

THE FRONTIER

O'Neill, Nebraska

CARROLL W. STEWART
Editor and Publisher

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Out of Old Nebraska — CLAIMJUMPER 2D TO HORSETHIEF

By James C. Olson, State Historical Society Supt.
Of all the varmints on the frontier of old Nebraska, none were so low as the claimjumper—except, of course, the horsethief.

Horsethieves were dealt with quickly, and once and for all, with the aid of the nearest tree, or (later and further west) telegraph pole. The claimjumper didn't get treatment quite this rough, but when caught, he was shown in a number of convincing ways that the most desirable thing between him and the community was distance.

The usual procedure was first to warn the offending gentleman to get out of town. Should that warning fail, more persuasive methods were used. Along the Missouri a favorite technique was ducking in the river. On cold days, especially, this usually was enough to convince all but the most thick-skinned of the undesirable citizens.

Claimjumper were a breed of rascals spawned by the conditions of the frontier. Before the government surveys were run, and the land auctions held, settlers simply laid claim to certain tracts of land on a first-come, first-served basis. Once a claim was staked out, the law of the frontier decreed that the claimant, or "squatter," should

be protected in his property rights.

Prior to the establishment of regular forces of law and order, however, it was difficult for the squatter to defend his rights. Claimjumper, seemingly always present in great numbers, took advantage of the situation to euvre him out of them, either by force or cunning. One technique for "jumping a claim" was simply to remove the stakes already set, and put up others with the jumper's name on them.

Given Short Shrift

To protect themselves from this type of activity, the early settlers organized claim clubs, which were simply vigilante committees founded to protect the rights of the members. These organizations took the law into their own hands and gave short shrift to claimjumper wherever they were found. Claim clubs were organized under formal constitutions. In each instance officers were elected and a set of rules and regulations adopted. (The State Historical Society, incidentally, has a copy of the records of the Platte Valley Claim association.)

To be recognized by the club, a man had to record his claim at a meeting in full hearing of all the members. Once the land was recorded and the claimant admitted to membership, the club took care of the rest. On the day when the government surveys finally were completed and the land auctions held, members of the club attended in sufficient numbers to assure each organized squatter that he would be able to bid in his land at not more than \$1.25 per acre.

With the establishment of land offices and machinery for the sale of land, claim clubs ceased to function. They were an important aspect of frontier justice, however, in the days before the land officers of the Federal government arrived.

Allen B. Connell spent the weekend at home with his family. On the way home from Alliance, he was accompanied by Mrs. G. W. Reising and son, Dennis, who had been at Morrill, where Mr. Reising has his place of business.

Mr. and Mrs. Francis Kelly and James Kelly returned Friday from Omaha and Lincoln. During their five-day stay they attended a convention for well-drillers.

Mr. and Mrs. Allan P. Jaskowiak and daughter, Nyla, were in Sioux City Monday on business.

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Manzer and daughter, and Mrs. Myrtle Manzer, all of Ainsworth, were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Brown.

Mr. and Mrs. George Layh entertained Harold Wetzler, of Herrick, S. D., last Thursday and Friday.



BRINGS TOP MARKET PRICE

Florida's grand champion Hereford is annoyed by candid photographers who crowded the champ at the Southeastern fat stock show at Ocala. "Grand Champ Bucky" was owned by Mary Edna Jackson, 13, Gaines-

ville, Fla., who netted \$1,441.50 when Bucky was sold to meat packing firm on the last day of the show. Bucky's price-per-pound was an all-time Florida high.

PRAIRIELAND ... TALK

By **ROMAINE SAUNDERS ATKINSON**
Route 5

LINCOLN — By an unexpected turn of events, I came in touch nearly a year ago with a boyhood friend at O'Neill in the 80's and an exchange of letters has been the next-best to a handclasp. There must be at least a few left on The Frontier's list of readers who will recall Homer Campbell. His father had a restaurant directly across the street from where the K. C. hall now stands and you could get more to eat there for a 25-cent piece than you can get now for a dollar.

In a recent letter he recalls the marriage of Joe Meredith and Miss Cora Riggs in 1885, the wedding being "an after-part of an amateur dramatic association performance." Mrs. Chas. McKenna, of O'Neill, is a daughter of the Merediths.

He expresses regrets on learning of the illness of D. H. Cronin and recalls that he is "about the last of the old bunch who constituted the O'Neill cornet band. . . . Jimmy Trigg in a bearskin chapeau was drum-majoring the band. Dennis played second alto, the after-beat part. The tuba would go 'umph' and the second alto would follow with 'tu-tu-rum-tum.'"

Homer is now living the life of Riley in Seattle, Wash., and is compiling the manuscript for a book on "The Life of a Printer." And, as I recall, he acquired the status of journeyman printer in the old Frontier shop in the days when columns of type were set by hand and printers acquired literary talent along with the art preservative.

And out of memory's fragrant store, there comes to him the notes of Prairieland's "first year meadowlarks and the dainty kildeers" with a glimpse again at the "wild tigerlily putting on airs in the society of bunch grass and bluestem."

Prairieland, where the magic wand of nature waves the velvet plumes in treetops and the call of prairie creatures awakes when pink dawn of a summer morning distills the dew on grass blade and bush to add its charm to the beauty and fragrance of rose and apple bloom. The hum of insects, the song of birds, white floating clouds, the warmth and glow of long days ending in the gold of sunset.

The auditorium was filling. Balcony seats were taken. One minute more and the group to occupy the rostrum would file in, introductions be made and the lecture would be on. In the pew just in front of me sat an elderly couple and by their side a wrinkled old lady who could have been taken for the

widow of Methuselah. She moved close to the matron on the left and began an animated tale in subdued tones. I caught (in an attentive ear) four words as I saw a tear stain the wrinkled old face of the speaker: I am so lonely."

There, in an hour of quiet meditation, was revealed the heart throbs that unveiled the depth of human pathos, a lonely old soul facing the tragedy of life's sunset.

The wrinkled face, moistened by a teardrop, suddenly became beautiful. Out of a lonely home through lonely days she had come this day for the consolation of human fellowship, for release from loneliness found in the contact of kindred minds.

Childhood, youth, maturity, age—and then the sunset, when into the consciousness of so few glows the golden beams of life's full fruition.

Organized society has its robots ministering a pittance for material needs; that greater need of heart hunger finds release when the wrinkled face shall nevermore be wet by tears.

A new book is offered to the intellectuals to help "men and women get more out of life." Get more—that is life's overshadowing philosophy in this, our day. More money, more of the glamorous and transitory stuff money will buy. More, more, more is the cry of professionals and artisans, of workers and idlers. Across the centuries comes a Voice: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Should the aim be to get more out of life or put more into it?

Pres. Truman, Mr. Churchill, the world's great and good men, are doing what is humanly possible for world unity. In B. C. 600 a Hebrew prophet, scholar, and statesman gave this answer to future programs for united nations of Europe: "And where, as thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

A handsomely lithographed document, officially signed and sealed in glittering gold, authorizes the sale of a commodity that can be the means of landing the purchaser next morning in the drab realm of municipal court. "Fined for drunken driving," reads the report. The state has authority to set up a condition and then impose fines and penalties for results.

"The young mother with her

O'NEILL LOCALS

Mr. and Mrs. Maford Yenglin were Sunday dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. George Layh.

Mrs. J. M. Kennedy, of Ainsworth, visited her parents, Mr. and Mrs. David N. Loy, Sunday.

C. E. Tenborg, of Emmet, visited at the Bart Malone home Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Lowery entertained Mrs. Grant Peacock and son, Kenny, of Emmet, Monday.

Warren Cronk, of Page, was a guest for the weekend at the home of his sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin E. Lorenz.

Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Lundgren had as their guests this weekend, Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Miller, of Sydney.

Mr. and Mrs. Don O. Lyons were in Kimball, S. D., Friday, on business.

Mrs. M. B. Marcellus and children visited Mrs. Marcellus' parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Robertson, for the weekend.

Among O'Neillites attending the hockey games in Omaha Saturday were Mr. and Mrs. George Recker, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Martin and Mr. and Mrs. Axel Borg.

The Misses Beverly Jane McCarthy and Helen McNichols returned Monday from a four-days' stay in Kansas City, Mo.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Wanser were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. John Walker, at Ainsworth, Friday.

Mrs. Francis Bazelman and son left Saturday for Omaha to visit Mrs. Bazelman's sister.

Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Melena were on business in Omaha two days last week.

Mr. and Mrs. James Lyons and children drove to Winner, S. D., Saturday and Sunday to visit relatives.

Mrs. Hugh J. Birmingham and daughter, Barbara, returned Thursday from Chicago, Ill., where they spent a week.

Mrs. Kevin Cronin and children, of Chicago, Ill., who have been visiting Mrs. Cronin's parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Morrison, for a few weeks, will depart for their home Saturday.

Mrs. Robert E. Gallagher entertained Mrs. Charlotte Ressegieu at dinner last Thursday.

Mrs. Harold Klingman, of Butte, was a caller Wednesday at the home of Mrs. Robert E. Gallagher.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Armbruster entertained Dr. Lucien Stark, of Norfolk, Sunday evening.

Mrs. Emmet J. Carr and

daughter, Karen, returned Tuesday from Bridgeport, where they had visited Mrs. Carr's aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Connors, for nine days.

Mrs. Frank Clements entertained her cousin, Miss Laura Vandersnick, of Ewing, Tuesday.

Mrs. Arlen Kirk, of Spencer, spent the weekend visiting her father, Thomas Donlin.

L. D. Putnam and Thomas A. Greene visited L. Moler and Joseph Schollmeyer at a hospital in Lynch Monday.

Alfred Strube was in Sioux City on business Tuesday.

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