

Chas. Skalla for County Clerk

Chas. Skalla is asking the voters of Red Willow county for a third term, and as he frankly stated before the Republican county convention at Indianola, July 19, a LAST term for county clerk.

A number of men in the history of Red Willow county have been selected for third terms. It has been the custom in the county clerk's office. Hetherington and Roper each had four terms. Green and Wilcox had three terms each. If any man in the history of the county has earned a third term by hard, painstaking conscientious work, by accommodating and efficient service, it is Chas. Skalla, the present county clerk.

Elected for the first time four years ago, by the slender majority of three votes, against the protests and opposition of a majority of the business men, who knew the qualifications required of a county clerk, and despite the fact that his election was contested and he had to expend over three hundred dollars to defend his title to the office, he took charge of the county clerk's office on January 9th, 1908, and to put it in a few words, "he has made good."

He agreeably surprised, not his friends, who knew his integrity and business qualifications, but his most bitter opponents, the men who fought him the hardest. He is supported for re-election today by the big majority of the business men throughout the county and especially of McCook, who declare him to be the best county clerk Red Willow county ever had.

It was not easy for Skalla to accomplish this and enlist this support. He is not what is commonly termed a "mixer" who can make votes by a handshake and a pleasant smile. Nor did he run after these men and ask for their support. He gained the good will and loyal support of these business men and the farmers as well, by hard, steady work, by attending to business, by giving every one a square deal, by treating his opponents as well as his supporters, not knowing any distinction between friend and enemy, as far as the work of the office was concerned.

Seven o'clock in the morning has found Chas. Skalla at his desk in the office the first week of his first term, and he has kept it up ever since, not for a short time before election, but for very near 4 long years and over 300 mornings in each year. And very near as many are the evenings, on which he worked until late in the night over the county's records.

Immediately upon taking charge of the office he discovered that no system has ever been followed by any county clerk, in checking the claims filed against the county and of the warrants issued, that would provide for an absolute check over all transactions. At once he prepared a form for a claim record and had a new book made for this purpose. Men who travel all over this state and who have examined this record, say that it is not excelled anywhere in the state, and only a few counties keep similar records. He instituted a system of numbering all claims of whatsoever nature, filed against the county, commencing on the first day of his first term, and by the way, the number on October 2nd, 1911, including all road work claims, was 6957. After numbering each claim in this manner, he entered the same on the new claim record, alphabetically, giving number, date of filing, name of claimant, what claimed for and amount claimed, so that today any one can call at the clerk's office and within a few minutes learn how many claims and the amounts of each that have been filed by any one individual in these four years. After each meeting of the county board, Skalla takes all the claims allowed by the board, and checks over the claim record, and enters the date allowed, the amount the claim was allowed at, the fund it was allowed on and the number of the warrant issued on the particular fund. After the warrants are either mailed out or called for by individuals, he again checks over the claim record and enters the date delivered or mailed out and the name of the party delivered to. No such or similar record was ever kept in this county by any county clerk. In fact, the commissioner record and the stubs of the warrant book, besides the claims, were the only

records kept before. This claim record has saved an immense lot of time for the county board and individuals, who were looking up claims, because they can locate a claim in a few seconds and follow its whole history. Keeping up this claim record easily takes one person two months time in a year if all work would be done at one time, but it is certainly a good investment of time.

He followed up this claim record with a system of mailing out warrants and checks for warrants. As soon as possible after each meeting of the board, he sorts out the warrants issued at that meeting. To parties living in McCook or vicinity, he mails a postal card, printed for that purpose, as a notice. To all others, who don't get to the county seat regular, he mails the check or warrant. He takes all these warrants to the county treasurer, and for those, which are on a fund that has money on hand, he gets a check. For those that have to be registered, as many of the road district warrants, he has the treasurer register them and then he mails out the registered warrant. Only a few weeks ago the county board allowed a lot of small claims on the bridge fund. This fund is way overdrawn and the warrants have to be registered. One bank at McCook takes all bridge fund warrants at par, just for the 7 per cent interest which they draw. Skalla found that he had thirty warrants on the bridge fund on hand, amounting to \$292.45, mostly belonging to people in the east end of the county and he knew that most of them needed the money. He had the treasurer register the 30 warrants, then took the warrants to the bank and sold them at par. They would not write 30 drafts without getting pay for the drafts. Instead of doing this he had the bank deposit the money in his name and called for a check book. He wrote 30 checks and mailed them out and every one of the 30 claimants got their money in full. Where ever was the county officer, who did this for his constituents? This work of mailing out checks and warrants takes a lot of extra time, but it is a great accommodation to the parties interested, who before had to make a trip to McCook, or send for the warrants with a neighbor, or write for them. Sometimes warrants stayed in the office for years, before their owners called at McCook for them. The only exception to this rule of mailing out warrants are those held up by the treasurer on account of delinquent personal taxes, and these cases are very rare. He has been criticized by some for the expense this mailing out warrants incurs, but he thinks that fair-minded people will consider the \$20.00 to \$30.00 postage it requires a year, as well spent.

The most important task Skalla undertook, was the "Account Ledger," the keeping of another new record. Many were the questions asked him, as to the costs per year for certain items, such as paupers, county supplies, office expenses, bridges, elections and others. No way was there of telling these and give correct answers, unless one took the commissioner record for a full year, read all the claims allowed and picked out all claims that referred to the particular subject one was interested in and after making lists of them, added them, and looked up all these claims, to see if he was right. It took a man several days to do this on pauper bills, and when he was through, he did not know how many he had missed.

Skalla soon knew, that this was no system at all and that some record ought to be kept, that would provide for a better checking of the costs of different items and departments. He prepared a form for a record and had a new book made at a cost of \$36.00. He then sorted out all the claims, beginning, not with 1908, his first year, but going back nine years further, to 1899, the year that the county records were moved into the present court house. He gathered all the claims of whatsoever nature for the one year and added them. Then he took the commissioner record for that year and checked all the claims with it, and added the commissioner record, and the figures had to balance to the cent, before he went further. He again checked all claims with the stubs of warrant books, and again they had to total the same figure. After thus securing the correct

amount, that was allowed by the board each year, he commenced posting the claims on this account ledger. He divided all claims in 90 different items and departments, and provided separate pages for each on the ledger. We can't now enumerate all 90 separate items, but give the following few: Assessors' salaries, boarding prisoners and juries, salaries of each office, office expenses of each office, printing and supplies for each office, court house expenses, repairing, salary and mileage for each commissioner, court costs, witness fees, jurors fees, road damages, election expenses, light, telephone, water, fuel for court house, insanity cases, pauper account, county records, road petition expenses, road work for each commissioner and for each road district and many more.

He posted each claim on its proper page on this account ledger, entering number of warrant, and date allowed, (so anyone can within a few seconds locate any one particular claim) the name of claimant, for what article or what service, and the amount. Many claims had to be divided into two or more separate items and posted on that many pages. After all of the claims for the one year were posted, he added each one of the 90 pages and totaled them to show the total amount paid out by the county for each item for that year.

Then he made a recapitulation in the back part of the same ledger, carrying all 90 totals to this page, and totaling it, and it had to balance to a cent with the original figure as shown allowed by the claims. Then he commenced all over again with the claims for the next year. It took all the way from 3 to 6 weeks hard work to thus check and post the claims of one year, and he only could work at it when the regular work of the office permitted it, as he never neglected his other work for this. He has now completed 1908, or 10 full years and is working on 1909, thus being with in three years of the completion of the record up to date.

Mr. Skalla is only too glad to show this account ledger to any voter or taxpayer that wants to see it. Any one who ever looked at it, is convinced that it is the most valuable county record ever made and that it is important that the work be finished and then kept up. Of course it will be easy to keep up this record, after its completion, by posting the claims allowed after every meeting of the board.

For instance any one can call at the county clerk's office and within a few minutes find out who assessed any precinct for the last 13 years and the amount he received each year, or who served on the election board of each precinct each year for 13 years. If he cares to trace the pauper bills he can tell how much each individual received from the county in that time. A few dozen other items could be mentioned in this connection.

In addition to these records Skalla has provided a warrant book, in which he entered all warrants issued by his office since January, 1908, and posts them after every board meeting, keeping each fund separate, and any one can tell at a glance how much was issued on each fund each year or for the current year. After each settlement of the county board with the treasurer, which is every 6 months, all the warrants redeemed in the six months, are turned over to the clerk, and Skalla checks them with this warrant book, entering the date redeemed after each warrant. He can this way tell what warrants are still unredeemed, at any time. He provided for a system of filing away the claims and warrants that enables him to lay his hand on any one of them within a minute, if he knows the number he is looking for, and his claim record, account ledger and warrant book give him either the claim number or the warrant number of any claim within a second.

No better system of auditing claims and checking expenses was ever kept by any county of this state. It is simply complete and absolutely accurate.

In all the other work, connected with his office, Skalla was just as efficient and prompt. All branches of the work were kept up and some say it is a pleasure to look up records in the clerk's office. The recording is attended to properly and efficiently and papers are returned to their owners as soon, if not sooner, af-

ter filing, than they ever were by any one in this or other counties. No man ever called at the office or wrote to Mr. Skalla, for information, without getting a detailed answer, if it was possible to get the information desired in his office.

About two years ago, he spent 2 to 3 months reading all the government patents for the land in this county and thus got the correct acreage of each piece of land within the county on the assessment records. Most of the land along the north and west line of each township falls short and it will be assessed for less acres hereafter. He also secured from the rail road company a list of the acreage they have in each section where the road runs through, and deducted this from the number of acres in the different quarters, which makes considerable difference to over 100 people in their taxes, but being only just and reasonable.

When he first entered the office, he spent several weeks checking all papers and records relating to road petitions, and placed them in proper files, and soon was better posted on all road matters, as well as county history, than any one else in the county.

In purchasing supplies for the county he always tried to be economical, getting the best for the least money, and not any more supplies than were actually needed.

Mr. Skalla has never made much noise over the reforms he instituted in his office and he was unjustly criticized by many, who would have approved of his work, had they known of it. It is true that he kept two assistants, one besides the deputy, in the office, and that this is one more than in most of the surrounding counties. It is also true that this is one less than was kept the last year of his predecessor, and not any more than was kept in the clerk's office for long years. In fact, the Commissioner record will show for the last 13 years, where the county board allowed, at the beginning of each year, to the clerk, Mr. Green as well as Mr. Wilcox, one deputy and one assistant, providing the fees of the office would permit it, and if either of these gentlemen did not have the assistant, it meant that the fees of the office did not bring the money, as they will say themselves. The assistants were only kept when the fees collected by the office permitted it, which meant when there was work to do. For instance, if the clerk collected \$2848.00 in a year, and a neighboring county, which kept only one assistant in the clerk's office collected \$2120, it meant that Red Willow county had \$728 more work to do than the other county. Such was the case in 1910, as well as other years. The fees collected represent the amount of work done, besides the extra work before mentioned, for which the county paid nothing.

The impression has been conveyed by people who know better, that Mr. Skalla receives a salary of \$2800.00. The fact is that the combined salary of the office force is that amount, providing the fees bring it. The salary of the clerk is fixed by the laws of the state. The county board can't raise him or lower him a cent and Mr. Skalla never touched a cent of this county's money, that did not lawfully belong to him.

He has made enemies politically, as he does not allow any one to think for him but has a strong mind of his own, and speaks right out in meeting. He is a thorough progressive, being one of the pioneer "insurgents" in this corner of the state, and he says that he does not have to hold office that bad, as to be a mummy. He would rather have his say about public matters and do what his conscience tells him is right, than to hold public office. But his activity in public matters never interfered with his conduct of the county clerk's office. We defy any county in this state to show us a county clerk's office better kept and more efficiently conducted than Red Willow county. The voters of this county, regardless of party affiliation will only honor themselves by re-electing Chas. Skalla for a third and final term for the important office of county clerk, and make sure that they will be served as efficiently in the next two years, as they have been in the preceding four

years.

If merit counts for anything and is entitled to any reward, this is certainly the time to reward it. Skalla's defeat, which now seems to be an impossibility would mean that it is no inducement for any public servant to devote his full time and energy to the work of the people and to do things absolutely on the square as he has done.

So well was his efficiency recognized, that while he had bitter fights for his first and second nominations, no Republican entered the primary contest against him this year and he secured unanimous nomination of his party for a third term, being the only man who ever received a nomination for a third term in this county without a fight, for long years.

Vote for Chas. Skalla, and good, clean, efficient county government. REPUBLICAN COUNTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

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The McCook Tribune, \$1.00 a year.

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