

THE FRONTIER

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CARROLL W. STEWART, Editor and Publisher
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Prairieland Talk

Building First Convent Took Courage; Fire Later Left Heap of Ashes

By ROMAIN SAUNDERS

LINCOLN—The O'Neill high school and St. Mary's academy have each graduated a large class of bright looking young people this year.

From the ashes of what was known as "the convent" a large boarding school has been developed. The institution was started at a time when it took courage to put up anything more pretentious than a sod house. At the laying of the corner stone Pat Hagerty, a corpulent and jolly Irishman, did the honors of passing the collection plate, among the assembled onlookers and with grunts of encouragement urged everybody to "chip in." Everybody was hard up but the one thing they had plenty of was a willingness to help and Pat raked in a sizable collection.

Den Hunt, who with his wife, the former Nellie Cronin, live at 51st and O streets in Lincoln, was the boss of the construction gang. He was heart whole and fancy free at that time but not long afterward he and Nellie were married. Both were of pioneer families in Holt county, Mrs. Hunt being a daughter of the county's first probate judge.

Now in life's twilight upon infrequent trips to the scenes of life's early romance they see a great institution of learning where Den in the long ago laid the first brick.

Blood stains the highways, human flesh is crushed under the wheels of moving trains. The railroads coming into O'Neill have been the scenes of accidents. Where the highway crosses the Burlington tracks east of town the lives of two young men from Inman were crushed out. At the North Western depot at the foot of Fourth street a citizen of Stuart met his death under the train. On a day in June in 1936 the mangled body of a man was found by Dave Miller, section foreman, lying on the North Western right-of-way west of O'Neill a few miles. From a paper in his overall pocket it was learned that the man was Frank McDermott, of Bassett, who was on his way to take a job at Graver Bros. ranch on the South Fork. Al Kittendorf, residing in the Redbird country, was

found by his son frozen to death in a snowdrift. He had gone to O'Neill on foot to get a few things for Christmas. Two recently taken to hospitals as the result of falling, one is home, the other under the sod—"under the sod and the dew waiting the judgment day." Childhood, youth, maturity, age and life's fitful dream is over. And not a mortal on earth who escapes the memory linked with the dead.

The ladies have an organization they call Nebraska League of Women Voters. How much of prairieland womanhood is included may mean only Lincoln and Omaha, as there reside the chief functionaries, but we understand the worthy purpose to be to support the best gents for office, even if that means a vote against friend husband.

Bushes along residential streets are aflame with white bloom, gorgeous flowers of purple, red and yellow adorn stately stems within a setting of green and trees wave a velvet plumage in the soft summer breeze. . . Water from a peak in Glacier National park in Montana drains into three oceans, Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic. . . The ancients employed honey as a medicine—and lived a century or two. . . Martin Van Buren, the 8th president of the United States, was the first called to such a position who was not born a British subject. He was born after the Revolutionary war. . . After reading some 600 words of a lady journalist on "What Is German Youth Thinking?" you are left wondering what German youth thinks of the layout. . . Walter Raecke, democratic candidate for governor, has had a tussel with pneumonia. . . Columbus voters defeated a proposal to issue \$345,000 in bonds for sewer extension. . . Ralston voters approved a \$500,000 school bond issue. . . Dodge has dedicated a \$120,000 parochial school. . . Three Lutheran synods, Nebraska, Kansas and Midwest, are uniting as one.

Now that little spot in New England marked R.I. on the map comes up with the culprits that pulled the biggest holdup since a gent stood by a light post with a machine gun at 13th and O streets here in Lincoln, while his pals went in and gathered in a basket the deposits and assets of the bank and made their getaway, while blue-coats stood nonplused at a safe distance.

When I was a legal voter and served on the election board down in Swan precinct about the time this department was promulgated, the observation was indulged that what is needed over in Europe is plenty of melon patches. The watermelon is a great neighborhood friendship maker. I hope they are still planting melon patches down there in Swan. There is nothing like the melon to foster neighborly feeling. So today I resurrect the watermelon sentiment expressed at that time. "Well, Joe," says neighbor Jim, "how were your melons this season?" "Didn't plant melons this season so have none." And as neighbor Joe talks to the "women folks" neighbor Jim goes to his melon patch and comes in with a big one under each arm for Joe to take home "for the kids." There is something about a melon that makes you feel that way and if that sort of a spirit could take

over among men military activities would come to an end. . . . With many citizens all over Nebraska I have been friendly with and regarded Gov. Val Peterson as an able executive. He has been three times honored by Nebraska republicans. It is regrettable that at a time when there should be party unity if we can do anything toward cleaning up questionable conditions in the national government that our governor has seen fit to take militant action in the matter of who is to be nominated for president that creates division and contending factions within the party. This began with the governor when he challenged Senator Butler, but was defeated in the primary and now assuming to tell the Nebraska delegation to the Chicago convention what to do is being resented by his former friends and supporters. He still holds state office and that

should be his first consideration, and we will all have the right to love him still. . . . Some 15 years ago Charley Peterson and the late Jesse James went on a cattle scouting trip that took them into Arizona and west Texas, but came home not trailing a herd. Jesse told me there were plenty of cattle but the owners were asking 8 cents and he and Charley could see nothing in them at that price. It is more than 50 years since Lamont & Richards brought in 2,000 head of wild-eyed ones from Arizona at about \$5 a head and ran them on the flats out in the Minneola country. Widner, of the Ditch company, brought in a few train loads from Mexico that couldn't take the Nebraska blizzards and broke the ranch. . . . Some years ago a mule from Holt county was shown at the national western stock show held

in Denver, Colo. Two mules were exhibited by Harry Henderson, of Lancaster county, one of these having been acquired of W. F. Tasler, of Holt county, and was said to be the smallest of the long-eared tribe extant, weight 94 pounds. The other exhibited with the midget was said to be the biggest of his tribe, weight 2,200 pounds. The little fellow was a colt, the big boy harness broke. . . . As late as the year 1903 Holt and adjacent counties were regarded as a "mission field." That year E. E. Dillon was sent into the territory by the American Sunday-School union. Mr. Dillon made his headquarters in O'Neill and got Sunday-schools organized in rural districts and none of the products of those schools ever became inmates of our penal institutions. Girls and boys thus brought up became the "salt of the earth."

I met a gent on the street recently who had just landed from Texas to take a job on a Nebraska farm. He told me portions of Texas were suffering greatly from drouth. . . . Dr. Fisher has his home for sale. Contact him if interested. 211

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