

Judge Kinkaid 'Outstanding Nebraskan'

Tap of a Bell on Puget Sound Determined Course for Future Congressman

By ROMAINE SAUNDERS
Editor-in-Chief, Diamond Jubilee Edition

Smoke from ocean-going steamers floated lazily in from Puget Sound. The air of mid-forenoon held a chill. Sea gulls on the eternal hunt for scraps to feed upon held the attention of a dapper young man who stood upon the wharf not knowing whether to board a vessel for Vancouver, British Columbia, or return inland.

He finally left it to the tap of a bell. If the bell sounded at the appointed hour the scholarly, well-groomed young man said to himself he would board a train and leave the Northwest. The bell clanged.

And so O'Neill acquired one of its most distinguished citizens, a polished gentleman and able lawyer from old Virginia. A week after the bell gave that signal, M. P. Kinkaid arrived in O'Neill. I got the story of the bell out there on Puget Sound from Kinkaid after he became a member of congress.

That was in 1882 and from then until his death in 1922 he was a citizen of O'Neill. What brought this polished gentleman from America's oldest settled community into a wild and woolly frontier country? Maybe it is accounted for on the theory of positive and negative forces, opposites find their affinity, or was it with him as with others, drawn into the untamed West by that mysterious and subtle thing, a desire for adventure.

But Kinkaid played a part in taming the West.

As district judge he did much to clean up the cattle rustlers and horse thieves. In 1900, Kinkaid was elected to congress from what was then the Sixth congressional district.

It may not be too much to say he did more for the district and the state as a whole than any that have gone to Washington from Nebraska when he secured the change in the homestead laws to enlarge the homestead in his district from a quarter section to a full section, which provided also that those who had acquired a quarter section under homestead could have three additional quarters and added to the tax rolls a vast amount of government land. This was achieved during Kinkaid's first term in congress. He was a member of congress at the time of his death.

Kinkaid, a man of exemplary habits, able, precise, contributing freely to the support of every worthy cause, knew everybody and extended the glad hand. But he was not a close friend and never carried O'Neill at an election. Kinkaid was a bachelor. Maybe O'Neill voters resented the idea of voting for an unmarried man.

Or maybe it was like sending up to Minnesota for potatoes when we grow better ones in Nebraska. Some how he, a Republican, could be elected when everything went otherwise politically.

Some of the party leaders favored his nomination only because he could be elected. They had no personal warmth of feeling for him. As a lawyer, in legal contests opponents feared him.

Judge Kinkaid's Virginia blood showed in his interest in horses. When a herd of wild ones were brought in off of the range and corralled back of Ward's barn, the judge looked them over and at different times bought the one that took his fancy. But he had unfortunate experience with two or three and then was absent as a spectator at the corral.

The judge was no broncho buster. One Howard Wilcox was taming for him, got tangled up in wire and was cut badly, another in the hands of Long Hair John kicked off a hoof and was shot.

Another bought on the assumption it was a pacer, proved otherwise, and was disposed of probably at a loss.

The upstairs rooms of O'Neill's first brick structure, at the corner of Fourth and Douglas streets, were both home and office for Judge Kinkaid. A new cottage fitted up on the East side of town by the judge had implications of the home of another bride and bridegroom in our midst. Speculation involved three accomplished ladies of the town, but none of these were under serious consideration as mistress of the new

cottage. The lady he had in mind turned her hand and heart to a member of the United States congress and the fancied victim of unrequited love was said to have made the vow to be elected to congress himself. After a brief residence in the new cottage the judge resumed his lonely life in the original haunts and found solace in devising a political career and sustenance from the crackers and protose from the Battle Creek sanitarium.

I enjoyed the contacts with Judge Kinkaid as did others and now wish to pay a tribute to his memory as one of the outstanding Nebraskans of his day.

News Notes in 1881-'82 . . .

Kinkaid Makes Court 'Squirm'

Bad Business—R. P. Cooper Shoots John Fritz—Jo Hall in Pursuit of Cooper Is Thrown from Horse and Nearly Killed.—An Unfortunate Affair. Thus read the headlines over a column story telling of a shooting over a debt. Cooper was apprehended and placed under \$500 bonds but made his get-away.

The wife of Herger Gaulekson, a Norwegian homesteader on the Keya Paha, was brought to O'Neill yesterday. The woman is violently insane and Sheriff Welton will convey her to the asylum at Lincoln tomorrow. The Frontier devoted a half column to the story, setting forth that the woman got the notion that a prairie fire near their home was hell on earth and that the Lord told her she was to be burned up in it. Recovering somewhat her sanity, she was started off again in wild raving when her bed caught fire probably from the old man smoking in bed and she had to be taken to the asylum, her husband also somewhat deranged, and three small children upon the mercy of the world.

Jesse Crawford was involved in a shooting scrape and when appearing before Judge Barnes for trial was released on the grounds of lack of jurisdiction as the crime was committed in unorganized territory.

Crawford's victim was Barclay Kane. The supreme court, however, ordered him to be tried in Holt county. M. P. Kinkaid was defending Crawford on the proposition that the supreme court had held in another case, that of I. P. Oliver, who was involved in a killing in unorganized territory, that the Holt county district court was without jurisdiction. The Frontier said the court was made to "squirm" when Kinkaid made jurisdiction an issue. Crawford was tried and convicted and remanded to the West Point jail, where he wrote a lengthy poem for The Frontier before being taken to the penitentiary.

Two newspaper men, one a doctor, a former county official and various gents from various walks of life, local and out-state citizens, who took the Keeley cure at the O'Neill institute, for the most part continued on the water wagon. But the institute, like many other things, started in the town, had its day.

The sign on the Gallagher building survived for a number of years after the institute suspended operations, here. It was men of more than ordinary ability in the community who took the Keeley cure, a matter of wonderment at some who had showed no outward signs of needing such treatment. The institute was just another of those things which O'Neill took on for a time.

Alcoholics Anonymous is now said to be bleaching out the red noses and has become a nationwide organization. No doses to take—join the bunch and say you are done with the cup that inebriates for all time. The writer does not know of such an organization in the county. As yet such are mostly in the larger cities.



LINING UP FOR 'KINKAID HOMESTEAD' . . . These men are lining up at the U. S. land office, which stood on the present site of the telephone building on Upper Fourth street—each waiting his turn to file for a "Kinkaid Homestead". In every American

history book the Kinkaid Act and U. S. land offices are mentioned. Scenes such as this provoked the widely-adopted use of the expression "doing a land office business"—meaning a thriving business.—(Photo courtesy Mrs. L. G. Gillespie collection.)



ROLLING HILLS ON EAGLE . . . This cluster of buildings represents Eagle Mills—Wm. Nollkamper's place on Eagle Creek. Northern Holt is flat in some sections, rolling in others

(above). Edw. S. Early writes (below) that the Eagle Creek country is "not too well defined geographically."

KEELEY INSTITUTE HAD ITS DAY

Along in the 1880s there was started a program for the treatment of the rednosed soaks when Keeley Institutes sprung up all over the nation. Across the South side of the Gallagher building on lower Fourth street there was a sign in large letters "Keeley Institute." So the program got going in O'Neill bewildered Dr. B. T. Trueblood being installed as supervising physician.

The treatment consisted of taking a dose of medicine at stated hours of the day along with certain prescribed regulations. You could be cured of both liquor and tobacco habits—if you wanted such release. Some young fellows thought it popular to take the tobacco cure all but after faithfully downing a spoonful several times a day for a few days and finding the pleasure derived from the narcotic weed diminishing gave it up and took as strong as ever to sending up the incense from the lighted end of a Havana.

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Eagle Creek Family Decides Bull Snake and Bats Are Undesirable House Pets

By EDW. S. EARLY of O'Neill

My father, mother, my two sisters and I, myself a mere kid, arrived in O'Neill from Pennsylvania in July, 1886. Father secured the relinquishment of a claim from George Gaffney and by Fall of that year we were established as Holt county homesteaders on land in what became known as the Eagle creek country, not too well defined in geographical boundaries but most anywhere from the North boundary of town to undefined limits to the Northwest.

There was a makeshift of a log house built in the side of a hill on our landed estate and the family took over. However, as mother and sisters entered this castle of frontier grass land they were greeted by a huge bull snake coming to welcome them from his hideout between two logs and a bat flapped his ugly wings. Mother and sisters retreated.

Tom Gallagher had induced father to pull up stakes in the East and come West. He was a neighbor of ours in Pennsylvania and so our family became guests in the hospitable home of the Gallaghers until a house could be built on father's claim.

The blizzard of 1888 put a finish to the log hovel by piling 10 feet of snow over it, crushing the building in, and this broke up the dishes and crocks stored there. The blizzard was the outstanding experience of prairie homesteaders in the 1880s.

On the mild morning snow clouds suddenly dropped to earth and enveloped every living thing out in the open in a blanket of damp snow.

Quickly violent wind swept in from the North and the temperature dropped to zero, coating eyes and nose and bodies of the livestock and the small herds of the homesteaders were first smothered then frozen. Only a few cattle in our neighborhood survived at that time.

The storms of the past Win-

News Note in 1888 . . .

Patrick Fahy's Wife Expires

The Frontier of April 19, 1888, quoted from the Western Catholic, published in Chicago, Ill., the notice of the death of Mrs. Fahy, of which the following is an extract:

"On Tuesday last this esteemed lady, who was the wife of the Hon. Patrick Fahy, of O'Neill, Neb., breathed her last at 2931 Prairie avenue, after a protracted illness which she bore with true Christian resignation. Mrs. Fahy, who was in her 43d year, was a sister of the Hon. John Fitzgerald, of Lincoln, Neb., president of the National League in America, and was born in the parish of Murroe, County Limerick, Ireland. She was invalidated for more than a year and during that time visited most of the principal cities in the United States for treatment."

The body was taken to Waunake, Wisc., for burial after the rites of the church in Chicago at St. James. Pallbearers were these prominent men of that day: Michael Cudahy, John Cudahy, P. F. Ryan, Bernard O'Gallaghan and W. J. Onahan.

'A Village Called O'Neill Was Incorporated'

On October 12, 1882, this news story appeared in The Frontier:

"Acting on a petition signed by a majority of the taxpayers, a village called O'Neill was incorporated on Saturday last by the board of county commissioners. Messrs. Sanford Parker, John J. McCafferty, Ed E. Evans, Patrick Hagerty and W. D. Mathews were appointed to act as a village board until the village election in April."

the drumbeat of eternity. They blazed the trail, endured the privations, the joy and the grief incident to the establishment of a town and a settlement that has become an important center of commerce and culture.

And now upon this Diamond Jubilee I join the many in whose memories are enshrined the men and women to whom we are indebted for the heritage of the pioneers.



O'Neill celebrates today its Diamond Jubilee. For the heritage left us by the pioneers we honor their memory on this 75th anniversary of the arrival of the First Colony.

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On this 75th Anniversary it comes as a special privilege to descendants of the pioneers to join with others in a tribute to their memory.

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