

Centennial History of Andrew County
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[Transcribed by Monica Schirmer Eshelman]

Report of Committee on History of Andrew County, Prepared for the Centennial Fourth of July.

Your committee, after having had several meetings, in which a general conference and interchange of recollections by the old citizens was had, present the following report, which, on account of the late day of commencement of the undertaking, and the great task required at our hands to prepare anything like an exhaustive history, will be concise and embrace the early days of the county exclusively.

The "Platte Purchase," which has not inaptly been termed "the garden of Missouri," and which embraces the northwestern corner thereof, was the [*illegible*] and happy hunting grounds of the Fox, Iowa and Sac Indians, until by treaty signed at Fort Leavenworth on the 17th of September, 1836, and ratified on the 15th of February, 1837, it became a part of Missouri, Congress having made provisions to that end upon the extinguishment of the Indian title.

Immediately following the extinguishment of the Indian title, the citizens of the adjoining counties east and south, believing that the land would be given to actual settlers, moved into this paradise in the spring of 1837, made their claims, cleared off the brush, planted corn, potatoes and vegetables, wintering their stock on Nodaway Island, which consisted of several sections covered with rushes. The country at that time had not been surveyed, and in order that an understanding might be had as to the manner of settlement and making claims, a public meeting was held by the settlers in the fall of 1837, added by Judge Wood, now of St. Louis, Colonel **Lewis Wood**, and other citizens of Clay county. **Robert Elliot**, who is still with us, was called to the chair, and a resolution was adopted that, for the sake of harmony and peace, each settler should make his claim cover a quarter section by setting in hewn posts at the corners. The settlers pledged themselves to observe this rule to the letter. It was published in a newspaper in the adjoining county of Clay, then the nearest organized county to the territory now known as Andrew county.

Joseph Walker, Calvin S. Cameron, James Officer and Frank Wrightsman were the first settlers of Andrew county. Mr. **Walker** is still living in the county, while the latter two have emigrated to Oregon.

In 1837 **Robert Elliott** and **John Samuels** brought a \$3,000 stock of goods, built a storehouse on the quarter section now owned by **Elijah Martin**, and this was the first store in Andrew county. It is remember as a time of trial for them, that shortly after the arrival of three wagon loads of goods, and before their contents were all stowed away in the building, they were visited by a score of drunken Indians. Never having dealt with Indians, they were in a quandary as to how to dispose of them-- since they desired

¹ **Bolding** and underlining mine. MSE

"accommodations" to remain all night in the store. By the aid of an opportune interpreter, accommodations were found for them elsewhere.

The principal settlement of this part of the "Purchase," however, did not occur until the fall of 1837, or the spring of 1838, when the following persons are remembered as some of those who took up their residence here: **Robert Elliot, John Kerr, Upton Rohrer, Hamilton Smith, Calvin S. Cameron**, the two **Griffith** brothers, **Johu** [sic] **Lincoln, Dr. Charles Caples, William A. Price, Jonathan Earls** and others.

In March, 1838, **Elliott & Samuels** store was removed to a more central point; a store-room 20x24 with warehouse was built, and a large stock of goods placed therein. Another house was put up at the same time, intended for a saloon, but was used for that purpose only for a short time; it was purchased and used for a school-house and for religious and public meetings generally. This old store-house is to this day a business house in Savannah.

Platte and Buchanan counties were the first counties organized from the "Platte Purchase," in 1839, to the latter of which this county was attached for civil and military purposes, until the 29th of January, 1841, at which date it was organized into a county and named "Andrew" in honor of Andrew Jackson Davis, late of St. Louis, who we believe was a prominent journalist and citizen of the State.

The boundary of Andrew county is as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of Buchanan county and running north along the former western boundary line of the State to the line dividing townships 61 and 62, thence west to the main channel of the Nodaway river, thence down the middle of the main channel thereof to the most southern crossing of said river by the range line dividing the ranges thirty-six and thirty-seven; thence south with the said range line to the middle of the main channel of the Missouri river; thence down said river, in the middle of the main channel thereof, to the northwest corner of Buchanan county; thence east with the north line of Buchanan county to the place of beginning.

Elijah Armstrong of Daviess county, **Elijah P. Howell**, of Clinton, and **Harlow Hinkston**, of Buchanan, were appointed Commissioners to locate the permanent seat of justice. The Commissioners, through **Theodore D. Wheaton**, reported to the county Court on the 29th of June, 1841, that on the 3d of April they had located the permanent seat of justice on the southeast quarter of section 9, in township 59, range 35, and recommended that the town be called "Union." The honorable County Court, however, named it Savannah. Fourteen dollars each were allowed the commissioners for their services.

The early inhabitants of the county labored under many disadvantages and privations. When attached to Buchanan county, business had to be transacted at Sparta, near the geographical center of that county. The nearest mill was in Clay county, a distance of over fifty miles, where flour and meal were procured, and often when farmers carried

their grist to mill, eight to ten weeks was the earliest they could get to return, owing to the extensive country to be accommodated by a single mill.

The first settlers were pioneers of iron will and perseverance, determined to combat hardships and adversity, many of whom have gone to their long homes. Others yet remain with us, and have been rewarded with wealth and prosperity, and are enjoying the dearly won fruits of their early labor and hardships. In looking over the list of the departed in death we are reminded of that solemn and impressive language in the Bible, which reads: "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." Peace be with them.

The county officers at its first organization were **Upton Rohrer**, President; **Samuel Crowley** and **William Deakin**.

Andrew S. Hughes, Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts, served by one day, and resigned, when **Edwin Toole** was appointed and held both offices for many years, and was regarded as one of the most efficient clerks in the State. He is still among the living.

Ezekiel Smith, Sheriff, and **Jonathan Earls**, Treasurer, died many years since.

As shown by the returns of **Henry Eppler**, the Assessor, the county revenue (separate from town lots and common school fund) amounted to \$120.72.

John B. Collier, the County Surveyor, is also numbered with the dead.

Benjamin K. Dyer was the first commissioner of the seat of justice.

Andrew county was attached to the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, with **David R. Atchison**, Judge, and **Peter H. Burnett**, Circuit Attorney, appointed by Governor "**Tom**" **Reynolds**, both of whom afterward became eminent in political life-- the first United States Senator and the latter Governor of California.

The first session of the Circuit Court in Andrew county was held March 8, 1841, at the dwelling house of **Gallant Rains**, the place designated by the General Assembly in the law organizing the county. The attorneys admitted to the bar at the term were **Andrew S. Hughes**, **John W. Kelley**, **Theodore D. Wheaton**, **Prince L. Hudgens**, and **Peter H. Burnett**. The grand jurors for the term were **James Davidson**, foreman; **Jonathan Earls**, **William I. Rush**, **Elijah Fuller**, **Hiram Smith**, **George Walters**, **Joel Guppy**, **William A. Price**, **Elijah Walters**, **James W. Wood**, **James Irvine**, **Abraham Dillon**, **David Davidson**, **Mitchell Gillam**, **Robert Elliott**, **Benjamin Williams**, **Benjamin R. Holt** and **James Herring**, four of whom are yet citizens of this county. They presented ten indictments for gaming, one for hog stealing, one for obtaining goods under false pretenses, and two for assault with intent to kill. The gamblers plead [sic] guilty and were each fined by the Judge one dollar and costs. The first civil case on the docket was

Tim Mosier vs. Coonrod Clifffield and others. The first *habeas corpus* was issued in favor of **Monroe Hayward**.

When the weather would permit, court was held under a large elm tree which stood about where now stands **J. C. Waterman's** fine brick dwelling house, his honor, "Dave," as he was familiarly called, seated in a chair on a huge pine box, presiding with the dignity of a Jay, Livingston or Marshall. The attorneys, when engaged in the trial of a case, used the crown of their hats as substitutes for tables. Ball-crown² hats were then in fashion, and swallow-tail coats, with collars striking the wearer about the amative organ of the occiput.



The places for the deliberations of the grand and petit jurors were places cut out in the hazel patch, sufficiently capacious to hold comfortably their occupants. A narrow [sic] path led to them, at the entrance to which sentinels were places to protect the juries from disturbance.

The following attorneys were subsequently admitted to the bar: **S. L. Leonard, W. B. Almond, I. N. Jones, James H. Baldwin, C. P. Brown, Lawrence Archer, Fred. Greenough, Benj. Hayes, W. A. Owsley, Samuel R. Campbell, Booth Atherton, C. F. Holley, Willard P. Hall, E. P. West, John Wilson, L. W. Hastings, J. M. Young, James B. Gardenhire, A. W. Doniphan, R. M. Stewart, Ben Stiles, C. C. Ellis, M. R. Singleton, Henry M. Vories, James Craig, Benjamin F. Loan, Bela M. Hughes, J. M. Bassett, Elijah H. Norton and James M. Davis**-- truly a fearful list to ravage on a new county.

Henderson Young succeeded **David B. Atchison** as Judge of the Circuit, the latter being appointed United States Senator to succeed Hon. **Lewis F. Linn**, deceased.

Henry Patterson, now of Holt county, was the first foreigner naturalized in the county, and **Alexander McAlister** next.

The first session of the County Court was also held at **Gallant Rains'**, the day after the meeting of the Circuit Court, March, 1841. The first business was to notify the commissioners to select the permanent seat of justice, to meet at **Gallant Rains'** and perform that duty. Two hundred dollars were appropriated and placed in the hands of **Edwin Toole**, to have the land entered, and the commissioners were instructed to lay off the land into lots and sell them. The first sale of lots was advertised in the *Far West* and the *Western Star* newspapers, published in Platte and Clay counties, the nearest at that time to Savannah. Subsequently *The Western Empire* was started in Savannah by **Lorenzo D. Nash**.

On the adoption by the Court of the Commissioners' report, selecting the county seat, **Prince L. Hudgens**, on the part of **William H. Rodgers**, and others, filed a motion

² Actually "bell-crown"

objecting to the report and location as contrary to law, and asking the court to set the same aside, which was overruled.

At the same term a new court-house was ordered built on the town site, to be 18 by 25 feet, of stone and wood, and to cost \$600. **Gallant Rains** was allowed \$12.50 for superintending its construction. **James Herring** was the building. This was a temporary house, and was occupied but a short time.

In the commencement of 1844, \$6,000 were appropriated for a new courthouse, to correspond with the dignity and pride of the honorable court. This is the brick structure that stands to-day [1868] a monument to the honesty and faithful workmanship of **John, James** and **Samuel Nelson**, builders, and **Elijah W. Ballard**, superintendent. This building was completed on the 17th day of December, 1845; it is 46 by 70 feet, two stories high, and capped with a cupola. Court first met in this house on the 19th of January, 1846. It is told that when the plans and specifications for the court house were under consideration, one of the Judges could not understand about the cupola, and objected to the appropriation for that item, but was overruled by the other judges. This honorable functionary, after the completion of the edifice, was seen intently grazing at the house, and upon being asked if he admired the structure, replied: "Why, yes, very much; and," pointing to the top, "that is the cupola; had I know how much it adds to the beauty of the building, I should have favored putting one on the other end, too!"

Savannah has no public square. The Court-house and county buildings are on the north half of block 24, the alley through that block being sixty feet wide and known by the euphonious appellation of "Shinbone alley," derived from the many pugilistic encounters had in early times on this thoroughfare.

The County Court convened for the first time in Savannah in November, 1841, the first business of which was to award five dollars for plans and specifications for a new jail, of which **John Eisiminger** was building and **Jeremiah Clarke** Superintendent.

Soon after **Samuels & Elliott**, license as merchants was issued to **Nave & Howard**, who did business in a small shanty that is now in a dilapidated condition, on Shinbone alley, in the rear of **Shedrick's** confectionery. About the same time, **Rogers & Welch, Frame & Richardson, James Wooney, Smith & Tootle, G. W. Samuels** and others were licensed, and a dram-shop license granted **Julius C. Robidoux & Co.** **Isadore Barada** opened the first hotel in Savannah in a frame building (afterward burned down) on the corner where now stands the St. Charles Hotel. **Riggins & Farnes** opened on Shinbone alley, just west of **Nave & Howard's** store.

Daniel Tool, Andrew Luckey [sic], **John Ellington** and **Amos Holsey** established ferries over the Missouri and Nodaway rivers. **Albert G. Clark**, modernly known as "China," was then, not a merchant, but acting constable of Nodaway township, and afterward Sheriff of the county.

John Tyrell, known as "Old Sixty," was acting Justice of the Peace, and **E. S. Castle** and **Jerry Burnes** were Justices for Jefferson township.

Milton R. Singleton was the first Public Administrator, **Theodore D. Wheaton**, Representative in the Legislature, and **Neal Gillam**, State Senator.

John Lincoln built the first mill on Lincoln creek; **Abraham Dillon** the first on Dillon creek; **Wilson & Kibby** the first on Platte river; one **Stansberry** the first on the Hundred-and-two.

Of the old settlers the following are among those who are yet living in the county; **Joseph Walker, Robert Elliott, E. A. Carson, Benjamin R. Holt, William A. Price, James R. Watts, Joseph Brock, Elijah Martin, John Riggins, Jeremiah Clarke, Lewis Stiles** (then a small boy), **C. P. Miller, A. F. Owens, Walter Wells, John Terrell, E. W. Gee, William Patterson, Daniel Van Buskirk, Charles Caples, John Lincoln, Edward Brock, John H. and Robert A. Watts, Nide Pettijohn, Samuel Monroe, Fred Wyatt, John White, James Neeley, Ezra, John and Nathaniel Kellogg, James Davidson, Ephraim Myers, Crowleys, Earles, Stantons, Smiths**, and others.

In August, 1849, **C. F. Holly** was elected the first Probate Judge, and was succeeded by **Daniel Vanbuskirk** in 1853.

William B. Allen, now residing in Savannah, located six miles north of Savannah, east of the Hundred-and-two river, in September, 1843. At that time there were no settlers except a few in and skirting the timber. The open prairie extended into Iowa, and perhaps into Minnesota. The prairie land was covered with a luxuriant growth of grass and flowers. Stock of all kinds were fat and healthy, and there was an abundance of game, such as deer, turkeys and prairie chickens, with plenty of fish in the streams. The summer of 1844 was very wet. The water-courses were very high, with no bridges or boats and but four canoes with which to cross. But one mill existed above what is now Bird's Mill, and that at one time did not turn a wheel for six weeks. The universal diet at that period consisted of meat, hominy, potatoes, and pound cake. The latter was made by pounding corn in a hominy mortar and sifting out the finest for bread, the coarser for hominy. In consequence of the excessive rain and rank growth of vegetation, a great deal of sickness occurred that fall-- mostly chills and fever. The bottom lands were then thought to be worthless, as it was so wet that a horse could not be ridden through without danger of miring. At that time **Mr. Allen** felt secure of a range for stock for a generation to come. But after the close of the civil war, the growth of the country took a fresh start, until now there is scarcely any land in that vicinity not enclosed, with the native grass and rank wild vegetation about gone. As the county improved, the health became better, until we have now as healthy a county as can be found in the West. Deer are no more found in the county, and turkeys, prairie chickens, fish, &c., do not repay the sportsman's exertions with anything like the profusion of thirty to thirty-five years ago.

The face of the county is generally gently rolling, and nearly equally divided between timber and prairie. The soil on the uplands is composed of silicious marl, and is

unsurpassed for fertility by any uplands. The bottoms are entirely alluvial, composed generally of a light, sandy, calcareous soil, fertile in the highest degree. "Hackberry Ridge," as it is called on account of the vast quantity of timber of that name thereon, extending north and south through the western part of the county, is the richest large body of land in the Platte Purchase. Andrew county is the premium county of the State of Missouri-- scarcely a rod of land in the whole county but can be easily cultivated; and in addition to this fact, the county is remarkably healthy. Probably not more than one third of the land of this county is in cultivation, which, in crop times, is covered with luxuriant fields of corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hemp, buckwheat, tobacco, sorghum, &c. Grasses such as timothy, red-top, red clover, hungarian, blue grass, also thrive vigorously. Apples, peaches, pears, apricots, plums, cherries, grapes, and all varieties of small fruit generally, yield abundantly; one hundred thousand dollars being the estimated value of this product annually. Premiums are annually awarded her citizens for the largest and best varieties of fruit, by horticultural and agricultural fairs.

Since the organization of the county, more than two-thirds of the original inhabitants have either died or removed farther West-- many having gone to the Pacific Coast-- but their places have been supplied more than ten-fold. This change of population, and the improvements in the county, are the only changes since the primeval days.

The county is well watered. The Missouri river washed its southwestern line, Nodaway river forming the western boundary, which forms a junction with the Missouri a short distance above Amazonia. In the junction of these two rivers is Nodaway Island, the most fertile body of alluvial land in the State. Lincoln creek's course is southwest through the northwestern portion of the county, emptying into the Nodaway a short distance below Fillmore. The Hundred-and-two river runs due north and south through the center of the county, the Platte river running parallel with it, and draining the eastern part of the county. Many excellent water-power facilities on these streams are availed for propelling saw and grist mills.

Many perennial springs of pure water are found in the county, and the best and purest water is reached by wells in all parts of the county at a depth of twenty to forty feet.

Timber in our county is inexhaustible, and of the best quality, and consists of black walnut, hackberry, oak, ash, elm, hickory, maple, linn, mulberry, locust and other kinds, conveniently located and accessible to the prairie lands.

An abundance of the best quality of stone for building purposes is distributed conveniently in every part of the county. Much of it is shipped to St. Joseph annually to supply the demand for building stone.

The progress of the county has not been rapid, but it has been steady. [*A few words illegible*] a handful of scattered settlers [*a few words illegible*] it has reached a population in this centennial year of about 18,000 [*a few words illegible*]. Many fine farms abound all over the county. School-houses are [*illegible*] every district being provided with a comfortable school-building. A fine graded school edifice was completed in Savannah in 1873, which has had an

attendance of four or five hundred pupils. The citizens of the county are alive to the importance of popular education, as is evinced by their liberal provisions for schools and teachers.

There is one historical fact in our history to which few counties of the age and population of Andrew can successfully lay claim. While we have always maintained a name for good order and meting out justice promptly to offenders against the law within our borders, we have happily never been called upon to inflict the death penalty upon a single individual during the entire history of the county. Our sheriff has never had occasion to build a scaffold.

To conclude, the future prospect for Andrew county is reasonably bright and encouraging. Our citizens have put to be true to themselves, to make the most of the facilities and advantages which the God of nature has placed in their hands, and the road to prosperity will be readily found and steadily traveled. Trusting and believing that such is their purpose and determination, the committee respectfully close their only partially completed labors.