

# Reminiscences of a Wayfarer

Some of the Important Events of the Pioneer Days of Richardson County and Southeast Nebraska, as remembered by the writer, who has spent fifty-one years here.

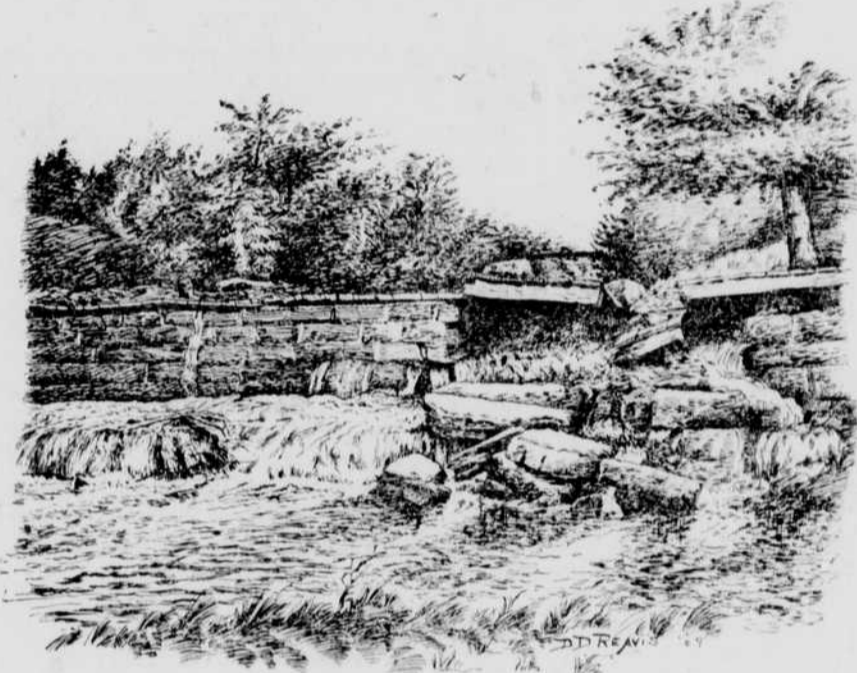
SUPPLEMENTAL TO THE LAST.

The town was named for the falls in the Nemaha some two or three miles to the southwest up the river. It was a very pretty piece of natural scenery, till marred and ruined at a later date, by the Stumbo family who owned the land on the north, trying to build a mill dam over them. The enterprise destroyed the water fall but succeeded in nothing else.

Below the falls for a hundred yards or more the water ran over a pebbly bed forming a riffle quite pretty to look at. This gravelly accumulation had been produced evidently, by the dynamic action of the water in wearing away the rock, forming the falls and thereby must have moved the falls further up the river than they originally were.

street, where the Richardson County Bank Building is located, I saw a pile of newly sawed walnut lumber, which I was told a Mr. Jesse Crook, who lived on a pre-emption claim north of town, was intending to put into a hotel; and below that was a double log house veneered with boards. In one of these John A. Burbank had a kind of general store, and the other was used as a dwelling for his family, consisting of his wife and little girl less than two years old.

That same little girl is now the wife of Judge Kibbey, the present governor of the territory of Arizona, while the wife and mother, as brave and true a christian woman and refined lady as the good God ever sent into this sin-bedeveled world to



The Falls

It is said that Niagara breaks the ledge under it at the rate of one foot or more every year and it is the opinion of scientists that in some age to come, it will have the effect of emptying Lake Erie on to the state of New York.

The river had a clear fall of over five feet, over a ledge of rock extending across it, and during the hot summer days that followed my first introduction to the country, was a good place to while away the time in fishing, or lying at full length under the cool shade of the trees which lined the banks of the river, and be lulled to sleep by the low steady roar of the falls.

The sound produced by falling water resembles no other sound possible in nature. The constant, unvarying, droning noise, seems unaffected by the rhythmic succession peculiar to all sounds; and its effect on the auditory nerve of a lazy or idle person is highly conducive to repose and sleep. I found it that way many and many a day during the long eventless summer of 1858.

It was almost a crime to destroy the beautiful falls, but as the river itself has gone the way of its greatest ornament, and destruction was inevitable in consequence, its anticipation by the mill dam, is relieved of blame in some degree.

With the subsequent cultivation of the soil, and the action of surface water in carrying debris and mud from higher ground and emptying it into the river, it has in the course of years, been so filled up, as to present the appearance of a mere mud sewer, with less than half its original capacity for carrying away the flood waters of the frequent freshets, to which it is naturally subject.

Falls City was not much to look at that quiet Sunday afternoon. There were four houses on the west side of Stone street, and one small carpenter shop located where the Gehling Opera House now stands. On the other side diagonally across the

bless it, has been at rest these many, many years.

In the further progress of these desultory sketches of a bygone time, I shall have occasion to speak more particularly of that excellent lady, together with others who were kind to me in later days, and whose words of encouragement and commendation did much to relieve the almost intolerable monotony of the surroundings.

South of the Burbank buildings, on the corner of the same block—where Jenne's shoe store now is—there was another boarding house kept by one Alexander Rickard. He and his family had come up from Kansas with Gen. Lane, together with several unmarried young men, all of whom had been retainers and followers of that famous free state leader down there, to help him build a town in Nebraska.

About midway in the next block south, a man named W. W. Buchanan, had put up a small one story house, probably twelve by sixteen feet in dimension and was occupying it with his family, consisting of his wife and three or four children. His brother, James Buchanan (not the president), was living on the quarter section directly east of the town site, to-wit, the southwest quarter of section eleven and later in the season built the house now owned and occupied by Mr. Ben Poteet. It was built of walnut lumber, and is just as good after the wear and tear of half a century, as it was on the day it was finished for occupation.

Still further to the south and about where Mr. L. A. Ryan's dwelling house now stands, Mr. Isaac L. Hamby had his residence. It was a shade better than the other buildings in town, but was not palatial by any means. He was one of the town proprietors, as well as the proprietor of a large family and a sawmill, at the lower end of town, (the mill not the family) somewhere between the present Mo. P. Ry. station and the city Electric Power Plant.

I think he must have been a

relative of Mark Twain's Colonel Sellers, in the "Gilded Age," for the extravagant dreams of the colonel bear a very close resemblance to many of the wild and improbable, not to say impossible conceptions of the future grandeur entertained by Mr. Hamby, of town and country—of the college, or other institution of learning he intended to build, or have built, on the high ground to the north, (indicating the place where the high school now stands,) of the numerous railroad projects that were afloat in the busy brain of that western builder of castles in the air, to be located on the Nemaha, on Pony Creek, to run to the Lord knows where, likewise, on the Walnut; of the building of woolen mills at the foot of Stone street, where it runs into the valley, for which purpose he had in mind the formation of a company "to divert the channel of the Nemaha by means of a new river bed to be dug along the bluff, which would furnish water power not only for that branch of manufacture, but also, for flouring mills and other industries that might suggest themselves in the development of things. It was almost bewildering to listen to him.

These visionary things were not spoken of as events likely to occur in a day not his own, but as probabilities in the present and contemporaneous with the building of the certain to be metropolis of the west—Falls City. I am not overdrawing the picture, nor perverting a single fact. They are all within the truth, and are less than the truth. The Aladin's Lamp story assumed some element of possibility as I listened to him descant on the glorious future in store for this people, which appeared to me, to be little else, than downright hallucination.

Let me say in the interest of exact truth that my friend Hamby was not alone in the business of dealing in phantasmagoric creations of an untrammelled imagination. I will show hereafter by the acts of the territorial legislature during the four sessions that had occurred since the organization of the territory, that more institutions of learning were provided for on paper, thereafter to be constructed, (but never were) than there were in the whole United States. Further, that more railroads, territorial roads and other works of internal improvement were chartered than we have of such institutions in operation in the state today. If the inmates of a lunatic asylum had been organized into a parliamentary body, and invested with legislative functions, I hardly think a more absurd lot of laws would have been passed by them. It did not cost anything to the autonomy of Nebraska to legislate. The general government paid all the bills and the members had nothing to do but to write laws and pass them without the slightest danger of imposing any burden upon any of the citizens of the territory; and, being a kind of go-as-you-please law making power, they made them without any reference to consequences. Besides, the passage of a law providing for the erection of a college, university, normal school or what not, in a little town of forty or fifty inhabitants, would sound good to the constituents of the member representing them in the legislature and most of such laws were passed for no other purpose. But by the way, the vagaries of our pioneer legislation is being made tolerably sane in the comparison with what is going on in the same shop at Lincoln, just now.

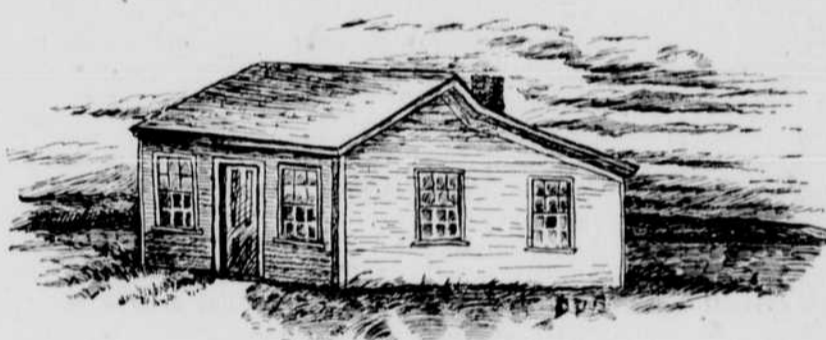
The same feverish haste to lay the foundation of a great state and to force conditions conducive to that end, prevailed like an epidemic all over the then sparsely settled territory. Every other man I met in Richardson County at about that

time, was inoculated with the same complaint to a greater or less extent and from hearing the constant repetition of the universal great expectations of those around me, I got used to it and listened as a matter of course.

There were two or three other houses in process of construction east of Stone street, and one on the street west in Block 153, that had just been built by Wingate King, long a resident here, and at that time the owner of a pre-emption claim, on the northwest quarter of section 15, originally a part of the land selected for the site of Falls City, but was dropped when the town company came to enter the land and pay for it under the laws of congress providing for the location of towns on the public lands. In another of the houses west of Stone street Squire Dorrington and his family resided, of which more hereafter.

I omitted to say that there was another building on the west side of Stone street on the corner south of the carpenter shop, another board veneered structure in which one, William M. Brooks, had a store of general merchandise, and which Fred Dorrington, a young fellow of about twenty, was managing for him.

Just across the street below it, was a hole in the ground probably fifty feet square, eight feet deep, and walled up with cobble stones, upon which Mr. Hamby, my friend of the extensive imagination, told me he intended to erect a hotel that would rival the best, west of the Mississippi. It was another of his impossible schemes. I don't believe the poor fellow, at that time, could have raised a hundred dollars to save his very soul from perdition. This unsightly scar on the surface of the earth remained a monument to the folly of its projector for



The Surviving Little Church Building

four years afterwards and till Dr. H. O. Hanna came over from Ohio, purchased the lots and built him a dwelling house thereon, in which he passed the remainder of his life. The site is now occupied by the splendid block erected by Mr. Samuel Wahl.

The town company consisted of James H. Lane, John A. Burbank, J. Edward Burbank, a Judge Hunt of Doniphan, Kansas, (I never met the gentleman) and the Mr. Isaac L. Hamby I have just been writing about. Lane and Hunt never became citizens of Nebraska; all the others did.

The town site was selected, surveyed and platted in the summer of 1857, but its articles of incorporation were not made matter of record till in April 1858, about twenty days before my arrival. The house I mention as built by Mr. Wingate King, in Block 153, is still standing, and in the same place. No alteration in shape or otherwise, has been made, and it stands precisely as it was built and as it has stood for more than half a century, while every other structure then in town, has long ago disappeared. I like that old house for reasons other than its great age, and particularly for certain associations connected with it. The house was new but not occupied, and it was suggested by Mrs. Burbank and Mrs. Van Lew that we get all the children in town to attend there on the next

Sunday and organize a Sunday school.

I think that was in the early days in June, and as anything in the shape of diversion would relieve the dreary sameness, I readily fell in with the proposal.

I have no distinct recollection of the number of those little human "Mavericks" we rounded up for the occasion, but we got some, probably ten or a dozen, and the function was pulled off, I suppose, in regulation order.

There was no church building in town, and the little house was improvised for such public worship as chanced to come our way. Wingate King was something of a preacher and held forth, now and then, and always in the little house, and always with a great deal of fervor. He seemed to think that acceptable worship was something of a tumultuous affair, requiring a liberal use of physical energy and a great deal of noise. He was a good man for all that. I liked him for his simple honesty, his kindly disposition, his christian virtues, his good citizenship, and for the strong belief, that had become a part of his life, that he would one day go to heaven. He has been dead for more than thirty years; the good women who organized that small Sunday school have faded from the world; while those bright eyed little urchins who lisped the old story, old with the ages, but as young as eternal spring, under the roof of this meager and neglected habitation, have drifted away to grow old, or die, as God has willed, in other places. But our ancient substitute for a church still remains, solitary in its loneliness and littleness, like something forgotten by the wayside, the last of the old town in the day of its small things.

Mrs. Sam Lichty spent a short time in St. Joe the first of the week.

## THE LOCAL LORE

Crowded off the regular Local Page.

Mrs. D. Corn was down from Verdon Tuesday.

Rev. R. Cooper Bailey spent this week in Kansas City.

Mrs. John Yocam who has been very ill with pneumonia is some better.

Myrtle Yocam, who was called home last week by the illness of her mother, returned to Peru Monday.

Robert Cain, Jr., and wife of Stella were guests at the home of J. R. Cain in this city. They returned home Sunday.

L. Redwood and son William returned from a several days trip through the south. They spent some time at Galveston, Tex.

Misses Emma and Anna Zentner of Tarkio, who have spent several days in Kansas City, are visiting their parents in this city.

Ralph Jenne returned Tuesday from New York City. Ralph has spent several weeks on a trip in the East and reports a most pleasant time.

Mrs. Margery Grant will return home this evening from a three week's visit with her daughter, Mrs. T. O'Haren at Artesia, New Mexico.

Mrs. Alvirda Allen Hunt of Davenport, Iowa, spent a few days in this city with Mrs. I. Mead. From here she went to Salem to visit relatives.

W. F. Kammerer who lives in Alaska and had not been in Falls City for many years arrived last Friday for a visit to his brother C. Kammerer and family.

## Private Money.

Private money to loan on Real Estate. Mortgages bought and sold. Call at First National Bank. 3-tf A. J. WEAVER

Miss Pearl Lawrence organized a Sunday school in District No. 27 last Sunday. Last year Miss Lawrence taught a very successful term of school in that district and conducted a Sunday school during that year but since she returned to this city the members lost their interest.

Dr. W. H. Kerr and wife were in Beatrice this week to see Dolly Dimple. This is the play that the Kerr children play in. They report an excellent crowd at the performance.

Ed Kimmel's little child is suffering from scarlet fever at their home in Ohio township. The schools and churches have been closed to prevent the spread of the disease.

John S. Nixon came over from Hamlin on business Tuesday. While in town he was a pleasant caller at this office and renewed his faith in this family necessity.

L. E. Evans, wife and son returned from Udell, Iowa, where they had been at the sick bed of their mother who is reported some better at this writing.

W. H. Tanner came down from Arapahoe, Monday to spend a few days with his mother and other relatives in this city.

Mrs. Jennie Darner and baby boy arrived from Columbus, O., being called here by the death of her father, J. C. Leister.

Charles Cornell and wife and Mrs. James Cornell attended the funeral of Mrs. Will Cornell at Seneca Wednesday.

Mrs. Jas. McFarland Sr., and daughter, Mrs. C. McCreary, returned home from an extended visit in Illinois.

Bart Butler and Miss Lila Allen of Dawson were married at the court house Wednesday by Judge Gagnon.

Fred Sebald was called to Carroll, Neb., this week to see his father who is very ill.

Mrs. Harry Custer is in Tecumseh visiting her sister, Mrs. J. McDowell.

Ewing Herbert of the World was up from Hiawatha Sunday.

Rev. H. Bex called yesterday and renewed his subscription.

## The First Pair

of Glasses should be very carefully fitted.

Here the Fitting is Scientific . . .

Geo. W. Reneker, O.D., M.D.

Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Falls City, Neb.

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Home Grown Potatoes at 75c per bushel.  
Red Seal Flour.  
Buckwheat and Graham Flour.  
Wisconsin Rye Flour.  
Rock Salt, Barrel Salt, Sack Salt--any size.  
Oil Meal.  
Tankage.  
Cider Vinegar at 25c per gallon  
Gasoline at 20c per gallon.  
Coal Oil at 15c per gallon.  
I pay cash for Poultry and Eggs  
Highest Market Price paid for Hides and Furs.  
Don't forget me when in need of Coal and Wood.

# C. A. HECK