

INTERESTING CHAPTER OF HOLT COUNTY'S EARLY HISTORY Fourth Installment

(Continued From Last Week.)

Improvements were coming into use as the world progressed.

A frontier life has its charms as well as its hardships. Lives full of energy usually want plenty of room so they seek opportunity on the frontier west, where they find sociability and friendship more in common than in old and established places.

He says that in passing from the "Badger" to the "Bugeater or Golden Rod" state they were forty-three days moving with horse teams and wagons heavily loaded. He writes on September 1, 1925: The greatest drought known since the first settlement of northern Nebraska is now—this season. Many farmers corn crops are dried up. Pastures so dry that the stock has to be fed the same as in the winter. Along the streams, where irrigation can be had, the corn and other crops are good, but not full.

It would seem that after reading much of the foregoing harrowing and bloodthirsty events that there was a sad and deplorable lack of the spiritual side of life among the settlers. They were a rough and sturdy race made so by the constant danger and the many difficult problems and daily hardships they were required to face. Their's was a rough exterior with an inner honesty and nobleness of character that was unmistakable. So let us review this angle. As before mentioned, if this were not true, when Mr. Prouty made the trip with the Elder of the Methodist church to Paddock and found a crowd ready to dance, would they have accepted a sermon instead. Would our young generation today do that?

Barley Blain, in his "Early History of Holt County" says, we crossed the Missouri river May 4, 1880, at Niobrara and settled about two miles southwest of Middlebranch in Holt county. Lived in a tent till early in June when we had our house under roof. While looking for a place to make a home we called at the sod house of G. W. Jones. While talking, others, landlookers came in. Mr. Jones said: "I got some lumber yesterday for a floor for my house and intend to put it in today." A young man who had just come in said, "It will be a good place for a dance then, won't it?" "Yes, said Mr. Jones, if the people want to come here and dance they can dance, and if a preacher comes along and wants to preach he can preach too." I said to myself, if I settle in this vicinity I will preach in his house.

I made a homestead entry four miles north of Mr. Jones sending word out, without further permission, that I would preach in his house the next Sunday. That service was the beginning of what is known as Mayfield church appointment. Preaching was continued for a few years and largely under the leadership of J. R. Kennedy, Mayfield church was built. I think this was the first country church built in Holt county.

He says the first Sunday school was at Prouty's home at Rockford on December 14, 1873, and prayer meeting at the same place on December 21 the same year, and these were continued until 1875, when Rev. S. P. Van Doozer came to Rockford and preached the first sermon on April 20th at the home of Elijah Thompson. At this time a church was organized with five members, Frank Bitney, class leader; Clara Bitney, Will Dickerson, M. S. Prouty and Jennie H. Shultz. The Rockford church was supplied services every three weeks by a preacher from Oakdale. In the summer of 1876, Rev. J. B. Maxfield the new presiding Elder of the district came to Rockford and held first communion service.

Mr. Blain says that so far as he can learn the first Methodist preaching service in the northeast part of Holt county was at Steel Creek school house by a Rev. Hurt, living at Walnut Grove in Knox county, in the autumn of 1879.

Rev. Blain is believed to have been the first Protestant Minister to have settled in the county and served eleven appointments in Holt county and three in Knox county. Among some of those were Steel Creek, Knoxville, Grim school house, Blackbird having held services in the home of W. E. McRoberts on a week day evening, Aug. 9, 1880.

He, after some persuasion consented to take O'Neill City, and with his son in 30 hours after unloading his tool chest had a board roofed shanty 12x16 feet constructed where he and his son, his daughter and son-in-law and baby resided until the Methodist Church of O'Neill was finished and dedicated on December 16, 1883.

He says further about Geo. W. Jones, that he was a real pioneer and was the first to go out on the prairie, away from the brooks, where water must be obtained by digging, he having taken his homestead on NE 1/4 Sec. 3, Twp. 28, Range 9.

Pioneering on the prairie has its variety of incidents both enjoyable and enduring and he tells of an incident that occurred in the Autumn of 1880. The delightful weather about the middle of October was taken by two or more denizens of the township for a trip to the saw mill on the Niobrara river to obtain material to build some stables. The weather changed while they were gone, first a light mist, with the wind in the north-west, then changing to snow which kept coming thicker, the wind increasing until the first class Nebraska blizzard was in full blast. Fortunately for them the wind was not in their faces, as they were driving south, with heavy loads for good roads, the gathering snow made wheeling very heavy. The snow and wind increased every moment. Crossing the Middlebranch at Parson Blain's their good cheer returned, for on the high prairie the way had been leveled by the wind, but darkness was upon them, teams nearly exhausted and men tired and cold. With no road discernable, snow a foot deep or more on the ground, and apparently a hundred thousand feet deep in the air all hope of finding shelter for the night was fast dying out. Then a light was seen ahead of them. The foremost was not long in finding the door of the soddy. In response to his knock a good looking woman opened the door of whom he inquired, "Will you tell me who lives here?" "Yes, she answered, you and I and your children, but we were afraid we might never see you again if you had to stay out in a storm like this. At home and did not know it. A genuine Nebraska blizzard so befuddles the elements that one out in it is liable to become so confused as to lose himself at his own door.

The pioneer settlers of Holt county are from many states and nations but probably more came from Iowa than any other, therefore one of its central townships was named Iowa. Among its early citizens were a few with very significant names, among which were those of Bright, Keep, Cherry, Pickle, Garrett, Waring, Alder, Persons, Surprise, Ward, Lull, Grass, Blain, Hall, Marker, Mills, Finny and Lee. Alfred Alder was the pioneer "Mill" man of Holt county, having built the "Middlebranch Mill" and managed its business for several years, selling out both the mill and his forty-acre homestead to Moses Bright, a brother of Jesse Bright, who was the first settler in Iowa township. His homestead was in four sections, one half in Holt and the other in Knox county.

Charles Finny, a brother-in-law of Mr. Alder, built a small store near the mill and soon became helpful to a considerable portion of Holt, Knox and Antelope counties by furnishing such mercantile supplies as were in demand. Public school teachers were here as elsewhere not an important class of settlers. However, among those well remembered as having taught school were two young men,

one from Iowa, John Wertz by name, who taught in his own house for a small sum and gave good satisfaction. The next year he gave the site, helped furnish the material and built the first school house in Willowdale precinct. Afterward he became editor and publisher of one of the best conducted weekly newspapers in the county. Concluding his service in the war against Spain, he was appointed postmaster in his home town of Stuart.

The other was from Minnesota and had spent some time in the Mankato Normal School. He taught several terms in his native state then after arriving in Holt county furnished the dugout that he built, intending to be a farmer, for a school house. The remuneration for a three months term was the state apportionment to district No. 50 for the year 1881, which amounted to less than \$50.00. The next winter he taught at Rock Falls in one room of Mr. Veal's residence and received as compensation his board and \$15.00 a month. Retiring from teaching he became a farmer.

Early in the year 1883, Rev. J. R. Gartner having settled in Verdigris precinct began preaching regularly at several places and was soon appointed to the charge of the Middlebranch circuit of the M. E. Church. The same year Rev. A. J. Calvert was also added to the number of pioneer preachers and made his headquarters at Keya Paha. The last we heard of him he was on his way to the Klondike.

A few years Rev. J. R. Gartner volunteered as a helper of Bishop Taylor in his self supporting mission in Africa and with his family (except the daughter who still lives near Maxfield church) went to the west coast of the dark continent where after a few months of earnest work he was overcome by the malarial climate and was buried on a hillside sloping toward the sea not far from the mouth of the Congo at Garaway Station. Mr. Blain gives us quite a vivid picture of what the pioneer preachers went through when he tells of his trip to the Mission Conference at Kearney, Nebraska.

Returning home the first Sunday evening in October after three days of absence, the first thing my wife said was "George has been very sick since you left." I had planned to leave the next morning. In the morning I said, "I don't have to go to the conference and can give it up," to which my wife replied, "We can take care of him. You cannot save his life by staying. If he dies the neighbors will help bury him." Turning to the oldest son she ordered, "get your father's horse, it's time he was on his way." I had a good horse that was soon at the door and I rode away, knowing that for two or three weeks I could not hear from home, nor could home folks hear from me. Knowing that the path of duty is the path of safety, therefore I did not worry about them though I often thought of them.

Having ridden about 50 miles I found entertainment at the home of a congregationalist, whose treatment was cordial. On leaving next morning I asked what I should pay. He said, "Have you twenty-five cents?" I handed him the amount. He took it and placed a half dollar in my hand saying, "I like to encourage such as you, who are trying to make the world better."

On the second day out I dined with a farmer on a creek several miles west of Albion. This man directed me to go past a blowout in the sand hills several miles south. "Near that you will see the tracks made by two wagons some time ago. Follow that until you reach a valley, along which there is a fairly plain road." That afternoon I saw but one living thing besides my horse, a lone meadow lark. Near sunset I reached the valley and there found a plain road which I followed for several miles. There was a small creek running down this valley at the left. Presently I saw a lantern near the creek and asked the man for entertainment. "How are you traveling?" was the reply. "On horseback, I replied." "The creek is mirey, you can't cross here. Go down the road half a mile where you can stay," he informed me. "I rode on, horse and rider both tired until the barking of a dog was a very welcome sound. I rapped on the door of a shack.

"Come in," I heard in broad Irish as I opened the door, and asked for entertainment for the night. "No sor, I'm away from home myself and the folks here are away," he informed me. "I have been riding all day and my horse is tired; I must stay either in the house or out of it. I want some feed for my horse and a place to sleep," I said. "Well I think I can find some feed for the horse," he answered. The horse was fed and we went in. "I can sleep on the lounge here," I said. "Oim goin to sleep here myself, sor. Oim here helpin' with the potato harvest an' bethought me to write a letter while fifteen miles nearer the post office than my home is," he informed me. I said I could sleep on the floor. "Alright," replied mine host. "I tried it but found it rather lively sleeping as there seemed to be two or three fleas on each of my limbs playing hipity hop with each other the whole night. Was finally glad to get up rather than be a playground for a flea circus. The grandmother and several children were discovered to be at home and I had a good breakfast."

"Started southward and soon folding the cedar was obliged to hold my feet up as high as possible to keep them out of the water. Found a fairly plain road but was obliged to ride toward all points of the compass among the sand hills. Darkness overtook me in a strange land with no human habitation in sight. Not long after dark, I heard boys laughing in the stillness among some small timber. I called to them and asked if I could get lodging for the night. "Go on to the house and they will tell you, they shouted. A few rods further I saw a light in a window almost under my horses feet. Going a little further I rapped on a door. It opened and I saw a well filled table surrounded by half a score of people all enjoying their evening meal. One of them was a Seventh Day Adventist minister whom I had known a few years before in Minnesota. I was cordially entertained.

"Before night the next day a fairly large prairie was reached several miles in extent. Considerably improved near the south side of this prairie was large farm with a house octagonal in form and two stories high. This was also a hotel the largest room of which was also a general merchandise store, well filled with goods.

Late in the afternoon of Thursday I reached Kearney, and found the M. E. Church fairly well filled. I saw only one familiar face, that of Mrs. Mary C. Ninde, of Winona, Minnesota. Here on the first day of the session of a new annual conference they organized a Women's Foreign Missionary Society.

I reported to Dr. Lemon the Superintendent of the west Nebraska Mission Conference that I had come from the northeast corner of the territory of his conference. He looked surprised that there was any need of preaching in that corner. I told him there was need of two men, one along the Elkhorn river and another along the Niobrara and its tributaries. After considering the matter he said, "Select your men and if they are willing to go we will send them." Saturday evening the Conference business was all finished. Immediately after the benediction a man who had just entered, hurried toward the Bishop saying, "Where is this man?" Bishop Warren called me and introduced the one who had just entered. After a little consultation it was decided that newcomer should go. The latest arrival drove a good team and a light carriage purposefully prepared for frontier work. He was Rev. J. De Los Wilson and early Monday morning we were on the road, headed for the Niobrara Valley more than two hundred miles away. We had driven perhaps 15 miles when a short turn on the road broke an axle and we were obliged to return to Kearney. Fortunately a farmer going to town for building material carried our broken rig to the city where repairs were completed before noon the next day. Early Tuesday afternoon we were again on our way. Thirty years ago the rural sections of central Nebraska were sparsely settled. In many parts long distances stretched between residences many of which were of

(To Be Continued Next Week)

Holt County Pioneer Passes in Boyd County

Daniel Jeremiah Kirwan was born at Bloomington, Ohio, December 12, 1862, and died at his home in Gross, Nebraska, on January 31, 1939, aged 76 years, one month and 19 days.

The funeral was held from the Catholic Church at Spencer, Nebraska, on February 2nd, and he was laid to rest in St. Mary's cemetery there, beside the remains of his departed wife, Elizabeth Ellen Kirwan, who passed away November 27, 1927.

Jerry Kirwan was a real pioneer of Nebraska, having lived in the state continuously since 1872 when he moved with his parents to Lincoln, Nebraska, from Missouri; where the family had lived two years; in 1880, he with his parents, brothers and sisters moved to O'Neill, Nebraska. He later lived for a time at Valentine.

During the construction of the "Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley (now C. N. W.) railroad, he was employed as a track layer, and was with the railroad crew from O'Neill, Nebraska to the Black Hills.

By occupation he was a farmer and stockman. For 25 years he had been a rural mail carrier and at the time of his death was a retired civil service employee. On February 16, 1887, he was united in marriage to Elizabeth Ellen Gaskill at St. Francis Mission, Dakota Territory. To this union was born 11 children, seven sons and four daughters; Edward L., of Ft. Randall, South Dakota; Mamie McCright, deceased, John M., of Omaha; Joseph P., of Miles City, Montana; Margaret Scanlon, deceased, William B., of Los Angeles, Calif.; Helen Kirwan, deceased, Philip D., of Fairfax, South Dakota; Gerald R., of Ft. Randall, South Dakota; Mrs. Lauretta Jonas, of Gregory, S. D.; Daniel F., of Ft. Randall, S. D. He is survived by 37 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren, four brothers, John S., of Boise, Idaho; Micheal F., of O'Neill, Neb.; Philip J., of Glenwood Springs, Colo.; and Edward B., of Ft. Randall, South Dakota.

On December 12, 1936, he was united in marriage to Mamie Millard at Fairfax, South Dakota, who with other relatives is left to mourn the passing of a kind and loving husband, indulgent father and a real christian man. He will long be remembered by all who knew him. The world is better by his having lived. xxx

SOUTHEAST BREEZES

By Romaine Saunders
I haven't gone to the state house to call on Senator Brady from "up home" but understand he is on his good behavior, with the prestige he attained two years ago having already been augmented considerably.

It is said that the ego has attained the proportions in the Italian dictator that he now plans an image of himself on a scale of that erected in the plain of Dura in old Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, to which is to be attached some of the old pagan religious significance.

Perhaps it is just as well to conclude that in those far-off days of which the picturesque Mr. Prouty and the scholarly Mike Long wrote there were breeds of range cattle, deer, jackrabbits, coyotes and other specimens of wild life which flourished in an "arid desert region," and let it go at that.

If there is a strain of hell-born conduct more contemptible, more despicable, more completely bereft of common decency than the treatment Tom Mooney has shown the loyal little woman who stayed by him and did all she could to finance the long fight for his release it has not yet come to light. And it is like spitting in the face of the governor who released him and the friends whose loyalty has been betrayed.

The old timer who thought he was pretty good at acrobatic tricks in his day will uncover for some of the stunts young fellows today put on. Just any day I see a common bicycle affording passage for three young huskies. Two somehow manage it, just over the pedals while a third stands on a precarious little perch just above the hind

wheel, arms folded and rolling through traffic with an air of contemptuous confidence.

The early February sky is a distinct disappointment to a city dweller. The artificial glare on all sides spoils the view of transcending charm vouchsafed the dweller in the open. For several nights the moon's full orb sheds a pale light which bathes in quiet splendor a landscape reaching to the far-off hills. An element which adds to the beauty of the picture in open country is absent this winter. A foot of snow, frost sparkling like rare gems and crunching under your feet as you walk, puts a touch to a moon-drenched February night that has inspired the poets. Lincoln streets this February are dry, bare, windswept and dreary at night, and one from the big prairie finds little of interest on the street.

Seventy-Two Residents Receive Compensation

Of the total number who filed claims in Holt county, 72 have been declared eligible and will receive their checks through the mails this week.

The average weekly benefit amount for claimants in Holt county is \$8.05.

The total amount of money which will be received by claimants each week is \$579.45. Unless these claimants become employed, this amount of weekly benefits will very likely remain constant from six to ten weeks.

A claimant is disqualified from receiving his weekly benefit check any week in which he earns in excess of \$3.00 in odd jobs or subsidiary employment or any week in which he works at his regular or customary employment. If working in regular employment, he is disqualified for that week regardless of the amount he earns in that week.

The disqualification applies only to the week in which he has the earnings.

Only three claimants in Holt county will receive the maximum weekly benefit amount, which is \$15.00.

It now appears likely that there will be approximately \$2,300 received by claimants in Holt county each month for the next few months. This amount will, of course, be reduced if the Employment Service can place these claimants in jobs. Every claimant is required to apply for work each week when he renews his claim and must be available for and physically able to work.

This is insurance (job insurance) which, it is hoped, will gradually reduce the relief load by substituting legitimate insurance benefits for the Dole or Work Relief.

From A Democratic United States Senator

"We have at Washington today the most costly, the most wasteful, and the most bureaucratic form of government this republic has ever known. In the fiscal year of 1939 the expenditures of all governments in America will be more than \$20,000,000,000, or almost one-third of the total gross income of the nation."—Senator Byrd.

Pre-Nuptial Shower

On Sunday night, February 5, a shower was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Donohoe, in honor of their son Francis' approaching marriage to Miss Ardis Chase. About 75 people old and young gathered for the event with nice presents, and well filled baskets for a lunch.

Card tables were arranged and card playing was the principal pastime of the evening.

About midnight a grand lunch was passed around. After this the Shield's orchestra and quartette was rounded up and songs were rendered. About this time the guests departed for home wishing this young couple a long and happy wedded life.

One Who Was There

Mrs. Christina Smith, of Atkinson, fell and broke her right arm on Wednesday. She was brought to O'Neill and Dr. French reduced the fracture, after which she left for the home of her son, near Creighton.

Natives of This City On the Way to Fame

Last week, the people of O'Neill were privileged to hear three former O'Neill residents broadcasting on three separate programs on a coast to coast net work. On Thursday night, Damion Flynn, son of Dr. and Mrs. P. J. Flynn, and who, under the stage name of Damion O'Flynn, is now appearing in a current Broadway production, appeared on the Rudy Valle program in a short Irish skit. Damion was born in O'Neill and lived here for several years, later moving with his family to Plattsmouth, where the family resided until they moved to Omaha. He is well known here, having returned for many visits with his mother, Mrs. Tess Flynn, who now resides in Omaha. On Saturday night, Donna Rae Cooper, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ted Cooper, appearing under the stage name of Donna Day, was heard on Fred Waring's program. Miss Day, is however, a regular member of Mr. Waring's Pennsylvanians and as such is heard on his program which is broadcast every Saturday night from New York City. Miss Cooper is also well known here, having lived here with her parents until they moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where she began her rapid and spectacular rise in the entertainment world. Miss Cooper's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Cooper are now with her in New York City, where, when she is not appearing with the band, she is engaged in the study of music and dancing, as well as dramatics.

On Sunday night, Harry Owens, son of Professor and Mrs. Jesse Owens, orchestra leader and entertainer was heard on the Fitch hour. Like Mr. Flynn and Miss Cooper, Mr. Owens was born in O'Neill, and while he himself, is not so well known in O'Neill, because, as far as we know, he has never been back to visit. His parents were well known and still have many friends here. Mr. Owens is not only an orchestra leader, but is also a composer, having composed along with many other popular pieces, "Sweet Lanonie."

Sell Real Estate of Late John A. Crandall

A large crowd gathered at the court house last Monday afternoon to attend the administrators sale of the late J. A. Crandall estate. About 1500 acres of land was sold, there being about one dozen bidders active at the sale. The land was sold in tracts and was sold subject to the taxes due thereon, which are around \$1,000. The land brought about five dollars an acre, except one tract, which sold for \$1.10 an acre, subject to taxes due. The home place, on the Niobrara at the mouth of the Eagle, brought the biggest price, the place selling for \$4,250.00. Even at that price the buyers got a real bargain as there is nearly 1,000 acres in this tract and it is heavily timbered. This place was bought by a farmer from Boyd county.

The Weather

This section of the state has been having some real winter weather the past week. Last Thursday morning it dropped to five above zero and went to four below last Friday morning. It warmed up then and we had fair weather until Monday night when it again dropped to one above. On Tuesday night however, the wind blew a gale and before morning the thermometer dropped to 13 below zero, the coldest of the winter. It moderated some during the day but was close to the zero mark all day Wednesday. Wednesday night it again started downward and by morning it had registered five below zero.

Snow is predicted for this section of the state for today and tomorrow with warmer weather.

Following is the weather chart for the past week.	
	H. L.
Feb. 2	20 5
Feb. 3	30 - 4
Feb. 4	34 13
Feb. 5	43 27
Feb. 6	42 23
Feb. 7	29 1
Feb. 8	1 -13

The temperature started to fall on Tuesday, February 7, at 10:00 a. m.

Emmet Harmon made a business trip to Center on Wednesday.