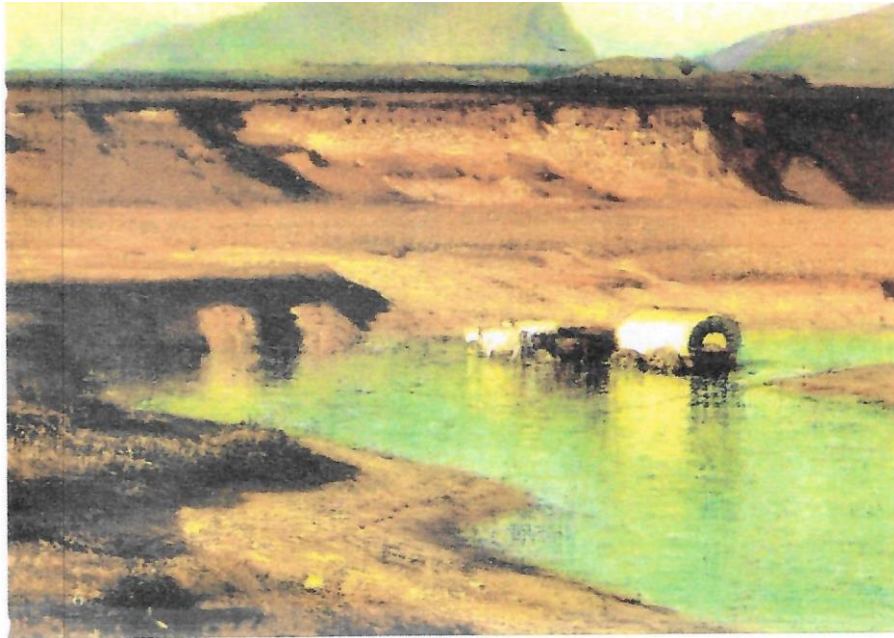


# THE MYSTERY OF THE PAST

FOR YOUTHFUL READERS



## THE LANDSEEKERS

Source: The Story of the Great American West  
by Random House Series

THE BIRD CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.  
All rights reserved

Volume I    April 2012    Issue VII

# The Mystery of the Past (for Youthful Readers)

## Introduction

- Out of the Past - Dorthy L. Mast pp. 1-2
- The Craft Corner - Dorthy L. Mast & Wanda Dowdy pp. 3-5
- The Photo Place - Wanda Dowdy p. 6
- Reflections - Connie Rooney p.7
- The Mystery Sleuth - Linda (Beeson) Carroll pp. 8-9
- The Keepsake - Linda (Beeson) Carroll p. 10
- The Map Quest - Helene Landenberger p.11
- Poetry of the Land - Helene Landenberger p. 12
- The Book Corner - Marsha Magley and Shirley Watson pp. 13-16
- Pieces of History - Hollis DaPron pp. 17-18
- Items of Historical Interest pp. 19-28

The Bird City Historical Association, Inc. Officers and Members

# OUT OF THE PAST

## Who Came and Why They Came?

Under the terms of the Homestead Act of 1862, a person could stake a claim to 160 acres of unoccupied public land by living on it and cultivating it for five years.

He could file for ownership at the nearest land office. By limiting these homesteads to 160 acres, Congress hoped to favor small independent farms rather than plantation-like spreads worked by slaves or tenants.

The fact that 160 acres of dry prairie barely sufficed to sustain a single family seemed to bother no one. Settlers claimed 224,000 acres in Kansas and Nebraska within 6 months after the act was passed. An equally strong impetus to settle the plains came later in the decade, as the railroads began laying tracks across the west. With empty box cars available for profitable freight and with countless uninhabited acres along the right-of-way, the railroad barons began selling farmland at \$2.50 an acre.

In an all-out campaign to lure settlers, railroad land offices churned out reams of propaganda that painted the prairies and plains as a veritable paradise. The call for settlers resounded throughout the East, and reached across the Atlantic to Northern Europe. Millions of pamphlets and posters printed in a variety of languages were circulated throughout Sweden, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, England and Wales. Local boosters in the prairie country sent support to the dangerous promotion activities of the railroads. "Land for the landless, homes for the homeless," were advertised to attract immigration from abroad.

These unrealistic promises brought settlers of different ethnic groups to the Northwestern corner of Kansas in the late 1870's and 1880's. These settlers usually settled on land close to their own ethnic group because of the language barrier and traditions and religions.

The Homestead Bill became a law May 20, 1862. It provided that "any person who is the head of a family, or who has arrived at the age of twenty one years and is a citizen of the United States or who shall have his declaration of intent to become such" and who has "never borne arms against the U. S. Government or given aid or comfort to its enemies" was entitled to 160 acres of land in certain areas or 80 acres could be taken in a railroad grant. A fee of \$18.00 was charged for each 160 acres. Fourteen

dollars was paid at the time of the application, and the balance paid when "final proof was made."

From the date of first application, usually called filing, six months was allowed to make improvements. On or before the expiration of that time the homesteader had to be on the land and begin improvements. It was further required that he make it his permanent residence for five years from the date of the first papers. Any time after that date, the settler could take out his final papers, provided, however, that he did it within seven and a half years after the filing. This final process consisted of giving evidence that the conditions had been fulfilled. If the evidence was satisfactory, a patent was granted on the testimony of two witnesses. This last formality was called "proving up."

Later legislation made certain exceptions in the case of soldiers, but only minor changes in the policy. One such change allowed war veterans to apply their service time in the army to the residence time for proving up on a homestead. Another amendment allowed an ex-soldier of the civil war who had served nine months to take 160 acres of land within the limits of a railroad grant -whereas all others could only take 80 acres.

There were several steps to acquiring a homestead patent as noted in the above Federal law.

Source: Pioneers -Time/Life Book  
The Sod House Frontier -by Everett Dick

Dorothy L. Mast

## Making a Dugout

When the hardy settler began the conquest of the prairie, he found at hand the material for shelter and fuel. The dugout and the sod house provided the shelter, and buffalo chips and prairie grasses served for fuel. The prairie home was made out of the sod or was dug out of the side of the hill.

The dugout was more easily constructed and became a temporary shelter until a sod house could be built. Often times the family lived in the covered wagon box dilling this time while the father used the running gears to haul the poles, brush and grass needed for the dugout. The family cooked their meals by a campfire and the group slept in or under the wagon.

The dugout was a room dug out of the side of a hill or ravine. A few posts were used to make a door frame or small window. The door opened out onto the ravine. The front wall was made of square cut turf. A roof sloping back into the hill was made of poles covered over with brush, a layer of prairie grass and finally a layer of dirt. It was bad enough for a man to live in a dugout; it was very trying for a woman.

Often the size of the interior of a dugout was only 8 feet by 12 feet. The dugout was a very common structure and was used for many purposes. Blacksmith shops, post offices, and even lodgings were sometimes located in them.

Not infrequently a combination dugout and a sod house were made.

Source: The Sod House Frontier by Everett Dick, p. 111  
Dorthy L. Mast

---

## The Sod House

Ordinarily, to prove up on a homestead, the land office required that a dwelling had to be at least twelve by twelve or twelve by fourteen feet. The sod house, although a little harder to build, was more satisfactory and lasted some years.

Some of these earthen homes were laid up rough, others plastered and still others hewed off smooth. These structures were of various sizes but a rather pretentious sod house followed a common building plan of sixteen feet wide and eighteen feet long.

The sod bricks were made by turning over furrows on about a half acre of ground where the sod was the thickest and strongest. Care was taken to make the furrows of even width and depth so that the walls of the structure would rise with regularity and evenness. A spade was used to cut the sod into bricks about three feet long. These sod bricks were then carried by wagon or makeshift sled to the building site.

For the first layer of the wall the three foot bricks were laid side by side around the foundation except where the door was to be made. The cracks were then filled with dirt and two more layers were placed on these. The joints were broken as in brick laying. Every third course was laid crosswise of the others to bind them together. This process was continued until the walls were high enough to put a roof on the structure.

A door and two window frames were set in the walls and the sod built around them at the proper time. Sometimes the builder drove sticks down into the walls for reinforcement. The gables were built up of sod or frame according to the means of the settler. Sometimes a forked post was set in each end of the structure furnishing a support for the ridge poles. The rafters were made of poles and the sheeting (layer) of brush. Prairie grass covered this and a layer of sod covered the entire roof. The settler who had access to the material and could afford it put a frame roof on it. In that case, the wooden sheeting was nailed on the rafters and tar paper spread over the boards. This was then covered with sod thinner than the sod used on the side walls and laid with the grass side down. The cracks were filled with fine dirt clay. From time to time the dirt clay had to be replaced as rain would wash it away. If the structure was to be plastered, a mixture of clay and ashes was used. If it was to be a smooth finish, the builder took a spade

---

and hewed the walls to a smooth finish and symmetrical proportions. One pioneer said, "A house was made without mortar, square, plumb or greenbacks."

Usually in a short time growths of sunflowers and native grasses covered the roof. The little sod house was frequently divided into two rooms by a quilt. In the beginning the doors were covered with buffalo or cow hides or blankets until a frame door replaced it. Eventually frame windows replaced the blankets.

The ordinary sod house had grave faults. The few windows permitted very little light and ventilation. Dirt and dry grasses kept dropping from the ceiling where sometimes insects, rodents and snakes found refuge. A disagreeable feature of these homes was the leaky roofs after a rain. Often when the roof was well soaked its weight was immense and the heavy rafters sank deeper and deeper into the soggy walls until occasionally the roof caved in and the walls collapsed. To prevent this kind of accident heavy posts were placed in the house to support the roof taking up much of the space in the interior of the house.

However there were some striking advantages to this type of structure. The wind seldom damaged it and it was protection against a prairie fire. A fireplace built of sod gave warmth and protection from the severe winters. The sod home was cool against the hot winds of summer. It gave protection against random Indian attacks.

As the family gradually moved into a frame house, the sod buildings were used for livestock and the sod was used for corrals, com cribs and other purposes.

Source: The Sod House Frontier by Everett Dick, p. 111  
Dorothy L. Mast

## A Sod House



This sod house was built in 1935 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of Bird City. It was located on the north side of 4th Street, west of the present day Big Ed's (2012), back about 50 feet from the street frontage.

These were the homesteaders who still owned their homesteads in 1935. They are from left to right: Ed Weaver, Bill Sawyer, Paul Wilkens, H. Weaver, O.Igo, Albert Weaver, W.H. Shahan and George Henry.

Source: from the Historical Collection of Dorothy L. Mast

Wanda Dowdy

---



# REFLECTIONS

p. 7

## Pioneer Settlers

Pioneer settlers had to work hard every day. The women spent many long hours rubbing by hand on a wash board, the clothes for their usually large family each week using the soap she had made. The white clothes had to be boiled in the copper boiler. She used a few tablespoons of lye to break the water.

Ironing was a hot job, too. Flat irons were heated on top of the old cook stove. When word came that company was coming, the stove was washed clean and when it was still warm, waxed paper was used to make it shine. Then the stove pipes had to be painted with black stove polish.

Lots of bread was baked nearly every day besides cake and pies. And during the year, the lady of the house made jelly, butter, pickles and sauerkraut. The family raised chickens for eggs and meat, along with hunting rabbits to supplement their meals.

The mother also sewed the family's clothes, making coats, shirts and dresses on her treadle sewing machine. Her hands were never idle.

The men used horses, mules and oxen to pull the machinery and work the soil to plant their crops. Harvest was done by hand with the whole family helping, and sometimes neighbors would help neighbors to get the crops in. The animals were very valuable to the homesteader in their work to make a home for their family.

Source: Information taken from Pat Rooney's mother's notes.  
Connie Rooney

## Homesteading History

What makes up a homesteading history? First, you have to exist or have existed. Second, it is important that you have identification like a name. Third, it is good to have a starting point. An example of this is last month's story about Charlie Bowers. His homestead story started from an orphan train arriving at Benkelman, Nebraska. He didn't have a name when he got off the orphan train, however, his adoptive parents gave him the name Charlie and legally gave him their last name Bowers. Although Charlie did not have a birth certificate to prove he existed, his adoption was all the proof he needed to show he existed. Now to making your homesteading history.

1. Write down your full name and, if you can, write down your parents' names or guardians' names. You can include grandparents' names, great grandparents' names and go as far back as you want into your family history.
2. Write down your homestead address (hint your Bird City address.)
3. Write down your address prior to coming to Bird City.
4. Write down your means of travel (car, horse, train, bus, motorcycle, pickup....) Write a description of this travel.
5. Draw a map of the route you traveled to get to your Bird City homestead from the previous homestead you listed above.
6. Write down adventures you had while traveling. List motels, restaurants, mountains, valleys, highways – all you can remember happening at each place.
7. Write down who traveled with you – family members, friends and animals are examples.
8. You have completed a basic homestead history of yourself and for yourself which you can save for forever.

9. You can add additional points of interest such as pictures, documents, advertisements, newspapers, property maps, drawings of the layout of your homestead and even of your old homestead from which you came. Your homestead history can be as detailed and interesting as you can create and it can go on for as long as you want to update your homestead history. Who knows, someday your grandchild or a student or a newspaper will find your homestead history very interesting and will want to share and/or print it. Put your information in a file and keep it in a safe and fireproof place. Have FUN!

Linda Carroll

---

# KEEPSAKES

p. 10

Pictured is Delores Lillick Dorsch modeling her keepsake made for her by her husband, Stanley.

Dee's father wore blue cambray shirts and when they became too worn for him to continue to wear, Dee's mother would cut up the shirts and use the fabric still useable to make quilts for those in need. Dee's mother cut all the buttons from the shirts of Dee's father and saved the buttons for sewing projects. The button collections of her mother were passed on to Dee. Stan created the beautiful keepsake earrings and necklace for Dee using the buttons her mother had cut from her father's worn out shirts. Dee wears the necklace and earrings proudly!! These keepsakes have a triple sentimental meaning from her father, her mother and her husband!!

Years ago, buttons, zippers, hooks and eyes, thread, fabric and everything usable was saved for future sewing projects -nothing was wasted and very little was thrown in the trash or the garbage dump. Create some keepsakes from articles of your family members and yourself to pass on to your children and your grandchildren. Keep the keepsakes in a safe place.



r

Linda Carroll

# THE MAP QUEST

## Tracks Through Time

p. 11

Dad tells me the '30's were rugged,  
When the dust filled the Kansas air,  
Sometimes it was more like night in the daytime,  
And the dirt was almost more than they could bear.

There were *no crops* for cash money,  
Barely enough feed to keep cows and chickens alive.  
To have the food they needed,  
Then after '38 when I was born, he said things began to thrive.

Always makes me feel good when he says,  
"After you were born things got nothen' but better."  
'Course he *always* was a positive man,  
Not one of your habitual fretters.

Being the farmer and stockman he was,  
The '40's and '50's were good,  
Lots of hard work and toil,  
Brought the kinds of rewards that they should.

The '60's and '70's he continued to work,  
Irrigating and feeding cattle,  
Always *getting work done* by Fair time,  
So a horse or a cow he could straddle.

Along about the '80's he began to slow down,  
But wait, we forgot 'coon huntin' to count.  
Lots of guys in the county, spent nights in the woods with him,  
Trailing dogs, howling the night song, 'til the flashlights grew dim.

He's done a lot of whip crackin' and snake killin',  
I'm talkin' the rattlesnake kind.  
Some call him a living legend,  
To me *he was just the BEST DAD you could find!*

Helene Landenberger

## POETRY OF THE LAND

### The West Kansas Yodel (Echoes from the Hills - Song)

Well, I've traveled far and wide, but the best countryside,  
Is right here in my Cheyenne County home.  
Oh, yes, Kansas is the best, in this part of the west.  
Where the sunshine dances on the hills.  
There was the Cheyenne Indian Nation, later on the Stage Coach Stations,  
All of this a part of our land.

Yodel -(Smoky Mountain style)

Oh the Trail Drives, they were long, and it sure was not a song,  
Driving cattle through those rugged breaks.  
Then the sod-busters came, staking out their homestead claims,  
On the quarter sections of the Kansas Plains.  
It can get as hot as blazes, but somehow it never phases,  
The love for our home on the range.

The yodel

Oh the deer are here again, but the antelope are thin,  
And the buffalo are making a return.  
How we love to tend our cattle, and there's snakes that have a rattle,  
Up north of Wheeler in those rocky hills.  
And the horses, they are fine, for we've kept the good bloodlines,  
All *this in our northwest Kansas* home.

The yodel

The winter winds, they sure can blow, and the snows we get will show,  
In the rangeland and the crops in the spring.  
The wild roses, they are few, and they love the morning dew,  
As they grow along the river and the streams.  
Oh, yes, Kansas is the best, in this part of the west,  
Where the moonlight shines on the hills.

The yodel (with an added pattern of yodeling and a high note, to finish)

Helene Landenberger

# THE BOOK CORNER

p. 13

Urs Vincenz Schild Sr., a son of Joseph Philipp Schild<sup>1</sup> and Katharine (Schnider)<sup>2</sup>, was born at Grenchen, Solothurn Canton, Switzerland<sup>3</sup>. He was of a mountain home and remained a mountain home resident as an adult, operating a dairy farm of brown Swiss cows in the Swiss Alps. Reared and confirmed in the Catholic faith, Vincenz Sr. was an Altar Boy, in Grenchen, in his younger years.

On May 4, 1869, Vincent Sr. took unto himself a bride at Grenchen, Rosalie (pronounced Rosallya) Gast.

Tradition came down to us, from my husband's grandfather, Fred Magley, that Rosalie, born at Bellach, Solothum Canton, Switzerland<sup>4</sup>, was the daughter of a peasant girl and a distinguished attorney named Meier. The caste system did not permit the marriage of lower and upper castes, so Rosalie was raised by her mother's family and was given that family's surname, Gast (pronounced Gosht). Rosa, as Rosalie came to be called, took her first Holy Communion on June 18, 1860, and joined the Catholic Church on May 14, 1869, in Grenchen.

Vincenz Sr. and Rosa became parents to four sons and five daughters, all born at Grenchen, three of whom died in infancy: the second born child, a boy, died in 1872, the third born, a girl, died in 1874, and Maria, fifth born, died in 1878.

The Schilds most likely never would have thought about coming to the United States, if it hadn't been for their first born child, Arnold, an ambitious, hardworking, cheerful and optimistic young man, who decided at the age of eight years that he wanted to see America.

Arnold Schild<sup>5</sup> was a well-read young man, and he had a good friend who loaned him books to read about the United States. That only increased his desire. In his teenage years, to the age of 17, he cut wood, worked in a large cheese factory (carrying 200 pound blocks of cheese from the first floor to the basement), and also worked at the Girard-Schild Watch Factory to pay his fare on a ship bound for New York. Reaching the port of New York in 1888, he inquired at an information center, looking for work, and Fairbury, Illinois, was recommended to him. Arnold worked and saved as a farm laborer at Fairbury, Illinois, until he was able to pay for his younger brother Joseph Vincenz' passage to America.

The two brothers worked together at Fairbury until Arnold decided to check out homestead lands here in Cheyenne County, Kansas. In 1890, he left Fairbury, came to Cheyenne County and homesteaded the land<sup>6</sup> for which he received a

---

<sup>1</sup> born, 1799

<sup>2</sup> born, 1810

<sup>3</sup> July 22, 1838

<sup>4</sup> May 1, 1845

<sup>5</sup> born April 23, 1871, died January 28, 1937

<sup>6</sup> NE 1/i of Section 2-Township 5-Range39

Patent on February 20, 1901, and the land he later deeded to his sister Mary. There he built a sod house which was used by the family for several years, at least through 1906.

In due time, Joseph Vincenz<sup>7</sup> followed older brother Arnold from Fairbury to the Cheyenne County homestead in 1891. The brothers worked well together and were able to bring the rest of the family from Switzerland in 1894.

Not all of the family members had wanted to leave Switzerland, most especially Father (Vincenz Sr.). Rosa, however, told him that she and the four younger children were going, even if he didn't. Though he did not want to leave his homeland, he eventually decided to go with the family.

Vincenz Sr., Rosa and their younger children, Maria/Mary<sup>8</sup>, Paulina/Pauline<sup>9</sup>, Hedwig/Hattie<sup>10</sup> and Isaac Eusebius<sup>11</sup> left Switzerland on

February 14, 1894, boarding the SS La Gascogne at Le Havre, Seine-Inferior, France. The family, being musically talented, was asked by other passengers to sing and entertain during the voyage to America. They earned a little bit of money that way, as the other passengers took up collections for them when they performed. Ship's Master E. Frangeul brought the ship to the Port of New York, (according to the ship's manifest which we thank Larry and Sara Shield for providing). The family disembarked and set out for Bird City, arriving here on March 4, 1894, to make their new home in the Arnold Schild sod house.<sup>12</sup>

Vincenz Sr.'s asthmatic condition, though somewhat eased, still plagued him for the last fifteen years of his life. His obituary says he passed from this life on February 4, 1907, from complications of asthma. A funeral was held from the family home on Wednesday, February 6, 1907, at 11:00 A.M., with burial at Cheyenne Valley Cemetery, Wheeler, Kansas. There being no Catholic Priest available, Joel Taylor, St. Francis Undertaker, officiated at the service. The family felt badly that Vincenz Sr. had not been afforded the privilege of receiving Final Rites of the Catholic Church.

In the vicinity of a month after Vincenz Sr.'s death, Arnold Schild, eldest son, travelled to Switzerland to get his childhood love, Anna Schnider<sup>13</sup>. Grandpa

Fred Magley told us that their return passage was during the season of Lent, so Arnold and Anna could not marry until they got to Cheyenne County. The St. Francis Herald of April 4, 1907 records: *"Mr. Arnold Schild of Dent and Miss Anna Schnider, (pronounced Schneeder, spelled Schnider) direct from Grenchen, Switzerland, were happily united in the holy bonds of matrimony at the office of the Probate Judge on Monday, Judge Adamson officiating. Mr. Schild but recently*

<sup>7</sup> born March 20, 1875, died January 2, 1927

<sup>8</sup> born 1878

<sup>9</sup> born 1881

<sup>10</sup> born 1882

<sup>11</sup> born 1885

<sup>12</sup> on NE \4 Section 2, Township 5, Range 39

<sup>13</sup> born October 31, 1882 Grenchen, died January 15, 1965



*paid a visit to the old home in Switzerland and his bride-to-be accompanied him across the waters. The Herald extends congratulations and best wishes for a long, happy and prosperous career."* They made their permanent home<sup>14</sup> on the location we most commonly think of as the Arnold Schild place, where the two-story house stood for many years, until destroyed by fire.

Anna (Schnider) Schild was a sister of Arnold, Werner and Adrian Schnider, all of whom had worked at the Girard-Schild Watch Factory in Grenchen. Werner Schnider met them while employed there, and met their sister, Anna, through them. The Schnider brothers remained in Switzerland – Arnold and Adrian Schnider were farmers in Grenchen. Werner Schnider made his living as a grocery store owner in Staad.

Following Vincenz Sr.'s death in 1907, Rosa remained in her son Arnold's household. In 1912, Arnold took his wife, Anna (Schnider) Schild, mother, Rosa (Gast) Schild, and young family to southeastern Kansas for a time, but they all returned to the farm on September 3, 1913. The following month, on October 23rd, Rosa was taken suddenly ill with heart problems from which she could not recover. She died on Saturday morning, October 25, 1913, and her funeral was held at the family home<sup>15</sup> on Monday, October 27, with Rev. Carlton, of Bird City, officiating. Burial was in the Cheyenne Valley Cemetery at Wheeler, beside her husband. Arnold Frederick Magley, one of Vincenz Sr. and Rosa's grandsons, and my father-in-law, was seven years old when Rosa died. He recalled the scene of the hearse, drawn by Strawberry Roan horses, making its way to Cheyenne Valley Cemetery.

Another recollection he shared was the death of Arnold and Anna Schnider Schild's fourth child, a son Werner Adrian<sup>16</sup>, who died on March 12, 1914, only 5

months after Rosa's death. Arnold Schild made the coffin his little son was buried in. The St. Francis Herald, March 19, 1914, says: *"A little child of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Schild, about four months old, died March 12, at 3 p. m. and was buried in the Wheeler Cemetery Sunday, March 15. We are unable to learn any of the particulars. The Herald extends sympathy to the bereaved ones."* The other children in that family unit were: Arnold Vincenz, Norma Hattie, Aria Leah, Olga Anna and Fred Harlan.

Joseph Vincenz Schild married Anna Elizabeth Nothdurft. They had seven children: August, Clarence Albert, George Kenneth, Rosa, Clara, Blanche and Martha.

Maria "Mary" married George H. Harpole. They adopted Joseph Henry and Lavon Colansky Harpole, a brother and sister.

Paulina "Pauline" married John L. Krimminger. They had no issues -- (children).

---

<sup>14</sup> SE V.i section 36 township 4 range 29

<sup>15</sup> SE V.i section 36 township 4 range 29

<sup>16</sup> born November, 1913

Hedwig "Hattie" Katherine married Friedrich "Fred" Magley, Sr. They had five children: Arnold Frederick, George Walter, Wilson Luther, Naomi Marie and Isaac Norman.

Isaac Eusebius, Vincenz Sr. and Rosa's youngest child, whom Rosa fondly called "Sebius," was married first to Norma Elma Loyd and second to Edna Helen Turley. His children numbered six: Joseph Harland and Norma Lottie by Norma Elma, and Lorence Delno, Hollis Madonna, Marvin Isaac and Melba Bernetta Edna by Edna Helen.

The original spelling of the Schild family was altered to Schield in this family line.

Vincenz Sr. and Rosa's five younger children and many of their descendants are buried at Cheyenne Valley Cemetery at Wheeler.

Contributed by Marsha C. SQUIRES Magley

## Pieces of History

p. 17

My Great Grandma Emily M. Walters Murray was born in England, on August 12, 1850. Emily came to America in a ship. She landed in New York and later moved to Franklin, Nebraska. She died on September 30, 1935 at Bird City, Kansas, and was buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Franklin, Nebraska. She was 85 years old.

My Great Grandpa John Murray was born in Scotland in 1836. He also came to America by ship, landed in New York and moved to Franklin, Nebraska. John died in 1901 and is buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Franklin, Nebraska.

Emily M. Walters and John Murray met at Franklin, Nebraska, and were married. They had three children, William, Nellie and Charles.

My Grandpa Charles Alexander Murray was born at Franklin, Nebraska, on July 27, 1881. He died on November 22, 1952 and is buried in Bird City, Kansas.

My Grandma Ella Scott was born in Oregon on May 5, 1882. Ella and her family moved to Furnas, Nebraska, Missouri and Smith County, Kansas. Ella Scott and Charles Alexander Murray were married on February 21, 1904 at Bloomington, Nebraska. They moved to Smith County, Kansas. They had two children, John Edward Murray and Ethel Mae Murray. My father John Edward Murray was named after his Grandpa, John Murray.

My father, John Murray, and his parents, Charles and Ella, along with John's sister, Ethel, moved to Cheyenne County, Kansas, in 1908 and settled on a farm six miles south of Bird City, Kansas. They were one of the early settlers in this part of Kansas. My grandma Ella died in 1913 and is buried at Bird City, Kansas.

Ella left two small children, John and Ethel, for Charles to raise. Charles' mother, Emily, and his sister, Nellie, came and helped to care for them.

My grandpa Charles Murray bought the three quarters of ground where the farm is now – 2012. My father John and his father Charles farmed the ground until my grandpa Charles moved to Bird City, Kansas, in 1945. My

father John bought the three quarters of ground from my Grandpa Charles. Then my father John did the farming.

My father, John Murray, was born at Smith County, Kansas, near Rankin, Nebraska, on June 5, 1905 and died June 26, 1987. He is buried at Bird City, Kansas. My father, John, met my mother, Eva Ann Pyle. They were married on

March 15, 1930. They had two daughters, Hollis Ilene Murray DaPron and Elaine Lucille Murray Kogl. My mother, Eva was born in Cheyenne County, Kansas, on February 6, 1909. She died on November 15, 2007 and was buried at Bird City, Kansas.

My folks, John and Eva, moved to Bird City, Kansas, on September 21, 1981.

These three quarters of ground now belong to Hollis Ilene DaPron and Elaine Lucille Kogl. Hollis Ilene DaPron's son, Darwin John DaPron, lives on the farm now.

Contributed by Hollis DaPron

# ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

## Fort Hays

America's western military outposts were extremely important in the settlement of the West. They brought people to provide protection for the routes of travel for stage lines and railroads as well as the many seeking a better life.

These forts were often called "Sentinels of the Plains" providing protection as railroads were constructed through traditional Indian hunting areas. Fort Hays was especially active during the years of the late 1860's and early 1870's. It served as a military depot supplying outposts where there were no operating railroads.

The Smoky Hill Trail opened in 1859 as the shortest route to the new gold fields in Western Kansas Territory - now Colorado. It extended west from Atchison on the Missouri to Fort Riley and on to Denver.

Merchant David A. Butterfield first had the courage to attempt stagecoach and freight service along the Smoky Hill Trail in 1865 and founded the Butterfield Overland Dispatch (BOD) and sponsored a survey of the trail and established station houses and stables. Big Creek station first was established midway between the first Fort Hays location and the present day site where the surveyor had found what he called a "good rock ford" to cross the stream. This station was designated a "home and cattle station" where food and a resting place for passengers and crews could be provided. As soon as service began, Indian troubles arose. Already along the trail, Fort Ellsworth, which became Fort Harker, was founded in 1864 at the junction of the Smoky Hill Trail and Fort Riley -Fort Lamed Military Road. Troops were then stationed further west on the Smoky Hill Road. Fort Fletcher became Fort Hays. Monument Station and Camp Pond Creek, which became Fort Wallace, were established in 1865. The main mission for these posts was to protect BOD trains, stations, equipment, employees and passengers. Distances were too great and troops were too few to prevent extreme losses to Indian raiders so eventually BOD was sold to competitor Ben Holladay who operated along the Platte River. Eventually the main mission of the Posts was to protect the railroad along the Smoky Hill valley.

The first Fort Fletcher, named for Missouri Governor Thomas C. Fletcher, was founded October 11, 1865, near the Smoky Hill Trail crossing

of the North Fork of Big Creek approximately six miles east of the BOD station. It consisted of tents for men and supplies situated in a loop on the right bank just above where North Fork joined the main stream. By early 1866 the soldiers were living in small log cabins and dugouts they had constructed. Some of the developing garrison of infantrymen were known as "galvanized Yankees", Confederate soldiers captured during the Civil War who were permitted to serve the Union in the West rather than sit in prison.

The soldiers of Fort Fletcher were responsible for protecting wagon trains, stage stations and travelers along the trail from Fossil Creek Station, near present Russell, to Monument Station located about ninety miles west. Supplies had to be routed from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley to Fort Harker and finally Fort Fletcher. Indian problems increased and there were too few troops and it was thought the fort might have to be abandoned because troops rode the trains and did not have the mobility Indian ponies provided. Additional troops were not available because the post Civil War Army was rapidly reduced – Fort Fletcher often did not receive needed supplies. Fort Fletcher was temporarily abandoned in May, 1866, and re-established in October, 1866.

The coming of the railroad was likely the most significant event in the opening of the West. The first railroad to build across Kansas was the Eastern Division of the Union Pacific Railway, later the Kansas Pacific Railway. Indian harassment continued but the railroad operated to Hays City on Big Creek by October 8, 1867 and reached Fort Wallace the following year and completed to Denver in 1870.

Fort Fletcher, when re-garrisoned, was several hundred yards northeast of the earlier location. Soon after the relocation, the fort was named Fort Hays to honor General Alexander Hays from Pennsylvania. He was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5, 1864. Permanent quarters were needed to be built since this was to be a permanent installation. Construction proved difficult because they were forced to use readily available materials. Quarters were built mostly of small logs, one story, and two or three buildings of stone.

General Winfield Scott Hancock decided the Fort should be moved nearer the Big Creek Station to be better served by the railroad. Before this could be done, heavy rains flooded the post. Seven soldiers and two civilians drowned. A new location was selected by Major Alfred Gibbs. The new site was officially occupied June 23, 1867. No major fight occurred in the immediate area of Fort Hays and it was never attacked by

Indians. The Indians attacked railroad construction camps and stage stations, sending workers back to Fort Hays.

Lieutenant Custer and his seventh Cavalry led his command through portions of northwest Kansas, southwest Nebraska and northeast Colorado Territory, but, unable to locate the hostile Indians, abandoned his command at Fort Wallace and returned to Fort Riley. There he was arrested, court-martialed and was suspended for one year, but was back in command and fighting Indians the next year.

Fort Hays remained as an active post until 1879, but, with the building of towns, homesteads and the efficiency of the military, the need for Fort Hays was finished. It did remain, however, for a time to assure everyone the change in population was permanent. The fort had made a significant contribution to the local economy for more than twenty years.

Source: Fort Hays, by Leo E. Oliva

Rosemary Powell

## ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

### Fort Wallace

Fort Wallace was established near the Smoky Hill Trail near the Park Creek Station of BOD (Butterfield Overland Dispatch) in far Western Kansas to protect travelers and the Stage Line from Indians in a vast region. Its primary mission was to help guard the Smoky Hill Trail from a point 150 miles west of Fort Hays and 200 miles from Denver.

Fort Wallace was founded in the midst of the largest region still controlled by several Indian tribes. These posts were called Forts, but were usually not fortifications.

Fort Wallace and the town of Wallace were named for William Harvey Lamb Wallace who was mortally wounded at the Civil War Battle of Shiloh. He died four days later on April 10, 1862.

The troops stationed at Fort Wallace faced more Indian opposition and engaged in more battles than any other post in Kansas. Limited man power, supplies, government policy and parsimony made it difficult for the Army to suppress Indian resistance on the Plains after the Civil War.

Government policy alternated between the use of force and peaceful negotiations. Neither side understood the culture of the other, thus all treaties were eventually broken.

There were many battles with the Indians near the Fort and all the stage stations were attacked. The post did not have enough manpower to provide escort for the stage coaches to operate safely so the stage line was virtually shut down. Because of the increase of Indian resistance, the garrison at Fort Wallace was increased from 243 at the end of June, 1867 to 336 in July and 541 in August. Troops from General Winfield Scott Hancock's expedition against Plains Indians arrived but Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer was in the region camping near the fort, and caused the Indians to back off and raids decreased. Freight wagons and stagecoaches moved again, when Custer's troops were ordered to the Platte and he led part



of his regiment to Fort McPherson near Maxwell. He was sent to scout along the upper forks of the Republican River. He sent a company of his regiment to Fort Wallace to obtain supplies for his command. A detachment was sent to Fort Sedgwick with dispatches for General Sherman. Custer did not leave the Republican until supplies arrived from Fort Wallace.

On June 26, Custer's supply train was attacked by an estimated five hundred Cheyenne and Lakota Sioux. The moving fight lasted several hours with the Indians withdrawing as the supply train reached Beaver Creek.

Because Custer was late in reaching the Platte, Lieutenant Lyman S. Kidder and ten men, with a Sioux guide, had been sent from Fort Sedgwick to find Custer at the Republican River and deliver orders for Custer to move toward Fort Wallace in search of hostile Indians. Not finding Custer, they headed toward Fort Wallace. Lieutenant Kidder and his entire party were killed by a party of Indians on the Beaver Creek (in present north Sherman County) on July 1, 1867.

As Custer headed for Fort Wallace, he found and buried the remains of the Kidder party. Custer's command reached Fort Wallace on July 13<sup>th</sup>

and camped about three miles west of the post.

Indian activity lessened because of the increased numbers of military. Mail and supply trains arrived and the lessening of Indian raids improved the outlook for troops at the post.

Since the situation was quiet at Fort Wallace, Custer soon left with 75 men and made a forced march to Fort Hays, supposedly to obtain supplies but really to see his wife, whom he had expected to find at Fort Hays, but she had gone from there to Fort Riley. A detachment of his escort, which could not keep up with Custer's rapid pace, were attacked near Downer's Station and two troopers were killed.

Custer later claimed he was going to get medical aid for his troopers because cholera had broken out in his camp near Fort Wallace. Custer however left the Fort Wallace Camp on July 15<sup>th</sup> and the first case appeared there on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Custer raced to Fort Harker by ambulance and to Fort Riley by railroad. There he found Elizabeth safe and well. He was arrested and was court-martialed, found guilty and suspended without pay for a year.

Increases in Indian raids in the spring and summer of 1867 prompted Congress to attempt to bring peace to the Great Plains, but they may have done the opposite. Treaties were signed by some of the Tribal Chiefs provided that all warfare stopped immediately. It looked good on paper to some tribesmen but their leaders did not agree. They were determined to

protect their lands from further settlement, consequently the Indian War renewed in 1868.

General Sherman declared negotiations with the chiefs "senseless twaddle" that did nothing to the Indians who preferred war. The Indians had not moved to assigned reservations and resumed hunting buffalo and tried to continue their traditional way of life. Dissatisfied Indians began to raid stage stations, harass railroad construction crews, attack homesteads and steal livestock. General Sheridan argued that defeating the hostiles and forcing them on the reservations was the only solution.

Sheridan was authorized to initiate two plans for dealing with the Indians. A company of civilian scouts, led by Major George A. Forsythe, might succeed in locating the elusive enemy. Before these plans could be set in place, Indian raids became threatening.

Before Forsythe's company of scouts had been organized Sheridan selected Lieutenant Frederick Beecher, a Civil War veteran and nephew of famous preacher and abolitionist, to take the veteran scouts and guides to find and possibly negotiate with those Indians who refused to leave Kansas for their reservations in Oklahoma.

The raids increased and many people were killed and wounded. General Sheridan was spurred to action so he launched his plan to employ a company of civilian scouts to assist the troops. On August 24th, Major Forsyth, who had been given the rank of Brevet Colonel, was directed to "employ 50 first-class hardy frontiersmen to be used as scouts against the hostile Indians, to be commanded by yourself." Lieutenant Frederick H. Beecher, Third Infantry, was Forsyth's subordinate officer. Dr. John H. Mooers, a surgeon, was attached to the unit. William H. H. McCall, a Civil War veteran who had received the rank of Brevet Brigadier General, served as a sergeant. Sharp Grover was named chief scout.

The army had no authority to enlist volunteers for such duty so they were enrolled as quartermaster employees. Many of the men furnished their own horses. The army supplied equipment and rations. Scouts were enlisted from Fort Harker and Fort Hays and sent to Fort Wallace where they arrived September 5th.

Forsyth's Scouts were sent to investigate the attack on a wagon train where two teamsters were killed. They determined the attack had been committed by a group of some twenty Indians and followed their trail to the Republican River.

On September 16, still on the trail, the scouts camped near the Arickaree Fork of the Republican in present day eastern Colorado. The

following morning they were attacked by a large force of Cheyenne and Sioux. They took refuge on an island in the creek, dug rifle pits and fought back. Their horses were soon killed or captured. Forsyth was severely wounded, eight of the scouts were badly wounded. Lieutenant Beecher, Surgeon Mooers and several of the scouts were mortally wounded. The site was later named Beecher Island to honor Lieutenant Beecher.

As they were surrounded by such a large force, the situation seemed hopeless. During the first night, volunteers Jack Stillwell and Pierre Trudeau were sent on foot to try to break through Indian lines and go to Fort Wallace for help. The second night, Allison J. Pliley and Chauncey B. Whitney departed on the same mission but were forced back by Indians. The following night Pliley and Jack Donovan succeeded in another attempt. The Beecher Island scouts did not know if either attempt had succeeded. Their rations ran out and they ate some flesh from the dead horses. The Indians kept them pinned down 4 days and remained at the site for 9 days, unable to move the wounded.

Stillwell and Trudeau reached Fort Wallace on the evening of September 22nd. They had traveled at night and hidden during the day. Commander Henry C. Bankhead sent couriers to find Captain Louis H. Carpenter who was scouting the Smoky Hill Trail west of Fort Wallace with Company H, Tenth Cavalry. (This regiment as well as the Ninth Cavalry were comprised of African-American enlisted men known as buffalo soldiers.) Carpenter, accompanied by experienced scout James J. Peate, was to proceed directly to relieve Forsyth. The messengers reached Carpenter the next day. Bankhead lead 106 men to find Forsyth.

Donovan and Pliley, who left Beecher Island on the third night, arrived at Fort Wallace on September 23rd. They had reached a ranch and caught a stagecoach to the post. They arrived after Bankhead's rescue party had departed.

Meanwhile Donovan set out from Fort Wallace with four other men to overtake Bankhead or Carpenter and lead them to the scouts. They found Carpenter on the morning of September 25<sup>h</sup> and Donovan and Peate lead the

Tenth Cavalrymen to Forsyth's scouts. Later the same day Carpenter's supply train of thirteen wagons arrived and the starving scouts soon ate their fill. Tents were set up to protect the wounded. Assistant Surgeon Jenkins A. Fitzgerald accompanied Carpenter and treated the wounded as best he could. He found it necessary to amputate one leg of Louis Farley, but Farley died during the night. Colonel Bankhead's troops arrived the next morning bringing Assistant Surgeon Theophilus H. Turner, more food, medical

supplies and ambulances. The dead were buried on the island, (some were later removed to the post cemetery) and the survivors arrived at the Post on September 29<sup>h</sup>. The wounded recovered in the post hospital. Forsyth's

command had lost five or six (one scout was not recovered and presumed dead) and fifteen wounded. Indian losses were nine killed, including Roman Nose, and an undetermined number of wounded. Sheridan's experiment with civilian scouts had not brought the desired results. Forsyth had been shot in both legs and required months to recover.

While Forsyth's scouts were besieged at Beecher Island, Indian raids continued. Company I, Tenth Cavalry was sent to guard the stage line from the end of the track at Sheridan to Denver. On September 17th, Captain Graham engaged an estimated 100 Indians near Big Sandy Creek in eastern Colorado. He reported that eleven Indians were killed and fourteen wounded while his losses were one man wounded and ten horses killed or captured.

More scout groups were formed who participated in searching for Indians, and troopers from Fort Wallace encountered Indians. Some troopers were killed and wounded in the battles in the widespread area.

After many engagements, the Indians moved from the area. It was believed that the troops had forced them to leave Kansas but they had formed into small groups and continued to harass traffic along the Smoky Hill Trail.

There were other winter campaigns with William F. Cody and James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok at Fort Wallace for a short time. Custer was recalled into the Army and his troops attacked and destroyed Black Kettle's Cheyenne village in the Washita River in present day Oklahoma. Black Kettle, an advocate of peace with the United States who had survived the Sand Creek Massacre four years before this, was killed along with many others. The 53 Cheyenne captives, mostly women and children, were taken to Fort Hays. Because most Indians accepted reservation assignments, Indian occupation in Kansas dwindled.

Even after the Washita battle, however, Chief Tall Bull and some Cheyenne refused to go to reservations. Early in 1869 more raids were reported. Big Timber Station and Lake Station were attacked with two civilians killed. Troops searched along the Beaver and Republican Rivers, but found no Indians.

All was quiet until April 16th, when Indians drove a small detachment back to the post without loss to either side. On May 26, 1869, Indians hit a wagon train, wounded 2 teamsters and escaped with 300 mules. On May

31st, Indians attacked a government supply train eight miles west of Fort Wallace. Two soldiers and 5 Indians were wounded.

In early June, the Cheyenne tore up the railroad track near Grinnell and derailed a train. Most of the passengers and crew, who were armed, drove off the attackers. On June 19th the Indians attacked a military supply wagon train, capturing 2 mules.

The same day a railroad survey party, guarded by troopers, was attacked. Two soldiers were wounded. On June 26th Indians raided the town of Sheridan and killed one man. Attacks continued on the railroad and telegraph lines, but they were protected by guards from the Fort who usually repulsed the attackers.

The public was outraged and the Army was directed to end these hostilities. Major Eugene A. Carr led his Fifth Cavalry into the field again and searched about a month before defeating Tall Bull's Cheyenne Dog Soldiers on July 11, 1869 at Summit Springs in Colorado. Two women were in the camp, Suzanna Alderdice and Maria Weichel, who had been captured in June in North Central Kansas. Mrs. Alderdice was killed in this battle and Mtis. Weichel, who was wounded, was rescued.

The railroad was complete to the new town of Wallace, near the post, and troops from Fort Wallace continued to help protect the area.

Indian resistance continued. On March 21, 1870, they attacked the guard at Eagle Tail Station – present day Sharon Springs, Kansas. In May the Indians killed a road master and 10 railroad workers between Lake Station and Kit Carson, Colorado.

On May 31, 1870 Carlyle Station, present day Oakley, Kansas, was attacked with 2 soldiers and 3 Indians killed. On June 3rd Grinnell, Kansas, was attacked.

Indian resistance became sporadic and the Post garrison was reduced nearly by half. No Indian depredations were listed for the state of Kansas in 1873 and the forts were ordered to be abandoned. However, Fort Hays and Fort Wallace remained to guard against additional Indian outbreaks. Some raids occurred in 1874 in southern Kansas during the Red River War.

Meanwhile buffalo hunters had eliminated the large herds in the Central and Southern Plains eliminating the primary sustenance for the Indians.

The army arranged a highly publicized buffalo hunt for Grand Duke Alexis of Russia in January, 1872. He and his entourage was accompanied by officers Sheridan, Custer and Forsyth, with Buffalo Bill Cody as guide. The post supplied seventy cavalry horses and four ambulances, each drawn

by six mules to assist in the hunt. A large herd was found a few miles southeast of Kit Carson, Colorado, and more than two hundred buffalo were killed.

Other hunting expeditions were organized and buffalo were nearly eliminated. Almost one hundred buffalo hides were shipped from Wallace during the winter of 1872 – 1873. In the next few years buffalo bones were gathered and shipped by the carload. Many Indians were outraged and instigated the Red River War. Because Indians were raiding into Kansas at that time troops were sent to scout through the region. The post was undermanned and could do little to protect the outlying area. They did recover and bury the remains of the German family in October, 1874 after the massacre by the Cheyenne.

There were a few more raids and after 1876 the post was reduced to fewer than one hundred soldiers with little more to do than routine duties and maintenance.

The "Last Indian Raid" in Kansas occurred in September, 1878 when 300 Cheyenne, under Chief Bull Knife and Little Wolf, left the reservation in Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma) in an attempt to return to their homeland in Montana. They escaped from troops from other posts. Squads from Fort Wallace were posted along the railroad to watch for the Indians. The squads were not needed, however, when the Cheyenne crossed the railroad undetected and proceeded northward, killing 19 citizens in Decatur.

After 1878 troops were engaged in routine garrison works as the post was no longer needed to protect the area. After December, 1880 the garrison averaged less than 40, a caretaker unit to protect the buildings and reservation from settlers.

Fort Wallace had served its mission well, protecting a vast region and engaging hostile Indians. Travel was made safe and settlers were able to occupy the lands from which the Indians had been driven. It also played a significant part in the military conquest of the Indians of the Central Plains.

Source: Fort Wallace: Sentinel of the Smoky Hill Trail by Leo E. Oliva  
Rosemary Powell