped to fix it in my memory. About 40 rods another buffalo dropped, and a little farther on another. The hunters came up with a wagon, and father helped them with the skinning, and got the hides, which came in good use, as you will see later on. The hunters took only the hind quarters. We had all the meat we wanted and the coyotes got the rest. The poor bison were sorely worried that fall by hunters, both foreign and domestic. They carried on this merciless slaughter in many cases not for food or any useful purpose, but for the sport of the chase. By the spring of 1874 the buffalo and elk had disappeared from this part of the Sappa valley.

I discovered an Indian cave, which when opened revealed a motley assortment of trinkets, such as were buried with redmen in the early days—tomahawks, bows and arrows, leg and arm bracelets, blankets, beads and other articles, some of which were in the last stages of decay and others in a good state of preservation. There were four skeletons in this cave. The Indians also buried their dead in trees, of which I found two. One must have been a chief or brave of some note judging from still apparent evidences of state with which he had been interred and the number of ponies which had been killed under the tree to carry him to the happy hunting grounds.

When father got his new house finished it was 16x20, plastered inside and out. Mother whitewashed the walls with native lime. We were shy windows and lumber to make doors, so buffalo hides were used the first winter, and the earthen floor was carpeted with the same kind of material and a few coon and antelope hides to give it a rich setting. A large fire place added comfort and cheer to the home. For a light we used a saucer and wick filled with badger oil, and when company came, candles made from buffalo tallow were used. There being no school, father bought me a bunch of traps from a hunter, and suffice to say the first shipment of furs to Kearney netted \$83. The same amount and quality would bring \$300 now.

One morning as mother was getting breakfast, and not knowing anyone was near, the buffalo hide door was pushed open and in stepped five Indians. A big plate of steaming griddle cakes caught their eyes, and they forgot to say "how 'co-lo." The cakes and a dish of juicy antelope meat soon disappeared.

Mother kept on baking cakes and the batter dough was soon gone and her patience also. Making a pass at the nearest Indian with the batter spoon, he backed toward the door trying to explain, "Heap friends," but she didn't take kindly to his talk, as they had eaten her breakfast and she had to prepare another. They had a camp on the creek and did not return. That afternoon they moved, for which we were thankful, as father was away down the creek. While gone he bought some cattle of John Manning and Moses McCarthy. For some time we enjoyed the luxury of receiving our mail about once every month and it was received with profuse thanks. Now the rural carrier must be Johnny on the spot every twenty-four hours, and gets no thanks for it.

About this time the young ladies of the neighborhood were casting sly glances at a dashing young collegian from Haddonfield, N. J., who had come to ride on the ranch of his uncle on the head waters of the Sappa. He was straight as a gun barrel and of perfect physique. The soft fresh complexion that he brought

from the east was soon exchanged for the tan of the plains. He was an apt pupil and took quickly to the new conditions. His unerring aim, cleverness with the rope, and the skill with which he handled his mount, gentle or otherwise, caused old knights of the saddle to sit up and take notice. I'm sure that an article from his pen would be interesting to the big family of readers



Building at the southeast corner of the square used for a court house, hotel, and store rooms at various times. Torn down in 1894 when the Norris block was erected.

of the Times-Tribune.

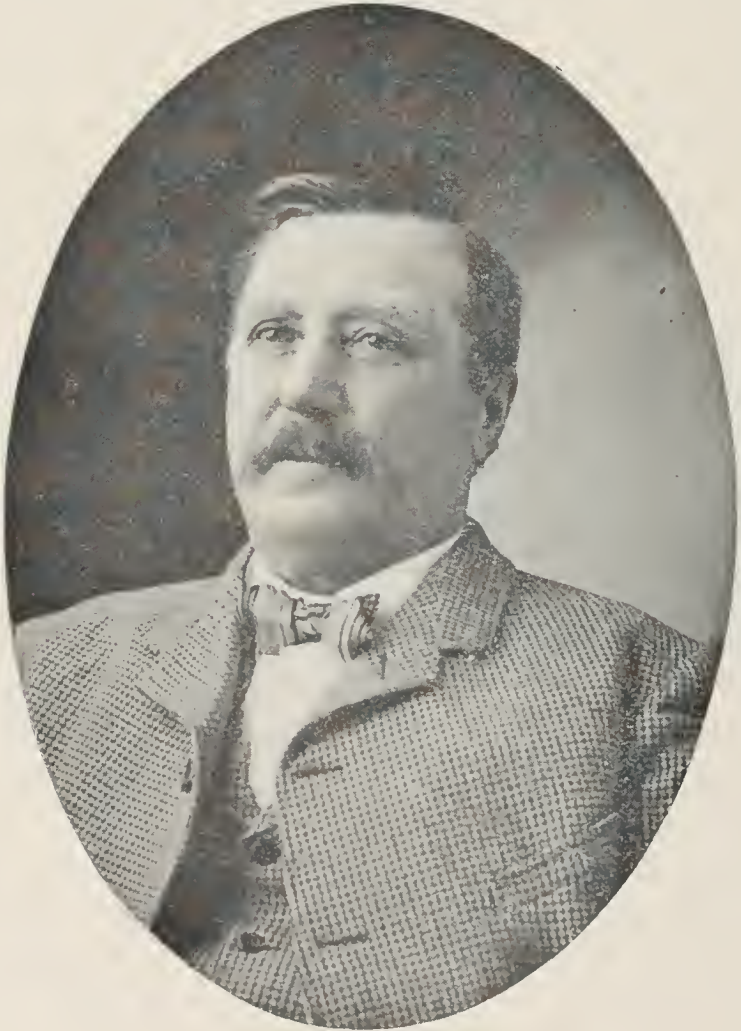
As I have a trip in prospect for the coming summer, and hope to meet many of the old friends, I say adieu until such time as I can extend to them the glad hand.

WM. T. MCGUIRE.

CHAPTER XV

I. S. Meyers Started Out For "Nebraska or Bust," Arrived Safely and Has Not "Busted" Up To Date

I have been eagerly reading the stories of the pioneer settlers of Furnas county, although I claim to be an early settler, and further, I claim to have done my part manfully in the development of our county. And the people of Furnas county have honored



I. S. MEYERS

me by electing me to the office of county commissioner for two terms (six years), and I sure filled my office with honor.

Having sold my farm in Ogle county, Illinois, in the fall of 1871, I concluded to be a homesteader. In the spring of 1872 I started in company with my brother, J. H. Meyers, and a young man by the name of Reybuck, for Nebraska, this being on the 29th day of April. Having four horses on a new wagon, chicken coop bolted on the side and two cows leading behind. (Yes, the finest cows I ever owned). We put an inscription on our cover, "Nebraska or Bust." After traveling three days our cows gave out. Too fat to travel. What to do we did not know. "Well," I said, "Boys I must sell my fine cows, that is all." So I began to look for a buyer. I stopped where a man had a lot of cattle and offered my cows for sale. He did not even want to come out in the road and look at them, but I insisted so hard for him to look them over that he did so. He said, "They are better than anything in my herd." "Well, he said, "What do you want for your cows?" I told him I was offered \$75 for the two before I started, but I thought I would sure make a sale so I said, "I will take \$60 for the two." He saw I was stuck and must sell, as I could not take them any farther, so he offered me \$30 for the two. What could I do but take this offer? So I said, "Now boys, our inscription will surely come true at this rate." But we felt free and relieved just the same, and then we could roll on in fine shape.

About central Iowa we caught up with a string of seven teams all headed for Nebraska. They were driving about thirty head of cattle, loose. We traveled together for a few days, and I found out that two teams were coming to the Beaver and Sappa valleys. The people are the ones that had the herd of cattle. Their names were John and Riley Craig. They said to me, "Why did you not bring cattle?" I said, "I started with two leading behind and had to sell them." He says, "If you buy a few cattle, my boys will drive them and it will cost you nothing." So I began to inquire for cows and soon had two, one for \$33.00, the other for \$35.00, and then we were fixed to come ahead.

We landed in the Sappa Valley, near Stamford, about the 8th day of June, 1872, stopping with a friend of Mr. Craig's, John Jones. Here we concluded to make our camp until we located, so we unloaded our wagon. We hired a surveyor by the name of Galen James, who lived not far from Mr. Jones, and started up the Sappa Valley. We went as far west as where Devizes now is. Not liking the Sappa valley for the reason the stream had such deep banks, and the timber so hard to get out, we

crossed over the divide to the Beaver valley. We were more favorably impressed with the creek and timber, the land and soil being the same on both streams, so we all located in the Beaver valley, just west of where the town of Hendley now is. The day of our location was the 12th day of June, 1872, and I have resided on that land ever since, until the year 1900, when I moved to Hendley, but I still own my homestead and other lands that I purchased after. So the inscription on the wagon has not come true, for I am not busted yet.

After locating our claims and having them surveyed out by Galen James, whom we hired at \$5 per day, we returned to Mr. Jones' place where we had left our cattle and all our outfit. We then started west to our claims. The first night we camped on Mr. Craig's place, the farm now owned by G. D. Meyer. That night a very large herd of buffalo came down across the bottom where our cattle were bedded down, stampeding the whole herd. My two yoke of work cattle (I had not yoked them) were in the bunch. Next morning we found our cattle in small lots from 5 to 7 miles up and down the Beaver valley. None seemed to be hurt, but after searching and hunting for three or four days, we were short two head. One of these being one of my cows, and one of Mr. Craig's best cows. We gave up the hunt for cattle and went on our claims, and began the preparations for building log houses. I had left my wife and child in Illinois and was anxious to get a home ready for them to come. I hired a man by the name of Jenkins, who lived just east of Stamford, to help me build. The house I built was 14x16, one and one-half stories high, with an addition of one story 10x12. It took until about the 21st or 22nd of July to complete the same, excepting door and windows. These I would bring from the railroad, when I brought my wife from Grand Island. We had just nicely started to build when there came a big Indian scare, and the settlers flocked together, but it soon passed over. This so annoyed Mr. Craig and family that they would not stay in this country. I bought a few of his cattle which were sore-footed; some of his implements; a stove, and bedsteads, and he turned back.

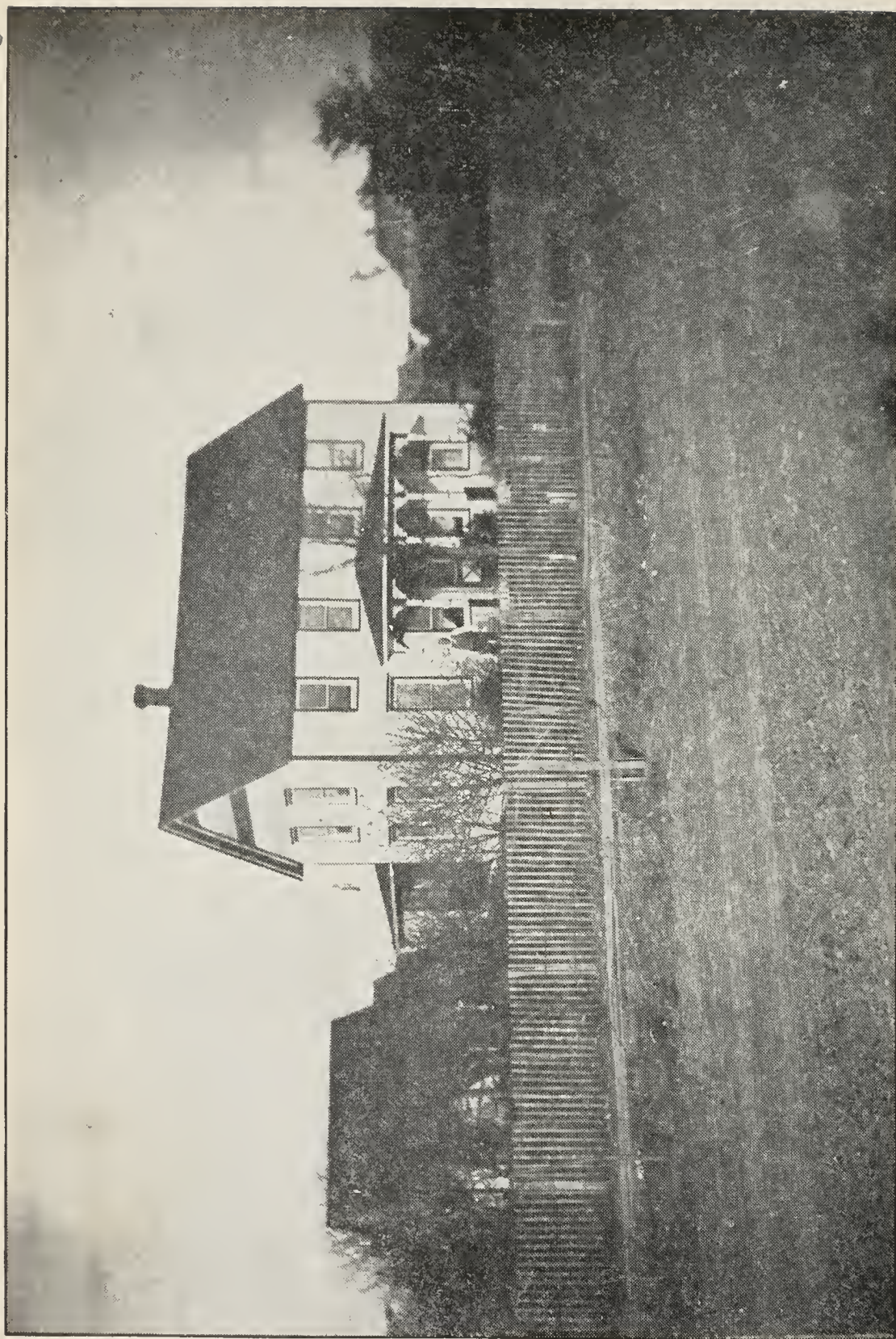
We were camped on my farm on a small flat in the timber, at the mouth of a big draw. I built my cattle corral in this timber. One night while we were building there came a heavy rain, and we being so tired, did not hear it. We were sleeping in covered wagons, having a tent outside, where we kept our

stuff. The next morning when we awoke the water was over hub deep, and my cattle corral was floated away. Our cow was tied to a heavy pole, she being "boss" of the rest, and she was nearly drowned. A young man by the name of John Foss swam in and cut her loose and saved her. We then began to look after the things in our tent. I found that my trunk in which all the money I had brought with me (over \$1,200.00 in cash) had floated away. The trunk, bedsteads, and everything we had in the tent were gone. I ran down along the creek, and finally saw my trunk floating down stream. I called Mr. Foss, as I could not swim, and he soon had it ashore. That was sure close to a "bust up" and I began to think the inscription on our wagon cover was ill luck to me. But we kept on building. One day there came a bunch of buffalo so close to the house where we were chopping and working that I took the gun, took a rest on the corner of the house and killed one. He was standing on the ground where the Lynden cemetery now is located.

After completing my house, and not having doors or windows, I nailed buffalo hides over the doors and windows, and started for Grand Island for my wife. I had written her when to start from Illinois. I took two teams, as I had a lot of household goods, floors, windows and doors for the house. That was a long, weary journey of about 140 miles. When we got back to the Republican river the river was up so high we could not cross, and were obliged to stay there two or three days. Finally we reached our "log mansion" and felt like it was a dear home to us, and have always felt that way.

My few head of cattle did well, and with a few other purchases, I soon had a good herd, but the sheep craze came to us, and I went into the sheep business, having then some small boys to do the herding. But I found out it was too confining to have my children herding sheep every day, so I closed them out, with less profit than I could have made in the cattle business in those days.

I proved up on my pre-emption the 13th day of December, 1872, and took a homestead the same day, joining. Then, it was build again, so by that time we had learned that sod houses could be built, and I built me a part sod and part dug-out house 14x42, with three rooms. I lived in that for six years, then concluded to build me a good sod house, all on top of the ground. This is the one that the picture is shown in this paper. I lived



Present Home of I. S. Meyers, at Hendley, Nebr.

here until the summer of 1887, when I built me a good frame house, 16x26, one and a half story, with an addition 16x18, one and one-half story with a cellar under the whole house, rocked up. I lived in that till 1900, then purchased me a home in Hendley, where I now reside. The picture of my present home I give in this paper.

As our writing is composed of frontier life, I believe it is appropriate to tell of a hair-breadth escape I had with a herd of buffalo. In the spring of 1873 I took my horse team and started to go to Lowell, Nebraska, 95 miles from our place, for provisions. I had seen lots of herd of buffalo that spring from fifty to as high as two hundred in a herd, but I did not dream of running into a herd of thousands of them. When I got about six miles away from home, on the big flat where William Taylor now lives, there I came into a herd of buffalo that covered the whole flat and reached as far north as I could see, and as far south as I could see, all a solid mass of walking buffalo. What to do I did not know, but finally concluded that if I would push on they would make an opening, which they did. My team was not badly frightened from the sight of buffalo. After crowding into the herd some 80 or 100 yards the herd began to split, and instead of making a circle around me in front they began to turn and come around back of me, and the whole herd started to run, leaving me on an island, with a sea of buffalo around me, not over 40 to 50 yards away. Then my team was frightened, and I sure had a time. I finally got off my wagon and took my team by the bits and stood there to take what might come, almost smothered in dust, made by the herd in the run. I am sure I was on that island nearly half an hour before I could see an opening to get out. I truly believe there was as many as 40,000 buffalo in that one herd. I had a good gun with me, but my better judgment told me I must not wound a buffalo there, if I valued my life for anything I wanted, and came out without a scratch.

In 1873 a man settled by the side of me whose name was Frank Griffith. He had first settled east of Beaver City, where Billy Sturtevant now owns his first claim. Not having a place to go into, I invited him to stay with us, in our cozy log house which he did. In June his rich brother-in-law, a banker, and wife, came out from Johnstown, Pa. Gee! but they were dressed in silks, satins, and broadcloth and Mr. Griffith, not yet having completed his building, which was a sod dug-out, they stopped with

us. There came a rainy spell in June, and it rained every night for about three weeks. It was impossible to keep a dry spot in the house, or to keep provision or beds, or anything dry. A few sheets of table oil cloth served well to keep a bed dry, and to keep our flour dry, but we could not supply the banker and his wife with oil cloth, and it was comical to me, for all it was hardship, to see them sit in bed, when the rain was pouring through the roof, holding an umbrella over themselves to keep their fineries from getting soiled. I thought it was as good an initiation as anybody needed. Laying all jokes aside, I had the same thing to go through with, only I think with more anxiety on my mind for fair weather, than they did, for my wife was confined during that rainy spell, and on the 20th day of June, 1873, my oldest son was born. Possibly most of our readers know him, S. L. Meyers. It was a task for me to keep my wife a dry bed, but I assure you that is the place where most of the oil cloth was used. Wife and child got along fine, never even took cold. I will say as for the banker and his wife, they were really as fine folks as I ever met, and while it was comical, I felt sorry that I could not give them better accommodations.

As this is frontier life, I believe it is appropriate to give my experience in putting up our hay in the fall of 1872. There was a young man by the name of Crawford, a bachelor, who took a claim not very far from me, and he had a big yoke of oxen. He boarded with me most of the time, and he proposed that he and I put up hay together, and that we do it with a grass scythe. I said, "Yes, if you are a good mower, we can do it all right." In a short time after I went to the railroad at Lowell, Nebraska, and purchased two scythes and a grind stone and a whet stone. A few days after I got home, I said, "Well, Mr. Crawford, let's grind up our scythes and go to putting up our hay," so we went at it. We found some old grass in the bottom and willows and buffalo too numerous to mention. We could not keep an edge on a scythe. We slaved about three-fourths of a day and had not cut as much as one man ought to cut in one-half day, so I said, "Mr. Crawford, do you realize that we can never make this hay this way?" "Yes," he said, "I do, but what will we do?" "Well," I said, "I must go to the railroad again and buy a grass mower, as there is no grass mower in our country." I had my wife bake me up some provisions next morning and I rolled out for Lowell again. When I got there there was not a mower in

Lowell, so I was obliged to roll on to Grand Island. There I bought a Buckeye Grass Mower, paying \$123.00 spot cash for it, and a wooden hay rake for which I paid \$10.00. We were then fixed out to put up our hay. As luck would have it I bought two boxes of extra sections, as I knew buffalo bones were a terror on the scythe. We soon had our hay up and the news spread like wild fire that I had a grass mower, and men came from the Sappa valley to get me to mow for them. I knew they could not put up hay with a scythe, so I went and mowed for a good many of the early settlers. I will name a few of the most prominent ones that had the most stock: Adam Keith, George Keith, Jasper Keith, Mr. Lauver, Dr. Malory, James Bronhard and Mr. Garlinghouse, and others that I just can't call to memory now. But at any rate I mowed grass until it was as dead as hay and did not need any curing, but they all said we must have it. It will beat a snow bank for our stock this winter, and so it did, as we had a fairly hard winter.

Our nearest postoffice then was Republican City. But soon after an office was kept by a man by the name of Painter. We soon had neighbors by the name of Blackburn, Griffith and Jenkins, and we used to take it turn about getting the mail for the whole neighborhood. We saw that this would not do, so took steps to get a postoffice established. It fell on me to take the office, this being the fall of 1873, and we called the postoffice "Lynden." I held that postoffice eight years, then turned it over to my brother, Philip Meyers, he in a few years turning it over to Daniel Donahue. Our precinct was named after our postoffice, "Lynden." After the railroad came, in the fall of 1887, we fought hard to have our town called "Lynden," but these big railroad officials regard themselves more worthy of the name, than the homesteaders choice, so we lost Lynden postoffice for the name of Hendley.

But to return to the early days. My friends, Craig and Mr. Reybuck did not stay only a very short time, there being a big Indian scare, and they could not stand the pressure, so they pulled east again. We did not know anything about building sod houses then, so all the first settlers built log houses, which might answer well for a fort, which it was our luck not to have.

My first piece of land I claimed under the pre-emption act and deeded it on the 13th of December, 1872, taking my homestead the same day, adjoining it. This country was covered

with all kinds of game then; buffalo being more numerous than any other kind. Antelope were also numerous; some deer and elk; wild turkeys by the hundreds; beaver, coon and otter were plenty too. We did not lack for our choice of meats. I often think what a shame it was to see so much nice meat going to waste. I often killed a buffalo and did not take over forty or fifty pounds of the meat, and some fine tallow, as we had no way of saving more, and could get it wherever we wanted it. I bought



"Dugout" Near Beaver City, Early Residence of Late Eli A. Richards

two yoke of work cattle at Republican City to open my farms with and they sure were a saving to me, as they did not need grain when in good pasture. They were ready to plow any time, and I used them to freight with also, to Lowell, Kearney, and Plum Creek. One time I was caught at Plum Creek with sore-footed oxen. An Englishman had a blacksmith shop there and stanchions to shoe oxen in, so I was obliged to have them shod. He charged me \$16 for the yoke. I wanted to kick, but he said, "Here, young man, there are 32 claws to shoe, and I would sooner shoe a horse's foot than to shoe an ox claw at 50c a shoe." So I was in for it. But before I got home, I thought I was in for it worse. We freighters used to water at Vaughn's ranch and at another ranch, Dad Dice's, ten miles south of Plum Creek. When I went out I had no trouble in getting water. (This was in Aug-

ust of 1874 or 1875; I don't remember which.) But as I was coming in, loaded with over two tons of freight, I came as far as the Dice ranch the first evening and got some water, but not all my cattle needed, as he was short of water. When I got to the Vaughn ranch I could not get a drop of water, either for myself or cattle, so all I could do was to push on. I found out that my cattle were getting too hot and dry to ever make Arapahoe alive, and I found that my tongue was beginning to swell in my mouth, but what to do I did not know. It would not do to give up so I went on slowly. When I was within eight miles of Arapahoe, I was just about ready to give it up, when I saw a strip of cane about 80 rods away. I went to it and sucked the juice out of the cane, until I was wonderfully relieved, then I cut all I could carry and took it to my cattle. After they had eaten that in less than half an hour, they were wonderfully revived, so I could go on to the Republican river for water. I took the precaution to unhook them from my load nearly a half a mile before I got to the river for I knew when they smelled the water no man could hold them from running right in, and so they did, but there was no load to be stuck. After they had their drink then I could cross the ford where it was fairly good to cross. These are part of the hardships of pioneer life, but not one-tenth a part of mine, though that was as bad as any I had.

In the spring of 1874, my brother sent me a load of sacked seed grain to Kearney. I took my horse team to haul it. When I got back to the Republican river, which we had to ford, the river was raised a little, but not enough to run in the box, so I tried to ford the river and got stuck when I was about two-thirds across. I had to unhitch and carry every sack out on my back and then the team could not pull the wagon out. So I had to float the box out and take the wagon apart, carry it out, and then put it all together again and load. It was so cold that icicles were on my clothes. That was another experience of early life; all to develop a home and build up our country. Is it any wonder so many homesteaders got tender feet and went back to their wife's people? My great hunting experiences will join with this. I hunted lots. My last buffalo hunt was in 1877. It lasted from the 20th of November to the 12th of January. Our game on that hunt was eight buffalo, twenty-one coyotes, one grey wolf, coon and skunks. I can't remember the amounts, they were too numerous.



Bank Building 1887



BANK BUILDING
BUILT IN 1894

Interior of Bank



Well I have written a rambling story, but could keep on for a whole day telling of our early life. Mrs. Meyers was then a brave woman, now an invalid. Lots of times from 700 to 800 Indians would come by our place—Pawnee, Otoes and Omaha tribes. They were not hostile, but would frighten people if they could and take possession of the house and provisions. Mrs. Meyers drove them out, and I told her never to give them anything and she never did. This happened when I was away and she was alone.

I will, for the benefit of our readers of the Times-Tribune, tell you a few more of my hunting experiences—as all the large game has gone from the country, so there is no excitement in hunting in these days, only a little sport. Pardon me, for not speaking about my nearest neighbor, Dick Rogers, often called “Man Killer Rogers” on account of the big army tales he used to tell. However, he was brave, yes, I dare say, foolhardy brave. He settled neighbors to me in 1873, in March. I located him on a farm joining south of me. Your last Tribune writer, William McGuire, was well acquainted with him. Why do I say “foolhardy brave?” Well, I will explain how men do eagerly seek after homesteads. He came with an old lynch pin wagon with a jinney and an Indian pony for a team; wife and three children. He had an old tent along which he squatted in the timber until he could build. The second day after he landed there came an awful heavy fall of snow, so I went down to see how he was fixed. They seemed cozy in their tent but I could see they were poor. I asked him how he was fixed for provisions and he answered, “I landed here with 15 cents and one bushel of cornmeal.” Now, was he not a pioneer? I say “yes.” I told him to come and get potatoes and meat until he could get out to kill meat; and he did. I give him credit for being more gritty than I ever was, but not using the best judgment for himself and family.

Now comes the hunting that I was going to tell you about. This Mr. Rogers and I went out to hunt buffalo, his nephew having arrived from Missouri, wanted a hunt. We only had two large guns, so the nephew said, “I will take Mr. Rogers’ big Colt navy revolver.” Out we went, and were not gone long, when we ran onto a herd. We shot into the herd, but only crippled one cow. She left the herd and soon laid down, so now Mr. Rogers said, “That was your shot, now let me finish her.” “All right,” I said. We advanced until she got on her feet, then he



EARLY DAY DUGOUT BARN



ALFALFA STACKING



PRESENT DAY THRESHING SCENE



RESIDENCE OF TODAY



HOMESTEADERS SOD SHANTY

shot and she dropped in her tracks. We all thought she was dead and walked up to her. I said, "Old Lady, you will never hurt any one." No quicker than I spoke, she was on her feet, with head down, right for us. We both fired in her head, and this nephew of Rogers' never took aim but just shot in her body. He happened to strike the heart and down the cow went. When he examined her we saw that neither of our shots would have dropped her; both shot too low. Well, we were just a little excited, you may guess, as it is not nice to be hunted by a wild beast, but lots of fun when the danger is over.

The best hunter I was ever with was a man by the name of William Thatcher, who has been dead for a number of years. He was a crackerjack and a fine marksman, but he had a mean gun. A good shooter but so often his cartridge shells would stick fast in his gun, then he was done until he dug them out with his knife, or I would give him my gun. He could beat me shooting. After we had made a run for a position, his nerve was more steady. I remember of one morning in 1875, in November, we were out hunting buffalo, over one hundred miles from home, for our winter's meat. We had to walk from our camp nearly eight miles to where the buffalo generally bedded, in the heads of draws, where we could get to them. We struck a herd, and having to make a long shot, both missed. As they started to run I said, "My run has unnerved me so that I can't hold my gun still." "Well," said he, "I have a cartridge fast again, give me your gun." So I did and sure enough he wounded a fine cow. She took right off from the herd, and six young ones went with her. We watched and figured all that day to get close enough for an other shot, and just before sundown, the cow laid down, then the rest also bedded down by her, in a fine place for us to get them. They were west of us, and just as we got into position the sun was so low, it gleamed over our gun barrels, so we could not shoot with any accuracy, so I proposed to have them all, and wait until the sun went down. We did so, and got the whole bunch. We took the cow first and the young ones would not leave her, so we had a fine slaughter.

Well, I guess you have too much of this now so I will "ring off." With best wishes to all my pioneer friends.

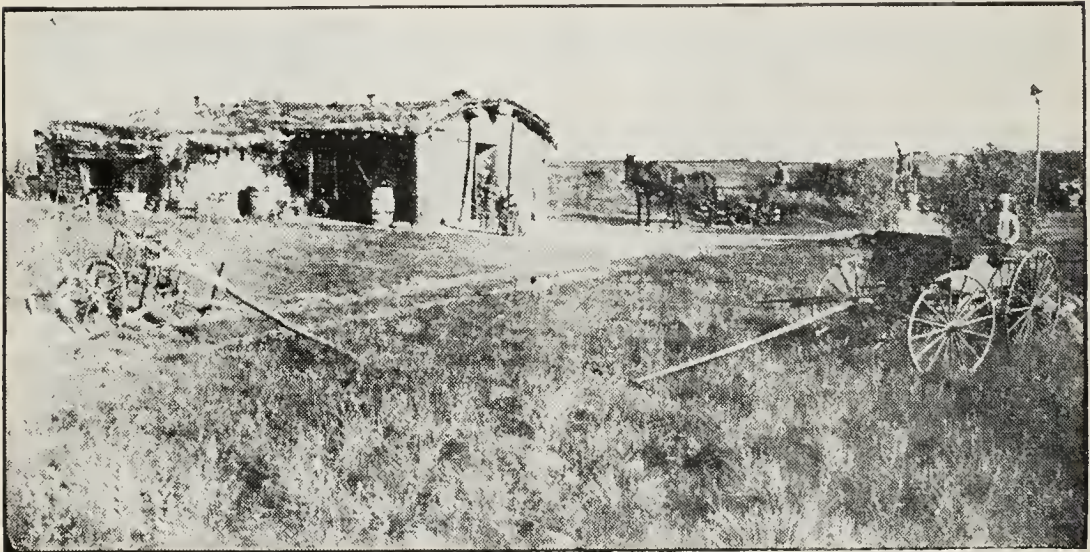
I. S. MEYERS.

CHAPTER XVI

Wood Rodents Caused the Pioneers Great Grief, and E. A. Smith Says They were as Greedy as Grasshoppers.

E. A. Smith, one of the sterling farmers of the southeastern part of the county, contributes the following Pioneer Story, and touches upon some things which have not before been mentioned in this series:

Editor Times-Tribune:—I have been much interested this winter in reading the pioneer stories. It brings to mind many things that have been well nigh forgotten. That the early settlers of this country had a hard time holding down their claims



Early Residence of E. A. Smith and Family

goes without saying, and they richly deserve the pleasant homes they have built up for themselves.

I landed on the banks of the Sappa in Furnas county early in the spring of 1873 and located a claim on a tributary to that stream where the Midway postoffice was afterwards established. I don't claim to have killed the bear, neither do I claim

to be the first settler in Furnas county, but I was here in a rather early day and know something of the hardships the early settlers had to contend with.

As to snakes, I never killed any with a ridgepole, but I killed them with about everything else. I was cutting sod corn near my house one day, and went into the house to pull off my boots but forgetting what I went for, I returned to my work. The first thing that I did was to step on a huge rattler, which was coiled up under a leaning hill of corn and he struck me three times on the boot leg before I could get off. Had I pulled my boots, as I intended doing, I might have gotten a bite. I slew him with my corn knife and I still have his rattles as relics.

I stayed here a short time in the spring of 1873 and helped a neighbor make a dugout and do some other work, and then went to the eastern part of the state to engage in work for the summer. I returned in the fall and built a cabin on my claim; part dugout and part log. The log part and all of my belongings were afterwards burned in one of those fierce prairie fires that Mrs. Freas so graphically describes in her story. In the same fire myself and two others fought for their lives. We were burning a fire guard, and if we got it burned in time we were safe, if not, it looked as if we must burn, for there was not a breaking near to which we could retreat. We got it burned but none too soon to save ourselves.

My next effort at house building was the sod house. At that time we set forks in the ground, laid poles in them, and laid the sod under them. I borrowed a team and broke some sod, but as I could get the team no longer, I cut the sod and carried it on a board. I had never laid any sod before, but did what I thought was a pretty good job. However, in a few days both sides of my house fell in. I built it up again, and it then stood for a number of years. We did not know then about native lime to plaster with so I begged some papers of the neighbors, and with a liberal supply of flour paste I papered the walls of my shanty and it looked good.

The wood-rat was a great pest along the streams. They would carry off everything they could get their hands on (if it may be said they had hands,) whether they had any use for it or not. They cut the suspenders off my pants one night, and I have not seen them since. However, I was glad to have the pants left, as it was all I had.

The first things I had in my shanty I bought of Crutcher & Jones. I think their's was the only store in Beaver at that time. I worked out until I got a little money ahead, then I thought I would farm for myself. I bought a team, some seed and feed; put in what I had broken on my own place, and rented some of a neighbor. The grasshoppers had been here the fall before and laid their eggs, and when warm weather came they hatched out in such numbers that they soon ate up all I had put out. Having invested all my money in this enterprise, I, in company with another young man, started out on foot to look for work among the cattlemen. We carried our grub in grip sacks on our backs and camped out nights.

We crossed over to the Platte river and followed that stream as far as Fort McPherson; (there were soldiers stationed there then,) but found no work. The country was full of men in the same fix as we were, so we hoofed it back to our claims again. After resting awhile, I started east to look for work again, which I found in Fillmore county. I was here off and on until I proved up on my claim; then I returned to my old home in Michigan, where I took me a wife and soon returned to furnas county, where I have resided ever since. I have not been as fortunate as some of the old settlers in the laying up of this world's goods, but I have a place I can call home and expect sooner or later to be laid beneath the sod of old Furnas county.

E. A. SMITH.

CHAPTER XVII

Mrs. John Harmon Tells of Many Expedients Resorted to by the Pioneer Women of the Beaver Valley.

The following letter is from the pen of Mrs. John Harman, of Garey, Okla. Mr. and Mrs. Harman were pioneers of this county, locating in Lincoln precinct early in the 70's. The letter adds an interesting chapter to the Pioneer Stories:

Editor Times-Tribune:—The first night in Furnas county we stayed with William Harman and family. After staying with them for a few days we moved to a dugout across the draw, which was covered with poles, hay and dirt. I said, "What can I do with my baby in a house like this?" But I soon studied out a plan to keep him from crawling on the dirt floor. I braided a large rug out of rags and got a strap and buckled it around his waist and tied it to the bed post so he could go the length of the rug. I felt real blue thinking of the nice home we would have in a few years, but I would pick up courage.

The first Sunday we were invited to church in a sod school house close to Grandma Matthews'. Elder Mayo preached. I went to church but John went fishing. When I got home he was home and had caught four nice fish. I was mad and wouldn't cook them, so he put the skillet on and looked around at me and laughed. I told him I didn't approve of such work on Sunday.

A few days later I got up early to get breakfast, and, looking down in the pasture, I saw two black objects down there. I called to John to come and see, and he said it was buffalo. I went across the draw to tell his brother, Will Harman, and they tried to kill one, but both got away. I was so afraid that I went in the house and shut the door. Our door had one of these patent latches—when you were out you had to pull the string to get in—so I was scared and pulled it inside the door. John asked me what I did that for, and I told him I wanted to be on the safe side.

Crop time soon came, and we put in a piece of corn. It grew

fine and we soon had roasting ears. I just told our neighbors what fine corn we had. By and by Mrs. Pruitt came along and wanted me to go to Beaver City with her, so we got in the wagon and started. We got as far as the Frank Nickle place when we looked up and saw a cloud in the northwest. It wasn't more than said and done until our horses stood dead still and wouldn't go at all. It wasn't a storm, but grasshoppers, and we had to turn around and go back. They ate the towels off the butter, and so many got in the butter that Mrs. Pruitt had to make soap out of it. I thought they would eat our clothing before I got home. I never saw anything like it before. We got home all right and I went to gathering roasting ears. I gathered a sack full and carried it into the house. The next morning when I got up there was nothing left but stubs sticking out of the ground. I also had a few nice cabbages, and I thought I would save them. I went out and covered them up with old clothes, but the grasshoppers ate clothes and cabbage too. But we had grub enough to last a year. The most trying time I had was when John would go to hunt or work and I had to be alone. I had written him how nice our corn was and the next letter I had to tell him we didn't have corn now. The trees were as bare as winter. The next year we did not raise a thing.

I remember one Sunday we were lonesome, so we went over and took dinner with O. Y. Harman and family. We were eating dinner when we heard someone coming on horseback. They rode up to the door and told the boys to get their families out of there—the Indians were coming—and they had killed several families. We all jumped up and began to put the things in the wagon, and no one needed to tell us to hurry. I carried my baby in my arms and helped load the wagon. I had two children at that time. We finally got started and went by Pat Cavany's to take his family with us. My sister-in-law and I got out of the wagon to help them get ready. I was hurrying around to get started, and his wife told me to go into the kitchen and get some bread, and when I went in there was Pat eating out of a pot of cabbage. I was tired to death to see him stop and eat cabbage and the rest all scared until we couldn't talk. We soon got ready and started. I could hardly breathe or talk. We went to Orleans to the hotel. I held my two little boys all night in my arms. The next morning we went to an old school house to eat breakfast. We found some of our neighbors there and all were laughing and talking and all

ate but me. I told them if they felt like I did they wouldn't be so funny. In a few hours John came and told us it was Texas cattle going across. I wouldn't have been scared that bad for a whole section of land. I told John the next scare I would go farther than Orleans. The country sure looked fine.

We went back home and the next thing we had was rattle snakes. I could not kill one so it kept me busy running most of the time. We finally got settled on a homestead. John hauled goods from Kearney and helped to haul the lumber for the first church in Beaver City. Our homestead was northeast about five miles from town. We homesteaded in '79. We built a dugout and moved in. At this time we had four children.

In '80 we had another dry year, and John said he would have to hunt work, so I told him I would go home and stay awhile. I went east and he went west. I stayed three months and got grub enough to last another year. I was glad to get back to the old dugout in the spring. John commenced breaking sod with a yoke of cattle. I would sit in the door and watch him awhile, and seeing the trouble he was having with them, I laughed. As I was walking up to him he said I wouldn't laugh if I had those cattle to contend with. I told him that all went in life. We had to take the bitter with the sweet. He said he couldn't see anything sweet around there. I said "our home," and I got a smile on his face, so I went to the house to finish my cupboard. I made it out of goods boxes. All the women those days made their furniture. We just had two chairs in the house. The rest were goods boxes, but they answered the purpose all right.

Finally we got our place all broke out and I thought lots of our home, but we had to mortgage it, and it took everything we could rake and scrape to keep the interest up. Some years we would raise a piece of rye. I picked rye straw and braided the boys' straw hats. In the winter I would make them caps out of cloth. I tried to save all I could and not go in debt. Mr. Armstrong had a herd of sheep and several died on account of cold weather, so he told John if he would pull the wool off the dead ones he could have it. He asked me if I could use it. I told him yes, to go get it. I washed and picked it and carded it in two rolls and spun it into yarn; colored the yarn and knit stockings for the children, and mittens. We had eleven children, who are all alive and all married but three, so you see we didn't have any time to play. We had lots of sickness, having six children down

at one time with diphtheria. Children were dying all around. The neighbors were so afraid they would not come in, and we stood over the children night and day. The doctor would not even come in, but would leave the medicine at the door. I just had my heart and hands full, but through God's mercy He saved them all. I told John we lived off the skimmed milk and saw the other fellow get the cream. As I can bring to memory, one Saturday night as the children and I were sitting around the stove (I had washed their feet for bed) I looked at them and they looked sweeter to me than ever before. I just thought how I would like to have things to supply their little needs. I had to ask the Lord to help me and take away that heavy heart. That piece of scripture came to me, "Ask in faith, believing thou shalt receive," and I felt better. I was sitting by the stove rocking the baby, when I heard a rap on the door. Somebody had sent me a basketful of groceries and \$1.20 in money. I was so thankful I cried. I could see the good things as well as the bad ones. We went through thick and thin. Finally the mortgage took our home. We stayed there three years longer, then moved to Oklahoma.

I would like to see the old-timers and neighbors and have a hearty hand-shake, but I have gotten something the mortgage cannot take and a clear title to it, and that is salvation, washed in His precious blood. But the toil of the road will seem nothing when we get to the end of the Way.

MRS. RUPHENIA HARMAN.

CHAPTER XVIII

Hubert Pettijean and His Honeymoon Journey of a Thousand Miles in a Prairie Schooner—and a Ruined Shanty at the End

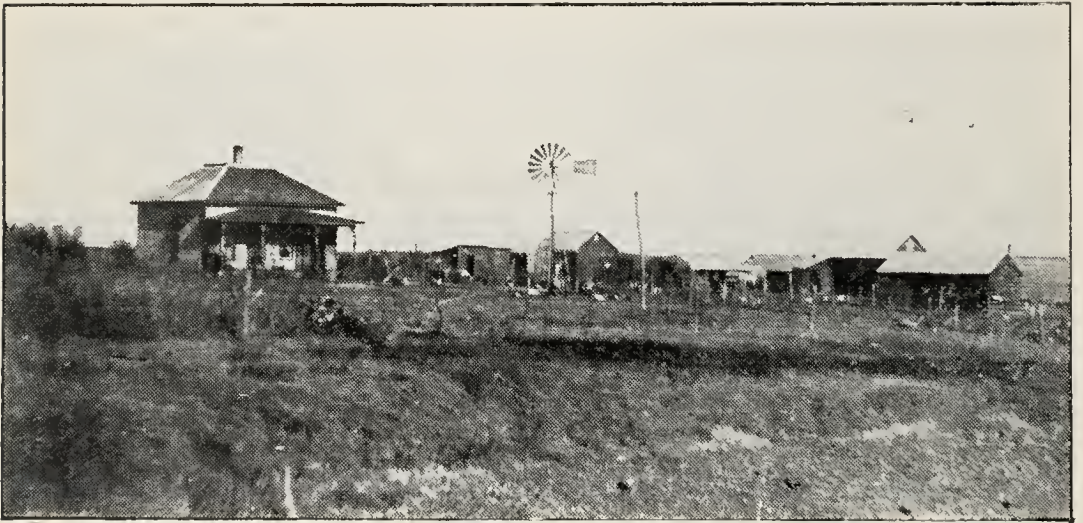
Hubert Pettijean, who recently told of some of the hardships he endured in the early days of Furnas county, has consented to tell how he happened to come to Nebraska in the following interesting article.

Editor Times-Tribune:—I am going to tell how I happened to come to Nebraska. Five families from Northern Wisconsin were coming in covered wagons and wanted me to come with them as their guide. There was Anton Delimont, his family team and wagon; Anton's mother and her two girls, and myself in one wagon. I was driving the team. The other three families had their own teams and wagons, but not liking the country, they went back. Anton Delimont's brother had taken his homestead in Harlan county in the summer some time, and he had to be on his place before New Year's. We got here the first part of November, and commenced to dig his sod house. We had it dug six feet deep when it commenced to snow and the wind to blow. We were staying in the covered wagon while building the house.

I remember in the spring of 1881 we were planting corn (Bill Frazer, who now lives in Harlan county, and myself) with a two horse planter. It was a hand dropper; one dropped the lever and the other drove the team. The first day we planted corn it was cold at night. We put the team in the shed and fed, then we took our supper and went to bed at 8 o'clock. When we woke up next day it was 1 o'clock in the afternoon. When the storm came we worked no more. We had to make shelter for the horses so we took the ridge logs and laid them the best we could on the dug house, then we put the cover off of one wagon on top and put our teams in the dug house. There were seven horses and fourteen persons living together in the dug house,

12 feet by 16 feet long. We had to stay in one corner. We stayed in there till the weather was better, and in the winter of 1878 and the first part of 1879 it was awfully tough, but we were always healthy and happy.

I was a young man at that time. I took my claim in 1878, worked on it and worked out, and in 1885 I proved up on it, got my deed, and went back to Wisconsin and got married. I put a cover on my wagon, and my wife and I started back to Nebraska in a covered wagon, the 1,000 miles alone. When I got back the fire had passed and had burned my dug house, so we built a sod house, 12x16. We built sod bedrooms on the ends and used ridge logs and poles for rafters, and willows for shingles, and the sod to cover the willows, and also used canvas for the ceiling. Sod house walls are good places for mice. Sometimes we could see them run on the canvas. We had a mouse trap that would catch four at one time—one of these round ones—and one night I said to my wife, "I am going to put that mousetrap on



Present Fine Home of Hubert Pettijean, in Maple Creek Precinct, Which Has Replaced the "Dugout" to Which He Brought His Bride in 1885

the canvas and catch some mice." Before going to bed I put the trap on the canvas and the next morning we could see that trap moving above our heads, and we thought that this was the four mice in a trap. I got out of the bed to look at the trap and there was one mouse in it and a snake twisting himself around the mouse and the trap, and it was the snake above our bed.

This is a true story of some of my early times in Nebraska.

It makes a person feel thirty years younger when he reads all those hard time stories.

One thing I had forgotten is about the wooden shoes Anton Delimont had. He had a pair of them and we went to Bloomington before New Year's, 1878, and he had them on. When we were at Bloomington we put the horses in the barn and stopped there for the night, sleeping in the office. Anton's wooden shoes had some ice on the bottom, and during the evening there were about a dozen men around the stove. Anton got up to fix the fire and his wooden shoes slipped and he landed on top of the stove, knocked down the stovepipe, and he came very near smoking the rest out of the barn.

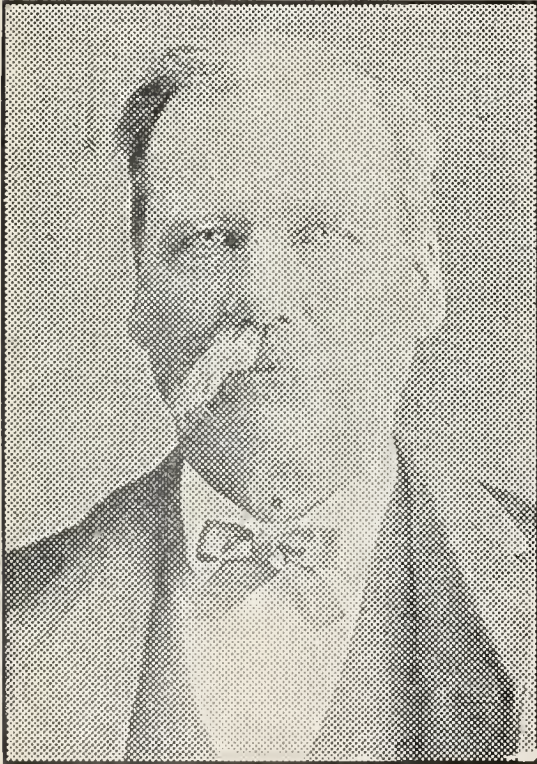
HUBERT PETTJEAN.

CHAPTER XIX

B. F. Goble Came to the Beaver Valley in 1879, and Even Then There Were Some Rattlesnakes in the Land

Editor Times-Tribune:—After reading the pioneer stories in our Beaver City paper, I find them very interesting. I don't know as you can call me one of the pioneers, but if you knew of my experiences after landing in Furnas county, I might possibly be called an early settler.

Having started my wife and two children back to Illinois "to my wife's folks," I started, in company with my brothers, George and Jeff, and Paul Paulson, from my home in Grundy county, Ia., in February, 1879, thinking to get me a home in Nebraska, for that was about as far west as I cared to go. Brother George and I each had a team and wagon and that was about all, financially. We found the railroad went no farther west than Franklin; so we thought we surely could find homesteads near Bloomington; but kept on coming west until we arrived at Orleans. There we met a Mr. Griffith who accompanied us to Mr. Troxwells, northeast of Arapahoe. But, oh, my; what a dismal looking country; the prairie for miles and miles was as black as it could be, for the Indians had

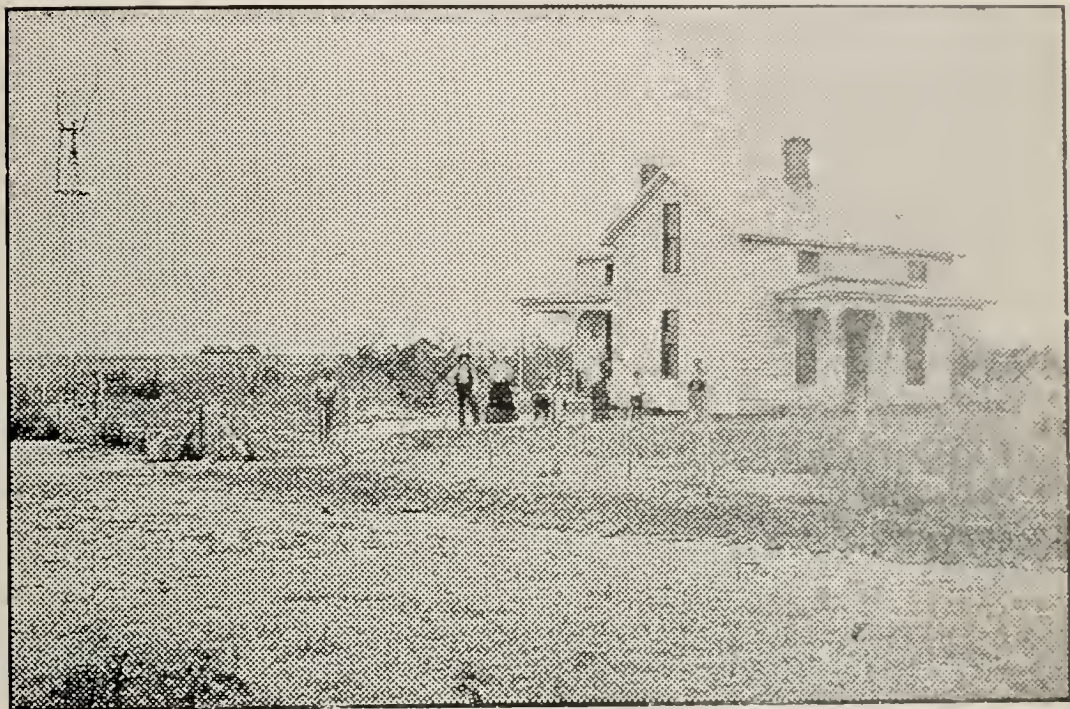


B.F. GOBLE

burned it over the fall before.

Mr. Troxwell said we could find a man over near Beaver City by the name of Tryon, who would locate us. At last we

found our man Tryon living about a mile east of where Hendley now is. Mr. Tryon told us there was no land along the streams, but what had been taken, for the settlers had come and taken it the fall before; and taken the six months act, and gone back east for the winter. That was a disappointment for we had thought to get land along some stream. So now it was divide



House on the Goble Farm in Vincent Precinct, Built by Mr. Goble in 1886

land or nothing. At last we got located eight miles north of Hendley, right on top of the divide between the Beaver and Republican valleys. We got the papers on our homestead on March 27, 1879.

We must have shelter for our horses so we built a stable in the bank of the canyon, made a stall for the horses in one end, and had our kitchen, dining room and bed room in the other. Then we thought we were pretty well fixed, except we had it so unhandy to get the water we had to use. We had to go seven miles to Isaac Meyers' for water, and haul it every day in a salt barrel, and when we got home the horses would drink the most of it. What spare time we got we broke prairie, put in sod corn, and was digging a well; got it one hundred and three feet deep, when one rope gave out, and money too; so we had to hunt work.

Our first job was a house to build for William McKinny

on the Sappa. The next job was to make a log house over into a frame house for Harry Remington, on the Beaver; there I earned my first cow.

The post office at that time was at Isaac Meyers' in a sod house, called Lynden P. O. Later it was moved to the sod store of T. L. Jones, now our Representative to Congress. The first few years our trading point was at Beaver City with Crutcher & Jones.

In June Brother Jeff and Paulson got tired of pioneering and started back with team and wagon for Iowa. And I lost one of my horses. Her feet commenced to come off, so had to kill her.

In August we started to put up our sod houses, for I was getting anxious to see my family. After we got the houses ready for the lumber, we took the three horses left, and had to go to Bloomington for it. We had a good load, for we got enough flooring for both houses, besides the rest of the lumber that we needed. It took us five days to make the trip. I finished the house by plastering the sides and tacking muslin overhead. We thought it quite cozy and comfortable.



MRS. B. F. GOBLE

Brother George's wife came from Iowa about the first of September, and my family came September 25th. We had to meet them at Plum Creek, or where Lexington is now. Having my family now to provide for, I had to make a trip to Beaver Creek for fuel. While I was gone there came up one of those hard rain storms, this climate was noted for at that time. When I got home what did I find, but my wife and children huddled up on a dry goods box, the only dry place in the house (the roof being made of willows across the rafters, and hay and sod on top of that.) That night all the place we

had to sleep was to lay the sideboards of the wagon lengthwise on the bedstead; hang comforts over them and crawl in. We slept as snug and dry as could be.

A few days after brother George's wife came, we were all out one evening after sunset, and she called our attention to something moving out in the sod corn. We watched and waited, and as it did not get any closer, I caught up the ax and said, "I'll find out if that is an Indian, or what." I started out with a sort of creepy feeling down my spine and found—a big corn-stalk moving back and forth in the evening breeze. That was our only Indian scare. We saw no Indians or buffaloes, excepting the tame one Mr. Hadley had. We were told the Indians and buffaloes left here the fall of '78, but the prairie was covered with trails and wallow holes. We were the first to strike a furrow on the divide.

The first Christmas in the sod house, we had quite a family, for A. B. Wolfe came from Iowa, bringing his wife and six children, all living in our little sod house of two rooms, until he built him a dugout on his own place. How bright the future did look; every one was happy, thinging of their homes they had come to find in the west. We think now that the happiest times of our lives was while living in "Our Little Old Shanty on the Claim."

The summer of '80 we boys built several houses in Pickleville, now known as Cambridge, having to ford the Republican river whenever we had to cross it. In the spring of '81, I traded my one horse for a pair of Texas steers. I brought them home and they were so poor, I thought to give them the best chance for grazing. I would fasten one on a rope, and let the other run loose; and if he didn't fall in the unfinished well, then, I only had the one after all. I had to have a team, and having a large white cow, I broke her in with the ox and worked them all summer. I had to milk the cow three times a day while working her.

After the ox fell into the well, I found out what it was to have good neighbors, if they were few and scattering. I had some plowing to do and one morning here came A. B. Wolfe, Jeff McKown, Mal Wolfe, J. H. Roberts, and others that I cannot recall to name, and did my plowing all in one day. I surely did appreciate it.

The fall of '81, we, with our neighbors, got a school started, in a small sod house, that had been vacated by William Pryor. It

was about two miles from us. Our teacher was a one-armed man, Martin Reynolds by name, and we paid him individually.

About this time brother George completed a well on his place, two hundred and twenty feet deep. Then we had plenty of water, but had to draw it with a horse and fifteen gallon bucket.

In May, 1884, we had a three or four days' rain, and the sod house commenced to go to pieces, great loads falling at a time. I thought it was not safe to remain in it over night. I had a small granary or grain bin covered with straw. I first took some quilts, then while it was raining torrents, I carried my wife and children to that, and we crawled in and slept without fear.

After that I built a part of the house that is standing on the homestead now. In the meantime it was not all plain sailing. We had prairie fires, dust storms, drouth, coyotes, rattlesnakes—yes, rattlesnakes galore, for we boys killed one hundred and twenty-five the first summer. This is a fact, for we saved the rattles.

My wife had a little scare with one of the reptiles. It happened in the cellar in the new house. I will give it in her own words. "I had a cupboard in the cellar where I kept the milk. When the sun was in the west, it was rather dark in the cellar. I went down after a pan of milk for supper and had just picked up the pan when I heard a rattle, nearly at my feet. What to do I did not know, for there was no one in the house at the time. I made a dash for the stairs, got a light and spade, and there not four feet from the bottom step was a large rattlesnake coiled up. What little strength I had left I put onto that snake. It had eight rattles besides the button."

But such things were forgotten when we would see the beautiful antelope scurrying by in twos, threes and sometimes six in a group.

Of course we went through hardships, and had drawbacks, but with good health and energy, interspersed with hard work, faith, hope and happiness, we lived on the homestead until January 9, 1907, when we moved to Beaver City. As settlers came in we made many friends, and our time being taken up in improving our home and visiting and entertaining our neighbors, the time soon passed away.

B. F. GOBLE.

CHAPTER XX

M. C. Perkins Landed in the Beaver Valley in 1873, "Bled and Dried," Won Out, and Now Lives in the Boyhood Home in Maine

Oakland, Me., June 7, 1912.—Editor Times-Tribune—Dear Sir:—You may think I am butting in where I have no business, but I have been greatly interested in reading some of the pioneer letters of the early settlers of Furnas county. I claim I am eligible to be classed as one of them that "bled" and "dried" in the Furnas of Nebraska. I was born down here in the "Pine Tree State," sixty-one years ago (not with a silver spoon in my mouth.) I left home at thirteen years of age to become self-supporting, and landed 75 miles northwest of Chicago, Rochelle, Ogle county, Illinois. I was there about three years, making two trips to Maine. I went from there to Seward county, Nebraska, in 1872, and the spring of 1873, I started for the Republican river. We struck the river at Red Cloud, and traveled up the river to Melrose, near where Orleans now stands. We were ferried across the river by some Swedes, who ran the ferry just to accommodate those who happened to have money. From there I went southwest of Melrose, six miles on the Prairie Dog. There I took my homestead, never seeing that piece of land after that. We started back to Lowell for the land office was there at that time. It was the month of June and very hot. In crossing the divide north of Melrose we saw a black cloud off in the northwest that did not seem to cover more than a few sections of land and it seemed to stay in one place for an hour. We drove to Turkey Creek where we camped for dinner. Staking out our horses, we got our slapjacks ready to eat, when we heard a terrific commotion up the creek. We thought it was a herd of buffalo coming down through the bushes. In less than two minutes there was five feet of water standing over our camp fire. We made out to save our wagon, harness and horses, but lost the most of our grub and cooking utensils. We drove on to the

Walker's ranch and ate our dinner and supper at the same time.

At that time Walker's ranch was the only place we could get water from Melrose to Lowell, for at that time the dirty man's ranch did not have their well finished. I went back and worked that summer, intending to go onto my homestead that fall, but Frank Gapen came back there to work in the fall and he told me that lightning had set fire to the prairie and burned the whole country over, and there was nothing for stock to live on, so I did not dare to go on my land that fall.

The next spring I put out a crop and the grasshoppers took all of my corn and a part of my wheat. The people said there was not a bushel of corn raised in Seward county and I guess it was true. Half of the people in the country went east to their "wife's folks" and half the people who remained on their claims lived on aid, that was sent there from the east. I packed up my little greasy bundle and hit the trail for California. I came back the next summer.

In the spring of 1876 I started for Furnas county and this time I had "blood in my eye." I was bound to become a freeholder of some of Uncle Sam's domain. At this time the creek land along the Beaver was taken up, so I went on the divide and took a timber claim on Section 26, south-west quarter, Town 3, Range 22 west. After that I took up a pre-emption. As I said above I lost my homestead right in Harlan county. For four years we raised little corn and some wheat. The year of 1880 came nearest to being a total failure. There were eight months there was no rain fell and I hope that no country will ever experience the like again.

I recall some very funny things that occurred during my homesteading. We all became expert sod-house builders and well diggers. One of our best well diggers was John Bickford, but sometimes he ran up against hard luck. He had been away at work and was on his way home with the proceeds of the day's work in groceries. He laid them down on the prairie while he went off the road to speak to someone, and some stock came along and ate them excepting his tobacco. John Mosher was the best homesteader of all. He hauled water from one to five miles for over five years for stock and house use. Yes, John was on the water wagon, and when we would see his wagon coming we knew he had something to take. I hired an old man by the name of Goodwin, and also his boy Walter, to dig a well on my timber

claim, and they were all winter at it. It would sometimes happen that Walter would be very late in the forenoon and I asked him what made him late. He said he was out late the night before "to see his gal." I said, "Walter, you should get married." He replied, "I shall marry next New Year's if I can only sell my turkey."

I made a trip east to get work. I was making a trip from Seward county in company with John Bickford, with one span of horses and two loaded wagons. As we were within a few miles of Minden, we met a young man with a span of mules loaded with barley. He saw we were heavily loaded and he gave us all the road. When he was getting into the road again his wheel tire came off. We went back and helped him replace it. We thought there was something wrong by the way he talked and later we found that he was the man who the night before had killed a woman and three little children near Walker's ranch, and a few weeks later killed Anderson the Swede, and was hung in Minden. His name was Richards.

The fall of the Indian raid, I started east for a load of provisions in company with several men. One of their names was Ireland. He lived near Arapahoe, and I have seen him since and talked about this instance. We drove the first one-half mile east of Walker's ranch and camped close to the old freight trail. There were three teams of us and after it became a little dark an old man and woman came along in a buggy. They asked us where there was a good place to camp. We told them about twenty rods ahead. They camped there and staked their horses out, and about midnight several horsemen came galloping into camp. They seemed to be excited and told us to get out of there for the Indians had burned Orleans and were coming right on up the trail. We got up and geared up our horses and pulled for Juniata, for the old man and woman were not there. I have always believed that the old couple were murdered that night. I have seen some things that looked queer at Walker's ranch. I could tell lots about the fleas and bedbugs, snakes and drouths in the years of 1880, 1890, and 1894, however, it has all been told and that must suffice.

After all the hardships and disappointments of a frontier life there is one bright spot in my memory for the good people of Furnas county. A great many of them have passed on to the Beyond, and the same will soon be said of us. As Job of old said,

“Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” When I had just gotten into my first sod house a man came along about dark and asked if he could stay all night. “We are not fixed for keeping travelers,” I said, “but I feel sorry for that pony you are astride, guess you can stay.” As he sat there on the pony his toes almost touched the ground; his hair hung to his shoulders, and his voice was like the “king of beasts.” I thought he was the biggest man I ever saw. He sang and prayed for our souls’ welfare, and ever after that Elder Mayo and I were fast friends. The elder was a diamond in the rough.

If this seems worthy of space in your valuable paper, publish it, if not, toss it into your waste basket.

M. C. PERKINS.

CHAPTER XXI

Frank Brouhard Gives a Number of Thrilling Reminiscences of Early Furnas County Experiences Which Have Never Before Been Published

To begin my story, we started from Iowa, June 14, 1872, father, mother, six children, my brother and wife, two teams, one saddle horse and little colt, and fourteen head of cattle. I came horseback and drove the cattle. We went to Des Moines and from there to Nebraska City, crossing the Missouri river there. I had never seen a ferry boat and it was quite a sight. From there we went to Beatrice and from there to Sandy Creek, where Alexandria now is, camping there for three weeks. While we were there father and brother went west to look for land and to hunt buffalo. They were gone three weeks and when they came back they said they had found the Garden of Eden. While they were gone about 800 Indians camped 80 rods from our camp, and you bet we were pretty badly scared. They stayed two days and the squaws would come over to our camp to trade calico and ribbon for meat, lard and tobacco. Mother had plenty of butter and she offered a squaw some, but the squaw put her finger in and tasted it and shaking her head, said "No good." I think those were the same Indians Mr. Whitney spoke about, the Otoes.

Here we lived in the first dugout we had ever been in, it being an old one, and mother was pretty much disappointed. Talk about snakes, it seemed to be full. They were sticking their heads out all over the house. Mother said when the folks came back we would pull for Iowa; but when they came back and told what a nice place they had found, she was better satisfied and when she saw the Sappa valley, she was willing to try it a while. Mother was afraid to sleep in the dugout so we cooked and ate in the house and mother and the smaller children slept in the wagon. I slept under it. One night a big storm came up and we moved our beds in the dug out, but we did not sleep much, as there seemed to be something crawling and biting us. We did not know what it was, but we found out later. The children



LOG AND SOD HOUSE ON THE HOMESTEAD OF HARVEY BROUHARD

This is one of the most historic of the old "sod shanty" structures in Furnas county. In it there have been many occasions, both gay and grave. It has been the scene of births, marriages and deaths. In it have been held dances, school meetings and Sunday school. It may be truthfully said that it was in its day the center of civilization of a wide area of the pioneer settlements.

At the extreme right is the famous horse, "Jim," to which the ancestry of a large number of the earlier horses of the south side of the country can trace their origin.

Holding "Jim" is the venerable James Brouhard, father of Frank and Harvey Brouhard, and who was a pioneer character known far and wide. To the right of the house is the grave of the pioneer.

squalled and mother and my brother's wife, I won't tell what they did, but there was a jubilee about all night.

The folks finally got back and we pulled across to the Republican river to Superior. From there we went up the river to Melrose where we forded the river and went up the Sappa to the forks where Mr. James lived. There we crossed the Beaver Creek and come up the divide about twelve miles, then we pulled on down the Sappa.

I am a little ahead of my story. When we got to Guide Rock father traded his team of horses for two yoke of oxen, so you see we did not travel very fast, but we got as far as the Sappa about the 24th or 25th of August, 1872. We camped on the north-west quarter of 18, township 1, range 22, two days and then we moved west on the north-west quarter of section 13, township 1, range 23, where we stayed two days, and then pulled for Lowell, where the United States land office was located at that time.

We started one morning and got about eight miles down the divide when we saw a buffalo. Father got his rifle but found he did not have his cartridge belt. He had hung it on a tree at the place where we had camped and forgotten it. He sent me back after it, but I did not find it. About half a mile from the wagons I saw eight Indians coming up out of the draw, and you bet I began to apply the whip. I thought I could outrun them, but when I got a little ways eight more headed me off. I did not know what to do, but they just asked me if I had seen any buffalo. I told them I saw some going south, so they went after them. I felt relieved. There must have been more than a hundred before I got to the wagons. We were visited every day by them, and they gave us all the buffalo meat we wanted. They were always begging tobacco and cornmeal.

When we got to Franklin we had to haul water, as there was only one place we could get any for 45 or 50 miles. The first day about three o'clock an Indian and his papoose, about 15 years old, rode up to the wagon and wanted some water to drink. Father gave him a quart and he wanted some for the papoose. He drank a quart and then wanted some more. Father told him he had some little children and he thought he did not have any more to spare, but the Indian said, "One mile heap water," and he gave father two hind quarters of buffalo meat. Father then gave him some more water and we drove on. We drove until almost sun down before we found water, and it was thick with mud, for a big herd of buffalo had just been there and tramped

it all up, but we camped there and used the water even if it was pretty thick.

The next morning we hooked up and went to Lowell. It rained all forenoon, but we never stopped, as the men wanted to get their papers on their land. We got there about 3 o'clock and left about 4 o'clock, driving about a mile where we camped. Indians were all around us and were there before sun-up the next morning. We left there about one o'clock the next morning and headed for the Blue river. It rained for three days but we kept going until we got down the river where there was plenty of wood. We took the cattle and dragged a big pile of logs up and dried our bedding and clothing. The next day we started down the river seventy-five miles, and after that we did not see any more Indians. We went into camp on the south side of the river on some state land; made us a dug out, and went into winter quarters. Father and my brother went to work there. Work was scarce, but they worked for what they could get. Sometimes it was 75 cents and sometimes more, and take anything in pay that we could eat or feed the stock. Father got some steel traps and began trapping. There were beaver, mink and otter, so we got through the winter pretty well, until the big snowstorm that started Easter Sunday. I think it was the 18th day of April, 1873. Hundreds of cattle perished. We lost four head, and father said that we were lucky, for some lost all they had. We did not see ours for about three days after the storm, when father and I went out with the oxen and pulled the dead cattle out of the drifts and skinned them for the hides and sold them. We got from 50 to 75 cents for them. Now they would be worth \$6.00 to \$8.00 apiece.

We loaded our goods about the 1st of May and started for the Sappa valley. It was a long and tedious trip, as the road was bad. We struck the Republican river at Superior, then up the river. Father had one yoke of my brother's cattle, as they were rather wild, and he let brother take a yoke of his, that were gentle. They were Texans and as quick as horses. We came along pretty well until we got west of Red Cloud. We camped on a little creek called Farmer's Creek. When we camped that night I could step across it, but the next morning it was a half mile wide. A big thunderstorm came up and at about 3 o'clock in the morning the water commenced running into the bed under the wagon, where father and mother were sleeping. They

got up and the bed began to float. He called to the rest and I jumped out and started for my saddle. It was gone, so I ran out where my horse was lariatd, or started to, and got into water up to my waist. I called to her and she came as near to me as she could, and I went a step farther and I could reach her halter. I untied her and climbed on her back, and she took me to dry land. Father and brother were getting the oxen and taking the wagons about 80 rods away, where we stayed until daylight. Then a woman came down to camp and told mother to bring the children up to the house and dry their clothes. I went with the rest. They had a big fireplace, and you bet I enjoyed it. Nearly everything we had was washed away, even the cooking utensils. I found my saddle over a mile from where we camped, in a big pile of drift. Some of the things we never found. By the time we could get out of there, there were about 20 or 25 teams there to cross. They were afraid to put their horses in the creek, so father hauled the wagons over with the cattle. He had one ox he could ride, and he would ride him and drive the others. We finally got out of there and went on. We came to a little creek east of Republican City. At this place the Texas cattle were afraid of the dirt bridge and turned so short they broke the tongue rod. Father sent me up to the town to get it mended. I told the blacksmith we would pay him the next morning as we came along. He did not like to let me have it at first, but he said: "Be sure and stop, and pay it." The next morning father stopped and paid it, and had just 10c left.

We came on up to Melrose and if I remember sightly, it was west or northwest of Orleans. There we forded the river and went across the creek and started up the divide, where we had better road. There had been quite a change here since we were here in August the year before. When we reached the claims we found the company organized and a postoffice near us called Richmond. Henry Brown kept it. There seemed to be lots of people here and the country did not look so wild. We landed on our homestead the 25th or 26th of May. The first thing was meat so father started the next morning out on the south divide. He soon came back and said he had killed a buffalo. We hooked up the cattle and went after it. He had caught a calf and cutting some hide off the cow had tied it. When we got close to it, it went kicking around and got its feet loose and away it went, so I did not have a buffalo calf after all, but we got our meat and

went home. We had plenty of meat, and also some of the neighbors. We also had plenty of lariats, as we cut the buffalo hide into what we called rope. They were better than rope and lasted longer than any rope you could buy for the grass did not cut them out. We used the hide for various things, rugs and chair bottoms, and I have made shoes out of them. My brother was out hunting and he wore his shoes all out, so he skinned the hocks of a buffalo and put them on green. He did not pay much attention to them and they dried to his feet, so he did not take them off at night. The next day he felt something crawling on his foot and he began looking, and come to find out, the flies had blown his feet. Then he was barefooted again. This is no joke. You ask Harve Brouhard, he was there. We had plenty of buffalo meat for two years, then they were more scarce as the hide hunters killed so many. I have seen hundreds of dead buffalo in one day, which had been killed just for the hides. Lots of them had not taken a bit of meat and sometimes had cut out enough for one mess. I believe I have seen more than 10,000 buffalo in one day. We saw them go from one divide to another the first year we were here by the hundreds. Talk about rattlesnakes, I have seen plenty and have killed thirty or forty in one day, and they aren't all gone yet. I killed two last summer.

Well, the next day after we got the meat, we began to fix a place to stay. We went to work and finished the dugout and moved in. We did not have any doors or windows, but we lived in the house, as we called it, until fall, or until I went away in July. I did not get back until December. The folks had a door, but we never had any windows for about a year and a half. We did not raise much that year, as we got there too late to put in anything but a sod crop and some late garden.

I remember the first celebration in Beaver on the Fourth of July, 1873. I went on horseback. We had a splendid dinner and everybody seemed to have a good time. That was my first acquaintance with Nat Ayers. He came around looking after the boys and marched us up for dinner. My folks weren't there and nearly everyone was a stranger to me, and of course I was somewhat bashful. I always knew Mr. Ayers after that. T. M. Williams and some of the others did the speaking. They had had quite a lot of sport and had a bowery dance. I could play the violin and there were others that could play. That was the first time I met June Denham and John McKee. I had met

Charlie Kinsman before and they were about all I knew, until that beautiful fourth of July.

I went east and earned enough so we got through the winter all right and had plenty of sport chasing jack rabbits and going to parties. I played for a good many dances. We had to dance on the dirt floor, and they seemed to enjoy it as well as though they had a good smooth floor. Everyone had a good time in those days.

W. T. McGuire spoke about that man shooting himself, a Mr. Jones. I was well acquainted with him and we missed him greatly at the parties. We used to always have something going on all the time, camp meetings in the groves in the summer and meetings in the little sod school houses in the winter, and it did not cost anything. We had good preaching and good times in general. Some of the writers spoke of the value of a homestead in the early days. I knew a man to trade his homestead and improvements, a small crop, and his wagon for the other fellow's wagon as he got would be worth about \$25 or \$30 today. I own the land at present and it would be worth from \$40 to \$50 per acre. I bought it for \$220 and homesteaded it. The first man traded it in 1876, and I bought it in 1877.

In the spring of '74 we began our work as usual and put out all the land we had broke, and as before it was dry, but not as bad as we had in the years before, but it was mostly blamed to the hoppers, but the drouth killed the corn before the hoppers alighted. We did not raise much that year. Some people sold out for what they could get and went back to their wife's folks, and some just went and left without selling out, and others came in and took their places. That was the way the tide went. The man that traded wagons and gave his claim to hoot, stayed for three or four years in the east (I think in New York state) and then came back to Nebraska on foot and homesteaded south of Beaver City. Henry Dierker owns his claim at present. His name was Mr. Kendall and most of the settlers will remember him.

Mr. Whitney spoke about drawing aid. I remember about that, but of that aid that was sent here some got plenty and some did not get very much. The people were just like they are now. When the officer was in Beaver City, everybody went over and he would take their names and ask them how many potatoes they wanted to plant. Some would say one-half acre and some

would want three or four acres, and one or two wanted five acres, so they did not get any. They had some clothing and we got some. I got a blue overcoat, which was the best aid we ever got. The next spring there was some seed grain sent in and some got plenty and some got very little. That was the spring of 1875. We had the best crop we have ever raised and the country began to go ahead and we thought we were strictly in the push. The divides began to settle up and everything was lively all that winter.

We started out in the spring of 1876 with a good heart, and everything that we planted came up fine and grew fine. We got our wheat cut and began cutting the barley. Before we were done cutting the grasshoppers began to light and they soon wound up the corn and everything that looked green, even the timber. They stripped the ash and began eating the elm and boxelder. A storm came up and it began to thunder and lightning and we had a big rain and hail, and the creek raised 22 feet in less than one hour. The hoppers were mostly in the timber and it washed them down. In some places in the drifts they were 3 or 4 feet deep, but they had eaten everything before the storm came. We had stacked our crop of grain on the bottom and the water was all around it and about four or five feet up on the stacks, so we lost most of our crop. We tore down the stacks and dried them out, but the grain was spoiled for anything but hog feed. Those were the last hoppers we ever had, only the few we have had lately.

Mr. Whitney spoke about Brigham Young responding when we asked for aid. I don't remember anything about that. I don't think there was anything came in our neighborhood from the west. We had several aid meetings and we did get some aid from the east. My brother went over to Plum Creek, (now Lexington) and hauled a load over. It was in the spring and cold and snow was on the ground. There were several teams, mostly oxen. Some of the men did not have any socks, but they went and were glad to think they were getting something for their families.

About the 1st of September I went to work for Mr. Lashley and worked for him for four months. I kept the family in provision, so we got through the winter all right. Of course we did not have any knickknacks, and not many fine clothes, but we stayed and were healthy and happy. Sometimes people would have the blues but not in the spring. Generally about the mid-

dle of June to the 1st of July we nearly always had some hot winds. At this time there were always people wanting to sell out. Nearly always they would say: "I want to stay but my wife won't stay." Usually they would stay away one year and maybe two, but they generally came back worse off than when they went.

Talk about hard times. I knew young men who had only one shirt, and I was one of them. In the summer of '76 I used to take my shirt off and wear some old dress waist while mother washed my shirt, and sometimes she would wash it three times a week, owing to the number of parties. Sometimes we would have that many parties in one week. All the same we would enjoy ourselves.

We started out in the spring of '77 with new courage and had a pretty fair crop. Plenty of most everything. In July I bought my claim and in the fall I took me a companion. Then I started in working for myself and wife. In the spring we put out a big crop and raised plenty of everything. Land began to advance. Everything in the shape of a piece of land was getting to be worth a good price, and nobody wanted to sell. In '79 we did not have quite so good a crop, but we got a good price. Wheat went up to \$1.00 per bushel, so it was not very bad. People stayed that winter and went to work in the spring with a good heart, and put in big crops, and did not raise very much of anything, and the tide began to roll east and west, mostly east to wife's folks. In June I hired out to my uncle at 50c per day. That did not look very big. I worked 53 days and then hooked up my team and drove east and stayed all winter. In the spring of '81 I came home and brought provisions to last me until harvest. We raised a pretty good crop that year. Then the country began to boom again. We never had any more failures until 1890, when the Sappa went dry for the first time. We had been here for over seventeen years. Well, I think Nebraska is the finest country to live in on the globe. Of course I have spent most of my time here, never living any place else since I was fifteen years old, so of course, I would naturally think this is the only place.

Some of the writers spoke about the herds of Texas cattle. There were hundreds went through here. Ask Clay Fletcher if he ever caught any Texas calves. He, Ad Lashley, and Al Horton had quite a lot of experience with them. They went down east of Beaver to get one and the cow chased them back to Bea-

ver. Horton had a steer he could ride, so he told them he would ride him down and bring the calf up to Beaver. He went down and put the calf on the street, got on and rode to town, and when he got there they could not get the cow in the corral. She ran everybody out of the street. June Denham had a big dog, so he got the dog took the cow by the ear and led her to the corral. Maybe you wont believe this, but this is no "josh," ask Clay Fletcher. He was there.

Some writers spoke of the game that was here in the early



Sod House Built by C. W. Mallory in 1872. It formerly had a dirt roof.
The shingle roof was put on by Mr. Brouhard in 1887

days. I remember the last wild turkeys. Some one started the flock down the creek about ten miles and I and a German by the name of Judge Altman, killed the last one. They were the last ones I ever heard of here on this creek. I think this was the fall of '74.

In speaking of aid, father did draw some meat. I think that was in the spring of '74. Our neighbor, Mr. Mallory, or as they used to call him, Dr. Mallory, lived one-half mile west of my

father's. He went up there and got his aid. Each one drew according to his family. He drew among the other things, two shoulders of pork. They weighed about four pounds each, and that was not very much for so large a family. So father would tie one up to the ridge log, and we would begin at the oldest, get up on a stool and swallow the shoulder and jump off the stool and so on down to the smallest. That would make the meat last until the next aid came.

About the Indian scare, I will say I was there. I got up early one morning, or rather I was up nearly all night, my wife being very sick. I went out very early and I saw three or four teams going down the road. They were hollering at me but I did not pay much attention, as my wife was so sick that was on my mind more than anything else. My brother's wife was with me and I was getting ready to go to the neighbor's to borrow a wagon to take her home, so I harnessed my team and went after the wagon. I stopped at one neighbor's and there was no one at home; so I kept going until I had gone to the sixth place, and there I found about twenty had gathered. They wanted to know if I hadn't heard about the Indians. I told them I had heard nothing. I did not stop to get the wagon but hurried back home. When I got there my brother and W. J. Keith were there, and they told me not to worry, they would not leave me. I was afraid it would scare my wife. Keith said there wasn't hardly anyone up the creek above where he lived. There were teams going back west for several days after that.

One of the writers spoke about the wood rats. His story sounds all right, as I have known those rats to carry off case knives, spoons, and tin cups, shoes and all such things. They never carried off my trousers or suspenders, but they were sure pests. I have killed buffalo, antelope, and wild turkey, and hunted and shot at many a deer but never killed one. I have seen as many as 100 in a day. I remember the first wheat we raised. We got a neighbor to cut it with an old self rake and bound it by hand, and cleaned off a place on the ground, and I rode the horses; that is, I rode one horse and led two others and tramped it out and cleaned it in the wind. Father and Mr. Kendall went to Grand Island to get it ground. They were gone four or five days. The wheat we raised made our bread and we thought it was pretty good. It was not long after that until we had mills near us. I used to freight from Lowell and Kearney. It

would take five or six and sometimes seven days to make the trip. We would get 75c per hundred. That was in goods. We would haul from 16 to 25 hundred. Some would haul 40 or more with yoke of cattle.

I will tell you a little of my experience hauling corn from Egypt. B. H. Reed and Jay Clayson and myself and H. Brouhard started sometime in December, 1874. We went as far east as Guide Rock, where we camped out. Harve had a light team. One was a pony mare and she was a cripple, and the other a little horse. We had just traded a day or two before we started and every time we went down a little hill he would kneel down. We kept laughing at Harve. He said, never mind, he would trade him off, but he would not trade with a preacher. The second night we were out we camped close to the river in a patch of willows. We cleaned off a place large enough for our blankets and built a big campfire that warmed the ground, then we put some straw and all rolled in together. About 12 o'clock it began to snow, but we kept covered head and heels. We did not dare to move or the snow would blow in on us. We slept quite warm. I guess Harve began dreaming, for he yelled out, "Boys, that little mare is a dandy, but I will trade that horse for anything before we start home." After we got through laughing at Harve, we all went to sleep again and pretty soon he began dreaming and this time he yelled out, "Well, boys, if you want corn for that watch, haul it out, it belongs to the crowd." One of the boys had a watch. Harve wanted to know what we were laughing at. Just say to Harve, "If you want corn for that watch, just haul it out, it belongs to the crowd," and he will know what you mean.

I believe I have written enough of this, so will draw to a close, for fear it will be monotonous. I want to say this for Furnas county. I will stand up for Nebraska. I have lived here 41 years and I never saw one year just like this. Everything, last spring, indicated a big crop of corn, but it doesn't look it now. The Sappa is almost dry at this writing, the 30th of July, 1913. It looks as though feed would be pretty scarce, but I still think there will be a good fall pasture. It has got to rain pretty soon.

Will close, with best wishes to everybody.

F. P. BROUHARD.

CHAPTER XXII

J. W. Turner Gives Interesting Account of His Pioneer Experiences, and Tells of the First School Held in Furnas County

On or about the first of September, 1872, father, with his family of six children, left Winterset, Iowa, for Nebraska, in covered wagons, crossing the Missouri river at Plattsmouth. and father, thinking perhaps it would be better, left the family at Plattsmouth, while he went and found a location. So, after renting a house and getting the family comfortable, he, with the writer and a man by the name of Ballard, set out in a prairie schooner for southwestern Nebraska, stopped a short time in Lincoln, then followed the B. & M. railroad to Lowell, where the United States land office was. After getting some maps and making some inquiries about our route we started south for the Republican river. My! This was a desolate trip, over forty miles with scarcely any settlement. About half way across this desert was "Walker's Ranch." Here we paid ten cents for a bucket of water. Mr. Walker had not yet finished his well, and had to haul water from the Blue river, many miles away. We camped here all night and started out early the next morning for Republican City, arriving just before sunset. The next day being Sunday we drove a few miles west of town where we stayed until Monday, camping near a man by the name of Friday. Along about eleven o'clock, Mr. Friday came down to the wagon and invited us to take dinner with him. We accepted his invitation without an apology. After entering the house, I noticed a large kettle sitting over the fire in the fire place. A little later Mrs. Friday came in from an adjoining room and with a large spoon was putting dough in the kettle, and then I knew what was coming, my mouth fairly watered, for if there is anything I do like it is chicken dumplings. Soon it was put on the table steaming hot, and we were asked to sit up. We certainly did eat our fill. I shall never forget that dinner. I was a lad of only fourteen years and had a boy's appetite. After we were through eating, Mr. Friday asked each of us how we liked our stew, as he called

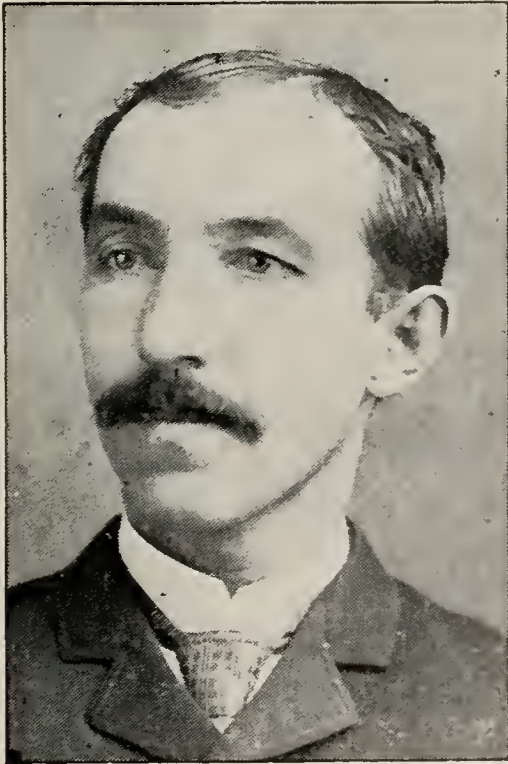
it, meaning the dumpling dish. All praised it highly. He then asked us what kind of meat it was. Father said it was squirrel, Mr. Ballard thought it was rabbit, and I said I knew it was prairie chicken. "Well" he said, "you have not guessed it, it is prairie dog." Well, that is the first good dog I had ever eaten.

Monday morning we started up the river, crossing at Melrose. We went west, camping near the forks of the Sappa and Beaver. Next day we drove up Beaver Creek to W. B. Bishop's, to whom we had been directed from the land office at Lowell, as a man who would show us land. After getting numbers on several pieces of land we went back to the land office where father homesteaded the se $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 18, township 2, range 21, on November 2, 1872. The next spring after the Easter snow storm was over and the roads were good again, father, with his family loaded in two wagons, left Plattsmouth for the new home in Furnas county. All went well until we got to Juniata. Here father was taken ill and we had to lay over two weeks. As soon as he was strong enough we went on. The roads were muddy and traveling slow, but finally we reached the Republican river, where we found the river banks full and fording impossible. The only way we could cross was with a small skiff, so everything was taken out of the wagons and a little at a time was taken over in the skiff. The wagons were taken apart, the running gear was taken over a piece at the time, and the wagon beds were floated over. The horses had to swim, one at a time, behind the boat, but all got over safe after a hard day's work. We had supper, then loaded our wagons again and we pulled out for our land, arriving there a little before midnight, May 12, 1873. Here we camped until morning. Early the next morning all were up scattered over the prairie, viewing our new home.

After getting a place to live in and doing some breaking the next thing was a school. Father, with William Harman, W. B. Bishop, John Keiser and others got together and found where they could get a person to teach and take the pay in breaking. This was Mrs. Lucy Brown. The first school was held in Ben Reynold's sod house, which was located in the northwest corner of the ne $\frac{1}{2}$ section 17, town 2, range 21. We had a three months term. The scholars at this school as near as I can remember were: Allie and Rhoda Harman, Margaret and Blanche Martin, Minnie Paul, Alice Tompkins, Mollie Tompkins, Josie Prewett, James Prewett, Charlie Martin, Lulu Brown, David Brown, Bud Crittle-

bough, Prior French and the four Turner boys, Gilbert, George, Lewis and the writer. There may have been others that I cannot recall. There were several more in the neighborhood but they did not come to this first school, which was a fall term. After this school closed, Mrs. Brown was engaged for a winter term. Before the next school commenced we had built a new sod school house just across the road from the Reynolds house. The new building was 14x24 on the inside. There were two half windows on the east and west, a door in the south and a fire place in the north end, with a large post in the center of the room to hold up the ridge pole, no floor and covered with a dirt roof.

The seats were made of slabs with holes bored and sticks driven in for legs. These seats were put against the wall around the room. Books were scarce and often two or three pupils would study out of one book at the same time. There were



J. W. TURNER

only two spelling books in school. (McGuffey's), two Ray's third part arithmetics, one geography and several odd readers. Imagine a teacher now a days trying to teach under these conditions. At this term there were added to our school several new scholars. Among them were: Park Mathew, Millie Reynolds, Aliee and Frank Keiser, Odell and Maud Therwechter, George and Jennie Hatfield. In this old sod school house we held literary society and spelling schools. Such times as we did have at our spelling matches. We made it a rule that no one should come who would not spell and

they came from Beaver City on the west to below Carrisbrook east, and from the Sappa on the south, and everyone must spell or get out, old or young. I wonder if John Keiser, Wm. Harman,

and Billie Sturtevant remember these spelling matches. It is all fresh in my mind, although it is nearly forty years ago.

Our first Sunday school was organized early in the fall of 1873, in Alex Paul's dugout down on the creek bank east of Mrs. Eldred's house. The first officers were E. B. White, superintendent; Mrs. Paul, assistant superintendent; Mollie Tompkins, secretary; J. W. Turner, treasurer; and Wilber White, chorister. The Sunday school was kept up for over twenty-five years continuously, but was moved for room to David Brown's sod house near where Mrs. Eldred now lives. Here it stayed until taken to the school house. We also had preaching. The first preacher was old father McDougal, who lived near "Sappa Peak." He came once a month at first, then every two weeks, and finally organized a class that met for services every Sunday.

The first summer we were in Furnas county, Indians were quite numerous. A band of fifty or more Pawnees were camping on the creek on the land now owned by Frank Coleman. They were friendly and never did us any harm, but they were a nuisance begging, especially the squaws. It was interesting and exciting to see a bunch of fifteen or twenty bucks kill buffalo. They would get the buffalo to running in a circle, then they would pick out the ones they wanted to kill and make a dash for them. Mr. Buffalo was pretty sure to come down. Often he would have several arrows in him and sometimes a spear or two. They would only kill each day what they would use. They kept this up for about two months, drying the meat and tanning the hides. The young Indian boys taught us how to make and shoot the bow and arrow. They were so accurate that some of them could hit a penny every time fifty feet away. The Indian was not like the white man with the buffalo, as they killed only what they could save while many white men killed them for sport. I remember one time seeing Jim Labar kill six in less than half an hour and only one was a knife put into. At times in the summers of 1873-74, the buffalo were so thick that we had to keep them off our corn fields or they would have trod it down, but it was only a few years until they were all gone, much to our regret, as we always welcomed a quarter of a buffalo. Buffalo meat, at one time, was the "staff of life" to us as we never tired of it. At one time we had two buffalo calves which gave us much sport.

Game was quite plentiful the first few years and we boys spent much time hunting while not busy on the farm. There were

lots of quail, grouse, some wild turkey, deer, antelope, a few elk and the buffalo, all of which helped to sustain life. Then we had the coyote, a few gray wolves, and occasionally a mountain lion would come down from the mountains and make his presence known by killing young calves and sometimes causing our stock that was lariatd out, to break loose. Then there was the wild cat, which was hard on the chicken house. There were quite a lot of beaver and coon along the creeks. All of which made sport and helped to take away the monotony of life.

After we had lived a few years in a dug-out, father built a new sod house and fixed up to keep travelers, built stable room for twenty horses and put up hay. He turned the old dug-out over to immigrants to cook and sleep in and dug a well near the camp grounds. Here many a traveler has camped for the night.

I doubt if there are many old settlers in Furnas and Red Willow counties in Nebraska, and Decatur and Thomas counties in Kansas that have not stayed over night in this camping place. I have known twenty teams to be camped on this ground at one time, all going west. Other times I remember when all were going east to visit "wife's folks."

For fear I may tire the readers, I will close, but want to say in conclusion that the ties of friendship formed among the early settlers of Furnas county are not easily broken. I wish to say also that the first five years in Furnas county was the happiest period of my life, and the most sacred spot on earth to me is the old homestead in the Beaver valley.

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CHAPTER XXIII

John T. Brown Writes of His Early Days as a Pioneer in the Beaver Valley—Forty-two Years in Nebraska

Editor Times-Tribune:—As nearly all of the old settlers have told of their trials and troubles in coming to and living in this county I guess it is about my time. I left Illinois on the 6th day of December, 1870, in company with a friend named Harry Winkler. We made our first stop in Missouri at his uncle's. I left him there and came on to Thayer county, Nebraska, where I had a sister living. After visiting with her a few weeks I started on a buffalo hunt up the Republican river, but got only as far as Red Cloud, when it snowed and turned so cold that we turned back.

I stayed in Thayer till the last of June, and then my friend came out and we went down to the eastern part of the state. We walked nearly all over the country south of the Platte river. There was not much work to be had so we returned to Thayer county. We decided to take homesteads if we could find some to suit us. About the middle of August, in company with Charley Rosenberger and a man by the name of Frank Anson, we started for the Republican valley. Red Cloud was the first town we came to. It was not very large, having only three buildings. Then we went up to Franklin Center. It had one frame store building, that was all. Republican City and Alma were not started yet. We crossed the river east of where Orleans now stands, at what is called the Rock ford. All of the good claims along the river were taken, so we came up the Sappa valley, and the first man we met was a tall German whose name I have forgotten, and the next was the late Judge Robbins. He and J. A. Palmer, of Stamford, had selected claims close together and were living in tents, not having had time to build houses. We asked about the show for getting claims and they said there was no one living west of them, but the claims on the main streams were all selected and would be settled as soon as the people could get there. At that time the only way you could

hold a claim was to move onto it, as the county had just been surveyed and the office at Beatrice had no record of the survey yet. Mr. Robbins went with us up to the line between Harlan and Furnas counties, at the northeast corner of section 25, town 2. He showed us how the corners were numbered and then went



The Brown Residence Replacing the Old Sod Shanty

home. We drove over to about the center of section 25 and camped for the night, it being nearly sun down. We had wild turkey for supper and breakfast. The next day we hunted buffalo and I killed one on the place John Keiser now owns, on the south side of the creek. The buffalo were scarce as the surveyors and soldiers had run them out. The country was covered with the carcasses of dead buffalo.

After we had looked the country over on both the Beaver and Sappa we decided to locate on the Sappa, as our wagon was there, and it was a difficult matter to cross the streams in those days. Rosenberger selected the one where we first camped in section 25, and the rest of us on up the Sappa. We then went back to Thayer county and Winkler and I decided to come back and work on our claims and keep the Indians off and the other settlers. We were young then and pretty green. We bought

a team and camping outfit and provisions to last about three months. Anson decided to not come back and Rosenberger had corn to gather and could not come then, so he hired us to make a dugout on his place. We got back about the 10th of September and went to work on Rosenberger's place first. We made a dugout to live in and one for the horses. I will say in passing that this was the first dugout on the Sappa. John Gapen, Mrs. John Rea's brother, made the next one. After we got the stable done we saw that we would need some hay to feed our horses if we put them up during a storm. There was plenty of wild hay but we had no way to cut it, so we went down to Mr. Palmer's to see how he cut the hay that was stacked on his place. We borrowed a scythe and pitchfork and went to work. Neither of us had ever mowed hay with a scythe, so we did not cut many tons.

After we got the hay stacked we took a trip up the Sappa to see what the country looked like. We met three hunters up at the head of the creek and they were the only people we saw all the time we were in this country except Mr. Robbins and Mr. Palmer. We were gone on that trip about ten days and when we got back to our dugout, a prairie fire had passed along and burned our hay and all the grass for miles around. We never thought of fire, did not think the buffalo grass would burn, it was so short. The fire did not burn the dugout or stable as the loose dirt we had left lying around protected them. Now we thought that fire had about ruined our prospects, as we expected to make a small fortune trapping beaver and killing buffalo, but it was a good thing we got burned out. We went back to Thayer county and had been there but a few days when there came the deepest snow I ever saw in Nebraska, and it stayed on the ground until the last of February. The snow was just as deep in this county and the settlers had a hard time getting something to eat. That snow seared my partner and he wouldn't come up here any more, so I bought his half of the team, wagon and outfit. It took all the money I had except a few dollars, but I had a good supply of powder and lead, flour and bacon.

The 15th of March Rosenberger and I started for the Sappa with our wagons loaded with shelled corn. After a hard trip we got to Judge Robbins place. We left our wagons there and went to our claims on horses. The country looked pretty bleak

up there on the Sappa. We dug some pits large enough to hold our corn in Mr. Robbins' yard, and covered it with hay and dirt. We went back after Rosenberger's family and did not get back until the first of May. I helped Rosenberger build some more house and then went over on the Beaver to see if I could find a claim that suited me better than the one I had selected on the Sappa, but I did not find any but what had been filed on, so I went back to the Sappa, hitched onto my plow, and have never turned back. There was no one west of me on the creek. It will soon be forty-two years since I first saw Furnas county, and I have done all I could in my humble way to make it a county any state might be proud of. I have seen all the good years and all the bad ones and am still here.

This story looks pretty long, and this is my last sheet of paper, so I will have to stop just at the beginning of things in this county, but will write again if the editor will stand for it.

JOHN T. BROWN.

CHAPTER XXIV

**Charles A. Clark Was One of the First to Sense the Coming
Glories of Furnas County, and He Tells of His
Pioneer Days**

I have been reading the stories of pioneer days in Furnas county, so I thought I would add my mite. My brother in law, Cyrus Trent, and I, started from Waterloo, Iowa, to Nebraska, in May, 1873. We got as far as Lincoln, where we met N. M. Ayers, who told us about Furnas county. Later we met Monell and Lashley. They were going out west to look up a location for a flouring mill and they wanted us to go along, so Lashley, Trent and I started for the Land of Promise. We went by train from Lincoln to Lowell, where we hired a pair of ponies and a buggy, and we drove to Republican City. There Mr. Lashley and John McPherson went on a scout for a mill site, but not finding any, we went to Orleans. There we met a man and his wife by the name of Dibert from Johnstown, Penn. They had a brother-in-law living west of Beaver City, so we took them along and all went to Beaver City. There Mr. Lashley found a mill site. We each found a claim just north of Beaver City and went to Lowell and filed on them. May 22, 1873 Lashley went to Lincoln to send lumber to build his mill, and I went to Waterloo for my family.

We left Waterloo in September and got to Beaver City October 10, 1873. We were like Trowbridge, we had some bad luck, but we got there. The first thing was a dugout. We slept in our wagon box till the dugout was finished. We needed some sod so we went down town and borrowed a breaking plow and started to break sod. That is as far as I got as one of my mares would not work on a plow, so I took the plow back. I met Wayne Carpenter and agreed to trade my mares for two yoke of cattle. He thought I had to throw in the wagon box, but I told him I couldn't spare that as it was our bedroom. Trent and I made two rooms, he living in one room and I in the other. That winter I got out logs and built a log house.

Trowbridge said their daughter was the second white child

corn in the county. I don't know who was the first, but our daughter, Maggie, now Mrs. Pixley, was born November 29, 1873, in the dugout. I will send you a photo of her two boys and me.

In March 1874 we moved into our log house. I had broken five acres the summer before. I stirred up and put in some wheat and corn and did some more breaking and planted some



Mr. Clark and Two Grandsons

sod corn. I did pretty well that summer. I built a house for Adam Keith, 12 miles southwest of Beaver city on the Sappa, and I did most of the mill wrighting on Lashley's mill. Everything was looking well so we must have a Fourth of July picnic. We built a large bower on the square, and put down a dancing floor. In making arrangements we found that we had no flag, so the merchants furnished the material and my wife made the first

flag in Beaver City. We had a first class picnic and a good time. The orators were Lee Hobson, T. J. DeKalb, T. M. Williams, W. E. Crutcher and Mrs. Mallory.

Everything went all right until the 8th of August, when the grasshoppers came. They soon got away with the corn. I had a pretty good garden and the hoppers left that. Some time in October there was a camp meeting four miles east of Beaver City, On Sunday morning I took the family and went down there. When we left home in the morning there were 125 fine heads of cabbage, 40 or 50 fine squashes, about 6 bushels of rhutabagoes and a lot of other vegetables. When we got home at night there was nothing there. Hobson's herder had lain down in the shade and gone to sleep and let the cattle eat up the garden, so a good share of our winter's living was gone. I had to work that winter at Lashley's mill. That fall Frank Caterton chased a buffalo onto our claim and killed it so we got a pretty good chunk of meat. We got through the winter fairly well.

In the spring of 1875 I put in a good crop of corn and oats, and the grasshoppers were coming down thick. They got all the grasshoppers cleaned up two acres of my late corn. I thought I would get the rest of my crop. On the 8th of August Captain and Mrs. Freas came to our house. Joe Postlewaight was there, and after dinner he suggested going after some jackrabbits. As we went by my corn I said, "I guess I will get the rest of my corn." We hadn't gone very far when the sun was darkened and the grasshoppers were coming down thick. They got all the corn and the squash, melon and pumpkin vines. They left the squashes and melons, but they were not ripe. We had mighty slim picking that winter, but we got along some way. Some of our neighbors had some things left. They got together to talk up an old fashioned farmer's picnic, and invited all the neighbors but us. One night we had a pretty slim supper and expected to have a slimmer breakfast, but we were happily disappointed. Just after dark some of the neighbors from the creek came in with bushel baskets of potatoes and cabbage and other good things. Well, I want to tell you we had a feast and a glorious good time. Some of the neighbors are still there, Mrs. Freas and Jake Downing. Most of them are scattered, and some have gone to their reward.

We did not have any Indian scares, but we had something just as bad. The Texas cattle trail was a quarter of a mile east

of our house. Three or four herds went up every summer. The cowboys were a rough set. They would come to the house and demand things and if we did not have them to give they would swear terribly and threaten to shoot. They camped three miles north of us and sometimes a heifer would get out of the herd and come down to our cattle and I would have to shoot it before I could get to my cattle.

The spring of 1876 I put in my crops and as usual the grasshoppers did the reaping. I was elected assessor and served for three years. I got no pay at all for the first two years, and \$5 for the third. I was treasurer of the school board two years. I got some carpenter work and some saw mill wright work that summer. In August our boy was bitten by a rattlesnake and we had a terrible time getting him cured.

The spring of 1877 opened up pretty good. I put in some wheat and corn and rye, and had a good crop. On the 19th of June our twins were born. The girl, Mary Edith, is now Mrs. E. A Shrove of Denver. The boy, Charles Ernest, is a traveling salesman for Kingsbaker Cigar Co., of Kansas City. He makes Beaver City in his travels.

Everything went pretty well until we began stacking our grain. Lee Hobson, A. J. Horton and I were exchanging work. We were working at my place and had one stack of grain finished and Hobson was working on another. In putting some poles on the top he lost one of the ropes, and after my little boy had helped him get it he set the fork against the stack and forgot it. When Hobson got through he slid down the stack onto the fork handle, and was badly hurt. We had a hard time until he got so he could be taken home.

My wife and five children had the diphtheria. My wife was very sick for over a week, but they all got over it. I had quite a bit of carpenter work in 1878 and raised a good crop, so we got along pretty well.

The spring of 1879 I rented my land and worked at my trade. There was quite a lot of building and we raised another good crop, so I began to think Nebraska was all right. But it stopped raining and there was no rain from September until the next July. The spring of 1880 I rented my ground again, but the ground was so dry that they could not plow it so I got no crop. I had to go away to get work. The summer of 1881 the drouth and cinch bugs took everything.

1882 was the same way. That fall I came to Fairbury to get work. My folks did not like to stay alone so much so I moved them down here, and we are here yet. I came to the conclusion that I was not built for a farmer, so I gave away my claim and quit it.

There is one thing I would like better than anything, and that is to see the old pioneers all together again at a farmers' picnic like we had then. They are scattered all over, some are still in Furnas county.

Wishing them a happy and prosperous year I will leave them for the present.

CHAS. A. CLARK.

CHAPTER XXV

**When M. N. Jenkins First Saw Beaver City It Was Inhabited by
Prairie Dogs, Rattlesnakes and Buffalo.
Now Look At IT!**

Editor Times-Tribune.—Perhaps it would be of interest to the old settlers of Furnas county to hear from one who took part in the battles of those early days with the grasshoppers, rattlesnakes and Indians.

It is forty-one years the tenth day of July since I first saw Beaver City. At that time the town was inhabited by prairie dogs and buffalo. The two Hadley boys, M. R. and Jesse; Will Kinzer, Tommy Williams and Danforth had taken claims around the prospective townsite. I was traveling in company with Ed Lyon. We ate our lunch here and then steered our double header oxmobile on up the creek, dodging the dead buffalo carcasses by the way, and camped that night with I. S. and Jonathan Meyers, who were shingling their first cabin with elm bark and sod.

The next day we went to the present site of Wilsonville. Here we found Corlas Wilson and Russel Johnston camped under the shade of an old elm tree on the banks of Beaver Creek. Corlas Alexander soon made us welcome. A few days later John McKee joined our company. He was looking for a location to start in business. Uncle John was third assistant cook. His part was to grind the coffee with a sledge hammer. We had huge appetites in those days. It required a stack of flapjacks almost knee high and a dishpan full of buffalo steak to fill us up to the collar.

Our camp was the frontier, no other station except a military post at Red Willow and Wild Bill, who camped near us a few days and then moved on. We had a few Indian scares that summer but lost no scalps, and later in the fall a big fire with high wind which licked up the hay stacks and a few cabins and the clothes that happened to be off our backs.

Our nearby postoffice at that time was Alma, but later on we heard of Arapahoe, and then we thought that we had things

convenient. Lowell and Kearney were the nearby railroad towns.

As the country began to settle we felt the need of mutual association. Accordingly the Beaver Valley Home Guards was organized, the object of which was not only to make our presence felt in case of mischief, but that we might make our wants known and invite horse thieves to "keep off the grass." Our association together called forth a discussion of our need of public improvements, such as postoffices, public highways, organization of the county, locating county seat, starting public schools, and appealing to Uncle Sam for protection against the encroachment of the red skins.

Our first effort to be heard by the legislature was to send John McKee to Lincoln to lobby for us in forming and naming the county. At this time all the territory west of Harlan county was known as Lincoln county and was represented by Buffalo Bill in the legislature. After Furnas county was bounded and named then came the county seat question, and some of you know what happened in some of those bob-tailed conventions.

Well, we "left our footprints in the sands of time" and we can never pass that way again. My mind often reverts back to the days of making history in Furnas county, but space will only permit me to hit a few of the high places. We often got short on rations, and did not have much to live on but faith and buffalo grass until the team would get back from the railroad. Then came the hot winds and the grasshoppers that blasted our prospects for a crop, and then the going down into "Egypt" after corn. Then came the Indian raid of '78, followed by the destructive prairie fire which licked up the grain and hay. Perhaps some of you have not forgotten the old "funding bonds" that were issued by the county, and sold for "spot cash," but the cash never came. Many times we found ourselves up against a dark proposition. Those were days of anxiety and excitement such as we shall not be called to pass through again.

It may be now that not many of the old settlers are left. Some, no doubt, have gone to other parts of the world, and some to the silent city of the dead. I have been away from Furnas county eighteen years, having lived in Colorado since leaving there. I shall be glad to hear from any of you who are interested in me, or to have you call on me when visiting Boulder.

M. N. JENKINS.

CHAPTER XXVI

**L. B. McComb Tells the Story of the Founding of Lebanon, and
Relates Incidents in the Lives of the Pioneers**

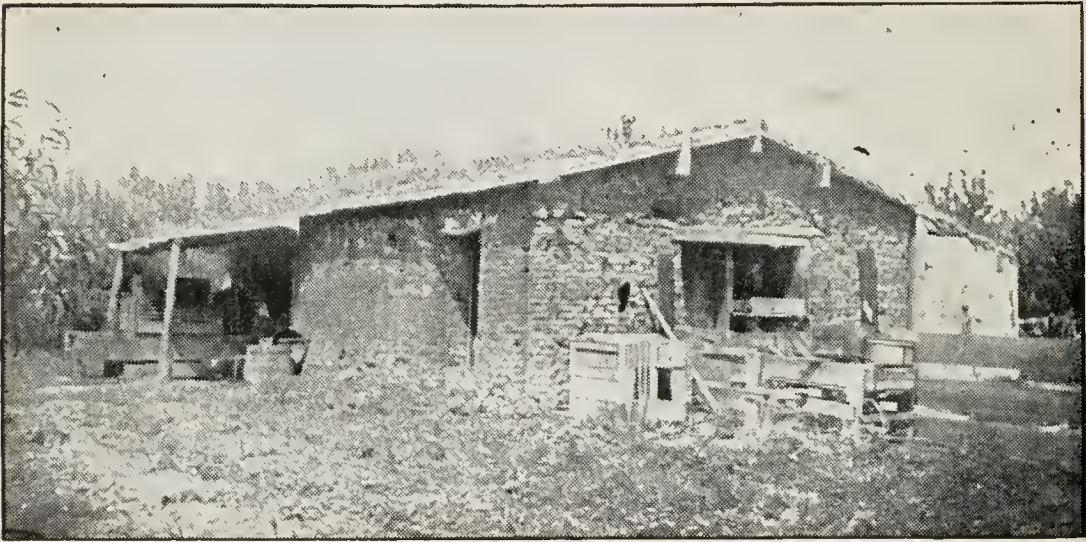
Editor Times-Tribune.—It is with much interest that I have read the different stories of pioneer days published in the Times-Tribune. Although there will be a similiarity in some respects to the other contributions, I feel that I would like to add my little mite to those already handed in, so I write and if you consider this not worthy of publication, commit it to the waste basket.

It was in the spring of 1872 that my father took the western fever, and it proved contagious inasmuch that one neighbor and himself fitted out a prairie schooner and started overland from Green Lake, Wisconsin, little knowing what their destination would be. They came on and on, until landing at Lowell, Kearney county, they concluded that they were far enough west for the time being. Lowell was a thriving little town, where the land office was then located, and father and Mr. Elkins secured work as carpenters and worked until fall. Once in the summer father got quite homesick because he found some "crawlers" in his clothes. He immediately packed his grip to start for home, when some one, finding out what was the cause of his sudden change of movement, told him what to do to rid his clothes of these inhabitants, so instead of carpentering for a while, he proceeded to have a wholesale massacre, and when it was over, instead of going home, he wrote home telling us of his experience, and also told us to sell out, pack up and come to him.

So on the 14th day of November, with three wagons equipped with a stove and other things suitable for winter traveling, and with nine people in our company, we started for the west, traveling all the first day in a glorious snow storm, and staying the first night with my uncle and family, who considered it a very foolish move. Uncle told mother that she was going where she could not find a stick large enough to whip a child with. She was not of the disposition to be easily "bluffed," so her reply

to this remark was, "I'll use my hand." He then said, "You will have to live in a dugout out there," Her reply to that remark was, "No, I won't. I'll not go under ground until I go for good." In this she was mistaken, as later on my story will reveal.

It would take too long to tell all the trials and hardships of that six weeks' trip in midwinter, camping out every night but two. Some may say, "Surely it did not take six weeks to make the trip." No it did not, for two weeks of that time we were camped at Maringo, Iowa, with sick horses. We arrived at



Former Home of James McComb

Plattsmouth, December 30. There we were told that we would surely perish if we tried to cross the plains in our wagons, so we chartered a car, loaded our goods and came by rail the remainder of the journey, arriving at Lowell the first day of January, 1873. Father had already prepared a little home for us, so we were not long in getting settled. My introduction to the new town was the acquaintance of a tame buffalo that would persist in following me to school, which was anything but pleasant for me. I was so afraid of him. He belonged to a Mr. Valentine, one of the merchants of the town, and he would dodge into the store whenever an opportunity presented itself, always expecting a treat of candy and apples.

Well, I must pass on. Our stay at Lowell was only during the winter. In the spring of 1873, father pushed on farther west

and located at what is now Lebanon. Father in later years sold the townsite of Lebanon one 40 of the land being a part of our old homestead.

Just as we were about ready to pack up and move to the Beaver the big April storm broke upon us with all the force of a genuine blizzard. Any of the pioneer settlers will distinctly remember it. We were shut in for three or four days, not daring to venture even a few steps from the door, and before the end of the third day all we had to eat was crackers and water, for everything was so wet inside and out of the shanty that mother could not make a fire. We had to stay in bed in order



Present Home of James McComb

to keep warm. The morning of the third day, father thought he must try to go to the stable to see how the horses were faring, so in a lull in the storm he started, and for a wonder, found the stable, or what was left of it. The wind had blown the straw cover all off, and the horses had trampled snow until their heads could be seen above the stable. All must of course know that the house and stable were both poorly constructed or they would have better withstood the force of the storm. They were put up only for temporary use. Father soon got the horses out of their snowy bed and took them to the livery barn. Then he went to the hotel and got dinner, but did not dare venture home until nearly night, for if he had missed the house, he could have gone for miles in that direction without finding a house. It was an anxious afternoon for the ones shut in, so when father came walking in a little before sun down, there was general rejoicing.

When the storm was over we started for our own home, being ten days on the road from Lowell to the northeast quarter of section 17, township 1, range 26 west. It rained nearly every day we were on the road, so when we arrived at the Republican river near Arapahoe the river banks were flowing full, and

nothing could be done but swim. Just as we were about to start in a Mr. McGill, who lived near the present town of Hendley, came to our rescue with an ox team and helped us across, then loaded the little folks into his wagon and went ahead with them. When we arrived at their home a good warm supper awaited the whole company of us. I shall never forget that meal nor the people who were so kind to us that night.

We immediately proceeded to make a house by pitching our tent and using some boards that father had on hand, setting them up tent fashion and using a tree at each end of the building for the upright poles and some good heavy joice for the ridge pole, with not "a blanket for a door," but a piece of carpet. Such was our home for the first five months of homesteading, as there was no time to build a better one, for some breaking had to be done and a crop put in, which with my brother's help father went about doing without delay. In swimming the Republican river everything in our wagons got wet, so we had to have a general unpacking and drying out time. Added to that we had to have another gray-back massacre, for somewhere on the road they had crept in. What a time we had, washing up and getting rid of the pests.

One day not long after we were settled, we heard a noise outside like the grunting of hogs. We went out to see where the noise came from, and just a few rods from the house we discovered a herd of about 60 buffalo leisurely feeding along. The men happened to be away from home that day, so we missed getting a good shot at them.

I have told you what our house was like, but not what other belongings we possessed besides our household goods. Well, they consisted of three horses, one cow, a hen and a rooster, the latter a present to mother when she left Lowell, and, by the way she raised that summer from the pair 30 chickens, the old hen setting three times.

Buffalo and antelope hunting was the favorite pastime for those days, but that soon came to an end, for we were only nicely settled and the crop well started when we were visited by a band of Pawnee Indians out for a buffalo hunt. There were three hundred of them and our place was alive with them for three days. Their camp was only a half mile from our house, and while there they killed 300 buffalo in one day. They dried and packed the meat ready for use in three days, putting it in

bails, as near as I can remember $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, and perhaps a foot thick. The bails were covered with rawhide. They carried their meat on pack ponies, loading them down until they would almost stagger under the load. When coming in from the hunt the same ponies were loaded with the raw meat, thrown over the ponies' bare backs, and an Indian sitting on top of the meat. We visited their camp one afternoon and saw them working at their various kinds of employment. One old Indian was making himself a ruffled bosom shirt, and on sight of mother, called on her for assistance, which she freely gave. Some were making bead ornaments, some piecing quilts, some preparing the evening meal by cooking brown beans over a camp fire, and some were busy tanning buffalo hides and packing meat. In the company were two old soldiers holding honorable discharges from the government, who came and begged the privilege of having dinner with us. How they did eat! They surely fulfilled the proverbial saying that "an Indian can eat enough in one day to last him a week." We traded with them in many different ways, exchanging their wares for groceries, for father had already established a trading post, supplying the few settlers with the necessities of life, ammunition included, as no person at that time would have felt that he could live here without his gun at his right hand.

Giving the Indians a rest I must now return to the subject of building a home in the west. After the excitement of the Indian company was over, father began hewing logs preparatory to building us a permanent home. The house was ready for the roof when father was called upon to accompany a young friend to his home in Wisconsin, who had come here in hope of regaining his health, but in vain, for he died soon after his arrival home. When father returned from his trip he brought more supplies for the little store, adding to the stock, prints, gingham, shoes, and some rough articles of clothing, such as were needed for the time and place in which we lived. It was late in the fall when he returned, and too cold to try to think of finishing our house in time to be comfortable for the winter, so he proceeded to dig a hole in the hillside and before many days a dugout with a tent for a roof was completed for our winter quarters. Thus mother had to submit to going underground, much against her pride and will, at the same time admitting that it was a comfortable place to be on a cold day.

The spring following our sojourn in the dugout, several changes took place. Our home was completed, and the dugout converted into a little store. Lebanon postoffice was established at our home. My brother carried the mail from Beaver City the first six months free gratis, later he was given the job of overland mail carrier and paid by the government.

Time waits for no one, neither does the tide of immigration. Now settlers are locating all along the Beaver valley. Among the first besides our people to grace the land of buffalo grass with homes were the following families and bachelors: R. P. Hligh, Dr. Isaiah Bennett, Frank Galusha, W. D. Johnston, James Springer, George McClure, Bruce Cummings, Charlie and Wm. Johnson, George and Platt Kinne, John and Wm. Townley, Wm. Halsey, and the Lyon brothers, four in number. West in this vicinity of Danbury were the Ashton, Royar and Dolph boys, and east in the neighborhood of Wilsonville were Robert McComb and sons, Daniel Crooks, L. M. and Castar Wilson, Geo. Miller, Mr. Soper, A. A. Plumb, Henry Remington, Marion McDonald, and Mr. Thatcher, the latter being the only blacksmith for miles around.

About this time the first marriage in this new country took place, that of John Townley to Miss Elizabeth Springer.

In the spring of 1873 Red Willow county was organized. At the primary elections arrangements were made for each precinct to write out their own tickets, there being no printing office in the county at that time. A committee was appointed to do the work, and it was a tedious task, there being only enough settlers for the county to legally organize. Though only thirteen years old at this time I had the honor, through permission of father, of helping write the tickets. My father, B. F. Bradbury, was elected one of the first county commissioners, and made his monthly visits to the county seat, Indianola, 20 miles away, to attend commissioners' meetings.

The first school in this vicinity was taught by Mr. Galusha, the schoolhouse being a dugout. The school furniture consisted of a home made table for the teacher's desk, and benches for the ten pupils. The heating plant was a little alcove in the back of the dugout, called a fire place, the chimney walled up with sod.

The first religious organization was a Sunday school, held at the home of Frank Galusha, where most of the religious met each week to study the word of God together, and every two

weeks we were visited by Elder Stewig, a Campbellite minister from Indianola.

The first birth to be recorded was that of my nephew, F. F. West.

The first social gathering that I remember was in honor of a birthday of Mrs. R. P. High. Both old and young were present, and then the company was not large. Mr. and Mrs. Tom Williams of Beaver City, came all that long distance to make merry.

The first death to bring sorrow into our midst was that of Grandpa Remington, who died at the home of his son, Wm. Remington. The funeral was held in the sod school house, and interment was made on a plot of ground just back of the school house. The casket was made by Daniel Crooks of plain pine boards covered with black calico. In later years Mr. Remington's remains were moved to the Hamburg cemetery.

In the years of 1874 and 1875 grasshoppers made such ravages on the crops that little was left for the settlers to subsist on. In order for them to stay and hold their claims, the government came to their rescue by sending aid by way of provisions and clothing. Second hand clothing was also sent by eastern people which was gladly received by the really destitute. The clothing from the government consisted mostly of army clothes, so when the men were fitted out with their new clothes, a stranger coming into the community might have thought the regular army was here in full force.

Grasshoppers and drouth also made other changes in rural affairs, for the majority of the settlers now turned their attention to stock raising, as there was plenty of free range and the native buffalo grass was found to be excellent feed. Many are the days when I have taken my paper or crochet work and acted the part of shepherd boy or saddled my pony and taken charge of the herd of cattle.

It was not uncommon at that time to see a tame buffalo with the herds of cattle grazing contentedly. At one time my father owned six, three of which grew to be four years old before he sold them. One of them took a particular dislike to me, and of course I was afraid of him. One time he pushed me down and was about to trample me when mother came to my rescue and drove him away. He was such a pet that he would often step into the house and take a morsel off the table if he saw anything he liked. He would follow us to school, remain all day,

and return with us at night. Finally we grew tired of such a troublesome pet, so father made a rack in the wagon, loaded him in, and started east to sell a buffalo. He went as far as Gibbon, where he sold "Buffy" for \$10 and 15 bushels of potatoes.

My story now brings me up to the centennial year of the Declaration of Independence. This was a notable time for us here in the west as well as for those at the Centennial Exposition. We began preparations a month before the notable day to celebrate in loyal style. The first thing we did was to send to Montgomery Ward & Co., then called the Grange store, for goods for flags. Mother made these, one large one four yards long, and six small ones six inches in length. The large one was to be carried by a flag bearer, the small ones to decorate the bridles of the horses. On the morning of the Fourth, the neighbors, 22 in number, old and young, met at father's for a start across the divide to Indianola. A wagon had been especially fitted up for the occasion, with seats all around the box and a high spring seat for the driver and flag bearer. It took a well equipped four horse team to haul the load and the provision prepared for the journey. Father had gone to Indianola the day before to attend commissioners' meeting and he met us one-half mile out of town, escorting us in grand style. We really were given credit for having the best equipped outfit on the grounds. The day was spent in a real patriotic way, and we remained until the morning of the 5th.

The next incidents worthy of note were the Indian raid and big fire in the fall of 1878. The morning of October 1, people all along the valley were notified that the Cheyennes were on the warpath and that all must flee for their lives, so we went with the rest to "Stone's Fort," just west of Wilsonville. Mother loaded the two younger children into a passing wagon, then she and I hid a few of our most valued treasures in the tall grass near our home, then saddled our ponies and started east. Father was in Minnesota on business at the time, so did not have a chance to participate in the enjoyment of the chase. Brother Charlie and our herder remained at home to guard the stock. They stayed until time to corral the stock and then started in pursuit of the refugees. Mother and I had not gone far when we came upon Mrs. W. D. Johnston and her little boys, who were driving their stock to where they could be better protected than at home.

We finally arrived at Fort Stone, where men, women and children to the number of between 200 and 300 were crowded together, scarcely a man knowing where to find a weapon of defense had the enemy arrived. Scouts were soon sent out to investigate the real situation and it was found that the Indians had simply gone across country from Oklahoma to their former reservation near Fort Robinson in northwest Nebraska. The raid was a rebellion against being moved south by the government. The only damage they had done or intended to do was in the direct trail from one reservation to another. That indeed was plenty, for murders were committed, horses stolen, homes pillaged, and crimes committed too awful to narrate. The husband of one poor woman in our company was among the victims and it was heart rending to witness the scene when news of his death was brought to her.

After the Indian scare was over and all had returned to their homes, beginning work where they had left it three or four days previous.

Following the scare came the disastrous prairie fire of October 15, claimed to have been set by the Indians as they made their run across country. The fire, accompanied by a high wind, burst upon the settlers like a cyclone, sweeping all before it. Many lost stock, feed, some even their home, and the country was left looking desolate indeed. Those who had any amount of stock had to move it to where they could find feed. The winter proved to be the most severe we had experienced since coming west. Many lost half, and some nearly all the stock they had. Father's loss was 100 head of cattle and 400 head of sheep.

I could tell of the social gatherings at the various homes and also of the rattlesnake, wild cat, porcupine and wood rat battles that were fought in those early days, but I must bring my story to a close lest I weary you with too much of pioneer life.

L. B. McCOMB,
Shipee, Nebr.

CHAPTER XXVII

**Mrs. E. J. McDonald, Wife of a Pioneer Who Homesteaded
Near Wilsonville, Writes of Stirring Incidents
In Early Days**

Editor Times-Tribune.—I have read many of the pioneer stories with interest and feel that I would like to add my pioneer experiences to the series.

My husband, Marion McDonald, in company with L. Scribner and R. Van Steinberg, started from Marcellon, Columbia county, Wisconsin, the last day of October, 1872, to find homes in the west. Having only a yoke of oxen for a team, he loaded our household goods in a wagon and started out. The family, consisting of two children and myself, was left behind until he had a home prepared for us. He was not out of the county when his oxen became footsore. He traded them for a horse and with an extra horse belonging to one of the other men he was again able to move on. After six weeks of traveling and camping they reached Gibbon, where the other men took homesteads. But this was not the home my husband was looking for. He wanted a piece of land with natural timber and water on it, so he followed Horace Greeley's saying, "keep going farther west," and after a few days more travel he found what suited him, lying 12 miles west of Beaver City and 4 miles east of Wilsonville on Beaver Creek. There he used his homestead rights on a quarter of section 28, township 2, range 24 west. He had to go to Lowell to take out his homestead papers, as that was the nearest land office at that time. This was in December, 1872.

He then started to building a home for us. It was built of logs, 12x26 feet, with a dirt roof. We had our sleeping rooms upstairs and one large room downstairs for a living room. The stairway consisted of a ladder.

After the house was completed in April, 1873, he sent word for us to come. We started the 21st of April, the week after Easter and the great blizzard that so many will remember. We came by rail as far at Lowell, where my husband met us with a team. While at Lowell we met Al Crawford and his mother, who wanted to go to Beaver Creek also, as he had located there

near the Gill place. So we took them on the load with us. We were three days making the trip. At Melrose, near Orleans, we had to ford the Republican river. The third night we reached L. S. Meyers, where we stopped for two nights and a day to rest up after such a tiresome journey.

We then went to our new home. No place will ever look as good to me again as that humble home did then.

At this time the settlers were breaking sod and planting seed corn and beans and making garden. We soon found out that it was not the place to raise beans. My thoughts were, "Oh, such a country, where beans won't even grow." Buffalo, antelope and wild turkeys were numerous. We always had plenty of wild meat, as our neighbors hunted and then divided with us. We were all on an equal then, financially and socially.

The next year after our arrival a drove of Pawnee Indians, 300 in number, came to our locality and camped on the southeast corner of our homestead. They were hunting buffalo and while here killed a great many, 150 in one forenoon. They were a great curiosity and I was very anxious to visit them in camp. So I went to their camp in company with Mr. and Mrs. Thatcher. We found them very kind and friendly. They were staking down the hides, cutting the meat and placing it on the hides, and then Indians dancing on it preparing it to eat. After four days they pulled up camp for Arapahoe. Nothing would grow on the land where they had camped for more than a year afterward, not even grass.

Everything looked favorable for a good crop the next two years until just before harvest when the drouth came, then the grasshoppers, which devoured everything in the shape of vegetation. The last year the hoppers stayed four days as the wind was not favorable for them to raise and leave. Whenever they raised or settled it put one in mind of a snow storm when the flakes are large. The next spring millions of little white hoppers hatched out, taking every spear of grass or wheat as soon as it was up. But about the 19th of April came a cold, sleety storm which froze the ground and the young hoppers with it. So that year we had a bountiful crop and no hoppers. We had plenty of rain. Several times the creek raised out of its banks, washing our temporary bridges away. At such times it was necessary to call on Mr. Remington to milk our cows and we milked theirs, as they were on opposite sides of the creek.

In 1877 we took more land so had to move onto the new land north of the half section line. We lived in a dugout on one of the quarters.

About this time came the Indian scare. We had to go east for safety as far as Jake Downing's. Henry Remington and my



**Sod House Where 300 Whites Gathered During Indian Scare,
One-half Mile West of Wilsonville**

husband stayed to look after the stock and fight the Indians if necessary. The next day we got word that there were no Indians in sight, so returned home feeling perfectly safe.

We were not safe long, however, for only a few days after the Indian scare came the big prairie fire supposed to have been set by the redskins. It burned everything within reach, jumping the Republican river in many places. Many a family was left homeless and without feed for their stock. My husband had gone to Beaver City that day, so I was alone with the three children. Realizing the danger that was coming, I took the children to a piece of plowing south of the dugout for safety. When I returned to the dugout everything was in flames as the fire had caught under the roof. There was no chance to save anything. Among other things were several loaded guns that the men had left when going to fight the Indians. When my husband returned he found his family safe but in no home to welcome him. We were forced to find a place of refuge for the night, and until

arrangements for a home could be made. We were welcomed at I. S. Meyers,' with whom we were compelled to stay almost a month. We shall never forget the Meyers for their kindness and hospitality at this needful time.

My husband fixed up a log house again for us, and with a box for a table and a pile of straw with a quilt on top for a bed, we managed to survive until we could get supplies from Kearney. We used the old stove, which we dug out of the ashes, to cook on, and the burned knives, forks and plates until we could get more. It was certainly real hardship.

About this time our school district was organized as district No. 5, by county superintendent T. K. Clark. The first school was taught by Mrs. Anna Jenkins. She took the pupils to her home, teaching for \$1.50 a week, and boarding herself. A school house was built soon after the district was organized.

The schoolhouse was converted into a place to worship not long after it was finished, as a Baptist preacher came to our vicinity to conduct a revival. We had some grand meetings and many came out taking a stand for Christ. After the meetings closed he continued to come once a month to preach to us. A church was organized under the name of Beaver Valley Baptist church. After the church was organized the pastor baptized several by immersion. That night he preached a powerful sermon to a packed house. He stayed with us that night, and the next morning he was all broken out with the measles. Everyone who had never had them took them, so there was not enough well ones in the neighborhood to take care of the sick. Later on he brought whooping cough to our family, and still later he brought crawlers, which it took a fine comb to catch. The following month he came again, asking if he might come in. We said, "Yes, if you haven't the smallpox or the itch." Of course we welcomed him for he was a fine man.

Our neighbors within a radius of four miles were Remingtons, Rowleys, Whitneys, Thatchers, Trowbridges and Jenkins. Grandma Jenkins will be remembered by all as a ready and willing servant in time of need, in sickness or death. Those who knew her longest, knew her best.

A half has never been told of the experiences of the pioneers, but not wishing to tire you with too long a story, I will close.

MRS. E. J. McDONALD.

Lincoln, Nebr.

CHAPTER XXVIII

INDIAN STORY

Mrs. McComb Tells of a Visit From a Pawnee Hunting Party

One quiet afternoon in the month of June, 1873, the monotony of a pioneer life at our home was broken by the appearance of an Indian who came riding up to our very door. As mother appeared at the door she was saluted with, "Where is your Indian?" Mother understood that he had reference to father so she replied, "A short distance from the house chopping wood. Do you want to see him?" Their conversation ran as follows: "No, I want some bread." Do you want to buy it?" "Yes." Mother went into the house and returned with a loaf of bread which she told him he could have for 10 cents. Said he, "Give it to me," to which she replied, "No, I won't. You told me you wanted to buy it and that is all the way you can get it." "Give it to me," he repeated with emphasis. She left him and went into the house. He rode away but soon returned with company, for it proved that he was one of a company of 300, who were out from the reservation for a buffalo hunt, and were camped about one-half mile from our house.

When they returned father was there to meet them, so they were not quite so much on the bluff. They came into the house, looked around and then took a general survey of everything surrounding the house. That which seemed to attract their attention more than anything else was a new grindstone. They must have gone straight to camp and reported that it was there, for before the close of the day scores of Indians came to sharpen their knives ready for dressing buffalo. All moved along nicely until they got too lazy to turn the grind stone, when one of them fixed a treadle to work it with their feet. Father had told my brother to stay around where they were to keep things straight, and see that they did not pick up what did not belong to them. He soon saw that it would not be long before they would have the crank of the grind stone worn off, and showed them what they were doing, and that they must return to hand power. All willingly

gave up the treadle plan except one old fellow whom I will call Bluffer, who told Charlie if he took the treadle off they would put it on again. They had some words, but brother won out, at the cost of that one Indian's friendship.

No more trouble occurred until the third day of their sojourn with us, when Bluffer came to the store with a riding bridle to sell or trade for groceries. Seventy-five cents was to be the price of the bridle, and he wanted coffee, sugar, flour ammunition, etc., for it. He wanted so many different things that each parcel, of course, would be small. Father commenced weighing out the different articles for him, and each time he would see the scales balance he would say, "little more, little more." Brother sat watching the whole transaction with not a very amiable feeling toward the Indian. Finally he remarked, "If he can't be satisfied I would tell him to take his bridle and go." The words were hardly said when the Indian put his whip to brother's mouth as much as to say, "Keep your mouth shut." Charlie took hold of the whip, then the Indian dropped it, drew his bow and reached for an arrow. Then brother took hold of both his arms and held him. Father stepped up between them and said to the Indian, "No more of this." The Indian replied, "All right, I'll tell you what I will do. I'll go to camp and get my chief and a heap of Indians and come back and settle it." "All right," said father, "I would like to see your chief." When he saw he could not bluff father, he calmed down, accepted what had been weighed out to him, and seemed satisfied with the trade. When he left he shook hands with all but brother. As he bid mother goodbye he said, "I don't like your boy.. I have been here heap days, heap talk, I don't like him.

The next day the government agent who was with the Indians came to the house and when father related to him the adventure we had with Bluffer, and his threat to go and get his chief, he said he was the most troublesome Indian in the company, but that his chief was a good man, and said it would have been the last thing he would have told the chief, for had he known it, Bluffer would have gotten a whipping. We had been informed by those who had had previous experience with the Indians that if we did not want to be run over by them to stand up for our rights from the start in dealing with them, and that was what my brother tried to do, but he being a young boy only

eighteen years old at the time, it seemed that the Indian did not care to accept his decision in business transactions.

They would bluff every time they could. One incident I remember of was that they went to one of the settlers to borrow a tub and washboard. The man told them that they could take the tub but not the washboard. They said to him, "Don't you know that all the land on these hills and prairies belongs to us?" Mr. Haak did not take the bluff, but replied, "That may all be, but the washboard is mine." The Indians accepted the decision of Mr. Haak, took the tub, used it and returned it, and seemed satisfied.

We were not surprised when the Indians came for we had heard that they had been given permission from the government to go out for a hunt, their territory being all land in Nebraska south of the Republican river. At the same time a band of the Sioux tribe were out for the same purpose, their territory being north of the Republican river. From here the Pawnees seemed determined to go northwest. The settlers told them they had better turn back, that the Sioux were up west waiting to fight them if they went over the boundary line. Their reply to the warning given was, "White man heap lie, white man want buffalo," but they found to their sorrow that white man did not "heap lie," for one morning early, while they camped in a canyon near the Frenchman river, the Sioux stationed themselves at the head of the canyon in a way that they had the appearance of a herd of buffalo lying down. When the Pawnees saw them they went out in high glee to capture the supposed herd. As they came close to them, the Sioux threw off their disguise and rushed upon the Pawnees and through their camps, massacring nearly the whole company. Thus their bluffing disposition proved a sad defeat for them. I expect brother's Indian friend went with the rest of them to their happy hunting ground. The wail of the few who did escape with their lives, as they wandered back to the reservation was, "Heap Sioux kill Pawnee, heap Sioux kill Pawnee."

LOLA B. McCOMB,
Shipee, Nebr.

CHAPTER XXIX

Another Early Day Settler Takes His Pen in Hand

Editor Times-Tribune.—I have taken so much interest in all the old time stories, that I thought I might add a mite to what has already been said. I am well aware that my memory will not serve me as it has some of the writers, but nevertheless I was right there among the beginners.

I will start out by saying that we, our family, consisting of father, mother, two sisters, and four of us boys, left Winterset, Madison county, Iowa, in the fall of 1872, for the wild and wooly west. We came as far as Plattsmouth, Nebr., and there wintered over to the spring of 1873, when we loaded all of our belongings into two wagons and hit the trail for Furnas county, Nebr. We did not find the wagon roads as good as they are today.

Well do I remember the day we put in getting across the Republican river at Melrose, near where Orleans is now located. The only possible way of getting across was a small hand ferry boat which would hold only about three or four hundred pounds at a time. We unloaded all of our fine furniture, took the wagons all apart, and put in the whole day in getting over onto the west side of that old measly river. I think the same stream is there yet, but I think they have better accomodations now. I did not appreciate the way they handled the passengers, but I think mother was a little the worst. She did not expect to land on the other side alive, but she did, and stayed with us just as a good mother always does. We went into camp again on the opposite side of the river, almost in sight of where we camped the night before, rising with the sun the next morning. Father said we would see our homestead, the place we were longing to see, before night, and sure enough we did, on the 12th day of May, 1873, forty-one long years ago.

There is where I have spent the most and best of my days. I lived on this old homestead continuously for thirty-seven years, and was never off the place for more than thirty days at a time.

We went through hot and cold, thick and thin, wet and dry, good and bad, we took things coming and going. It certainly was wild for miles and miles around. We had buffalo, deer, elks, antelopes, wild turkey, wild cats, coyotes, some lions, and no limit to rattlesnakes. Some of the other writers have mentioned snakes, for we sure did have an abundance of them. In fact I guess we had nearly everything, from a buffalo down to a chintz bug.

I well remember the first buffalo hunt I had. I was only about 12 or 14 years old, and my brother George and I got the notion that we could kill buffalo, so we loaded up our old army musket and out for a hunt we went. We did not travel over a mile from the house until we saw our game coming right toward us. We found a hiding place which happened to be a buffalo wallow and a big old ragged buffalo nearly ran over us. How we did wish for our hiding place to sink just a little! The way we did hug the earth was no small thing to think about. Did we kill any buffalo? No, we didn't know we had a gun until we got back home. I'm not sure but what it was a part of the herd from which Elder Mayo got his buffalo calf which he baptized in Beaver Creek so as to increase the number in his Sunday school class.

In those days we used to go from three to five miles to Sunday schools, but now it seems that we can hardly get across the street to a fine mansion costing thousands of dollars, with fine seats, pipe organs, and nearly everything that heart can wish. Just look back, dear old friends, 40 years ago. An old sod house was shingled with buffalo sod, a fire place in one end, windows with glass 10x12, long slabs 10 to 16 feet long with four legs in for seats a sawed elm or cottonwood block for a teacher's desk, one book for three or four scholars, blackboard four feet square, and an old married woman for a teacher. Good enough, the boys were not all after her. I well remember one day at school in the above described fine schoolhouse that the old lady seemed to have been out late the night before and was somewhat sleepy, so she crowded the scholars up a little closer together on the patent benches and she occupied about seven feet of one end and took an old fashioned Furnas county nap. While she was enjoying her end of the slab, we kids had a few games of ball, had a fight or two, went down to the creek and had a bath, and then decided to go in and get our lessons. My brother finally ran up against a word in his book that none of us knew how to pro-

nounce. He went to the teacher for instructions. "Wake up. What is this word? I can't pronounce it." After clawing her eyes awhile, she rolled over on the side, raised a small grunt, and her reply was, "Oh, call it something and let it go." Talk about education! We had nearly all kinds in our little sod schoolhouse in Lincoln precinct.

Schoolma'ams were not so plentiful in those days as fleas and grasshoppers. Some years we had more grasshoppers than rain, and other years we had more rain than hoppers, but I remember only one summer that we had hoppers, rain and hail. I cannot remember the exact date, but perhaps some of the old timers will bear me out in the assertion which I am about to make. The grasshoppers were on the ground first and they did not wait for an invitation either. They were devouring our crops that we had worked so hard for faster than a Jersey hog could eat corn, and by all appearances they had come to stay while crops lasted, but there came that night one of the worst rain and hail storms we ever had. All the streams and small creeks were out of their banks, and there were not enough life boats to save the hoppers. They were washed down from the high lands into the creeks and lodged in the timber in drifts four feet deep. One can imagine the smell we had to endure for months. Now this is no fish story, but a small hopper story.

Chintz bugs were another pest which certainly tried the patience of the early settlers. Maybe you later settlers don't think we old ones had some patience to stay with and undergo what we did. Grasshoppers one year, then for a change next year chintz bugs, then swap off to hot winds and no rain, then drowned out, and so on. To live on hopes from one year's end to another is not what most people now days call high cost of living.

I could write much more, but for fear of tiring the readers I will close, hoping to see letters from others, which will help increase the number of pages in the book which is to be printed. I wish to say that the happiest days of my life were spent in the old dugout and sod house in Furnas county, and it is the most sacred spot on earth.

L. I. TURNER,
Montrose, Colo.

CHAPTER XXX

**Mrs. Philip French, Wife of a Pioneer Who has Been Called to
the Great Beyond, Adds Some Interesting Incidents
to the Collection of Reminiscences**

Forest Grove, Ore., June 19, 1914.—Editor Times-Tribune.—The last week in April, 1872, my husband and myself, in company with C. A. Danforth, my brother Will Haney, and Felix Lester, a cousin of my husband, Philip French, whom all pioneers will remember, started from Seward county, Nebraska, for the Republican river country, where we could homestead 160 acres of land and get timber and water. We drove across the country to Fairmont, then followed the Union Pacific railroad to where Hastings is now located. At that time the country was sparsely settled. The St. Joe and Denver Railroad Company had just laid their rails across the Union Pacific tracks. There were two sod houses near there and a little board shack put up temporarily for an office. We drove around the end of the grade and up to one of the sod houses, as it was time to camp for dinner and we could get water for the stock while we were getting dinner and looking over the country, which is prairie as far as eye can see. I thought it was a very pretty country, and said to the men, "I think that we had better stop here, this will be a big town some day." Then Dan, as we called him, laughed and said, "No, don't you get tender feet and want to stay here. We must have timber and water and 160 acres of land before we stop." I think I was beginning to get a little tired and blue for we traveled slowly and we had a cow behind our wagon and Lester had an ox team, so you see we did not go quite as fast as the automobile of nowadays. We went from Hastings to Spring Ranch on the Little Blue and crossed it near Wild Bill's ranch, and after passing there we headed southwest toward the Republican river. We were all glad when we came in sight of the timber on the river. We came down to the mouth of Elm creek, late in the evening and went into camp for the night, near where Amboy now is. We began to hunt for a place to get water with which to

cook. We did not like to use the water in the creek, as the country was strewn with carcasses of dead cattle. Texas cattle had starved to death, as there had been a heavy snow and sleet. We found there was a house up the creek a short distance and they had a well where we could get water which was greatly appreciated by us, as we were all tired and thirsty, not having had water to drink at noon.

The next morning we followed up the Republican valley, reaching Red Cloud, there being only one house and a blacksmith shop there at that time and a few other houses in sight along the road, but I think the land was all settled along the river. When we came up the valley to Painter creek we met an old man living in a dugout, who kept a little postoffice, and when we reached the Old Stockade, there had been someone living there for the winter, but they had moved onto their claim. There was a store kept by Bryan and Vibkins in a log house where old Melrose was later located. There we crossed the river and followed up the Sappa creek to the forks of the Beaver and Sappa. There we stopped for the night. Some time in the afternoon we found two dogs running along the dim road. We had no dogs so we thought we would get these. We called them up to the wagon, deciding they were lost dogs, we took them in and let them ride. One was a bird dog and the other was a big yellow chap. I guess he was just dog. I said I wanted the bird dog but we had not been in camp long when he started off. We called him, but no stopping him, so one of the men took a gun and followed him to the creek. He had crossed by that time and was going toward home. We learned later he belonged to Jim Lumney. As we were getting settled in camp a man came around the wagons and said, "Hello, Jawbone, you got home, did you," and we found the dog was right at home with the stranger, who introduced himself as Galen James, so Lester loosened the dog and the others had the joke on us, said we were good ones to try and steal dogs and take them right home. We had to have a little fun as we journeyed along the lonesome road.

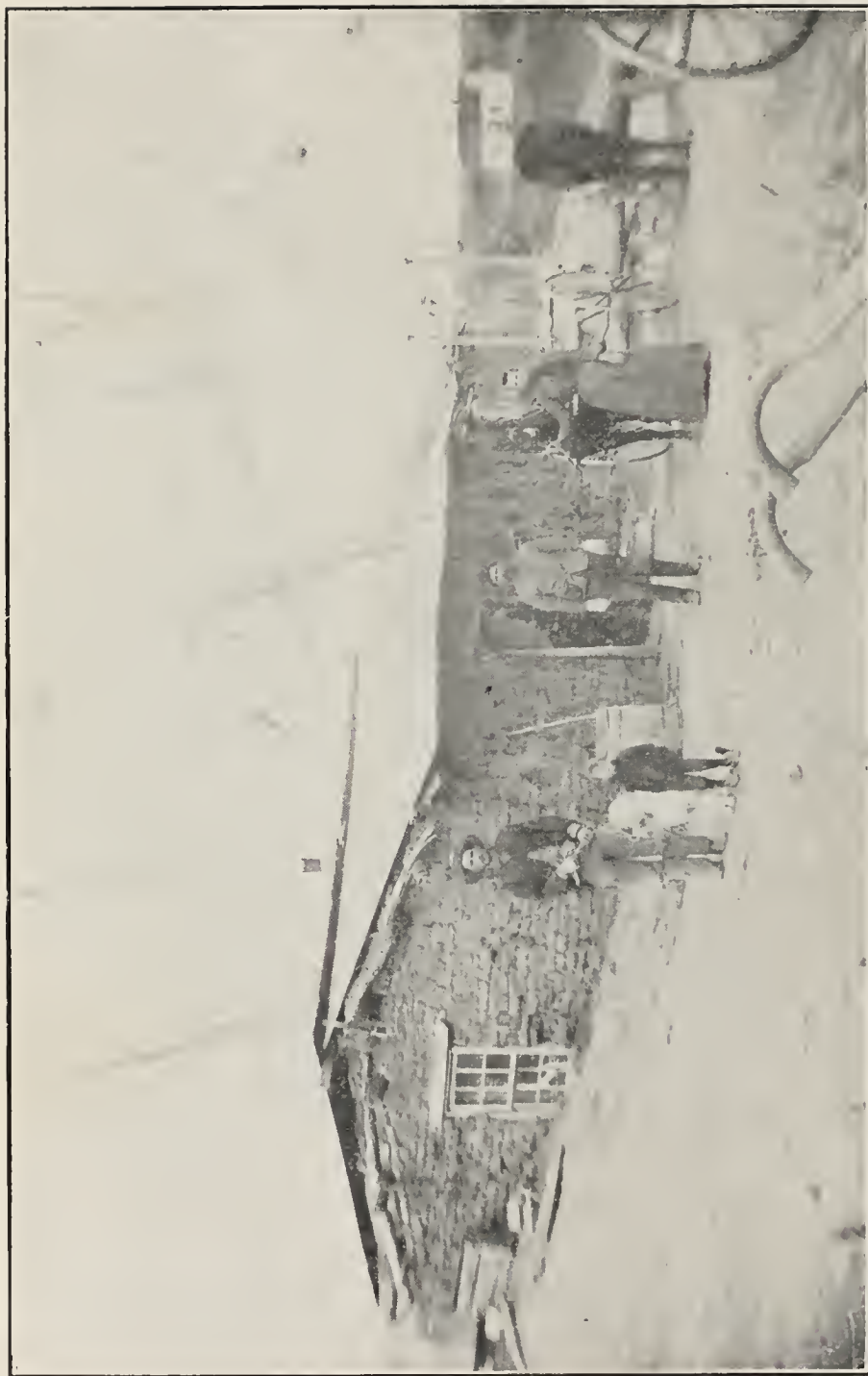
James told us of the vacant land near there and we wanted to get near where the center of the county would be when it was organized. The next morning we started up on Beaver Creek, and before noon we came to Keiser's camp. I think this was the first day of May. They had landed there the day before. We stopped and talked awhile and Danforth, Will Haney and Felix

Lester decided that they would drive on up the creek and Philip and I would stay where we were, until they would see what could be found in vacant land that suited our needs. They would mark their claims and also one for us. I think they were gone three days and when they came back and reported their find they had claims for all of us, as they supposed. The next day Philip went back with them to see the land, but the claim they had picked for us was on the school section. None of them had thought to look out for that, until they went back the second time. Danforth's homestead was very near the present townsite of Beaver City. Felix Lester's was what is known as the Tommy Williams' place. Will Haney owned the land where the depot now stands. Mr. French and I were a little disappointed when we found the choice for us was school land, but Philip then decided we would homestead joining Mr. Keiser on the east. We hitched up and pulled our wagons across the line and set the bed of the wagon off for our bed room. Then we stretched the tent at the end of the wagon bed, and that was our kitchen and dining room for a while. We lived there until we got a little breaking done, or until the first of June. Then my brother, Will Haney came down and helped us build a little log house, just one room, one door and one window with four panes of glass and a sod roof.

Buffalo ranged the hills in great herds. In fact, it seemed at that time, that it would be impossible for the buffalo to have disappeared in less than forty years, as they have done. The hills were black with them as far as you could see. We had plenty of fresh buffalo meat all of the time. Sometimes when the men went out for a hunt they would hitch up the horses and oxen and drive over the hills. I would go with them quite often. One time Lester drove his oxen, and he and Philip and Dan were all going for a hunt so I said I would go too. We went up on the divide toward the Republican river, and when we got up there the buffalo seemed to be all on the move going south. Philip and Dan got down in the canyon out of sight so they could shoot as they came by. Lester and I stayed in the wagon. The buffalo were so thick, and then they came on a run with their heads down. We thought they were going to run over the wagon, team and all. But when they got real close, they divided and some went in front and some behind the team and thus missed

annihilating us. But they never halted. Another time I remember I went with Philip and Will out in the hills for a hunt. They shot a buffalo and got it down and Will ran up to the wagon, took an ax and struck it in the head. It jumped up and ran away. Will followed for five miles, and then came back without any meat. We were all excited when the animal jumped up, for we thought it was going to fight. That fall there were flocks of wild turkeys and we could have a roast any time we wanted it. We thought we had found the garden of Eden, but later we decided it was Eden of the prairie dogs, rattle snakes and fleas. I remember one time we were talking about the country and Lester said, "I tell you folks, this is God's country, but He wasn't ready for us to settle out here yet. He hasn't finished it up." There are many more instances I could speak of, but I fear my letter would be too lengthy.

MRS. FRENCH.



A "Palatial Residence" of the Early Days

CHAPTER XXXI

**Mrs. W. H. Vining Was a Pioneer Woman Who Endured the Early
Day Hardships With Her Husband, Coming Here With
Seventy-Five Cents in Cash**

Stamford, Nebr.—Editor Times-Tribune—There have been a number of articles written by pioneers of Furnas county, but as none seemed to write about this part of the county except C. F. Wheeler, I will try to tell some of my experiences here in early days. My husband, William H. Vining and I came to Furnas county in November, 1877. We came from Scribner, Nebraska in a prairie schooner, and were on the road seven days. We stopped at Grandma Gapen's and stayed all night. The next day my husband came on to the dugout and cleaned the cobwebs and rat's nests out so we could move in. The next day we moved over. It was the first dugout or sod house I had ever seen, but I found a large room with one half window and a door, a dirt floor and a dirt roof. We put muslin overhead and it made a very nice abode. My husband laid up a log house but it had no roof on it yet, so we lived in the dugout that winter. Just before Christmas we had a three-days' rain and oh, how that dirt roof did leak! My husband wanted to take me over to Dan West's, as they had a log house with a shingle roof, but I said that I would stay with him. We set pans and buckets under the worst leaks, and we piled our clothing and everything else in a heap and covered them with a quilt. Then came the question of how to sleep without getting wet. We took one piece of a quilting frame and fastened it to the logs overhead. I put the bed slats on the chairs and then placed the bedding on them, and then we pulled the wagon sheet up over the piece of quilting frame and down to the chair backs, and we had a small tent right in the dugout. The water ran off into the pails and pans and we were quite comfortable, even though we had to crawl into bed from the foot, as the head was against the wall and the sides tied to the chair backs. We had lots of wood and kept up a good fire in the fire place, so we were

quite comfortable. The next summer we put a sod roof on our log house and got windows and a door and a floor, which made it somewhat better than a dugout.

My husband had 75 cents when we got to our claim, and he worked for 75 cents a day and paid 75 cents a bushel for corn. We lived on corn bread a good share of the time, but always tried to have some flour in the house. We got a cow from one of the neighbors to milk, as we didn't have anything to buy a cow with. We raised a good crop that summer and the next summer we raised a big wheat crop and we bought our first cow. We also had a good crop of potatoes, and it was lucky we did, for in 1880 it was dry and windy up to June 11, so there was but little raised. My husband liked to hunt and he kept us supplied with rabbits and we had our wheat for flour, so we lived through all right.

The first hogs we had I earned by doing some sewing for Eric Hanson, who was then a bachelor. I got two pigs but one of them died. The other one I would lariat out on the grass and with what slop we had I managed to keep it and raised seven nice pigs. That year we raised some corn, and we fattened our hogs and had our own meat. Usually a quarter of a beef a winter was all the meat we had, but beef was not so high priced then as it is now. People talk of hard times now, but little do they realize how the old settlers had to live. I had a neighbor come to me and ask for a meat rind to grease her bread pans with. That was in 1880. There were lots of people got aid, but we got along without it through all the hard years and never starved either.

The buffalo were nearly all gone when I came here, but I saw several. Finn Michel and Dan West each had one. I had a few encounters with rattlesnakes. One day in '78 I was going from the dug out to the log house, and in the path lay a big rattler. I called my husband and he soon made away with it. During harvest time in the summer of '79 I went out to gather the eggs. I reached into a nest and got the eggs and something seemed to tell me there might have been a snake there. I looked and there he was. I got a stick and killed him and found that he was a rattler about two feet long.

I saw a number of prairie fires but never helped fight one. I used to always look around to see if there were any fires before going to bed. My husband helped fight fire at Eric Hanson's that came near taking his home. The young people of today don't realize how we had to bear with privations in order to stay with

our homes, and many who have become dissatisfied with old Furnas county would be glad to be back on the old homestead. I have never yet been the one to say sell out and go somewhere else. Good health and a home is worth all the hardships we have to bear.

The first time I was in Beaver City was in '78. There was not a house in sight. If any one had a claim they lived in a dug out down out of sight. In all thirty-six years in Furnas county I have found good neighbors; but as I look around I find there are but few of us left. I can count but three living near, who were here when I came. They are John Brown, Eric Hanson and Eric Smith.

On March 3, my oldest and only child died of membranous croup. She was just one year old that day. I was lonely and my husband wouldn't leave me alone, so he got a little girl to stay with me. Her mother was dead and she was living with her sister, Flora Northrop. She had been here about a month when she took sick with diphtheria. We did all we could for her, but death claimed her. Then Mrs. Northrop's children took it and they all died. Mrs. Northrop also had it, but she was stronger and got over it. The Dan West's children took the disease and two of them died. Those were serious times for many of us.

In 1885 my little boy died and I was made sad again. Then in 1907 my husband was called away and the home circle was broken.

Our first school was taught by Cassie Barber. I well remember the big revival meeting held by Elder Mayo at the Carpenter school house. Then I remember when the Congregationalists started a church at Precept, and when Scott and Wheeler started a store at Precept.

I just recalled the Indian scare of 1878. My husband was going to start to Kearney on Monday and had got a girl to stay with me while he was away. He had heard about the Indians but said nothing to me. Mrs. Hiram Barber had come that Sunday evening and she said something about them, but I said nothing to my husband about what she told me. About 3 o'clock Monday morning the father of the girl staying with me came to the door and knocked. My husband went to the door and they talked for a short time in low tones. Then my husband told us to get up and we would go to Grandma Gapen's. He said the neighbors were gathering there and the Indians were coming down the creek.

When we got to Mrs. Gapen's we found a crowd of excited people. At daybreak the men mounted horses and started up the creek to see if there were really were any Indians. But when they got above Precept their hearts failed all except three. These were C. E. V. Smith, Dan West and my husband. They went up the creek until they met a preacher who told them that there had been Indians farther up the creek but the soldiers were after them.

I was not much afraid so Mrs. Barber, the girl and I went home. In a few days a big herd of cattle came through here. Many people thought that some one up the creek had seen the cattle and spread the word before there was really any danger. But it was certainly an exciting time at Grandma Gapen's. Ask Leva Rea of Beaver City about it. She had to work pretty hard to get anough for all of us to eat and no doubt remembers it well.

This was written in 1913 but perhaps will be of interest to the old settlers.

MRS. W. H. VINING.

CHAPTER XXXII

Nat M Ayers was one of the first pioneers, and he is selected to close this volume of Reminiscences

Editor Times-Tribune:—I have been reading for months past with much interest the articles written by past and present residents of Furnas county, and in these articles much has been added to the written history of the county and southwestern Nebraska. Nearly all the writers were early day settlers with whom we had a neighborly interest and personal acquaintance and friendship that can never be forgotten while the life blood flows through our mortal veins.

And I beg pardon for referring to some of the articles, not to criticize them, but to call the writers' attention to the fact that they could have said more of historical interest. One of the articles of my old time friend, B. F. Whitney, was not complete, as he ought to have written of a trial he had while he was a justice of the peace of four parties who were charged with the murder of an orphan boy on the Sappa, where Lucas and Dempster of Republican City conducted the prosecution and Morlan and Harvey for the defense. The defendants were charged with the murder of an orphan living with a family on the Sappa, but the evidence produced at the trial came nearer convicting the prosecuting witnesses than the defendants. The trial was held under a big elm tree on the Seager place on the banks of the Sappa and was witnessed by Dan West, Silas Clemmons, and came near resulting in a riot, which was only averted by strategy and cool judgment.

Mr. Whitney and the writer were members of the old Melrose Lodge No. 60, and I believe we are the only charter members living at the present time.

It has looked strange to me that with all these articles but very little has been said of the organization of the county, but as I have written of this subject in previous articles I will only mention the matter yet it was one of the important events of the early days, and in my book I have gone over the subject thor-

oughly, and will now leave it one of the early important events in making a new empire.

Mrs. Freas wrote of the prairie fire and of hustling her family out to the plowed field, but perhaps she did not know that Judge Sumney, Ed Ayers, Frank Nicholson, and the writer whipped out the side fire east of the house while she, with her family, was out on the plowed ground.

Neither do I see in any of these articles anything about the stolen bonds which were issued under an act of the legislature for the purpose of funding the indebtedness of the county, and of which so much has been said in years gone by, and on the subject of which Elder Mayo preached sermons, and John Mannering dreamed dreams and had visions.

Billy McGuire speaks of Joel Collins and Sam Bass, who with four others, held up the Union Pacific train at Big Springs, in October, 1877, and will say that if he will get a copy of the August number of Will Maupin's *Midwest Magazine* he will get a complete story of the hold-up, the names of all six of the desperadoes and a description of the men and their final capture. I was in the Black Hills that summer and lived close neighbors to the whole gang.

John Keiser's trip to Egypt to buy corn was characteristic in those days and many of us did the same thing; farther east in Nebraska and southeast in Kansas were called Egypt whither we often went to buy corn. C. A. Danforth gives a fine description of the country and of the people who first invaded that portion of the Indian country.

The conditions now and when the first settlers came to the country are very different; then our associates were the scout, the soldier, the Indian, the frontier homesteaders; now the associations are the schools, the churches, the mingling of town and country people and hobnobbing with the politician and the statesman; then a top buggy was a curiosity and when the first one was driven to Beaver City in April, 1873, by a Mr. Blackmar and A. E. Harvey, it was viewed with admiration and was as much of a curiosity at that time as the automobile was thirty or forty years later. Then to deliver a message officially or otherwise to a friend in another county or state, it must be carried by horse or wagon for many miles, requiring days for delivery, while now a flash of electricity elicks the wire or conveys the sound of your voice for hundreds of miles and in an instant your mes-

sage is delivered, while forty years ago it would have taken days or weeks to deliver the same message.

The ox team that then traveled twenty miles a day has been succeeded by the automobile that travels ten times the distance in a very few hours. The doctor came with his calomel and quinine and called appendicitis inflammation of the stomach, and now a case of appendicitis calls for an operation with the surgeon's knife and all ordinary diseases are treated on the germ theory, and thus the practice of medicine has been revolutionized.

Then the immigration moving from one state to another went in covered wagons while now the conditions are so changed that one moving any distance load their effects in a car and go by rail. Then we burned wood, but now we patronize the coal trust and burn coal brought in from other states; thus through a succession of the years the conditions have been changed in many essentials, from an Indian country inhabited by buffalo and other wild game, together with the wolves, prairie dogs, rattlesnakes and other reptiles to a country of civilization.

One reason that there were so many snakes in this, as all other new countries, is that the Indian will never kill a snake, probably from some superstition, but it is a fact that no Indian will kill a snake of any kind. I learned years ago to believe any reasonable snake story, and many of them have never been told, but in the early settlement of the country rattlesnakes were almost as plentiful as fleas, and I can assure you that there were plenty of the latter, and the nights were made hideous by the howling of coyotes and wolves.

Individual experience of the conditions existing in Nebraska in the early days that would fill volumes have never been told for there are stories and experiences of the early days yet untold, and there are but few of the early settlers now remaining to tell the story.

MOVING WEST

When I decided to go west a homestead now in view
Was just the thing for all young men, and with some neighbors
few,

We fitted out in pilgrim style with wagons for our craft
Propelled by weary ox teams, in this there was no graft.
I filed upon a homestead there and built a small log den,
Where snakes and lizards by the score went in and out again,
The prairie dogs outside the house would bark and run around,
While buffalo and antelope in plenty could be found.
The hoppers came in right good will and ate up all in sight

A cornfield then was naught to them, they ate a field at night.
And in the morning nothing left except a cornstalk stump.
Homesteads then went down a bit and prices took a slump;
Some went here and some went there for work of any kind,
While Mayo went off preaching to ease his troubled mind;
Jess Hadley lost his horses to a thief from off the plains,
And rode them off no one knows where, the thief made all the
gain,

Jake Young turned all his hogs adrift, and Danforth took a shot,
He killed but three and wounded one and Jake got fighting hot;
Judge Jenkins of the probate court tried to ease per slug;
Cap Brown done all the pleading then, but Jenkins signed kerjug.
Ike Myers bought a mower his neighbors for to please.
And Tommy Williams had one that mowed the grass with ease.
But all this trouble's passed and gone some forty years gone by
Some few abide to tell the tale, some in the church yards lie.

N. M. AYERS,
Fairmont, Nebr.

LOOKING BACKWARD

By Nat M. Ayers

The following article, *Looking Backward*, was left among the papers of the late Nathaniel M. Ayers, addressed to the *Times-Tribune*. It is probably the last manuscript written by him for publication.

Turning backward to the western border of civilization, to scenes in Nebraska when it was younger than it is today; when travel was chiefly by the prairie schooner route, with an occasional pilgrim crossing the state on foot or on horseback; when Texas beef and buffalo meat were more plentiful than packing house products are at the present time, and prices were so different that the high cost of living was not the vital importance. We are going to turn back to some of the holiday dinners and festivities that will not be forgotten so long as the vital spark of life shall animate the mortal part of those participated in the luxuries to be had when Nebraska was wearing its rompers.

In 1872 a settlement along the 100th meridian was considered as far west as a settlement along the 96th meridian ten years earlier, and it was in 1872 the first settlers located along the Beaver west from Orleans to where is now located the towns of Beaver City, Wilsonville, and other towns of less importance, and your correspondent with others located homesteads near where the town of Beaver City is now located. There was no town there then, no railroads, no telegraph, no telephone, no electric light, no water works, no automobiles, no bridges, no houses, no stores, no mail routes, 30 miles to the Alma postoffice, and the early settlers were greatly delighted to learn that the B. & M. railroad had located a town on their line from Lincoln to Kearney, only 80 miles away to be called Lowell, and here was to be located the United States land office.

All the first homesteaders were located along the streams where they could have plenty of timber and water. Wild meat, such as buffalo, antelope, and wild turkey could be had for the killing. The cattle trail had been opened from Fort Hayes to Fort McPherson and North Platte, and this afforded a little help for the homesteaders, as the herd usually dropped a few cattle in crossing the streams, they would hide in the brush and timber and were often passed without being seen, but the homesteader soon found them after the herd had passed, and of course



NATHANIEL M. AYERS

claimed them unless the real owner called for them, but this never happened.

Time dragged along, prairie sod was being broken for crops the next season, log and sod houses were being built, and people moved from their covered wagons to their new houses, hay was cut and stacked to provide for the stock during the winter months, and the holidays coming on to be celebrated in the new west. Neighbors visited back and forth, (mostly on Sundays) and much discussion was had as to how the holidays would be celebrated, and it was finally decided the Ed Ayers' folks would give a Thanksgiving dinner, Henry Moore's to give a Christmas dinner and T. M. Williams a New Year's dinner, and bachelors and all in the immediate vicinity should be invited guests at these dinners.

The writer was not married then but was living with his brother Ed, and the responsibility rested on his shoulders of providing some of the luxuries for the feast. We could not go to the store for turkey, cranberries, raisins, and such other luxuries as could be had farther east in the towns and cities, for the reason that we had no store handy, and when a store was started its principal stock was bacon, flour, soda, and ammunition, but we had plenty of buffalo meat, both dried and fresh, and we had killed a fine Texas steer that we had picked up during the summer, so to complete the list for the feast. Rob Armstrong and your correspondent went down in the timber and killed a fine turkey gobbler, making three kinds of meat for our Thanksgiving dinner. Then we had potatoes hauled in from Grand Island in a wagon, plum pudding made from wild plums, dried peach sauce, dried apple and mince pies, plenty of milk and butter, besides such other articles as could be assembled from the cupboard and improvised cellar. There was plenty and let me say that no one on earth had better appetites than the early settlers had in western Nebraska, and this feast was enjoyed by about thirty grown people and half as many children. The afternoon was spent in athletic sports and such other amusements as could be brought to mind, and this was the beginning of history in the new west. Two men had come in the day before, one an old friend and the other from Chicago, who enjoyed the dinner hugely, and those two men located near by, and both became honored citizens and held positions of trust in the county for many years.

Then came the Christmas dinner at Henry Moore's, which was about the same fare we had at the Thanksgiving dinner, consisting principally of buffalo meat and wild turkey. A small store had been started in the meantime, and the guests at this dinner decided to have a town started there, and petitioned for a mail route from Alma and a postoffice, the office to be named Creswell as first choice, and Beaver City as second choice. Creswell was postmaster general at that time, and he turned down our first choice of a name, and gave us Beaver City. No doubt he thought it would be a joke to have a little office named for him away out in the wilds of Nebraska.

Then came the New Year's dinner a week later at Mr. Williams,' but he had the others beat a mile. He had been to Grand Island, 130 miles away, and brought back a load of provisions, and in this load was a fine dressed hog. A nice piece of pork well roasted was a real luxury. It had been nearly a year since any of the party had tasted a piece of fresh pork, and this was certainly fine. The guests took to that pork as eagerly as a nigger at campmeeting would take to a con-pone and possum.

These were a few of the entertainments that were enjoyed on the frontier in the early days, and the way those three women worked and planned to make those three dinners presentable and palatable was enough to wreck the nerves of a savage, but they survived the ordeal and two of them are still living. It is seldom that any of the few now living who enjoyed those three dinners get together but something is said about those three dinners, and with all the trials and disappointments of a frontier life, there are a few happy recollections that help brighten the path of the homesteader in his declining years.

NAT M. AYERS.

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