

THE MYSTERY OF THE PAST

FOR YOUTHFUL READERS



THE LANDSEEKERS

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

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GENEALOGICAL BEATITUDES

Blessed are the great-grandfathers who
saved embarkation and citizenship
papers,
For they tell when they came.

Blessed are the great-grandmothers, who
hoarded newspaper clippings and old
letters,
For these tell the story of their time.

Blessed are all grandfathers who filed
every legal document,
For this provide the proof.

Blessed are grandmothers, who preserved
family Bibles and diaries,
For this is our heritage.

Blessed are fathers who elect officials
that answer letters of iniquity,
For to some they are the only link to the past.

Blessed are mothers, who relate family
tradition and legend to the family,
For one of her children will surely remember.

Blessed are relatives who fill in family
sheets with extra data,
For to them we owe the family history.

Blessed is any family whose member
strives for the preservation of records,
For theirs is a labor of love.

Author unknown

Contributed by Dorthy L. Mast

The Mystery of the Past (for Youthful Readers)

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The Bird City Historical Association, Inc. Officers and Members

OUT OF THE PAST

The Homestead Act of 1862 had opened the public domain to homesteaders that could claim 160 acres by living on it and making a few improvements. This domain included the plains that became Cheyenne County, Kansas in 1873.

The Covered Wagon Journey of the Land Seekers

During the 1800's, pioneers continuously moved west, mostly in wagon trains. Nothing had prepared these pioneering travelers for the ordeals of the journey. Back in Illinois, Indiana or Missouri - or wherever it was - they had pictured themselves building new homes and creating bright futures in the west.

However, the reality of getting there was an even more difficult trial. They were met with failing supplies, dwindling food, shortages of water, bone-wrenching weariness and accumulating miseries of every sort. As the pioneers moved westward, perhaps 15 miles a day in good weather, they saw the tragic sights of families that had preceded them, the animals pawing at the graves of the dead, the odor of dead mules, oxen and abandoned wagons.

Even so, they kept on going; after some time on the trail they felt they had gone too far to turn back and so had little choice except to continue on. They were ever wary of the Indians. They endured weather changes, flooded rivers and the ever constant biting insects and often not finding fuel for their cooking fires - only dried buffalo chips. The wagons moved on in spite of the wind, dust, hail, heavy rain or the heat.

The voices of women in the 1700's and 1800's were given very little credence in the decisions made by the men of their families. There were a few of these women in the later years of their lives who left us some records to that period of time in their lives. This story is compiled from some of these records:

STORY

The women listened with concern as the land agents gave glowing stories of the great opportunity for acquiring free land in the west, just for

the taking. The concerned voices of the women were ignored in the excitement of "free land for the taking."

A woman with two small children clinging to her skirts looked at her husband in consternation as he told her they were going west in a covered wagon pulled by oxen along with another small group of pioneers, for there was safety in numbers. She stood beside her husband listening in apprehension to the wagon master addressing the men. Her concerns were many as the wagon master said they would be going to Kansas territory. The woman had no idea where that was.

Her unanswered questions were overwhelming: Were there trees there to build a house? Would there be a neighbor nearby? How long would the journey take? Would there be towns along the way where they could get more supplies? Where would they sleep? How would they get everything in the wagon? How would they carry water and food?

As all of her questions swirled in her mind, she approached the wagon master in desperation and told him the women needed to be told what arrangements they should make. The wagon master evaded her questions and told her she should talk with her husband about it. He did tell her that he would be meeting with the men to discuss what was needed for each wagon, depending on the number of persons with each wagon.

One can only imagine the thoughts of a woman exhausted from the journey only to find nothing but a vast Kansas prairie and to be told she would have to live in the wagon or a dugout until a house could be built of the sod, because there were no trees, only bushes along the river banks or creeks.

The following is a list of supplies carried in most wagons, depending upon the number of individual persons or family.

Supplies - Weapons

Pistol	Rifle
Knife	Hatchet
Gunpowder	Bullets
Bullet Mold	Bullet Pouch
Holster	

Bedding & Tent Supplies

Quilts	Tent
Feather Beds	Poles
Ground Cloth	Stakes
Pillows	Ropes

Food

Flour	Baking Soda
Bacon - salted	Cornmeal
Coffee	Dried Fruit
Hardtack	Molasses
Dried Beans	Vinegar
Dried Beef (Jerky)	Sugar
Rice	Tea
Eggs	Salt, Pepper

Cooking Utensils

Dutch oven	Kettle
Skillet	Coffee Grinder
Coffee Pot	Tin Tableware
Water Keg	Flint (fuel starter)
Butter Churn	

Special Items

Lanterns and Kerosene	Bandages
Candles	Chamber Pot
Candle Mold	Scissors
Tallow	Needle/thread
Camp Stove	Wash Bowl
Spinning Wheel	Lye Soap
Bible	

Clothing

Wool Socks	Cotton Socks
Wool Coats	Brogans
Rubber Boots	Boots
Woolen Pantaloons	Sun Bonnets
Buckskin Pants	Woolen Underclothing
Duck Trousers	Cotton Underclothing
Cotton Shirts	Flannel Shirts

Tools and Extra Equipment

Gimlet	Oxbows
Ax	Spare Axles
Hammer	King Bolts
Hoe	Linchpins
Plow	Shovel
Spade	Spokes
Whetstone	Wagon Tongue
Extra Wheel	Heavy ropes

Luxury Items

Plant Cuttings or seeds	School Books
Musical Instruments	Toys

Source: The Way West, by Tom Brun in The Great American West, by Reader's Digest.

Source: Time/Life Book Series

The Great American West by Readers' Digest

Dorothy L. Mast

CRAFT CORNER

Make a Simulated Covered Wagon

Supplies needed:

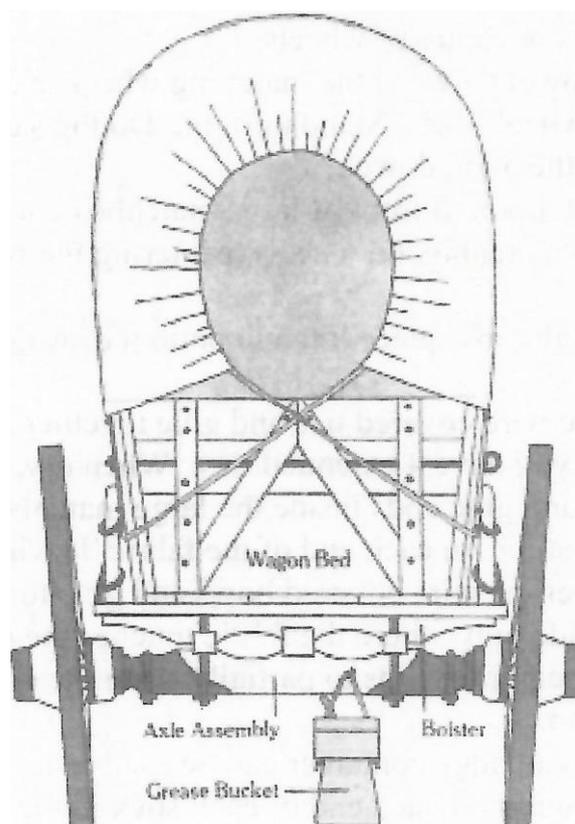
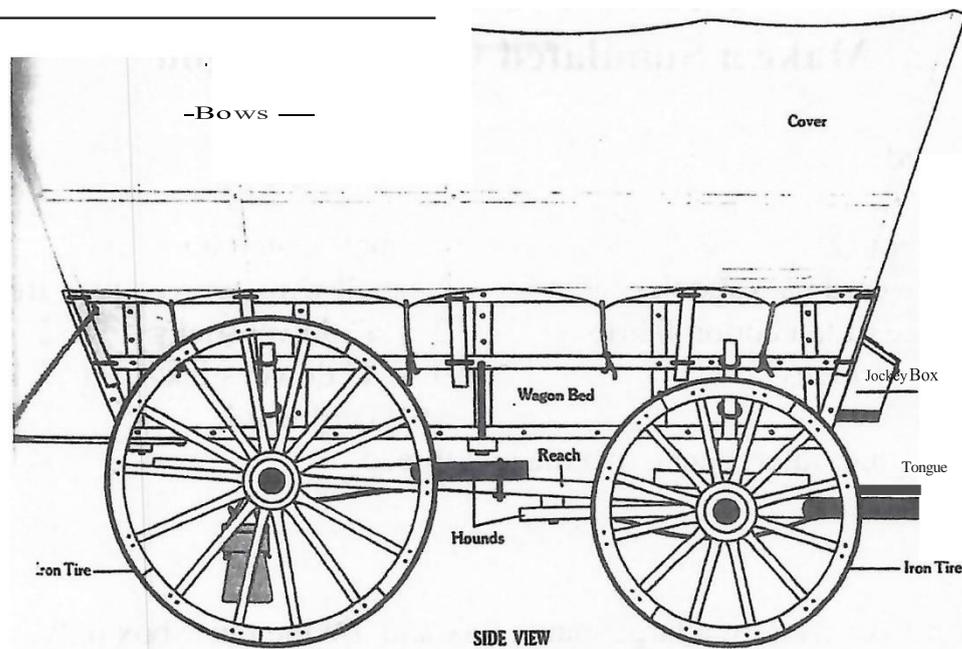
1 large match box	1 small match box
8 large wire covered package ties	2 small wire covered pkg. ties
1 - 6" x 8" piece of tan cotton fabric	2-114" dowel sticks-3-1/2" long
2 empty film cartridges	1-114" dowel stick - 1-1 1/2" long
4 small buttons	stiff cardboard

scissors, tacky glue, ruler, pencil, needle and thread

Directions:

- (a) Remove covering of a large match box and use the inner box only.
- (b) Draw and cut 2 front wheels and 2 back wheels from stiff cardboard – same size as diagram.
- (c) Cut small holes in center of wheels.
- (d) Glue a 3 1/2" dowel between the matching wheels extending through the holes in each wheel – 1/4". Stand upright. Do the same with the other set of wheels and the 3 1/2" dowel,
- (e) Glue small matchbox to front of large matchbox for a tool box seat.
- (f) Place the large matchbox on wheels (centering the wheels front and back.) Glue in place.
- (g) Glue tongue with cross piece hitch to bottom of wagon box, touching the dowel stick.
- (h) Take two of the wire covered ties and glue together at center. Let dry. Continue until you have 4 extended ties. When dry, curve each tie into an extended bow and glue ends inside the large matchbox.
- (i) Sew a running stitch on each end of the fabric, leaving two knotted ends.
- (j) Place fabric over the wire covered bows and glue to the edge of the large matchbox outside only where the fabric touches the bows.
- (k) Pull threads together on ends to partially close the edge of the fabric and tie. See diagram.
- (l) An empty film cartridge container can be used as a water barrel.
- (m) Place a small button on each end of each stick in the center of each wheel. See diagram.

The next time you are at the Antique Engine and Thresher Show -visit the Eggers building and look at the covered wagon replica.



REAR VIEW

The three main parts of a prairie schooner were the wagon bed, the undercarriage and the cover. The wagon bed was a rectangular wooden box, usually about four feet wide and 10 to 12 feet long. At its front end was a jockey box to hold tools.

The undercarriage was composed of the wheels, the axle assemblies, the reach, which connected the two axle assemblies, the hounds, which fastened the rear axle to the wagon tongue; and the bolsters, which supported the wagon bed. Dangling from the rear axle was a bucket for grease or a mixture of tar and tallow to lubricate the wheels.

The cover, made of canvas or cotton, was supported by a frame of hickory bows and tied to the sides of the bed. It extended beyond the bows at either end of the wagon and could be closed by drawstrings.

Source: Time/Life Series by Reader's Digest
Dorothy L. Mast

THE PHOTO PLACE



Kerosene Lantern

A kerosene lantern, also known as a "barn lantern" or "hurricane lantern," is a flat-wick lamp made portable and for outdoor use. They are made of soldered or crimped-together sheet metal stampings, with tin-plated sheet steel being the most common material, followed by brass and copper. There are three types: dead flame, hotblast, and coldblast.

The hot-blast design, also known as a "tubular lantern" due to the round metal tubes used in its construction, was invented by John Irwin and patented on January 12, 1868. The hot-blast design collected hot (exhaust) air from above the globe and fed it through metal side tubes to the burner, to make the flame burn brighter.

The Kerosene Lantern was one of the most important items that was included in the supplies of the people traveling in covered wagons. The fire was totally enclosed which made these safer than kerosene lamps and was the only lighting these people had to keep them safe as they traveled across the country. The pioneers encountered many dangers from wild animals as well as Indians, but these lanterns helped keep them safe. The people would post rotating guards, or lookouts and would use the lanterns in a way that kept them safe from the Indians' detection.

Source: [Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia](#)
Wanda Dowdy

REFLECTIONS

p. 10

Family story of William and Betsy (Fiss) LeBow

William LeBow was born May 23, 1833 in Quebec, Canada, the first son of James and Lydia (Moore) LeBow. The name was originally spelled LeBeau, but had been changed when the family (French **Huguenots**) had fled France ahead of the French Revolution.

Betsy was born July 16, 1844, the daughter of Henry and Fredericka (Strala) Fiss, who brought their young family to Ontario from Kohlberg, Germany in 1857. William and Betsy both grew up near Maynooth, Ontario. They were married on November 19, 1869 in Renfrew, Ontario, and here 13 of their children were born.

When word of the Homestead Act and stories of the rich, clear level land in Central United States traveled northward, William and his three grown sons, Henry, Thompson and Fred, knowing how hard it was to clear land in Ontario, decided to make the move, along with Betsy and the eight other children to Western Kansas. Their last son was born in Kansas and they had buried two other children in Ontario.

They arrived in Bird City in early spring of 1885. We know William and sons, Henry, Thompson and Fred, filed for naturalization at Decatur, Kansas, on May 6, 1885 and received their citizenship papers at St. Francis on April 17, 1891.

When William and his family arrived by rail in Benkelman, Nebraska, (the closest spot to Bird City available) they looked out on what appeared to be a dry and barren land. The area they had left was heavily wooded and thick with streams and lakes, also more than abundant rainfall. This was probably the hardest adjustment for Betsy and she never ceased to miss the trees and streams of Ontario.

Upon arriving in Benkelman, the only transportation available to them was a two wheeled cart, an oxen and a mule which they purchased to finish their journey to Bird City. They had to ford both the North and South Republican Rivers, having been forewarned of quicksand. They arrived in Bird City (a dusty little village) to find few accommodations and with a minimum of possessions.

The merchants were always glad to see the homesteaders, but they were met coolly by the cattlemen, and problems and controversies because of this arose often and unexpectedly.

William settled about 4 miles south of Bird City and the family lived in a dugout the first year. The first summer was spent breaking sod and trying to raise food for a large family for the coming winter. The oldest sons worked at whatever there was to be found in order to help their family get established. It had been an expensive endeavor to move so many so far and funds were low.

They had to haul their water, and just keeping fresh water available was a huge task.

Being a religious family, William and Betsy recognized the need for spiritual training for their family and both of their names appear on the original charter of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Bird City, signed on the 23rd of September 1886. They both signed with an "X" which proves how brave and determined they were to provide something better for their children. Their move to another country must have been at the very least a frightening experience. The older children, who had had some education, were dedicated to helping their parents and other brothers and sisters. The early members met in homes or public buildings wherever possible until they built a church. Religious organizations were welcomed by all the early people to the area, although to many, they were considered a nuisance and an obstacle to what they wanted to do. The church often weathered resistance and apathy from those who were in a financial position to have helped them most. This they did with optimism and determination and the church grew. Betsy's grandchildren remember her always giving thanks before every meal in her native German tongue.

William and Betsy weathered the hardships of blizzards, drought, prairie fires and disease, often wondering how they were going to feed such a large family. But with the faith in God and eternal optimism, this was accomplished, and as the years passed, they saw their sons and daughters go to school, grow up and marry, knowing in their hearts they had made the right decision for their children when the move to western Kansas was initiated.

In their later years, they moved from their farm to a home they had purchased in Bird City, and here enjoyed a few years of rest and comfort.

William died September 14, 1916 and Betsy died on August 16, 1921. Both were buried in the Bird City Cemetery to be joined throughout the years by many descendants. They had had 56 years of married life before they were separated, but their name lingers on in Bird City as a Street and the LeBow Manor. Many of their descendants still live in the area.

Their children were: Henry, Thompson, Jane Turley Waldemire, Fred, Anna Holtz, Martin, Lydia Watson, Mary Pierce, William, John, Joseph and Edwin.

This story was gathered from the gleaning of stories, old records and hours of conversations with William and Betsy's grandchildren: Dale LeBow, Nellie LeBow Burr and Marjorie LeBow Burr ... and was written by Delphia (Hester) Burr.

I said that I would sleuth out an interesting mystery history this month. From the Cheyenne County History book, I sleuthed out settler Charlie Bowers' history written by Simon Matson. I am quoting Mr. Matson's words.

"We believe it was 1888, at Benkelman, [Nebraska], when a number of orphan children were brought there to be taken by anyone who would provide one or more children with a home.

One after another the children were taken until only one boy remained. He was small and frail and of foreign (Italian) parentage. When he alone remained, he burst into tears. Marion Bowers from the Neville neighborhood in Cheyenne County, stepped forth, saying, 'I'll take you, my little boy'. The boy became Charlie Bowers.

Marion Bowers said a few years before he died, 'Charlie and I have never said a harsh word to each other.' Marion and Mrs. Bowers had no children of their own, but they later adopted a girl.

Charlie taught several successful terms of school in Cheyenne County. He had a winning way and was greatly liked by his school and Sunday School pupils. Charlie and his wife were very musical. Charlie was in Oklahoma a few years doing school work.

After returning to Cheyenne County, he was elected County Treasurer for four years. After George Lawless died in 1912, Charlie Bowers became editor of the St. Francis Herald for a time, after which he moved out on his land¹, where he built a home. He and his family lived there until 1929, when

he had a sale and moved to Florida, with his wife, Nan, and their two daughters, Italia and Margaret Nan. This much loved and talented family was greatly missed in the Neville neighborhood.

On December 15, 1940, when the Neville folks commemorated the 30th Anniversary of the building and dedication of their church, they read a letter from Charlie Bowers, recalling many of the people and events of the earlier days.

Charlie Bowers died in Florida in 1952, and Mrs. Bowers died there some years later."

Sometimes what seems to be the worst thing that can happen to you can be the best thing that can happen to you! This was the case for Charlie Bowers.

Source: Taken from one of Simon Matson's many published articles about Cheyenne County people and events. Cheyenne County History, F68, p. 226

Linda (Beeson) Carroll

¹Section 29, Township 5, Range 41

Source: Cheyenne County History, p. 4

Linda (Beeson) Carroll

IF.C.H.** *****J">

1271

Pictured is a paper measurer for elite and pica sized type on old typewriters and word processors and newspaper copywriters. There were no computers, nor were there any devices to set up margins, indentations, line spacing, word spacing, etc. – everything was computed in one's own brain! The pictured paper measurer was quite the fine tool to have available to set up typewritten work.

I enrolled in the Secretarial Program at the Northwest Kansas Area Vocational Technical School at Goodland, Kansas, and the measurer was included in the Secretarial Program packet that I used for many years. It certainly increased my productivity. This keepsake brings to my mind many memories. Therefore, it is a sentimental keepsake as it has no monetary value.

Linda (Beeson) Carroll

THE MAP QUEST

p. 17

Heaton's Crossing ,....., Tour Talk

Possibly the first question that comes to minds why is it called Heaton's Crossing?

I understand from some people who knew about it that it was the best place to cross the Timber Creek in the late 1800's. Without roads or bridges as we came to know them people had to seek out the best places to get from one side to the other whether it was a small creek or a good sized river. On early maps it was call just Timber Creek somewhere along the line someone added BIG. It might have been folk lore that added it, but it did have Timber on it even in those early times.

This brings me to the part of the story of why the Heaton's settled there. It was about 8 years after Lucius R. Heaton had married in 1867, (he and his wife were living in Iowa) that he struck out on his own to look for a homestead. Some 500 miles later traveling by team and wagon he had decided to make camp somewhere north and west of present day Bird City. During the night, his horses got loose. He had wanted to find a place with wood and water on it and when he found his team they were grazing peacefully along the wooded creek. They had found wood and water; he was delighted with the spot and immediately began to prepare to stay right there. He started the typical pioneer home A DUG-OUT with but one door and two windows. He returned to Iowa in 1877 and brought his family to stay on the Big Timber. He brought four teams of heavy work horses, plus saddle stock, one thoroughbred stallion and a few head of cattle. The story was often told in the family, how the youngest child was asleep at the time of crossing the Missouri River on a sand-bar, when one wagon upset. She was jolted awake, all wet. She asked if she was dead. Far from it, that girl grew to be her father's horse-woman to ride the range and keep the stock from wandering too far away.

The part of this story that intrigued me the most was the huge sod house that they built. It had one room that measures 32' x 14' and two others that measured 20' x 14' !!! These rooms with their nine foot

ceilings, (unheard of for those times) seemed to be the first hotel/motel as such in the area as it was the favorite stopping place between Bird City and Benkelman. They would serve family style meals in the big room, had sleeping rooms and, of course, places for the horses to feed and water. So why wouldn't it just be a haven of rest.

The outline of the sod house, as I understand it was still visible in the early days of our historical society, but is no longer. Hopefully, there are a few among us that know the location. Since it was on the north side of the creek, we'll go in from the north. The Glascos had owned the land up until a few years ago and held a beautiful family wedding out there. It is now owned by a man from Parker, Colorado, Michael Mulligan, who has refurbished a native rock cabin on the south side of the creek.

This same dwelling was the residence of Corky and Barbara Stroup in the 1950's. Mary Lou Munn, who lived nearby, told me that there was a winding road that led into it from the north. The grounds were artfully landscaped with rocks and beautiful flowers and she raised big gardens. There's a spring adjacent to the house, and it was considered a place of beauty. It was never lived in after the Stroups.

She also said that her husband Clint, (who incidentally was the great grandson of Benjamin Bird for whom Bird City was named) told the story like this:

The Heaton Ranch was the scene of many an early day celebration in the form of 2 to 3 day get-togethers. A large wooden dance floor would be brought in on skids and a band consisting of three or more instruments would play and people along with dancing would EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY.

Others told of circuses and rodeos being brought in – in the 1920's – so I always wondered if that might have been some of the untold history of my Dad's teenage years. Son-in-law of Lucius Heaton, Homer Bowers, wrote, by way of his daughter in 1922: "I built a dam on Big Timber Creek and we had a swimming beach with a bath house and a dance floor. There was also a baseball diamond and rodeo grounds. In 1924 we had a 4th of

July celebration and it was that night that a very heavy rain came along and washed out the dam RUINED EVERYTHING !"¹

This information I (Helene Landenberger) found in the Atwood Republican Citizen publication dated November 5, 1880

Under population:

70 inhabitants

34 cattlemen

12 homesteaders

10 girls

9 boys

This included the Heatons who just arrived by the aid of G. T. Dunn of Kepferle.

Lucius Heaton is the only person of the Cheyenne County 1880 census to be buried in Cheyenne County that we know.

When I was out researching the area in 2003, I talked to Alvin Loop and Wes Donahue. They told me Alvin's Uncle George Wilkens and Lee and Leonard's dad, Alfred (Alf) Amsberry, built the stone house. Alvin showed me the Horse and Buggy road, as he called it. The Loops home place (since 1929) was along this creek that Glenn Glasco referred to as Coyote Creek. Alvin called it something else, but I could never find it named on any maps.

The following is one of Alvin Loops stories: "At the time the WPA built the dam on Timber Creek, I was just a young boy. They needed another horse to use for the work over there and we had a sorrel horse that they used. I had a white pony with a black head. I led the horse over there with my pony. They paid a dollar a day for the use of it and when I got back home with the horse (and the money) my dad let me keep mine."

Contributed by: Helene Landenberger

¹ Dundy Co. Heritage, pp. 44-45

POETRY PAGE

March

By

Elizabeth L. Powers

The lion roars and shakes his mane
The month of March is here again
With chilling winds and driving rain
He blusters o'er the whole domain
With gnashing teeth and lashing tail
He revels in a wintry gale
An angry beast on mischief bent
He storms around until his rage is spent
Then quietly he slips away
And April's lambs come out to play.

PLOWING

by

Marion Doyle

Across the furrowed field the crows
Go stalking in newly polished arrogance
Disdainfully, without even one wary glance
They follow the newly earth scented rows.

The man feels the smooth surge along the trace
The shiny steel etches beauty in the soil
And now he thinks of it no longer as toil
With visions of new growth in his face

He stops his team in wonder, as a wren
No larger than a willow leaf pours out
With visions of spring's promises again
His winter weary heart is freed of doubt.

And quietly beneath the quickening sod
He hears the echoes of the voice of God.

Unknown Source
Contributed by Dorthy Mast

The Precious Easter Egg

When homesteaders came to the plains by wagon the food supplies were a priority item. Sometimes a few prized laying hens with a rooster were carried in a homemade wooden crate fastened to the side of the wagon. As the family settled on a homestead, the laying hens were watched closely for a setting hen and a few precious eggs were left in the nest with her to hatch into baby chicks.

When Easter time came closer the children wanted to decorate the eggs. However, the mixed chickens seldom produced pure white eggs as brown eggs were more common.

The eggs were prized for baking and that left few for decorating so oftentimes the children were only allowed one or two of the white eggs to decorate.

Decorating eggs in those days was much different than today as they used colored paper that may have come in a rare apple box, or pieces of boiled onion skin, small scraps of fabric using a flour and water paste. The colored paper was seldom used as the children often ate the hard boiled eggs.

Neighbors sometimes traveled to each other's homesteads on Easter Sunday and one homesteader commented, "Mama's supply of eggs soon ran out because all the reserved eggs were used in baking and the neighbors had six kids that liked eggs."

Mama was not prepared for extra children. The small sod house was one room but she prepared a good supper. After supper the few remaining Easter eggs were eaten as one young boy commented, "We just watched them gobble our eggs."

THE BOOK CORNER

p.22

The Sheeder Family

Walter B. Sheeder, who was 9 years old when he came to this county, wrote an interesting account of that family's journey and later experiences:

"We left Bennett, Nebraska during November 1885 and arrived at Benkelman on Election Night. The next morning, almost the first sight to attract our attention was mounted cowboys riding hither and thither. They all wore boots and spurs and ten gallon hats. They rode fractious horses, bedecked with large saddles on which were tied long lasso ropes and slickers. And six shooters were a common sight, carried in the holster on the saddle or in a belt. Leather pants, called chaps, were also a part of their regalia.

The Livery barns occupied a prominent location on main street, around which one would see a motley gathering of people. Lumber yards were doing a thriving business in those days. Cowboys, freighters, and families, who were on their way to take up their abodes on homesteads which they had filed upon, cooked their meals around covered wagons.

Among other things we noticed was a large pile of cattle and buffalo bones piled for shipment along the railroad tracks, (the railroad having arrived in Benkelman in 1882). The pile was perhaps 200 feet long, six to eight feet high and perhaps 20 feet in width. The side near the tracks was all made up of heads from which protruded the long horns of the cattle and the black horns of the buffalo. These were arranged in a perpendicular manner and made a very novel sight. This divulged the heavy winter losses of cattle that the large early day cattle ranches were accustomed to having during the severe winter months when no preparations were made to feed like there are now days. It was simply the survival of the fittest that would live through the cold winters. We presume that fully half or more of the cattle born on the prairies would die before being raised and shipped to market.

The next day we left Benkelman in a spring wagon and one of our first surprises was to ford the Republican River, there being no bridges across the stream, and we were more or less uneasy until we reached the bank on the other side of the stream. We next came to the cattle ranch of the old Northwestern Cattle Ranch south of Benkelman and this was first time we were ever permitted to feast our eyes on the grandeur of a cattle ranch surrounded by cattle and cow ponies with large brands covering perhaps the entire side of a cow. We imagined we could almost see the entire map of Texas inscrolled upon their sides.

Borrowed from: Bird City Times, Pioneer Edition, 1932

Edited/Paraphrased by Marsha C. Magley

The ranch was under the management of Benjamin Bird, a picturesque man of the plains who was to become, you might say, the father of Bird City. We crossed Big Timber at the old Heaton Ranch and first glimpsed the face of a pioneer woman of the plains. This very remarkable person was Mrs. Heaton who will be remembered by all of the old settlers of the county, as they were the earliest settlers on Big Timber. They lived in a dugout on the banks of the creek and built a very large sod house with large rooms, and covered with a thatched roof. The Heaton home was always a very hospitable place to visit and a great many friends were entertained there from far and near. Meals were served on a long table in the kitchen and all who chanced to be at the ranch at meal time were always invited to partake of the feast prepared by Mrs. Heaton and her lovely daughters and were entertained as friends of the family. The old Heaton home will never be forgotten by the old settlers.

We finally arrived at what was to be our future home about 6 miles northeast of Bird City. Father had come out in October and begun the erecting of a frame house, and it not being completed yet, we were entertained for awhile by a hospitable family in a sod house with walls three feet in thickness. A few days after our arrival, an old fashioned blizzard swept the plains in all its fury. Snowstorms at that time were nearly always accompanied by high winds which blew the snow in great drifts. Some historical storms and heavy snows visited the country that winter. In the spring the snow melted and made the prairies soft and filled the lagoons with water which was very welcome to us as we had to haul water in barrels a good many miles.

In 1880, a group of people were trying to make homes about 5 miles northeast of Bird City, but the summer was so dry and hot, and water so hard to get, that they gave up and left the country. But in 1886, there were perhaps more people living in the county than there are at the present time (1932). School districts were organized, town sites were established, county seat fights were settled and the permanent building of Cheyenne County was on in earnest.

Borrowed from: Bird City Times, Pioneer Edition, 1932

Edited/Paraphrased by Marsha C. Magley

Pieces of History

My father, John Murray, and his parents, Ella and Charles Murray, and John's sister, Ethel, came to Cheyenne County in 1908 and settled on a farm six miles south of Bird City, Kansas.

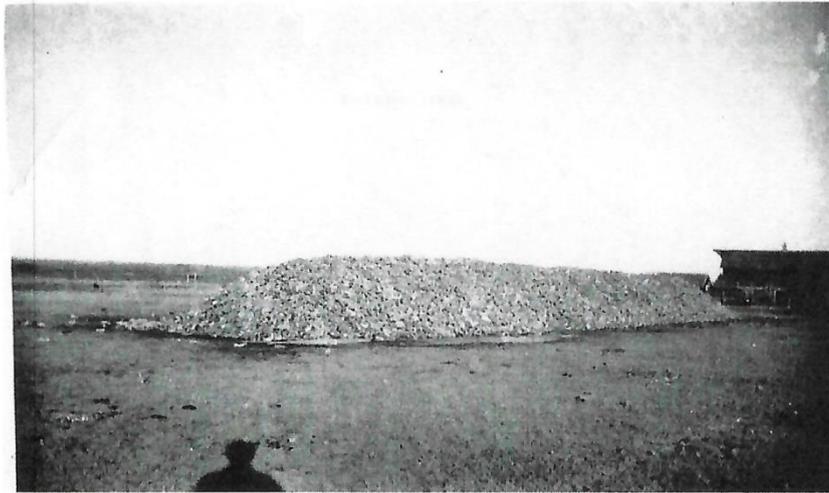
Charles Murray bought three quarters of land when he moved out here. When John Murray was old enough, he and his dad, Charles, farmed together. John and Charles Murray raised com, wheat, milo and cane. The cane would be cut and shucked, hauled in and then it would be ground and fed to the cattle.

When John and Charles Murray got ready to pick the com, they would use a wagon and two horses to pull the wagon. The com was shucked in the field. John and Charles would use shuckers that they would put on their hands. The shucker would take the shucks off of the com. Then John and Charles would load the com on the wagon. When the wagon was full, they hauled the com in and put the com in rows in the barn. Later they would use the com sheller to take the com off of the cob.

John and Charles had a header that would cut the wheat and milo. The header cut off the heads of grain and carried them up into the wagon. The header was pulled by four horses. Then they would sell their wheat and milo.



The two teams of horses



One row of com by barn – 1932



Header pulled by 4 horses



One row of com - 1932

Hollis DaPron

ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Come to Cheyenne County!

Why would you be enticed to come to Cheyenne County, Kansas, to make your home? Have you heard about the "FREE LAND" available? Are you the adventurous type of person to think this might be exciting because you have heard stories about cowboys and trail drives? Let's look at ways the newspapers of early Bird City, beginning in 1886, lured people to settle in Cheyenne County.

Bird City News,
Thursday, November 11, 1886
Editor's Opinion

In a short stroll over the county, recently, we were surprised at the evidence of thrift everywhere apparent. Many of our farmers have been busy breaking all the land that they could break, and in consequence have from 50 acres to 100 acres broken out. Some of this ground has been backset, and sown to small grain but a large portion has been reserved for spring crops. This is as it should be. All of our farmers should see to it that they have as much ground broken out this fall as they can cultivate next summer, and then if they want to raise some winter crops, they can do so.

All kinds of small grain does well in this country, but we do not think it will pay to raise much small grain from the fact that there is no market for it at present, but the best thing the farmers can do is to get all the breaking done they can, you will find something to do with it. If you cannot do anything else, you can sow it to tame grass and turn your stock on it. Do all the breaking this fall, and when spring comes, you will find use for your ground.

Bird City News
Thursday, December 9, 1886
Editor's Opinion

Cheyenne County is part of Kansas and Kansas has her drawbacks but venture to remark that there is no state in the union that has made a better showing than Kansas has, under the same circumstances, during the past year. In the matter of railroad building, we take the lead, more miles of railroad having been built in

this state than in any other state in the Union. Our crop report compares favorably with that of older states, in many cases exceeding them. Coal has been found in paying quantities, and silver is said to abound in many places. The rainfall has been sufficient for all necessary purposes, and is constantly increasing. It would seem as if we resituated in the midst of a favored region where a man has only to be industrious and frugal to soon make a home for himself and family, and place them above actual want, if not in affluent circumstances.

Come to Kansas, where health is certain, where you can amass a fortune in a few years, where the inhabitants are frugal, industrious and sober; where prohibition does prohibit when rightly applied; and in your wanderings be sure to come to Cheyenne County, and you will never regret it.

BirdCityNews,
Thursday, January 6, 1887

Tabor, Iowa
Letter to the Editor:

December 20, 1886

I do not, of course, feel like running down Iowa, in which state I have lived for nine years or more, but on the contrary, I consider it to be one of the best states for agriculture I was ever in, still with my recent short acquaintance with Cheyenne County, Kansas, I must give the preference to KANSAS. You know it makes a great difference with a man to have a home and, though Iowa is a splendid state, my home is in Kansas. Not like some, I have made the acquaintance of merchants and business men generally and the farmers of that county, and I tell you, Mr. Editor, it is a big thing for a man away from his home to feel these attractions to his new home in a new country. I often think with surprise and wonder of that country home that not much over a year ago, where Bird City now stands, there was scarcely a house to be seen, and now it is a thriving City, while from the door of my own house on my farm, I can count a large number of houses all erected since I put up mine, last spring. You know when I was at my home, I was down with a fever, and I often think how kind my new made friends were to me, to care for me, until I got enough strength to start my family here. Well, I am stout again, in good health, but I cannot say this of my family, my wife is very near down with her constant care of our little babe, which weighs no more today than the day it was born, four months ago. We are fearful we shall not be able to raise it, for it is a great sufferer, and the wonder is that it can live, suffering as it does. The rest of my family are well, and though small, are quite pleased at the thought of going home to Kansas as soon as the baby's health will permit.

I see that quite a number of Mills and Fremont County boys that have claims near me are back here, pitching in good earnest into work, getting ready to make their final moves to their new homes. Success to them. They are hard working fellows and deserve good homes.

Crops are short in Iowa this year, and while Iowa will stand a good deal of drought, I think Kansas will stand it as well, and better out where my place is in Cheyenne County.

Our folks seem to think we will suffer for water out here. I just laugh at them and tell them that the average depth of wells here is, I think, greater than it is out in Cheyenne. I may be mistaken, but I know there is not much difference. There are quite a number of wells out here from seventy to one hundred and ten feet deep. Our water in Cheyenne, too, is quite as good as it is here, and as to our native grass, I think it is better than it is here. From what I can hear, Cheyenne County is about to receive large additions of the very best and most enterprising farmers before long. I know many who are making all their arrangements to come out there, and I really think, Mr. Editor, that we have the garden of the world out there. I don't know how much corn I raised last season, my first on new ground, but I think when I come to sell it, I shall find it does not fall too far short of 1000 bushels. Just tell the folks out there to be patient, and I will supply them with eggs, for when I come, I am about to bring 100 hens that my wife has been raising.

Now please give my best respects to all of my friends, and tell them we are coming, "not a hundred thousand strong," but quite a number of us, just as soon as it will be safe to move our sick child.

Truly yours,
I.P. Bearnhouse

Bird City News
Thursday, January 27, 1887

Cheyenne, The Northwestern County of Kansas

To the agriculturist seeking a comfortable home, is the most attractive portion of this state and is fairly entitled to be called the "Paradise of the West". Blessed with a most productive soil and a healthy climate, it has been fortunate in the class of people who have so settled in it.

Northwestern Kansas is the field for enterprise for the farmer, nowhere in the world can he get so much for his labor as in her virgin soil. The intelligent farmer will want further information, let him consider that with the richest soils and with seasons three to four months longer than in the North. He has here the whole wide field of production to choose from and experience in. Here the stock raiser has ample competence for his labor. Here the cattle thrive upon the prairies

without other care than the annual herding and branding, while in the North the stock raiser must feed his cattle from four to six months in the year. Such is one of many advantages that are offered to the farmer to locate in Northwestern Kansas; the land of beauty, the land of provisions, the land of breadstuffs, the land of fruits and flowers, a home that will be in name and in fact, a sanctuary to all who accept it, and a land that gives a cordial invitation and an earnest greeting to all who wish to link their fate with hers.

Settlement began in this county in the spring of 1885 and in April of 1886 it was organized with a population of 2,750 and now it has an area of 1,020 square miles, and contains 652,800 acres. All the crops that were planted in 1885 were on sod and her yield was beyond expectation. The yield of com was from 20 to 30 bushels per acre, milled one to two tons per acre, while vegetables of all kinds grew splendidly.

In 1886, the yield of sod com was from 25 to 40 bushels per acre while that which was cultivated went from 40 to 65 bushels; oats from 35 to 50 bushels; rye from 20 to 40; winter wheat 20 to 35; millet from two to four tons per acre and potatoes from two to four hundred bushels per acre while garden products yielded abundantly.

Her soil is a black loam and three to six feet deep; and of a porous nature. Farmers here can cultivate their crops the next day after a hard rain. We defy any state to produce a soil that retains more moisture better than ours. Farmers in eastern states, can you afford to cultivate land that is selling for 50 to 75 per acre? Can you afford to keep land for your children, that in ten years that will bring no more than it does now? Can you afford to spend your days working hard on 40 or 80 acres to make a living but never to be able to own any more? Can you afford to give that land owner over half of your life for the privilege of cultivating his soil? You can come here and buy land for one to ten dollars per acre that will produce as large crops as your land does there and will sell for as much as your land.

Bird City is the county seat of this county. She was chartered in May, 1885. She may well be called the magic city of the North West. It has grown in this short time to a beautiful city. It was incorporated in December 1886, yet with this rapid growth it has not kept pace with the beautiful level prairie country surrounding her. And to those who contemplate going into business, we say now is the time to come to Bird City, where your investment will make you three hundred per cent in one year.

The B & M Railroad has completed their surveys and are working on the east of the line. We are on the prospective lines of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad from St. Joseph to Denver, and the Kansas Pacific from Oakley to Ogallala. It is not at all improbable that within another year we will have the advantage of three railroads.

Farmers, mechanics and business men, now is your golden opportunity to invest in the best country and town in the west, and witness the boom of 1887.

In conclusion we would say, we have endeavored to state nothing but facts, so when you come among us you cannot say we have deceived you in the least.

Respectfully Yours,
Cave and Franklin

Bird City News
November 24, 1887

A Little Boys Ill Luck

"Come on. What are you waiting for?" inquired one little boy of another.

"Mamma won't let me go."

"She won't? My mamma lets me go most everywhere.

Yours is awful strict, am't she?" *S m m i\ r .*

"Yes, she used to be the principal of a seminary."

"Was she?"

"Yes. I guess pop didn't think about the trouble he was making for me when he married a school teacher."

Rosemary Powell
