

# Nuckolls County One of Southern Nebraska's Richest Garden Spots

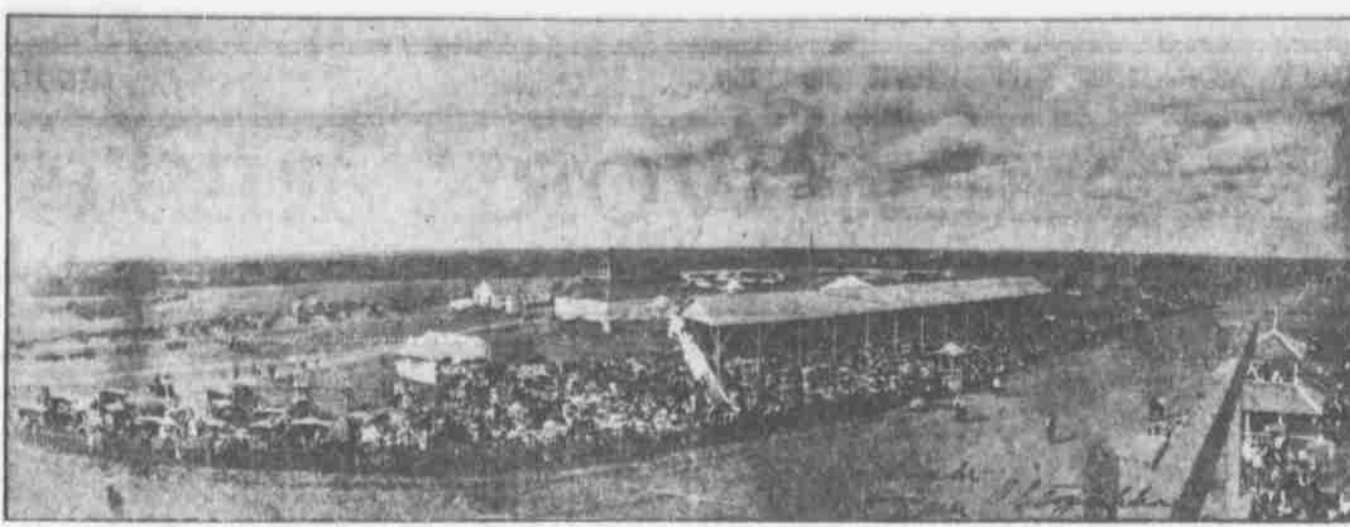
THE story of Nuckolls county commenced with the great trail period for the overland route from St. Joe, Mo., to California. The past year has been one of unusual prosperity to the farmers of Nuckolls county. For instance, a large piano dealer of Lincoln declares that he is selling fewer pianos to the city people than he sold last year, but that the farmers are buying nearly twice as many as they bought the year before. The center of this business is swinging away from the cities and into the rural communities. The farmer had good crops last year; he sold them at the best prices on record; and he seems likely to have the same experience this year.

The Nebraska farmer's first duty is to feed the American people. But one-eighth of his products are sent abroad. The yearly consumption of agricultural products is \$20 per capita. The average acre produces but \$11 a year. Opportunity in Nuckolls county yet keeps its door open. If they could only shut the door of waste, the well-being of the people would surpass all previous human experience.

Nuckolls County was organized as a county in 1871, has an area of 575 square miles, a population of 20,000, ninety-three public schools, seven high schools, 170 miles telephone, 137.84 miles of telegraph, 161.52 miles of railroad, three free libraries, free rural mail delivery. This county is watered by the Republican and Little Blue rivers, Elk, Beaver, Ox Bow and Spring creeks. The Little Blue is especially noted for its water power. It furnishes power for fifteen flouring mills in the state. The valleys of the Republican and Little Blue are noted for fertility and productivity.

No county in the state of Nebraska can excel Nuckolls county in the raising of alfalfa. While alfalfa is raised to a limited extent in all parts of the state, the soil in Nuckolls county is peculiarly adapted to the requirements of this wonderful grass. Alfalfa grows in this county on the upland and lowland, rough land and smooth land, in fact anywhere it is planted, which is evidence there is no "gumbo" soil. There is no crop that can be raised that will produce the quantity and quality of roughness as alfalfa. Three or four heavy crops of hay are cut from each alfalfa field each season. Analysis and experiments have proved that alfalfa has much the same feeding value and fat producing qualities as corn. No hay can be raised that has the fattening qualities of alfalfa, as it contains 90 per cent of fat producing elements. As corn, the king of grains, alfalfa does not wear out the soil, but tends to fertilize it. The important advantage Nuckolls county has over other alfalfa districts, is that it is a good corn and wheat country. Alfalfa and corn will grow in adjoining fields, and it is a great advantage to the feeder to be able to raise both hay and grain, and also to the farmer to be able to market his corn with his neighbor.

Nuckolls county is situated in the southern tier of counties, the fourth county east of the center of the state and but a little more than 100 miles west of the Missouri river.



COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS AT NELSON.

The soil of Nuckolls county is a rich, fertile, black loam, one to four feet in depth, underlain with spongy clay subsoil, which makes this land especially adapted to the growing of alfalfa, the greatest hay-producing grass in the world. Horses, cattle and hogs are produced liberally in Nuckolls county and with profit. Wheat, corn, oats and rye, vegetables and fruits yield abundantly and drought has never caused a total failure in Nuckolls county.

Fruits, such as apples, pears, peaches, plums, grapes and berries, are of the finest flavor.

There are six flouring mills in Nuckolls county, the combined capacity of which is 1,000 barrels daily. These mills are in operation the year around, and when running on full time consume daily 5,000 bushels of wheat. This wheat is, of course, all grown in the county. Besides this milling industry there are twenty-six elevators in the county in connection with the railroads.

Three-year-old steers fed on alfalfa meal and ground corn will gain about four and one-half pounds a day for sixty days. The reason for this large gain is that this forms a balanced ration; the steer does not chew his cud.

Jewel county, on the south of Nuckolls, is the banner county of Kansas in the production of corn and alfalfa. It was unfortunate for Nuckolls county that much of its land was taken in an early day for speculation by the shogmen of the Union Pacific railroad shops at Omaha. Nuckolls county is pretty well timbered with natural forests along the streams, while on the uplands the handiwork of the frugal husbandman is everywhere in evidence and the level expanse of farmland is studded with young bearing orchards and numerous groves of shade trees.

The artificial timber consists of maple, elm, boxelder, ash and catalpa, while along the streams abound the black and white oak, cottonwood, elm, ash, etc. in great profusion.

In the northern part of the county small grain crops prevail and in the southern half along the bottoms, corn is king, as is readily seen from the many long drives

filled with golden ears and the thousands of bushels piled upon the ground in great ricks.

The cattle industry has developed to a wonderful degree in the last few years, and it is no uncommon thing to find 700 and 800 cattle being fed on one ranch and fitted for the market.

This industry is conducted on a large and profitable scale along the Republican valley. Within a radius of eighteen to twenty miles of Superior, there are on an average of 40,000 to 60,000 head of cattle grazing and fattening for the market. The cattle business is made especially profitable here by reason of the dry, open winters and quality of the grasses. The per cent of loss is extremely light and the usual maladies afflicting cattle in other sections, are scarcely known.

About 20,000 head are shipped yearly from Superior to eastern markets, at an average price of \$55 per head, so you can grasp the magnitude of this great industry.

Nuckolls county was organized and held a first election June 27, 1871. The Mormons passed through the county along the course of the Little Blue on their westward way; making the first road or trail in Nuckolls county, which was, in 1855 adopted, straightened, bridged and used by the government. In 1859, Butterfield started the pony express over this road, which, considering the time and route, was a hazardous enterprise. The same year, Russell and Wadwell started the overland stage line and established stations along the route in Nuckolls, the most noted of which was Oak Grove. In 1867, during the Indian raid, the country was abandoned by the white settler, excepting a man by the name of John Lorimer, who could not be induced to go. In less than two weeks he fell a victim to the merciless tomahawk and scalping knife.

The first permanent settler in the county was B. L. Comstock, locating at Oak Grove, on the Little Blue, with his family in 1861.

The first marriage ceremony in the county was performed March 6, 1872, by Judge E. A. Davis, it being about the first official act. The contracting parties were

Mr. J. E. Bunker and Miss Martha Johnson. Being his first attempt, Mr. Davis desired to show dispatch and said, "Since there is no prescribed law in Nebraska for marrying people, I pronounce you man and wife."

The first sermon in the county was preached in the summer of 1872 by Rev. Mr. Penny of the Presbyterian church. The Elkton Sunday school, was organized June 12, 1872, being the first in the county, composed of four members, R. Hollingworth, C. C. Fletcher, Joseph Carlon and Maggie Follmer.

The last buffalo was killed on the Republican bottom, just below Superior, in 1875, by William Crabtree. The first Fourth of July celebration was held at Oak Grove about two weeks after the first election in 1871.

When the first court was held in Nelson, there were only two houses in the town. One of the first cases to be tried was that of a horse thief.

Next to Thayer county, Nuckolls suffered more from Indian raids and depredations than any county in southern Nebraska. In the great Indian raid of August 7, 1864, which extended from Gage county to Denver, Colo., Oak Grove, the home of Nuckolls, was the only place in Nuckolls that held out against the Indians. Superior pays about one-fourth the entire tax that goes into the county treasury, and is the first city of the county.

A few short years ago nothing but wooden buildings could be seen and they were small and inadequate. Today we find a city of business houses substantially built of brick and stone and occupied by enterprising business men. Superior has made a phenomenal growth in the last fifteen years. The brick used in the construction of these blocks was produced by its own brick plants and is as good as can be produced anywhere. Its sidewalks are largely brick and cement and as fast as possible old board walks are being replaced by new brick ones. The boom days are now past and Superior has come out smiling and prosperous and its citizens are all as firm as ever in their determination to push the town and the growth now is steady and substantial. The onward march of Superior is backed up by the country that surrounds it. Every year sees more good farmers tilling good farms, more cattle grazing and being fed for market and more hogs going to market to fill the orders of bustling stockmen. To visit Superior and the valley tributary is to be at once desirous to make a home with this people.

The experience of nearly all business men teaches that well graded and improved wagon roads for a distance of five to twenty-five miles from a trading point like Superior add more to its business interests and permanent growth than any other one thing that can be done. The Commercial club is a live body of business

men, who appreciate the fact that their success lies in securing the trade of farmers in this section, and know that the way to attract trade to this city is best done by the laying out, grading and keeping in strict repair the main roads leading to the city. Every farmer who is looking for a market and trade center, has his eye on Superior, and the action of the Commercial club will bear fruit at no distant day.

One of the big industries of the winter season is the ice crop, harvested from the mill race by the Santa Fe railway and local concerns. Nearly all the ice for the great Santa Fe system is harvested at Superior and shipped to various points along the route.

We hear a great deal of talk of the "wild and woolly west," and way down east, many people seem to have an idea that business in this section of the country is conducted on a very primitive plan, but the fact is, that even way out in Nebraska the retail merchants are fifty years at least in advance of the retailers in store management and in the judicious display and arrangement of their stocks. Western merchants are nothing if not progressive. They are constantly introducing new ideas into their business, and not only in the interior arrangement of their respective places of business, but in their methods of advertising and extending their trade.

No such splendid railroad facilities can be found in any town in Nebraska threefold the size of Superior.

The Burlington & Missouri River railroad is the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy's Kansas City-Denver main line and carries eight to ten trains daily. They built through Superior in 1873 and have given this entire valley easy access to eastern and western markets.

Superior is the terminus of the Santa Fe from Strong City, Kan., connecting with the main line of their great system. Superior has made a remarkable and substantial growth in the quarter of a century since it sprang into existence. It has thirteen railroad postoffices, each of which has grain markets and general merchandise stores.

Devesee and Edgar are just over the county line on the north and Davenport, on two railroads, just over the line east. Nelson, the capital of Nuckolls county, is second in size, with a population of 1,200. It has two railroads, two substantial banks, a flouring mill of 100 barrels capacity. Besides numerous retail establishments, Nelson has two large department stores, each occupying three large store rooms, 25x100 feet, elegant high school building, churches, court house and hotels.

Nelson is about the geographical center of the county. It is a well-built little city and has some very pretty residences. The court house is a well-constructed building, as is also the high school.

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As an institution it is the chief cornerstone of our glorious republic. We do not prize it so supremely because we have millions invested in wood, brick, stone and marble in the form of magnificent buildings, but because our schools are institutions for the education of our children.

The present state of efficiency of the Nelson public schools is the result of many years of evolution. Its growth, though, not remarkably rapid, has been steady, substantial and along right lines.

Going as far back as the year of 1881-2 we find the school in charge of W. H. Gerds as teacher, with an enrollment of forty-five pupils. The next year the enrollment was increased to fifty-four and C. W. Devall was the teacher.

In the spring of 1890 the first commencement exercises were held, when a class of two boys graduated.

It was now becoming evident to many of the citizens that the old school building was inadequate to accommodate the school. In the spring of 1891 a petition was circulated asking for a special election to consider the question of voting bonds for a new building.

The building was ready to be occupied in January, 1892. The school had scarcely gotten located in the new building when on the 30th of March a tornado wrecked the building.

The graduating class of 1902 consisted of nine girls and seven boys, the class of 1904, four girls and six boys and the class of 1906, fourteen girls and four boys.

At the present time Nuckolls county has ninety-one school districts, with ninety-three school buildings, where 3,170 students are taught by 120 teachers, who draw \$30,547 annual salary. The school property of the county is valued at \$170,230.

The county has two accredited schools with twelve grades, Nelson and Superior. Superior has just moved into their new

school building costing \$25,000 and modern in every respect. Both of these schools give the normal training course.

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Nuckolls county stands third in the state in the production of alfalfa, as they produced last season over 21,000 acres, besides 1,800 acres of timothy and 1,000 acres of clover. During the last season they also produced 108,000 acres of corn, 43,000 acres of wheat and 10,000 acres of oats. The county is also producing a liberal amount of fruit, largely for home consumption. They have at present, growing and in full bearing, 45,000 apple trees, 107,000 peach, 8,000 plum and 13,000 cherry trees.

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welfare, to religion and to civilization within this republic, and at the greatest centers of need within the world. His modesty was unusual. His humor was dry, illuminating and ever kind. A courteous listener, a close and careful thinker, a wise reasoner, a delightful companion, a strong and lovable man, he will be missed by those who knew him well for as long as they will live, and his memory will be cherished in the records and honored in the institutions to which he gave his thought, his time, his means—and himself.

**Fisk's Price of Lies.**  
James Fisk, Jr., had been a peddler from his boyhood days through New England towns. His father was a peddler, and James had been brought up in that life absorbing all the bluff, nerve and flashy display characteristic of the traveling vendors of Yankee notions and tinware, who were conspicuous in the early days, before merchandise had developed in a perfect system. It may be said of Fisk that he had been a prince of peddlers, and his wagon was a spectacular in appearance, being painted in the brightest colors and to which he drove well groomed horses that always attracted a large crowd of rural admirers wherever he went.

A story of an incident of the days when he was traveling with his father illustrates Fisk's standard of moral honesty. An old woman charged Fisk's senior with having misrepresented the value and quality of a piece of calico sold at 12½ cents a yard.

"Well, now," said Fisk, Jr., "I don't think father would tell a lie for 12½ cents, though he might tell eight of 'em for a dollar."

**Clemenceau and the Joker.**  
One of the stories concerning M. Clemenceau, the fallen French premier, tells how he recently nonplussed a practical joker who sent out a number of invitations to people all over Paris to a big dinner at Clemenceau's house. Some days afterward M. Clemenceau was surprised to receive letters from total strangers accepting "his kind invitation to dinner,"

and thanking him most cordially. Now, the ex-premier is a man of wit, and instead of flying into a temper, he realized that some one had been playing a trick upon him, so he gave orders for a dinner, and it was duly held. His unknown guests were highly delighted to be in the company of the distinguished statesman, but their ardor was somewhat dampened when, after the banquet, their host broke the news to them that their presence there was really due to a choice little joke which had been perpetrated by some person or persons unknown. Naturally the diners hastened to depart as soon as they conveniently could.

**"Senatorial Courtesy."**  
Justice Peckham's death revives the almost forgotten name of David B. Hill, to whom it was indirectly due that Rufus W. Peckham, and not his brother, Wheeler H. Peckham, became a justice of the supreme court. When a vacancy was caused by the death of Justice Blatchford of New York, in 1893, relates the Philadelphia Ledger, President Cleveland nominated William B. Hornblower, then and since a leader of the New York bar. Mr. Hornblower had been one of the opponents of David B. Hill in New York politics, and Hill, regarding his nomination as an affront, appealed to "senatorial courtesy" to prevent his confirmation. The president, therefore, withdrew Hornblower's name and nominated Wheeler H. Peckham, a much more active and pronounced anti-Hill democrat, and Hill succeeded in securing his rejection. Mr. Cleveland did not continue the fight, but named Senator White of Louisiana, whose nomination was promptly confirmed.

Two years later, on the death of Justice Jackson, President Cleveland nominated for this vacancy Rufus W. Peckham, who was then a member of the court of appeals of New York, as his father had been before him. He also was a Tilden democrat, but was out of politics, and he met with no objection. But if it had not been for Hill the other son of the elder judge would have been the United States justice.

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When the new luminous are lamp, with its flood of mellow light, was produced by the engineers of the General Electric company they immediately designed a luminous are headlight which will throw a beam of light for many yards on either side of the track for a distance of nearly 2,000 feet ahead. Such illumination is of great assistance to motormen in taking curves or avoiding collisions with vehicles, animals or persons. Many of the cities, however, do not allow these blinding lights within the city limits. Fortunately this new lamp can be dimmed by a simple throw of a switch, making it available for both city and interurban service.

**Not the Same Joshua.**  
"We had a county judge down my way a few years ago whose love for biblical lore was so pronounced that he couldn't resist a desire to air it on every possible occasion," said Congressman Henry D. Clayton of Alabama a few days since. "One day an old darkey was brought in from the mountain district under suspicion of maintaining an illicit still. There was no real evidence against him."