

HOMESTEADERS

THE STORY OF PERRY, KANSAS

*One Hundred Years of Progress
from 1854 to 1954*

PERRY CENTENNIAL

JULY 8, 9, 10, 1954

THE STORY OF PERRY, KANSAS

Prepared for the Perry Centennial by Elmer E. Bates

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Early Days of Kansas Territory

Kansas became a territory May 30, 1854, by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill introduced by Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

The third section of the Douglas bill repealed the Missouri Compromise and threw the territory wide open to the free staters and slave holders and left the future of the issue up to the settlers themselves as to whether the State should be free or slave. Prior to this Missouri and Maine had applied for admission, the former with a constitution permitting slavery, the latter as a free state. In 1819 Arkansas and Missouri had been organized separately with no restrictions on slavery.

Since the admission of Vermont in 1791 a balance of power had been maintained in Congress between the North and South. If Arkansas and Missouri were to be admitted at the same time as Maine, that balance would be shifted and the Southern states would control Congress. Finally after much debate, Congress admitted Maine and Missouri, one free, the other slave, but forever barred slavery north of parallel 36-30 of the Louisiana Purchase. But as Missouri was a slave state and parallel 36-30 was located on her southern boundary, an exception was made in her case.

The earliest travelers to the eastern part of this territory brought back such glowing reports about the wonderful country; tree-lined streams inhabited with beaver and otter, numerous deer, bear and other wild game, and fertile valleys covered with valuable timber, that they labeled it "The Garden of the West." The eastern part was a beautiful country and a trapper's paradise and there was plenty of land for homesteaders.

Settlers came from the North, the New England States, the Atlantic Seaboard and the South sent through the various Aide Societies to make new homes. They traveled over rough trails in covered wagons pulled by oxen and staked out claims. They came by steamboat, putting up with sickness and other hardships, and suffered all the inconvenience of getting stuck on a sand bar or hitting a snag and having to wade out and walk and then hire a man with a wagon and team (if they could find one) to haul them to their destination.

They came any way possible and with them came crooked politicians, gamblers and gunmen to prey on honest homesteaders. Settlers were murdered and their cabins burned; squatters were chased off their claims; crooked elections were held and ballot boxes stuffed. In fact there was so much devilment carried on by both sides that it was very evident that the territory would be a battle ground before it became a state.

The first cabins were crude huts made of round logs chinked with chips and the cracks plastered with mud, with roofs covered with clapboard shingles. A fireplace made of logs and plastered with mud was

made in one end. The end of the cabin served as the back of the fireplace. This heating system was satisfactory until the logs dried out, then the cabin was apt to catch on fire. The walls of some of the better cabins were made of squared logs, with clapboard roofs and fireplaces made of rock. The walls of some of the better cabins were covered with clapboards on the outside.

The first white men to enter Jefferson County, of which there is any record, came in the summer of 1819 with an exploring expedition sent out by the government after the purchase of the Louisiana Territory. Prof. Say with Maj. Long and party entered the southwest corner of the present Delaware Township and marched in a northeasterly direction until they came to the "Grasshopper" (Delaware) River where they camped for the night. The next day they crossed the river near the falls and left the county just east of the present town of Nortonville.

French hunters and trappers appeared on the Missouri River in their pirogues (two canoes lashed together) as early as 1804, but didn't come up the Kansas River as far west as Jefferson County until they had depleted the supply of fur bearing animals on the Missouri, and were looking for new places to set their traps. One of them, Francis Chateau, established a trading post known as Kansas Landing near the mouth of the Kaw River in 1828, and a few years later a cousin set up a trading post on the south side of the river opposite Jefferson County and about two miles east of Leecompton. Fur bearing animals at this early date were very plentiful and easily caught, and the French did a thriving business. They taught the Indians (Delawares and Kaws) how to trap and were soon trading them all kinds of trinkets and colored cloth for pelts. In fact there were so many furs brought into Chateau's trading post at Kansas Landing that one season's catch shipped by keel boat to St. Louis amounted to as much as forty thousand pounds.

The French were good trappers and were successful in the fur business, but didn't stake out any claims and as soon as fur bearing animals became scarce most of them moved on to other regions. The few who stayed along the Kansas River eventually married into the Kansas and Delaware Indian tribes.

Three years after Frederick Chateau set up his trading post at Kansas Landing, Moses Grinter of Beardstown, Ky., was hired by the U. S. Government to establish a ferry on the Kaw River to connect the Military road from Ft. Leavenworth to Ft. Scott. He arrived in 1831 and immediately put into service a rope ferry west of Secondine (Muncie). He was the first permanent white settler of Wyandotte County. He married Ann Marshall, a Delaware Indian. By 1855 all the French traders were gone so Moses Grinter added a store to the Ferry business and began to trade with the Delawares and the Wyandottes.

When Kansas Territory was opened to settlers most of Jefferson County belonged to the Kaw half-breeds and the Delaware Indians. The Kaws held a mile-wide strip along the Kansas River, while the Delaware Reserve lay just north and east, and covered about 55,000 acres.

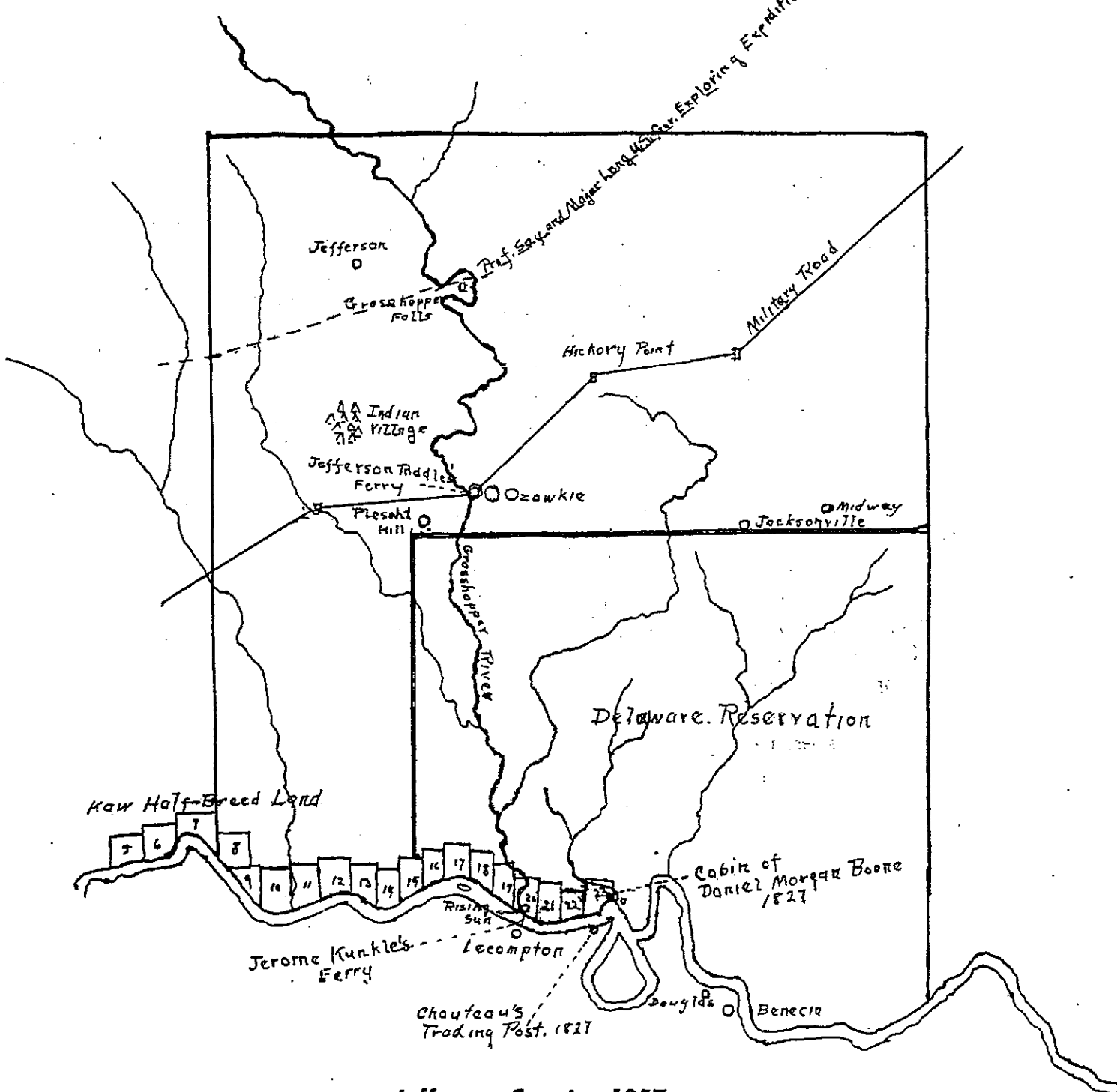
Previously, the Government had made a treaty with the Delawares and other tribes in 1830, giving them the land with the understanding that it would be theirs forever and there would be no encroachment by the white man. Now thirty-four years after the signing of the treaty, Kansas Territory was organized and the land opened for settlement. The various Indian Reservations were to be reduced in size and there was to be a gradual movement of the Indians to other reservations.

The Government set up land offices in all the districts; and Leavenworth and Ozawkie were designated for District 13. The greater part of the Delaware land was to be sold in 1856 at Leavenworth and the remainder in Ozawkie in 1857.

Ozawkie boomed until the land sales, and temporary residents came by the thousands. During the land sales every building was crowded and the outskirts of the town were surrounded by camps of land buyers, speculators and gamblers. Many men came loaded down with gold and every conceivable gambling device was run night and day. Money was continually changing hands and everything was lively. Ozawkie town lots sold for fabulous prices.

Many settlers had already built cabins and taken possession before the land was ready for sale and

Prof. Say and Major Long U.S. Ar. Exploring Expedition 1819



Jefferson County, 1857

consequently had the advantage over the newcomers, by being established near the Land Offices. The Government recognized the Indians' property rights and insisted that they be paid before the settlers took possession of the land. About the same time the Delawares were selling their land, the Kaw half-breeds had begun to dispose of their possessions. Chief White Plume of the Kaws made a trip to St. Louis as early as 1825 to make arrangements with the Government to sell their surveys along the river. Previously on June 30, 1825 the U.S. Government made a separate treaty with the Kaw Indians. They were to receive 300 hogs, 300 cattle, 500 fowl, 3 yoke of oxen, 2 carts and farm tools. Daniel Morgan Boone, son of old Daniel Boone, was hired by the Government, to teach them how to farm with a title "Farmer for the Kansas Indians". They were deeded a strip of land on the north bank of the Kansas River one mile wide, beginning where North Topeka now stands and ending 23 miles east. The land was divided into 23 sections, the last one directly south and east of the present town of Williamstown. The Treaty was signed by General Clark of the U.S. Government, and Chiefs White Plume, Great Valor, Little White Bear, Real Eagle, and Great Doctor of the Kaws. Eventually most of the land was sold to the settlers, but clear titles were hard to get because the Indians were illiterate and unable to read or write and easily influenced by unscrupulous agents. So many quit claim deeds were made and titles transferred that finally the settlers allowed the taxes to become delinquent on their land, then bought it back at Sheriff's Sale in order to clear the title to acquire a clear tax title.

When Daniel Morgan Boone was hired by the Government to teach farming to the Indians, he moved with his wife and eleven children to the Kansas Reservation and built a log house at the mouth of Stonehouse Creek on the north bank of the Kansas River about five miles southwest of Perry. Napoleon Boone was born in this cabin Aug. 22, 1828. He was the first white child born in Jefferson County and the State of Kansas. The Boone cabin was located directly across from Chateau's Trading Post on the south bank of the river. Chateau was a relative of Frederick Chateau, owner of Kansas Landing, now the present location of Kansas City. A blacksmith shop and other buildings were erected near the Boone cabin. A large well was dug and curbed with stone. The buildings were located just east of survey 23 Kaw half-breed lands about two and one-half miles southeast of the town of Williamstown.

Supplies were brought up the Kaw River to the Indian Agency by means of Keel boats. The Keel boat of that date was from 40 to 75 feet long, cigar shaped like the French and Canadian Voyageur, pointed at both ends, and propelled by sails and oars, or by tow line if the current was too swift. After about three years of fruitless teaching, the Boones gave it up and moved back to Missouri. Now all traces of the buildings are gone; the well filled up; the ground put under cultivation and included in the T. B. Wilson Ranch.

First Territorial Governor.

When Samuel H. Reeder was appointed Territorial Governor by President Pierce in 1854, one of his first acts was to divide the territory into districts, establish voting places and appoint judges of election for the purpose of electing a legislature to draw up a constitution and prepare the territory for statehood. There were 13 districts in all, and the present Jefferson County and the west half of Leavenworth County formed the 13th district with Ozawkie designated as the voting place. Two elections were to be held, the first to choose a delegate to Congress, the second to elect members to the Territorial legislature.

There was no law determining the eligibility of a voter other than "Squatter's rights." According to the pre-emption laws in force in Kansas Territory at that time, a settler was required to build a house, cultivate the soil and within five years pay \$1.25 per acre for his 160 acre claim. However, in order to be eligible to vote, he did not have to wait out the 5-year period until he had proved his claim, but became a qualified voter as soon as he had set his stakes and built a cabin.

In those days there were all kinds of shady characters and crooks who tried to evade the law by merely constructing foundations on their claims. Sometimes more than one foundation was constructed on the land and out of almost any material at hand.

The governor called the first election for November 1854, but the pro-slavery men, fearing that they would lose as they were legally out-numbered by the free-Staters, called their own election 15 days earlier. J. W. Whitefield, pro-slavery man from Jackson County, Mo., was the candidate and received 68 out of 72 votes cast, mostly by pro-slavery men from across the border. The next election was to choose members for the Territorial Legislature, and was to be held May 30, 1855. In the meantime the governor, not liking the character of the first election, and questioning the legality of the voters, ordered a census taken of the district and 69 eligible voters were enumerated. The night before the election, 240 slave holders and pro-slavery sympathizers from Missouri came into the Territory, moved on to the land around Ozawkie, and each man laid 4 twigs in the form of a square. The next day they gathered around the polls, drove off the legally appointed judges at the point of a gun, and then transferred the ballot boxes to the house of a pro-slavery man where they set up their own voting place, selected their own candidate and appointed judges in sympathy with their cause. Most of the free-State men refused to vote, not only because they considered the election illegal, but because they were out-numbered and would be unable to elect their own candidate if they did vote. Elections in the other 12 districts were carried on in a similar manner, and the result was a strong pro-slavery legislature.

Gov. Reeder, although a Democrat and appointed by a pro-slavery President, was honest and did not wish Kansas to become a slave State. He considered the methods used by the Missourians in exercising their right to vote as illegal, and tried to set aside the election, but not being able to oust all of them, finally had to allow the candidates to take their seats. The legislature first met at Pawnee, then adjourned to Shawnee Mission, where they passed a resolution condemning the acts of the Governor, and demanded that he be removed from office. Gov. Reeder eventually was removed from office, but remained within the Territory and joined the free-State movement. He was finally indicted by a Federal Grand Jury called by Judge LeCompte (pro-slavery sympathizer) and finally left the Territory to avoid arrest.

On Sept. 7, 1855, Wilson Shannon, pro-slavery man, was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Gov. Reeder upon his removal from office. This same year all eligible counties were organized, and the boundary lines of Jefferson County were established and remained the same as they are today.

Three unsuccessful attempts were made to write a constitution that would be acceptable to Congress. The first was made in 1855, when the free-State party leaders met at Topeka and wrote the Topeka Constitution, which provided that Kansas should enter the Union as a free State. This Constitution was rejected because it ignored Squatter Sovereignty rights. The next Legislature (so called Bogus Legislature) met at LeCompton in 1857 and elected delegates to a pro-slavery Constitutional convention. They also drafted a constitution which was rejected because the free-State people were not allowed to vote on a free-State issue. The third legislature met at Minneola, and then adjourned to Leavenworth and wrote the Leavenworth Constitution which was adopted by a vote of the free-State people but was rejected by Congress, because it did not represent both parties. The fourth and last attempt was made when the Legislature met at Wyandotte, and wrote the Wyandotte Constitution in 1859, which provided that Kansas be admitted as a free State, but it was not until the Southern States had seceded and withdrawn their delegates, that the North was able to muster enough votes to admit Kansas as a free State to the Union. The Bill was signed Jan. 28, 1861. Six regular Governors and five acting-Governors served Kansas from July 7, 1854 to Feb. 9, 1861.

Jefferson County was organized in 1855 with Ozawkie as the County Seat. N. B. Hopewell, O. B. Tebbs, and Henry Owens were appointed to the County Court (same as County Commissioners), and the first meeting was held Jan. 1, 1856. The county was divided into 3 townships: Slough Creek, Ozawkie, and Grasshopper Falls. Slough Creek comprised the present townships of Rural, Sarcxie, Oskaloosa, Union, Jefferson and Norton; Ozawkie that of Fairview, Kentucky, Kaw and Rock Creek, and Grasshopper Falls took what was left. At a later meeting in 1856, the southern part of Jefferson County was organized into Kentucky Township. In 1857 the County Court was done away with, and a new governing body called



Kaw Half-breed Indians

E.E.B.

the County Board set up, composed of a trustee from each township. Alex. Bayne represented Kaw Township. At the next meeting in 1860, the County Board being an unwieldy body, was done away with in favor of the County Commissioners. Rural Township was organized in 1871 out of part of Kentucky and Sarcoxie.

When settlers first arrived by wagon train in eastern Kansas they entered by two main roads. One began at Westport, followed the Kaw River on the south side through Lawrence, Lecompton and Topeka, where it crossed at Pappan's Ferry, turned northwest to Nebraska, Wyoming and on to Oregon. The other road, laid out by the Government, connected Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth. It followed a course west of Leavenworth and entered Jefferson County near the northeast corner, then southwest to Winchester, west to Hickory Point and Ozawkie where it crossed the Delaware River at Jefferson Riddle's Ferry, then southwest to Topeka and on to Fort Riley. A branch road ran south of Ozawkie to Rising Sun where it crossed by ferry to Lecompton. Both roads connected this section of the Territory directly with the Missouri border, and made Douglas, Leavenworth and Jefferson Counties easily accessible and very convenient as a skirmishing ground for the different political factions.

A number of minor engagements took place in Jefferson County, the most notable one the battle of Hickory Point. The battle was fought in September 1856, between the free-State forces of Gen. James H. Lane and a number of Southern sympathizers (Kick-a-poo rangers) led by Capt. Lowe. One man was killed and several wounded on both sides. Jim Lane had held a commission in the U.S. Army before coming to this Territory and no sooner had he arrived than he became a leader and champion of the free-State movement. After the pro-slavery party stopped free-State traffic on the River, an overland route was opened through Iowa and Nebraska, down through Brown County to Topeka. Lane and his forces built two log forts on the trail to protect the incoming settlers against the bush whackers.

Five years before the opening battle of Fort Sumter, as homesteaders from both North and South began arriving in increasing numbers, activity gradually changed from small skirmishes to open warfare, especially along the border. This was emphasized upon the arrival of John Brown. Unlike Jim Lane, he was a rabid abolitionist and spread terror along the border, especially after the Marais des Cygnes Massacre in which innocent free-State men, including some of his own sons, were killed. He and his followers started a war, not so much to keep Kansas free as to free all slaves, and operated the notorious "underground railroad" transporting slaves from Topeka north to the Nebraska line and Free Territory. If he looked anything in real life like the murals on the wall of our State Capitol building, the mere mention of John Brown's name was enough to make the settlers bar their doors and the kids run and hide under the bed. He might be a hero around Osawatomie, but along the border he was a spiller of blood, and five years later made the fatal mistake when he and his followers captured Harper's Ferry with the idea of obtaining arms for the slaves that they might fight for their freedom. He was convicted of treason, hanged and his body lies buried about two miles south of Lake Placid, New York.

James Lane entered politics and he and Samuel C. Pomeroy were the first Senators elected to Congress after Kansas entered the Union. While at Washington he received a commission as brigadier general and soon returned to Kansas where he organized several regiments of soldiers. He served a second term under President Johnson and voted against the majority of Congress when they wished to continue the punishment of the Southern States, even after the war was over. The majority of his friends turned against him for taking his stand with the President, thus causing him to become despondent and he committed suicide in 1866. Lane University at Lecompton was named after him.

River Transportation

In 1857 the Territorial Legislature passed an act making the Kansas River navigable and incorporated two companies to organize, build and operate steamboats on the Kansas River. Nothing was ever done by either company. This was before the advent of the railroads and boats were considered the easiest means of travel. A few boats came up the Kansas River as early as 1854, but were not extensively used until after

the passage of the Navigation act. About 35 steamboats of various makes and sizes traveled up and down the Kansas River from 1854 to 1864. Some made only one trip, gave it up as a bad job and went south to deeper water. A few reached as far west as Manhattan, Junction City and Ft. Riley, a distance of some 240 miles, but the river had to be at flood stage to make the trip. Practically all of the boats were built in the East and then brought down the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri, then up the Kaw. These were generally loaded with free-State settlers. Some were especially constructed for the shallow water of the Kaw River but proved no better than the other boats. There were about 25 landings between Kansas City and Fort Riley, the principal ones being Lawrence, Lecompton, Topeka, Manhattan and Junction City. Boats had the right of way and cables had to be lowered to let them pass. One man was drowned while trying to lower the cable of Jerome Kunkle's Ferry at Rising Sun. The Steamer Silver Lake, under Captain Willoughby, was coming up the river when the pilot sounded the proper signal, but the man in charge failed to act promptly in lowering the cable. When the steamer was but a short distance away, the foreman climbed out on the cable sliding a weight before him. He was too late. The cable caught the upper deck and was about to tear it away when the captain ordered the cable cut. Before a small boat could be lowered, the man was carried under the steamboat and lost in the flood waters.

Boats were either stern or side-wheelers driven by one or two woodburning steam engines. Wood was plentiful along the way but it had to be chopped, and this caused considerable delay. In the course of a trip upstream the Captain would have to land several times a day to replenish the bunkers. The crew occasionally appropriated rail fences from the Indian truck patches, but most always cut down trees. However, rails being well seasoned made better fuel and the crew didn't hesitate to chop them up. Travel on the river was very hazardous and many difficulties were encountered. Snags, shifting sandbars and shallow channels, especially when the river was low, retarded the development of river transportation. A boat might strike a snag and sink; or the river might suddenly drop, leaving the boat stranded for weeks; or it might catch on fire and burn.

The Emma Harmon with Capt. J. M. Wing in command, was the first steamboat to come up the Kaw River after the beginning of the white settlements. After leaving Lawrence the boat stopped at noon to get a supply of wood. While the crew was at work the passengers spent the time picking wild strawberries. Before reaching Topeka the boat broke an engine shaft and was laid up several days for repairs at Tecumseh. By the time Topeka was reached the river began to drop so the Captain turned the boat around and steamed back to Wyandotte.

The steamer Excell, a stern-wheeler of 100 tons, made the first successful trip up the Kaw in April of 1854 carrying 1100 barrels of flour along with a number of passengers. The boat went as far west as Fort Riley where Major E. A. Ogden of the U. S. Army selected a point at the junction of the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers for a Military Base.

The Morning Star was the largest and most luxuriant boat ever to enter the Kansas river trade. It pulled up to the levee at Lawrence, but the Captain refused to go any further for fear of getting stuck on a bar. After a couple of days unloading the Captain turned around and steamed back to the Missouri.

Cholera broke out on the steamer Hartford from Cincinnati bound for Fort Riley, Kansas, and every night the boat had to be tied up long enough to bury the dead. It was referred to as the abolition boat, because the entire list of passengers was anti-slavery. After several weeks the boat finally reached its destination. On the return trip the Captain ran aground at St. Mary's Mission of the Pottawatomie Indian Reservation, and while waiting for another rise in the river, decided to overhaul and paint his boat. While the crew was at work the Captain bought a cow and some hay from one of the Indians. The next day two other Indians came aboard begging tobacco. They were referred to the clerk who unceremoniously kicked them off. Before anyone knew what was going on the boat was on fire, presumably set by the Indians and burned to the water's edge. A salvage crew took charge of the hull. One

boiler was sold to the New England Emigrant Aid Company at Lawrence to be used in a saw mill. Before they could get the other engine the river went down so they buried it on the river bank. It was never reclaimed.

Passengers were troublesome and caused many delays. Another boat was near St. Mary's Mission when two drunks jumped off and waded out to fight a duel. By the time they had reached the shore the water had sobered them up, so they decided they didn't want to fight after all. The boat went on down the river leaving two very much surprised individuals standing on the river bank. There was much rivalry between boat Captains over the monopolization of boat trade. Captain Beasley of the Col. Gus Lynn decided that he was going to control all the business and shut all the other boats off the river. On one trip from Manhattan to Kansas City he took all that was offered at points below even though he had to land it as soon as he was out of sight of the town. He loaded his boat until it was about ready to sink, then pressed the passengers into service to help unload it as soon as he was out of sight of the landing or got stuck on a sand bar. When the boat reached LeCompton, Uncle George Zinn, well-to-do farmer, used his own crew to load his corn on the boat. While they were at work the Captain and passengers took in the town and all the saloons. When the boat was ready to start the Captain was found in one of the saloons blind drunk and had to be led back to his quarters. In the course of this trip down stream as much corn was stacked on the river bank as was taken aboard.

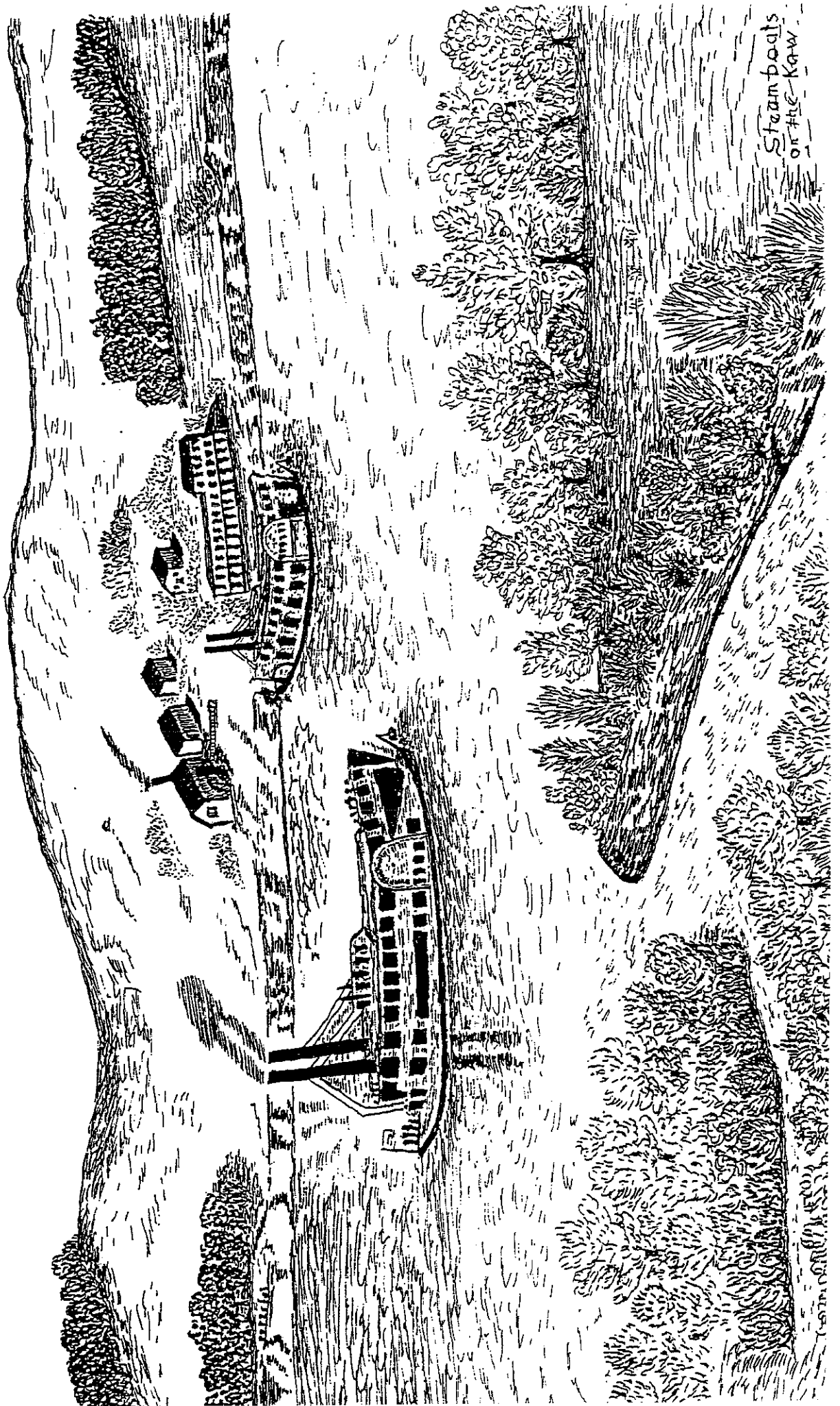
Steamboats also played an important part in the settling of the new territory. They were one of the principal means of transportation for settlers from the east coming by way of St. Louis to Kansas City, then up the Kaw. In order to make a success out of river transportation, boat captains agreed to treat all passengers alike and make no discrimination between northern and southern sympathizers. But in spite of the agreement free-State passengers along the Missouri were treated with utmost contempt and humiliated in every way possible in assignment to quarters and seating at the tables at meal time. They were forced to ride third class, while slaves were taken into the cabins with their southern masters.

It was very evident from the beginning that if Kansas Territory was to be brought in as a free state it would have to be done at the point of a gun. There was no law enforcement in the territory, making it impossible to keep order. For this reason most of the boat passengers were well armed. As soon as the pro-slavery crowd along the Missouri found this out they began to search all boats at the various landings. Crates and boxes were broken open and property destroyed. Guns then were brought overland by stage and ox-cart. In order to get by the pro-slavery men, crates of Sharps rifles were labeled "Bibles" and distributed to the free-Staters. Recently while workmen were cleaning out the basement of the Capitol building at Topeka a dust covered crate marked "Bibles" was found and proved to be a shipment of these old guns. They were turned over to the Historical Society.

The banner years for Boat Captains on the Kaw River began in 1857 and reached the peak in 1858. That year the stage of the river was the highest between the great floods of 1844 and 1903. By 1860 dry weather had set in and very few boats tried to come into the Kaw. The weather was so dry by August that the river practically stopped running at Topeka.

By 1866 river traffic had been taken over by the railroads. On Feb. 25, 1864, the Kansas Legislature passed an act declaring the Kansas, Republican, Smoky Hill, Solomon, and Big Blue not navigable, and gave the railroads authority to dam and bridge all streams. This act put a stop to all steamboat traffic already proven to be impractical, and encouraged the railroads to go ahead and take over the building of the West.

Before the coming of the railroad, settlers flocked to Jefferson County, then Dist. 13, by steamboat, covered wagon, and ox-cart over rough trails that led into this part of the country. Some of the earliest settlers were Mormons. They were run out of Missouri on account of their peculiar religious belief, and in 1851 settled on land on the Delaware River on the present site of Thompsonville. They settled



Steamboats
on the
Kaw

on land previously occupied by Everett's sawmill. Everett was a Kaw half-breed a little more intelligent than some of the other Indians. He sawed 13 logs and then stopped for repairs and while digging around the mill to make improvements was killed by a cave-in. By the time Mormons had arrived the mill had practically fallen to decay and had been moved away. The Mormons built a water-power grist mill, farmed the land for two years and tried to establish homes. But not being able to acquire title to their holdings they were finally forced to move on west and eventually settled around Great Salt Lake, Utah.

First Permanent Settlers

By 1854 the first permanent settlers began to arrive in Jefferson County. This same year settlements were established in Rock Creek, Kaw, Kentucky, Ozawkie, and Delaware townships. John Skaggs, slave holder, was the first settler to take up a claim in Kentucky township. He built a cabin on the banks of the Delaware River in 1854, and the next year was married to Miss Sallie Skaggs, the ceremony being performed by Judge LeCompte of Lecompton, Kansas.

Rising Sun, the first town established in Kentucky township, was laid out by Joseph Haddock in 1857 on the north bank of the Kansas river close to the present Lecompton bridge. He took into partnership Lutt and Menzer, store-keepers, and Jerome Kunkle, ferryman.

The first voting place in Kentucky township was located here in 1856, and the first post office in 1858. Miss Anna Foster, daughter of Wooden Foster, county commissioner, taught the first subscription school. The first sermon in Kentucky township was preached by a Methodist minister in 1857 at the home of Alex. Bayne.

Rising Sun grew rapidly. It was a thriving little town and took care of the business of the river traffic until Perryville (Perry) was surveyed and laid out by the Kansas Pacific Railroad in 1865. Then it declined as the river transportation was taken over by the railroad and in 1864 the founders moved most of the buildings to a new location on the railroad about one mile west of Perryville and started the town of Medina. The town was named after Medina, Ohio, the name being suggested by John Speere, prominent citizen of Lawrence, Kansas. John Speere was a native of Medina, Ohio and offered a prize to the parents of the first child born, provided the citizens would name the town Medina. Perryville was named after John D. Perry, president of the railroad. This same year Centerville was laid out by George Williams on the west bank of the Delaware River about half way between Perryville and Medina. It was named Centerville on account of the location. John Collins built a large two-story frame building, the first floor for a general store and the second story to be used as a hall. This was the only building ever to be erected, and was used principally by the citizens of both Perry and Medina for religious and political meetings.

Perry and Medina made rapid progress and there was much rivalry for the control of business. Centerville being in between took what was left and finally died out. The building was eventually moved to Perryville and used as part of the mill of Leech and Sons.

At the peak of her growth, Medina had a population of two thousand, seven business establishments, a depot, quite a few residences and was incorporated into a third class city with as many saloons as business houses. At this time there was no control of the liquor business. All towns were wide open and the section crew of the railroad stationed at Medina spent so much time at the bars on week-ends that come Monday morning, they were in no condition to work. As this condition was detrimental to the up-keep of the road, the officials moved the depot and section crew to Perry and refused to stop the trains at Medina. Another reason was that the Kansas Pacific had laid out Perryville, named it after the president of the road and wished it to be the principal town between Lawrence and Topeka. The antagonism of the railroads spelled the doom of this pioneer village and it gradually declined as a business center.

By 1871 Perry had a population of about 600 people, two general merchandise stores, one grocery,

one drug store, one furniture store, one millinery shop, one harness shop, one boot and shoe shop, two blacksmiths, one wagon shop, two hotels, one livery stable, one print shop, one meat market, one barber shop, one lumber yard, one grist mill and elevator, and a depot. There were four organized and active churches, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and African Baptist. Perry was incorporated as a third class city March 3, 1871, and N. G. Stark was elected first Mayor. As there were no School Districts, the people of the town in co-operation with the free masons organized a stock company, built a two-story school house and established a subscription school. Later \$7,000 was voted to build a two-story school house and Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Queen were the first teachers. The first school district organized in Kentucky township was No. 35 at Newman. Rev. Josiah Terrill, U. B. minister, was Perry's first settler and preached the first sermon and also was the first postmaster. Through his influence Lane University was founded at Lecompton. Eddie Reckard was the first white child born in Perry. *The Kaw Valley Chief* was the first newspaper published at that time and was established in 1870 by L. E. and A. H. Merritt. *The Perryville Times* was the next paper. It was published by H. G. Evans in 1870 and after changing ownership a few times was moved to St. Marys in 1874. Before Perry was laid out and incorporated the only means of crossing the Delaware in the immediate vicinity was by a ford about a quarter of a mile north of town. In 1871 a pontoon bridge was built at this location to take care of the increased wagon traffic. The bridge was considered so vital to the welfare of the town that the city council passed an ordinance to hire a good competent man at 50 cents per day to keep the bridge in good repair.

Newman was another town located in Kentucky township three miles west of Perry on the Kansas Pacific. It was founded by H. L. Newman in 1867 with post office, store and two churches and a population of 12.

Williamstown, the only village in Rural township, was located on the Kansas Pacific three miles east of Perry on the banks of Stonehouse Creek, the site once occupied by Chief White Plume's stone house. Chief White Plume of the Kaw half-breeds hired masons to build a stone house modeled after the ones he had seen in St. Louis when he went there in 1825 to make arrangements with the Government to sell his land. Stonehouse Creek was named after the old stone house which was located about 50 yards north of the Kansas Pacific depot. It had long been abandoned and was ready to fall down by the time the settlers arrived in 1865. The first store was owned by Sam Mitchell. Mapes, Williams & Moore bought 900 acres of land from the railroad and built a saw mill south of the tracks. A post office was established and a school house built at the cost of about \$1,000 which was used for both school and religious services. Williamstown finally reached a population of 103, but never grew any larger because of the antagonism between the mill owners and the settlers. The latter claiming that the mill owners had bought the land they (the settlers) had previously settled on.

Thomas R. Bayne and Jackson Smith were the first settlers in Rural Township. Thos. R. Bayne took up a claim on Kaw half-breed lands two and one-half miles southeast of Williamstown. He was the first Sheriff of Jefferson County, at one time County Commissioner and in 1882 was elected from this district to the State Legislature.

Thompsonville was located three miles northwest of Perry on the banks of the Delaware river, and consisted of one saw and grist mill, one store, one church, and a post office and had a population of 70. The town was named after C. L. Thompson, owner of the mill. He came to this location in 1870 and set up a water-power grist and saw mill. It was a stone burr mill and pulverized the wheat instead of cutting it like the steel burrs of modern mills. Mr. Thompson did a thriving business and farmers brought in grain from all over that section of the country. The method of handling grain was different in those days. A farmer brought in so many bushels of corn or wheat; it was weighed and ground, the miller keeping his share for pay and the farmer took home what was left. Thompsonville continued as a town until about 1900, but with only one dirt road and no rail connections, it, like some other small

isolated towns of that time, gradually died out, and all that is left is a Methodist Church and a few residences.

The first settlement in Kaw Township was located at Kaw City in 1854, and established by Jefferson Riddle, T. W. Wilson, J. Kaykendall and R. P. Beeler. At that time that part of Jefferson County was supposed to belong to Calhoun now Jackson County. The settlement was located about one and one-half miles north of the present town of Grantville. A town company of 25 members was organized in 1857 and in 1858 a few houses and a post office were built. J. H. Jones was the first postmaster. When the Kansas Pacific railroad was being completed in 1865, a station known as Kaw station was located on the farm of D. W. Kleinhans. Mr. Kleinhans soon laid out a town around the depot and the name was changed to Grantville. The first passenger train came through in 1866. After the post office was moved from Kaw City to Grantville, Kaw City declined and was finally abandoned. Grantville, the only village in Kaw Township, had a store, a school house and a few residences. The Methodist Church was built in 1868.

When Kansas Territory was first established with Jefferson County in the 13th District, Kentucky Township was considerably larger than it is today. By 1870 the county was divided into eleven townships. According to the first biennial report of the State Board of Agriculture in 1878 the population had increased from 4459 in 1860 to 12,471 in 1878. Roads were laid out, school districts were organized, factories set up and churches founded. Three coal mines were uncovered in the north part of the county and quite a bit of coal mined. There was good limestone for the building of foundations and fences. All kinds of crops were being raised. Wheat, rye, corn, barley, oats, buckwheat, Irish and sweet potatoes, cotton flax, hemp, tobacco, broom corn and all the grasses for hay and pasture. Orchards were set out. Farm animals were on the increase. Horses, mules, dairy cows, beef cattle and sheep. And there was trouble with sheep-killing dogs. A good many of the farms were fenced against livestock running loose. There were no herd laws at this time, and sentiment was pretty well divided over fences. Those opposed contended that it would be a nuisance when driving livestock to market and would encourage specialized rather than diversified methods of farming. The ones in favor claimed it would cut the cost of improvement, bring in more settlers, and be a great benefit to society. Industry was on the increase. There were nine steam or water power elevators and flour mills. Six wagon factories, one woolen mill, five furniture factories, six cheese factories, one broom factory, three harness factories and two saw mills with a total valuation of \$134,000. Of this number one wagon and carriage factory, one harness factory, and two flour mills were located in Kentucky Township. From 1858 to the time of this report there were approximately fourteen newspapers published in the county, some only a short time before they were discontinued, sold, or the name changed or transferred to other towns. *The Grasshopper*, *Crescent*, *Gazette*, and *Jeffersonian* at Valley Falls, *The New Era* at Medina, *The Kaw Valley Chief* and *Perryville Times* at Perry and *The Oskaloosa Independent*, *Sickle and Sheath*, *Jeffersonian Democrat* and *Statesman* at Oskaloosa.

Three railroads were completed and in operation across the county. The Kansas Pacific crossed the southern part with Perry and Medina the principal stations. The A.T. & S.F. ran from Topeka across the northwest part of the county and connected the towns of Meriden, Valley Falls and Nortonville. The Kansas Central narrow gauge ran from Leavenworth to Valley Falls and through the northern part of the county then out through the northwest corner. The principal stations were Winchester and Valley Falls.

Early Troubles In Perry

Perry was incorporated in 1871 but the petition to incorporate which was filed with the Probate Judge in 1869 at the county seat was not put on record until 1892. From 1871 to 1890 very little progress was made by the town and surrounding community due to drouth and grasshoppers, blizzards, two financial panics and the near-miss of a tornado. In the summer of 1874 after the wheat had been

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115 NASSAU ST. NEW YORK

GETTING A HOIST.
A bad case of heaves.

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harvested and before the corn had matured disaster struck one evening in August when grasshoppers suddenly appeared as a great cloud in the west and settled over the valley. They lit on fence posts, trees and houses, and ate everything that was green. They stripped the trees and corn fields, etched hoe handles and ate up leather gloves and starched clothes. They piled up in the corners of buildings by the basket full, and even settled on the rails of the railroad track and stalled the trains with their crushed bodies. After the crops were destroyed, they left as suddenly as they had come, but it was too late to re-plant and the coming winter was one of great hardship, especially for the farmers.

Perry was having other troubles besides drouth and grasshoppers. Saloons and bowling alleys were wide open with no closing hours. As there was no lighting system, the streets were dark, making convenient places for men and boys to hang out. After several drunken brawls the city council passed an ordinance closing all saloons, dramshops, billiard saloons and bowling alleys at ten o'clock during week days and all day on Sundays, election days and the 4th of July. No minors were allowed in the saloons. Vagrants were not allowed to loaf around on the city streets, and there was an ordinance against carrying concealed weapons. The city jail (calaboose) was one of the most essential buildings and had to be kept in good repair as it was generally full of law breakers. As money was scarce at that time, prisoners were required to work out their fines on the streets. All merchants were required to pay from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per year for the privilege of operating their business establishments. This ordinance did not appeal to the merchants and only lasted a couple of years when it was repealed on the insistence of the business men.

As there was no recreation provided for the young people and as it was against the city ordinance to play ball within the city limits they spent their spare time throwing rocks, jumping on and off moving trains, getting in and out of box cars, standing on tracks in front of on-coming trains, and loitering around the depot and on other railroad property until the city officials on the insistence of the railroad and complaints of the citizens of the town, were required to pass several ordinances against these offenses. Livestock grazed in the streets and became such a nuisance that they had to be corralled and the owners fined.

By 1879 saloons had become such a nuisance and hang-out for horse thieves and highwaymen that the dry forces in the state demanded that something be done to stop the sale of liquor. As a result the State Legislature passed the prohibition law in 1879 and in 1880 it was submitted to the people and passed by a vote of 92,302 to 84,304. Although the sale of liquor was illegal in the state, saloon keepers refused to obey the law or close their doors. In some localities officers refused to enforce the regulations or arrest the offenders and bring them into court. This flagrant violation of the law caused Carry A. Nation of Medicine Lodge to launch her hatchet-smashing crusade against the illegal joints. She was the wife of a lawyer and minister and had always been a staunch advocate of prohibition especially since her first husband died of acute alcoholism. When she saw that the law was not being enforced, she started out to do something about it. She first used a stone, then an iron bar, and finally settled on a hatchet as the best smashing weapon. This movement, started in 1890, spread so rapidly over such a wide area that soon groups of women were organized and smashing joints all over the state. One evening about 6 o'clock, five or six hatchet swinging women raided the Perry joints, smashed bottles, knocked in barrel heads and broke out the windows.

The women of Williamstown, fearful of the dire consequences which might result, prevailed upon the men one evening to masquerade as women and raid the joint. The room was crowded with half-drunken men and when the raid struck they all started to run, and two fat men became wedged in the door. By the time they had recovered from the surprise, the place was a complete wreck.

This state-wide movement was kept up until 1906 when Gov. Hoch and Atty. Gen. Jackson began to enforce the law by removing mayors and county attorneys and sheriffs in places where the law was being violated and replacing them with honest and reliable officials with instructions to close the joints and exercise the "padlock law". This was practically the end of the liquor business in Kansas and eventually led to prohibition in 1919. National prohibition lasted 14 years and was repealed in 1933.

At the beginning of the nineties business became more stabilized and there was gradual improvement

in the city government of Perry. Streets and alleys were cleaned up on the advice of the State Health Department. Two citizens on North 3rd street were ordered to tear down their corn cribs and remove offensive hog pens; and one Henry Wise was given notice to cease butchering within the city limits. Flat rocks were laid down at street intersections for pedestrians and some tiling to drain mud holes. The town was lighted for the first time in its history when oil burning street lamps were purchased for the business section. Hitch racks were installed on the south side of Front Street opposite the Grinter Store. The City Council even went so far as to order straw ticks for the jail that the prisoners might be more comfortable while serving time in the calaboose.

A windmill pump (town pump) and water tank stood on the present site of the little park and was one of the busiest places in the town, as it was the most convenient place to water horses and livestock.

The first stock yards stood directly south of the windmill on the north side of the tracks, but the location was especially objectionable to the town people because of offensive odors, so the yards were moved to the south side of the tracks. This didn't help much so they were finally located east of town and stood there until torn down on account of not being used any more.

The early nineties was also a period of building and establishing new firms in spite of the financial difficulties brought on by the panic of 1893 and the political squabbles between the Populists and Republicans. The Bank of Perry was organized by J. L. Raines in 1893. When the bank was first organized, business was carried on in one of the grocery stores until the brick building on Front Street was finished. In later years the bank was enlarged to take care of the expanding business. The J. P. Thomas Lumber Yard was erected in 1897 and continued to do business under several different managers until it was sold a few years ago, and is now known as the Perry Lumber Co. In 1898 Abe Hay built a large two-story stone building near the corner of Elm and Bridge streets and established a general store on the lower floor with living quarters above. It is at present the property of the Masonic Lodge. The same year Thos. Lee erected the east side of the present Lee Hardware store and also the present Post Office. For many years Thos. Lee carried on an outstanding implement business and each year on New Year's Day played host to the entire community with a turkey dinner. It was one of the highlights of the season.

Perry was without a newspaper from 1884 to 1898 when the *Kaw Valley Chief*, formerly published by L. E. Merritt, was revived and became known as the *Perry Mirror* under the editorship of W. R. Smith. The first newspaper office was located in a building on the south side of Front street in the first block east of the present U.P. depot. When the double track was laid in 1904, it was moved to a building north of the present laundry and continued to be edited until the 1951 flood, when it was taken over by Ed Abels of the *Lawrence Outlook*.

As may readily be seen, the town and surrounding country was gradually being changed into a prosperous community, but regardless of the efforts of the people, no community is immune to disaster. In June of 1893 a tornado struck east of Perry and wrecked practically all the farm buildings along the bluff for a distance of about three miles. Eleven people were killed, and several injured and the property damage amounted to thousands of dollars. The next Sunday after the storm the Union Pacific railroad ran special trains out to Williamstown and many people visited the scene of the disaster.

This was followed ten years later by the great flood on the Kansas River of 1903. The water reached from bluff to bluff and was the highest since the flood of 1844. All buildings in Perry and the surrounding low lands up and down the Kaw were flooded and the people took to the hills. As there were no community telephone lines at this time and means of communication were slow, much livestock was lost which otherwise could have been saved if the owners had been notified in time.

In 1901 Dr. Zimmerman and E. L. Raines organized the first telephone system. It was strictly a local affair, and consisted of a few wires strung on poles around town with only about five or six patrons. The system gradually expanded as people became accustomed to the ease of communication. In 1907 J. D. Roberts was granted a franchise to establish an exchange to connect Perry with the surrounding towns as

well as the local community. In 1903 the Western Independent Telephone Company was given permission to run long distance telephone lines through Perry. The next year the Union Pacific began to lay a double track between Kansas City and Topeka.

Growth Of Business Section

When Perry was incorporated the principal business section of the town was located in the block directly east and north of the present depot with business houses on both sides of Front Street. *The Perry Mirror* office, Stone Elevator, dwelling, boarding house and hotel and several other houses were located on the south side of the street. On the north were restaurant, furniture store, drug store, blacksmith shop, grocery store, hotel and a double two-story frame building that housed hardware and clothing store downstairs with Lodge hall above. All the business establishments and dwellings on the south of the street were torn down or moved away to make room for the U.P. double track. All the buildings on the north side of the street were burned in two separate fires. The restaurant on the corner, one of the first stone buildings erected in the town, (location of the present drug store) was burned in 1910, while the other buildings were destroyed sometime after World War I.

Perry's one and only fire fighting apparatus of that period was burned up when the restaurant caught fire. It was the kind that had to be pushed up and down the street to build up pressure before it would work. After several tries with much pushing and puffing it failed to work so the local firemen got disgusted and pushed it in.

Chris Hoffman's hardware store that stands at the northwest corner of Leonard Knapp's sawmill was the first hardware in Perry and the only building left of that original business section.

Soon after the old stone elevator was torn down to make room for the double tracks another location was selected west of the lumber yard on about the same ground as the present elevator. Before the building was finished it caught fire and burned. Another elevator was put up on the same location and served the community until 1936 when it was destroyed by fire. A large elevator was built by Dick Brothers and carried on the business until 1948 when it changed ownership. A larger elevator is being erected on the east side of town by Corpstein Bros.

After the flood of 1903 the city started a drainage system to dispose of surface water and petitioned the Union Pacific railroad to get permission to run a tile under the right-of-way to connect with a ditch on the south side to carry the water west into the Delaware river. After considerable correspondence the petition was granted. The streets were then graded up and the project completed by 1905.

As the business section of the town gradually moved west and north and more farmers began to come to town, especially on Saturdays, there was a greater demand for hitch racks. In 1909 one new hitch rack was installed from the windmill and town pump west to the corner of the lumber yard then north a half block. Another one ran from the corner of the present Masonic building south to the railroad tracks, then east another block.

In 1912 a one story cement block building was erected at the back of the lot north of the present Heck and Seyler store, to house Perry's \$5,000 municipal light plant. By 1915 the demand for electricity had increased to such an extent that the plant had to be enlarged and the building remodeled. As the city jail stood directly behind the light plant and was about to fall down, a new jail was included in the plans and attached directly to the east end of the building. By 1931, the equipment of the plant being worn out, it was sold and the lighting of the city taken over by the Kansas Electric Power Company. The old light plant building was used for a city hall until 1948 when it was remodeled to house the present fire department.

Sometime about 1915 other business houses in the block were being torn down or remodeled to make way for new establishments. The present feed store and vacant *Mirror* office building replaced an old hardware store, and the ice plant was torn down to make way for Willard Good's new hardware store. The old drug store building, after standing vacant for several years after the death of A. F. DeBacker, was sold and converted into a laundry. Dale Stark's meat market and grocery store was moved into a larger building

across the street and the old building later became a part of the hardware store.

A livery stable stood directly across the street from the present fire department building. Erected some time during the seventies by Jim Bouton, it continued under his ownership until 1890 when it was sold to B. L. Fowler. It served the public until about 1917 when it was destroyed by fire. By this time the automobile had practically replaced the horse and buggy so it was never rebuilt.

Churches

When the first settlers arrived in a community and laid out a town, one of their first acts was to establish Sunday schools and churches. These pioneer home builders felt a need for some religious faith and realized that any community or town established without it was doomed to failure. Perry was typical of the small town of that time.

At one time there were six active churches. The Baptist was built in 1882, the Presbyterian in 1869, the Methodist in 1888, the Catholic in 1884, Christian in 1903 and African Baptist 1872. The Methodist, Catholic and Christian are the only active churches at the present time. The Baptist church was sold in 1912 and torn down, the location used for a portable skating rink, then later for a large garage. The Presbyterian church was sold to the Catholics and used for a parochial school for a few years until removed to make way for the new Catholic church in 1927. The old Catholic church was replaced by their parsonage. The old Methodist church was sold and the material used for a dwelling when the new church was built in 1927. The new parsonage was erected in 1945.

Rural Development

As goes the town, so goes the surrounding country and vice versa. As the town progressed, there was also great improvement in the surrounding community. The rich land especially in the Kaw Valley had been cleared, and the farms put under cultivation. Roads were laid out on section lines and worked under the Poll Tax System. There was also a change in the social life. In the early days of poor roads and slow transportation, social gatherings were confined to the country school houses or to some centrally located farm residence. Singing bees and spelling matches were enthusiastically entered into. Debating societies were organized and the school houses were crowded on the night of the contest. One of the social events of the season took place in the spring at the house cleaning time when the carpets were untacked and rolled up and all the young people of the community were invited in for a dance to the tune of the organ and fiddle. The dance generally lasted until the wee hours of the morning and didn't break up until the fiddler gave out and the caller quit.

The gradual change that took place between 1890 and 1920 was brought about by the establishment of rural mail routes and the invention of the automobile. The first rural mail routes were laid out in 1890 but only on roads that could be traveled the year around. This served the farmers who lived directly on the route but was not of much benefit to the others. With the invention of the automobile came a great clamor for better roads. Wagons and buggies could travel over muddy roads but not the automobile. Motorists of this period spent a good deal of their time prying their cars out of mud holes or hiring men with teams to drag them up on solid ground. Automobile Good Roads tours were being sponsored by various organizations to promote the building and marking of good roads, and prizes were offered for various runs. Newspapers sponsored road races known as "cup runs," the winner receiving a loving cup as a trophy.

As the number of automobiles increased, the demand became greater for more and better roads, and pressure was being brought on the legislature to make some provision for the improvement of the rural roads. In 1907 the legislature passed the Good Roads bill, making Kansas the first state in the Union having such a law. The bill was introduced by George H. Hodges, a member of the legislature who had become a good roads booster since the time of his marriage when he got stuck in a mud hole and had to go to his wedding in a pair of muddy shoes. The law provided for the construction of hard-surface county roads, expenses to be borne part by the county, part by the township, and the rest by special benefit district adjacent to the road. This was good for the counties but it did not make any provision for state roads.

In 1917 Congress voted a fund to build state highways and each state participating had to match the fund set up by that particular state. At this time Kansas adopted the Kansas Highway department, but construction of the roads was left up to each county, with the State Highway engineer acting as advisor with the understanding that there would be cooperation between the counties for a continuous system.

In 1928 the Constitution was amended to place the construction of state highways directly under the Highway department, and tax gasoline used on the highways to provide a fund sufficient to match the federal fund set aside for that purpose. The law provided for the replacement of old wooden bridges with concrete and steel structures, something permanent and lasting. From 1917 to 1943 Kansas received \$95,000,000 in federal funds, some of which did not have to be matched by state gas tax.

The invention of the automobile and the establishment of state roads and mail routes brought about a gradual decline and eventual abandonment of the small branch lines of the various railroads. At one time all the towns of Jefferson County were connected up with branch lines of various railroad systems. The Santa Fe ran from Topeka northwest to Meriden where it branched, the south fork known as Leavenworth and Topeka ran east to Ozawkie, Oskaloosa and McLouth and on to Leavenworth. The north branch is still in operation up to Rock Creek, Valley Falls, Nortonville and Atchison. The Missouri Pacific entered Jefferson County about three miles south of the northwest corner and ran southeast through Valley Falls, Oskaloosa, and McLouth, where it crossed the Leavenworth and Topeka branch, then on to Tonganoxie and Kansas City, where it was known as The Kansas City, Wyandotte and Northwestern. The Union Pacific entered Jefferson County about four miles east of the northwest corner, ran down to Valley Falls, then east to Winchester and Leavenworth.

The Union Pacific main lines in the Kaw Valley and the Santa Fe branch lines from Topeka to Meriden, etc., are the only lines left and in operation, all the others having gone out of existence by 1930.

The first hard-surfaced road constructed in Jefferson County was the Williamstown to Oskaloosa road, built in 1920 under the Good Roads law benefit district. In 1925 about one quarter mile of brick pavement was built through Perry at the cost of about \$45,000, and connected U.S. 24 from Kansas City to Topeka.

In 1926 the principal streets of the city of Perry were paved, giving Perry more improved streets at that time than any other town of its size in the state.

In 1931 the city council passed an ordinance granting the Kansas Pipe Line and Gas Company authority to bring a pipe line into the city, for the purpose of furnishing gas for lighting, heating, and industry.

The first attempt to establish water works was turned down when submitted to the vote of the people. Ten years later, in 1948, economic conditions being very much better, a similar proposition was submitted and passed, though the cost was much higher than the previous estimate. A water tower was erected on the city property behind the old electric light building. After several tests for good water, a pumping station was located in the northwest part of town.

The next year after the water system was completed and in operation, fire fighting equipment was purchased and a fire department was organized, giving the city real fire protection for the first time in its history.

Modern Improvements

For the past fifty years this community has gone through a great period of flood, drouth, depression and two wars, and like all hard-working, progressive communities has stood the test and with improved educational, religious, and civic facilities has become a better place in which to live. One of the greatest improvements has been in the educational system. In 1909 the old brick grade school building in the east part of town was remodeled with the addition of extra class rooms for the accommodation of both grade and high school students. This work was done immediately after the organization of the Rural High School District. In 1921 a new high school was constructed at a cost of \$60,000 and turned over to the District in 1922. The grade school continued to use the old building until 1949 when a modern new grade school was built. A football field and track field was added later to the high school. In 1948 a new fieldhouse with a



seating capacity of 1300 was built at a cost of \$80,000. It is the only building of its kind in the county and brings many interesting athletic events to the community.

In 1943 the American Legion Post started a fund-raising campaign to build a new Legion building. Construction was started in 1944 and through the combined efforts of the Post with contributions from the general public the building was finished and ready for dedication in 1945. It is now being used as a place of amusement and meeting place for various organizations, but under the supervision of the Legion.

In 1938 the Gateway Casket Company erected a large one-story brick building on a plot of ground east of the city limits and began the manufacture of caskets. After a few years of operation, the firm was taken over by the Midwest Wood Products Company and a large warehouse and a housing project of 8 or 10 units added, making in all quite a growing business. In 1951 Jones-Mack of Topeka took over the buildings, enlarged the plant and established what is known as the Jones-Mack Furniture Company of Perry, one of the largest of its kind in the state.

In 1951 disaster struck the Kaw Valley in one gigantic flood as great as that of 1844 and much higher and more devastating than the one in 1903. Perry was inundated twice. The first time by a flash flood the morning of June 22, when the Delaware jumped its banks after a five-inch rain on the upper basin. The residents were caught unaware and practically all household goods were lost in the houses that were flooded. Mr. Charles Tabbert was drowned when trapped in his basement while trying to remove his fruit from the flood water. This was a regrettable incident, but it was impossible to save him as he was pinned down by a caved foundation. The town had barely recovered when struck by the second flood when the Kaw river came out of its banks the second week of July. Residents of the valley were warned by telephone and radio and the more alert ones were able to move their belongings before the river reached its peak. Others were cut off by back water and had to be taken out by boat. A few were like that old Missourian from the "show me" state; they did not believe the water would ever get high enough to flood their property. As a result quite a little machinery was damaged and household goods lost which otherwise could have been saved. In Jefferson County Red Cross headquarters were set up in Oskaloosa where most of the flood victims took refuge. Later they were transferred to the Legion building in Perry. Many flood sufferers in this vicinity were greatly helped by the Red Cross.

Farms along the river were damaged, covered with sand with channels cut or holes washed out. Bridges up and down the Kaw were wrecked, including the Lecompton bridge. Practically all farm crops in the valley were lost. The flood came so late in the growing season and stood on the land until it was too late to replant. The water table was so high in some parts of the valley that fields were unfit for cultivation even the next season. A few farms next to the river were deeply plowed to cover up the sand and bring back the fertility. In a very few cases a rich black soil was turned up; a soil that had been covered by some previous flood.

By 1953 many of the old flood marks had been erased and the valley seemed to be back to normal. This same year U.S. Highway 24 through Perry was widened; two dangerous curves eliminated, and new black-top pavement laid down, making one of the city's best improvements.

Today Perry is a thriving little town with well-paved streets, good modern schools, active churches and well-organized business establishments, and a park. Perhaps the smallest park in the state of Kansas, with the distinction of having only one tree, several times larger than the park. It is a beautiful, symmetrical, wide-spreading elm and for many years was decorated at Christmas time with many colored lights, and could be seen and admired by motorists coming up the highway. In the heat of summer it provides a shady spot for loafers passing the time of day, much about nothing. A place for tired businessmen, campaigning politicians, truckers stopping for the noon hour. A judge's court is known to have been held beneath it. In fact so many happenings during its 60 some years of existence that like the wise owl that sees all and knows all, it has become known locally as the "Tree of Knowledge."

Back in 1895 it was a mere sapling about 3 feet high when the circus came to town, and the elephant

BLACKSMITHING.



115 NASSAU ST. NEW YORK

PUBLISHED BY CURRIER & IVES

GETTING A HOIST.

A bad case of heaves.

drank out of the water tank and spoiled the water, and scared the living daylights out of the horses along the rack, and there was torn harness and kicked single trees and broken shafts and locked wagon wheels and running and cussing men and a general all around hullabaloo. Then there was the time the first little red automobile chugged into town and created nearly as much commotion as the elephant and a lot more curiosity among the grown-ups. Now it has grown to tremendous proportions, and like the small boy "bursting his breeches" it has outgrown the Christmas lights. All in all it is a wonderful tree and an asset to the city and should be preserved at all cost.

In looking back over one hundred years of progress since Kansas became a territory, I should like to pay tribute to the brave men and women who pioneered and blazed the trails that led through the years to build this State of which we are all so proud. Never was it more important, than now, for all Americans to support the Constitution, both State and Federal, and cling to the ideals and principles of Democracy, Justice and Liberty. It is our duty and privilege to preserve these principles and to press ever onward. "Ad Astra per Aspera"—To the Stars Through Difficulty.

ELMER E. BATES

Business Men of 1895-1896

Thos. Lee
 J. C. Stines
 John Swan, carpenter
 J. J. Bouton
 James Durbin
 John Games
 Dr. E. D. Flagg
 H. B. Brown
 Sam Asbury
 H. W. Spangler
 M. F. Taylor

John Gilfillin
 J. L. Raines
 Chris Hoffman
 Roush Hardware
 Burk Furniture Store
 Sam Jones
 C. W. Davis
 Robert Eakin
 Abe Hay
 F. M. Stark
 Dr. D. Surber

R. E. Hames
 W. J. Duncan
 J. P. Kunkle
 Tom Kirby
 Peter Jordon
 Henry James, City Marshal
 Tom Payne
 J. R. Moon
 J. M. Colley
 Ike Knapp
 J. W. Roush

Material for this History was obtained from:

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