

Holt County Has Had 59 Postoffices

At Least One Office Is Named for Postmaster's Mother-in-Law

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

Holt county has had at least 59 postoffices at various times since its settlement. They were all served at one time by carriers on horseback or with teams. When the railroad crossed the county carriers went out to outlying postoffices from railroad points. This continues today to some extent, but the number of inland postoffices has been materially reduced since the introduction of the RFD, automobiles and for other reasons. In 1925 the state university sponsored a paper bound volume of Nebraska place names under the guidance of Lillian Linder Fitzpatrick and others. Every city, town and postoffice in the state at that date and the years before is listed with a brief story of the origin of the name. The purpose of this article is to present the list of 59 postoffices that have functioned in Holt county with something of the origin of the names given to each.

It is well known that O'Neill is so named for Gen. John O'Neill. John Carberry has been credited with getting Atkinson on the map, the name being derived from Col. John Atkinson, of Detroit, Mich., who seems to have acquired land in that vicinity.

Peter Stuart owned land on which the town of Stuart was laid out in 1879. Emmet is a tribute to Robert Emmet, the Irish nationalist. W. H. Inman opened a store on the open prairie in 1881 and another town and postoffice set up business as Inman. Ewing got going in 1874 in honor of James Ewing, the first postmaster. Stafford was so named for Mike Stafford, the road boss of the railroad. Page was named after its first postmistress, Mrs. W. W. Page. Emporia and Hay Point were two other postoffices on the Short Line, the first deriving its name from a town in Kansas and the other from the fact it was a hay shipping point.

There were many inland postoffices. Agree to the North took the name from a lieutenant governor of Nebraska. Annear, near the Niobrara river, was so named as a tribute to Ann Carol O'Neill, the postoffice being at her home, Amelia, in Wyoming precinct, derived its name from Amelia Bliss.

Badger, up on the Big Sandy, was a friendly gesture to the little fur-bearing animals that hung out up that way. Biscuit—we don't know the origin of the name but maybe some oldtimer in Paddock precinct can tell us. Blackbird, an Omaha Indian who once had his tepee near the creek of that name, was a chief of the Omaha tribe who passed to the happy hunting ground in 1880. Bliss, down in Lake precinct, was so called probably because it brought a sense of bliss to the settlers to have a postoffice among them. Origin of Brodie, way to the Northwest, is not known.

Catalpa was a popular tree to try out with the homesteaders. There was such a group of trees near where this postoffice was established. Celia was named for Celia Harker.

Chambers has been credited to Doc Mathews, of The Frontier, who is said to have suggested the name in honor of E. F. Chambers, register of the land office at Niobrara. Old timers at Chambers, however, will tell you their town was named after

a less notable guy, who was the first mail carrier from O'Neill to the new settlement.

Chelsea—maybe this was brought out of old England? The office was up near the Niobrara. Cleveland, in the precinct of the same name, was so called for L. M. Cleveland and was one of the first inland postoffices in the county, established in 1878.

Deloit—maybe named after an Iowa town. Located in Deloit precinct, the postoffice in reality was across the line in Wheeler county, while the postmaster lived on the Holt county side of the road. Dorsey, first called Mineral, took its permanent name from George W. E. Dorsey, congressman from 1885 to 1891. Doty and Dustin, each deriving the name from individuals of the community, Mrs. Dustin, a militant crusader, E. H. Doty, a booster for post roads.

Grand Rapids in the Northwest corner of Sand Creek precinct was suggested by the fits of the Niobrara at that point. Gravel Pit, between Atkinson and Stuart. Green Valley is a perpetual green valley South of Stuart.

Hainesville, in honor of S. E. Haines, who with one other venturesome family settled in Eastern Holt in 1879. Harold, in Conley precinct.

Inglis, another Sand Creek postoffice, origin of which is not known. Inez, 18 miles Southwest of Atkinson, no longer a postoffice.

Josie, in the far Southwest corner of the county, not now an office. Kola, in Swan precinct, a child of the Kinkaid homesteaders, now discontinued.

Laura, established in 1881 and named by her husband in honor of Mrs. Laura Estep. Lavina, another name selected by a gallant gent in honor of his wife, Mrs. Lavina Smith. This office got going as early as 1878. Leone, a third one that took the name of the first postmaster's wife. I. R. Smith was the postmaster. He served the county as sheriff and was in the livery business in O'Neill in later years. Little, in the South of McClure precinct, took the name of L. B. Little. Lucerne, in Fairview, went to Switzerland for the name.

Maple Grove, in Saratoga precinct, had reference to a grove of trees. Martha, one son-in-law paid a tribute to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Martha Rollin Porter, when he became the first postmaster in 1904. Meek, after Samuel Meek, Middlebranch, one of the old settlements of the county near the East line at the middle branch of the Verdigre. Mineola, postoffice and lively inland town during the 1880s in Scott precinct, abandoned and taken over as a cow camp by Lamont and Richards.

Opportunity—here appeared to be an opportunity to do well with a store on a corner of a big ranch, so a point Northeast of O'Neill bears that name today.

Paddock was one of the early postoffices first known as Troy, changed in 1875 to Paddock in honor of A. S. Paddock, U. S. senator from Nebraska. It probably saw more of the vigilantes, rustlers and half-breeds than any of the communities of the Niobrara valley. Phoenix—this was originally Greeley in respect to an early settler, Peter Greeley, in a rugged community North of Atkinson. There being another Greeley postoffice in Nebraska, the name was changed to Phoenix and the community still flourishes though I understand the mail service is by star route.

Ray, out in the Eagle creek country got its name from a boy, Ray, son of Mr. and Mrs. N. T. Hixie, was established 1880 and discontinued some years ago. Redbird, named af-



HARVESTING CHICKORY . . . The chickory industry in the 1890's was the source of a minor but shortlived boom in O'Neill. Capitalists organized several chickory factories. Photo from the

Charles E. Stout collection shows people at work in a chickory field outside O'Neill.

1880 Visit to Atkinson —

Editor Writes About New Colony;

Suggests Holt County Be Divided

(From The Frontier, September 30, 1880.)

In company with that companionable disciple of Esculapius, Doc Daggett, and that jolly knight of St. Chrispin, Gus Hagenstein, ye Frontier quill-shover last week made a visit to O'Neill's sister city of Atkinson. On the way up, we diverged from the main road at Judge Malloy's and visited Webster & Lovell's new ranch, situated 10 miles from the Judge's up the fertile, handsome valley of Holt creek, in the sandhills. This is one of the grandest sections of country for stock raising in this country of counties.

The hills furnish excellent range, while the bottomlands grow fine hay and no doubt good crops of corn and grain, though at present but little is cultivated. Webster & Lovell have a bonanza, and know it.

From the ranch we drove to Lost Lake, stopping on the way at Prospect Hill (at least that is what the boys have named it), one of the largest elevations of land we have seen. From its top the country was spread out in panoramic beauty. O'Neill, Atkinson and other towns are plainly distinguishable. Doc insisted that he could see so distinctly for miles that Sheriff Sagendorf could be seen at Atkinson, 12 miles away, asking the boys to "take something."

Lost lake is quite a pretty boy of water and was alive with geese, ducks, cranes, and also there were several beautiful swan, whose pure whiteness and graceful movements could but excite the admiration of the lover of beauty and purity.

Supper time found us at Atkinson, and it proved a grand place to be found about that time of day, too, and Mr. and Mrs. Bitney will bear us out in the statement that we fully appreciated their efforts in the culinary line.

The evening was devoted to business (note the advertisements) and pleasure. The pleasure consisted mainly in participating in one of Sagendorf's "way up" frontier dances which tire as well as rest the physical man. The night was spent in Wheeler's hay mow, which proved a good place to rest, as old Morpheus performed his duty as satisfactorily as thought we were responding on downy beds of ease.

Early dawn found us up for a view of the town, and while we are writing we will give the readers our idea of what Atkinson is and will be in the future.

The first to think of founding a town at this point was Gen. John O'Neill, the originator of O'Neill city, now the countyseat of Holt county. The general was disappointed in money matters and for a time failed, but finally interested Col. John Atkinson, of Detroit, Mich., in his scheme, and the town was laid out and named in honor of the colonel. Its natural location on the lovely Elkhorn is magnificent, and is situated so far from O'Neill (20 miles) that there will never be any conflict between the two places. In all probability when the county of Holt is divided

ter the creek by that name and continues a flourishing community of Northeast Holt.

Saratoga, established as a postoffice in 1879 in Saratoga precinct. One of those names imported from the East. Scottville derived its name from the ill-fated Barret Scott and continues no longer as a postoffice. Star, Charley Downey, the stage magnate, proposed the name because it was something less than a mouthful. His home had been two miles from the point where this office was established in 1883 or 1884, and I think still functions. Swan, on the North shore of the lake by that name is in Swan precinct.

Tonawanda, an Indian name located in Southwest Holt and long since abandoned. Tonic, at one time in existence in Deloit precinct, name suggesting life in Southeast Holt, was a tonic for the depressed. Turner, out on the Eagle, so named after Mr. Turner, a partner of Wm. Knollkampire.

which it will be some day as it is altogether too large, being ter Mr. Turner, a partner of Wm. Knollkampire of the Eagle mills, composed of as much territory as four ordinary counties, Atkinson will be made a countyseat. The town is surrounded by a splendid farming country and is destined to become one of the best inland towns in the West.

At present, her future looks bright indeed, and there is no reason why it should not prove to be all its friends expect. It will no doubt soon have one and perhaps two railroads. Mr. Frank Bitney is the owner of the townsite and is making very liberal offers to parties who will permanently locate in the place and build. In fact, he proposes to give away a number of desirable lots to right parties.

Mr. Bitney is postmaster and general merchant, an enterprising, go-ahead gentleman, thoroughly reliable and will answer correspondence intelligently, without misleading. He proposes to do the squaring thing by individuals, manufacturers or railway corporations.

Mr. Sherill Sagendorf, one of the first settlers, is a young man who believes on progression and is doing much for the town of his choice. He has erected three buildings, one used for a hardware and drug store by himself, a residence and blacksmith shop occupied by Mr. Daniel Lynch, a practical workman recently of Niobrara.

Messrs. Theo. Wheeler & Son are newcomers, but are of the right stamp to assist in building up a new town. Already they have put up the largest and most convenient livery, feed and sale stable in the country. It is indeed a good one and reflects credit on the architect and builder, Mr. Alfred Miller of Kankaka, Ill., and the people are proud of it. They are also preparing to build a commodious store building and residence, and will otherwise assist in improving the place. The senior gentleman, particularly is a good one, and deserves the thanks of all of Holt county for the interest he takes in her welfare. If every man in the county would as much in proportion to his means we would just more than boom.

Dr. Ph. D. Paul is also a newcomer, but takes hold heartily and is a valuable acquisition to the community. His office is at the city drug store and will attend to all business in his line, from prescribing a dose of physic to amputating a limb.

Christian Smith is arranging to open a meat market and will see that community does

'Billy Reed Killed Me, but Let Him Go!'—Dying Words of Barney Kearns

Barney Kearns, sheriff of Holt county, was shot and killed in early April, 1881, by Billy Reed, a cowboy. The killing, an outgrowth of remonstrance on the part of the sheriff with the cowboys over shooting down the clothes lines on which family washings were hanging, took place at a point near where the present Knights of Columbus hall stands at the corner of Third and Douglas streets in O'Neill.

After the shooting Reed mounted his horse and started for the ranges but was taken by a posse, brought back, tried and acquitted. He later died in a gun fight in Texas.

On April 28, 1881, The Frontier quoted the following from an exchange bearing the name Progress:

"Boys, attend to Jim; you can do nothing for me." Thus spoke Barney Kearns, late sheriff of Holt county, immediately after receiving his death wound at the hands of a cowboy.

He had accidentally shot Jim Connelly, his deputy, in an encounter with lawless cowboys, and his big heart went out for his unfortunate comrade without a thought for himself. When he had made his last confession to the priest, he said, "Billy Reed killed me, but let him go," and his soul winged its flight to its Maker.

There is no doubt but that these words of forgiveness from the lips of poor Barney saved Reed from being lynched. Surely it is a grand religion that teachers and practices . . . "forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Noble Barney Kearns!
Sir Isaac Newton was a poor student as a young boy.

not suffer for fresh meat.

This comprises the business of Atkinson at present. We honestly believe it is bound to be a first-class young city, an excellent trading point.

Mrs. Sagendorf, we unhesitatingly pronounce, without flattery, an adept in the art of cookery and it was with the best of feelings toward Atkinson and her people that we headed the ponies homeward.

No Bag Limit —

J. F. McCartney and Doc Daggett bagged 85 prairie chickens and 12 ducks in one day's hunt the fore part of the present

week about 15 miles Northwest of O'Neill, and the boys didn't seem to think it was much of a day for hunting. . . . E. H. Kinch, Charlie Shepard, the writer, and Mr. Merritt, a lawyer from Fairbury, Neb., spent several days this week hunting on the sandhills at the head of Plum creek. Ye editor had the good luck to kill a doe and a fawn which he brought home. Mr. Kinch remained in the hills for a week's chase and is having good luck. There were at last reports six deer bagged. (Hunting as it was in 1881.)

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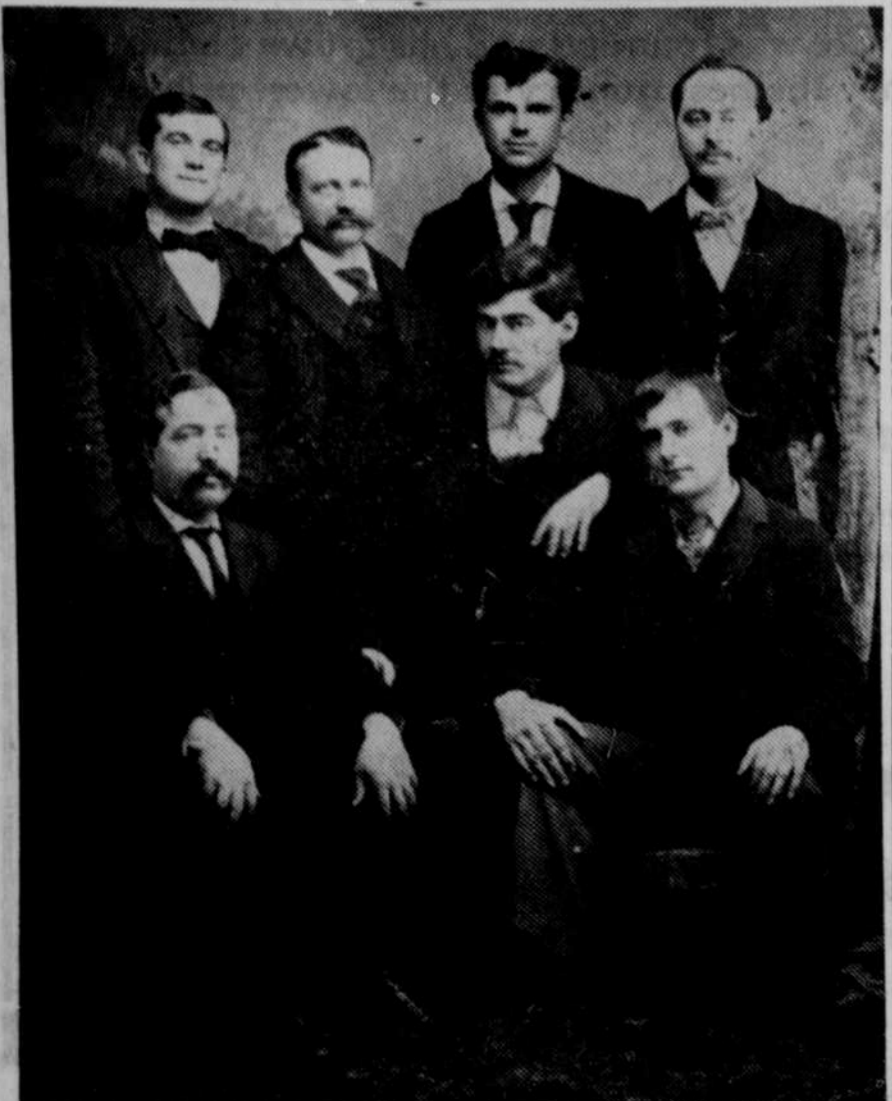
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MRS. HICKS' BOARDERS . . . One of O'Neill's star boarding house was that operated by Mrs. E. P. Hicks. (Front row left-to-right) are: M. D. Long, Dr. Furay, John J. Kelly; back row—S. J. Weekes, Ed Grady, J. P. Gallagher and Dr. J. P. Gilligan.