

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY.

BY D. C. BLOOMER.

(Concluded from page 236.)

THE market price of all kinds of farm products was very low at the beginning of 1873. In January, corn sold at Council Bluffs at 16 cents per bushel, oats, 18 cents, barley, 30 cents, wheat, from 50 to 65 cents. These figures slowly advanced during the year, and in December wheat stood at 80 to 90, corn at 36, and oats at 28 cents. The crops were a fair average. The wheat was a good deal injured by heavy rains in June and July, but these helped the corn forward and secured a good yield. The autumn was very mild, and fine Indian summer weather continued almost until the end of the year. The winter of 1873-4 was a remarkably pleasant one all over western Iowa. It hardly rained from October to April, and the largest fall of snow did not exceed four or five inches in depth.

Six new civil townships were this year created by the Board of Supervisors, viz: Keg Creek, Wright, Pleasant, Layton, Norwalk, and Hazel Dell. This increased the whole number of civil townships in the county to twenty-two. Norwalk and Hazel Dell were formed out of the old township of Crescent, and there was a protracted and bitter discussion among the people on the question of division, resulting finally in the formation of two new organizations, leaving the old name to apply only to township 76 of range 44. Layton township was so named in honor of Capt. Joshua C. Layton, an old resident of the county. Simeon Wright, whose name was also commemorated in the same way, had been for many years a practical farmer and resident of Walnut township, from which the new township

of Wright was set off. Both Pleasant and Layton townships were set off from the old township of Knox.

The tax levied this year for general purposes by the Board of Supervisors was $13\frac{1}{2}$ mills, which was largely increased by the school and bridge taxes in the different townships. In Council Bluffs city the total levy, including city taxes, was $34\frac{1}{4}$ mills on the dollar. This large taxation was very severely felt, the general dullness in business and low prices of farm produce making it very difficult for the farmers, especially, to pay their taxes. The sum of \$46,560 was collected from the railroads. At the September term of the Board, a settlement was made with H. T. Clark for the construction of twelve new iron and wood bridges, the total amount paid him being \$11,391.80. The total expense of criminal prosecutions during the year was \$5,388.

During the summer, county warrants were for the first time in the history of the county paid on presentation to the treasurer. This very desirable result had been reached by the bouding of all the outstanding warrants in 1872, and by careful economy on the part of the Board of Supervisors. The great expense of the courts, however, did not permit warrants to remain at par for any great length of time, and by the end of the year they again sold at 85 and 90 cents.

Council Bluffs continued to be the resort of the light-fingered genty, who, by three carde monte and other tricks, were enabled to plunder the unwary of their money. The most deplorable case of this kind was that of the Rev. W. R. Mosher, of Story county, who, coming to the city with a large quantity of butter, was induced to risk his entire stock in trade on the turn of a card. Of course he lost. He appealed to the authorities for redress, and the butter was finally regained, but the excitement and mortification was too much for the unfortunate victim, and he returned to his family with a mind shattered and crazed, and in a few weeks more his death was announced. As the year wore on, more vigorous measures were adopted to rid the community of these pests, and a very fair degree of success crowned the efforts of the police, but still, in spite of all precaution,

men were still found so foolish as to risk their money, and always lost, as a penalty for their folly.

A deep religious feeling was aroused in Council Bluffs during the month of March, by a series of union meetings held at first in the different churches, but finally in the largest hall in the city. They were conducted several days by the Reverend H. P. Hammond, a noted revivalist, who preached and exhorted with remarkable fervor, both in the hall and on the streets. He came here from Des Moines, escorted by some sixty of the prominent residents of the capital, to bear their testimony to the wonderful success which had attended his labors in that city. The result of these meetings was shown in large accessions to the membership of the different churches.

The city election in Council Bluffs was rather a tame affair, there being hardly any contest except for a single officer. The officers chosen, either without opposition, or by large majorities, were as follows: Mayor, N. D. Laurence; Recorder, F. A. Burke; Marshall, H. A. Jackson; Treasurer, Jacob Williams; Assessor, T. B. Bowman; Aldermen, H. H. Field, E. L. Shugart, R. L. Douglass, W. A. Wood, Geo. E. Tabor, W. C. James, and J. H. Warner. The officers appointed by the council were, City Engineer, L. P. Judson; City Attorney, E. E. Aylesworth; Supervisor, E. Thornton.

An ordinance had passed the previous month, largely reducing the salaries of the mayor and other city officials.

The principal improvement of general importance consummated this season by the city council, was the cutting of a road through the high hill in the northeastern part of the city, thereby greatly improving the approaches to the city from that direction. This work cost \$3,128.64, of which amount \$1,000 was paid by the county, the balance being paid by the city.

At the annual school election held in March, the officers elected were S. H. Riddle, president; J. S. Forman, treasurer; and Wm. Groneweg and H. H. Field, directors. The total expenditure for the previous year, exclusive of pay-

ment of bonds, was \$25,702.55. Twenty-six teachers were employed in the public schools of the city.

On the 29th of April, quite a large fire occurred in the village of Avoca. Several buildings were burned, including the one occupied by the Avoca Delta printing office, which was entirely destroyed. During the following month the county was visited by several severe storms, doing considerable damage to buildings, and partly unroofed the high school building and institution for the deaf and dumb in Council Bluffs.

The Council Bluffs Daily Tribune, by Berry & Smith, was commenced early in May, and continued to be published for three or four months. In November, this was succeeded by the Daily Globe, by Moorehead & Co., which is still published. The Tribune was independent in politics, while the Globe took ground against the national administration, and was soon recognized as the opposition organ. The other papers published in the county were, the Nonpareil, daily and weekly; the Republican, and the Record and Farmer, both weekly; and the Central Christian Advocate, monthly. The Avoca Delta soon appeared in a new dress, under the management of B. W. Adams.

The questions growing out of the terminus of the Union Pacific railroad still continued to occupy public attention. The transfer train maintained by that road proved none the less vexatious and burdensome from long usage. A case was made up for the decision of the attorney general of the United States, which, it was thought, might tend to finally settle the question. It did not do so, however, and in July, Messrs. Hall & Co. commenced a suit in the circuit court of the United States, for Iowa, asking for a peremptory mandamus to compel the Union Pacific Company to run its trains across the bridge to Council Bluffs. Various questions were raised as to the right of the plaintiffs to maintain this suit, all of which were decided in their favor. A final decision has not yet been reached.

On the 31st of May the United States land office was removed from Council Bluffs to Des Moines. It was first

established on the 12th of March, 1853. During the twenty years in which it had been kept open, nearly all the public lands in south-western Iowa, excepting those donated by congress to the railroads, had been sold. The persons who had held the office of register during this period were, Joseph H. D. Street, L. W. Babbitt, James Pollard, L. S. Hill, Frank Street, Sylvanus Dodge, and Nehemiah Baldwin. The office of receiver had been held by S. M. Ballard, Enos Lowe, A. H. Palmer, and D. C. Bloomer.

The villages of Avoca, Walnut, and Neola, on the Chicago & Rock Island railroad, continued steadily to increase in population. A number of new buildings were erected in each. Avoca took the lead, and gave evidence of a steady and durable growth. Several churches were commenced and a fine large brick school house was erected. The surrounding country is among the most beautiful and fertile portions of western Iowa. Indeed, the whole eastern part of the county received large additions to its population this year. New farms were opened in great numbers on the prairies, and the demand for land for actual settlement was active and continuous.

The Fourth of July was intensely hot, but in the afternoon the air was cooled by a storm of wind and rain. The grangers celebrated the day by gatherings in Crescent, Knox, Kane, and other townships, and in Council Bluffs there was a large turn-out at the races on the fair grounds.

The annual conference of Latter Day Saints in September, was the largest collection of people ever convened in the county. People were present not only from all parts of Iowa, but also from several other states, some having come a distance of over three hundred miles in their wagons, to attend the meeting. Joseph Smith and all his leading elders and co-workers were in attendance, and the services, which extended over several days, were closed on Sunday with a public baptism in the presence of many thousands of spectators. The conference was held in a beautiful grove in Kane township.

On the 26th of August, Charles Granville, while engaged

in threshing wheat on the farm of William Garner, in Kane township, was fatally stabbed by a knife in the hands of Thomas Davis, who declared that the deed was done in self-defence and while under the control of overmastering passion. He immediately surrendered himself to the officers of justice, and during the following winter was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to the penitentiary for six years. Granville was a young man and a new comer, while Davis had been a resident of the county for a number of years.

The great financial panic of 1873 was very severely felt in this county, paralyzing business to a large extent, and throwing many persons out of employment. There was, however, only a slight run on the banks and banking offices, and all were enabled to keep their doors open and promptly pay all demands made upon them. The line of discounts was, however, reduced to a very low limit, it being found for a time almost impossible to make collections. At this time the First National, the Pacific National, and the Savings Banks, were in operation, and also the banking house of Officer & Pusey, in Council Bluffs.

The directors of the agricultural society determined early in the season not to offer any premiums for the exhibition of fast horses at the annual county fair. This was done in consequence of the general belief that horse-racing, as it is commonly termed, occupied too conspicuous a place in such exhibitions. The "reform" did not prove very successful. When the fair came off in September, the "horsemen" held themselves aloof, and their places were not very well filled by those who had been most frequent in their complaints that these gentlemen with their horses had hitherto formed the principal attractions on such occasions. There was a large number of cattle on the grounds, and the show of agricultural implements was very good. But the farmers brought in but a meagre quantity of the productions of their fields and gardens, nor did they attend themselves or their families in any considerable numbers. The art hall was also poorly filled, so that the usual attractions were

wanting. Finally, the weather proved cold and unpleasant and hence the fair of 1873 was not considered up to the mark. No premiums were paid though many were awarded, the money being absorbed in the payment of old debts. All this, it was said, was because the fast trotters were not placed on exhibition, and "pools" permitted to be sold to those having money to risk on their favorite steeds. The experiment will hardly be repeated in Pottawattamie county.

The census taken by the state in 1873 gave the population of the county as 28,171, divided among the different townships as follows: Belknap, 157; Bloomer, 601; Center, 711; Crescent, 1,167; Grove, 515; Hardin, 216; James, 161; Kane, 1,362; Knox, 2,025; Macedonia, 403; Neola, 225; Rockford, 726; Silver Creek, 380; Walnut Creek, 614; Washington, 156; York, 225; Council Bluffs city, 1st ward, 1,601; 2d ward, 1,760; 3d ward, 1,723; 4th ward, 1,898; 5th ward, 1,311; 6th ward, 2,232. The total number of voters, 3,960. Number of dwellings, 3,507. Number of families, 3,598. Excess of males over females, 847. Number of acres of improved land, 79,964. The number of schools in the county, 101. Number of teachers, 160. Amount paid to teachers, \$38,884.46. Total number of pupils enrolled, 3,988. The county superintendent reported a great deficiency in good qualified teachers. He also reported that, "with corn at fifteen cents and wheat at fifty cents, it was difficult to keep all the schools running even so much as six months."

The whole number of votes at the election in October was 2,842. Governor Carpenter's majority was 326. L. S. Axtell was elected representative by 370 majority over J. M. Talbot. George Doughty, sheriff, by 324 over J. B. Blake. Perry Reel, treasurer, by 48 majority over J. W. Chapman. David Tostevin, county surveyor, by 37 majority over L. P. Judson. R. L. Douglass, county supervisor, by 47 majority over Wm. Garner. John Bennett was elected auditor, and Wooster Fay county supervisor, without opposition. The county offices were about equally divided

between the two parties. The question of dividing the county, although not then directly at issue, entered largely into the contest, and probably controlled the result on treasurer, over which the most interest was excited. Mr. Axtell pledged himself to vote for submitting the question to the people.

Tuesday, November 18th, was a day of great excitement in Council Bluffs. Two noted prize-fighters had arranged to have a mill somewhere in the county. The sheriff, apparently anxious to prevent it, as were all decent people, requested the governor to send him material aid to that end. In response to this appeal, two uniformed military companies came on from Des Moines and were placed under command of Sheriff Doughty. They arrived early in the morning of the above day, and were stationed at the depot with the avowed intention of arresting the principals in the proposed fight. Well, the trains came over from Omaha filled with several hundred people of all shades, colors, and descriptions, but neither of the doughty champions of the ring were on board, so the train went on its way until it crossed the county line into Mills county. Here the ring was formed, the two principals made their appearance, having been brought on the ground in carriages. Two or three rounds were fought, when the affair terminated in a row, and all parties started for their homes, and the military companies returned to Des Moines.

On the evening of December 7th, the silver wedding of Judge Caleb Baldwin was duly observed in Council Bluffs by a large assemblage of his friends and neighbors. The occasion was one of unalloyed pleasure to all present. The Judge and his excellent wife received numerous valuable presents, including a silver dinner set, presented by the members of the bar in the county.

The failure of the Texas Pacific Railroad, or the continuance of work upon it, brought back to the county this fall a large number of contractors, mechanics, and laborers. Many of these found themselves on their return without work or employment of any kind, the general dullness in

business and uncertainty in money matters adding to the difficulties of the situation. The county, however, was full of grain, and by economy and patience the winter was passed, and all who were willing to work were generally enabled to support themselves and families comfortably.

This year the order of the Patrons of Husbandry largely increased in the county. Granges were established in nearly all the townships, and by the end of the year the whole number reached forty. The membership was quite numerous and included many of the most intelligent and substantial farmers. On the 4th of December the anniversary of the order was celebrated in Council Bluffs. In spite of the bad weather, the attendance was quite large and addresses were delivered by Mr. Prindle, L. S. Axtell, J. Sterling Morton, and Miss Julia H. Garretson. Grange stores were established in Council Bluffs and Avoca, and also an elevator at the latter place. D. B. Clark, L. W. Babbitt, L. S. Axtel, J. M. Talbot, and J. C. Layton, were among the prominent members of the order.

OLD SETTLERS' POEM.

Written for and read before the Old Settlers of Van Buren County, at their Annual Meeting at Keosauqua, Iowa, August 19th, 1874.

BY KATE HARRINGTON.

KIND friends, 'twas something new for me to say
I'd meet the dear Old Settlers here to-day.
'Tis passing strange I should consent to come,
To leave the privacy of hearth and home,
And thus present a paradox to you—
A maiden effort at full forty-two.

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