

Exeter Township

Exeter township, in the northeastern corner of Fillmore County, is bounded on the north by York and on the east by Saline counties, on the south by Liberty and on the west by Fairmont townships. The land is fairly level. Indian Creek rises in Sec. 18 and flows northeast into Sec. 4, where it turns eastward to Saline County and later joins the West Blue River. A branch of Johnson Creek rises near the southern edge, in Sec. 33, and flows northeastward, zigzagging through Secs. 23, 24, and 25 toward Saline County and the Blue. In 1966, the township had 33 irrigation wells in operation.

The township is crossed from east to west, just south of its center (through Secs. 24 to 19), by the main line (Chicago-Denver) of the Burlington R.R., closely paralleled by U. S. Highway 6. The Fremont-Superior branch of the Northwestern R.R. slants across it from the northeast to the southeast corner (Secs. 1 to 31). Both railroads pass through the village of Exeter.

Warren Woodard was the first settler in what later became known as Exeter township, settling here in 1870.

A special meeting of the County Board was held on May 27, 1871, for the purpose of dividing the county into Commissioner Districts. The county was to be divided into three districts by two east-and-west lines; thus each district would be 8 by 24 miles. The north district was to be designated No. 1, the middle district No. 2, and the south district No. 3. This put Exeter township into District No. 1.

On February 6, 1872, Orlando Porter was appointed road overseer for Precinct 1. On March 16, 1872, Warren Woodard was appointed to the same post, as Mr. Porter failed to qualify.

A meeting of the county board on November 9, 1872, decided that the county should be divided into precincts six miles square. The date for the reorganization was set for Tuesday, January 7, 1873. The meeting for Exeter township

Exeter Township Homestead Map

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|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| William C. Anderson | John W. Atkinson | | | Henry Hammond | Bennett Erwin | | | B. H. Bruner | Thomas D. Richardson | Joseph S. Provencher | | | |
| John S. Dart | | | | | | | | Reuben E. Lawrence | Harvey Wright | | | | |
| Willard C. Woodworth | Charles H. Dorathy | | | Michael Sweeley | Lemuel T. Mead | | | Luana C. Barnes Widow | Nathan S. Babcock | Jacob F. Shelbol | | | |
| | | John R. Drummond | Parkerson Ryan | | | Frank E. Graves | James Bivins | | | | William Miner | Darius J. Cook | |
| | | T. C. Chamberlain | Lawrence Ryan | | | James A. Luff | James G. Haner | | | | Aaron Lindley | Henry Dykes | Albert A. Miner |
| James F. Keller | Calvin P. Angell | | | | | | | James M. Sewell | Wm. H. Houtz | | | | |
| Benjamin F. Stille | Henry Wiszmann | | | | 16 School Land | | | John Tanner | Abigail Rice | | | | |
| | | S. A. Shelly | Wm. Wright | James W. Dolan | | John P. Kettlewell | Harrison A. Sturdevant | | | | Margaret Malcolm | Samuel Dailey | |
| | | John N. Dayton | Wm. N. Babcock | Horace G. Smith | | Edward D. Young | Minor orphan children of Sturdevant | | | | James Alexander | Wm. Skadden | |
| | | | | | | | Samuel E. Root | | | | Alonzo Rice | | |
| John E. Ingham | Job Hathaway | | | Warren Woodard | Nesbitt Taylor | Thomas B. Farmer | | Fritz Metzger | Peter Becker | James Treaster | | | |
| Willard D. Paine | Elmer G. Wilcox | | | Charles Boyce | Caleb J. Litch | Lester S. Litch (Heirs) | | Oreon Hager | | Abram T. Hager | | | |
| | | Joseph E. Dickson | Henry C. Young | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Alfred Dickson | John T. Dorland | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Oliver P. Chapman | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | 16 School Land | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

was to be held in Exeter. Officials at this time were: Judges of the election, C. J. Chamberlain and Harvey Wright; clerks of the election, Warren Woodard and Michael Sweeley; justice of the peace, N. S. Babcock; constable, William Miner; road supervisor, O. P. Chapman.

Exeter township included the following school districts: Nos. 20, 22, 23, 24, and parts of 94 and 95. School terms averaged from 2½ months to 4 months; teachers' salaries ranged between \$25 and \$40 per month. Homestead maps in the county clerk's office show that most homesteads ranged from 40 to 160 acres.



Photo from Mrs. T. D. Clarke

School District No. 22, taken during the 1896-97 school year. *Top row, left to right:* Nanny Brown, Minnie Menke, Anna Becker, Herb Decker, Ollie Dumpert, Herb Jensen, Frank Brown, Homer Decker, Lenard Courtwright, Anna Menke, Ora Rice, Mary Becker. *Middle row:* Ed Becker, Clarence Brown, Emma Long, Barbara Dumpert, Helen Becker, (behind) Frank Becker, Sophia Menke, Tracy Becker, Minnie Becker, Charley Trauger. *Front row:* Paul Becker, Nettie Long, Jessie Long, Lizzie Becker, Ann Alexander, Rosie Dumpert, Dora Becker, Lettie Rice, Alice Long, Louise Becker, Lottie Cook, Katie Knox (teacher).



Photo from Mrs. Guy Brown Sr.

District 95 in 1912-1913

In the picture (not listed in order) are: Walter Howarth, John Barbur, Sam Eurich, John Krejci, Mary Krejci, Mildred Dyer, Anna Sladek, Lizzie Eurich, Mable Rose, Emily Horne, Mamie Ruhl, Willie Miller, John Miller, Lloyd Steyer, Frankie Krejci, Gladys Dyer, Lucile Barbur, Ruth Horne, Lillie Miller, Harold Dyer, Frankie Loukota, Willie Eurich, Dorothy Horne, Mamie Loukota, Clara Miller, Tommie Rose, Vera Miller, Jimmie Loukota, Ernest Dyer, Alice Miller, Hazel Sircin, Willie Sircin, Julia Rose.

FAMILIES

There is more, much more, to be said about our early pioneers and homesteaders than can be compressed into any one book. Much time, thought, and effort have gone into preparing this material. It could not exist even in this condensed form without the *Pioneer Stories* of the Rev. G. R. McKeith (collected for the purpose of recognizing pioneers' Memorial Day, June 14, 1914, and published at Exeter in 1915), and the articles entitled "Pioneering in Nebraska," written by Miss Elula Smith (later Mrs. Ben Smrha) about her father, Dr. H. G. Smith. Many of our elder citizens have given much of their time and effort in trying to help piece together the events and stories of pioneer life. Many things would not be recorded on paper if it were not for their memories of the past.

Mrs. T. D. Clarke was asked to compile the history of Exeter, and had started on this, but her health forced her to give it up. Some of our information is from her previous efforts. Mr. and Mrs. N. F. Whitmore, the Leshner Blouchs, the Frank Cravens, and the T. D. Clarkes were most helpful with information, and with clippings and pictures from past years. Dr. Claire Owens, although 90 years old and blind, was extremely helpful because of her remarkable memory. Another source of information was the cemeteries, with dates, spellings, and sometimes causes of death.



Photo from L. T. Blouch

Rev. George R. McKeith, pastor of Baptist Church from 1913 to 1917 and author of *Pioneer Stories* of Fillmore County.

Without doubt, there are many things that could have been written down, given time and space. We wish to take this opportunity to thank all who helped in any way with the compiling of this material. If anyone in our community, or their pioneer ancestors, has been left out, the omissions were certainly not intended.

—Mrs. Robert E. Trauger (Exeter township) and Mrs. Roy Stubbendick (Exeter town)

Mr. and Mrs. James Alexander left Aberdeen, Scotland, for Exeter, Nebraska on June 22, 1872, and eventually arrived at Pacific Junction, Iowa. Here they were left on the open platform without a home or shelter; but they had some beds and rugs, and, the weather being fine, they unpacked these and spread them carefully on the platform. With the starry heavens for a covering they passed the night. They next made their way to Lincoln, and on to Exeter. The party consisted of six people: Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, two small boys, a grandmother, and a girl who looked after the children. Mr. J. K. Barbur happened to be near by when they got off the train and offered to take them to their destination.

Mr. Alexander bought the rights of a homestead—the S ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 24—for \$50 and sent the necessary filing fee of \$14 to Lincoln. It was not until some time afterward that he learned that the money had been used for some other purpose. This meant that, in the eyes of the government, the land was not his, and he had to pay the \$14 a second time. Such was the character of some of the people with whom the pioneers had to deal.

They rented an old soddy on the adjoining land for \$1 a month. The house had but one room, and the roof leaked so badly that they had to use umbrellas in rainy weather. The floor, being dug out, made a good receptacle for water, and was at times more like a duck-pond than anything else. Probably the rent charged was sufficient for such a house.

During their sojourn in this house they were called upon to celebrate their first July Fourth. Mr. and Mrs. James Horne, having heard of the new arrivals from Scotland, and being themselves of the same hardy stock, naturally felt inclined to make a friendly visit, and made the Fourth of July the occasion. With their two children, they called upon the Alexanders, who at this time had no stove, chairs, table, or bedspreads, but they had brought with them some of the Scotch oatmeal, the real thing, that makes their people sturdy and strong, and some tea and cheese. With these and other good things they celebrated their independence.

They made a dugout on their own land for a home. This also had only one room, wherein they had to make the most of little space in this broad land. The capacity and furnishings of this house were at times taxed to their utmost potential. On one occasion when Mr. Alexander was attending prayer meeting in town, seven wayfaring men presented themselves asking for a night's shelter. Here indeed was a task, but with the hospitality of the West, these men were taken in and sheltered, being made as comfortable as possible on the floor, while the members of the household slept on boxes.

They were often brought to church services by Harry Sturdevant, a charter member of the Exeter Congregational Church. He had a good measure of the old-time religion in his soul; in fact, it was "pressed down and running over," and so great was the overflow that the journey by wagon was made lively with his singing. So real was his experience of the love of Christ which sought outward expression that where he failed in voice volume, he made up with his feet on the bottom of the wagon.



Photo from Laura Pflug

Exeter Cowboy Band

On June 18, 1885, the Exeter Band attended the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in Portland, Maine. The Exeter Band was chosen as State Department Band of the G.A.R. in competition with the bands from Fairbury and Steele City. The band had fine silver-plated instruments and owned about \$1,500 worth of property, including a band wagon.

Mr. John C. Bonnall, an officer of the Burlington system, served as publicity man throughout the trip. As he gave the boys the title of "Cowboy Band from Nebraska," large and curious crowds were always in evidence.

The members making this trip were: John Lewis, Will Lewis, Charles Dorthy, M. L. Mead, J. W. Eller, Charles Bartlett, Sam Logan, Joe Hassler, Charles Parish, Henry Fisher, J. C. Wilson, Charles Pflug, and Job Hathaway, all of Exeter. In order to fill in some of the parts where the regular members were unable to go, Silas B. Camp and Ed Dempster of Geneva and D. C. Moffatt and Charles Finnacle of Friend were taken. Frank Osborne, a colored man, was taken along as property man.

The officers were Joe Hassler, president, J. C. Wilson, leader, and Job Hathaway, drum major. Circled, Colonel Nathan S. Babcock.

T. C. Allen came to Exeter in 1891, bringing his family a year later. During the next few years he worked at various jobs. He had always been interested in road improvement and so he began selling road equipment such as graders and steel tiling, which had just been invented and manufactured by Lee Arnett of Lincoln.

During the off season Mr. Allen often drove Dr. McCleary's team when the doctor made calls. On these trips over all kinds of roads, he conceived the idea of using some kind of heavy drag that could be pulled over the roads as they dried so that the ruts could be filled and not be allowed to get deeper and deeper.

Dr. McCleary supplied the money to construct the first drag. They decided to pass the idea along to the whole township and their drag was used for many years. Thus Mr. Allen was responsible for the first "Good Roads" development in the state of Nebraska.

Colonel Nathan S. Babcock came from New York State in 1871. As the railroad ended at Lincoln, he made his way to Seward, and walked on from there, looking for a family near Indian Creek. Nothing like a house could be seen anywhere, until at last he noticed a stovepipe sticking out of the ground on a little hill. Closer investigation revealed a dugout, with one of the best rooms he ever saw. He afterward made his way to Exeter, where the only house visible was the one built by Warren Woodard. While crossing the country, he noticed the horses acting rather queer; then a man mysteriously put in an appearance, asking the colonel what he was after. He assured the man that he was after no mischief, when the man said, "But you have your horses on my house!"

When the colonel brought Mrs. Babcock to their claim — the E ½ of the SW ¼ and the W ½ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 2, T8, R1W — they came in a wagon without springs, and their seats were wooden chairs, less than an ideal outfit for a 50-mile trip over the prairies. Their household goods did not arrive for a week after, so they built a fire on the hillside. They cooked their meat on the end of a stick, boiled the potatoes in a teakettle, and for plates used shingles, which, with the companionship of silverware, provided quite a contrast in dining experience.

Out here, there was nothing to distinguish weekdays from Sundays. They lost track of the Sabbath for a time, and were no doubt glad when they once more knew one day from another. Rattlesnakes

were numerous then; no less than 36 were caught in one day. Colonel Babcock had several rattles to show for his efforts.

Talking of the grasshopper plague, they told of having given to a brother back East an account of the numbers and destruction of the invading host. The brother wrote back, "That is a good fish story you have out West." They finally sent him a small piece of soil about an inch square so he might see the grasshoppers hatch out, instructions being given as to what to do. That small piece of earth contained so many young grasshoppers that they never more doubted the western story.

Mrs. L. T. Blouch gave Bess Streeter Aldrich this portrait of the colonel:

"Colonel Babcock, who served in the Civil War, was an aristocratic-looking man who always wore his full uniform on Decoration Day, and rode his beautiful black horse with much dignity. What a thrill we children used to have when we visited their home and saw his sword and all of the rest of an officer's regalia hanging on the wall. He even took the sword down and let us take it in our hands."

Mr. and Mrs. William N. Babcock came to Nebraska in the fall of 1870, remaining through the winter in Ashland. Mr. Babcock took up a claim on the E ½ of the SW ¼ of Sec. 20 in February, 1871, and they moved onto it in May. This land adjoined that of Dr. Smith, part of which is now included in the town.

Their first shelter was a tent made of four sheets sewed together, a home not destined for long life. Within their first week here, they were favored with a typical Nebraska storm, which just after midnight brought down their tent so completely that it could not be re-erected. They made their way barefoot toward the Smith home, being assured they were on the right land by locating a furrow which the doctor had struck around his claim. They made what runs were possible with each lightning flash, finally reaching the dwelling. They were welcomed gladly by Mrs. Smith, who told them she could well guess what had happened. The following day revealed the sad condition of their belongings. The men went that same morning to secure lumber for a more permanent home, during the building of which the Babcocks stayed with the Smiths.

During their brief tent life, Mrs. Smith was their first caller. Making her way across the prairie, she had to wade through a ditch. On reaching the other side, she found a large rattlesnake in the grass. She knew that the Babcocks slept on the ground and wondered if she should tell Mrs. Babcock about it. Thinking that if a snake were near her home, she would like to know about it, she decided to tell her. But Mrs. Babcock just laughed and didn't seem frightened.

Mrs. Babcock had to go to the Woodard home, a mile away, whenever she needed a pail of water. Since Mr. Woodard was also the postmaster, she also had to go there for the mail. During one of those trips, she was overtaken by a storm and had to wade through water waist deep to get home.

On another occasion when she was caught in a storm, and sought shelter in the Smith home, she caught Mrs. Smith going through one of her wet-weather experiences. She was sitting on the bed with her umbrella up and with basins placed around the floor, catching the water.

The Babcock sod house was 12' x 14', and in this building she taught the first local school, having as pupils three Woodard children, Charles Smith, and her own boy, Fred. In this small home, too, she provided lodgings one stormy night for a family of eight persons who were passing through.

It was not uncommon for men to get lost on the prairie. Perhaps the women were not so venturesome, and yet they must have been courageous at times. One dark night when Mr. Babcock was away from home, a man knocked at the door, saying he was lost, and could they direct him to Dr. Smith's house. Nothing daunted, Mrs. Babcock went out and put the man on the right trail, telling him to look for the lighted lantern which the doctor kept burning, and he would surely find the place.

Mrs. Babcock helped Dr. Smith when a nurse was needed. A Mr. Sheldon asked Dr. Smith for help and as a result Mr. Sheldon came to get Mrs. Babcock. They set out in the wagon. After traveling for some time they realized that they were lost; then they saw a house which the doctor thought was his home, but to his disappointment it was not. They went on again, and at last they saw a light. On approaching the house, they had found the right one.

One Sunday morning an Indian looked through the Babcocks' window, and before any information could be given, he was in the house. On looking around the room, he saw a scarlet shawl. Then he commenced saying some sort of rigmarole, the only word she could understand being "papoose." So, taking it for granted that he wanted the shawl for his baby, Mrs. Babcock let him have it. Then he admired Mr. Babcock's cap, and, anxious to get rid of him, they gave him the cap also. The Indian was delighted and left.

The Texas cattle passed over the prairie, often 15,000 in a herd. One day a cow strayed from the herd and was seen by the Dolan boys. They, of course, could not undertake catching her alone, so they sought the help of Woodard, Babcock, and Smith. These set out after the cow — no easy task, for if the cow saw them first, it was sure to go for them. Sure enough, the cow saw them and was about to make a rush at them, when they all fired, bringing it to the ground. The cow was quartered, each man getting a quarter of beef. As the Dolans had no place to store their share, it was packed away with Babcocks' beef on the sod roof. All went well until about midnight, when wolves scented the meat and would have had it, for they had already brought it to the ground. If they had not been able to frighten the beasts away, the beef would have been lost.



Photo from Edith Kranda

Main Street looking north. Dr. O. P. Baker's Dentist and Real Estate office is the second building on left. He practiced in Exeter from 1880 to 1912.

Dr. O. P. Baker first visited this neighborhood with "Joe" Shaub, who at that time was a grain buyer along the Burlington. After visiting for some time, the doctor found it necessary to go 2 miles out of town to the Willard Payne place to eat and sleep. During that visit he bought a quarter section of land one mile east of town and then went back to Morrison, Illinois, where he told the merchants about Exeter. As a result of his description of this country and its possibilities, he sold five farms without the buyers' ever coming to look at them.

In February, 1874, he built a house on the farm he had bought. But a neighbor thought the country was getting too thickly settled, so he sold his 80 acres and left for the West. In September, 1874, he brought a party of 275 land-seekers from Illinois, and, even though that was the grasshopper year, he sold five farms in one day. Again, in 1875, he brought out a party numbering 265 persons and succeeded in locating 230 people within 16 miles of Exeter.

Dr. Baker advertised these Nebraska lands extensively and, though at that time a nonresident, he did a great deal to help to settle this country. He moved to Exeter in 1880, and thereafter made

his home here. Being a dentist, he became the first dentist to practice in Exeter. He continued to practice here about 32 years; then, owing to failing eyesight, he sold out. He had worked continuously in his profession for 46 years.

—From "Pioneer Stories"

John T. Borland had made his way from Crete to Pleasant Hill, where he met James Horne, who persuaded him to come out nearer his place. He accepted the help offered, and Mr. Horne helped him to locate on the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 32, one mile west of his own homestead. Mr. Borland returned to Illinois, and, making everything ready, he and his wife, with their goods, returned with a mule team, commencing the journey on April 17, and reaching the homestead on May 12, 1871.

On reaching their homestead, Mr. Borland made a kind of gypsy tent or cabin, by making walls of sod on which he placed the top boards of the wagon box, and the wagon cover. In this home, the size of an ordinary wagon box—containing one room which did service as kitchen, bedroom, and living room—they lived nearly three months. The cookstove stood at the entrance, with the cooking plate just inside the tent, the back part and pipe outside. Their straw bed covered the floor, and of course was on the ground, but was carried outdoors in the daytime to give moving room.

The first July Fourth celebration held in the neighborhood was at Turkey Creek, in 1871, when a Rev. Beggs of the Free Methodist Church gave the address.

Mr. Borland soon erected a sod house with a shingle roof and a board floor, and plastered throughout with a mixture of lime and sand. Being some 3 miles from the railroad, they were not visited by either Indians or adventurers, but they had their share of visits from coyotes, which relieved them of their chickens and turkeys. They also lost small pigs in the blizzard of 1873. Otherwise they were comfortably fixed.

An interesting note on the grasshoppers was the way Nature freed the country of the pest. Their visit left millions of eggs in the soil, waiting to be hatched in the spring. But that next spring was varied. After a few warm days helped to hatch out the young grasshoppers, there would come a cold rain or snow, which killed them off. This happened several times until hardly a grasshopper remained.

Mr. Borland had the honor of bringing the first load of lumber into the town of Exeter. It was secured at Crete, and used in the Smith & Dolan store building.

James W. Dolan left Corning, Iowa, February 1, 1871, and reached Lincoln the same day. After learning, at the U. S. Land Office at Lincoln, that the first location where there was plenty of land was Fillmore County, he took the stage to Crete, with John F. Evans, an old army comrade. From Crete, they walked westward, following the grade stakes of the railroad. He reached the Warren Woodard home in the evening and spent the night. The following day, Mr. Woodard took him to look at government lands in the vicinity. He selected the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 20. He then walked back to Crete, took the stage back to Lincoln, filed his claim, and pre-empted, in the name of his brother William, the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the same section. This was about February 20, 1871.

He went to Lincoln on April 13 and bought lumber to build a house. It was hauled from Lincoln to the land in one wagon load with one team of horses. The total cost of the lumber, with one window, and one door, was \$43. The hauling cost \$12. The house measured 12' x 14'. He used siding boards for the roof, as being less expensive than shingles. The hardware cost \$3. A young Englishman, William Haines, the principal local builder at the time, assisted in the building. The entire cost of the house was approximately \$65. A box bed of boards was built in one corner of the room. An empty nail keg and a soap box were used for seats. These and a small board table made up the furniture.

Black crickets were plentiful during the summer and entered the house in large numbers. They enjoyed roosting on and chewing Mr. Dolan's clothes during the night. It was his custom before dressing in the morning to give the clothes a good shaking to dislodge the crickets. One morning while performing this daily stunt, he disturbed a good-sized rattlesnake that had entered through the floor during the night by way of an accommodating knot-hole. The snake replied to the shaking of the clothes with his rattle-box, so Mr. Snake had to be disposed of the first thing that morning. Rattlesnakes were not as numerous as crickets, but there were too many for comfort.

James Dolan's farming outfit consisted of one yoke of oxen, costing \$135; one secondhand farm wagon, \$70; one 12' breaking plow, \$29; and a limited supply of hand tools, spade, axe, hammer, etc.

He and his brother William dug a well 40-odd feet deep, and broke up 30 acres of prairie on their claims during the spring. This was mostly planted to corn, which did fairly well and helped to inspire confidence, there being at that time much discouragement and doubt as to the country's future. Some hay was cut in the

slough, using an Armstrong Mower.¹ The corn was also cut and saved with the hay for feed. All this came in handy the following winter. During the summer, while farm work was slack, he sometimes walked to Crete, where he worked at unloading lumber, for which he was paid \$1 per carload. During the summer of 1871, the B. & M. R.R. was extended from Lincoln to Hastings.

In the fall of 1871, the new town having been located, Mr. Dolan disposed of his farm apparatus and engaged in merchandising with Dr. Smith as a partner. He later abandoned storekeeping to enter the lumber and grain business, erecting one of the best modern grain elevators on the Burlington line.

On October 4, 1876, he married Ida M. Hager, the second daughter of A. T. Hager, another early pioneer and the first treasurer of Fillmore County. In the spring of 1880, Mr. Dolan disposed of his business interests in Exeter, and moved to Indianola, Nebraska, where he engaged in banking and real estate. There he served on the school board for 24 years and was a state Senator from the district in the sessions of 1883 and 1885. In October, 1904, he moved to Los Angeles, California.

—From "Pioneer Stories"

R. H. Downey, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Downey, came to Nebraska with his parents in May, 1871. His father homesteaded the W ½ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 2, Liberty township, in June, 1871, and he lived with his parents in a sod house.



Photo from Robert Trauger

The Last Remaining Soddy in Fillmore County

This home was built by Robert Herman Downey, and he and his family moved into it on November 5, 1889. The walls were three feet thick, plastered on the interior. They boasted a wood floor, and enjoyed a most comfortable home in all seasons. This picture was taken in 1912, shortly before it was torn down.



Photo from Robert Trauger

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Herman Downey, about 1933.



Photo from Robert Trauger

John Downey (left) and William Downey (right) in 1890. William was the father of R. H. Downey, John of Sherm Downey.

He married Anna Coates in 1886 and moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he worked for two years in a railway freight house. While they lived there, a daughter, Pearl Anna (Steyer) was born (October 18, 1887). Feeling that the city was not the best place to raise a family, he returned to Exeter. Their first son, Chester H., was born on October 14, 1889, while they were briefly living with his parents.

Then, on the SW ¼ of Sec. 36, Exeter, near his father's place, they built in 1889 a large two-room sod house, with walls 3' thick, plastered walls and ceilings, and a wooden floor. This sod house saw the births of another daughter, Ethel Leona (Trauger), on September 10, 1891, and another son, Harold L. Downey, on July 2, 1894. The family lived in the soddy until 1904, when they moved into a newly constructed frame house.

In addition to farming, Mr. Downey engaged in well digging. He was first in partnership with his uncle, Chester Stephens, but later bought out Mr. Stephens's share of the business. The sod house, which had the distinction of being the last in Fillmore County, was not torn down until 1916.²

Chester Downey married Edith Kail in 1923, and Harold Downey married Louise Diekman in 1918. Harold had one son, Glenn L. Downey, who now teaches at the University of Nebraska. Glenn's children are Robert Alan, Linda, and Barbara.

R. H. Downey retired and moved into Exeter in 1923. Mrs. Downey passed away in 1934, and Mr. Downey in 1937. Their children, all now deceased, passed all their lives in the Exeter community. Pearl Anna, who married Elzie Steyer, died on June 16, 1953; Chester died on May 16, 1966; Ethel Leona, who married Charley Trauger, died on October 5, 1964; and the youngest, Harold, died on June 20, 1963.

Sherman R. Downey was born on December 27, 1867, in Mendon, Michigan. He came to Nebraska with his parents around 1875. They made the journey in a covered wagon pulled by a team of horses. Mr. Downey remembered that one of the horses was completely blind, and that his parents had started the trip alone, but were joined by six different families along the way.



Photo from Robert Trauger
Sherm Downey in 1902

Mr. Downey vividly recalled the loss of the family dog on the trip. When they discovered that the dog was missing they turned back for 2 miles to where some men were working on the road. The men declared they knew nothing of the whereabouts of the dog, but Mr. Downey always felt they had taken him, as he had seen his pet just before they encountered the road crew.

During the six-week journey, and until they obtained suitable shelter here, John Downey and his sons slept under the wagon, and the womenfolk slept inside. They settled on the SE corner of Exeter township and built a sod house which had a sod roof for three years until it was replaced by a shingle roof. Mr. Downey declared that a "soddy" made a quiet, comfortable home.

He recalled an interesting experience with their oxen. While still residing in Michigan, his father had taken Sherm to the mill to grind some sacks of wheat. They had stopped the yoke of oxen near the mill pond and had just stepped into the mill when they heard a big "splash!" Investigating, they found the oxen swimming in the cool, refreshing pond with the overturned wagon floating along behind. The sacks of wheat were salvaged and dried, and another trip was made to the mill to obtain the much-needed flour.

Sherm Downey was married to Edith Dreher in 1904. They moved to Glenwood Springs, Colorado, where he was in the hardware business for two years. Returning to Exeter in 1906, Mr.

¹ Younger readers may not at once recognize this as a joking name for a scythe.—*Editor's note.*

² Mrs. Harold Downey, who supplied the Downey birth and death dates, tells us that the "Old Downey House" pictured in G. R. McKeith's *Pioneer Stories* with his account of William Downey (with whose Liberty township story we seem also to have placed it) was in fact the R. H. Downey soddy described here. —*Editor's note.*

Downey and Bert Dyer opened the Dyer & Downey Implement Company.

While they lived in Exeter, two daughters were born: Dorothy (now Mrs. Wayne Alvord, of Dallas, Texas) and Geraldine (Mrs. Edward Fitzgerald, of Lincoln). In 1928, they moved to Grafton, where Mr. Downey operated an implement business during most of the next 40 years. In recent years, Mr. and Mrs. Downey divided their residence between Grafton and Memory Manor in Exeter. They celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary in 1967, and on December 27, 1967, he celebrated his 100th birthday. The couple had three grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Mr. Downey passed away in Exeter on February 2, 1968.

Thomas B. Farmer came to this area from Bloomington, Indiana. In October, 1870, he arrived in the neighborhood in company with Warren Woodard. He spent the winter near the Blue River in the Sutton and Grafton district, trapping mink and beaver, and living on grouse, rabbits, and turkeys shot in the neighborhood. Here, with a companion, he had made a small dugout, but was often alone for several weeks at a time. Once, while he was alone, he came back from looking over his traps and found near by several hundred Omaha Indians. He was naturally somewhat alarmed. But these Indians were out hunting and fishing, with no intention of injuring anyone. He saw them go into camp, after which a few would come around and look into his shack, but in no way interfered with his property.

In the spring of 1871, he homesteaded on his claim, the E ½ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 28, and built a sod house. Later he returned to Bloomington, where he was married on March 18, 1873. When his bride came to Exeter, she expected to see a town, and wondered why she was dropped off the train onto the open prairie. "Why am I left here?" she asked. "Where is the depot?" Then she found, to her amazement, that the town of Exeter consisted of one building, the store recently erected by Messrs. Smith & Dolan.

In due course the grasshoppers relieved them of five acres of corn, besides their garden truck, and the mosquito netting from the windows.

They became the parents of Frank Farmer, born in 1874, who became a nationally known singer. Mabel Farmer Manning, born in 1876, a lifelong resident of Exeter, was a great help in the compilation of this history. She passed away on October 15, 1967.

Henry Hammond, a native of Indiana, went first to Illinois, and then came to Nebraska. In the fall of 1870 he filed on the NW ¼ of Sec. 4. He then went to Nebraska City, where he worked during the winter, and settled on his homestead in the spring of 1871, having only a yoke of oxen and \$5 in money with which to start the new life. Like most of the pioneers, he met with many reasons to be discouraged; but he held on with faith and confidence, until, finally successful, he raised a worthy family and lived to an honored old age, the satisfactory results of years of honest toil.

About one year after he homesteaded, he was married to Catherine (Kate) Drummond, sister to "Pat" Drummond; her sister Margaret married Michael Sweeley. These all homesteaded about the same time and in the same neighborhood.

In the winter after their marriage they received word that Mrs. Hammond's sister was very sick, so they set out that same night to do what they could. After staying overnight, they returned the next morning to find that their house had been robbed and burned, and they were left with nothing but what they had on. There was abundant evidence that the house had been robbed as well as burned, for several half-burned articles were found in parts of the room out of their proper places, and the fire had been so clever as to completely burn (?) several good-sized chunks of meat, without completely burning the wooden cask in which they were packed. The culprits were never definitely located, though it was never thought likely that anyone had come all the way from Florida, or any other outlandish place, to commit such a deed upon the struggling poor.

Because of this misfortune many people advised them to give up and return East, but they decided to remain and fight out life's battle on the claim. During the winter he would haul firewood for 8 or 10 miles, often in the severest weather with no warmer clothing than his overalls. Their daily fare was mostly milk and corn meal, varied only by a change to corn meal and milk. They were thankful for having a good cow for whose contributions to their bill of fare they were very grateful. Mr. Hammond, who was a Civil War veteran, said he thought "The Army rations in wartime were never more limited than in this case."

During the great blizzard, many people in the neighborhood were suffering with the measles, and Mr. Hammond lay ill. The snow found its way inside through a crack in the north side of the roof, gently and imperceptibly, yet definitely accumulating. By morning there was a wagonload on the floor, the beds were covered, and quite a quantity of snow water lay in the hollow places of the sick man's pillow. The fires were out and no firewood could be

found anywhere. Mrs. Hammond never felt more hopeless or discouraged in her life. But soon Michael Sweeley came to the rescue with his arms full of kindling, and helped in other ways. He afterward had to dig through five feet of snow to recover the Hammond hogs.

The grasshoppers were just as considerate with the Hammond farm as with any in the district. After their visit, 60 rows of corn stalks contained only half a bushel of corn. A remarkable thing regarding the grasshoppers was their surviving a heavy hailstorm. Although they lay so thick everywhere, and the hail came so thick and fast that it could be scooped up by the pail full, it seemed that the hail had not killed the grasshopper. But it was not a "survival of the fittest."



Photo from Leo Gibbons

Henry G. Hammond's barber shop in 1895. (Notice the photographer in the mirror.) Henry G. Hammond was the son of Henry Hammond.

Job Hathaway, Willard Payne, and Elmer Wilcox came together, in the spring of 1871, from Greenwood, Illinois, in covered wagons. They settled on Sec. 30, one mile west of town. Mr. Hathaway filed on the NE ¼, Mr. Wilcox on the SE ¼, and Mr. Payne on the SW ¼; the remaining NW quarter was taken later by the Rev. John E. Ingham. In due course Mrs. Hathaway came West and was met by her husband in Lincoln.

Mr. Payne built a frame house in the middle of the section so that a portion of it was on each claim, and they all lived in the same house, each homesteader having his particular corner. In this way they met the requirements of the law by each man sleeping on his own land. This house ultimately became the property of Mr. Hathaway.

On one occasion a man came up to the house on horseback and asked for a night's lodging. Mr. Hathaway was away and Mrs. Hathaway did not like the idea of having the strange man in the house, so she asked Mr. Payne what he thought. After looking the man over, he decided it would be all right, as the man looked respectable. The man slept with Mr. Payne, and some time during the night, Mrs. Hathaway was alarmed to hear that Payne was receiving a good pounding and shouting to the man, "You donned old fool!" The fight seemed so real that Mrs. Hathaway jumped through the bedroom window, and was making her way to the neighbors' when she heard the call, "Come back, lady! Come back, lady!" It appeared that the stranger had been dreaming about a fight, and in his sleep had commenced to let fly at Mr. Payne. Needless to say, the man was full of apologies, but it hindered Mrs. Hathaway from ever again taking a stranger into the house.

Charles Hole came to America in 1870, from West Pennington, near the famous city of Glastonbury, Somersetshire, England. After spending some time in Boston and in Detroit, he made his way to Exeter in April, 1872, and homesteaded 80 acres 3 miles S of town, the W ½ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 6, Liberty township.

Mr. Hole married and settled in Exeter in 1878. Then, in 1881, he built a home here, and in 1915 they had the distinction of being the only residents to have lived in one house for so long a time.

Mr. Hole had come to Exeter with a Frank Appleby, a carpenter, who died at the Warren Woodard residence in the spring of 1872. He was the first white man to be buried in this vicinity.

James Horne was a native of Low Coats, Lanarkshire, Scotland. After working as an engineer on the Caledonian Railway, he came to America in 1853, where he found work with the Hudson River R.R. (later the New York Central). In 1858, he visited his old home and there married Jane (or Jenny) Miller, and the couple soon came to America. They settled for the next 11 years in Poughkeepsie, New York,



Photo from James Barbur
Mr. and Mrs. James Horne.

where he continued working for the railroad. They then moved to Illinois, where he worked for the Illinois Central R.R. for some five years. He had already bought 90 acres of Illinois land; so that when the "Western Fever" broke out, he was a ready candidate for infection. He first had a look at Canada; that did not seem promising, so he visited Kansas. That did not impress him, either; but Nebraska did.

He returned to Illinois, sold out his interests there, and homesteaded 3 miles SE of Exeter, on the E 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 4, Liberty township. There he built a sod house. A few years later they moved across the road into Exeter township (the SW 1/4 of Sec. 34) and built a frame house, living there until his death in 1902. It was told of him that when he began farming, his knowledge of the art was so slight that he had to ask how to unhitch a horse; but he became a successful and highly respected farmer.

The children of James and Jane Horne were Will, George, Agnes, James, Francis, Lillian, John, and Ben.

After his father's death, James F. Horne in 1903 moved his family onto the home farm in Sec. 34. He had married Edith Alice Howarth on November 8, 1900. To this union five children were born: Emily, Ruth, Dorothy, Richard, and Esther.

James and Edith Horne replaced the frame house in 1924 with a new one and lived there until his death on July 14, 1934. His son Richard and mother Edith Horne and daughter Esther lived together here until Richard married Doris Hetherington on October 12, 1940. To this union were born Frances, James Richard, and John Carl. They lived on this farm until Richard's death on November 1, 1961.

Richard's son James and wife Sandra, sons James Talbot and Richard Ray, are now living on the Horne farm. A Horne family has been living on this farm for 97 years.

Jane Horne passed away in January, 1916, and Edith Howarth Horne on February 24, 1952.

Frank Augustus Lewis was born in Piper City, Illinois, September 1, 1873. He came with his parents to a farm near Exeter as a young lad and attended school in District 22.

On January 30, 1895, he was married to Minnie Frances Trauger. They lived at Hebron for several years, then moved to Exeter where Mr. Lewis began working for the Smith Index Factory. He remained with this firm for 53 years, retiring in 1955. He was a life-long member of the Congregational Church, serving as treasurer for 20 years, and as deacon for 43 years.

Mrs. Frank Lewis was interested in civic affairs and served as Worthy Matron of Exeter Chapter 256, O.E.S. She was also a member and Regent of Stephen Bennett Chapter of the D.A.R.

Mr. Lewis passed away on February 3, 1959, and Mrs. Lewis on November 12, 1961.

—Mrs. Robert E. Trauger



Photo from Hazel Jorgenson
Will Buck, son of early Exeter settler F. M. Buck; father of Mrs. Mable Coates. Mr. Frank Lewis' mother was a sister of Will Buck.



Photo from Mrs. Ted Jorgenson
Mrs. Will Buck

Mr. and Mrs. **Caleb J. Litch** homesteaded here in 1870 on the E 1/2 of the SE 1/4, Sec. 28. They built the one-storied part of their frame home in 1870. The two-story addition, in 1872, made their home one of the first two-storied homes with an open stairway, and other such fine details, to be found in the county. They had one son, Lester, who in young manhood homesteaded the W 1/2 of the same quarter (where Gerald and Margaret Becker now live). He died as a young man.

C. J. Litch passed away in the early '80's. Charley Trauger's father, M. E. Trauger, had a story about Mr. Litch's passing. Mrs. Litch had asked Mr. Trauger to take a telegram to the depot, wiring for a former minister to come and conduct the burial services. The message said that Mr. Trauger would meet the train and bring the minister to the Litch home. Somewhere along the line, the message got mixed up, for when the minister got off the train, he showed great shock. He finally stammered, "Why, Mr. Trauger, I came here to conduct your funeral, and was under the impression I was to be met by Mr. Litch!"

Both Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Litch lie buried in the center of the Exeter Cemetery, and their graves were at one time surrounded by four large pine trees.

This farm is owned today by Mr. Charley Trauger, and the original family house is still standing.

—Mrs. Robert E. Trauger

Lemuel T. Mead, a native of Fort Branch, Gibson County, Indiana, came to Nebraska in March, 1870, bringing his wife and little son; his two daughters followed later. They settled in Lincoln, where he worked as a wagon-wright for David Bowen, the first blacksmith in Lincoln, Mr. Mead being the first man to do the wood work.

In the fall of that year, he came out West and secured a claim, but returned to Lincoln and worked there till spring. They came to the homestead—the SE 1/4 of Sec. 4—in March, 1871. Their first house was one room, 18' square. Their first barn was a tent, and during the severe winter their cow's mouth was badly frozen, but with careful nursing it recovered from that misfortune. Mr. Mead recalled one year when it was so cold that he harvested his wheat wearing an overcoat.

On one occasion they gave dinner to some Pawnee Indians. When it came to the helping of themselves with the butter, they simply took a chunk in their hands and ate it clear. There was no need for knives or spoons; "they were in no degree fastidious," (as Rev. McKeith phrases it), "but were evidently quite original, fingers having been made long before spoons."

A neighbor named Wright, with his wife and children, were once going to town with Colonel Babcock, who provided the conveyance. When about half a mile from Mead's home they were overtaken by a fearful windstorm. None of the party could remember just what happened; but they found themselves lying in Mead's wheat field. The wagon box in which they were sitting was carried off the running gear and tipped over into the field. The party was badly bruised but not seriously hurt. Because of the apparent damage to the young wheat, Colonel Babcock suggested payment, but Mr. Mead said, "We will wait until harvest and see how things turn out." The incident became a standing joke with Mr. Mead, as he always said he had better wheat on that particular spot than anywhere else in the field.

Mr. Mead built a sod workshop and did a great deal of wagon repairing and other work for several years.

One of the most pleasing sights in those early days was the prairie mirage, when, in the clear weather of early morning, they would often see that wonderful illusion which often proved such a snare and disappointment to weary travelers on the plains. This optical phenomenon would sometimes give the effect of a vast lake, or a river with trees growing on its banks, or a great city. At other times it would come more as the "Looming," when distant unseen objects would be observed in the sky, the town of Fairmont being reflected in that way. People used to say, "The air is rarefied." So one morning the Mead boy went out of doors, and upon seeing the mirage, ran into the house saying, "Oh, Mama, the air is glorified this morning!"

Mr. Mead lived on the homestead 11 years, then moved to Exeter, where he died on April 17, 1901, in his 75th year. Mrs. Mead lived until February 8, 1913, and was 82 when she passed away. They both joined the United Brethren Church held in the Redfern schoolhouse. Mr. Mead remained a member until his death. Mrs. Mead was a member of the Methodist church when she died.

Mrs. Mead's genealogy showed her family related to General Robert E. Lee, and Mr. Mead's traced a relationship to Sgt. John Pritchett, a soldier of the Revolution.

Louis Menke came from Germany and homesteaded along the Blue River north of Exeter about 1870. He married Anna Becker and they made their first home in a soddy. At that time they got supplies from Crete. In 1873, they moved, with one child, to a farmstead 2 1/2 miles E of Exeter and built a log cabin. This was their home for several years before they built a frame house. The old house and the new both stood until 1940.



Photo from Lillian Barkmeier
The Louis Menke Log House in 1939

The Menkes raised nine children on this farm. They were Rica (Dumpert), Mary (Jansen), John, Anna (Barkmeier), Minnie (Hammond), Sophia (Mathews), Lena (Mathews), Henry, and William. Two children died in infancy. The father, Louis, died in 1902. Mrs. Menke continued to live on the farm until 1917, when she moved into Exeter.

William H. Miner came from Illinois in 1870 and located on the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 12. He lived through the first summer in a tent, which became a well-known landmark and a place of call for many of the incoming travelers. The countryside was one vast open plain without a shade tree, and wild animals appreciated even the shade offered by tall grass or weeds. Once, an antelope was enjoying what shade a large sunflower could give, when Mr. Miner crept up and shot it. In that easy way he secured a supply of good meat.

At one time Mr. Miner had gone to Weeping Water for a load of corn and was within 3 miles of Cordova when he became lost in a snowstorm. He dug his way into a snowbank and crawled in with his blankets, staying there until morning, the horses having to make the best of the situation.

An Irishman named Pat McMann, whom he had known in Illinois, was passing over the plains to Colorado and called upon him. When he left Mr. Miner, he gave him some nails as payment for his hospitality. These nails were kept in a tub and Mr. Miner, needing some one day, put his hand into the tub and grabbed a rattlesnake.

Jacob Pflug at the age of 16 joined the Union Army and was mustered out in May, 1865. He married Hannah Sayles of Lyons, New York, on November 6, 1865, and on November 7 set out for Nebraska. From St. Louis he rode on a load of goods to Nebraska City. In April, 1866, Mrs. Pflug took a train to St. Louis and then came by boat to Nebraska City.

They lived in Nebraska City until 1868 and then moved to Lincoln, where he and his brother had a grocery store at what is now 10th and P Streets. There were no walks in Lincoln in those days and many times the streets were very muddy. They attended the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the first State Capitol. A picture of their small son, the late Jake C. Pflug of Ohio, and one of the small son of Lincoln's Mayor William T. Donovan were placed in the cornerstone.

In 1871, he took a 160-acre claim about 5 miles NW of Exeter (the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 12, Fairmont township) and for a number of years clerked in Dr. H. G. Smith's general store. Many times he walked the 5 miles to and from work. The general store included dry goods, groceries, hardware, implements, and the post office and real-estate office.

In 1881, he sold the farm to Philip Schaefer, Sr., whose son, Philip Schaefer, Jr., still owns it. He then engaged in the implement business in Exeter from 1882 until 1909, when he sold out and retired on account of failing health.

Mr. Pflug was prominent in the early history of Exeter and held many places of trust. He was for many years a member of the school board and also superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School. He was a member of Lincoln Lodge No. 19 of the Masons for more than 50 years. Mrs. Pflug was the first Oracle of the Royal Neighbors when it was organized in Exeter.

Mr. and Mrs. Pflug were the parents of 14 children. Mrs. Pflug died November 30, 1908, and Mr. Pflug on August 20, 1923.

—Mrs. Herbert Howarth

John Redfern came with his parents from England, and lived for some time in Peoria, Illinois. He came to Nebraska in 1870 and lived for three years near Nebraska City. When they arrived at the Missouri River, it was frozen over, but

as the ice was too thin to be safe for heavy traffic, they walked across it in knee-deep snow, and had to wait some time for their goods. They settled on land 3 miles N of Exeter, and had a family of seven children to care for, and only one span of mules with which to start life in the new land. They built a sod house and passed through the usual pioneer hardships, surviving hail, blizzards, and grasshoppers. One day one of the boys went around the house to pick up what he thought was a piece of black cloth; to his surprise, he found it to be a rattlesnake.

Their house was open for preaching services and Sunday School, Mr. Redfern being a great Sunday School worker. "Father" Green would preach there,—an old man who was one of the best known and most respected characters in the district.

John Redfern died on November 17, 1901.

Alonzo Rice, a native of New York State, came to La Platte (formerly Lorimer Mills), Saryp County, from Pennsylvania. After working there for about three years he came with his brother, Palmer, and secured a claim on Sec. 14, the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$, July 30, 1870. The only thing visible on the prairie when he located was a tent used as a home by "Bill" Miner; there were no houses, and the nearest thing to a tree was a sunflower.

To find one's bearings when traveling over the prairie, one had to look for some stovepipe sticking out of the ground—the sure sign of a dwelling—and then ask their township, section number, and probably the lay of the land, north, south, east, and west.

The nearest town and post office was Camden (which old maps show to have been 3 or 4 miles S of the present Milford). Alonzo Rice set out early one morning to go there. It was his custom when traveling in the dark to note the location of a certain star, but after he had gone some distance, somehow the stars got changed around and he lost his "lucky star" or "star of hope." After continuing for some time, still believing he was going in the right direction, he recognized, as the dawn came, not far away his own house. He guessed that the horses, realizing the aimlessness of the effort, had made tracks for home.

During those early days, Mr. Rice would go to Hebron, on the Little Blue, and work in the stone and lime quarries. The sections west—Sec. 15, and a school section—remained open prairie for some time after he located, and antelope grazed there in the summer time. Mr. Rice remembered the coming of James Alexander. The canny Scot, "brand-new fro' the land o' heather," had failed to locate his land (the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 24) and Mr. Rice had to help him find it. The growing corn on the Rice farm was a source of wonder to the stranger, as it was so unlike anything he had seen growing in the old country.



Photo from T. D. Clarke
Mr. and Mrs. Palmer Rice, taken on their Golden Wedding anniversary in August, 1914, at their farm home $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles NE of Exeter.

Palmer Rice, brother of Alonzo, worked for 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ years as a day laborer in the lumber woods of Pennsylvania, and in 1869 moved to New York State. He and his wife decided that their chances for success there were too limited, and he secured a covered wagon and three horses and started westward. They set out on April 25, 1870, in spite of snow that had fallen in the forenoon, and made their way to Nebraska. For many miles along the road, as they passed through the villages, the covered wagon was such an unusual sight that the youngsters called them Gypsies, and in some places they were not allowed to camp. The journey to La Platte took seven weeks.

After staying a few days with Alonzo at La Platte, Palmer Rice took the ferry across the Platte River, rode on a construction train to within 7 miles of Lincoln, and then walked to the city. There he inquired about homesteads, and found many people ready to offer information, and especially willing to help them locate in their particular county. The description of this area seemed especially favorable. When he returned to La Platte, the brothers decided to come out and secure homesteads.

They made their way to Camden, an old freighting town, where they met Fred Roper, a land agent, who brought them into the country to see the land. Liking this neighborhood, they decided to locate here, selecting the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 14. They stayed overnight with the Miner brothers, who at that time lived in a tent, and the next day had dinner with Schuyler ("Elkhorn") Jones. They located the land with Mr. Roper's help. He counted the horse's steps from Miner's corner, and then looked for the next stake, which at once gave them the situation of the land. It was decided that Palmer would take the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, brother-in-law John Tanner the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, brother Alonzo the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and their mother the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$.

Then they returned to La Platte, but came out again to the claims in the fall and put up a sod house, made some hay, and again went back to La Platte for the winter. In January, 1871, Palmer Rice helped to move Mr. Tanner onto his claim, and on the return trip had his first experience of Nebraska's cold weather. Not being prepared for it, he had a hard time to keep going. If he had in the least missed his way, he would have frozen to death.

He made another trip in March, bringing Mrs. Rice and part of his goods. The sod house in the meantime had shrunken so much that the winds had no difficulty in finding their way into the house, especially at the eaves. Because of the cold house, Mrs. Rice was ill for some time afterward.

Palmer made another trip to La Platte in April to help move the other relatives to their homesteads. At Camden, he saw Dr. H. G. Smith, with a load of lumber, nails, etc., stuck fast in the Blue River. He went at once to the doctor's assistance. With some chains and ropes, they braced the wagon to bear the strain and then hitched the extra horses and soon had the wagon on dry land.

The loss of corn crops to the grasshoppers in 1874 induced many people to return East, but the Rices decided to remain. Fuel would be scarce that winter. So they set up the stove in the cellar and lived there, using cornstalks for cooking and heating. One day when Mr. Rice was in the field cutting cornstalks, some Indians came by the house. Mrs. Rice, although alone, was not afraid, as she knew their dog would keep the Indians at bay, and he did.

Many of the local farmers were afraid to sow their wheat the spring after the grasshoppers' visit. It was feared that the large number of their eggs left in the soil would make a wheat crop impossible. But Mr. Rice, believing that there was no great risk, secured extra land, farmers supplying the wheat and accepting his note. The average yield was 12 bushels an acre. The first sales brought 55 cents a bushel, but the price rose to \$1.30 a bushel. Mr. Rice had made a good speculation.

During his first year here, this district was under the jurisdiction of Saline County, and settlers paid their taxes there. Then Fillmore County was organized. Mr. Rice sat on the first election board for four townships, the meeting being held in James Horne's yard. Mr. Horne was away buffalo hunting at the time.

The Tanners' four-year-old son, Alonzo, was buried on the Palmer Rice farm.

Mrs. Jennie Roper Rogers ("Aunt Jennie") was born Jennie Abbott, in El Paso, Illinois, the daughter of English parents. She had two brothers, Sam and Frank. Their father spent much time and money trying to prove that he was heir to a wealthy estate in England. Jennie attended Mt. Carroll Seminary at Mt. Carroll, Illinois, where "Frank" Hubbard was also a student and the two girls formed a friendship which lasted many years. Jennie was invited to a nutting party at the Hubbard home and there met the elder brother Elbert, who later became a well-known author. A girl who later became Mrs. A. J. Sawyer of Lincoln attended Mt. Carroll, and she and Jennie became fast and in fact lifelong friends.

Jennie taught school at least one term. Then at 19 years of age she was married (after prayer meeting) to Schouler Roper. The newlyweds, with Sam, Frank, and their mother, came to Nebraska in 1873, in a covered wagon, crossing the Missouri River on a ferry at Brownville. They took up a claim near Exeter where there was not much to be seen but prairie grass which billowed in the wind "like the waves of the sea." This was a tree claim and many fine old cottonwoods which Jennie helped to plant are still standing. They lived in a sod house. Jennie and her mother fought a prairie fire one day when the men were away and saved their buildings. One vivid memory was of holding a lantern all night while the men tried to remove a horse from the well into which it had fallen. A little son, Charles, was born the following summer. He later became the founder of the Roper Mortuary in Lincoln. At times it was necessary to place an umbrella over the baby to keep him dry when the rain came through the roof. One time, soon after the birth of one of the children, a pig wandered in at the unscreened door when Jennie was left alone for a



Photo from Cora Rogers

Merritt L. Rogers and wife (Jennie Roper Rogers)

few minutes, and tipped over the slop pail. At Christmas time the Ropers and Farmers took their two babies (Charles and Frank) and journeyed to Crete to have the babies' pictures taken. They had wrapped them up so snugly that both babies broke out with the heat.

They later moved into a frame house. One day when Jennie and the baby were at home alone the Indians came, tried the doors (which were locked), and snooped all around the place. She had seen them coming and hid herself and the baby in the box stairway, trying to amuse the baby, so he would not cry, by counting the buttons on the front of her dress. Her husband did not get home until dark, but the Indians had long since gone.

They moved to town, bought a little home, and went into the restaurant business. Three more sons were born, one of them dying in infancy. Then the husband died, leaving Jennie with three little sons and a mortgage on the house. Sympathetic friends made up a purse and paid off the mortgage. Then the young widow went to work to support her family, doing dressmaking, nursing, and whatever there was to do. There were no widows' pensions in those days.

Her two brothers, one of them married, had gone on to western Nebraska, and settled on a ranch on Pumpkin Creek, near Bayard. Two children were born to Sam and his wife. Soon after Jennie became a widow a call for help came from the brothers. Sam and his wife were stricken with typhoid. Jennie went and did what she could, but both died, leaving two little orphans, a boy and a girl. Jennie brought them home with her; then her own children took the fever and her son Carl died. Relatives of her husband, living in Illinois, offered to take her brother's two children to raise, if she would bring them there. After reaching Illinois her brother's little boy became ill with the fever and died.

She returned to Exeter and again took up the struggle to make a living for herself and two sons. There was always time for work in the little Baptist Church, of which she was a loyal member for years. There was also always time to give many babies their first bath, nurse the sick, and help prepare the dead for burial. She became Aunt Jennie, Aunt Jen, or Auntie Roper to most of the children in town.

In 1905, Jennie Roper married my father, Merritt L. Rogers, and became our second mother. The Rogers family came to Nebraska from Illinois about 10 years later than the Ropers. There was a triple wedding ceremony when my father and Aunt Jennie, and my two sisters, Ruth and Bessie, were married. Ruth and Clint went to Chicago to live, and Bessie and Valentine Babcock went to western Nebraska. Mother said, "One flew east and one flew west and one flew over the cuckoo's nest!" I was the one that flew over the cuckoo's nest.

Among the pioneer experiences which I have heard her tell many times were the grasshopper invasions, and the great blizzards. During one blizzard Frank and Sam Abbott were caught in the barn for 24 hours, drinking the cow's milk for food. And the grasshoppers were so numerous that they covered the sun.

When sewing for a living, she made wedding dresses for brides, then tucked in a bouquet for the bride, fashioned from bits of fern leaf and pink begonia blossoms from her own window. Many times she was called on to dress the bride and then attend the wedding as an honored guest.

Before coming to Nebraska she and her mother sent to friends in England for enough black silk to make a dress for each. These friends cut several lengths for the skirts and sewed them together, thus evading the duty. Jennie wore her dress just twice before leaving Illinois, and when they wanted to tree-claim their Nebraska land she sold her silk dress for \$20. (They needed \$14.) She also brought 20 yards of newly woven rag carpet and sold that when they were in need of cash. She said, "Oh, yes, I sold everything I had which was salable," and when I jokingly said, "But you did not sell the baby," her eyes twinkled and she replied, "No, everyone had babies."

My father was employed in the Tag Factory and earned very good wages for those years. He and Mother took great pride and joy in remodeling the home, installing a hot-water heating plant, water, electricity, and a telephone, and the front porch which they always enjoyed so much. It was a real satisfaction to both to reserve one-

tenth of their income to use in generous support of their church and Baptist missions, besides many other good causes.

This has not been written with any idea that it was a literary gem, but as an effort to record a few of the events in a very outstanding life of a pioneer woman of great character and courage. Bess Streeter Aldrich was particularly interested in the story about the silk dresses.

—*Julia Rogers Blouch*

Parker Ryan was born at Waterloo, New York, and afterward lived in Peoria County, Illinois. He came to Nebraska with his brother Lawrence Ryan, Pat Drummond, Michael Sweeley, and Henry Hammond in 1870. They filed for homesteads in that year, Parker Ryan taking the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 8, Lawrence Ryan, the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and Pat Drummond, the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the same section. Michael Sweeley settled on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 4, and Henry Hammond on the NW $\frac{1}{4}$. Mrs. Ryan and the children left Peoria in March, 1871. They stopped a week at Afton, Iowa, where Mr. Ryan met them and brought them on to Lincoln. They completed their journey here in wagons, arriving at the homestead on April 6, 1871. For some time after they arrived, they camped, using the wagon beds for sleeping.

Five days after their arrival, the two Ryans, Drummond, and Sweeley set out for Lincoln to obtain goods and machinery.¹ On the next Sunday morning, bright sunshine promised a pleasant day, but before long clouds began to gather and rain began to fall, followed by a snowstorm which developed into a blizzard. Mrs. Ryan and her small children sought shelter in the wagon. A brother-in-law, Oliver Johns, nailed some carpet over the wagon front to help matters. Then he, with his wife and mother-in-law, went into the other wagon. Luckily, they had a barrel of crackers with them, although there was nothing eatable in the wagon with Mrs. Ryan and the children. The storm increased in fury and continued incessantly until two o'clock Tuesday afternoon, during which time the mother and little girl had nothing to eat or drink, and the baby just what was possible from a mother receiving no nourishment. Mr. Johns had come close a time or two to ask after them but was unable in the storm to render any help. When the storm abated, he speedily sought to relieve them. He found everything frozen so hard that an ax was necessary to cut a way into the wagon. Soon after they had been liberated and a fire started, the other men returned. They had gone no farther than Walnut Creek, where they were stopped by the storm. They had anxiously returned to see if their people were still alive. Their cattle were lost in this storm, but were afterward found near Turkey Creek. A homesteader down there had taken them in and fed them.

Shortly after the Ryans went into their new home—a house of one room, 14' x 16'—they had to entertain three gentlemen who were traveling through the country. Their visitors were a judge and two lawyers from Omaha. The accommodations were very scanty. It was decided that the judge and one lawyer would sleep on the table, while the other lawyer would sleep on a rug under the table. Matters would not have been bad, considering these limitations, had not the judge fallen off the table onto the lower lawyer, who happened to be lying at the time partly out from beneath the table, in an unconscious search for a softer place.

The homesteaders had to live close to their lands in those days, or someone was sure to jump their claim. When the Ryans were away once visiting friends in the East, on the return journey they met several men with two wagons. In conversation, the men told them they were on their way to jump a claim, giving the number and location of the land, which just happened to be the Ryans' homestead. Here was an opportunity to show tact and wisdom and to prove that "a closed mouth makes a wise head." They journeyed on, but when near the homestead the Ryans managed to get ahead of the other wagons, and had their wagon full length on the claim in time to retain it before the men realized what had happened.

The SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 10 was jumped five times, three men losing their lives as a result. Two men were killed outright, and the third died of his wounds. Two of these men fought and killed each other, one being shot dead just as he ran his pitchfork through the other. Each lost his life as well as the claim.

One day two men rode up to the house and were asking particulars regarding the country when they noticed the well-marked trails of the Texas cattle. One of them asked the women if they were Indian trails! One woman, answering in fun, said they were. They looked rather frightened. They next asked if the women ever saw any Indians, and were told, "Yes, lots of them; we saw 20 Indians not long ago." (They did not add that they were seen in the company of a government agent.) This proved to be enough information for the men, for they turned their horses and fled back eastward, and, though the hat of one of them blew off, they did not stop to pick it up.

While the men were digging a well at Mr. Drummond's, one

¹This seems to be an error in McKeith's account. The blizzard described is clearly the blizzard of Easter Sunday, April 13, 1873. Parker Ryan's granddaughter, Mrs. Edith Hild of Lincoln, tells us that the arrival date (April 6, 1871) is correct, but that her grandfather was caught in the Easter blizzard of 1873 while bound not for Lincoln, but for Nebraska City.—*Editor.*

morning Mrs. Ryan decided to go along. The screen door had been left open, and when they returned about 11 P.M. Mrs. Ryan thought she heard an unusual sound as she placed the baby in bed. Mr. Ryan assured her that he could not hear anything. After much reassurance she finally got into bed, only to jump out again declaring that she heard a sound like a muffled rattle. Her husband told her to get back into bed, and commented, "It's just like a woman to be frightened of the noise of a cricket." The next morning they were up early, Mr. Ryan returning to the well digging, and Mrs. Ryan getting ready to do the family wash. While she was busy about the boiler, the little girl came running out of the house screaming and shouting, "A snake! a snake!" On going inside, Mrs. Ryan saw the snake sitting on the bed "rattling to beat the band." It had been lying there between some quilts that were between the bed and the mattress, and right in the place where she had slept all night. When the bedclothes were pulled off for the washing, the snake had been liberated and made its way to the top of the bed. With a hoe, Mrs. Ryan attacked the snake. It would stand on its tail and strike at her, then coil and strike again. She managed to keep clear of its blows, and after great difficulty and determination she succeeded in laying the reptile low. Needless to say, there was no washing done that day. When Mr. Ryan returned he found his wife in a sad state; she could not speak, and he was at a loss to know what had happened. At last she struggled to the door and out to where the dead snake lay, and with one desperate effort, she said, "There's your cricket!" There was no going to bed that night, as everything in the house was turned out to make sure there were no more snakes around, for even the brave man had become weak at the thought of having slept in the bed with a rattlesnake. It had eight rattles and a button (nearly nine years old) and measured nearly three feet long.

The first crop on the Ryan farm was a five-acre field of oats, which seemed in every way satisfactory. As this was to be the first thrashed in the neighborhood, everyone was curious to know how it would turn out. On the thrashing day, the homesteaders gathered from far and near, bringing not only their horses to pull the wagons, but their other stock as well, as there would be no one home to feed and water them. Although the house was only one room, 60 men, women, and children were provided with dinner, and every horse had a taste of oats. The horses were tied up wherever possible around the place, and for each group a bushel basket of oats was thrown on the ground. This necessarily meant some amount of waste. When the thrashing was over, there being no money, the thrashers received 10 or 12 bushels of oats for helping with the work. Then, when Mr. Ryan came into the house, Mrs. Ryan wanted to know how he would take care of his oats, as he had no granary. "Oh! I think I can manage to take care of my share of the oats all right," he replied. Undoubtedly he could, for the quantity of oats that fell to his lot after his wholesale feeding of his neighbors' horses measured half a bushel.

Charles C. Smith was born at Junius, New York, in 1866 and came to Nebraska with his parents in 1871. After high school, he went to Doane College at Crete and received his Bachelor of Science degree in 1887. Mr. Smith retained a lifelong interest in the college. He was secretary of the board of directors (1901-1915) and chairman of the board (1914-1915 and 1925-1934). He also earned a master's degree at Eastman Business College at Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1888.

As a young man Mr. Smith filed on a homestead near Grover, Colorado, and was cashier of a bank at Grover for a short time. He came back to Exeter and worked in his father's bank. It was then that he saw the need of the bookkeeping aid which he invented and began manufacturing in 1896.

In 1911, Mr. Smith was elected to the Nebraska Senate and served one term. He was a member of the National Stationers Association, director of Associated Industries of Nebraska (of which he was president in 1921), director of the Nebraska War Work Council of the Y.M.C.A. during World War I, state director of the Y.M.C.A. from 1917 to 1923, president of Exeter American Red Cross from



Photo from John Bacon
Charles C. Smith



Photo from Mrs. Armin Bender
Dr. and Mrs. H. G. Smith



Photo from McKeith's "Pioneer Stories"

The first house built in Exeter, where Dr. H. G. Smith opened the first store.

1916, and director of the Nebraska Conference of Congregational Churches from 1918.

Mr. Smith married in 1892. He and his wife reared four adopted daughters. Mrs. Smith died in 1930, and Mr. Smith in December, 1951.

Dr. Horace G. Smith first arrived in Nebraska on January 1, 1871. He walked from Lincoln to Milford and then on to the future site of Exeter. He spent his first night here in the home of Warren ("Boss") Woodard. Then the only house in the neighborhood, this was on the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 28, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile E of present Exeter, now the home of Leo Charles Becker.

While looking for a place to locate, he noticed survey stakes along a prospective line of the coming Burlington & Missouri River R.R., and another line of stakes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 miles to the south. Wanting to be near the railroad, he selected a homestead close to each line of the survey. He knew that either site might be taken before he reached the land office at Lincoln, and that the railroad would not be laid in both places. Upon his arrival in Lincoln, he found that the south location had already been claimed, and so he filed on the north location, the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 20. Fortunately, the northern survey line was the one chosen by the railroad.

Dr. Smith returned to Allegan, Michigan, to bring his wife and son, Charles, to the homestead. They came to Lincoln by rail, and from there west, they came in a heavily loaded lumber wagon. The first night was spent in a one-room farmhouse. It had two beds, one occupied by the owners, the other by the three Smiths. Two hired men slept on the floor. The next day, in attempting to go through a draw filled with water, they got stuck. Dr. Smith walked out on the wagon tongue, unhitched the horses, and rode out to get help. He borrowed a wagon, drove into the stream, and with the help of another man, little by little, they unloaded the stranded wagon until it could be pulled out. That night they spent in the vicinity of Dorchester. The third day, they arrived at their homestead. A house of boards and battens was built in such a way as to be ideal for a dry climate, but in about three weeks the rain came. Mrs. Smith found an umbrella too small to cover the bed and had to resort to carpets to keep the sleeping place dry. The house was the last one west at that time, the next being 22 miles away.

It was in this house with one room, two windows, and a door, that they entertained the gentleman sent out by the railroad to help the Town Company lay out the town.

Since the nearest doctor was 26 miles away, Dr. Smith was called upon to care for the sick and continued to do so until another doctor located here.

Provisions were scarce in the immediate neighborhood. Dr. Smith had brought a good supply for their own use, but was not willing to sell out of his little stock. As a result, he decided to order a stock of goods from Chicago and open a store. An 8' x 16' room was added to the house, and two dry-goods boxes served as counters. The stock of goods arrived at Lincoln, but when he arrived there he did not have the money to pay the freight. However, an old friend, hearing of his plight, loaned him the money. So he gathered his goods and returned home and was able to meet the demands of the neighborhood through the little store. Soon Dr. Smith and James Dolan built a larger store, for general merchandise.

The Smith house was once visited by two Indians from a railroad car that had been switched off near the homestead. As was their custom, they stealthily drew near the house, looked through the windows, and then walked in. Mrs. Smith was scared at first. One of the Indians was carrying a bow about four feet across, and a quiver of arrows. After a serving of fried cakes and other eatables, they went away satisfied.

During a thunderstorm, a flash of lightning made its way down the chimney and melted the ends off the wires stretched across the store, strung with different kinds of tinware. The commotion can well be imagined. Fortunately the lightning missed the kerosene can and passed through the corner of the floor without causing a fire.

The first child born in Exeter was Anna E. Smith, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Smith. Their son Charles later made the family name widely known by inventing the adjustable tag. The first tag factory, founded by Charles C. Smith and located in Exeter, was known as the "Adjustable Index Factory."

When the post office was relocated in Exeter, Dr. Smith was appointed the first postmaster at a salary of \$10 a year.



Photo from Nesbit F. Whitmore
Mr. and Mrs. Nesbit Taylor

Nesbit Taylor and his wife Mary Singer Taylor and family came to Exeter from their home near Covington, Kentucky, in 1871. The family consisted of two boys and four girls: John Edwin, Richard Lewis, Lucy Mary, Eliza Jane, Laura Ann, and Emma Alice Taylor. Nesbit Taylor bought land between the T. B. Farmer and the Warren Woodard homesteads—the W $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 28.

Mr. Taylor built a house and barn, planted many trees and shrubs, and in other ways improved the land. Many of the old settlers have told of the good times the local young people had at the Taylor home in the early days. The Nesbit Taylor family brought Southern hospitality with them and made every visitor welcome.

Mr. Taylor later bought an acreage adjoining the west edge of Exeter and moved to town. Part of this acreage became the Nesbit Taylor Addition to Exeter. Edward (or Ed) Taylor, Nesbit's oldest son, was street commissioner and sexton of the Exeter Cemetery for many years.

Two daughters married sons of early settlers, Charles Paine and William Dillon; another married Frank T. Whitmore, a young watchmaker from Boston, Massachusetts. He had a jewelry store in Exeter from 1880 until 1886. Edward Taylor brought his wife with him from Kentucky; Richard L. married Ella Barnes, daughter of another early settler.

The Nesbit Taylor family experienced all the hardships and tribulations common to the early settlers.

Nesbit Taylor, his wife Mary Singer Taylor, John Edwin Taylor and his wife Nancy Taylor, Lucy Taylor Whitmore, and Ella Barnes Taylor are buried in the Exeter Cemetery. —Nesbit F. Whitmore



Photo from L. T. Blouch

J. W. Taylor, born in Winchester, Va., in 1834, served in the Union Army and was held prisoner in Andersonville Prison. He lived in Indiana after the war until he came to Harvard, Nebraska, in 1888. He moved to Exeter the same year and started a grocery store. His daughter married T. S. Blouch.

W. H. Taylor was born in County Tyrone, Ireland, a country which has given birth to some of the finest pioneers. Mr. Taylor left Ireland at the age of four on a sailing vessel. The voyage lasted eight weeks, during which time most of the family, including himself, had smallpox. They first settled in Canada, in Carleton County, Ontario, in what was then an unbroken wilderness. Wild animals and Indians were their nearest and most numerous neighbors. Cutting down trees and clearing off the logs and brush was the bane of pioneer life in Canada; it was heartbreaking work compared with anything the early settlers in Nebraska had to contend with.

At 16, he left Canada and went to Seneca County, New York, an old settled county whose well-tilled fields, fine orchards, and beautiful lakes made it one of the most delightful counties in the world. So he became (as he said) a citizen of the United States by choice and not because of accident of birth; and such people ought to, and usually do, make pretty good citizens. Mr. Taylor said, "People, like cabbages, improve by transplanting, and transplanted brawn and brain rule the world." He was proud of having always been an asset to the country, and never a liability.

After working by the month on a farm and chopping wood, a chum and he took a wild-goose chase west, working as they went, till they crossed the Mississippi at Quincy, Illinois, their objective point being Leavenworth, Kansas. From there, they expected to drive mules across the plains to Salt Lake. They went no farther, and within a year Mr. Taylor was glad to find himself back in Seneca County, with a very poor opinion of the West.

Having saved some money, he turned his attention to securing a better education. Being blessed with a retentive memory, he soon mastered the common branches, and then obtained a higher education in the Waterloo Academy, the Fort Edward Institute, and the Oswego Normal School, teaching school between times.

It was during this time that Dr. Smith, who had known Mr. Taylor from the time of his coming from Canada, came out to Nebraska. Mr. Taylor came to Exeter on the last day of April, 1873,

and on the first day of May had a half interest in the firm of "Smith & Taylor." He was too late to get a homestead, but though he missed the homestead, he lost no time prospecting, and therefore suffered none of the privations some of the homesteaders went through.

Mrs. Smith kindly provided him with accommodations in their home, the only dwelling on the town site, with one room and a lean-to, but he had a comfortable bed on a couch behind the cookstove.

J. W. Dolan had just opened a lumber yard but had his office in the store. He slept on the counter and opened the store in the mornings.

Mr. Taylor was, from the first, delighted with the gently rolling prairie, and never was homesick. It rained the first night of his arrival, and came very near keeping it up for the traditional 40 days and 40 nights, till the whole country was nearly flooded. In going from the Smith home to the store he would take off his boots and socks, roll up his pants, and wade through the water.

Some things in the new country seemed strange to him, such as the frequency and velocity of the windstorms and the amount of electricity in the atmosphere. He had not been long in the store, when a man came and asked if he had seen a stray railroad car go by. It seems that a boxcar with open brakes had been left on the siding at Fairmont, and the wind blew it onto the main track, and it went clear to Dorchester before it was headed off. In the usual thunderstorms of those days there was one continuous glare of lightning, and peal after peal of thunder.

Something that surprised him in the pioneers of Exeter was the ability of some who, from appearances, did not seem to have much. The county, towns, and school districts had all just been organized, and someone had to fill the offices, so nearly every boy or man held an office of some kind. One was justice of the peace, another notary public, another constable, and some school officers.

A person appointed to an office, even if he had no special qualifications, but was of the right stuff, could soon qualify. These people had qualified, and he felt cheap to hear them using legal terms of which he knew nothing. Here is one illustration: "When the settlers began to break up the land it was difficult to prevent 'movers' from driving across the plowed ground. Two miles east of Exeter, a very youthful-looking boy from Maine was plowing with a team consisting of one ox and a cow. He was barefooted and arrayed in an old straw hat, a cotton shirt, and an old pair of overalls, held by one suspender with nails as buttons, when on the west side of his plowing, he saw a 'mover' drive onto the east side. He stopped his team and hailed the man. 'Didn't you see my sign telling you to keep the section line?' 'Yes! but this don't do any harm, and I'm in a hurry.' To which he replied, 'I don't care if you are, I can't have people driving over my plowed land, and I want you to go right back and keep the section line!' 'Guess I won't go back now,' said the man. 'Well, if you don't, I'll have you arrested when you get to Exeter!' 'Where is Exeter?' the man asked in surprise. 'Don't you see that building off to the west?' 'That's Exeter, is it? Then who will arrest me?' 'I will, I am the constable!' Then, with a look of contempt, the man replied, 'A h— of a looking constable you are! Get up, ponies!' And he drove on and was not arrested, but no one enjoyed the joke more than Fred Sturdevant, the boy constable."

Mr. Taylor missed the April storm of 1873, but had some experiences with Nebraska blizzards. One he did not forget was this: A party was being held at Walter Doyel's, 5 or 6 miles NE of Exeter, to which Mr. Dolan and he had been invited. It had been a beautiful, mild January day, and they hired a team and lumber wagon and started a little after dark for the house. Mr. Taylor did not know the way, but Dolan claimed he did. A gentle snow from the south began to fall soon after they started, and soon the wind whipped around to the north, and they were in a blizzard. They were soon chilled to the marrow, and could hardly see the horses, and got completely lost somewhere along Indian Creek. He said some uncomplimentary things to Dolan for taking him out on the prairie and losing him, but, finding that Dolan's hands got cold and numb, he took the lines and drove he knew not where; but after what seemed a long time, he spied a light and drove straight for it—and it happened to be Doyel's house. He often wondered how many may have been lost either in a forest or on a prairie. A person loses all sense of direction, hardly knows "straight up," and can scarcely believe his own eyes when he comes to familiar scenes. Having been lost in a wood in Canada with night coming on, with bears, wolves, and panthers at no great distance, and again after dark in a blizzard on Nebraska's plains, he could testify that it is not an agreeable sensation.

But "Sweet is pleasure after pain." When they got into the house, the dance was in full swing, and the discomforts of the trip were soon forgotten, especially as this was where he first met the girl who became the lifelong partner of his joys and sorrows.

He had once an Indian scare. In the fall of 1873, the first telegraph operator had come to the office, and he was a man who never made anything less in the telling. On Saturday the news came over the wire, that the Indians were on the "war path" and had committed some depredations and had killed a few homesteaders about 75 or 100 miles west of Exeter, and the agent said they were headed this way.

On Sunday evening, the agent and most of the men folk were scattered in different directions, visiting their best girls. Will Dolan and Taylor were the only able-bodied men left in town, the rest being women and children. As they were eating supper by lamplight, the talk drifted mostly to Indians and the probability of their coming to

Exeter. The Indian stories went around the table, when all at once a big Indian stuck his face right against the window. Then he, with his squaw, came in and said, "How!" and, shaking hands all around, asked for something to eat. They naturally thought these two were the forerunners of the whole tribe, so Dolan and Taylor went out to reconnoiter. Every dog in the vicinity was barking. Taylor had a revolver, and Dolan had an old army musket, but there was nothing in the store larger than No. 8 shot. There was some bar lead, and this they hammered out and cut into slugs. Dolan, armed with the old musket, and Taylor, with the revolver and a corn-knife, did valiant picket duty most of the night. In the morning, the old Indian and his squaw called and were again supplied with food, and so ended the Indian scare.

Of this incident, Mr. Taylor said: "I had been used to Indians in Canada, where they had the reputation of being truthful, honest, and civil; no one in Canada thought of having any fear of Indians. When only 7 or 8 years old, I was often the only man (?) about the place, and we slept soundly with dozens of Indians camped across a narrow stream from our shanty. When I came to the United States, I was surprised to hear them spoken of as being dishonest, treacherous, and deceitful. It was simply a reflection of treatment. It is easy and popular to find fault with the English government (and it has faults in plenty); but the way England has always treated the Red Man and Black Man stands out in happy contrast to the way those people have been treated by any other nation."



Photo from Charley C. Trauger

Trauger home, built in 1888, with Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Trauger and son Charley C. (taken in 1894). At this date (1968), the fourth generation of Traugers are still residing in this home. The house has been remodeled many times and there remain only five feet of wall that have not been changed.

M. E. Trauger settled in Exeter township in 1879, after first visiting here in 1877.

The ancestors of the Traugers in America were located in the province of Hessen Darmstadt, Germany. In 1747, three orphan children—Christian, Henry, and Eliza—embarked for the New World, arriving in Philadelphia on October 9. According to the custom of the time, they sold themselves to a merchant for their passage and worked at Shipport, Pennsylvania, to repay him. In 1767, Christian and Henry moved to Nockamixon Township, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, purchasing adjoining farms, which are still in the Trauger name.

Lewis Trauger, grandson of Henry, migrated to Sussex County, New Jersey, in September, 1818. His son Elias, who was killed while serving in the Civil War, was the father of M. Edmund Trauger. M. E. Trauger was born April 7, 1845. He spent his boyhood on the farm, 1½ miles SE of Flatbrookville, New Jersey, but found farming difficult in the mountainous terrain. His diaries, which he started in 1866, show that he supplemented his income by cutting hoop poles (for making barrel hoops) and railroad ties (for which he received about 40 cents apiece). He also taught school.

On November 19, 1873, he married Mary Caroline Hill. On August 16, 1875, they journeyed to Illinois and Iowa, visiting relatives and seeing for themselves if the stories of the "glorious West" were true. In the spring of 1876, they left the land of their birth and moved to Morrison, Illinois, where a daughter, Minnie Frances, was born on March 9, 1877.

While living in Morrison, Mr. Trauger met Dr. O. P. Baker, whose glowing reports of the land around Exeter induced him to come out and see for himself. Arriving in Exeter on Friday, December 14, 1877, he stayed for a time at the home of the F. M. Bucks. He looked at land as far west as Grafton before returning to Illinois, but was most impressed by the Exeter area. Back in Illinois, he worked as a farm laborer and saved his money, to be able to establish a home in Nebraska.

Mr. Trauger and Lyman Beech, who settled in Fairmont township, rented a railroad car and loaded their belonging at Sterling, Illinois. They got to Exeter at 11 A.M., February 28, 1879. In those

days, when you rented a boxcar you were allowed to ride free in the caboose. Before they left Sterling, a man—name unknown—asked Mr. Trauger if he could ride in the car and look after the team of horses and the cow. He wanted to go West, but had no money. En route to Nebraska, they encountered a snowstorm and extremely cold weather. The fellow stated that he would have frozen to death had not the cow co-operated by lying down and allowing him to lie next to her.

In the Traugers' "Old Timers" Museum you will find today most of the furniture and machinery brought here in 1879. This museum was started by M. E. Trauger's grandson, Robert Edmund, in 1950 as a family hobby, to perpetuate the pioneer memories of this area.

Mr. and Mrs. Trauger bought 80 acres of railroad land, the S ½ of the SW ¼ of Sec. 27. They lived for one year on the F. M. Buck farm 1½ miles S of Exeter and farmed this as well as their own 80 acres.

In 1880, they moved to Dr. O. P. Baker's farm one mile E of Exeter. That spring, they planted trees on the south side of their 80, planning to build there soon. But this plan was delayed by the fact that in 1883 he had the opportunity to purchase the N ½ of the NE ¼ of Sec. 33 from Caleb Litch. In 1885, he purchased the 80 adjoining the original 80 he had bought in 1879. He then decided to abandon his proposed building site and instead built on the west side of the north 80, so as to be closer to the town of Exeter. Dr. Baker had made him a very good price on the 80 he had purchased from Mr. Litch. He sold this on January 7, 1893, and was forever thankful that he had done so, because of the drought of the middle 1890's.

A son, Charles C. Trauger, was born on September 22, 1886, while they still resided on the O. P. Baker farm.

In 1888, his dream of a house of his own came true. The house was almost lost before they moved. While they were plastering the house, they had a stove in the upstairs to keep the plaster from freezing. Mr. Trauger had walked halfway home, when he felt that he should go back and check the stove again. When he arrived, he found that a live coal had fallen from the stove and had started a small fire on the floor of the hallway. He easily put it out, but was always thankful that something had told him to return.

Mrs. M. E. Trauger passed away in 1923, and her husband on May 30, 1934.

Charles Trauger married Ethel L. Downey on August 31, 1919. They had two sons, Donald, of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Robert, of Exeter. Charles Trauger still resides on the farm with his son Robert, Robert's wife Shirley, and their children, Charles and Lynelle, and Melissa.

The wagon tracks of a main trail leading from Exeter southeast to Turkey Creek are still visible on a strip of the Traugers' native prairie. Grandpa Trauger wrote in his diary that he had to string a barbed-wire fence across the farm to keep people from driving across his land.

M. E. Trauger was a charter member of the Exeter Methodist Church. Since he joined in 1879, there has always been a Trauger on the official board. He canvassed for shares in the Exeter Rolling Mills & Elevator Association, and also for the canning factory. He served on the school board of District 22 for a number of years from 1880 onward. He was also township treasurer for many years, and was a member of the board of supervisors during the construction of the present courthouse in Geneva in 1893.

—Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Trauger



Photo from Robert Trauger

Trauger's "Old Timers" Museum is located on the Trauger farm. Besides household, town, and farm items, it has a remarkable collection of threshing machines. The 1890 Frick Portable and 1893 Belle City Hand Fed thresher pictured here were used in Exeter's celebration of the State Centennial.

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Hardware Store.

EXETER, - NEBRASKA

Warren Woodard homesteaded the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 28 in 1870. This first homestead, although "out" in the township, actually set the stage for the founding of Exeter. Mr. Woodard was a lawyer. Before coming to Nebraska, he had lived in Michigan. As a member of Co. F, 10th Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, he had participated in 12 battles during the Civil War. After being mustered out in 1865, he spent two years in the nursery business in Illinois.

Mr. Woodard's house was the first post office, established in 1871, and named for him. He was postmaster until the post office was moved to Exeter proper at a later date. He was the first justice of the peace in Fillmore County, appointed in 1872. He was also one of the clerks when Fillmore County was organized in the spring of 1871. Many of the old deeds carry the acknowledgment of Warren Woodard.

The Woodards had four children: Eugene, May, Leon, and Arthur. In 1876, Mr. Woodard erected a 15-room hotel in Exeter, a two-story building which would house 30 people.

The *Fillmore County Democrat* reported, on May 13, 1893:

"'Boss' Woodard was a welcome caller at our headquarters Monday. He was in a reminiscent mood, and gave us a little interesting ancient history. He told us that at the time he had the hotel here, he ran an express to Friend. The forms of the Exeter newspaper were set up here, and he carried them in his express wagon to Friend, where they were printed, and then brought them back the same way. In the words of A. [Artemus] Ward, or somebody else, 'Things is different now.'"



Photo from Laura Pflug
Mr. and Mrs. Willard C. Woodworth in year 1886. Daughter Laura, son Harvey, daughter Kitt, and son Ed.

Mr. and Mrs. Willard C. Woodworth came to Nebraska in 1872 and homesteaded on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 6, 3 miles N and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile W of Exeter. When settling on their land, they were anxious to have everything in as good order as possible, so they spent their ready money on improvements. But that year's farming did not meet their expectations, and soon they needed for food the money which they had spent on the house, barn, and well. They had to go to Lincoln for credit, where fortunately the Farmers' Grocery Stores readily allowed them \$5 worth of provisions until a wheat crop was forthcoming to pay for them.

Eleven antelope ran on their claim for about six months after they located, and hunters would ride over the land in every direction. About that time, Mrs. Woodworth was very ill, and, failing to get hired help, had to do the work as best she could. One day a huntsman said, "Lady, you look sick; can I get you some water?" The man was not only kind enough to get a pail of water, but went out and shot a prairie chicken which he gave her, expressing the hope that she would soon get better. Then, after showing this unexpected kindness, the stranger passed out of her life.

Some neighbors named Crooker living on Indian Creek had a siege of measles. Six in the household were stricken down at one time; so someone thought of asking Mrs. Woodworth, as there were two women in her house, she and her mother, and one might be spared. Mrs. Woodworth went willingly, hardly expecting to find conditions as bad as they were; and for three nights and days she never rested in her efforts to help them through, but one girl died in spite of all the care.

Some time later, Mrs. Woodworth had typhoid fever. Miss Crooker, a schoolteacher, called one day, and, seeing her condition, went home and sent her father and mother to look after her. They remained and cared for her until she recovered.

The Horton schoolhouse was the place of worship for their neighborhood, and they were members of the Church of God who worshiped there. In those early days, men would attend the services barefooted and in overalls, while the women wore large sunbonnets. In later days, "Father" Green of the U.B. Church, a native of Lancashire, England, and a York County homesteader, came often to preach; in fact, for a long time, he was the only preacher there. True to his native-country characteristics and training, he was a very "deep" preacher, and of great fervor in his devotions. He was always careful to kneel when he prayed; he was not ashamed to bow himself before his God. He would always spread a large red handkerchief on the floor—evidently to save his best trousers, even though the newness had long since departed. "There were giants in those days," men mighty in faith and prayer. He died about 1895, over 80 years old, and is buried in the Exeter cemetery.

Exeter

Exeter was located on the E $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 20. Most of the ground occupied by the village was a part of the original homestead taken by Dr. Horace G. Smith. He came here in January, 1871, to look at the land, and homesteaded on the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 20. In February, 1871, the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 20 was the homestead of James W. Dolan; the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ was the homestead of William Dolan; and the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 20 was homesteaded by John N. Dayton and William N. Babcock, each taking 80 acres. The first homestead in the neighborhood was that of Warren Woodard, on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 28. This was the stopping place for many settlers as they first came to this area. It was also the first post office, called Woodard Post Office; the next nearest post office was at Lincoln.

It was by chance that Dr. and Mrs. Smith located on a spot where the Burlington & Missouri River R.R. also located. (This lucky chance is described in the account of Dr. Smith). The Burlington extended its line from Lincoln to Hastings in the fall of 1871. The depot was built in 1872.

Few towns have been named in as unique a way as Exeter. The railroad proposed to build a line from Crete westward, with towns approximately eight miles apart and named in alphabetical order. It is believed that the name was suggested by some settlers from around Exeter, England, who had located in this area. Thus we have the towns of Dorchester, Exeter, Fairmont, Grafton, Harvard, Inland, Juniata, Kenesaw, and Lowell.

Dr. Smith had built a small house, and it was here that the gentleman sent out by the railroad town company was to meet with the people to decide on a town site. A. B. Smith surveyed the land. The land homesteaded by Dr. Smith and J. W. Dolan was considered a little too flat for a town, but this site was chosen anyway. Dr. Smith and Mr. Dolan each

EXETER

FILLMORE CO Scale 600ft to 1 inch. SEC'S 20, 29, T 8 N R 1 W.



Official State Atlas of Nebraska (1885)
Map of Exeter in 1885.



Photo from Edith Kranda

The Present Hotel

gave a share of their land for the town site. The post office was moved from the Woodard home to the site of the town now called Exeter and Dr. Smith was appointed postmaster. Dr. Smith had added a small lean-to onto his one-room house; this was to become the first store as well as the post office.

The first hotel was built in 1872, by L. Keneval. The first grain warehouse also opened for business in that year. The first marriage was that of J. W. Eller and Frances Hager, in November, 1872. The first schoolhouse was erected in 1873. Exeter was incorporated as a village on April 1, 1879.

During the time between the first homesteaders in 1871 and the incorporation in 1879, many changes had taken place. Many people had decided to settle here and had built houses, and some had put up places of business. The town was beginning to take shape. The Smith store became Smith & Dolan; in 1873, it became Smith & Taylor. Mr. Dolan opened a lumber yard and a grain elevator on the Burlington line.

When people gather in a community, they tend to form some kinds of clubs. One of the first, the "Lyceum," was a literary club, known as the Exeter Lyceum; in 1876, they had a Lyceum paper, the *Exeter Evening Post*, made up of poetry, wit, and wisdom, as well as discussions on political and theological topics. By this time, the second hotel had been built, by Warren Woodard. In 1878, many more businesses were opened, including two large grain elevators. The trees planted by the first settlers had grown enough to give some shade and to improve the appearance of the town. F. M. Ziska had opened a general-merchandise store in the late 1870's. This store was destroyed by a fire in 1889, along with many other business places.

A meeting had been held to form a school district, and it was decided to build a 24' x 36' wooden school building. The schoolhouse was also the meeting place of the Lyceum and many other activities, including Sunday church services. Some groups met in the second-story room of the new Smith store.

The churches were organized very early in the 1870's. The Congregational Church was organized in 1872, and so was the Baptist Church. The Methodists also organized



Photo from Lillian Barkmeier

Main Street looking north in 1909. The building in right background is Exeter's first hotel.



Photo from Edith Kranda

Christian Church and Parsonage (1905)



Photo from Robert Trauger

New sidewalk on Main Street, and Exeter's dray service (about 1910). (Note Nebraska State Fair advertising on fly nets.) In the dray: Harve McGleese, Dutch Moore, Vern Hiatt. On the sidewalk at left: Bill Brown, George Horton, Tom Walters. The three men on the right are unidentified.



Photo from Edith Kranda

Main Street looking south in 1905. Notice windmill and the curfew bell on the windmill tower.



Exeter Volunteer Fire Department about 1910.



RUINS AFTER THE FIRE AT EXETER, MONDAY NIGHT, APRIL 26, 1909

Photo from R. D. Erdkamp

Ruins after auditorium fire, Monday night, April 26, 1909.

about this same time. It was necessary to hold their meetings together until they could build their respective churches. The Catholics organized in 1873. The Christian Church and the Christian Science Church were organized shortly thereafter.

Main Street today has changed considerably in 95 years or so. Then the street was just plain dirt and when it rained it was nothing but mud. And it was a few years before the wooden sidewalks were laid. Later it was graveled and in 1937 paved. At one time U.S. Highway 6 came right down Main Street but is now routed through the south side of town.

In the main intersection a windmill provided drinking water and supplied a horse trough. Many people got their water there until they could put down their own wells. Many also had cisterns to catch rain water, which was good for washing and bathing, but not so good as well water for drinking.

This windmill also had a bell on top, which rang every night at 9 o'clock, the curfew hour for children. They knew that they had better either get home before it sounded or really scamper the minute it did start to sound. This bell also sounded fire alarms and substituted for the ringing of church bells.

For many years, the only means of fire-fighting was the bucket brigade. Later, there was a hose, rolled up on a large wheel, which could be pulled to the fire. In 1905, two big air-pressure water tanks were installed near the present firehouse. The firemen have always been a voluntary group. The city got a fire truck in 1928, and a new one was purchased in 1961. But the firemen are still volunteers, usually numbering around 25. They are an extremely necessary and devoted group of men.

Exeter has been plagued by many fires. A fire started on the corner of the present Barkmeier store and burned south to the brick bank building on a Halloween night some time around the turn of the century. Another fire in the early 1900's started on the south end of the same block and burned all the buildings to the north, stopping again at the brick bank building. Another fire in the same period burned all the buildings north of the "Auditorium" and gutted that building also. Nearly one-half of the block on the east side of the main street closest to the Burlington tracks also burned in the early 1900's. This fire started in a bakery on the northeast corner of that block. The "Rink" was a victim of fire, and the brick school also burned in 1915. Most of these fires occurred before any fire equipment was available. So they relied on the bucket brigade for many years. By the time the brick school burned in 1915, the fire department had a water-pressure hose which did save the new school building that was nearly completed behind the old one.



Photo from Mrs. Ann Saunders

Mr. and Mrs. Emory Yates in front of their tailoring shop in 1902. The Yateses also had the first "picture show" in 1908. (This building, which stood where Erdkamp Motors driveway is now located, was Exeter's first saloon, called "The Blind Pig.")



Fire burned the east side of Main Street in the early 1900's.

Photo from William Ruhl



Photo from Joe Gephart

New sewer line in 1927—taken west of Dr. Wiggins' house. Lou Worthel, Bill Buck, unknown, "Bus" Baker, Art Buck, Joe Gephart, Dan Sullivan, Mr. Alexander.

In 1928, the water tower was erected, with a tank within a tank. The inner tank was to furnish water to the sprinkler system in the tag factory in case of fire. Mr. C. C. Smith, who contributed to the erecting of the tower, influenced its size and construction with a view to insuring the safety of his factory.

Exeter installed in 1927 a municipal sanitary sewer system, which includes a storm sewer system as well as a sewage-treatment plant.

Electricity came early to Exeter. Charles Smith installed a coal-fired steam engine back of the tag factory for a power plant. There was an underground tunnel from the factory to the power plant. The people of Exeter benefited by being able to have electric lights and machines with electric motors. Housewives could have washing machines and electric irons. Mr. Smith sold this power to his fellow citizens until 1912 or 1913, when Consumers bought the power plant from him with the understanding that they would convert all the electric motors for alternating current from the direct current provided by the Smith plant. When Mr. Smith supplied the power, the electricity went off at midnight. As Exeter had electricity so early, it is a bit startling now to look at old pictures of Main Street and see the light-wires and the light hanging over the middle of the dirt street with no cars parked along it. With the passage of time, newer and better lighting systems were installed on the streets. The city council decided in 1955 to put the same kind of light along the highway as those on Main Street. They were to put 21 lights, three to a block, 150 feet apart, on the south side from the Dinneen garage to the Hiway Cafe.

The first telephone in Exeter was one put in between John Craven's place of business and his home. Mr. Craven's brother, who worked with the Bell Telephone system at the time, helped to install

it. Then a few people had their own telephone systems. There were 15 to 20 telephones with numerous wires running from one house to another. Eventually this worked into a larger group that wanted telephones. So there came to be a control and a central operator in the Exeter *Enterprise* office. At one time both the Independent Telephone and the Bell Telephone companies operated in Exeter.

In the early 1900's, believing that Exeter needed a playhouse or theater, W. H. Wallace got a company of businessmen together to build a theater. Among those contributing, besides Mr. Wallace, were lumberman John Craven, J. N. Cox, W. H. Taylor and J. M. Ziska (all in the dry-goods and grocery business), stock buyer Joe Coates, and John Ohm. The brick building, called "The Auditorium," was built about 1905 or 1906, with W. P. Wallace, son of W. H., as manager.

In 1908, Mr. and Mrs. Emory Yates installed movie equipment and Exeter enjoyed its first "picture show." These were silent pictures, and feeling and emotion were conveyed by overacting on the part of the actors and by the piano music that accompanied the show. Miss Ann Yates played the music for the movies and used cue cards that came with every film. Each show sent song slides and Miss Alice Howard sang, accompanied by Ann Yates (now Mrs. Ann Saunders). Later Bernard Nevin played drums to piano accompaniment. Mr. Nevin later taught music for many years at Midland College in Fremont.

Early in 1900, the Pflug Implement Store north of the theater burned, setting fire to and gutting the Auditorium, and destroying the blacksmith shop to the south. The owners immediately had the building rebuilt, with some changes. Instead of a flat roof and level floor with posts through the center to support the roof, it was finished



Photo from William Ruhl
Rebuilt Auditorium after the 1909 fire.



Photo from Esther Jones
Chicago & Northwestern Depot, taken at a July 4th celebration.



Photo from Cora Rogers
C. B. & Q. Depot, Exeter. Among this group are Mr. Steyer, Clifford Downing, Billy Anderson, Lou Allen, William Parrish, and John Downing.

with a self-supporting roof, a slanting floor, a larger stage, and more seating capacity. Mr. and Mrs. Yates installed new movie equipment in a completely fireproof booth. They took over the management at this time and purchased the Auditorium in 1918. Talking equipment was installed as early as 1928.

In those years the Auditorium, besides showing movies, was the scene of all school activities, home-talent plays, and a very popular group, the "Chick Boyes Players," who set a unique record of playing one night every two weeks for 19 years. After the death of Mr. Yates in 1935, the Auditorium changed hands several times. The coming of television ruined the theater business and the building stood empty for some time. This beautiful building is now used as a grain-storage bin.

F. A. Robinson, editor of the *Fillmore County News*, in 1913 installed movie equipment in a building north of the Klotz Pharmacy and named it "The Wonderland," but this venture was destined to failure, as Exeter was unable to support two amusement places.

In 1956, the Chamber of Commerce decided to see about a band shell for the up-and-coming band, so that the people could enjoy

band concerts in the summer. Some donations were made and George Harrison was contacted. With the help of the vocational agriculture boys and some of the community-minded men, the band shell was built from plans designed by George Harrison and Tim Ruhl. Intended as a multi-purpose band shell, 32' wide, 20' long, and 12' high, it was built in six weeks on north lots by the water tower, and served for many enjoyable band concerts. It was later moved to the vacant lot in the middle of the west side of the main business district on Main Street. It has since been torn down to make room for the new bank building.

At one time, Exeter had two depots, adjoined by small parks. The Chicago & Northwestern depot was sold and torn down for lumber in 1951. The Burlington depot is still very much in use and has been remodeled just recently. T. J. Parker became the depot agent in 1965.

With the coming of so many people to Exeter in the 1870's, it was soon evident that a cemetery would be necessary. W. H. Taylor and Charles C. Smith were both actively interested in the needs of the town. Mr. Smith owned land and sold lots for the cemetery, a non-profit organization in which shares were sold to help meet the cost of upkeep. The town was given the cemetery in 1947, since when it has been tax-supported. Donations have been used for improvements, such as access of water and maintenance of roads and buildings. Some of the trees that Pat Murphy donated to the cemetery when it first started are still growing there.

A newspaper, the *Exeter Enterprise*, was started on September 29, 1877, by William A. Connell, who went broke after three months and gave up. His last issue was dated December 1, 1877. He was succeeded by William J. Waite, who revived the paper on January 12, 1878, and continued as editor for many years. The following is a business directory drawn from the revived *Enterprise* of 1878:

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| J. W. Dolan..... | grain and lumber |
| H. G. Smith, W. H. Taylor and P. W. McCauley..... | general merchandise |
| Failing Brothers..... | general merchandise and drugs |
| Hannes & Stillely..... | hardware and grain |
| J. H. Edney..... | hardware and implements |
| Dayton Brothers..... | furniture |
| Dr. G. W. Whipple..... | physician |
| Dr. R. Beecher..... | physician |
| Job Hathaway..... | livery |
| Warren Woodard..... | Centennial Hotel |
| J. P. Kettlewell..... | meat artist (That was his own term) |
| Elias Peterman..... | harness shop |
| T. B. Farmer..... | contractor |
| S. F. Root..... | boot and shoe maker |
| Charles Hole..... | plasterer and chimney builder |
| John Barsby..... | collector |
| T. W. Lowrey & Co..... | grain, flour, coal, and implements |
| M. Wiseman..... | blacksmith |

On April 3, 1879, the *Exeter Enterprise*, with proper booster spirit, had these things to say: "The demand for houses is on the increase; 25 could find renters if they were to be had." "Build a house and be in fashion." "Fillmore County is one of the best Eastern-advertised counties in Nebraska. It must be so; else why would so large and steady a stream of immigration be constantly pouring in?" In 1892, another newspaper, the *Exeter Eye*, was started. In 1893, this became the *Fillmore County Democrat*, and then the *Exeter Democrat* later in the same year. The name was again changed in 1899, to the *Fillmore County News*, and that name has remained.

Among pleasant gatherings were what were known as "The Sings," held in private homes, when the singing of favorite hymns was a delight to all. As many as 50 people would come from far and near to share in such gatherings.

One place of much activity was "The Rink," built originally for roller skating. It was a large building with a gallery or balcony around its inside. This came to be used for social functions such as dances and the big Fourth of July celebrations that the pioneers appreciated so much. At one end of the building was a stage, which was the scene of many plays, traveling shows, vaudeville acts, etc. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the plays that a traveling group presented here. This building was later destroyed by a fire.

By 1882, the town had a population of more than 400. By that time the town had two banks, the Bank of Exeter and the Wallace & Co. bank. More clubs had formed, including the Odd Fellows, the Masons, and the Grand Army of the Republic. The old schoolhouse had been outgrown and

a larger school was in the making. The new building was to cost about \$7,000.

A foundry was started in 1910. Sam Spitz had been harvesting for people but decided to start making castings and molds so that he could make iron parts for machinery, such as wheels, cog wheels, and so on. The foundry was started in the town proper, but because many of the townspeople complained about the soot, about 1920 it was moved to Hastings (where it is still operated by Sam's son, Louis Spitz).

J. N. Cox started a general-merchandise store in 1884. Some time after the turn of the century, Exeter had a Y.M.C.A.; dates are not available, but it was of short duration. About the same time a Sons of Veterans Club was formed; dates for the organizing and disbanding of this are also not available. Exeter had a race track in the south part of town, used for horse racing. There was also a ball park near by.

The following list of businesses appeared in an 1893 issue of the *Fillmore County Democrat*:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Costello & Sweasy..... | Tonsorial Artists |
| John Mohr..... | Exeter Jewelry |
| J. N. Cox..... | general merchandise |
| Craven Bros..... | lumber, coal & lime |
| Dr. E. L. Ramsdell..... | drug store |
| First National Bank..... | H. G. Smith |
| E. H. Buck & John Ohm..... | blacksmiths |
| Alta V. Robinson..... | milliner |
| James Kelly..... | meat market |
| I. T. Powell..... | liveryman |
| J. C. Smith..... | grocery store |
| A. S. Cookus..... | blacksmith |
| John McDonald..... | photographer |
| W. H. Taylor..... | general merchandise |
| H. S. Bedford..... | Exeter Roller Mills |
| J. C. Pflug..... | grocery store |
| C. H. Wullbrandt & Son..... | general merchandise |
| Exeter National Bank..... | W. T. Taylor, president |
| | W. H. Wallace, cashier |
| J. A. Nye..... | ice cream parlor |
| H. S. Greenawalt..... | Merchants Hotel |
| Henry Randell..... | shoe store |
| C. A. Songster..... | implements |
| Mrs. R. S. Crooker..... | milliner |
| J. W. Taylor..... | grocery store |
| F. M. Ziska..... | general merchandise |
| W. J. Nevins..... | druggist |
| W. N. Babcock..... | insurance |

The same 1893 issue of the *Democrat* described the school: "The schoolhouse is a fine, large, brick, two-story building in the eastern part of town. Five teachers are employed at this time. The subjects taught are: Algebra, Rhetoric, General History, Civil Government, Bookkeeping, English Literature, Latin, Physics, Geometry, Botany, and Elocution. The total number of pupils in 1893—318." Dr. Claire Owens was the first music teacher in this school; she started teaching here in 1898, just after graduating from the School for the Blind at Nebraska City. (A full account of Dr. Owens appears elsewhere.)



Photo from Robert Trauger
Front of 1907 envelope of Joseph Coates

By 1907, many changes had taken place. The population had increased and more business places had opened or changed hands. Joseph Coates, a dealer in livestock, had all



Photo from Nesbit Whitmore
Exeter Y.M.C.A. Left to right: Mr. Ingram, Mr. Whitmore, Mr. Holbrook.

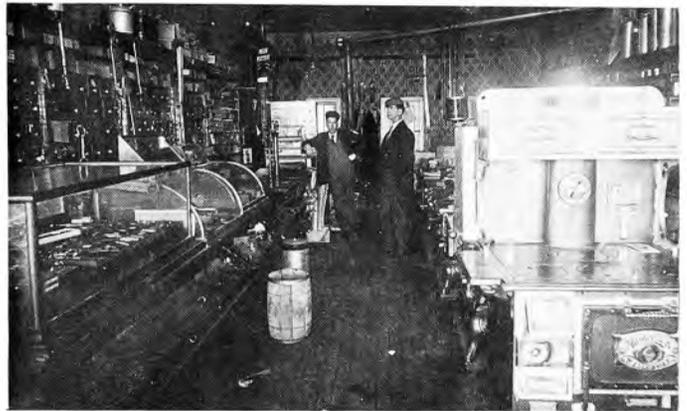


Photo from Hazel Jorgensen
Rothrock Hardware Store



Photo from Leo Gibbons
Dr. McCleery's Office (1880 or 1890)

his envelopes printed with a glowing description of Exeter. The following passage is from the back of one of these envelopes:

Exeter, Nebraska (The good roads town). Located 44 miles west of Lincoln, on the main line of the Burlington railroad at its junction with the Chicago & Northwestern. Has population of 1200. "The best little town in Nebraska." Exeter is the recognized trade center of a large territory in one of the most fertile regions in Nebraska and nearly all lines of business are represented. These advantages combine to make Exeter one of the most desirable business points, as well as a pleasant residence town, in the State, and progressive men will find opportunities here, both in capital and labor. Farm lands sell from \$60 to \$100 per acre, and a splendid system of modern roads reaches nearly all parts of our trade territory. Two telephone systems with their country lines reach almost every farm for many miles and

3 rural mail routes completely cover the territory with daily service. Its citizens are enterprising and progressive and will extend to all desirable comers a hearty welcome. Our excellent public school employs 9 teachers and carries the work to the State University standard. A Catholic parochial school employing 4 teachers will be open in September; 5 fine churches and another building; 2 banks; 4 grain elevators; 1 flouring mill; 2 hotels; 2 newspapers; 4 department stores; 2 drugstores; 2 hardware stores and other branches of business well represented. The professions include 4 physicians, 2 dentists, and no attorneys (in which line there is a good opening). Smith's Adjustable Index Tag Factory is located here and employs about 100 people. A cigar factory, laundry, bakery, pop factory, broom factory, canning factory, as well as a first-class clothing store would find a good location. Inquiries will be answered by J. C. Wilson, Sec. Commercial Club.

Just how much influence this letter had would be hard to say, but there have been a bakery and a canning factory here since that time.



Photo from William Ruhl
Catholic School—about 1907

In the 1890's and early 1900's, three famous personages visited Exeter, two Presidents and one unsuccessful aspirant.

William Jennings Bryan, one of Nebraska's most illustrious speakers and politicians, made his first political speech in Exeter. Mr. Bryan was attending the university at the time. A speaker was to come to Exeter for a Democratic rally, but canceled his appearance and Mr. Bryan was asked to take his place. The rally was held in the room above the Taylor store. Mr. Bryan later made two more speeches in Exeter; however, the dates are not available.

Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the U. S., made a short stop in Exeter in 1912. Although he was not scheduled to stop here, someone found that he was coming through on his campaign train. The train did stop and a few were fortunate enough to see him and Frank Craven was able to shake hands with him. This was when Mr. Roosevelt, opposed to the way President Taft was running the government, broke away from the Republicans and formed a third party, the Progressive party, or, as a lot of people called it, the "Bull Moose" party.

William Howard Taft, 27th President of the United States, also made a brief appearance here in 1912. The campaign train came through Exeter, stopping long enough for President Taft to say a few words. President Taft had defeated Mr. Bryan in the 1908 election.

It is also interesting that the mother of a man who ran for the presidency in later years (1964) was once a resident of Exeter. Josephine Williams, mother of Barry Goldwater, came here with her parents after she was out of high school. Her father ran a store in Exeter and was on the school board for several years. Josephine went to Arizona for her health and that is where she met Mr. Goldwater, the father of Barry. Evidently she recovered from her ailment, because she has lived a long life. Several Exeter people remember her quite well. She had a few relatives in this area.



Photo from William Ruhl
Left to right: Bert Dyer (in car), Sherm Downey, Mr. McClean (machinery salesman), and John Downey—taken in 1909.

By 1915, the town had grown enough to need more land for new homes, and so the SW 1/4, Sec. 20, and part of Sec. 10 had been annexed.

It is interesting to compare 1915 prices with those of today. These market prices were found in the *Fillmore County News*, December 9, 1915.

| Market prices 1915 | | Advertisements of 1915 | |
|----------------------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Wheat No. 3-93¢ No. 2..... | 95¢ | Dr. E. L. Armstrong..... | chiropractor |
| Corn | 52¢ | J. A. Craven..... | lumber and grain |
| Oats | 32¢ | Dyer & Downey..... | implement |
| Hogs per cwt | \$6.00 | Debus Bros..... | wholesale and retail bakers |
| Cream | 33¢ | J. B. Klotz..... | Rexall store |
| Chickens | .09 1/2¢ lb. | Wallace & Co..... | banker |
| Old roosters | .04¢ lb. | Farmers & Merchants Bank | |
| Ducks | .08¢ lb. | Brown & Bickert..... | merchandise |
| Geese | .07¢ lb. | Dr. F. T. Butz..... | dentist |
| Turkeys | 15¢ lb. | Dr. A. N. House..... | dentist |
| Butter | 25¢ lb. | Exeter Electric & Power Co. | |
| Eggs—cash 24¢, trade | 25¢ | McKeag & Hill..... | real estate and insurance |
| Potatoes, per bushel | 75¢ | Gilpins | variety store |
| | | Karl F. E. Wegener, M. D..... | physician and surgeon |
| | | Guy Phelps had just bought Mr. Schriener's interest in Phelps & Schriener | druggist |

At this time Exeter had a population of 1,100. The above list was taken from just one paper, so the list of businesses is not complete.

In 1915, the Burlington and Northwestern railroads both had depots. Exeter had excellent rail transportation east or west.

Exeter is also well located as to highways. U.S. Highway 6 once went down the main street but it has been in the south part of town for quite some time. A major east-west road, it joins U.S. Highway 81 at Fairmont, giving access to north and south roads. Interstate 80, not far away, is a great help.

Library

The first library was actually a loaning of books by Mr. and Mr. J. B. Klotz. Mr. Klotz had a drugstore and a good supply of books that he was willing to share with others.

1910-1911: A library was started by the Exeter Dramatic Club, which sponsored plays, socials, card parties, and tag days to raise funds. A library of 1,000 volumes was established.

1915: The library was managed by the Exeter Library Association. Books were for everyone to use, whether members or not.

1936: The Exeter Woman's Club started a library again. It was taken over by the Exeter Village Board some years later and became a tax-supported library, with Mrs. Lillian Perry appointed



Photo from Mrs. Ann Saunders
Exeter Dramatic Club about 1911. Seated, left to right: Emory Yates, Ilma Agur, Eunice Wilson, Keith Graul. Standing, left to right: Willard Steyer, Murine Allen, Mary Ann Yates, Katherine Sullivan, Bernard Nevins.



Photo from Mrs. Elmer Horton

George Horton behind counter in his grocery store in 1920. This building now houses the Exeter Library.

librarian. Mrs. Perry has continued in that capacity since 1936 to the present time. The library was moved to its present location in 1938. There were 3,500 books on the shelves, but many needed to be discarded because they were too worn and so the real number would be less than 3,500.

1968: The library has a collection of 5,264 books. The Woman's Club has given \$20 yearly for the summer story hour and reading program.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick Manning gave a movie projector to the library in memory of Mrs. Dick Manning's father, Mr. John Schwab. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer McCabe gave a set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in memory of Mrs. McCabe's father, Mr. Link. Many books, have been given to the library at various times by individuals or groups.

Banks

In the late 1870's, William H. Wallace of Morrison, Illinois, homesteaded on Sec. 28 in Exeter township. Soon after, seeing the need for some sort of financial aid for the community. Mr. Wallace made small loans to individuals. As an office, he used a small room in the rear of a harness shop, in which he placed a small iron safe, which thus became Exeter's first bank vault. He later organized Wallace & Co., a private bank, located on the present bank site. This bank later operated under a state charter, under the same name, and then became the Wallace National Bank, under a national charter. In the year 1882, the Bank of Exeter was also in operation.

The Wallace National Bank was operated by William H. Wallace as president until his death in 1926, when his son, William P. Wallace, became president. Leshar T. Blouch acted as bookkeeper, assistant cashier, and cashier from 1907 to 1946.

After some years, two other banks were organized in Exeter, the Exeter State Bank and the Farmers & Merchants Bank. The Exeter State Bank was later acquired by the Wallaces. It was operated separately for several years and was then consolidated with the Wallace National Bank. The Farmers & Merchants Bank and the Wallace National Bank were both liquidated in 1933 and the First National Bank of Exeter was organized with H. M. Link as president, Frank Craven, vice-president, and Leshar Blouch, cashier. Mr. Blouch retired from the bank in 1946, after having been affiliated with the banks for approximately 40 years. He was also treasurer of the Village of Exeter for 41 years. After Mr. Link's death in 1961, Elmer McCabe became president of the bank, Roy E. Stubbendick, vice-president, and Lillian Barkmeier, cashier.

In 1966, plans were completed for a handsome new bank building, which was built on the vacant lot two doors south of the former bank site.



Photo from Lillian Barkmeier

First National Bank, established in 1934. This building is now occupied by a barber shop.



Photo from Lillian Barkmeier

New First National Bank Building (taken in 1968)



Street scene in Exeter, July 4, 1897—Royal Neighbors of America team drilling. Stores, left to right: P. W. McCleery's photo gallery; Lodge hall top floor, J. N. Cox dry goods on street level. Stores, right to left: T. B. Farney harness shop, *Enterprise* paper; Dr. E. L. Ramsdell drugstore.

Clubs and Organizations

1882: By 1882, many clubs had organized; however, exact dates are not available. The organizations at that time were the Masons, Odd Fellows, and Grand Army of the Republic.

1880: The I.O.O.F. started with 10 members; present membership, 23.

1883: Rebekah Lodge organized in 1883; present membership, 45. 1893: There was an organization called the Sons of Veterans Club, but no other information is available.

1897: The Royal Neighbors of America organized in 1897 with 24 charter members. The R. N. of A. had a drill team at one time, and the Cordova and Milligan R. N. of A. transferred to Exeter Camp 504. The present membership is 43.

1898: The Woman's Club organized in 1898 with about 20 charter members. Dr. Claire Owens was one of these and served as president of the club for four years, and as parliamentarian for 31 years. The club was inactive during World War I, but reorganized in 1926 and became a federated club. The Woman's Club sponsors the "Y" Teen girls. The present membership is 50.

The Bide-A-Wee Kensington Club had started in the early days as a birthday club and had Sunset Parties for ladies over 65.

1914: Masonic Lodge No. 283 was chartered in 1914; extinct in December, 1952.

1915: Clubs in existence in 1915 were the G. A. R., the United Workmen, Woodmen of America, and Knights of Pythias.

Chamber of Commerce: The exact date of organization is not known. It was known as the Commercial Club in 1907. This civic organization has grown considerably in the last few years. The membership in 1962 was 62; at present there are 101 members.

Lions Club: First chartered February 11, 1944. Once had about 35 members; reorganized, 1952; present membership, 16.

Business and Professional Women's Club: Organized in March, 1954, with 18 members. Membership in 1966, 23.

American Legion: William Sullivan Post No. 218, organized in 1926, named in honor of first serviceman from this community to give his life in World War I. Charter members, 10; present membership, 88.

American Legion Auxiliary: William Sullivan Unit No. 218, the auxiliary, was organized in 1930 with 14 charter members. Mrs. Gertrude Clinton was first president. The ladies have been very active in the community. One of their yearly activities has been to decorate veterans' graves on Memorial Day. Present membership, 61.

Eastern Star: The Exeter chapter of the Eastern Star organized in 1914.

D.A.R.: Exeter has not had an active organization of its own, but 5 or 6 ladies from Exeter were members of the Geneva and Fairmont groups.

Happy Hour Club: The Happy Hour Extension Club, organized in 1917, was first called the "Jolly Twenty." When the membership increased the name was changed. Present membership is 20.

Sunshine Extension Club: Organized in 1925 with 14 members; present membership, 10.

Evergreen Extension Club: Organized in 1926 with 12 members; present membership, 13.

Tribby Extension Club: Organized in 1930 with 14 members; present membership, 16.

Lady Bird Extension Club: Newly organized in 1966 with 9 members.

There are various other clubs, as for bridge and similar functions. There are also many 4-H clubs, too numerous to list.

SCHOOLS

The coming of education to Exeter was described by Miss Elula Smith in the *Fillmore County News*, April 4, 1935. The first school was taught by Mrs. William Babcock

in her sod house. Her pupils were Fred Babcock, three Woodard children, and Charles Smith. The article does not give the year, but it must have been 1871 or 1872. County Superintendent G. W. Gue issued the usual notice: District No. 20 was to be formed of Secs. 19, 20, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33; he notified Job Hathaway that the organizational meeting would take place at Mr. Smith's store at one P.M. on February 9, 1872. The first officers elected were H. G. Smith, moderator; Job Hathaway, director; and Henry Young, treasurer.

Later, the citizens were summoned to discuss plans for a schoolhouse. Mr. Farmer was chairman of the first school board, Jim Dolan, secretary, and John Dayton, treasurer. Miss Smith wrote: "Mr. O. P. Chapman opposed everything that was suggested, but the majority ruled and plans were made for the building. When the meeting was about to adjourn, Mr. Chapman said, 'I move that \$100 be appropriated to provide a bell for this schoolhouse.' His motion went over big." The contractor for the building was Ben Stilley, and one of the carpenters was Mr. Farmer.

Soon after this meeting a 24' x 36' building was erected on the corner of Exeter Avenue and South Boundary Street. (This site is now, in 1966, a vacant lot at the NE corner of the intersection of Main Street and U.S. 6.)



Photo from Mrs. B. C. Songster
District 20 (Exeter Public School), built in 1882.



Photo from Mrs. Armin Bender

Exeter Public School Faculty in the late 1890's. *Back row:* Mabel Farmer, Floy Clark. *Front row:* Mary Scherzer, Etta Morgan, J. T. McKinnon, superintendent.



Photo from Leo Gibbons

The old school burned in 1915, just as the new one (at left) was being finished.

It was not many years before this building was out-grown. In 1882, the new brick building in the east part of town was finished and occupied. Mr. Chapman's bell was transferred to it and for many years summoned the children to school. It is said that when this building burned in 1915, the bell gave one last peal as it dropped into the flames. A new brick building was already being built, because the 1882 building was no longer large enough. Although the new building was very close, it was not damaged by the fire. Rev. G. R. McKeith wrote in 1915: "The last, but not the least of Exeter's improvements, is the erection of a \$40,000 school building, a magnificent, commodious, and well-arranged property, well fitted, and equipped to meet the needs of the town and district for many years."

During recent years, the Exeter Public School has undergone many changes and improvements. In 1945, the school was housed in one building and, because of the war, many departments needing improvements had to wait until equipment was available. One of the first improvements made was the building of a three-unit kitchen and remodeling of the homemaking department. Other improvements included lights for the football field; building the gymnasium-auditorium; fluorescent lighting for some rooms; new football bleachers; redistricting, which brought the buses and the establishment of bus routes; a Vocational Agriculture building; and a hot-lunch kitchen. Much obsolete and worn-out equipment has been replaced.

By 1961, standards and pressure by the State Department of Education for more playground space forced the school to use the football field to meet this requirement. The land east of the school was purchased for a new athletic field, football and track. The field was named "Scott Field" in memory of Scott Briggs who died while a senior in Exeter High. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Max Briggs.

As enrollment continued to increase, to provide necessary facilities the district voted a \$200,000 bond issue in 1965.



Photo from Burton Farmer

New Elementary School (1967)

This amount was for the construction of seven elementary classrooms, a multi-purpose room, and kitchen facilities for the whole school. This new building is located south of the gymnasium. The old building has been remodeled to make more and larger rooms for the Junior and Senior high grades.

There are many organizations within the school system:

F. F. A. organized in 1954—48 members in 1966
 F. H. A. organized in 1956—15 members in 1966
 Pep club—67 members.
 "E" club—35 members.
 "Y" Teen club—83 members.
 Student Council—15 members.
 Music Dept.—89 students in vocal groups
 Exeter has organized an M.A.T.H. honor club, called "Mu Alpha Theta." There are 18 full members and 8 associated members.
 There are two associated clubs, the "Y" Teen Council Mothers and the Exeter Band Mothers Club.

| <i>Band</i> | <i>Athletics</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Stage band17 | Football45 |
| Varsity band51 | Basketball30 |
| Junior band34 | Track25 |
| Beginners band32 | |

The Exeter Public School in 1966 had an assessed valuation of \$5,829,065 and a mill levy of 28.6. Exeter can still boast of its accomplishments in this department. The Exeter School has the lowest school-tax rate in Fillmore County, and ranks among the lowest in schools of comparable sizes.

There were 341 pupils attending the public school, which, combined with the 62 parochial pupils, gave a 1966 total of 403 pupils attending school in Exeter.

CHURCHES

In 1915, Exeter had six different churches or meeting places: Congregational, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Christian, and Christian Science. At present (1966), there are only the Congregational, Methodist, and Catholic churches. The others have either joined with other denominations or disbanded.

Congregational Church

In a room known as the Exeter Hall, over the H. G. Smith store, the Congregational Church was organized on March 31, 1872, with 11 charter members. They put up their first church in 1872. It was remodeled in 1907, with a 10-foot addition on the west, an alcove for the pulpit on the north, new seating, and a new furnace. In 1924, a story-and-a-half unit, 30' x 32', with full basement, was added on the south. The church has observed four major anniversaries, its 40th, 50th, 60th, and 85th. It owned a parsonage until 1964, when it was sold. In 1960, the church became yoked with the First Congregational



Photo from Mrs. Ted Jorgensen

First Congregational Church, Exeter

Church of Friend. The Rev. Donald Cassiday of Friend serves both congregations. One notable earlier pastor was the Rev. G. R. McKeith.

An article by Miss Belle Alexander (undated) provides additional information:

"The settlement of this township began during the year 1871 and religious services were held in various homes in the neighborhood. The first preaching service was held at the home of J. K. Barbur. It was in this same home that the first prayer meeting was held and the first Sunday School organized. Services were held in Exeter Hall for about 1½ years and then moved to the new schoolhouse just finished on the corner of Exeter Avenue and South Boundary St. This building was a room 24' x 36', well seated with patent seats and answered the purpose very well. The Congregationalists were the first to organize but the Baptists and Methodists organized soon after. They continued to worship together until 1878, the Congregationalists furnishing the pastor one-half of the time and the Baptists and Methodists the other half. The charter members of the Congregational Church were John K. Barbur, Kate Barbur, Abram T. Hager, Clarissa L. Hager, Frank E. Hager, Orson Hager, Elias J. Hager, H. G. Smith, Catherine Smith, Harrison A. Sturdevant, and Rice Kelly."

In 1966, this church had 108 members, and Sunday School averaged from 50 to 60 members.

Christian Church

This note on the Christian Church was supplied by J. C. Wilson: "The Christian Church was started in 1898, on July 19, when 19 members organized the Church of Christ in Exeter. Those attending were two young boys, three men and their wives, three young girls, and eight other women. Brother Martin was the elder, Brother Starr and later Francis Hoot were the deacons; Mrs. Starr was the deaconess, and Mrs. C. A. Bickel was the church treasurer. After a few weeks 14 new members were added to the church. Fifteen months later a building was erected at a cost of \$1,400."

Twenty-five years later the attendance had reached 96 at the Bible School. The church held regular services until July 1, 1956, when they were no longer able to keep going, and decided to disband. The parsonage and church building were sold and removed from the lots. However, the Christian Women's Fellowship have had regular meetings and in 1966 were continuing to meet.



Photo from Don Johns
Christian Church and Parsonage, Exeter (early 1920's)

St. Stephen's Church (Catholic)

The history of the parish of St. Stephen's at Exeter is not well known until 1873. It is probable that Father Kelly, who lived in Lincoln, passed through Exeter in 1870 and said Mass at the residence of F. McTygue south of town.

The first part of the old church was built in 1874 or 1875. Part of the priest's residence was built in 1878. In 1883, the residence and the old church were completed and some improvements were made. A new church was erected in 1901 and 1902. A parochial school was erected in 1907 and opened in September, 1907, with Dominican Sisters in charge. The new priest's residence was built in 1910. A storm damaged the church in 1918, and it was repaired and improved. The church was completely redecorated some time between 1940 and 1949, and an electric organ was added.

The school was remodeled in 1934. It has always had a good library and in 1952 the collection of books was accessioned and tabulated and many new volumes were added. A new set of encyclopedias was purchased in 1954.

The Dominican Sisters remained until 1940, when the Felician Sisters came; they are still there.

The St. Stephen's School and Home Association, formerly the

St. Stephen's P.T.A., was organized in 1935; one of its notable successes has been the hot-lunch project.

Msgr. Patrick Healy who came in 1949, celebrated his Golden Jubilee of ordination June 24, 1954. Upon the death of Msgr. Healy in 1956, Msgr. Henry H. Ingenhorst was appointed pastor of St. Stephen's and installed on October 3, 1956.

Extensive renovation of the church was undertaken in 1961, including a complete interior decoration and the installation of a new heating system. In the spring of 1964, St. Stephen's parish purchased property to serve as a convent for the teaching staff. The school building underwent some needed repairs and its educational facilities were considerably expanded. On September 17, 1964, Msgr. Ingenhorst celebrated his Silver Jubilee of ordination with the assistance of the congregation and visiting clergy.

St. Stephen's Church had 477 members in 1966 and the St. Stephen's Parochial School had 62 pupils.



Photo from Robert Trauger
St. Stephen's Catholic Church in 1902



Photo from R. D. Erdkamp
St. Stephen's Catholic Church as rebuilt in 1918.

Christian Science Society

The Christian Science Society organized in 1897. First meetings were held in a room of the Smith factory. In 1900, it changed its name to First Church of Christ, Scientist and met in a room above the First National Bank.

A concrete-block church was built in 1907, with Frank Craven the general overseer. He also laid most of the block. The church

averaged 35 members. The congregation decided to disband in 1951 and the building was sold to the Assembly of God. Two years later this church also found it necessary to disband. The building was sold in 1953 to Ted Larsons, who remodeled it into a private home.



Photo from Mrs. Esther Jones
First Church of Christ, Scientist (Exeter, 1907)

Methodist Church

As early as 1871, religious services were being held in private homes. The first Sunday School was organized 4 miles S of town and was carried on successfully for several years. The class was organized by the Rev. D. B. Lake in an 18' x 25' room above the H. G. Smith store, on the lot now occupied by the Barkmeier store; entrance was by an outside stairway.

From this class three denominations—Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist—were organized at different times during the year 1872. In 1873, the first schoolhouse was erected, and this was used for some time by all the denominations.

Members of the different denominations took turns doing the janitor work and ministers came from near-by towns every two weeks for preaching services. After a few years, the school had to be given up and the Methodists found new quarters over the W. H. Taylor store. Rev. Davis from Indiana was the first resident pastor. He received the huge sum of \$450 per year and furnished his own house, which later became the first Methodist parsonage and served as such until the early 1900's. Until 1879, there had been no board of trustees, so the organization could not legally own property. In that year, J. P. Kettlewell, T. B. Farmer, C. A. Songster, W. L. Hildreth, Elias Peterman, and M. E. Trauger were named trustees. In 1880, there came some inclination to raise money to purchase lots on which to erect a church. The first effort was made at the close of a midweek prayer meeting at the home of a member. A collection was taken, but this fell short of the required amount. After the singing of a hymn, Mr. Songster suggested another collection, and this process was repeated until the needed amount was raised.

A 22-foot lot was purchased and the railroad company donated another, and, in 1881, the first Methodist Episcopal Church of Exeter was erected on the site of the present building. The structure was 28' x 48'. Eliminate the main auditorium of the present building and move the east and west ends together and you have the original building.

Several years later the Epworth League sponsored the purchase of the bell which is still in use. The lighting system consisted of large kerosene lamps hung from the ceiling and heat was furnished by a large coal stove placed a little back of the center of the room. Later a large round "Oak" stove was placed under the building after the manner of a pipeless furnace.

In 1905, the Rev. J. W. Lewis convinced the members of the need for a more modern building and submitted a plan for the remodeled church, which was dedicated with fitting ceremonies in 1906.

The Ladies' Aid furnished the large north window and the G.A.R. donated the south one, with the understanding that they might use the building for their annual Memorial Services without charge as long as needed.

In the meantime, the board of trustees had purchased the building on the southeast corner of the block for a parsonage and during the pastorate of the Rev. W. Hull this building was extensively remodeled.

The church, as dedicated in 1906, was used with normal repairs until 1927, when, because of a substantial gift to the church, the members thought it advisable to refinish, redecorate, and fully modernize the building.

In the winter of 1934-35, the ceiling of the main auditorium was lowered and the church was completely redecorated. A large gas furnace replaced the former coal furnace and a gas floor furnace serves the west room.

In 1939, the church tower was made higher to house a "Singing Tower," a gift from Frank Farmer of Denver as a memorial to his parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Farmer. The tower may be

Photo from Mrs. Armin Bender
Exeter Methodist Church (1881-1905). This church was cut in two in 1906 and the present sanctuary was built between the two parts. The tower was removed and placed in the angle.



Photo from Edith Kranda
Exeter Methodist Church as remodeled in 1906. The church looked like this until 1927, when it was brick veneered and finished as it stands today.

heard in all parts of town and as far as 5 miles in the country. The Singing Tower here was the first in a Nebraska church.

In the spring of 1944, the Sunday School and Mission Study Class gave the church an American flag and a Christian flag.

In March, 1945, the picture, "The Open Door," with its spotlight, was a gift from Frank Farmer. At the same time, the cross and candle holders were given by the Sunday School and Mission Study Class.

Sponsored by the W.S.C.S., a committee composed of Mrs. Pearl Steyer, Mrs. N. F. Whitmore, and Mrs. D. L. Hall prepared an honor roll of our World War II servicemen. An artistic frame was made and presented by Mr. and Mrs. Whitmore and a record book was presented by Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Trimbath. Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Hall presented a container for the record book and a group of friends had a spotlight installed for the display.

The church kitchen was remodeled in 1951. In 1959, the basement was remodeled and Sunday School rooms were partitioned off. At the same time a chapel for the M.Y.F. was installed in the east end of the basement and a new furnace was also added.

In 1961, a new parsonage was erected. In 1964, the sanctuary was repainted, the church floors were refinished, and new furniture was provided for the pulpit.

At this time (1966) the church has approximately 250 members and 130 enrolled in the Sunday School.

Baptist Church

The Baptist Church was organized in 1872. The church building was erected in 1879, rather like the Congregational and Christian, but a little smaller. It stood facing north on the place where the Farmer Mortuary is now located. In later years a parsonage was built just east of the church, mostly by the labor of members. The Baptist Church was fortunate to have an outstanding quartet that was well known for their renditions of anthems at Sunday morning worship.

The first Communion set of plates and goblets were made of pewter. Later Mr. and Mrs. L. Gilbert presented the church with a beautiful silver Communion set. The silver set is at present in the museum at Nebraska City.

When the congregation became quite small, because of deaths and families moving to other communities, it was decided to disband. Those who wished joined with the Congregational Church in a federation of the Congregational and the Baptist in January, 1918.

It was necessary to use the Baptist Church for classrooms for school at the time when the first school grew too small and the new school had not been completed.

The church and parsonage buildings were sold about 1923. The church was torn down and the parsonage was used in the rebuilding of the Farmer Mortuary.



Photo from Edith Kranda
Exeter Baptist Church in 1905

CIVIC ACTIVITIES

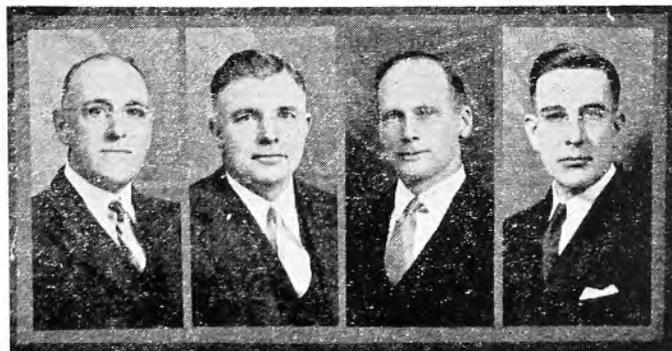
Farmer Male Quartet

The original Farmer male quartet, organized in the late 1920's, was composed of P. R. Farmer, 1st tenor; T. D. Clarke, 2nd tenor; A. E. Bashford, 1st bass; and L. T. Blouch, 2nd bass. Mrs. W. P. Wallace was the accompanist. They immediately selected suitable numbers and started meeting regularly for rehearsals. As soon as it became known that they were ready for public appearances, they were much in demand. They sang at many different functions and entertained in Exeter and community and in other Nebraska towns and communities.

Frank Farmer, of Denver, a brother of P. R. Farmer, became interested in the quartet, and gave much of his time and talents to their rehearsals. When in Exeter, he often accompanied them on singing engagements, where he would lead in community singing and also sing solos.

The quartet also furnished the music for many funerals. This was a part of the service Mr. Farmer offered to the public without extra charge. In January, 1934, the quartet had several recordings made of both their sacred and secular numbers. They also had photos taken for use in their work.

The community was shocked and saddened when P. R. Farmer was critically injured in an auto accident; he passed away September



The Farmer Male Quartet in the late 1920's. Left to right: P. R. Farmer, T. D. Clarke, A. E. Bashford, L. T. Blouch.

22, 1935. P. R. Farmer was the father of Burton Farmer of Exeter and Paul Farmer of Geneva. Both the sons are morticians, as was their father.

Mr. Bashford passed away in April, 1946. The two remaining members of the quartet, Mr. Blouch and Mr. Clarke, continue to make their home in Exeter.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Clarke learned to sing as a boy when he lived on the Isle of Man, an island between England and Ireland.

Medical Center

The Medical Center began by a vote of the people at a special election in February, 1956. The town board accepted the architect's plans in July and asked for bids. The building, of brick-veneer construction, cost approximately \$25,000. Its 28' x 65' area provides 15 rooms, which include a waiting room, three examining rooms, two laboratories, and two private offices. It is completely air-conditioned, with tile floors and smooth plaster walls throughout. The first doctor to occupy the building was Dr. James E. Loukota. At present (1966) the building is being used by two dentists who come out part time from Lincoln—Drs. Harold Demaree and Clifton Hicks—and by an optometrist, Dr. Delwyn Anderson, who comes once a week from Geneva.

The people of Exeter have tried, so far unsuccessfully, to interest a doctor in locating here permanently; but they have not yet given up either hopes or efforts.



Photo from Burton Farmer
The Medical Clinic in 1967

Memory Manor

A retirement home for many of our pioneers became a reality in 1965. Memory Manor is a result of community co-operation. Mr. Turner, president of Bethel Homes, Inc., agreed that if the local area would raise \$25,000, Bethel Homes would build a 45-bed modern nursing home. In the same spirit in which pioneer Nebraskans long worked together, the money was raised; and we now have, in a handsome building on the north side of U.S. 6 at the western edge of Exeter, a pleasant refuge for those who wish to rest, or who because of illness have laid down the plow, shovel, hoe, pot, or pan, and must relax in the well-earned, kind care of others.



Photo from Burton Farmer
Memory Manor in 1967



Photo from Burton Farmer
Exeter swimming pool, constructed in 1964.

Swimming Pool

The Exeter Woman's Club decided, in May, 1963, to promote the project of a city swimming pool. The club's Community Improvement Committee asked for, and obtained, a meeting with the state Department of Health. The village board co-operated, and a meeting of interested citizens evoked considerable enthusiasm. The board de-



Photo from Mrs. Cora Rogers

Exeter Post Office in 1912. Left to right: Mort Rasmussen, William Hildreth, Postmaster; Ed Mitchel, Grace Hildreth (Agur), Joe Rogers. Notice the belt-drive motorcycles.

cided to place a bond issue before the public on November 12, 1963. The Woman's Club put on a publicity campaign, as a result of which the citizens approved the bond issue. As a result, Exeter is the proud possessor of a modern swimming pool. It was opened to the public in July, 1964, and a formal dedication was held on May 30, 1965.

City Park

Soon after the swimming pool was built in the City Park, in 1964, much work was done to improve the park. The park was completely reseeded, and the city installed a sprinkling system. Picnic tables were repaired and painted. Parking space was provided for the many people who use the park and the pool. There is also playground equipment for children. To the south of the park is a well-used baseball diamond. This general area is a busy place in the summertime.

Postal Service

The first post office in Exeter was located in the home of Warren Woodard in 1871, 1/2 mile E of town on the present Leo Becker farm. It was later moved to the home of Dr. H. G. Smith here in town. Through the years it had three different locations on Main Street before being moved to its present site in 1928. The Exeter post office started as a fourth-class office, and then remained a third-class office for many years before being rated as second class in 1950.

Postmasters have been the following persons: Warren Woodard, 1871; D. A. Wentworth, 1886-87; Dan Kochendarfer, 1887-89; A. T. Hager, 1890-93; James Kelley, 1893-97; C. N. Phillips, 1897-1906; William J. Hildreth, 1906-15; Dan Kochendarfer, 1915-19; Harry V. Ingram, 1919-30; Frank Ainsworth, 1930-47; Frank Leibee, 1947-65; T. I. Larsen, 1965—.



Photo from Ted Larson

First Air Mail into Exeter in 1938. Left to right: Richard Ferguson, Ed Mitchel, Billy Mitchel, Clark Crane, Verne Johnson, Leo Koehn, Chester Taylor, J. D. Rogers, Pilot (unknown), Irene Murphy (hidden), Frank Leibee (hidden), Frank Ainsworth, postmaster.

Rural Route delivery started about the year 1880, with three routes. The first carriers were George Borland, Smithe Wallace, and Fred Phillips. Other carriers included William Mitchel, Ed Hall, Mort Rasmussen, Paul Farmer, Seron Manning, and Joe Rogers.

We now have two routes out of Exeter. The carriers are (1966) Kenneth Taylor (Route 1) and John Drommond (Route 2).

This is but one story of many rural mail carriers. On April 27, 1911, a young man sorted up a pouch of mail at the local post office and started forth on his rounds as a rural letter carrier. Forty years and three days later he made his last official delivery to the patrons on Route 1, Exeter. He was J. D. Rogers, who made his first delivery as a temporary carrier. He received his permanent appointment in June, 1911. The first route was 24 miles long, when there were three routes out of Exeter. When the routes were consolidated, Mr. Rogers became carrier of Route 1, 43 1/2 miles long. Through all the years, however, he served the same area north of town and many of the same families.

For conveyance he used horses, motorcycles, various types of automobiles, the last that vehicle known as a Jeep. It was computed that Mr. Rogers traveled about 500,000 miles as a mail carrier.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Elevators

The first elevator in Exeter, built in the 1870's, was owned and operated by James Dolan. By 1878 there were two elevators; names of owners other than Mr. Dolan are not available.

In 1907, there were four elevators. One was the Ragen Co. Elevator, between the Burlington stockyard and the street. This is believed to be the elevator later owned by Joseph Coates. W. W. Kimberly and Co. was located by the Burlington depot. It is now (1966) the location of the Co-op elevator office. The Kimberly Elevator was sold to the William McNeil Grain Co. between 1910 and 1920. The Nye, Snyder & Jenks Elevator, located south of the Methodist Church, was operated by George Horton. There was also the Trans-Mississippi Elevator.

On April 8, 1911, farmers of the Exeter community met to organize a Farmers' Elevator. Permanent officers were Walter Howarth, president, and Levi Steyer, secretary. One month later, \$4,000 was pledged, to be divided into \$25 shares, with no one to have more than eight shares.

In September, 1911, the board met and bought the Trans-Mississippi Elevator for \$3,000. With a few added expenses, the total cost was \$3,206.90. S. G. Manning was hired as manager. Business prospered and the year 1912 showed a good profit. In 1913, coal sheds were built. Total bushels of grain bought in 1912 were 207,040 (including corn, wheat, and oats). During the next 10 years, big business items were grain, coal, flour, cement, binder twine, and apples. At times, apples were bought by the carload. Profits continued annually. New board members were Walter Howarth, Levi Steyer, Will Jansen, Henry Kolar, Sam Gillan, Fred Underwood, and N. M. Becker.

The big addition of this decade was the purchase of the Joe Coates Elevator, on the Burlington, in May, 1919, for \$5,000. Assets



Map of Exeter in 1926.

at end of this period were \$24,677.87, with 221 stockholders and 405 shares. Levi Steyer resigned as secretary of the board.

The second decade (1920-30) saw important figures and changes take place. After 11 years, Walter Howarth resigned because of ill health. Before leaving, Mr. Howarth gave a full report, showing a large saving to patrons. In 1924, 372 cars of wheat, corn, and oats were shipped. In 1927, the petroleum business was added. Mr. Gillan's bid was accepted and then gasoline and fuel was sold to patrons. In October, 1929, George Thompson became the new manager. There were policy changes during this time. Interest on stock was frequently as high as 10 per cent. The board added William Morgan and E. J. Barbur to its list of directors.

The next decade (1930-1940) was a period of drought and depression. Wages had to be cut, and the board offered to share undivided profits in grain, whatever was needed, to help the even more unfortunate farmers in northern Nebraska. Rough times continued. Wages again had to be cut; the secretary voluntarily reduced his pay. Public audit started, and it was necessary to borrow money with which to operate. The year 1936 brought the need for a garage business, with Hans Nelson in charge of this department. The board now included new members John Due, Herbert Howarth, John Miller, Charles Trauger, Jim Krejci, Godfrey Mueller, Axel Nelson, and Bob Douppnik. In December, 1939, there were 154 stockholders and

261 shares.

Between 1940 and 1950, some facilities became obsolete; the result was the purchase of the McNeil Elevator on the Burlington for \$10,000. Now the old Coates Elevator was torn down for the lumber. The '40's saw some wage increases for the manager and employees, with year-end bonuses. Many repairs were made on the elevator, with some grinder-moving problems. Also added were some small buildings. Business directly reflected the fruitfulness of the years. The new directors added were Frank Lovegrove, Roy Eberhardt, Bert Schwab, William Keil, Walt Guthrie, Willard Steyer, and Olaf Due. In 1947, Walt Barkmeier resigned and Bill Ruhl was hired as the new manager.

The decade 1950-60 was an unusual one. The first five years showed substantial additions. A larger scale, a new feed house, and a roller mill to process feeds were added. The commercial fertilizer business expanded considerably. The six-year period from 1955 to 1961 saw great expansion in storage facilities, increasing capacity to 605,000 bushels. A \$19,780 grain dryer, a liquid fertilizer plant, and a 5,000-gallon bulk oil tank were added. In 1964, an anhydrous plant and equipment were added, as well as a 4,000-gallon tank for the oil plant. In 1965, a molasses blender, with a 4,000-gallon molasses storage tank, was added.

Thirty-five names have appeared on the board of directors list.

The latest names added were Aaron Guthrie, Harve Johnson, John Leif, John Geiger, Jay W. Dyer, Eric Rasmussen, and Joe Hassler. The last total showed 540 stockholders and 5,650 shares, indicating growth and progress.

The Farmers' Elevator, now known as Exeter Co-Operative Elevator Co., has been fortunate in having had only four different managers during its 55-year life. The board of directors were also dedicated men. One member, Fred Underwood, missed only one meeting in 37 years.



Photo from William Ruhl
McNeil Elevator about 1915



Photo from William Ruhl
Exeter Co-Op Elevator in 1967



Photo from John Bacon
Smith Tag and Index Factory. The addition was built about 1910.

Charles C. Smith Index Tab Factory

The first successful factory in Exeter was that set up by Charles C. Smith for making index tabs. About 1895, while a clerk in his father's bank, he devised some adjustable tabs to flag frequently used accounts and save a good deal of time. Callers at the bank who saw these tabs in use took to asking him if he would make a few for them to use in their businesses. This was the very modest beginning of a business that, in later years, gave the name of Exeter more nearly world-wide fame than that of any other American town of its size.

By 1896, Charles Smith was receiving enough orders to justify opening a small factory and employing workers. His first factory was in the directors' room of his father's bank. The business prospered and quickly elbowed its way out of the directors' room. It might even be said that it elbowed the bank right out of the bank building and, in time, also absorbed an adjoining building. When even this grew inadequate, an addition was built onto the back of the plant.

During the early years of the business, Mr. Smith gave primary consideration to developing, improving, and expanding his line of products, first in the continental United States, and then in foreign countries. He also aimed at improving manufacturing procedures. He was instrumental in developing machinery to decrease the amount of hand work in making his products.

The tabs are used to index books and card systems. Some, made wholly of steel, are called Signals or Guides. The signals may be either plain or printed with months, numbers, or letters. The guides have insertable paper labels protected by a celluloid covering.

The leather tab (which has the distinction of being the first and oldest) is made of bronze clips with a projection of leather, this being stiffened by a filler of felt.

The gummed strips, made of paper, cloth, and leather, differ from the tabs and signals in that they are not removable, but are gummed to the paper or card in the place desired for indexing. The cloth and leather strips may also be celluloid covered, which provides a means for slipping a paper label under the celluloid, thus making an index which may be changed. These strips are sold by the foot but in actual use are cut up into as short lengths as desired.

At one time, almost all the signaling items used throughout the world were made in Exeter. Although competitors later arose, the Exeter factory long remained the acknowledged leader for quality signaling. As this is written (1968), the Exeter factory has been discontinued.

The business which Mr. Smith built up was incorporated after his death. The present owners are largely people who either worked for him or sold the products which he manufactured in Exeter.

The *Lincoln Journal and Star* reported, in June, 1953:

"An old Exeter business firm is under new ownership and has been incorporated. Following Mr. Smith's death in December of 1951, the firm came under trusteeship of the First Trust Company of Lincoln. Mr. Smith's daughters, the heirs, then converted the estate into cash, the purchaser being York businessman Willis E. Stover. According to the records in the office of County Judge Guy A. Hamilton, the amount involved in the liquidation transaction was \$23,500.

"The new corporation has bought the business from Stover. The corporation is capitalized at \$100,000. Incorporators were Charles Peabbles, Robert L. McCloskey, and Delores M. Link of Washington D. C.

"An expansion of domestic sales is planned but no change in manufacturing personnel or plant organization is contemplated, according to manufacturing manager Nesbit F. Whitmore of Exeter. Thirteen persons are now employed.

"William H. Cravens of Round Hill, Virginia, is president of the corporation. Glen F. Monnig of Exeter is vice-president and general manager and has been acting secretary and treasurer. Nina Chambers is office manager.

"The 'Government Schedule of Supplies' has listed the firm's products for more than 40 years. Most of the stockholders, a corporation officer reports, other than officers and employees, are persons in the stationery and office fields."

The Lincoln *Star* in 1957 said of a long-time member of the firm: "After 57 years with the local Charles C. Smith Index Tab Co., Nesbit F. Whitmore has retired. Mr. Whitmore joined the firm in 1900. His first salary, as a boy of 15, was \$1.50 for a 25-hour week. "His first duties included scuffing the small steel tabs so that glue would stick to them more readily. Mr. Whitmore, in his long tenure with the company, saw the firm's output increase from one lone type of index tab to more than 50 various sizes, shapes, and colors.

"His title before he retired this month was vice-president in charge of production. His inventiveness and mechanical inclinations have resulted in many improvements in the operations.

"Mr. Whitmore's second job at the plant was a 'printer's devil.' From 1908 until 1951, when Charles C. Smith died, he was in charge of production.

"Mr. Whitmore has seen the firm's personnel vary in number from six or eight to more than 70. Labor-saving machines, many of which Whitmore had a hand in inventing, have reduced the need for workers but have speeded production.

"Mr. Whitmore invented one machine himself and it is one of the most used in the plant. It takes rolls of cloth and pressboard and makes them into a gummed index stripping. One of his last jobs before he retired was the making of more than 800,000 tabs for an airline on this machine. Mr. Whitmore has now retired."

Thane D. Croston was manager of the Charles C. Smith Index Tab Co. from January, 1956, until October, 1959. After leaving the Smith plant, Mr. Croston started his own factory.

Debus Bakery

In 1912, the Debus Brothers, Sander (Sam) and Henry, started a bakery in the back room of their ice-cream parlor. After operating here for one year, they bought a lot on East Main St. and erected a building on it. (This building is now occupied by Bob's Body Shop.) Their only piece of machinery was an electric dough mixer. The rest of the work was done by hand. They installed a Peterson Pegan continuous fire-brick oven. As time went on and their business increased, they purchased more machinery. They hired T. D. Clarke as a helper in February, 1916. Their output at this time was an average of 800 loaves of bread per day. They also baked rolls and pastries.

In 1917, the brothers dissolved the partnership. Henry went to Fremont, and Sander became the sole owner and manager. T. D. Clarke remained as an assistant baker and Mrs. Nellie Taylor as clerk.

During World War I, many commodities were scarce and Sander was compelled to use substitutes in his bakery goods. He succeeded well with substitutes while many other bakers were not so successful. This news spread rapidly and in a short time he was averaging 3,500 loaves of bread per day, besides the rolls and pastries. The shop was shipping baked goods to many other towns, by express, on both Burlington and Northwestern trains. This expansion necessitated more help, and Sander secured the services of his half-brother, A. J. Maser of Lincoln. Other helpers included Faye and Donald Johns, Clyde Long, and Noel Smith. Mrs. T. D. Clarke assisted Mrs. Taylor as clerk.

In 1923, Sander decided to move his bakery to Hastings and formed a corporation. Frank Craven, one of the incorporators, became vice-president and continued in that capacity until 1956 when Sander Debus passed away. Mr. Craven then became president until another company bought out the corporation in 1964.

(Frank Craven built the first reinforced concrete silo in Nebraska in 1908. The silo is still in use today.)



Photo from Don Johns

Debus Bakery about 1918. Bread in boxes ready to be shipped out on the railroad.

Exeter Canning Factory

A two-story frame canning factory 24' x 80', with frame porch and attached stairway, was located in the east part of Exeter in the Smith addition, near the C.B. & Q. R.R. This plant, owned by A. J. and Cordelia Bird, canned tomatoes, corn, yellow string beans, and peaches.

On this land was an orchard which had peaches, plums, cherries, and apples. Some of the apple trees had been grafted with other trees and produced large crab apples.

The canning factory, first started in 1890, was sold to H. S. Bedford in 1893. Some time between 1893 and 1902, the building was destroyed by a fire.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hill bought the land in 1902. The building was gone but some of the foundation was still there, and later some of the labels were plowed up. While the factory was in operation, a large amount of canned corn had spoiled. These cans were dumped, and heavy rains, falling soon after, washed the cans onto some of the farmers' land, much to their disgust.

Exeter has also had a mattress factory several times, but they were never successful and of short duration.

Exeter Roller Mills

Founded as a co-operative in 1886, the Exeter Roller Mills was later purchased by H. S. Bedford. In 1893, the *Fillmore County Democrat* said:

"It is one of the boasts of the city and stands among the best mills in the State. The capacity of this mill is 100 barrels and among his favorite brands of flour we note 'Our Best,' 'Silver,' and 'Ladies Favorite.' Mr. Bedford ships his flour to all points in Nebraska and has also a wholesale house at Lincoln, and branch or exchange houses at Seward and Bee. In connection with his mill here, he has a large storehouse 244 x 80 feet, two stories high, in which now is stored 65,000 sacks of flour, a sight of behold."



Exeter Roller Mills in 1886

Newspapers

The *Fillmore County News* was operated for approximately 15 years by Richard Ferguson, 1938-1953, when Mr. and Mrs. Bill Sand purchased the paper. The Sands were here for six years, until 1959. At that time the *News* was sold to John Farley, who had the paper for six months.

The present publishers are Mr. and Mrs. Al Bonta. They purchased the paper in February, 1960. The Bontas commuted from Alexandria for six months before they could find adequate housing for themselves and their nine children.

The Bontas had operated the *Alexandria Argus* for eight years before coming to Exeter. After the *Alexandria* paper was sold, Mr. Bonta worked for 1½ years for a newspaper in Fairbury.

The *Fillmore County News* has 750 subscribers.

Kittinger Mink Farm

The mink business started in 1944, more as a hobby than a business. The Burton Kittingers began with five young mink the first year, then traded the surplus males for more females. Some of the mink were raised on shares with other mink ranchers. Another rancher would furnish the breeding stock and the mink were raised by the Kittingers for half.

Mr. Kittinger had been in the blacksmith and welding business, but the mink business demanded more of his time and after a few years he sold the shop and devoted his time to mink raising. For the last several years the Kittingers have kept about 400 breeding females and pelt around 1,500 to 1,600 mink each year.

A 25-ton freezer-cooler, and a 1-ton feed mixer and grinder are used to handle about 1,700 lbs. of feed per day in summer and fall, mostly chicken and beef by-products.

The Kittinger mink farm raises three different colors of mink—the pastel, sapphire, and natural dark mink.

The Kittingers are members of the Great Lakes Mink Assn., the E.M.B. Assn., and the Nebraska Mink Growers Assn.

In November, there is a mink ranchers' show at Kearney. A few from other states also enter mink. Competition is keen; the best mink of each color wins a trophy and the next four best win ribbons. The Kittingers have won two trophies and numerous ribbons.

March is the month for mating the mink. Most of the young are

born in May. The average litter is from 3½ to 4. Some females will have 1 or 2 young mink, while others may have from 8 to 10. The average weight of a new-born mink is ½ ounce. A full-grown female weighs 2 to 2½ lbs.; males weigh up to 6½ lbs. Plenty of feed and water are important to the growing mink. The mink are pelted in December and the furs are shipped to New York for auction.



Photo from Burton Farmer
Kittinger Mink Farm in 1967

Modern Products, Inc.

Modern Products was incorporated in 1959. The first product manufactured came several months later from an idea brought to the company by Ray T. Hall. The idea was for a machine to bore horizontal holes in the ground. Anyone operating a trenching machine needs an earth auger of this sort when he encounters something that cannot be trenched, such as a railroad track, highway, driveway, or street. Holes are drilled to carry water mains, sewers, telephone cables, electric cables, gas lines, etc.

A network of distributors was built up, covering the United States, Canada, Alaska, Japan, Thailand, and South America, enabling the firm to capture its share of the world's auger market. The products are advertised in national trade magazines and through personal contact with distributors.

This product caught the interest of the Omaha Steel Co., who considered the auger line and a small trencher introduced by Modern Products, Inc., as ideal companions to their recently acquired Brown Trencher line and the Modern line was bought up by Omaha Steel.



Fire destroyed a portion of the Modern Products building in 1967. The building, now owned by Ray T. Hall, has been reconstructed and houses the offices of the Horizontal Boring Co.

Photo from John Terril
John Terril in his creamery on the west side of Main Street (1924)



Photo from Mrs. John Plettner
John, John, Jr., and Joel Plettner in 1941

Plettner Hatchery

The Plettner Hatchery started in 1919 in a home basement. Here a capacity of 2,200 eggs were hatched in common lamp incubators. In 1927, the home business was discontinued but resumed, with a 30,000-egg capacity, in the old *Fillmore County News* building (later sold to the American Legion).

The hatchery was moved in 1931 to the Odd Fellows building, operating four 60,000-egg machines. It moved again in 1939 and ran 120,000-egg machines. The hatchery was a partnership between John and Elmer Plettner from 1927 till 1950, when the partnership dissolved. The hatchery has since been discontinued.

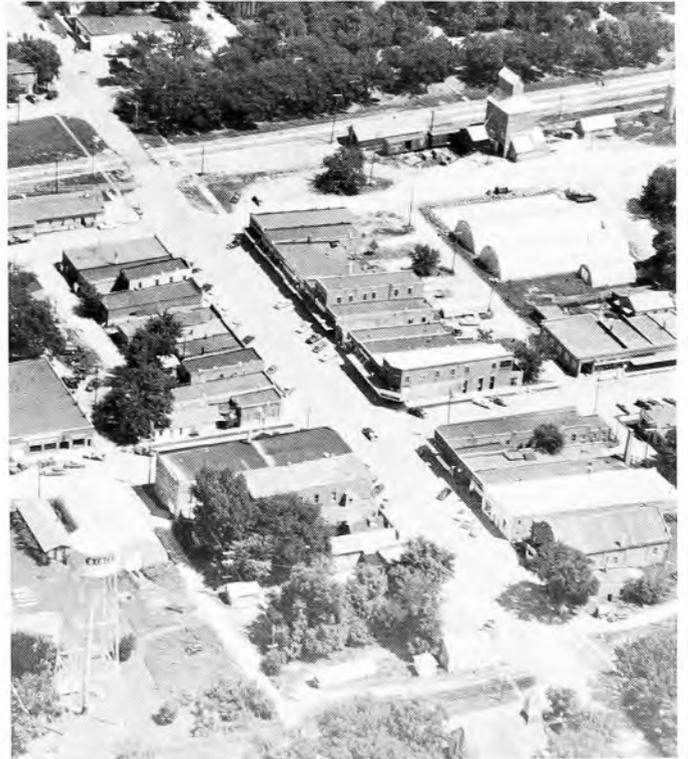


Photo from William Ruhl
Aerial view of Exeter business district—July, 1957

BUGS AND WEATHER

Grasshoppers

The early settlers were faced with many obstacles. The breaking of the prairie was backbreaking labor; then they had to wait, hope, and pray that the rains would come at the right times, plentiful enough but not too much, to permit a bountiful harvest. These were things that could at least be foreseen. But the grasshopper plague was something totally unexpected, and they could do nothing but watch their crops vanish in a matter of days—or hours. Many homesteaders gave up and returned to their native states. Others gave up farming and sought other occupations. E. S. Coates wrote, in a *Nebraska Farmer* article:

"They came for three years. The family had 40 acres in crops. One day about the middle of July, just a few days before their 20 acres of wheat was to be cut, the wind changed from the south, where it had been for a few days, around to the north. Soon came a roaring noise and a haze. Then came a rain of grasshoppers. In two days, the garden, potatoes, wheat, and the corn—everything was gone. The hoppers rose and sailed off to the south. In the spring, my family got seed to plant the 40 acres again, and broke up some more land, planting it to corn. They harvested a small grain crop that year, but the hoppers came again in August, took the corn, took the late garden and potatoes.

"The next spring, they planted all the plowed ground and broke more. They harvested a big wheat crop, the corn was in the roasting ear, the potatoes were immense, and it seemed the pioneers' cupboards would be full. They planned a mass meeting at the settlement to give thanks for the absence of the grasshoppers and for a full crop. The preacher had just offered a prayer of thanks, when wind came up from the north and the grasshoppers began to fall on the assembly. The worst grasshopper scourge of them all was on. The hoppers were so ravenous, they ate the corn and then crawled into the shocks and ate the heads off the grain.

"The hoppers had stayed that fall and laid eggs. When the crops were nicely up, millions of them hatched out and began to feed. Everyone despaired. The day my folks were packing up to go back to Iowa, a brisk wind came out of the north. The grasshoppers arose in a huge cloud and left forever." [This three-year siege occurred in northeastern Nebraska.]

In the locality around Exeter, they were bad only one year, according to Miss Elula Smith:

"Some of the farmers were quite unfortunate. Mr. A. T. Hager had purchased a harvester and he and his son Orson and Mr. Farmer had cut the Hager wheat and finished that belonging to the Alexanders at noon, July 10, 1874. After enjoying one of Mrs. Alexander's bountiful dinners, Mr. Farmer was walking home. A cloud seemed to be passing over the sun, and soon there were grasshoppers everywhere, a smaller species than we are accustomed to see. They not only destroyed the crops and gardens but feasted on the mosquito-bar covering the windows. They evinced a great fondness for onions, destroying them so completely that nothing was left to tell the tale but the ground holes where they had grown. The air was literally alive with hoppers, so much so that the youngsters went out with barrel staves and beat down the insects. They were so thick on the Burlington track, and the wheels slipped so badly, that the engineer was unable to stop the train at the depot, but when he got the train stopped, he backed to the station."

Grasshoppers were back again to plague the farmers in the 1930's. Although by now the farmers were better equipped to deal with them, they again consumed distressing amounts of the farm products. Many farmers put out poisoned bran, but this did not prove to be very effective. The grasshoppers not only ate grains and gardens, but were known to have chewed on fence posts and even on clothes that were hung out on lines to dry. The problem seemed to solve itself as the drouth of the 1930's passed. Since that time, many insecticides have proved to be quite effective.

Blizzards

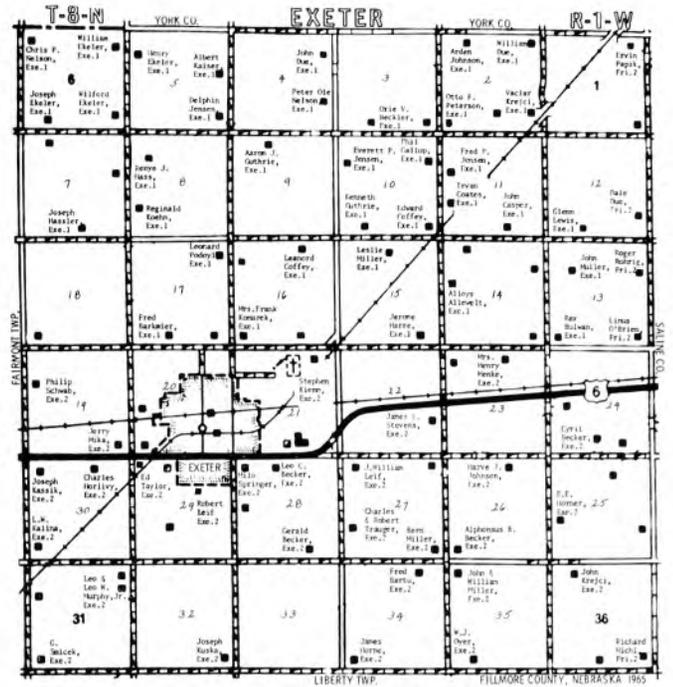
Of these storms, Miss Elula Smith wrote:

"One of these storms long to be remembered was the Easter storm which began on Sunday, April 13, 1873, and lasted three days. Something which seemed like solid snow commenced falling at day-break. Snowdrifts covered everything and in some places nearly all the stock froze.

"During one blizzard, Mr. Chris Kobe [a few miles away in York County] had to feed corn to his cattle through a hole in the roof of the barn, and he shoveled in snow to quench their thirst. He had to keep this up for two weeks. [During the storm] he found his way from the barn back to the house only by following a lariat rope.

"Many of us recall the blizzard of January 12, 1888, and have read the story of Minnie Freeman, later Mrs. J. C. Penny, who kept her scholars in a sod house until the roof blew off and then tied them together with strings and took them safely to the home of a settler. She was called the 'Nebraska heroine.'

"In Exeter, it was one of those mild days that often come in January. Many of the children went to school without coats or hats.



Mattie Wallace (Crooker) was without a coat or hat; however, Del Van De Venter loaned her his coat. The storm broke right after recess and our parents began arriving to look after us. The older scholars helped to get the younger ones home, so none of the children in town had to remain at the schoolhouse overnight. Belle Alexander was attending school in the district 2 miles E of town. Miss Ada Robinson was the teacher. After the storm commenced, her brother came from town and carried in firewood. One of the older boys took the horses to a farmer's barn. A Scotch neighbor made some scones and another sent cookies. The teacher and scholars remained at the schoolhouse, and several walked home in the morning over the snowdrifts.

"To one person, at least, the storm was a welcome relief. Gertie Barbur (Rasmussen) was attending a country school taught by Nettie Manning. Gertie didn't like the teacher and was often compelled to stand on the floor because of some misdemeanor. Such was the case on this particular afternoon. When it commenced to storm, she was allowed to take her seat.

"One mother, southeast of here, perished in her effort to go to the schoolhouse to get her children."

There have been many blizzards since that time, but none that claimed as many lives or caused as much loss of livestock. Nowadays, the hazards of a blizzard cannot compare with those of pioneer days. We have better ways of getting through the snow (though even these are not 100 per cent effective), and we have radio weather forecasts which enable us to anticipate storms and take precautions. Even so, Nebraska blizzards are not to be taken lightly.



Photo from R. D. Erdkamp
Main Street looking south (1937)

Drouth

One major hazard in farming country is drouth. The two worst in our history were those of 1893 and 1934; statistics are not infallible, but the 1934 drouth may have been the worst ever. That year very few farmers had any crops at all, and the next year was not much better. But conditions slowly improved, and the land was green once more. Many became discouraged and moved elsewhere; but the pioneer spirit was still present, and most stayed on and kept trying and survived.