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CENTENNIAL HISTORY
OF
POLK COUNTY,
NEBRASKA,

PREPARED BY

HON. A. NANCE,

AND READ AT THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IN

OSCEOLA,

JULY 4th, 1876.

OSCEOLA RECORD PRINT.

1876.

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COUNTY DIRECTORY.

AMON STEEVER,	}				
JOHN VAN HORN,		-	-	-	<i>County Commissioners.</i>
JOHN G. MICKEY,					
JOHN H. MICKEY,		-	-	-	<i>County Treasurer.</i>
JOHN P. HEALD,	:	-	-	-	<i>County Clerk.</i>
JAMES W. SNIDER,		-	-	-	<i>County Judge.</i>
JOHN B. MITCHELL,	-	-	-	-	<i>County Superintendent.</i>
SAMUEL G. PHEASANT.		-	-		<i>Sheriff.</i>
ANSON G. SHERWOOD.		-	-	-	<i>County Surveyor.</i>
S. O. WHALEY,		-	-	-	<i>Coroner.</i>

The following Historical Sketch of Polk County was delivered by Hon. A. Nance, member of the Nebraska Legislature from this county, at the request of the citizens of Polk County, assembled at Osceola, June 10th, 1876. The undersigned were appointed as a committee, by citizens of Polk County, Neb., at the Centennial Celebration held on the 4th of July, 1876, at Osceola, to take measures to have this Historical Sketch published, and we hereby certify that the statements therein contained are reliable and trustworthy, and that said History is a truthful and correct statement of the origin and development of our County.

L. HEADSTROM,
CALMAR McCUNE, } *Committee.*
DAVID FOY.

Osceola, Neb., July 4th, 1876.

CENTENNIAL HISTORY
OF
POLK COUNTY, NEBRASKA,
PREPARED BY
HON. A. NANCE,
AND
READ AT THE CELEBRATION IN OSCEOLA,
JULY 4, 1876.

Polk county, Nebraska, is the fourth county west of the Missouri river, and is bounded as follows:

On the north by the Platte river; on the east by Butler county; on the south by the county of York; on the west by the Platte river and Hamilton county. It comprises about 450 square miles in extent, making in all nearly 288,000 acres of land susceptible of cultivation.

The county was originally a part of Butler county, but by act of Legislature the county of Polk was included within its present boundaries.

By order of His Excellency David Butler, Governor of the State of Nebraska, a special election was ordered to be holden in Polk county, on the 6th day of August, A. D., 1870, for the purpose of electing officers, and the following-named persons were selected:

For County Commissioners—S. Stone, C. A. Ewing, Jonathan Crockett.

County Clerk—Frank Reardon.

Probate Judge—James Query.

County Treasurer—John H. Mickey.

Sheriff—Ole Bredeson.

The records of the county show that the total value of personal property in the county at this time amounted to six thousand nine hundred and sixty dollars (\$8,960). John H. Mickey made the first assessment, and his territory included the whole county.

The county-seat of the county was located in August, A. D. 1870, on the south half of the northeast quarter and north half southeast quarter of section twenty-four (24), town fourteen (14) north, range two (2) west, and the county's capital was named Osceola.

On the 14th day of December, 1870, F. M. Stone was appointed County Surveyor, and John Fox County Superintendent of Schools, thus making a full board of county officials.

Also, at the same time, the county was divided into two precincts—Hackberry and Clear Creek. The division was made as follows:

Hackberry Precinct—To extend from the south line of the county to the center of township fourteen (14) in said county, and embracing all lands from the eastern to the western line of the same.

Clear Creek Precinct—To extend from the center line of township fourteen (14) to the northern line of the county, and embracing all lands from the eastern to the western line of said county.

In the month of April, A. D. 1871, it was ordered by the County Commissioners that another precinct be formed on the west side of said county, described as follows: "Said precinct to embrace all lands lying west of the center line of range three (3), and beginning at the south line of the county and extending to the northern boundary of the same, said division to be known as Platte precinct."

In the months of August and September the question of the removal of the county seat began to be agitated throughout the county, and the County Commissioners submitted the question of such removal to be voted upon the 10th day of October, A. D., 1871.

Section nineteen (19), township fifteen (15) north, of range two (2) west, and section sixteen (16), township fourteen (14) north, of range two (2) west, were the contesting points. After a heated and exciting election the latter location was selected by a majority of fourteen (14) votes, and on the 14th day of

October, 1871, the County Commissioners issued their proclamation declaring said county seat located on the southeast quarter of section sixteen (16), township fourteen (14) north, of range two (2) west. Messrs. Frank Reardon, John H. Mickey and M. W. Stone were appointed a committee to select forty (40) acres of land out of the aforesaid tract, who located the county seat on its present site.

On the 16th day of November, A. D., 1871, the County Commissioners advertised for bids for the construction of a Court House for the county, to be erected at some point to be designated by said board on the southeast quarter of section sixteen (16), township fourteen (14) north, of range two (2) west. The contract for building the Court House was awarded to M. W. Stone, who completed said building, and it was accepted by the Board of County Commissioners March 20, 1872.

While we have thus traced the progress of the county, from its foundation up to its full and complete organization and location of its capital, we will now endeavor to record in as faithful and impartial a manner as possible the natural features of the county, its soil, climate, social and educational privileges, and, as nearly as practicable, all that has made "little Polk" the peer of any county of like age in the State of Nebraska.

STREAMS.

The Platte river, which forms the northern boundary of the county, averages about three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of a mile in width, and, although not navigable, will afford in the near future, if properly applied and utilized, an excellent mill and manufacturing power. It is also watered by Clear creek, a beautiful stream, abounding in fish of various species, which also affords some facilities for mill-power. The southern part of the county is traversed nearly its entire length by Blue river and its numerous tributaries, making Polk county one of best-watered in the State.

TIMBER.

The Platte and Blue rivers are skirted by numerous groves of timber, among which the walnut, cottonwood, hackberry, box elder and ash are the most numerous varieties.

NATURAL FEATURES, SOIL, ETC.

The land lying along the Platte river in the valley proper is very fertile, except that immediately contiguous to the stream, which is sandy and better adapted to grazing than agriculture. The soil one mile distant from the river averages from one foot to seven feet in depth. It is a rich black loam, containing a small proportion of sand, and is uniform throughout the county. The lands in the Blue river valley are of the same nature of those of the Platte, with the exception that they are adapted to agriculture to the water's edge.

The uplands of the county comprise about three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of its entire area, and are exceedingly

fertile. The soil is a black loam, from two to four feet in depth. The lands throughout the county are gently undulating, without any abrupt breaks and hollows, and can be made a fit home for the agriculturist with as great ease as any portion of the State.

PRODUCTS.

The principal products are corn, wheat, oats, barley, rye and flax. The yield of these cereals is often enormous, and in quality cannot be excelled anywhere. Wheat averages from 18 to 30 bushels per acre. Corn, 50 to 100. Oats, 60 to 75. Barley, 40 to 75. Rye, 25 to 40, and flax, 15 to 25 bushels to the acre. The labor required to produce these crops is not near that demanded in the older States, and large yields are assured many years without any apparent exhaustion of the soil.

CLIMATE.

The climate cannot be surpassed anywhere in the United States in general healthfulness. The air is pure, dry and bracing, and is full of life-giving properties.

Invalids and health-seekers from the East have in a great majority of cases been restored to perfect health, and *all* have experienced relief from the vivifying and health-restoring influences of our magnificent climate. Especially those suffering malarial, pulmonary and throat diseases are benefited, and it will soon be generally known that health as well as wealth and prosperity can be obtained in our county.

MINERAL DISCOVERIES.

No valuable minerals have as yet been found in the county, although "coal blossom" has been discovered in different localities at a depth ranging from 30 to 60 feet.

Further and more complete investigation will undoubtedly prove that coal exists in large quantities.

POPULATION.

The predominant population is native-born, although Sweden, Germany and Canada are well represented.

Particular attention is invited to the Swedish colony mainly established by Lewis Headstrom, Esq., in the western part of the county, with the town of Stromsburg as its chief trading point. Our Swedish settlers are among the most energetic and industrious of our citizens in improving and building up our young county and advancing its material interests.

The Canadian settlers, who are mostly settled in what is known as Canada precinct, in the eastern part of the county, have shown, by their well-kept and well-ordered homes and farms, that upon them the beneficence of the General Government has been worthily bestowed.

Our German fellow-citizens have carried into practice their proverbial thrift and economy, and have played an important part in placing our county

where she is, in progress and advancement behind none in the State.

The native-born population of the county are, almost without exception, emigrants from the Eastern States, from whence they came to secure free homes for themselves and their children.

Of this class a large majority belong to "Uncle Sam's boys in blue," who kept step to the music of the Union in those troublous "times that tried men's souls."

Our native-born citizens are, almost without exception, energetic, self-reliant, industrious, and, in short, just such a class as we need to make our county the foremost in the State, if not in the United States.

EDUCATION.

In common with the rest of the State, Polk county is blessed with an excellent educational system. The State having set apart two sections of land in each township, Polk county's share of this munificent endowment would amount to about sixteen thousand (16,000) acres. Her people have evinced a determination, by their acts, to preserve this heritage for their children until it shall become a magnificent endowment indeed. In 1870, when the county was organized, the people were destitute of educational advantages, but with commendable energy and enterprise they went to work to supply the deficiency, and the result is seen in our midst.

Fine school-houses, with the most improved furniture and apparatus, meet the eye on every hand. A skillful and experienced corps of teachers impart knowledge to the young Nebraskan, and direct his feet in the path of knowledge. Select, if you will, any county in the Eastern States, and our county will equal, if not surpass it in the advantages given to the youth in the matter of education. At no distant day will follow seminaries, colleges and high schools of learning, for with such a brilliant present what cannot we expect in the future?

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS.

While the people of Polk county have been alive to their educational interests, religious matters have not been neglected. Already, in many parts of the county, fine and substantial church edifices have been erected, and more are in prospect. There is not a precinct in the county in which there are not one or more church organizations alive and progressive, laboring with unabated zeal for the moral and spiritual advancement of themselves and their fellow-citizens.

NEWSPAPERS.

The first newspaper in the county, called the *Polk County Times*, W. D. Ferree, editor, was established at Stromsburg in the summer of 1872. It was short-lived, however, only about six months elapsing before its final demise. The *Osceola Homesteader* was established a few weeks later by the *Osceola Printing Company*, at *Osceola*. H. T. Arnold, editor. The paper was Republican in poli-

tics, and ably edited. It changed hands several times, the following-named gentlemen having filled its editorial chair successively: M. E. Crookham, Frank P. Burgess, W. F. Kimmel and Calmar McCune. The paper did much to instruct and enlighten the people in various ways, and was a very efficient medium in advertising and calling attention to the attractions and desirableness of Polk county as a location for those desiring to seek a home in the "Far West." In January 1876, S. F. Fleharty took charge of the paper, and thus became its centennial editor. Its name was changed to that of "THE OSCEOLA RECORD," and under the management of its editor it has become one of the leading papers of the State. THE RECORD has a circulation of nearly 600, and its subscription list is rapidly increasing.

GRASSHOPPERS.

It might be proper to refer here to the crisis that Polk county passed through in the year 1874, familiarly known as "grasshopper year." We had a tremendous rush of immigration into our county in 1873 and the spring of 1874, and as a consequence this class of settlers were nearly destitute, having expended their all in preparing their farms for the next season. The oldest settlers among us had no surplus of grain of any considerable amount to depend upon, so that our situation was exceedingly critical. The grasshopper pests had destroyed all the corn, the oats nearly so, and the wheat was materially injured.

In the fall of 1874 a County Aid Society was organized, with Lee K. McGaw, President; John A. Beltzer, Secretary. This society did a vast amount of good and alleviated much suffering. Very few of the settlers left the county, and the large majority of those who did soon saw "the error of their way," and returned in a short time. Our people, during this trying period, displayed more than ordinary heroism, and are now enjoying the fruits of their patience and self-denial exercised at this critical time.

INDIVIDUAL PROSPERITY.

We herewith append a few instances of what individual enterprise backed up with the almost unlimited resources of our county may accomplish:

R. O. D. Cummings settled in Canada Precinct in the spring of 1871, and took up a Government homestead of 160 acres, without a team, with hardly a dollar, and with nothing but a clear brain and a pair of willing hands. He passed through the trying "grasshopper year," kept out of debt, and has the following to show for his perseverance: Fifty-six acres under a high state of cultivation, a good and substantial house, an artificial grove of six acres of forest trees, among which may be found walnut, catalpa, box elder, ash, and other valuable varieties. Mr. Cummings is now the fortunate possessor of this beautiful home, and is not in debt to exceed \$20.

Cyrus Garwood, a settler in the same vicinity, came into the county in the spring of 1873, with a team and about \$700 in money. Mr. Garwood expended most of his money in putting up a frame house and making other necessary improvements. He succeeded in breaking but a small portion of his homestead in the spring of 1873, and in 1874 his crops were all destroyed by the grasshoppers, with the exception of a little wheat. Mr. Garwood had a wife and four children to support, and the future looked exceedingly dark. But he now has a beautiful farm of 160 acres, over one-half of which is improved, a splendid grove of over three acres of forest trees, and set out nearly an acre this spring. He is in debt not to exceed \$100, and thinks that Nebraska, and especially Polk county, is the proper place for a man to emigrate to and not from.

Alexander Shank, of Platte precinct, affords another bright example of what may be done in Polk county, by foresight, industry and energy. Mr. Shank has a large family, a wife and seven children, and came into the precinct with scarcely a dollar. He made settlement in the county in the winter of 1871, and the next spring went to work, having had barely enough money to support his family through the winter. He has 160 acres of land under cultivation, a fair house, two good teams, a large number of hogs, and between fifty and sixty head of cattle, and is out of debt.

George W. Cadwell, of same precinct, also has a good record to exhibit. He settled in the precinct in 1872, and had a team but no money. By close economy and untiring industry, however, he managed to struggle along, and is now the possessor of as fine a quarter section of land as there is in the county, with nearly one-half of it improved; has a good frame house, quite a number of cattle and is out of debt.

While there are dozens of such instances throughout the county, we have not been able to interview the parties and make statements concerning their progress. However, if we should attempt to record them all, the pen of the historian would tell such an amount of truth of the almost fabulous individual progress of our citizens as would amaze our steady, slow-going Eastern friends, if not the world.

In writing this history numerous details have to be entered into, and to secure this object, and for greater accuracy, the nine (9) voting precincts in the county will be separately and briefly considered:

HACKBERRY PRECINCT.

Hackberry precinct is the oldest and most populous in the county. The Blue river runs through it from east to west, and is heavily timbered. Thomas Conolly has the honor of being the first settler in the precinct, if not the first in the county. He made settlement in 1867, and was followed shortly after by Albert Seaver. The next year (1868) Mr. John Patterson and wife, with their sons—Richard, James and William—James Clark, John H. Mickey, and W. W.

Maxwell made settlement. In 1869 Messrs. James Query and V. P. Davis settled on what is now known as Davis Creek, this creek taking its name from Mr. Davis.

The first child born in the precinct, and, in fact, in the county, was Edgar Roberts, son of Mrs. Louisa Roberts, born Nov. 30, 1868.

School District No. 1 was organized in 1871 with 38 scholars; John A. Giffin teacher. Members of School Board: T. W. Blake, Moderator; James Clark, Director, and John H. Mickey, Treasurer.

In the fall of 1872 and winter of 1873 the Methodists organized the first church, under the charge of Rev. James Query, Polk county's pioneer preacher. The membership is quite large, and rapidly increasing. In the winter of 1873-4 the Church of God was organized in the Hoffer settlement, as it is called, with a membership of 30; pastor, Rev. Mr. Warner. In the spring of 1876, Rev. Mr. Earnhart, a Baptist minister, organized a church with a membership of nearly thirty.

Wayland postoffice is located in the southern part of the precinct; Kinsey Michener, Postmaster.

At the end of the year 1871 less than 100 acres of land was under cultivation; in 1876, nearly 10,000. Natural timber, about 600 acres, mostly along Blue river; about 200 acres of artificial.

Population in 1871, 30; in 1876, 512.

ISLAND PRECINCT.

Island precinct lies in the northeastern part of the county, and is so named from its being located between the two channels of the Platte river. Mr. Bouker Beebe was the first person who made a settlement in the precinct, which was in the summer of 1870. In the spring of 1871, Rudolph Kummer, H. M. Mills, M. D., William Thomas, Henry Augustine, and Alex. T. Simmons made settlement, took Government claims, and went to improving them.

The first school district organized was No. 17, with Miss Jennie Osterhaut as teacher. The School Board was composed of the following-named gentlemen: Wm. Thomas, Director; Rudolph Kummer, Moderator, and H. M. Mills, Treasurer.

Seventy-five acres of land were under cultivation at the end of the year 1871, while in 1876 over 5,500 acres were under improvement. There are about 30 acres of natural timber in the precinct, and at present about 100 acres of artificial timber have been put out by the settlers.

There is no postoffice in the precinct. Present population, 167.

CLEAR CREEK PRECINCT.

Clear Creek precinct derives its name from a beautiful stream of the same name that runs through the northern part of it from west to east.

The first settlers in the Precinct were Geo. D. Grant, G. E. Barnum, Guy C. Barnum, and Levi Kimball, who all came in about the same time.

G. D. Grant settled upon the railroad land, while the Barnums and Levi Kimball took pre-emption claims.

The first school district organized was district No. 4, in the year 1871. The school house was not built until the spring of 1872. The district had fourteen scholars; Miss Vandercoff was its first teacher. At the organization, the following-named gentlemen were elected to serve on the School Board: John Morrow, Alexander Munro, and John McPheeters.

Only about ninety acres of land were under cultivation at the end of the year 1871, and, at present, about 2,970 acres are responding to the labor of the husbandman. From the best data we are able to procure, there are about fifteen acres of natural timber in the precinct, while of artificial timber there are about sixty acres. There is one postoffice in the precinct, Redville, and it is on the mail route from Osceola to Columbus. Remy Miller, present Postmaster.

Population, 1876: 253.

CANADA PRECINCT.

Canada precinct is one of the largest, in extent, in the county, and is one of the best improved.

To James W. Snider should be accorded the honor of making the first settlement in the precinct, which he did in the spring of 1871. Closely following him was Peter Bull, William Jarmin, George Bull and family, S. O. Whaley, M. H. Whaley, J. A. Palmer, Rufus Burrett, Wm. Fosbender, H. W. Chase, M. W. Stone and D. D. Bramer. Number fourteen (14), the first school district, organized with twenty-six scholars. Members of first School Board, Stephen Bull, James Mackie and George Bull. Cyclone postoffice was established in 1873, Albert Cowles, Postmaster. Rev. Mr. Whitehead organized in the fall of 1873 a Methodist Church at what is known as the Burley School House. A building was constructed by this organization in the spring of 1876, called *Wesley Chapel*. The number of acres of land under cultivation at the end of 1871 did not exceed 100 acres. The present number of acres in this our centennial year are about 9,000 acres. There is no natural timber in the precinct whatever. By the industry and enterprise of the settlers it is estimated that there are 300 acres of artificial timber.

Population in 1871 about twenty. Present population 393.

OSCEOLA PRECINCT.

The precinct of Osceola derives its name from the county seat of the county, and is one of the most populous precincts in the county. James Query and V. P. Davis, with their families, made settlement in October, 1868. H. C. Query came in in the year 1869, and among other settlers may be mentioned J. R. Stewart, George Kerr, John A. Beltzer, Henry Hildebrand, George W. Kenyon, J. F. Campbell, Wm. Query, Lumin Van Hoosen, H. T. Arnold and others.

The town of Osceola was located at a general elec-

tion in 1871, on the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 16, town ship fourteen (14) north, of range two (2), west. The town site was purchased in June, 1872, by Messrs. W. F. Kimmel and John H. Mickey. These gentlemen surveyed and platted the town in the same month. The first building erected in the town was the Court House, which was completed in January, 1872. The second building was the store of W. H. Waters, built in May, 1872. In October of the same year Wm. F. Kimmel and John H. Mickey built the first residences, and in December, 1872, the school house was built. The town has a population of between 100 and 200, and is rapidly increasing. Nearly every branch of business is represented, among which may be mentioned 2 hotels, 3 dry-goods stores, 2 agricultural implement establishments, 1 hardware store, 1 drug store, shoe-shop, harness shop, 2 blacksmith shops, 1 wagon shop. Of the professions the town has 1 attorney 3 physicians, and 2 clergymen. The office of the Osceola RECORD is established and has very materially aided in advancing the interests of the town and county.

The first child born in Osceola was Evan Mickey, son of John H. and Morinda Mickey, January 26, 1874.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1872, with L. F. Whitehead as pastor, and with a membership of seven. Their present number is about ninety. Present pastor, J. Q. A. Fleharty.

The Congregational Church was organized in October, 1872. Pastor, C. C. Humphrey. Membership sixteen at organization. Present membership largely increased. Rev. Simon Barrows present pastor.

At the end of the year 1871 not over fifty acres of land were under cultivation. It is estimated that at present over 9,000 acres are being cultivated.

The postoffice at Osceola was established in 1872, William E. Loring, Postmaster. The office he held at his residence. Osceola was the terminus of the mail route from Lincoln via Ulysses, and the service thereon was once a week.

Most of the natural timber in the precinct is found along Davis creek, and comprises about five acres. Of artificial timber now growing there are about 300 acres.

Present population, according to census of 1876, 473.

STROMSBURG PRECINCT.

The first settler in the precinct was Wm. H. Records, who made settlement in the fall of 1869. B. F. Smith, Thomas Records, J. P. Smith, A. P. Buckley, P. T. Buckley, J. C. Smith and A. L. Larson made settlement early in the spring of 1870.

The town of Stromsburg was located and surveyed, in the summer of 1872, by Lewis Headstrom, who acted under the instructions of the Stromsburg Town Company. The first building in the town was erected in the fall of 1872, but was not occupied until the winter of 1873.

Nearly everything in the business line is represented, and the town enjoys a large and lucrative trade from the surrounding country. The present population is about 100, and increasing rapidly.

The first school district organized was District No. Ten (10), in the winter of 1872, Mr. J. A. Palmer, teacher. Number of scholars in school six (6). Messrs. J. P. Smith, Thos. Records and Wm. A. Shoemaker were members of the first school board. There are now six (6) school districts in the precinct, with a total of 180 scholars.

The first church organization was formed in the summer of 1873; denomination Baptist, with an original membership of fifteen (15). The present membership is seventy-three (73). Charles Lundgren was the first pastor.

The second church organized was the Lutheran, which was formed in the fall of 1874. J. Lundberg, pastor. This denomination has a membership of about 30.

The Congregational Church of Pleasant Prairie in this precinct was organized in the fall of 1873, with a membership of seven (7). Rev. Simon Barrows, pastor. This church has largely increased in numbers, and is in a flourishing condition.

The Methodist Episcopal Church formed a society of considerable numbers during the winter of 1875-'76. Rev. Mr. Brannon, pastor.

The Baptists and Lutherans have each a church building worth together over \$3,000.

In the year 1871 about fifteen acres of prairie were under cultivation. At present 8,386 acres.

The first postoffice was established in Stromsburg in the winter of 1873. J. C. Smith, Postmaster.

There are about fifteen acres of natural timber in the precinct, principally found along Blue river. There are at present 500 acres of artificial timber in the precinct.

Total population of the precinct, according to census of 1876, 559.

PLEASANT HOME PRECINCT.

Pleasant Home precinct is in the southwestern part of the county, and S. C. Davis has the honor of being its first settler. He came into the county the 29th of October, 1870. Shortly after Milo Barber, William Maston, J. N. Nickell, John and Henry Marty, J. D. Darrow and J. N. Skelton made settlement.

In the fall of 1872 School District No. 6 was organized with fifteen scholars. Jay N. Skelton, teacher. The members of the School Board were C. J. Doremus, J. N. Nickell and S. C. Davis.

In the summer of 1872 Pleasant Home Postoffice was established, with S. C. Davis as Postmaster.

The United Brethren was the first church to form an organization, which they did in the fall of 1872, with a membership of four. Henry Spafford was their pastor. Their present membership is about thirty-four.

The Methodists, in the fall of 1875, organized

with E. J. Hancock as pastor, membership about twenty.

There is also an organization of Adventists, with a membership of fourteen; Rev. Mr. Boyd, pastor.

During the year 1871 about sixty-five acres of prairie was broken. At present between 5,000 and 6,000 acres.

There is no natural timber of any account in the precinct. Between 350 and 400 acres of artificial timber.

Present population of the precinct, 420.

PLATTE PRECINCT.

The precinct of Platte derives its name from Platte river, and is situated in the northern part of the county.

Messrs. P. C. King and W. T. Dodge took Government claims in March, 1871, and Messrs. Guy, Faustus and James Beebe in April following. J. A. Powers and A. G. Sherwood, Geo. W. Cadwell, Oliver Scott, and others, came in shortly after.

School District No. 7 was organized in the fall of 1871, although the school house was not built until 1872. The school consisted of eight scholars, John P. Heald, teacher.

The School Board consisted of the following gentlemen: Moderator, Guy Beebe; Director, John Lohr; Treasurer, Oliver Scott.

The first postoffice in the precinct was established at Thornton, in August, 1874, J. N. Hurd, Postmaster, who is still in charge of the office.

The first church organized was that of the United Brethren, with a membership of six. The organization was made in December, 1872, Henry Spafford, pastor.

A Methodist organization was effected in March, 1875, with a membership of eleven. Present membership nearly doubled. First Pastor, E. J. Hancock.

The Lutheran Church (Swede) organized a few months since, and has quite a large membership. This denomination is now building a church in the southeastern part of the precinct.

Number of acres of prairie under cultivation at the end of the year 1875, 47; number of acres now under cultivation, 3,350.

There is but little natural timber in the precinct; what there is consisting of willows and small brush, growing along Platte river.

There are about eighty (80) acres of artificial timber in the precinct.

Present population, 250.

VALLEY PRECINCT.

The first settler in Valley precinct was B. H. Keller, who made settlement in the spring of 1871. Charles R. Clark, J. W. Sheldon, Levi Kelley and James Bell came in about the same time.

W. B. Daynude, James Harmon, William Stevens, D. C. Place, Andreas Horst, John and Joseph Curran, M. C. Stull, John Benson, Collin and Robert

Beebe and Thomas Clark were among the first settlers.

The first school district organized was Number Five (5), in June, 1871, with James Bell as teacher. Members of School Board—James Harmon, Moderator; James Bell, Director; and William Stevens Treasurer.

The first church organized was the Methodist; Rev. Mr. Whitehead, pastor. Original membership, 7.

At the end of the year 1871, there was less than 200 acres of prairie under cultivation. At present, over 9,000 acres.

Number of acres of natural timber, 100; artificial timber, 80 acres.

Population, 1871..... 20
Population, 1876..... 326

RECAPITULATION.

Number of people in the county at the end of
year 1870..... 90
In 1876..... 3,353

Increase..... 3,263
Percentage of increase, 6 years..... 3,625 per cent.
Average increase per year..... 604 per cent.
Number of scholars in county, 1871..... 120
In 1876..... 1,141

Increase..... 1,021
Percentage of increase, 5 years..... 850 per cent.
Average increase per year..... 170 per cent.

Number of acres of prairie broken at the end
of year 1871..... 742
In 1876..... 53,606

Increase, 5 years..... 53,164
Value of school property, 1871..... \$ 800
Value of school property, 1876..... 15,142

Increase 5 years..... \$14,342
Acres of natrnal timber, 1871..... 785
Acres of natural timber, 1876..... same
Acres of artificial timber, 1871..... none
Acres of artificial timber, 1876..... 2,020
Valuation of personal property, 1871..... \$ 6,960.00
Valuation of personal property, 1876..... 195,454.60
Total valuation of real and personal prop-
erty, 1876 \$810,236.00

We have thus detailed as correctly and in as reliable a manner as possible the history of Polk county, from her formation to the year 1876, the centennial year of the nation.

Our progress, although it has been marvelously rapid, has nevertheless been solid and substantial. We, or those who may come after us, need have no cause to be ashamed of the origin and development of our county, as exhibited in her advancement of the past five years.

That the next centennial year of the republic may see Polk county in the front rank and the peer of any in the State, in civilization, culture, wealth and refinement, as she is to-day, is the wish of your historian.

APPENDIX.

We herewith append as items of interest to those contemplating emigration, a few facts in regard to lands, wages of mechanics, prices, etc.

LAND.

There is some Government Land in the county, but the choicest tracts have been occupied.

Three classes of Government claims can be taken—Homestead, Pre-emption and Timber claims.

Eighty (80) acres can be taken as Homestead by any citizen of the United States, or one who has declared his intention to become such, and one hundred and sixty (160) acres by any person who has been in the military service of the United States 90 days during the rebellion. Government fees \$14.00 and \$18.00 respectively. Pre-emption claims consist of 160 acres and must be paid for at the rate of \$2.50 per acre. Any person above the age of 21 years, can enter 160 acres as a Timber Culture claim upon setting out 40 acres of forest trees on the tract so taken, and at the end of ten years will receive a patent from the Government.

All of these claims are exempt from taxation until a patent is received from the United States.

Railroad lands can be purchased in the county at from \$2.50 to \$6.00 per acre, according to location, on from 5 to 10 years time, with 6 per cent. interest.

Lands can be bought from other parties at prices ranging from \$3.00 to \$10.00 according to location, improvement, etc.

Messrs. John H. Mickey and A. Nance of Osceola and Lewis Headstrom of Stromsburg, are agents for the sale of lands in the county.

WAGES.

Carpenters' wages are from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per day; Stone Masons' and Plasterers' \$4.00 to \$5.00; Painters' \$2.50 to \$4.00. Common labor is not very much in demand, as farmers, until their farms are more thoroughly improved, can do most of their own work.

Farm labor commands from \$16.00 to \$22.00 per month and board. Day laborers from \$1.00 to \$1.50.

PRICE LIST.

Lumber.....	\$22.00 to \$27.00.
Lime.....	\$2.25 to \$2.50.
Brick.....	\$11.00 per M.
Horses.....	\$200 to \$300 per pair.
Work Oxen.....	\$75.00 to \$140 per yoke.
Milch Cows.....	\$25.00 to \$40.00.

Groceries, Dry Goods, Furniture, etc. etc., are about the same in price as in the East.

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