

# Holt County's Story a Recital of Steady Growth Along Material Lines



BUSINESS STREET IN O'NEILL.

**T**HE story of Holt county is only the story of a mighty pilgrimage. Every county in this part of Nebraska has a story in the telling of which there are two distinct methods. One includes only the resources, the things that are present today, and will increase as decades tomorrow. The other is romantic and has something of the speculative.

The romance of the Holt county settlement is one of the most thrilling in history. Men are living who took part in it, yet it has gone into history as a distinct romance, fitly to be spared from the story of historic progress. Every reflective old pioneer to this county must have his moments of looking backward and his wholesome private reflections upon the theme of his short-sightedness in his time. The old cattleman, who remained in Holt county, lived in a state of constant surprise. Before he came he regarded it as strictly a cattle range. After an experience in it, he remained under that idea. The fever grew and reached its climax and declined and he still thought and said that the country was good for nothing else. The homesteader came from Iowa and Illinois and seized upon the opportunity the cattleman had neglected, and as the time passed the deception grew worse and worse. The waste and loneliness began to have a value. The home-makers came with enthusiasm and some cash. At first, the old cattleman, calmly awaited the miserable failure of all this wilderness and contented with his few remaining fellows as to the signs of the time. While the cowboy life has all but passed away, one may see them yet, in their wide rimmed hat and leather trousers. The ranches are conducted after modern fashion. Each ranch has as much land in cultivation as in pasture, and the erstwhile cow puncher is following the plow and driving the self binder or mower these days.

In this county the rural districts are settled by people from every state in the union and the thrifty towns are settled by a refined and cultured people. Many of the merchants are college graduates and rank among the shrewdest business men. Holt county is essentially a live stock county. By climate and production it is adapted to the growing of animal life. One-

third of its area is better adapted to pasture pursuits than to agriculture. The great cattle ranches have disappeared, but in their stead, hundreds of smaller ones have been established. They have stopped growing cattle in Holt county and are growing beef. They have discovered that legs and horns are the least portion of the beef animal. They could never put their industrial finger on the range steer. His number and his quality were always a problem.

Holt county, one of the largest in the state, is about the size of four common sized counties that contain sixteen townships each. This county has 160,000 acres in farms, with 122,000 acres under cultivation. The county is composed of the Elkhorn and Niobrara valleys and the low divide between them. The Elkhorn valley comprises about two-thirds of the southern portion of the county and the Niobrara over one-half of the remainder. The whole county may be said to consist of level table land, or very gently rolling prairie. About 5 per cent of the county is bottom land subject to overflow. 25 per cent table land, 40 per cent rolling land and 30 per cent draws, gulches, sand levels and hills. The Elkhorn and its tributaries, Cachee creek, South Fork and a few other streams, water the southern portion, and the Niobrara and its tributaries the northern part.

The settlements in Holt county have been too recent for much serious difficulty with the aborigines. No county in the state has had so peculiar an experience with the noble red men as Holt. Much more trouble was experienced from the horse thieves than from the Indians. On June 29, 1876, Governor Garber issued a proclamation for the organization of the county. The first regular election in Holt county was held November 6, 1877, and resulted in the following officers being elected: Commissioners, H. W. Haines, Samuel Gregory and Harry Spindler; Judge, V. Ross; clerk, Sanford Parker; treasurer, Elijah Thompson; sheriff, Thomas Berry. At a special election held December 27, 1878, Paddock, a small settlement on the Niobrara, was chosen county seat by a three-fifths majority. At a county seat election held May 12, 1880, O'Neill was made the county seat of Holt county.

O'Neill is situated about three-fourths

of a mile north of the Elkhorn river, on land gently sloping to the south. The valley here is about ten miles wide. O'Neill is the center of the stock and grazing country for many miles around. The first settlers in the immediate vicinity of O'Neill were H. H. McEvony, Frank Bitney and John T. Proby. On the twelfth of May, 1874, General John O'Neill, in honor of whom the town was named, arrived here with the first colony of his countrymen, consisting of Neil Brennan, Patrick S. Hughes, Timothy O'Connor, Henry Curry, Thomas Connelly and William Fallon. On November 1, 1874, Dr. J. Hayes, James Ryan and John Redd arrived and in May 1875, the general arrived with his second colony. In 1875, General O'Neill brought in his third colony, consisting of 102 men and a few women and children, and in 1877, his fourth colony consisting of seventy-one men, a few having families.

The townsite of O'Neill originally consisted of 100 acres and was platted by Thomas A. Atwood in May 1874. Upon the arrival of General O'Neill's first colony there was not a building in the town. The first building was a sod house, 18x28 feet, and was named the Grand Central hotel. The building of O'Neill did not commence until after the arrival of the general's second colony in 1875. The first frame building was erected by Mr. Maybury, under contract with Patrick Fahy of Omaha, who was largely interested in the original townsite of O'Neill. The first school was taught by Miss Ellen O'Sullivan in 1876, in a building erected by the Catholics for church purposes. Rev. J. P. Bedard, a French Canadian Catholic missionary, preached the first sermon in O'Neill, in 1874.

The first child born in O'Neill was a son of Mr. and Mrs. James Ryan, in March 1875. The first marriage—a double one—was Neil McEvony to Ellen Thomson and Samuel Wolf to Sarah J. Thompson, occurred May 26, 1875, and the first death was that of a daughter of Michael H. McGrath, in February 1875. The Independent Order of Oddfellows was instituted November 30, 1876, with ten members, and was the pioneer lodge of the upper Elkhorn. The Holt County Record was

established in June 1878, by T. J. Smyth. The Frontier was established October 1, 1880, by W. D. Mathews. Its editor was commissioned postmaster at O'Neill, December 8, 1881.

It is very doubtful if the early pioneers and founders of Holt county realized that they were laying the foundation for so large, prosperous and productive a commonwealth as we find here today.

It is quite difficult to give a correct estimate of the value and productiveness of the county merely from statistics and a general review of its resources. One must travel out for miles, especially to the north, to comprehend anything about its productiveness as a grain and general agricultural county. A few facts may assist the reader in gaining a partial idea of this county.

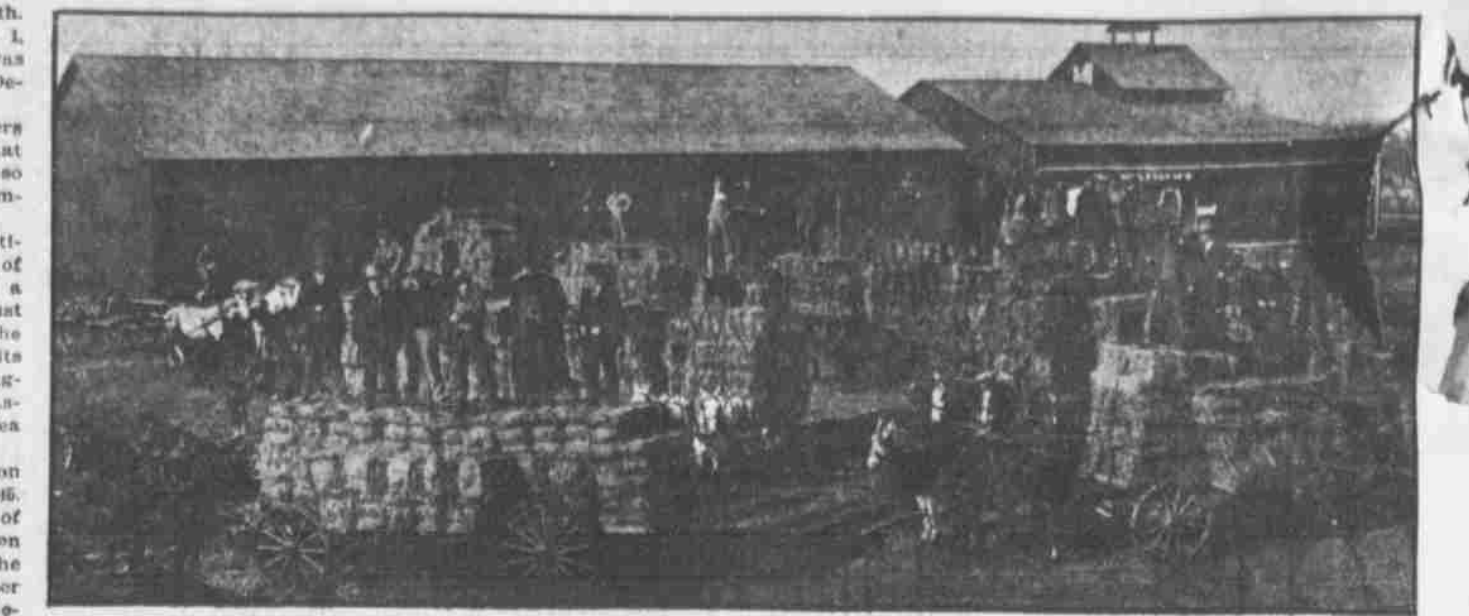
At present Holt county has a population of 18,000 and a valuation of \$11,000,000. The county has seventy-eight miles of railroad within its border, with seven thrifty, progressive railroad stations. The county also has two well developed water powers, two flouring mills, seven elevators, two banks, four free rural delivery routes. Over 30 per cent of the farmers in this county own their farms and about 90 per cent are supplied with rural telephones.

But one county in the state compares with Holt in regard to its public schools, and it is doubtful if there is a county that takes a deeper interest and more pride in the advancement of their schools than does this county. The county at the present time has 21 school districts, where teachers are employed. The county has 1,000 children of school age.

It must be remembered that this is a large county and in two townships each containing thirty-six sections there is but one school district in the township. This comes largely from the Kinkaid homestead law, where there is but one family on the section. There is but one school house remaining in the county. The general condition of the school buildings and grounds will compare favorably with many counties that have been settled much longer than Holt. For four years the schools have been under the management of Florence E. Zink and the conditions of these schools and the progress that is being made seem entirely satisfactory to the entire county.

It is a prosperous county and a happy and contented people. South of the Elkhorn it is largely a hay and grazing country from which thousands of cattle are sent to market each year. It will give some idea of these few sections of this large county, when we state that the farmers and cattlemen last year sold and shipped out, 21,800 cattle, 32,700 fat hogs, 1,000 hogs and 200 mutton sheep. This county also sold and shipped out 67,500 bushels of oats and 40,000 bushels of rye. Holt county leads all the other counties in the state in the hay industry. Last year the county produced 47,700 tons of hay which is nearly double that of any other county in the state.

This is not only one of the prominent counties in the northern part of the state in the live stock industry but it is already



"HAY DAY" AT FROELICH & RYAN BARN, O'NEILL.

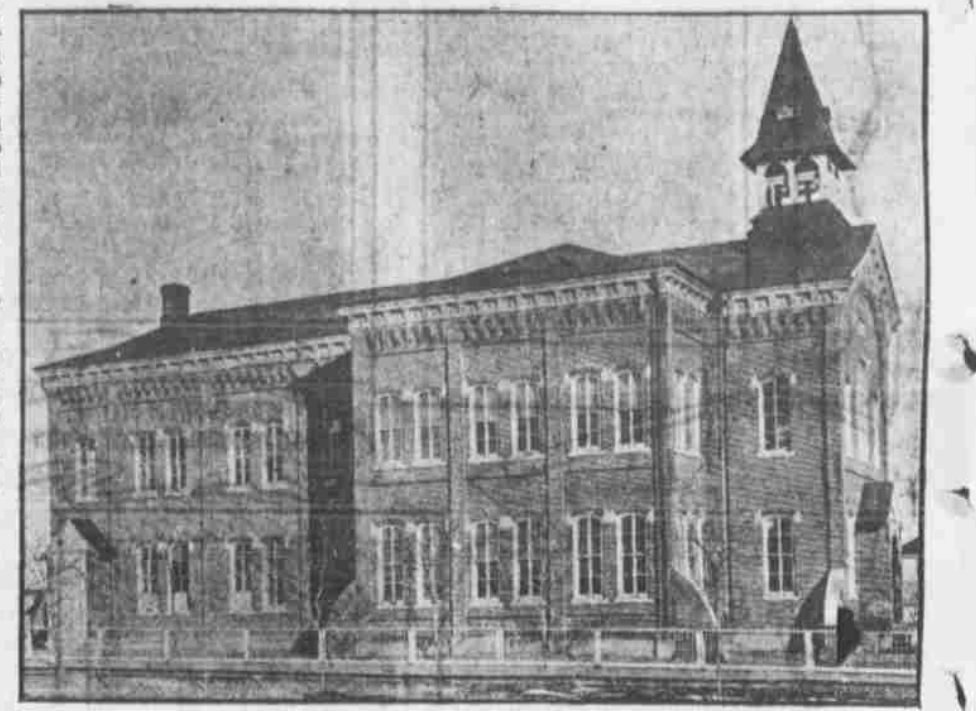
well to the front in the dairy industry. At the present time the farmers have on their farms over 10,000 milk cows where 800 hand separators are in use. From these cows they manufactured and sent to the market last year 103,400 pounds of butter and 40,000 gallons of cream. Each year these farmers have more and more of their land seeded to alfalfa. At the present time they have over 3,000 acres in full bearing and many hundred acres that will come into productiveness with the coming season.

The poultry industry is attracting more attention each year, as will be shown by the facts that these farmers or their wives, in 1908, marketed over 22,000 dozen of eggs and 200,000 pounds of poultry. Last year the farmers of this county produced 65,300 acres of corn, 4,000 acres of wheat, 32,700 acres of oats and 5,000 acres of rye.

The bustling, enterprising, thrifty city of O'Neill, with a population of 2,000, is not an accident. It has been created by an ambitious, energetic and progressive class of citizens. Education, intelligence and culture are plainly apparent in the many church and splendid schools, as well as in the many fine business blocks. The city stands today a credit to its citizens and an honor to the Elkhorn valley. The first thing that strikes the eye of the visitor of O'Neill is the clean, wholesome appearance of its stores, a good criterion of what may be found on the inside. It is perhaps very apparent to the careful observer of industrial and commercial matters that the city has never forged ahead to rapidness as in the last few years.

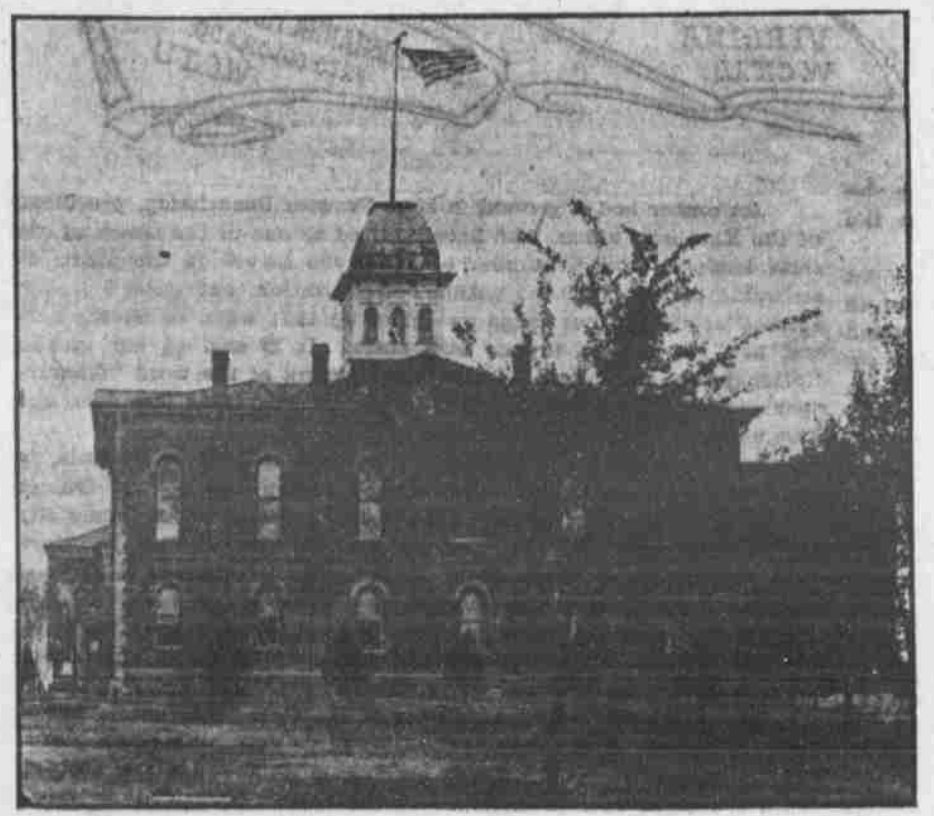
O'Neill has three substantial banks that have the liberal support and entire confidence of this and adjoining counties. They have a combined deposit of \$450,000.

The public schools are in excellent condition, with model school buildings where ten teachers are employed. St. Mary's academy has a capacity for 300 students, where eight teachers are employed. This splendid institution was established eight years ago at a cost of \$60,000.

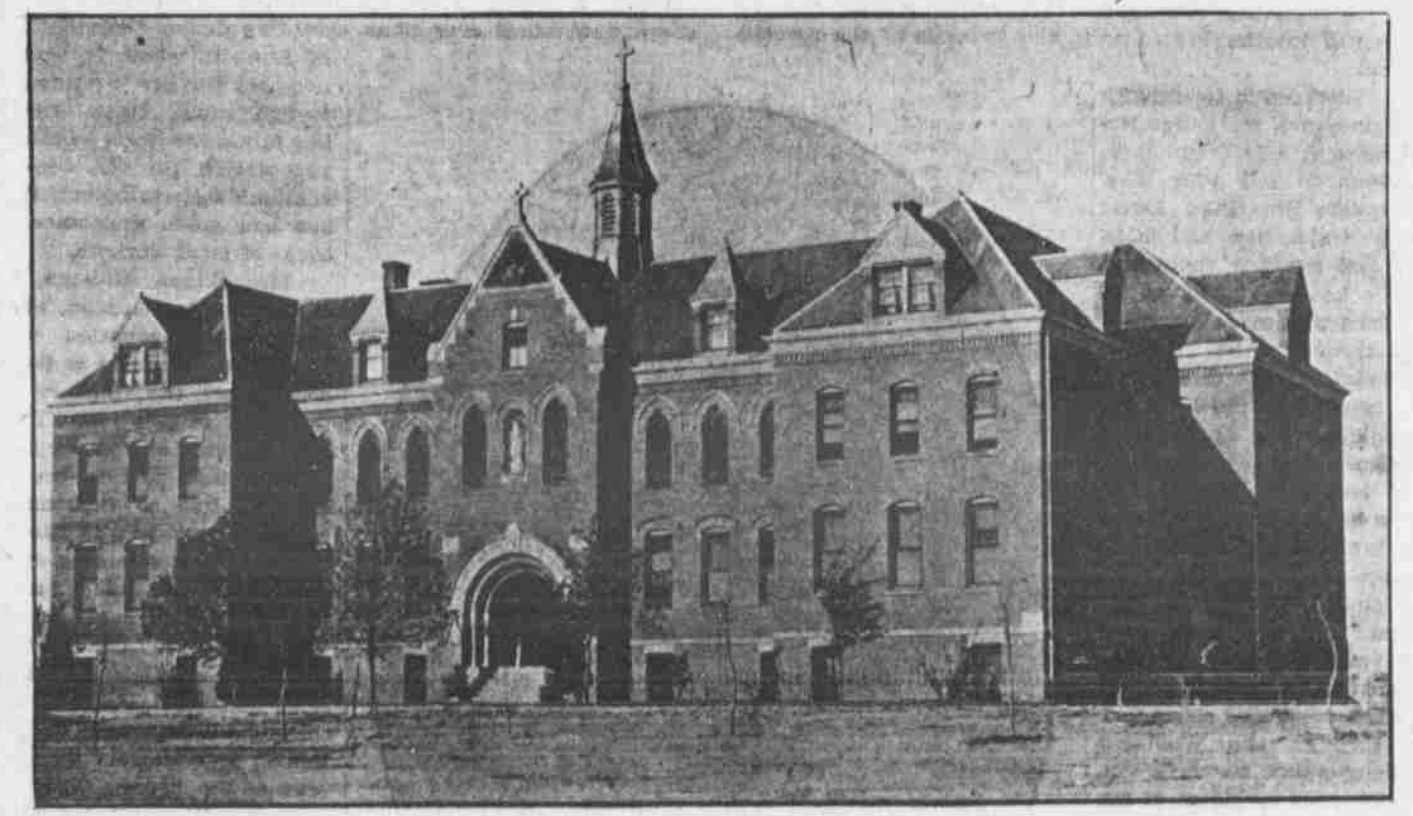


PUBLIC SCHOOL, O'NEILL.

The United States land office is located here. There is still remaining 60,000 acres of vacant land in this district. There are 2,600 homesteaders in this land district who will prove up within the next year. These homesteaders were nearly all taken under the Kinkaid act and contain 540 acres. Seventeen years ago the government began experimenting on the land in the southwest corner of this county in regard to its being adapted to the growth of forest trees. Many acres of Jack pine were planted at that time and at the present there are hundreds of acres of this specie of pine growing on the open bare sandhills. The experiment has proven a complete success.



HOLT COUNTY COURT HOUSE, O'NEILL.



ST. MARY'S ACADEMY, O'NEILL.



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS HALL, O'NEILL.

## Electrical Science and Practical Application Growing in All Directions

**W**ILL the mountain streams and mighty rivers cook our food and heat our buildings some time in the near future? The electrical engineers of the General Electric company say they will, after the cost is taken.

It was an English physicist named Joule who found that the amount of heat developed by an electric current could be accurately measured. The amount of heat developed from electricity depends upon the current strength and the resistance it overcomes. A circuit that has twice the resistance but the same current strength as another is developing heat twice as fast as the second, whereas a circuit that has twice the current strength but the same resistance as another is developing heat four times as fast as the other.

An ordinary electric filament consumes about eight times as much power as a 16-candle power lamp. It offers only one-eighth the resistance to the current that the lamp offers and so its current is eight times as large.

Suppose a person should buy a flatiron for use on a 110-volt current and should afterwards move to a city where the current was run at 220-volt pressure; with twice the voltage, he would require twice the current that his iron was designed for and used on this current it would soon burn out. If the reverse happened and he attempted to use a 220-volt iron on a 110-volt current, he would find that he could scarcely get his iron makers of lukewarm.

This is why all makers of electric heating devices caution intending purchasers to always state voltage desired.

In all the electrical heating devices the heat is secured by passing electrical currents through resistance metal. These alloys are not good conductors of electricity; they "resist" its passage and this resistance produces heat in great quantities.

Nearly all the smaller electric heating lamps may be connected directly to the lamp socket, but where the current is to be done entirely by the ironing force it is best to install a special heating circuit both for convenience in making suitable connections and because the user can secure a better rate for the current consumed in such quantities.

The rates for the electric current vary widely, depending on the cost of generation, competition, etc., so it is impossible to state the exact cost of operating electric

heating devices until the rates are known. But with this knowledge, it is possible to calculate running costs to a nicety that is quite impossible in other systems. Calculations always specify the watt consumption of the various devices because current is sold at so many cents per kilowatt-hour. A kilowatt-hour is the consumption of 1,000 watts for one hour's time or of one watt for 1,000 hours' time. Thus, if a device rated at 500 watts is used one hour, the consumption is one-half kilowatt-hour. A small water heater is rated at 300 watts. In five minutes it will boil a pint of water. Let us see what the cost would be at 10 cents per kilowatt-hour. The 300 watts is three-tenths of a kilowatt and it uses this amount for one-half hour. The consumption, then, would be one-fourth kilowatt-hour and the cost of operation is seen to be one-fourth of 10 cents, or 2 1/2-cent.

The use of electricity for cooking purposes is becoming common. The apparatus in which the heat is produced can form a part of the cooking dish itself, thus making it possible to cook without a stove. It has marked advantages of cleanliness and convenience over other systems, and when the current can be had at a moderate price it is cheaper than other systems. It is estimated that the average current consumed by a family of four for cooking purposes is eighty-four kilowatt-hours per month. This at the rate of 5 cents per kilowatt-hour amounts to \$4.32.

There is practically no change in the room temperature in summer where electric cooking is in process, and, inasmuch as special rates may usually be obtained during the summer months, its use is especially popular at that time. Another property that has made electric heating for cooking popular is the shortness of time required. Gridlides are ready for use in from three to five minutes; broilers in from seven to ten minutes; chafing dishes, five minutes; laundry irons, five to seven minutes.

In many ways, cooking by electricity is the ideal way. It gives the same measured heat every time. With it, cooking can be done by the clock instead of by guess. Or it can be done exactly to one's taste. The bread toaster, for use at the table, is a good example of this.

**Government Owes 'Phones.**

When the provincial government of Manitoba proposed to purchase and operate all

telephone systems in the province, other provinces of the Dominion watched with interest the experiment, for Manitoba claims to be the first government, not only in Canada, but in the world, to get into the telephone business, says the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Toward the end of 1907 negotiations were started between the government and the Bell Telephone company for the purchase of all the lines, exchanges and franchises from the monopoly. Approximately \$2,000,000 was the price agreed upon for the entire system, with a quantity of supplies and material which the company has on hand. After twelve months of operation under government ownership a surplus of \$300,000.10 is declared after deducting the cost of the construction of 1,436 miles of long distance lines and twenty-nine new exchanges for 2,158 subscribers.

So satisfactory has been the showing made under government ownership that a reduction varying from 25 to 50 per cent.

**Run on Applejack.**

IN THE dry sections of Susquehanna county, New Jersey, applejack is at a premium these days because of the demand for it in the treatment of snakebites. Driven out of their accustomed haunts by the fires that are raging in the Swatwood mountain woods, snakes are swarming into the more settled portions, and reports come in from every side of people being bitten.

The staple remedy is to press a quid of chewing tobacco on the wound and apply applejack internally in liberal doses. Rattlesnakes and copperheads are common in the villages and Oleytown is particularly afflicted.

**Candle as a Cake.**

Ninety-nine candles, indicating the age of a charming Quaker, Mrs. Lydia Sharpless of Whittier, Cal., blazed on the birthday cake which graced the center of a large table set in the dining room of the Friends' church.

Seventy-five of her descendants were present to offer congratulations to the woman, who clings to the dress, manner and speech of the Friends of other days, but keeps informed as to events and movements of the present. She was born in Middletown, O., but has lived in Whittier for many years.

**Allows a Child \$15,750 a Year.**

The report of Referee Henry A. Robinson, who was appointed to investigate the application of Mrs. Gladys R. Martin for an allowance for her infant son, James E. Martin, Jr., the grandson of the late James E. Martin, has been filed with the Surrogate at Great Neck, L. I. It does not allow the amount asked by Mrs. Martin, but shows that, with proper economy, the

young man can be brought up on an allowance of \$15,750 per year, payable quarterly.

The amounts allowed are \$4,000 for a home and \$5,500 a year to maintain the same; for an automobile and his keep, \$3,000; for entertainment by the infant and for his recreation and exercise, \$3,900; for prospective medical attention, medicines, etc., \$200 and for clothing, \$150. The estate of the child is estimated at \$488,100.

In fixing the allowance the referee said that the child's father was used to an income of \$60,000 a year, and the child was entitled to an income which would educate and entertain him to the same extent.

**Horse Chews Tobacco.**

It is a generally believed fact that dumb animals have an aversion to tobacco in any form. This was disproved to a slight extent by the recent experience of a visitor in New York City. He says that he was standing in the upper deck of a Delaware, Lackawanna & Western railroad ferry returning from Hoboken. As he stood there watching the passengers come on he saw a delivery wagon belonging to a Hoboken laundry concern drive on the lower deck and stop. The driver descended from his seat, and, pulling out a package of tobacco, rolled a cigarette and returned the package to his pocket. His horse in the meantime had pricked up its ears sharply forward and then stepped forward and begun to sniff at the pocket where the tobacco had been placed. The driver with a laugh moved forward a step or two, but was followed by the horse, which again sniffed at the pocket containing the tobacco. By this time the cigarette had been rolled and lit. The driver then turned to the horse and thrust his hand in his

pocket, while the animal was all attention. Those watching him thought that he would pull out a lump of sugar, but were much surprised to see again that self-same package of tobacco. Still further were they surprised when he took out a generous handful and extended it to the horse, which took it greedily. At this point the ferry had reached the New York shore, and the chain being let down the horse trotted off the boat, contentedly masticating a juicy quid of tobacco.

**Twelve Stitches in Heart.**

Michael Lawlor of 194 Hodiannott avenue, St. Louis, whose heart was sewed with twelve stitches after he had been stabbed in a fight in Wallston, August 22, has practically recovered. He is held at the St. Louis city hospital that the surgeons may watch his heart action for a few days.

The remarkable operation is said to have been the first of its kind ever performed in St. Louis. On several occasions incisions in the outer covering of the heart have been closed, but never before have stitches been taken in the heart itself while it was pumping blood.

As soon as Lawlor was received at the hospital, Superintendent W. C. G. Kirchner and Drs. Rodney Bunch and C. H. Shutt performed the operation. An opening in his breast was made in the form of a trap door, the ribs being cut and laid back.

The doctor had the little hope that Lawlor would live, as the operation was an extremely dangerous one. He recovered rapidly, however, and was soon able to walk about the hospital. He will be discharged in a few days. He says the wound pained him no more than a pin-prick, and that he did not realize he was seriously hurt until doctors at the hospital discussed his case with him.

will be announced within the next few days. Several reductions have already been made since the government took over the system from the Bell company. The cost of the construction of 1,436 miles of long distance lines and twenty-nine new exchanges for 2,158 subscribers.

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**Electric Traction for Freight.**

Mr. Melien, president of the New Haven road, is preparing for an experiment. According to the Railroad Age Gazette, a new electric locomotive is being built for him which is designed to haul freight trains, and which is likely to be completed next month.

It has long been believed that the economy resulting from the substitution of electricity for steam on trunk lines would be chiefly conspicuous in passenger traffic. Indeed, experts have held that even in the handling of that class of business there is room to discriminate, the suburban service being regarded as a more inviting field for electric traction than the long distance express service. The movement of freight by electricity, on the other hand, has not usually been regarded as promising any special advantages. Nearly all electric engineers, if not distinctly discouraging any attempt to initiate such a service, have at least been cautious about advocating it in the immediate future. For this reason the experiment about to be made by the New Haven company deserves to be and certainly will be watched closely. One electric freight locomotive does not guarantee a revolution in railway usage, but Mr. Melien's venture will be an object lesson of exceptional value. The New Haven management will be the first, of course, to learn whether the innovation is likely to be profitable, but in time other railroad officials will discover the truth and be able to determine whether or not to take a similar step.

It is announced that the new engine is designed to draw a freight train weighing 1,500 tons at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour and a heavy passenger train weighing 800 tons at forty-five miles an hour. In any case the investment is not likely to be wasted, for if a larger use of electric power in hauling freight does not follow it is pretty sure to throw new light on the proper design of electric engines for passenger trains.

**Electricity Causes Few Fires.**

Simply because Benjamin Franklin associated electricity with lightning, and that most people are more or less afraid of lightning, electricity is believed to be a dangerous factor in fire hazards. This is not true, for it has been proven time and again that electricity causes less fires than a number of the other things about the house or office.

Last year nearly 8,000 fires were reported in the city of Chicago. A careful record was kept of the origin of these fires and the result showed that only about 1 per cent could be laid to electricity. Only one