

NEBRASKA CENTENNIAL - 1867-1967

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Foreword

It is with no small degree of pride and humility that the committee in charge of this Historical Booklet submits it to our readers.

We are proud to be a part of a community so rich in historical background and proud and humble to have had the privilege to compile these historical facts.

With no apologies let us say that we realize that much of interest has necessarily been omitted due in great part to lack of space. It has been our desire to include those items which should be of greatest interest to the greatest number of people.

We regret that it was impossible to pay personal tribute to the many men and women of our community who have brought credit not only to themselves, but to their community in many fields of endeavor. Suffice it to say that we are proud of all of them and happy to claim them as Dakota Countians.

May we express our sincere thanks to all who have in any way contributed to this book, by sharing information, writing of articles, loaning of pictures, typing of manuscripts and to the many who have given us words of encouragement.

Committee

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LOOKING BACK

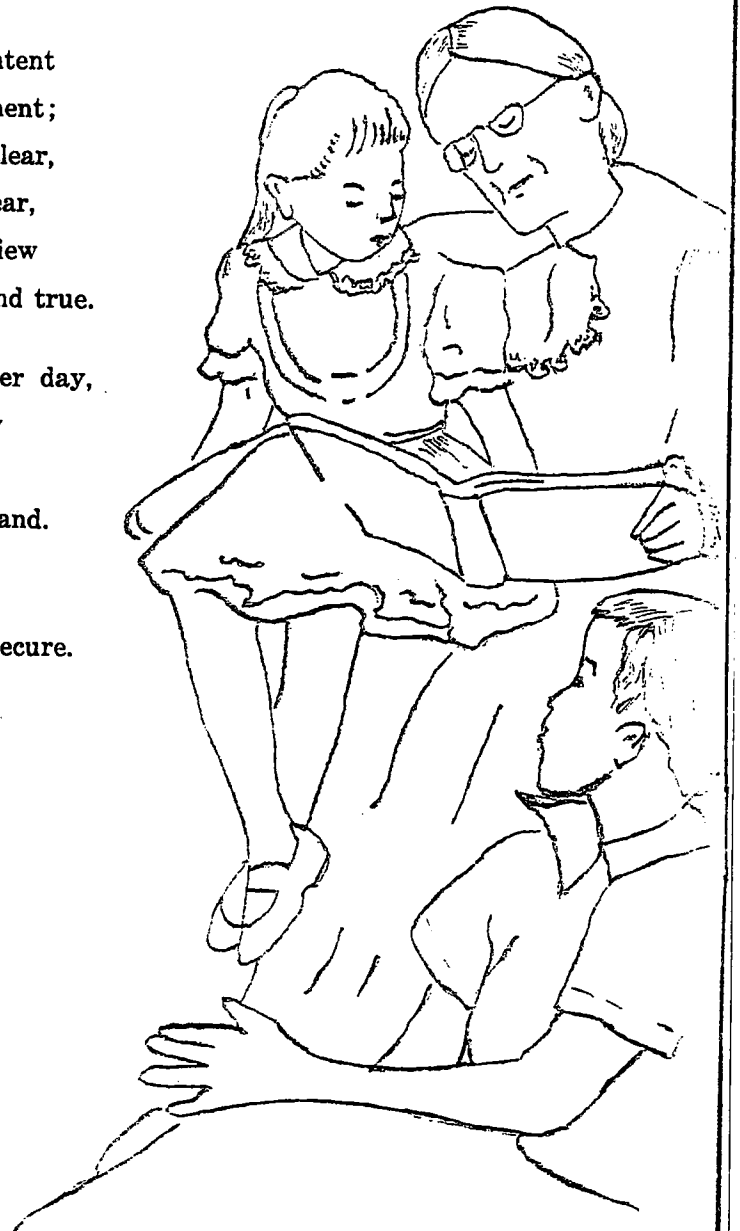
With profit we may turn our eyes again
To former days, when strong courageous men
Upon this bleak and hostile shore unfurled
the ensign, symbol of a free man's world.

We are debtors all to those of stern intent
Who blazed the pathways of a continent;
And to wise leaders, who with vision clear,
And great ideals, and aspirations dear,
Kept the full promise of this land in view
And laid in law its framework deep and true.

So well they wrought that in this latter day,
Men in martial ranks unfaltering lay
Their lives upon the altar of our land
To keep it safe from the despoiler's hand.

The spirit of the pioneers gone before
Still marches on to make our world secure.

—B. L. Bruce



In The Beginning

What must have been the thoughts and feelings of the first white man when he placed foot within the confines of Dakota County and viewed the broad prairies of the Missouri River bottom down which meandered the mighty expanse of water overlooked by forested green bluffs? What changes would loom before him if he were to stand there today! Tremendous progress has occurred which transcends the wildest dreams of the first pioneers.

It is not known when the first white man came to Dakota County. Father Marquett, on a map drawn in 1673, traced the Missouri River accurately at this point so he may well have traversed this very region. Perhaps even the Spanish under General Coronado may have reached this region in 1541. It is a matter of record that Paul and Pierre Mallet, French-Canadian fur traders, with six companions, swam their horses across the Missouri River just below what is now Dakota City on May 29, 1739. They were enroute to Santa Fe which then belonged to Spain.

In the late 1700's the Spanish government became greatly alarmed at the advance of the British down the Missouri River from Canada. The Spanish

Governor at St. Louis ordered a fort and trading post built on the river about twelve miles below the present site of Dakota City. The fort was named Ft. Charles. Documents from St. Louis Historical Document Foundation edited by A. P. Nasatir give us the information that James Mackay was born in Scotland and came to America about 1776. He was first employed by the British in the Northwest Territory, and later in 1793 he changed his allegiance to the Spanish. Chosen to be manager of the Missouri Company's affairs on the upper Missouri, Mackay with thirty-three picked men left St. Louis at the end of August 1795 to open trade with the Omaha Indians and to construct a fort and trading post near the Indian village. The party arrived at the Omaha Village of Chief Blackbird on November 11, 1795. They set to work immediately to construct the fort, which they named Fort Charles after King Charles of Spain. Although attempts made by the Nebraska Historical Society to find the exact site and possible artifacts of Ft. Charles have thus far failed, it is believed the location is near the present site of Blyburg Lake south of Dakota City.



Probable site of Fort Charles, located 3 miles east of Homer. Arrow No. 1 points to spot where historians think the fort was located; No. 2, old high bank of the Missouri River; No. 3, the present-day Harold O'Connor farm. E. N. Swett stands in old Omaha Creek bed.

We who live in Dakota County walk daily on historic ground. No county in the state of Nebraska has a richer historic heritage. This land which is now called Dakota County was a part of the original Louisiana Territory and has been under the flags of three nations: Spain, France and the United States. In 1803 sixty-four years before Nebraska became a state Napoleon, who had forced Spain to cede the Louisiana Territory to France, sold the entire territory to the United States for \$15,000,000 or about one and one-half cents per acre.

Since little was known about the land, President

Thomas Jefferson commissioned Captain Merriweather Lewis to organize an expedition to explore the newly purchased territory. The expedition of forty-five men started from the little fur trading village of St. Louis in April 1804. By August 1804 they had reached a point a short way below the present site of Dakota City. There they made camp and remained until August 20, 1804. Soon after they halted on the 13th Sergeant Ordway and four men were sent to the Maha (Omaha) Village near where Homer is today. They explored the ruins of the



Inset picture in right-hand corner points to a grove of trees where Lewis and Clark once camped. Houses in foreground depict location of Omadi, now extinct.

ancient village of the Omaha Indians and found the graves of hundreds of Omaha Indians. Today a marker has been placed in-

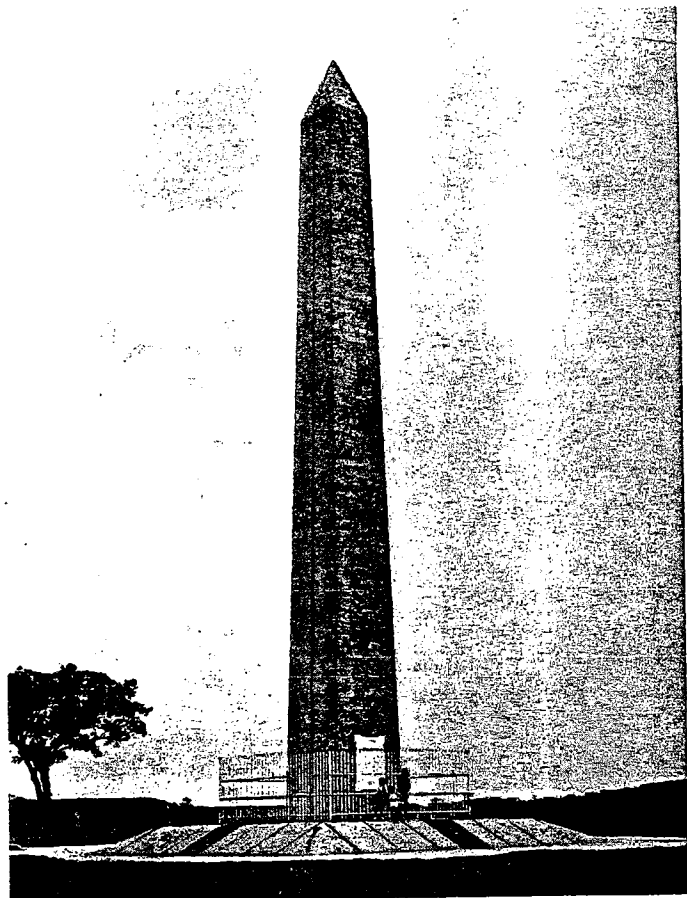
dicating the site of the earth lodge Omaha Indian town of Tonwatonga. The marker was dedicated to the Omaha Indians by Dr. W. E.



Tonwatonga Historical Marker — dedicated June 9, 1963.

Aeschbacher, director of the Nebraska State Historical Society on June 9, 1963. Leonard Springer of Macy said, "This marks a historical day for the Omaha people. It brings back memories of our forefathers". He also stated his grandparents were buried on the west hill near Homer.

The expedition then set sail and Sergeant Charles Floyd died as they reached the high bluffs about one mile south of the Floyd River. Just be-



Floyd Monument — erected in 1901.

fore his death he said to Captain Clark, "I am going to leave you" — his strength failed him as he added — "I want you to write me a letter". Such was the death of the first United States soldier who died on the Louisiana Expedition. They buried his body with military honors on the top of the high bluff, and the grave was marked by a cedar post. In 1901 a beautiful monument now known as the Floyd Monument was erected.

On the morning of August 21 they sailed by the site of Sioux City three miles from where the Floyd flowed into the Missouri, which then flowed through what is now Crystal Lake opposite South Sioux City. After passing through the lake they came to the site of old St. John's where they killed their first buffalo, also a deer and beaver, and they saw two elk as they scampered over the hills to where Jackson now stands.

By an act of Congress passed March 3, 1805,

the District of Louisiana became the "Territory of Louisiana", and what is now Dakota County was included in the new territory. St. Louis was made the capital, and President Jefferson appointed James Wilkinson governor. On June 4, 1812, the "Territory of Missouri" was organized within the bounds of which was the present area of Dakota County.

A few adventurous fur traders were the only white men to gaze upon the land of Dakota County until 1847, when the Mormons on their way to Salt Lake traveled across the southwestern portion of Dakota County. Another group in 1853 wintered near the site of old St. John's.

By a treaty made with the Omaha Indians and proclaimed June 21, 1854, all the land west of the Missouri River except the Omaha Reservation was ceded to the United States, and thus the land that constituted Dakota County was opened to settlement.

For more than thirty-two years after the admission of Missouri as a state into the Union, Nebraska which had once been a part of the Missouri Territory was practically without a government. Nebraska Territory was organized by an Act of Congress passed March 4, 1854. Dakota County was organized by an act of the first territorial legislature March 7, 1855, in response to a petition presented January 22, 1855, signed by J. D. M. Crockwell and thirty others including persons from Thurston and Dixon counties. It wasn't until 1889 that Dakota County assumed its present boundaries.

Now as we celebrate the one hundred years of settlement in Dakota County we are reminded of hundreds of mementos. Some are mere ruts in the prairie left by prairie schooners. Who were the people who looked upon this land as an opportunity for personal freedom and settled it, making it what it is today? Who were the hardy souls who braved drouths, floods, and the panic of the 1870's and knew full well that success meant hard work and adaptation to a new kind of life? One such group who hammered out history in small but heroic deeds that were to have a lasting imprint on succeeding generations was a colony of Irish brought from Dubuque, Iowa, on June 2, 1856, by Father Jeremiah Treacy and his brother, John J. Treacy. The story of their experiences could very easily be taken from pages of some western pioneer novel.

"Going Where No-one Lives". More than one hundred years ago a covered wagon with that slogan painted on its weather-beaten canvas was ferried across the Missouri River from the little frontier village of Sioux City to the Covington woods in Dakota City. This covered wagon was the conveyance of Father Jeremiah Treacy, who with his brother John and two other companions, had come out from the Catholic Parish of Gerryowen near Dubuque, Iowa, to look for suitable land upon which to

settle a colony of Irish immigrants.

So it was in August 1855 that Father Treacy and his companions came into Dakota County. After several days of exploration they decided on a tract of land at the foot of the bluffs about a mile and a half northeast of the present site of Jackson. After making this selection, staking their claim, and naming the site St. John's Fountain Bluff (the next year changing it to St. John's City), Father Treacy returned to his parish in Gerryowen to make arrangements for his Irish immigrant colony to come to the new home the following spring. Certain of the party were left to hold the claim. Two of those probably left behind were John Treacy, his brother, and Adam Boehmer (sometimes listed as Benners).

A particularly sad tragedy occurred during the first winter at the new settlement. It is not known just how or when Boehmer's wife and infant child joined him at St. John's Timber. However, in his claim cabin in the winter of 1855 they were the victims of a tragedy that cast its shadow over the first chapter of the history of this ill-fated colony. Boehmer's wife during that winter was about to be confined. The nearest help was in Sioux City between eight and ten miles away. Boehmer left the cabin to travel this distance to secure the services of a midwife, known in those parts as Mother Maginn, who had promised to come when needed. But before leaving, in order to protect his expectant wife and their little child against the freezing temperatures, he built a fire in the fireplace and put the kindling within easy reach of his wife so that she could keep the fire alive until his return. After the little child was tucked safely at its mother's side, Boehmer started for Sioux City. When he returned Boehmer discovered that his cabin had been visited and attacked by Indians. His wife had already given birth to the infant and from exposure and fright lay dead on the floor together with her older child and newborn baby. The Indians had taken the feather tick from the bed, emptied it on the floor, torn up the house, and gone their way. The three Indians were delivered to General Harney at Ft. Randall, condemned and executed for the crime.

After Father Treacy returned to Gerryowen from his trip to Dakota County in 1855, he immediately set to work to organize the colony which was to accompany him to the place he had selected in the Nebraska Territory.

On April 21, 1856, twenty-five Irish immigrant families, about sixty persons including Father Treacy's parents and widowed sister, started from Gerryowen, Iowa, for their new home. They traveled in eighteen covered wagons drawn by oxen. Each family was supposed to have one year's food supply and money enough to pay for the government land which they were to secure. This was before the

time of the Homestead Law, so the land was not actually free but had to be paid for at a very low rate per acre. This plan was known as the pre-emption law. The group also brought some farming equipment and a few cattle.

Since there were only trails to follow and numerous unbridged rivers to cross, it took thirty days for the wagon train to cross Iowa to the little frontier village of Sioux City. It was a typical immigrant train traveling from fifteen to twenty-five miles per day, preparing meals over camp fires, and sleeping on the ground or in wagons at night.

After reaching Sioux City the colony camped for a few days on the banks of the Floyd River, while Father Treacy with a few companions went ahead to make the final preparations for the arrival at the destination near Elk Creek in Dakota County.

More than one hundred years ago on Saturday, June 1, 1856, an observer standing on top of Prospect Hill in Iowa would have seen a section of "The Inland Empire of America" in the making. To the south at the foot of the bluffs he would have seen the sprawling log cabin village of Sioux City. To the north at the mouth of the Big Sioux River he would have observed an encampment of a detachment of U. S. Dragoons, and nearby hundreds of tepees of the Yankton Sioux. To the west across the wide Missouri he would have seen a vast panorama of timber and prairie stretching away to the horizon.

At the foot of the hill near Perry Creek, the wagon train of the Father Treacy Colony was preparing to cross the Missouri on John Feenan's crude flatboat. This ferry was probably the only one in existence at that time on the Missouri above Bellevue.

It took all day for the wagons, oxen, and cattle to be ferried across the river. The boat was very crude and was pulled back and forth across the river by means of ropes and cables. It is very probable that only one wagon at a time could be safely loaded on this boat. It was late in the day when the eighteen wagons were finally assembled on the Nebraska side of the river and started up the trail that led through "old Covington woods".

The wagon train followed the trail to the southwest to a point where it met the river, which at that time flowed through what is now Crystal Lake. It was now near sunset and the caravan pitched camp for the first night in Dakota County. The next day, June 2, 1856, the Father Treacy Colony arrived at the new home at the foot of the bluffs near Elk Creek.

According to Warner's History of Dakota County the following people came in the first settlement of the colony: Father Jeremiah Treacy, his mother and father and widowed sister (Mrs. Coyle), Daniel Duggan, James Kelleham, George Portiss,



Father Jeremiah Treoy

Michael McKivergan, James Jones, Michael McCormick, Charles Boyle, James Ryan, Patrick Ryan, Nicholas Ryan, William Hogan, Simon Magen, Patrick Twohig, Arthur Short, John Treoy and Ed-

ward Jones. All but the last four were heads of families.

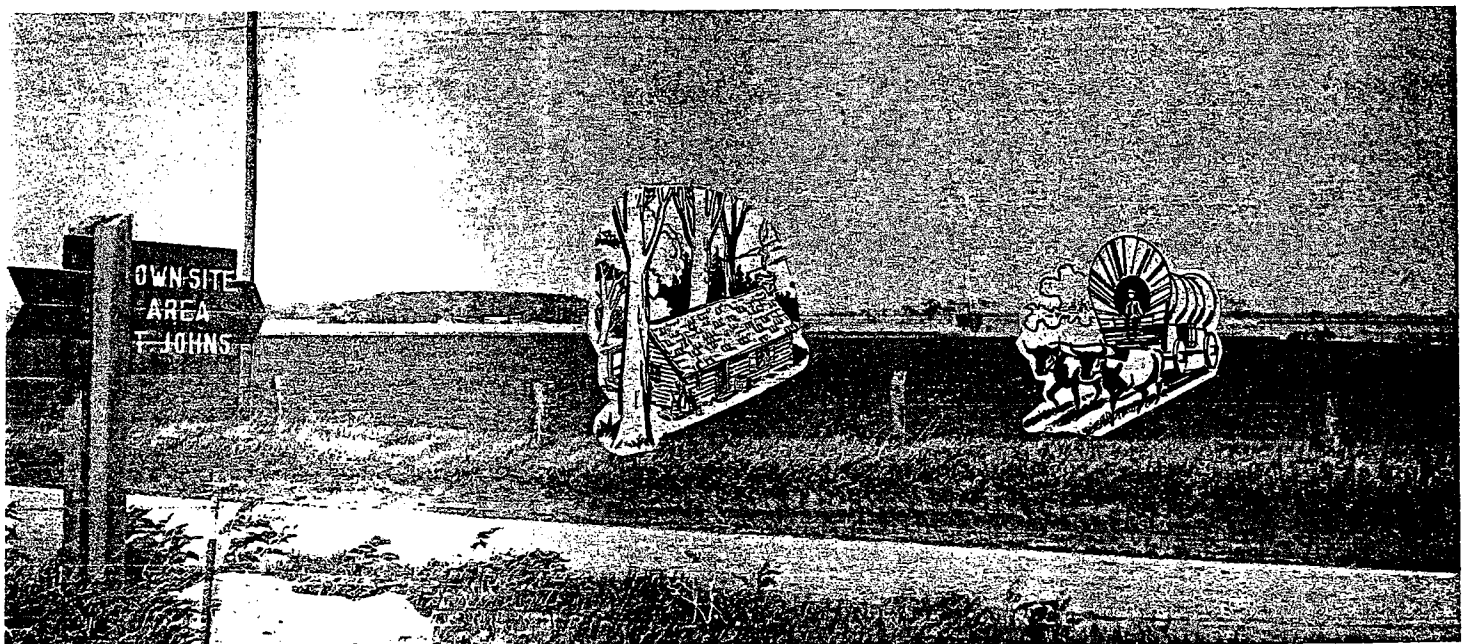
When the colony arrived at its destination one log cabin was under construction and a dugout had



been completed in the side of a hill. While the cabins and the dugouts were being built the members of the colony lived in tents or in covered wagons. By June 24, 1856, a site for a town had been platted and named St. John's in honor of St. John the Baptist.

The winter following the founding of the colony was especially severe. There were forty days of continuous zero or sub-zero weather. Four feet of snow accumulated on the level. Families were practically imprisoned in their log cabins and hillside dugouts. There was a severe lack of nourishing food and many existed mainly on parched corn. The shortage of food coupled with the long weeks of winter isolation brought many of the new colonists to the verge of nervous collapse and despair.

With the spring came the melting of the heavy

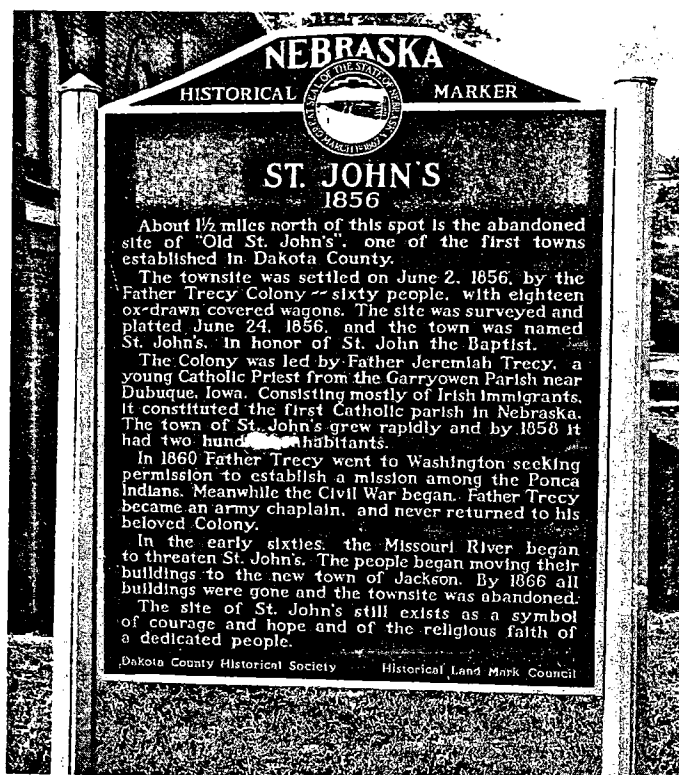


Former town site of St. Johns, 1½ miles north of Jackson, Nebraska.

snows and floods. Dakota County in the spring of 1859 appeared to be a vast lake. However, the new settlers managed to plant their crops. The crop prospects appeared very favorable until a grasshopper scourge visited the area and the crops were severely damaged.

Even in the face of extreme discouragement the colony grew rapidly. Father Treacy reported in 1858 that there were two hundred people in the Elk Creek area. The little town of St. John's had a hotel, fifty dwellings, a church, a sawmill, a gristmill, a store, two doctors, and a log school house. Joseph Brannan kept the first store and Rosana Clark taught the first school which opened in April 1857.

After the departure of Father Treacy from his colony the townsite which he had selected and marked out seemed to lose favor with the settlers, and in June 1860 the church was moved about a mile and a half south. The store and houses soon followed, and the town grew up around the church in this new location. It was first called "Franklin", but as that name had already been given to another post office in the state, the town was later incorporated under the name of Jackson. In this centennial year let us pause and give honor to this man of God and his courageous band who dared the unbroken wilderness, and whose accomplishments have become a part of our great American heritage. Here too has

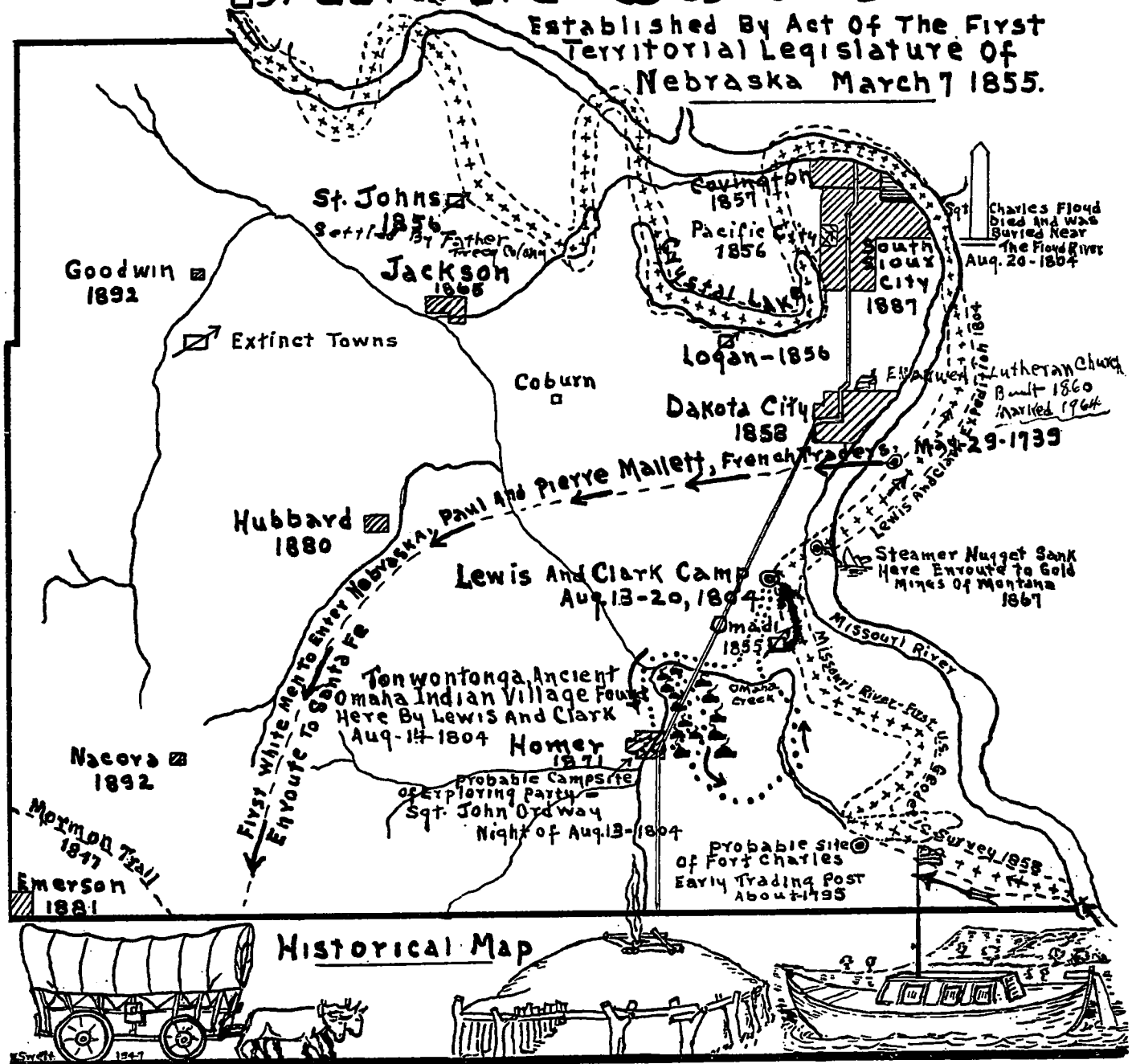


St. John's Historical Marker, Jackson.

been placed a marker in order that we may remember what Father Treacy and his courageous band did for this county.

DAKOTA COUNTY

Established By Act Of The First
Territorial Legislature Of
Nebraska March 7 1855.

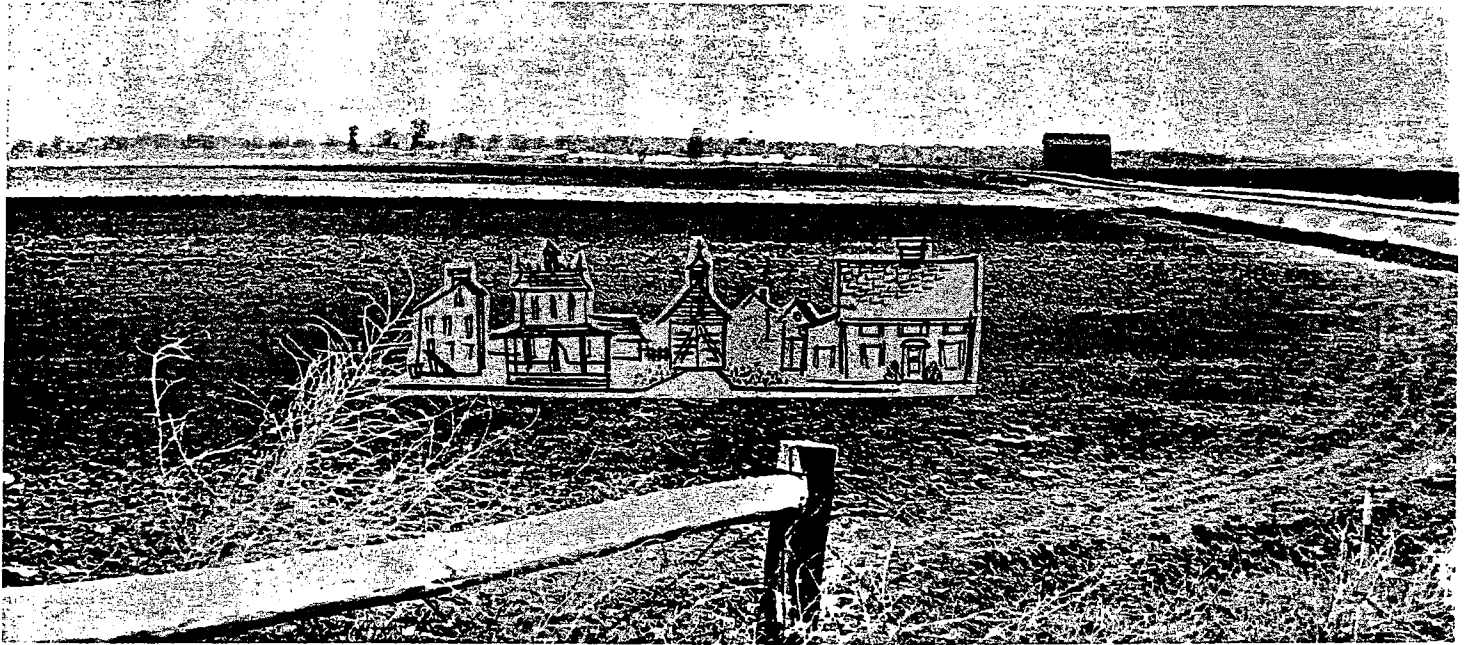


Extinct Towns

The pioneers according to "Warner's History of Dakota County" had one weakness at least, and that was a bad one. In other words to use the modern phrase "they had it bad" — a mania for laying out townsites. At one time ten towns were founded along the river from Blyburg to Ponca, but of these but one is now existing.

OMADI

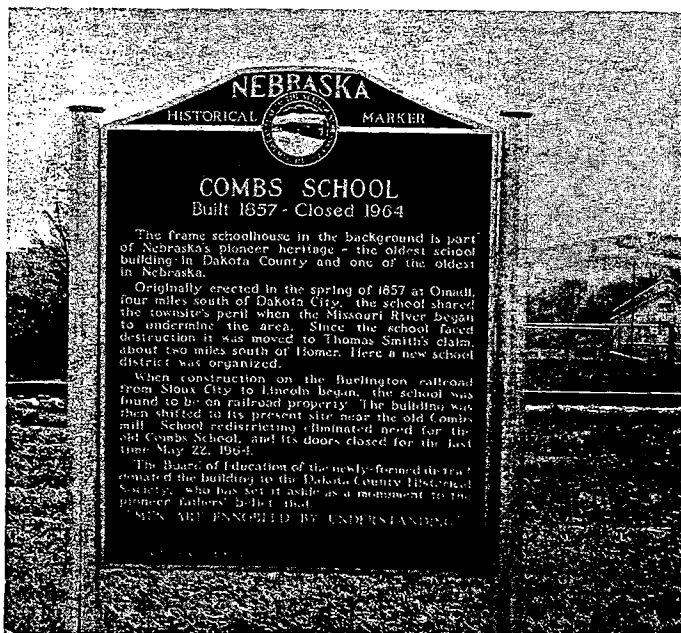
The first of the extinct towns to be laid out was Omadi, located five miles south of Dakota City by George T. Woods, Chauncey A. Horr, and Moses Kreps who crossed the river September 1, 1855, building the first log cabin in Dakota County, except perhaps for Gustave Pecaut. For a bit of humor



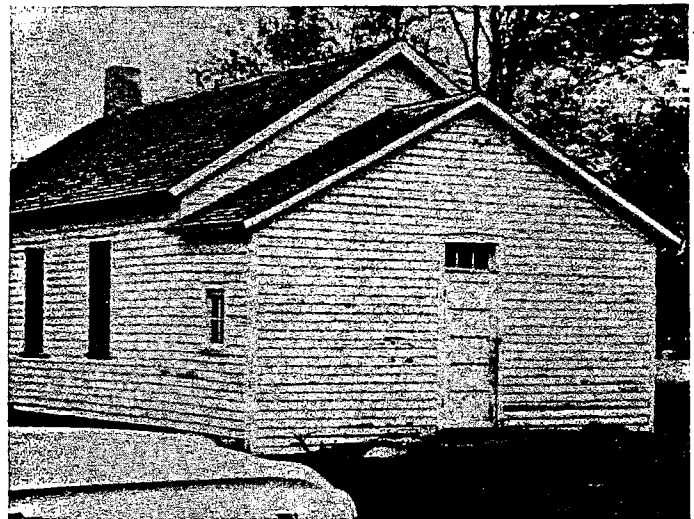
This picture shows the actual site of Omadi; at one time a thriving city of nearly 400 people. The townspeople of Omadi were forced to move their homes when the Missouri began cutting away at the bank of the river where their homes were located.

this story is told of how Omadi got its name. Some years previous when the Omaha Indians who lived here contracted smallpox, an Indian who was very ill with fever, stood on the river bank crying, "Oh, me die!" In the spring of 1856 settlers began to arrive, and the town began to thrive until about four hundred inhabitants arrived. The usual community buildings and services soon sprang up, a hotel, stores, newspaper and post office. A school building was erected in 1857. Miss Putnam of Sioux City taught the school, the first in Omadi and also in the county. When the Missouri River began to undermine this area the school was

moved to Thomas Smith's claim about two miles south of Homer. Here a new school district was organized. When construction on the Burlington Railroad from Sioux City to Lincoln began, the school was found to be on railroad property, and the building was then shifted to its present site. School redistricting eliminated need for the old Combs school, and its door closed for the last time



Combs School Historical Marker.



Combs School — closed 1964.

May 22, 1964. A marker has been placed near it to remind us of our pioneer fathers' belief that "Men are ennobled by understanding".

About 1862 disaster seemed imminent when the treacherous Missouri washed away a portion of the town and decay went on until 1865 when every house was removed, some to Dakota City and others upon farms.

LOGAN

The same spring on the Missouri River, now Crystal Lake, the town of Logan grew very rapidly and soon became a rival of Omadi. By 1858 it reached its height of prosperity containing more than twenty-five houses. When the Missouri River began gnawing away the northern portion, its inhabitants commenced to move to Dakota City and adjacent farms. By 1860 the town was completely deserted.

OTHER TOWNS

St. John's, surveyed and platted in 1856 and incorporated in 1857, was vacated in 1866. Pacific City, platted October 18, 1856, was situated about where South Sioux City is now built. In 1857 it contained about ten good frame buildings, but its inhabitants becoming discontented with the location all moved away. The year 1856 seemed to have some particular magic for the platting out of new towns, for in September 1856 Blyburg was surveyed and founded in the extreme southeastern part of the county. It never grew beyond two cabins. During the year 1858 two towns, Franklin City and Verona, were incorporated but never had the honor of containing a single house. The towns of Randolph, a post office until 1877, and Lodi until 1874, were both founded near Homer. Emmett, a post office situated in the northern part of the county, was discontinued in 1873, and Nacora, located seven miles southwest of Hubbard, was established in 1892 as a post office.

GOODWIN

The village of Goodwin was laid out by Cornelius Duggan in 1889 on a tract of land which was part of his farm. The town was located ten miles southwest of Jackson.

Cornelius Built a general store which he leased to D. F. Waters. At first trains ignored the village until Cornelius and Michael McKivergan, a neighbor



The gas station at Goodwin was victim of the decline and finally the complete abandonment by the townspeople.



The once busy Goodwin State Bank was the only brick structure in the village. Wide cracks in the brick wall indicate the oncoming collapse of the building.



These were the remains of the Goodwin Blacksmith and Wagon Shop in 1956. Buried under the fallen roof is a brick hearth and chimney.

and original member of the famous Father Treacy Colony, stood on the tracks as the train approached and refused to budge. Thereafter, the trains stopped daily, and soon a depot was built with a full time station master.

The name Goodwin was taken in honor of Mr. Goodwin who was an official of the old Pacific Line. Later John Duggan purchased the store business from D. F. Waters as well as the building and town-site from his brother Cornelius. Shortly, thereafter, the railroad company built a sidetrack to Goodwin. Mr. Duggan was appointed postmaster after the post office was built. By 1919 there was a bank, school, saloon, elevator, and blacksmith shop.

Among the still living ex-residents of Goodwin is Edgar F. Frederick, who for many years was building custodian at the Dakota County Courthouse in Dakota City. He relates, "I was married in 1900 and took my bride to Goodwin, where I became the village blacksmith and worked from sunup to sunset shoeing horses, fixing

wagons, repairing machines and sharpening plows. We lived in a house back of the smithy."

For over forty years the little village flourished, even holding its own during the depression years. The beginning of the end for Goodwin came with the tremendous advancement of automotive transportation and good all weather roads and highways. In 1940 the post office was closed, and it was decided that the store business be discontinued. Thus Goodwin was placed in the category of the so-called "Ghost Towns". The only activity there at the present time is the rural school, still operating with a highly qualified teacher and large enrollment.

COBURN JUNCTION

Mr. Eric Beermann, a prominent farmer who until his death in 1958 had lived on a farm near Dakota City, relates this story concerning Coburn Junction, later called "Coburn," which was situated five miles west of Dakota City. It consisted of a depot with outside rest rooms, a dug well with good water, stock yards with shed, a loading chute equipped for doubledeck loading, two side tracks, pumping station, elevated water tank

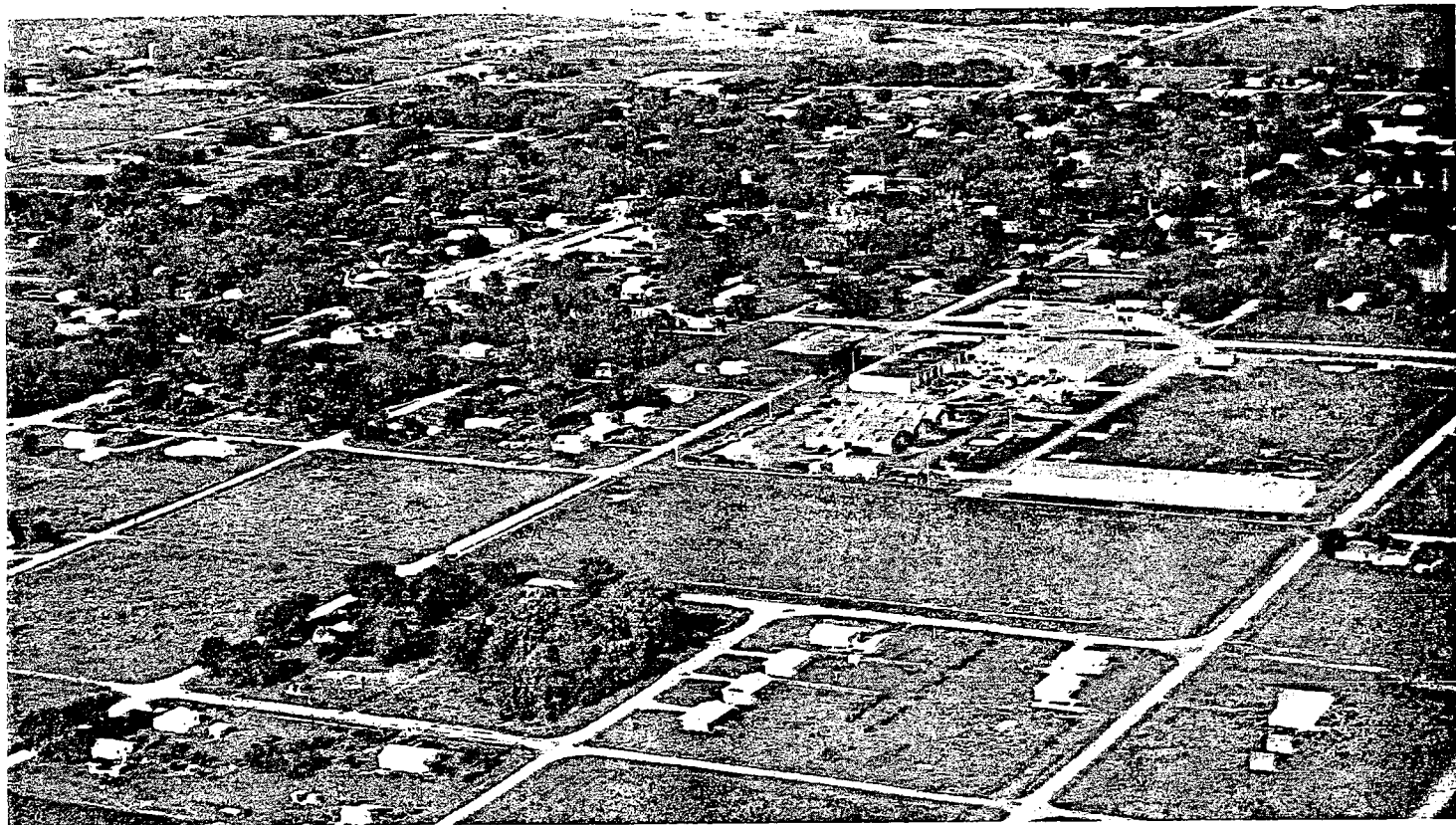
for supplying the steam engines with water, a story and a half house for the section foreman, shed for his horse and cow and a garden spot.

Some years later the section house burned and the section foreman was then housed at Dakota City. Coburn was a busy station, handling freight from the branch road to the main line and vice versa. Passengers were quite often numerous in the waiting room making connections for the different trains. Besides the large amount of express to be transferred from one train to another, there were carloads of seed corn, potatoes and wheat loaded there to be shipped out. Coal, gravel and cement were shipped in. In 1919 the original depot burned and a new one was erected on the site. Eventually because of the use of automobiles and trucks the Omaha and Norfolk passenger trains were taken off, eliminating the need for a depot agent.

Coburn gradually faded out of the picture. In 1940 the depot was sold to a private party and moved to South Sioux City to be used as a residence, which is now located at 313 East 13th Street.

Little of great importance is recorded as happening in Dakota County in the first days of one hundred years ago, but the average pioneers living in dugouts and log houses in prairie and scraggly river settlements weren't accustomed to important

things. In fighting to survive they hammered out history in small but often heroic deeds that were to have a lasting imprint on succeeding generations. Today a number of thriving towns are evidence of this.



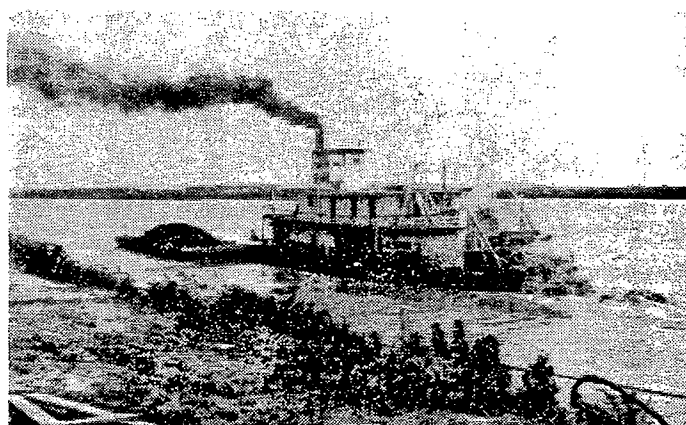
PRESENT-DAY DAKOTA CITY, NEBRASKA

DAKOTA CITY

The founder of Dakota City was J. D. M. Crockwell, who as an agent of the Dakota City Land Company, filed a plat of the town for record on September 20, 1856. Dakota City and Dakota County were named after the Dacotah tribe of Indians, commonly called Sioux. Dakota City was incorporated by the County Commissioners April 5, 1858. The first house was built by Benjamin E. Chambers in March 1856, made of logs with a flat dirt roof, ground floor, one hole for a door, and another for a window. It was later improved and used as a hotel called the Chicuahua House. The townsite was laid out nearly two miles long east and west. The eastern end of the townsite ended on the bank of the Missouri River, and the main street was laid out east and west, being named Broadway. As the name implies, the street which was 150 feet wide, is no doubt one of the widest streets ever laid out in Nebraska. Since Dakota

City was a "port of call" for the steamships plying the river, Broadway Street was laid out wide with the idea of building a canal from the street so the barges could come into the town.

The first ferry on the Missouri River in this area was owned and operated by J. D. M. Crock-



First ferry on the Missouri River.

well. The first store was established by John Naffziger. In 1858 the Dakota City Pottery Works was established in the east end of town near the river. It was owned by Ziegler and Eckhart. At this time it was the only pottery works in the en-



tire Nebraska Territory. The factory did an excellent business, shipping its stoneware products to settlements up and down the Missouri River.

The town was booming and speculation in property and businesses was active. Settlers as far west as Columbus and O'Neill came to file their land entries here. The stores did a great deal of trading at that time. The Bates Hotel cost \$16,000 to build. In it the United States Court was held twice a year—in the spring and in the fall. Buildings including houses and saloons were moved into the town. Some of the larger structures were moved in sections. Two houses of prostitution were moved from the Covington area to Dakota City. In 1893 the population in Dakota City numbered 700. A brick yard was one important industrial enterprise, furnishing bricks for a number of the buildings of Dakota City as well as the neighboring territories. Included among the businesses were two hotels, one billiard hall, five carpenters, one newspaper, two draymen, two physicians, manufacturer of patent corn planters, seven lawyers, and three school teachers.

The first opera house west of the Missouri River was at Dakota City. The theater was in one of the hotels. It was located in the center of the hotel, a stage of sorts was at one end. It was a great open area that had a balcony encircling it. People would sit up on the balcony and some seats were down on the main floor. Traveling shows as well as local groups performed for as long as interest held. Raymond Ream states, "I remember seeing it burn down."

The Dakota City Herald was the first newspaper in Dakota City and the second in Dakota County. A number of other papers were started over the years but have long been discontinued. In

1906 the Dakota County Herald was sold by John Spencer to John Ream. He edited the paper until his death in 1930, and since that time the paper has been published by his son, Raymond.

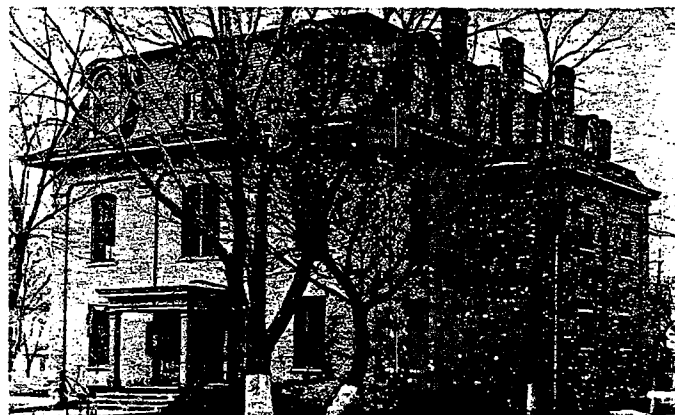
The first railroad built into Dakota City was the Covington, Black Hills, and Columbus Line. It was a narrow-gauge road and reached Dakota City in 1876. This road was later taken over by the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Line. In 1904 the Talbot and Foy interest in Sioux City built an interurban line to Dakota City via South Sioux



Old street cars from Sioux City to Dakota City.

City and Crystal Lake. The road was dismantled in 1918. In 1906 the Burlington Railroad was built through Dakota City.

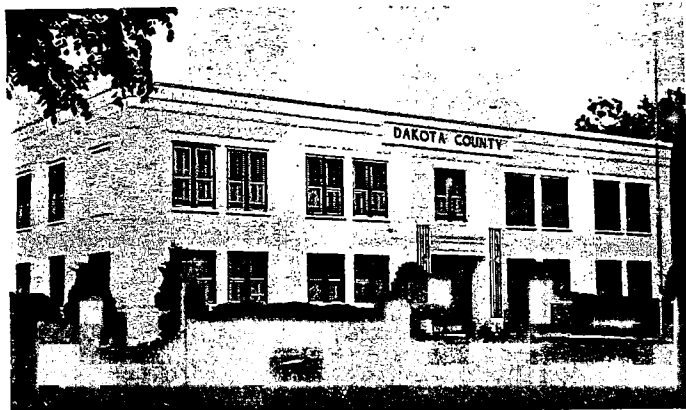
Dakota City was made the county seat of Dakota County soon after the establishment of the county by the Territorial Legislature in 1855. For several years the records were kept in a log court house. In 1869 bonds were voted for the building of a brick structure to the amount of \$15,000, being built by Augustus Haase in 1871 of brick



This court house stood until 1940. Construction cost \$15,000.

made in Dakota City. In later years people of Dakota County were asked to vote on the issue of transferring the county seat to South Sioux City, and it carried. As a result the people of Dakota City instituted a lawsuit against moving it. An appeal to the State Supreme Court was perfected, and the

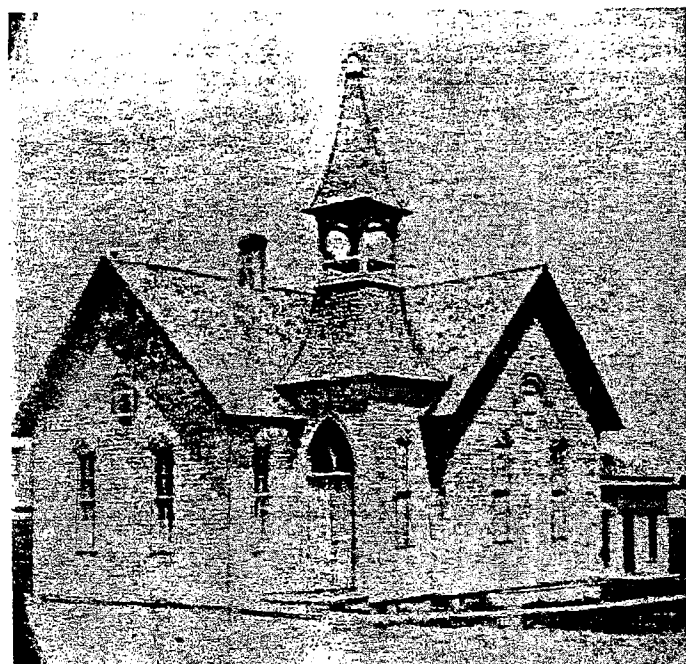
Court ruled that the construction of the building had constituted a "bribe." Therefore as a result the entire proceedings were declared null and void. Unsuccessful attempts to move the county seat to



Present-day court house.

South Sioux City were also made as early as 1857 and again in 1926. The present court house was built in 1940 at a cost of \$66,000, using W. P. A. funds.

In the pioneer settlements one of the first things to obtain attention was the establishment of places of worship. The Presbyterians were first to hold religious services in the spring of 1857, and

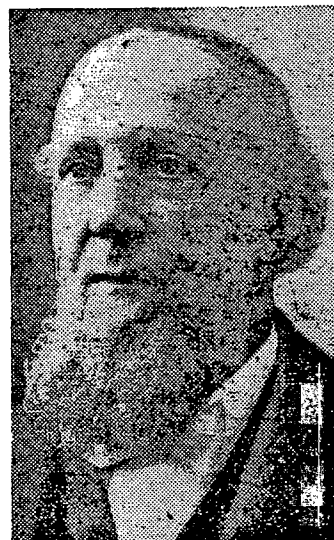


First Methodist Church — built in 1857.

the Methodists organized in June 1857. Lutherans were next to organize.

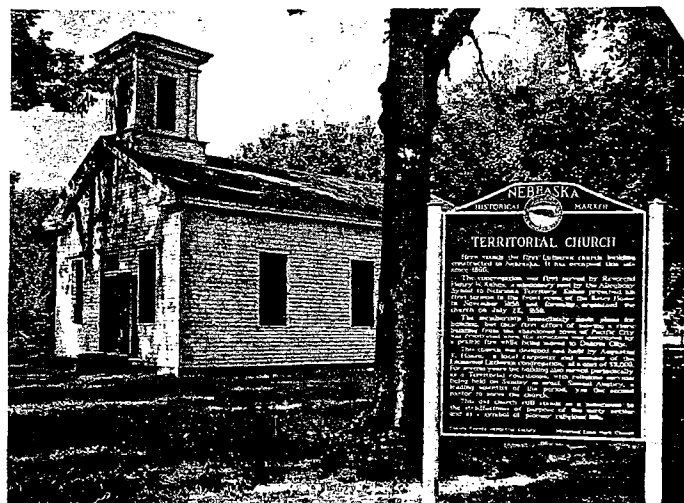
In 1858 the Reverend H. W. Kuhns, a missionary sent to Nebraska Territory, preached the first Lutheran sermon at Dakota City in the front room of the Bates House, a three story hotel. The Church Society was organized on the 22nd day of July, 1859. The members at once began prepara-

tions for a house of worship. A store building was purchased in the abandoned Pacific City, but it was burned by a prairie fire while being moved to Dakota City. In the spring and summer of 1860 the Emanuel Lutheran Church building was built at a cost of \$2,000 by Augustua Haase. The first Lutheran pastor was Reverend H. W. Kuhns. The



Reverend H. W. Kuhns

following story is told: Reverend Kuhns was caught in a great blizzard at Dakota City. It was Sunday and he felt that he must fill his appointment. When he got to church only C. F. Eckhart and J. B. Zeigler were there, but he delivered his sermon. After his return to Omaha when asked how he got along he said, "I had a very large and intelligent audience." Mr. Zeigler being a very large man and Mr. Eckhart a very intelligent man corroborated him in his assertion. This little church was the first Lutheran Church to be built in the Territory of Nebraska. It is today the oldest church building of any denomination now standing in Nebraska. For many years the territorial court was held in it also. This old church has become a landmark, and Jul-



Emanuel Lutheran Church — built in 1860

19, 1964, 350 persons attended the dedication of an historical marker at the site. Mr. E. N. Swett read the following eulogy to "The Little White Church on the River."

I am the little white church by the river.
More than a century ago I was built here beside this mighty river.
Built by the rugged hands of our pioneer fathers,
That the word of God should not perish,
But be forever enshrined in his new land.
In my first hundred years I buried your dead and comforted the living.
I baptized and confirmed your children,
And taught them the ways of Christian living.
In my early years I saw the pioneer father
Come with his plow and his rifle,
Determined to possess this bountiful land,
And build a home for himself and his family.
I saw the pioneer mother come
With the Bible under arm and a lantern in her hand,
A guiding light for little feet to follow.
The story of my existence is a story of America on this great river.
The wealth of the inland empire passed by my door.
I saw the last of the great fur trade,
I saw the rise of the steamboat era and its decline with the coming of the railroads.
I saw this land grow from covered wagon and log cabins to beautiful homes, towns and villages.

I was born in the flames of the great Civil War.
Men of my congregation went forth to that war, some never returned.
But the Union was saved. Their names are immortal.
I saw the end of the Indian wars.
I saw the two World Wars and the Korean War.
Today my sons lie buried in nameless graves on the battle fields of the world.
From the ashes of these great sacrifices
I saw a New America arise, an America fresh from the burning creative hand of God,
An America destined to lead the world,
To greater and better things for all mankind.

Now, at the beginning of my second century
I stand deserted.

My work as a church is ended,
But you, my people, have seen to it
That I stand as a monument to those who have gone before,

And as a symbol of hope to those who come in the future.

So long as I exist I shall always be
"The Little White Church by the River",
I shall always be your chapel of memories.

E. N. Swett

(Read at the dedication of the Emanuel Lutheran Church as an historical landmark, at Dakota City, Nebraska, July 19, 1964.)

As soon as the pioneer had a roof over his head he set about establishing a school for his children. The first school in Dakota City was taught by Mrs. L. C. Packard in 1857 in the old log court house located on the corner of Broadway and 19th Street. In 1866 a two-story brick school was built about three blocks east of the Lutheran Church. On the same block in 1892 a frame building was constructed. This building was destroyed by fire in 1911. The present brick structure was built in 1912 and the auditorium in 1940.

The fifth oldest Masonic Lodge in the State of Nebraska is located at Dakota City. Omadi Lodge No. 5, A. F. & A. M. was first organized in Omadi, a town on the river about six miles south of Dakota City in 1858. With the destruction of Omadi by the river the lodge was moved to Dakota City in 1862 and the present hall constructed about 1915.

The prospects of Dakota City began to fade upon the admission of Nebraska as a state. The Federal Land Office was moved to Niobrara, and the two sessions of court were no longer held here. The finest hotel in the territory began to decay as there was no longer a need for the "grand hotel" (The Bates Hotel). It was razed in 1879 and sold as old lumber.

Very early the river began cutting into the townsite. In the early 1900's fully one-third of the original townsite had been taken by the river. Young people of Dakota City would watch the river wash away great masses of earth. It was not at all uncommon to lose an entire farm in one



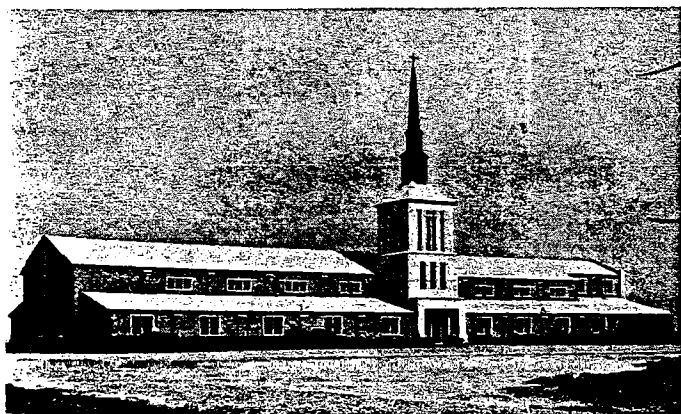
House being moved from banks of raging, cutting Missouri River.

day during the spring rise. In 1893 the farm owned by W. I. Broyhill (the old Murdick farm) was completely washed away by the Missouri River. Frequently houses were moved into Dakota City to save them from the raging river. The house from the Altamus Farm, south of Dakota City was brought into town for this reason and today is the home of Genevieve Mason.

In 1912 the farmer and residents of this area formed a district for the purpose of stopping the erosion by the river. Being unsuccessful, they hired the Woods Construction Company. The area west of Dakota City was known as "The Swamp" or "The Three Rivers." This was the overflow or drainage route of the Omaha, the Elk, and Pigeon Creek. Water would back up about five or six miles. Hal Bridenbaugh recalls swimming a horse across this swamp. Drainage ditches were dug thus making this land between Dakota City and Jackson available for farming.

I'm sure as Mr. Beerman, who lived on a farm near Dakota City, described the work of his mother, it brings nostalgic memories to many old-timers. "Most of the time she had several men to cook for besides the family, which of course called for plenty of provisions. Quite often in the fall of the year a full barrel of sorgum molasses went to the cellar, let down by rope and plank. Sauerkraut was made by the barrellful in the fall. Usually a pickle barrel was used for this purpose. A large wooden kraut cutter was used by two men holding it between them on their knees. Others carried the cut cabbage down into the cellar and put it in the barrel, using a heavy wooden stomper to pack it. Fruit and vegetables were canned in large quantities. Mother liked to raise chickens, many of which hatched and raised themselves all over the farm. It was nothing unusual to see her out in the yard picking up cobs and pieces of wood for the cookstove and heater. Often times she would help with the milking, filling the pail as fast as anyone."

Salem Lutheran Church, three miles west of Dakota City, is a product of the twin churches.



Present-day Salem Lutheran Church.

Two identical churches were situated across from each other. In one church the sermon was given in English, in the other German. This location came to be known as the "The Church Corner." In 1926 the congregation was incorporated. One church was razed and the lumber used in the construction of the Lutheran Church in South Sioux City. Actual construction for the present beautiful church began with ground being broken March 24, 1957. The cornerstone was laid July 21, 1957 with dedication May 4, 1958.



Harry Sides "First Tractor in County"



Steam Threshing Rig



Going shopping — 1904.



PRESENT-DAY HOMER, NEBRASKA

HOMER

Truly the ghosts of the dwellers of the site on which today stands Homer could tell some interesting stories. It was here that in 1800 lived hundreds of Omaha Indians. In this year smallpox broke out in the tribe and they burned their village and moved south. Here, too, was the birthplace of the famous Omaha chieftan, Blackbird. It was the ruins of this village which Lewis and Clark found in 1804. Many early fur traders visited this place.

St. Patrick's Day 1856 found Jesse Wigle moving to his claim on the same ground where Homer is today located. Here he, too, witnessed the terrible never to be forgotten winter of 1856-57 which tried the most sturdy pioneers.

The first house erected was by Squire Martin S. Mansfield on October 1, 1871, which was to be used as a store. Soon the wild jungle and high prairie grass began to change magic-like and fields began. The second building was also a store. A building built by Herbert Harris could tell quite a story. It was first a hotel in which was also kept a saloon. Later the building was purchased by the school district for a school house. Here were held all the community's activities, religious revivals, political rallies and elections.

In 1872 the Omadi post office was moved to Homer and John Smith was the first postmaster. In 1875 this village was incorporated by the County Commissioners under the name of Homer. The first child born in Homer was Walter Smith. The first school was taught by Henry Ream, who also conducted the first Sabbath School. One can't help chuckle at a list of businesses or occupations found in Homer in 1893: one saloon, two justices of the peace, two carpet weavers, one well digger, two bands, and a race track.

In the early years of Homer's existence it was the home of the famous Indian scout, Charles Bristol. He was known locally and by the Indians as Omaha Charley. For many years he recruited and looked after the Indians for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Because of his friendship with Indians he was able to make an excellent collection of Indian artifacts many of which are now in the Historical Society Building in Lincoln. He died about 1919.

When the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission purchased approximately 300 acres of land north of Homer, centennial history was also preserved. For it was Dakota County's pioneer family physician, Daniel Brooks Stidworthy (1866-1931) who, with many friends and a large pack of thorough-bred dogs, hunted and preserved this wild area for many years. Dr. Stidworthy was a lover of the out-of-doors and the beauty of the



Dr. Stidworthy (1866-1931)

hills and valleys. He organized the first Hunting Club of Homer in 1895 which later became affiliated with the Izaak Walton League. The National President of the Izaak Walton League believes the area is the only one of its kind with such extensive historical and recreational potential.

Dr. Stidworthy's daughter, Ada Stidworthy Westover, was instrumental in interesting the State in establishing the Reserve. Its rolling hills covered



Spring place, north of Homer.

with native grasses, original timber, natural springs, artifacts and historical trails — a haven for birds, deer and other wild life had not yet felt the sting of man's progress.

The entire area is well known to many residents of northeast Nebraska and Woodbury County Iowa as picnic and hiking grounds. The first Old Settlers picnic of Dakota County was held on the grounds.

Dr. Stidworthy was educated in the schools of Sioux City, Iowa and the University of Iowa. Obtaining his medical degree he began the practice of medicine in Homer in 1894. Traveling many miles by horseback, team and buggy over trails and ungraded roads to care for the sick, he was for more than a third of a century, a most prominent figure in northeast Nebraska in politics and community civic affairs. He served as School Board President, and as Town Board President was largely instrumental in having waterworks installed in Homer. He served as a major in World War I and chief regimental surgeon of the 41st Railroad Artillery. He was the first commander of the Homer American Legion, Buckland Post.

At his death in 1931 he was acclaimed for his fight against tuberculosis, smallpox and typhoid fever. He established health and immunization programs in all of the public schools in northeast Nebraska. Homer schools and business houses closed until noon the day of his funeral to pay their

respects to their beloved family doctor.

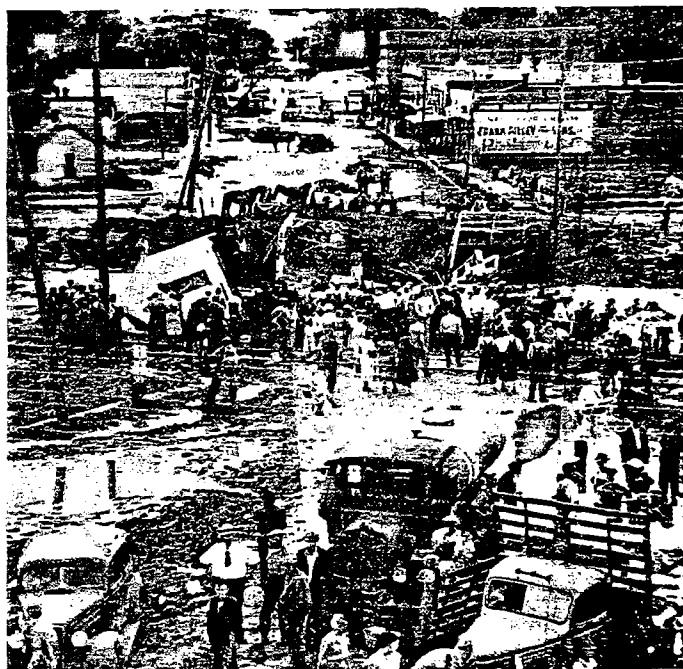
He married Alice Hallquist of Sioux City in 1895. The family home where they lived in Homer still stands. His three daughters were born in Homer.

In spite of floods, grasshoppers, and tornadoes the village numbered approximately 400 inhabitants. A new school building is its pride and joy, completed in 1965.

A crippling flood occurred in June 1920 and another again June 22, 1940, when Omaha Creek overflowed and seriously damaged Homer. In both instances the people showed great fortitude and



Main street of Homer during 1920 flood.



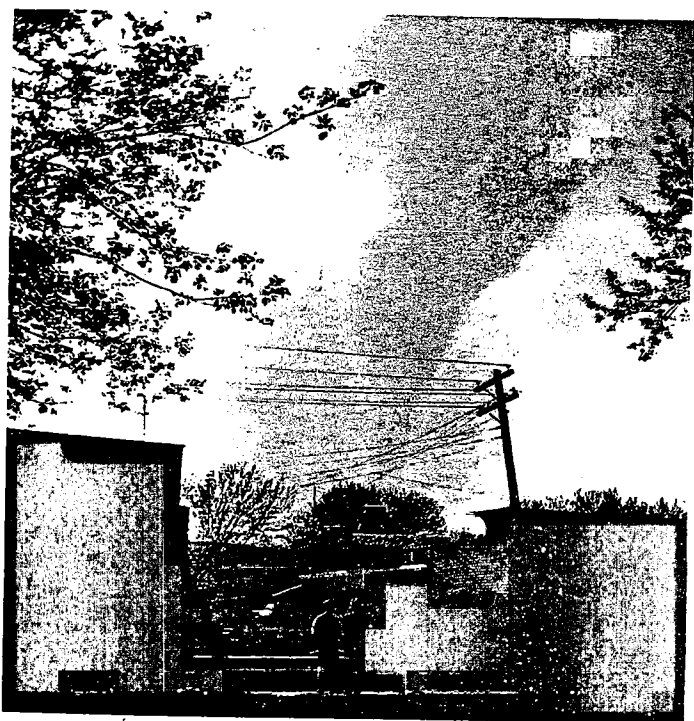
The tragic flood of 1940 claimed the life of Mrs. Helen Shull, her daughter. The house was washed off the foundation, swept downstream and slammed against the bridge.

rebuilt the town better than it was. Mrs. Millie Lothrop, telephone operator at Homer at the time of both flood disasters, stayed at her switchboard far into the night warning people of the oncoming water. She stayed on until the water came into her office and put the switchboard out of order.

For these acts of heroism she was twice given \$1,000 and awarded the Theodore Vail Medal for Heroism (Bell Telephone Company).

In this centennial year (1967) as we reflect back with some of our pioneers, many interesting stories long forgotten are retold. One incident which came to the mind of Johanna Harris now 89, our oldest Dakota County pioneer at the Nebraska Centennial Party, occurred in the June 1919 flood. She and her cousin living near Homer saved themselves from being washed away by chopping a hole in the wall of the house above the window. They clung there all night while water reaching to their necks raged through the house. The homestead which was owned by Johanna until 1948 is now owned by her great nephew, Marvin Harris. The old log house still stands on the place.

The tornado of September 13, 1928, brings back tragic memories to Doris Berger, who with her brother, Harris, attended the O'Connor school



Tornado over Homer — May 1, 1930.

near Homer, in which the teacher, Miss Helen Rooney, lost her life. School had been dismissed and Doris and Harris were to wait with the teacher until their father arrived, but instead they left with a neighbor, Mr. Alvin Trask. Just as they reached his home three-quarters of a mile away they saw the school house and trees being blown away. Upon returning to the site everything was gone except Harris' books neatly piled where his desk had been. Miss Rooney was found holding the doorknob some distance away beneath the floor of the school house.

Mr. Art Rymill of Homer when asked about

the flood of Homer remarked, "Yes, there were many of them, but the people always come back." He commented that perhaps the 1940 flood was the most destructive because there was more that could be destroyed. Mr. Rymill mentioned a conversation about the 1875 flood with a George Blessing, who remembered it as a small boy. In just a half day the twenty some houses had been flooded with only roofs showing. The water then was not as swift as today, due to the big ditch which today carries the water.

"Oh, yes, I remember the blizzard of January 12, 1888," commented Mr. Rymill. "I was just six years old and had started to school, but for some reason we weren't in school that day. My dad who had been away from home became lost in the snowstorm. He finally let the horses go and they brought him home. I remember how cold he was; he just shook all over. It was 35 degrees below zero. We built a big fire to warm him up. Then he went out and combed the ice out of the horses' hair and blanketed them down. I also remember his telling about the 1880 blizzard. When the eight feet of snow melted in the spring, the entire Missouri River bottom was under water and looked like a big lake."

"It's often interesting to read epitaphs on old tombstones", added Mr. Rymill. "One in the old cemetery northwest of Homer tells of a Mr. Josiah Davis, who had the first sawmill in Homer. He



JOSIAH DAVIS

fought in the Mexican War, took part in the 1850 gold rush, accumulating \$1,000, and brought home many stories of experiences with Indians."

As a boy Mr. Rymill had considerable contact with various Indian tribes and learned to speak their languages. He praised the conduct and honor of those Indians. Since they had no milk they were pleased when Mr. Rymill's mother gave them some. In return they often gave some gift. Mr. Rymill remembers wearing a pair of pretty beaded moccasins.

sins given him made of buckskin and rawhide.

Another victim of the flood was the St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Homer. The building in 1889 was purchased from the United Brethren congregation. When the disastrous flood of June 1920 swept through the town, the church and parsonage were swept from their foundation. Nevertheless the



Old St. Paul's Church was victim of flood in June, 1940.



St. Paul's Lutheran Church . . . addition erected in 1958 is at right.

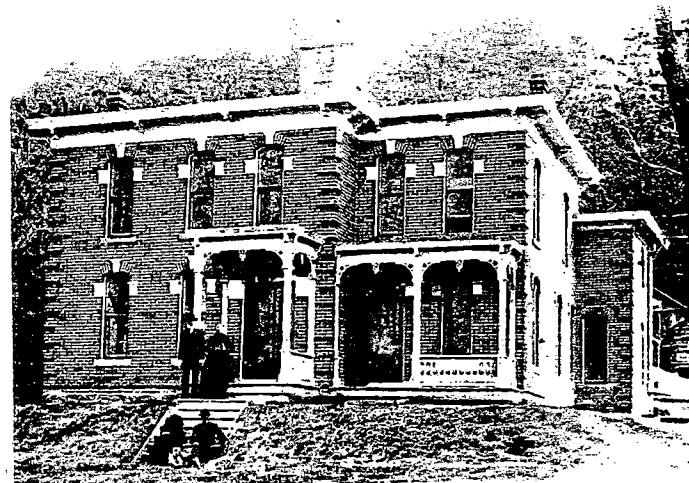
church property was repaired. In 1935 the Danish Lutheran and St. Paul's were combined. Again in 1940 the flood destroyed the church and parsonage beyond repair, and they were sold for \$175. However, 1958 found a lovely church complete with a beautiful electric organ, new pews and hymnals.

Probably no calamity in history of this region so seriously affected the people as the long continued invasion of the grasshopper. Residents of the present day can hardly believe the stories. The grasshoppers appeared about 1857 and came again in 1864 and 1867 when they destroyed all cultivated vegetation. An old-timer remembers a lady saying that all she had left of her onions were round holes in the ground. Mr. C. R. Marks, an historian of early Sioux City, wrote that he counted fifty to one stalk of corn. Grasshoppers would also gather on the tracks in sufficient numbers to stop the cars. The crushed hoppers would so oil the track that the wheels couldn't get sufficient hold. Only the

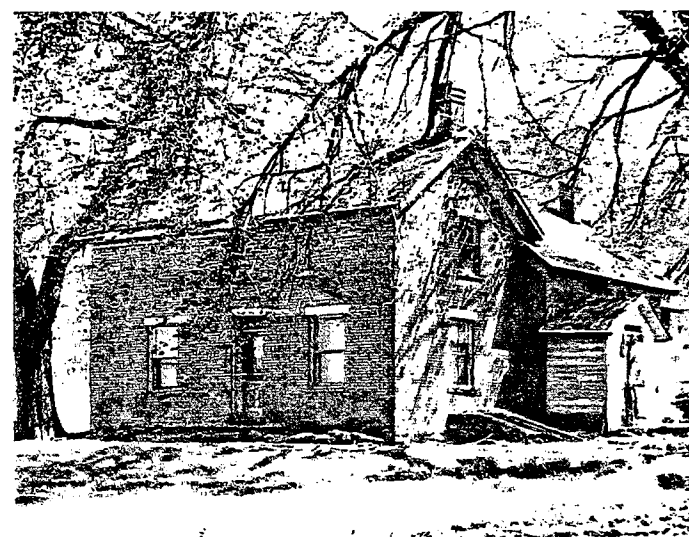
sturdiest of pioneers could withstand this in addition to the panic of 1873 which came during a period of drouth. As a result many, many homesteaders returned East.



Homer's Main Street in 1909.



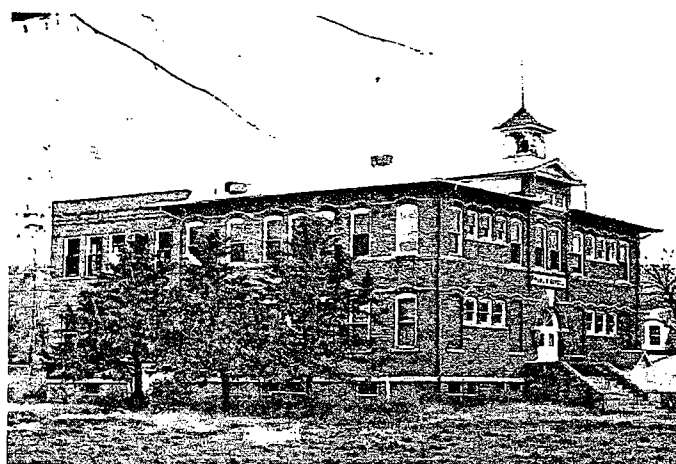
This eight-bedroom mansion, built by Cap. Cornelius O'Conner, is located 2 miles east of Homer. Capt. O'Conner started construction in 1875 and the home was completed 4 years later. Magnificent walnut, hand-carved woodwork was used throughout the home.



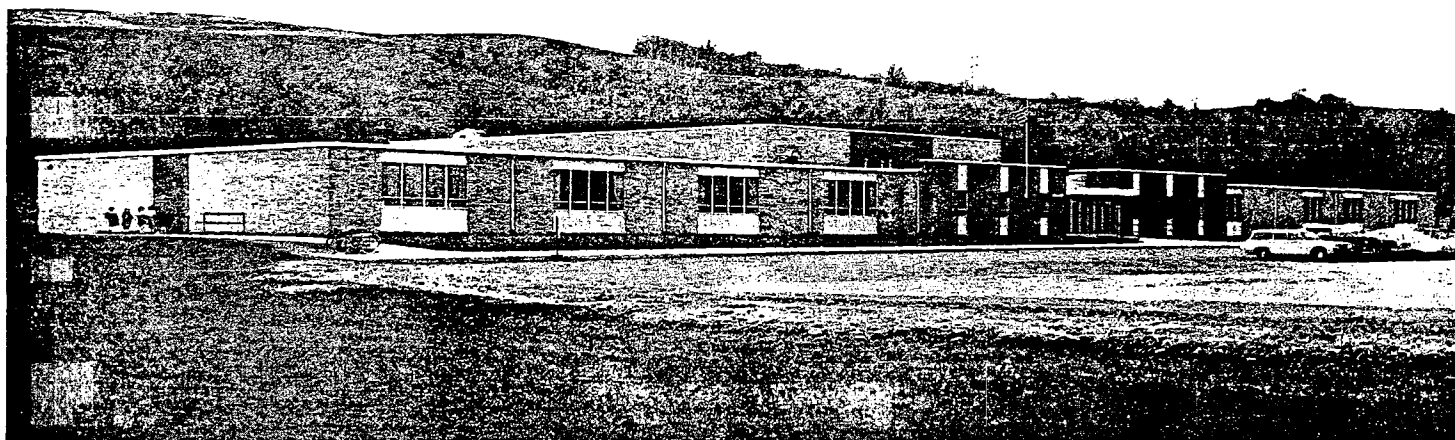
The Ashford place 1 mile east of Homer, still standing. Built in 1860 with bricks burned from clay taken from the Homer bluffs.



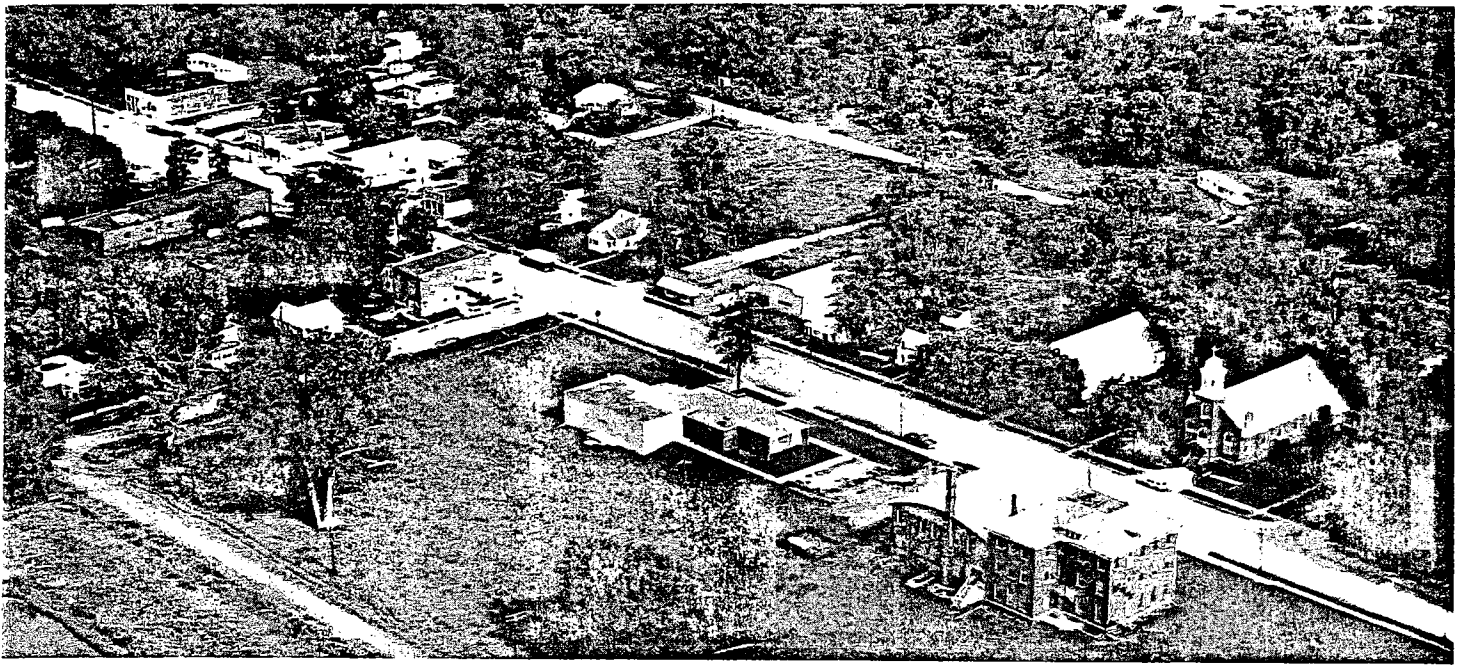
Skidmore Blacksmith Shop of Homer, about 1907.



Former Public School in Homer, torn down in 1966.



New Homer District 31-R school building, opened April 28, 1965.



PRESENT-DAY JACKSON, NEBRASKA

JACKSON

The history of Jackson goes hand in hand with the story of its desire to make as convenient as possible the procuring of a Catholic education for their children. Therefore in 1893 St. Catherine's Academy was built and staffed with Dominican Sisters. This



St. Catherine's Academy addition.

was a boarding and day school. The success of the academy received commendation from examining state authorities. In 1925 it became coeducational. Through depression years the Sisters strove valiantly to keep the school going.

In 1929 a flood following a cloudburst caused much damage, and this terrible catastrophe repeated itself in 1940. Flood waters rose to the height of seven or eight feet in the Academy basement and repairs and improvements made there since the flood of 1929 were ruined. Because of the cost of making necessary repairs and difficulty of maintaining the school financially, it was decided to close the Academy in 1940.

In 1913 the cornerstone of the present church



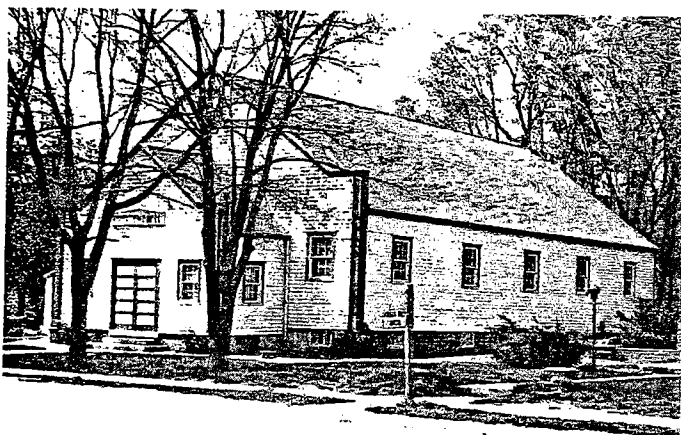
St. Patrick's Catholic Church.



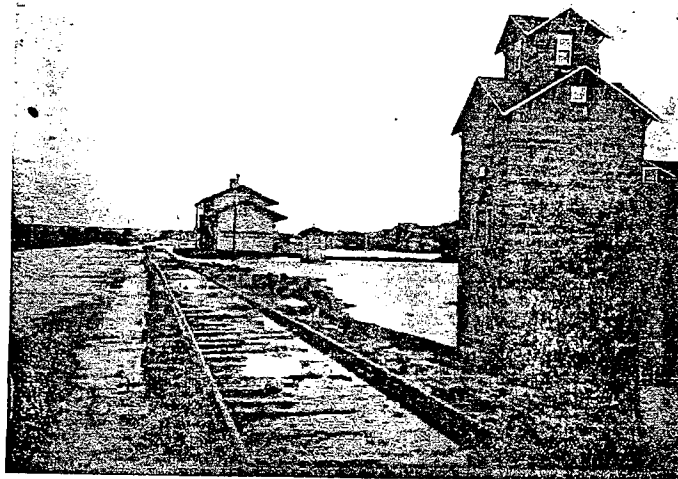
Father Trecy Shrine, Jackson.

was laid and the brick edifice was erected in 1914. In recent years a very beautiful shrine to the memory of Father Treacy has been erected in the church yard in Jackson. In spite of years of drouth and financial shortages the new Providence Hall was erected in 1937, entirely by men of the parish.

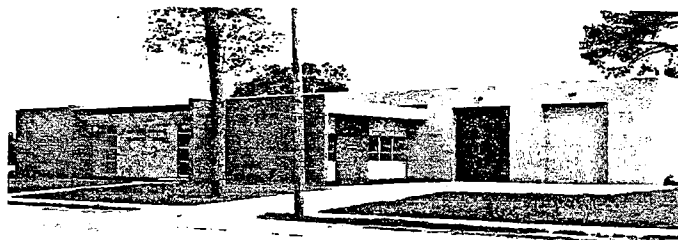
With the advent of paved roads into Sioux City business declined, and the town became dormant for several years. There is now evidence that the town is moving ahead again. The 1960 census shows the population to be 224.



Providence Hall, Jackson.



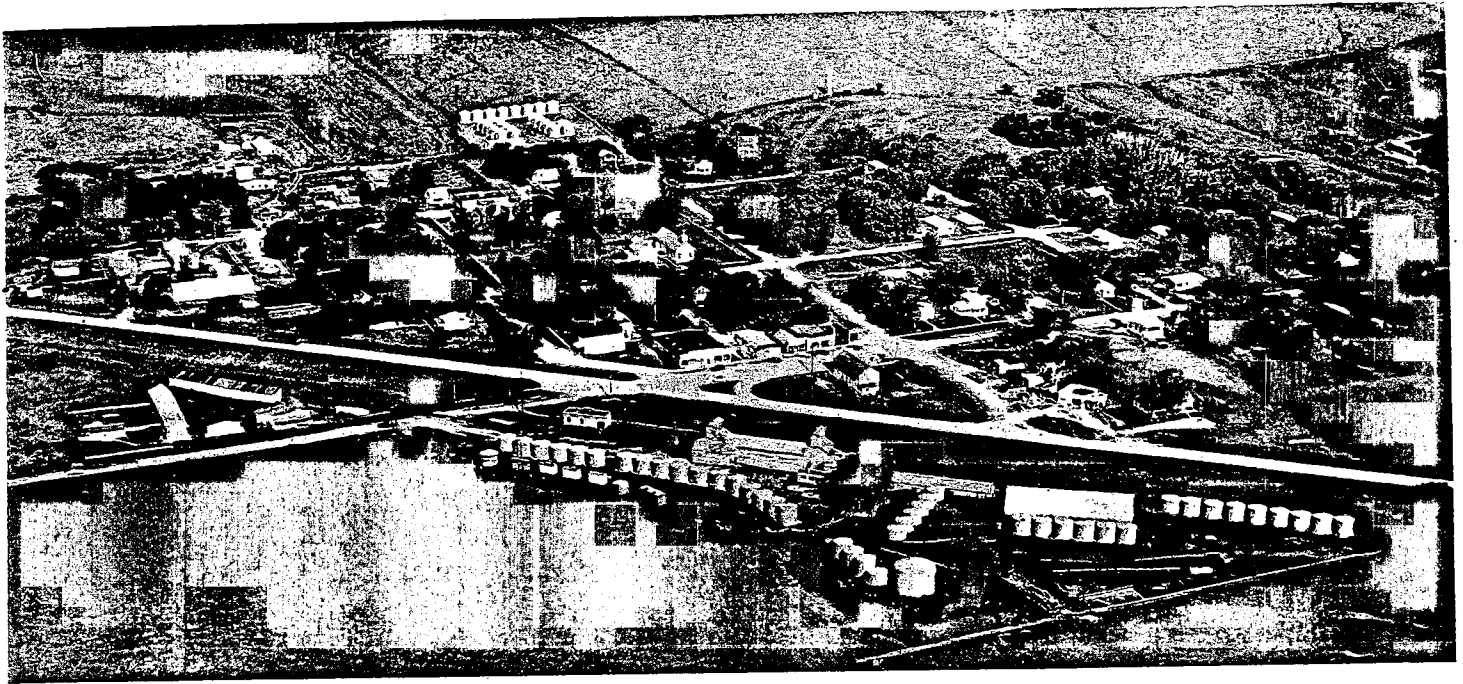
Flood at Jackson — June 30, 1903.



Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company building.



ST. JOHN'S CEMETERY, NORTH OF JACKSON



PRESENT-DAY HUBBARD, NEBRASKA

HUBBARD

About ten miles southwest of Dakota City another town was laid out in 1880 by the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad called Hubbard in honor of Judge A. W. Hubbard, first president of the Covington, Columbus and Black Hills Railroad.

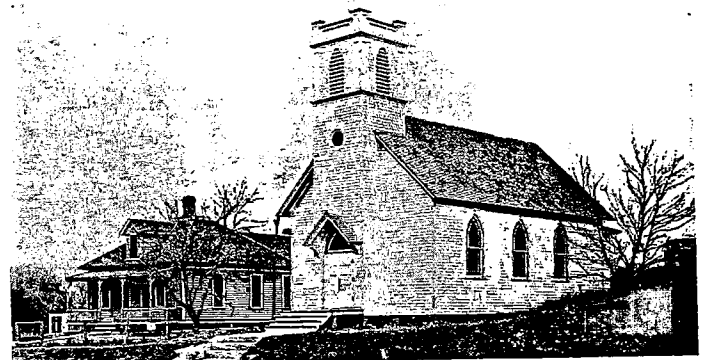
The station building was the first to be erected in the town, and John F. Myres kept the first store, also being the first postmaster.

In 1885 the people of Hubbard who until then formed a part of Jackson parish, wishing to have a church built for themselves, were organized into a parish of their own with Homer connected. They soon built a church and a parochial residence.

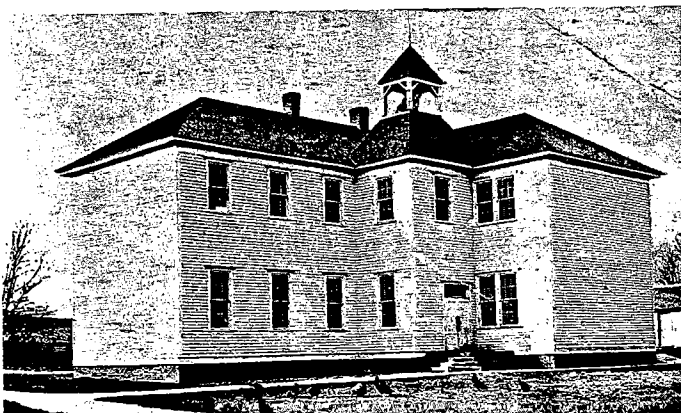
Although the town has never shown much growth, it is a good business town located in a very

good farming area. The 1960 census gives Hubbard a population of 135.

With the coming of the railroad came towns. So it was not only with Hubbard, but also with Emerson which was laid out the next year, 1881, in the extreme southwestern part of the county.



Lutheran Church, Hubbard, built in 1908.



Hubbard Public School, burned in 1922, rebuilt in 1926.



Interior of bank at Hubbard in 1905.



PRESENT-DAY EMERSON, NEBRASKA

EMERSON

Emerson is situated in the extreme southwestern corner of Dakota County. The main street has the distinction of being the county line between two counties, Dixon and Dakota, while the southeastern portion of the town lies in Thurston County. A sign on the outskirts of town proclaims it as "The Largest Town Located in Three Counties." The population of Emerson in 1966 was 826 and is predominantly of German and Irish descent with a large segment of Swedes, Danes and Bohemians.

Emerson owes its early existence to transportation in various forms. In the 1870's, stagecoaches traveled this route to the west with a stopover at the Demme farm on the north edge of what is now Emerson. Noting the fertile land and lack of proper markets and transportation facilities, the railroad, in 1879 began to build a line to connect the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad with Sioux City, Omaha and Norfolk. This junction became

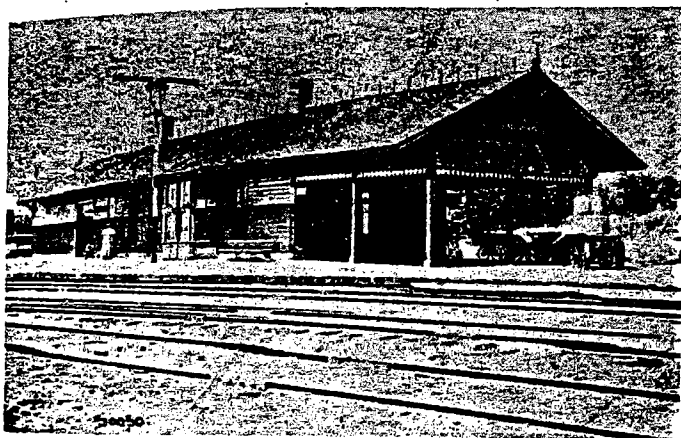
a tremendously busy point. In 1880, the railroad bought 100 acres of land for a townsite and that brought many settlers into the community. In 1881, Emerson was established. The first building erected was the depot and the second a section house. Boyle Bros. built the third, where they kept a store and William Warnock built the fourth, which was the first dwelling house.

The town soon began to flourish. At first it was known as Kenesaw Junction, but since it was learned that there was another town in Nebraska by the same name, it was re-named Emerson, for the author, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In May 1882, Emerson had what is referred to as the "Winnebago Invasion." At that time the Indian Reservation extended north as far as the present center of Emerson and many settlers had built a collection of temporary shanties on land where they had no rights. On the morning of May 6, 1882, a band of Indian warriors delivered the decree of the Winnebago Council meeting that these people were to be off the reservation within an hour. By nightfall, every inhabitant had moved his shack and possessions into the village proper. Later, the reservation line was established at the Thurston County line.

In 1883, R. E. Kuhn plotted the original townsite, and since that time additions have been made by D. W. Mathewson, Atlee Hart, William Warnock, Emerson Mill & Improvement Company and others.

In 1888, when the town's inhabitants numbered between 200 and 300, the village was incorporated. By 1890, Emerson had grown and spread southward



Emerson depot still in use.

into Thurston County. In 1893 the population numbered 600.

Among the first residents who located upon the prairie hills here were William Warnock, P. H. Boyle, H. S. Boyle, Patrick Bannan, W. S. Lippold, John Engelen, M. Pruden, M. L. Rossiter, J. J. McCarthy, D. W. Parmelee, R. H. Kuhn, C. A. Johnson and Nelson Feauto.

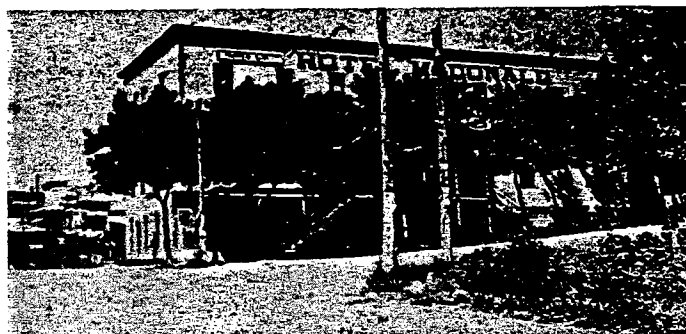


Emerson — looking southwest from the water tower. Old Methodist Church is pictured in foreground.



Emerson — looking down Main Street north from the water tower. The Catholic Church is pictured on the far hill.

Emerson was born as a railroad junction and as late as the 1930's, 67 trains went through the town each day. The railroads eventually built three section houses, an extensive water works, car scales and a good stock yards. Every four hours a passenger train left for Omaha, Sioux City or Norfolk. The thriving town was the home for railroad workers. Four hotels flourished and at one time it even had a cigar factory and a roller mill. Gradually truck lines took over. Today the depot still stands, but is used only as a station house.



Old McDonald Hotel in Emerson.

The Echo was the first newspaper venture, established in the spring of 1883, by Nelson Feauto, who was succeeded by Joshua Leonard, July 21, 1885. Mr. Leonard changed the name of the paper to the Emerson Era and conducted it until 1892, when the paper expired. In a few weeks thereafter, Harry S. Swenson and Charles S. Packard started the Emerson Enterprise, and the paper was sold to Frank Bancroft, who in December of the same year sold to H. W. Conley, he selling to S. E. Cobb June 2, 1893. In about 1920 the name was changed to the Emerson Tri-County Press and still serves this community with a weekly newspaper.

There are four churches in Emerson. The first was the Catholic Church built in 1885 with a parsonage built in 1891. In 1902 a newer church was built and used until the present building was erected in 1949. This past year has seen a beautiful new parsonage constructed.

Sacred Heart parochial school was built in 1918 at a cost of \$65,000. A convent and a new \$100,000 auditorium have been added recently.



New Emerson Sacred Heart gym.

The Presbyterian Church was organized December 10, 1882 and its church building dedicated June 10, 1888. It also provided a parsonage for its pastors. The church has been remodeled several times and is still in very good condition.

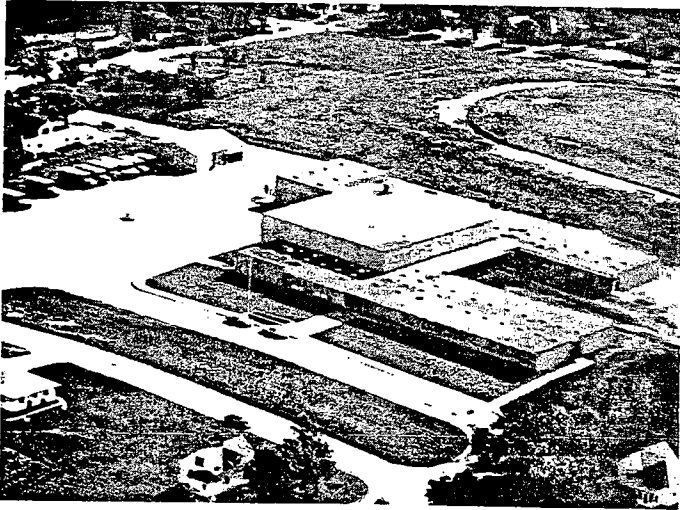
St. Paul's Lutheran Church was organized in 1886 and erected their building in 1893. A parsonage was built in 1913. A new and larger church was built on the same location in the mid-40's.

St. Luke Lutheran Church was organized in

1911, and the church building erected in 1916. A parsonage was also provided. The church was re-modeled in 1950 and a new parsonage built in 1961.

The Methodist and Assembly of God also had churches here at one time.

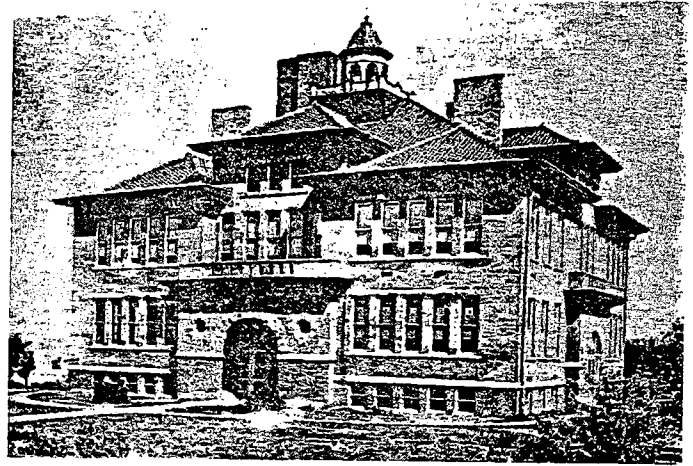
In 1885 the school district was bonded for \$5,000 and a fine school building was erected. This was later sold for \$275 and in 1906 a new and larger brick building was completed at a cost of \$20,000. In 1954 a new school was completed at a cost of \$255,000 and later re-districting necessitated the building of a new junior and senior high school and auditorium, dedicated in 1964 at a cost of \$530,000. The community is very proud of its fine school systems and high educational standards.



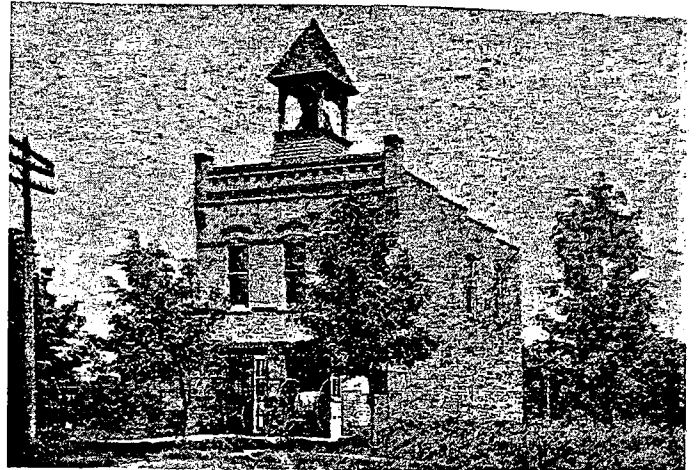
Emerson Public School, 1967.



Arrow No. 1 points to construction site of Emerson's new Tri-View Apartments for the elderly and low income, to be completed in 1968. Arrow No. 2, community swimming pool



Old public school building.



Emerson Fire Hall with horse-drawn equipment.

The fire department was organized in 1902 and the water works in 1903 after a serious fire had resulted on main street. A Gas Generation Plant was in operation from 1908 to 1918, and a sanitary sewer system completed in 1922.

A light plant was established in 1912 by Henry Jensen. He sold out to the Nebraska Electric Company in March 1917, which ran it until September 1919. The city held an election and bonds voted to the value of \$18,000 to buy the old equipment from the Company for \$8,000 and the rest was used to build the plant in a new location and purchase new engines. Since that time building additions have been made and bigger power equipment installed so that today about 400 metered customers are served.

In about 1940 the Northeast Nebraska Rural Public Power District stationed its headquarters in Emerson and today serves around 2,000 customers.

The first secret society organized in the town was the Grand Army of the Republic, which established C. R. Weaver Post No. 185 on April 19, 1884. J. F. Warner, then Commander of the Post at Dakota City, was the installing officer. Among

the charter members were William Warnock, B. F. Goodwin, John Bennett, I. M. Shockley, N. Feauto, J. Dixon, Charles Boyle, E. Barber and John Ward.

The Masons organized here January 25, 1893 with M. H. Evans, W. M., and J. W. Fisher, secretary. The Masons are still active at the present time.

The A.O.U.W. had a lodge and in 1893 J. W. Fisher was W. M. and L. Wakefield was recorder

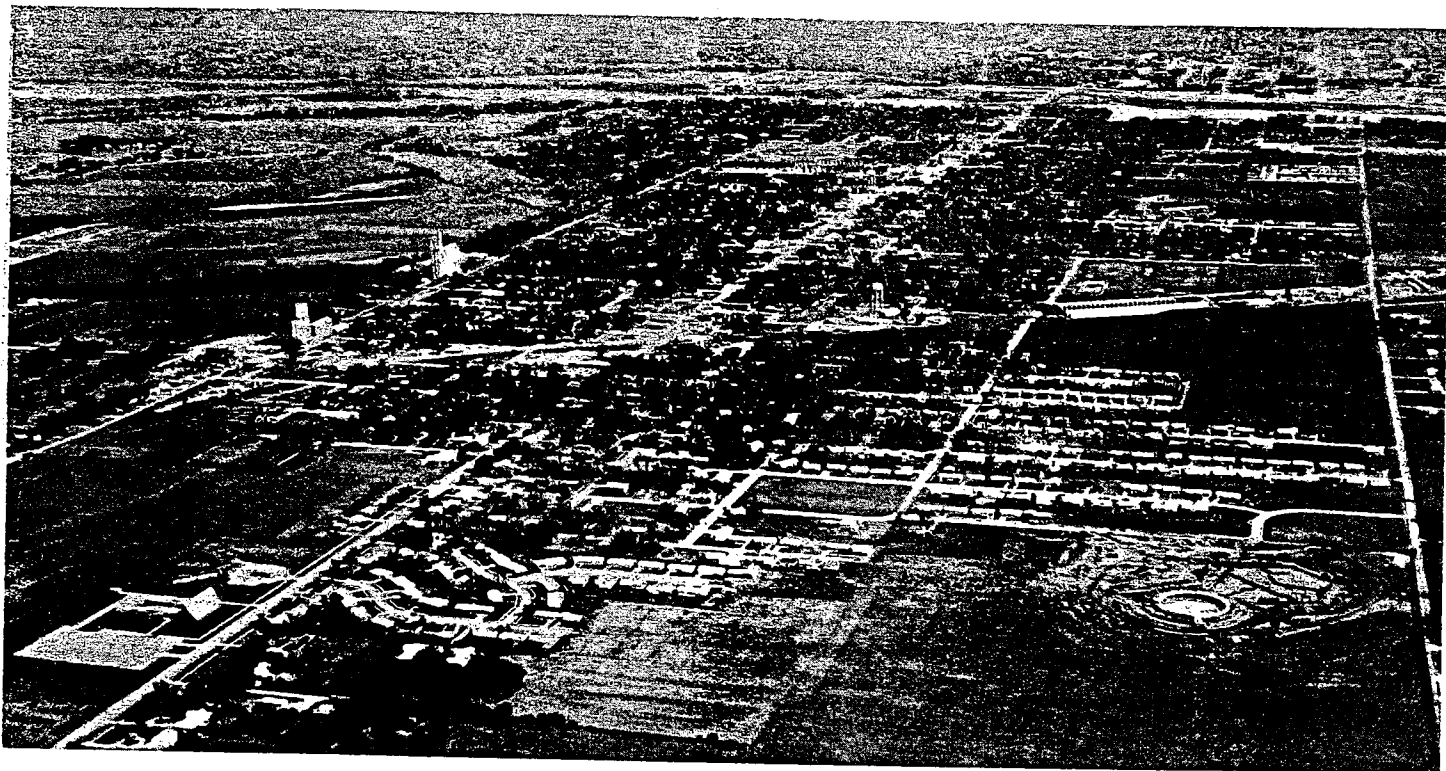
An Independent Order of Good Templars Lodge was organized in the spring of 1893. L. Wakefield was Chief Templar and Hallie Bennett, secretary.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union had a society and in 1893 Mattie Parmelee was president and Winnie Fuller corresponding secretary.

At one time a Lion's Club was also active.

Other active organizations formed over the years are the I.O.O.F. Lodge, Rebekah Lodge, Eastern Star, American Legion and Auxiliary, Firemen and Auxiliary, Commercial Club, P.T.A., Jr. and Sr. Women's Clubs and many others.

Emerson today can boast of many other fine facilities and improvements among which are a swimming pool, an excellent park, summer recreation program for children, baseball, softball, Jr. Legion baseball, 80 blocks of paving and more planned, at least 20 new homes in the past few years, and a new Housing Development featuring low rent housing and housing for the elderly is now in the process of being built. Good hard surface highways into town from all directions have been a big asset.



PRESENT-DAY SOUTH SIOUX CITY

SOUTH SIOUX CITY

South Sioux City, Dakota's largest city, is located on the south bank of the Missouri River directly opposite Sioux City, Iowa. Since 1920 the population has steadily grown, and the present population is estimated to be about 8,765. South Sioux City has basked in a very colorful history.

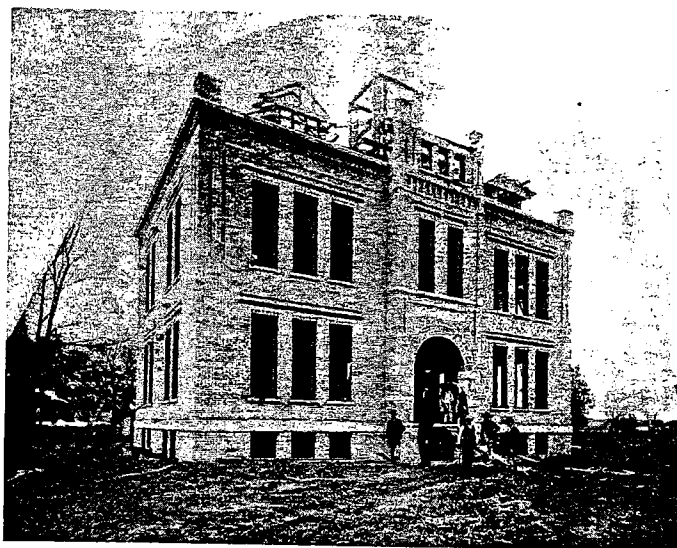
Gustave Pecaut, a Frenchman, is believed to have been the first white settler in what is now South Sioux City. He built a log house near the river in 1854. As early as 1856 G. W. Sherman surveyed a townsite between the present City Hall and Burlington Railroad on the Nebraska side of the river which was called Pacific City. Due to the ravages of the river the inhabitants became discouraged and moved away.

Harney City was laid out on paper in 1856, never becoming a real city. Its location is believed to be identical to Covington. Newport was then laid out on the same site in 1857, its name being later changed to Covington. Covington was incorporated in 1870. The same year Stanton was also laid out between Covington and the bend of the river, being one mile from the nearest post office. In its greatest prosperity Stanton boasted 31 buildings, thirteen of which were saloons.

The first child born in Covington was John Quinn in 1857. The first marriage was John Feenan to Margaret Boyle, and the first death was of an old man dead near the river.

The first school was taught in 1857 by Mary Pinkerton in a little log school

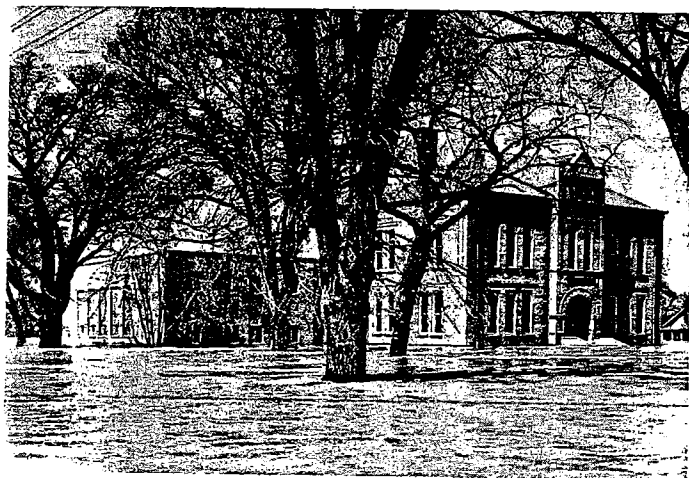
house situated near the site of the old Lewis and Clark school building. This rustic-looking brick school building, known for many years, remained as the only land mark of the infamous Covington. Mr. E. N. Swett, long time superintendent of schools



Covington school under construction.

for the South Sioux City School district, stated that Mr. John Peyson, who was mayor of Covington during the prosperous years of the late eighteen hundreds, regardless of the fact he was a saloon keeper with a somewhat shady reputation, foresaw the need of a school. Mr. Peyson, therefore, solicited the money from saloon keepers by means of license fees. More than enough money was collected

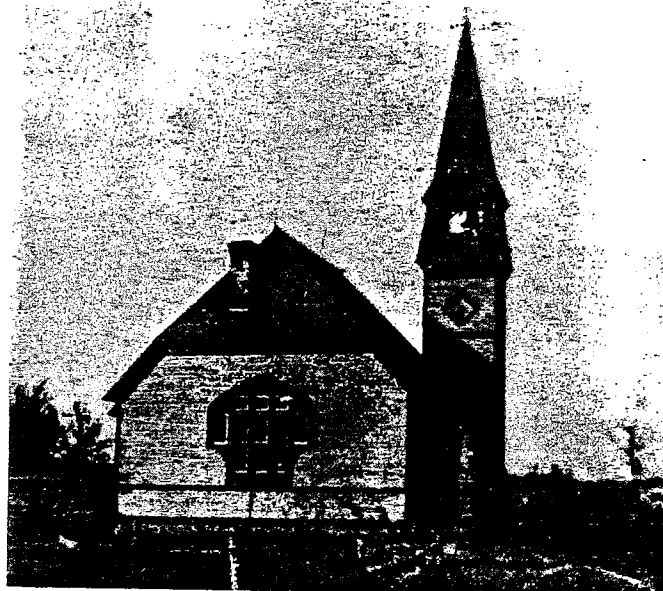
to build the school in 1890. When questioned by the townspeople as to what he had done with the remainder of the money, he answered by saying he had collected it and so had more right to it than they. Later the name was changed to the North Ward School when Covington and South Sioux City were incorporated in May of 1893. Mr. E. N. Swett was responsible for renaming the building after the famous explorers Lewis and Clark. The 1952 flood



Lewis and Clark in height of flood.

hastened the demise of the famous landmark. It was torn down in 1954 and replaced by a new Lewis and Clark grade school in 1960.

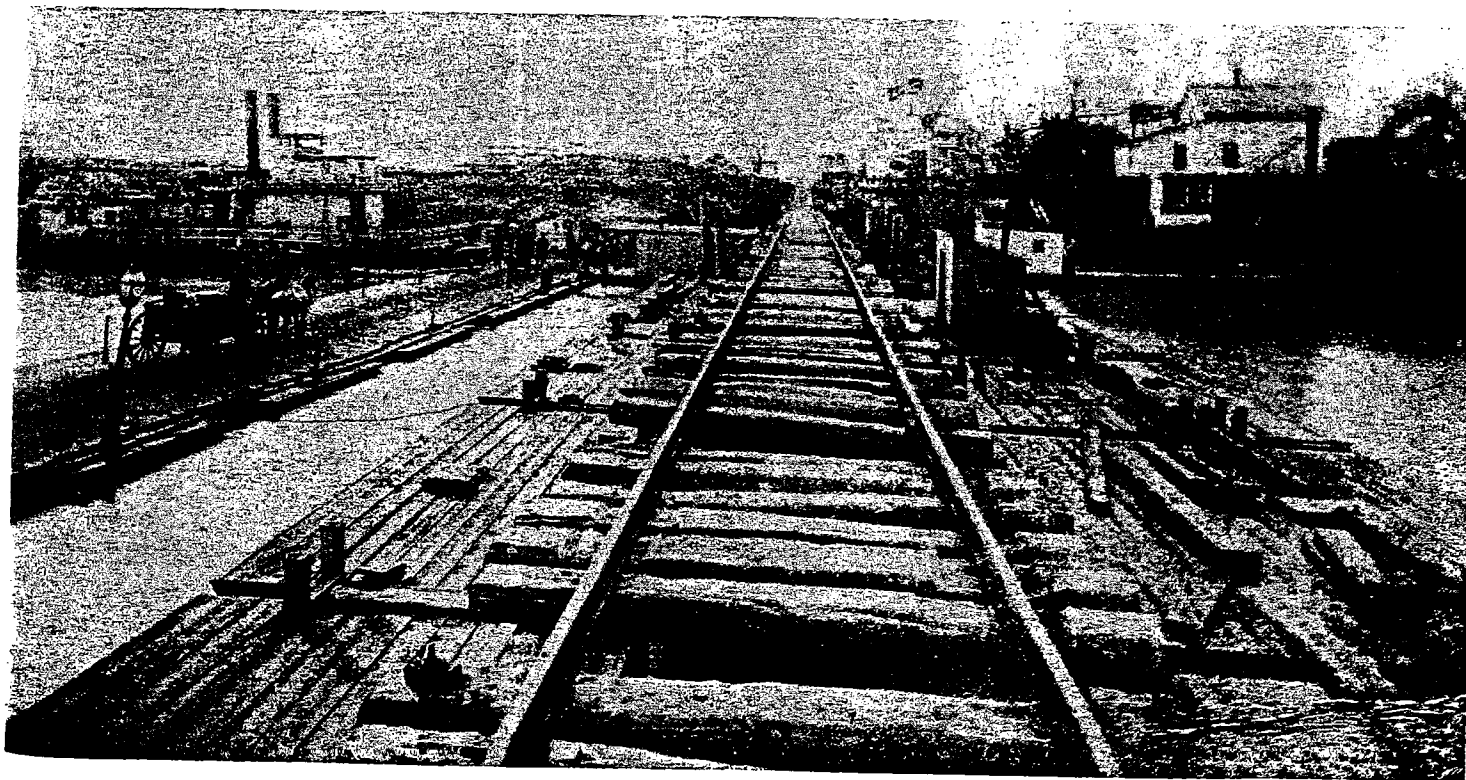
The first Presbyterian Church in Covington was erected in 1871. Methodism began in Covington in 1871 on a site which is now in the Missouri River.



First Presbyterian Church, burned July 6, 1924.

In 1855 John Feenan launched a crude looking boat upon the Missouri and carried passengers and wagons between Sioux City and Covington.

When Reverend George Haddock of Sioux City was assassinated August 3, 1886, the lawless element of Sioux City moved across the river into Covington and Stanton and set up saloons and gambling establishments. In 1889 the only communication between Sioux City and Covington was a ferry and ice in winter, so a pontoon bridge was



Pontoon bridge built on the Missouri River between South Sioux City and Sioux City in 1889.

built the same year to connect them. The bridge was swept away in 1892 and was replaced by another the same year. A familiar figure at this time was Capt. William Luther. He rendered valuable assistance on the pontoon bridges, and helped run a ferry boat across the Missouri River until 1891. In 1893 he constructed a pleasure steamer which was used on Crystal Lake.



Capt. William Luther

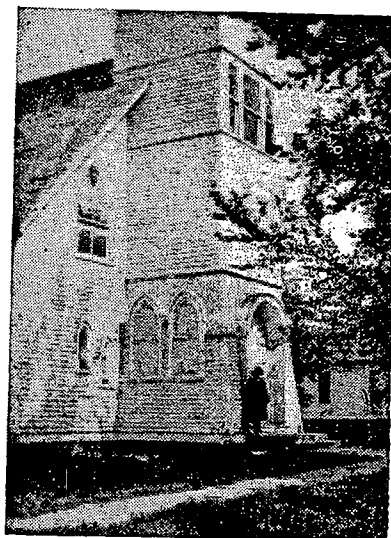
Covington and Stanton became noted, along with such towns as Dodge City, Tombstone and other pioneer settlements, as one of the frontier's wild, rip-roaring communities. A journal reporter who visited these towns, Covington and Stanton in the latter part of December 1890 wrote: "A morning visitor, unless it be Sunday or a holiday, will find two towns containing 250 persons all as quiet and subdued as a rural cemetery. The two towns begin to come to life about noon and to take on the looks of a carnival. Barkers, gamblers, and operators of all kinds of games of chance take up their stands on main street. Nightfall brings the two towns to full life. Every saloon and dive is illuminated with such light as the purposes of the proprietor will permit. In the dives of Covington one will find only one or two kerosene lamps which are further dimmed by smoke and soot." The reporter goes on to say—"Violence and sudden death played their part in the

brief history of these two towns. The Pea Green, a sporting house overhanging the Missouri River, is said to have had a trap door for the convenient disposal of bodies of those reluctant to part with their money. Fred Gordon of South Sioux City who spent his boyhood in Covington, made the statement that an uncounted number of bodies were taken from the river near Dakota City."

By 1895 both Stanton and Covington practically vanished due to ravages of fires and the river. The frontier moved on west past the two ghost towns.

The original South Sioux City was platted in 1857. The town we know as South Sioux City was incorporated in 1887, including Pacific City and Stanton, with Covington joining in 1893. The first church was built in 1887 by the Presbyterians and served also as a school until the town voted \$5,000 in bonds for the erection of a school building.

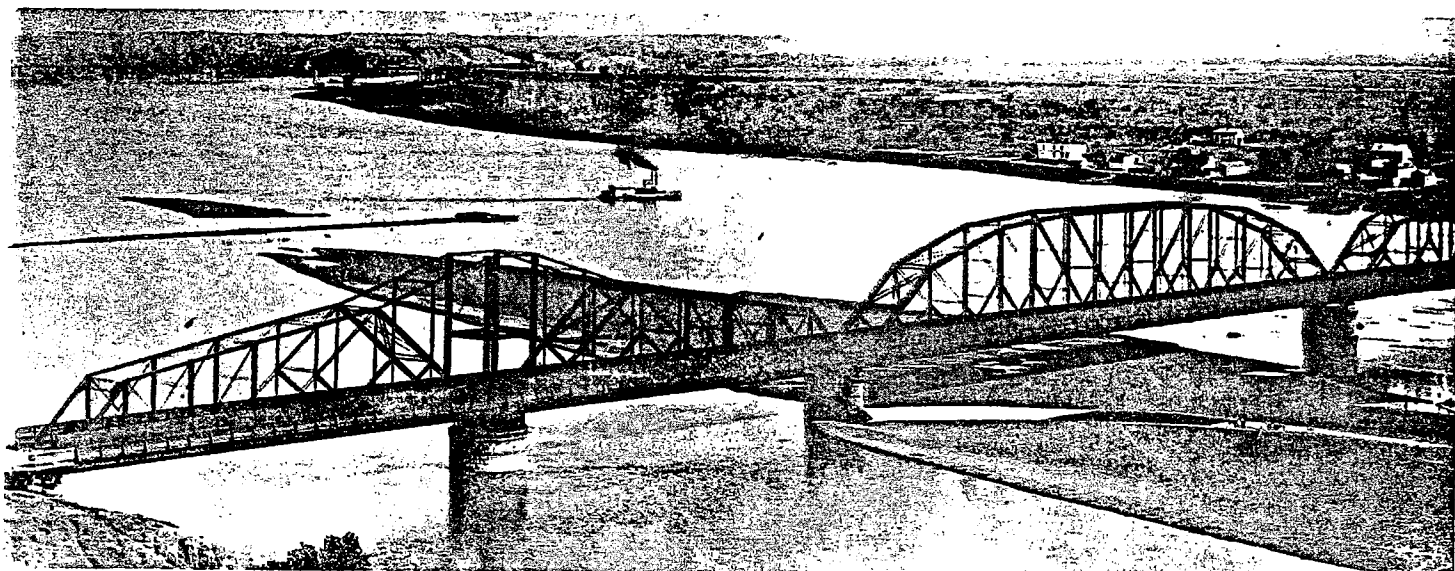
In 1893 the Catholic Church was under construction. The First Lutheran Church was built in 1890.



Catholic Church — 1893.



First Lutheran Church — 1890.



The Combination Bridge in the early 1900s.

The first horsecar track was built in 1887, extending from the depot on the far side of South Sioux City north to the ferry landing. In 1904 Talbot and Foy built an interurban line across the combination bridge to Dakota City along what is now Highway 77. One branch of the line extended to Crystal Lake which had become quite a recreation spot of northeast Nebraska. The line was discontinued in 1918. A combination bridge over the Missouri was completed on November 18, 1895. In 1951 the bridge became toll free, and in 1959 was widened to include four lanes.

One of the tales concerning the often treacherous Missouri that can, we understand, be verified is the one concerning the origin of the "Island." This area is the land from west of the high-bank on Highway 29 to the west of the bridge over Crystal Lake and bordered by Crystal Lake on the south. It seems that the old Missouri at that time passed through McCook Lake, Crystal and Silver Lakes, making a bend at Prospect Hill in Sioux City. Its course then paralleled the Sioux River past the present site of the Combination Bridge. On the bend of Crystal Lake a business was made of selling wood to the steamboats. A group of local citizens seeking to prevent this business from flourishing, placed a suitable charge of dynamite at the bend, causing an eddy which straightened out the old Missouri.

For more than thirty years South Sioux City has steadily improved. In spite of wars, depression, and floods.

At one time South Sioux City had three papers in operation. The "Homer Star" moved in from Homer after the 1940 flood and became known as the "Dakota County Star." Two other papers were in operation at this time in South Sioux City, the "Eagle" and the "Mail." The "Mail" was merged

with the "Star," and the "Eagle" went out of business in a few years.

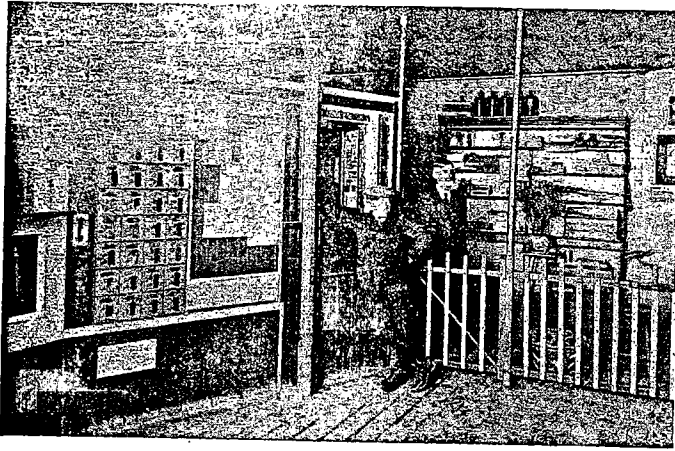


Main street of South Sioux City. Henry Pilgrim is pictured with his father and hired man.

The present post office is located in the spot that originally supported a saloon. At this saloon it is told a gambler wrote his name on a windowpane with his diamond ring to prove the steak he offered was authentic. The glass from this window was preserved when the present post office was built.



Exterior view of U. S. Post Office, South Sioux City, 1903. Leonard Kryger and Miss Blanche Kryger are pictured on steps.



Interior view of South Sioux City Post office, approximately 1906.

The first meeting of the Veterans of World War I was held June 20, 1920, at the Firehall located at East 19th and A Streets. The purpose of the meeting was to organize an American Legion Post. Art Lampman was selected as chairman and Lloyd Church was appointed secretary. At this meeting the name of the Post was agreed upon; namely Cownie-Church Post. Cownie was for Brodie Cownie who enlisted the day war was declared and died July 27, 1917, from wounds received in action. He was one of five Cownie brothers who served in the war. Church was for Ralph Church who enlisted in the hospital department of the U. S. Army and was acting as nurse when he died of typhoid fever in the field hospital at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, August 26, 1917. These two men were the first from this community to die in the service of World War I. In 1947 after World War II the veterans started making plans and raising funds to build what is now known as Memorial Hall. Most of the work on the Hall was done by the veterans themselves. It is now used not only for the meetings of the veteran groups and auxiliaries, but also by many other groups for business and social affairs.

In spite of the depression the South Sioux City Woman's Club with the aid of C. W. A. and P. W. A. funds was able to build the Public Library. The



South Sioux City Public Library.

Library cost \$10,000, \$2,500 of which came from C. W. A. funds.

A quote from the Dakota County Star concerning the 1952 Easter flood which covered sections of South Sioux City and surrounding territory to a depth of seven feet reads, "The Missouri has swept down stream leaving in its wake hundreds of families whose toughest battle has just started. The cost of cleanup, repairing shattered families, and offering a ray of hope will be staggering."



South Sioux City farm surrounded by water.



Five feet of water at Lake Park during 1952 flood.



A black and white line drawing of a man standing on a wooden bridge, looking out over a landscape. The man is seen from the back, wearing a suit and a satchel. In the distance, a sun is rising over a horizon, with rays of light. The bridge has a simple wooden railing.

NEW FRONTIERS

"All frontiers are settled now,"
He said with a gusty sigh.
"I wish I'd lived in early days
When adventure still ran high.

"The world is all quite civilized;
There's nothing left to dare.
No opportunity remains—
I wish I'd lived back there!"

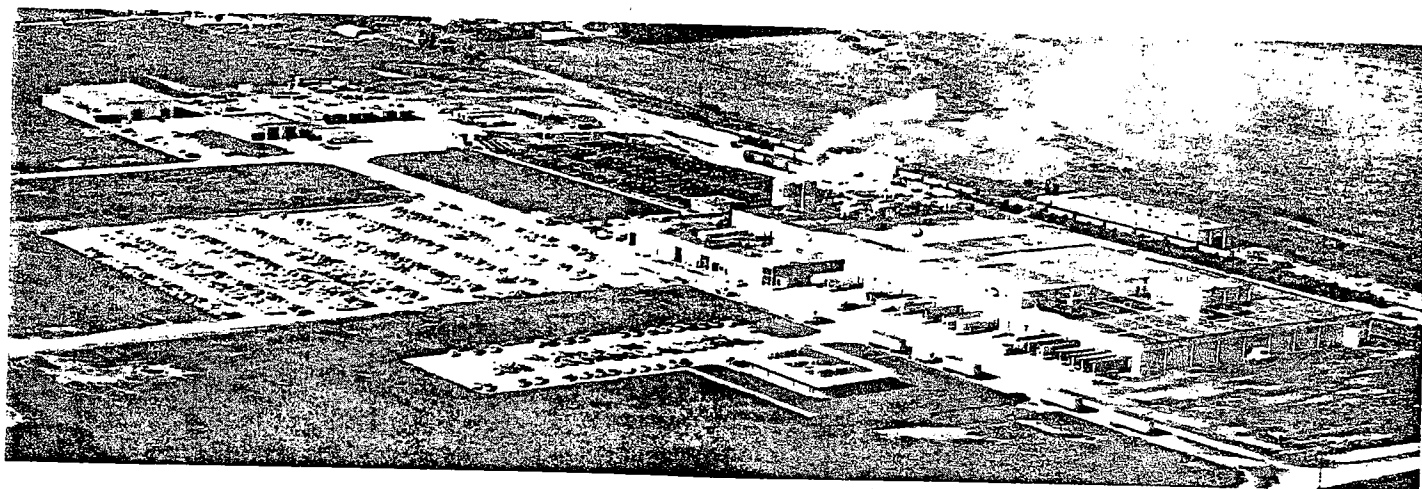
Oh foolish youth! The future's large
Where men may dare, and win.
At every problem still unsolved
The wide frontiers begin.

So long as hunger walks the earth,
While one child cries for bread,
Where men grow desperate for food,
The new frontiers are spread.

While children die of strange disease,
While men have ills uncured,
Where medicine stands questioning
Are still frontiers assured.

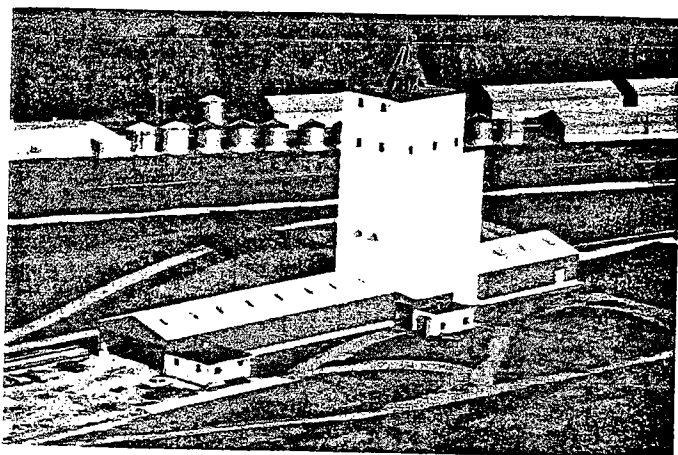
As long as knowledge questions, "Why?"
As long as earth has tears,
Will youth be challenged and youth dare
To conquer new frontiers.

—Ruth Lelong Peterson



\$12,000,000 IOWA BEEF PACKERS PROCESSING PLANT

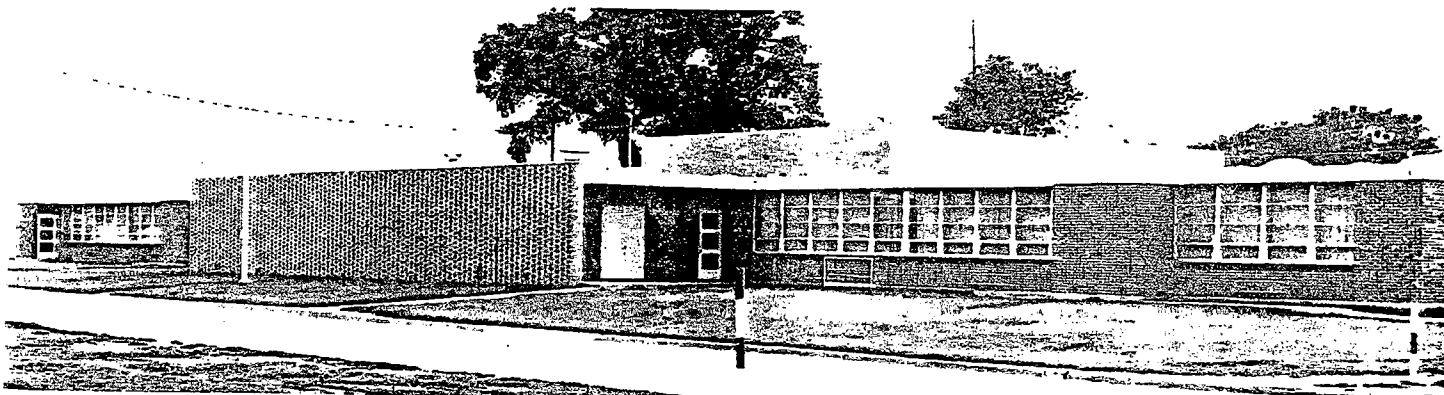
Today the city of South Sioux has its own electric distribution system and water system. Natural gas is cheaply and efficiently supplied by the Iowa Public Service Company. Five modern school buildings now take care of the more than 1850 students and some one hundred teachers. In 1966 a bond issue was passed for the building of a beautiful modern high school building. In 1966 South Sioux City was the third fastest growing city in Nebraska, being aided by several new industries including Iowa Beef Packers, Inc. and O. A. Cooper Milling Company.



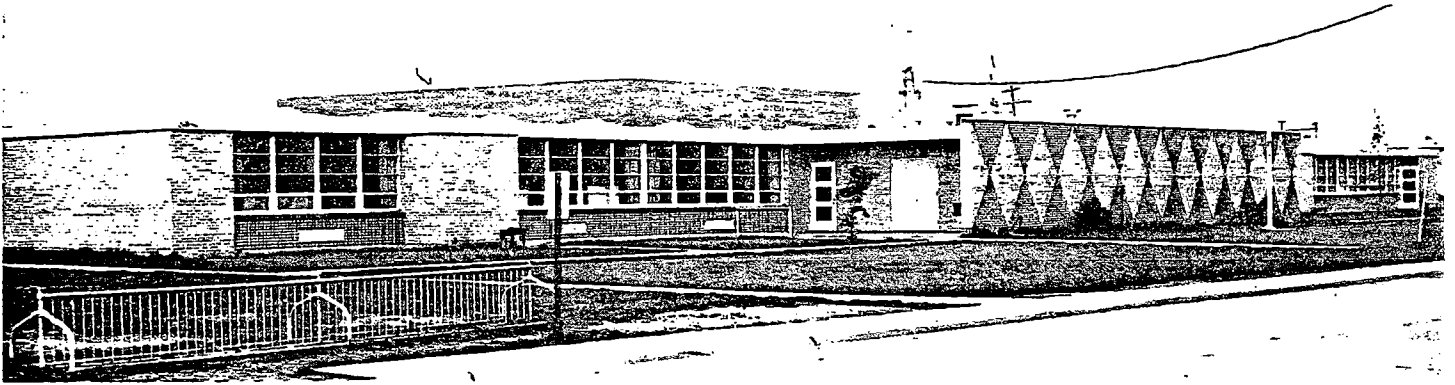
O. A. Cooper Milling Company.



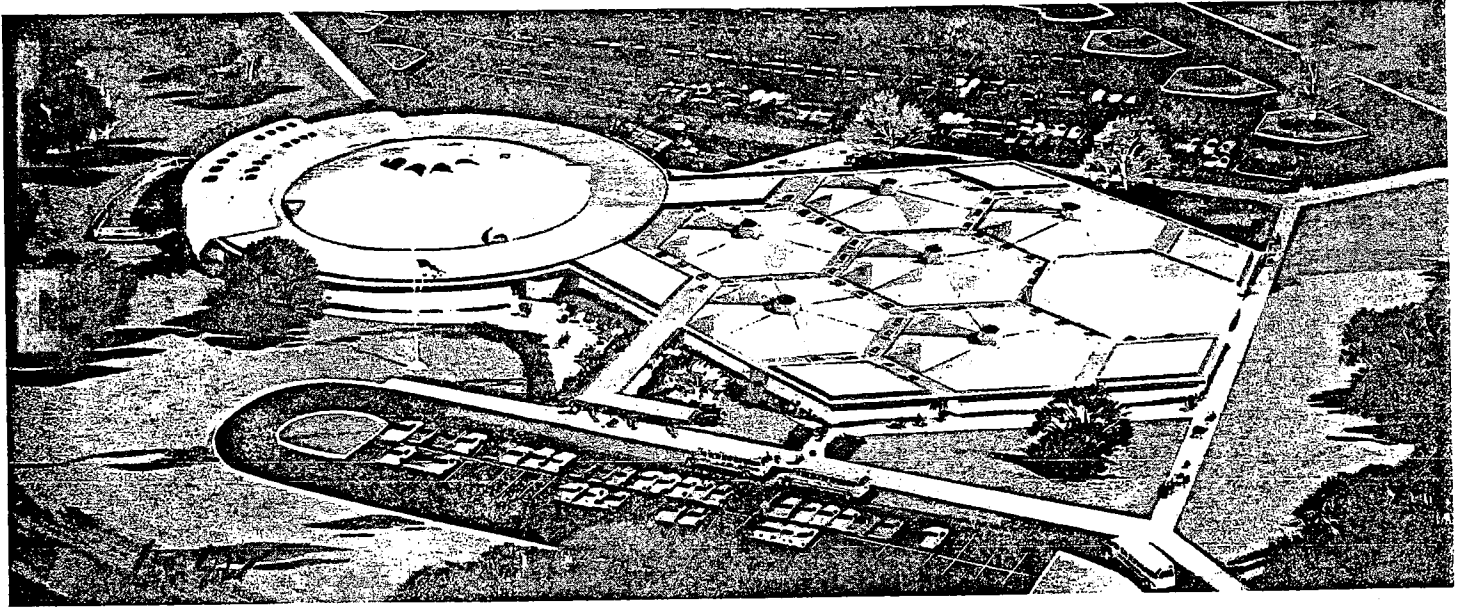
Drug store in South Sioux City in 1905, located two buildings from the corner of 21st and Dakota. Pictured are Leonard Kryger, Miss Bessie Kryger and Miss Pearl Kryger.



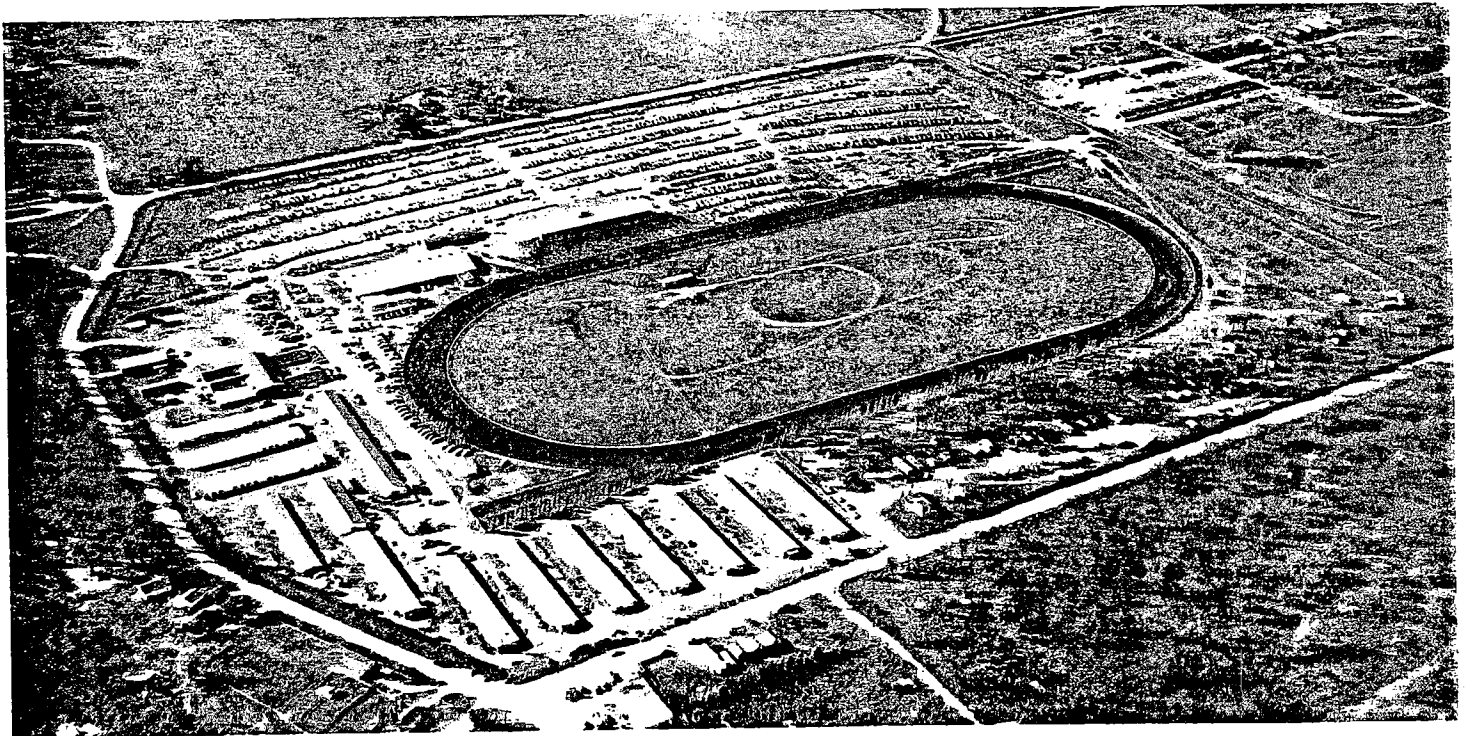
Lewis and Clark Elementary School.



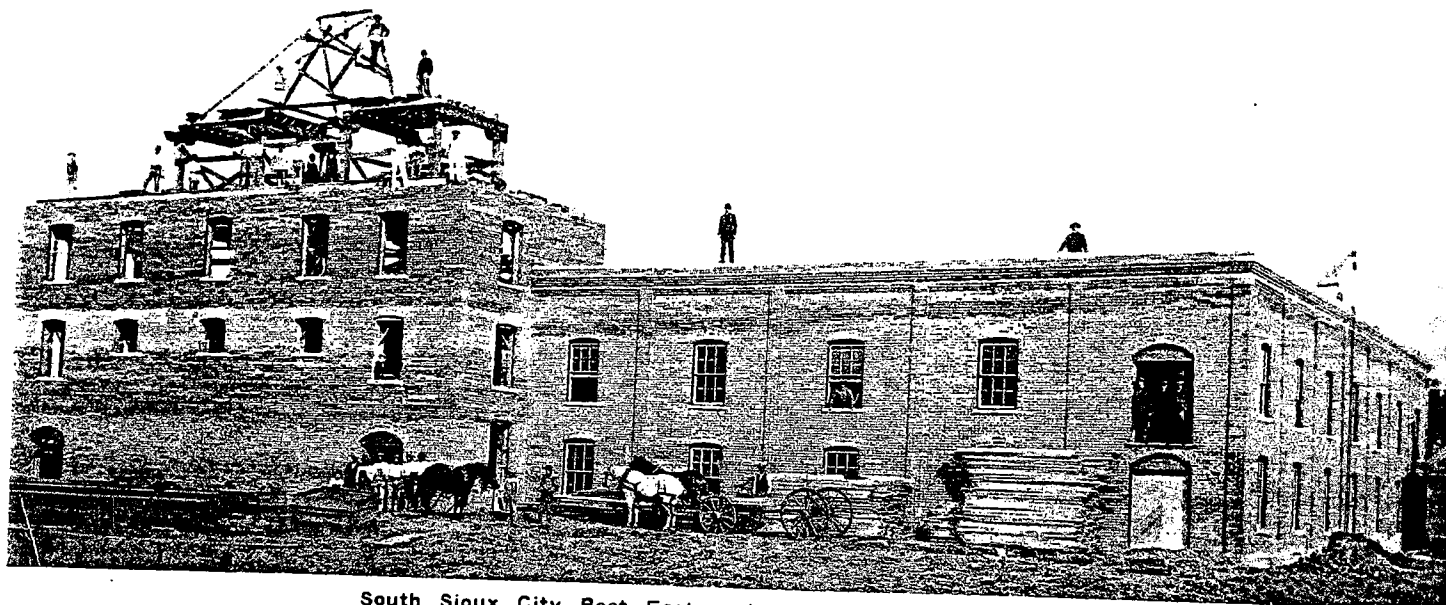
E. N. Swett Elementary School



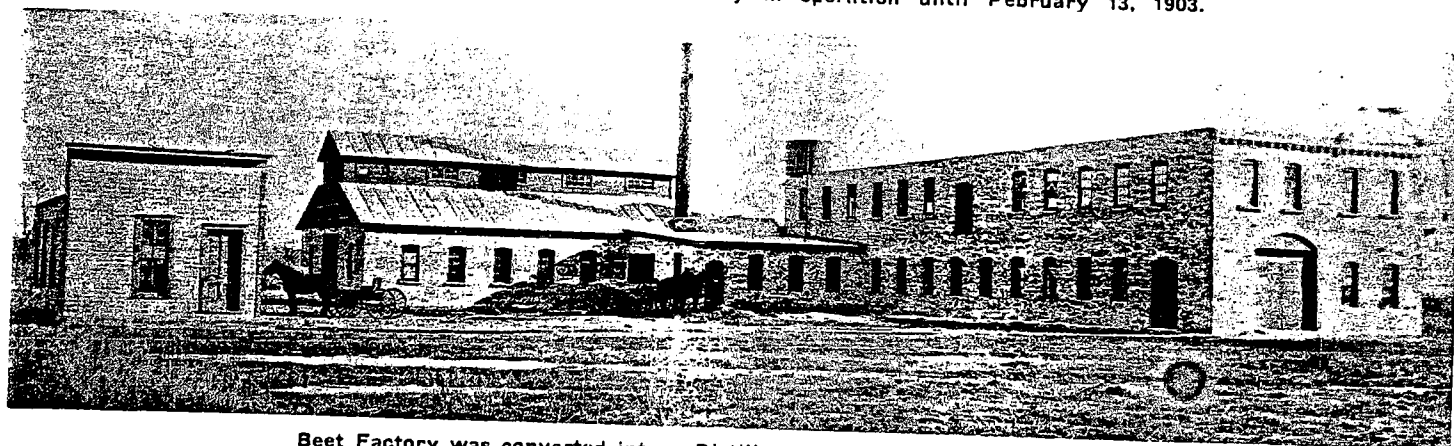
New \$2,000,000 South Sioux City High School, scheduled for completion in 1968.



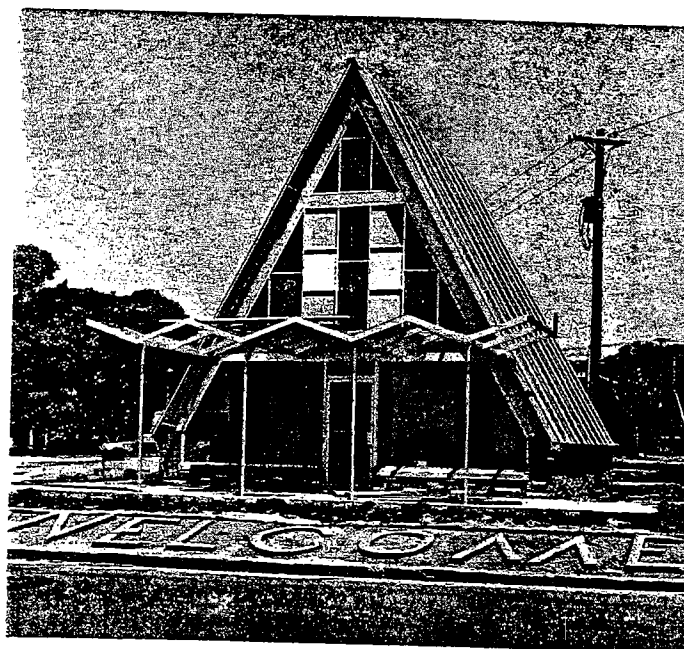
Atokad Race Track, west of South Sioux City.



South Sioux City Beet Factory in operation until February 13, 1903.



Beet Factory was converted into a Distillery in early 1900s, located on West 17th St.



Present Chamber of Commerce Office.

In Conclusion

The challenge our first settlers met, they who endured prairie fires, devastating storms, onslaughts of grasshoppers, destructive floods and the annihilating droughts, bound these leaders in a bond of friendship which resulted in the formation of the Old Settlers Association. The first reunion took place September 23, 1882, in the Baird's grove. The old settlers continued to meet through the years except for a lapse of fifteen years. This was, I'm sure, a source of inspiration for them as Mr. D. C. Dibble stated in his address at the fourth reunion, "As a single ray of light passes through the prism and becomes the seven colors of the rainbow, so will a strong pride in our county foster social relations, combat selfishness, instill patriotism, and fill the soul with noble and happy thought."

What a change we see today as we honor those who first broke the sod! Months of travel by oxen-drawn wagons are reduced to a matter of hours by fast flying jets. Modern homes are indeed a contrast to the sod shanty on the lonesome prairie. Yes, as we in Dakota County this year

gather to honor these pioneers and reflect on a century full of accomplishments we find ourselves again faced with great challenges, perhaps even greater than any that have come before. We must be the new pioneers and at the end of the next century may our descendants look back and with just pride honor us.



From the Rocky's lofty summits
Flowed the mighty waters wide,
To the shores of the Missouri
Came Man's never ending tide,
Red-skinned warriors from the valleys
Came to barter and to see,
And they all met in friendship
'Neath the lofty council tree,
There was born Nebraska,
One-hundred years ago,
That stands today in splendor
On the banks of mighty Mo.
From the Rocky's lofty summits
Flowed the mighty waters wide,
At the feet of our Nebraska
The midwest's joy and pride.

Nature's bounties bless Nebraska
With her fields of golden corn,
Fertile farmland feeds our nation
From this state where I was born.
Cattle roam her many valleys
In the seas of rippling grass
All the dreams of our forefathers
At last have come to pass.
This is our Nebraska
Her Century is here,
The future has no limit
For this State we hold so dear.
From the Rocky's lofty summits
Flow the mighty waters wide,
At the feet of our Nebraska
The Midwest's joy and pride.

—Tom Boughn

