

Fertile Dawson County Where the Pioneers Have Won a Good Fight



LA HACIENDA RANCH HOUSE, FIVE MILES NORTH OF LEXINGTON.



BIRDSEYE VIEW OF LEXINGTON, NEB.



IMPLEMENT HOUSE OF J. S. THOMAS & SON, LEXINGTON, -LARGEST WEST OF OMAHA.

THE story of the settlement of Dawson county is like the story of the American colonies, like the story of the Saxon conquest, just a story of fifty years ago, when Dawson county was marked on the map as a desert and for most part it was a desert indeed. Before civilized men came to grapple it this desert lay green and tempting in May and June and brown and dreary the rest of the year. Along the streams the giant bluestem grass hid the deer and antelope and formed a place of refuge for the coyote and the gray wolf that lived in the thickets of the river bottom. Every fall from the state's northern to its southern boundary great prairie fires, house high fanned over the plains and marked it with ribbons of black desolation scores of miles wide, for the north wind and the south wind that carried the fire across this prairie made forests impossible, and no creature not fleet of foot or light of wing could make this place its habitat. The Mormons and the forty-niners left sunflowers by the roadside and the yellow flowers in their seasons marked with a blaze of glory the main trail that followed the ever winding stream. On these trails or near them the forts and trading posts of the government and the relay stations of the freighters and the mail carriers were found. He who would venture north or south from these highways had only the sun and stars to guide him. And when settlers did come into the prairie their early journeys over the virgin, trackless sod were accompanied by a music that has been still for these twenty years—the purring of the tall bluestem under the wagon bed in the rich valleys, marked with a strangely beaten time as the heads of the resin weeds tattooed upon the wagon beam and spokes. It was a sound like the lapping of velvet waves upon golden sands and many a child lying curled up on the bottom of the mover's wagon has known it for his lullaby. And in the dreams of thousands of men and women of mature years, pleasing the uttermost parts of the earth, this song of the bluestem, and the resin weeds tattoo come bringing with them a memory of clear, blue sky, hung at the horizon with long, trailing clouds that beckoned into an enchanted distance. So came the settlers to Dawson county.

Civilization upon the 4,000-foot slope that rises westward from the Missouri river

adapted to the growing of alfalfa. The entire valuation of the county is \$30,912,000, and it has a population of 13,100. This makes it one of the strong counties in the state both in the matter of population and valuation. The county is well supplied with railroads, having sixty-three and one-half miles within its borders and eight fifteen rural mail routes established in the county serve 6,500 people, and cover over 500 miles of rural route daily. The county also has 1,000 miles of public highways and 100 miles of irrigation ditches. There are about 2,500 farms in the county and it is these farmers that are looked to as the wealth producers.

This county has 22,000 acres of land under a high state of cultivation, and is one of the strongest counties in the state in regard to the amount of beef and pork sent to market each year. The farmers of this county sold and shipped out last season 30,500 beef cattle, 57,100 fat hogs and 2,300 fat mutton sheep. While there is a large amount of grain sent to market by the farmers of this county each year the amount is small compared to what is consumed on the farm. Last season these farmers sold land shipped out of the county 1,047,000 bushels of corn 557,000 bushels of wheat and 251,000 bushels of oats. It is but little wonder that these farmers are prosperous when one stops to realize what these figures mean.

But the chief glory of the county is not its material wealth, but its schools. In the amount of money spent for schools in proportion to the wealth and population this county has but few equals. Never before in its history has the school shown greater progress. Dawson county at the present time has ninety-three school districts and 104 school buildings with 128 rooms. The county at present employs nineteen male and 145 female teachers. Professional spirit of teachers is strong. One hundred and twenty-seven teachers have had more or less normal training. Nearly all attend the annual institute. Three of the high schools of the county, those at Lexington, Gothenburg and

Overton, are doing regular high school normal training work. There are some excellent school buildings, both town and rural, in the county. Within the last two years the rural school houses have been greatly improved as to exterior and interior, by the use of paint, wall paper, pictures, etc. About 20 per cent of the rural schools have libraries. Many of them are provided with musical instruments. The school grounds are also being improved with fences, trees, etc. At the National Corn exhibit at Omaha two premiums were won by George and Joseph Seiberger, school district No. 16. L. A. Glinger is serving the county for the sixth year as superintendent of schools, he is a man well qualified for this position, being a graduate of the state normal, and having thirty years experience in school work. He is both a worker and a winner.

Win Daniel Freeman came to the county and settled in the Platte valley he little thought that in so short a time that the wild prairie on which he had settled would be a garden. After the first pioneers had broken the ground others on their way west to find homes were attracted by the smiling genial rolling land of the future county and stopped to make it their home. Some of the settlers arrived ahead of the railroad, a few coming with ox teams. The early days of the county were not days of profit and pleasure. The little settlement struggled for many years against many kinds of adversity. The Indians, chiefly Otoes and Pawnees, made some trouble.

In the time of the old freight emigrant roads across the plains the route extended up the Platte on the south side through Dawson county. The overland telegraph was established through the county in 1861, and this county is the only place where it was ever injured by Indians. There were ranches established every few miles along the route in this county. The most important of these was that of Plum Creek, now Lexington, which was the telegraph and stage station and the most important one between Fort Kearny and Cottonwood Springs. Several murders were committed here by the Indians. The

ready quiet a village, it was not laid out and platted as a town until 1873. This was the first town in the county. During the fall of 1873, a great deal of local excitement was created over what was supposed to be a gold mine about one and a half miles east of Plum Creek. Gold seekers from all part of the country flocked to this point.

Though Dawson was at the time of its settlement occupied as a herding ground by the cattle men, no serious trouble with them was ever experienced by the settlers. The crops on which the county had to depend for its prosperity were not generally as good as they are today. Some of the fainter hearted gave up the fight in those days and returned to the east or pushed on farther west. But the far sighted ones stuck to the fight with a faith in the county which was its own reward and which in due time bore ample fruit. Today Dawson county is among the most fertile and productive and progressive counties in the state.

The last five years in Dawson county have been banner ones for the farmer and business man. Years in which all previous records in the way of crop raising and general progress have been broken. These years go down in the history of this county as ones of unparalleled prosperity and elation in the minds of the citizens as well as the outsiders the fact that there is no more favorable spot in the whole Platte valley for a farm and home. The growth of root crops as well as grains and fruits has been so prolific that it is hard to say which has had the advantage and merits the most praise. Hay, grains of various kinds, potatoes and other root crops, fruit and vegetables have been produced and prosperity and plenty have reigned everywhere. It might be said right here, however, that the crop which has left the most cash in circulation, the crop which has raised the mortgage from the farm and placed the farmer on firm substantial footing is the corn crop.

Dawson county stands among the very first counties of the state in the growing of alfalfa, which also makes it one of the leading as well as one of the coming counties of the state in the dairy industry. The farmers at the present time have 2,850 acres seeded to alfalfa. On these farms are 5,785 cows kept and from these cows were produced last year and shipped

out of the county 30,000 pounds of butter and 100,000 gallons of cream, while the poultry industry of the county was represented by the sale of 142,000 dozen of eggs and 72,000 pounds of dressed poultry.

The flourishing industries of the county are becoming manufacturing institutions of much importance. Last year the four mills manufactured, sold and shipped out 3,000,000 pounds of flour and 300,000 pounds of mill feed.

Lexington, the county seat of Dawson county, has a population of about 3,000, and is the largest little city in the Platte valley. It is decidedly a city of homes. Somehow, one can always tell whether a dwelling is a house or a home; that air of comfort and contentment pervades even the inanimate boards and the very shingles. As a visitor gets into an automobile and slides around the town or takes a Sunday afternoon stroll, that fact forces itself to him at every block. This is a city of homes. Few cities of its size in the state have as many miles of cement sidewalk as Lexington. The business blocks and the stock of merchandise carried is entirely adequate to the trade. The county agricultural society, which is a new organization, bids fair to be an entire success from every standpoint. The alfalfa meal mill and the flouring mill are the principal manufacturing institutions and add much to the prosperity of the city. But there is no one organization that is doing more for this little city than the representative business men of the city and county and ever on the alert for anything that will advance the best interests of a new county. The city has good telephone service that reaches over the entire county and state. It also has a good system of water works and is supplied by electric light and power by one of the local manufacturing plants.

The county has some of the best blooded stock in the state. George Allen has a thousand head of Shropshire sheep and 115 head of Shorthorn cattle that he keeps entirely for breeding purposes. Mr. Allen has secured several hundred medals and premiums in different states on his stock.

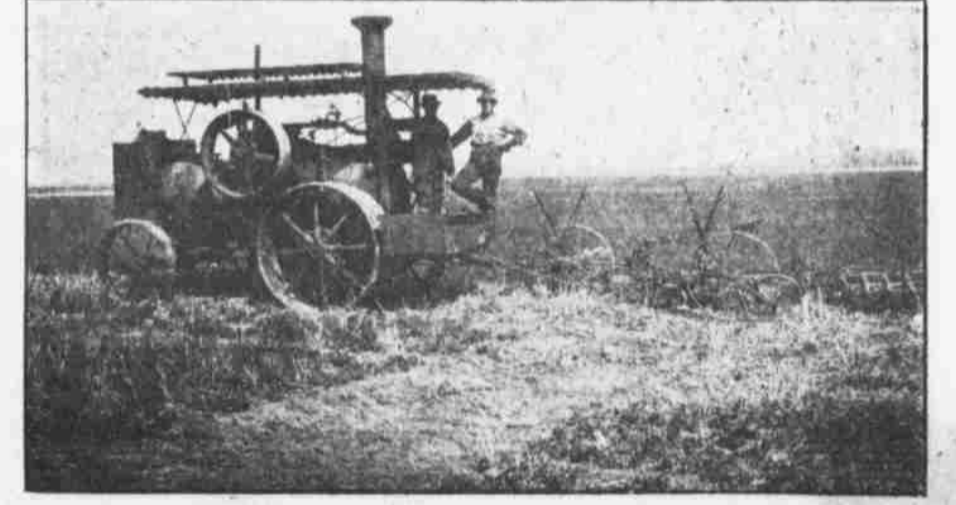
E. E. Young is also a prominent stock breeder in the county. He makes a specialty of raising several large feeders of stock in this county that furnish an excellent market for the surplus grain.



FACULTY OF LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL.



COUNTY OFFICERS OF DAWSON COUNTY.



PLOWING AND HARROWING ON LA HACIENDA RANCH.

Carpenter's Letter

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and also the low alluvial soils farther down. They breed their cattle in central places where the bulls are kept and when they have a goodly flock drive them from place to place to find pasture. During this time their homes are round tents of hide, which they can set up or take down as they please. When the cattle are ready for the market they drive them to the Russian or Manchurian cities for sale.

At the present time there is no great demand for meat in this part of the world. The Chinese live upon grain, vegetables and fish, with a bit of native pork now and then. The Buddhists do not eat meat at all and the demand is confined to the Mohammedan Chinese, to the Russians and to such foreigners as come into the country. The price for a 6-year-old steer is only \$13 in gold.

The cattle are so poorly kept that it takes from six to eight years to fit a steer for the market instead of three years, as at home. Mr. Parker says that the animals are much like our old Texas longhorns. They have large but not heavy frames and on that account they would form an ideal cattle to cross with our Herefords. He says their meat is excellent, resembling the compact flesh of the grass-fed cattle of Montana, but not at all like the corn-fed bullocks of Iowa. The best markets today are those of Russian Siberia. Vladivostok takes considerable meat, and there is a packing plant there with ammonia coolers and concrete floors. About 5,000 cattle are consumed a month at Harbin and drives are sent overland to Blagovestchenak, on the Amoor, and also to other Russian stations with large military forces.

As to the pork of Manchuria, no foreigner says that it can possibly help it. The hogs are the scavengers. They are seldom fed, and they root about through the mud and fish, eating all sorts of vile stuff. As a result, they are black-bristled, big-stomached, small-hummed, hungry-looking animals. They are much like our razor-backs, but their flesh is by no means so good. They are very prolific, having from twelve to fourteen pigs at a litter; and by cross breeding might be turned into excellent stock.

undeveloped farm lands of the world lies right here. The whole of Manchuria has a climate and soil fitted for good cultivation. The country is enormous, and at present not one-fifth of it is under cultivation, and that fifth is not half farmed. Manchuria, all told, covers more area than more states of the United States. It has more ground than Germany and France, big as the Mississippi and, on the whole, it is fairly well watered. Prof. Parker tells me that the grain area is probably one-half of it, and there would be lots of room around the edges. It is bigger than all New England, Delaware, Virginia, Dakotas, and that crops will grow much farther north here than in the United States. What sown in April matures six weeks sooner than that sown in the like latitudes at home. It is the same with Indian corn, which is ripe by the first of September, or about two weeks earlier than in the United States.

The soy bean does not grow at all in our country above the cotton belt. Here in Manchuria, it thrives in such latitudes as St. Paul and Winnipeg, and it is raised in great quantities. They are producing tobacco here as far north as Canada, and the experts of the American Tobacco company say that if it were properly grown the tobacco would be as good as that of Virginia. It is believed that the southern part of Manchuria will produce cotton, so that altogether this is potentially one of the richest lands upon earth. That it is not so today is largely due to bad government, bad transportation and ignorant farming, and it is raised in great quantities.

The Bread Basket of Asia.
As the result of long conversations with Messrs. Parker and Tomhave, and from my own travels over Manchuria, I am more and more convinced that one of the greatest and most valuable sections of

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all of which evils will probably be remedied in the not distant future.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Up-to-Date Building Methods

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man, says the rest of the theater will rise mushroom-like to completion.

"So far the work has seemed to drag, but to us on the job it has been going remarkably fast. Men who stand around on the street and look into the hole do not realize how much work is being done down there. It is a slow task to dig trenches and put in re-enforced concrete.

"But after we got the foundation and the walls up to the first story then the people will be surprised at the rapidity with which we will shoot up the theater.

"Nearly everybody doubts our ability to get the theater part ready for December 27. Why, it will be the easiest kind of a job. If necessary we can turn the whole building over to Mr. Brandeis by that time. We now are figuring on that, too."

It is not generally known among the people who stop to look at the work on the Brandeis theater that men employed by the same firm and working in the same half block are excavating for an addition to The Bee building, which occupies the ground across the alley south of the new theater.

This addition to The Bee building will stand against the south wall of the theater extending 122 feet from the west end of the Brandeis structure. Its dimensions are 32x112. It will be three stories high besides the basement, which will go twelve feet below the level of the alley.

It will be connected with the main building through the basement.

The Fortiora Hope.
The general consulted the topographical chart.

"You understand, colonel," he said, "that this change on the enemy's fortifications necessitates the most reckless disregard for human life."

"I understand, general," the colonel replied. "The fortiora hope that leads the movement will be composed exclusively of amateur chauffeurs."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Optimism.
A small boy was hoeing corn in a sterile field by the roadside near Betzel, Ind., when a passerby stopped and said:

"Dear to me your corn is rather small."

"Certainly," said the boy, "it's dwarf corn."

"But it looks yellow."

"Certainly. We planted the yellow kind."

"But it looks as if you wouldn't get more than half a crop."

"Of course not," said the boy, "we planted it on the shares."

Commercial Club Executive Committee at Fort Omaha



COLONEL GLASSFORD AND HIS STAFF AND THEIR GUESTS IN FRONT OF HEADQUARTERS BUILDING.