

## PIONEERS HAD THEIR TROUBLES

(Continued from page 2-D)

My cousin and I were getting a load of hay at a stack when I looked up and saw something in the distance that obscured the view. I said, "What is that?" My cousin looked and then said "It's a blizzard, let's get out of here."

We made it to his barn, put up the team, then got to father's by following a wire fence. Ernest and Ed had started for Swan Lake. The storm struck when they were two miles from home and they turned back and got to safety. Gus and Will Ott were exposed to the storm, but were able to get to shelter by following the track made in the snow in the morning. This was accomplished by one of them walking ahead of the team.

The C. W. Moss family lived on the hill South of the Elmer Fix place and some 80 rods North of the Moss abode stood the school house. The teacher, Mrs. Bird, and her pupils were marooned in the school house for 24 hours by that '88 blizzard, their only means of light at night being a kerosene lamp without the chimney. Hay was used for fuel and they fortunately had a supply of that in the unplastered school house that sat up on stilts or all might have perished in the 40-below temperature. Three of the Moss children were in the school, John, Theodore and Audrey, who later became my wife.

May I pause again to pay a tribute to the sod house, the cow chips and the hay burners, the three great institutions that made the taming of the wilderness possible.

Prairie fires, blizzards, violent summer storms, long distances to travel, losing one's way on the open prairie were some of the hazards of pioneer life. If you took a job you worked a week for what boys and girls earn in a day now.

Before there were undertakers and funeral directors the settlers took care of and buried their dead. The body was taken to the cemetery at Chambers, let down into the grave by means of lines taken from a set of harness and the neighbors who had dug also filled the grave. If no minister was available to perform the rites of burial, R. C. Wry was asked to be present and offer prayer. Mr. Wry was one of the organizers of the Chambers Baptist church, had the first grocery store there and was the first postmaster.

We were many times made to feel grateful because of the unselfish ministry of this noble pioneer over at Chambers.

Some items of interest follow which appeared in the Amelia Journal of April 20, 1893. George Travers and Fred Scott were the editors. On that date they let the public in on these bits of news:

Sunnyside Sabbath School meets every Sunday at 10 a. m., church service immediately after. Covenant meeting second Saturday in each month.

There has never been a total failure of crops in South Holt county. If you want to buy the old Howard place call at this office. This is one of the best 160 acres in the flowing well belt. Price \$2,000, terms reasonable.

A mowing machine to trade for a road cart at this office. Also a road cart for sale cheap. Will sell a first-class fanning mill right from the factory for \$21.

Harry Davis carries the mail from Atkinson via Inez, Amelia, Swan, Ballagh and Erina. Rates for passengers very reasonable. This route is through the celebrated flowing well belt. Distance traveled about 55 miles one way three times a week.

Remember at all times to speak a good word for your neighbor.

There is nothing easier to believe than a good lie about ourselves. . . . Mark this—you don't have to be disagreeable to be good.

Harry Davis has purchased a town lot in Amelia. A. A. Anderson has more of these splendid lots for sale.

The Journal of December 6, 1894, had these items: When in Amelia don't fail to call at the new store and see the fine line of holiday goods on display. Christmas presents for old and young. The most complete line of holiday goods ever shown in Amelia at prices to suit the times.

The greatest affair of the season in the social line was the grand literary banquet at Fountain Valley, (Inez), which had

an excellent program. Lew Kelly, chairman, called the assembly to order and after singing Mrs. Nancy White led in prayer, followed by some instrumental music by the Salvators. W. W. Peck made a short address and then followed the program, which was well received throughout. And the supper—well, everybody brought a basket of good things, some brought two, and everybody ate all they could and cried because they could not eat more. The party adjourned about midnight, and everybody voted it the most enjoyable affair of the season. For genuine hospitality and ability to entertain Fountain Valley is at the head of the list.

Free lunch can be obtained by buying goods at the following prices:

|                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| Good tea, per pound       | 30   |
| 2 lbs. Evaporated peaches | 25   |
| 2 lbs. apricots           | 25   |
| 1 lb. raspberries         | 20   |
| 20 lbs. raisins           | 1.00 |
| 20 lbs. rice              | 1.00 |
| 32 bars soap              | 1.00 |
| Warranted flour, per sack | .65  |

## 5 HOGS BRING \$85; 'BIG MONEY' THEN

From a letter written by James W. Baker, dated "Amelia, Neb., February 13, 1893," and addressed to George Schrieker at Davenport, Ia., some quotations are taken.

Mr. Schrieker took as a homestead the land where the buildings of the James ranch in Swan precinct now stand. Mr. Baker was also a homesteader in that neighborhood. He was an uncle of Tom Baker, of the Riley ranch, who sent The Frontier the letter from which extracts are taken.

"We have had the nicest winter weather and the least snow I have ever seen in Holt county," he writes. Of a certain neighbor, Mr. Baker said that he was "just as lazy as he used to be. He sold me his cow and pigs and pasture fence, and his chickens to Mr. Sewall. So that leaves him with just three horses. He is getting tired of living batch there, he says, and will rent the place and go to the world's fair."

This same neighbor he writes about, whose first name was Albert, had neglected to plow fire guards and a prairie fire burned his hay stacks, but he saved his house.

Writing of his own livestock, Mr. Baker said they were in fine shape. On the 13th of February he had taken five hogs to Atkinson. The hogs sold for \$7.35 a hundred and brought \$84. "That is big money for hogs," he wrote and added "I have 12 left yet."

Presumably of this \$84 hog money Mr. Baker sent \$40 to a bank in Albion to pay a note.

### Young People in 1881-'82

#### Victims of Cupid —

Taken from files of The Frontier: "Mr. Nic O'Brian, of Saratoga precinct, returned to his old Wisconsin home a couple of weeks ago 'after his things,' he told us. The sequel shows that Nic took a wife as one of his Badger effects, and on Tuesday night, Mrs. Nic, accompanied by her mother, arrived in O'Neill en route to her new home. Congratulations being in order we extend ours.

Mr. Walter O'Malley and Miss Julia Welch were united in marriage on Sunday, the 21st inst., Dec. '81, at the Catholic church, Rev. Father Smith officiating. The Frontier extends congratulations to the happy couple. By the way, Walt, doesn't Ryan exert a peculiar (marriageable) influence over his clerks?

The Frontier of December 28, 1882, recorded four weddings, as follows:

Father Smith performed the ceremony at the church at 2 o'clock on Christmas that made Mr. D. P. O'Sullivan and Miss Mary E. Kirwin husband and wife.

At the bride's father's on the 24th, 'Squire' Gager "tied up" matrimonially Mr. Chas. Ellis and Miss Ida Schaefer.

Another wedding on Christmas day was that at Apple Creek, the contracting parties being Mr. William Pine and Miss Louella Campbell.

Mr. Andrew Robinson and Miss Lizzie Lumsden were married at Atkinson.

### COWBOYS WELL ARMED

D. L. Pond, a livewire of the Inman community, took a whirl over the open spaces adjacent to O'Neill in an early day and wrote: "Large herds of cattle are kept by different ranchmen, on the unoccupied land, varying from 1,000 to 30,000 head. . . . Some of the stockmen employ 15 to 20 cowboys who ride ponies and go well armed to protect themselves from Indians."

## RYAN, BIGLER HELDUP BY MOB

### Masked Gang Threatens to Hang Pair of Cattle Buyers in 1894

In 1896 there was still activity along the border gulches among the remnants of left-overs of the old vigilantes organization. On January 24 of that year a young fellow by the name of Graves was waylaid at the spot where Barret Scott and party had been held up a year before. Graves was taken by masked men to a cabin and put through a grilling, then let go under orders to get out of the county. Involved in this was the suspicion that Graves knew a lot about the Scott affair and was gathering evidence to bring members of the mob to justice.

Less than a month later, Holt county's first born white child, now 21, Joseph W. Ryan, in company with Charley Bigler, was held up by masked men near the Ray postoffice some 20 miles Northwest of O'Neill. Joe was associated with his father, James Ryan, in the stock business, their ranch being five miles West of town.

The morning of February 10, 1896, he mounted a horse and rode off in the direction of the Bigler place where he arrived about noon. He inquired of Bigler if he had cattle for sale and was told he had, also being informed that James Creigs had hogs ready for market. Joe was invited to remain with the Biglers for dinner, after which Mr. Bigler proposed to accompany him to the Creig's place. Catching up a horse and throwing on saddle and bridle the two rode North.

After proceeding some distance Joe turned in his saddle and saw three masked men riding on a lope after them. He called Bigler's attention to the oncoming figures and Bigler remarked that he had often been held up and something was in the wind today.

Neither of the two riders were armed with the more-or-less familiar six-shooter, but as the three masked figures rode up along side three guns pointed at them and they were ordered to halt.

Other masked riders came in out of the gulches and the whole party proceeded North for a short distance and came to a stop in the shelter of a hill.

"Will this do?" asked one of the band. It was agreed that it would. Ryan and Bigler were ordered off of their horses, blindfolded and when they heard someone say, "Bring the long ropes," it looked pretty serious. Their hands were tied behind their backs, a noose slipped over their heads.

Joe's story of what then ensued was told to the O'Neill newspapers two days later, and is as here recounted:

"I was asked what I knew about the Allen cattle. I thought they referred to the cattle I had bought of Bill Allen the year previous over by the Slocum postoffice. 'How about the Carr and Allen deal?' I was asked. Then I knew it was the cattle I had bought in the Fall of Tom Allen down on the old Potter ranch. I did not know what it was all about. One after another shot questions at us. I was asked if I had any cattle in the Allen herd. I replied only those I had bought from Ben Johring. I had paid him \$150 for six head of poor cattle. 'And you paid \$25 a head for them,' I was asked, to which I replied, 'yes.'

"After much questioning the bride reins of my horse were put in my hand, rope removed from my neck and I was instructed to remain where I was for 20 minutes and then get out of that neighborhood and come no more there to buy cattle. 'How will I know when the 20 minutes are up?' I asked. 'When you hear a shot' I was told. I thought probably this shot meant my finish. Presently I heard the mob ride away and in the course of 15 or 20 minutes there was a shot.

"My hands had been previously freed so I removed the blindfold and there by my side stood Bigler tied and blindfolded. I released him and we rode away, stopping at his home. It was thought best not to transact any cattle business that day in that neighborhood."

This experience resulted in a complete breakdown for Mr. Ryan and he went to a premature grave a few years after. The purpose of the masked mob was thought to have been to eliminate the Ryans as cattle buyers as they were paying more than some other buyers who were thought to be responsible for the holdup. One arrest was made but the suspect escaped conviction.

### 'What the He--! No More Fat Cattle?'

Al Hileman came in out of the North gulches with a load of stone for the foundation of a building that Fred Gatz was having built. When the load pulled up to be dumped and Fred saw who had brought it he exclaimed, "What the he--. Al, ain't there any more fat cattle in the pastures out that way!"



A SHOW IN THE 90's . . . Mrs. James H. Riggs Sunday-school class of girls staged a show in the 1880's and the above photograph is a scene from their production. Standing (left-to-right)—Lillian Bowen, Rosa Meals, Laura Meals and Lillian Gallaher; kneeling—Florence Smith and Mary Heinerickson; reclining—Maud Gillespie.

### Frontiersmen Came to Elkhorn —

And he showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.—Rev. 22:1.

Pious souls who had crossed the muddy Missouri at Running Water, made their way Southwest and anchored their prairie schooner for the first time at the brink of the Elkhorn, John's brief description of the river of celestial realms may have come to mind with the conviction that here it is.

Winding its course on a bed of sand the crystal waters of the Elkhorn river flowed through an unspoiled region of waving green dotted with the blue and gold of the meadow bells. Deer and antelope drink of the cooling stream and wild water fowl nest by its side; the haunting beauty, the lingering harmony of colors in nature's lavish adornment, the fairy music of bird and insect have intrigued the travelers. They pause. Here we make camp. Where the waters spread wide and shallow man and beast stepped in and drank of the nectars of the sands, where narrowed into deeper pools fish were hooked out to roast at the evening camp fire.

The glow of camp fires no longer cast their flickering light over the waters, the covered wagon, the wigwam, the print of beaded moccasins, even the fish that the pioneers knew, are gone; but the Elkhorn flows on to mingle its flood with other streams that empty a full flowing tide into the sea.

### Square Dancing, Waltzing Thrill Ardent Youth

"Salute your partners, join hands and circle to the right!" The whine of the violins and the gliding of sandaled feet over the polished floor was on. Who was that leather-lunged gent calling to the dancers? Maybe Elmer Merriman or Martin Cronin perched on a stool high on the musicians' platform in the old combination skating rink, opera house, and general community amusement and cultural center on West Douglas street, leading away into vacant places. The music ends, the "call boy" wipes his perspiring brow and is silent. Sweating, ardent youth and coy maiden retire to the side lines. Out steps a few couples and the seductive waltz circles the room led by Tom Morris and partner. A night in the gay '90s in old O'Neill.

### Pioneers Would Have Their Jokes —

It seems that about the time that H. M. Uttley started for Washington, D. C., in the employ of Postmaster Hagerly, said The Frontier of December 29, 1881, some practical joker in O'Neill sent a letter enclosing a photo of Uttley to the chief of police of Washington, warning the police to look for the original of the picture as he was a "crank" who had started for the capital to kill Scoville and thus end the Guiteau trial. The papers got hold of it, the police were on the lookout, Scoville and Guiteau were on the ragged edge, when Congressman Valentine, from this district, was obliged to explain the matter.

### Judge Harrington Escapes Injury When a Young Fellow —

The O'Neill Tribune of July 7, 1887 said: "While riding a wild pony in the pony race at the fair grounds Monday afternoon, James Harrington was thrown against the wire fence at the South end of the track and received a very ugly flesh wound on the right limb. Medical assistance was procured immediately and the injured boy taken to his home. Although the wound is not as severe as at first supposed, it will be several weeks before the young man will fully recover."

## Learns Lessons in Western Etiquette

Western people are death on etiquette, wrote a visitor from the East to his mother when he first saw O'Neill in 1879. You can't tell a man here he lies without fighting. A few days ago a man was telling one of his neighbors, in my hearing, a pretty large story. Says I, "Stranger, that's a whopper." In the twinkling of an eye I found myself in a ditch a perfect quadruped. Upon another occasion, says I to a man I never saw before, as a woman passed: "That isn't a specimen of your Western women, is it?" Says he, "Your afraid of fever and ague, ain't yore?" "Very much," says I. "Well," replied he, "That lady is my wife; and if you don't apologize in two minutes, by the honor of a gentlemen I swear that these two pistols"—which he held cocked in his hands—"shall cure you of that disorder entirely." So I knelt down and politely apologized. I admire the Western country much, but darn me if I can stand so much etiquette; it always take me unawares.

### Athletes Become Circus Performers

In 1888 O'Neill had an organization of young huskies known as the Star Athletic club. Walt Tesch was captain; Grand Saunders, secretary, and Tim Hanley, treasurer. Other members were: John Weekes, Jim Harrington, Frank Mann, Dennis Sullivan, James Shane and Dennis Cronin. During the year or so of the club's existence the boys put on a show or two in the old rink and made O'Neill citizens gasp at their ability as circus performers.

The Great Unwashed — J. C. Smoot has the only bath tub in town. Try it, now that warm weather is here.—The Frontier, May 27, 1886.

George Brown killed three large elk and several antelope this week, which he brought to town dressed in fine shape. We have now eaten deer, antelope and elk steak and it is difficult to determine which is the best. (That was in 1880 when there were no official strings of hunting.)

# Central Finance Corp.

Norfolk O'Neill Neligh

## 25 Years in the Field Fulfilling a Need that Is Centuries Old!

THE PIONEERS were largely concerned with the simple and the basic things of life. Most loans were executed along friendly, neighborly lines. Borrowing then was honorable and necessary just as it is today.

PERVADING the prairie scene, however, was the matter of survival, the job of conquering the wild, and the task of building.

TODAY the pace is different. The requirements are quite apart from those humble beginnings. The sod houses and log cabins are gone — supplanted by modern dwellings that afford a more pleasant, more abundant way of life.

TODAY, the Central Finance Corporation, 11 years "young," in O'Neill, stands ready to prove useful to hundreds of Northeast and Northcentral Nebraskans in their pursuit of life and happiness. Our friendly financial service is at the disposal of any who need a "lift" . . . any who wish to take advantage of the convenience in "Central-izing" their loans in making for better living.

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