

NEBRASKA'S ASSOCIATION OF TERRITORIAL PIONEERS

Men and Women Who Made a State Out of the Wilderness Will Meet at Milford to Renew Memories of the Days of Hardship, Toil and Privation and Later Triumphs.

"RMS I slog and the man," wrote the ancient bard in magnificent strain. Then he told of the adventures of a little band of Trojans upon a little ocean. His rhetoric was unsurpassable, his command of language magnificent, his dramatic power strong, his narrative concise. But the adventures of his hero, after all, were but puny compared with the accomplishments of modern men—those men for example who came to Nebraska half a century ago, when this state was an untrodden wilderness, who fought the Indian, cleared the land, built cities and constructed railroads.

The Territorial Pioneers' association of the state of Nebraska was organized May 26, 1892. Its membership is divided into different classes. Class A consists of those who were residents of the territory prior to 1867; class B, those who are lineal descendants of class A. Associate members are those who became residents of the state prior to 1875. Provisions are also made for honorary membership. The purpose of the organization is to draw from the old pioneers the unwritten history of territorial days and to make the same a matter of record with the State Historical society for future reference. The business meeting is held the first of each year and an annual reunion and outing is held at such time and place each summer as may be designated by the executive committee. Many interesting stories of the pioneer days, the trials, tribulations and adventures of frontier life are told, and one reminds the other of his or her experiences. The writers connected with the historical society are ever ready with pencil and tablet to record these events as related at the reunions, the most interesting being often told in ordinary conversation.

Reunion at Milford

The annual reunion and outing will be held this year at Milford, on Saturday, July 11. An informal reception will take place at the library building of the state university in Lincoln on Friday evening, and the members of the association and friends will go by special train to Milford Saturday morning, returning in the afternoon in time to connect with outgoing trains at Lincoln in the evening.

On the arrival of the train at Milford the excursionists will be conducted to the Shogo park and the Soldiers' home grounds, where a short program will be rendered, and those who desire will have the opportunity to attend the Milford chautauqua, which will be in session and has arranged a special program suited to the occasion.

Milford was located in an early day, on what was known as Kearney Cut-off, which afterwards became a steam-wagon road and the crossing of the Big Blue river, and the beautiful location of this village is replete with many incidents of historic interest. The expedition of the Spaniards under Coronado from the city of Mexico in 1542 in search of the city of gold is one of the most unique adventures in the annals of American history. Lured on by the fabulous stories of treasure told by the Indians, they traversed northern Mexico, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas and some parts of Nebraska crossing the Republican river. The farthest point reached has been wrapped in mystery, but the legend of Shogo, as gathered from the Pawnee, Otoe and Omaha Indians, indicated that some part of this expedition reached the present site of Milford, where resided the wise and diplomatic chieftain, Quenchaqua, who ruled over this vast Pawnee territory. They, by some artifice, worked upon the credulity of his daughter, Shogo, until she was persuaded to accompany them to the southland, where they represented to her that her murdered lover awaited her in the happy hunting grounds, to which they were the special envoys authorized for this purpose.

The early trappers found tepee poles, the remains of the village of some 5,000 Sioux Indians, pitched on the present site of Milford, who had probably penetrated the domain of the Pawnees so far and then been driven back by the combined forces of the Pawnees, Otoes and Omahas.

Mormons Crossed There

The Mormons migrating to Salt Lake crossed the rocky ford at this point, a fact remembered by the oldest inhabitant of Milford, who in her childhood days witnessed the train of Latter Day Saints as they wended their way westward, many of the women pushing two-wheeled carts loaded with provisions and equipment. The elevation on which is situated the Soldiers' home surmounts the rock-ribbed banks of the Blue, wherein are indicated three distinct periods of formation, presenting to the geological student a rich field for research in a glimpse of the prehistoric ages. The scenery along the Blue at this point is picturesque, romantic and inspiring. The decaying giants of the forest described in the mythical lore of the Indians, studding the hillsides and canyons and peopled with plumaged songsters of varied hues, stand as mute sentinels of the past.

A fine body of men and women are those who came to Nebraska before the present generation was born, who with unflinching courage and unflagging industry tilled the soil, erected homes, raised families and built cities, railroads and all those great institutions which are the visible sign of a strong commonwealth. Today they are old, but their influence is no less great, for they are wise in counsel. For many years they have helped their children to succeed, instilling their own virtues into the younger generation and thus strengthening the state and infusing rich, red blood into its veins.

Did Agamemnon in his most trying hour before the besieged walls of Troy ever wish for ten Ajaxes with mighty arms and giant bodies? No; but it is related that he prayed that he might have ten Nestors for the sake of their wise counsels. And he doubted not that with the counsels of ten Nestors Troy would quickly perish.

Neither let the stylishly tailored youth of today imagine he knows more of gallantry toward the fair sex than these pioneers. In courtesy, in neatly-turned compliment toward their life companions, no men can excel the pioneers. Nor can any woman receive these compliments with more grace, with more charming blushes than the sturdy, good women who helped bear the burdens of the early days and did at least half of the work in converting the primeval wilderness into the smiling home of a happy people. There is no dispute upon this subject. The men with one accord declare that without the help, the encouragement, the unflinching spirit, the Godly trust of these women whom they took in their youth to travel the path of life with them, the great state which is now Nebraska, filled with fertile farms and wealthy cities, would still be the primeval wilderness, roamed over by the buffalo, the coyote and the Indian. The "pioneerettes," indeed, have an assured honored place in the ranks of the early settlers of Nebraska.

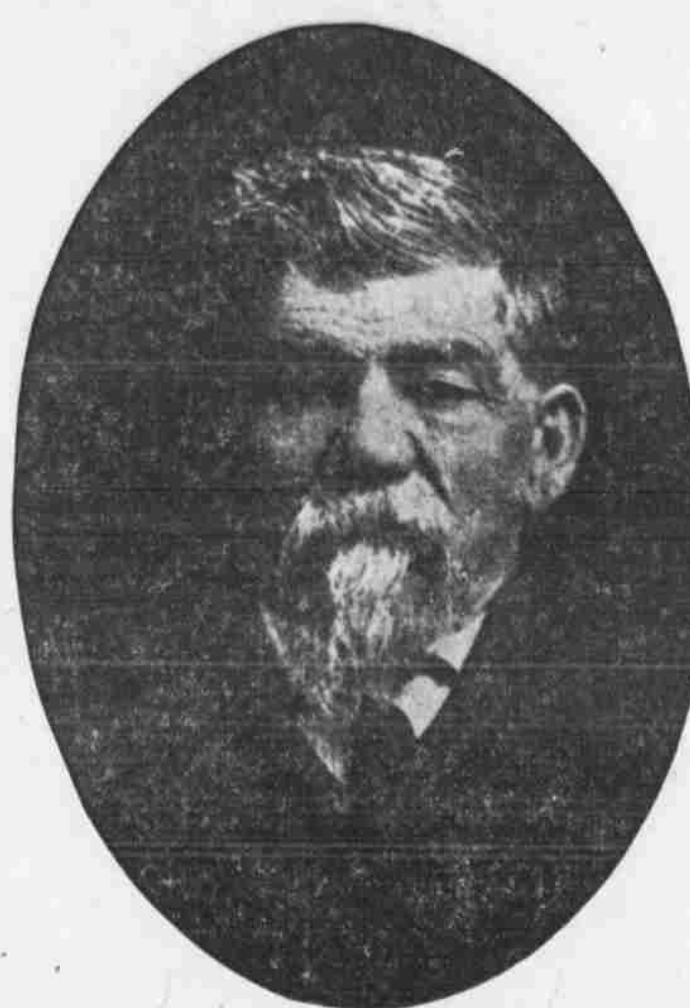
President Yost is Typical

Absalom N. Yost of Omaha is president of the State Association of Pioneers. His life is a typical one among them. He was born April 5, 1836, in a log house on a farm which stood then nearly two miles from the town of Cincinnati, O., but which is now one of the best residence sections. When he was still a child his parents moved to Spencer county, Indiana, where they lived until Absalom was 8 years of age. There he began his school days in a log school house, where Miss Adeline Worthington was schoolmistress. The next move of this pioneer family was to Lockport, Ill., whither they went by way of the thriving town of Chicago. While they lived there the mother died and the father moved with his orphan children to the town of Lockport.

At the age of 10 years Absalom was bound out to a farmer named John Battie, in De Kalb county. The conditions of this contract were that the boy should work for his master until he attained the age of 21 years. He was to work without wages and when discharged at his 21st birthday the farmer should give him two suits of clothes and a Bible. In 1852 his employer decided to go west and they started with three yoke of oxen and a big covered wagon. Absalom rode in a saddle on one of the oxen, driving the others. They spent the summer traveling through Illinois and Missouri and made their winter quarters in Lucas county, Iowa, where farming operations were begun the following spring. In 1854 they joined a party of fourteen men from Quincy, Ill., and came to Nebraska, where the party bought a tract of land twenty miles square from Logan



ABSALOM N. YOST,
Omaha,
President of the Nebraska Territorial Pioneers' Association.



ANTOINE CARENEY,
Pender, Neb.
Believed to be the Oldest Living Native Son of Nebraska. Born Near Fort Calhoun About 1817. Son of a French Fur Trader.



MARY J. DRIPPS BARNES,
Barneston, Neb.
She is the Oldest Living Woman Native of Nebraska. She Was Born Near the Present Site of Bellevue, November 15, 1827, the Daughter of Andrew J. Drrips, Fur Trader and Indian Agent.



MARTHA ANN WHEELING,
Lincoln, Neb.
She Came to the Nebraska Country in 1847 as the Bride of Frank Wheeling and Was the First White Woman to Become a Resident of the Territory Now Included in Nebraska.

Fontenelle for \$100. In the fall they returned to Iowa and the following spring brought out their families to Nebraska.

The first Indian scare came when the Indians swooped down on the colony one morning in July of that year and killed two men. Volunteers were called for and Battle declared that his "boy" would make the perilous ride. That night young Yost, mounted on a fleet horse, rode the fifty miles to Omaha and notified Governor Cumming of the Indian outbreak. The next day General Thayer with a detachment of men hastened to Fontenelle, but the Indians had disappeared.

November 30, 1855, was the day when the big blizzard started. The snow came for three days and nights. The settlers lost more than half their stock and were snowed in for weeks. Fortunately

there were plenty of deer, wild turkeys, elk and buffalo to provide food.

Young Yost had been helping Colonel Miller, father of Dr. George Miller, in surveying that part of the country, and the colonel pointed out where the young man could get a good claim. He took it and proved up upon it. The town of Arlington now stands on that piece of ground. The following spring he met his wife. He had made a trip over into Iowa to get seed corn and wheat. He stopped for the night in the village of Council Bluffs. There was a spelling bee that night and the Council Bluffs school went out to "clean up" the Mesquite Creek school. But there was a girl, Miss Anna Dorsey, 16 years of age, in the latter school who frustrated these plans. She spelled down the whole Council Bluffs aggregation, including

the teacher. "I decided she was a pretty nice girl," says Mr. Yost, "and before I left town I got acquainted with her and the following September I married her."

The young couple lived that winter in the groom's house in Fontenelle. He had built a house on his claim during the previous summer and in the spring they moved out and occupied it. There many adventures visited them, such as were common to all pioneers. One day when the husband was away a prairie fire swept up on the horizon. A tiny field of wheat stood near the house, protected only by a narrow plowed "freguard." Mrs. Yost rushed out with a mop and pail of water and fought frantically to put out sparks and flames. When the mop broke she snatched off her skirt and, dipping it in the water, continued the fight and saved the wheat.

Another Indian outbreak occurred in 1859. This is the one during which Governor Black is said to have given his famous order that "twenty barrels of whisky and a sack of flour" be brought instantly from Columbus as fighting provender for the soldiers.

Once Mr. Yost, working in his garden, was startled to see an arrow alight on the ground near him. He hurried to the house, where he found an Indian shooting at pigeons on the roof. The Indian turned at his exclamation and drew an arrow against him. But with a hoo handle Mr. Yost knocked the bow and arrow upon the ground and beat off the warlike aborigine.

Went Out to Fight

When the civil war broke out he enlisted in Company A, Second Nebraska cavalry, but before the regiment could proceed south the Minnesota massacre occurred and the men were ordered to the Red river country, where they spent nearly two years in Indian fighting. After being mustered out in Omaha Mr. Yost returned to his claim, which he soon sold and then took a homestead twelve miles north of Fremont, where he lived until 1880, during all of which time he was a member of the school board. He had tried storekeeping in Deadwood, S. D., for a time in 1876. In 1880 he went to Norfolk, Neb., and bought a hotel and livery business. His wife had died in 1875 and in 1881 he married Mrs. France J. Williams. He came to Omaha in 1893 and since then has been in the employ of The Bee Publishing company traveling as solicitor. He was one of the committee to revise the city charter three years ago. He has always taken an active interest in the building up and improving of Omaha and is a member of the Federation of Improvement Clubs. He is also active in the Grand Army of the Republic. He has four sons borne by his first wife and a daughter by his second. They are as follows: Rev. John P. Yost of Plainview, Neb.; Louis K. Yost, superintendent of the Western Union telegraph between Ogallala and Denver; Sullivan S. Yost, a ranchman in Oregon; Frank Yost, with the Nebraska Telephone company, and Miss Anna Dorsey Yost.

Mr. Yost drove the first mail wagon probably in Nebraska. This was between Fontenelle and Omaha. He made the round trip of 100 miles every two days. With J. B. Robison he operated the first threshing machine in Nebraska in 1869, when they threshed all the grain grown north of the Platte river with their eight-horse power outfit. He retains as relics the compass which was used in surveying and laying out the town of Fontenelle and also an oil painting of his old homestead shanty.

Milford will be a lively town the day the pioneers are there. These men and women are not really old. To look at their gray hairs and wrinkled faces one might think they are, but that is a delusion. The spirits of most of them are as young as they were fifty years ago. They exemplify the philosophy of Cicero, that calm defier of age and time.

Cicero on Old Age

In his great essay, "Concerning Old Age," that Roman philosopher says: "They advance no argument who say that old age is not engaged in active duty and resemble those who should say that the pilot in navigation is unemployed, for that while some climb the mast, others run up and down the decks, others empty the bilge water, he, holding the helm, sits at the stern at his ease. He does not do these things that the young men do, but in truth he does much greater and better things. Great actions are not achieved by exertions of strength or speed or by quick movement of bodies, but by talent, authority, judgment, of which faculties old age is usually so far from being deprived that it is even improved in them."

"All men cannot be Scipios or Maxims, so as to remember the stormings of cities, battles by land and sea, wars conducted and triumphs gained by themselves. The old age also of a life passed in peace and innocence and elegance is a gentle and mild one, such as we have heard that of Plato to have been who in his 81st year died while writing; such as that of Socrates, who says that he wrote that book which is entitled 'The Panathenaean,' in his 94th year, and he lived five year sater; whose master, Gorgias, the Leontine, completed one hundred and seven years, nor did he ever loiter in his pursuit and labor; who when it was asked of him why he liked to be so long in life said: I have no cause for blaming old age—an admirable answer and worthy of a man's learning."

"For the short period of life is long enough for living well and honorably; and if you should advance further you need no more grief than farmers do when the loveliness of springtime hath passed that summer and autumn have come. For spring represents the time of youth and gives promise of the future fruits; the remaining seasons are intended for plucking and gathering in those fruits. Now, the harvest of old age, as I have often said, is the recollection and abundance of blessings previously secured. In truth, everything which happens agreeably to nature is to be reckoned among blessings."

Truly Cicero himself never conceived of a pleasanter, more

(Continued on Page Three.)

Two Contrasting Groups Caught at the Picnic of the Douglas County Pioneers' Association



SOME OF THE DOUGLAS COUNTY PIONEERS.



LATEST GENERATION OF THE PIONEERS.