Phelps Helps



Volume 16, Issue 1

Spring 2008

Meetings held at the Nebraska Prairie Museum on the first Monday of the month at 2:00 PM.

The public is welcome!

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Future Plans For Library Addition

Details are being discussed on the future plans for building on to the Don O. Lindgren Genealogy Library. A committee has been formed which has met a couple of times. Bill Perry has made a blueprint of the proposed 13 by 40 foot addition. It will be built inside the present museum with display areas being built on top.

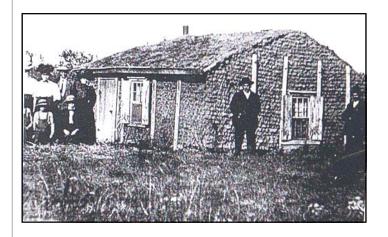
Several donations for library addition have been received. We are very grateful for the support of the community and museum board members and staff.

Those who volunteer at the library are pleased that their work is appreciated. We have strived to be of benefit to the museum, our local community and all the hundreds of those who have requested research throughout the United States and other countries.

This expansion will insure that the future history of the area will be preserved and we will be an excellent genealogy library that will serve many purposes.

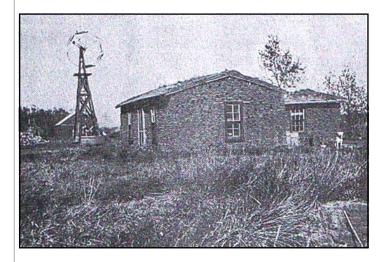


Sod House Memories



Story of Mrs. Clarence McNeal, Gothenburg, Nebraska

If you should ever want to build a sod house, here is a recipe for one. The recipe was found in the old and early history of Gothenburg. First, select a low place because it has more gumbo in the top soil. Now sod must be cut four inches deep, and twelve to fourteen inches in length. A spade can cut the sod into the foot lengths.



Then these pieces are laid one on top of the other just as bricks are laid. When the wall is two to three feet deep, you are ready to cut your window frames. These are held in place by props until the wall is finished on all sides and is high enough to hold them. Now trim the walls carefully with a sharp spade. Your sod house is ready for its sod roof. Nail beams from a slightly

By Mrs. Theodore A. Peterson

elevated ridge-pole to the outside walls, and cover them with boards.

Now lay tar paper over the boards, with the seams on the end over-lapping. Cement these with tar. After this is done you are ready to overlay the roof with sod in layers. After the grass roots of the sod knit into each other. Your roof will be waterproof and strong. It will withstand heavy winds.

Now plaster the inside of your sod home with native lime mixed well with a goodly mixture of hair and gravel to bind it well. If at this time you find you are short of money, you may leave the ceiling as it is rafter open and clear. But if you wish to cover them, have your new rafters covered with nailed on strips of paper making a fine clean ceiling.

Or, you could have a ceiling of wainscoting, lathe, or plaster. Cover your floor with rough boards or leave it bare. If bare, have your wife sprinkle the new floor lightly each morning with good rain or well water, then sweep. The tramping of the families felt will soon make the floor into a hard, cement-like surface. If you have rooms with a board or other hard floor, you can cover it with a generous layer of light straw and then with home woven carpet. This must be stretched tightly over the straw and tacked down.

In time your straw will wear to an even surface, but at first it may bulge in the center like a huge biscuit.

Good luck with building your sod house.

Marriages From Mascot, Harlan County, NE

NOTE: The Phelps Helps Newsletter highlights Harlan County in this section. With many of our subscribers interested in and from Harlan County, and since Harlan County is a connecting county to Phelps County, the Phelps Helps will publish history information on Harlan County. Dick Dyas, one of our long time members, compiled an excellent book on Mascot, Harlan County Nebraska. He also helps maintain the Spring

Grove Cemetery in which many families in the Mascot Area are buried. Included in this issue of the Phelps Helps is a list of marriages Dick compiled from the records of the Evangelical Church in Mascot, Nebraska that was active until 1950.

The first entry in the church marriage record is that of Mr. Howard R. Rowman and Miss Mirtle Frazee on March 30, 1898 followed by

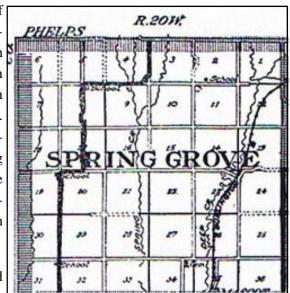
the marriage of Gavin Murray and Alta Essick on May 3, 1899. The following is a list of the marriages of the families most of us are familiar with.

DATE

GROOM

BRIDE

1903, Apr. 8	Jess E. Luke	Clara C. Worthington
1903, Dec. 23	Daniel Troutman	Katie Grosenbach
1903, Dec. 24	Charles Norman	Nellie Luke
1904, Aug 27	August Malone	Maude Morton
1906, Dec. 20	Daniel Grosenbach	Elsa E. Keene
1907, Jun. 26	Claude B. Grace	Estella L. Baker
1907, Sep 25	Amel O. Bloom	Mary E. Grosenbach
1910, Dec. 28	Joel W. Bloom	Aurilla S. Troutman
1913, Dec. 31	George Tanner	Eunice Johnson
1916, May 17	James Barbee	Nettie Grace
1916, April 22	Samuel Grosenbach	Dora Sandage
1924, Aug.24	Rev. John Armold	D'Alta E. David
1924, Sep. 19	Lloyd E. Johnson	Ethel F. Tanner
1926, Aug. 18	John Murray	Etta Cress
1928, Aug. 15	Francis C. Cady	Merna A. Clark
1929, Feb. 6	Arthur VanOsdol	Helen M. Ullrick
1932, Aug. 11	Kenneth McArthur	Olive B. Troutman
1936, Sept. 1	Ralph Thengwall	Alice Irene Murray
1941, Sept. 2	Lowell Elbert McNew	Rosanna Rosier
1944, Mar. 19	Clarence Sheffield	Hazel Tanner
1949, March 10	George Peterson	Barbara Coffey
1950, Feb. 12	Gerald Dean Skiles	Barbara Lee Longsine
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New Members

Ethel Basaile 1010 S. 25th Street Omaha, Nebraska 68105

Researching the families of Elbert Albert Silvers and Marjorie Kling Silvers who were married in Phelps County, Nebraska.

Dan Green 7098 Vineyard Way #6-106 Germantown, TN 38138

I am searching for information on the relatives of Clarence Bennett Johnson who was a foster child of Waldemar and Elizabeth Johnson. Clarence married Ruth Jenson 29 Dec 1926 in Phelps County. Their children were Roger, Clinton, Lamont, LaVern and Elaine.

Barbara Liedtke 11406 San Luis Peak Way Peyton, CO 80831-4416 barbararaliedtke@yahoo.com

I am interested in Knaggs, Sydehham, Musgrove (Musgrave), Mott Kopf, Knispel, Neben and early days at Fort Kearney, Phelps, Harlan, Buffalo and Dawson Counties, including the communities of Alma, Kearney, Lexington, Buffalo and Eddyville.

If I can provide any information on any of these subjects, please ask and I'll produce what I am able. My family's history starts with Moses Sydenham arriving in the U.S., and Knaggs families coming to join him in 1862 time frame at Fort Kearney. I also have people who came through Kearney, NE from New York and Illinois and Pennsylvania and Ohio and moved onward to Dawson county and farther west to Idaho and California.

Farms For Sale ~ Nebraska Nugget ~ July 17, 1883

Holdrege, Nebraska was not in existence in July of 1883. The county seat of Phelps Center was still anticipating a great building boom and the anticipation of the railroad coming through their town.

T. M. Hopwood was not only the editor of the Nebraska Nugget, but sold land. Here is his listing for July 1883.

Timber Claim near Lake post office; price \$650; will trade for stock; 30 acres broke, 5 acres in timber; all good land.

160 deeded land, 9 miles south of Phelps; 70 acres broke; good house, barn and well; price \$1,000. Not a foot of waste land on it.

Timber Claim, 160 acres, 15 acres, broke and in crop, 10 miles south west of Phelps, price \$300. 160 acres 8 miles north; well improved, 50 acres crop, price \$1000.

80 acres ¹/₂ mile south of Platte River; well improved, 40 acres broke, price 400.

160 acres of deeded land, 90 acres broke, house and stable, ¹/₂ mile from post office, price \$1200.

160 acres deeded land; 70 acres broke and in crop, house $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from post office, price \$1200.

160 acres deeded land; 35 acres broke, price \$9 00 in trade.

Timber claim 12 miles south of Phelps, 5 acres broke, price \$150, good terms.

Timber Claim; 10 miles southwest of Phelps, 10 acres 10 acres broke, price \$350, easy terms.

160 acres 10 miles west of Phelps, 7

acres broke, house on claim, price \$580.

160 acres, 40 acres broke, house and barn, 5 miles southwest of Phelps.

160 acre farm for sale 8 miles east of Phelps; a good sod house and barn and good well of water; price \$750, 80 acres in wheat, price \$750, ½ cash, a yoke of cattle for sale also.

160 acre claim west of Phelps, 8 miles, 30 acres broke with good house and barn and good well water; price \$750; will sell yoke of oxen with claim if desired, easy terms.

A claim 8 miles southeast of Phelps; price \$750, 80 acres broke, house, stable and well, a boss claim worth \$1,200.

We All Like To Go Back Where We Came From Written by Spence

(This is from a "Stray Thoughts" article in the Holdrege Daily Citizen article dated May 9, 1966.)

There is growing interest in Nebraska History. "We all like to go back and see where we have been."

In Holdrege "We've been" in Phelps Center, the town that was our predecessor, so let's go back to have a look in Phelps Center, which had high hopes of becoming a flourishing city, rapidly faded away when the railroad came through and missed it by about seven miles.

The newspaper, the Nebraska Nugget, published at Phelps Center in February of 1883 extolled the beauties of Phelps County and its county sea, which was in the center of the county. "The town site is one of the most beautiful in the world and the pride of the Midwest."

The editor continued to spread the gospel of Phelps Center through the spring and summer of 1883, only before the railroad decision to bypass the town.

"Six new buildings under construction....two hotels dong a thriving business at \$1 a day...a new twostory schoolhouse to be ready for the fall term....a daily stage line to and from Kearney, Nebraska...Two churches organized and more being planned... Two additions to the town setup."

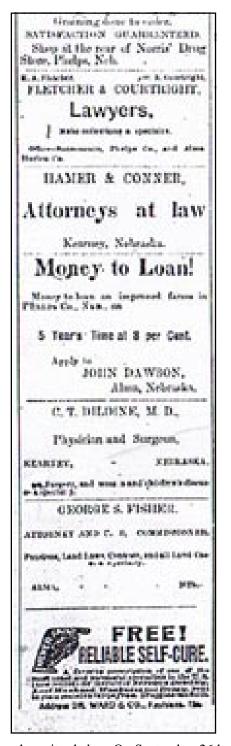
Meanwhile rousing railroad meetings were taking place every few

days in Phelps Center and over the area. The new B & M cutoff had been surveyed to Minden and Phelps Center was expecting to be the next stop, wrote the Nugget editor: "The very latest word is that the cut off will make a straight shirttail from Kenesaw to Minden and then light out for Phelps Center, thence to Oxford, on through Beaver City, then on down around Robins Hood's barn clean out to Denver." That was in July of 1883. In August it was announced the route was definitely established as far as Minden.

In late August a report came that the rail route would miss Phelps Center by about eight miles. This the Nugget editor called nonsense, "We have too much faith and good judgment of the company to believe they will leave the most productive part of Phelps County and all of Gosper County to be occupied by another railroad---the U.P.." Phelps Center was still booming "and some of the best buildings in the town are going up." In September it was reported that 70 houses had been built in Phelps Center during the year. (Those sound like Chamber of Commerce figures).

September 5, 1883 the Nugget reported that the railroad town site man was in town and that his visit "means something. Let the B &M do as it may, Phelps Center will have a railroad."

But Phelps Center was beginning to



have its shakes. On September 26th the Nugget reported L. Hallgren was in town and secured over \$3,000 in pledges for a survey of (Go Back Continued on page 6)

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railroad from Norfolk to Kearney, thence to Phelps Center on the southwest. "Phelps Center is not dead, mind you" The editor declared.

It was on October 3rd. that the word came. A letter from Superintendent Holdridge (that's the way it was spelled) announced the road would cross the county seven miles southeast of Phelps Center. Fifteen Phelps Center Business men pledged to move their buildings and move to the new town site, and many others said they would build new buildings at the new town (as yet unnamed). Wrote the editor: "This new stampede for the new railroad town we regret very much,

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as the present town of Phelps Center is the most beautifully located townbut we have decided to make the best of it and our future action will be governed accordingly."

"The new township is creating the wildest excitement"...land seekers were coming in from all over Nebraska and states as far east as Ohio... A grist mill, three lumber yards, two banks, a hotel that would accommodate 60 persons, were already on the ground.

The Nugget editor was recovering rapidly from his sorrow at leaving Phelps Center. He wrote "The new town site is one of the most beautiful we have ever seen. It is all laid north of the depot, which is at the foot of a gentle slope, rising to the north for three quarters of a mile." The following Wednesday, October 17th 1883, the Nugget was printed in Holdrege. The editor wrote: "It is not as we wanted it---we are disappointed in that, but there are lots of others in the same boat so we are happy. Cheer up neighbors, this is a mighty deep, bad cut, but it will all heal over in time and we will feel as gay as the morning lark."

And so Holdrege was born and Phelps Center was abandoned over the years and reverted to farm lands. Many die-hards stayed on, but eventually they too, either joined the procession to the new town, or lived out their lives in the deserted Village.



History of Nebraska ~1882 ~ Phelps County

The County Seat is now Phelps Center, to which place it was removed in November, 1879, by a vote of the people. In the winter of 1879-1880, the court house was removed to Phelps Center from Williamsburg, and put in good repair, but very soon after took fire and was burned down. It has not since been rebuilt and the county therefore has no public buildings at the present time.

Considering the fact that there is no county property of any value, and that its indebtedness is about \$25,000, it would appear that there is mismanagement on the part of some county officials and a gross careless extravagance on the part of the early settlers in voting bonds which resulted in no benefit to the county. The citizens of the county at present time are, however, using all possible means of relieving themselves of the cumbrous debt, and we are willing to pay every dollar of their honest indebtedness. To this end in the fall of 1881, funding bonds to the amount of \$10,500 were voted by the people.

Phelps County is the home of the Hon. C. J. Dilworth, the present attorney General of the State. His homestead claim and residence are in the north western part of the county, near Williamsburg Post office.

The following is the roster of the county officials for 1882: D. H. K. Whitcomb, County Judge; P. O. Hedlund, County Clerk; Peter Peerson, County Treasure; Mrs. Mina Hopwood, County Superintendent;



E. G. Brunzell, County Surveyor; William Wilcox, Coroner; Lewis Newman, Sheriff; P. A. Brodin, D. M. Case and Ellis M. Palmer, Commissioners.

PROGRESS IN THE COUNTY

From the date of organization of the county to the present time, it has continued to increase in settlement and in the number of farms broken up. Settlers are now to be found in all parts of the county. It is true that, having no railroad or large stream anywhere within its limits, its progress has been slow but it has been steady. During all these years, except in case of grasshoppers or some other exceptional plague that has resulted in the destruction of crops throughout the western counties, those of Phelps County have been good. Agriculture has been carried on with as great success as in other counties, and the farmers are now in a prosperous condition.

School districts have been formed

in all parts of the county, and the public schools are well maintained.

Church services have been organized in the different communities of the county, and have a good membership. The citizens as a class are both moral and religious, and Sunday schools are kept up in the different localities.

TOWNS AND POST OFFICES

There are no towns of any great importance in the county. The following places are post offices and some of them very small country villages. They are Rock Falls, Sacramento, Phelps Center, Williamsburg, Industry, Integrity and Highland.

Phelps Center is the county seat and is situated in the center of the county. It contains about dozen buildings and has a population of about eighty. In businesses, about all branches in an ordinary country trade are represented and not withstanding its small size two newspapers are published here. They are Nebraska Nugget, edited and published by T. M. Hopwood, and the Phelps County News. edited by Harry Hazelett. Both are enterprising weekly papers, well filled with the local news of the county. From its central location and the fact of its being the county seat, Phelps Center is growing somewhat and will soon become a thriving and prosperous village. Its location is a pleasant one, on the high upland prairie.

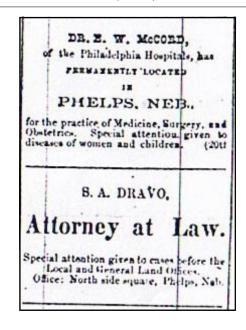
Rock Falls is situated on Spring (1882 Continued on page 8)

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Creek, in the southwestern corner of the county. Its location is a good one for a town, and it already has a few businesses houses and a population of 100. In course of time, as the settlement of the county increases, it will no doubt make a thriving little village.

Sacramento is situated in the southeastern part of the county, on the high upland prairie. The location is a pleasant one. The different branches of business in a country



trade are well represented and it already has a population of seventyfive. Considering the fact that it is located so far from a railroad, it is already a thriving place, and with the increasing settlement of the county, it should soon make a prosperous county village.

Holdrege Business Roster of 1887 continued...

(This information came from the Souvenir Historical Edition in the Holdrege Daily Citizen in June of 1958)

Ledlie and Rea occupied the L-shaped store rooms which were built with the conjunction of the Commercial State Bank building at 4th and West Avenues. John Ledlie and H. D. Rea both came to Holdrege from Des Moines, Iowa, and had extensive business experience.

George Warnick and Co. started a business in 1885 in a small frame building on West Avenue but soon moved to larger quarters on Hayden (Fourth Avenue) directly west of the post office. The dry goods firm was managed by Paige Warnick.

L. Brown operated a large gen-

eral merchandise store at the corner of West Avenue and Third. Mr. Brown succeeded A. P. Erickson in the spring of 1886. The frame building directly across the street west of K. K. Appliance Co. is still standing.

E. H. Snow, manager of Snow Brothers and Co. general merchandise store came to Holdrege from Taylor in Loup County in 1886. The Snow's were originally from Vermont.

M. C. Beghtol, Jeweler came to Holdrege from Lincoln in 1886. He had 20 years experience in the Jewelry business and watch making business.

<u>Lunkley and Eaton</u> came from Ottumwa, Iowa. In 1886 to open a furniture a store. In December of that year they purchased the stock of their only competitor, J. C. Rundstrom.

D. W. Hilsabeck opened his drug store here in April 1886.

A. A. Sheneberger and Wagner Hardware Store opened here on April of 1886. A. A. Sheneberger came here from Pennsylvania and Clinton Wagner was from Iowa.

W. P. Norris and W. E. Brock established the firm of W. P. Norris and Co. in Phelps Center in the fall of 1882. Mr. Norris, the resident partner, came to Nebraska from Iowa in 1880. The drug store was moved to Holdrege with the establishment of the new town.

L. P. Lewis operated a land, loan and Insurance business. Mr. Lewis was a homesteader,

(Roster Continued on page 9)

(Roster Continued from page 8)

coming to the county in 1878.

<u>A. E. Whitcomb</u>, windmill dealer was one of the leading merchants of Holdrege. He also operated a plumbing business. Along with his brother D. C. D., they had a windmill of their own invention which had been on trial for a year and which they were determined (in 1887) to manufacture on a large scale. Natives of Vermont, they were reared in Wisconsin.

Lester Ellsworth came to Nebraska from Pennsylvania in 1880. He moved to Republican City in 1883 to establish himself with Mr. Luce in the drug store business, and the firm of Luce and Ellsworth moved to Holdrege in November of that year.

S. M. Thompson was a native Nebraskan, born in Otoe County. He was a hardware dealer and tinsmith.

W. S. Deisher established his farm implement business here in the spring of 1886.

The Traders Lumber Co. commenced business here in the summer of 1885. The company was one of the string of four yards, at Red Cloud, Minden, Bertrand and Holdrege. James Goble was business manager of the Holdrege yard.

<u>L. Weber</u> was the general

manager of the A. G. Scott and son Elevator which had a capacity of 75,000 bushels of grain.

H. O. Barber was an extensive dealer of grain and coal, and had a number of branch houses in adjoining counties in Nebraska and Kansas.

<u>N. L. Trimble</u>, loan agent, located in Holdrege in January of 1887. He came here after a short residence in Bertrand.

G. H. Barnes opened a real estate, loan and insurance office in 1885.

<u>Yale Brothers</u> came to Holdrege from Beatrice in October of 1886 and established a windmill and pump business. They were former resident of Knox County, IL.

E. B. Gard Jr., the harness maker of East Ave., commenced business here in January 1, 1887.

D. Stulken was not one of the first in Holdrege, here were on or two houses ahead; but he was the first man to bring his family here. He was a skillful boot maker and repairman.

Fredericks and Engstrom's grocery was established here in 1884. Their firm had been enlarged to cover 140 ft. depth of the lot.

<u>A, Wickstrom's</u> stock farm was located less than mile from

the city. He dealt in Purebred horses, Shorthorn and Hereford cattle and Poland China hogs.

Mrs. J. J. Wyatt, who operated a traveling photograph car, enjoyed a flattering reputation as one of the finest artists in the country. Formerly of Roseville, Warren County, Illinois, she planned to erect a commodious art gallery in Holdrege.

J. A. Johnson was dealer in real estate, loans and Insurance. He located in Holdrege in the spring of 1886.

The Holdrege Livestock Co. was an extensive institution; its owners were Mr. Conger, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Jones.

J. J. Raymaker came to Holdrege from Hastings in 1886 and embarked in the loan business. He had built a fine residence in west Holdrege.

<u>C. S. Breech</u> was serving his third term as city Marshall in 1887. He was also a dealer for school furniture, desks maps and charts etc.

<u>**Guy Crandall**</u>, successful horse dealer, located in Holdrege in 1884

<u>Given and Martin</u> was another firm dealing in horses.

To be continued in a future Phelps Helps issue...

Children's Home Book Update

Ken Mosman has completed the work on the Children's Home book. We anticipate the delivery date will be before June 1, 2008. This is a project of the Holdrege Area Genealogy Club. All books sales will go through Holdrege Area Genealogy Club and all profits will go to the expansion of the Don O. Lindgren Library at the museum.

Book Title – SURNAME INDEX OF THE FORMER RESIDENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN ORPHAN'S HOME AND THE CHIRSTIAN CHILDREN'S HOME OF PHELPS COUNTY---1889-1954 The hard bound book is being published on acid free paper. There will be 38 photographs and a color picture of the praying child picture that once was hung in the chapel at the Children's Home. Prepublication price is \$25 + \$4 Postage and Handling. After May 1, 2008 book price will be \$30 + \$4 Postage and Handling.

Orders may be sent to: Holdrege Area Genealogy Club, Box 164, Holdrege, NE. 68949.



Holdrege Area Genealogy Club PO Box 164 Holdrege, NE 68949