

ABOUT ADAM'S COUNTY

Where the Soil's Fertility is Proverbial and Prosperity has an Abiding Place.

HASTINGS, "QUEEN CITY OF THE PLAINS"

A P. Pious and Progressive Community Upgrown in Twenty Years.

MORE PRAISE DUE TO PUCK THAN TO LUCK

Great Possibilities of Ocho and Salt Mining Near the County Seat.

TILLERS TESTIFY TO ADAM'S ADVANTAGES

Land Increased in Value Four Hundred Per Cent in Fourteen Years—Fine Fruit Farming Country—No One Yearning to Sell.

Adams county is one of the second tier of counties in Nebraska north of the Kansas line, and about 120 miles west of the Missouri river. Its congressional description is townships 5, 6, 7, 8, in ranges 9, 10, 11, 12, west of the sixth principal meridian. It is almost midway between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude, and 97 and 98 degrees west longitude. Its area is 570 square miles or 365,000 acres, while its mean elevation above the sea level is 1,500 feet. The population in 1870 was 19, in 1880, 10,239, and in 1890, 24,303. Adams county presents some remarkable contrasts. In 1872 there was not a building where the city of Hastings with its 14,000 citizens now stands; five years before that the land was inhabited only by a few Indians, its prairies dotted with flocks of prairie chickens and a man with a well was envied by his neighbors for miles around; now every farmer must have his windmill with pipes running over all the farmyard, and the city of Hastings possesses one of the best water systems west of the Mississippi river. Then many teams were eagerly sought for, now the farmer's most valued possession is his children behind a team which is properly an object of jealousy on the part of the more unfortunate city mortals. The country is noteworthy in many respects. It is more densely populated than any county in the state outside of Douglas and Lancaster. Its average population being forty-three persons. Outside of these two, it is also the wealthiest in the state. Within its boundaries are fully 150 farmers who each own a net worth \$5,000 above all incumbrance. The soil is most peculiar. The rocks are as hard as pavement, while plowed land is as mellow as an ash heap. After a heavy rain, and within a time surprisingly short, to an easterner, the ground will apparently be as dry as before. The water is absorbed, and does not remain upon the surface to form the mud which is so familiar in other sections. In itself, the soil is a rich black loam. The drainage is excellent. Through the southern part of the county runs the Little Blue river, with its branches, Sand, Thirty-two Mile, Cottonwood and Pawnee creeks; through the northern corner of the county runs the south channel of the Platte. Mineral Possibilities. Aside from the natural fertility of the soil, there are other advantages which have yet remained undeveloped. Some little time ago a prospecting well, a thousand feet deep, was drilled by the citizens of Hastings. Beginning at a depth of 250 feet and extending to the 300-foot level, there was discovered a bed of the finest quality of yellow ochre. At 942 feet a flow of salt water was struck, which seemed to have passed the surface of the earth and re-entered it. The water is pure and clear, and the ochre now being used has ever been worked, but it is only a question of time until Nebraska points and salt will be furnished from the Hastings beds.

Adams county was organized in 1857, but as at that time the country was practically uninhabited the act was permitted to become a dead letter. In November, 1871, a proclamation was made by Acting Governor James organizing the county for executive and judicial purposes, and fixing the date for the election of county officers on December 12 following. This election was held and the chosen officers duly qualified. Juniata was made county seat, but in 1873, after the usual county seat war, Hastings was made the capital of Adams county.

Indian troubles were unknown in the early history of the county, as before there were many whites to molest the redskins had all been removed to reservations. And yet there were doubtless many exciting scenes, most now almost to tradition. The old California trail, the object of many a memory, leads in a northwesterly direction through the county, and over it must have passed Kit Carson, Fremont, and the earlier explorers, Malet and Robitaille. In Washington Irving's "Astoria" mention is made of an encampment which must have been near Juniata, the central part of the county and Fenimore Cooper's "Hawkeye" must have been familiar with this region.

The assessment books of last year show that the value of the personal property in Adams county was \$1,900,000; of the farm real estate, \$5,000,000; of town lots, \$4,000,000; of railroads, \$4,500,000. This valuation would make the average wealth of each person in the county to be \$500. Last year, according to the records of the county clerk and released with the register of deeds, the farmers of Adams paid of \$100,000 more mortgages than were paid. Of this comparatively small amount was settled for by foreclosures. In the month of June of this year \$20,046 of mortgages were filed and \$10,235 released. During the same time there were no sheriff's dees made and of the 4,000 mortgages fully 90 per cent was for part payment of purchase money.

As Fertile as Old Egypt. The fertility of Adams county farm lands is proverbial. Of the 570,000 acres of land in the county a very small fraction is unfit for tillage. In the northern portion, bordering the Platte, and in the extreme west are numerous sandhills, while in certain parts of the course of the Little Blue the land is inclined to be somewhat rough. But strange as it may seem, some very excellent crops are being raised on these sandhills by the cultivation of wheat, the best of the Blue furnish the best of pasture. In fact, the bulk of the land is as fertile as the valley of the Nile, without the attendant disadvantages of floods and crocodiles. Of course, corn is the staple product, although in late years wheat and oats have risen in popular favor. Last year, from 100,000 acres planted, Adams county raised enough corn to give twenty-one pounds of shelled corn to every family of five persons in the United States. In the same year there were 38,520 acres of wheat and 38,000 of oats. The proximity to the Oxnard beet sugar works has caused many farmers to try the raising of sugar beets. Flax and buckwheat are cultivated to a certain extent, while there were 2,370 acres of rye and 1,475 of barley grown according to the assessors' books for 1891.

It is a mistaken idea that leads many people to speak of "treeless Nebraska," for there are more shade and fruit trees on farms and city property in Adams county than in many of the states farther east which were originally covered with forests. Adams county apples are shipped to Fenimore, Adams, orders having been placed in the past during the late part of the Nebraska aversing season. Hastings, although only twenty years old, is one of the students of western cities. Cottonwoods, as a quick growing tree, were the first chosen, but later these are giving way to elms, maples and poplars. Referring again to the assessors' books, it is found that there were last year 15,560 trees in the county, a large increase over the returns of the year previous. On the lawn of Postmaster J. B. Hearwell of Hastings are planted sixty varieties of fruit and shade trees.

Hastings' origin dates back to 1872, when the townsite was surveyed under orders of Walter M. McKim and Thomas E. Farrell. At that time the E. & M. was in operation,

and the St. Joseph & Grand Island (then St. Joseph & Denver) had been extended to meet its lines at Hastings. "Probably two of the most important factors in the growth of the new city were the removal of the county seat from Juniata to Hastings and the opening of the St. Joseph & Grand Island in 1870. The great fire of September, 1870, destroyed thirty-three buildings in the central business portion of town, causing \$100,000 of damage. The ruins had hardly ceased to smolder when the work of replacing the old wooden buildings with substantial bricks was begun. An ordinance authorizing the city to borrow \$53,000 for the construction of a system of waterworks was passed on this action confirmed by a vote of the people. The system consists of eight bore wells 140 feet deep, which pump the water into a large receiving basin. Two large force pumps take the water from the reservoir and pump it into the main pipe, 125 feet high and twenty feet in diameter. There are nearly twenty miles of mains, and fire hydrants are scattered at intervals through the city. The works are self-supporting, and each year pay more than the interest on the debt. The system is giving the city the advantage of free hydrant service for fires. The water is as pure as that of a mountain spring, and the supply is inexhaustible.

Some Features of Hastings. The State asylum for the incurable insane was situated at Hastings in 1858, an appropriation of \$75,000 being made by the legislature. In addition the citizens of Hastings gave 160 acres of land two miles from the city, and in 1871, with a view of the legislature an additional appropriation of \$75,000 was made for the purpose of adding two wings and other needed buildings. The main building is 125 by 125 feet, with a main hall 150 feet long. The new wings at the ends of the central part are each 140 feet and 100 feet wide, with a basement. The farm is cultivated in part by the inmates themselves, a number of acres being given to sugar beets.

The new courthouse, which was completed in 1891 at a cost of \$72,000, is said to be the finest edifice of its kind in the state outside of Douglas and Lancaster counties. It is built of red sandstone, with red sandstone trimmings and foundation, and with a slate roof. A central tower 125 feet high is surmounted by a statue of scholarship two feet in height. The various offices are most comfortably and commodiously arranged, the casings and office furniture being in main of natural oak.

While Hastings has never been loudly proclaimed as a manufacturing city, the fact remains that the "Queen City of the Plains" has more factories than even her own citizens give her credit for. The largest cold storage plant in Nebraska is located there, and the largest woolen mill in the state. A wholesale harness factory gives work to fifty hands; a soap factory to a number; the Queen city steam laundry operates from two to three hundred hands; the Hastings mill sends corn meal to Tennessee, and a fence factory has lately been established. The Hastings foundry is owned by William Moritz and employs a number of hands the year around. The Hastings roller mills are favorably known over the state, one of its owners, Mr. H. Edgerton, being one of the directors of the State Manufacturers' association. In addition there are a number of brickyards, cigar factories and cordage works which employ hundreds of men.

Last year the city council submitted a proposition to the voters to bond the city to put in a system of sewerage. The proposition was once defeated, but upon being put before the electors it was carried almost without opposition. A sewer farm was purchased and a fine system of sewers put in according to plans made by the present city engineer of Omaha, Mr. Andrew Rosewater. The system has given entire satisfaction, and now all of the business houses and many of the private residences are connected with it.

In the latter part of July, 1891, the question of paving the central portion of the city was agitated by some of the citizens. The council ordered paving district No. 1 to be paved and called an election for the purpose of issuing \$50,000 of intersection bonds. Just as the work had begun, the property owners saw the advantages to be derived from paving, and petitioned the council to create paving districts 2 and 3. At the special election called for July 5 last to consider the issuance of \$25,000 intersection bonds, fully 90 per cent of the vote cast was in favor of the proposition. The new districts embrace nearly all of the business portion of the city, about twenty blocks.

Hastings has no need of a militia company, if it be true that the pen is mightier than the sword. The city boasts of no less than three daily and five weekly newspapers. The daily and weekly Nebraskan are the oldest papers in the city, Messrs. J. A. and J. J. Croth being the publishers and editors. The daily Republican is the only morning daily between Lincoln and Denver; C. L. and F. A. Watkins are the owners. They also publish a weekly edition. The daily Times is a penny daily published by the Times Publishing company. Both the Nebraskan and Republican are republican papers. The Adams County Democrat, published by R. B. and C. B. Wahlgren, dispenses democratic doctrine to its readers every Friday. Our Own Opinion is an independent weekly. The Independent Tribune is a stalwart republican weekly, conducted by the veteran journalist, A. H. Brown.

Hastings is pre-eminently a city of churches. The finest church edifice in the city is owned by the Presbyterian society, and is situated at the corner of Lincoln avenue and Seventh street. It was erected at a cost of \$55,000, and is built of brick with red Colorado sandstone trimmings. It contains a pipe organ valued at \$1,000. Rev. Harry Omar Soren is the pastor. St. Cecilia's (Catholic) dates back to the establishment of Hastings. The parish is presided over by Father J. E. English. The first services of the Congregational denomination were held in the covered wagon in which the pioneers traveled over this region. The first regular organization was made in 1871 at Hastings. The society at the present time owns a neat and commodious place of worship and has Rev. Mr. Powell as pastor.

The Methodist Episcopal church was organized in a depot in 1872, and their present church is a great credit to their former humble quarters. Rev. Adams is their minister. The Baptist church was founded in 1874; Rev. J. E. Folsom is the present pastor. St. Mark's Episcopal parish owns a very neat and comfortable place of worship, with Rev. William L. Cook as rector. The Christian church is presided over by Rev. Mr. Kirshstein. The Swedish and German citizens have each religious organizations, the Swedes having one and the Germans four.

considerable proportion is owned by farmers. The Adams County bank was founded in 1868. Its capital is \$100,000, and its surplus is \$200,000, and of the \$135,000 on deposit \$50,000 is farmers' money. The Exchange National bank has a capital of \$200,000 and \$150,000 on deposit, nearly all farmers' money. Hastings as a wholesale point can hardly be overrated. The main thoroughfare is the B. & M. route and its branches to Aurora, Kearney, Oberlin and the Republican valley, and to Cheyenne, with the St. Joe & Grand Island giving direct communication with the Union Pacific at Grand Island, and leading to the southeast, with the Great Eastern, with the Missouri Pacific to the northeast, and the Missouri Pacific toward the southern part of the state and into northern Kansas. It will be seen that Hastings is a busy and important city, and an excellent point for wholesale houses to locate. There are now located in the city hardware, grocery, lumber, furniture, liquor, cigar, commission houses, and more are constantly being added.

Six miles west of Hastings on the lines of the B. & M. and Missouri Pacific is situated Juniata, with 600 inhabitants, the oldest village in the county and a good lively country village. The town of Juniata was surveyed in November, 1871. The village was incorporated in 1880 and is now under the trusteeship of the State. Methodist and Baptist denominations have church buildings and supplies are regularly made for other denominations. The Grand Army of the Republic has a hall in Juniata, and the fellows have lately built a hall for their own use.

A large grist mill furnishes employment for a number of hands. It has a number of elevators which are of much convenience to grain producers. The Juniata bank is conducted under the firm name of C. R. Jones & Co. The Juniata Herald is a newsy weekly, republican in politics, with Isaac H. Rickell as its editor.

Kenesaw, west of Juniata, was a prosperous settlement in 1873. Its present population is about 400. Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Evangelical denominations are all represented, with several houses of worship. Years ago, as it was on the government trail, Kenesaw was a favorite stopping place for soldiers and officers, although the village has lost this former importance the growth of the country surrounding has made it a good active little town. Kenesaw contains a school, a newspaper, a published there, and two banks, Exchange bank and Bank of Kenesaw, do a thrifty business with the merchants and farmers of the country.

South of Hastings ten miles is the village of Ayr, whose history dates back to 1878. Ayr is a pleasantly situated village on a branch of the B. & M. near the Little Blue river. The omnipresent red elevator is here, and the trade of the south part of the county is largely done here. The Methodist and Presbyterian have churches. Marvin N. Kress, better known to old timers as "Wild Bill," is now the postmaster.

Hanson is a village nine miles north of Hastings, whose claims for recognition depend upon the trade given it by the surrounding country. Prosner is the terminus of the Nebraska branch of the Missouri Pacific and a grain collecting center. In the lines of the Kansas City & Omaha, in the west central part of the county, are Holstein and Roseland, two villages established comparatively recently. On the same road twelve miles north of Hastings is Pauline, and a couple of miles farther on Pauline. This latter village claims the distinction of being a junction point of the Missouri Pacific and Kansas City & Omaha crossing here.

From Fifteen to Sixty-Five. Generally the prosperity of a county depends more upon the energy of its inhabitants than upon any superior natural advantages it may possess. If Adams county occupies an enviable place among the sisterhood of Nebraska, it is because of the men that luck has placed here. A few instances out of the many are cited to support the claim that this is one of the best counties in the state.

Charles B. Bigelow, the present county clerk, came to Nebraska in 1872, along with many of "our boys" who were sent down into the Republican valley, but not liking the country he retraced his steps as far as Juniata. Near this city he was obliged to stop, "on account of a lack of financing," he puts it. In fact, he was unable to pay the pre-emption fee required by the government for homesteaded land. He was obliged to "squall" until he could raise the requisite \$2. In addition to his original eighty which he obtained from the government for \$14, he has now at least a couple of hundred acres adjoining, for which he paid \$5 an acre. His eighty cost him practically nothing, and when he was suggested to Mr. Bigelow that perhaps when he had a little more of anything, and it brings me in a good income. "No, I rented it, getting one-third of the produce." Near Mr. Bigelow are his father and his brother, whose enterprises are very similar to those of C. B. Mr. Bigelow states that when he first came to Nebraska he had to go two miles to get water. A neighbor of his had to go to the same well, a distance of four miles, afoot, and carry the water in a couple of pails. This same man thought he was a good deal better off than he is now, and the distance he had to travel was reduced to two miles.

Wm. of West Blue Township came to the state in 1877. He was fairly well off when he began, as he had a capital of about \$2,000. He had a farm, invested in 160 acres of Union Pacific land, for which an offer of \$8,000 would not be refused. Besides this he owns city property in Hastings. Mr. Rinker's special interest is in raising sheep on an average twenty on the place at all times. Last year his forty acres of corn averaged forty-five bushels an acre, and the same area of oats yielded 100 bushels. His farm he still keeps in meadow and the rest is highly improved.

The writer recently made a trip into the northeastern portion of the county into West Blue precinct. Calls were made at nearly every farmhouse, with the object of determining the value of the country. The property were shared by the older settlers. It must be understood that the trip did not extend over the whole township, but that the route was chosen only at random, to the absence of any of the older class must not be taken as intentional.

Daniel Dillon was the first called upon. He came to Nebraska in 1875 and purchased 160 acres of land a short distance north of the city at about \$15 an acre. Mr. Dillon has improved his farm by setting out on numerous fruit and shade trees, until it is known pretty well all over the county as a fine fruit farm. It has planted, and is still receiving the returns from four acres of apples, a five-acre peach orchard, cherry, plum and nutbearing trees and grapevines, and a large number of other fruit trees. Small fruit he is in profession and still he has room to cultivate the usual farm products. His land has increased from \$15 to \$50 in value in four years.

Testimony of Practical Tillers. G. G. Halstead lives three miles north of Hastings, where he has a 147-acre farm. He obtained his land eleven years ago, paying for it \$8,500. It is not all the market now, but its value is fully \$12,000. He has raised 1,600 bushels of oats from sixty-five acres, 3,000 of corn and 125 tons of tame hay. His corn averaged forty bushels an acre. When Mr. W. J. Fisher took up his present farm in '87 fully half of it had never been broken, although the price paid was \$22 an acre. Now it is all broken and he has put out a quantity of fruit, besides a peach orchard, which is in a promising condition. Last year he raised 1,000 bushels of corn, flax and oats, all of which yielded a good crop.

increase of nearly \$5,000 in nine years. Corn is the principal crop, although Mr. Huxtable has a few acres of alfalfa. "Probably two of the most important factors in the growth of the new city were the removal of the county seat from Juniata to Hastings and the opening of the St. Joseph & Grand Island in 1870. The great fire of September, 1870, destroyed thirty-three buildings in the central business portion of town, causing \$100,000 of damage. The ruins had hardly ceased to smolder when the work of replacing the old wooden buildings with substantial bricks was begun. An ordinance authorizing the city to borrow \$53,000 for the construction of a system of waterworks was passed on this action confirmed by a vote of the people. The system consists of eight bore wells 140 feet deep, which pump the water into a large receiving basin. Two large force pumps take the water from the reservoir and pump it into the main pipe, 125 feet high and twenty feet in diameter. There are nearly twenty miles of mains, and fire hydrants are scattered at intervals through the city. The works are self-supporting, and each year pay more than the interest on the debt. The system is giving the city the advantage of free hydrant service for fires. The water is as pure as that of a mountain spring, and the supply is inexhaustible.

A West Point Story. Harper's Young People: Two plain ordinary citizens visited West Point for the first time and were deeply interested in the blithesome cadet. With the assurance that they were on government ground, and that they were finite parts of the same government, they went where they pleased and were not interrupted. As the day waned, however, they drew their forbidden ground—a plot sacred to the embryo generals. As they stepped across a line, ignorant of the awful trespass, a mild youth with spottish uniform and heavy musket ran up.

"No citizens allowed here," said the sentry. The citizens turned sadly away. "I feel like the sunset gun," remarked one. The sentry stopped to listen. "Why?" inquired the other citizen. "Because I've just been fired off," was the answer, and to the citizen's delight the sentry smiled.

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