

NEHAWKA.

WILLIAM REED DUNROY.

Nehawka is a queer little town down in Cass county. It is more like a New England town than any other one in the state, and the fact that its founders came from "Old Vermont," may account for its peculiarities. It is situated on the banks of the Weeping Water, and there are hills all around it, and strange as it may seem to people in Nebraska, there are rocks galore around the town and the general appearance is that of a bit of down east set on the prairies of the west.

The town was started some ten or twelve years ago on the spot where many years prior, settlers from Vermont came and made their homes. It is said that the general superintendent of the Missouri Pacific road, was looking about among the trees for a town site and he climbed up a ladder, peered about a while, and at last decided upon the present site for the station. The farmers in the vicinity at once took a great interest in the projected town, and as they were thrifty and cautious, they went at the project with extreme conservatism. They searched about for persons to come to the town and asked one man of each business to locate there. If more wished to come, they were discouraged. One druggist, one butcher and the like was deemed sufficient and all others were warned to keep away. A sort of a discouraging committee was formed and in that way competition was kept down to the minimum. The town grew, but it never had a boom. Its growth was steady and healthful, and the result is that there has never been a business failure in the place since it started.

When it came to building a school house the people went at it in the proper manner. They levied a tax for the purpose and put up a fine two-story brick schoolhouse, without a cent of bonded indebtedness. The lumber merchant was induced to open an account with the school directors and wait until the money was forthcoming for his pay. The brick was burned by a local brick burner, and he also kept an open account. The second year the bills were all paid, and there is at the present time, a snug sum in the bank to the credit of the school district. The school house is a commodious one with a large city hall on the second floor which may be used for all school and city purposes.

The bank is another peculiar institution. When it was first started it had a capital stock of \$5,000. The farmers in the vicinity, all wealthy, put their money in the home institution and they soon had in the neighborhood of \$50,000 deposited in the bank. People coming to the town and hearing of a bank with but \$5,000 capital stock and deposits to the amount of \$50,000 laughed at the farmers and asked them if they were not afraid of such a bank. But the answers were characteristic. They replied "Don't we know the men at the head of the bank? That is sufficient for us." And they kept their money right in the bank. At the present time the bank has a much larger capital stock and is one of the thriving businesses of the little village. And by the way, the cashier of the bank is one of the men of the town who has irons in the fire. Besides his duties as cashier, he adds that of partner in a general store, partner in a real estate office, insurance agent, editor of the newspaper, and was elected justice of the peace last term, but would not qualify.

Nehawka has never been incorporated. It is contended by some that as soon as it is incorporated that the expenses of the government of the village will be increased. Another faction says that a saloon may be one of the evils to follow incorporation, and so it fights it. At the present time the government is not of any consequence. The assessor is

about the only official who ever acts. Last year they had no justice of the peace, and this year one was elected but has not yet qualified. There is not a lawyer in the town, but one physician and only one of three ministers of the gospel who preaches there, resides in the place. Most of the business men are retired farmers who have come to town to spend the remainder of their days.

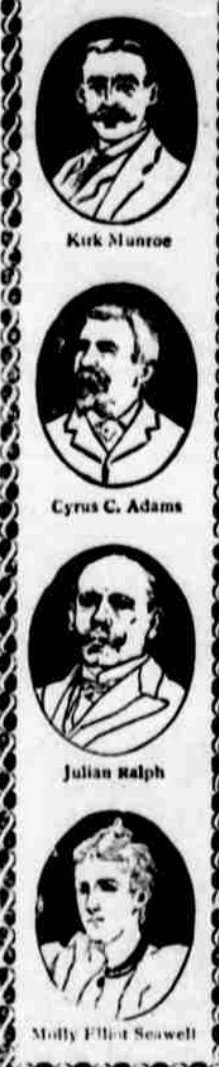
Not far from the town is a large fruit farm which consists of 150 acres of apple trees and ten acres of cherry trees. Isaac Pollard is the owner of the place. He came to Nebraska in 1856 and settled down on a homestead where he has remained ever since. He saw Nebraska grow from a great barren prairie into orchards, meadows and green seas of corn and wheat. From a little orchard of a few trees brought from Vermont, he has grown his present large orchard. A large cold storage building, built of brick, stands near the entrance to the fruit farm and a brick house, large and commodious, has taken the place of the little board hut that first sheltered Mr. Pollard when he first came to the state. When he first came to this country the wild deer, buffalo, wild turkey and the wilder Indians, prowled about. It was thought then that the state would never be settled, but that it would always be a vast grazing land for innumerable cattle, and it was the purpose of the early settlers to use the land for cattle raising.

Lawson Sheldon is another old settler who came to Nehawka in the early days. He tells an interesting story of that early time in regard to a man by the name of Roberts. This man settled near where Mr. Sheldon lives, and it was thought that he was a Mormon. There were two women at his house, one not overly handsome and the other bright and buxom. Roberts told the settlers that the younger one was his wife's sister, but as that was a favorite story with Mormons it was not believed. A man by the name of Kanaba, growing tired of keeping "old batch" decided to board with the Roberts family. Later, deciding to go south, he left, and when he went away he gave Roberts about \$300 to keep for him while he was gone. A day or two after Kanaba had gone, Roberts reported that twelve Indians had come to his house and robbed him of about \$700. A posse was immediately organized to go in search of the Indians, but no trace of them could be found. The strongest part of the matter was that there were no evidences about the place to show that the red skins had been near at all, and suspicions were aroused that Roberts was not telling the truth.

Later on, Kanaba came back, and when he heard the story he too was filled with disbelief and one dark night he gathered together a few friends, and they gave Roberts a surprise party. They took him out in the woods and carefully adjusted a rope around his neck and throwing one end over the limb of a tree, they pulled on the other end until Roberts arose to a nice distance. They let him dangle until he was black in the face, and then they let him down and asked him where Kanaba's money was. But he insisted that the Indians had taken it, and after hoisting him several times the men let him go. He moved away in a few days and it was thought that he went to Salt Lake, to join the Mormon colony.

In the early days the settlers squatted on their land and as the section lines were not laid out there was trouble later on. When the lines were laid it was found that the squatters had not obtained their land in regular tracts, but had regular patch-work pieces. Another thing that confused matters was the fact that the government allowed each man to take 160 acres, and the territory at first allowed a man to take 160 more. The latter settlers were allowed to take

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but 160, and when they came and found some of the men possessed of 320 acres, they were angry and proceeded to jump claims. This did not suit the early pioneers, and it is hinted that several claim jumpers were escorted as far as the Missouri river, and it is not known whether they made their way across to the other side or not, as they were never seen again. The Indians as a general thing were friendly. They roamed the country, following in the wake of the buffaloes that furnished them meat and clothing. In the summer time the buffaloes came north and in the winter they went south, and the redskins followed their movements. But Indian and buffalo are now things of the past, and a thriving town occupies the place where once the smoke of the Indian tepee ascended, and the rumble of the buffalo's tread was heard.

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