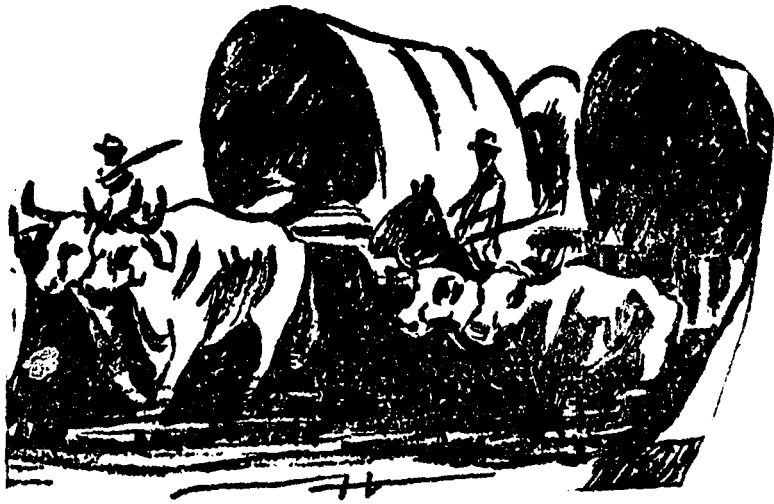


DAYS OF YORE

Early History of Brown
County, Nebraska



Compiled by

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History of Brown County

History has been defined as a "systematic written account of events." In presenting this sketch of some of the leading events of Brown County, Nebraska, I have endeavored to abide by that definition, though material of a reminiscent or narrative character may occasionally be included.

Another writer has said, "History is not made by documents, but by human beings." The material I have collected and arranged for this sketch was, in the main, given to me by the early residents of this county. To them I shall always feel indebted for their assistance in compiling the facts which make up our county history. It is all inscribed in never-fading pictures on the memory tablets of our pioneers, those brave men and woman who endured the hardships of life in a new country that it might become a place of civilization. If this sketch serves to call to mind the efforts of these pioneers to found homes and to bring law and order to an uncharted wilderness, it will have served its purpose. To those who came in later years, I trust it may bring a slight understanding of what it means to be a pioneer.

Let us try to imagine what this portion of Nebraska was like before the coming of the white settlers. A great expanse of prairie, slightly rolling, spread out on every side as far as the eye could reach, most of it covered with a rich growth of grass. Some varieties of this grass were tall with stiff, straight stems, some of low growth with delicate, curling blades. Here and there were running streams which were hidden in canyons or ravines where trees and shrubs were found, but until the edge of the canyon was reached the entire country appeared to be "a sea of grass,"

which stretched ever on and on toward the setting sun.

Over these vast plains wandered great herds of buffalo. In the spring and summer seasons they lived farther south, but came to this section for fall and winter grazing. The short grasses, dried by the burning summer suns, kept their flavor and nourishing qualities, thus furnishing excellent winter feed for these magnificent animals (giving the name "buffalo grass"). The herds found water and shelter from winter storms in the canyons and the rough land near them.

Other wild animals were here in greater or less numbers—deer, antelope, coyotes, wolves, bears, prairie dogs, rabbits, prairie chickens, grouse, ducks, geese and a few fur-bearing animals. All found suitable homes in the trackless wilderness.

The region was ideal for hunting-grounds, and long before the white men came to use it for that purpose, it was visited by roving bands of Indians. In the remote past there may have been resident tribes but earliest records show it was claimed by the Oglala and Brule tribes of the Sioux nation who held all of what is now northwest Nebraska, as far east as Long Pine canyon. These two tribes, with their allies, the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, fought other Nebraska Indians who lived in the eastern and southern sections of our state, to prevent them from hunting on these choice grounds. (It is believed that one of the last of these battles occurred about one and a half miles north of Long Pine, as battle scarred trees, human bones and broken fire arms were found there by early settlers.

It will probably never be definitely known just who the first white men were who saw the land now included in Brown county. After the settlements along the Atlantic coast became well established, several nations of Europe sent exploring expeditions into the middle west. Some were searching for gold and other precious treasure, some wished to claim the land for their governments, and others were led only by the love of adventure.

Sheldon's History of Nebraska gives this interesting account of the explorations by the Spaniards. One expedition led by a Scotchman, James Mackey, (Fr. Jacques Machey) reached the region of the North Loup river in 1795-96. He continued westward to the great sandhill lakes of Cherry county, then traveled northward to the Niobrara river which he followed down to where it joins the Missouri river. Mackey made an accurate map of the regions that he had explored which was published in Paris in 1802. On this map in the region of Long Pine creek is this inscription: "Mountains of sand, underlain by subterranean and invisible streams in the midst of which is a great canyon, two hundred fifty feet across and one hundred fifty deep, formed by the washing of the mountains." This map entitles Mackey to the honor of being the first white man to explore the sand hill region of Nebraska. If others came they left no record of having visited this locality.

These early explorers were followed by men in search of new homes. Settlements were made along the Missouri River, and from these settlements the more venturesome ones followed up the rivers that empty into the Missouri for the purpose of hunting and trapping wild animals for food and furs. These were taken back to

the settlements and traded, bringing good profits to the hunters. It took only a few years of this systematic hunting to kill off the immense herds of buffaloes. They were slaughtered without mercy, the white hunters taking only the hides and the choicest cuts of meat. With the vanishing of these animals the main source of food was taken from the Indians, and they became very hostile to all white men who ventured to cross the borders into their hunting grounds.

The discovery of gold and silver in California and other western states lured thousands of men from eastern states to try to reach the gold fields where they hoped to become rich by their findings. It is possible that some of these gold seekers may have crossed our country.

Missionaries were sent to the Indian tribes in the hope that they might be taught the principles of the Christian faith and the ways of civilized living. These devoted men came from the white settlements along the Missouri river or from their homes in the eastern states. All of these venturesome men, whatever their purpose in coming—the early explorers, the hunters of wild game, the gold seekers and the devout missionaries, left slight traces of their travels. A trail through the tall grass, ruts made by wagon wheels, ashes left from a campfire, all told a story to the white men who came later.

In time these dim traces of travel were followed by other men making a well marked route, known by a name to direct other travellers. Slight traces of these old trails may still be seen in places. The earliest of these is probably the "Sawyers Trail." It was begun in 1865 by a United

States government expedition for the use of freighters taking supplies and mining machinery to Virginia City, Montana, where gold had been discovered. Its eastern terminus was Niobrara (at the mouth of the Niobrara River) and passed across Brown County a few miles south of that river.

The "Calamus Trail" entered Brown County near the southeast corner. Its eastern terminus was Fort Hartsuff (near Ord). It followed up the North Loup river, then the Calamus river to its source in Moon Lake, then on west through the sand hills to the forts in the western part of the state. It was used chiefly as a military route for United States troops passing from one post to another. In later years a government post was maintained on the north shore of Moon Lake, affording a stopping place for travellers and also a place for securing supplies. (Moon Lake was at first named Post Lake from the fact that this government post was located on its shores. Branches from Calamus Trail led to other places, and these trails and the last traces of the supply post may still be found by diligent search.)

The "Gordon Trail" was made in the spring of 1875 by a large company of gold hunters from Sioux City, Iowa, who were trying to enter the Black Hills against the orders of the government. The expedition kept to the south side of the Niobrara river in order to evade United States troops from Fort Randall (South Dakota), who had been ordered to prevent them from entering the Black Hills. The troops overtook the Gordon party near the present site of Gordon, Nebraska, and destroyed the wagons and other property of the miners who were all placed under arrest and taken to Fort Randall. (There were twenty-nine wagons with four-horse teams, so their

trail was well marked. It passed north of Long Pine, then followed quite closely the present route of U. S. Highway No. 20 across the county, passing just north of the court house and crossing Bone creek northwest of Ainsworth. This trail and other routes followed by early freight wagons are sometimes called "Black Hills Trails.") All of these dim reminders of by-gone days tell us a story of brave men who ventured into a wilderness, the leaders of a migration that later came in a never ending procession.

In 1857 Lieutenant G. K. Warren of the U. S. Army was sent to explore the Niobrara river. He was equipped with a few wagons drawn by eight-mule teams and a small force of men. The object of the expedition was to find a practical route for freighting army supplies from Fort Randall to Fort Laramie. That he did not find such a route is a matter of history, though his reports show that he made a thorough exploration of the country adjoining the Niobrara and Keya Paha rivers. (If this expedition left a "trail," I have yet to hear of it.)

Another class of men sometimes came into this wild, new country. They planned their travels carefully that they might leave no trails for others to follow. They were outlaws who lived by stealing horses from farmers in Iowa and eastern Nebraska. The stolen stock was brought to this lonely country and hid until a safe market could be found for it. The canyons afforded good pasture and safety, Plum creek being well adapted to this purpose. (It was there that the notorious "Doc" Middleton and his band of horse thieves had headquarters, though his home was near Mariaville in what is now called Middleton canyon. The remains of a corral on Hazel

Creek, Middleton hill,, said to have been his "lookout" on Plum creek and Doc's lake in Cherry county are reminders of his residence here in early days.)

All the northwestern portion of this state was at one time known as "unorganized territory" and was given the general name "Sioux County" though there were no county officers. The only government it had was administered from the military posts. The Nebraska state government gradually took this over after 1867 when the territory was admitted to the union. As scattered settlements were made the "unorganized territory" was divided up and counties established. Large companies of settlers came to O'Neill in 1874-'75. Holt county was organized in 1876, and for a few years the land which later became Brown county was attached to Holt for purposes of taxation.

Cattle ranches were the first settlements made in northwest Nebraska. The surplus stock from these ranches was bought by the United States government at good prices, so the business was a profitable one for a few years. To the west of Brown county several large outfits were found very early, previous to 1880: Boiling Springs ranch owned by Carpenter and Morehead; the JP ranch on the Niobrara about twelve miles below Boiling Springs; the Newman ranch twenty-one miles west of Boiling Springs; and the Hunter ranch about due south of where Gordon is now located. The herds owned by these outfits were driven into this country from Texas over the old "Chisholm Trail". They were the Texas longhorns, a breed no longer seen in this state.

These ranchers were in continual warfare with the Indians and many lonely

graves are found in the hills along the Niobrara river where rest the remains of cowboys who were shot and scalped by Sioux.

Each year the Sioux became more dissatisfied and warlike. Many treaties were made with them by commissioners sent out by the United States government, but they were made only to be broken, both the government and the Indians being equally faithless. Due to the loss of their buffalo herds, the Indians were starving. They blamed the white settlers for their troubles, and as these troubles increased so did their hatred of the white race, though in earlier days the Sioux were friendly to white men.

By terms of a treaty signed in 1868 the Black Hills had been ceded to the Sioux Indians. After gold was discovered in the Hills in 1874 no further efforts were made to keep the white men out of the Hills. The Indians had broken their part of the treaty, and the government knew that the mines would never be worked by the Indians, so the entire agreement was set aside. (The Sioux are still trying to collect large sums of money in payment of their claims to the Black Hills.)

Fort Hartsuff near Ord, Nebraska, was built in 1874 to protect settlers of the Loup Valley from Indians and outlaws, but it was too far away to afford any protection to the country along the Niobrara. Congress decided to locate the Sioux on reservations where they could be kept from wandering and committing depredations on the incoming settlers. In the fall of 1876 the United States government sent commissioners to the Sioux headquarters in western Nebraska to ratify a treaty which was signed by Chief Red Cloud of the Oglalas and Chief Spotted Tail of the

Brule Sioux. The Indians agreed to remove to land reserved for them in South Dakota. Each Indian was given a small sum of money, beef and other supplies every month and heads of families were given free title to one hundred sixty acres of land. The Brules were located on what is now called the Rosebud reservation; the Oglalas farther west at Pine Ridge. The construction of the agency buildings was begun in 1878. This move drew the attention of home seekers to North Central Nebraska, as the removal of the Indians gave people confidence that their lives would be safe from attacks. A railroad was heading in this direction which was an added inducement to those looking for land.

Again the Indians failed to live up to the terms of their treaty and were continually wandering from their reservations, robbing and killing any white men they could find. As an added safeguard it was decided to send troops to keep the Indians in bounds.

In 1879 General Crook of the United States army, commanding the department of the Platte was ordered to select a suitable place for a new fort. He made a visit to the region, and recommended a point on the Niobrara river south of the Rosebud agency. The post was established April 22, 1880 by Major John J. Upham of the 5th U. S. Cavalry. Three companies of his regiment and one company of the 9th Infantry were the first troops to be stationed there.

The post was named Fort Niobrara. The buildings were mostly of adobe brick. The other materials used in their construction and supplies for the soldiers were brought by large freighting outfits from Neligh, then the western end of the rail-

road. These outfits consisted of ten to twenty heavy freight wagons with twelve yoke of oxen on each wagon with trailer. Some smaller freighting outfits did a thriving business hauling supplies for the new military post, and for ranchers who established themselves nearby. They in turn did a good business selling their cattle on hoof to the government to feed the soldiers and for the monthly beef issue to the Indians. ~~(Ft. Niobrara~~ was abandoned in 1907, troops were removed and all the buildings disposed of but one which is now used by the U. S. Game Preserve which has its headquarters on the site of the old Fort near Valentine.)

Immediately after the troops were sent to Fort Niobrara a government mail stage made regular trips twice each week. John and George Berry had the contract for this stage line. The Bassett home in Long Pine Canyon was a stage station in charge of John Danks. Bone Creek post office at the Cook and Tower ranch served a large scope of country for mail. (This ranch house was near the present city limits of Ainsworth on the northwest, where the Gordon trail crossed Bone Creek. Ed Cook was postmaster, Mrs. Nannie Osborne, deputy).

After the Morris bridge was built across the Niobrara river near the present site of Carns the freighting outfits some times crossed there paying one dollar for the privilege. Continuing their journey on the north side of the river to Fort Niobrara and western ranches they avoided fording Pine, Plum, and other creeks, but when they returned with empty wagons they usually followed the road which crossed our county (through Twp. 30 to Atkinson.)

The Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley railroad began building westward in the late 70's. Each year it pushed farther into the new farming regions. To supply the needs of the new settlers the railroad carried freight, mail, express and passengers to its western terminus, Oakdale, then Neligh which it reached in 1880.

In the late 70's the cattle men came ahead of the railroad. They were attracted by the rich, abundant grasses of the prairies which offered excellent range for their herds, with water, shelter and firewood to be found in the canyons. As a rule these ranchers held a "water front" on some running stream and had no legal title to the land as it had not formally been thrown open for settlement. Government surveyors had been at work for several years blocking out the land in sections, townships and ranges so that records of each man's land could be kept. They began near the Missouri river in the southeast part of the state, and each year pushed a little farther west and north. Great dangers and hardships were suffered by the surveyors while on duty in the new country. Robert Harvey of St. Paul, Nebraska, was in charge of the work in this portion of the state.

The winter of 1880-'81 has gone into history as one of the most severe that was ever known. The prairies were covered with snow so deep that the cattle could not graze on the buffalo grass on which the ranchers relied for their winter feed. The snow came early in the fall and laid on the ground all winter. It was so deep that the cattle could not travel, and at times a crust of ice covered the surface of it making travel impossible as the cat-

tle sank into the snow and thousands of head starved to death, sometimes in sight of the hay which ranchers had put up to be fed when the cattle could not graze. Of the 3,000 head on the Cook ranch only 800 were left in the spring. Other ranchers had similiar losses and were obliged to close out, thus leaving the fertile prairies open to settlement by the farmers who came a few years later. To these hardy frontiersmen much credit is due for their efforts to establish cattle ranches in this country to which it is so well adapted. Had they understood the climate they could have protected their stock from blizzards as is now done and saved themselves from losses.

Among these early ranchers were Cook and Tower on Bone creek, A. M. Brinkerhoff at the mouth of Pine creek, G. W. Howenstein, J. W. Roselle, James Abernathy and G. W. Kirkpatrick.

The first survey for a railroad was made on the north side of the Niobrara river . This fact may account for the early settlements along the Niobrara and Keya Paha Rivers.

The newcomers who followed the cattle men were mostly farmers with a few doctors, lawyers, preachers and merchants, all seeking the free land that could be obtained under the homestead law. The head of a family or any citizen twenty-one years of age could obtain one hundred sixty acres of land by living on it for five years and making a few improvements (building a small home and plowing a few acres of prairie. There were also small fees to be paid amounting to about \$18). There were two other methods of obtaining a quarter section of land; the timber claim law which required that ten acres must be set to living trees;

and the pre-emption claim which required six months residence and the payment to the government of \$1.25 per acre. Some ambitious homeseekers obtained land by all these methods.

These early settlers arrived in true pioneer style, some driving the entire distances from their former homes in covered wagons, with a few cattle and chickens and their household necessities ready to begin life on "the claim". Others came by rail to Oakdale or Neligh (and later to O'Neill or Long Pine), then took transportation from there with freighters or others who kept suitable outfits for such journeys.

The railroad reached Long Pine in 1881. It was then called the "Sioux City & Pacific." A good sized town soon sprung up and many newcomers built homes in the canyons of Pine and Willow creeks nearby. In the spring of 1882, the railroad pushed westward. Two preliminary surveys were run, one north and one south of where it was finally built. A townsite was surveyed about a mile north of the present site of Ainsworth, but abandoned when the line of road was changed. The station was named in honor of "Captain" J. E. Ainsworth of Missouri Valley, who was in charge of the construction. The first train arrived in Ainsworth June 11, 1882.

Later in the summer the road was completed across the present limits of the county and a station established on the homestead of John Berry. It is very probable that the name, Johnstown, was in his honor. A postoffice had been established in 1881, two and one half miles north of Johnstown. It was called "Evergreen" and Harrison Johnson was postmaster.

New settlers came in great numbers in the spring and summer of 1882. A general feeling prevailed that the organization of a county should be attempted. To make the journey to O'Neill on county business was very inconvenient and expensive, and all filings had to be made at O'Neill or Valentine. As the population increased the need of county government was keenly felt.

In December, 1882, Frank Sellors and Merritt Griffiths circulated a petition asking that the coming legislature pass an act establishing a new county from unorganized territory lying west of Holt county. The boundaries as set forth in the petition included what is now the three counties, Brown, Rock and Keya Paha, and was a tract forty-eight miles from east to west and sixty-four miles north and south. It had been under the jurisdiction of Holt county for some years.

Two bills defining the boundaries of Brown county were introduced; one in the senate by Moses P. Kinkaid of the twelfth district; the other in the house by Frank North of the twenty-third district. The bills were practically the same and both were introduced on January 9, 1883. Kinkaid's bill passed the senate on January 24th without a dissenting vote, but was lost in the house, that body having already passed North's bill on February 8. The senate passed this bill on February 14 and it was approved by Governor Dawes on the 19th. From the fact that there were not less than five members of the legislature of '83 by the name of Brown, and that the petition mentioned no name, it was decided to call the new county "Brown." Loup and Cherry counties were organized the same year.

A committee consisting of Ed. Cook,

T. J. Smith and Leroy Hall went to Lincoln in the interests of the new county. The result was the appointment by Governor Dawes of the following named special officers on March 17:

Clerk —D. B. Short.

Commissioners —D. D. Carpender, Thos. Peacock, I. N. Alderman.

Ainsworth was named the temporary county seat. I have been told that when the news of this action reached Ainsworth, the rejoicing was strenuous and pronounced. These special officers met April 5th and took the oath of their respective offices. In May the county was divided into three commissioner districts and the following precincts were organized and voting booths established in each; Kirkwood, Bassett. Thatch, Long Pine, Griffiths, McGuire, Ainsworth Johnstown and Keya Paha. J. L. Harriman was appointed superintendent of schools and the Western News, T. J. Smith, was made the official organ. A special election was called for July 19, when county officers as follows were elected:

Clerk—C. W. Stannard.

Judge—S. G. Sparks.

Treasurer—John Staley.

Sheriff—John Sullivan.

Superintendent of Schools—W. G. Townsend.

Coroner—Albert Palmer.

Surveyor—R. Strait followed by Dennis Collins, then W. S. Collins.

Commissioners—First district, P. A. Morris; second district, D. B. Short; third district, D. D. Carpender. At this same election Ainsworth was made the permanent county seat.

John Sullivan having failed to qualify, Jasper Stanley was appointed sheriff. John Sullivan and Ed. Cook were appoint-

ed stock brand inspectors. On August 9th, the commissioners rented the east ten feet of Reed's hall for the use of the county officers for \$10 per month, with the privilege of using the balance of the hall when necessary for a court room. This hall was the second story of the old Snell building, on the east side of Main street, which was destroyed by fire a few years ago. A few pieces of furniture were purchased for the use of the new officers, also a safe costing \$550, books for county records, material for bridges and a few roads were laid out. February 28, 1883, the sum of \$300 was set aside to build a bridge over the Niobrara river at Mead's ranch. The balance of the cost of the bridge was to be met by subscription and the site was donated. J. S. Carnahan was appointed foreman of the work. A similar plan was adopted for bridges at Brinkerhoff's and Morris' bridge and the same amount of money set aside for each. The bridge at Mead's ranch was accepted and opened for use December 9, 1885: in the meantime the county had purchased from Mrs. Osborn a ferry boat for which they paid \$96.70. This ferry boat was sold soon after to Mead and Stokes who did a thriving business.

At the general election of 1883 these special officers were re-elected with the following exceptions: Clerk, B. H. McGrew; treasurer, J. A. Plympton; sheriff, H. J. Simpson; coroner, J. H. Spafford. J. F. Burns was appointed county attorney at a salary of \$100 per year. In June it was found that the assessed valuation of the entire county (now three counties) was but \$649,195.75, of which the railroad and telegraph companies was \$240,115. A levy for taxation was made of

9 mills general, 4 bridge and 2 road.

The new county was now in fairly good running order. The usual perplexing problems came up to annoy and create factions. The bridge question seems to have been quite satisfactorily handled. The bridges over the Pine, Plum and Bone creeks, in addition to those over the Niobrara, were among the early undertakings. The care of prisoners occupied much attention, and consumed not a little of the county funds, as it was necessary at first to send them to other counties to be kept. In June, 1883, Mrs. N. J. Osborn gave to the county a small building to be used as a jail, which by installing steel cells and being remodeled met the needs of the county until 1889, when \$1,000 was set aside to build a jail and sheriff's residence; \$600 was added to this sum later for the completion of the building.

Establishing roads was another problem on which many citizens were busy, also the changing of precinct boundaries and establishing new precincts. The county commissioners were besieged with petitions on these subjects at almost every session. One of the first precinct divisions made was that of Keya Paha (the entire county) into Burton and Keya Paha precincts. The care of the insane and the poor, the soldiers' relief work, the county printing, the claims of the rival agricultural societies at Ainsworth and Long Pine, the salaries of the minor county officers, such as the superintendent of schools, county attorney and the county physician were some of the questions the commissioners had to deal with at that early date.

But all these matters faded into insignificance before two great questions, namely, county division, and the building of a court house. As early as October, 1883 residents of the eastern part of the county petitioned for an election to vote on county division, the new county to be called Elkhorn. A year later, October 14, 1884, a petition was presented, signed by Ralph Lewis, John A. Plympton and 243 other voters asking that the question of detaching a portion of Brown county and erecting the same into a new county to be known as Keya Paha county, be submitted to a vote of the people at the next general election. The new county was to include all that part of Brown lying north of the center of the channel of the Niobrara river, and containing 25,471 acres, the petition was granted and at the general election on November 4, a majority of voters favored the division. Twice in 1886 and again in 1887 petitions were before the commissioners asking that an election be called to vote on the question of making the eastern portion of Brown into a new county to be called Elkhorn. On August 1, 1888, a petition was presented, asking that the question of county division be submitted at the general election in November. The new county was to be called Rock and the boundaries were defined as they now stand. It took 37,352 acres from what remained of Brown, leaving 40,491. The election was called and the majority of voters favored the division. Then began a long drawn out controversy between the two counties as to the division of the property held in common, such as safes, steel jail cells, lumber, coal, wood, county records, and even the grounds on which the court house stood. For two years the matter re-

mained unsettled, and though the commissioners of the two counties held many joint sessions an agreement was not reached until 1890, and all points in dispute were settled except the right of Rock county to hold an interest in the court house site. This matter was taken into district court and then carried to the supreme court with the result that Rock county won her contention.

The other vexed question was the permanent location of the county seat and the building of the court house. Ainsworth had been named as the temporary county seat, but before the division of the county into Rock and Brown Long Pine was much nearer the geographical center, east and west.

In January, 1884, Mrs. Osborn deeded to Brown county the block of ground where the court house now stands on the condition that it be used for a court house site. This gift materially strengthened Ainsworth's claim to become the permanent county seat. Meanwhile the commissioners had found Reed's hall ill adapted to use as a court house. In June 1884, the main hall of the Ainsworth opera house, later the Osborn hotel, was rented for \$25 per month till Brown county should build a court house. The rent was later reduced to \$20 per month.

In 1886 a building on the east side of Main Street, then a skating rink locally known as the "bustle buster," was purchased by the commissioners for \$1200 from J. W. Alden, who with Henry Woodward, P. D. McAndrew, Leroy Hall, L. K. Alder and S. P. Hart bound themselves to move the building to the southeast corner of the court house square and fit up four public offices in it without expense to the county. This contract was cancel-

led a few months later, and Brown county was still without a court house.

On August 31, 1886, the first decided step was taken toward building a court house. It was plain to be seen that it would be impossible to carry an election by the necessary two-thirds majority to bond the county for a building. A petition was signed by more than fifty residents of Ainsworth precinct asking the commissioners to call an election for the purpose of voting precinct bonds in the sum of \$10,000 for building a court house on the court house square, Ainsworth, was presented to the commissioners and granted. Accompanying the petition was a bond pledging the cost of the said election if the required two-thirds majority could not be obtained. Two elections were held, the second being necessary on account of an irregularity. The majority favored the bonds which were issued by the commissioners.

Plans and specifications for the building were prepared by W. D. Vanatta and Co., and the usual procedure of asking for bids was followed. The contract was let on October 3, 1887, to Wm. Whitticar, Frank Whitticar, W. D. Vanatta, J. B. Finney and Lew Williams, for the sum of \$9,750. In payment they took bonds issued by Ainsworth precinct. The bond given by the contractors for the faithful fulfillment of the contract was signed by S. Backey, R. S. Rising, Altschuler and Rippey, and Ed T. Cook. A. Rathburn was employed by the county as superintendent of construction. He was succeeded later by W. H. Baldwin. West Point brick were used for the building at a cost of \$13 per thousand. It was completed and formally accepted by the board of commissioners on November 22,

1888. The following year \$1,000 was set aside to purchase furniture for it.

In July 1889, it was struck by lightning and as a result some repairs were necessary. From time to time a few repairs and changes have been made but in the main the building stands practically as it was built. A small sum of money derived from renting it was set aside in April, 1890, to purchase trees for the court house square, an enterprise which we highly appreciate today.

While the work of erecting the court house was in progress a petition was presented signed by 1228 voters asking that the county seat be relocated. As this number was more than three fifths of all the voters in the county, the petition was granted and the election called for July 10, 1888. On the same date an election was held to decide the question of issuing bonds in the sum of \$18,000 to be used in paying off the indebtedness of the county, which had been accumulating since its formation. Strenuous efforts had been made to collect the delinquent taxes but the debt steadily increased. The election resulted in the issue of the bonds and the county seat remaining at Ainsworth.

For a few years, during the 80's the tide of immigration flowed steadily until there was claim shanty on almost every quarter section of tillable land. The years 1884 and 1885 were marked by an unusual rush of newcomers. A few cattle ranches had been opened in the sand hill sections, but at that time the grass was very sparse, and only in the valleys was the growth heavy enough for grazing. This was probably due to the frequent prairie fires which swept over them.

The normal, yearly rainfall of Brown

county is about 24 inches (23.98 as shown by the average all-time records). Although no records were kept the early settlers say rains were plentiful and that harvests were abundant, especially wheat which was of excellent quality. In 1884 and again in 1888 a carload of wheat shipped from Ainsworth took the first prize offered by the Chicago board of trade as the best grade received there during those years.

Garden products grew with almost no cultivation and were also of excellent quality. Food was plentiful for those who were willing to put forth even ordinary effort. The late P. D. McAndrew once wrote of our early settlers: "Brown county received a large contingent of Uncle Sam's nobility and very best citizens, full of faith, zeal and energy, who went to work in dead earnest, and soon proved to the satisfaction of everyone that this is a white man's country".

It is true that these pioneers had a great many hardships to endure, many handicaps to overcome. But few of the comforts and none of the luxuries was the rule. Small houses, many of log or sod, a restricted social life, few churches and schools, yet on the whole everyone seemed contented and happy. The blizzards and extreme cold of winter, the heat, cyclones hailstorms and prairie fires of summer, Indian scares, rattlesnakes, cattle rustlers, horse thieves and other "pests" or annoyances were overcome or endured.

Courts were soon organized; law and order prevailed with but a small amount of crime and lawlessness. Vigilance committees were active in some sections and several lynchings took place, but the greater portion of the people felt secure

in their new homes. They had faith in this country, believing that the good crops would continue. They had faith in the integrity of the new county of Brown and its officers. They had hope that the future would bring its blessings in easier living, better schools, more roads and bridges and a broader, pleasanter life for their children.

As they saw their new location they could note signs of progress on every hand. Building materials were very high but as settlers made final proof on their claims the log cabins, dugouts, soddies and small frame "shacks" that had done service for dwelling and school houses were replaced by well built structures of lumber. The general trend was toward a building that would endure.

The county income from taxable property was very uncertain, but the county officials did well with the tax money that could be collected, and a general improvement in roads and bridges was to be seen each year.

But this progressive spirit was very suddenly checked when crops began to fail for lack of rains. In 1890 many farmers failed to raise enough to feed their stock and family, and appealed to the county for relief. The county, in turn, appealed to the state. Small amounts of money received afforded some help for the needy, but there was need for very rigid economy everywhere.

The dry seasons continued and each year more families were obliged to ask for relief. Many became completely discouraged and left the county. Farms were deserted, stock was sold at low prices, given away or turned out to die. Banks began to fail, which made times more strenuous for the county, the farmer and

business man. Many firms were forced to close their doors. By 1895 the population had dwindled to about one half of what it had been before the dry years.

No one starved, but there would have been great suffering had it not been for the aid from outside the drouth-stricken counties. Supplies of food and clothing in car load lots were distributed in "Relief stores" to all who would accept them. These were sent by people of eastern states. Our own citizens gave generously of their time and money to those less fortunate, and the state furnished seed grain so that the farmers who had the courage to put in another crop each spring were enabled to 'Carry on.'

One of our early homesteaders, Charles N. Swett, once wrote a very vivid word picture of farming conditions during the drouth years. (Mr. Swett, now deceased was granted the first patent for land now included in Brown county, to be issued from the Valentine land office. His patent (or deed) was dated August 13, 1883.) His description follows:

Drouth Years 1893-4-5

"About one-half of each homestead was broken up by 1893. Crops had been good, and you would find lots of cattle south, with some north and west of town. In 1893 the drouth started in July. It was dry and hot. Corn that year averaged about five to six bushel, small grain about fifteen bushel.

In the spring of 1894 it was very damp. Wheat stooled on the ground, and got very thick. Again the drouth hit in May and June the wheat died before it headed out. Corn tasselled out, but tassels fell off, and there was not an ear in the entire field. Some wheat made two bushels per acre. No oats were cut. In

the heat of the day corn would roll up like a cigar; at night would uncurl and look fine.

In 1895 crops were little better. Just raised enough so the people managed to get through. People left Brown county by wagon loads. Very few farms occupied on Bone Creek. Some couldn't get away because they couldn't sell what they had. A cow wouldn't bring \$15, and shoats sold for 50 cents to \$1.00.

"In 1893 and '94 aid was sent to this county— food supplies and clothing. R. S. Rising and J. Kingery were the committee in charge. Rations were issued to all who were in need, just enough to last one week. Dan Woodward had charge of the store with Rising and Kingery over him.

Those who left here found good crops around O'Neill and Neligh, but west of here was as dry or dryer than here. Not a great deal of stock died as there was some moisture in the spring, and one found some hay in the low ground of the south country. Hogs were turned out in the oats and corn, and most of them butchered while they were shoats. Ainsworth had no side walks during these years. There were a few stores. During these trying times many stores closed and and their owners left town. In the fall of 1894 about 300 people were all that remained in Ainsworth.—Charles N. Swett.

(Ainsworth's "Relief Store" was located at the northeast corner of Third and Main streets. Mrs. L. K. Alder, Mrs. Adeline Smith and Rev. T. W. DeLong were others who worked in the store.)

Those who stayed in Brown county were well repaid in time for so doing. Gradually the rainfall increased and the labor of the farmer was rewarded by good crops. Very slowly prosperity returned,

but only by the strictest economy and most diligent labor were the debt ridden people able to pay off their obligations. The same was true of the county. Payment was often deferred but never defaulted.

A few of the former citizens returned to the homes they had left. Each year a few new settlers came, but not until after the turn of the century was there ever another rush of immigration. The central and northern portions of the county were fairly well settled as here is our richest farming land. The sand hill regions, considered suitable only for grazing were largely government land with here and there an isolated ranch home.

In 1904 a new law was passed permitting a homestead of 640 acres to be acquired by five years residence thereon and placing improvements upon it to the value of \$800. This was called the "Kinkaid law," honoring the congressman from this district who secured its enactment—Hon. Moses P. Kinkaid of O'Neill.

This law proved of great value to all of northwest Nebraska and its passage resulted in the settling of the sand hills in a very few years. Again a flood of new settlers, sometimes called "Kinkaiders," came into our county, and a most prosperous period followed their coming. The population was greatly increased, live stock, grain and other personal property was almost doubled in a very short time. Small but prosperous cattle ranches with a few acres in grain and other produce soon covered the sand hills sections. The dairy business sprung into prominence and has proved to be a source of great revenue for this county.

Several new precincts were formed, schools and postoffices established, roads

laid out and a few bridges built. What had been regarded by some as a hopeless wilderness became a region of comfortable homes. Even the land itself, underwent a change in character and appearance due to the fact that prairie fires no longer were allowed to sweep over it. Vegetation still increases yearly and by its decay the soil is changed and enriched. As these deposits increase the appearance of the sand hills is changed and the soil becomes more productive.

Thus did the Empire of Brown have its beginning and thus has its growth and development been brought about. No events of great public importance have been staged within her borders, yet all events which have here transpired have a vital meaning to us, her people. Only the bare facts of her history are here inscribed. Her life's story, (as noted in the first paragraph of this brief outline), is to be found only in the hearts and minds of those hardy pioneers who brought into being this commonwealth in which we should take great pride. We see it now, not as "a sea of grass" stretching toward the setting sun, but as a well-settled farming and grazing country, dotted with homes of contented, law-abiding citizens. A fine highway, U. S. No. 20, has replaced the old "Gordon Trail" and other dim reminders of olden days; well kept county roads and other highways in process of construction intersect at frequent intervals. The lonely road ranch is superseded by neat towns and modern residences; the country post office has been replaced by rural free delivery of mail, keeping our citizens in touch with the rest of the world, this service being supplemented by telephones and radios. We are no longer isolated unless from

choice as our transportation facilities meet all needs. Thousands of beautiful shade trees, many groves and parks break the monotony of the prairie landscape and in other ways add to our comfort and pleasure.

It is useless to multiply words. Let us rather note its present value, not only in dollars and cents (which in 1937 was found to be \$6,520,915 for purposes of taxation) its suitability for homes, its healthful climate, pure water, resorts for hunting and fishing and many other advantages which may be found if we will but observe them.

One of our most famed Nebraska authors has written of our land: "The land belongs to the future. How many of the names on the county clerk's plat will be there in fifty years? We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it—for a little while." (Willa Cather—in "O Pioneers!")

As we grow in knowledge of the past our courage to meet the future should be made stronger or our pioneers will have lived in vain.

MEMORIES

And Items of Interest

The fact that our sister county, Keya Paha, was a part of Brown from February 19, 1883 to November 4, 1884, gives us an active interest in her early settlement and history.

The name "Keya Paha," meaning in the Indian language, "Turtle Hill," was given to that portion of our state north of the Niobrara river and the river which traverses it, many years ago. In a communication, dated October 29, 1858, signed C. Randall (from near Fort Randall and printed in the Missouri Republican,

of St. Louis) I have found the following: "We travelled up the Turtle Hill river 101 miles having a good road, good grass and wood in large quantities. The Turtle Hill river is a great game country. We saw thousands of buffalo and almost myriads of antelope. The river can be crossed every fifty yards if necessary without bridging or digging. The quick sand is not bad, and in many places there is rock bottom."

In the same article the Niobrara is described thus: "It is a better game country than the Turtle Hill river region. The banks are steep and high, however, making crossing difficult. It is full of petrifactions, and fossil remains. Almost every coolie or ravine where there is pine or cedar, counts its bands of elk, the ravines and plains are filled with buffalo, and the river with millions of wild geese, ducks and a specie of snipe." A country such as this writer portrays could not fail to attract adventurers.

Soon after the Sioux Indians were placed on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations, in 1878-'79, the white men began to establish ranches along these two rivers, using the fine upland meadows for grazing. About the year 1877, a large cattle outfit owned by Charles and Henry Tienken had taken up holdings in the western end of what is now Boyd county, a lonely outpost on the frontier at that early date. Other cattle men followed. Of this early settlement Mr. Ross Amspoker of Springview has written: "F. J. Rhodes, the postmaster at Burton, came to this county in the year 1879 with his father, Sam Rhodes, his mother and brother Fred. The family located in 14-34-17.

"At that time the Livingston ranch was located about 1-33-18. W. N. Hud-

son was a nephew, a part owner and manager of the ranch and Henry Brockman was the foreman. The ranch carried about 2500 cattle, but the hard winter of 1880-1881 wiped them out and the ranch was abandoned. Henry Brockman settled just east of the present town of Brocksburg. He was a German and a man of much property. W. N. Hudson lived for many years on his ranch south of Brocksburg. He was a man of much ability, was at one time deputy-county clerk, and postmaster at Springview, also interested in the bank at Burton.

“Other early settlers were Henry Skinner, John Kuhns, Homer Wilson, John Beal, —Means, Henry Richardson, Capt. W. F. Tarbell, H. W. Palmer, Milo Goodrich, and John Beeman, all about 1878. R. S. Wooden, Ed H. Monroe, Jules Ancelot and Fred Berlet in 1879. S. and R. Long, John Sullivan, 1880 (the latter quite prominent in Brown county in later years.) In 1881 Frank Dixon, Chas. Larue, Major Hooker, P. P. Haugen. Among the early comers was Louis Hassed and Charles Jewett just east of Meadville (year not found.)

“Due north of Springview was the Hammond Brothers ranch. It is my understanding that they came in 1878. Their holdings included much of the fine hay land that is now part of the Hamilton and John A. Jackson estate lands.

“In 33-35-21 was the M. L. Taylor ranch; he came to this part of the state about 1878 or '79, and I believe was west of Meadville for a year or so, and then settled at the point above indicated. He was the Capt. Taylor of the Vigilanters. My people came to this country in 1884, and lived within a mile of the Taylor ranch. At that time Taylor went to

neighborhood gatherings with a six-gun strapped on. He was a big man with red whiskers just beginning to show gray. Quite a character in a way.

"At the present site of Carns, Capt. W. F. Tarbell operated a ferry in an early day. William Morris established a bridge over the Niobrara which was known by his name. It was in operation as a toll bridge as late as October, 1884.

"There were many people moving into this part of the county in 1880 and 1881 with the big settlement in 1882 and 1883."

—Ross Amspoker

Heavy losses of cattle in the winter of 1880-81, rumors of a railroad to be built north of the Niobrara, and changing conditions throughout our nation—all helped to bring a different class of settlers during the early '80's. The majority of them were genuine home-seekers. Some came from as far east as New York and Pennsylvania. Railroad companies were putting out much advertising, promising rich rewards to those who would take chances on life in the west.

From Bradford, Penn., in the early spring of 1883, a colony consisting of sixty-five men, women and children settled along the south side of the Keya Paha river. They played an important role in the early history of the eastern end of the county. Their children and grandchildren are still numbered among Keya Paha county's leading citizens. Iowa, Wisconsin and eastern Nebraska also sent large numbers of settlers.

Probably no other section of Nebraska has seen more crime and tragedy enacted on its soil than has that section which is now Keya Paha county. It was the battleground between the lawless and

the law-abiding elements of its citizens, each faction struggling for supremacy, and each upheld in the belief that their claims were paramount. The story of this struggle will probably never be recorded and Time will erase the thrilling tales of the daring deeds of the horse thief and the cattle rustlers as well as those of the early peace officer and the "Vigilante."

The Niobrara proved to be an almost impassable barrier between the two portions of what was then Brown county, and there were many long weary miles to be travelled to reach the railroad or the seat of the county government. The honest people were at the mercy of the thieves and other outlaws. Poor roads, poor bridges and other drawbacks influenced public opinion to such a degree that the belief in county division soon became very strong. A large majority took the stand that the north side of the river should have its own officers and its own seat of government. There was very little opposition to the division and in a short time after the election on November 4, 1884, the new county was in operation.

It took some time to locate the county seat as there were many little towns contesting for the honor. It was finally established at Springview on April 28, 1885. The residence of David Heiges was made the temporary court house. As the county owned the town site the funds secured from the sale of lots were used to build a court house.

Among the early postoffices were Darnall, Adrian, Lutes, Enterprise, Nesbit, Burton, Brewer, Simpson, Norden, McGuire, Carns, Stevenson, Lomo, McLean, Munt and Meadville, (though the last named was located in Brown county

for several years it served many on the north side of the river for mail facilities, and was finally moved across the river.)

Mrs. Sam Rhodes taught the first school in the county. Miss Thomas, now Mrs. A. H. Burr of Omaha is said to have been the teacher of the first school in Springview, and to have given the town its name.

The second couple married in the county were F. M. Conn and wife, now of Chadron, married April 1, 1885.

MEMORIES OF LONG PINE

In the fall of 1881 Long Pine was a hustling little frontier town only a few weeks old. It was headquarters for Berry Brothers stage line and all freight and supplies for Fort Niobrara and surrounding country. The Railroad eating house was operated by Mr. and Mrs. Rich. The Severns House was built shortly after this.

There was lots of talk and excitement about the possibilities of the new country farther on when the road was built west in the spring. A number of business men who established themselves at Long Pine that year, later came to Valentine, then on to Chadron. Doctor Alfred Lewis was Long Pines' first physician; in 1883 he came to Valentine and was the first physician to locate here. Thomas Moore, now living at Riverside, California, was a pioneer businessman of Long Pine who later moved his flour and feed store to Valentine.

F. H. Warren who was elected Judge of Cherry County in November, 1883, also came up here from Long Pine. My father, Peter Donohar, brought his family to Long Pine in the fall of 1881 and we lived that winter in the canyon near the Seven

Springs that we heard so much about and close by Sergeant O'Leary's attractive little house built of red cedar logs was situated.

Some people thought the water in the springs contained medicinal properties and should be developed and the town called Seven Springs instead of Long Pine. Mr. O'Leary was a discharged soldier from the regular army but everyone still called him Sergeant O'Leary. He had filed on a homestead on the canyon.

A tragic death occurred on the street at Long Pine that first fall. Bartley Kane, a young homesteader from Atkinson, had been working for Berry Brothers. There was some dispute over his wages. Kane was very angry and made some disparaging remarks about Berry Bros. to which Jesse Crawford, a stage driver for Berry Brothers., took exception and he struck Kane with a piece of 2x4 and killed him.

It was a very sad affair for Mr. Kane had a young widowed sister with two small children who had come out from some place in the east to file on a homestead joining his at Atkinson and she was expecting him home to build her house and help her get ready for a winter on her claim.

Spotted Tail was killed by Crow Dog that year and many rumors of an Indian outbreak grapevined through the country but we felt very safe in Long Pine canyon because we were near the railroad. —Catherine M. Donoher, Valentine, Nebr.

Long Pine creek was so named because of the magnificent pine trees which grew on its banks. These trees were famed for their great height and symmetry, and have been often referred to by early explorers and travellers. So superior were they to the pines in other canyons near,

that many of the best of them were chopped down and put into use soon after they were discovered. Only a few of the best ones were left when the country adjacent to the creek was settled.

One of these fine trees was taken to Fort Hartsuff where it was used for a flag pole on the parade ground. A detail of soldiers from the fort had been sent out to search until they found the tallest tree in this part of the state, and they returned with one from the banks of the Long Pine.

Mrs. Nannie Hogan in writing of the trail over which she and her mother, Mrs. Nannie Osborn, traveled coming from Fort Hartsuff to the Bone creek ranch mentions the "Lone Pine" which was very tall. It stood near the head waters of Long Pine creek and could be seen for fifteen miles. This tree served as a land mark for travel between the Calamus trail and the freighter's trail.

The late A. J. Leach of Oakdale, made several exploring and hunting trips to this section in the early '70's He wrote a description of them, then added: "Later, I with two others went with teams and hauled away from Short Pine creek two loads of cedar timber for a bridge over Cedar creek in Antelope county. The pil-ing for the first public bridge across the Elkhorn river was all hauled from Long Pine creek." This is no doubt but one of many instances of these fine trees being used for practical purposes.

An account of the journey made by the Gordon Expedition through the county in May, 1875, written by Charles J. Kimball of Hermosa, S. D., and published in Sheridan County Star, contains this interesting item: "We crossed Long Pine near its mouth which was the steepest ravine I ever crossed with a wagon. We tied

logs to the hind axles of the wagons to help hold them back. West of Long Pine, we killed a cinnamon bear in the timber on the Niobrara river. The men who had ponies to ride went out and shot at him with revolvers which only made him mad and he chased them up the hill. V. P. Shoun was the scout for the party and he killed him just as he got to the top of the hill, so we had bear meat for supper."

Long Pine, the town, was named for the beautiful stream and canyon through which it winds. The first settlers here made their homes in the canyon to be near wood and water, and to be somewhat sheltered from the elements. Several came in the late '70's: Rev. Irving H. Skinner—Bassett, James Graham, Seth Bates, Mike Kernan, F. E. Stockwell and family, the Donoher family. John Coleman (who had been employed earlier on the Cook and Tower ranch on Bone creek.)

Other very early residents in and near the town were Carleton Pettijohn, Isaac Mills, Theron Ford, Abe Bailey, John W. Vargison, Nels Ringsrud, Henry Tabler, Ed Ryan, Dr. Lewis, Sergeant O'Leary, W. H. Magill, Henry Danks, John and Henry Leadis, Granville Butler, John Hill, Charles and Thomas Glover, J. D. Whittemore, Z. B. Cox.

The first resident to occupy ground where now stands the town was "Dirty" Smith. With his family he had homesteaded the ground now occupied by the depot and yards of the Chicago & Northwestern railway company.

(I have seen a published statement that Kate Litz was the very earliest settler in Long Pine in 1876, but have been unable to verify this.)

In 1881 and 1882 many Indians came from their reservation north of the Keya Paha river to Long Pine to get supplies, bringing cedar posts to exchange for goods when they had no money.

The Methodist church of Long Pine was the second church in Brown county. It was organized by Rev. I. H. Skinner, Cornelius B. Morefort, Charles R. Glover W. E. Davis, Joseph E. Dunn and Benjamin Elliott, November 30, 1883. (contributed by Mrs. W. M. Ely). One of the earliest Methodist pastors, Rev. W. W. Thomas, often walked to Ainsworth and Johnstown and conducted services.

The earliest school in Long Pine was held in a building on Main street. Dr. Learn who was also one of the first dentists in Brown county, was the teacher. In 1882 a small frame school house was built.

On January 9, 1884, the county commissioners granted a petition signed by Long Pine citizens making it an incorporated village.

The following Indian story is taken from a collection of early Brown county history memories made in school district N. 18, Fern Keim, teacher:

“During these years of early settlements the Indians were frequent visitors, but seldom bothered people. Every spring they would travel from the Niobrara river to Moon Lake to fish. On one of these trips their chief, Warning Hawk, died from drinking poison whiskey. The Indian tribe started from Moon Lake with his body which was to be buried on their hunting ground along the Niobrara. During the entire trip from Moon Lake to the river, the Indians kept screaming their death cry which greatly terrified the settlers.”

From the same collection I took this: "One crossing on Plum creek was known as Frame's Crossing." It was located on Frame's homestead northwest of Johnstown. This crossing was used by the Indians on their trips from the Niobrara to Moon Lake."

Mrs. Wm. P. S. Thompson, formerly Mrs. Charles Allen came to Brown county in 1881. She has many interesting memories of her life on the frontier. In a collection made by Mrs. Audrey Burge, for use in her school, I have taken these:

"There were hundreds of deer and antelope, and some elk were to be seen, but infrequently. Eb. Osborn, an old Indian scout, killed an elk whose antlers measured seven feet from tip to tip. These were sent to England. Some of the pioneers made their living by killing, dressing and shipping dressed prairie chickens and quail to the eastern people.

In 1887, John Anderson, a Danish farmer while repairing a curbing on a well was entombed for a period of nine days by the sliding sand over his head. He was rescued alive by his neighbors, Henry Archer and George Campbell. The story of this dramatic episode was often retold by the pioneers. It is given in detail in Mrs. Burge's collection.

Rev. Elias Frame, who filed on a homestead near Johnstown on April 7, 1880, some times held religious services after there were a few settlers in that locality.

A Methodist church was built in 1884. The United Brethern church was organized December 12, 1885, Rev. Campbell, minister. Among the very earliest ministers was John Calvert. Rev. Elias Frame and Jeremiah Frame filed on claims near Johnstown on April 7, 1880, the first filings

made in what is now Brown county at the Valentine land office.

The first store in Johnstown was opened in the railroad depot by W. H. Marriner in 1882. Later it was moved to a building north of the railroad under the firm name of Scattergood and Marriner. The next year George Weber of Lincoln put in a general store and in 1884 established a bank. Farleigh and Diamond put in a stock of drugs in 1884. Dr. Farleigh was the first physician.

After the establishment of Johnstown station on the newly built railroad the postoffice was moved from "Evergreen" to the section house and Mrs. Parsons was the post mistress, wife of the section foreman. Dan Hart was the first depot agent.

The earliest school in that locality was conducted by W. G. Townsend in the Harrison Johnson home. The late A. W. Scattergood taught a spring term in 1883 in a little log house about one mile north of the townsite. Miss Lou Richmond taught there in 1884 and had an attendance of twenty-one pupils, and W. G. Townsend taught in Johnstown that year.

The A. Scattergood family came into Johnstown in 1883 on the first "Passenger Coach" brought to the station, attached to a construction train. The homestead adjoining the town on the northwest is still the home of two daughters, Mrs. Doyle and Miss Mabel Scattergood.

Other early settlers in the west part of the county were Frederick Schulz, Gottlieb Schulz, Ed Fancher, John Brill, Charles Cowley, W. G. Townsend, B. M. Chase, George Carpenter, D. D. Carpenter, Casper Lochmiller and sons William, Casper, Fred, Phillip and Henry, H. C.

Stone, J. W. Terry, Max Rauscher and Jackson Billeter.

Johnstown became an incorporated village on January 9, 1913. The first trustees were Peter Wantz, A. Holt, Mark Williams, Frank Miller, Stanton Rose. A fine brick school building was erected the same year.

To pioneers the early mills are of great value. The fine running streams on the south side of the Niobrara offered ample water power which was early utilized for grinding grain and sawing lumber. On Pine creek were the Ritterbush mills for both flour and lumber, Richard Upstill, sawmill; Steve Kyner, flour mill. On Bone Creek was Sisson's mill and people came from great distances to have their wheat ground or to buy flour. It was owned by A. L. ("Gus") Sisson. Otto Hoefs built a sawmill at the mouth of the Fairfield in 1892 and sold to Wm. Kuhre the next year. Mr. Kuhre still owns it.

An earlier mill was built on the Fairfield in 1883 by Cornell and King. Chas. Cornell took the first homestead in Fairfield precinct. Logs were cut along the creek by the government for use in building Fort Niobrara and later lumber from this mill was bought for use in the construction of the buildings there. The Bruce mill on the Niobrara in the western edge of the county about six miles above the Norden bridge, was useful to early settlers in that section.

MEADVILLE

* One of the most interesting localities in the county is that adjacent to the Niobrara where Nebraska highway No. 7 crosses this stream. It has a scenic beauty all its own and is almost without a rival in the entire state. It has an historic back-

ground, replete with interest and romance. To do justice to this locality would require much space. It should be seen to be appreciated.

I have gleaned from the diary of Mrs. Slonecker (Blanch Mead) a few important facts and with her permission am presenting them here:—

In August 1882, Merritt I. Mead a veteran of the civil war, came from Thayer county and located on the south side of the river. He found a small log cabin in which the family consisting of wife and two daughters took up their residence. Several rooms were added and to accommodate travelers he opened his home for meals and lodgings. "Mead's Tavern" soon became very popular as Mrs. Mead and her daughters, Blanch and Gertie, were famous cooks.

Early in 1883 a post office was established at the Tavern. It was given the name Meadville and Merritt Mead was postmaster. Mail came from Ainsworth twice a week, Went Conway carrier. Later stage drivers were Corwin Campbell, Nate Blue, Dyer Crum, George Cook, Dave Hackler, Gene Olstrum, Cale Worley.

The next year W. S. Moore opened a store on the north side of the river and the postoffice was moved there. Later it was in Snyder's store. Taylor was the last postmaster, up to 1896 when it was discontinued. In 1904 it was re-established with Wm. Slonecker postmaster.

AINSWORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL

(Lila McAndrew)

School District No. 10, Ainsworth was organized August 25, 1883, E. A. Palmer was director, J. W. Alden moderator and S. G. Chaney treasurer.

The first school in district No. 10 was held in a little log building, northwest of town, on the north bank of Bone Creek, in 1882. It was taught by Mrs. Mary Wade. Some of the pupils attending were Lettie Cheney (Mrs. J. D. Kirkpatrick), Millie Cheney (Mrs. Will Kirkpatrick), Joy and Bert Cheney, Dan and Mary Woodward, (the late Mrs. L. M. Short.)

In 1883 school was held in a frame building where the home of Mr. Leve Lindquist now stands. The building was also used as a jail. Judge S. G. Sparks was the teacher. The names of the late James Munson and Albert Chaney were among those added to the list of pupils.

The next year, (1884) school was held in the original Congregational church building, although the walls were not yet plastered and brown paper had to serve as a substitute.

Prof. A. W. Smith presided over the advanced grades who were seated with faces to the north. Mrs. O. B. Rippey taught the primary pupils whose seat faced the south, both departments being in one room.

In 1885 school convened in a two room frame structure, which was located across the street east of the present site of the Bell Telephone building. Prof. A. W. Smith continued as upper grade instructor and Mrs. Hattie Ray had charge of the lower grades.

In 1886 a four-room, two story brick building was erected on the ground where the present grade building now stands. Prof. A. W. Smith continued as principal and Miss Luce taught in the lower grades. Prof. Chas. E. Holmes was the next principal, Mrs. J. F. Wyvel (then Miss Westover) and Miss Clyde Allen were lower

grade teachers. Among the teachers who followed were Mrs. Byron Chase, then known as Miss Golden, Miss Anna Wortz and Miss Lou Richmond, (the late Mrs. George Farman, Sr.) This building was wrecked as soon as school closed in the spring of 1895, and some of the material was salvaged and used in the present grade structure, in which school was opened the following fall,—only two weeks later than the usual time.

This building supplied the needs until 1910 when more room became necessary. At this time what is known as the Gray building was erected. Prof. W. E. Flake was the first superintendent who had charge in this building. It was about this time that the twelfth grade was added and the High School became accredited with Nebraska University.

In 1922 the present High School building was begun, completed in 1923, and formally dedicated October 26th of that year. This fine structure will no doubt stand for many years as a monument to the members of the board of education and loyal citizens, who at that time fought numerous legal battles with opposers, in their determination to provide adequate housing facilities for the youth of the community in a building of which that community may well be proud.

(Having had the privilege of a very interesting interview with Mrs. Nannie Hogan, daughter of the late Mrs. Nannie Osborn, during her last visit to Ainsworth in July, 1935, a few facts of general interest, as well as some of her own pioneer experiences were recorded, chiefly for the benefit of the school children who often have need to seek information regarding the early history of the town.)—Lila McAndrew.

Mrs. Osborn and her daughter, Nannie lived at old Fort Hartsuff near the town of Ord. They became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Tower, the latter being a sister of Mr. Ed Cook, who was foreman of the famous Cook ranch. The buildings which were erected in 1873, all built of logs, were located on the bank of Bone Creek and were the first to be erected on the site which was later to be known as the town of Ainsworth.

Many bones of mastadons and other prehistoric animals were found in and along the banks of the stream, hence the name Bone Creek.

Mr. Cook had come in 1877 and "squatted" on the claim. The cattle were owned by a syndicate but Cook was manager of the ranch. In 1879, through the influence of ~~Mr.~~ and Mrs. Tower, Mrs. Osborn and Nannie were persuaded to come up from Fort Hartsuff and serve meals to the cow boys on this ranch. Mr. Cook was to take care of their stock and pay them a monthly salary. Coming across country with all their worldly possessions, they were given living quarters in the north end of the log building. Mr. Cook's home, including the Post Office, was in the south end with a long hall-like room between. Mrs. Osborn was made assistant postmaster. Among the people who got mail at that time were: Gus Sissons, Stanleys, Swetts, Stockwells, Carpenders, and Fanchers.

A lantern was raised to the top of a high pole at the Cook ranch every night, which served as a signal of habitation to those in the vicinity. One night word was received at the ranch that "Doc" Middleton and his gang of men were coming. Cook told two cow boys to sleep one on each side of the fireplace, which was done

with much apprehension, and extreme tenseness prevailed in the cabin that night.

When the outlaws arrived, Cook allowed them to come in. They had blankets and slept peaceably on the floor, but the two cowboys stayed on guard. In the morning the host invited them to have breakfast but the band refused the invitation and went on to the Bassett ranch near Pine creek. (This was later known as the Kyner place.) Here they demanded breakfast.

Mrs. Osborn filed on a homestead, a part of which is now in the west part of Ainsworth. The original house of logs still stands on the corner of 2nd and Osborn streets, but it is now covered with cement. Nannie took a homestead farther west. Both women also filed on tree claims and preemptions.

Mrs. Osborn had business to transact in Ord the next spring after locating at Ainsworth, so she and Nannie hoisted the side saddles on their ponies and set out to make the trip on horseback. By dark the first night they had arrived at Dick Ray's ranch, on Gracie creek, about seventy-five miles from Ainsworth. They found no one home but in those days the latch string was always out. So they went in, made tea, prepared lunch and retired for the night. About midnight they were awakened by the clattering of horses' hoofs and were not sure just who might be coming. But it proved to be Dick Ray himself and his men who were equally surprised to find horses in their barn. But when Cook's brand was discovered on the horses and the side saddles were seen on the porch, they knew who was there. On entering the house Mrs. Osborn called and made themselves known. On their way back from Ord they had to stay at this

ranch again and although Nannie much preferred to take care of her pony herself the men insisted on feeding it for her. But Little Charlie was not accustomed to an over indulgence of food and before the travellers had gone very far on the homeward trail the pony was sick. However they managed to get to the head of Pine Creek about dark that night but the trail could not be seen. The faithful pony had always led the way home but Little Charlie was not himself so seemed unable to pick up the trail and the two brave hearted women realized they were lost. They saw two camp fires off to the northwest but were uncertain which one they should try to reach so decided to make for Bassett's ranch. But as several attempts to find the trail which would take them there were unsuccessful, they decided to go back to a cave in the bank of a cliff of Pine creek, which had been passed some time before, and there they spent the night. Each one had a blanket so they rolled up in these and Nannie held the reins of the horses standing outside. A cold drizzling rain set in which turned to snow. Cute, the dog was left outside as guard but was later brought in to keep his mistress' feet warm. At daybreak they started out again. The only land mark visible was a lone pine tree about fifteen miles away. After traveling some distance they saw men coming who proved to be Mr. Cook and two cowboys coming to find them and who piloted them safely home.

Mrs. Osborn donated the lots for the Court House, also for the Congregational and Methodist churches and Mr. Cook's sisters gave \$300.00 for the bell used on the Methodist church.

Leroy Hall owned the east part of town and donated the school house block.

His home was the place which is better known as the Scattergood residence.

John Sullivan located south of the tracks. Woodward's log store was built in 1880. The Orcutt hotel about where the Ford garage and Royal Theatre are now located.

AINSWORTH

Reminiscent

That portion of Ainsworth lying west of Main street was platted on the homestead of Mrs. Nannie Osborn. Leroy Hall platted an addition on his land on the east side of Main, extending as far north as Fourth street. North of that, Henry Woodward's addition on his home stead. On the corner of Main and Fourth was the Woodward store, the first business house in the town. It was a log building put up in 1880, and was located on the freighter's trail.

Among the early business houses were Tracy and Glover's store managed by J. D. Crawford; Munson and Secor, later Munson and Ackerman, John De-Brown, George Reed, general stores; Frank Sellors, real estate; H. J. Sutton, jewelry; Dr. O. H. Crane, drugs; W. D. McCord, elevator; Orcutt house and Burns hotel; P. D. McAndrew, L. K. Alder, Alex Altschuler and S. E. Benton, lawyers; Ed Enderly, Frank Gillette and the Davisons; Alton and Sherwood, and Burns bankers; Dr. Kenaston, physician; Hall and Chaney, hardware; Merithew, restaurant; Ainsworth Lumber Co.; Grave and Co., lumber; Leroy Hall, proprietor Journal, Morgan and Miller, publishers; Western News, T. J. Smith, publisher; P. P. Shade, livery owned by E. Loeb; Bridgeford's saloon.

Ainsworth was incorporated as a vil-

lage soon after the county was organized. The petition was presented to the commissioners on December 10, 1883, and was granted the next day. Among the signers were William H. Orcutt, Frank Sellors, P. P. Shade, Nannie Osborn, R. M. Munson, P. D. McAndrew.

T. J. Smith was the first postmaster after the office was changed from Bone Creek to Ainsworth. He was succeeded by Clark Barnes. The first F. E. & M. V. agent was O. B. Rippey, followed by L. A. Rodwell.

The first child born in Ainsworth was the little son of Leroy Hall and wife in 1882. The first death was Mrs. Young.

The Congregational church of Ainsworth was the first religious edifice in the county, built in the spring of 1884. The church organization was perfected on August 12, 1883, by Mrs. O. B. Rippey, Mrs. Henry Woodward, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Alden, Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Alden and Rev. J. Herbert. The first pastor was Rev. N. L. Packard.

The first Fourth of July celebration was held here in 1882, on the depot platform before the depot was built. A twenty-foot flag was offered as a prize to the neighborhood sending the largest delegation. The Grand Prairie community won the prize, which was accepted by Dan Carpenter on behalf of that neighborhood and the flag is still the property of his daughter, Mrs. P. J. Holst. For years this flag figured prominently in all celebrations held in this section. Mr. Carpenter rigged a platform on a wagon and with the flag flying from a pole erected in the center of the platform, many of our matrons of today, the girls of those days, rode to celebrations.

On Christmas of the same year, the

first Christmas exercises were held in the waiting room of the depot. A beautiful cedar tree which Lee Gould and Went Conway brought from the banks of Bone creek, 12 miles away, was the main feature of the occasion.

In 1883, the first fair was held on Nannie Osborn's claim southwest of town, Glen Nesbit took the prize as the prettiest baby, and Millie Cheney received a special prize, a gold thimble given by H. P. Sutton, as the most accomplished young lady in the county.

The first newspaper, The Western News, was established by T. J. Smith. Mr. Smith was later identified with the Ainsworth Star and afterward with the Star Journal. He took a prominent part in all county and local affairs. It is said that he selected the route for the road from here to Springview. The second newspaper, The Journal, was established July 3, 1884, by Leroy Hall.

A Sunday School was organized. It was held in the home of L. W. Gould and afterward in the waiting room of the depot. Rev. W. W. Thomas, an itinerant preacher at Ainsworth and Rev. Elias Frame, a homesteader, held occasional services. A Sunday School organizer, Frady, by name, assisted in the work all through this section. These religious services were graced by a choir and an organ loaned by Birdie Bridgeford. Among the singers were W. D. McCord and Birdie Bridgeford. Mollie Stockwell presided as organist.

The first term of court was held November 27, 1883, F. B. Tiffany, presiding. Among the jurors were: H. S. Potter, W. D. McCord, O. B. Rippey, C. F. Barnes, F. W. Sellors, A. L. Sisson.

The first patent issued for land with-

in the limits of Brown county as it then stood, by the United States government, as shown by the records in the Valentine land office (now extinct) was to Charles W. Wyman of Carns, Nebraska, April 10, 1881.

The first teacher's examination was given in 1883 by Supt. J. L. Harriman. The applicants were: Millie Cheney, Minnie Briggs and A. W. Scattergood. At the conclusion of the day's labor the superintendent announced that "ladies first" had always been his motto but as the young man present had to walk to Johnstown yet that night he desired to write out his certificate first, that he might be on his way, providing of course that the ladies would not object. Thus it was that A. W. Scattergood, just graduated from Cambridge university, received the first teacher's certificate in Brown county.

The next year, 1884, teacher's institute was held, conducted by Supt. W. G. Townsend and several rural schools were organized that year. Among the pioneer school ma'ams were Lou Richmond, Lou Bain and Nellie Murphy. Unique and interesting experiences are told by these teachers who taught for about \$25 a month and boarded 'round.

The first marriage license issued in Brown county was to L. D. Bates and Miss Columbia L. Mills on September 8, 1883. The next four to follow were: Harry L. Brown and Louisa Humstaker; Chas. W. Stannard and Juva Melins; Daniel D. Bennett and Julia A. Carns; Jasper L. Stanley and Martha E. Berge.

* Nesbit Hose company was organized June 30, 1890. Officers: president, J. A. Rogers; vice president, J. M. Kingery; foreman, T. J. Smith; assistant foreman, J. A. Douglas; secretary, W. H. Williams;

assistant secretary, Frank Boyd; treasurer, L. M. Short. Charter members. F. A. Pennell, J. A. Rogers, R. M. Nesbit, Ned Jones, L. M. Short, C. G. Alton, T. J. Smith,, W. H. Williams, J. G. Ackerman, J. M. Kingery, J. F. Wyvel, Charles Marsden, Earl J. Pollock, Bert Fournier, W. O. Toliver, Z. Funk, B. A. Miller, W. E. Spencer, J. A. Douglas, H. O. Paine, M. White, W. H. Hogan, Louis Reif, E. W. Fair, J. Reif, E. T. Ash, Frank Boyd, Edgar Heffley, Alex Altschuler, O. C. Bartlett, W. G. Hedges, C. B. Sargent, Frank W. Sellors.

In 1936 Mrs. Elizabeth Sellors Deer gave to the city of Ainsworth, the Sellors Pioneer Memorial cabin to be used as a museum for any relics of pioneer days as may be placed therein. It is built of native logs and stands on ground given by Mrs. Osborn, near the east side of the Court House park. Mrs. Deer built it as a memorial for all pioneers of Brown county, especially honoring her father, Frank W. Sellors, who played an important part in the early history of Ainsworth and Brown county.

The first birth in the county was Arthur L. Kirkpatrick, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Kirkpatrick. He was born on a ranch near the Niobrara river *Aug 11, 1880*

The first pair of twins were Lee and Lou Magill, born to W. H. Magill and wife August 24, 1882 on Pine creek.

The accidental shooting of Alfred Chase, brother of Byron Chase in the western part of the county was probably the first death in the county. Edgar Crandall's death by shooting was one of the earliest fatalities. Both these men were buried in Grand Prairie cemetery, the first cemetery in the county.

In the winter of 1880-'81 many farmers were unable to get supplies as the cold and snow were so severe that it was almost impossible to drive to Atkinson for the necessities of life. Even at Cook's ranch where supplies could usually be obtained, but little could be spared. Three settlers, Gus Sisson, C. N. Swett and Jap Stanley, sent a team to Atkinson, but owing to the deep snow it did not return for thirty days. They got a half-bushel of shelled corn, a few beans and a hog's head from Cook's and on this they lived till the team came through.

The little log cabin built by Bill Woods on his homestead in 1879, still stands. It is on highway 7, on W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 13, township 30 range 22., four miles north of Ainsworth. It is probably the oldest house in the county.

Agricultural products from this county have won recognition at Nebraska state fairs. In 1909-'10-12, and possibly in other years a carload of exhibits took the first prize for the western district. In 1910 Brown county took first prize on potatoes in competition with the entire state. A collection of nearly one hundred varieties of native grasses found in this county was also awarded first premium in 1912. C. W. Potter, W. H. Peck and J. E. Stauffer were in charge of this enterprise.

In 1908 Frank Herron and August Bokhold while employed by Wm. Slonecker cutting brush for riprapping on the north bank of the Niobrara river, discovered the curious tree known as the "spreading cedar." It is a tree whose branches surround the trunk making a carpet on the ground for several feet surrounding the tree. When discovered it was but three feet high. Samples of it were sent by Mr. Slonecker to the state

university. It is said to be one of only four of the same variety in existence. It is near the Meadville baseball park.

Kid Wade, a young outlaw supposed to be one of the famous gang that operated in this section in early days, was lynched in the early morning hours of February 8, 1884. He was captured in Iowa by a band of vigilantes, given a trial and turned over to officers from Holt county. During the night he was taken from the guard in a hotel at Bassett by a band of masked men and hung to a railroad whistling post, one mile east of the town. He was buried on Bassett hill. His true given name was Albert. His trial took place in the home of the late Charles Honnen of Johnstown, then residing a few miles west of Carns, in Keya Paha county. On July 11, 1884, the commissioners of Brown county allowed the bill for his coffin and box, twenty dollars, furnished by J. M. Mead of Long Pine.

In very early times the Pawnee Indians from the southern part of Nebraska, made hunting trips to the sand hill regions every summer, camping on what is now called Goose creek in southern Brown county. They gave the name "Koskopah" creek to the stream. The curves of the creek resembled the crook of a goose's neck, so the name was changed by white men to Goosecreek. When the post office was established there in 1920, the Indian name, Koskopah, was sent in by the patrons, but by a mistake in copying it was made Koshopah. The office was established in a 10 by 12 sod house at Lee Athey's and he was the first postmaster. Koshopah is said to be the only name of Indian origin in the county.

—By Fern Burdick, District 16

Items of Interest from Rock County

W. E. Buckendorf

Delving into the original records of Rock county for information, one finds that the first entry in Record book A is a copy of the proceedings of the county board of Brown county on August 1, 1888. At this meeting M. E. Freeman and others filed with the county commissioners a petition asking for a division of Brown county and the formation of a new county to be called Rock. In this petition is quoted the boundary lines of the proposed new county. The next day the board passed a resolution submitting the proposed question to the voters of the county and set the date of the regular election, November 6, 1888 as the day on which the voters might make their decision. The election notice was signed by C. F. Boyd, county clerk of Brown county. The election gave a vote of 1029 for the division and 689 votes as being opposed to a division.

Governor Thayer then issued a proclamation ordering a special election to be held December 24, 1888, for naming officers and locating the county seat.

This election resulted in naming the following: clerk, W. T. Phillips; treasurer, J. D. Likens; judge, F. N. Morgan; sheriff, Henry Harris; coroner, A. J. Taylor; superintendent, W. H. Rugg; attorney, A. H. Tingle; commissioners, S. Corder, A. H. Gale and E. Opp. The question of location of the county seat gave Bassett 315 votes; Newport, 179; Thurman, 156; Tracy, 93; Rock Center, 24.

* The first meeting of the new county board was held January 8, 1889, and by a resolution adopted, Bassett was made temporary county seat. As none of the contesting points had received a majority of

votes, a special election was held January 29, 1889 and as a result thereof, Bassett was made permanent county seat.

Later at a joint meeting of Brown and Rock county boards for the purpose of arriving at assessed valuations of the two counties, it was found that Rock county's assessed valuation was placed at \$439,042.00; that Brown county's valuation was placed at \$994,341.00

A. M. Brinkerhoff was one of the county commissioners of Brown when Rock became a separate commonwealth. The family came to the county in 1878 and settled near the Niobrara river. Other members of the Brinkerhoff family were John H. Putnam and these families selected land in the extreme northwest corner of what is now Rock county. Later coming to that section was the A. C. Kendall family, locating nearby in 1884. Mr. Kendall in 1904 established in his place, Cuba postoffice of which he was postmaster for a number of years.

When the Putnam family located on Pine creek there was not another family along the creek. Mr. Putnam built the first school in that locality and a little later established the first Sunday school west of O'Neill. Later the F. E. Stockwell family located upstream on Pine creek, some three miles from Long Pine in 1879. Other early day residents of the Niobrara river family were the Turpins, who settled near what is now the Mariaville and Kirkwood neighborhoods in 1878. The following year there came to this neighborhood the families of Edward G. Green and the Thomas Peacocks. Mr. Peacock established Mariaville postoffice at his farm in 1882 and was postmaster for many years.

Note—(In 1916 I wrote a brief sketch of the early history of Brown County for a program given at an old settlers' picnic in Ainsworth. Later the sketch was printed in local newspapers and also a few copies in booklet form. Since, I have been asked many times to republish this sketch on account of historical matter contained therein. I have revised it, in a few minor details, and added to it, and am presenting it in this form trusting that it may be of some value to public schools where local history has a place in the course of study.

Lillian L. Jones.)