

# West Blue Township

West Blue township is located on the northern edge of Fillmore County. It is bounded on the north by York County and on the east by Fairmont, on the south by Geneva and on the west by Grafton townships. It derives its name from the West Blue River, which winds in a northeasterly direction through its northern part. The land is gently rolling, except for some roughness along the river. There are large deposits of sand and gravel, which have been used to surface many of the county's roads. By the end of 1966, a total of 45 irrigation wells had been drilled in the township.

The history of this township is especially interesting, as the first homesteads in the county were located here. In June, 1866, William O. Bussard and William C. Whitaker, natives of Ohio, filed on homestead claims. Mr. Bussard was first and filed on the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 8, T8, R3W of the 6th Principal Meridian. Mr. Whitaker, the second claimant, filed on the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the same section. These men then came onto their claims, making dugouts and shelter for their stock, thus preparing for permanent settlement.

In October, 1866, **Nimrod J. Dixon** filed on the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 6, T8, R3W and his fiancée, Miss Lydia Gilmore, filed on the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the same section. Mr. Dixon selected his land without seeing it. At that time he could homestead 160 acres; but the law was shortly to change so that one person could homestead only 80 acres. As he would not have had time to come and see the land and get back to Nebraska City to file on it before the law changed, he chose his claim and viewed it later.



Photo from Erma Dixon  
Mr. and Mrs. Nimrod J. Dixon

The same season, J. H. Malick and Jacob Werts, both young natives of Ohio, and James Whitaker, twin brother of William, filed on claims, making a total of seven for Fillmore County in the year 1866. All of these claim-holders, fearing the severity of the winter, spent the time until spring farther east, with relatives or friends.

In the spring of 1867, the Whitakers and Mr. Bussard returned to their claims and broke some of the ground, and then went to Missouri to spend the winter of 1867-68 with their families. They returned in the spring, bringing with them their mother, Mrs. Elisha Whitaker, then over 70 years old. She filed on a claim adjoining that of her son William.

On February 28, 1867, after having to go all the way to Nebraska City for the license, Nimrod J. Dixon was married to Miss Lydia Gilmore at the home of her parents in adjacent York County. This was the first marriage in York County. Mr. and Mrs. Dixon then moved onto their claims, where they lived continuously for 40 years.

On October 20, 1868, **Henry L. Badger**, a native of Connecticut, came with his family from Livingston County, Illinois, and settled on the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 2, T8, R3W. Later in the fall, E. L. Martin and L. R. Warner also filed on claims but did not settle on them until the spring of 1869. Only a few settlers were added to the list in 1869, but the year 1871 brought the railroad and with it large numbers of people.

The first settlers dealt with Nebraska City, as that was

the nearest railroad station. Mail was brought by carrier from post office to post office, the offices being in the homes of the settlers. The mail was all carried in one sack and emptied at each post office, where the mail addressed to there was sorted out and the rest put back into the sack to be carried on to the next office for a repeat performance.

E. L. Martin laid out a town on his land and called it Fillmore. He was commissioned postmaster on March 10, 1871, and kept at Fillmore the first post office in the county. In the same year, Henry L. Badger was commissioned postmaster of an office known as West Blue. He kept the office in the dugout for two years and, for some time after that, in his log house, even after the establishment of the post office in Fairmont.

J. E. Porter was the pioneer merchant of the county. He opened a store in Fillmore City on February 10, 1871; but in the fall he moved his store to Fairmont.

On March 15, 1871, Henry L. Badger was appointed registrar of voters for the county by acting Governor W. H. James. He took the oath of office before William Ong, justice of the peace in York County, and proceeded with his duties.

As early in the history of the county as 1868, the little band of settlers along the West Blue River enjoyed religious services. The Rev. Isadore Caldwell, a United Brethren circuit rider, came up the river valley on horseback and preached in the dugouts of the Whitakers, Bussards, and Dixons.

The first marriage license in Fillmore County was issued June 27, 1871, to William C. Whitaker, the first homesteader, and Sabra Brumsey. They were married June 28 by County Judge William H. Blain. The names of Mrs. H. L. Badger and John Whitaker appeared as witnesses. The county judge came from his home some 15 miles away, in Madison township (Sec. 20), and spent the night in the dugout of H. L. Badger, who lived  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the scene of the wedding. Judge Blain borrowed Mr. Badger's coat to perform the ceremony.

The first white boy and girl of Fillmore County were born in West Blue township. They were Arthur Dixon, son of Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Dixon, born on their homestead January 9, 1869, and Emma Whitaker (Mrs. J. K. Hall), daughter of Mrs. and Mrs. James C. Whitaker, born in 1870.



Photo from Erma Dixon  
Arthur Dixon, first white child born in Fillmore County.

In 1872, the board of commissioners decided to divide the county into precincts six miles square. They ordered the following notice to be published in the *Fillmore County Bulletin* for four consecutive weeks, with the date for reorganization set for January 7, 1873: "Notice is hereby

given that on Tuesday the 17th day of December A.D. 1872, the legal voters of the various townships in the County of Fillmore will meet." The voting for West Blue township was at the home of William Whitaker.

In the 1870's, many more homesteaders came. A few of those whose records are available are the following:

**Joseph Carney**, a native of Pennsylvania, was born November 7, 1832. He enlisted for three months in the Pennsylvania State Militia in 1860 but saw no active service. In March, 1872, he came to Fillmore County and took up a homestead on Sec. 32, West Blue township. His first home here was a small frame house in which he and his family lived while he converted the wild land into highly cultivated fields. Mr. Carney and his wife Mary (Mills) had four children, William L., Margaret V., Mary A., and Susie M. Carney.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
Carney home in West Blue township

**J. B. Cory** was born in Wyoming County, New York, August 11, 1839. He came to West Blue township in 1872 and took up a homestead and a timber claim on Sec. 18. In 1881, he married Miss Nancy Sloniger; they had two children, Clara and Perry N. Cory.

**Isaac Eastwood**, a worthy representative of one of the prominent and highly respected pioneer families of West Blue township, was born in Yorkshire, England, December 21, 1855. He was the son of Thomas and Fannie Eastwood. He was reared and educated in his native land and there started to learn the machinist's trade but was forced to abandon this because of his health. In 1872, he accompanied his parents on their emigration to America, where they became residents of Fillmore County. His father homesteaded on the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 12, West Blue township. Their first home was a sod house, replaced some years later by a frame house. In 1882, Mr. Eastwood married Miss Inez Aldrich, who died in February, 1884. He was married again, to Miss Nancy F. Chambers, on March 11, 1886. He served as treasurer of West Blue township for two terms.

**John B. Kauffman**, an honored pioneer and influential citizen of West Blue township, was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, April 28, 1825. He was a son of John and Eliza Kauffman. In 1837 he accompanied the family on their removal to Ohio. At the age of 16, he commenced learning the blacksmith's trade, which he continued to follow in Ohio until April, 1870, when he came here and homesteaded on Sec. 8. He erected a log house upon his land and opened the first blacksmith shop in the county. In exchange for work in the shop, his neighbors broke his land during the first year of his residence here. He followed both blacksmithing and farming, meeting with marked success. There were still some Indians in this region at the time of his arrival, but none were hostile. While in Ohio, Mr. Kauffman was married, on December 31, 1854, to Miss Melissa Whitaker. Four children were born to them: Dora F., Martha I., Nellie E., and Lon S. Kauffman. Mrs. Kauffman died March 8, 1895, and Mr. Kauffman on March 14, 1904.

**John Lindgren** was born in Sweden in 1815. When he reached manhood, he married Christina Swanson, by whom he had five children.

He and his family sailed for the United States in 1868. After six months spent in Harlem, New York, he removed to Princeton, Illinois, where he lived until 1870. The family then came to Fillmore County, taking up a homestead on Sec. 4, West Blue. After constructing a dugout for the accommodation of his family, he began to break sod and improve the land. At the end of seven years, he traded it for 120 acres in the same township, where he made his home until his death on January 26, 1893. His wife died on February 26, 1898.

Elof Lindgren, the only son, owned and operated this farm after the death of his father. On November 24, 1887, he was united in marriage with Josephine A. Kron. He retired early and made his home in Grafton.

**George F. Marsh**, who was born in De Witt County, Illinois, in 1840, saw active duty and was wounded in the Civil War. He settled on Sec. 20 in 1873. Mr. and Mrs. Marsh had nine children: Charlie, John, Mary E., Georgiana, Samuel B., Edward, May B., Julia M., and Eleanor B. Marsh.

In 1872, **John A. Martin** and his wife Mary J. (Larmer) Martin, both natives of Ireland, settled in West Blue township, taking up a 160-acre homestead on the SE  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Sec. 20. The son, John Martin, Jr., lived on Sec. 22. On May 19, 1878, John Martin, Jr., married Miss Missouri Johnson, a daughter of Abraham and Sarah (Eckley) Johnson. Nine children were born to this union: Mabel E., Thomas L., Clara B., Dora A., Clarence L., Hattie E., Allen E., James H., and one who died in infancy.

**Henry E. Oates**, a well-known and prominent agriculturist of Fillmore County, was born March 1, 1839, on the Isle of Man, off the coast of England, and was reared and educated in his native land. In the spring of 1855, he sailed for America. He first located in Chicago, Illinois, where he learned the carpenter's trade. In 1860, he went to Colorado and engaged in mining until the fall of 1862, when he enlisted in Company I, Second Colorado Volunteer Infantry, and was assigned to the Army of the Southwest. He saw a lot of hard service in Missouri, Arkansas, and Indian Territory. At the close of the war he was honorably discharged. He was married to Miss Mary Bermaster, a native of Stark County, Illinois, in 1872. Six children were born to them: Henry, William J., Thomas A., Robert, Oscar, and Harriet J. Oates. In 1883 he came to Nebraska and settled on Sec. 28, West Blue township.



Photo from Frieda Oates  
Henry Oates

My father, **Anson Cary Palmer**, and my mother, Amanda Lewis Palmer, homesteaded on Sec. 14, T8, R3W, West Blue, 2 miles N and 2 miles W of Fairmont. My father, a Civil War veteran, had picked this location in the spring of 1869, and in 1871 brought my mother and my older sister May to Nebraska. The lumber for the house was hauled with ox teams from Lincoln. Part of the house still standing on the property is the original homestead.

A. C. Palmer was fatally injured in an accident at the Fairmont elevator in March, 1885. His widow was left to rear the six children: May Palmer, the oldest, aged 14; Clara Palmer (Beach); Eva Palmer (Reader); Charlene Palmer (Zunuwalt); Earle Palmer; and the youngest, Clarence Palmer. Clarence, the only one of the children to remain on the home-



stead, lived there for 50 years, until he retired. He now lives with his wife Ethel in Fairmont. Their three children were Dorsey Palmer (deceased), Pauline Palmer Hurst, and Joyce Palmer Dean.

—Mrs. Clarence Palmer



Photo from Clarence Palmer  
Hesperin homestead (4 miles from Fairmont) in 1897. Left to right: Mel Millen, Grandma Palmer, Aunt Emma Shuler, Earl Palmer.



Photo from Clarence Palmer  
The A. C. Palmer family. Back row, left to right: Charlene, A. C. Palmer, May. Middle row: Eva, Mrs. Amanda Palmer, Clara. Bottom row: Clarence and Earle.

The Hon. **J. M. Perkins**, son of Joshua and Rebecca Perkins, was born in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, October 3, 1828. On coming west in 1873, he located in Grundy County, Illinois, where he purchased a farm and turned his attention to agricultural pursuits. He made his home there until 1882, when he bought a farm in West Blue township and became a resident of Fillmore County. On December 26, 1882, Mr. Perkins was united in marriage with Miss Mary Blake, a native of Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. In 1888, he was elected supervisor of West Blue township and served in this office for seven years. He was elected to the lower house of the State Legislature in 1895 and filled that position for one term with credit to himself and his constituents; during his term, he was a member of the Committee on Agriculture, Cities, and Villages. Mr. and Mrs. Perkins had 11 children: George A., Harvey G., Charles W., John A., Edward D., Alexander R., and Frank B. Perkins, and four daughters.



Photos from Mrs. Harry Perkins  
Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Perkins

The following history of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 34, West Blue, was written by Ora A. Robbins, the present owner and resident since birth:

In 1874, my father, **Fernando F. Robbins**, a Civil War veteran of 1861 to 1865, his wife, a daughter, and a son migrated from the state of New York and settled on this place. He bought out a homesteader's right and proved up on the claim. The patent, No. 10,078, was issued November 1, 1881, and was signed by President Chester A. Arthur.

The only incumbrance ever on the place was a mortgage for \$600, dated February 18, 1879. It was released January 22, 1880.

The only improvement on the place at the time my folks arrived was a dugout (if it may be called an improvement). It was just a hole in the ground for the tenant to live in, along with his wife and one young child. He was a lawyer by profession.

Going back to my folks, the daughter mentioned above, Carrie E., was born November 17, 1869. She is now Mrs. Carrie Avery who lives in the north side of Fairmont. The son, Earl D., died the year they came out here. He was one year and one day old and is buried on this place. The grave is marked by a large evergreen tree.

As to myself, I was born January 2, 1876, and have been a continual resident on this farm since. Nearly all of my schooling was at District 11, one mile west of here. I served on this school board for 33 years.



Photo from O. A. Robbins  
Mr. and Mrs. F. F. Robbins (about 1920)

In 1905, I was married to Miss Berneice Nichols. In 1906, we built a house just across the driveway from my folks. The house was 16' x 28', one and three-quarters stories. I continued farming the quarter.

Two daughters were born to us. Florence M. was born on May 7, 1908, and Hazel B. was born June 6, 1913. Both daughters followed the schoolteaching profession. For six years Florence taught in Districts 81, 11, and 3 in Fillmore County. In 1931, she married Everett Nichols and now lives 2 miles S of here. They have two boys, Gene and Marvin. Both have served their time in the Army—Gene, overseas in Korea, and Marvin, in three different training camps.

Hazel taught in Districts 3, 12 and 29. While teaching in District 29, she contracted scarlet fever from one of her pupils and died in 1936.

I was in school on the day of that memorable blizzard of January 12, 1888.

My mother died in 1923 and my father in 1926.

In my father's will, this quarter was left to me. I was appointed administrator of his estate. After the death of my parents, we wrecked most of my folks' house, dug a full basement 28' x 36', moved my house over to the basement and built to it a completely modern house. We installed a 10,000-gallon cistern for soft water, with the water under automatic electric pressure. All this project was practically done by our own labor. Laying up the basement walls, plumbing, wiring, painting, plastering, were the jobs hired.

We both belong to the Rebekah Lodge. I have been a member of the Fairmont Odd Fellows lodge for over 55 years, and was its secretary for 16½ years. We both belong to the Methodist Church.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
Mr. and Mrs. William E. Smith

In February, 1878, **W. E. Smith** left Berkshire County, Massachusetts, where he had been born and reared, and came straight to Nebraska, buying in New York a ticket to Lincoln. He was then 24 years old. Soon after landing here, he bought SE ¼ of Sec. 10 from Isaac N. Dille. Mr. Dille had homesteaded and broken 20 acres, but, as his wife did not like the county, they had gone back to Iowa. Mr. Smith built up the farm and fed quite a number of cattle and hogs. He served three terms as county supervisor. Three children, Harry Leah, and Ethel, were born here and graduated from the Fairmont High School. Harry was born on this farm on February 1, 1882, and lived there until he sold the farm to Floyd Lott and moved to Fairmont on December 29, 1960. He spent his childhood and married life here except for two years when he worked in Wyoming. He married Ema Haughaout of Fairmont, who was born July 9, 1882, and has always lived in Fillmore County. The couple had two children, Dale and Margaret (Mrs. Francis Nichols).



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
William Smith driving team (about 1900)

Miss Clara Stines, a longtime resident of Fairmont (died September 28, 1964) supplied this account of her father, **Hal P. Stines, Sr.**, and his homestead. After stating that in 1878 Joe Rose bought the NE ¼ of Sec. 28, she continued: "In the spring of 1879, Mr. Stines went to Thompson, Illinois, and while there married Clara E. Rose on June 30, 1879. This is an account of the wedding published in the *Fillmore County Bulletin*:

"Married at the residence of the bride's parents, June 30, 1879, by Rev. Lower, Hal P. Stines of West Blue Precinct, Fillmore County, and Miss Clara E. Rose of Thompson, Carroll County, Illinois.

"The delighted couple arrived in Fairmont on July 11, and proceeded to West Blue, beginning housekeeping at once. Mr. Stines is one of our young and enterprising farmers, who very wisely made up his mind that it is not good for man to be alone. He has taken

Photo from Mrs. Hal P. Stines, Jr.  
Hal P. Stines, Sr., and his grandson making garden in 1918.



unto himself one of the most beautiful and highly prized varieties of Illinois roses and transplanted her to the more genial soil of his beloved Nebraska, where her fragrance will be daily and hourly upon Hal instead of wasted upon desert air."

"The *Bulletin* extends congratulations and wishes them a happy life."

"The next year I (Clara) was born and we lived there until 1886. I still own the farm. We then moved on the SW ¼ of Sec. 16, West Blue township. Father had bought this from the government during Grover Cleveland's first administration. The deed was signed by Cleveland.

"My brother, Hal P. Stines, Jr., was born there and has never lived anywhere else.

"October 9, 1949, a windstorm blew all the buildings down except the house and crib.

"Six children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Hal P. Stines, Sr.: Clara R., Fletcher H., Hilda A., Ruth A., Hal P. Stines, Jr., and two who died in infancy."

**Shelly Stines**, a brother of Hal P. Stines, Sr., was reared in New York. He moved to Iowa in 1866 and farmed there until he came to Nebraska in 1880. After spending one year in York County, he purchased 480 acres of valuable land in West Blue township. He gave special attention to the care and feeding of livestock. In 1898, he erected upon his place, at a cost of \$2,500, one of the best homes in the county. He married Miss Sarah A. Bennett in 1884. Their children were LeRoy, Archie, Amy, Helen, Maude, and Dorothy.

**George W. Swartz** was born in Brant County, Ontario, Canada, on November 9, 1842. His parents, William and Sarah Swartz, were natives of New York and Pennsylvania, respectively, but spent most of their lives in Canada. In 1864, he moved to Livingston County, Illinois, where he made his home for 19 years. On March 27, 1872, he married Miss Elizabeth Rook of Delaware. The children born to this union were Emma (Mrs. L. A. Frederick), William, Harvey J., Clara B., and Olive L. Swartz. Arriving in Fillmore County in 1883, he bought 225 acres of land in Sec. 6, West Blue township. He farmed and improved this land, which has ever since been in the Swartz family. In 1888, he built a large barn which is still in use. The farm is owned today by William Swartz, now living in York.



Photo from William Swartz  
The George Swartz family about 1915. Left to right: Clara, Mrs. Swartz, George Swartz, Olive, and William. Harvey and Emma not pictured.



**J. A. Swartz** was born in Brant County, Ontario, Canada, May 3, 1851. After being educated in the public schools of the Dominion, in 1868 he came to the United States and settled in Illinois. In the spring of 1878, he came to Fairmont, Nebraska, and rented land for one year, after which he purchased a farm on Sec. 5, West Blue township, for \$6 per acre. It was under cultivation, and the first year he raised \$2,000 worth of wheat, which more than paid for the farm. In December, 1875, he married Miss Sarah A. Pearson, a native of Illinois. Seven children were born to them: Carrie L., Ernest, Nellie, Lillian, Carl, Roy, and Jessie.

Some of the earliest industries were milling and lumbering. When the town of Fillmore was laid out by E. L. Martin in 1870 in the valley of the West Blue River, the first post office was established. The pioneer store, which opened February 10, 1871, was run by J. E. Porter, who was also deputy postmaster.

In 1873, C. M. Northrup built the first flouring mill in the county. A notice in the *Bulletin* on April 21, 1873, stated that C. M. Northrup & Company asked the citizens of Fillmore, York, and adjoining counties to assist in building the mill dam, mill race, and mill on Sec. 1, T8, R4W. Mr. Northrup wanted volunteers to bring spade, shovel, pick, axe, wagon and team, or the one thing needful to procure a substitute. He had brought from the East a turbine water wheel, corn mills, a sawmill, and a lath mill, and had made arrangements for all other machinery as soon as needed. The village now contained a mill, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, store, and 50 inhabitants. The mill continued to operate until 1921 or 1922, when it was torn down. L. A. Frederick was the last miller and owner. People from miles around hauled their grain to the mill and took home flour and meal.

The sand and gravel of the Blue River were used extensively in the building of bridges and roads. In the early years, it was hauled from the river beds by wagons and teams. Now, large pits are dug and the gravel is pumped out by machinery into gravel trucks, which carry it off for road and cement work. The large gravel deposits on the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17 were once owned by Herbert Lauber of Geneva. They were for some time the property of the Overland Sand & Gravel Company of Stromsburg, Nebraska. The Nichols Construction Company of Geneva bought the area from Overland on February 16, 1946. It is estimated that the Nichols firm alone has pumped more than 250,000 cubic yards of gravel from these deposits.

The Budler brothers, Bernard and Wayne, in 1935 started a truck garden in the Blue River valley on the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5, raising tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet corn, and potatoes. During World War II, their business particularly thrived, and they used three pick-up trucks to deliver their produce to neighboring towns and to the Fairmont Army Air Base. In 1952, another brother, Louis, took over the business; he continues to raise tomatoes, sweet corn, and cucumbers for sale to people who come out there to get the produce.

The growing of hybrid seed corn is one of the more recent industries in the township. The Lauber Seed Farms purchased the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 9 from the F. S. Ashby estate in 1942. The W. A. Biba Engineering Company then leveled 140 acres, using, for the first time, four new DW-10's, four-wheel tractors and scoops. After leveling, the Lauber Blue Valley Hybrid seed was produced on this land, irrigated from the Blue River. In 1945, the Laubers purchased the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 9—long the property of Isaac Beery, whose only daughter had married a man named Flick—from the Flicks' interest. This quarter had been in hybrid seed corn production, and this use has been continued. A 2,000-bushel ear-corn dryer was built in 1947 when R.E.A. came through this area. In 1955, when the Blue River was very low, a 1,200-gallon deep-well was put down to supplement the river irrigation.

In 1950, a 250-tree orchard, of apple and peach trees, was planted on a 15-acre plot, on a contoured and terraced hillside. But after seven or eight years this operation proved

to be not economically sound; the orchard has been destroyed and the land put back into cultivation.

In 1956, Lauber's Blue Valley Hybrid Milo was grown for the first time; production from the hybrid milos has been very good. Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Smith, the tenants on this farm, have been in charge since this land was first purchased. This 320-acre farm is now owned by the Lauber Seed Company and leased to the Lauber Seed Farms.

In 1953, Roy King purchased the District 1 schoolhouse and used this building as a headquarters for raising bees and selling honey. He keeps more than 3,000 bees, and honey dealers over a large territory purchase his product.

Cattle raising is carried on quite extensively in this township, as the areas around the river banks offer much good pasture. One of the largest cattle feeders in the area is the Nichols Brothers farm, located on the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17 and managed by Mr. and Mrs. Howard Brower.

The history of West Blue township would not be complete without some mention of the landmarks many of us remembered as children but which are now gone. One such landmark was the beautiful cedar trees in the yard of the Ora Robbins farm. Clyde M. Husted, in his article "My Red Wheel and I" (*Nebraska Signal*, September 6, 1901), describes them:



Photo from Ora Robbins

Trees in the Robbins farmyard in 1901

Mr. Robbins' house is well set back from the road on rising ground. In the front yard is planted 30 just common old cedar trees. We may say the trees are "common old cedar trees," but the artistic manner in which Mr. Robbins trims them is very uncommon.

Mr. Robbins is an artist and these trees are said to be as fine as any in the United States unless it be those in the Italian Gardens on the grounds of H. H. Hunnewell at Wellesley College, Massachusetts. The 30 trees are trimmed in 28 different designs. We will mention a few of the designs, but it is impossible to know the beauty of these trees without once seeing them. One is trimmed in the form of a lantern. This is very nice and shows much artistic work. The one most people admire and the one that shows off nicest from the road is trimmed into the form of a gravy dish. We have another trimmed into the form of a wash bowl and pitcher and he is now fitting a watch-dog to stand guard on another. These are fine specimens of what is called topiary work, and add much to the value of the farm. Mr. Robbins has been offered \$25 if he would transplant a single tree to another ground.

Another landmark was the huge cottonwood trees on the Badger homestead. (These are described more fully in the Badger family story.)

The general appearance of the township has changed immensely in the last generation. Most of the roads are now graveled. Farming has changed notably since irrigation. There are now 35 irrigation wells in this township, and the methods of farming have kept up with the times.

There used to be threshing rigs run by steam engines at harvest time. Nowadays, large self-propelled combines can be seen in almost every wheat field. Tractors are getting larger, and have become easier to drive, with power steering, cushioned seats, and even radios to put a little music into the farmer's long outdoor day. He can also keep up with the news, weather, and markets even while out in the field.

When butchering time came in the good old days, several neighbors brought their hogs and had a butchering bee.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
Threshing scene about 1900

They didn't choose bacon-type hogs, but rather the ones that would give them the most lard. Water to scald the hogs was heated in large iron kettles and the hogs were dunked into barrels of scalding water after they had been killed. The scraping was done as they hung from their hind legs from trees. One picture of the time is of a butchering scene at the home of H. I. Mills. Six neighbors were posing with eight large hogs strung up in the trees. All the available dishpans and kettles were brought out to hold livers, hearts, and tongues. The meat was cared for in the home by salt curing or smoking, and in later days, by canning. Now, most farm homes have freezers. The hogs and beef are taken to a butcher, and by the time the farmer sees the meat again it is all wrapped and sharp-frozen, ready for the freezer.

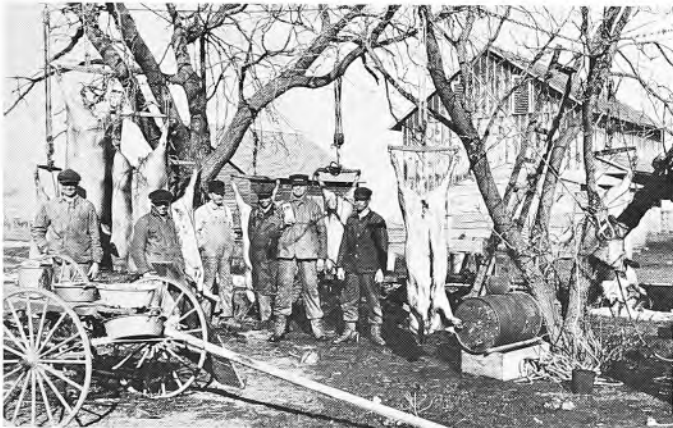


Photo from Ora Robbins  
Butchering at H. I. Mills farm

The coming of R.E.A. made life much easier in the farm homes. Cows are milked by electric milkers, electric motors are used for lifting, and ironing and washing machines are lifesavers for the housewife.

## CHURCHES

No churches were built in West Blue township. However, almost every school district offered the public an opportunity to participate in religious training, as Sunday School and Bible Study classes were held on Sunday afternoons in the schoolhouses. A good many families in each local district could attend these lessons.

The West Blue Aid Society was organized on November 3, 1897. Its first meeting was at the home of Mrs. Jennie Burgess. The officers were: Mrs. Jennie Burgess, president; Mrs. Drenay Farley, vice-president; Mrs. Carrie Smith, secretary; Mrs. Carrie Avery, treasurer; Mrs. Julia Verry and Mrs. Susanna Hall, directors. The dues were five cents per month. Meetings were held in the homes of the members every two weeks.

Their objective was social intercourse and the making of money for the Methodist Church in Fairmont. The finances were gleaned by dues, oyster suppers, evening socials, and ice-cream socials, and was given out by the vote of members

attending meetings. Sometimes the money was used for church furnishings. No definite sums were to be raised, nor were any promises made; the women did the best they could and gladly gave what they could afford.

The members from November 3, 1897, to October 8, 1925, as listed by the secretary's books for that period, were:

Mrs. Susanna Hall	Mrs. Alex Perkins
Anna Hall	Mrs. Valeria Patterson
Mrs. Lenfert	Mrs. Cora Perkins
Maggie Perkins	Mrs. M. Badger Halsey
Mary Calaway	Bertie Spahr
Mrs. John Keller	Mrs. Jennie Foulon
Amanda McCashland	Mrs. Clara Rose Stines
Mrs. L. Bender	Mary Perkins
Anna Swan	Mrs. Julia Verry
Mrs. Charles Perkins	J. F. Little
Mrs. Mary Lashbrook	Mrs. Artie Green
Mrs. W. A. Lewis	Sarah Stines
Mrs. Drenay Farley	Pira Billick
Mrs. Jennie Burgess	Mrs. Ralph Beuch
Mrs. J. T. Bender	Mrs. Flora Bumgarner
Carrie Smith	Mrs. Albro
Jennie Farrar	Alice Moul
Mrs. L. H. Badger	Mrs. E. M. Forbes

The officers in 1967 were: Velma (Mrs. Walter) Moul, president; Mae (Mrs. Otto) Schmidt, vice-president; Ninette (Mrs. Lew) Moul, secretary; and Viola (Mrs. Jake) Lutz, treasurer. At the present date, the West Blue Aid Society is still very active and working for the same aims and purposes as those for which the society was organized, with only a few changes. The officers are elected for a term of one year at the last regular meeting in each December. There are no dues. Meetings were changed from every two weeks to the first and third Wednesday of each month. There is one charter member, Mrs. Carrie Avery.

No community would be complete without some social life. Through the years several different clubs were formed.

In the early 1900's, a group of some 30 young people formed the Jubilee Club, for young couples who were dating. They met in the homes of the members, and their entertainment was chiefly composed of parlor games.



Photo from Ora Robbins  
Jubilee Club in the early 1900's. 1-Orin Harmon, 2-unknown, 3-unknown, 4-Clarence Nichols, 5-Mary Talmadge, 6-Bernice Nichols Robbins, 7-unknown, 8-Hattie Bridgman, 9-Art Lefler, 10-Ida Shoemaker Black, 11- Jessie Nichols, 12-Mason Chapin, 13-unknown, 14-Charles Milner, 16-Nellie Lashbrook Nichols, 17-Maude Swartz Duey, 18-Clara Bear Shoemaker, 19-Hannah Aldrich, 20-Elizabeth Pollock Hutton, 21-unknown, 22-Edgar Nichols, 23-Charles McFadden, 24-Lillie Goodsel Nichols, 25-Fannie Sawyer, 26-Mamie Pollock Camp, 27-Anna Shoemaker, 28-Milt Jolly, 29-Homer Harmon, 30- Ora Robbins, 31-unknown.

The Twentieth Century Club was formed in 1910 by the married women in West Blue and neighboring communities. The purpose of this club was to quilt, sew carpet rags, or do any other similar work the hostess wished to have done.

In the early spring of 1925, a group of ladies met at the home of Mrs. Will Carney for the purpose of organizing a club which took the name of the West Blue Kitchen Club. Mrs. Carney was elected president. On November 17, 1925, the club met at the home of Mrs. Frank Rolfes. Mrs. Will Carney was unanimously elected president; the other officers were Mrs. O. A. Robbins, vice-president; and Mrs. Anna

## West Blue Township Homestead Map

Anson Trius	Peter Tryon			John A. Whitaker	Owen Flin		Henry L. Badger	Wilson Mathews					
Elisha L. Martin				John Howell	N. O. Wenborg		Henry L. Badger						
Lydia Dixon	Nimrod J. Dixon	5		William N. Howell	James B. Whitaker	3	Thomas O'Brien	Arthur C. Clark			4		
				John Lindgren				John Eastwood					
7		Wm. C. Whitaker	Wm. O. Bussard			Lyman R. Jacob F. Warner Laschan- sky	Charles Hubbard			Thomas Eastwood	Martin B. Phillips	Martin B. Phillips	John M. Finn
		Elisha Whitaker	Granville M. Palmer	9		Jacob F. Laschansky	Isaac N. Dille	11		John R. McCashland	Thomas Wykoff		
		John B. Kauffman	Eleanor Palmer			James W. Toland							
Cyrus Wright	George Bussard						Anson C. Palmer	Byron Moffett					
	Jeduthan B. Corey												
Nelson F. Allen	Jeduthan B. Corey	17		16		15							
							Joseph Saylor	Phebe Spade	Isaac Spade				
		William Bosserman	George C. Witter			Heinrich Jonathan Krunsick Hall	Owen L. Shaw			William Spade	Andrew G. Church		
19		Patrick S. Real	John Martin	21		Pyra T. Stines	David J. Tiffany	23		William N. Stewart	Geo. W. Gree		
Benj. T. LaShell	Lucinda Long	John M. Jenkins	John Ash		Henry L. Hickman	Jacob F. Boyer		C. H. M. Masfield	John W. Stewart				
John Shoff		Thomas Henderson		29	Arran W. Chase	George Barrows	27	Nellie Porter	Nellie Porter	James C. Porter		25	
		Ann Taylor											
		Joseph Carney	Joseph Carney	Lewis S. Beall		Henry Schraeden	George Ulsh	Fernando F. Robbins					
31		Wm. P. Craig	John C. Beall		33	Louisa H. Chaplin	James A. Barr		35			36	
		Anna C. Bruce	Wm. A. Stuckey										

Bergstrand, secretary-treasurer. The other members were Mrs. Cal McElvain, Mrs. Ernest Softley, Mrs. Harry Bordner, Mrs. Frank Rolfes, Mrs. Mike Griffin, Mrs. Roy Hull, Mrs. Tina Everetts, Mrs. Alex Ogden, and Mrs. Jim Smith.

On January 19, 1926, it was voted to change the name of the group to the West Blue Designers. New members at this meeting were Mrs. W. D. Smith, Mrs. Ed McCabe, Mrs. Edna Hildebrand, and the Misses Mary and Margaret Schmitz. Five more new members were enrolled on February 5, 1926: Mrs. Charles McMahan, Mrs. Mary McIntyre, Mrs. John Kelch, Mrs. Edgar Nichols, and Mrs. Harry Kelch. In September, 1926, the membership totaled 29. In that year they joined the Federated Club.

Interesting project lessons such as "Making the Living Room Attractive," "Refinishing Furniture," "Landscaping," "Gardening," and many more have been given over the years. Members won many premiums at the Fillmore County Fair for their collective agricultural exhibits and booths displaying project lessons. In 1941, when approved practice sheets

telling how many quarts of fruits and vegetables canned during the year were handed in, Mrs. William Hofferber was the leader, with 840 quarts canned. During 1942-1943, many members did Red Cross knitting and sewing, and made bandages. The club donated home-canned fruits and vegetables to the Henderson Children's Home, and sent printed feed sacks to England.

Club goals for the year 1949 were to promote understanding and prevention of brucellosis and undulant fever, as well as to carry on charity work. The club celebrated its 25th anniversary with an open house at the Legion Hall in Fairmont on October 11, 1950. Over the years, average membership was 22, and the treasury was replenished in a variety of ways. One charter member, Mrs. Ernest Softley, is still (1967) active in the club. The club is now known as the West Blue Extension Club and has 25 members. In 1967 the officers were: Mrs. Ralph Softley, president; Mrs. Howard Miller, vice-president; and Mrs. Clyde Jacobsen, secretary-treasurer.





Photo from Ora Robbins  
20th Century Club, organized in 1910

## SCHOOLS

The first school in Fillmore County was taught in a dugout on the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 12, West Blue, by Mrs. Laura Phillips. She was employed and paid by the people. This school was finally known as District 4. After districts were organized, teachers were hired for a term of three months. If they proved satisfactory, they were contracted for another three months.

West Blue township was divided into five school districts, Nos. 1, 4, 11, 15, and 70.

District No. 1 was composed of Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18. It was organized under the supervision of County Superintendent G. W. Gue on December 4, 1871. He failed to make a record of this, but notified E. L. Martin that the first meeting for the election of school district officers would be held at Mr. Martin's house on December 4, 1871, at 2 P.M. He instructed him to notify every legal voter in the district of the time and place at least five days before the date set for the meeting. On October 11, 1873, on petition of the voters in District 1, the county superintendent shifted Secs. 6 and 7, and the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Sec. 5, to the newly formed District 70.



Photo from Clara Stines  
District No. 1 (date unknown)

County Superintendent John A. Dempster's accounts of visits to District 1 were quoted in the *Fillmore County Bulletin*:

June 26, 1872—Visited school in District No. 1, taught by Miss Elva J. Lewis; 16 pupils present, 18 on the list. Miss Lewis is an experienced teacher of nine terms, and we class her as number one. She is doing well; and labors under the disadvantage of having no apparatus to work with or furniture, not even a desk or chair. House built of logs, dirt roof and with no floor. School in good state of progress.

June 20, 1873—Visited school in District No. 1; W. O. Bussard, director, R. B. Likes, teacher; 18 pupils present, 22 on list. Number studying orthography, 22; reading, 22; grammar, 8; geography, 7; arithmetic, 17; penmanship, 17. School taught in log house 12' x 18' inside; seated with pine seats and desks. No blackboard; order and recitations, good; grade of certificate, second; wages per month, \$30.

Later a frame schoolhouse was built and remained in use until 1925, when a modern two-story building was

erected. Grades from one to ten were taught, and two teachers were hired. Miss Jessie Whitaker and Miss Wilma Whitaker were the first teachers in the new school. In 1934, the ninth and tenth grades were discontinued, and only one teacher was hired after that.

On January 27, 1953, District 1 was dissolved and annexed to District 19. The last teacher was Mrs. Lindell Hawthorn. The schoolhouse was sold to Roy King and is now the headquarters for a thriving honey industry.

Year	Teacher	Months Taught
1872-73	Elva C. Lewis	3
1873-74	E. McCoy	1
1874-75	H. E. Wright	3
1875-76	Belle Fisher	3
1876-77	Fannie M. Bennett	3½
1877-78	Fannie M. Bennett	3
	Lily Beery	3
1878-79	Mary White	3
	Harrison Palmer	3
1879-80	Mary Lyman	3
	William Smith	3
1880-81	F. S. Jacks	3
	H. C. Palmer	4
1881-82	Mary Masters	4
	S. H. Heller	3
1882-83	Marion W. Barrett	3
	Belle Richardson	3
1883-84	Mary Little	7½
	L. P. Goundy	3
1885-86	Ella Bennett	3
	S. C. Cook	4
	Marietta Avery	3
1886-87	Nellie Keith	4
	Mary Avery	3
1887-88	Marietta Avery	8
1892	Nellie Rothwell	
	Bertha Crabb	
1893	L. M. Farrar	
1894	Lottie Bennett	
	William Moul	
1895	Mamie Farrar	
	William F. Moul	
1896	Agnes Keegan	
1897	Agnes Keegan	
1898	Mable Combs	
	Agnes Keegan	
1899	Edythe M. Miles	
	Agnes Keegan	
1900	Edythe M. Miles	
	Agnes Brady	
1901	Agnes Brady	
	Lillian Green	
1902	Lillian Green	
	Mary B. Stanard	
1903	Mary B. Stanard	
	Julia M. Marsh	
1904-05	S. D. Purviance	7½
	Lena Purviance	1½
1905-06	Margaret Seibel	8
1906-07	Margaret Seibel	9
1907-08	Thomas Keenan	9
1908-09	Leah Smith	9
1909-10	Lester Westbrook	
1910-11	Alda Bender	
1911-12	Alda Bender	
1912-13	Closed	
1913-14	Closed	
1914-15	Ruby Severns	
1915-16	Pearl Murphy	
1916-17	Pearl Murphy	
1917-18	Pearl Murphy	
1918-19	Anna Hoarty	
1919-20	Sylvia May	
1920-21	Wilma Whitaker	
1921-22	Ethel Love	
1922-23	Myrle Philson	
1923-24	Myrle Philson	
1924-25	Wilma Whitaker	
1925-26	Jessie Whitaker	
	Wilma Whitaker	
1926-27	Jessie Whitaker	
	Wilma Whitaker	
1927-28	Marjorie Glenn	
	Esther Sughrue	
1928-29		
1929-30	Esther Sughrue	
	Edna Witte	



1930-31 Martha A. Pregge  
Ludmilla Radil  
1931-32 Ethel Moor  
Gladys White  
1932-33 Frances Patten  
Gladys White  
1933-34 Gladys White  
Vlasta Krupicka  
1934-35  
1935-36 Artice Miles  
1936-37 Artice Miles  
1937-38 Rita Griffin  
1938-39 Rita Griffin  
1939-40 Gesine Muchow  
1940-41 Gesine Muchow  
1941-42 Hannah Dwyer  
1942-43 Mrs. Gesine Luethke  
1943-44 Roberta Bermaster  
1944-45 Maxine Lovegrove  
1945-46 Bette Johnson  
1946-47 Bette Johnson  
1947-48 Gesine Luethke  
1948-49 Gesine Luethke  
1949-50 Della Everts  
1950-51 Carolyn Goodrich  
1951-52 Carolyn Goodrich  
1952-53 Mrs. Lindell Hawthorn



Kings Apairy

Photo from Nebraska Signal

#### District No. 4 was one of the earliest in the county.

December 15, 1871

In accordance with a petition handed me by Henry L. Badger for the formation of School District Number 4, Fillmore County, Nebraska, I have set apart the following described sections to constitute that district:

Sections 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, and 12, Town 8, Range 3.

I notified them that the election of district officers would take place at the residence of Henry L. Badger, Saturday, December 30, 1871, at one p.m.

I ordered Mr. Badger to notify every voter in the district five days prior to the election and then indorse on the notice such notification with the dates thereof and hand the same to the chairman of the meeting and he to deliver it to the Director chosen at such meeting and he to record the same at length as a part of the district records.

(Signed) G. W. Gue, County Superintendent.

The district failing to organize at the appointment time by request of Mr. Badger, I extended the time to January 6, 1872.

(Signed) G. W. Gue.

At this meeting, Thomas R. Wychoff was elected moderator, James S. Chamberlin, treasurer, and H. L. Badger, director. No action was taken toward building a schoolhouse in the district until March 24, 1873. The first three months of school was kept by Mrs. Laura A. Phillips at the residence of M. B. Phillips.

On March 24, at a special meeting, it was voted to build a frame schoolhouse, 18 x 26 feet, from proceeds of bonds voted at this time to the amount of \$1,200. The county clerk, however, decided that the bond issue was illegal because of the length of time they were to run. The problem was reconsidered at the annual meeting, April 7, 1873, and it was voted to build a sod schoolhouse instead of a frame one; but wet weather kept this from being built. At another special meeting on July 11, 1873, an issue of bonds to the amount of \$800 was voted, to provide an 18' x 26' frame schoolhouse, with patent seats; this was finished about September 1, 1873. A school was commenced in September by Miss Belle Perry, who taught for six months.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey

District No. 4 pupils about 1900. Left to right: Teacher, George Porter; Fordyce Moul, Earl Forbes, Harry Perkins, Earl Hall, Maggie Shaul, Grace Hall, Oliver Moul, Mable Perkins, Albert Baxter, Goldie Shaul, Mae Brower, Hammond Shaul, Ada Moul, Nellie Perkins, Mary Badger, Mary Forbes.

At the annual meeting, April 7, 1873, J. S. Chamberlin was elected treasurer, and J. R. McCashland, moderator, to serve out the unexpired term of T. R. Wychoff. Every man over 21 was required to work two days building the schoolhouse.

An account of a visit made to District 4 by John A. Dempster, county superintendent, was published in the *Fillmore County Bulletin*:

June 26, P.M., 1872

Visited school in District Number 4. Mrs. Laura A. Phillips, teacher. There were nine pupils present, 12 on the list, nearly all small children and not very far advanced. This is her first term and she appears to be doing well with them. The branches taught, chiefly reading and spelling. School kept in a dugout, not built for the purpose and inconvenient, having no furniture.

The families living in the district when it was organized were those of J. S. Chamberlin, J. W. Smith, H. L. Badger, Wilson Matthews, J. R. McCashland, T. R. Wychoff, and E. L. Warner. On January 27, 1953, this district was dissolved and annexed to District 19. The last teacher was Miss Donna Hienz. The schoolhouse was sold to Tony Lowe, who converted it into a modern dwelling for his son John.

The following records of District No. 11 are from the files in the county superintendent's office:

January 24, 1872

In accordance with a request of a majority of the voters of District 11, I have set apart the following described sections to constitute that district in Fillmore County, Nebraska: Sections 21, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34 and 35.

I informed W. G. Barrows that their meeting for the election of district officers (viz) Moderator, Director and Treasurer would take place at the residence of W. G. Barrows, Wednesday, January 24, 1873.

I instructed him to notify every voter in the district five days previous to the election and endorse on the notice such notification, with the date thereof, and hand it to the chairman of the meeting, who will deliver it to the Director chosen at such meeting, and he will record the same at length as a part of the district records.

(Signed) G. W. Gue, County Superintendent.

Geneva

Fillmore County

June 4, 1878

In accordance with a petition of the majority of the legal voters of School Districts 11 and 16, I have this day set off from District 16, the SE 1/4 of Section 29 to Township 7, Range 3, West to District 11.

(Signed) J. B. Lewis, County Superintendent.

Geneva, Nebraska

December 24, 1886

By virtue of the powers in me vested by the school laws of the State of Nebraska, and in accordance with a petition signed by a majority of those qualified to vote at any school meeting in School Districts 11 and 14 of Fillmore County, Nebraska. I have this day detached from school District 14 and attached to School District 11, the N 1/2 of Section 4, Town 7, Range 3, West.

(Signed) J. B. Sexton, County Superintendent.

An account of a visit to District 11 by John A. Dempster, county superintendent, was printed in the *Bulletin*:

Friday, P.M.

September 27, 1873

Visited school in District Number 11 taught by Mr. George Barrows in his own house; five pupils present, six on the list, all small and not very far advanced. Mr. Barrows informs me that he has taught 22 terms in the Eastern states. Under the circumstances, with small school and inconvenient place, he has not the opportunity to display the ability of a teacher of so much experience.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
District No. 11—last day of school year.

The first frame school was taught by Miss Belle Perry and was known as the "Butterbaugh" school. Ora Robbins has in his possession the boards from above the door of the old schoolhouse, with this name on them.

During the years 1920, 1921, and 1922, Miss Sylvia May taught this school. She was instrumental in starting and organizing the Parent-Teachers Society in the district. Meetings of this group gave occasion for displays of local talent and for hearing well-known guest speakers such as Newton Gaines from the University of Nebraska and L. C. Oberlies of the Telephone Company. At one meeting, the Cotton Blossom Singers, a group of Negroes from Mississippi under the direction of Laurence Jones, was passing through the country and gave a program. All the families from miles around would attend these programs at the school; on such occasions the schoolhouse was always overflowing.

On January 27, 1952, this school was dissolved and annexed to District 19. The last teacher was Mrs. Caroline Stadler of Heartwell, Nebraska.

The following item, written by John A. Anderson, Sr., appeared in the *Nebraska Signal* for May 14, 1953:

This is a farewell sigh to old No. 11!

The beautiful custom and tradition of the community dinner, the last day of school was observed today, and will be no more. The fine palatable viands served by the culinary women experts will tease our appetites at No. 11 no more and the fine sociability of the community by patrons and friends—old and new, that has been enjoyed will move out with the closing of No. 11.

The social hour of the ladies following the dinner, when discussion of the latest in Parisian styles, to chickens and gardens have been enjoyed, is now history. And the ball games in Don Galusha's pasture passed out today. But as usual the men and boys motored to the contest.

The game was, as always, much enjoyed and closely contested and to the credit of good umpiring by Bob Halsey perfect peace and pleasure was enjoyed by all. The presence on both sides of athletic girl players added grace to please the spectators.

The school house in District No. 11 has been the scene of many community activities in the past, such as the P.T.A. for 12 winter seasons, and gatherings in the horse and buggy days. No. 11 has the singular distinction of having one pupil of the primary grade, in the then new schoolhouse of near homestead days still an active and loyal friend of school activities and who has seen groups of A, B, C, pupils of No. 11 as successful teachers.

The school festivities today were in honor of the school and the successful term closed by Mrs. Caroline (Keister) Stadler of Heartwell. The final events here reported are the results of progress intended for betterment of opportunities that can only be found in the good old United States of America.

**District No. 15** was founded in 1872.

January 25, 1872

In accordance with a request of a majority of voters in School District Number 15, I have set apart the following described sections in Fillmore County, Nebraska, to constitute that district:

Sections 13, 14, 15, 22 and 23 in Town 8, Range 3, West.

I notified A. C. Palmer, that meeting for the election of district officers, Moderator, Director and Treasurer would take place at the residence of Mr. J. Saylor's, Thursday, January 25, 1872, at one o'clock, P.M.

I directed him to notify every voter in the district five days previous to the meeting and indorse on the notice such notifications

with the dates thereof and give it to the chairman of the meeting who will deliver such notice to the director chosen and he will record the same at length as a part of the records of the district.

(Signed) G. W. Gue, County Superintendent.

Officers elected at that first meeting were Owen L. Shaw, moderator; Ansen C. Palmer, director; and Joseph Saylor, treasurer.

November 19, 1904

In accordance with a petition signed by a majority of the legal voters of the School Districts Numbers 15 and 19, I have this day set apart from District 15 and annexed to 19, the NE ¼ of Section 13, Town 8, Range 3, West of the 6th Principal Meridian in Fillmore County, Nebraska.

(Signed) Lewis Goodrich, County Superintendent

Recorded by Henry Vauck, County Superintendent.

On January 27, 1953, this school was dissolved and annexed to District 19. Miss Genevieve Elward, now Mrs. Wayne Lefever, was the last teacher.



Photo from Harry W. Smith  
District No. 15. Back row, left to right: Harry Smith, Lottie Bennett (teacher), Clara Stines, Leah Smith, Hilda Stines. Front row: Leroy Stines, Ernest Laschanzky, Amy Stines, Clara Laschanzky, Anna Hartman, Arch Stines, unknown, Gus Laschanzky, unknown.

**District No. 70**, founded in 1873, was another school with a life-span of nearly 80 years.

In accordance with a petition of a majority of the legal voters in School Districts Number 1 and 29, Fillmore County, Nebraska, I have this day set apart the following described territory to constitute District Number 70:

Sections Number 6 and 7 and west ½ of Section 5, Town 8, Range 3, West; also Sections 1 and 12, Town 8, Range 4, West.

I notified Mr. E. L. Martin that the first meeting for the election of a moderator for three years, a director for two years and a treasurer for one year, would be held at Fillmore Post Office in said district on Tuesday, October 21, at two o'clock P.M.

I instructed him to notify every legal voter in said district of the time and place of holding said meeting at least five days before the day above mentioned and indorse on the notice a return showing each notification with the dates thereof and deliver it to the chairman of said meeting who should deliver the same to the director chosen to be recorded as part of the records of said district.

(Signed) John A. Dempster, County Superintendent.

The school was built and operated on Sec. 6 for several years. Then the building was moved to rented land just across the road to the west in Grafton precinct. Here school was held until 1885, at which time a new schoolhouse was erected just south of it on Sec. 1 in Grafton.

The school was in operation until 1952, when it was discontinued and the building sold. Miss Norma Witte was the last teacher.

Date	Name	Months Taught
1873-74	Anna Dilworth	3
1874-75	Anna Dilworth	3
1875-76	Dora Kauffman	3
	R. J. McKnight	4
1876-77	R. J. McKnight	3
	H. C. Palmer	3
1877-78	R. P. B. McKnight	3
	Hattie Palmer	3
1878-79	Hattie E. Ambler	3
	Hattie Palmer	2½

1879-80	William Sheets	3
	Mrs. J. M. Lowry	3 1/4
1880-81	Hattie Ambler	2
	R. J. McKnight	4
1881-82	S. C. Cook	3
	Lillie Hoskinson	3
1883	J. S. Leonard	7
	W. B. Hoskinson	7
1884	T. C. Cook	3
	Ella Bennett	3
1885-86	A. W. Griffin	4
	Nellie Stevens	4
	Kittie Hann	2
1886-87	Willis Moul	4
	Grace McCashland	3
1887-88	Grace McCashland	7
1889-1903	No Record	
1904-05	Julia Marsh	7
1905-06	Julia Marsh	8
1906-07	Elizabeth Heagney	8
1907-08	Elizabeth Heagney	8
1908-09	Elizabeth Heagney	8
1909-10	No Record	—
1910-11	No Record	
1911-12	Ethel Ely	9
1912-13	Josephine Schinzel	9
1913-14	Josephine Schinzel	9
1914-15	Dorothy Pusey	9
1915-16	Ruby Severns	9
1916-17	Clair Hawkins	9
1917-18	Edna Kleinschmidt	9
1918-19	Edna Kleinschmidt	9
1919-20	Grace Jolley	9
1920-21	Gertrude A. O'Brien	9
1921-22	Annetta Saul	9
1922-23	Alyce Real	9
1923-24	Stella Ely	9
1924-25	Stella Ely	9
1925-26	Mabel Whitaker	9
1926-27	Mrs. Mabel Trautman	9
1927-28	Marguerite C. Murray	9
1928-29	Eileen White	9
1929-30	Eileen White	9
1930-31	Gladys White	9
1931-32	Eileen White	9
1932-33	Dorothy Smith	9
1933-34	Nola Smith	9
1934-35	Elaine Anderson	9
1935-36	Elaine Anderson	9
1936-37	Elaine Anderson	9
1937-38	Helen O'Connor	9
1938-39	Helen O'Connor	9
1939-40	Helen O'Connor	9
1940-41	Evelyn Luethke	9
1941-42	Norma Jean Harmon	9
1942-43	Mrs. Will Swartz	9
1943-44	Elizabeth Lutton	9
1944-45	Elizabeth Lutton	9
1945-46	Letha Steiger	9
1946-47	Gladys Finnegan	9
1947-52	Norma Witte	45

## RECOLLECTIONS OF THE WEST BLUE CORNET BAND

FILLMORE COUNTY, NEBRASKA

by Edward David Perkins

Arlington, Virginia

June 1, 1957

Original organization sponsored by F. C. Bennett and Joshua M. Perkins

Date organized — 1883 or 1884

Date disbanded — Probably about 1907

Name — West Blue Cornet Band

First public appearance — Fourth of July celebration at Badger's Grove in 1884—the day Mabel Perkins Baker was born

### Original Members

Name	Instrument Played
Lou Bullock	Tenor Horn
Charlie Bullock	Bass Tuba
Walter Chamberlain	Clarinet
Charlie Chamberlain	Cornet
Harvey Perkins	E Flat Cornet
Charles Perkins	B Bass
Mose Bennett	Cornet
Fred Bennett	B Flat Cornet
Louis Farrar	Alto Horn
Baity (Doc) Farrar	Tenor Horn
Gus Lashansky	Alto Horn
Arthur Curtiss	Baritone Horn
John Moore	Alto Horn
Alpheus Hall	Bass Drum
Otto Elliott	Snare Drum or Horn
HENRY MOORE, leader — (German watchmaker and Jeweler)	

### Members Joining at Later Dates

Edward D. Perkins	B Flat Cornet
John A. Perkins	E Flat Cornet
George Perkins	Tuba
Johnnie Brennan	Trombone
William Walworth	Tenor Trombone
Frank B. Perkins	Baritone Horn
John Hall	Alto Horn
Edson Hall	Snare Drum
Alexander Perkins	Cornet
Chester Perkins	Snare Drum
Frank Finney	Cornet
Emmett Finney	Cornet
John Little	Bass Drum
Ralph Little	Alto Horn
Forest Farrar	Cornet
William Gillin	Tenor Horn
Otto Gillin (leader)	Cornet
Charlie Gillin	Tenor Horn
George Wallen (McCool)	
John Wallen (McCool)	
Ed Reed	Alto and others. Also composed music. A fine musician
Elwood Bender	Cornet
Wes Spencer	Cornet
T. J. Bender (drum' major)	



Photo from William Swartz

This is the building in which the first school was held in District No. 70. William Swartz attended school here in 1883 at the age of 7.



Photo from Ora Robbins

West Blue Cornet Band—perhaps about 1888.





## Members of the Vigilant Society (by townships):

Fairmont		
A. M. Black	F. O. Bridgman	Frank Thompson
M. H. Shoemaker	J. H. Smith	A. W. Reams
A. W. Loomis	W. W. Seeley	Pete Keeler
W. O. Hoffman	L. M. Chapin	M. E. Millin
F. C. Chapin	L. Stieger	George Manley
L. Casburn	A. G. Church	S. W. Bair
I. W. Kelch	Wm. Hodgson	Frank Peterson
T. Shanks	G. D. Salyer	Wint Black
S. Sawyer	C. O. Peterson	E. L. Brown
B. M. Barker	George Aldrich	
West Blue		
Fred Hodgson	S. Dewey	H. Hodgson
W. A. Dewey	C. Milner	E. G. Hall
F. F. Robbins	F. J. Bender	Vick Benway
C. H. Morrison	Charles Aldrich	Andy Magee
John Foster	C. Manley	G. A. Peterson
James Hodgson	M. Perkins	G. A. Perkins
S. M. Cole	J. Carney	J. W. Clark
W. H. Beswick	E. McCabe	Fred Pearson
John Ahrons		
Madison		
G. W. Jackson	A. Huston	B. J. Benedict
W. H. Searles	Giles Hadley	L. P. Loghry
C. O. Wells	J. B. Stoclon	H. Linsley
Peter Smith	Mort Patterson	Phil Smith
D. Pollock	Will Houchin	Ed Maulsberg
J. S. Park	L. Stewart	Harry Brown
T. W. Cable	G. A. Walker	F. L. Blaise
G. G. Wellman	B. A. Merritt	E. Fricke
G. Warner	John Shafer	Henry Cook
W. H. Lapp	W. H. Garrett	C. M. Benedict
John Gibbs		
Geneva		
J. I. Hutchen	W. J. Phinney	John McCabe
W. S. Brown	C. Goodrich	G. W. Fraley
J. M. Ward	G. Redfern	G. Rogers
M. Rodgers	C. Redfern	C. C. Sumway
W. H. Nichols	M. W. Porter	F. N. Ayers
S. Westhaver	H. Rhodes	G. H. Williams
W. B. Hunter	W. Hosack	H. W. Stephenson
J. Morgan	A. D. Fisher	D. Tope
Joe McFadden	F. G. Wellman	M. Pangle
J. Moshier	R. H. Matterson	Ira P. Heath
H. Haggerty	I. J. Heath	C. A. Chesnut
J. A. Brower	W. H. Cooksey	L. Chesnut
D. P. Shibley	J. T. McMayon	Lewis Goodrich
D. B. Ayres	B. B. Ogg	Mrs. Frank Ayres
W. H. Miller	F. Jackson	J. J. Fergerson
A. Richards	D. H. Goodrich	Mrs. L. McFadden
W. F. Brink	J. R. Schofield	

### Pioneer Reminiscences

The following accounts of the Dixon, McCashland, Badger, and Spade families are from *Nebraska Pioneer Reminiscences*, published by the Daughters of the America Revolution in 1916. This first story, of the earliest settlers in the county, is largely in the words of Mr. and Mrs. Dixon.

The first settlement in Fillmore County, Nebraska, was made in 1866 by Nimrod J. Dixon, a native of Pennsylvania. He was married to Lydia Gilmore, who had previously filed on a homestead adjoining his. Mr. and Mrs. Dixon continued to reside on their homestead until they moved to Fairmont, Nebraska, after living on the farm 40 years.

Mr. and Mrs. Dixon were married February 28, 1876, at the home of Mrs. Dixon's father, Elias Gilmore, near Blue Vale. Mr. Dixon got his license at Nebraska City. From that time until the summer of 1868 they were the only settlers in the county, and were seven or eight miles from the nearest neighbor.

In relating her experiences, Mrs. Dixon said: "I was afraid to stay alone; so when Mr. Dixon had to go away, I went with him or my sisters stayed with me. At that time, we had to go to Milford for flour and 25 miles to get a plow-lay sharpened. At such times Mr. Dixon would stay at my father's home near Blue Vale and help them two or three days with their breaking, in return for which one of the boys would come and help him.

"The Indians visited us frequently and I was afraid of them. One time a number of them came and two entered the dugout and asked for flour. We gave them as much as we could spare, but they could see the flour sitting on a bench behind the door and wanted more. We refused, but they became very insistent, so much so that Mr. Dixon grabbed

a black-snake whip that hung on the wall and started toward them. This show of resistance was all that was necessary. It proved to the Indians that Mr. Dixon was not afraid of them, so they gave him powder and shot to regain his friendship.

"An Indian came in one day and gave me a lot of beads, then he wanted flour, which we gave him. He took it and held it out to me saying, 'Squaw cook it, squaw cook it!' This I refused to do, so he said, 'Give me the beads, give me the beads.'

"My baby, Arthur, born January 9, 1869, was the first white child born in Fillmore County. I recall one time that I was home alone with the baby. An Indian came in and handed me a paper that said he had lost a pony. I assured him that we had seen nothing of the pony. He saw a new butcher knife that was lying on the table, picked it up, and finally drew out his old knife and held it toward me saying, 'Swap, swap!' I said, 'Yes,' so he went away with my good knife.

"The worst fright I ever did have was not from Indians. My sister Minnie was with me and we were out of salt. Mr. Dixon said he would go across the river to Whitaker's and borrow some. We thought that he wouldn't be gone long so we stayed at home. While he was away, a cloud came up and it began to rain. I never did see it rain harder. The river raised, and the water in the ravine in front of the dugout came nearly to the door. The roof leaked so we were nearly as wet indoors as we would have been out. The rain began about four o'clock in the afternoon. It grew dark and Mr. Dixon did not return. We thought that he would certainly be drowned in trying to cross the river. While we were in this state of suspense, the door burst open and a half-clad woman rushed in, saying, 'Don't let me scare you to death.' I was never so frightened in my life, and it was some time before I recognized her as my neighbor, Mrs. Fairbanks.

"Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks had gone to Whitaker's who were coopers, to get some barrels fixed for sorghum, and left the children at home. When it rained, they thought they must try to cross the river and get to their children. Mr. Dixon came with them. At first they tried to ride horses across, but the one Mrs. Fairbanks was riding refused to swim, and threw her into the water, so she had to swim back. They were all excellent swimmers, so they started again in a wagon box which those on land tried to guide by means of a line. With the aid of the wagon box and by swimming they succeeded in getting across. That was in the fall of 1869.

"The only time I ever saw a buffalo skinned was when a big herd stayed a week or more on the south side of the river. Kate Bussard and I stood on the top of the dugout and watched the chase, and after they killed one we went nearer and watched them skin it."

Mr. Dixon took his claim without seeing it. In October, 1866, he went to the land office and learned that he could then take a homestead of 160 acres, but the new law would soon go into effect providing that settlers could only homestead 80 acres. Mr. Dixon was afraid he could not go and see the claim and get back to Nebraska City and file on it



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
The second "Badger Bridge"—the first bridge to be built by the county.



in time to get 160 acres. In telling about it, Mr. Dixon said, "I thought it would, indeed, be a poor quarter-section that would not have 80 acres of farm land, so I took my chances.

"In the year 1868, the first year that we had any crops planted, it almost forgot to rain at all. The barley was so short that it fell through the cradle. There were no bridges so we had to ford the river. It was hard to haul much of a load across because the wagon would cut into the mud on the two banks while the sandy river bottom would stand a pretty good load. That difficulty I overcame by making bundles or sheaves of willow poles and placing them at the two banks and covering them with sand. Later the settlers made a bridge across the river near the homestead of H. L. Badger. This has ever since been known as the 'Badger Bridge.' The first bridge was made of logs which we procured along the river.

"I was making a hayrack of willow poles at the time of the total eclipse of the sun. It began to grow dark, the chickens went to roost, and it seemed that night was coming on.

"The year 1869 was rainy and we raised good crops and fine potatoes that season. That was the year they were driving Texas cattle up to eat the northern grass and then ship them east over the Union Pacific Railroad. The cattle stampeded, so they lost many of them and we saw them around for a year or more.

"My first buffalo hunt was in 1867. The country seemed to be covered with great herds and the Indians were hunting them. Twenty of us started out with five wagons. There were Jake and Boss Gilmore, Jim Johnson, and myself in one wagon. We had only about three days' supplies with us, expecting to get buffalo before these were exhausted, but the Indians were ahead of us and kept the buffalo out of our range. Our party crossed the Little Blue at Deweese. Beyond there we found carcasses of buffalo and a fire where the Indians had burned out a ranch. Realizing that it was necessary for us to take precautions, we chose Colonel Bifkin our leader and decided to strike another trail and thus avoid the Indians if possible. We traveled toward the Republican River but found no track of either buffalo or Indians, so we turned around and followed the Indians. By that time our food supply was exhausted, but by good luck we shot two wild turkeys.

"We were soon following the Indians so closely that we ate dinner where they ate breakfast, and by night we were almost in sight of them. We thought it best to put out a guard at night. My station was under a cottonwood tree near a foot-log that crossed a branch of the Little Blue. I was to be relieved at 11 o'clock. I heard something coming on the foot-log. I listened and watched but it was so dark that I could see nothing, but could hear it coming closer; so I shot and heard something drop. Colonel Bifkin, who was near, coming to relieve me, asked what I was shooting at. 'I don't know, perhaps an Indian; it dropped,' I replied. We looked and found merely a coon, but it did good service as wagon grease, for we had forgotten that very necessary article.

"The Indians kept the main herd ahead of them so we were only able to see a few buffalo that had strayed away. We went farther west and got two or three and then went into camp on the Little Blue. We always left a guard at camp and all of the fun came when Boss Gilmore and I were on guard so we missed it. The others rounded up and killed about 20 buffalo. One fell over the bluff into the river and it fell to our lot to get it out and skin it, but by the time we got it out the meat had spoiled. The water there was so full of alkali that we could not drink it, and neither could the horses, so we started back, struck the freight road and followed it until we came to Deep Well Ranch on the Platte bottom. We had driven without stopping from ten o'clock in the forenoon till two o'clock in the morning. We lay down and slept then, but I was awakened early by chickens crowing. I roused the others of our party and we went in search of something to eat. It had been eight days since we had had any bread and I was never so bread-hungry as then. We came to the Martin home about three miles west of Grand Island and although we could not

buy bread, the girls baked biscuits for us and I ate 11 biscuits. That was the home of the two Martin boys who were pinned together by an arrow that the Indians shot through both of them while riding on one pony.

"That morning I saw the first construction train that came into Grand Island over the Union Pacific Railroad. If I remember correctly it was in November, 1867.

We took home with us five wagonloads of buffalo meat. I did not keep any of the hides because I could not get them tanned. Mr. Gilmore got Indian women to tan a hide for him by giving them sugar and flour. They would keep asking for it and finally got all that was coming to them before the hide was done, so they quit tanning, and Mr. Gilmore had to keep baiting them by giving them some more sugar and flour in order to get it done."

Mr. and Mrs. Dixon had eight children. Loyd Dixon, the youngest son, and his wife, still own the original homestead, but reside in Fairmont, Nebraska.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
The Winberg Homestead, S  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 4, West Blue township  
—taken in 1905. Center: Mr. and Mrs. August Winberg; holding horse,  
Harry Winberg.

### Pioneering in Fillmore County

by John R. McCashland

In the fall of 1870, with Mrs. McCashland and two children, Addie and Sammy, I left Livingston County, Illinois, and drove to Fillmore County, Nebraska. We started with two wagons and teams. I had three good horses and one old plug. I drove one team and had a man drive the other until I became indignant because he abused the horses and let him go. Mrs. McCashland drove the second team the rest of the way.

A family of neighbors, Thomas Roe's, were going west at the same time, so we were together throughout the journey until we got lost in the western part of Iowa. The road forked and we were so far behind we did not see which way Roe turned and so went the other way. It rained that night and a dog ate our supplies so we were forced to procure food from a settler. We found the Roe family the next evening just before we crossed the Missouri River, October 15, 1870.

East of Lincoln we met a prairie schooner and team of oxen. An old lady came ahead and said to us, "Go back, good friends, go back!" When questioned about how long she had lived here, she said, "I've wintered here and I've summered here, and God knows I've been here long enough."

When Mrs. McCashland saw the first dugout that she had ever seen, she cried. It did not seem that she could bear to live in a place like that. It looked like merely a hole in the ground.

We finally reached the settlement in Fillmore County and lived in a dugout with two other families until I could build a dugout that we could live in through the winter. That done, I picked out my claim and went to Lincoln to file on it and bought lumber for a door and for window frames.

I looked the claim over, chose the site for buildings, and when home drew the plans of where I wanted the house, stable, well, etc., on the dirt hearth for Mrs. McCashland to see. She felt so bad because she had to live in such a place that I gave it up and went to the West Blue River, which was near, felled trees, and with the help of other settlers hewed them into logs and erected a log house on the homestead.



While living in the dugout, Indian women visited Mrs. McCashland and wanted to trade her a papoose for her quilts. When she refused, they wanted her to give them the quilts.

I had just \$42 when we reached Fillmore County, and to look back now one would hardly think it possible to live as long as we did on \$42. There were times that we had nothing but meal to eat and many days we sent the children to school with only bread for lunch.

I was a Civil War Veteran, which fact entitled me to a homestead of 160 acres. I still own that homestead, which is farmed by my son. After visiting in the East a few years ago, I decided that I would not trade my quarter-section in Fillmore County for several times that much eastern land.

### The Badger Family

Lewis H. Badger drove with his parents, Henry L. and Mary A. Badger, from their home in Livingston County, Illinois, to Fillmore County, Nebraska. They had a covered emigrant wagon and a buggy tied behind. Lewis was 12 years old October 5, 1868, the day they crossed the Missouri River at Nebraska City, the nearest railroad station to their future home.

The family stayed with friends near Saltillo while H. L. Badger came on with the horse and buggy and picked out his claim on the north side of Fillmore County, it being the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 2, T8, R3W of the 6th principal meridian.

At that time the claims were taken near the river in order that water might be obtained more easily, and also to be near the railroad which had been surveyed and staked out in the southern edge of York County near the West Blue River.

The Badger family came on to Lincoln, then a mere village, and stopped there. They bought a log chain, and lumber for a door; the window frames were hewed from logs. When they reached the claim, they did not know where to ford the river so they went on farther west to Whitaker's and stayed all night. There they forded the river and came on to the claim the next morning, October 20, 1868. There they camped while Mr. Badger made a dugout in the banks of the West Blue River, where the family lived for more than two years. The hollow in the ground made by this dugout can still be seen.

In 1870, H. L. Badger kept the post office in the dugout. He received his commission from Postmaster General Creswell. The post office was known as West Blue. About the same time, E. L. Martin was appointed postmaster at Fillmore. Those were the first post offices in Fillmore County. Before that time the settlers got their mail at McFadden in York County. Mr. Badger kept the post office for some time after moving into the log house and after the establishment of the post office at Fairmont.

In 1867 the Indians were all on reservations but by permission of the agents were allowed to go on hunting trips. If they made trouble for the settlers they were taken back to the reservations. While the Badgers were living in the dugout a party of about 1,000 Omaha Indians came up the river on a hunting trip. Some of their ponies got away and ate some corn belonging to a man named Dean, who lived farther down the river. The man loved trouble and decided to report them to the agent. The Indians were afraid of being sent back to the reservations, so the chief, Prairie Chicken, his

brother, Sammy White, and 17 of the other Indians came into the dugout and asked Mr. Badger to write a letter to the agent for them stating their side of the case. This he did and read it to Sammy White, the interpreter, who translated it for the other 18. It proved satisfactory to both Indians and agent.

In August, 1869, while Mr. Badger was away helping a family named Whitaker, who lived up the river, to do some breaking, the son, Lewis, walked to where his father was at work, leaving Mrs. Badger at home alone with her four-year-old daughter. About four o'clock it began to rain very hard and continued all night. The river raised until the water came within 18 inches of the dugout door. The roof leaked so that it was almost as wet inside as out. Mr. Badger and Lewis stayed at the Whitaker dugout. They fixed the canvas that had been the cover of the wagon over the bed to keep Grandmother Whitaker dry and the others sat by the stove and tried to keep warm, but could not. The next morning the men paddled down the river to the Badger dugout in a wagon box. The wagon box was a product of their own making and was all wood, so it served the purpose of a boat.

It should be explained that the reason the roofs of the dugouts and log houses leaked was because of the material used in their construction. Shingles were out of the question to these settlers of small means living 100 miles from the railroad. There were plenty of trees near the river, so the settlers hewed out logs for ridge poles, then placed willow poles and brush across for a support. On top of that they put dirt and sod. When it rained the water naturally soaked through. The roof would leak for several days after a big rain.

The next dwelling place of the Badger family was a log house built on the south half of the quarter-section. For some time, they lived in the log house and kept their stock in the dugout stable on the river bank. Thus they were living during the great April storm of 1873, which lasted for three days. All the draws and ravines, even the river, were packed full of snow that was solid enough to hold a man up. There was very little snow on the level, it all being in drifts in the low places. The Badgers had a corn field between the log house and the river. While the storm raged, Lewis wrapped himself in a blanket, and by following the rows of corn made his way to the dugout stable and fed the horses once each day. It was impossible to give them water.

Henry L. Badger was commissioned by Governor Butler the first notary public in Fillmore County. Later he was appointed, by Acting Governor James, registrar of voters for the election to be held April 21, 1871, to elect officers for the new county. At that election he was elected both county clerk and county surveyor.

In the late sixties when the county was first settled, the country abounded in buffalo, deer, antelope, elk, prairie chickens, wild geese, ducks, and turkeys. The muddy stream known as the West Blue River was clear and the fish found in it were not of the same variety as those caught now. Wild plums grew in abundance along the river bank and were much larger and of finer quality than the wild plums of today. In those days glass jars for canning were not as plentiful as now, so they picked the plums late in the fall, put them in a barrel and poured water over them and kept them for winter use.

Lewis Badger tells of going on buffalo hunts with his father and seeing herds of thousands of the big animals, and driving for ten hours through the herd.

In early days the settlers did lots of trapping. The Indians were frequent visitors and one time an Indian went with Mr. Badger and his son to look at their traps. In one trap they found a mink. Mr. Badger remarked that they got a mink in that same trap the day before. The Indian said, "Him lucky trap." The Indian would not steal, but he wanted the lucky trap, so the next day that trap was gone and another in its place. The Indian seemed to get the best of the bargain, for it is a fact that they never caught a thing in the trap he left.

Although most painfully familiar to every early settler,



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
The Badger farm in 1897. Left to right: Lewis H. Badger, Mary Badger, Mrs. Charles Weis, Charles Weis, Mrs. Minnie Badger.

no pioneer story is complete without the grasshoppers. They came in herds and droves and ate every green thing. For days great clouds of them passed over. The next year they hatched out in great numbers and flew away without hurting anything. Mr. Badger had a nice young orchard that he had planted and tended. The grasshoppers ate the leaves off the trees and as it was early in August they leafed out again and were frozen so they died. Snakes feasted on the grasshoppers.

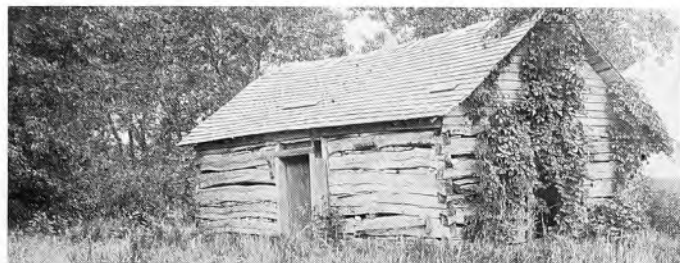


Photo from Mary Badger Halsey

The log house built on the Badger homestead about 1873.

After seeing a garter snake at that time just as full of grasshoppers as it could possibly be, Lewis Badger never killed a snake or permitted one to be killed on his farm. Many people asked for and received the so-called "aid for grasshopper sufferers." In this section of the county it seemed absolutely unnecessary, as there had been harvested a good crop of wheat, previous to the coming of the hoppers.

In 1871, the railroad was built through the county. That season Lewis Badger sold watermelons, that he had raised, to the construction gang at work on the road. The town of Fairmont was started the same year. In those days the settlers would walk to town. It was nothing unusual for Mr. and Mrs. Badger and Lewis to walk to Fairmont, a distance of six miles.

When the Badger family settled on their claim, they planted a row of cottonwood trees around it. These trees made a wonderful growth. In 1911 part of them were sawed into lumber. There were two especially large cottonwood trees on the farm. One measured 26 feet in circumference at the base and 19 feet around five feet above the ground and ran up 40 feet before it began to branch out. The other was 33 feet around the base but branched into three trees four feet above the ground.

Mrs. H. L. Badger died January 11, 1894, and Mr. Badger July 21, 1905. Mrs. Mary Badger Halsey and son still live on the original homestead.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey

Threshing machine working on the H. L. Badger homestead about 1897. At far right: Lewis H. Badger standing by one of the freight wagons used to haul freight from Fairmont to Geneva before the railroad came to Geneva. This wagon is now in the "House of Yesterday" at Hastings, made over into a "Conestoga" wagon.

### Fillmore County in the Seventies

by William Spade (written in 1915)

We came to Nebraska in October of 1870 by wagon and wintered a mile east of what is now the Red Lion Mill. We made several trips to Lincoln during the fall and winter and one to Nebraska City, where brother Dan and I shucked corn for a farmer for a dollar a day with team.

I moved on the William Bussard claim, later the Elov Lindgren farm, in March 1871, and raised a crop, then moved on our homestead in Sec. 24, T8, R3W. We built part dugout and part sodup for a house and slept in it the first night with only the blue sky for a roof. This was in October, and

we lived in this dugout until 1874, then built a sod house.

In April, 1873, we had a three days' snow storm called a blizzard. In the spring of 1871, I attended the election for the organization of the County of Fillmore.

I followed farming as an occupation and in the fall of 1872 William Howell and I bought a threshing machine, which we ran for four seasons. Some of the accounts were never paid.

Our lodging place generally was the straw stack or under the machine and our teams were tied to a wagon, but the meals we got were good. Aside from farming and threshing, I put in some of the time at carpentry, walking sometimes six miles back and forth, night and morning.

In July or August, 1874, we had a visit from the grasshoppers, the like of which had never been seen before nor since. They came in black clouds and dropped down by the bushel and ate every green thing on earth and some things in the earth. We had visits from the Indians, too, but they mostly wanted "hogy" meat or something to fill their empty stomachs. Well, I said we built a sodup of two rooms with a board floor and three windows and two doors, plastered with Nebraska mud. We thought it a palace, for some time, and were comfortable.

In June, 1877, I took a foolish notion to make a fortune and in company with 10 others, supplied with six months' provisions, started for the Black Hills. We drove ox teams and were nearly all summer on the road; at least we did not reach the mining places till August. In the meantime the water had played out in the placer mining district so there was "nothing doing." We prospected for quartz but that did not pan out satisfactorily, so we traded our grub that we did not need for gold dust and returned to our homes no richer than when we left. However, we had all the fresh venison we could use both coming and going, besides seeing a good many Indians and lots of wild country that now is mostly settled up.

### Pioneering in Fillmore County

The following account was written by Ella Louise Bennett Waring (Mrs. John K. Waring) of Geneva in 1911:

The first real settlement in our county was in 1864, when William Bussard and William Whitaker entered homestead claims on the Blue River in the northern part of the county. At about this time a few families located on Turkey Creek. These, however, were not destined to remain alone for long, for in the early '70's there was a "grand rush." C. H. Bane and J. W. Eller, attorneys, G. A. Hart and C. H. King, physicians, and E. R. Spear, the first minister, arrived about this time.

J. E. Porter, merchant, Nimrod Dixon, a farmer, and E. L. Martin founded a town called Fillmore City on the present site of Fillmore Mills. Its history begins in 1870. In the fall of 1871, when the B. & M. Railroad was completed through the county 4½ miles S of the Fillmore Mills, the merchant J. E. Porter moved away and there was soon nothing left of the town.

In 1871, steps were taken to secure a county organization, for we were attached to Saline County and existed only in name. Acting Governor William H. James issued a proclamation ordering an election to select officers and locate a county seat. This election was held at the home of Nathaniel McCalla on Turkey Creek; there were 81 votes cast. In 1872, work was begun on a county building; the jail was built first, then the courthouse.

The different parts of our county were settled by different nationalities with their different ideals and characteristics. Liberty precinct was a Bohemian settlement, Momence a German, and in the southwest were our Swedish people. However, the first settlers took up the north end of the county and were from the eastern and middle states: Massachusetts, Maine, New York, and Ohio. These people also settled around Fairmont and Geneva. As my father brought his family here very early, I will tell you something about these settlers and their ideals as they appear to me, and I shall give the little incidents as I remember them and thus you must draw your



own conclusions as to their ideals and their part in making our county what it is today.

My father, hearing in 1873 of the rich soil and fine climatic conditions, determined to investigate the opportunities in the Far West. When the War of the Rebellion closed, thousands of men returned to their homes and civil life. Many found their places filled, their businesses either decayed or ruined; some were unsettled by their terrible experiences and were unable to go on with their former occupations, others did not care to do so. Naturally they hurried toward the then "Great American Desert."

The government had passed the Homestead Act, giving special privileges and inducements to the returning soldiers and had granted large tracts of land to the Union Pacific, and later to other railroads, for building railways. Every other section of land in our county for a distance of 10 miles on either side of the proposed railroad was set aside for this purpose, except for Secs. 16 and 36, which were reserved to provide funds for school purposes. In the early '70's many ambitious young men from the Eastern states got together a few household articles, loaded the prairie schooner, and, with their wives, started out to make a home on this government land. You are familiar with the slogan "Nebraska or bust" painted on the white canvas—and, in common parlance, a great many of them were indeed busted when they reached their destination.

When we came from our eastern home among the Berkshire Hills, this country was a limitless expanse of blue sky and green earth, and here and there a darker green where they told us trees were planted and somewhere in those shadows someone had built a hut or dug a place in the ground and put huge timbers over it. The logs were drawn from the Blue River and then piled with brush, and dirt was shoveled over this, and it sheltered them. The only home these people had, their children were born in; they lived here for a few years, for most of the early settlers were very poor, often burning buffalo chips for fuel and cooking the insipid wild beans for food. They were so poor, in fact, that in 1874, the grasshopper year, aid societies were formed in the East and many were thus tided over until a crop could be planted and harvested. Long trains of white-capped wagons drawn by thin, weak horses contained discouraged settlers and their families going East (if only to Iowa or Illinois) to spend the winter.

In the spring of 1875, long trains of prairie schooners traveled westward, and this year a bountiful harvest rewarded their labors; but rains, hard and continual, set in as the grain was being harvested. Much of it was completely spoiled or so much injured that the bread made from the flour was black and musty and almost impossible to eat.

In spite of all this, the courage of these people did not fail, and in 1876 there was another bounteous harvest. I remember the shocks of wheat that stood out like huge houses in a town on the open prairie. We had sod corn the men had planted on new-broken land; tall, straight stalks grew up and large, fat ears were harvested that fall.

I wish I could describe some of the early settlers as I remember them: J. E. Porter, E. L. Martin, and Nimrod Dixon, as well as the first white woman I remember well, Mrs. E. A. Whitaker, who was over 70 years of age.

My sister taught in the first log schoolhouse in District 1 and boarded with Granny Palmer, who lived in a dugout on the side of a cliff on the Blue River. The furniture in her home consisted of a small cookstove, one chair, two or three small boxes, and a homemade table and bed. She must have had a skillet and a few dishes, but that is all I remember. She always wore a huge, dark, slat sunbonnet and smoked a cob pipe.

Then there was an old man, Warner, who lived in a dugout near the Whitakers on the Blue, a small, energetic man, a minister of the gospel from Vermont, but a man with such a strong temper that he was a terror for miles around. The Indians were his only friends. They camped and fished on his land spring and fall for a few weeks each year, for the agent of the Omaha Reservation still let them. They were forbidden

to beg, but it was not an uncommon thing to see a pony silhouetted against the sky. We would know it was an Indian by the pony's peculiar gait, halfway between a trot and a gallop. Father would always give them things, food or clothes, and sometimes they would nod and grunt and shake hands all around and sometimes, like agents of later days, they would fling away with sullen glances. They were dressed in blankets, moccasins, and long strings of beads. The huge rings that dangled were always topics of conversation among us children for days after such visits. And sometimes we would visit their encampment, their dirty round tents with poles protruding from the top, and dirty children. There were fat, sleek ponies which the Indian boys rode or drove to the running water to drink. The squaws were cooking over open fires or caring for their babies, and many buffalo robes hung around the camp.

A half-mile west of us was a small board house with a tiny barn and with trees planted all around. Mr. Shaw lived here with his family. We always called him Mr. Shaw. To me, he was an old man in his rusty, baggy suit of black, dressed so differently from the neighbor men. Although he was only 30, we never saw him working in the field; but at every baptism, picnic, circus, or meeting that came along, Mr. Shaw—with his young wife, her name was Rilley, always with a baby in her arms—would start out early for the celebration. The wife was neatly clad and also the three little girls, sitting on a board behind their parents in the wobbly lumber wagon drawn by two sorrel horses. The little girls had bright hair ribbons and hats, neat dresses, and whole shoes and stockings, for Mr. Shaw was one of the very few to receive a pension. One day a man of national repute was going to make a short stop in Fairmont and all the countryside turned out. I remember Mr. Shaw well that day, looking old and bent, carrying a faded flag that the fierce breeze nearly whipped from his hands. There were grouped together young, tall, stalwart men who marched up to pay their respects to the great man in the car. In a few years Mr. Shaw moved away. Where he went or what became of his family we never knew, but the land he homesteaded, although now owned by strangers, is still known as the Shaw land.

There were the Halls, Ohio people, who had located on a homestead four years before we came. Their two-room sod house was neat and comfortable. Their land was surrounded by hedges of cottonwood, honey locust, and box elder. The many-paned windows were filled with bright, blooming flowers, in both winter and summer. Their home was surrounded by trees and shrubs. We used to buy milk, butter, and eggs there, and Mrs. Hall was neat, capable, and thrifty.

The Crumsick family lived a half-mile farther on. They lived in a half-frame and half-dugout house. Not a tree or flower brightened the life of the little woman who worked like a man by her husband's side. Great barns soon loomed up on their farm, and they raised cattle and hogs, but not a tree or shrub did they ever plant. They lived unto themselves, never attended church or Sunday School, and, like Mr. Shaw, moved away.

[Apparently Mrs. Waring attempted to write a full narrative history of her family's settlement in West Blue. There is, at this distance, no way of knowing whether the following is part of a longer manuscript, part now missing, or whether it represents as far as she got with the story. However, we reprint it in full, as we have it, for the sharpness of detail and of its feeling for the pioneer life, which undoubtedly reflects the experiences of many.]

In 1875, H. L. Badger and other settlers along the Blue sold father a section of land in West Blue precinct. Returning to Massachusetts, he chartered a car and loaded furniture, lumber, and such other things as he thought could be used in the new home, as there was not a tree or shrub on the whole 640 acres. But glowing indeed was the description of the prospects in store for us in this country with its wonderful climate and black rich soil, so different from the worn-out farms in New England. I think now he must have read Washington Irving's "Prairies" or "Astoria" or he



would not have been so enthusiastic. Certainly Mother did not share his optimism, but there was a schoolhouse only a few rods from where he planned his new home. The children would have educational advantages—and mother was determined that her children should have an education!

We came in the early spring. Our only real rest from travel after we boarded the train at Canaan, Connecticut, was an hour's walk in Chicago, where we changed cars, and another two hours at Council Bluffs before ferrying across the Missouri. Council Bluffs consisted of only a few houses. Mother and the children climbed up a hill, where a woman gave us all a drink of terrible-tasting water that she pulled up from a funny-looking well. After mother's talk with her she was greatly depressed. I often thought what must have been her feelings from Lincoln on.

The country became wilder, flatter and flatter, and when we reached our destination, there was nothing to be seen but green earth and blue sky. We had at last reached Fairmont, our goal.

In the spring of 1875 a passenger train came whistling and blowing into the little town of Fairmont. The train consisted of an engine, one baggage car, and two day coaches. As the train stopped, a middle-aged man stepped from the train to the railroad platform. He was holding the hand of a little girl of ten. He was closely followed by a tall boy of perhaps 20, who was leading a smaller boy of 12 by the hand. He was followed by a boy of about 18, who clasped tightly the hand of a little boy of 2. Then followed three other groups of two each: a slim girl of 16 with a girl of 8, then one of 14 with a little girl of 6, and last of all, the end of this little procession, a tired worn woman of perhaps 35 with a sleeping baby of 4 months in her arms. All looked tired and dusty, and no wonder, for they had ridden three days and three nights in a day coach and now at last were near the place they were to call home. At least they were in the town only three miles from the farm lately purchased, which the parents of this group of children hoped to have for a home.

The train, with much clatter and rattle, passed out of sight and the group stood on the little wooden platform in front of a very small and very red building with the sign "Fairmont R.R." in large white letters conspicuously located on a red board.

The town consisted of a little red depot, a two-story white building with the sign in big black letters "Burlington Hotel," and two small one-story buildings with high, square false fronts, labeled respectively "Porter's General Store," "Post Office," and "Livery Stable."

A small building stood near the railroad track about four rods from the depot with the words "E. L. Martin" and "Coal." Three or four new-looking shanties with stovepipes emerging from their roofs for chimneys and one good-looking white house completed the buildings of the town of Fairmont.

As the train became smaller and smaller until it was finally lost in the horizon, a young man of 22 stepped briskly up and, grasping the hand of the father of our little group, said in a hearty, loud voice, "Welcome, Captain Bennett!" Another man by this time was hurrying toward the platform and he too, evidently, was interested in our family, for, taking the toil-worn hand of Captain Bennett, he welcomed him in the same hearty western style. Then with twinkling eyes he remarked, "We got room enough here for all of you," and waved his hand over what seemed an endless seat of green in every direction. Then he said, "You must be tired; come over to the hotel and we will divide up." So the little procession went along in the same position as before—the father with his little girl whose hand he once more took in his, with the others following demurely in his wake and the mother bringing up the rear across the green plot of ground leading from the depot to the hotel.

"Captain Bennett, we will take three of the girls to our home," said one of the men. A middle-aged, sick-looking man stepped forward and said, "The rest of them can come home with me." So it was decided that we were thus to be disposed of. Father and three of the older boys went to the

two-story building, the Burlington Hotel.

Will Chapin took hold of my hand, and Vie, who was 8, two years younger, and Fannie, 15, followed. On the path that led to the town proper, I noticed one large white house. I comforted myself by thinking, "There is where we are going." This man that held my hand was friendly and pleasant, but we passed the house and went toward a building even smaller than the others. The door was open, and a happy-looking young woman with black hair and bright eyes smiled broadly. She kissed each of us on the cheek and said, "Come right in, supper is ready." Then Will pulled up two boxes and Vie and I were invited to sit on one, side by side, at the little table that was set for five. Suala, that was her name, took one of the two chairs and gave Fannie the other, while Will sat on the remaining box. We were helped to potatoes, meat, gravy, and other foods just as we had had at home. These two were so lively and jolly. Fannie fell in with their chatter and my homesickness soon disappeared with the meal.

Afterwards, as Fanny helped with the dishes, Vie and I sat and looked around—such a tiny room with a big flat bed in one corner, that took over a fourth of the place, a cook-stove in the other corner, and boxes for cupboards. There were two windows and the only door, the one we came in at. The table now was cleared, the dishes put away, and while I sat wondering where we all would sleep, Suala bade Fannie to get us ready for bed, while she turned down the nice white covers and I knew no more until I heard talking and laughter.

The sun was pouring in the window. Suala said Will had gone out to where Father was building a new house. He was a carpenter and rode out on a load of lumber. After breakfast Vie and I went out of doors. The houses seemed as small and poor as they did the day before, but the air was sweet and pure, and there were wild flowers in bloom near the house, small bright-colored ones without fragrance. We picked a bouquet and Suala put them in a cup in the window-ledge. There was a rumbling sound and soon we saw a long streak of smoke in the distance. A freight train came puffing in and we all watched it as it maneuvered around, leaving cars and picking them up again. Suala said the train men were switching the cars on side-tracks, that were meant to be left. At last it sent great clouds of black smoke from the engine and with clatter and much loud shrieking, moved away. It was every day the same when the freight train came in.

Photo from Robert Waring  
Ella Louise Bennett Waring



In the afternoon we walked out to Mr. Taylor's, where Mother and the other children were taken upon arrival. This was about a mile away. The dwelling, which was very low and flat-looking, was made of boards, end to end. Inside, it was quite comfortable, having three small rooms, most of which were filled by beds. Mr. Taylor took us back to town, Suala and Fannie sitting with him on the spring-seat in the rattling lumber wagon. Vie and I sat in the box behind and bobbed around like marbles when the horses trotted over the rough, winding road.

Will came in for supper and said the frame of the new house was well started—Father was a skilled carpenter—and when our car came with the furniture we were able to move



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
Planting corn about 1925

in. *What a day that was!* How impatiently we waited for the load of lumber to be there, so we could ride. Finally we started out over the prairie on foot, walking, walking toward the northwest. We could see the new house in the distance, but never seemed to come closer to it. Finally Fannie said, "When we get to that stump, we will sit down and rest." The stump proved to be a bag half full of grain; a man was sowing in a field near by. There were no buildings until we reached our house. Mother was already there and had supper ready. After supper we sat around on piles of lumber and boxes and talked and planned and watched the beautiful sunset. The car had partly unloaded. The beds were up, the floor was only partly laid, but the house was enclosed and HOME.

The house was all there was. All raw prairie, green and bright with flowers, but not a tree, bush, or stone on the 640 acres of land! Truly it took a brave heart not to have many misgivings. But now Mother knew what she had and what she must do. She never complained in the months that followed. If she had any misgivings, we did not know it. She came to stay, and we did.

At first we bought milk from a neighbor, going with a three-quart pail for it, morning and evening. One day father came from the west, leading a cow. It was the handsomest cow a family ever had. We called her Corey. Father had bought her from a man by that name. Twin calves were born a few days later. They were named Bright and Dime. Father built a little barn for these and one day added two bay horses to our livestock, fine young horses, Snap and Dan, who served us many years.

It was time to plow or break the prairie. Snap and Dan made very little impression on that vast domain of green. Two yoke of white oxen were purchased. Strong and patiently they toiled that spring until long black fields appeared where only a few weeks ago was green prairie. It looked to me like a black patch on a large green garment. This was planted to sod corn and was again green and beautiful.

Father and the boys worked long hours on the house and in the field, and when winter came, considerable corn was harvested and hay cut and stacked for our livestock. Fences and yards were built and another good-sized barn, so the winter found us comfortable, but very, very homesick for the beautiful trees, the fine buildings, and the cultured life we had left behind. Mother made friends with the neighbor women. They gave her flower-seeds and she bought bunches of cottonwood sticks to put into the ground, when spring opened. We were sent to school in the little schoolhouse close by. Mother organized a Sunday School there, which met in long, lonesome Sunday afternoons. My sister May, a little girl of perhaps six, often led the singing, she being able to get the right pitch. "Hold the Fort," "Pull for the Shore," and "Little Band" were favorites and always sung, when Ezra Witter, a young man with a growing family, was not there to start the tunes with his tuning-fork. Mrs. Hall had a sweet, although shrill, voice. Her son Alfred inherited her love of music. He was a lad around 13, who took upon himself the duty of opening and closing the schoolhouse in summer and tending the fires in the great stove in winter and trimming and cleaning the kerosene lamps.

This schoolhouse was a community center for that region for many years. Long benches were made, that sat along the sides and back of the room under the blackboards. There were knots in these boards, and figures and characters made

were greatly disfigured on their account.

One winter a young schoolman was engaged to teach the school. He wore a shock-cap with tails that were always fluttering in the wind, and acted and talked so differently from the rest of us.

[Mrs. Waring's manuscript ends abruptly here.

—Editor.]



Bird's-eye view of Fairmont  
Photo from Ora Robbins



Photo from Harry Carson  
Left to right: William Heckman, Nimrod Dixon, and Harry Carson in rig. Harry Carson "Tater" hauled mail overland from Fairmont to Geneva for his father—Henry Carson at the age of 14 years. "Tater" started carrying mail on the Fairmont route in 1908, and was a rural carrier for 51½ years, retiring June 30, 1959. One sack held all the patrons mail when he first became a carrier.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
Cottonwood tree planted on Badger farm that grew to 26' in circumference at base.





Photo from Ora Robbins  
Tunnel to windmill; in the tunnel Mrs. Nichols and granddaughter Hazel Robbins. Standing on the snow bank Mrs. Robbins and daughter Florence.



Photo from Mrs. Royal Jackson

George A. Williams was born in Lafayette, Illinois, August 17, 1864. He married Mable Grubb October 22, 1888. In 1890 he purchased 240 acres of land in West Blue township, which became their family home. Mr. Williams served in the lower house of the State Legislature from 1919-23 and was co-author of the bill directing and construction of the new state capitol. In 1924 he was elected Lieutenant Governor. He served two terms in this capacity under Governor Adam McMullen and Governor Arthur J. Weaver. After retiring from active politics he was an active layman in church affairs. Mr. Williams passed away July 7, 1946.



Photo from Mary Badger Halsey  
Sawing cottonwood logs in 1909 or 1910. Left to right: Art Kerekel, Mr. Herndon, Wallace Fassnacht. Bottom picture: Cottonwood logs on Badger farm.



Clarence Nichols, Maud Moffat, about 1900



Courtesy Nebraska Signal  
Artist drawing of the Fair-view Apartments.