OSCEOLA
COUNTY HISTORY

IOWA WRITERS PROGRAM W.P.A

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IOWA

Compiled and written by

The Iowa Writers' Program

Of the Work Projects Administration

In the State of Iowa

Jessie M. Parker,

State Superintendent of Public Instruction,

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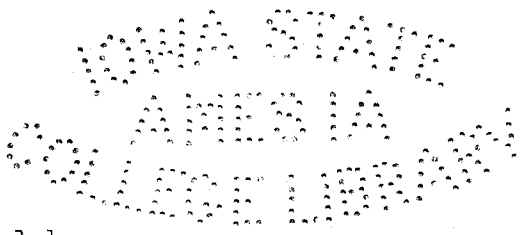

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FOREWORD

The story of Osceola County is marked by two characteristics of the American way of life -- the love of freedom and stamina for the long pull. The entire county was a treeless prairie covered with grass that grew man-high and waved like an ocean in the wind. There was no timber for log cabins nor did any building stone crop up. Lumber had to be hauled long distances. In winter, blizzards covered all signs of habitation and froze to death all unsheltered living things. In summer the hot sun burned the growing green to parched brown. Often, when the settlers had raised good crops, hordes of locusts devoured them. Prairie fires raced over the plain, leaving it a blackened waste. But the settlers hung on, until hard work and the American way of pulling together made Osceola a successful farm county.

This new Osceola County History, written by the Iowa WPA Writers' Program, gives a truthful and clear account of the growth of our county, and in these days, hectic with war and shifting values, we are especially glad to look back in its pages upon the unwavering courage of our forebears.

Earle M. Grasswick

County Superintendent of Schools

Osceola County

1942

INTRODUCTION

Osceola County is one of Iowa's youngest. Its story is largely a story of the struggles of veterans of the Civil War who first rolled onto Osceola's treeless prairies in 1870. The early Osceola County frontiersmen were poor men, inured to the hardships of battlefields, and they found in their new home a new sort of battle.

They found no materials at hand but sod and the long, rank prairie grass. There were no trees, there was no stone. There was no stream large or strong enough to provide power for a mill.

The Indians had shunned this county, except for occasional hunting. A windblown desert of grass, it offered no protection for them and the constant threat of destructive and rapidly moving prairie fires made the land always dangerous. Many people believed that land which did not support trees would not grow crops either, but here, in 1870, came Captain E. Huff, with some of the boards he would need for the building of a cabin. Others followed him so quickly that in the fall of 1871 Osceola County elected its first county officers.

Possessed of an unquenchable faith in their land, the Osceola County pioneers stuck to it through blizzard, fire, and insect plagues that reduced the entire county to starvation. They stuck and developed their rich soil and built good homes. They founded for their children a tradition of "stick and grin" that is of the very essence of the American way of life.

CHAPTER 1

THE MAKING OF OSCEOLA COUNTY

The 430 square miles of land that we now call Osceola County lay at one time on the floor of an ocean that covered the entire continent of North America. For millions of years, myriad generations of marine life lived and died there, the lime from their bones and shells falling to the ocean floor and building up through the years a mass of soggy lime many feet in thickness. As the lime became thicker and thicker, its own great weight finally pressed and cemented it together into a sheet of solid limestone.

Today we can still see the remains of various forms of animal life that gave their bodies to the building up of the stone. Among the two most common of these fossils are the small, horn-like shells known as cephalopods and the butterfly-like shells of the brachiopod family.

Gradually the continent rose out of the water. Points of land appeared here and there and the ocean became shallow and currentless. Plants took root and began to grow and to spread their seeds. Soon the marshes and bogs were transformed into vast forests of strange, fibrous and bulbous plants and trees that became dense jungles.

But the struggle between the land and the ocean was not yet over. Great sections of the land sank down again and again and the making of limestone and sandstone was repeated. The mud and vegetation beneath the new rock formations became pressed into layers of slate and coal.

The Sketch of the Geology of Iowa, 1926, tells us: "The hard, regularly-bedded rocks of Iowa were formed almost exclusively under water. They were originally loose, soft sediments spread out where they now lie, in regular sheets or layers, on the bottoms of ancient seas. The present sandstones were originally submarine sand banks, the shales were beds of mud, the limestones were the products of coral reefs or marine shells of various kinds, broken and ground into fragments, and the coal seams were first masses of vegetable matter accumulated in swamps and marshes, somewhat as similar matter accumulates in modern peat bogs."

Finally the ocean receded and once again Osceola County lay high and dry. Jumbled and broken rock layers protruded upward to form ridges and cliffs, the softer, half-formed sandstones and shales had resolved themselves into sand and soil once more, and plant life had begun to take root.

But the region was soon to undergo another marked change, the results of which we can see all about us. The northern hemisphere became intensely cold. Great quantities of snow fell, and due to the continued cold did not melt but continued to pile up, layer upon layer, throughout the long winter months. During the short summers some of the snow melted, but the long winters quickly froze this slush into solid ice, and more and more snow fell to cover it in ever deeper layers.

Year after year, the snowing, melting and freezing continued until finally a mountain of snow and ice, thousands of feet thick, had formed far to the north. Then, due to the tremendous weight above it, the packed ice at the base of this mass began to crawl slowly outward. As the weight above it increased each winter, the great blade of ice moved farther and farther southward, plowing and grinding at the earth before it. Pieces of cliff were torn off and ground into fine sand, gravel, and boulders.

Slowly the great mass moved into Osceola County. Its average speed has been estimated at about one mile in each 12 years, at which rate it took the glacier somewhere between five hundred and a thousand years to flow completely over the county. But the destruction was complete. The ice sheet leveled everything before it.

No one knows exactly how long each glacier remained but we know that at least three glaciers came into Osceola County.

The last, known as the Wisconsin Glacier because it came from the direction of Wisconsin, moved slowly into the northeast corner of Osceola County, carrying with it millions of tons of closely packed boulders, gravel, sand, and the debris of previous ice sheets that it had picked up along the way.

The glacier ate its way across the land, pushing up great hills and mounds of frozen earth ahead of it, until it reached a point about half-way across the county. Then something happened. Warm days returned, and softened the glacier, and stopped it.

As the ice melted large ridges and hills of glacial debris were left. These kames and moraines, as they are now called, were quite often fantastic in shape. Some of them were dome-like, some resembled inverted cones, others arose to a gentle slope on one side to fall away precipitously on the other, and others were long, rounded ridges that lay upon the land like giant caterpillars. Ocheyedan mound, 1,670 feet above sea level and the highest point in the State of Iowa, was formed in this manner.

Among these boulder-strewn formations were many valleys and depressions.

The glacier left Osceola County in general a flat, elevated plateau with a drainage system of small rivers and creeks sloping gently toward the south. The Ocheyedan and the Little Ocheyedan rivers drain the eastern two-thirds of the county, and Otter Creek the western third. Both these streams finally find their way into the Missouri River.

Strange animals once roamed these prairies, among them the mammoth elephant. Its long, curved tusks were sometimes as much as 12 feet in length and its body was covered with thick, black hair which grew over a dense matting of reddish wool. That the mammoth roamed through Osceola County is known, for a giant mammoth tooth was unearthed near Melvin during the summer of 1923.

The Mound Builders are known to have lived here at one time, but our knowledge of them is meager. We only know they were short of stature, that they had a knowledge of the use of fire, and used weapons of bone and flint and built mounds in the effigies of birds, fish, and animals.

The Indians were the next to occupy the land, but it is quite unlikely they ever established permanent homes in Osceola County, for this region was an open prairie that lay entirely unprotected against the rigors of both summer and winter. There were no forests to break the drive of winter winds, no protecting sheltering valleys, not even timber with which to build fires or shelters.

During the summer months buffalo, deer, and elk grazed upon the tall, billowing prairie grass; gophers, badgers and groundhogs burrowed homes in the sandy knolls; fish teemed in the rivers, lakes, and creeks; birds sang from the reeds along the banks of streams, and the lakes and marshes were alive with wild ducks and geese.

Bands of roving Indians may have come through the county on hunting and fishing expeditions,but they did not stay, for even in the summer time there was grave danger here. Sometimes the tall prairie grass caught fire and a great wave of licking flames swept the prairie, driving out or destroying everything in its path.

The absence of trees in Osceola County was perhaps the most serious result of the frequent prairie fires. The reeds, the grass, and the quick-growing willows along the banks of streams could spring up anew each year after being burned over, but the slower-growing trees were given no chance to establish themselves. Before the coming of the first white pioneer, Osceola County offered little encouragement to the homemaker.

CHAPTER 2

THE WAGONS ROLL IN

In 1847 Osceola County was part of a large unsurveyed section of land called Fayette County, which contained some 20 future counties of Iowa.

By an act of the Iowa Legislature on January 15, 1851, all unsurveyed lands in the State were to have their county boundaries definitely established. Thus a group of men went into Osceola County during the spring of that year to mark out and plat the borders, sections, and quarter sections.

Due to the absence of trees, the township corners were marked by mounds of earth about four feet in height. The sections and quarter sections were marked in a similar manner by lesser mounds, and still more were built up along the State boundary to the north. Small posts of red cedar were set into these mounds with figures cut into them to indicate the section, township, and range.

But settlers did not come. Osceola County was known to the people of Iowa as the "great American desert." There were no trees, and there were no roads on which lumber for homes could be shipped in. What about the soil? Would it be possible to raise crops there? Could a man grow crops where trees wouldn't grow? No one wanted to take up land there and then find out that crops could not be raised on it. Another consideration that discouraged settlement during the next several years was the danger of Indians. For it happened that the only Indian massacre in all of Iowa had occurred a few miles east of Osceola County. This was the Spirit Lake Massacre in 1857, in which 46 men, women, and children were murdered by the Sioux Chief Inkpaduta and his band.

Osceola County might have gone on for many more years without attracting settlers had it not been for the Railroad Grant of 1865. At this time, Congress passed a law granting the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad a right-of-way through the county. But the State of Iowa would not give a grant of land to a railroad company from the State of Minnesota, and the State of Minnesota would not grant land on its territory to a railroad company from Iowa.

This deadlock was finally solved when a company called the Sioux City and St. Paul was organized at Sioux City, and another, the St. Paul and Sioux City, was organized at St. Paul. In this way, the Sioux City company received a grant of land extending to the Minnesota line, and the St. Paul company received a grant extending to the Iowa line. There they joined.

The preliminary surveying of the Sioux City and St. Paul land grant was begun during the summer of 1866, and the news of it spread through all of Iowa and many of the neighboring states. So far, the only people who had set foot upon the soil of the county were travelers, explorers, surveyors, or lone trappers who occasionally came into the county during the winter to trap the fur-bearing animals that frequented the marshes and streams.

The Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad Company grants included all the even-numbered sections of land for ten miles on both sides of the proposed railroad, and this land was held for sale by the railroad company at a cost varying from three to five dollars an acre. The railroad company would not, however, sell land to eastern speculators. They held it for settlers; settlers along the railroad would mean more business and more shipping.

The homestead law was in effect, also. Anyone desiring a homestead in Osceola County could obtain not more than 160 acres by proving in writing that upon a certain date he had entered upon the land with intention of occupying it for actual settlement and cultivation. This affidavit had to be accompanied by a fee of ten dollars, after which the settler was allowed time to get settled upon his chosen homestead and to make improvements on it. Five years later he could "prove up" on his land and get a clear title of ownership.

Strange as it may seem, Osceola County was named for the noted Seminole Chief, who brilliantly commanded his warriors in their struggle against the United States until he was captured by United States forces and died a prisoner in Fort Moultrie, Florida, in January 1838. It is a long way from the everglades of Florida, Osceola's home, to northwest Iowa, but his memory lived after him and the story of his heroism traveled far. The settlers liked to talk about his exploits and about the romance that led to his marriage with the Creek Indian Princess, Ouscaloosa.

As they sat about their hearth fires on wintry evenings, the pioneers wove legends about the colorful chief and his bride. According to one of these stories, the chieftain's bride was named Lucy, and she was said to have been a Negro slave girl who had worked for an aristocratic family in the South. Upon coming north as the bride of Osceola, she began to feel the strength of her position as the wife of a chief. In her tent beside a trail near the site that was later to become Oskaloosa, Lucy held afternoon "teas" for whoever would come. She was hailed as the welcoming and entertainment committee for all weary travelers who passed her door.

Thus Osceola and his bride became well known throughout

Iowa. Travelers would give directions to reach a certain place by saying, "Take the right fork of the trail when you come to Osceola's and Lucy's tent." Or, "It is a day's journey south of Oskey's and Lucy's."

Later, many actually believed the Indian and his wife had come north and that the city of Oskaloosa got its name by the combination of Oskey and Lucy. In reality, however, the city was named directly for the wife of Osceola, though the warrior had never set foot on Iowa soil.

By the beginning of 1870, Osceola County had been named and surveyed, the railroad that was soon to cross the county had been carefully planned, a land office had been set up at Sioux City, and the homestead law was in effect. But still no one had driven his wagon into the county in the actual search for a home.

In the fall of 1870 a lone wagon came slowly across the grassy plain. It was driven by Captain E. Huff, a soldier who had fought with the Northern armies in the Civil War. He had heard of the great stretches of land in Osceola County, and had heard of the railroad that was soon to cross this territory. Here, perhaps, he could find the home that he wanted.

Captain Huff brought with him,from Sioux City, food supplies and enough lumber to build himself a shelter. He came in from the south, and followed the general course of Otter Creek to the northwest. Once he passed the sod hut of a lone trapper who had come in for the winter in quest of fur-bearing animals. That lone trapper was the only man Captain Huff saw.

A few miles up the stream from the trapper's hut, Captain Huff came to a place where the right-of-way of the proposed railroad came near to the banks of Otter Creek. Here the ground was black and rich, with a sandy subsoil that would make the spot ideal for the growing of small grain. There was abundant water and forage for the horses.

Captain Huff unhitched his team and set to work. During the days that followed, he built his shelter from the lumber he had brought along. It was a crude shack, with neither floor nor windows, but it marked the beginning of the settler's attempt to tame the wilderness of which Osceola County was a part.

After having finished his crude house, Captain Huff did not waste time on the banks of Otter Creek. Winter was coming on, there was no fuel to be had, and the flimsy structure he had put up would offer but slight protection against the bitter cold for which the county was noted. Hitching up

his team again, he went westward into Lyon County to spend the winter with friends.

The following spring he went south to Sioux City to file his claim at the land office. While there he met C. M. Brooks, who was planning to go into Nebraska in search of land. Brooks, however, on hearing Captain Huff's glowing account of Osceola County, gave up the idea of the Nebraska venture and decided instead to go into Osceola County.

Several of Brook's friends were depending upon his report concerning Nebraska soil, and he wrote letters to them explaining the change in his plans, and at the same time inviting them to meet him in Osceola County that spring as soon as they could get packed and get away.

When Huff returned to his claim that spring, he found that another man had moved into the vicinity. This was A. H. Lyman, who later became known to the settlers as "Windy Jake" because of his lengthy conversation.

A. H. Lyman made the trip into the county from Wisconsin early in March before the frost was out of the ground. He brought no lumber with him, and was therefore forced to build a shelter from what material the surrounding country offered. He set to work with his team, cutting long strips of the tough sod from the earth. "Snaking" the widest and heaviest of them to the spot he had selected for his residence, he made a square "foundation" of the thick strips. One after another, he piled other strips of sod upon this foundation until he had the walls of his home built up to a suitable height. Then he brought back the sturdiest willow poles he could find along the banks of Otter Creek and crisscrossed them across the top of the walls. Over these poles he piled great quantities of slough hay to serve as a thatch roof.

When the house was finally completed, it was far from beautiful. There was an open square hole in the east wall which served as a window, and a larger hole in the south wall to be used as a door. The walls themselves were dirty, grassy, and uneven, and the thatched roof resembled a low-crowned haystack.

W. W. Webb, C. L. McCausland, and M. J. Campbell responded to the letter they received from C. M. Brooks and were among the first of the new arrivals in the county that spring. Webb and McCausland made the trip in a covered wagon drawn by oxen. M. J. Campbell came with Brooks. They brought their equipment by rail to LeMars, where they purchased a team and a wagon for the rest of the journey. The four men met at Captain Huff's shack beside Otter Creek, and went from there to section 8, township 99, range 41, a few

miles north of Huff's. There they laid claim to all of section 8, each man filing upon a quarter of the section.

During the early part of May, many white-topped wagons rolled across the wide prairie. These prairie schooners were built for the most part in eastern manufacturing centers. They were very large and deep for those who could afford the best of equipment, and approximately four feet wide across the base of the wagon box.

To see one of these wagons at a distance as it rolled across the prairie was indeed an inspiring sight. At some points the tall, wind-rippled grass shut the oxen completely from view and the white-topped wagon seemed to roll and pitch along the very top of the waving grass like a tiny ship on a wind-swept sea. When the wagon reached a stream it actually became a scow, for the water-tight box of the wagon permitted it to be floated upon the water.

These early settlers brought with them as many of their family possessions as possible. One man brought with him in one wagon, besides his wife and eight children, three trunks, two sets of work harness, several bushels of potatoes, two dozen hens, a sheet-iron stove, many iron pots, numerous kettles, and enough feed to last the team for the extent of the journey.

Whenever the travelers sighted a lone hut or shack, they stopped to visit and to inquire about the new land. A. H. Lyman's little sod hut was the scene of many of these stop-overs, and on some nights the entire floor of the sod house was covered by sleeping people.

There was an early spring that first year. Thousands of brants, ducks, geese, and sandhill cranes fed along the small streams and lakes. The marshes were rife with cattails, water lilies, and tiger lilies. Plovers and meadowlarks sent out calls from the tall grass upon the hills.

H. G. Doolittle and James Richardson from Floyd County drove into Osceola County and stopped one day at Captain Huff's shack, where they spent the night. The following morning they took their leave, and, following Captain Huff's directions, finally laid claim to two quarter sections of land in section 24, township 99, range 41.

John H. Douglass brought his family and all his belongings from Wisconsin by wagon. After laying out a claim on section 14 and making some improvements, he removed his family to Allamakee County to avoid the rigors of the winter.

Mr. John Neff brought his family into the county from Ohio and located on a homestead east of the site of the fu-

ture town of Gilman. Among the members of his family was his daughter, Adorah Annette Neff, 13 years old.

On the long trek from Ohio, Adorah Annette had watched the country unfold before her, her eyes ever scanning the broad prairie ahead, wondering what new sight might lie in wait for her just over the next knoll ahead. Sometimes, when the constant jolting of the springless wagon grew too much for her, she walked through the tall grass beside the plodding oxen, stopping now and again perhaps to pluck a wild flower or to mimic the song of a lark.

At times, when the wagon was stopped to rest the oxen, the entire family would climb down to the ground and walk around to limber up cramped muscles. In early evening the oxen were unhitched and allowed to graze upon the lush grass, water was carried from the nearest stream, and the family gathered about a tiny campfire to prepare meals from the food brought along in the wagon or shot by the trail.

Adorah Neff dreamed at night about the new home and the new land that lay somewhere ahead of her. She was to watch this country grow out of its wildness and to see the maturity of Osceola County in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 3

WORK AND ORGANIZATION

Many more people came into the county that spring and summer, and the greater share of them settled in the western part, for it was here that the railroad was to be built. The early settlers knew their nearest neighbors, but they had no way of knowing how many other families there were scattered about throughout the county. They were too busy with the building of their own new homes to go calling on remote settlers or to welcome newcomers to the land.

Some of the families brought meager supplies of lumber with them and erected small shacks similar to the one Captain Huff had built. Others, having no room within their wagons for lumber, were forced to build temporary homes of sod like that of A. H. Lyman.

Still others made dugouts or caves in the sides of the glacial moraines that happened to be upon their claims, or erected shelters that were half dugout and half sod house, or dug caves and covered them with tents fashioned from the tops of their covered wagons -- anything was done that would serve as a shelter for the family, for there was another important work that had to be started at once.

Most of the settlers had been able to bring with them only small supplies of food, and if the ground were not broken and crops planted right away, they had a hungry winter to look forward to.

Breaking the tough sod of prairie grass was a herculean task. It was deep with large fibrous roots. The early pioneer soon found that a single team of oxen was not equal to the task. In order to pull one of the heavy plows through the stubborn sod, it was necessary to yoke from two to five pairs of the sturdy beasts together. None of the early settlers owned this many oxen, so neighbors pooled their teams and went from field to field breaking sod.

The plow itself was a heavy, cumbersome affair. The beam was of tough wood and the mold board was stripped with iron to prevent undue wear. The share was of soft steel and had to be sharpened frequently while in use. By means of a lever and the front wheels, or trucks, the depth of the furrow could be regulated. But even with all the combined oxen, the going was slow. A man could consider himself quite fortunate to break as many as 30 acres of land during the plowing season.

There were a few crews who hired out from farm to farm

during the summer, but the settlers were for the most part jobless veterans of the Civil War, and had little or no money with which to hire anyone. Planting was done by poking a hole into the soil with a pointed stick and dropping in the seed. Corn, beans, pumpkins, squashes, and various garden vegetables were planted in this manner.

But there were still other tasks that had to be accomplished. The nearest points for supplies were LeMars and Cherokee, each 30 or 40 miles away. This meant a three-day trip for an ox team, and very few of the early settlers could afford this much time away from their new claims.

A partial solution to the problem came when T. J. Shaw brought in a large stock of needed supplies and opened a store on Otter Creek near the site that was later to become Ashton. This store soon became a meeting place for the scattered settlers. Here they could visit, obtain supplies and gather news from the surrounding country. Here they sat, on barrel heads or boxes, discussing the future of the region and making their plans. Another thing to be thought of at this time was the church. Several families got together June 5, 1871, at the Elbridge Morrison place, two-and a-half miles northwest of the site that was later to become Sibley. Here the first Methodist sermon was preached by the Reverend John Webb, and plans were made for church work and organization in that part of the county.

Another meeting of the people took place at the Abraham Miller place near Sibley, for the purpose of establishing mail facilities between LeMars and Shaw's store.

A meeting was held at A. M. Culver's July Fourth, 1871, to nominate county officers. H. G. Doolittle presided. As a result of this gathering the following officers were chosen: A. M. Culver, treasurer; D. L. McCausland, recorder; F. M. Robinson, auditor; Cyrus M. Brooks, clerk of the courts; M. J. Campbell, surveyor; J. D. Hall, coroner; Delily Stiles, superintendent of schools; John Beaumont, drainage commissioner; J. H. Winspear, George Spaulding, and H. R. Fenton were supervisors. Grading was begun on a railroad during the year, and now that people were certain that the railroad was actually coming through, still more settlers came into the county.

Some did not try to "tough out" the winter. John H. Douglass removed his family to Allamakee County for the cold months and several others followed his example. Those who decided to remain faced the very serious problem of what to do for fuel.

The closest timber was along the Big Rock River in Lyon County and along the shores of West Okoboji Lake in Dickin-

son County. Either supply was 25 or 30 miles away over dim trails and marsh lands.

The housewives found a solution, however. Through the summer they had learned that the long prairie grass, when twisted into tight knots, would produce sufficient heat for cooking. Why, then, would it not also serve to heat a house?

Practical tests showed that it would, and almost immediately hay-twisting became the vogue of the day. Hay was plentiful and, as one pioneer youth put it, "it was a heap better then freezing."

Hay-twisting was done in the following manner: a handful of the long hay was taken in both hands, twisted until it resembled a thick rope, then bent back upon itself and allowed to coil double, like a rope. After that, the loose ends were tucked together securely, and the "twist" was ready for use.

Hay-twisting was costly in time at first, but soon a simple machine was developed to do the task more quickly. It was claimed that with this machine affair a man could twist enough hay in a day to last longer than the amount of wood he could have chopped from logs during the same length of time.

One large sackful of twisted hay was enough to do a big baking or to supply heat enough for a wintry evening, or sometimes both. It was during a comfortable evening around a hay fire, perhaps, that a local bard, whose name was lost in time, "twisted up" the following:

AN OSCEOLA TONGUE-TWISTER

The hay-twister twisted his hay-twisted twist,
A wrist-twisted, fist-twisted, hay-twisted twist.
He twisted this hay-twisted twist with his fist;
He twisted it, twisting a hay-twist...You try 'er!
He twisted a hay stack right into the fire!

During that winter H. K. Rodgers built a store upon the future site of Sibley. He had a good trade from the surrounding settlers, and hired William Mitchell to drive an overland trade route between the store and Cherokee. Mitchell drove his ox team and wagon regularly over that trail, regardless of the weather.

The deep snow of the winter halted work on the railroad, but it was resumed as soon as the melting of the snow permitted. That spring the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad

Company laid out the townsites of Sibley and Gilman. Sibley was section 13 and included only the resident shack of F. M. Robinson and the store that had been built by W. H. Rogers. But as soon as the site was located, others flocked in.

D. L. McCausland hauled in lumber from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and erected a two-story building that turned out to be a combination residence and boarding house. The building was put up in such a hurry that the builders completely forgot about putting in any stairs until after it was finished. As a remedy for this, cleats were nailed to the studding at one side of the house and a hole was cut in the floor of the second story just above.

Work was begun on the Sibley courthouse, the schoolhouse, the Sibley Hotel, and a large barn to shelter the horses belonging to the hotel guests. Ward built a saloon at about this time. A grain elevator was put up along the railroad grading.

June 1, 1872, the railroad was completed to Sibley and the first train came chugging into town. This was a great occasion for the people of Osceola County. It meant that at last they were connected with the outside world, and had an outlet for their harvests.

Sibley grew rapidly during that year. Levi Shell built a lumber yard. David Littlechild started a livery business. There followed a harness shop, a drugstore, a furniture store, and a dry goods store. J. T. Barclay, Hugh Jordan, J. F. Glover, and R. J. Chase set up law offices. Dr. J. M. Jenkins, Dr. Gurney, and Dr. Churchill were practicing physicians.

All trails led to Sibley, the center of a great new agricultural area. Overland freight routes were established between Sibley and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, by way of Rock Rapids in Lyon County. Large fleets of wagons hauled supplies from Sibley to the west, and brought back loads of grain on the return trip. So much wheat came to the Sibley market that at times there were as many as 50 wagons waiting in line to be unloaded at the elevator. Other trails came in from Cherokee, LeMars, Spirit Lake, and Worthington. Stage routes were established and regular schedules maintained.

More buildings began to go up. There were more stores and more residences. By the end of the year 1872 there were three general stores, three coal yards, two warehouses, one flour and feed store, four implement dealers, a blacksmith shop, a harness shop, butcher shop, drug store, two restaurants, one saloon, a livery barn, a hardware store, and a furniture store. Six law offices and three real estate of-

fices were listed and the Sibley Gazette was established.

The hotel began advertising that it had "a pleasant parlor with a rich carpet, a piano, and up-to-date parlor furniture conducive to enjoyment for transient drummers (salesmen) for the new stores." It was reported to have sleeping rooms with "bright and lively carpets" and a third floor with a bed capacity for 46 persons.

CHAPTER 4

STORIES OF EARLY SETTLERS

John H. Douglass, one of the early settlers who had removed his family to Allamakee County for the winter, came back to his claim with his family, wagon, team, household goods, and some livestock. It was early spring, 1872, and the wagon went well over the frozen ground. But when Douglass and his family reached the Ocheyedan River, their troubles began. The river was filled with packed snow.

Before attempting to make the crossing with the wagon, Mr. Douglass helped his family over on foot and got them to the Buchman home on the opposite shore. It was evening by then, but Douglass, a brawny Scot, decided he could get the team and wagon across before nightfall.

When he started back across the river, however, he noticed that the snow had begun to soften. It was still strong enough to support his weight, but would it support the combined weight of the team and wagon? He decided against experimenting. But there was, he thought, a possibility that he could get the team across and then, by running a long rope back to the wagon, bring it over afterward.

This he decided to try. He hitched a long rope to the horses, not wanting to be too near them in case they fell through, and started across the river. But just then something happened. The river had broken loose somewhere above him and water began to rush down about him. In a moment Douglass was up to his neck in the icy water and could go no farther. Neither could he get back to the bank that he had just left.

He was rescued before nightfall by the combined help of his own family, the Buchman family, and H. G. Doolittle and his brother, who were visiting the Buchmans. The following morning the river was worse than it had been the night before. But Douglass went across it, determined this time to succeed in bringing back with him his belongings. Upon reaching the other side, he hit upon the idea of making a raft out of Mrs. Douglass' huge red cedar bedstead. This he did and, with the aid of a rope and the people across the river, he ferried the most valuable of their possessions over.

Next he tied the horses single-file and swam them across, carrying with him a long rope that was tied to the wagon. After getting the team over he hitched them to the rope and let them pull the wagon across. But, as the wagon came down the steep bank, a box on the back of it broke

loose and the two pigs that were in the box ran squealing away through the long grass.

Douglass had to go back across the river again with the family dog and round up his pigs. By the time all this was accomplished it was evening again, and the Douglass family was forced to spend another night at the Buchman place.

Others who had spent the first winter away were also coming back, and there were many new settlers on the trails. New ground was plowed and the hills of green prairie grass gave way to the black of freshly turned soil. Those who had plowed their fields the year before dragged and cross-dragged the ground and then sowed their wheat. Corn was planted by hand as before. The women planted garden seeds and set out onions. Trees were planted and one nursery was started. Herds grazed on unplowed plains and hills, tended by a boy or man who received his pay from the owners of the cattle.

A Fourth of July celebration was held in the hotel barn at Sibley. A troupe of clowns was there and John Douglass (of the hazardous Ocheyedan River crossing) added to the fun with his hilarious Scotch wit. A speaker from Sioux City gave a patriotic address. It was cold enough that Fourth for overcoats.

At about this time the county's officials, elected October 1871, began to make trouble, both for themselves and their constituents. These officians had authorized themselves to select the swamplands within the county and to use those lands to raise county funds. Considering how many claims of the people had swamps upon them, this was not very good news to the settlers, who were, for the most part, impoverished veterans who could not afford attorney fees to fight their law cases in court.

They called a meeting to discuss the problem, and blamed J. H. Winspear, one of the supervisors, for most of the trouble. In defense of himself he claimed that it was the railroad swamplands he was after and that he had hired attorneys to help him acquire them. These attorneys cost the county $6,000 in fees, and it was guessed that Winspear had also been paid by the county for the building of schools in out-of-the-way places, schools that later became residences for some of the people who were friends of the county's officials.

Warrants were being sold against the county for various thinly explained enterprises. The settlers finally discovered that their officials had put the county into debt to the amount of about $20,000. And there seemed to be little chance of the county's paying these debts because the only

taxable land at that time was a few acres that had been purchased by speculators. The claims of the settlers were untaxable until "proved up" and the railroad lands were exempt from taxation.

Finally a committee of 27 men was appointed to get the resignation of objectionable members of the Board of Supervisors. This committee visited the home of Winspear one evening, determined to rid the county of him. But Winspear had been forewarned by someone, and had availed himself of the protection of Sheriff Stiles.

The committee went to the home of another official that evening, but that man, also forewarned, was not at home.

For a time it seemed that there might be serious trouble, and in view of this Sheriff Stiles deputized several men and armed them, hoping in this way to keep down violence. This small army of men made its headquarters at Sibley and were on 24-hour call.

In spite of the situation's graveness, it had its funny aspects. One day the deputies had congregated in a saloon and had placed their firearms along one wall. Douglass, the Scotsman, was in town. He saw this laxness of discipline and decided to unleash a bit of the wit for which he was famous. Calling a friend to him, he gave the man certain instructions to be followed.

A few minutes later, back in the saloon, the deputies heard an excited shout of "Fire! Fire!" They went hurrying out through the door of the saloon as fast as possible in search of the conflagration. While they were gone Douglass slipped in through the back door, gathered up all the firearms that were left, and dumped them through a trapdoor in the floor into a hole which, perhaps unknown to him, contained about four feet of water. After that he left town quietly and went back to his claim.

The committee of 27 men was not successful that year in ridding the county of undesirable officials. There were many other things that claimed their time. Waving fields of wheat and oats were ripe, corn stood tall and green on the land, and vegetables were plentiful.

The first threshing machine appeared in the county in that year. It was a crude, horse-powered machine owned and operated by John A. Hass. It had no self feeder, no band cutter, no stacker, and no blower. But with the aid of this machine the people of Osceola County harvested over 5,000 bushels of wheat and nearly 5,000 bushels of oats that fall. Later in the season the settlers picked nearly 14,000 bushels of corn from the fields. Thus encouraged, they began to

buy farm machinery in the hope of being able to handle still better crops the following year. But money was extremely scarce, and to get it they mortgaged whatever they had: livestock, furniture, wagons, and future crops.

The Osceola County Agricultural Society was organized, and its officers were: President, L. G. Ireland; Secretary, E. Hogan; and Treasurer, F. M. Robinson. The first fair was held in Sibley on the steps of the newly finished courthouse. It consisted mostly of a display of the various crops raised during the year. The fair lasted two days, October 11 and 12, 1872, and was considered a success. Here the farmers had an opportunity to talk over their problems and to exchange ideas of planting, cultivating, harvesting, and seeding.

The members of the First Methodist Church met a week later, October 18, to elect a board of trustees for the purpose of procuring subscriptions for the building of a church. By the end of that year they put up a building 22 by 50 feet square and 16 feet high. It was clear of debt except for a borrowed $300 which was to be paid off at the rate of $100 a year, beginning January 1, 1875.

CHAPTER 5

REVERSES

The winter of 1871-1872 was severe. So much snow fell, followed by extremely cold weather, that railroad building was impossible until well along in the spring of 1872. Some of the pioneers did not understand the momentum of a blizzard crossing a treeless plain. The snow was pulverized as fine as flour by the force of the gales. It drove through clothing, blinded the eyes, and took away the breath so that people caught out were in danger of smothering. People lost in the snow had to fight the inclination to lie down and rest. Even if lost, one had to keep up a ceaseless tramp to avoid freezing to death. Horses refused to face the storm.

In January 1872 a three-day blizzard struck the county. A Dr. Hall and his son who had tried to withstand the winter of 1871-1872 drove two teams of oxen to the Ocheyedan River to cut willow brush for fuel. They took their oxen, and abandoning the brush they had cut started for home. The snow and wind became so blinding that the youth could not see his father behind the team. As he neared his home he realized that his father was no longer with him, but was so nearly frozen he dared not turn back. An immediate search was impossible. Dr. Hall's body was found the following spring. Another fierce blizzard struck in February of that winter. Teams could not travel off the beaten roads without floundering and having to be shoveled out. Fred Knaggs lost his life while on his way home from Roger's store, pulling a hand sled full of provisions.

The blizzard of January 1873 was remembered as one of the worst ever experienced in the county, as the following letter clearly shows:

Osceola County, Iowa
J. F. Glover, clerk
Sibley, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1873

Cousin Eugene:

Dear Sir: Have had a terrible blizzard -- lasted three days. Haven't heard much from the country round about as yet; but we have had word from the stage which left Sibley for Rock Rapids, a short time before the storm. Baker, the stage driver, was found some three or four miles from Rock Rapids, frozen to the knees. A man who started with him, A. K. Jenkins, I believe -- a contractor for bridge iron who was going to Lyon County to see the officials about furnishing iron for their bridges in Lyon County was found outside the stage frozen to death. The horses were both frozen to

death. I am afraid we shall hear of other deaths -- have heard of some cattle being frozen. People are burning hay.

The road (Omaha Railway) has been kept open most of the time from Sioux City to Sibley and there has been no lack of fuel -- the other part of the road has been blockaded most of the time. Telegraph lines have all been broken and we have had no mail for about ten days.

Robinson and others are going to Sioux City tomorrow and I will send this out with them.

Lewis sent word that he will give $40 for Francis' lots.

Yours ---

J. F. Glover

As Glover feared, there were other deaths. Peter Ladenburger lost his life in this blizzard, as did two others whose bodies were found outside the county.

It is believed that this was the storm which caught a number of men in Shaw's store. They were forced to stay there for three days while they saved their horses from freezing by bringing three of them into the small store and tying the fourth outside in a railroad tank.

By March of that year the railroad was blockaded by drifted snow and there was an acute shortage of fuel. Hay twisting was again resorted to. Large planks were rigged up in the form of scrapers. These, pulled by ox teams, were dragged across the frozen swamps in such a way as to break off and pile up the tall marsh-grass so that it could be twisted into fuel.

Spring was late and backward that year and the farmers were pressed hard for time in the plowing of fields and the planting of crops. Then came still another set-back, for after the fields were planted no rain fell. The drought lasted from the first of May until the middle of June. The prairie grass turned brown on the hills, pasture became scarce, and the crops were retarded.

Benjamin A. Dean, an elder of the church, carelessly let a fire get away from him while he was burning prairie grass around his property. The fire spread quickly over the country and before it was finally brought under control had swept away all of neighbor McCallum's hay and loose property, leaving his house unharmed.

McCallum had Dean arrested and brought before a justice, who found him guilty and fined him $5 and costs. The elder paid the fine and McCallum collected a reward of $50 from the Board of Supervisors for the apprehension and conviction of a man who had caused a prairie fire.

Dean held not the slightest animosity toward McCallum over the affair and invited him to ride home with him and stay overnight. McCallum accepted and, the following morning, magnanimously reimbursed Dean for the expense and trouble he had been put to, McCallum paying him back his five dollars.

One morning in June 1873, when many had started to church in Sibley and others were spending a quiet Sabbath at their homes, far from the county seat, the severest blow of all struck the farmers. The sky was clear and blue, flowers bloomed along the edges of the marshes, and larks sang from the tops of the tallest weeds. In spite of the drought, grain was growing. Then a black cloud appeared in the west, approaching with the speed of the wind. It writhed and spread out until it filled the whole sky. Accompanying the cloud was a terrifying, buzzing roar. Church-goers stopped their teams to stare at the sky. Workers stopped their tasks in the fields. Women and children came running from the shacks and sod houses, frightened by the awful sound. "Cyclone!" thought some. But it was not a cyclone. Soon the cloud seemed to be disintegrating, falling apart into tiny specks that swooped earthward. Some thought the end of the world had come.

The watchers stood spellbound while it settled down about them. The whirring of millions of tiny wings filled their ears, then they caught sight of shining wings, the long bodies, the long legs of grasshoppers, the prairie scourge. Before the eyes of the watchers green stalks of corn turned black. The buzzing of the wings stopped, and a new sound came, the noise of mandibles tearing at all vegetation. Whole fields of wheat and oats went down as the horde ate through the slim stalks.

Some of the settlers struggled to salvage as much of their small crops as possible, but the battle was futile. The grasshoppers (Rocky Mountain locusts) went rapidly from field to field, leaving only destruction.

The locusts tried their teeth on everything they came to. They ate stray boots and overcoats. They ate the leaves and bark from the willows and chewed at the handles of farm implements. According to some observers they lit upon the backs of sheep and ate the wool.

It is little wonder that some of the settlers described the grasshopper as "having the face of a horse, the eyes of an elephant, the neck of a bull, the horns of a deer, the chest of a lion, the belly of a scorpion, the wings of an eagle, the thighs of a camel, the feet of an ostrich and the tail of a serpent." They ate more than the above animals combined.

After finishing the crop areas the "Army Grasshoppers", as they were nick-named, moved on to the open prairies. But the prairie grass was less to their liking, and within ten days after they had arrived in the county they left, having destroyed nearly everything but the unquenchable spirit of the Osceola County farmer. One farmer stated that after eating his crops all day, the grasshoppers sat on his fence and spat tobacco juice at him all night.

In July of the same year, 1873, a windstorm whipped through the county, knocking over barns and buildings and tearing signs from the store-fronts in Sibley. In August prairie fires once more raged through the brown grass. In November a fire almost wiped out the frame buildings of Sibley's business district. The damage done was as follows:

Barber and Lawrence	Drug Store	$ 900
A. H. Clark	Groceries	600
H. C. Kellogg	Store	1,200
Kelley and Walrath	Drygoods	1,244
J. A. Cole	Drugs	2,000
Wilbur Brothers	Stock	1,100
	Total	$7,044

These disasters, one after another in such rapid succession, finally sapped the morale and hope of the struggling men and women of Osceola County. And it is no small wonder that some of them left their claims to work as railroad hands or wood choppers, or that some left entirely to find other lands.

The following letter was written in 1873 by one of those who had determined to "stick it out" for another year:

"Nearly every man is poor -- very poor, and a great majority are ex-soldiers of the Union, with young families to support. When the grasshoppers took the crops, we did the best we could for the coming winter. We went to the lakes and caught barrels of fish, but we did not have the means to properly care for them; so they spoiled.

"Stock was sacrificed to the sharks (presumably "loan sharks") that infest our section, at next to nothing of a price, and many of us have thus eaten up and worn out the

horses and work cattle that had been our mainstay. We could buy no fuel, and when I left twisted hay and rank seed grass was the only fuel nine-tenths of the people were using.

"Much sickness prevails, brought on by a long abstinence from wholesome and nutritious food. One family, I knew of has the father down with the rheumatism, three out of six children were down with the measles, while the mother was about worn down herself. Cornmeal, grated from frost-bitten nubbins, was the only food in the house, if the sod and board shanty may be called such. The people bear with each other and mutually extend aid as much as possible.

"One young man from Jasper County, who happens to be a good shot, has valiantly taken upon himself, the task of keeping all invalid families supplied with meat, wild game, and the day I left brought some geese to the family I have mentioned."

In 1873 the total population of Osceola County was 1,409 persons. There were only two towns: Sibley, and Gilman, which later became Ashton.

After the grasshopper scourge and the Sibley fire,many of the store owners closed their business and left.

When the grasshoppers came Gilman had a store, a millinery shop, hotel, saloon, blacksmith shop, fuel yard, and two residences. The town was entirely dependent upon the farmers surrounding that district. But after the grasshopper scourge there was no longer any hope of support for the town and nearly all the business men left.

Osceola County was not the only part of the country that suffered because of the "hoppers." The damage was spread over other counties and even over neighboring states, but the suffering in Osceola County was especially acute. Most people had been on their land but a short time, had not accumulated surpluses of grain or money, and had not the means to plant again. November 15, the Homesteaders' Protective Association made the following State-wide appeal:

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF IOWA:-

We the undersigned, a committee appointed by the Homesteaders' Protective Association of Osceola County, an organization effected for the purpose of looking after the extreme and urgent necessities of the people of said county, caused by the almost total failure of the crops do deem it just and proper that we let our sister counties, who are in affluent circumstances, have positive knowledge of the situation of a very

large proportion of the citizens of this county.

The most of the settlers came here last spring with little or no means, and depending entirely on their efforts during the summer to carry them through the winter; honestly and faithfully have they toiled. A very large amount of ground was sown and planted in the spring -- more than sufficient to raise subsistence for all for the coming winter, if it had not been for an extremely wet, backward spring, and the invasion of a vast army of grasshoppers, which caused almost a total failure of corn and small grain crops, so that they now find themselves, on the eve of a long, cold winter, worse off than in the spring; without food of the plainest kind, and without means to purchase fuel to protect themselves and families during the coming winter. There are hundreds of families who have not sufficient clothing, and know not where the bread that they will eat ten days hence is coming from, (or their fuel). These same people, relying on their crops to carry them through the winter, have labored diligently through the summer, and thousands of acres of the prairie have been turned over ready for a crop next spring.

Now therefore, be it known to the people of the State of Iowa, that without liberal assistance from some source, a very large portion of the citizens of this county will be without the necessaries to sustain life, and also fuel to keep them from freezing, and unless from some source seed is furnished to these people to sow and plant in the spring, many of the broad acres that are now ready will have to lie idle the coming season.

We, therefore, appeal to the liberal Christian hearted people of this State for assistance in the shape of money, clothing, fuel, and staple articles of food.

At present writing there are at least 200 families in the county needing immediate assistance.

All consignments will be made to C. M. Bailey,
Agent H. P. A. Sibley, Osceola County, Iowa.

As a result of this appeal, the State of Iowa appropriated money for the relief of Osceola and other stricken counties. Applicants for aid received 15 bushels of seed wheat and some seed corn and garden seeds. Some of the more needy received food in addition. Sibley was made the distributing point for both Osceola and Dickinson counties.

The local Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, obtained more grain through a petition to the National and State Grange for assistance.

CHAPTER 6

THE DISCOURAGING SEVENTIES

The settlers who had stayed on in Osceola County in spite of the grasshopper invasion planted their seeds in the spring of 1874, hoping that their troubles were over for a time. But the spring was dry and the crops did not do well. The eggs left by the grasshoppers, however, did exceedingly well, and hatched out under the warm sun by the millions.

The first the farmers knew of this danger was when patches and strips of crops began to disappear from the fields. The farmers took action then, but it was too late.

Several methods of defense came into use at this time. Smoke and fire were used to some extent, and the "hopper-dozer" was invented. This consisted of a long plank with a wheel at each end and a long tin trough that ran alone one flat side of the plank from end to end. The trough was filled with kerosene, oil or thin tar and the plank was dragged broadside through the fields in such a manner as to let the grasshoppers leap before it and fall into the trough. After the trough was filled, the grasshoppers were dumped out upon a barren spot of ground and burned. But this did not solve the problem -- there were too many "hoppers."

The farmers devoted all their time to the battle against the insects. Then, ironically enough, all the hoppers arose upon a gentle wind from the east one day and left. Behind them were the damaged fields. About a third of the crops were ruined.

Besides the leaving of the pests, two other good things happened in Osceola County during that year. One was the dedication of the Methodist Episcopal Church, December 18, 1874, at Sibley, and the other was the departure of some of the less desirable of the county's officials.

Although the grasshopper scourge discouraged the settlement of Osceola County still further, those who remained planted their crops as usual in the spring of 1875. But in the summer of that year, a foreign swarm of hoppers appeared from the northwest. This new swarm destroyed nearly all the crops in Viola Township and damaged fields to a certain extent throughout the rest of the county. Those farmers who were dependent upon crops alone for their income were severely hit, while those who had herds of cattle suffered less. There was enough prairie grass for both the hoppers and herds, and the herds did not suffer noticeably.

Fencing became a serious problem at about this time. The herds were becoming too large to be left on the open range and lumber with which to build fences was prohibitive in price. Wire fencing was out of the question at this early date. The farmers did the next best thing: they tried to plant their fences.

Taking willows from the banks of the streams, they set them out in long rows about the fields to form a living barrier that held the cattle.

In the fall of 1876 the grasshopper devastation became so widespread that the governors of Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and the Dakotas held a convention in Omaha to discuss the problem. The best that came of this was official recognition of grasshoppers. The price of farm lands dropped to below the original government price as thousands of people began to leave the infested areas of Iowa. Osceola County's total population was 1,778 persons.

In spite of the reverses they suffered, many of the settlers still had faith in Osceola County, and this faith extended through other parts of the Middle West.

One day in 1876, while Daniel Paullins, a banker and land-owner of Quincy, Illinois, was sitting on the sidelines of a rowing match at the Philadelphia Centennial, he became acquainted with William B. Close of Cambridge, England. In the course of conversation, he gave Close a glowing account of the possibilities of northwestern Iowa.

Mr. Close visited the area, then returned to England and persuaded his brothers to form a colonization company and to come to America. This Iowa Land Company, as it was called, centered its operations at LeMars and was listed on the London Stock Exchange as having a capital stock of approximately $5,500,000. It was soon to have a direct bearing upon Osceola County.

In 1886 Peter Shaw of Viola Township wrote the following letter to the Sibley Gazette Tribune:

"This summer O. B. Fowler from Illinois purchased a quarter section in the southwest part of this township of the St. Paul Railroad Company. He is a good, stirring man and thinks that northwest Iowa is not to be sneezed at, if we do have grasshoppers occasionally, for farmers can devote their attention to raising stock and making butter and cheese and it takes little means here for a farmer to begin, compared with the older counties.

"Land is cheap, from $5 to $8 per acre, on long time

with small payment down. We have no fences to build as we have a herd law and stock is herded in the summer time by boys or picketed out by using stakes and long ropes. So by not having any fences to build, it saves half the price of the land.

"If the farmer wants a fence let him plant out a willow hedge which will make him a fence in six years, that will turn any kind of stock and will be an ornament to the place.

"You can get good water here by digging 15 to 20 feet. You can burn hay for fuel, which is another big item saved in the fuel line. A man with a mower can cut hay enough in one day to last a family a year. And it makes better fuel to cook by than soft coal.

"With these and many other advantages this county possesses, I look upon it as one of the most promising for a man of small means to invest in, or for the capitalist for that matter."

During the same year Benjamin A. Dean, the elder of the prairie-fire episode, expressed in a letter to the editor of the Gazette Tribune the need he felt for keeping a record of the county's growth, saying:

"A general history of the county ought to be started soon before those who possess the precise information -- the early settlers -- are out of reach. I believe Mr. Nelson, who with stock and teams made the so-called "Bohemian Trail" across the county in township 98 -- on his way to settle Beloit, Iowa, six summers ago -- is living.

"D. C. Whitehead, Esq., is dead. Through the snow in March '71 he staked out the state road between 99 and 100 from Silver Lake to Rock Rapids. Probably the railroad men can be found who worked in the preliminary railroad surveys throughout the county in '71.

"That year I saw two fair-sized trees in our county uncut and some settlers can inform us of the existence of quite a grove in our northeast township.

"Possibly we might learn who built that trappers sod house on the Ocheyedan in 1870 which A. Buchman found in the spring of '71. Captain Huff, the first settler to build a house here -- it was a frame house -- can tell us of first preemptions and homesteading in those days when he quartered the advance guard.

"It would not be hard to learn what family first pitched tent or planted wagon top cover on its homestead here, who struck the first furrow, about how much ground was

broken up the first summer and how much crops raised; also how many families were here and stayed throughout that terrible winter when Beeman, Knaggs and Dr. Hall froze to death.

"We might well have this winter a Pioneer's Society to which the first comers should narrate reminiscences or anecdotes of our beginnings and write out what they know of that first year.

"And let a secretary and county historian preserve these facts -- not for buncombe or advertisement but for generations to come. Who is the man fitted for this who will take it in hand?"

So far as is now known, Dean's letter brought no immediate general response. The earliest complete local work, History of Osceola County, Iowa, was written or compiled by D. A. W. Perkins, who published the book at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1892. This work makes no reference or acknowledgement to Benjamin A. Dean. But since some good stories of early life in the county have survived, it seems likely that some of the settlers must have taken care to hand down descriptions of their experiences, which were told and retold so often that these were kept alive.

CHAPTER 7

A GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT

During 1877 taxes began to come into the county treasury from the lands that had been claimed by the homesteaders in 1871 and 1872. It was possible to get considerable tax exemption, however, by forestation. A State law permitted a deduction of $100 from the valuation of taxable land for each acre of trees planted for a period of ten years and kept thriving during that time. In this way, it was possible for the farmer to remove about half of the taxes from a quarter section of land by planting four or five acres of trees.

But good tree plants were scarce. Many farmers had been getting young trees for fences and windbreaks, and there were very few to be had near at hand. Trips had to be made to the vicinity of Sioux City, where slips and young plants of cottonwood, soft maple, and willow could be obtained. Bushels of maple seeds were obtained from along the Missouri River. And some of the more fortunate of the farmers were able to get hard or silver maples, chestnuts, elms, and evergreens. Captain L. G. Ireland planted as many varieties of trees as he could find. Dick Wassmann, who later bought the land, added still more varieties until the grove included over a hundred species of trees.

So many trees were planted along the highways for fencing that after a time the roads were like lanes through shady parks. Birds nested in the trees, and the countryside rang with melody. Large shade trees grew along the streets of Sibley. Each farm had at least one grove, and many farms took names from wooded surroundings. Among them were: Evergreen Stock Farm, Maplewood Stock Farm, Woodland Farm, Cedar Valley Farm, Elder Grove Farm, Sheltered Nook, the Jassmine Pine Grove, and Willow Twig. Now that the plowed fields made extensive grass fires impossible, natural undergrowth began to come into its own in the wooded areas. Orchards of small fruits were started -- plums, cherries, currants, gooseberries, and other berries.

Farmers began diversifying their farming from the standard crops of wheat, oats, and corn. They made experimental plantings of rape, the seed of which cost little since two quarts would cover an acre. Considerable flax was raised, but the straw of this was wasted. Sorghum was tried, but the lack of cane mills made the venture unprofitable. However, the farmers who began raising hogs, sheep, and cattle became relatively prosperous.

The following list of wedding presents given to a pio-

neer bride and groom seems to show that they had within their own families the basic necessities for starting out. The reader can suppose at a glance that the young man must have already had a team and harness, the young lady a bedstead, a bureau, a pair of wash tubs, and a stove. Besides the deed to their land, they were given a silver card basket, two hanging lamps (one with a white and one with a red shade), hand-painted platter and set of silver teaspoons, glass water set, quilt, pair of pillows, mustache cup and saucer, china cup and saucer, rocking chair, washboard, garden hoe, pair of vases (one silver and one glass), set of individual salts, set of dishes, knives and forks, complete outfit of bedding, a gold breastpin, $5 in cash, washbowl and pitcher, carving set, individual castor, blue cut glass silver-mounted jelly dish, hand-painted cuspidor, ruby celery glass, cut glass silver-mounted syrup pitcher, large glass cake stand, frosted glass fruit dish, a cream glass, fluted-edge sauce dish, set of beautifully flowered delicate glass tumblers, pair of German China vases with raised glass flowers and handles, photograph frame of oxidized brass, garnet cut glass berry dish (set in silver with a silver ladle), silver cream pitcher, silver sugar bowl, and a silver spoon holder.

Imposing as this list sounds, many of the things it includes are of small value and others simply embrace the necessities given to every young man "set up" for farming by his parents. The bright luxuries among the wedding gifts were luxuries indeed, perhaps the only such things the young couple could hope to possess for years to come.

In 1878 the Sibley school had 70 pupils, and there were a few other county schools throughout the vicinity.

By 1879 some of the farmers, weary of fighting grasshoppers and discouragement, had left the county. Speculators had left because of the decreased value of farm lands. Land was to be had almost for the asking. Gilman showed plainly the result of this depopulation. In that year it had but one merchant and one blacksmith left. All the other places of business had been boarded up. The Sibley Gazette stated: "Last week we spent an hour or two in Gilman. This village is struggling with all its hopes in the future, waiting patiently for a depot, an elevator, and an express and telegraph office. A year or two of good crops will bring it into notice, give it more buildings, sidewalks, a mayor and all the paraphernalia of a full-fledged metropolis, until then it must move quietly and contentedly."

As if the hopes of the letter above were answered, more and more cattlemen began to move into the county to replace the farmers who had left, bringing with them feed stock and milk cows. And in the fall of 1879, because the crops had

turned out better than they had for several years before, the county fair was resumed by the struggling Agricultural Society.

By 1880 Osceola County had felt still more impetus in its upward swing. The Close Brothers, the Englishmen who had established the Iowa Land Company of LeMars, announced that a large number of English colonists were on their way to Iowa. As the Close Brothers did not want to see the inexperienced but enthusiastic sons of English aristocracy forced to put in their time "cutting down trees and uprooting stumps" in timbered country, they chose Sibley as a branch office and purchased 60 square miles of prairie land in Osceola County, principally from the railroad.

Even before the titles to the land had been transferred, the breaking teams were at work in the vicinity getting the ground ready. The Close Brothers rented out some of the land to tenants who came into the county looking for farms but had not enough money to buy. These tenants were paid $2.25 per acre for breaking. The Close Brothers furnished flax seed and made an agreement to pay half the threshing bill and to pay for the plowing of the stubble in preparation for corn planting the following year. In return they were to receive half of the crops raised.

Orders were placed for lumber for 160 houses to be built by 1882 for the English colonists and some of the tenants. In addition the Iowa Land Company built a block of brick buildings in Sibley, 128 by 80 feet, and the town soon became the rendezvous for a large number of young Englishmen who hoped to learn the American way of farming.

The corn planter, binder, and steam thresher were in use in the county then and put new life into farming. More fields could be planted and harvested in a shorter length of time than before.

The Englishmen imported sheep, horses, cattle, swine, poultry, and dogs. They also continued their British customs in dress, and in dining and tea time, much to the amusement of the native pioneers. And they did not neglect their sports. As most of them were well supplied with money, they set a fast pace which the young men of Iowa found difficult to follow. There was many a merry fox hunt across the prairies. But when foxes could not be found, rabbits or wolves served just as well. Polo suits were ordered from England, and cow ponies were put to the test of training. Tobogganing and ice hockey were popular winter sports.

Due to the influx of these new people, small businesses in Sibley and Gilman began to thrive again. In 1882 Nicholas Boor moved into the almost deserted town of Ashton and

started a lumber yard and a grain elevator. The hotel was opened again. The following year the name of Gilman changed to Ashton, which became a prosperous little town where but a short time before Gilman had been all but a ghost town.

The increased number of livestock in the county soon became a menace to the crops. The willow fences, it was found, were not sufficient to keep cattle away from grain. The willow hedges took up space that might otherwise have been cultivated. Many of these hedges were cut down at a tremendous labor cost, and replaced by fences of lath interwoven with smooth wire. Grant and Company, of Sibley, began manufacturing fence of this type.

It was during the 1870's that the patent rights were established for barbwire in order to defeat a monopoly known as the Barbed Wire Trust, which sought to get prohibitive prices by allowing no competition. The basic barbed wire patent was not on the barb alone, but on the twist which prevented the barb from skidding along the wire, a trick which Iowa farmers proved had been devised before the beginnings of the Barbed Wire Trust by the son of a Scott County, Iowa, farmer.

In the early days the sloughs were not without their value. They acted as partial barriers to prairie fires, roving cattle drank from them in the summer, and in winter mink and muskrat could be trapped in them. But the sloughs were breeding places for swarms of mosquitoes that caused suffering to man and beast alike, and the best soil of the county was considered to lie beneath those broad expanses of grass and water.

In 1883 some of the farmers, determined to reduce the mosquitoes and reclaim the swamps for farm lands, brought two ditching machines into the county. Slowly but surely, swamp after swamp was drained and brought under cultivation. But the draining of the swamps caused the water level to lower correspondingly. The shallow wells in the county, which up until this time had given good service, became more and more unreliable. It was soon necessary to dig deeper wells, and these often meant investments in windmills. A small windmill factory was started in Sibley, though it did not operate long.

In 1884 the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad crossed the county east and west through Sibley. This afforded a more direct communication with the eastern markets. Up to this time the only two towns in the county were Sibley, in the west-central part, and Ashton, in the southwest. The new railroad brought three more towns into existence: Ocheyedan, Harris, and later Allendorf. These

new towns were a boon to the people of the central and eastern part of the county, for before the towns came into existence the closest trading center was Sibley, a number of miles to the west of them.

A tow mill, erected in Ashton, began to work during this year under the management of E. Phillips. It was powered by a 35-horsepower steam engine and employed eight men. Up until this time, flax had been an unprofitable crop in the county because there was no outlet for the straw, but with the opening of the mill the raising of flax became more profitable. The mill produced two or three tons of baled tow each day, most of which went to eastern markets to be used by upholsterers.

Then a steampower flouring mill valued at $12,000 was set up in Sibley. Equipped with the newest type of patent rollers, the mill had a capacity of 75 barrels of flour a day. This tended to stabilize the wheat prices throughout the county.

Ocheyedan, soon to become the new trading center of the northeastern part of Osceola County, grew rapidly. A shanty belonging to James Wood was the first building on the site. As soon as the railroad came through, Wood ordered supplies and set up a store in his small home. Before the year ended many more business establishments had been erected. Charles Woodworth put up a hardware store. William Smith established a general store. Joseph and Dominick Kout and L. B. Boyd put up buildings and opened stores of general merchandise. Dr. C. Teal opened a drug store. French and Hayward had a large building for storing coal and grain. Another warehouse for coal and grain was built by D. L. Riley. Archibald Oliver started a livery stable.

The following year, 1885, saw still more buildings and business. C. A. Tatum built a feed store and a butcher shop. Peter Graves put up another general store. A. V. Randall opened up still another business house, and John Wilson erected a hotel which he named the Ocheyedan House.

Ocheyedan's first birthday celebration was held July 4, 1885. This community affair brought in farmers from the surrounding countryside. There were orations, music, various kinds of horse races and foot races, and plenty of dancing.

Other buildings were going up throughout the county. Most notable and most significant were the creameries that were established at Ocheyedan, Sibley, and Ashton.

Heretofore, the farm women did what they could to take care of current expenses by churning butter at home and sell-

ing it to the stores. The price paid for the butter, however, was extremely low. There was very little demand for it since most people in the county either made their own or purchased it from a few of the better butter makers of the community. Most of the storekeepers, finding no outlet for butter, merely tossed it into the grease barrel along with lard and other things that would later be turned into soap.

But now that creameries were being set up, the housewives were saved many hours of toil. Cream could be skimmed from the milk and sold directly to the creameries, which in turn sold their product in the East.

In the late 1880's, ten years after the grasshopper plague, the county was enjoying the best and most prosperous years it had yet seen. A large number of the farms were fenced. Large houses and barns were built, and new farm machinery and varied crops made the tilling of the soil much easier and vastly more profitable.

The Osceola County Tribune, describing the fair of 1886, reflected prosperity with the following account:

"In spite of the rain, attendance at the fair was substantial -- in fact better than at any previous fair. In the agricultural exhibition there was a good display and of excellent quality. This department shows the farmers in the county are rapidly getting first class stock and are rapidly improving the same.

"At the head of the thoroughbred department was C. P. Reynold's large Durham bull which took the sweepstakes purse in this class. O. Burton's fine cow of the same grade placed second.

"In Poland China hogs, O. Burton, H. B. Clemons and Dave Winter each had a good display. George H. Fawcett, of near Ashton, probably had the finest display in his class but it seemed to be generally conceded that his pigs were too finely bred for this country. They were undoubtedly the finest-bred stock of the kind on the grounds.

Thoroughbred Class

"In the thoroughbred horse class there were numerous fine specimens. The most noticeable to the reporter was the span of two year old Clydes of Patterson and Tom Ashton.

"Because of the bad condition of the track on account of the rain Tuesday the scrub races that were advertised to come off on the first day were omitted. The second day however, a purse was made up and a race arranged. Mr. Patter-

son's little brown mare took first money and a LeMars horse second. On the third day a similar purse was gotten up, E. Van Skye's black pony putting plenty of daylight in between him and Shoemaker's bay.

"Principal feature of the fair, however, were the trotting and running races for a purse of $100. The trotting race occurred on the second day. In the first heat, Brother Baldwin was leading Chief Joseph by a handsome two lengths with Kitten McDonald third and Hero and Dexter next.

Chief Joseph Wins

"In the running race, Little Joker was far and away the class beating Bay Deacon and a field of other highclass runners.

"The Polo match Friday afternoon between the LeMars and Sibley clubs resulted in a grand victory for the home team, the score standing 8 to 0 in their favor.

"And thus ended the fourteenth exhibition of the Pioneer Agricultural Society. All premiums we believe will be paid in full. This speaks well for the officers in charge."

In the fairs during the next two years the influence of the English colony was marked. There were steeplechases and games of polo and cricket. The young Englishmen, however, got tired of farming and its hardships, and before the end of the decade nearly all had left the county.

During this decade many churches were built. The first Congregational Church to be organized in the county was at Sibley October 8, 1872. Three years later the congregation raised sufficient funds for a building. In 1888 a branch of the church was organized in Ocheyedan and a building erected there.

The Baptists met at first in Mitchell's Furniture Store at Sibley. The Reverend J. L. Coppoc, Baptist minister at Spirit Lake, was engaged to preach once a month. The Baptists finally built and dedicated their church in the fall of 1882.

The first Roman Catholic Mass of the county was celebrated by Father Lenihan, assistant priest from Sioux City, in May 1873 in Holman Township on the homestead of Patrick Larkin. The first Roman Catholic Church of the county was built near Ashton in 1881. Services were held in the new building even before it was plastered. Four years later the church was moved into Ashton and in June 1888 Father James McCormack became the first resident priest. The parish at Sibley used the courthouse for its services for a time.

Later, in 1883, the parish bought an old schoolhouse, moved it to their own lot, and converted it into a church.

An Evangelical Lutheran Church was established in Horton Township. Services were irregular from 1884 until July 31, 1887. Then the Reverend John Schinerer was installed as resident minister. The following year a church and a parsonage were built and a parochial school was organized. Still later another Evangelical Lutheran Church and parochial school were organized and erected at Ocheyedan.

The Methodist Episcopal Church had its beginning in 1872 at the home of A. M. Culver, one-and-a-half miles south of Sibley. Nineteen members were organized at that time. A church was built in 1873 and dedicated December 18, 1874. Later on there was a division of the church and a second building was erected at Ocheyedan, but in time the two factions reunited.

The following is quoted from a letter written by one who was present at an early meeting, at the home of C. M. Brooks:

"The greater than usual number of men comers at Mr. Brook's made it necessary to bake bread on the Lord's Day and while baking was going on, the little pioneer congregation gathered in the room to listen to a preacher -- one of the new comers. In the same room were the baking and the preaching, and as the minister went forward with his discourse, so did 'Mel', as Melvina Brooks was called by her relatives and near friends, go on with her baking. She realized that on her depended the feeding of hungry men, with appetites such as only pioneering brings to the table. While others had nothing to do but listen, she had to work for the listeners. She could both hear and work, and right down before the minister she baked the bread of earth while he spoke the bread of Heaven, and she did her work as well and as honestly as the preacher did his. It was thus she went forward doing the things most necessary to be done, and though not possessed of a very robust constitution did her full measure of work -- having less in mind her own strength than the comfort of those around her."

A church referred to as "Hope Church" was built in West Holman Township, west of Sibley. Little record was left concerning it save that it was made up of Presbyterian Hollanders, with the Reverend Messrs. Broncka and Heigenga among the pastors.

A group of Mennonites settled in Harrison Township during the eighties. Distinguished for their simplicity of living and their indifference to the outside world, they made thrifty and industrious farmers and prospered well.

As a majority of the people living in Osceola County were Civil War veterans it was natural that they should build a Memorial Hall. Following is an account of this taken from the Osceola County Tribune of Friday, November 18, 1887:

"After a 'long and strong pull' the soldier's memento at last has reached the shore of success, and stands prominently out to its admirers, completed. In the construction of this building, credit is due to all the 'boys' for their untiring zeal and handiwork by which the G. A. R. is enabled to put before the public as a cherished relic this Memorial Hall.

"Regardless of party or business they put their shoulders to the wheel and pushed together; they subscribed from whom might give and liberally took from their own pockets the balance required for the construction of this hall...It is indeed a handsome building,the brickwork being well done, which adds beauty to its exterior -- the queerness of its shape taking an important part in this regard. On the inside the hall is the most conveniently arranged with its stage, kitchen, auditorium, gallery, etc., and is finished in the best of style, with a seating capacity of 300. The members of this Post deserve great praise on one point in particular, viz: they have a first-class hall, and do not owe a dollar on the same.

"The proceeds of the entertainment, as mapped out for Thanksgiving day and evening, will be exclusively applied toward furnishing the Hall, and we bespeak a liberal patronage from the public. A first-class dinner will be served, wherein roast pig, roast turkey, chicken, plum pudding, and all the delicacies of the season will be on the bill of fare.

"A splendid program will be presented to the public, among which will be interesting sketches from Commander-in-chief Rea (the man who stands at the head of 350,000 ex-soldiers) and others.

"The old vets intend giving the best entertainment Sibley ever had and they are sparing no pains to make it a go, and those who will lay away the busy cares of one day and lend their presence to this entertainment will never regret it.

"Dinner will be served at 1:30 p.m., at the low rate of 50¢ for adults and 25¢ for children. Doors open at 7:00 o'clock for evening entertainment."

A week later, Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1887, the new hall was dedicated with an elaborate program, which all agreed more than fulfilled the promises made for it.

CHAPTER 8

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the beginning of the 1890's Osceola County showed obvious progress over earlier days. Ox teams and heavy wagons had given way to fast horses and topped buggies. Bicycles made their appearance along country roads and in the towns. Road graders were busy upon the highways. Drawn by several teams of horses, they threw broad belts of dirt into the center of the road, building it up and then smoothing it out for the passage of spring wagons and carriages. Men with teams worked out their road taxes. Farmers made road drags and filled up whatever holes appeared in the roads beside their farms.

The countryside was checked with rectangular fields of varied crops and pastures. Crops were far superior to those of the earlier days because of better seed as well as better machinery. The Farmer's Institute became popular in the county. Both men and women took part in the Institute affairs and discussed such subjects as "How can the yield of corn be increased in Osceola County?" or "How can life on the farm be made as attractive as in town?"

Livestock had so improved that the farmers now would not waste feed to raise the kind of stock that had roamed the prairies only a few years before.

Throughout the county were well-built churches and schools. And now that there were better roads and quicker transportation, people in both country and town had more time for social affairs at the churches and schools.

At the very beginning of this decade the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad extended its system from Gowrie in Webster County northwest into Sibley. This gave Osceola County a direct line to Des Moines and to the coal mines of southeastern Iowa. Melvin and Cloverdale soon sprang up along this new line. Osceola County now had seven railroad towns.

A general wave of prosperity was felt during 1891. In that year the town of Ocheyedan was incorporated and the Ocheyedan newspaper was started.

Ashton, with a population of 309, now had a drug store, two restaurants, a photograph gallery, furniture store, clothing store, meat market, harness shop, hotel, wagon shop, five general stores, two elevators, a farm implement store, a barber shop, bank, newspaper (the Ashton Leader), a creamery, and the Methodist, Catholic, and Presbyterian

churches.

By the middle of the decade cream separators had come into wide use on the farms. This increased the value of cream greatly and brought in a better profit for the farmers.

The town of Allendorf came into being at this time. Following is a description of it given by the Osceola County Tribune, August 1, 1895:

"The new town which has been referred to as Oliver, east of Sibley, has had its name changed by the railway company to Allendorf. The post office department has not yet established an office there, however, but the probabilities are that this will soon be done, as at least five families will soon be quartered in the limits of the new station. McGowan's store is nearing completion and is a two story building of good size. G. M. Alvard's building is all enclosed and is one story, but of large size on the ground. In this will be a store and the post office, while Mr. Alvard will also act as agent for the railway company. The men can do the work, and altogether the spot which was barren a month ago now presents an animated appearance."

A number of people gathered in an office in Sibley one Saturday night in February 1895 to discuss plans for the beginning of a library. It was decided to properly fit up a place in town for a reading room, install as many good books and periodicals as possible, and to hire some capable person to care for the place. The cost was not to exceed $500. A Library Association was organized and the following officers were elected; The Reverend E. H. Smith, president; W. H. Armin, vice president; Frank Y. Locks, treasurer; and C. F. Lowrie, secretary. J. F. Mattert, G. L. Gaswell, S. L. Hague, A. W. Harris, F. W. Hahn, and G. G. Schlegel were chosen as the board of managers.

The officers met again the following month to adopt a constitution and decide upon regulations. These were made to conform as nearly as possible to the State laws relating to libraries. The library itself was to be turned over to the town of Sibley as soon as the town could levy a library tax.

Another town, May City, came into being in 1898. It was established in Harrison Township by a group of colonists from Canada. Having no railroad, May City was destined to have a slower growth than the other towns of the county. During the same year the town of Harris organized a city government and established a bank.

February 15 of this year the United States battleship

Maine had been blown up and sunk in the harbor at Havana, Cuba, and the war between the United States and Spain had begun. Answering the call to arms, the following men of Osceola County enlisted as soldiers in the Fifty-second Infantry: John Hientz, Charles L. Brand, Fred Chambers, Samuel Hamel, Philip Kerr, Wm. P. Redmong, John B. Webb, Pliny Westcott, Bohl Borg, and Thomas Lawton joined Company E, while Albert H. Foster went to Company K, and Fred D. Brunson and Nathan L. Plimpton joined Company L.

Sibley had grown to have several blocks of business houses and many blocks of residences, but still depended upon wells for its water supply. When a fire broke out, people gathered to form a bucket brigade -- a long line of willing hands between the fire and the water supply. Buckets were passed from hand to hand along this line as rapidly as possible. The people at the end of the line nearest the fire threw the water where it would do the most good and returned the buckets by way of another line. But this was a slow process and at best could keep pace only with a slow fire.

Finally the city council of Sibley contracted with the Jackson and Moss Company of Des Moines for the building of a city water system. W. H. Jackson of that company was the engineer in charge and W. D. Lovell was the contractor.

Completed in August 1900, the waterworks consisted of a deep well near the Omaha tracks and Fifth Street, a tower and tank 90 feet high, a 60-horsepower engine and boiler, a compound complex pump with a capacity of 750,000 gallons a day, several thousand feet of water pipe, and a number of fire hydrants. The tank and the pump together could create enough pressure to send water a full 90 feet into the air from a seven-eighths-inch nozzle. The cost of the well itself was between $600 and $1,000. Mr. Lovell received $16,200, making the total cost approximately $17,000.

This system greatly reduced the fire hazard in Sibley, for the hydrants were so located throughout town that any house in the city could be reached from one or another of them by the aid of a hose 800 feet long.

The nearest town was the only contact the community had with the outside world. The farm houses had no telephones, and there was no delivery of mail. Once or twice a week farmers came to town to buy supplies, sell their produce, and to get their mail and periodicals at the post office. In 1901 the people of the community decided that there should be rural free delivery of mail to the outlying farms. Mr. J. M. Phillips laid out two prospective routes and in March of that year a government inspector came into the county, went over the proposed routes, and approved their establishment.

Route No. 1 started at the "McCallum corner" and went three miles north, then east, and finally back into town. Arthur Stamm was hired as the rural carrier for this trip. Route No. 2 began at the graveyard, went south for a few miles, and came back into town again from the east. F. Cole was awarded this one. The salary for a carrier was $500 a year.

The two routes together delivered mail to all the farm homes in a strip of country 15 miles long and five miles wide east of Sibley. Each trip was about 25 miles long. The mail was carried on horseback or by horse and buggy, and it took each mailman almost the entire day to cover the 25 miles of his route.

Chautauqua, traveling tent shows intended to bring education and entertainment to people far from any large cities, first reached Osceola County in 1907. Sibley had its own Opera House, but traveling troupes of entertainers were scarce after the 1890's and it stood vacant most of the time. One-night stands were very frequent during the 1890's.

The first Chautauqua to visit Sibley was under the auspices of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. It came August 27, 1907, and stayed for six days. The cost of a season ticket was $1.50.

Among the noted lecturers were Judge "Ben" Lindsey of Denver, Colorado, known as the "Kid's Judge." The subject of his lecture was "The Misfortunes of Mickey." The Right Reverend Monsignor Tihen, a prelate and a power in the Catholic Church, was advertised as one of the new leaders of American thought. There was George L. McNutt, a minister who had toured America giving lectures that he hoped would bring about better conditions for the laboring man. He was known as "The Dinner Pail Man" because he had worked with laborers in factories, studying the conditions under which they were employed. Peter MacQueen, a veteran newspaper correspondent of the Boer and Spanish Wars, was advertised as a preacher, soldier, student, and world-wide traveler. Adam Bebe, Dr. Monroe Markley, Winfield Gaylord, Dr. Carl Thompson, all noted lecturers of their day, had parts in the program.

Besides the speakers there were musicians and singers, magicians, motion pictures (then very flickery), and community singing.

The library, which had its humble beginnings ten years before, received a decided boost on March 26, 1908, when Dr. Niell, a G. A. R. official, proposed that Memorial Hall be turned over to the city for use as a library, with certain

restrictions. Six hundred people supported this new movement and launched a basket supper to raise the initial funds for carrying it out. Donations totaling 534 books were made, and a three-mill tax levy was proposed to raise $700 annually to maintain the library.

Four years later E. M. Taylor, president of the Library Board, reported $400 in cash available for the purpose of new books. This report was made at a meeting of the Men's Association at Sibley, January 28, 1912. At this meeting, Mr. S. S. Redmond also suggested establishing a normal course in the Sibley school to take advantage of $500 in State aid available for that type of project, and a course in manual training was urged.

In 1870 Captain E. Huff had built the first shanty on the lonely bank of Otter Creek. Only 37 years later, in 1907, the State Auditor's report for Osceola County showed 72,392 acres of corn producing 2,993,755 bushels, and similarly encouraging figures in their proper proportions for oats, wheat, barley, rye, potatoes, hogs, horses, cattle, sheep, and poultry.

Under the preemption act of 40 years before, land had been valued at $2.50 an acre. Now, in 1913, its value was between $100 and $200 per acre.

Where the ox team and heavy wagon once made their slow way over dim trails, the model T Ford with its highly polished brass radiator now skittered along graded roads, kicking up clouds of dust in dry weather and churning angrily at the mud ruts in wet weather.

Allendorg, the station on the main line of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad midway between Sibley and Ocheyedan, was steadily growing up. By 1914 it had a bank, owned principally by George W. Schee of Primghar and managed by Clyde Wheaton. There was a general store owned by McGowen and Company and managed by Ray Williams, the postmaster. There was a lumber yard owned by the Shell Lumber Company of Sibley and managed by C. Shuttleworth. I. Broderick owned and operated a grain elevator, and another elevator was run by the Calender Brothers of Ocheyedan. D. D. Garberson sold agricultural implements. C. H. Rickabaugh was the blacksmith, and ran a threshing machine at harvest time. The telephone line was owned and managed by George and Charles Protexter. A United Evangelical Church had been built, of which Reverend O. J. Conway was pastor.

Up until this time, town and country homes had been without electricity, but in October 1914 Sibley's electric light plant was completed. The plant was run by a large

Corliss steam engine, the drive-wheel of which weighed 7,000 pounds. Two hundred houses were wired for electricity and were ready for the current on the opening day, and other families were soon to take advantage of this new form of lighting.

The following month Sibley's new and modern hospital was completed and dedicated. The dedicatory address was given by D. G. G. Cottam, but due to inclement weather many of the other doctors throughout the county were unable to attend.

Sibley was justly proud with a new hospital and a new light plant, but the people soon began to smile a little at the latter. It was working, but besides putting out enough electricity, the steam engine was throwing away great quantities of power in exhaust steam, which meant real waste. To put this excess steam to work, the people voted a franchise to the Sibley Heating Company for the use of the streets of Sibley to install a heating plant that would utilize it. J. W. G. Robb of Minneapolis was granted a contract to furnish material and lay pipes at a cost of $8,830. W. T. Bain of Milwaukee was granted a contract for insulating the pipes, for $9,980. Other pipes and equipment were estimated at a cost of $2,000.

Pipes were laid from the light plant up the main thoroughfare to the two principal blocks of Ninth Street. This made it possible for the two business blocks, and any other business houses or homes between them and the plant, to connect to the main pipes and have steam heat fresh from the exhaust of the Corliss engine at the light plant! The pipes were sent in from Pittsburch, Pennsylvania, and the heating plant was in operation before the first cold weather of 1916.

December 11, 1917, the Library Association again moved forward, when a grant of $10,000 was received by the city from the Carnegie Library Fund and a lot for the building was donated by Harris L. Emmert. The building was of pressed brick with stone trimming and a tile roof. The dedication exercises were held in the opera house and were followed by a reception in the new library building. The Reverend J. T. Parson offered the invocation. H. H. Nelson, president of the library board, reviewed the history of the library project in Sibley. Mrs. T. S. Stedman, secretary of the board, presented the library keys to the city. J. C. McGlade of State Teachers' College gave an address.

Reminiscent of the old days were two storms that swept across the county during 1917. The first one, on a Sunday afternoon in July, was a cyclone followed by hail and rain,

the worst storm in the history of the county. Windmills, houses, and barns were torn down, and hail laid waste entire fields of oats, corn, and hay. At least nine farms had a total loss, and 39 others reported losses up to 75 per cent. The entire damage to the county was estimated at nearly $100,000. The second storm came in February of that year. The temperature dropped to 35° below zero and wind whipped across the prairie, piling up snow in 15-foot drifts. Railroad freight was held up for ten days and food and fuel supplies ran dangerously low. This was acclaimed the worst blizzard the county had yet experienced.

CHAPTER 9

MATURITY

August 1914 marked the actual beginning of the first World War, and on April 19, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany.

Iowa's war-time governor, William L. Harding (1877-1934), was a Sibley man. He served with wisdom and distinction, and was re-elected at the end of the two-year term.

Osceola County felt the effects of the war almost immediately. As more and more food was shipped to Europe, the prices of farm products at home rose, and with this rise came an accompanying boost in the value of farm lands. In one year, between 1917 and 1918, it was estimated that the average price of farm lands increased $15 an acre.

More and more land was being cultivated. Newer and better farm machinery was purchased by farmers, who hoped to raise even bigger and better crops. Many farmers went into debt for new equipment. Some hurriedly bought up neighboring farms. Prices for farm products were sky-high. A 49-pound sack of wheat flour cost $3.25, and round steak sold at 35 cents a pound. Butter went to 55 cents.

At the same time the young men of the county were answering the Nation's call to arms, and men who did not go to war were migrating to the cities to take advantage of the high wages paid by the manufacturing concerns. Farmers, in order to get the labor they needed, began paying 50 to 75 cents an hour for farm help.

The war was first brought directly home to the county when Mrs. C. M. McDougall received word that her son, Reed Guthrie, had been killed in action in France October 5,1918. He was the first Osceola County boy killed in that war.

War Savings Stamps amounted to $28.25 per capita in the county. Five Liberty Loan drives brought in the sums of $73,500, $230,000, $442,950, $765,000, and $529,350.

Then, early on Monday morning, November 11, 1918, word was flashed into the county that an armistice had been signed bringing the war in Europe to a close. The Sibley Gazette on November 14, 1918, carried the following story of the reaction in Sibley: "Victory day, Monday, November 11, will never be forgotten in the history of Sibley. The receipt of the news that Germany had signed the Armistice, thereby ending the war, was the occasion of an outburst of good cheer and rejoicing never before witnessed in Sibley.

Whistles blew, bells were rung, people shouted, and business was practically at a standstill. After the strain and stress of war, the relaxation was the more appreciated.

"The celebration proper was held in the evening. However, it continued without an interval from morn till night. All business houses closed at noon, and the Sibley cornet band enlivened the afternoon and evening.

"At seven o'clock things were going right. Thousands of people were down town to participate in the epoch making event. A mammoth bonfire, torchlight procession and music by the band featured the evening's program. Whistles shrieked, bells rang while everybody made merry."

But in spite of the Armistice, prices continued to rise. Food was still being shipped to Europe. Most people in the United States were making more money than they had ever made before, and the more money they made, the more things they bought. This continuous buying in turn boosted industry and prices.

By 1919 the price of farms had risen another $35 an acre. Farms were now selling in Osceola County for $180 an acre -- a far cry from the $2.50 of the old preemption act.

Soldiers back from the war organized American Legion Posts. The first in Osceola County was organized in Ashton during November 1919 with 45 members. It was designated as the William Ben Hoffman Post in honor of the first young man of the Ashton community to be killed in the war.

The second post was organized a few days layer at Sibley and was named the George Mudge Post in honor of a Sibley high school student who was one of the first in the vicinity of Sibley to enlist in the services. He died of pneumonia shortly after his enlistment. The membership consisted of 55 ex-service men from and around Sibley. The following officers were chosen: O. K. Parrott, commander; Leo Gallagher, vice commander; Clifford Hanon, adjutant; L. D. Garberson, finance officer; Lovette Polley, historian; Chester Tregilus, master-at-arms; and Walter Carey, chaplain.

For several months the city council had been discussing the problem of lighting the street through the business section. On February 27 H. L. Emmert donated $2,000 to the town of Sibley for the purpose of erecting electroliers, and now they were able to go ahead.

By 1920 land values in the county had reached an average of $217.25 an acre, and other prices and wages were rising correspondingly.

Sibley continued to feel the effects of the boom prices. On August 6, 1931, a concrete and brick pavement project which started in April of that year was finished. It consisted of more than four miles of brick pavement for the downtown section, and concrete for the residential.

By September 1922 the heating plant which had been installed six years earlier, to use the waste heat of the Corliss light plant engine, had paid for itself and was formally turned over to the city of Sibley.

A cooperative creamery was organized in Sibley and began operations March 1, 1923. This creamery had a charter membership of 250 farmers who pledged their entire production of sweet cream from a combined total of 1,500 cows. A. M. Hein was chosen as the local manager. Within nine months the first report of the Sibley Cooperative Creamery stated that $150,000 had been paid to their patrons. It is estimated that this was approximately $25,000 more than would have been paid had the creamery not been cooperative.

The plant itself was to be paid for on a cent-per-pound basis. The local price of butter fat rose six or seven cents a pound because of it, and as more and more farmers of the community began to take advantage of the cooperative enterprise, the output leaped from 113 to 150 tubs per week in less than a year. Most of this butter was shipped directly to New York.

More and more farms were changing hands. Sometimes as many as 1,600 acres changed ownership within a period of two days. Exorbitant prices were being paid in some cases. George Balmer sold his place for $385 an acre! The Nick Roben place, four miles southwest of Sibley, sold for $325 an acre. The Odenga place brought $329 an acre.

Town people were buying better furniture and newer cars. The model T Ford, famous "Tin Lizzie" of the gumbo roads, was losing popularity. People wanted higher-priced cars.

The graveling of roads had been going on for some time. Osceola County spent $218,378 on the construction and maintenance of its 45 miles of primary roads. By 1923 the entire road system of the county, with the exception of 11 miles on the Ocheyedan-Harris road, had been graded and graveled, and the great Atlantic, Yellowstone and Pacific Highway was scheduled to cross the county as it linked the East and West.

During the years that followed, prices finally reached their peak and began to go down. Men found, in many cases, that there were not enough jobs to go around. The need for

farm products overseas decreased and the farmers, who a few years ago had paid $7.50 a day for farm help, were no longer pressed for men. Tractors in use on the farms made the problem worse for jobless farm hands.

Farmers who had bought expensive farms found that these had gone down in value. By January 1933 farmers were burning corn for fuel. It was better economy to burn corn than to sell it and buy coal or wood. Earl Truckenmiller, superintendent of public utilities at Sibley, purchased 750 bushels of corn at ten cents a bushel to be used as fuel in the Sibley light plant.

A community woodpile came into being in Sibley. Dead trees and branches were donated by the city from the parks and city streets. People who were unable to purchase fuel were allowed to take wood from this pile.

When transients migrating from place to place in quest of work came into Sibley and asked for help, they were directed to the woodpile. Here they might work (for no more than three hours) and for each hour of work the city issued a trade slip valued at 15 cents. These slips were accepted by the merchants as cash. The merchants redeemed the slips with the county auditor, who turned over the chopped wood to the people of the county who needed it most.

In May of 1933 young men in the county were joining the Civilian Conservation Corps. Needy families were given seeds and small plots of ground where they could raise gardens for themselves. Other families were forced to accept help from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The National Industrial Recovery Administration was started and 60 merchants in Sibley cooperated with it.

The farmers continued to raise corn. But there was entirely too much corn being raised, so much that people in the United States could not begin to use it all. As a result, the farmers had no market for it.

Then word came into the county that the Federal Government would lend money on the corn at the rate of 45 cents a bushel providing the farmers would seal it into cribs. This was to keep the value of corn at a fair level and to keep a reserve supply of corn on hand.

By January 1934 the farmers in Osceola County had sealed 400,000 bushels and there was still more remaining to be sealed.

To stabilize further the products of the farm, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration presented a plan under which the farmer would be paid by the Government to regulate

his production toward the end of achieving a national agricultural balance. The AAA was accepted in Osceola County by a vote of ten to one. Acres of corn land were taken out of production and turned to pasture. The raising of pork was cut to a low point. By September 1934 corn-hog checks began coming into the county. The farmers, in getting rid of their excess pigs, had donated them to the county for relief.

The Public Works Administration was a plan set up by the Federal Government enabling cities to secure cash grants for the building of public improvements. In 1935 Sibley got a PWA grant for approximately $45,000 for the building of an addition to the schoolhouse. Bonds for another $55,000 were raised in the city, and the work was started.

The new school was dedicated on the afternoon of November 11, 1936. In the evening the principal address was given by Miss Agnes Samuelson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Music was furnished by a mixed chorus and by the high school band. The school's early history was reviewed by Mrs. W. D. Shuttleworth. Dr. F. W. Winkler, president of the school board, spoke on "The School Today", discussing its purpose and future in the community. The benediction was pronounced by the Reverend M. L. Sunderlin.

Among the other WPA and PWA projects in the county were: the extension of the city heating system to the new school, the improvement of the public golf links, improvement of the courthouse and grounds, the building of a new pumphouse, and the several road programs. These were the graveling projects for Baker, Ocheyedan, Goewey, Horton, Viola, East Holman, and Allison townships, the widening and grading of the road at Ashton, and the street improvement at Ashton, Melvin, and Harris. Another schoolhouse was built in Holman Township. A sewer was established at Melvin.

During this time other buildings than schools were going up in Sibley. A cold storage plant was erected: a brick building 42 by 70 feet and containing 520 lockers. This plant made it possible for the farmers, by renting a locker, to keep their meats and other foods preserved almost indefinitely. The building itself was put up by the Christensen Construction Company of Sibley.

Also in 1936 a National Guard Company was organized: a medical unit consisting of 50 men and their officers. The Legion Hall was used as company headquarters.

Nineteen Thirty-Six was the year that began with a record blizzard to be long remembered by Osceola County people. For 38 consecutive days, the mercury hung between zero and 35° below. A 30- to 35-miles-an-hour wind whipped the snow

into drifts that defied the snow plows. The snow was driven so hard that it even cut its way into smooth window panes, permanently marring them.

Schools were closed in the towns and business houses were forced to close because of a fuel shortage. In Ocheyedan, coal was rationed in 500-pound lots. Some farmers, lacking fuel, were again forced to burn corn in their stoves and furnaces.

The Sibley Gazette Tribune of February 13, 1936, reported the storm in the following account of a doctor's attempt to travel through it:

"With the aid of the maintenance equipment of the Iowa Highway Commission, Dr. F.P.Winkler responded to a sick call Saturday afternoon in the home of Herman Winters, whose wife was seriously ill with diphtheria.

"With a nurse, Dr. Winkler boarded a big truck guided by Mr. Conway, through the raging blizzard, going via Highway 33 and Highway 9, thence south through Allendorf, to Mr. Winter's home, one and one half miles south of the big corner.

"The blizzard grew worse and owing to the increasing hazard, the nurse was left at Allendorf.

"It was impossible to see through the windshield, so that the driver was compelled to open the door to see his way.

"Returning from the Winter's home the truck became stuck just north of the Sharbondy Oil Station. The caterpillar tractor was finally secured. That also was abandoned, and the Doctor and his group of road men repaired to the Sharbondy Oil Station where they remained from Saturday night until late Sunday night, finally arriving home about midnight. For over 24 hours they were marooned in the station, feeding on knick-knacks, candy bars, etc. About a dozen men were crowded in the small station and even fuel shortage threatened for a time.

"Returning to Sibley Dr. Winkler was compelled to ride on the rear of an open truck.

"Dr. Winkler says it was the most strenuous 27 hours he ever experienced and says great credit is due to the highway employees for the safe return of the party. On account of poor visibility and the raging blizzard it was impossible to see but a few feet in advance of the machine."

In August the paving was completed on Highway 33 from

Sibley to Ashton, and a celebration was held. During the festivities, hat-snatching became prevalent. Mayor Koopman of Sibley and Mayor Ballard of Ashton, among others, lost their hats that day. The hats, once "snatched", were tossed into the soft cement or into the cement mixer where they were used, as Mayor Ballard explained it, to "reinforce the concrete."

In October 1938 a PWA grant of $8,325 was awarded Osceola County for the construction of bridges on the county's secondary road system, including the townships of Viola, Horton, Allison, and Ocheyedan.

The several years of depression, far from hurting good will in the county, had nurtured the community spirit born in earlier days, and on September 2, 1938, a "good will tour" was held. Bright and early at nine in the morning, 23 carloads of enthusiastic people set out from Sibley to visit surrounding towns and advertise the Sixteenth Annual Osceola County Fair, to be held at Sibley September 6 to 9. The caravan visited nearly 20 towns during the day, stopping in each only long enough to give a short program of music and to issue a personal invitation for the people to attend the fair.

All went well and the caravan was given a friendly welcome in one town after another until they reached Worthington, Minnesota, the last town to be visited that day. There the caravan met with unexpected difficulties.

Before leaving Sibley, S. S. Robinson, secretary of the fair association, had telephoned the Worthington Chamber of Commerce for permission to enter the city. The secretary had been absent but the girl who answered the telephone had advised Mr. Robinson that she thought a visit to the city would be quite in order.

The caravan entered Worthington, but no sooner had the musical program started than a police officer, feeling bound by his duty, demanded that the program stop and that the caravan leave the business district at once.

A. R. Mann, secretary of the Sibley Commercial Club, informed the officer that leave had been granted for the caravan to visit the city, and that the group would go within a few minutes. The police officer, however, insisted that the time to go was immediately.

"You're the boss," Mr. Mann told him. Then, hastening to the loud speaker they had brought along, he announced, "Get in your cars, boys. We're going home!" Half an hour later the caravan pulled into Sibley, car horns sounding a prolonged blast. They had completed a 225-mile trip. Later

the town of Worthington sent two Chamber of Commerce representatives to Sibley to express Worthington's regret concerning the unfortunate incident. Apologies were made for the policeman's interference and Sibley was assured that Worthington people would attend the fair.

In spite of the incident at Worthington and a day or two of bad weather, the fair was successful. LeMars won the polo match by a score of 3 to 2, and Sibley captured the cricket games by a 124 to 107 margin. By the afternoon of the second day there were over 400 entries placed for exhibition. Most notable among these was the herd of Black Welsh cattle owned by J. B. Warren of Lyon County, the only herd of its kind in the United States. The cattle were native to Northern Wales.

Hybrid corn was another feature of the fair. When P.G. Holden, an expert sponsored by the Iowa State Agricultural College, was teaching the desirable features of an ear of corn in the 1900's, one high school student inquired whether the fine-looking ears yielded more than the "bad" ones. He was told to try them. In experimenting he found that high yield depended on other properties than just straight rows and cylindrical ears, and he determined to find them. The studies of this young man, Henry A. Wallace of Des Moines, led to the development of hybrid corn, the result of crossing inbred varieties. It won the yield test over all others in 1925. The future Vice-President of the United States to many Iowa farmers was "Hybrid Henry."

Farmers gradually replaced fields of open-pollinated corn with the hybrid varieties which yielded from ten to 20 per cent more per acre.

The Government was taking more corn land out of production each year in Osceola County, and yet the acres left under cultivation, due to the increased yield of better varieties, were making the total corn crop greater each year. The year 1937 saw a record-breaking crop in the county, with four-and-a-half million bushels.

Two years later the Government had cut corn acreage nearly 20,000 below the 1937 level, and yet the corn yield for the year was 4,446,000 bushels, only a few thousand below the 1937 crop. The corn acreage was cut nearly 20 per cent, and the yield dropped little more than one per cent.

By the time the corn was picked in 1939 and a large portion of it sealed, Osceola County had the greatest corn carry-over in its history. The farmers of the county were receiving loans on their sealed grain.

Electric power on farms was made possible primarily by

the Rural Electrification Administration. By May 20, 1939, news had come to Osceola County that the REA had allotted a grant of $181,000 to the county for the improvement of the Sibley electric light plant and for the extension of power lines to the various farmers who had previously subscribed for the service. New and improved equipment soon replaced some of the older equipment in the Sibley plant. Additions and improvements were made on the buildings, and power lines were laid. Most of the work was done by the Spencer Construction Company, which at one time hired as many as 75 men on the project.

By June 6, 1940, there were 302 subscribers receiving electric service, and more than 184 miles of electric line radiated out of Sibley. During the next three days the Sibley Municipal Electric Plant held an open house ceremony. Over 600 persons attended, and 43 cities and towns were represented.

Once again, men of Osceola County in 1940 were preparing to take up arms against any possible combination of aggressors. With the passage of the Selective Service Training Act, the Osceola County Selective Service Board was organized with the following men named as officers: Elmer Beldt, chairman; A. R. Mann, secretary; W. T. Steiner, clerk; and Dr. F. P. Winkler, E. H. Koopman, and Lyle Fletcher, members. On October 16, 1940, an estimated 1,591 young men of Osceola County registered for the first peacetime training in United States history.

By this time several hundred miles of road paving and surfacing had also been completed in the county, and to further this work the County Board of Approval met late in 1940 to make plans for more paving and graveling. It was estimated by the board that at the close of the new two-year highway program there would be approximately 420 miles of surfaced road in the county.

The 1940 census showed that Sibley had grown to be a small city with a population of 2,356 persons, a gain of 486 over the census of 1930.

The county fair of September 1939 was made memorable by the presence of two special guests, Adorah Annette Neff Lyman and E. H. Romney, the oldest living residents in the county. The pioneer girl of 1871 had married H. C. Lyman in 1894 and had reared a family of 16 children while the county grew out of the days of its fairs on the courthouse square. She was 82 years old, 12 years older than the county's first settlement. Mr. Romney had come to Osceola County a year after the Neff's arrival, in 1872. Now they saw a caravan, not of covered wagons but of sleek automobiles, led by the Sibley band to herald the fair to 17 towns. When the fair

began, farmers drove comfortable family cars over shining ribbons of cement and parked on spacious grounds.

Mrs. Lyman and Mr. Romney saw the products of a rich farming region. The fruits and grains in the horticulture department looked as though a horn of plenty had been emptied on the tables. In the women's department stood rows of vegetables, fruits, and meats canned by cold pack or other scientific processes. There were luxuriant displays of flowers grown on farm premises.

At the school exhibits, boys and girls proudly pointed out work done in standardized rural or graded town schools. The Sibley High School students, by means of pictures and demonstrations, visualized the Future Farmers of America.

The 4-H boys and girls lingered near the be-ribboned stalls of the prize-winning pigs and calves. There was a good reason for pride, for buyers of 4-H baby beeves paid the youths a total of $11,564.59 for 104 head. The champion calf sold for $18.50 a cwt. People crowded in to see the 4-H girls demonstrate "Aids to good grooming", or to see the boys demonstrate stock judging. All barns for sheep, hogs, horses, and cattle were full to overflowing.

The townships of the county presented exhibits depicting the interests of the day: the Ever-Normal Granary, farm-to-market roads, National unity through the Farm Bureau, National defense through pork raising, ratless corncribs, soil conservation through AAA programs, and others. Ocheyedan won a red ribbon for its exhibition, "The Importance of Investment in Farm Philosophy."

Business firms demonstrated cold storage possibilities, hybrid corn developments, and modern farm implements. The cooperative creamery displayed delectable products.

The county nurses displayed baby incubators and numerous health charts, emphasizing the fact that Osceola's most important crop was its boys and girls.

In the grandstand, fair visitors watched skaters performing on artificial ice, and saw the Shriner's nationally known White Horse Patrol of pure white Arabian horses.

When the fair ended, the judges agreed that the number and quality of the livestock were highest in the history of the fairs.

Osceola's hard struggles and this subsequent development had occurred in less than seven decades since Captain Huff's slow-moving wagon had first lurched onto its prairie in 1870.

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