Edwards County, Kansas, 1872-1900

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EDWARDS COUNTY, KANSAS
1872-1900

This study of Edwards County presents a general history of the county from 1872-1900, stressing its agricultural development. After a brief discussion of the natural setting and the early settlement and organization, the period is divided into three eras: 1877-97, and 1897-1900. Some outstanding events are recorded. Primary sources utilized include contemporary newspaper accounts and the county survey, in the main, are publications of the Kansas Farm Historical Society and the Kansas State Historical Society and the county survey. Records of the Edwards County Times, the Kansas Farmer, and the Kansas Farmer are also discussed.

The writer has included biographical sketches of the settlers, early residents, and early business enterprises. Important changes from 1872 through 1900 are discussed, and the Edwards County Times, April 30, 1887, and the Kansas Farmer, April 30, 1872, and subsequent railroads in Edwards County. Appendix A

being

A thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

by

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Date May 15, 1961

Approved

Major Professor

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ABSTRACT

EDWARDS COUNTY, KANSAS
1872-1900

This study of Edwards County presents a general history of the county from 1872-1900; stress is on the agricultural development. After a brief discussion of the natural setting and the early settlement and organization of the county, the period covered is divided into three sections: adversity, 1874-1883; boom, 1884-1887; and readjustment, 1888-1900. General agricultural conditions and outstanding events occurring during each period are recorded. Primary sources utilized consists of contemporary newspaper accounts and the secondary sources, in the main, are publications of the Kansas State Historical Society and the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

Kinsley, the county seat and the largest and oldest town in the county, received more attention than the smaller towns and rural areas of the county. However, the founding of Offerle, Nettleton, Lewis, Fellsburg, Kirkfield, Wendell, and Belpre are also discussed.

The writer has included three maps: the county in 1887; boundary changes from 1867 to 1886; and an excerpt from the Kinsley Mercury, April 30, 1887, showing the proposed and completed railroads in Edwards County. Appendix A
shows the population of the county, and Kinsley, from 1875 to 1960; Appendix B records the wheat and corn acreage and average yield, and the total value of all field crops, from 1875 to 1900.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research for this thesis was greatly facilitated by the special consideration accorded to the author by Elsie Jenkins, Librarian, and Edna Brown, Assistant Librarian, of the Kinsley Public Library. The author also especially appreciates the suggestions and constructive criticism made by the members of his graduate committee: Dr. Raymond L. Welty, chairman, Dr. Eugene R. Craine, Dr. Wilda M. Smith and Dr. Roberta C. Stout.
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Maps

Edwards County in 1887

Edwards County Boundary Changes

Railroads in Edwards County and Proposed Lines

An invaluable source of the activities is the economic history, which reflects the activities and resources as they appear in the legal record.

Edwards County in J. A. Bate's History of Kansas, Vol I, Kansas, First published in 1875.

Kansley, March 14, 1875.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There have been no general histories written concerning Edwards County during the twentieth century. However, a large amount of material which records various aspects of the county's history is available. The purpose of this study has been to collect the available material, in addition to considerable material which has been gleaned from the various newspapers of the county extending over the period 1877-1900, and to write a brief history of the county from 1872-1900. Edwards County has been, and is, dominated by agricultural pursuits and therefore, major stress has been given to this aspect of the county's history. An attempt has been made however, to utilize contemporary accounts which reflect the attitudes and reactions of the residents as they appear in the local papers.

An invaluable source for the study of the history of Edwards County is J. A. Walker's, "Views of Kinsley and Vicinity, and a Sketch of the History of Edwards County, Kansas," first published in the Edwards County Leader, Kinsley, March 14, 28, 1878. J. A. Walker came to Kansas

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1Homer E. Socolofsky, (ed.), Kansas History in Graduate Study (Manhattan: Kansas State University, 1959), map facing page 1.
in 1873 and wrote his history of Edwards County five years after the first substantial settlement in the county. This work was of such value that it was edited and reprinted in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, August, 1940, by James C. Malin who stated at the time that:

There are occasional instances where an early historical sketch of the beginnings of a community are of sufficient importance to justify reprinting. The one offered here fits the test . . . .

Since Walker's history was written so close to the events, Malin wrote a brief introduction in order to place the history in broader historical perspective.

Professor Malin deserves a great amount of credit for his intensive study into the period extending from the late 1880's to the early 1890's. Malin has also made substantial contributions to the history of Edwards County in his works, "The Turnover of Farm Population in Kansas," and "The Evolution of a Rural Community; An Introduction to the History of Wayne Township, Edwards County, Kansas." Allan G. Bogues' detailed study of "Farm Debtors in Pioneer

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4Ibid., IV, 339-372; *Lewis Press*, June 1-July 6, 1933.
Kinsley" and Minnie D. Millbrook's article on "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers, Gentleman From Ness," which relates Rodgers' activities in Pawnee County while Edwards County was part of the former, have supplied the author with valuable facts.5 The historical editions of the Kinsley Mercury, occasioned by the eightieth and eighty-fifth anniversary of the settlement of the county, have also been a valuable source of information, although many of the articles were repetitious and variations of Walker's history and Professor Malin's studies.6

Agricultural and population statistics were gathered from the publications of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, including the Agriculture Reports from 1874-1876 and the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1877-1960. Considerable information relative to schools, churches, banks, newspapers, vacant government and railroad lands, land laws, national and state origins of population, and post offices was found in the earlier Biennial Reports. Although their files are not complete, the Kansas State Historical Library at Topeka was found to have most of the


6Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953; August 14, 1958.
newspapers printed in the county. The Deed Records at the county seat were utilized to verify the amount of land granted to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. These records also contained a copy of the indenture between the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and the trustees of the Arkansas Valley Town Company, effected March 18, 1873, in Suffolk County, Massachusetts. After the Arkansas Valley Town Company, a company designed to promote settlement in the Arkansas Valley, had satisfied the terms of the indenture, a copy of the Kinsley city deed was filed for record on March 3, 1880.7

Because a majority of the studies made on Edwards County center around Kinsley, the writer endeavored to find as much information as possible about the lesser towns and the rural areas of the county. Owing to the fact that most of the early papers in the county were used primarily as propaganda organs, the amount of historical material found in these papers was meagre. Although each of the smaller villages of the county generally made weekly correspondence to the larger papers in Kinsley, the information consisted mainly of news possessing only local interest.

The value of the study of county history, which

7Deed Records, Edwards County, B, 324, 329.
amounts to a study of how individuals adapt themselves to their environment, an adaptation which never becomes absolute, is partially justified by George L. Anderson. Speaking specifically of the settlers in western Kansas, Anderson expresses his opinion that successful

... types of adaptation were the results of folk-processes: and the most fruitful technique for the historian is to study a community in its entirety, with the emphasis upon the role of individuals as portrayed in local newspaper and manuscript sources. 8

Professor Malin observes that the organized-colony idea

... was a type of social idealism which was attractive to many people of that decade [1870] who were interested in social reform and the betterment of the condition of the poorer classes. 9

The settlement of Edwards County by organized-colonies, therefore, is a concrete example of this social idealism at work. Malin also points out that the thesis which maintained that the frontier acted as "a safety valve through which the problems of recurrent American depressions were solved" was not applicable to the frontier settlement of Edwards County. 10


10Ibid., 262.
The People's Party or the Populists assumed national proportions in the 1890's; many historians interpret the Populist movement as a reform reaction to the corruption within the established political parties. This hypothesis is tested in Edwards County by Malin and he concludes that the Populist party gave the people of the county no better government than previous political parties.¹¹

Because of the limitation of time the writer has not attempted to follow the method suggested by Professor Malin's works, that is, the testing of broad historical generalizations in a particular local situation; however, cognizance of the potential value of local history has been a great encouragement. The intention of the following study has been to give a synthetic view of the history of Edwards County. Such an approach, the writer believes, possesses merits not to be found in analytic studies.

¹¹ Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 176.
Source - Biennial Report, 1885-1886, 197.
CHAPTER II

NATURAL SETTING

Prominently placed on U. S. Highway 50, a sign in Kinsley reads: "New York, 1541 miles; San Francisco, 1541 miles." Kinsley, the county seat of Edwards County, is located in South Central Kansas and in the High Plains section of the Great Plains physiographic province. With the exception of two townships, the northern boundary of Edwards County is the 38th parallel and the eastern boundary, within a tolerance of approximately one mile, is formed by the 99th meridian. Pawnee County borders Edwards County on the north, Pratt and Stafford on the east, Kiowa on the south, and Ford and Hodgeman on the west. Having seventeen townships, with an area of 391,680 acres, Edwards County ranks eighty-second in size among Kansas counties.

According to the Soil Conservation Service map of Edwards County, there are no class one soils within the

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2 See map facing page 31. Ten townships were added to Edwards County in 1875 and in 1886 these townships were detached from the county. Liberty has been taken by the writer to exclude these ten townships from the scope of this work. The above ranking, therefore, is based upon the present size of the county in relation to the existing 105 counties.
county, soils suitable for cultivation with no special conservation practices. However, the majority of the soils of the county are suitable for cultivation, ranging from simple conservation practices to limited use and intensive practices.

Edwards County is divided by the Arkansas River, which enters near the southwest corner, and, flowing northeast, crosses the northern boundary at about the center.

North and West of the river is an eastward extension of the "Moist, Semiarid High Plains" consisting of smooth to gently rolling divides separated by drainageways along which the slopes are moderate to strongly rolling. South of the river the gently undulating lands, broken by hummocky and dune topography, are characteristic of the "Great Bend Sandy Plains."

R. I. Throckmorton, formerly head of the Department of Agronomy at Kansas State College, has classified the soils of Edwards County into four major groups. Along the Arkansas River is a strip of soils, about three to four miles in width, which are classified as dune sand; and, although

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not suitable for cultivation, they are suitable for grazing with moderate restrictions in use. South of this strip of dune sand the soils have been formed from a mixture of outwash material and the weathering of Plains marl. They "have a deep subsoil which permits of deep penetration of moisture and plant roots." Sandy in nature, they are adapted to the production of corn, sorghums, alfalfa, sweet clover and wheat. North of the Arkansas River, excluding the extreme northwestern corner of the county, the soils are classified as Western residual soils. These soils were formed from limestone, sandstone, and shale with limestone predominating and are suited especially to wheat and the sorghums. A small area in the extreme northwestern corner of the county has essentially the same types of soils as are found south of the dune sand strip but they are classified as heavy soils, not nearly as sandy as the former.

In addition to the belt of dune sand south of the Arkansas River, sand hills are also located across the central part and along the southern boundary of the county. Because of the sandy nature of the soils, south of the river

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6 Ibid., 94; 99-101.
or in the Arkansas Valley, there is a small amount of run-off of precipitation, most of what does occur collects in small depressions and shallow meandering drainage-ways. The only drainage-way of significance south of the river is Rattlesnake Creek, located in the southeastern portion of the county. North of the Arkansas River, the Big and Little Coon Creeks converge northeast of Kinsley and flow out of the county, at the northern boundary, approximately one and one-half miles west of the Arkansas River.

The average elevation of Edwards County is 2,000 feet above sea level. At the Ford-Edwards county line, north of Offerle, is located the highest point in the county which is about 2,300 feet. In northwestern Edwards County the land is relatively flat, and the maximum relief in this upland area is generally less than 100 feet. South of the river, the topography ranges from relatively flat areas to irregular areas containing high sand hills. However, most of the sand hills are adjacent to the Arkansas River and the areas of more moderate relief are flat to hummocky.

The average gradient of the river is approximately seven


feet per mile.\textsuperscript{9}

Native flora of the county consisted of grasses, there being practically no timber in the area before its settlement.\textsuperscript{10} Types of native grasses adhere generally to the same geographic divisions used in classifying the soils of the county. South of the strip of dune sand which parallels the Arkansas River, the native vegetation consisted of a mixture of big and small bluestem and sand bluestem. The sand hills produced tall grasses, mainly sand bluestem and approximately fifteen per cent Indian and sand love grasses. These were tall grasses, sometimes growing five feet or higher. North of the river, the short grasses, buffalo and blue grama, were the dominant species. Most of the native grasses north of the river were blue grama; buffalo grass composed only a very small percentage of the native grasses.\textsuperscript{11}

As to climate in this section of the High Plains, Richard Sheridan observes,

\textit{From a geographical and topographical point of}

\textsuperscript{9}McLaughlin, "Geology and Ground-Water," 14.

\textsuperscript{10}Biennial Report, 1877-1878, 196.

view South Central Kansas is of interest because it is a transitional area; the eastern three fifths lies in the Prairie Plains while the western two fifths lies in the Great Plains.12

Using the 98th meridian as the dividing line between the Prairie Plains and Great Plains, Sheridan states that these two areas are similar with the exception of the amount of rainfall.13 Prior to the settlement of the Great Plains, they were known as the Great American Desert. C. Warren Thornthwaite succinctly expressed the nature of the problem faced by early settlers in this region, in this manner:

In a desert, you know what to expect of the climate and plan accordingly. The same is true of the humid regions. Men have been badly fooled by the semiarid regions because they are sometimes humid, sometimes desert, and sometimes a cross between the two.14

Insufficient moisture for successful farming, therefore, was the principal obstacle to the settlement of this area. And, because precipitation was sporadic, adjustment to the climate of the High Plains was not easy for the early settlers.

Compounding the problem of insufficient rainfall, moderate to high wind velocity and a large number of sunny days contribute to rapid evaporation. Fortunately, three-

12Sheridan, "An Economic History," 5.

13Ibid.

fourths of the annual rainfall in this area occurs during the growing season, but this is partially offset by heavy downpours which diminishes its benefits. Based upon the records of the United States Weather Bureau station at Trousdale, located in the southeastern part of the county, the greatest moisture deposit recorded was 39.11 inches at Trousdale in 1944. Early recordings of precipitation for the county are not available, but the average annual moisture deposit at Trousdale, from 1915 to 1945, was 22.44 inches.

From 1947 to 1956 unofficial records have been kept at Kinsley, which is located nearer the center of the county. These records, compiled by the Soil Conservation Service, show that the average annual moisture deposit from 1947 to 1951 equaled 26.61 inches, and from 1952-1956, 15.86 inches. If 22.44 inches is used as the normal average annual precipitation, the five year period from 1947 to 1951 received 119% of the normal, and the 1952 to 1956 period received 71% of the normal. Illustrating the fluctuations in moisture deposits, which results in seasons of plenty and dearth, was the record-breaking year of 1944, with 39.11 inches at Trousdale.

dale, compared with 8.71 inches falling at Kinsley in 1956, another record-breaking year. 17

This uncertainty of sufficient moisture was the greatest single problem of the settlers in Western Kansas. Their success or failure depended on how they adapted themselves to the physical characteristics of the grassland region. Furthermore, approximately ninety per cent of the settlers in Edwards County in 1875 were

Accustomed to a moist and cooler climate, [and] the weeks of dry weather, with cloudless sky, blazing sun, and hot winds which pitilessly sucked the last drops of moisture from the early vegetation, filled them with despair. 18

Slightly more than fifty per cent of the settlers in the county in 1875 came from the state of Massachusetts and these pioneers, accustomed to a humid climate, had to adapt themselves to an environment which provided no native timber. Moreover, the principal mineral resources consisted of sand, gravel and some limestone which could be used for building stone. 19

17 Raymond L. Schninker, Conservation Agent for Edwards County, personal interview, January 25, 1961. Precipitation records and percentages are based upon the unpublished statistics kept by the Conservation Agent at Kinsley.


19 Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Agriculture Report, 1875 (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1875), 259.
They also had to become acclimatized to a wide range of temperatures, accented by hot winds in the summer and blizzards in the winter. An early settler describes her impression of the summer winds in this manner:

The air was so dry here then that they would slice buffalo meat one half to one inch thick and tack it against the house and in a few minutes it would sear over with the hot dry winds so that insects would not come near it, and it would dry very soon. Thus, the natural setting of Edwards County offered to settlers serious challenges which, even in retrospect, resulted in expressions of despair like the following:

The sand hills were almost without grass, and they drifted about in the wind, and oh, those sand storms that we had in 1879 and '80, when it would grow dark and we would think that after months of waiting the long wished for rain was coming at last, but we were disappointed as it was a sand storm, and the pebbles rattled against the windows and the corn curled up its blades and turned yellow as a result of the hot dry, south wind. In 18 months there was not enough rain to lay the dust in the road.

Further adversities which confronted the settlers of the High Plains were the severe winter storms. In the spring and summer months, ripening crops were threatened by destructive hail storms and frightening tornadoes were a menace to the inhabitants. Blizzards, although there is

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20 *Kinsley Mercury*, August 14, 1958, Sec. A. Miss Ida Mosher, author of the quotation, came to Kinsley with her parents in 1878.

no precise definition of this term, usually denote storms similar to the following, as described in the *Kinsley Mercury* on January 9, 1886.

The wind blew a gale from the north, while the thermometer soon sank several degrees below zero, and the snow, which was all the time falling fast, was blown across the face of the earth in clouds so dense that at times the eye could not penetrate it for a distance of more than one or two rods. The storm continued all day Thursday, the mercury still falling, until at four o'clock p.m. the thermometer registered eight below. About six o'clock the gale commenced to decrease in force and before Friday morning had ceased entirely, though the cold had increased to 18° below.

This storm was one of the most severe in the recorded history of Kansas, "50 to 100 persons were frozen to death and cattle by tens of thousands destroyed in two weeks of zero weather." Aside from its climatic uniqueness, "the first extensive settlement of the southern Great Plains by farmers began the year after the great blizzard of 1886 killed many of the cattle on the big ranches." 23

Fortunately, there was an abundance of water for domestic use and stock wells in Edwards County. South of


watching a drove of antelope which came to drink at a pond near her parent's homestead. Antelope meat was available for a time in the market at three cents a pound. There were buffalo trails near their place, Mrs. Buchanan remembers, but remarked that they never saw any buffalo near their homestead. There were buffalo in the area, however, when the first settlers came to Edwards County. "If it had not been for the buffalo," an early settler recalled, "I do not know what the first settlers would have done for meat and their bones sold for more than their hides." "In January, 1873, Fred Gardner shot six buffalo, with six consecutive shots, from the window of the telegraph office," but this easy hunting did not last long, because in July, 1875, "W. F. Blanchard killed the last buffalo known to have been killed in Edwards County." 

A few deer were in the area. Zebulon M. Pike, while passing through the vicinity of Edwards County, recorded in his journal that his party killed one buffalo, one elk and

27Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. A.
28Ibid.
29Ibid., August 14, 1958, Sec. A.
the Arkansas River the depth of water ranges from three to fifty feet, most of the wells being about fifteen to twenty feet in depth. North of the river, the depth to water is greater, the deepest wells in the county being located in this area, but few exceeding 100 feet in depth. Kinsley, which is located north of the Arkansas River, obtains its municipal supply of water today from wells south of the river. These wells provide water of much better quality while the water supply north of the river is considerably harder.

During the period of early settlement the wells were simply constructed. Miss Ida Mosher states

There were very few windmills. I don't remember but one that Mr. [John] Fitch had at Nettleton, and he used that as power to grind feed in his mill which he brought from Chicago. Several had open wells with a windlass, rope and buckets, where their wells were deep. I remember ours . . . which had a barrel with both ends out set in the ground and a small box over it, and we dipped the water with a pail and a rope, and a man could stand on the sand in the bottom and look out but he could not dip it dry, for the water ran so fast, and water could be found at a depth of 18 inches, quite near the river . . . .

Another asset to the early settlers of the county was the fauna in the area. Mrs. C. L. Buchanan, who came to Edwards County with her parents early in 1876, recalls

24 McLaughlin, "Geology and Ground-Water," Plate No. 2.
25 Ibid., 43.
26 Kinsley Mercury, August 14, 1958, Sec. A.
one deer.31 Pike also recorded seeing the first wild horses that were seen on his journey in 1806. These may have been in Edwards County.32 One account of the early settlement of the county states that seventy-five wild horses were chased from Rattlesnake Creek to Kinsley, and corraled.33

Although jack rabbits, prairie dogs and coyotes are classified as pests, they did furnish some useful purpose to the early settlers. In 1887, Clint Beck, who came from Illinois, relates that "cow chips was our main fuel and jack rabbits our meat."34 Rattlesnakes and prairie dogs were plentiful and coyote hunting became an early form of recreation for the residents of the county.

31Milo Milton Quaife, (ed.), The Southwestern Expedition of Zebulon M. Pike (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1925), 65. According to Elliott Coues, who collaborated with Quaife, Pike camped opposite the present site of Kinsley on October 31, 1806 (64, note 2). Pike recorded killing the buffalo, elk and deer on October 31, 1806.

32Ibid., 63. If Coues' conjecture concerning the camping site of Pike, on October 31, 1806, is correct, the sighting of the wild horses on October 29 would localize Pike's expedition somewhere in southern Pawnee County or northern Edwards County. Coues locates Pike's party at the Pawnee Fork of the Arkansas River on October 23, 1806 (61, note 1).

33Kinsley Mercury, August 14, 1958, Sec. B.

34Ibid., August 14, 1958, Sec. A.
CHAPTER III

SETTLEMENT

Long before any permanent settlement in the area that now encompasses Edwards County, the region was part of a huge grazing area. In the words of Eugene R. Craine,

Throughout most of post-glacial times the area has probably been a grassy steppe, supporting enormous herds of grazing animals but unfriendly toward the foot traveling Indians. Extreme heat and cold, great distances, uncertain year around living off the migratory bison and the precariousness of arid farming, were not conducive to Indian life.

Aversion to this region as a satisfactory habitat by Indians was altered with the coming of the white man to the New World. Craine continues:

The Plains, as a culture area, developed late and was the result of the Spanish introduction of the horse and the westward movement of the eastern woodland tribes caused by conflicts with British, French and American colonial expansion.

Habitation of this region by Indians, therefore, was a result of the introduction of the horse by the Spanish and

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1 Hereinafter "Edwards County" will designate the present boundaries of the county (see map facing page 7), and will be used to identify this specific area prior to and subsequent to its legal creation.


3 Ibid.
the external pressures of advancing civilization.

Because of the relatively late settlement of Edwards County, the role played by Indians in its settlement was insignificant. Indian campaigns in 1868 and 1869 forced "the Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes" onto their reservations and "after 1869 there were few sporadic Indian attacks in South Central Kansas; but, in general, the settlers had little to fear from this quarter." Nevertheless, reports of Indians roaming beyond the confines of their reservations, occasioned this fearful description of conditions in Edwards County in 1878:

As we write, the blood thirsty fiends are roaming at will, almost in sight of Kinsley, butchering the honest, unsuspecting pioneer, whose wrecking scalp is thonged to the belt of those satanic fiends who are armed today better than any army in Europe. Perhaps frightened by his own account, the writer closed with a moderate, and more realistic appraisal of the danger, observing that "we see no occasion for alarm here . . . ."

There remains one account of an Indian battle, occurring in the summer of 1848, within the boundaries of Edwards County. James H. Birch, a member of a military detachment

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5Kinsley Graphic, September 21, 1878.
escorting the paymaster at Fort Leavenworth to Fort Dodge, has preserved a record of the battle. Birch, along with seventy-five other recruits under the Command of Lieutenant William B. Royall, had just been issued breech-loading carbines and, according to Birch, were the only soldiers in the Mexican War armed with this type of weapon. The small detachment had proceeded without incident until it had crossed Coon Creek and camped "on the banks of the river [Arkansas], close by the present town of Kinsley." A war party of about eight hundred Comanches and Apaches charged the soldiers the next morning, June 18. The Indians were surprised, however, because in past battles they had learned to take advantage of the time necessary for the soldiers to load their rifles. But on this occasion, the breech-loading rifles, firing about five times a minute, caused the Indians to withdraw. According to Birch, "They then drew off again about a mile, to ride in the bottom and there had the first populist meeting ever held in Kansas." Led by a woman, the next charge threatened to overwhelm the defenders until someone suggested that they shoot at the charging horses.


7 Ibid., 411.
Evidently the larger targets aided their accuracy because the Indians were forced to retreat. Mounting up, the detachment pursued the Indians into the surrounding sand hills but when they realized the Indians were encircling them, they rode back to camp. Birch concluded: "I may be mistaken about the location of this episode, but I feel sure it was between where the town of Kinsley is located and the banks of the Arkansas river."8

It is quite possible that a number of famous explorers traveled across Edwards County. In 1541, the first white explorer known to be in this area, Francisco Vazquez Coronado, came in search of Quivira. Coronado came upon some Quivira Indians and, Herbert E. Bolton writes, "These Quivirans were evidently met between the sites of Kinsley and Larned."9 Nearly two centuries later, in 1739, the Mallet brothers, Pierre and Paul, crossed Kansas. John Rdjord believes that they traveled in a southwestwardly direction from a point near Stockton, "and probably reached the Arkansas River west

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8James H. Birch, "The Battle of Coon Creek," Kansas Historical Collections, 1907-1908, X, 413. Another account locates this battle northwest of Kinsley, not east as stated by Birch. See Bliss Isley and W. M. Richards, Four Centuries in Kansas (Wichita: The McCormick-Mathers Publishing Company, 1936), 40.

of Dodge City."\textsuperscript{10} If this conjecture is correct, the Mallet brothers came near Edwards County.

Spain, in an attempt to learn more about the plains country and to survey a regular trail from Santa Fe to St. Louis, sent Pedro de Vial as a pathfinder in 1792-1793.

On June 25 he crossed the Cimarron and two days later he reached the Arkansas. After two more days they met some natives who said they were "Cances." Far from being friendly, these Indians stole their horses and all their supplies; they even cut off the clothes they wore, leaving them "totally naked," says the diary.\textsuperscript{11}

Vial and his companions were allowed to continue their journey and, by August, 1792, they reached the "River of Kansas."\textsuperscript{12} After the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France, in 1803, exploration in South Central Kansas was greatly accelerated.

Attempts made by the United States to explore the southwestern portion of the newly acquired territory resulted in countermoves by the Spanish, the most notable


\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 37.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid. Assuming Rydjord's account is essentially correct, and that Vial's party reached the Arkansas in the vicinity of Dodge City, it is of interest to speculate that Vial may have the unique distinction of crossing Edwards County under somewhat embarrassing circumstances.
being the expedition of Don Facundo Malgares in 1806. The Spanish, learning of Zebulon M. Pike's plans to make friends with the Plains Indians and to find the sources of the Arkansas and Red Rivers, countered by sending Malgares to the disputed region. One phase of Malgares' assignment was "to descend the Red River and, should it [Malgares' expedition] meet the Pike expedition, to intercept and turn it back . . . ." Unsuccessful in intercepting Pike, Malgares returned to Santa Fe and, whenever possible, Pike's party followed the trail left by the retiring Malgares. It is highly probable that Pike and Malgares passed through Edwards County.

In 1821, Mexico successfully declared her independence from Spain, thus opening possibilities of a flourishing trade with Santa Fe. "The next year, 1822, the first successful trading expedition to Santa Fe was accomplished under the guidance of William Becknell, of Missouri." The general


14 Ibid., 52.


route followed by Becknell, which came to be known as the Santa Fe Trail, passed along the north side of the Arkansas River through Edwards County, near the present sites of Nettleton and Kinsley.¹⁷ There are five markers in Edwards County that mark two distinct trails, one along the valley and the other on the hilltops, about three miles north, was known as the "wet weather trail."¹⁸ At Coon Creek, one of the camping places along the trail in Kansas, was located a "ranch."¹⁹ These "ranches" served as trading posts along the trail to supply the needs of the wagon trains. Sometimes they were enclosed by a stockade and were used as crude hotels.²⁰

Although possessing no importance, in-so-far as the actual settlement of the county is concerned, the foregoing mention of Indians, explorers and the Santa Fe Trail is intended to give a broader historical perspective of the specific area. Uninviting to the pioneers, the Great Plains were considered by westward moving pioneers as part

²⁰Ibid.
of the Great American Desert, a classification disseminated by the early explorers. Before the Civil War the plains were an unavoidable obstacle to the western movement to Utah, California and Oregon and their greatest importance resided in the various trails that led to more attractive places. However, to varying degrees, the native grasses of these plains were utilized by cattlemen. One of these cattlemen, Isaac V. Lewis

... was pasturing and trading cattle here [Kinsley] before there was a Kinsley ... He was here in 1870, three years before Kinsley was started and two years before the railroad came through.21

Unsettled conditions caused by the Civil War brought an influx of settlers to Kansas. They were encouraged in part by a desire to start anew in the west and were also attracted by the generous provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862. Of more immediate influence, however, was the coming of the railroad.

Occupying a paramount role in the settlement of the High Plains, the railroad preceded any known settlement in Edwards County. Knowledge of the vast profits made in the wagon-commerce to Santa Fe presented a challenge to railroad promoters. Citizens of Atchison and Topeka secured a charter from the Kansas Territorial Legislature on February 21

21Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953.
11, 1859, and Cyrus K. Holliday became president of the newly organized Atchison and Topeka Railroad Company.

While the trade with Santa Fe and New Mexico was the primary goal for building of a line to the Southwest, Holliday's imagination was fired to develop the unsettled empire that lay between the Missouri River and Santa Fe. . . . George W. Beach, the first construction engineer, enlarged on Holliday's dream with repeated argument that a land which was able to support the buffalo should also support an agricultural empire.22

To encourage railroad construction, government land was granted to Kansas by an act of Congress approved March 3, 1863, entitled "An act for a grant of lands to the State of Kansas in alternate sections to aid in the construction of certain railroads and telegraphs in said State . . . ."23 Acceptance of the government's grant of land for the building of railroads was approved by the Kansas legislature on February 13, 1864.24 The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company, formerly the Atchison and Topeka Railroad Company, was then granted

. . . . all the lands granted as aforesaid [alternate sections], and which shall be situated opposite to and within a limit of ten miles of the line of said

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23 Edwards County Deed Records, B, 324.

section of road thus completed. . . . 25
Patent to the land was to be conveyed to the Atchison, Topeka
and Santa Fe Railroad Company upon the completion of any
twenty consecutive miles of road "from the city of Atchison
via Topeka, to the western line of said state, in the direction
of Fort Union and Santa Fe, New Mexico . . . . ." 26

In the summer of 1871 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa
Fe Railroad ran its survey through Pawnee County and the
track was completed to Larned on July 20, 1872. 27 About
August 1, 1872, the railroad was extended to the barren
plain where Kinsley was soon to be located. 28 In July
service was opened to Hutchinson and from that point the
line followed a course along the Arkansas River to the
Colorado line. By the close of September, the line was
beyond Dodge City. 29

Sixteen miles of the track passed through the north-

25Taylor, General Statutes, 397.

26Ibid.

27Minnie Dubbs Millbrook, "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers,
Gentleman From Ness," Kansas Historical Quarterly (Topeka:
The Kansas State Historical Society, 1953), XX, 307. Here-
inafter this series cited as KHQ.

28James C. Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History of
Edwards County," KHQ, 1940, IX, 271. Hereinafter cited as
Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History."

western portion of Edwards County. In harmony with the desire of Holliday to develop the plains, the railroad worked assiduously to populate the area and conducted experiments to determine the agricultural products best suited to the region. When conditions seemed favorable, excursion trains from the east brought potential settlers to view the area. During times of severe crop failures, the railroad furnished seed for the fall sowing, "bearing all the expenses of buying, handling, transportation and shrinkage; the settler paying only the actual cost of the seed wheat, supplying sacks."  

On the heels of the construction crew for the Santa Fe Railroad, was a committee representing the "Chicago Work-chronology is supported by Robert McCanse, who came to Edwards County in August, 1872. In the Kinsley Graphic, June 14, 1901, McCanse states that the "Santa Fe Railroad had at that time [August, 1872] reached Dodge City but no regular trains were run west of Great Bend."

30 Oscar Clayton Hull, "Railroads in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, 1911-1912, XII, 44. Computed on the basis of 6,400 acres per mile of track constructed, in accordance with the provisions of the federal grant of 1863, the railroad should have received approximately 102,400 acres of land in Edwards County. However, the Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture, 1879-1880 (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1880), 433, states that the Santa Fe Railroad received a total of 144,119.00 acres in Edwards County. The Edwards County Deed Records, B, 320-324, contains a copy of the patent for land granted by the State of Kansas to the Santa Fe Railroad Company in Edwards County, and these records indicate that the railroad received 110,722.00 acres.

31 Kinsley Graphic, August 2, 1879.
EDWARDS COUNTY BOUNDARY CHANGES

Laws, 1867, 55.1

RUSH  BARTON

*  

PAWNEE  STAFFORD

Laws, 1873, 152-153.

RUSH  BARTON

PAWNEE  *

UNATTACHED  STAFFORD

Laws, 1874, 92.

RUSH  BARTON

PAWNEE

EDWARDS  STAFFORD

Laws, 1875, 87.

RUSH  BARTON

PAWNEE

EDWARDS  STAFFORD

DETACHED IN 1886

1Based upon The Laws of the State of Kansas (Leavenworth: Bulletin Book and Job Office, 1867-1886).

*Location of Larned
ingmen's Colony" which selected the present site of Kinsley, in August, 1872, as a suitable town site. They named their settlement Petersburg, in honor of T. J. Peters of the Santa Fe Railroad. Among the members of the founding committee was C. N. Pratt, Samuel G. Rodgers and Robert McCanse. McCanse, who claimed to be the first settler in Edwards County, arrived on August 10, 1872. In October, the few inhabitants of Petersburg cooperated with the people of Larned in taking the necessary steps prerequisite to the organization of Pawnee County.

Although Pawnee County was not organized in 1872 its boundaries had been drawn in 1867, when the Kansas legislature had laid out three tiers of western counties, all of the unoccupied land in Kansas up to Range 26 West.

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33 Kinsley Graphic, June 14, 1901. McCanse, in the article cited here, states that he joined a colony organized in Chicago in the summer of 1872, paid a membership fee of $25 and was the only one of the colony who ever came to Kinsley. August 10, 1872 is probably the most definite date which can be reasonably established as the date of the location of Petersburg. Additional support for this date is given by Minnie Dubbs Millbrook, "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers, Gentleman From Ness," KHQ, 1952-1953, XX, 308. Hereinafter cited as Millbrook, "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers."

34 Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 271.

Hawkins, of Larned, was appointed census-taker and secured the signature of every legal elector in the county. However, it was necessary for forty householders, who were legal electors of the county, to sign a petition which would initiate legal steps essential to the organization of a county.36 It is doubtful that Hawkins could find the legal number of electors necessary, but the people were resourceful and fortunate in that "an immigrant train came toiling by and the men in Larned rode out, held it up and forced the men in the party to sign the petition . . . ."37 It was next necessary to find six hundred residents, the minimum required for organization of the county. This was easily accomplished by Hawkins who contrived to exceed the minimum requirement by reporting 674 inhabitants.38

Meanwhile, Rodgers, apparently the leader of the Chicago Workingmen's Colony, had returned from a trip to Chicago and informed the Governor of the fraudulent transactions which had occurred. He was unsuccessful, however, in delaying the organization of Pawnee County, and on November

36 Laws, 1872, 243.
37 Great Bend Tribune, December 24, 1934, as quoted in Millbrook, "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers," 309, from an article written by Dwight B. Christy, who was the third sheriff of Pawnee County.
4, 1872, the county was organized, temporary county commissioners were appointed, and Larned was designated as the temporary county seat. The temporary county commissioners acted with despatch and divided the county into two townships, with a voting precinct in each, locating one at Fort Larned and the other at Larned. On the following day, November 5, regular elections were held. The Chicago Workingmen's Colony did not attempt to go to the voting precincts established by the commissioners in Larned, but established their own voting precinct and elected Rodgers for the seat in the Legislature. Captain Henry Booth was elected by the Larned group, and he and Rodgers presented themselves as the officially elected representative from their county.

Investigations were made by the committee on elections of the House of Representatives and their report of February 13, 1873 stated:

The organization of the county of Pawnee was made and completed in the city of Topeka on the fourth day of November, 1872, and the pretended election held in said county on the following day (November 5th) was without any notice to the people of the county, and evidently shows that the will of the people could not have been fully and properly expressed at the said election, occurring the day after the organization.

Since the number of seats in the legislature was limited,

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it was easy for the legislature to ignore both Booth and Rodgers upon the recommendation of the election committee which reported "that neither of the persons claiming seats, under said pretended election are entitled to be admitted as members or delegate in this Legislature." While Booth was in Topeka, he apparently did not abjectly accept defeat and return home.

Booth and his following were afraid that as new towns were built in Pawnee County it would be difficult for Larned to retain its position as county seat, since it was not centrally located.

So the more politically influential town planners had the county lines redrawn, a process much simpler to accomplish than moving their town and much less painful than losing the county seat. Although Pawnee County did not have representation in the Legislature, the boundaries of the county were redrawn to suit the purposes of the leaders in the county.

This as Booth said frankly, "brought Larned nearer the center of the county and strengthened it as the county seat." He failed to add that Larned was the stronger, too, because not only Petersburg but every

41House Journal, 1873, 416. In the event that the Legislature would decide to admit one of the contenders to a seat, the election committee recommended recognition be granted to Rodgers, who had received 108 votes compared to 35 received by Booth.

42Millbrook, "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers," 316.

other town was by this same action, cut off and cast out of Pawnee county entirely.\textsuperscript{44}

In response to petitions presented to the Legislature by residents of Pawnee County and by settlers in the detached part of the county, one township was returned to Pawnee County in 1874.\textsuperscript{45}

While Booth was busy with his political machinations, the infant settlement of Petersburg continued to grow. In September, 1872, the first lumber arrived for building a hotel and the cornerstone was laid on December 5, 1872.\textsuperscript{46}

Sometime in the fall of 1872, Samuel E. Fay and his family came to the county and located near Nettleton. In October, one of the children of the Fay family died, the first death in the county, and was buried near Nettleton.\textsuperscript{47} A telegraph office was established by the railroad company at the tank three miles west of Petersburg and Fred Gardner was employed as operator. In February, 1873, the telegraph office was moved to Petersburg.\textsuperscript{48} Undaunted by the elements, the hotel was opened for business in March, 1873; although it had been

\textsuperscript{44} Millbrook, "Dr. Samuel Grant Rodgers," 319.
\textsuperscript{45} Laws, 1874, 92.
\textsuperscript{46} Kinsley Graphic, June 14, 1901; Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 271.
\textsuperscript{47} Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 272.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 271.
sided it still did not have any doors, windows or a roof. 49

A number of settlers arrived in the spring of 1873. 50

In March a group representing the Massachusetts Colony, from Boston, located their colony at Petersburg and built three colony houses. Captain Peter H. Niles, agent for the sale of railroad land and resident agent of the New England Homestead and Colonization Bureau, which had absorbed the Massachusetts Colony, arrived with another group of colonists in April. 51 During the same month a drug store was opened, operated by N. C. Bowles. In May, Bowles was appointed postmaster and, since there was one post office in the state named Petersburg, this office was called Peters. 52

Because Petersburg was unattached to any county or judicial district, as a consequence of the redrawing of the...
boundaries of Pawnee County in March, 1873, the residents of Petersburg organized themselves into a city of the third class and elected city officials. The townsite of Petersburg was surveyed and platted in May, and in June, Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson, a wealthy lady of New York and the sister of one of the settlers, contributed $1,500 for the construction of a community hall. J. A. Walker writes that the name of the town was changed from Petersburg to Peters City, sometime during the year 1873, possibly shortly after the town had been platted and city officials elected. During the fall of 1873 the name was changed again. "Petersburg was the railroad name of the town, or the spot where a town was supposed to be made later on ..., but the name was changed to Kinsley,

In honor of E. W. Kinsley, of Boston, "the soldiers friend," who was a member of the Immigration Bureau, and as an appropriate return for the honor conferred he be requested to donate or cause to be donated a church.

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid. The new name, Peters City, was in honor of Captain Peter H. Niles, resident agent of the New England Homestead and Colonization Bureau.
56 Kinsley Mercury, September 18, 1890.
57 Ibid. This agrees generally with an earlier account found in the Kinsley Mercury, October 13, 1883, which states that E. W. Kinsley was "the gentleman who built the Congre-
Arrival of several families from Wisconsin and Minnesota in the fall of 1873 induced some of the leaders of the community to spend the winter of 1873-1874 in an attempt to have the legislature erect the orphaned townships into a county. Their efforts achieved results and

On March 7, 1874, Gov. [Thomas A.] Osborn approved an act creating several new counties and defining the boundaries of some previously erected. By this act Edwards county was called into existence...

The newly created county was named Edwards, "in honor of W. C. Edwards, of Hutchinson, and senior partner of the present [1878] house of Edwards Bros., at Kinsley."

Additional arrivals added to the population of the county in the spring of 1874. Among the new residents were the Plags, father and sons, who were the first Germans to settle in the county. In May, a memorial was filed with the national church in this city in consideration of the name of the place being changed from Petersburg to the designation it now bears, which was done in the fall of '73. Allan G. Bogue, "Farm Debtors in Pioneer Kinsley," KHQ, 1952-1953, XX, 85, writes that Edward Kinsley, an employee of the Santa Fe in Boston, was sold a quarter section of railroad in Edwards County in 1873 for one dollar. This may indicate that Kinsley's interest in the town that was named for him was enhanced by speculative hopes.

58 Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 274.

59 Blackmar, Kansas, A Cyclopedia, I, 565; Lewis, 1874, 91-93.

60 Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 274.

61 Ibid., 261.
the governor stating that the population of the county was more than 600, and requesting that the county be organized. The petitioners also asked for the appointment of temporary county officials and that Kinsley be named the temporary county seat. 62 Robert McCanse was appointed by the Governor as census-taker and on "July 10, 1874, he made his return reporting only 301 inhabitants; the law requiring not less than 600 inhabitants to perfect an organization." 63

Some of the citizens, possibly recalling how the industrious Hawkins had found a sufficient number of residents for the organization of Pawnee County, were dissatisfied with McCanse's enumeration and requested the appointment of another census-taker. The second enumeration was more fruitful, for 633 inhabitants were found, and Governor Osborne issued his proclamation declaring the county organized on August 21, 1874. C. A. Hubbs, N. L. Humphrey, and G. W. Wilson were appointed commissioners and J. A. Walker, clerk. 64

These appointees met on September 3, 1874, and C. L. Hubbs was appointed chairman. "They divided the county into municipal townships of Kinsley, Trenton and Brown, and des-

62Blackmar, Kansas, A Cyclopaedia, I, 566.
63Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 274.
64Ibid.
Ignated places for holding elections therein at the regular
state election, November 3, 1874."\(^6\) On October 5, 1874, an
order was issued, to be voted on in the November election,
which would make Kinsley the county seat. At the election,
Kinsley received sixty-nine out of the seventy-four votes
cast. \(^6\) The regular county officers chosen at the election
were

C. L. Hubbs, representative, over A. L. Kendall, his competitor, 46 votes to 35 for Kendall; T. L. Rodgers, John A. Brothers, F. C. Blanchard, commissioners; Wm. Emerson, county clerk, E. A. Boyd, treasurer; L. W. Higgins, register of deeds; Jonas Woods, clerk of the district court; V. D. Billings, sheriff; J. S. Perry, coroner; W. C. Knight, superintendent of public instruction; Taylor Flick, county attorney; M. Moag, probate judge; Frank A. White, county surveyor.\(^6\)

Charles L. Hubbs was admitted as a member of the House of Representatives from Edwards County on January 12, 1875.

However, on January 21, the Attorney General said that members from Edwards and eleven other counties were not legally entitled to a seat because of a deficiency of population in their respective counties. Their seats were declared vacant on January 28. Although Hubbs failed to receive a seat in the Legislature, he was admitted as a

\(^6\)Cutler, Andrea's History, 1368.

\(^6\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 275.
Within seven months after the organization of Edwards County, the boundaries were changed; two tiers of townships were added on the south which gave the county a total area of 972 square miles. A final change in the boundaries of the county was made in 1886. At that time the two tiers of townships which had been added in 1875 were detached and restored to Kiowa County.

The treeless prairies of Edwards County caused one settler to record in her diary, "It is very pleasant to see someone at work--some life about this region. Everything is so monotonous, almost unbearable . . . ." Nevertheless, within a period of two years, 1872-1874, these prairies were being settled and called home. During this short period the sparsely settled community in and around Kinsley helped in the organization of Pawnee County; but when separated from that county, they successfully effected the organization of their own county.

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68 House Journal, 1875, 459-460.
69 Laws, 1875, 87. See map facing page 31.
70 Ibid., 1886, 54. See also Helen Gertrude Gill, "The Establishment of Counties in Kansas," Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1903-1904 (Topeka: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1904), VIII, 449-472.
71 Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. B, 2. From the diary of Miss Hattie Humphrey, entered March 2, 1874.
CHAPTER IV

ADVERSITY, 1874-1883

Before continuing with the development of Edwards County subsequent to its organization, a brief digression will be made in order to give a general summary of the conditions in the county from 1874 to 1900. It is intended that by furnishing a brief outline of the county's economic development, further elaboration will be more meaningful in context of the broader overview. Also, some justification will be presented for the more or less arbitrary division of the years from 1874 to 1900 into three periods.

Adversity characterized the period from 1874 to 1883. In 1874 the drought and grasshoppers constituted a severe shock to the newly organized county, but the years 1875-1878 were generally favorable. In 1876 the turnover of railroad land in the county became rapid. During that year twenty-nine sales were made, and an additional twenty-seven sales were made during 1877 and 1878.¹ Two new settlements were started in the county in 1876; and after the completion of a bridge across the Arkansas River in

1877, settlers started moving south of the river. Two bushel wheat and three bushel corn yields in 1879 did not augur well for a continuation of good times. The following year was not too much better, but the tide of prosperity, again, turned in favor of the county during the 1880's.

By 1883 the Arkansas valley was beginning to experience a real estate boom. James C. Malin writes that

The Kansas boom of the late eighties slowly began to gather momentum during 1884, reaching its climax during 1887. Partly the process was a return of settlers who had deserted western Kansas during the drought of the early eighties, but mostly it was migration of new people.

Edwards County's population increased every year from 1882-1887. Therefore, the selection of 1884 as the date marking the period of boom, 1884-1887, is rather arbitrary. However, the Biennial Report of 1883-1884 stated that

The year 1884 proved to be propitious to agriculture, in all sections of the State, and it is reasonable to conjecture that the results of the census of 1885 will show that these western counties are recovering from the misfortunes of the past, and that the center of population has again resumed its westward

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3See appendix B.


5See appendix A.
In-so-far as Edwards County was concerned, the conjecture was correct, for the population of the county increased, in 1885, by 1,643, the greatest single population variation in the history of the county. There is some justification therefore, for the use of 1884 as the year marking the beginning of a period of boom. Furthermore, the sale of railroad lands in Kinsley township, which had only amounted to ten sales during the previous five years, leaped to thirty-three in 1884 and 1885.

The boom period, 1884-1887, was distinguished by a series of booms. First, the small-farmer boom, which was founded upon an abundance of cheap land; second, the townsite boom which flourished not only in Kinsley but also in the new settlements of Wendell, Lewis and Offerle. Following the townsite boom were the railroad boom and the industrial boom. Almost as rapidly as the boom period was generated it collapsed late in 1887. One of the main factors in the collapse of the boom was


7See appendix A.

The drought of 1887, which extended throughout most of the Western States and everywhere very disastrous, fell with much force on Kansas, and in common with other States she experienced one of the most disastrous crop years in her history.9

There were booms in the period of readjustment from 1888 to 1900, but they were of a different nature. Malin explains the reaction of the settlers thusly:

With the collapse of the boom as a whole, the emotional defense of a disillusioned and nearly desperate people alternated between religion and politics; religion from January to planting time, and politics from harvest to November, but in the nineties it settled down to politics pretty much all the year around.10

A drought started over most of the southern plains in 1890 and by 1892 was severe. Because the drought persisted the movement of settlers was mainly eastward from 1892 to 1895, but good rains during the latter 1890's revived the stricken region.11 With the exception of 1892-1893, the first increase in the population of the county occurred in the latter part of the 1890's. The temporary increase in population during 1892-1893 was probably the result of a comparatively good year in 1891 when the total value of all

agricultural products increased over the 1890 figure by $85,759.12. However, the trend which promised better times was reversed in 1893 when the value of all agricultural products decreased by $424,383.09. Professor Malin, writing about Wayne township during this period, remarks:

... for ten to fifteen years this region suffered prolonged depression which came to its climax in the panic of 1893-94. A second period of rapid growth opened eventually, however, after 1900.

Generally, the period from 1888 to 1900 was a period of readjustment, one of the main features consisting of an attempt to solve the problems of the plains environment by experimentation with different crops and methods of farming. A panacea to the settler's problems was thought to be found in the Farmer's Alliances and then the People's Party, but after the defeat of William J. Bryan in 1896, the county gradually returned to its traditional support of the Republican party.

Returning to the period of adversity, 1874-1883, we find that while the politically minded leaders of Edwards

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12 Biennial Report, 1889-1890, 65; ibid., 1891-1892, 64.
13 Ibid., 1893-1894, 58.
14 James C. Malin, "The Evolution of a Rural Community; An Introduction to the History of Wayne Township, Edwards County, Kansas," from the files of the Kansas State Historical Society. Copied from the Lewis Press, June 1 to July 6, 1933. Hereinafter cited as Malin, "Wayne Township."
County busied themselves with the task of organizing the county during the summer of 1874, difficulties of a different and more immediate nature confronted the pioneers. Even in normal times, this primitive plains settlement would have had a serious time in producing the essentials for a livelihood, depending, as they did, mainly on corn, potatoes and garden vegetables. But, "about the 25th of July, one of those periodical, calamitous visitations . . . made its appearance . . . the grasshopper or locust." An early settler remembered

... the grasshoppers were going from north to south, millions of them, and they obscured the light of the sun, and looked like a gray cloud, and the car wheels slipped on the rails as if they had been greased. Many people went out and cut down the corn stalks to save them for feed ... Mrs. E. D. Taylor saved her garden by driving a flock of about one hundred turkeys into it. The grasshoppers ate nearly every green thing and hoe and rake handles, and even gnawed the wood on houses so deeply that it could be seen a year after.

Adding to the misfortune of the grasshopper scourge, "the sun shone every day that summer [1874] without so much as a cloud on any day, and they had no dews for two years.

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16Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. C. Mrs. W. D. Erwin, an early resident of Kinsley and reputed to be one of the more reliable authorities of early history, writes in the same issue quoted, that the grasshoppers "even chewed the shingles on the houses."
after their [the Massachusetts Colony] arrival, so dry was
the climate."17  At this critical period, the State Board of
Agriculture conducted an investigation relating to the effects
of the drought and the grasshoppers.18 During September, the
county commissioners submitted a report of their investi-
gations to the Governor which stated

Our crops are totally destroyed; not one bushel of
vegetables or grain being saved for man or beast. Our
people are mostly poor people, without wealthy relatives
or friends to assist them in their extremity.19

C. L. Hubbs, who had been appointed by Governor Thomas
A. Osborne to make a report of the conditions in Edwards
County, submitted his findings on December 13, 1874. Hubbs
reported that fifty-nine persons were in need, or about
twenty-five percent of the total population. During the
fall of 1874, the Santa Fe Railroad advanced seed wheat to
the settlers along the line, allowing a maximum of fifteen
bushels per farm.20  In response to the need, food and cloth-
ing were sent to the county during the fall and winter.21

17Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. C.
18Agriculture Report, 1874, 14.
19Frank W. Blackmar, (ed.), Kansas, A Cyclopedia of
State History, 2 vols. (Chicago: Standard Publishing Company,
1912), 1, 566-567.
20Malin, "Wayne Township."
21Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. C.
Recovery from the shock of drought and grasshoppers was not rapid. In 1875 approximately seventy-three percent of the total acres under cultivation were planted to corn and seventeen percent to winter wheat. Corn, the principal crop, averaged thirty-five bushels per acre but the market price was only thirty cents per bushel. It was not until 1876 that the county began to show signs of recovery. During 1876 the population of the county tripled, climbing from 234 to 705, and the acres under cultivation nearly doubled, as did the total value of the field crops produced that year.

Most of the county lay south of the Arkansas River and bonds, amounting to $10,000, were voted by the county on July 29, 1876, for the construction of a bridge across the river. After completion of the bridge in March, 1877, the spread of population over the county as a whole had its beginning. There is some evidence that settlement had commenced south of the river prior to 1877. In the November 3, 1877 issue of The Valley Republican, the following article appeared:

Comparatively little has as yet been done to develop

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22 Agriculture Report, 1875, 261.
23 Biennial Report, 1877-1878, 196.
24 Compiled from the Agriculture Report, 1876, 143.
25 Malin, "Wayne Township."
the vast resources of this plain so recently known as the unproductive "Great American Desert." In fact last December--less than one year ago--John Leslie and the brothers Trotter were the first men to make homesteads south of the hills in Edwards county. They immediately returned for their families . . . .

In the same article it was stated that the first house south of the hills was built in January, 1877. Movement of settlers across the river, however, was not of any consequence until 1877 and even then, Edwards County prior to 1878 consisted primarily of settlers around Kinsley and in the vicinity north of the river.

During the spring of 1877 a colony of about thirty families, known as the Wentz colony, crossed the river and located in the southern part of the county. Another group from New York, the first to locate in the northeastern part of the county, settled in the county in 1877. 26 It was reported that the farms south of the river would have two weeks harvest in 1878, and that was the first year there had been any threshing to do on the south side. 27 Further indications of growth south of the river appeared in the organization of a Sunday School and the completion of a new

26Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 278.

27Kinsley Graphic, August 24, 1878. The "south side" designated the area south of the river. The Kinsley Mercury, August 23, 1884, reported "the first steam threshing engine ever brought to this county was unloaded last Wednesday, and went puffing through the streets of the city headed for the South Side."
school house in 1878. 28

By 1877 the population growth of the county warranted the seating of Taylor Flick as the first representative from the county to be legally recognized. 29 Continuing prosperity changed the attitude of the people toward the climate, which, in 1874, had been so unfavorable. Even the gusty winds were spoken of proudly:

Our eastern friends visiting here complain only of Kansas zephyrs, and they are our pride. They are healthy and bracing . . . . Better have breezes from prairie and mountains, than mud, and impure atmosphere and ague. 30

The editor of the paper could not resist an opportunity to boast of the rapid growth of population in the county, and, in support of his contention, stated that the number of children of school age in district No. 1, had increased from forty-three, in August, 1876 to 150 by December 20, 1877. 31 Greater prosperity was yet to come to Edwards County in 1878.

Compared with the population of 1876, the state census indicates that the population of the county increased by 241 percent in 1878 and the total value of field crops increased from $28,919.57 in 1876 to $114,831.14 in 1878. 32

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28 Kinsley Graphic, October 26, 1878; December 28, 1878.
29 Malin, "Wayne Township."
30 The Valley Republican, Kinsley, November 10, 1877.
31 Ibid., December 22, 1877. 32 See appendix B.
On January 5, 1878, The Valley Republican reported that 126,520 acres of land had been taken; 80,160 acres were government lands and 26,360 acres were railroad lands. The paper outlined the procedure and expense of taking government lands, listing the different options which included preemption; homestead entry, citizen; homestead entry, soldier; and timber culture entry. Acres under cultivation increased from 3,942.25 in 1877 to 9,481.25 in 1878.33 After the good harvest of 1878 the Kinsley Graphic asserted:

It is but a year or two since the theme of almost every man who came to Kansas was either grasshopper or drought, now they are no longer heard except as a faint echo reverberating from the hollow pate of some professional growler.34

Another part of the county was threshing its first wheat in 1878. In the spring of 1876, Lawrence Offerle, John Offerle and Phillip Ott, from Geneseo, Illinois, settled at the present site of Offerle. Lawrence Offerle platted the town site and it was named in his honor. Distinguishing Offerle from other settlements in the county was the absence of any sod houses, all the houses had been built of lumber. A post office was established in 1877, and Abner Offerle was the first postmaster and Edwin Offerle was the first Santa

33Biennial Report, 1877-1878, 198.
34Kinsley Graphic, September 28, 1878.
going to rain for six months or more. 37

Besides the general prosperity in 1878, two outstanding events happened in the county. One was heroic, according to the papers, and the other was tragic. On February 1, 1878, an attempt was made to rob the Santa Fe safe at the depot in Kinsley. While the robbers sought to force the night operator to open the safe, a train pulled into the station and the night operator, under fire, ran out of the depot and warned the engineer of the attempted robbery. The train proceeded down the tracks a short distance and the robbers, realizing that their scheme was known, fled. 38 A week later, W. B. Masterson, sheriff of Ford County, and his posse captured two men who allegedly were part of the gang that had attempted the robbery at Kinsley. 39 The publicity received from this episode was thoroughly enjoyed. The paper broadcasted,

The Wichita Eagle is screaming with jealousy at Kinsley’s fame. The Emporia News thus warns us: "It is said by persons just from Wichita that the editor of the Eagle is in a fearful state of mind because the Kinsley train robbery did not take place at Wichita.

37 Kinsley Mercury, August 14, 1958, Sec. B.

38 The Valley Republican, Kinsley, February 2, 1878.

39 Ibid., February 9, 1878. One conviction resulted from this attempted robbery. Mike Rourke, who had allegedly been one of the robbers involved in the January 27, 1878 robbery, was sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. See Kinsley Graphic, March 15, 1879.
Fe agent. Three incidents occurred in connection with the settlement of Offerle that vividly illustrate the misconceptions early settlers had about the plains. A considerable amount of land in Edwards County was taken under the provisions of the timber culture act, and some people, Harry Offerle recollects, "Coming to Western Kansas to take timber claims brought stump pullers to clear their timber lands." Still, Harry Offerle continued,

George Taylor did worse than that—he shipped a thrashing machine to Offerle in 1877. When Taylor arrived at Offerle, he would not pay the freight on the thrashing machine, and the Santa Fe unloaded it and held it on the Santa Fe right of way for freight charges. Taylor said that there never would be any use for a thrashing machine in this country. At harvest time in 1878, the Offerles made a freight settlement with the Santa Fe and released the machine to Taylor to thrash wheat for the Offerles, the first wheat raised in the west part of Edwards county.

Clint Beck, who settled southwest of Offerle with his parents in 1887, remembers that

When we landed in Offerle we were taken to the Lawrence Offerle resident to see how things would grow in Kansas. This was a fine looking place, green grass, a fine garden, a windmill and a large tank, but being from Illinois we knew nothing about irrigation so didn't realize this place was being watered by the windmill and tank. Some real estate men would take a rain coat along when they would take an eastern man out to look at some land when he knew it wasn't

35 *High Plains Journal*, Dodge City, September 27, 1951.
36 Ibid.
Kinsley mustn't do so any more if she does not want to excite Wichita's jealousy." 40

Prairie fires, which were a common early day menace, resulted in one death in 1878. A lady, who lived northwest of Kinsley,

... had been over to a neighbor's, and when returning home, was overtaken by the prairie fire that raged with such destruction Thursday week. Her clothes caught fire, and before assistance could reach her, she was so badly burned that she died the following Saturday. 41

The almost continual threat of prairie fires resulted in the organization of a fire department in Kinsley on December 12, 1878. 42 Prairie fires did not cease to occur, however, two were started by a settler attempting to burn fire-brakes in 1881. 43 One fire was reported to have burned over all the county south of the river in 1882. 44

40 The Valley Republican, Kinsley, February 16, 1878.

41 Kinsley Graphic, October 19, 1878. Ida Mosher, who came to the county in 1878, remembers riding "many miles over burnt ground where all was charred and black except the cactus plants which escaped or were only slightly scorched and were still green." See ibid., September 24, 1953, Sec. C, 5.

42 Kinsley Graphic, December 14, 1878.

43 Ibid., December 17, 1881.

44 The Republican–Graphic, Kinsley, September 21, 1882.
Edwards County had little to boast of in 1879, except a fire in Kinsley. On April 26, 1879, the Kinsley Graphic reported that

At a quarter past one o'clock, Sunday afternoon, while a terrible gale was blowing from the south, a fire broke out in the rear of either the City Palace saloon or Hampton's meat market, followed by an explosion loud enough to be heard across the street.

A few months after the fire in Kinsley, a fire in Larned caused the citizens of that city to agitate for greater fire protection. The editor of the Kinsley Graphic noted the efforts of the Larned people and proudly said, "We have a dozen of the same kind of fizzlers as yours, but then ours was a one hundred thousand dollar fire." 46

By harvest time in 1879 the reality of hard times was apparent. Anticipating the future, it was predicted that "jack rabbits and antelope will figure largely on the bill of fare of the citizens of this county next winter." 47

Evidently the editor of the paper was not fond of the "bill of fare" because a notice was run in the Kinsley Graphic on January 24, 1880, offering to accept chickens for payment of overdue subscriptions. Seed wheat was furnished by

45Kinsley Graphic, April 26, 1879.
46Ibid., August 9, 1879.
47Ibid., June 14, 1879.
the county commissioners to the farmers who could not purchase seed for the fall crop. Security for the wheat thus distributed was a chattel mortgage on the next year's crop. 48

Early in the year 1879, it was suggested by the paper that Edwards County should follow the example set by the people of Larned, who were organizing a coal company and preparing to start digging immediately. 49 Not to be outdone, the boys of Kinsley had their own plans for making money. They painted dogs, which were in abundance, and tried to sell them to strangers as specimens "only found in this section of the country." 50 Humorous as these efforts may seem in retrospect, the situation was serious. A correspondent of the Kinsley Graphic related sadly,

No more dances, socials, &c., and the monotony is unbroken save by the long line of prairie schooners trailing their slow length along continually, almost, going eastward as a rule, the proprietors wearing faces not unlike Long Island, as they relate the mournful story of how sadly they have been "taken in." 51

The drought continued through the summer and by October "the strong wind swept the bed of the Arkansas river, now dry, until clouds of sand rose so thick and high that the

48 Kinsley Graphic, September 13, 1879.
49 Ibid., February 15, 1879.
50 Ibid., June 28, 1879. 51 Ibid., June 21, 1879.
sand hills on the opposite side were hid from sight. "52 Nor did conditions improve considerably in 1880. In May the bridge over the Arkansas River was spoken of "as a monument to that once famous stream."53

Later in the history of the county the climate was spoken of as "sunny Kansas" with an "Italian climate."54 One paper went so far as to predict

The soil of Edwards county is naturally adapted to the growing of vine fruits. There is no reason why this country can not become as famous for vine fruit as California. As for grapes there is no portion of the globe where nature has intended they shall grow in greater profusion, the vine-clad cliffs of Germany and the world-renowned vineyards of France not excepted.55

The writer of the foregoing estimation of the potentialities of Edwards County would have disagreed with the conclusion of the following article, which appeared in the February 14, 1880 issue of the Kinsley Graphic:

Among the inducements held out to the Boston colony that made the first settlement that amounted to anything in this county, to encourage them to come here,

52Kinsley Graphic, October 11, 1879.
53Ibid., May 15, 1880.
54Kinsley Mercury, March 1, 1888.
55Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, May 18, 1887. An attempt was made to produce wine in the county. The Biennial Report, 1893-1894 through 1899-1900, report wine production in 1893, 1896-1899. Maximum production was 361 gallons in 1898 and the total production in the nineteenth century was 440 gallons.
was that Kinsley (then Petersburg) was the head of navigation of the Arkansas river, and that this would be made one of the greatest orange producing sections in America. Last Thursday would convince any sane man that oranges wouldn't do well here.

A more certain source of income was the gathering of buffalo bones.\textsuperscript{56} It would seem that the supply of bones scattered over the prairies would have been depleted by 1880, but they were brought in by the wagon load each week.\textsuperscript{57}

In May, 1880, the county commissioners let a contract to a local firm which provided for the furnishing of supplies to the poor.\textsuperscript{58} Two months later the paper lamented that

Two years ago Kinsley boasted of four newspapers, now it has two that issue regularly. There were six hotels, now we have two and a restaurant. There were five livery stables and one feed stable, now there are three.\textsuperscript{59}

Realization that some innovations were necessary if they were to cope successfully with the fluctuating climatic conditions resulted in two widely different methods proposed by residents of the county in 1880. In March, twenty-three Kinsley men were invited to a farm south of the river to witness one farmer's attempt to irrigate his fields by a combination of a windmill and a steam pump. A demon-

\textsuperscript{56}The Valley Republican, Kinsley, November 10, 1877. Five dollars per ton was the price paid for bones in 1877.

\textsuperscript{57}Kinsley Graphic, February 28, 1880.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., May 8, 1880. \textsuperscript{59}Ibid., July 31, 1880.
strategy was given after dinner.

... the engine was fired up, and perhaps owing to the fact so many were present to see the new means of irrigating, some of the valves were found to be out of order and the pump refused to work satisfactorily.

The other method proposed was designed to preserve moisture. Farmers were urged to grind gypsum and put it on the soil in the spring or before hot weather. The objective of this practice was founded on the belief that gypsum

... absorbs all the moisture to be found in the atmosphere and retains it, imparting it to the plants as needed. It will also absorb all the ammonia and gases of different kinds and thus it becomes a fertilizer as well.

Misfortune continued to pursue the county, for Kinsley had another fire in 1880, less than fourteen months after the "beautiful little city was burnt to the ground a little over a year ago." About ten or eleven buildings were destroyed by the fire, which was believed to have been started intentionally in the cellar of the vacated Kinsley Hotel. This fire elicited a different response from the one in 1879. Instead of enjoying the publicity the fire would bring, the editor of the Kinsley Graphic reflected a revengeful attitude. Commenting on the fire, he wrote,

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60 Kinsley Graphic, March 27, 1880.
61 Ibid., December 18, 1880.
62 Ibid., June 12, 1880.
It failed to satisfy the heartless, deep-dyed villain that our crops have been a failure for two seasons, and that all within the borders of our county felt the loss alike. . . . were he known to our citizens the few spare days between him and Hell would be considerably shortened.63

Regardless of the misfortunes, Kinsley had the distinguished honor of being addressed by President Rutherford B. Hayes in November. The presidential train stopped for a few minutes at the depot and Hayes spoke, afterward shaking hands with all who desired the pleasure.64

In 1877, the Lyceum met at the church in Kinsley and discussed current politics. The topic of the discussion was "That President Hayes' South Policy should be endorsed by the American people."65 However, the discussion was, like the policy, not very satisfactory, so the paper observed.

Although Kinsley and Offerle survived the hard times of 1879-1880, the little settlement of Nettleton was not so fortunate. Increasing prosperity in 1876 had resulted in the founding of Nettleton. Though not a town, Nettleton was the name applied to the vicinity near where the railroad crosses the county line into Pawnee County. John Fitch, of Hyde Park, Illinois, visited the area and moved

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63Kinsley Graphic, June 12, 1880.
64Ibid., November 6, 1880.
65The Valley Republican, Kinsley, December 22, 1877.
to Nettleton in the fall of 1876. Fitch had great plans for the newly founded town. He first constructed a windmill which was used for irrigation and as motive power for a grinding mill. The mill was used for grinding flour and feed and for shelling corn. P. M. Jones held a dual position, manager of the Nettleton House, "where you can get a square meal for twenty-five cents," and postmaster of the recently established post office called Fitchburg. Fitch was appointed station agent for the railroad office, called Nettleton Station.

In October, 1876, Fitchburg was surveyed and laid out, and Fitch started construction on his house, eventually intended to be a hotel. It was

... 28 by 42 feet, including a full size basement, is three stories in height, with an attic equal to a fourth story. The building is finely finished and furnished, and is lighted by gas made on the premises.

The Fitchburg correspondent's report in The Valley Republican, which appeared in the November 17, 1877 issue, reported that the Fitchburg mill was doing a good business and that an engine had been attached to the mill to supple-

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66 The Valley Republican, Kinsley, November 3, 1877.
67 Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History," 262.
68 The Valley Republican, Kinsley, November 3, 1877.
69 Ibid., November 3, 1877.
70 Ibid., January 12, 1878.
ment the windmill. It also proudly announced that "three families reside in the city of Fitchburg; more coming; the spirit moves." During the month of December, reports from Fitchburg were optimistic. The railroad had erected a platform eight feet by twenty-four feet and hopes were expressed that the railroad would also put up a small depot, "which would not cost much, and would add much toward settling the surrounding country. However, we are thankful for this much." 71 Improvements were made on the machinery of the mill, and business, the paper revealed, was on the increase. 72

Some concern was exhibited about the Sunday pastimes of the young people, who, instead of attending Sabbath school were "strolling over the country with dog and gun." 73 Fitch's prosperity probably caused some envious settlers to sign a petition calling for a change in the name of the post office, because the office was changed to Nettleton, to become effective April 1, 1878. 74 Six new settlers came to the community in February, but lack of rain caused some of the residents to leave in May. 75 This exodus and the

71 The Valley Republican, Kinsley, December 1, 1877.
72 Ibid., December 22, 1877.  
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., February 23, 1878.
75 Ibid.; Kinsley Graphic, May 11, 1878.
absence of additional settlers caused the Nettleton corres-
pondent to make bitter reference to "Dead Beats." Kansas,
the correspondent wrote, was overrun with them,

They get free rides through the country, ostensibly
to look at and select lands. Some of them claim to
represent large colonies of people who are just ready
to start for Kansas. They generally slink away in the
night, after having asserted to numerous victims their
positive intention of remaining indefinitely.76

As if to compound the difficulties of the struggling
community, John Fitch's wife died in March, 1878, and in
July, John Fitch was killed in an accident.77 Moreover,
crops were very poor throughout the county in 1879. This
was the first year that the number of acres seeded to winter
wheat exceeded that planted to corn.78 In June, a Sabbath
school was organized at Nettleton, but the problem of young
people hunting on Sunday, unfortunately, was being settled
in another way.79 The next report sent to the Kinsley
Graphic, which was printed on September 13, 1879, stated:

Since our last letter from Nettleton many changes
have taken place, as a result of crop failures, fi-
nancial depression, &c., the sum of which is hard
times, two little words expressing a world of mean-
ing, as used by most Kansans just now.

76Kinsley Graphic, May 11, 1878.
77Ibid., July 27, 1878.
79Kinsley Graphic, June 28, 1879.
P. M. Jones, the postmaster and only merchant in Nettleton had left with about six other residents, and the correspondent closed with the statement: "it savor s strongly of a 'decline.'" In a seemingly desperate attempt to keep the town alive, Nettleton was incorporated into a city of the third class in the fall of 1879. Promising predictions were made concerning the crop prospects for the coming year and the possibility of the construction of a school house.  

The next year, 1880, was another lean crop season however, and the once promising community of Fitchburg, or Nettleton, failed to survive.

Two seasons of crop failures, 1879-1880, are reflected in the census figures in 1881, when the population of Edwards County sank below the 1878 figure. Acres under cultivation in 1880 had decreased by 4,477.5 compared with the previous year, and, in 1881, the figure plummeted another 18,923.5 acres.  

In spite of the decreasing number of acres under cultivation, the value of wheat and corn raised in 1881 more than doubled. As a result, the decreasing population trend was reversed in 1882. Un-

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80 Kinsley Graphic, December 7, 1878; ibid., February 1, 1879.


82 Ibid., 1879-1880, 154; ibid., 1881-1882, 222.
solicited advice was given to the farmers by the paper in 1881; it recommended farming fewer acres and farming more thoroughly, 160 acres was considered too much. Also, more attention should be given to raising stock. These admonitions indicate a realization that changes were necessary in current farming practices.

An encouraging sign of renewed life in the county was the building of a hotel and cafe by the railroad in December, 1881. After the harvest in 1882, the paper announced that the yield of winter wheat and other grains in the county was the largest known. And, according to the Biennial Reports, the paper was partially correct. Corn yielded 30 bushels per acre in 1882, the previous high was 25 bushels per acre in 1876, but winter wheat averaged 24 bushels per acre in 1878 and only 21 bushels in 1882. Statistics, however, were not really the important point; what mattered was that prosperity was returning. Another evidence of good times was the destruction

83 Kinsley Graphic, November 19, 1881; ibid., December 10, 1881.
84 Ibid., December 31, 1881.
85 The Republican-Graphic, Kinsley, July 13, 1882.
86 See appendix B. Hereinafter "wheat" will designate winter wheat since spring wheat was never planted in substantial quantities, except in 1878 and 1879, when the acreage averaged 1,785. See Biennial Report, 1877-1878,
of $7,000 worth of county script which was redeemed in the summer of 1882. 87

The monotony of the long winter months was broken by a bank robbery in Kinsley on December 9, 1882. Twelve thousand dollars were stolen, a fact which temporarily threw the citizens of Kinsley into a panic; however, the culprit, the county treasurer, was soon discovered. Because the treasurer, J. W. Crawford, had access to the safe in the bank, which was connected with his own office, and because he was known to have been in the building during the time of the robbery, suspicion naturally pointed to him. Although denying he had a part in the robbery, Crawford said he knew he was under suspicion and could help to recover the stolen money. However, because his reputation would be ruined in the county, Crawford bargained with the cashier of the bank, L. G. Boies, asking that Boies agree to purchase his house and refrain from taking any measures to find the criminal, or criminals. His terms being accepted, Crawford led the authorities to the hidden money and all but approximately $400 was recovered. 88

198; ibid., 1879-1880, 154. Excepting 1878-1879, acreage in spring wheat never exceeded 500 acres a year and ceased to be planted in 1895, ibid., 1877-1878 through 1895-1896.

87The Republican-Graphic, Kinsley, July 13, 1882.
88Ibid., December 14, 21, 1882; ibid., February 15, 1883.
Another good crop was enjoyed in 1883, although the total value of field crops decreased $64,847.04. But, partially compensating for the loss from this source, the value of animals slaughtered or sold for slaughter exceeded $10,000 for the first time in 1883. The number of acres planted to sorghum exceeded the corn acreage in 1882; and, in 1883, the sorghum acreage was only 155 acres less than the wheat acreage. Constant searching for some crop that would be suitable and profitable, was turning the attention of the farmers to sorghum. Rumors had been circulating in 1882 that the Larned Sugar Works might be moved to Kinsley. Kinsley had a flour mill but wanted to expand, and in January, 1883, the machinery of the Larned Sugar Works was moved to Kinsley.

Housing the $25,000 worth of machinery of the new refinery was a three story building in the southern part of town. In August, it was announced that one of the leading industries in Kinsley was the sugar factory and operation was expected to commence in a few days.

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90 Ibid., 1883-1884, 123-124.
91 The Republican-Graphic, Kinsley, January 25, 1883.
92 Kinsley Mercury, August 18, 1883.
nately, difficulties in obtaining additional machinery essential to sugar refining prevented any sugar production. On October 8, 1883, the works did process fifty tons of sorghum which averaged eighteen gallons of syrup to the ton, and gave employment to fifty-five persons. Though the production of sugar never materialized, it did offer more tangible prospects for the future than the reported discovery of a silver mine in the northwestern part of the county, in March, 1883.

Faith in the possibilities of the semiarid climate was not destroyed by the lean years, but taught the settlers

93 *Kinsley Mercury*, January 19, 1884. Because of the relative certainty of raising sorghum, the sugar mill issue remained alive in Kinsley for a number of years and the plant operated spasmodically, producing syrup. In addition to the lack of capital, the reliance on bagasse as fuel for the boilers was a definite handicap. On August 29, 1885, the *Kinsley Mercury* reported that J. Bennyworth had started up his sugar mill but was not operating at capacity. It was still called a sugar mill although its production was limited to making syrup. Bennyworth addressed a meeting of citizens of Kinsley, in January, 1888, soliciting support for the raising of $6,000 to buy new machinery to add to what he had, so sugar could be refined. See *Kinsley Mercury*, January 19, 1888. The *Biennial Report*, 1887-1888, 136, listed the industries of Kinsley, mentioning two brick-yards, a flour mill and a tin shop, but no mention was made of the syrup mill. The last reference found to the syrup plant appeared in the *Kinsley Mercury*, April 12, 1890, where it was stated that "J. Bennyworth, the pioneer of the sugar industry, has a plant in Kinsley that he has been operating successfully for some years."

94 *The Republican-Graphic*, Kinsley, March 8, 1883.
in Edwards County that alterations in their traditional practices had to be made. However, during the next few years the emphasis was not on adaptation to the environment, but an effort was made to convert an essentially agricultural region into an industrial metropolis.
CHAPTER V

BOOM 1884-1887

Returning prosperity to the county in the late 1880's can be seen by a cursory examination of the population trend and available lands. The coming small-farmer land boom was sensed by the Brown township correspondent who wrote

The long expected boom for south western Kansas is certainly approaching. The evidences are unmistakable. Quite a number of homestead entries have been made on this side of the river during the last two or three months. Already more than one of the hitherto thinly settled communities are speaking of organizing school districts and building school houses before another winter. I am told, and I think on good authority that already upwards of one hundred preemption claims have been entered on lands lying south of the Rattlesnake hills . . . .

Government lands, subject to the homestead, preemption or the timber culture acts, amounted to 274,720 acres in 1882; 150,000 acres in 1884; 11,760 acres in 1886; 8,120 acres in 1888 and by 1890 the Larned Land District, which included Edwards County, did not report lands available by county, but had only 20,000 acres available in the entire district. All of the Santa Fe's land in Kinsley township

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1 Kinsley Mercury, March 1, 1884.
2 Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1881-1882 (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1882), 224; ibid., 1883-1884, 125; ibid., 1885-1886, 119; ibid., 1887-1888, pt. 2, 209; ibid.,
was disposed of during 1884 and 1885. In 1884 the railroad had reported 70,276 acres unsold in the county but no lands were listed for sale by January 1, 1887.

A study of Wayne township, for the year 1885, indicates the type and size of the newly acquired farms. Malin classified the farmers of the township into three groups: ranchers, large farmers and small farmers. There were twelve ranches which averaged 2,144 acres; twenty large farms, twelve of them were half-section farms and three full section farms and the remaining were odd sizes; twenty-nine small farms, averaging 160 acres. The large and small farmers practiced a combination between field crops and livestock.

Population in the county climbed from 1,876 in 1884 to 2,166 in 1889-1890. Between the 1884 and 1886 reports, ten townships, amounting to approximately 230,400 acres, were detached from Edwards County, which would partially account for the sudden drop during that particular period. Hereinafter these reports cited as Biennial Report.

Allan G. Bogue, "Farm Debtors in Pioneer Kinsley," Kansas Historical Quarterly (Topeka: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1953), XX, 88. Hereinafter this series cited as KHQ.

Biennial Report, 1885-1886, 119.

James C. Malin, "The Evolution of a Rural Community; An Introduction to the History of Wayne Township, Edwards County, Kansas," from the files of the Kansas State Historical Society. Copied from the Lewis Press, June 1 to July 6, 1933. Hereinafter cited as Malin, "Wayne Township."
to 4,717 in 1887, a figure not exceeded for sixteen years. Malin writes that by the time of the census of 1885, Wayne township contained a population of 315, most of whom were new arrivals. Incoming settlers were making Edwards County a thriving area.

These years of boom, 1884-1887, were generally good years from an agricultural viewpoint; the wheat during this period averaged sixteen and one-half bushels per acre and the corn averaged twenty-five and one-half bushels. A record corn crop was recorded in 1886 when 533,150 bushels were raised; but the market price was only thirty-five cents per bushel, and the following year the corn acreage decreased from 21,326 to 6,608. The desire to raise corn persisted in the thinking of the farmers, however, and during this four year period the corn acreage more than doubled the wheat acreage. It was not until the 1890's that the soft wheat grown in the 1880's gave way gradually to hard Turkey wheat, and wheat supplanted corn as the principal field crop.

On January 31, 1885 the Kinsley Mercury, motivated

6See appendix A. 7Malin, "Wayne Township."
8See appendix B.
9Biennial Report, 1885-1886, 199; ibid., 1887-1888, 134.
10Ibid., 1883-1884 through 1887-1888.
11Malin, "Wayne Township."
by the understandable desire to induce more people to settle in the county, gave an impressive list of forty-six branches of businesses represented in Kinsley. Among the diverse list was included: 1 jail; 1 I.O.O.F. lodge; 1 Catholic church; 3 Protestant churches; 2 G.A.R. posts; 2 justices of the peace; 1 brick school house; 1 graded school and 1 W.C.T.U. organization. After the plentiful harvest of 1885, rumors began to circulate concerning the formation of the Arkansas Valley and South-Western Company by a group of Hutchinson businessmen backed by Topeka capitalists. This group proposed to construct a railroad line which was to run from Hutchinson to Kinsley, and probably would be leased to the Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe for a more direct through route.12

At a railroad meeting in November it was argued that the Santa Fe, with only sixteen miles of road bed in the county, paid one-fourth of the taxes paid by the entire county for personal and real estate property.13 The proposed railroad would add another twenty-two miles of road bed in the county, and hence, it was a sound investment.14

12Kinsley Mercury, September 5, 1885.
13Kinsley Graphic, November 20, 1885.
14Oscar Clayton Hull, "Railroads in Kansas," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1911-1912 (Topeka: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1912), XII, 44.
Another meeting was held and eleven men were appointed as a committee to interview the people in their townships and solicit support for the railroad. Caution, a rare trait during this speculative period, was advised by the paper early in 1886. Concerning the railroad boom, the paper stated:

The air is full of rumors of railroads in all directions through western Kansas. A charter only costs one dollar, which doubtless accounts in some measure for a great many of these imaginary lines. Caution gave way to speculation however, and the editor continued

Where there is so much smoke, however, there is bound to be some fire, and with the heavy immigration of the past year to this part of the country there is bound to be railroad construction and other public improvements of a permanent nature.

Pertinent to the current railroad question was the farmer's marketing problem. Because much of the county did not have access to the railroad passing through the northwestern part of the county, farming practices were partially dictated to the settler by restrictive circumstances. Inadequate transportation made it more profitable to raise crops such as corn, barley and oats, rather than wheat, because these crops could be sold to the ranchers and the

15 Kinsley Graphic, November 20, 1885.
16 Kinsley Mercury, January 2, 1886.
rancher did not have to worry about transporting his product to a market outlet.

This system was interrupted by the blizzard of 1886, which dealt a severe blow to the cattle industry throughout the state; and the county was faced with two alternatives. The Kinsley Graphic, January 25, 1886, reported that some stock raisers said that the heavy loss of cattle required a revision of former practices, namely, turning attention to a better grade and providing adequate shelter for the stock. Or, as suggested by the same paper on February 26, 1886, cattle ranching should be abandoned, expressing the belief that "slowly the cattle baron has rounded up for the last time his thousands to give room to the vast corn fields and seas of grain." The choice between the alternatives did not have to be absolute, but the farmer gradually displaced the rancher, thereby making transportation and potential market outlets a prime issue. Moreover, this change in events created a problem for the citizens of Kinsley.

Much of Kinsley's business had revolved around the profitable trade of supplying the ranches, but now, in

... its place was left only the petty trade of the impecunious homesteader—that is, unless it was possible to conjure into existence some new and highly profitable form of big business as a substitute.17

17James C. Malin, "The Kinsley Boom of the Late
So the problem faced by Kinsley and the "impecunious homesteader" was to decide if they would vote to buy 880 shares of railroad stock at $100 per share or lose the opportunity for another railroad. The original survey carried the proposed route through Wayne township, but there was some contention that more votes could be gained if the route were to go through northern Franklin and Brown townships. However, no definite action was taken to change the original survey. The election on the bond issue for the construction of the Arkansas River and Western Railroad was set for April 23, 1886, and the Kinsley Mercury elatedly announced in the April 24, 1886 issue that the bond election had carried by a majority of 448 out of the total vote of 1,066. As anticipated, Trenton, Franklin and Brown townships did not support the bond issue at the polls but the county was to have another railroad.

Work commenced immediately on the new railroad from Hutchinson to Kinsley, renamed the Chicago, Kansas and Western, and the first regular passenger train arrived in Kinsley at 12:55 p.m., August 10, 1886. Accompanying

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18 Kinsley Mercury, April 3, 1886.

19 Kinsley Graphic, August 13, 1886.
... small-farmer boom had come the railroad boom; rail dependent upon farmers for its traffic and farmer dependent upon railroad for its market. And then, like measles on a child, townsites broke out all over this young country.20

As early as 1879 a post office, Belpre, was established seventeen miles east of Kinsley, and by 1880 a correspondent from that area was sending items of news to the papers in Kinsley. But until the influx of settlers in 1883 and 1884 and the completion of the new railroad, the significance of the vicinity could be summarized in the words of the Belpre correspondent who wrote

Belpre is dull and won't furnish material for a lengthy correspondence. ... There are two arrivals in our neighborhood, which is a little encouraging since so many are leaving.21

In 1886, with the completion of the railroad, the town of Belpre came into existence. On June 12, 1886, the Kinsley Mercury reported that the Arkansas Valley Town Company had purchased a half section of land from Mrs. S. R. McKibben and had laid out the new town of Belpre, and town lots were selling rapidly. Business establishments started to multiply and "all that is needed is a little capital to

20Malin, "Wayne Township."

21Kinsley Graphic, April 17, 1880. "Belpre" was merely a post office and the community around the post office spoke of it as a town.
make things boom."\(^{22}\) When the railroad's construction train reached Belpre on July 9, the town consisted of one dwelling; but by August the railroad had built a station house, stock yards and a water tank. Other improvements included a lumber and hardware store, a livery and feed stable, a blacksmith shop and a grocery store.\(^{23}\)

Considerable inconvenience was caused because the Belpre post office was located three miles from town, and a petition was forwarded to the Postoffice Department asking that it be relocated at the present town site. The Belpre correspondent believed that "it undoubtedly will be done when all the red tape of the government has been exhausted in delaying the matter."\(^{24}\) There evidently was more "red tape" than the citizens of Belpre anticipated, because in September, with winter approaching, the correspondent wrote in exasperation

"The mills of God grind slowly," but the postoffice department at Washington doesn't grind at all, but we still go to the sand hills for mail. How long, oh Lord! oh, how long!\(^{25}\)

A church building fund was started in November and

\(^{22}\)Kinsley Mercury, August 28, 1886.

\(^{23}\)Ibid., August 21, 1886.

\(^{24}\)Ibid.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., September 25, 1886.
by February, 1887, Belpre could boast of

... two grain houses that handle thousands of bushels of corn, two firms that handle three kinds of coal and do a rushing business, five stores, one blacksmith shop, one large livery stable, and one of the best lumber yards in the county, not excepting any.26

In the same article the observation was made that "the country surrounding Belpre has hitherto been monopolized to a great extent by speculators, but is now being cut up into small ranches and farms." Before the collapse of the boom period, 1884-1887, Belpre was able to add a school house to its list of improvements.27

Lewis, eight miles east of Kinsley, was founded when the new railroad passed through the county. On May 22, 1886, the Kinsley Mercury announced that Lewis, Price and Company had sold a quarter section for the town site of Lewis. At first the residents objected to the name of the new town, but Lewis stuck. Within one month plans were under way for the construction of a Methodist church in Lewis and about thirty town lots had been sold.28

26Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, February 25, 1887.

27Kinsley Mercury, October 13, 1887. Belpre was to undergo its greatest boom during the first quarter of the twentieth century when a railroad, the Anthony and Northern, was built through the southern part of the county and a branch line from Larned passed through the town and made connection with the road to the south of Belpre.

28Ibid., June 12, 24, 1886.
By July the mushroom growth of the community was attested to by the report of a farmer who

... oiled his wind mill the other day and while on the tower took observation to see how many mills he could see and he counted eighteen, all within a radius of five miles. 29

The residents of Lewis, who persisted at this time in calling their town "Wayne," celebrated the fourth of July in Garfield, Pawnee County, because "the grove at that place is what attracts the attention of the farmers who have to work out in the hot sun day after day." 30 During the months of July and August the new town was bustling with activity.

A lumber yard was opened and about two hundred men were working on the railroad. "The train," reported the paper, "whistled over at Lewis for the first time last Saturday [July 17] night." 31 And construction began on the Lewis depot in August. 32

Late in September some of the citizens of Lewis met in the depot and organized a Protestant Episcopal church. Twenty-six farmers agreed to deliver four loads of stone apiece to the building site and it was estimated that as many more loads would be needed. 33 By this time Lewis

29 Kinsley Mercury, July 3, 1886. 30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., July 24, 1886. 32 Ibid., August 7, 1886.
33 Ibid., October 2, 1886. This church was completed
had about twenty-five buildings completed, among them two lumber yards, one owned by Wolcott Bros., the other by W. S. Simpson, of your city [Kinsley]. There are two livery stables, Col. Devine, of Wendell, owning one and M. C. Kennedy the other. Mr. Cox has a boarding house and is doing a good business. Mr. Spence has his hotel nearly completed. Mr. Yontz has a lunch room, J. W. Carpenter has a neat land office, and Mr. Sarver has a grocery and meat market. Col. Lewis has just completed coal bunks to hold two hundred tons and has coal on the track.34

The Lewis correspondent reported in the Kinsley Mercury, November 13, 1886, that M. C. Kennedy had published the first paper in town, the Lewis Scissors, and that a post office would be opened the following week.35 J. M. Lewis, the coal dealer, started construction on a grain storage bin in December to round out seven months of fervent activity that resulted in a new town in Edwards County.36

Fellsburg, located in Franklin township, about sixteen miles southeast of Kinsley, had a post office in 1882, but it was located too far from the new railroad, which crossed the northern part of the county, to experience in the summer of 1887 and later moved to Kinsley. See Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. A.

34Kinsley Mercury, October 2, 1886.

35No record of this paper was found in the Newspaper Division of the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka.

36Kinsley Mercury, December 11, 1886.
the boom enjoyed by Lewis and Belpre. The Fallsburg school house was the central meeting place for the community where the young people could step "the light fantastic business in fine shape besides getting away with a wagon load of watermelons . . . ." Although Fallsburg was not affected by the railroad boom, the rapid settlement of the county led the Franklin township correspondent to report in the Kinsley Graphic, August 21, 1885, that "Fallsburg is on a boom. Samuel Reeder has opened out [sic] a first class boarding house where the lean may be made corpulent . . . ."

Eight miles east of Fallsburg was another post office called Kirkfield, named after Robert G. Kirk, a farmer who had settled in this part of the county. The post office at Kirkfield had been established by 1882, but probably because of the competition of Wendell, located two miles south of Kirkfield, this community passed into obscurity.39

Wendell was founded in 1883, and Professor Malin des-

37Biennial Report, 1881-1882, 221. Like Belpre, Fallsburg experienced its greatest expansion in the twentieth century. See above, note 27.

38Kinsley Mercury, September 1, 1883.

39On June 19, 1890, the Kinsley Mercury reported that Kirkfield was "literally wiped from the face of the earth . . . by a cyclone. Not a house was left standing." The paper stated that this was the first "cyclone" in many years in the county and added a postscript which said that the town of Kirkfield only contained a vacant barn.
ribes the town site as "a quarter section of sand (but not so big a quarter as some, where the sand had to be stacked to get it all on) located in what had been the center of the county." Nevertheless, after the first year of existence, Wendell had a grocery store, a restaurant, a livery stable and a printing office and a hotel under construction. Building sites were given by the town company for businesses or dwelling houses, title being conferred upon completion of construction. In January, 1885, a church was nearing completion and a school district had been organized.

During the spring of 1885, Wendell continued to expand rapidly. A drug store was added to the business concerns and it was reported that "R. M. Drake, the lumberman is hardly able to supply the demand, he keeps from six to eight teams on the road all the time hauling from Kinsley." S. J. Hetzel managed a restaurant and bakery, and a confectionery store had been opened. Hetzel, Manuel and Beezley, a Wendell real estate firm, was reported to have located 125 people on pre-emptions and sold six farms at an average of $12.50 per acre. F. G. Millett, one of the founders of

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40 Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 45-46.  
41 Kinsley Mercury, November 15, 1884.  
42 Ibid.  
43 Ibid., January 10, 1885.  
44 Ibid., April 11, 1885.  
45 Ibid.
Wendell, sold his interest in the town in April and the new town company sold twenty-six lots, after taking possession, for the average price of $125 per lot. In view of the transportation facilities in Wendell in 1887, when the town's only prospect for mail delivery was by pony express, her facilities in 1885 seem impressive. Five hacks left Wendell daily; one to Harper, one to Medicine Lodge, one to Coldwater, one to Kinsley, one to Greensburg and one to Mullinville.

Railroad fever, which seemed to be contagious during this period, struck this community in April, 1885, when hopes were expressed that Wendell would have a railroad by Christmas. In the first issue of the Wendell Champion, edited by W. H. Finch, the editor presented Wendell's case for a railroad.

At the present prices town lots are the best investment that can be made in the west. But the first question asked by one and all will be, "What are your railroad prospects?" Three railroads are building in our direction, one survey has already been made which touches the town, and there is no doubt but that within the next six months we will have one at least, and the probabilities

46 Kinsley Mercury, April 25, 1885.
47 Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, May 18, 1887.
48 Kinsley Mercury, April 25, 1885.
49 Ibid., April 11, 1885.
are that two will reach us. In fact, we have a scope of country around us so large and so productive that railroads cannot afford to stay out of it. There is no way to reach the road except by crossing the sand hills, and there is now not another valley as well settled and as productive as ours but has a railroad. There are now about thirty business houses in the town, and nearly if not quite as many more will be erected before the end of the year. 50

To a people who intensely desired to see these booming predictions come true, Finch's reasoning probably seemed sound. However, no railroad came but hopes were not abandoned.

In July, 1886, the residents of Wendell were encouraged by rumors of a connecting railroad between Larned and Greensburg which "would give this valley communication with Wichita, Kansas City and with the west by way of the Rock Island & South Western." 51 On January 21, 1887, the first issue of the Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, carried news from Wendell which consisted of the sad report that "the town is rather quiet since the departure of the Champion." In May, 1887, the Wendell correspondent attempted to keep alive the illusion that Wendell was progressing, but the rash optimism of the past was gone. 52 Before admitting defeat however, the citizens of Wendell circulated a peti-

50Wendell Champion, October 9, 1885.
51Kinsley Mercury, July 3, 1886.
52Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, May 4, 1887.
tion which called for an election to change the county seat from Kinsley to Wendell. Prior to the boundary change which took place in 1886, Wendell was located near the center of the county and had aspirations of becoming the county seat. Sufficient support for the county seat change warranted the proposal to be presented to the electors of the county. E. D. Taylor from Wendell, the watcher for the polls in Kinsley township, was doing a thorough job and the Kinsley people were afraid that the election was going to be won by Wendell. Acting on this assumption, the Kinsley group persuaded Cyrus Roberts to pick a fight with a stranger, which would give the judge an excuse to clear the court room and stuff the ballot box. The plan worked and Kinsley retained the county seat but Roberts complained later, "I had a hell of a time keeping from getting licked, as the stranger did not understand it was a put up job."54

Wendell's misfortune was enjoyed by Kinsley, though

53See map facing page 7. Considerable excitement prevailed in the county early in 1885 when the state legislature was considering a boundary change which would take ten townships from the southern portion of Edwards County. Kinsley Mercury, January 31, February 7, 21, 1885. Opposition to the proposal was successful in 1885, but the change was effected in 1886. On February 19, 1886, the Kinsley Graphic voiced the opinion that the advantages of the change outweighed the loss because, "Union between the north and south side seemed to have been a matter of impossibility."

54Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. A.
the county seat was in no position itself to be exultant.

Wendell, a Kinsley paper asserted,

... is now in the throes of a religious boom ... The position of Wendell is analogous to that of a condemned murderer. With its custom mill passed to the pale realms of shade, its railroads and water tank lost in the sand on the east banks of the Rattlesnake, its mail reduced to a tri-weekly drawn by only two plug horses in place of the four noble steeds that used to delight the hearts of the ever-tired citizens, and many of its claims, with large and artistic mortgages on them; what wonder is it that the ex-geographical center should give up all hopes of worldly things and fall back on the consolation which two churches will afford? ... Christianity is not so filling as patent roller flour, especially when the blizzards are raging through a pair of last summer's linen pants."

The "Wendell Clippings," in the Kinsley Mercury, April 26, 1888, conceded defeat by admitting that "the once promising town of Wendell now assumes the appearance of the 'last rose of summer.'"

Exaggerated as the small town booms in the county may appear in retrospect, none of them compared with the colossal booming activities of Kinsley. A Board of Trade was organized in Kinsley in April, 1886, for the purpose of promoting business in the town and in the same issue of the Kinsley Mercury that announced the success of the bond election to purchase stock in the Chicago, Kansas and Western Railroad, it was stated that a road would be built north-

55Daily Mercury, Kinsley, December 17, 1887, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 45-46.
west from Kinsley to Denver. Looking to the bright prospects of the future the editor reviewed the past history of the county and then commented:

There is an old saying that "It's a long road that has no turning." Kinsley was a railroad station more than twelve years ago, and in 1878 had a population of 400 people. Then a whole handful of misfortunes came upon it and seemingly came all at once. In April of 1879 one-fourth of the business portion of the town was reduced to ashes. A year later a similar calamity occurred. But now the winning card has been turned.

Prices for crops had not been good in the county in 1886; and in 1887 the average yield of wheat and corn, ten and fifteen bushels per acre respectively, was the poorest since 1880. As a result of these adverse agricultural conditions the booming propaganda of the other villages in the county became less radical; however, the reaction in Kinsley was substantially altered by W. S. Hebron. Hebron, a new arrival to Kinsley, took over the Kinsley Mercury on January 29, 1887, and, instead of recording news, started an all out campaign of manufacturing news.

During February, 1887, a Building and Loan Association was organized and the Kinsley Investment Company shortly thereafter. The object of the Investment Company was to

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56 Kinsley Mercury, April 24, 1886.  
57 Ibid.  
58 See appendix B.  
59 Kinsley Mercury, February 5, 1887; Kinsley Graphic, February 18, 1887.
That our readers may fully understand the growing importance of Kinsley as a railroad center we submit here with a crude outline of the city showing its present and prospective railroads. Two of these roads are already in operation to this city, the third, the D.M.&A., will be finished by the first of September, while both the Frisco and Omaha, Kansas and El Paso will be completed in twelve-months at most.

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D.M. & A. ---- Denver, Memphis and Atlanta Railroad
O.K. & E. ---- Omaha, Kansas and El Paso Railroad
O.K. & W. ---- Chicago, Kansas and Western Railroad
A.T. & S.F. -- Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad

-----completed railroads
buy and sell real estate, the profits were then to be divided among the share holders of the company. In January the Omaha, Kansas and El Paso Railroad Company had been chartered, with some Kinsley men as officers, and Kinsley was suggested as headquarters for this proposed line. In promoting this projected line, Hebron was reversing the position of the former editor who had stated that "there will be no road built south of Kinsley for several years." Hebron argued, however, that Kinsley needed an outlet to Chicago by way of Omaha and said that the road would be completed within a year to the southern part of the county. Rumor of an extension of the Chicago, Kansas and Western Railroad, which had been predicted by the Kinsley Mercury on April 24, 1886, was kept alive and Hebron stated that construction on this line would begin in a few days.

"KINSLEY: RAILROADS, ROUND HOUSES, REPAIR SHOPS AND MANUFACTORIES," was the heading of the Kinsley Mercury on February 26, 1887. Kinsley, the paper continued, was "Pretty, Plucky, Preserving and Proud ...," and why shouldn't she be? The Denver, Memphis and Atlantic Railroad, at first

60 Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 25.
61 Kinsley Mercury, April 24, 1886.
62 Ibid., April 19, 1887.
63 Ibid.
known as the Arkansas Valley, Iuka and North-Western Railroad, was to be built and its division headquarters were to be located in Kinsley, "neither of which is a matter of the least uncertainty ... " But, Hebron maintained, Kinsley was not limited only to one or two railroads.

Arrangements are being perfected for the most marvelous building boom, the coming summer, ever witnessed in the valley. The Santa Fe will build machine shops and round houses, a canning factory will go up, a foundry will be established, a carriage and wagon factory, ... besides many other enterprises which will be carried through but are not sufficiently matured as to warrant any mention at this time ... .

In March Hebron said the Denver, Memphis and Atlanta Railroad would reach Kinsley by July; and on April 1, 1887, the Kinsley Graphic announced that the voting of township and county bonds to aid in the construction of this line had resulted in an overwhelming majority in every township.

By June the extension of the Chicago, Kansas and Western Railroad to Denver was abandoned but confidence was expressed that the Denver, Memphis and Atlanta Railroad would become a reality.

On June 18 the Mercury announced the completion of the survey from Iuka to Kinsley, and predicted that trains would be running in ninety days; a two-story depot 58 by 130 feet was to be built and division offices established. A syndicate of Missouri Pacific

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64 *Kinsley Mercury*, February 26, 1887.

officials was to build a large hotel. 66 Two more railroad prospects were announced by the Kinsley Mercury on April 9, 1887, one, the Rock Island was sure to come and Frisco representatives had been in Kinsley, seeking land on which to build depots, shops, and divisional facilities. 67 The railroad boom suddenly ended however, because "during the mid-summer the railroads succeeded in concluding an agreement not to build more roads in 1887." 68

An integral part of the railroad boom was the real estate and building boom. During the week of March 5, 1887, the average daily total of real estate transfers equaled $30,000. 69 It was reported the same month that a $35,000 hotel and $150,000 worth of other buildings were to be erected within ninety days.

Every real-estate office was crowded, and ran two

66 Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 27.
67 See insert facing page 90.
68 Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 27. The underlying cause of this railroad boom is discussed by Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 25, in which he states that many lines were projected "by irresponsible parties into the trade territory of those already built, and primarily for the subsidies voted by counties, townships, and towns, or to sell out to stronger roads. The established systems, the Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Rock Island and Missouri Pacific, felt that they had to locate branch lines in order to protect themselves from these racketeers, even when the business secured did not in itself warrant construction."
69 Ibid., 31.
to four teams showing stuff to customers, and sometimes two or three dealers were making out sale papers for the same piece of property.70

In April the hotel, Santa Fe depot and the Masonic Temple, "besides a number of business blocks and scores of residences," were "in course of erection."71 Just how much construction was actually being done is difficult to determine, since, during this period, little distinction was exercised between actual and proposed construction. For example, two of the papers had stated in the latter part of April that construction on the Santa Fe depot was under progress, but the Kinsley Graphic, May 13, 1887, reported the arrival of contractors from Lawrence who began staking off the ground preparatory to commencing work on the new passenger depot.72 And, the Kinsley Mercury, May 28, 1887, said that the Santa Fe had just broken ground for the depot.

A review of Kinsley's progress was made by the Kinsley Mercury, May 28, 1887, when it was publicized that a system of waterworks has been commenced to be ready for use in a few months, and an electric-light plant is being established. Kinsley has extensive sugar works for the extraction of that article from sorghum which cost $50,000. A flouring mill with the latest approved appliances; a mattress factory, bot-

70 Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 31.
71 Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, April 27, 1887.
72 Ibid.; Kinsley Mercury, April 30, 1887.
tling works--supplying an immense territory--and several other less important industries. A large cooperative cracker manufactory from the East has recently purchased a tract upon which to erect their buildings, houses for employees, etc., and will commence operations immediately.73

By comparison, however, the predictions of late summer and early fall dwarfed these modest accomplishments. Over two million dollars were to be invested in other projected manufacturing enterprises. Of the important new industries predicted, Malin lists

... twine, meat packing, leather, glue, oleomargarine, canning, tin cans, printing of labels, paper boxes, gloves, strawboard, tobacco, crackers, sugar, sashes, doors and blinds, churns and washing machines, harrows, and papier mache. ... in addition a barb wire factory, a foundry, steel mills, linseed oil works, plow works, and not least, a college, a public library, and the great publishing houses of the Daily Evening Mercury and the Daily Morning Graphic.74

More concrete than these projected enterprises was the construction of a water works and two new school houses. It was proposed to issue thirty-year bonds, amounting to $40,000, for the construction of a water works.75 On June 30 the election was held and the vote disclosed that about

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73 Of the industries listed in this summary, the Biennial Report, 1887-1888, 136, lists only the flour mill. Three "less important industries" were listed by the report; two brick-yards and a tin shop.

74 Kinsley Mercury, August 18, 1887, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 33-34.

75 Kinsley Graphic, June 10, 1887.
four to one were in favor of the bond issue. On July 6, 1887, the Edwards County Banner presented its arguments for the passage of another bond issue, amounting to $16,000, for the construction of two schools. The basis of the argument for the new schools was not the need for better educational facilities, but because schools would be a means of continuing the boom. According to the Banner,

There is nothing that is better calculated to build up a town than liberality in every education enterprise. Such school buildings as are contemplated for this place, will be worth thousands of dollars annually to the city by drawing homeseekers, and enhancing the value of property.

Convinced that they needed better schools, the residents of Kinsley cast 390 votes at the school bond election, every one in support of the bond issue. 77

W. S. Hebron, of the Kinsley Mercury, kept up his booming efforts, and on September 1, 1887, proclaimed

Kinsley! The Cynosure of all eyes. The coming great metropolis. A $250,000 packing house and a paper and paper-box factory employing 1,000 operatives to be established here at once. The contracts all signed,

76 Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, July 6, 1887.

77 Kinsley Graphic, July 15, 1887. One of the new schools was to be built on the grounds of the old school house which had been completed in April, 1877, at a cost of $4,400. See James C. Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History of Edwards County," KHQ, 1940, IX, 263. The walls of the school house started to crack and crumble and when it was torn down in 1887 it was learned that the contractor who had built the school had used thousands of unburned bricks.
sealed and delivered, and but a few days will elapse before hundreds of men will be at work here upon the buildings.

A small item in the Edwards County Banner, September 7, 1887, revealed more accurately the conditions actually existing in the county than the wild assertions of Hebron. The Lewis correspondent wrote,

The immense rains that we did not get in June when we wanted them are coming now . . . . The rains though coming so late, insure to us a magnificent crop of tumble weeds, which will go far toward filling our deficiency of corn.

Disregarding this pessimistic note, The Weekly Banner-Graphic, December 16, 1887, eloquently declared:

The Dark Eyed Goddess dons her purple robe and joins the march of progress. Oh Ye Gods and little fishes, read, read and reflect. Business barometer booming--Buildings being built. Fair fame forging forward finely. 78

Some reason for optimism became tangible in December, when bids were advertised for the foundation of the $250,000 packing house. 79 But Hebron, in heaping scorn on the decline of Wendell, unintentionally disclosed the general conditions throughout the county when he wrote:

. . . the junior member of the "Farmer's Friend Land and Loan Company," is wintering at his suburban villa, and says the prairie hay in his vicinity makes a superior article of soup. He expects to pass a very comfortable winter if the hay holds out.

78 As quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 41. 79 Ibid.
J. W. Carpenter, the rotund senior member of the same benevolent firm, is holding down his claim north of the city. By judicious feeding of his horses he is enabled to dispense with a clothesline this winter, the bony protuberances on the animals proving excellent receptacles for articles from the wash. With the money which he will save this winter in a single article of clotheslines, Mr. Carpenter expects to start a farmers' safe deposit bank next spring. Since he retired to his claim the citizens have been agitating the question of boring for natural gas to supply the deficiency.

Misery enjoys company and, although the papers would not admit it, the boom was spent except for a few desperate attempts to revive the lifeless cause early in 1888; and the only major permanent monuments to the boom were the water works and the school houses.

80 Daily Mercury, Kinsley, December 17, 1887, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 46.
A sharp decline in the aggregate value of field crops and the beginning of a population decline characterized the year 1888 in Edwards County. In the early months of the year the people of Kinsley were occupied with a religious revival being held in the Methodist church. Regarding this revival, the paper remarked,

Interest still centers in the revival meetings at the Methodist Church, and while the number of conversions is not so large as is reported from some of our neighboring and more ungodly towns such as Larned, Stafford, Dodge City and others, there is still much good being done . . . .

Although there was a brief period of respite from the booming activities, the tempo of the past year was soon revived. On February 9, 1888, W. S. Hebron, editor of the Kinsley Mercury, announced

One million dollars worth of new buildings to be erected here at once: One of the largest packing houses in the West and some of the largest manufacturing institutions in the United States . . . .

Possibly suspecting that his readers were becoming somewhat skeptical of his predictions, Hebron attempted to

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substantiate his predictions by explaining that

... manufacturers are leaving great labor centers, and are isolating their establishments from cities; they are moving to the region of the raw material, and the day of concentration has passed away forever, at least it seems so as one watches the development of the manufacturing interests in their movements.2

Boomers in southwest Kansas believed that their region had not received a fair share of publicity from the state immigration bureau and decided to organize a Southwestern Kansas Immigration Society.3 A meeting was held in Kinsley and it was decided to have Edwards County represented in the newly formed society and financial support was pledged.4 Some elements in the county realized that greater emphasis should be placed on agriculture and the Board of Trade appointed a committee

... to go to Kansas City and purchase flax seed and distribute it to the farmers gratuitously, as an experiment, in order to furnish material for the paper mache works, and the seed to be sold to our oil mill.5

The problem of power for the industrial development of the county was also solved by Hebron. He freely conceded

2Kinsley Mercury, February 9, 1888.


5Kinsley Mercury, February 16, 1888.
that Kinsley had vast amounts of sub-soil resources in the form of gas, coal, salt and artesian water, moreover

Kinsley had succeeded in the past few weeks, in developing the fact that we have a water power here of several thousand horse power capacity. This we regard as better than a coal mine in supplying cheap power for driving machinery. It will be utilized at once and before snow flies another winter, several factories will be in motion here, their wheels turned by water power.6

To support his position, Hebron revealed that an engineer from Chicago had already made a thorough survey of the water course, "from where it leaves the river to the point at which it again empties back, and after a careful computation, says that there can be developed a force of fully 3,500 horse power."7 Calculations made by Hebron and the engineer were ironically disproved by a correspondent who wrote:

... while crossing the Arkansas during the summer, I noticed clouds of dust rising from the river's bed. It struck me quite forcibly that the river needed irrigation, just enough to lay the dust.8

An effort was made to revive the railroad boom and the paper reported that the Omaha, Kansas and El Paso Railroad would be built from Kinsley to the south line of the

6Kinsley Mercury, February 23, 1888.
7Ibid.
8As quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 171.
state "at once, or in a short time at least." Malin observes, however, that a four-line item in the same issue leaves a reader wondering. It read:

The officers and directors of the Kinsley Milkyway Rapid Transit Company will meet this evening for the purpose of discussing the practicability of running a branch line to the moon.

Early in March the paper called attention to the arrival of the architect of the Inter-state Packing and Provision Company and disclosed in detail the size of the main building and its component parts which was to be built by that company. Readers of the Kinsley Mercury were informed on March 8, 1888, that charters had been filed with the Secretary of State by the Western Holyoke Papier Mache Mills Company, of Kinsley, with a capital of $250,000, and by the Kinsley Water Power Canal Company, with a capital of $300,000. The purpose of the latter company was to erect and maintain dams for the purpose of water power and irrigation. Further good news was reported by the Edwards County Banner-Graphic on March 2, 1888, when it was made known that a stock company had been organized in Brown town-

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9Daily Mercury, Kinsley, February 10, 1888, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 166.
10Ibid.
11Kinsley Mercury, March 1, 1888.
ship

... under the name of Fountain City Town and Artesian Well Company, with a capital stock of $10,000; of which, $7,500 have already been subscribed. They propose to locate a town, and sink an artesian well. Town site will be at the junction of the Iuka and Northwestern and the Omaha & El Paso[ sic] railroads.

In the midst of the vast industrial expansion that Kinsley was undergoing, though in reality it was confined to the newspapers, the Board of Trade held a meeting to discuss the purchase of seed for spring planting to be given to farmers who were unable to buy their own. The board concluded to purchase $1,000 worth of oats, seed potatoes and other seed; and a committee was appointed to solicit subscriptions for the fund.12 W. S. Hebron continued his booming articles until July, when he announced

We'll see you later. As soon as business lives up and Kinsley starts out on another boom we'll be on the ground with the Daily Mercury to carry the news ... . . .

For the present we propose to give the people a rest.13 Others in the county were forced to acknowledge that the boom had ended. George E. Wilson had come to Kinsley in 1887 and later wrote, "The 'boom' of the middle Eighties was about over, but we did not realize it."14 Continuing,

12Kinsley Mercury, March 15, 1888.

13Daily Mercury, July 14, 1888, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 171.

14George Edgar Wilson, Autobiography of George Edgar
Wilson related

... the boom had collapsed, we had had two or three lean crop years, commodity prices were low, wheat at 40¢, corn 15¢ and cattle worth hardly anything; good cows ten to twelve dollars and steers as low as $1.50 a hundred pounds, and there was coming on a political revolution.

After experiencing a small-farmer boom, a town-lot boom, a railroad boom and an industrial boom, the residents of Edwards County reluctantly turned their attention to agriculture and then to politics.

Wheat had averaged only eleven bushels per acre and corn ten bushels in 1888. The Edwards County Banner-Graphic, July 6, 1888, came to the conclusion that "we are now convinced that what Kansas needs more than anything else is scientific farming aided by a little more capital." At this time however, the emphasis was on corn production, because in 1889 the acres planted to corn exceeded the wheat acreage nearly sevenfold. During the winter of 1888-1889, the Mercury predicted another boom in 1889, "beside which all former booms pale into insignificance." The boom came, but not to Edwards County. A huge acreage of


15 As quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 171.

16 See appendix B.

17 Kinsley Mercury, November 15, 1888.
former Indian land was opened to homestead entry on April 22, 1889, in Oklahoma. This, said the paper, was a...

scheme, from what we can learn about it, is gotten up and engineered by Wichita town lot boomers, and about the only argument we have heard so far, advanced in its favor is that it will make an opening for the wholesale business of Wichita.¹⁸

This added competition caused the Graphic to comment that

"Now that we have Oklahoma, hell is no longer a necessity."¹⁹

As early as 1880 some of the citizens of Kinsley had considered opening a cheese factory. The Kinsley Graphic, August 7, 1880, reprinted an item from the Dodge City Times which observed; "Kinsley wants a cheese factory. The best location for one would be in the Graphic office. Cheese it. Start a soap factory." Nonetheless, the idea did not die and the Edwards County Co-operative Cheese Factory Association was organized in October, 1888, and the first cheese was made about the tenth or twelfth of November.²⁰ Another cheese factory was started at Lewis in April, 1889, scheduled to commence operation on May 1.²¹ Unfortunately, the new enterprise resulted in more publicity than profits. During

¹⁸ Kinsley Mercury, November 15, 1888.
¹⁹ Kinsley Graphic, April 15, 1889, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 178.
²⁰ Kinsley Mercury, February 7, 1889.
²¹ Ibid., April 12, 1890.
the first year that both factories were in operation the Biennial Reports indicated that the total production of the county was $369.00.\(^{22}\) In 1890, however, the value of cheese production reached $3,250.70, which seemed to indicate success for the industry.\(^{23}\) But in 1891, the value of cheese produced in the county fell to $157.85.\(^{24}\) The decline continued until 1894, when the value of the cheese product increased to $1,335.60, but the total cheese product for the remainder of this period, 1895-1900, did not surpass the value of the product of 1894.\(^{25}\)

Agriculturally, the years 1889-1892, were favorable and the crops were good. For the four year period wheat averaged seventeen bushels per acre and corn averaged twenty bushels.\(^{26}\) The Biennial Report for 1889-1890 said

The two years constituting the biennial period covered by this report are both remarkable. The one, 1889, is a thorough specimen or type of a Kansas year of plenty, with overflowing granaries. The latter (1890) was remarkable for being the driest and hottest season in twenty years, almost wholly destroying the

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\(^{23}\)Ibid.

\(^{24}\)Ibid., 1891-1892, 64.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., 1893-1894, 58; ibid., 1895-1896, 610; ibid., 1897-1898, 598; ibid., 1899-1900, 714.

\(^{26}\)Computed from the figures in appendix B.
corn crop . . . Wheat, oats and flax, for the most part, were good. 27

Fortunately, in 1890, the farmers of Edwards County drastically reduced the corn acreage and more than doubled the wheat acreage; from this date forward corn ceased to be the principal crop in the county.

Fine crops were also reaped in the county in 1891-1892. Describing these years, the Biennial Report related:

Taking the State as a whole and the crops in the aggregate, the two years have been prosperous years; and, with the rigid economy enforced by previous crop failures and hard times incident to collapse of the boom, the farmers of Kansas have liquidated more indebtedness in these years than they have done in any previous biennial period in the history of the State. This is especially true in the central and western belts, where the wheat area has been so largely increased and the crop both years so exceptionally good. 28

Although crops were good, the prices were poor; the average price of corn for the period, 1889-1892, was less than twenty-four cents per bushel, and the object of the farmer was not production per se, but income resulting from production. 29 R. E. Edwards, a Kinsley businessman, expressed his opinion concerning the conditions in 1890 in saying,

Our city and county are all right. We have ex-

27Biennial Report, 1889-1890, vi.
28Ibid., 1891-1892, vii.
29Computed from figures in Ibid., 1889-1890, 64; Ibid., 1891-1892, 64.
experienced severe such [sic] depressions as we are now passing through and the result has even been that those who had the nerve to weather the storm never had cause to regret their "staying qualities" . . . .30

Others in the county, however, were advocating more positive action than just "to weather the storm." The People's Party had run candidates in the county election of 1889, but, "the gang of self constituted political purifiers" was defeated.31 In January, 1890, the Edwards County Farmers Alliance was organized at Kinsley with defeated People's Party candidates as president and secretary.32 In Brown township a Farmers Alliance was organized on January 20, 1890, with a membership of ten, but by February 6, it had a total membership of thirty-nine.33 Allegedly, an applicant or two for membership in the Edwards County Farmers Alliance, a Kinsley organization, were refused admission because they were Republicans. This action caused the Mercury to publish a blast against the People's Party which stated that:

A few Kinsley shysters were at the bottom of the whole business and as soon as the people learned who they were they lost all faith in the movement. This

30Kinsley Mercury, March 22, 1890.
31Ibid., February 6, 1890.
32Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 173.
33Kinsley Mercury, February 6, 1890.
same set of "Kinsley shysters," however, are still designating all who voted for the successful ticket last fall as a gang and a few of them seem to imagine that being a member of the Republican party is to belong to the "gang" and to belong to the "gang" ought to disqualify anyone from being admitted as a member of the Alliance. 34

The Mercury supported the Alliance movement however, and declared that the Alliance was

... destined to work a great benefit to the producing class, especially of the western country. We believe the Alliance will in a very short time be able to dictate terms to railroads and other "soulless" corporations. 35

Actual organization on a county basis was effected at a delegate convention of the Farmers Alliance held at Lewis on February 17, 1890. Officers were elected and Fallsburg was selected as the most central location for holding sessions of the county Alliance. 36 At first, "the Alliance was represented as non-political, and in that guise drew membership without respect to party lines." 37 The guise was abandoned however, as the election drew nearer, and regular Democrats joined with the People's Party in an

34Kinsley Mercury, February 22, 1890. 35Ibid.
36Ibid. The Kinsley Alliance, which was organized in January, 1890, was called the Edwards County Farmers Alliance, but, regardless of its name, did not represent the county. See Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 173.
37Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 173.
attempt to displace the Republican "gang" holding county
offices.

High expectations were aroused by the Alliance.

The Lewis correspondent wrote:

We understand the Alliance [sic] here has taken
stock in the State Alliance stock Exchange, and intend
to commence making purchases soon. This is a move in
the right direction and we hope there will be a chance
for the farmers to get their groceries and farm imple-
ments without having to support from three to five
middlemen.38

In March, the county Alliance met in Kinsley and changed the
name of the Edwards County Alliance to the Sunflower Alli-
ance.39 A People's Party convention was held in September
and in November the "Pops," as they were popularly called,
made a clean sweep of the county offices.40 On November 7,
1890, the Kinsley Graphic analyzed the election in this
manner:

One thing is self evident that the "grand old
party," in Edwards County is fast going to the wall
under the present leadership. If the party is content
to have it that way, it is just as well. The peoples
party furnish a very comfortable avenue for escape from
a sinking ship. "Let her go Gallager."

With the exception of one commissioner, the Republi-

38 Kinsley Mercury, March 1, 1890. The correspondent
reported in ibid., May 1, 1890, that "some of the farmers
are ordering farm implements through the Alliance."

39 Ibid., March 8, 1890.

can ticket regained control of the county in 1891. The Kinsley Graphic attributed the loss to the fact that there were just two tickets, the Peoples and the Republican, and many Democrats voted the Republican ticket "to down the alliance." However, from 1893-1896, the Populists controlled the county offices in Edwards County. In 1894, the correspondent from south Brown township commented:

The political pot begins to boil gloriously. Two more years of this Cleveland-Sherman policy will make populists of everybody except the incurable blind. Most of the wheat in this part will make at least ten bushels per acre—one-half bushel of wheat and nine and a half of straw. The Kinsley Mercury remained loyal to the Republican party, and in 1896, hopefully reported large support of William McKinley and announced the organization of a McKinley Club in Lewis and one in Franklin township. In Edwards County, however, McKinley was not as fortunate as he was on the national scene, because he lost every township in the county.

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41 *Kinsley Graphic*, November 6, 1891.
42 *Ibid.*, November 11, 1892; November 17, 1893; November 9, 1894; November 15, 1895; November 6, 1896.
Control of the county by the People's Party had not resulted in a sudden rise in prices, and added to the depression of prices was a series of crop failures extending from 1893-1896. George E. Wilson remembers 1893 as the "year of the great drought. Wheat, corn and even feed crops were a total failure and what stock was left was wintered on sand hill hay and corn fodder." By this time, 1893-1896, wheat was the principal crop in the county and the average yield for this period was slightly over one and one-half bushels per acre. George E. Wilson, who had bought into an abstract business in 1893, in Kinsley, writes that in 1893 and 1894, at least two-thirds of the land in the county and much city property had been taken over and was owned by the loan companies and private investors all over the East. My abstract business put me in touch with many of these outside owners and I secured the agency to look after the renting, collection of rents and payment of taxes for these non-resident owners and later on I had exclusive agency in selling these lands and town property. The income from renting and collecting rents did not amount to much the following four years for the years 1893, '94, '95 and '96 were almost total crop failures and it was not until 1898 that we sold our first farm.

Later the county could look back on the hard times with a feeling of triumph, but the residents had seen many

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46 Wilson, Autobiography, 27.
47 Computed from figures in appendix B.
48 Wilson, Autobiography, 28.
failures and had attempted various schemes to revive the economy of the county through other than political means. Early in 1890, the Edwards County Real Estate Company was dissolved and two years later the Kinsley Building and Loan Association was also abandoned. 49 A total of four banks had been in operation in Kinsley during the boom period, 1884-1887, three of which were organized since the boom had started to gain momentum in 1886.

The Edwards County Bank was incorporated in September, 1882; the Edwards County Mercantile Bank had been organized in July, 1886; the Kinsley Exchange Bank was established in March, 1887 and the First National Bank made its debut in July, 1887. 50 By the end of the boom period only three banks remained in operation, the Edwards County Bank, the First National Bank and the Kinsley Exchange Bank. 51

R. E. Edwards, who had become president of the First National Bank in 1887, had started the first bank in the county in 1876, the Edwards County Bank. When Edwards, the brother of W. C. Edwards, for whom the county was named,

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49 Kinsley Mercury, February 22, 1890; ibid., September 15, 1892.
50 Ibid., April 16, 1887; Ibid., July 16, 1887.
came to the county he had the first kiln and burned the first brick in the county, from which he constructed a store. A. S. Johnson, a land agent for the Santa Fe, was busily engaged in promoting the county and apparently was willing to resort to any means to accomplish his ends. For example, he had a photographer prepare a picture of a homestead on the bare prairies, "with orchards hanging with ripe fruit, a nice yard with trees and shrubs, and children playing on the grass." Johnson felt that such a growing community should have a bank and he thought the private office in one corner of Edwards' store would suit his purpose. After Johnson had attempted to induce Edwards to open a bank, at least for a picture,

Mr. Edwards picked up a piece of charred wood from a bonfire near the store ... and wrote "Edwards County Bank" on the side of the plastered corner as a joke and called Johnson's attention to it. Johnson got his picture and the rumor spread that Kinsley had a bank and people started coming in to make their modest deposits, so "the bank started itself, before it had even a check or a deposit slip."

52 Kinsley Mercury, September 24, 1953, Sec. A.
53 Ibid. This office was plastered with lime burned locally, from rock which had been brought from Hays.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
From this humble origin the Edwards County Bank remained in operation until October, 1890, when the paper announced that it had closed its doors. 56 On June 23, 1893, the Kinsley Graphic notified its readers that the Kinsley Exchange Bank had failed. In another year, 1894, the First National Bank was compelled to give up its national charter and obtain a state charter. Under the new charter the same officers were retained and the bank was renamed the Kinsley Bank. 57

Some of the residents of the county found it difficult to give up the idea of making easy money, and in October, 1890, invested in a project to "sink a hole in the ground below the level of the Arkansas river, to see what nature had stored beneath them." 58 Such a project had long intrigued many people and according to the paper the results of this particular operation confirmed their beliefs. It was reported that a rich vein of coal was discovered, though the investors had to rely upon the opinion of the operator of the boring machinery, who was reportedly an expert. The hole was bored to a total depth of 150 feet and the absence of further mention of this discovery seems to indicate that

56 Kinsley Mercury, October 30, 1890.
57 Ibid., February 22, 1894.
58 Ibid., October 23, 1890.
the only one to make any money was the person who bored the hole. 59 A Lincoln township correspondent of the Kinsley Mercury, December 11, 1890, could not pass the opportunity to express his cynicism regarding the county seat's misfortunes and wrote:

Rumors of a railroad being built from Omaha to Galveston, is floating on the gentle Kansas zephyrs. Should the road pass through my farm I shall insist on building a town or city with a postoffice attachment, a packing house and papier mache plant, an oil mill, also a blacksmith shop and an opera house.

Various experiments with sundry crops were conducted during the period of readjustment, 1888-1900, in an attempt to find the crop most suitable to the county. Broom corn had been successfully grown in 1891-1893 and in 1895, a record breaking 1,043,500 pounds were produced, but the price was hardly more than two cents a pound and this crop was rejected. 60 An attempt to persuade the farmers of the advisability of hemp production was made by the paper during the summer of 1895, but this also failed to materialize. 61 A number of items in the Kinsley Mercury, in the latter part of 1894 and the early months of 1895, encouraged the farmers

59 *Kinsley Mercury*, December 11, 1890.

60 *Biennial Report, 1895-1896*, 610. Price computed from the figures provided in this report.

61 *Kinsley Mercury*, August 1, 1895.
to consider pump irrigation and raising alfalfa. The Biennial Report indicates that alfalfa production started in 1881 but did not become significant until 1896; by 1899 the value of the product of this crop equaled $55,484.75.62

Deficient crops, in 1893, caused the Kinsley Mercury, July 27, 1893, to beseech the county commissioners to provide employment opportunities for the distressed farmers. Another crop failure, in 1894, compounded the severity of the depression and the state government extended aid to Edwards County. On February 21, 1895, the Kinsley Mercury informed the people of the county that they were to receive $1,421.00 in state aid which was to be expended for the purchase of seed grain. Grants, the paper continued to explain, were conditional,

No person can receive more than twenty dollars worth of seed and considerable red tape must be unrolled to get that. The board is the judge of the needs of the applicant and in order to receive aid you must convince the board that you are not able to buy the seed yourself.

Efforts to increase production in 1895, were fruitless. The correspondent from south Brown township reported, in March, that the wheat was "dull; twenty-five cents per acre asked, no bids, no sales."63 In May, the conditions were no better,
the same correspondent informed the paper, "We have no wheat that will make twenty bushels to the acre, but we have 'scads' of it that will go twenty acres to the bushel."64

Deteriorating conditions were revealed in the Kinsley Mercury on December 10, 1895, when the editor complained:

There are a number of unoccupied buildings in Kinsley that are being allowed to fall into ruins. Every town in this part of Kansas has at the present time more or less unoccupied buildings but it is a poor policy to let them go to wrack and flaunt their delapidation in the faces of strangers who pass the town.

In 1894, some speculators from Cleveland, Ohio, purchased a square mile of land three miles west of Lewis. They divided the section into town lots and recorded the plat at the county seat under the name of Ohio City. Returning to Cleveland with a map of the city, which included imaginary buildings, the speculators gave away about 2,500 lots, the only expense being a fee of $8 to $10 for recording the transaction and payment for a notary.65 The Kinsley Mercury published a brief account of the founding of the city on October 18, 1894, and, exercising reasonable restraint, reported that the parties who had founded Ohio City "said" they represented a colony of 2,000 people who wanted to move

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64. Kinsley Graphic, May 31, 1895, as quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 181.

to Kansas. Kinsley had out-boomed the other towns in the county, nearly a decade had passed and she still was reminded of her folly. Early in March, 1893, the Lewis correspondent noted that Lewis had a new store but "as yet we have not heard any talk of electric lights, street cars nor an opera house . . . ."66 In view of these constant reminders of her past, it is understandable that Kinsley newspapers were reticent when the Ohio City project was being promoted. Apparently the cheese factory which had come into existence, in 1888, had ceased to operate, because the paper announced that an effort was being made to reactivate the plant.67 Some relief came to the county during the winter of 1895-1896, however, when the Santa Fe railroad was busy laying new tracks.68 Besides the adverse agricultural situation, Kinsley was aroused by the murder of Mayor John F. Marsh, who was shot down on the streets of Kinsley by two strangers in 1894. Robbery was evidently the motive for the murder. A reward of $1,000 was offered for the capture of the murderers and within three weeks they had been captured, sentenced and were waiting in Lansing to be hanged.69

66 Kinsley Mercury, March 9, 1893.
67 Ibid., March 14, 1895.
68 Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 182.
69 Kinsley Mercury, October 25, 1894; Ibid., November
Lack of moisture was not the farmers' principal problem in 1896. That year they were plagued by grasshoppers and other insects that destroyed their crops. One resident sarcastically predicted that the county would not be bothered with the same problem the next year which would be "free from all kinds of pests" under "McKinley protection." The year 1896, was the fourth consecutive year of very deficient crops and many eastern speculators who had tenaciously held on to land in the county began to sell out. This, according to Malin,

... was the beginning of the end, the liquidation running its course during the next five or six years .... They [nonresidents] were taking whatever they could get.... Buyers were giving what the land seemed to be worth or what they could afford to pay. The rebuilding of the community was scarcely possible except it be done on the foundation of a capitalization of land at its current income value. It was a bitter process for all concerned, but this phase of the liquidation of the boom marks one of the turning points toward the recovery of the next decade. This process incidentally contributed in part also to the general increase in the size of farm units to a point where they would more nearly sustain a farm family. 

Fire again struck Kinsley, in 1896, when the Santa Fe hotel and eating house was burned, resulting in an esti-

15, 1894. The same paper reported on November 7, 1895, that the two men convicted of the murder of Marsh were not executed and, because of legal technicalities, it was doubted that they would be hanged.

70 As quoted in Malin, "Kinsley Boom," 182.

71 Ibid., 187.
mated loss of $8,000.\textsuperscript{72} It was hoped that the railroad would rebuild, but it soon became evident that if any construction was contemplated it would be in Dodge City, not Kinsley. To fill the vacuum of the loss of one business, the paper revealed that "a leading Kansas City physician stated to us the other day that in his judgment the climate of this region is far superior to Colorado for consumption."\textsuperscript{73} It was suggested that a sanatarium be established in Kinsley but nothing ever came of the proposal. Some excitement was caused by inquisitive boys who became involved with playing with the grown up's play things, early in 1897. These

\[\text{... mischievous boys broke into the old powder-house on the south side of the creek where a large quantity of dynamite which was left over from the rain making experiments of a few years ago was stored and distributed the explosive pretty well over the town.}\textsuperscript{74}\]

Following the example set by his elders, a young man from Lewis was seeking sub-surface treasures. He thought that he had discovered the site of some hidden treasure and after doing the necessary excavation discovered he was digging up a woman's grave.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72}Kinsley Mercury, July 23, 1896.
\textsuperscript{73}Ibid., February 18, 1897.
\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., January 14, 1897. \textsuperscript{75}Ibid., March 11, 1897.
This period of readjustment was characterized by a depression of farm prices followed by a depression of production, but "it's a long road that has no turning" and the value of all agricultural products in 1897 was $594,579.19, compared with $244,797.35 in 1896.\textsuperscript{76} The next year, 1898, Wilson writes,

\ldots was also a good crop year and now the times were much better. A few farmers began to think about buying land. The outside investors had been paying taxes and getting nothing in return and were anxious to sell at the first chance. We sold several farms that year [1898] at from a dollar to five dollars an acre \ldots.\textsuperscript{77}

The remaining years of the nineteenth century were propitious for agriculture in the county and the population of Edwards County started an upward trend in 1898, which was to continue well into the next century.\textsuperscript{78} The Biennial Report, 1899-1900, declared that the years covered in the report were "by far the most profitably productive of any in the state's history \ldots."\textsuperscript{79} In 1900 the total value of all agricultural products equaled $792,322.25, the most profitable year in the history of the county.\textsuperscript{80} With a

\textsuperscript{76}Biennial Report, 1895-1896, 611; \textit{ibid.}, 1897-1898, 599.

\textsuperscript{77}Wilson, \textit{Autobiography}, 30.

\textsuperscript{78}See appendix A.

\textsuperscript{79}Biennial Report, 1899-1900, v.

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Ibid.}, 715.
great deal of pride the County Treasurer published a call in 1899

... for all outstanding warrants of Edwards county. This means that there is money in the treasury to pay every dollar of floating debt that the county owes and leaves enough on hand to take care of current expenses. From this time on county bills will be paid in cash. This is a great step for the county in more ways than one. When the Edwards county bank failed in 1890 carrying with it over $20,000 of the county's money, there were outstanding unpaid warrants to the amount of over $20,000. Since then this county has seen hard times but in spite of that, every year has seen a gradual reduction of this debt. The last two years of unexampled prosperity has had much to do with it. In those two years (1897-1898) over $30,000 of delinquent taxes have been paid.

With the turning of a new century, Edwards County, after a slow and faltering beginning, was entering into a new phase of development.

81Kinsley Mercury, March 3, 1899.
CHAPTER VII

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

In the autumn of 1873 the first school was taught in Edwards County. Mrs. A. L. McGinnis, teacher of the ten pupils for the three month term, wrote that the school was opened

... more for the purpose of complying with the law which required a three months school to be taught before public money could be used, than for any benefit which the pupils were expected to derive under such difficulties. Something over $30.00 was subscribed to this end. ¹

There was no school house and the building in which the first school was taught was twelve by sixteen feet, with a door and one window. It did not have a stove and before the term was completed, Mrs. McGinnis wrote that

... the house became so cold that we could not remain there. How well I remember those cold winds, sweeping and howling around the little shanty, loosen- ing the battens and bringing clouds of dust through

¹Kinsley Mercury, May 13, 1943, High School Dedication Supplement, as quoted in L. R. Clark, "History of Education in Edwards County." Clark wrote his history in 1901, when he was Superintendent of Public Instruction in Edwards County. See also James C. Malin, "J. A. Walker's Early History of Edwards County," Kansas Historical Quarterly (Topeka: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1940), IX, 273-274. Here-inafter this series cited as KHQ. Mrs. McGinnis also published the first newspaper in Edwards County, the Edwards County Leader, which appeared on September 16, 1873, see G. Raymond Gaeddert, "First Newspapers in Kansas Counties," KHQ, 1941, X, 313.
the cracks, until the place became so comfortless that I took the children into the room in which I was living... .²

District No. 1 was organized in October, 1874, by W. C. Knight, the first Superintendent of Public Instruction in the newly organized county. Some of the settlers were unsympathetic with Knight's actions and petitioned the county commissioners, "praying the honorable board to declare the action of the superintendent null and void."³ The petition was denied and during the winter of 1876-1877 the first school house in the county was built. School was taught for the first time south of the river the same winter Kinsley built its school house.⁴

By 1897 the total number of school districts in the county reached forty-four. In 1899 the first class was graduated from the three year high school course offered at Kinsley.⁵ Educational progress, however, had not been without incidents. In September, 1878, the Kinsley Republican appealed to parents for cooperation in the matter of school children bringing firearms to school and practicing during recess, stating that the practice must cease and

³Ibid., May 13, 1943.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
threatening offenders with arrest. The Kinsley Graphic demanded action by either the parents or teachers concerning the "reckless conduct" of school children who were standing on the railroad track when trains were approaching. Undisclosed acts of vandalism at the school houses in Kinsley called forth this editorial comment:

In this connection we cannot forbear to say a word about the class of literature that some of our boys are reading. "Dare-Devil Dick" and cheap "detectives" are poor stuff with which to fill the minds of the young.

Manifestly, the early educators were confronted with many problems which are not peculiar to this century. The Agriculture Report, 1875, of the State Board of Agriculture stated that there was one church edifice in Edwards County and the total membership was eighteen. The first Christian service held in the county was at Kinsley in the office of a hotel.

The building was an ill made wooden structure

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7Kinsley Graphic, November 13, 1880.

8Kinsley Mercury, December 24, 1896.

found on the ground of the Massachusetts colony, it had been built and abandoned by a colony from Chicago the previous autumn.\textsuperscript{10}

Reverend S. D. Storrs, Congregational Home Missionary for the State of Kansas, had learned of the new settlement made by the Massachusetts colony and came to Edwards County in 1873.\textsuperscript{11} Storrs preached the first sermon in the county to a congregation which numbered fewer than a dozen. The following year, 1874, a donation by Edward Kinsley of Boston made possible the erection of a church assessed at $2,000.\textsuperscript{12}

By 1882 there were eight Christian denominations in the county: Baptist, Church of Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational and Roman Catholic. At this time the Roman Catholic membership more than doubled the combined total of the remainder of the churches, but the Roman Catholics did not have any of the three church edifices recorded in the county.\textsuperscript{13} This condition was remedied in 1883, however, and the Kinsley Graphic disclosed

\begin{flushright}
Work was commenced on the Catholic church this
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10}Kinsley Mercury, September 18, 1890. \textsuperscript{11}Ibid. \textsuperscript{12}Agriculture Report, 1875, 261. \textsuperscript{13}Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture, 1881-1882 (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1882), 223. Hereinafter cited as Biennial Report.
week, and it is expected that it will be ready for occupancy by the middle of May at latest. When completed we will have three good church buildings in Kinsley.14

According to the Biennial Report, the Roman Catholic church had a membership of 525, in 1882, and this figure declined to ninety-four in 1892; the Methodist Episcopal denomination took the lead with a membership of 166.15 As a result of the transitory nature of the farm population in the county, Malin observes, "... churches came and went as did lyceums, literary clubs and dancing clubs."16

In addition to various social functions sponsored by the churches, sundry other groups were organized to increase cultural opportunities in the community. At the regular meeting of the Edwards County Literary Society, held on Wednesday evening, October 31, 1877, the members discussed the issue relative to Chinese immigration to the United States.17 A literary society was organized at Offerle in 1886. The first meeting was held at the school

14Kinsley Graphic, March 29, 1883.
17The Valley Republican, Kinsley, November 3, 1877.
house on December 28, 1886. The program for the evening consisted

... of orations, declamations, select reading, music, a newspaper and the discussion of the question, Resolved, that there is more pleasure in pursuit than in possession. 18

Obstacles were encountered however, and the Offerle correspondent wrote

Our literary meetings have been almost a failure the last two weeks, partially on account of bad weather, and also because the programme was not carried out at either. It seems as though the attendance would be larger if the audience could be certain the entertainment would be good, even in bad weather. As it is, they know it will be a failure as a literary meeting and do not care to attend a farce. 19

Regardless of the fact that many of these social organizations were not permanent, they provided a welcomed means of diversion from the rigors of pioneer living. On December 8, 1877, The Valley Republican announced a social sponsored by the Presbyterian church. One of the inducements to attend was the opportunity it afforded for "a pleasant drive by moonshine." The rural communities utilized the school house as a meeting place and possibly were envious of the pretensions made by the county seat. A Kinsley paper, boasting of the county seat's advanced cultural

18 Kinsley Mercury, December 25, 1886.

19 Ibid., February 19, 1887.
position, revealed in 1886 that "Kinsley has a last reached the zenith of social lore. A full-fledged dancing school has been organized. Hugging set to music on the half-shell." Offerle made provision for those who desired to do battle with words or with their fists.

Our debating society has tried in their way to transfer the Indian Bureau from the Department of Interior to the War Department and also to abolish the patent law. The boxing school is doing very good work in the way of making some of the boys' noses bleed. And there were others with different ideas of recreation. No details were given of the activities of the "West Side Bachelor Club," but it was noted that "the boys had a time that will be long remembered . . . ." Popularity of this type of club was evidenced by the formation of a similar organization in Kinsley in 1890.

A great deal of interest centered around dramatic clubs. The Kinsley Graphic, February 7, 1880, called attention to the organization of a dramatic club "that will insure an evening of rare entertainment with their first public appearance." The boom of the late 1880's was

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20 Kinsley Graphic, February 26, 1886.
21 Ibid., February 22, 1879.
22 Edwards County Banner, Kinsley, September 7, 1887.
23 Kinsley Mercury, April 24, 1890.
accompanied by considerable interest in opera. The Casino Opera Company played "Chimes of Normandy" and "Mikado" at Kinsley's Flohr's opera house early in 1887. In February, 1887, W. S. Hebron, the new editor of the Kinsley Mercury, bluntly commented that Charles H. Clark's Boston Company had presented

... the temperance drama of "Ten Nights in a Bar-room" and was greeted with an exceptionally good audience. The play is old and stale, very; but stale as it is, was nevertheless appreciated by the Kinsley people.

As the boom began to degenerate the cultural enthusiasts had to rely on local talent. The March 1, 1888 issue of the Kinsley Mercury announced

The Comic Opera of "Doctor of Alcantara" will be given by home talent of Kinsley, at Flohr's opera house Tuesday & Wednesday evenings, March 6th and 7th.

Continuation of the decline after the boom caused the editor of the Kinsley Mercury, no longer the unappreciative Hebron, to express the desire

... to see a theatrical troupe or an opera company come to town, we are getting rusty for want of amusement of some kind. Even "Uncle Tom's Cabin" would be welcome.

24 Kinsley Mercury, January 15, 1887.
25 Ibid., February 26, 1887.
26 Ibid., January 10, 1889.
Croquet was one recreational activity thoroughly enjoyed by the early settlers. The correspondent from the locality south of the river wrote to the Kinsley Graphic:

With the return of warm weather the once fashionable and still indulged in game of croquet is all the rage, grounds spaded up, and balls flying.27

In the same report by this settler, called the South Side correspondent, was the observation,

The South Side is a little behind in the line of dances. Could we not crowd one in somewhere, to give zest to our public entertainments and lift the burden resting upon our literary and religious enterprises?

A roller skating rink was opened in Kinsley in 1885. Publicising the new enterprise, the paper advertised: "The floor is double, almost noiseless, of seasoned hard maple, corners laid circular, good light and especial accommodations for the ladies."28

Despite the misfortunes of four successive crop failures, the promotion of entertainment organizations continued. The Kinsley Mercury, May 30, 1895, announced:

The bicycle enthusiasts of Kinsley have organized a club which is not wholly confined to the devotees of the magic wheel. Some forty members

27Kinsley Graphic, March 15, 1879.
28Kinsley Mercury, June 6, 1885.
are enrolled, over half of whom ride, the other half will be provided with other amusements. The old Edwards house has been rented and will be fitted up as a club house, with games of various sorts of an indoor character and a double tennis court and a croquet ground will be prepared for those who do not ride.

One bicyclist made news in March, 1895, when the Offerle correspondent wrote: "A lady on a bicycle passed through town last week wearing bloomers. The natives were thunderstruck."\(^29\)

Other organizations in the county were designed to promote agriculture. The Wayne Township Farmers' Club was organized in July, 1886 and the objectives of this group included exchange of ideas and information, cooperation with the county fair association and social intercourse.\(^30\) Another Farmers' Club was organized on August 21, 1886, in Franklin township. At the periodic meetings of these clubs various aspects of the farmer's problems were discussed.

The Franklin club discussed, for example, methods of "ridding the country of the pesky sand burrs," and "corn raising—the best means of planting and cultivation."\(^31\) This type

\(^{29}\)Kinsley Mercury, March 28, 1895.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., July 17, 1886. The organization, functions and accomplishments of this club are presented by James C. Malin, "The Evolution of a Rural Community; An Introduction to the History of Wayne Township, Edwards County, Kansas," Lewis Press, June 1-July 6, 1933.

\(^{31}\)Kinsley Mercury, August 21, 1886.
of organization was not new in the county; the first reference discovered appeared in the *Kinsley Graphic*, December 7, 1878, which published a call to the farmers of Edwards County:

In order that we may profit by each other's experience, and more fully derive all the benefits arising from an interchange of views upon matters pertaining to the agricultural interest of the country, we have concluded to organize a FARMERS' CLUB, and cordially invite all farmers, and others interested in the cultivation of the soil, to meet . . . .

Two or three attempts had been made to organize a Farmers' Alliance prior to April, 1881, but apparently these early efforts were not very successful. It was not until the latter part of the 1880's that the Alliances really took root in the county. Edwards County had a Wool Growers' Association; the purpose of this group paralleled the other agricultural organizations. The *Republican-Graphic* reported on April 20, 1882, that the next meeting of the Wool Growers' Association would discuss the subject of marketing wool and the purchase of sacks, twine, dip and other supplies. After the harvest of 1885, a movement was initiated to organize a county fair association. The *Kinsley Graphic* called attention to some friction in re-

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32*Kinsley Graphic*, February 5, 1881; *ibid.*, April 2, 1881.
The farmers undertook not long since to organize a county fair association but the move was hardly on foot when the would be dictator of the religion, politics, finance and social etiquette of the county, R. E. Edwards, stuck his miserly mug into it, and as matter of course undertook to control it, and as usual tried to control it in the interest of the few and against the interest of the many.33

It seemed that Mr. Edwards did not approve of the proposed location of the fair site, which the editor of the paper thought very acceptable. "Baldy," the editor avowed, "don't want it there because some person might come into town and leave it again on a road that doesn't run immediately past 'my store.'"34 The disagreement was settled and the paper described the first fair ever held in Edwards County as "... a complete success in the full sense of the word."35

It would appear that all of the efforts which were made by the farmers of the county to educate themselves to their new environment would have greatly accelerated successful adjustment, however

... the effects of population turn over in the early history of Edwards county resulted in each new crop of settlers trying to adjust to new climate, new soils and new crops and usually, not learning, move on. It took 40 years to discover what crops to raise and how to grow them.36

33Kinsley Graphic, August 28, 1885.
34Ibid.
35Ibid., October 23, 1885.
36Malin, "Turnover of Farm Population," 356.
Although the process of adjustment was slow, the early settlers of Edwards County tried to solve their problems on a cooperative basis and thus derived a great deal of satisfaction from their common struggle. Together they worked, worshipped, played and endeavored to raise their cultural standards.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Grave natural obstacles, augmented by an injudicious attempt to transplant an agricultural economy unsuited to the Plain's semiarid climate, complicated and prolonged the successful adjustment of the early settlers to the physical geography of Edwards County. Like the annual precipitation, economic conditions in the county fluctuated between seasons of plenty and scarcity, tending to result in an unstable population which impeded the accumulation of sound agricultural practices.

Settlement of Edwards County began in 1872, almost simultaneously with the building of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad through the county. After an auspicious but short lived beginning, the first settlers in the county experienced the first of several re-occurring periods of depression, generally attributed to drought, insects, low prices for agricultural products, or a combination of the three. Kinsley and Offerle survived the economic crisis of the 1870's, but Nettleton, apparently prosperous and growing, succumbed to the adverse agricultural conditions.

Returning prosperity in the 1880's and the building of another railroad in the county resulted in unrealistic
booming activities. Instead of contributing to the progress of the county, fantastic promotional schemes diverted the attention of the settlers from the basic problem of conforming to the realities of their environment. Disregarding the obvious fact that Edwards County was not a "Garden of Eden," a concept promulgated by enterprising promoters, the early settlers persisted in ignoring that the primary possibilities of the county resided in its soil. Even the sandy soil was not the best and the farmers had to learn that they could not always depend upon sufficient moisture to nourish their crops.

A series of lean crop years in the early 1890's brought about considerable political agitation and the county looked to political reforms as the solution to their problems. This approach, however, was unable to increase the annual precipitation. During the latter part of the 1890's, the crops in the county were much better and the prices of farm commodities were increasing. The spirit of political reform subsided and the farmer directed his attention to a growing interest in sound, scientific agricultural practices. After coming to the realization that prosperity was dependent upon adjustment to, rather than alteration of, the physical or political setting, substantial success was achieved.
Turkey Red wheat, a variety vastly more suited to the area than soft winter wheat, displaced corn as the principal crop in the early 1890's. This development, accompanied by the devaluation of land in the county after the collapse of the boom of the late eighties, was a significant step toward successful adaptation to the county's limitations.

During the twentieth century the farmers of Edwards County continued to progress in selecting crops suitable to the soil and climate, and responded to more scientific tillage methods. The early belief in sub-soil riches materialized in the new century with the discovery of natural gas and later, petroleum. Though these new assets did not radically effect the economy of the county, they were important factors in maintaining a rather stable population. The faith and optimism, therefore, which the pioneers had in the potentialities of Edwards County, has, in the twentieth century, been justified.


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The Valley Republican, Kinsley, November 3, 1877-February 23, 1878.
The Weekly Banner-Graphic, December 16, 1887.
Wendell Champion, October 9, 1885.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS


MISCELLANEOUS

Records of the Register of Deeds, Edwards County, Kansas.
APPENDIX A


Sources - compiled from the Agriculture Reports, 1875-1876; Biennial Reports of the State Board of Agriculture, 1878-1951; and mimeographed reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, "Population of Kansas as Reported by County Assessors," 1952-1960.
### POPULATION OF EDWARDS COUNTY AND KINSLEY, 1875-1960

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## APPENDIX B

### FIELD CROP STATISTICS

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<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>47,916 9</td>
<td>18,747 13</td>
<td>447,129.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>47,644 6</td>
<td>20,246 24</td>
<td>431,066.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>43,525 16</td>
<td>25,032 13</td>
<td>666,758.33</td>
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From Agriculture Reports, 1875-1876 and Biennial Reports, 1877-1878 through 1899-1900. Average yield per acre computed from these reports.