

# Chelsea Township

The tenth township to be formed in Fillmore County when it was surveyed in 1870 was named "Chelsea" after the first white child to be born (about 1868) within its 36-mile area. The boy, Chelsea Raines, lived with his family 1½ miles south of the former Chelsea Church site, where he and other members of the family were listed on the earliest church records.

Chelsea township is bounded on the north by Madison, on the east by Glengary, on the south by Belle Prairie, and on the west by Stanton townships. It is crossed from west to east on its first section line below the Madison township border by Nebraska Highway 41. The city of Geneva just barely overflows into its northwestern corner. Its two southern tiers of sections are crossed by the south fork of Turkey Creek, which zigzags from northwest to southeast, leaving the township near the middle eastern boundary of Sec. 36.

The comparatively level topography and the fertile soil of Chelsea township are well adapted to agriculture. Therefore, the raising of corn, wheat, oats, milo, and alfalfa, together with livestock feeding, poultry raising, and dairying, constitute its chief industries. In 1887, however, there was on Sec. 6 a cheese factory, and another sprang up a few years later on Sec. 17. Also, James Cook, on Sec. 13, and Mr. Hinton, on Sec. 17, operated sorghum mills. To these mills people brought their sorghum and had it made into delicious syrup, on shares. The syrup was used as a sugar substitute and as a spread on bread and hot cakes. Two blacksmith shops, one owned by Austin Shackelford on Sec. 23 and the other by Jerry Vance on Sec. 2, performed a very necessary service for the farmers round about.

There has never been a trading center in Chelsea township, or the smallest portion of a railroad track. There are no large streams, and no heavily wooded areas. Osage hedge, however, growing along roads and surrounding many fields, is living testimony of the effort our pioneers made to relieve the bareness of the prairie. Hedgerows also served as fence lines; some farmers kept them attractively trimmed. In time, apple orchards became common; but most of our present tree-planting is confined to windbreaks or drouth-resistant and disease-resistant varieties about the farmstead.

The people who live in Chelsea township are, for the most part, of Irish, German, Swedish, or Czechoslovakian ancestry. The Czechs have become more numerous in the last 20 or 25 years, probably because of the township's proximity to a Czech community.

In the early history of Chelsea township, farms rarely consisted of more than 160 acres, and many were much smaller, so that farm homes then were much more numerous and closer together. Fourteen families once lived on Sec. 14, as compared with two farm homes found there at present, those of Clarence Higel and Frank Kotas. A clump of trees, a granary, or perhaps a barn are all that remain to mark the place of a one-time dwelling, and even those marks are rapidly disappearing. Although most of the farmhouses in the township were built 50 or more years ago, many have by now been remodeled into comfortable and attractive modern homes with all conveniences. Many of these improvements have come about since the arrival of rural electrification in 1949.

For the most part, Chelsea township has escaped major disasters. It shared with other communities two epidemics of diphtheria, the blizzard of 1888, and the influenza epidemic of World War I. Periods of drouth have been common, but severe hailstorms and true cyclonic winds have been infrequent. To this writer's knowledge, there has never been any loss of human life by fire or wind, and not more than a half-dozen traffic fatalities. Among traffic accidents, one train-car collision, on June 18, 1933, took the lives of three people: Lee Bailor, his son Robert, and Frances Bumgarner.

The 1918 influenza epidemic took a severe toll in the community, three of those stricken being members of one family: Mr. and Mrs. Bill Strothkamp and one of their six children. One unusual accident occurred in 1914 or 1915 when Johnny Kolz was killed while operating a grindstone which disintegrated. Another man, Charles Sprout, was killed (April 25, 1918) when struck by a horse. In 1892 Edward Brooke was fatally injured in a fall from his windmill.

Livestock casualties have caused severe financial setbacks and disappointment to most farm families. One example was the experience of Ed Nelson when he was building his house in 1908. The family was depending on the sale of 160 heavy hogs to meet a share of the cost. Shortly before the house was completed, the hogs were stricken with cholera, and the burning of carcasses became a regular morning chore. One blind pig was all that remained when the plague had passed. In the late thirties, a strange disease commonly known as "sleeping sickness" attacked horses, and many died or became blind. The discovery and use of various vaccines have been effective in curtailing such losses among livestock.

Numerous farm buildings have been lost by fire. The Ben Hafer farm, now the William Bures place, lost both barn (1901 or 1902) and house (1920). Mrs. Hafer was publicly commended for her bravery in rescuing all the horses from their burning barn; an insurance company presented her a check for \$150.

After several successive years of drouth during the early 1930's, a few farmers began to ponder the possibility of pump irrigation. The first well drilled in Chelsea township was on the Ed Nelson farm five miles east of Geneva near Highway 41, in 1939. No more wells were drilled, however, until the early fifties, when lack of rainfall again became a problem. By the end of 1966, there were 58 wells, and more were being drilled.

Increasing costs of production, higher standards of living, and the steady improvement of farm machinery have revolutionized farming practices here as elsewhere. The man doing diversified farming in the 1960's has a small fortune invested in a complete line of equipment. His machinery will include one or more tractors and the accompanying plow, cultivator, disc harrow, drill, planter, mower and rake, manure spreader and loader, baler, combine, forage cutter and blower, corn-pickers, and elevator. In addition he may have a grinder, a milking machine, a truck, and at least one car. The farmer who irrigates has a further investment in the well, the motor and the power that runs it, and a mile or more of irrigation pipe. He may also have a sprinkler and fertilizing equipment. And along with the machinery, of course, go the expenses of operation and repair.

Except in the realm of cattle feeding, farm chores have lessened. Although most people raise a certain number of chickens, an increasing number of farm families buy their milk and milk products. The farm vegetable garden is much smaller than in former years — on some farms, now non-existent. These and many other changes are more or less the result of modern living conditions. Not all are good, but not all are bad.

The practices of 50 years ago, and even less, now seem almost unreal to the people who experienced them, and utterly unbelievable to those who have not. Then, all farming operations involved a great deal of time and hard work in comparison to the amount of production. Although the binder was considered a wonderful improvement over previous methods of harvesting, it took one day of steady cutting to complete 20 acres of wheat. Operating the binder and driving four fly-tortured horses at the same time was a man-sized job. It was wise to change teams at noon, if possible. Other members of the family, women included, and hired men or boys followed the binder and gathered up the bundles, setting

them in shocks of 12 to 18 bundles each. In this way the grain was kept in good condition until the threshing crew arrived, which might be several weeks later.



Photo from O. E. Nelson

Company threshing rig of Alpine District, 1922. Owners of rig: J. A. E. Nelson, Mark McCartney, Clarence McCartney, Herb Roberts, Donald Fisher.

Walford Peterson operated one of the first large threshing outfits in Chelsea township. The separator was powered by a steam engine which had to be supplied with water and burning straw or coal. The crew consisted of the separator man, the engineer, and the water boy, who hauled water in a tank-wagon from the nearest large water tank. Eight men with racks and teams, assisted by four field pitchers, loaded and hauled the bundles up to the separator and pitched the bundles into the feeder, one at a time. The straw was blown up and out into a huge golden-colored stack, and the grain rolled from a spout into a wagon. Three scoopers tended the wagons and hauled the grain to a bin, where it was shoveled off by hand.

By the long-drawn noon whistle of the steam engine, the housewife and her helpers (usually neighbor women) knew that 18 or 20 hungry men would soon have their teams fed and themselves "washed up" for dinner. Without benefit of refrigerator, frozen foods, or ready-mix, a bountiful meal was served. Water was carried from the well, and freshly churned butter was brought from the cave or the milk tank. Bread and pies had been baked in a cob range that kept the kitchen at a consistent 100° Fahrenheit most of the day. Preparations for the evening meal or afternoon lunch began as soon as the dinner dishes were finished. The three crew men usually stayed overnight, for their job of "getting up steam" would begin early the next morning. Barring bad weather or breakdowns, a job was usually completed in two or three days, and the outfit moved on to the next farm. About ten jobs completed a season.

The threshing operator hired little help beyond the engine crew, as each farmer on the "run" (about 10, as a rule) furnished his own labor and equipment — such as team, rack, wagon, or whatever — on each of the jobs. Five cents a bushel was charged for wheat and three cents for oats, to cover costs and provide a slight profit. The first steam thresher engines burned straw; later coal was used. The operator paid for the coal but the farmer being served was responsible for having the coal hauled from town.

The earliest threshers were not equipped with knives for cutting the twine around the bundles of grain, nor was there a swinging blower for discharging and depositing the straw. It was usually the task of some boy to stand and cut the bands as the bundles were pitched into the feeder. It was important that the pitch be at just the right angle, or tempers were apt to flare.

Harvest time was always a fascinating experience in spite of the heavy work involved, but corn picking was, for most people, the hardest and least glamorous of farm jobs. There were, however, individuals who took a great deal of pride in the speed and efficiency of their work and were available for hire, at about three cents a bushel and board and room. More than one young man came by what little cash he had through corn-picking jobs that sometimes lasted well

into the winter. It was not always his to keep, for there were some hard years when his money had to pay for the family's groceries. A corn picker's equipment consisted of shucking mitts and a peg or hook strapped to his wrist and hand to assist in dislodging each ear of corn from its stalk as he worked down the row or rows. His team and wagon kept slightly ahead of him and to the side. Bangboards attached to the wagon kept the ears from going overboard as they were tossed in. A well-trained team started and stopped at the picker's command. If picking in fairly good corn, a man could get one load in the morning and one in the afternoon; and, of course, each load had to be scooped off by hand. The only way to complete a job of this kind was to stay with it day after day, week after week, no matter what the weather or one's own ailments, until the work was done. It was not uncommon for wives and older children to help when possible. Small children were sometimes bundled up and taken along, part of the time riding in a little wagon tied behind the shucking wagon. After chores and supper were done, mother patched shucking mitts by the light of a kerosene lamp, while she "rested."

Small wonder, is it, that the mechanical cornpicker, introduced about 1918, gained favor so rapidly?

About ten years later, the combine for small-grain harvesting was introduced in the township. Clarence Nun was one of the first farmers to own one; it attracted a great deal of attention.

The tractor preceded both. The first three-wheeled plow tractor in the township came into the possession of Arthur Larson, who won it in 1916 as a prize for obtaining the most subscriptions to the *Omaha Daily Bee*.

Cars steadily became more common. By the purchase of a two-seated "Jackson" in 1908, Emmor Fox became the first car owner in Chelsea township. A ride around the section was a great thrill for neighbors of the Fox family. About 10 years later farm trucks were introduced. These became another great advantage to the farmer, particularly in getting his grain and stock to market. Before this time, cattle were driven to the nearest stockyard and shipped by train to Omaha and other central markets. If the distance was less than six or seven miles, hogs could be driven also, but more often they were hauled by team and lumber wagon. In hot weather, they were loaded in the evening and hauled at night in order to avoid the heat. It took a long time to drive even a few miles because the horses had to walk to lessen the jarring of the wagon. Any driver who permitted his team to trot was very apt to reach his destination with at least one dead animal.

With the increase in motorized vehicles, road improvement became a necessity. Highway 41, which was graded by the state with horse-drawn graders, in 1924 became the first graveled road in Chelsea township. Now (1966) it is an all-weather road, fully "black-topped." Two county roads intersect at a point four miles east of Highway 81 and two miles south of Highway 41. All the unsurfaced mail routes are now graveled, and maintained by the township.

Organization vitally concerns any community, and Chelsea township is no exception. The first township meeting was held on April 3, 1888, when Robert Stewart was chosen clerk and J. M. Piersol moderator. A levy of two mills was voted for roads and three mills for all other purposes. At the next meeting, in June, Jonas Miller was appointed constable and an overseer was appointed for each of the four road districts.

The districts were numbered from right to left, beginning with No. 1 in the northeast corner of the township; these remain the same today. The earliest township record is a book of minutes kept from 1888 to December, 1915, by the following clerks: Robert Hastings, Morgan Warner, C. F. Heinciker, J. H. Morgan, W. C. Peterson, P. J. Hafer, T. M. Andrews, J. F. McCartney, J. W. Hafer, A. B. Miller, F. Hafer, L. C. Brooke, W. J. Sloan, and H. A. Warner. The main items of business concerned (as they do at present) the maintenance of roads, expenditures connected with the tax levies, and the election and appointment of township officers and supervisors.

|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       |                       |                     |                    |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Riley H. Jewett   | Freegrace L. Sexton |                 |                     | Geo. P. Webster       | Christian A. L. Voigtlander |                   | Jasper N. Spivey      | Owen D. Wilson, Jr.   | David Jackson       |                    |
| Daniel W. Haskins | Harvey A. Winchell  | Gottlieb Yeager |                     | Frederick Heiderstadt | William D. Wilson           |                   | Jeremiah Vance        | George M. Cooper      |                     |                    |
|                   |                     |                 | William Merrill     | Charles F. Vick       | Andrew F. Webster           |                   | Oraon B. Foiden       |                       | Francis McCartney   | Mattheu Young      |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   | Edward C. Glow        | James N. Hastings     |                     |                    |
|                   |                     |                 | Henry R. Deming     | John F. Blain         |                             |                   | John Archer           | Alijah Archer         | James Bell          | Jonas Lawrence     |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       |                       |                     | Moses Taylor       |
| Lewis Rockwell    | Charles A. Warner   |                 |                     |                       | School Land                 |                   |                       | James H. Robinson     | Thomas F. Whiteel   |                    |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       | Walter Churchill      |                     |                    |
| Bidwell H. Brown  | Edward Brooke       |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       | Benjamin F. Ryan      | Isaac H. Croly      |                    |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       |                       | William Shackelford |                    |
|                   |                     |                 | William Warner      | Thomas Thompson       |                             |                   | David Warner          | Frederich Hobensee    |                     | Cyrus Macy         |
|                   |                     |                 | Richard Kinsey      |                       |                             |                   |                       | Daniel Miller         |                     | Salathiel Standey  |
|                   |                     |                 | Adam Bailor         | David H. Conant       |                             |                   | S. R. Piersol         | Austin C. Shackelford |                     | John W. Andrew     |
|                   |                     |                 |                     | Henry Conant          |                             |                   | Louis Hobensee        | John R. Piersol       |                     | Robert E. Hastings |
| William Yates     | William Yates       |                 |                     | Milton K. Wellman     | Thirza Wellman              | Joseph M. Piersol |                       | Benjamin Morgan       | Samuel E. Raines    |                    |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       |                       | Ethan L. Shaw       |                    |
| Simeon Albro      | Thomas C. Wood      |                 |                     | Cyrus McPherson       | Heinrich Struckmeier        | Carl Pfingsten    | Charlotte Struckmeier | Jesse S. Griffith     | John W. Mullikin    |                    |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       | Elisha T. Chester     |                     |                    |
|                   |                     |                 | Henry Plattner      | George Finister       |                             |                   | Simeon Chester        | Mary E. Taylor        |                     | School Land        |
|                   |                     |                 |                     |                       |                             |                   |                       |                       |                     |                    |
|                   |                     |                 | William A. Thompson | Zalmon Bray           |                             |                   | James F. Taylor       | Mercy L. Taylor       |                     |                    |

### Chelsea Township Homestead Map

The organization of school districts began early in the seventies and continued for 10 years. A brief history of each appears elsewhere in this account.

Some present-day children might have been delighted with the educational policy of our pioneers, as the first school terms lasted only three months; but these short terms rather quickly grew longer. By 1885, most of the districts were holding school for six or eight months and, by 1915, nine months. Teachers received \$20 or \$30 a month and boarded, if necessary, at a home near the school for a dollar or two a week. Because there were more and larger families, school enrollments were larger; the average was about 45 pupils, with ages varying from 5 to 19 years. The fact that there was a "new teacher" almost every year would seem to indicate that teaching was often an arduous task. Maintaining discipline must have been a job in itself, especially during the winter term when "big boys" went to school for the fun of it, and if the teacher was pretty.

The teacher did her own janitor work and taught reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic to all ages. Geography and grammar were for such older pupils as could afford books. Slates and slate pencils for much written work helped to save paper. Classes recited about every 10 minutes from a

long recitation bench at the front of the room. For lack of space, double desks (for two pupils each) were crowded together, and extra pupils were seated on a bench at the back of the room. Children walked to school, and on cold winter days sometimes carried hot baked potatoes or hard-boiled eggs in their coat pockets to warm their hands and to supplement the noon lunch. Frozen sandwiches were not a novelty; and dinner pails, along with wet mittens and overshoes, occupied strategic places around the heating stove in the center of the room. If only as much heat could have stayed near the floor as went to the ceiling! In spite of the long black stockings and high laced shoes that children wore, feet were cold and faces hot. Playground equipment was unheard of, but nothing was more fun than a Fox and Goose ring in the snow.

The county superintendent visited each school once or twice a year. In 1881, County Superintendent Dempster recorded: "Severe winter interfered with progress of winter schools. Late spring keeps many little fellows on the farm. Schoolhouses mostly substantial." In 1882 he wrote: "More demand for advanced grade teachers. Much good resulted from Institute Week. Motto, 'Good Wages for Good Work.'" By 1900, salaries had risen to \$45 or \$50 a month. In 1921,

some teachers received as much as \$100 dollars, but salaries had declined to half that amount by 1940. After that slump, however, came a decided increase, and by 1950 teachers were receiving around \$180 a month, with greatly improved teaching facilities.



Photo from Oscar Nelson

Chelsea Women's Club (January 29, 1931). Lower row, left to right: Mrs. Howard Snodgrass, Mrs. Lyman Brooke, Mrs. Mike Kelch, Mrs. Tom Hall, Mrs. George Mason, Mrs. Irvin Lange, Mrs. Colon Murphy, Mrs. Harry Hall. Upper row, left to right: Mrs. Lester Brown, Mrs. Harry Garrett, Mrs. Cleve Hafer, Mrs. Ross Brown, Mrs. Snodgrass, Mrs. Bertha Meyers, Mrs. Woods (mother of Mrs. Ross Brown).

Thirteen women became charter members of the Chelsea Extension club in 1921. They were Mes. Lyman Brooke (president), John Stevenson (secretary), Charles Sprout (treasurer), John Hafer, Lyle Sprout, Verl Wilson, Cleve Hafer, Joe Purdy, Roy Purdy, George Mason, Ed Hutchens, William Watmore, and Clair Yates. Although Mrs. Brooke is the only charter member now living in the township, the club has been active in extension work since its beginning and has had for several years an average of 30 members. The club has contributed to several worthy causes and has given a boost to many new homes, for sons and daughters of its members are always given a gift or "shower" when each is married.

Mrs. Brooke was also leader of the first 4-H Girls' Club in the township. It was founded in June, 1923, the first members being Helen Mason, Lela, Hazel, and Mable Hall, Bonnie Brooke, Helen Nunns, and Bonnie Myers. Most of Chelsea's boys and girls have since been members of 4-H clubs and have won their share of honors in the various divisions. Helen Nunns, Frances Roberts, John Brooke, Helen Mason, and Eugene Anderson have been winners of coveted Chicago trip awards. John Nelson won the State Public Speaking Contest in 1953.

Since 1915, most of Chelsea township's young people have attended Geneva High School. At that time, regular attendance, for some, required a bit of doing. Three boys — Fred Rhoda, Glen Berger, and Waldo Schupbach — rode horseback a distance of eight and nine miles each morning and night. Some drove a horse and buggy about the same distance. Others paid, or worked, for room and board in town. Along in the 1920's, Model T Fords became popular means of transportation; but even as late as 1945, Rudy Jirkovsky rode a bicycle almost nine miles twice a day. On the whole, Chelsea students acquitted themselves very well. Most of the boys enrolled in agricultural courses and took part in athletics. Girls have been interested in home economics and secretarial training. Music also has held the attention of both boys and girls. Several have won scholarships. Christie Nelson was elected to Girls' State in 1954 and edited the *Genevan* the following year. Anne Jirkovsky was selected queen of the Spring Festival in 1949, John Nelson king in 1953, and Richard Nun king in 1954. Doris Miller, Darlene Podlesak, and John Nelson are the only Chelsea products of recent years to have graduated from college or university, but several have attended for two or three years; and a number of girls have received normal-training certificates from Geneva High School and taught rural schools in this community and elsewhere. Jesse Mason, son of the late George F. Mason and Libbie Mason, graduated from the College of Agriculture in the 1930's. Doyle Mullikin, son of an early pioneer, J. W. Mullikin, was one of the first graduates of the University

School of Medicine in Omaha. Until his death in 1963, he practiced medicine for more than 50 years at Chester, Nebraska.

—Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

## CHURCHES

As noted in the school district accounts, Sunday schools and special religious services were held in a number of the township's schools almost as soon as the buildings were constructed. The need for a church presently arose; the site selected was adjacent to the little Bethel Cemetery located at the north line of Sec. 24. A grant was obtained from Salathiel Stanley, who owned the NE ¼, and the United Brethren Church was built here by donated money and labor in 1880. The Rev. Mr. R. G. Carter was the first full-time pastor; a small house on the Ben Morgan farm served as a parsonage. This was moved to Strang in 1886 when a U. B. church was constructed there. From that time until about 1915, the Strang pastor served both charges, services being held at the Bethel Church on Sunday afternoons. Some of the early pastors were Ben Morgan, T. B. Cannon, Mr. Brink, Mr. Hayden, Mr. Bittner, Mr. Webb, Profit Gregg, Mr. Parker, Mr. Abbot, and Mr. Lunde. Each, of course, drove a horse and buggy. When pastors made "calls" during the week, meals and overnight lodging were, quite naturally, provided by the farmers. More often than not, the preacher's remuneration took the form of farm produce, which he hauled home in the back of the buggy. There were years when he received as little as \$250 in cash.

In 1884, the Methodist Church, through a loan from the General Conference, was built on a plot of ground given by Cyrus Macy, located on the corner west of the U.B. Church and Bethel Cemetery. This church, composed mostly of old soldiers, disbanded in the late nineties and stood idle until Robert Hastings purchased it, about 1897, intending to move the building to his farm. He had virtually begun the moving operations when the U.B. people persuaded him to let them buy it. The former U.B. building was sold to August Peterson for \$340 in 1898. The church then reorganized, with the Rev. E. H. Pontius of Geneva as pastor. The Rev. Miss Willamette Marks held revival meetings, and the church progressed for some time. There was an active Ladies' Aid, whose members, with the help of their families, "put on" many a chicken dinner, oyster supper, or ice-cream social. These affairs involved a tremendous amount of labor; for, without kitchen or dining facilities, it was necessary to move home equipment to the church and back again by team and spring wagon. Food was served at improvised tables in the church sanctuary, the only place available.

In 1928 a full basement was added, and the congregation felt very fortunate to have such improved Sunday School facilities as well as a kitchen and diningroom for social affairs. A Delco lighting plant was installed. Two coal and cob ranges, an oil stove, and a German heater for the dining room supplied the necessary heat. All the water was pumped by hand from the schoolyard pump across the road and carried in buckets or "Johnny cans" (10-gallon cream cans) to the basement. For the gallons of coffee consumed and the mountains of dishes to be washed, water naturally had to be heated on already crowded stoves. Those were the days — a far cry from the streamlined equipment of the modern church kitchen where all the steaming-hot water needed is available at the nearest faucet. Even so, the Chelsea church ladies enjoyed an enviable reputation for good cooking and "plenty of it" as long as the church existed.

Student pastors from York College supplied the pulpit during the late twenties and early thirties. Raymond Bryant and Homer Crosby (between 1927 and 1935) perhaps served the longest periods. After that, the resident pastors of the Geneva United Brethren Church conducted preaching services on alternate Sunday mornings until the last years of Miss Mann's ministry (1950-1951), when services were held each Sunday morning at ten o'clock and the Sunday School at eleven. Pastors preceding Miss Maude Mann were the Revs. A. W. Swanson, Glen Cane, H. J. Plymesser, H. A. Dierdorff (during whose ministry the Revs. Richardson and



Chelsea Church about 1926. Evangelist Rev. Mouer holding Bible. Raymond Bryant, Student Pastor (arrow). Photo from Oscar Nelson

Mouer conducted a successful revival in 1938), and E. D. Sell. Miss Mann began her seven years of service in 1944.

In 1948 the church edifice again underwent much-needed improvement when, under the leadership of Wilson Miller, the sanctuary was remodeled and attractively decorated. A furnace, electric lights, and other equipment were installed with the arrival of rural electrification. Again, both labor and money were generously contributed by members and friends of the church. Impressive dedicatory services were held in June, 1948, and the community was justly proud of the improvements. It is a sad commentary, however, that in spite of these valiant efforts to preserve a rural church, a combination of conditions and circumstances arose which made it increasingly difficult to support the church program. In 1954, a depleted congregation voted to disband. Most of the families transferred membership to the Geneva Evangelical United Brethren Church, where the Rev. Wayne Schreuers, who had recently come to this pastorate (his first), following a brief tenure by the Rev. Milford Vance, ministered from 1954 to 1956. (The Evangelical and United Brethren denominations were merged in 1950.) In 1956 the church building was razed by Joe Vavra, a Saline County farmer, who purchased it for \$500. The plot of ground was sold to Bernard Weiss, an adjacent landowner, for \$50.

Chelsea Church, as it was commonly known, touched the lives of many persons over the years. It, and they, benefited in proportion as each individual gave of himself and his means in Christian service.

The record of 1887 discloses a membership of 69 persons, including such family names as these: Wallam, Jacobway, D. Miller, Cook, Wilkison, S. Yates, Larkin, E. Nelson, Morrison, Shobeck (Schupbach), Steele, Folden, Jackson, Piersol, Chelsea Raines, and Whitzel. Other names are Cloyd, and Nettles (a Negro who worked for Mr. Yates). In the 1890's we find the names of Mr. and Mrs. John Archer, Sarah Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. W. Eaton, Osier and Mary Cook. Names of the early 1900's include O. Stone, Flora and Lucy Nunns, Harrison, McCartney, Churchill, Mullikin, Michaels, Owens, Mahan, Rhoda, Miller (family of Jonas M.), Leonard, S. Lynn, F. Hall, Powell, R. Myers, Elton, Saylor, and Hidey.

The following persons were members of the church at some time during the period between 1925 and 1953. Many

of the older people, of course, were members before 1925:

- Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Schupbach, Eunice, and Clifford
- Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler Berger, Mildred, Howard, Robert, and Donald
- Mrs. Charles Weiss, DeVee, and Bernard
- Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Miller, Lucille, and Doris
- Mr. and Mrs. Roy Miller, Charles, Marie, Clair, Hazel, Irvin, Joan, and Suzan
- Mrs. Charles Miller
- Mr. and Mrs. Alvah Miller and Louise
- Effa and Maude Miller
- Mr. and Mrs. Fred Fox
- Mr. and Mrs. J. A. E. Nelson, Silvia, Verna, and Oscar
- Mrs. Oscar Nelson, John E., and Christie-Lou
- Mrs. Roy Yates
- Mrs. Cecil Fox, Delores, Alvin, and Dorothy
- Mr. and Mrs. Albert Churchill and Melvin
- Helen, Edna, Edgar, and Fredrick Nunns—children of Fred and Ora Nunns
- Robert Nunns, Sr., Ruth, Roine, Robert, Richard, and Francis
- Mrs. Francis Nunns, Carol, and Faye
- Mr. and Mrs. Lester Brown, Doris, Mervin, and Merle
- Ila Zoe Brown
- Vorus, Bonnie and Verle Myers—(children of Ed and Audra Myers)
- Mrs. Vorus Myers
- Clarence, Hazel, DeVee, John, and Bernice Nun—children of Wenzel Nun
- Mrs. John Nun, Richard, Rodney, and Rex
- Harry Fox (husband of Bernice Nun), Deryl Dean, and Shirley
- Earl and Kenneth Baumann
- Mr. and Mrs. Clair Christiancy, Ardith, Evelyn, Rodgers, Clair, Jr., and Robert
- Mrs. Howard Peterson, Zelma Mae, Velma Jean, and Paul Forest
- Libby, Clayton, and Herman Jirkovsky
- Mr. and Mrs. Claude DeWitt
- Mrs. Bessie Rhoda, Lillie, Helen, and Edna
- Mrs. Leslie Myers (Alma), and her children, Blanche, Lola, and Donald Shapley
- Eleanor and Richard McDonald
- Mr. and Mrs. Emil Bernasek, Caroline, and Rodney
- Donna and Patricia Koahler



Photo from O. E. Nelson

Interior of Chelsea E. U. B. Church after remodeling in 1948.

The earliest recorded names of Sunday School officers are dated June 29, 1884. They were T. B. Cannon, superintendent; J. M. Piersol, assistant superintendent; P. L. Cannon, secretary; S. E. Piersol, assistant secretary; Nettie Cooper, librarian; and Minnie Piersol, treasurer. The four Sunday School teachers were Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Jacoway, and Mr. Dan Miller. Included in the minutes of each Sunday service were several questions which were to be answered the following Sunday. Some examples are: "How many times is *ague* mentioned in the Bible?" "What verse in the Bible has all the letters in it but one?" "What was done with the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath?" "Where was Moses when the light went out?" The total collection of the four classes rarely exceeded one dollar.

It is not possible to list the good works of faithful individuals who served in an official capacity or otherwise during the life of Chelsea church. We can but give briefly a few outstanding facts of a statistical nature which are of interest to its people.

J. A. E. Nelson, who died in October, 1962, at the age of 86, had the honor of being the oldest continuous member of the church. His name appears as "Eddie" Nelson on the earliest class record of 1884. The five-mile walk to and from the church when he was nine years old did not prevent his regular attendance. Next in the line of longevity is Effa Miller, whose name appears 10 years later. Effa is the fifth of 12 children born to the Jonas Millers, all of whom were living until the death of Bertha (Mrs. George Churchill) in 1945; five of the children are still (1967) alive, though no longer in Chelsea township. Eight of the children became members of the church. Of these, Alvah, Roy, Wilson, and Alma established homes within the township, while Viola, Effa, and Maude continued living on the home place until 1945. Johnnie and his family also resided near by for a few years. To our knowledge, nine brothers and sisters, occupying seven different homes, set a record for simultaneous residence within the township.

Comparatively few funerals were held at Chelsea Church. Among them were those of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hastings, Charles and Sarah Folden, Mrs. Sophia Rhoda and her three sons, Dave, Frank, and Charles, Erwin Schupbach, and Schuyler Berger. The old Bethel Cemetery is rarely used now, although the township still provides \$75 yearly for its maintenance and upkeep. Cyril Bernasek became caretaker in 1949 and in 1967 still serves in that capacity. The present members of the cemetery board are Fred Fox, Oscar E. Nelson, and Cyril Bernasek. According to a statement made by Osier Cook, there were few graves when he came to Nebraska in 1878, but the diphtheria epidemic of 1879 resulted in numerous deaths and additional graves in the little cemetery. There are now 167 graves, of which one of the oldest is that of Robert Steele; its marker and one other are dated 1872.

The two weddings held at the church were those of Lucille Miller to Leo Oschner in 1949 and of Ardith Christianity to Harold Schmid in 1951.

Many social functions of a party nature were held in the church basement. Included in these were many "family nights" when all ages met and participated in well-planned homemade entertainment, bridal showers, receptions, anniversary observances, 4-H gatherings, and class parties. There are perhaps 30 "fiftyish" men and women of the Chelsea community and elsewhere who vividly recall the "Young People's Class" of which they were members. The good times they had were largely due to the tireless efforts of Mrs. Fred Fox, their teacher for many years. To our knowledge, all these former young people are solid citizens today. It is unique that 10 members of the class, the children of both Wenzel Nun and Robert Nunns, Sr., were motherless at an early age. These families gained the admiration of all who knew them by the capable way in which they met such misfortune. Clarence and John Nun and Bernice Nun Fox, and Francis, Robert, Jr., Richard and Robert Nunns, Sr., all have established homes in the township.

— Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson



Photo from Mrs. Fred Fox

Chelsea E. U. B. Sunday School Class taken before 1920. Back row, left to right: Sylvia Nelson, Hazel Nun, Beatrice Nun, Verna Nelson, Robert Nunns, Hazel Fox, Clarence Nun, Mabel Yates, Cecil Fox, Florence Fox, Teacher Mrs. Fred Fox, Francis Nunns, Glen Berger, Waldo Schupbach. Front row, left to right: Ralph Nun, Ronald Fox, Howard Pontius, Harry Fox, Fred Rhoda, Richard Nunns.

## SCHOOLS

County Superintendent J. B. Lewis notified John W. Mullikin that District No. 30 ("Dudley") was formed on December 16, 1880, comprising Secs. 25, 26, 35, and 36. Twenty-six qualified voters were informed of the meeting to be held on December 28, 1880, at the Mullikin home. Mr. Mullikin leased two acres of land on the NE corner of Sec. 35 for the school and stipulated that the school building could also be used for religious purposes.

The first term of school opened for three months on December 19, 1881, with Miss Ella Merrill as teacher at \$30 a month. Twenty-eight pupils were enrolled, ranging in age from 5 to 19 years. The subjects taught were reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, with geography and grammar added for those who could afford books. A large pond on the west side of Sec. 25 marks the spot where sod was taken for the first sod schoolhouse. By September 1, 1884, an 18' x 20' frame building was completed; two additions were made later. The first school board voted to hire only male teachers, but because these were scarce, lady teachers were procured.

District 30 was first called "Pleasant Valley" and school records are headed thus. Later it came to be known as "Dudley," possibly because a country post office in the Mullikin home was called Dudley, and mail was addressed to Dudley, Nebraska. Harvey Ryman delivered the mail by cart and horse. His wife Emma helped when her husband was busy.

Dudley School was the scene of many community affairs such as "litararies," singing schools, spelling bees, box suppers, and the like, as well as religious services. Miss Lillie Rhoda (to whom we are indebted for most of the information concerning District 30) recalls plainly the long, low, unpainted mourners' bench which was used in revival meetings. Her grandfather, Mr. Mullikin, had a fine tenor voice and conducted singing schools in Districts 30 and 32, and led the

singing in the tabernacle in the maple grove on his farm across from the school. He could preach sermons, conduct funeral services, and offer prayer. Musically, he was self-taught, and started his own children and those of neighbors in music.



Photo from Charles Miller  
School District No. 30, 1931. *Front row, left to right:* Frances Schupbach, Gerald Wiswell, Harold Wiswell, Clair Miller, Charles Miller, Wayne Hall. *Second row:* Hazel Drummond, Dorothy Molthon, Elaine Molthon, Irene Hall. *Back row:* Thelma Wiswell, Doris Hafer (teacher), Gladys Molthan, Alice Schultz, Marie Miller.

| Year | Teacher                    | Director        |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1881 | Ella Merrill               | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1882 | Theda Johnston             | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1883 | Nettie Richardson          | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1884 | S. T. Drummond             | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1885 | H. B. Wallace              | A. T. Drummond  |
|      | Mary Foster                | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1886 | Mary Foster                | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1887 | S. J. Spelde               | A. T. Drummond  |
|      | Eva Purviance              | J. W. Mullikin  |
|      | O. H. White                | J. W. Mullikin  |
| 1888 | Nellie L. Coffin           | T. O. Cloyd     |
| 1889 | Lillian Donovan            | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1890 | Lillian Donovan            | A. T. Drummond  |
|      | W. H. Allen                | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1891 | Clara Wickizer             | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1892 | Esther Piersol Lyon        | S. J. Hall      |
| 1893 | Gertie Clark               | S. J. Hall      |
| 1894 | S. T. Conner               | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1895 | Bertha Thompson            | A. T. Drummond  |
|      | Nellie Matson              | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1896 | Ella Purviance West        | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1897 | Mary Davis                 | A. T. Drummond  |
| 1898 | Ora Ogg                    | A. T. Drummond  |
|      | Carrie Neyhart             | S. J. Hall      |
| 1899 | Carrie Neyhart             | S. J. Hall      |
| 1900 | Bessie Bailor              | S. J. Hall      |
| 1901 | Mable Combs                | S. J. Hall      |
| 1902 | Alta Andrew Priefert       | S. J. Hall      |
| 1903 | Grace Babcock              | S. J. Hall      |
| 1904 | Bell Rowe                  | S. J. Hall      |
| 1905 | Lottie Putnam              | S. J. Hall      |
| 1906 | Erdel Harrington           | S. J. Hall      |
| 1907 | Clarence Fry               | S. J. Hall      |
| 1908 | Wilhelmina Schneider       | S. J. Hall      |
| 1909 | Alma Toren                 | S. J. Hall      |
| 1910 | Bertha Mathewson           | S. J. Hall      |
| 1911 | Grace Heiderstadt          | S. J. Hall      |
| 1912 | Stewart Heiderstadt        | S. J. Hall      |
|      | Electa Dot Hastings        | G. M. Galbraith |
| 1913 | Vinetta Miller             | G. M. Galbraith |
| 1914 | Elmer Bradley              | G. M. Galbraith |
| 1915 | Elmer Bradley              | G. M. Galbraith |
| 1916 | Francis Stephens           | O. Mullikin     |
| 1917 | Clarice Overhalser         | O. Mullikin     |
| 1918 | Alice Neyhart              | S. J. Hall      |
| 1919 | Anna Totemeier             | S. J. Hall      |
| 1920 | Sarah Kyker                | S. J. Hall      |
| 1921 | Margaret Hogan             | C. M. Bernasek  |
| 1922 | Margaret Hogan             | C. M. Bernasek  |
| 1923 | Helen Matejka              | C. M. Bernasek  |
| 1924 | Helen Matejka              | C. M. Bernasek  |
| 1925 | (closed)                   | Claude Hall     |
| 1926 | Rose M. Sieber             | Claude Hall     |
| 1927 | Juanita Nicholson          | Claude Hall     |
| 1928 | Juanita Nicholson          | Claude Hall     |
| 1929 | Juanita Nicholson Coughran | Claude Hall     |
| 1930 | Lela Hall                  | Claude Hall     |
| 1931 | Doris Hafer                | Claude Hall     |

|      |                  |                |
|------|------------------|----------------|
| 1932 | Erma Schultz     | Claude Hall    |
| 1933 | Erma Schultz     | Roy Miller     |
| 1934 | Zella Wagers     | Roy Miller     |
| 1935 | to 1937 (closed) | Roy Miller     |
| 1938 | Max Garland      | Roy Miller     |
| 1939 | Evelyn Ritchey   | Roy Miller     |
| 1940 | Fern Most        | Roy Miller     |
| 1941 | Geraldine Menke  | Roy Miller     |
| 1942 | Bernice Schmale  | Roy Miller     |
| 1943 | Bonnie Taylor    | Roy Miller     |
| 1944 | Virginia Wright  | Roy Miller     |
| 1945 | Virginia Wright  | Roy Miller     |
| 1946 | Lillie Rhoda     | Roy Miller     |
| 1947 | Lillie Rhoda     | Roy Miller     |
| 1948 | Lillie Rhoda     | Richard Sieber |
| 1949 | Lillie Rhoda     | Richard Sieber |
| 1950 | Lillie Rhoda     | Richard Sieber |
| 1951 | Lillie Rhoda     | Richard Sieber |
| 1952 | (School closed)  | Lillie Rhoda   |

**District No. 32**, commonly known as "Chelsea" because of its proximity to the former Chelsea United Brethren Church, was organized in 1872 and originally consisted of Secs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 35, and 36 of T6, R2W. John W. Andrew was instructed to notify all legal voters of the place of meeting. Other schools eventually absorbed some of its territory, so that the district now includes only Secs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, and a part of 22. Early in the century a neat two-door school building replaced an earlier frame structure. It stands on the SW corner of Sec. 13, facing south on a graveled east-and-west road. There are the usual outdoor toilet facilities, some playground equipment, a fuel house, and a recently covered and motorized pump. The last teacher, Miss Lois Most of Ohio, who attended Fairbury College two summers, drove the family car a round trip of 24 miles each day to teach her eight pupils.

The earliest record of a school business meeting was signed by Director J. A. Larkin, April 2, 1882. The contract for the drawing of coal and cleaning the schoolhouse was let to the lowest bidder: to Walferd Peterson at 99¢ a ton, for coal, and to J. Wollam, \$1.25 for cleaning. In 1891 O. L. Stone was allowed \$3 for taking the "senses" of school children between the ages of 5 and 12 belonging to District 32. There were 66 children listed, 60 under the age of 18. These were members of the following families: W. C. Wollam, D. Cook, G. H. Simmerman, J. W. Andrew, R. E. Hastings, J. J. Miller, M. Warner, D. Miller, A. L. Shackelford, J. A. Larkin, J. Jones, D. Warner, W. Churchill, J. B. Miller, J. Simburg, H. G. Ryman, M. Menace, J. A. Peterson, J. Wollam, Jim Borland, R. Nunns, J. Peterson, O. L. Stone, and C. Taylor. In 1890, Mae Bailor taught 63 pupils for \$270 over a period of 154 teaching days; the value of school books and apparatus was \$60.

| Year   | Teacher          | Director      |
|--------|------------------|---------------|
| 1879   | J. B. Sexton     | E. F. Chester |
| 1880   | J. B. Sexton     | J. W. Andrew  |
| 1881   | Walter White     | D. Cook       |
| 1882   | Mary Gale        | D. Cook       |
|        | T. J. Whitzel    | J. A. Larkin  |
| 1883-4 | No record        |               |
| 1885   | Mary Sprout      | D. Cook       |
| 1886   | Mary Sprout Cook | D. Cook       |
| 1887   | Mary Sprout Cook | D. Cook       |
|        | Clara Thomas     | D. Cook       |
| 1888   | Annie L. Ballard | J. A. Larkin  |
| 1889   | Alice A. Gell    | J. A. Larkin  |
|        | Hattie Russell   | J. A. Larkin  |
|        | Mae Bailor       | O. L. Stone   |
| 1890   | Mae Bailor       | O. L. Stone   |
|        | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone   |
| 1891   | Lulu Arrowsmith  | O. L. Stone   |
|        | Louise McDermott | O. L. Stone   |

The following teachers taught at some time during the next 10 years: Jessie Sprout, Seldon Moore, Mr. Overton (brother of the U.B. pastor), Lydia Babcock, Maude Mosier, and Bertha Thompson.

|      |                 |              |
|------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1901 | Bessie Bailor   | O. L. Stone  |
| 1902 | Hattie Russell  | J. A. Larkin |
| 1903 | Irene Hollister | J. A. Larkin |
| 1904 | Carrie Sauer    | J. A. Larkin |
| 1905 | Carrie Sauer    | J. A. Larkin |
| 1906 | Nellie Deaver   | J. A. Larkin |

|      |                     |                   |
|------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1907 | Daisey Yates        | J. A. Larkin      |
| 1908 | Josephine Schneider | J. A. Larkin      |
| 1909 | Josephine Schneider | J. A. Larkin      |
| 1910 | Josephine Schneider | J. A. Larkin      |
| 1911 | Pearl Swails        | J. A. Larkin      |
| 1912 | Earl Hill           | Roy Yates         |
| 1913 | Blanche Zinc        | Roy Yates         |
| 1914 | Ivy Wythers         | Roy Yates         |
| 1915 | Lucille Kretke      | Roy Yates         |
| 1916 | Lucille Kretke      | Roy Yates         |
| 1917 | Lillie Rhoda        | Roy Yates         |
| 1918 | Lillie Rhoda        | Claude Ogg        |
| 1919 | Sarah Kyker         | Claude Ogg        |
| 1920 | Lorine Griffin      | Claude Ogg        |
| 1921 | Lillie Rhoda        | Claude Ogg        |
| 1922 | Lillie Rhoda        | Claude Ogg        |
| 1923 | Lillie Rhoda        | Schuyler Berger   |
| 1924 | Edith Hranac        | Schuyler Berger   |
| 1925 | Edith Wolter        | Schuyler Berger   |
| 1926 | Edith Wolter        | Schuyler Berger   |
| 1927 | Angeline Coon       | Schuyler Berger   |
| 1928 | Ann Taborsky        | Roy Yates         |
| 1929 | Ann Taborsky        | Roy Yates         |
| 1930 | Ann Taborsky McPeck | Roy Yates         |
| 1931 | Ann Taborsky McPeck | Roy Yates         |
| 1932 | Ann Taborsky McPeck | Roy Yates         |
| 1933 | Mildred Thomas      | Roy Yates         |
| 1934 | Mildred Thomas      | Roy Yates         |
| 1935 | Ann Sluka           | Charles Jirkovsky |
| 1936 | Blanche Jirkovsky   | Charles Jirkovsky |
| 1937 | Blanche Jirkovsky   | Charles Jirkovsky |
| 1938 | Mable Gewacke       | Frank Koahler     |
| 1939 | Mable Gewacke       | Frank Koahler     |
| 1940 | Alice Druba         | Frank Koahler     |
| 1941 | Alice Druba         | Frank Koahler     |
| 1942 | Alice Druba         | Frank Koahler     |
| 1943 | Blanche Cecnle      | Harry Fox         |
| 1944 | Betty Sluka         | Harry Fox         |
| 1945 | Betty Sluka         | Harry Fox         |
| 1946 | Betty Sluka         | Harry Fox         |
| 1947 | Betty Sluka         | Harry Fox         |
| 1948 | Arlene Larson       | Harry Fox         |
| 1949 | Mary Ann Placek     | Harry Fox         |
| 1950 | Wilmetta Rippe      | Harry Fox         |
| 1951 | Loretta Rippe       | Harry Fox         |
| 1952 | Loretta Rippe       | Harry Fox         |
| 1953 | Betty Novak         | Harry Fox         |
| 1954 | Willa Jean Kotas    | Harry Fox         |
| 1955 | Lois Most           | Harry Fox         |
| 1956 | Lois Most           | Harry Fox         |

District No. 35 ("Prairie Flower") consisting of Secs. 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33 of T6, R2W, was organized by John W. Barrows, deputy under County Superintendent G. W. Gue. Mr. Barrows notified J. W. Breg that the first meeting for election of officers would be held at the nearest central point in the district on Saturday, March 16, 1872, at one p.m. Sections 28 and 33 and a part of Secs. 20 and 21 were allotted to near-by districts as they were organized.

The schoolhouse was a small frame building facing the road that bounds Sec. 30 on the east, the school grounds being the northeast corner of a quarter belonging to Oscar Peterson of Geneva; the land reverted to him when the property was sold in 1954. The building was purchased by Walter Ebbeka and Jim Bumgarner.

Among the earlier pupils of this school were children from the Tyson, Heller, Nicewander, Anderson, Yates, and Brooke families. Mrs. Maude Brooke Stringfield recalls that eighth-grade graduation was a very important occasion in her school days. Jessie Morgan was her eighth-grade teacher and Charles Smrha the county superintendent who officiated when she and Harvey Leonard graduated. Both were required to give a 20-minute discourse on some subject of their own choosing and composition. Maude's topic was "Light and Darkness."

Some of the family names appearing on record books since 1915 are Bailor, Christiancy, Ebbeka, Fidler, Hall, Kelch, Leonard, Lowe, Myers, and Trenary.

| Year   | Teacher       | Director         |
|--------|---------------|------------------|
| 1879   | Lillie Stultz | Robert Stewart   |
| 1880   | H. W. Warner  | Willis Zader     |
| 1881   | Lucy Clark    | V. S. Annschrold |
| 1882   | Alice Bailor  | Richard Kinsey   |
| 1883-4 | No record     |                  |
| 1885   | Alma Luke     | N. G. Taylor     |
| 1886   | Lillie Huston | C. L. Ray        |
| 1889   | No record     |                  |

Some of the teachers after 1890 were Minnie Heller (1899), Myrtle Williams, Jessie Morgan, Al Smith, and Laura Smith Schupbach.

|      |                   |
|------|-------------------|
| 1904 | Romayne Hayes     |
| 1905 | Mrs. Anne Johnson |
| 1906 | Mrs. Anne Johnson |



District 32 School ("Chelsea"), about 1900.

Photo from Oscar Nelson



Photo from Esther Janing  
School District No. 35—1921. Left to right: Robert Bailor, Laurence Weinerth, Earl Purdy, Tom Weinerth, Verna Oakes, Edith Ebbeka, Bonnie Myers, Alice Purdy.

|         |                                |                 |
|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1907    | M. P. Ames, Amy Garrett        |                 |
| 1908    | H. D. Matthewson, I. E. Cronin |                 |
| 1909    | H. D. Matthewson, I. E. Cronin |                 |
| 1910    | Ruth Sapp                      |                 |
| 1911    | Essie Crowley                  | Frank Bailor    |
| 1912    | Harriet Ray                    | Frank Bailor    |
| 1913    | Harriet Ray                    | A. V. Morgan    |
| 1914    | Lucille Kretke                 | A. V. Morgan    |
| 1915    | Esther McDonald                | A. V. Morgan    |
| 1916    | Zella Lamb                     | Roy Christiancy |
| 1917    | Estelle Steele                 | Roy Christiancy |
| 1918    | Nelli Murphy                   | John Hoff       |
| 1919    | Nelli Murphy                   | Henry Ebbeka    |
| 1920    | Nelli Murphy                   | James Bumgarner |
| 1921    | Esther Bordner                 | James Bumgarner |
| 1922    | Ruth Horne                     | James Bumgarner |
| 1923    | Alta Priefert                  | James Bumgarner |
| 1924    | Marjorie Glenn                 | James Bumgarner |
| 1925    | Mrs. Florence McCaulley        | O. L. Bailor    |
| 1926    | Myrtle Melvin                  | Harry Hall      |
| 1927    | (No teacher)                   | Harry Hall      |
| 1928    | (No teacher)                   | Harry Hall      |
| 1929    | Eleanor Bruce                  | Harry Hall      |
| 1930    | Bernice Ashton                 | Harry Hall      |
| 1931    | Bernice Ashton                 | Harry Hall      |
| 1932    | Bernice Ashton                 | Harry Hall      |
| 1933    | Leona Cromwell                 | Harry Hall      |
| 1934    | Leona Cromwell                 | Harry Hall      |
| 1935    | Phyllis McKibben               | Harry Hall      |
| 1936    | Gesine Muchow                  | Harry Hall      |
| 1937    | Gesine Muchow                  | Harry Hall      |
| 1938    | Dorothy Keil                   | Harry Hall      |
| 1939    | Dorothy Keil                   | Harry Hall      |
| 1940    | Dorothy Keil                   | Harry Hall      |
| 1941    | Dorothy Keil                   | Harry Hall      |
| 1942    | Virginia Baker                 | Earl Kelch      |
| 1943    | Alice Druba                    | Norbert Gergen  |
| 1944-56 | (School Closed)                |                 |

**District No. 45** ("Blain"), consisting of Secs. 4, 5, 7, 9, 16, 17, and 18, was organized May 14, 1872. County Superintendent John A. Dempster instructed Henry King to notify every legal voter within the district that the meeting for election of officers would be held at the King home on Saturday, May 18. The first officers elected were John F. Blain, director; William Sprout, moderator; and John Christiancy, treasurer.

Blain schoolhouse, so called after a pioneer family who lived near the school, was located on the NW corner of a farm now belonging to Vinetta Miller Eaton, 2 miles S and 2 miles E of Geneva on Sec. 16.

At the turn of the century it had an unusually large enrollment, which made it necessary to build an extension and hire an extra teacher for the lower grades. The annex was later removed.

Most of the early schools had bimonthly programs called "literaries," which featured not only "ciphering" and spelling bees but also local musical and debating talent. Because of their size, regularity, and quality, the literaries at Blain appear to have been outstanding. For a time, Sunday School and church services were also held in the Blain schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse was also the township voting place; the children enjoyed having Election Day off, but many had to shuck corn on that day.

This school was closed in 1951. It continued to be used as the voting place until the building was sold to Robert Nunns, Jr., in 1954 and was moved to Geneva, where it became Ed McClusky's workshop.

There are two three-generation groups identified with Blain school. One is that of Fred Nunns, Sr., his children, and the children of Fred Nunns, Jr.; the other consists of Robert Nunns, Sr., his sons Francis and Robert, and their children. Two-generation families are Mrs. William Watmore and children, and Lyman Brooke and children.



Courtesy of Francis Nunns  
School District 45 taken at school picnic May, 1949. Back row: Robert Strothkamp, Carol Nunns, Faye Nunns, Richard Larson. Middle row: Bobby Nunns, Tom Nunns, Dale Nunns, Richard Strothkamp, Fred Nunns, Shirley Nunns, Dianne Larson, Vaden Myers. Front row: Diane Robare, Linda Hutchens.

| Year    | Teacher                    | Director        |
|---------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1875    | Parthenia Matson           |                 |
| 1876    | Parthenia Matson           |                 |
| 1877    | Maggie Stewart             |                 |
| 1878    | Arthur Evans               |                 |
| 1879    | Eva Selby                  |                 |
| 1880    | Mary E. Deming             |                 |
| 1881    | Mary E. Deming             |                 |
| 1882    | Lucy J. Clark              |                 |
| 1883-87 | No record                  |                 |
| 1888    | J. B. Lewis                |                 |
| 1889    | No record                  |                 |
| 1893    | Minnie Carson (primary)    |                 |
| 1893    | Flora Houchin (juniors)    |                 |
| 1898    | Mr. M. P. Ames             |                 |
| 1899    | Lou Thompson               |                 |
| 1900    | Lou Thompson               |                 |
| 1904    | Mary E. Deming             | Gilbert Owens   |
| 1905    | S. M. Beadle               | Gilbert Owens   |
| 1906    | Herbert McCartney          | Gilbert Owens   |
| 1907    | Lydia Linnert              | Gilbert Owens   |
| 1908    | Katherine Jennett          | E. J. Delaney   |
| 1913    | Gertrude Sughrue           | E. J. Delaney   |
| 1914    | Gertrude Sughrue           | E. J. Delaney   |
| 1915    | Georgia Timmerman          | H. A. Warner    |
| 1916    | Georgia Timmerman          | E. J. Delaney   |
| 1917    | Georgia Timmerman          | E. J. Delaney   |
| 1918-20 | No record                  |                 |
| 1921    | Nora Miller Heath (4 yrs.) | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1922    | Lola Churchill             | L. C. Brooke    |
|         | Mrs. John Eller            | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1923    | Esther Sughrue             | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1924    | Esther Sughrue             | Mrs. Fred Nunns |
| 1925    | Pearl Lapcheska            | Mrs. Fred Nunns |
| 1926    | Rose Komarek               | Mrs. Fred Nunns |
| 1927    | Velma Butterbaugh          | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1928    | Velma Butterbaugh          | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1929    | Jeanette Reynolds          | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1930    | Jeanette Reynolds          | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1931    | Lorene Hofferber           | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1932    | Lorene Hofferber           | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1933    | Lorene Hofferber           | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1934    | Frances Roberts            | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1935    | Lorene Hofferber           | L. C. Brooke    |
| 1936    | Lorene Hofferber           | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1937    | Lucille Mitchell           | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1938    | Alice Sluka                | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1938    | LaVerne Swanson            | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1940    | Katherine Yetman           | R. F. Dwyer     |

|      |                                     |                 |
|------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1941 | Marguerite Churchill                | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1942 | Marguerite Churchill                | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1943 | Alice Druba                         | R. F. Dwyer     |
| 1944 | Alice Druba                         | Dave Robare     |
| 1945 | Doris Strothkamp                    | Derrel Hutchens |
| 1946 | Doris Strothkamp                    | Derrel Hutchens |
| 1947 | Florence McCaulley                  | Derrel Hutchens |
| 1948 | Darlene Podlesak                    | Derrel Hutchens |
| 1949 | Mary Ann Reinsch                    | Derrel Hutchens |
| 1950 | Mary Ann Reinsch                    | Derrel Hutchens |
| 1951 | Children transferred to District 75 |                 |

Derrel Hutchens continues as director

District No. 65 ("Alpine") was formed when, in accordance with the petition of 20 legal voters of School District 2, County Superintendent John Dempster, on February 26, 1873, set apart Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, and 12 of T6, R2W, to constitute the new district. He notified Mr. H. G. Cooper that the meeting for election of moderator, director, and treasurer, would be held in the Cooper home on Saturday, March 8, 1873, at 2 P.M. Mr. Cooper was instructed to notify every legal voter five days previous to the meeting. The Cooper family occupied a sod house just south of the present William Bures home on Sec. 2. An acre of land on the southwest corner of the Cooper farm was designated as school land, and a frame schoolhouse was erected a few steps from the road, facing south. In 1904 this was torn down, and the lumber was used in building a new schoolhouse the same year. It boasted a belfry and was considered one of the better school buildings in this area. The board was usually very cooperative in supplying the needs of teachers and pupils.

School programs, picnics, and other affairs were well supported by the patrons of the district. It had quite a large enrollment until about 1930, when the number of pupils began a gradual decline. Although there were but a half-dozen children left by 1947, the patrons of the district worked at the schoolhouse during the late summer to make extensive and much-needed repairs on the interior. It presented a very attractive appearance during the remaining few years of the school's existence. In 1953, District 65 contracted with District 75 to send the children to the Geneva school. The yellow school bus has since become part of daily life as it makes its regular route morning and evening.

Some of the families whose children attended school in District 65 were Archer, Bell, Sluka, Churchill, Wythers, Roberts, Hafer, Ward, Wilson, McCartney, McDonald, Podlesak, Votipka, Novak, Bures, Frycek, Kovanda, Koahler, Fox, and Nelson (the only family to have three generations attend District 65).

| Year    | Teacher                                      | Director        |
|---------|--|-----------------|
| 1872    | Eleanor Matson                               |                 |
| 1873    | Eleanor Matson                               |                 |
| 1874    | T. J. Whitzel                                |                 |
| 1875    | Eleanor Matson                               |                 |
| 1876    | J. D. McHelvey                               |                 |
| 1877    | Eleanor Matson                               |                 |
| 1878    | Maggie Stewart                               |                 |
| 1879    | Parthenia and Eleanor Matson                 |                 |
| 1880    | Luella Harbaugh and Chester Metcalf          |                 |
| 1881    | Luella Harbaugh and Sydney Purviance         |                 |
| 1882    | D. L. Beatie                                 |                 |
| 1883    | Eva Davis, Hattie Whitzel, and H. P. Wilson  |                 |
| 1884    | No record                                    |                 |
| 1885    | Grace Porter                                 |                 |
| 1886-87 | No record                                    |                 |
| 1888    | Mae Bailor                                   | O. D. Wilson    |
| 1889-90 | No record                                    |                 |
| 1891    | Hattie Gardner                               | O. D. Wilson    |
| 1893    | Rose Owens                                   | O. D. Wilson    |
| 1894    | George Porter, Bertha Sheldon, Minnie Carson | O. D. Wilson    |
| 1895    | Ada Allen                                    | J. F. McCartney |
| 1896    | J. S. Moore                                  | J. F. McCartney |
| 1897    | J. S. Moore                                  | J. F. McCartney |
| 1898    | Anna Thompson                                | J. F. McCartney |
| 1899    | Maude McCartney Heller                       | J. F. McCartney |
| 1900    | Chan Wickinis                                | J. F. McCartney |
| 1901    | Charlotte Goold                              | J. F. McCartney |
| 1902    | Julia M. Osterlick                           | J. F. McCartney |
| 1903    | M. P. Ames                                   | J. F. McCartney |
| 1904    | A. W. Larson                                 | Emmor Fox       |
| 1905    | Nellie Pflug and Mae Bailor                  | Emmor Fox       |
| 1906    | Ida Walton                                   | Emmor Fox       |
| 1907    | Verna Mowry                                  | Emmor Fox       |
| 1908    | Mae Bailor                                   | Emmor Fox       |



Photo from Oscar Nelson  
District 65 School ("Alpine"), about 1908.

|         |  |                      |
|---------|--|----------------------|
| 1909    | Mary Donnehue  | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1910    | Mary Donnehue  | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1911    | Lucy Cullins   | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1912    | Helen Edgecombe  | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1913    | Anna Burke, Tom Ashton   | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1914    | Ruth Watson  | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1915    | Alma Miller  | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1916    | Sarah Miller   | M. D. McCartney      |
| 1917    | Anna Jicha   | James S. Delaney     |
| 1918    | Marie Ayers  | Allen McDonald       |
| 1919    | Beatrice Taborsky  | Allen McDonald       |
| 1920    | Edna McCartney Kreycik   | Allen McDonald       |
| 1921    | Iris Ward  | H. H. Roberts        |
| 1922    | Iris Ward  | H. H. Roberts        |
| 1923    | Verna Nelson   | H. H. Roberts        |
| 1924    | Verna Nelson   | Fred Fox             |
| 1925    | Verna Nelson   | Fred Fox             |
| 1926    | Verna Nelson   | Fred Fox             |
| 1927    | Helen Wilson   | Fred Fox             |
| 1928    | Rose Hammond   | Fred Fox             |
| 1929    | Rose Soukup  | Fred Fox             |
| 1930-31 | No record  |                      |
| 1932    | Helen Nunns  | Fred Fox             |
| 1933    | Helen Nunns  | Fred Fox             |
| 1934    | Helen Nunns  | Fred Fox             |
| 1935    | Alice Sluka  | Fred Fox             |
| 1936    | Ann Sluka  | Fred Fox             |
| 1937    | Ann Sluka  | Fred Fox             |
| 1938    | Ann Sluka  | Fred Fox             |
| 1939    | Blanche Jirkovsky  | Fred Fox             |
| 1940    | School closed  | Fred Fox             |
| 1941    | Helen Bernasek   | Fred Fox             |
| 1942    | Helene Wasserbauer   | Fred Fox             |
| 1943    | Mrs. Shirley Rosse   | Fred Fox             |
| 1944    | Blanche Ceerle   | C. E. McCartney      |
| 1945    | Alice Druba  | C. E. McCartney      |
| 1946    | Alice Druba  | C. E. McCartney      |
| 1947    | Alice Druba  | C. E. McCartney      |
| 1948    | Betty Novak  | Mrs. C. E. McCartney |
| 1949    | Betty Novak  | Mrs. C. E. McCartney |
| 1950    | Dorothy Hiatt Van Horn   | Mrs. C. E. McCartney |
| 1951    | Betty Novak  | Mrs. C. E. McCartney |
| 1952    | Betty Novak  | Mrs. C. E. McCartney |
| 1953    | The District contracted with District 75 (Richard Poch, director). |                      |

District No. 76 ("Centennial") included Secs. 27, 28, 33, and 34 of T6, R2W, when it was organized on February 5, 1876. County Superintendent John A. Dempster requested J. M. Piersol to advise all legal voters of the meeting to be held February 19. A part of Secs. 22 and 21 were later added to the district. A new frame building replaced the old one in 1910. It was considered quite a nice building, and it still maintains a lonely vigil on the corner of Sec. 28 which belongs to the Warner family. Because there were so few schoolchildren after 1945, the district paid tuition and transportation for each until 1953, when it contracted with the Geneva school district.

The names of 40 pupils appear on the "Teacher's Daily Register" of 1900. Some of the family names are Bechtel, Christiancy, Demaree, Fiedler, Jones, Leff, McDonald, Parker, Saylor, Tonkinson, Wellman, and Woodworth.

| Year | Teacher                                 | Director           |
|------|---|--------------------|
| 1879 | Emma Zerba                              | M. K. Wellman      |
| 1880 | Parthenia Matson                        | J. M. Piersol      |
| 1881 | Parthenia Matson                        | J. M. Piersol      |
| 1882 | Emma Cooch                              | J. M. Piersol      |
| 1885 | Clara Masters                           | E. O. Wellman      |
| 1886 | S. T. Drummond                          | E. O. Wellman      |
| 1888 | Mary James                              | E. O. Wellman      |
| 1889 | Annie Thomas                            | E. O. Wellman      |
| 1890 | S. D. Purviance and Annie Wilson        | E. O. Wellman      |
| 1891 | Elva Dempster                           | E. O. Wellman      |
| 1892 | Clara Wickizer                          | Walter Christiancy |
| 1893 | Fanny Purviance                         | Walter Christiancy |
| 1894 | Minnie Heller Warner                    | Walter Christiancy |
| 1895 | W. H. Odell                             | Walter Christiancy |
| 1896 | Carrie Neyhart                          | Walter Christiancy |
| 1897 | Alta Andrew Priefert                    | Walter Christiancy |
| 1898 | Alta Andrew Priefert                    | Walter Christiancy |
| 1899 | Eva Bahr                                | Walter Christiancy |
| 1900 | Alta Andrew Priefert                    | T. H. Tonkinson    |
| 1901 | Laura Smith (Schupbach)                 | C. Cumpston        |
| 1902 | Kate Lincoln                            | C. Cumpston        |
| 1903 | Blanche Heald                           | C. Cumpston        |
| 1904 | Blanche Heald                           | C. Cumpston        |
| 1905 | Emma McCartney                          | C. Cumpston        |
| 1906 | Mabel Bailor                            | C. Cumpston        |
| 1907 | Mildred Timmons                         | C. Cumpston        |
| 1908 | Mamie Lenhart                           | C. Cumpston        |
| 1909 | Mamie Lenhart                           | C. Cumpston        |
| 1910 | Mr. Jay Buckles and Miss Maude Sherrard | C. Cumpston        |
| 1911 | Stella Stelle                           | C. E. Cumpston     |
|      | Dot Hastings                            | C. E. Cumpston     |
| 1912 | Dot Hastings                            | C. E. Cumpston     |
| 1913 | Eva Huston                              | C. E. Cumpston     |
| 1914 | Myra Snodgrass                          | C. E. Cumpston     |
| 1915 | Mildred Timmons                         | C. E. Cumpston     |
| 1916 | Florence Stevens                        | Lee Folden         |
| 1917 | Hazel Huston                            | Lee Folden         |
| 1918 | Hazel Huston                            | Edwin Taylor       |
| 1919 | Ethel Love                              | Edwin Taylor       |
| 1920 | Anna Totemeier                          | William C. Myers   |
| 1921 | Eila Griffin                            | William C. Myers   |
| 1922 | Gladys Allen                            | William C. Myers   |
| 1923 | Ada Myers                               | Elmer Nelson       |
| 1924 | Ada Myers                               | Elmer Nelson       |
| 1925 | Ada Myers                               | Elmer Nelson       |
| 1926 | Ethel Loomis                            | Elmer Nelson       |
| 1927 | Elizabeth Shurtliff                     | Elmer Nelson       |
| 1928 | Anna Thomas                             | Elmer Nelson       |
| 1929 | Anna Thomas                             | L. L. Myers        |
| 1930 | Anna Thomas                             | L. L. Myers        |
| 1931 | DeVee Weiss                             | L. L. Myers        |
| 1932 | DeVee Weiss                             | L. L. Myers        |
| 1933 | DeVee Weiss                             | L. L. Myers        |
| 1934 | DeVee Weiss                             | L. L. Myers        |
| 1935 | Ruth Stickell                           | L. L. Myers        |
| 1936 | Blanche Shapley                         | L. L. Myers        |
| 1937 | Blanche Shapley                         | L. L. Myers        |
| 1938 | Dorothy Bassett                         | L. L. Myers        |
| 1939 | Dorothy Bassett                         | L. L. Myers        |
| 1940 | Lucille Miller                          | L. L. Myers        |

|      |                 |              |
|------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1941 | Fern Most       | A. Lentfer   |
| 1942 | Pauline Wagers  | A. Lentfer   |
| 1943 | Norma McCluskey | A. Lentfer   |
| 1944 | Norma McCluskey | A. Lentfer   |
| 1946 | to 1949         | Otto Otten   |
| 1950 | to 1957         | Verle Meyers |



Photo from Mrs. Clair Christiancy Sr. School District No. 76—1909. Front row, left to right: Herb Saylor, Otto Stofer, Dick Christiancy. Second row: Albert Cumpston, Rosie Richardson, Audrey Christiancy, Miss Homes, Ann Stofer. Third row: Clyde Michaels, John Stofer, Frank Saylor, Boyed Homes, Loyed Homes. Back row: Marie Richardson, Edwin Hall, Ralph Myers, Clair Christiancy, Claude Saylor, Fred Stofer, Vern Christiancy, Ed Stofer. Teacher Maude Sherrard.

## MAIL AND PHONES

Gleye McCaulley and Henry Reinsch served for many years as mail carriers for most of Chelsea township. Linus Walters, who began in 1955, is the present carrier. Good roads and a car permit him to cover the area in about four hours each morning. Not so fortunate was Robert Carson, one of the first carriers to the community. With team and cab, allowing for the time he took at noon to rest his horses and to eat a lunch, it took him eight hours to cover his 18-mile route. Miss Minnie Carson vividly recalls the pleasure it gave her father when Mrs. John Stephenson invited him in for a warm meal, as she often did. The Stephenson place, now the William Watmore farm, was about halfway on the route. Mail carriers were frequently called upon for services beyond their specific duties. Mr. Carson often delivered messages to people along the route. On one occasion he found a sample of dress material in a mailbox with a request that he please match the material and bring it out on the route the next day or so. "No matter how cold, how deep the snow or impossible the conditions," recalls Miss Carson, "nothing



Hauling poles from Geneva for the Chelsea-Alpine Telephone Company about 1905.

Photo from Oscar Nelson

mother or I could say would ever stop him from trying to make his route. We put in many a worrisome day."

With the formation of the Alpine and Chelsea telephone companies in 1905, long wires stretched between tall poles became for the first time a part of our roadside landscape. Chelsea people could now "call up" the neighbors, summon a doctor, or contact people in their county seat. Such convenience is now recognized by most rural families as a necessity. The farmers themselves installed these local lines and have spent many long hours since keeping them in shape—often under trying conditions, for ice and storms take a heavy toll almost annually. The Chelsea company maintained 12 miles of line and had 20 customers. The last officers were Robert Nunns, Jr., Derrel Hutchens, and Bill Watmore. The Alpine company had 7½ miles of line and 6 customers. Its first officers were Emmor Fox, Ed Nelson, and Mart McCartney; the last officers were Fred Fox, Harry Fox, and Oscar Nelson. All these smaller companies have now been taken over by the Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph Company and merged into the nation-wide dialing system.

## FAMILIES

**John W. Andrew**, son of Henry and Sarah Andrew, was born in Indiana, April 8, 1843. From Indiana he moved to a farm near Fennimore, Wisconsin, where he resided when the "call to arms" was issued by President Lincoln. He enlisted August 26, 1861, and was mustered into service at Madison on August 29, 1861, as a private of Captain Mark Fennicun's Company "H," 7th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, Col. Joseph Van Dorn commanding. On September 14, 1862, he was wounded in the battle of South Mountain, Maryland, and had to enter a hospital. He later re-enlisted in the 8th Wisconsin Infantry and served another eight months, until the close of the war. He served his country as a soldier and as a sergeant for a total of three years and eight months. He received a certificate of honorable discharge on September 5, 1864, returned to his home in Wisconsin, and resumed farming near Fennimore.

On January 5, 1868, John Andrew married Marcia Arvilla Zerba. To them six children were born: one son, Ira, and five daughters, Lillie, Clara, Alta, Effie, and Blanche.

In April, 1871, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew, with Lillie and Ira, came to Fillmore County in a covered wagon and settled in Chelsea township. He homesteaded the SW ¼ of Sec. 24, T6, R2W, and obtained his patent from the United States government on September 25, 1878. They made their home here until 1910, when they rented the farm and moved to Geneva. Their first home was a sod house in which Clara was born on December 1, 1872. The rest of the children were also born on the homestead in Chelsea: Alta, October 8, 1876; Effie, April 25, 1885; and Blanche, August 16, 1887.

The family experienced the hardships of two great blizzards, the Easter storm of April 14, 1873, and the Great Blizzard of January 12, 1888. In both storms, they saved their livestock by taking all into the house, where all lived together until the storm had passed. Snowdrifts all but buried the home and the few farm buildings. The nearest town was Fairmont, about 16 miles away. The grain had to be hauled all that distance by team and wagon. Wheat seemed to be the main crop.

Mr. Andrew was active in the civic, educational, and religious life of the community. He was a member of the G.A.R. and the United Brethren Church. The church was built on the northeast corner of this Sec. 24, and a cemetery just west of the church. Soon after, the Methodists built a bigger, better church on the northwest corner of the same section. The first schoolhouse was located near the north border of Mr. Andrew's homestead. Later, the school was across the road, just north of the Methodist church. Mr. Andrew was a member of the school board for many years.

The community was sparsely settled and could not support two churches, so the Methodist church stood idle for several years, until it was purchased by the U. B. church and the U. B. church was torn down and hauled to the farm of

Gus Peterson. I doubt whether this church is standing today. I know the homestead was not sold until several years after the death of Mr. Andrew, August 11, 1935. He was 92 years, 4 months, and 3 days old. At the time he was living with his son Ira near Orchard, Washington. Mrs. Andrew passed on at her home in Geneva, March 6, 1917, at the age of 70 years, 3 months, and 9 days.

Blanche died at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, in Lincoln, Nebraska, December 12, 1923, age 36 years, 3 months, and 27 days. Alta Andrew Priefert died October 24, 1927; Clara Andrew Peterson died September 24, 1928; Lillie Andrew DeWitt Thomas died November 11, 1931; Ira Marvin Andrew died April 13, 1952.

I, Effie Andrew Johnson, am the only one left. I'll be 81 years old on April 25, 1966. I am doing the housework and living with an 89-year-old lady in Sterling, Illinois. I have a daughter and two sons living here in Sterling and Rock Falls. Raymond Johnson and Leta Thome live in Rock Falls and Donald Johnson lives in Sterling. I also have a son, Ira, living near Dunning, Nebraska. My oldest daughter, Nellie Johnson Cole, passed on May 11, 1937, leaving four small children.

My oldest son, Glen Andrew Johnson, passed on March 18, 1954, leaving three sons and one daughter, all nearly grown. I have 15 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

—Effie Andrew Johnson

The SE ¼ of Sec. 18 in Chelsea township was homesteaded by **Edward Brooke** in 1871. He came from Illinois with a team and wagon and a breaking plow, built a house, and put down a well which, after being deepened, is still in use. In the fall of 1873 he asked Miss Minnie Warner to come to Nebraska, and they were married on January 1, 1874. Six children came to bless the home, but in 1892 Edward fell from his windmill and the farm was left to his widow, who passed away three years later. When the estate was settled, the place went to the eldest son, Lyman. He and his wife, the former Ella Ward, still live on this place and enjoy the comfort and convenience of a modern home which they built in 1913. Their son John and his family also reside in Chelsea township. Their daughter Bonnie (Mrs. Sumner Harris) lives in California.

—Mrs. Lyman Brooke

**Walter Christiancy** purchased the NE ¼ of Sec. 27 from the Burlington R.R. in November, 1883. He improved it, and he and his family lived on the place until his retirement in 1922. His son Clair and his family then moved to the farm and lived there until 1954 when they and their son Robert moved to Geneva. Since that time their son Rodger has farmed the land, and he and his wife are now living on the place.

—Mrs. Clair Christiancy, Sr.



Photo from Clair Christiancy  
Sod house of Walter Christiancy on NE ¼ of Sec. 27, Chelsea Twp., about 1880. The children are Bert Christiancy and Belva Christiancy Saylor.

**Walter Churchill** (1841-1923), naturalized citizen, and his wife **Jerraldine Kirchner** (1845-1911).

Walter Churchill came from Bristol, England, in 1858. He went from New York City to Pennsylvania, where he worked for a wagon maker. It was there that he met Jerraldine Kirchner who was, at that time, working for a family who were horse trainers. In a few years' time, enough money was accumulated to make it possible for them to get married and set out by covered wagon to "the West."

Crossing the Mississippi River at Keokuk, Iowa, and the Missouri River at Nebraska City made the trip venturesome. Their first child was born in Iowa, and so the young couple lived there briefly before deciding to go farther. Their final destination was a homestead on the S ½ of the NW ¼ of Sec. 14, Chelsea township (1871).

A sod house was built in the middle of the section. It was there that several of their children were reared. Later on, a frame house and barn were built on the section line.

The hardships were many, but their faith in a new land carried them through. On one occasion a big blizzard came in the seventies. The wife put her apron over the horse's face and led it into the house. The oxen were poorly sheltered in a straw shed. Their hides were so badly frozen that the hair came off (after a time). The story originally was that the wind was so violent that it blew the hair off. The latter is only partially true.

In the summer months, churning, bread-baking, and other household chores were done at night so that all of the family could work in the fields during the day. A hasty nap at the ends of the furrows afforded much-needed sleep in the daytime.

The family has come a long way from the pioneer life, but I think each one has an appreciation for the background inherited from the forefathers.

The family of Walter Churchill: Emma Mullikin, Mary Ellen Peterson, Eva Friday George, Walter A., and Albert, all deceased. —*Stella Churchill*



Photo from Mrs. Dewey Fessler  
Walter Churchill family taken about 1903. Back row, left to right: Emma (Mrs. Ora Mullikin), George, Mary Ellen (Mrs. Gus Peterson), Walter A. Front row: Albert, Walter and Jerraldine Churchill, Eva (Mrs. John Friday).

**Allen T. Drummond** came from Lancaster, Missouri, in the fall of 1880 and purchased school land, the SW ¼ of Sec. 36, one-half mile south of Dudley school. He, his wife, and their three sons and two daughters occupied the place in 1881. Their daughter Ida and her husband William Gewecke now own the place. The house and barn built by Mr. Drummond are still standing.

**Emmor Fox** (1851-1910) and his wife **Harriet Morrison Fox** (1851-1930). He came to Nebraska in 1881 and settled on a farm in Chelsea township. His first marriage was to Sarah Lawrence. To that union were born Lewis Fox and Dora Fox McPherson. Fred Fox is the only child of his second marriage. —*Stella Churchill*

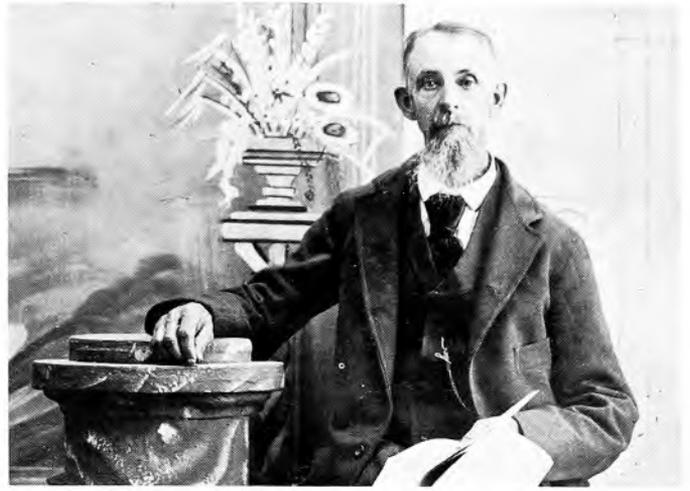


Photo from Ruth Fox  
Joseph G. Fox (about 1900).

**Joseph Gardner Fox** (1831-1917) and his wife, **Almyra Shuck Fox** (1847-1929).

Joseph G. Fox was born in Pennsylvania and went with his parents to Ohio in 1841. There he grew to manhood, and served in the Civil War (Company "G," Ohio Regiment) in 1864. His second marriage was to Almyra Shuck. The couple resided in Ohio until 1885, when they chose Nebraska for a new home with a future. Joe, as he was known, came before the family and worked for a time on the "Moze" Taylor farm, thus earning enough money to bring his family here.

In 1885 Almyra had a furniture sale in Ohio, packed a few things, and came the many miles by train to their new home. She provided for her children by packing a lunch of chicken, hominy, bread, and sugar. When four days were over and their destination was reached, their food had long been exhausted, as the chicken and hominy had spoiled and had been thrown out the car window. A wagon was awaiting them at Fairmont. The sewing machine, feather bed, and quilts, as well as seven children, were loaded, and all were ready for the short ride to the Emmor Fox home in Chelsea. It was there that they spent their first night in Nebraska. The next day, they took their meager belongings and took up residence in a farmhouse about a mile away and lived there for several years.

Their most harrowing experiences were snakes coming through their sod house floors, and the blizzard of 1888. In great emergencies, corn was parched and used to make "coffee." Corn-meal mush provided a sustaining diet many a time.

The children of Joseph G. Fox were: Eva Wolverton, Cora Shackelford, Orpha Jesse, Gepha Churchill, Lemma Miller, Edgbert Dow, Edmond Low, and Robert W. Fox. (For Cora and Robert, see under *Shackelford*).

Orpha Fox, daughter of Joseph G. Fox, married Charles Jesse in 1893. They farmed in Fillmore County until 1903, when they moved to Ohio and ran the mill there. But



Photo from Fred Fox  
Home of Emmor Fox, 1893. Included in the picture are Emmor Fox by the buggy, Fred Fox in the buggy, Lewis Fox on the wagon. Insert picture shows Emmor Fox and daughter, Dora and son, Lewis.

Charles and Orpha lived only a few more years after that. They had four children. Edith, widow of Glen Chadderdon, and her son Bud live in Los Angeles. Bertha and her husband, Ernest McGuire, live in St. Louis, Missouri. Their son Bob, a helicopter pilot, is married and lives in Laguna Beach, California. They have a married daughter.

Howard Jesse and his wife (Inez Engel) farmed east of Geneva for many years. Retired, they now live in Friend, Nebraska. Charles Jesse, Jr., is deceased. —*Stella Churchill*

**J. F. (Frank) McCartney** bought the NW ¼ of Sec. 12 as a homestead relinquishment in the fall of 1872. The following spring he brought his wife Elma and her two small sons by covered wagon from Rock Island, Illinois, to a sod house located near the southwest corner of this farm. A year or two later he built a frame house on the north side of the quarter. The family occupied this until 1898, when they built the present two-story house, which faces Highway 41 to the north. Small evergreen trees brought from the Platte River and set out in the front lawn in the 1870's are venerable trees today. Twice a year needed supplies were hauled by wagon from Beatrice. A large orchard furnished apples and cherries for the family, which ultimately consisted of eight children: Will, Charlie, Mart, Maud, Clarence, Herbert, Emma, and Alta. Maud, Mart, Herbert, and Emma taught in rural schools. Herbert received a degree in 1911 from Iowa State. Emma graduated from Omaha General Hospital and was one of the Red Cross nurses who served in France during World War I (1918). She passed away in 1931 and is one of the war dead honored each Memorial Day at the Geneva Cemetery. The elder McCartneys retired to Geneva in 1906. The original farm is now owned by the Nelsons.

—*Miss Carmen Heller*

**Joseph McDonald**, descended from Scottish ancestors who spelled the name "Macdonald," came from LaSalle County, Illinois, in February, 1875, and purchased the NE ¼ of Sec. 1, T6, R2W from local land agent H. G. Bliss at Fairmont, representative of the Burlington R.R., for \$3.75 an acre. He paid part of the money in advance and then hired out to a man in Illinois for two more years in order to pay off the balance. In 1881 he married Eleanor Kinrade, who had come with her parents to the Burress community in 1879. Two daughters and two sons were born to them. Allen died of pneumonia in 1920, two years after his father's death. Harold and his family have lived on the farm almost continuously since that time. Joseph McDonald, a very meticulous man, rather specialized in the raising of purebred Duroc Jersey hogs.

—*Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson*



Photo from Harold McDonald taken 1899

Left to right: Esther McDonald Axtell, Clarence McDonald, Joseph McDonald, Bertha McDonald Fisher, Ella Kinrade McDonald, Allen McDonald.

**Abraham B. Miller** came from Wabash, Indiana, in the fall of 1881 at the age of 19 years. In 1883, he purchased from the state of Nebraska 160 acres in Sec. 16, T6, R2W, and in 1887 and 1889 he purchased 80 adjoining acres. In December, 1889, he leased two acres in the NW corner of Sec. 16 for District 45, known as the Blain school.

Mr. Miller batched in his home for several years; later, on February 22, 1888, he married Miss Mary Foster in Springfield, Illinois. They then came out to their farm where they lived until they moved to Geneva in 1916. The Millers had four children; Vinetta Miller Eaton, of Geneva; Inez Miller Spangler, of Des Moines, Iowa; Ross Miller, of Nashua, Iowa; and Helen Miller Fisher, of Lincoln, Nebraska. Mr. Miller passed away in 1929 and Mrs. Miller in 1940. The farm is still owned by Vinetta Miller Eaton and Inez Miller Spangler.

—*Mrs. Vinetta Eaton*



Photo from Mrs. Cliff Wilson

Mr. and Mrs. Frank McCartney—1918.



Photo from Vinetta Miller Eaton

The Abraham Miller Farm Home in Sec. 16, Chelsea. The girl in the buggy is Vinetta Miller.

**John Walter Mullikin** and his family were early pioneers in Fillmore County. John Walter was born September 10, 1839, at Bridge Town, Maryland. In 1845, with his parents, he moved from Maryland to Middlefork, Indiana. He grew up without formal education, but few of his day had a better self-taught education. He served as an instructor in the newly established county schools of his community. He served in the Federal Army in the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 in Company "K" of the 18th and Company "H" of the 118th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and was mustered out of the army early in 1865.

On April 16, 1865, he was married to his boyhood sweetheart, Helen Elizabeth Beard. Elizabeth was born at Middlefork, Indiana, January 19, 1846; her parents originated in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Guests had assembled for the nuptials; but just as the minister was about to begin the ceremony, a messenger rode in on horseback with the shocking news that President Lincoln had been assassinated on April 14. Mr. Mullikin scarcely had the presence of mind to go through the ceremony; he felt that more war was inevitable.

The government furnished Civil War veterans with lists of land available out West. A tree claim of 120 acres on Sec. 26 in Chelsea township was selected. A Mr. Chester had not been able to prove up on his claim because of illness, and Mr. Mullikin purchased his rights.

In 1872, the family, with five small children—Everette, Perry, Orrin, Atley, and Iza—moved from Indiana by covered wagon to the newly acquired claim in Nebraska. The claim was not without improvements: a dugout for a home, a barn, and many trees that were growing on the place. More and more trees were planted; at one time, there were four productive fruit orchards.

Bessie Rue, the second daughter, was the only one of the children born in the dugout (on August 6, 1876). On December 14, 1893, she married William Rhoda of Chelsea township. Within the next three years a frame house was erected over the dugout. Between 1879 and 1891 the five younger children were born: Burke, Doyle, Olga, Owen, and Ida. The oldest daughter, Iza Inez, passed away on December 19, 1880, at the age of nine.

As the sons grew up, all left home to seek work elsewhere. The parents never saw all their large family at any one time. When they celebrated their golden wedding in 1915, eight of the 10 children were present.

The pioneer life of the Mullikin family was typical of that of all early settlers. There were hardships, privations, and prosperity, all dependent largely on the whims of the weather and of insect pests. The family went through two great blizzards—the Easter storm of 1873 and the Great Blizzard of January 12, 1888. At one time in the early 1880's, Mr. Mullikin operated a post office in his home. The address was Dudley, Nebraska. Harvey Ryman went by horse-drawn cart to Fairmont three times a week to carry the outgoing and to bring the incoming mail. When Harvey was not able to make the trip, his wife, Emma Zerba Ryman, made it for him. For several years Mr. Mullikin operated a cane press. Farmers for miles around raised their own cane, which they brought to the mill to be pressed; the juice was then cooked until it formed molasses. Stored in large barrels, molasses was the only sweet enjoyed by the pioneers. Members of the family recalled the first brown sugar in bulk obtainable in some stores. The introduction of white sugar was an event never forgotten. A cider press was a busy place every fall; homemade vinegar was a necessity.

Because he was capable, Mr. Mullikin extracted aching teeth for family and friends. He was also able to fill cavities in teeth, a great aid in the early days.

Elizabeth Mullikin capably met all the challenges of pioneer life in the new country. She was resourceful, thrifty, and industrious; her hands were never idle. Her crafts, arts, and skills were unsurpassed. She carded raw wool and spun thread with which her knitting needles supplied mittens, hose, and scarves for her entire family. During the growing season, her preserving and pickling kettles were always in use. In a countryside lacking professional aid, Mrs. Mullikin was an

angel of mercy in sickness. Her home remedies, teas and brews of native plants, were known to be most helpful. Her skills, almost unknown to the present generation, included the making of kraut, hominy, butter, cheese, and homemade soap. Lye for making soap was obtained by soaking wood ashes in water and using the water with pork or beef cracklings. Other skills included drying and preserving of fruits and vegetables in the sun. What the pioneer woman lacked in conveniences, she made up in resourcefulness.

Mr. Mullikin, an avid student, was far ahead of his day in educational interests. He organized District 30 in December, 1881, and was a school board member for many years. The corner of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 35, Chelsea township, was leased to the newly organized school district for as long as the school remained operative. This plot was on Mrs. Mullikin's land across the road from the home. She recalled that her father in Indiana had given three different corners of his land for school purposes. She insisted that District 30 lease the plot, which would thus belong to the then present owner of the land when the school was finally abandoned. Her forethought proved to have merit.

The schoolhouse was used for religious purposes—Sunday school, preaching services, and revival meetings. All the family took part in the religious services of the community. Mr. Mullikin knew music. He not only taught his own children to sing and to play instruments, but he also started several young men of the neighborhood on musical careers. Singing schools were a delight to all who attended. Mr. Mullikin possessed a sweet tenor voice that was unsurpassed. When called upon, he was capable of delivering a Sunday sermon. At one time, he was called upon to conduct a funeral service. He was known to have made a study of many religious creeds, as well as the platforms of all the political parties of his day.

Mr. and Mrs. Mullikin remained on the farm for 32 years. With their youngest daughter, Ida, they moved to Cherryvale, Kansas, in October, 1904. Mrs. Mullikin passed away on March 9, 1925, and Mr. Mullikin on October 17, 1926.

All ten of the children married. There were 41 grandchildren. Their son Doyle graduated from the University Medical School at Omaha and was a practicing physician at Chester, Nebraska, for more than 50 years. The daughters Ida and Olga were teachers; Ida retired in 1956 after teaching for 35 years.

In 1966 the surviving members of the family are Owen N. Mullikin of McMinnville, Oregon, and Mrs. Ida C. Mitchell of Chester, Nebraska.

—Miss Lillie C. Rhoda



Photo from Lillie Rhoda

The John Walter Mullikin family taken on April 16, 1915 at the Golden Wedding Celebration of Mr. and Mrs. Mullikin. Back row, left to right: Burke, Owen, Doyle, and Atley. Second row: Olga Perry, Bessie Mullikin Rhoda, Orrin, Ida Mullikin Mitchell, Everette. Seated: Mr. and Mrs. Mullikin.

**Walferd C. Peterson** was born September 23, 1866, in the province of Kalmar, Sweden. His parents, Johannes and Sarah "Johnson," and four of their children came to the United States, leaving Emma and Walferd in Sweden with relatives. There was a Swedish settlement in Galesburg, Illinois, so that was where they went. After a time the family had earned enough money to send for the two children, and they came over on a ship which took three weeks to make the trip. At the time Emma was 11 and Walferd was four years old.

On settling in Galesburg, the family assumed the name of "Peterson," as it was the custom in Sweden at that time to take the name of the father's father and add "son" to the name, and hence the family became "Peterson."

After Emma and Walferd came to Illinois, Walferd contracted what we now know as polio. In early days little was known about this disease or ways of treating it; and so Walferd was left a cripple for life.

His formal schooling was very meager; the older boys in the family took him to school in a wagon when the weather permitted, or when the work on the farm was slack. Even though he did not get much education at school, he was an avid reader and mechanically minded. He always kept abreast of the times. Since he had been denied schooling, he was eager to see that his children all got a good education.

In the year 1879, the family heard of railroad land that could be purchased in Nebraska. At that time all the homestead land was taken, but they pooled their money and had enough to buy land in Chelsea township, Fillmore County, southeast of Geneva. The records state that "Eighty acres of land was purchased from the Burlington and Missouri River Rail Road Company by Johannes Peterson, for the consideration of \$600.00. Legal description, the E 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 15, T6, R2W of the Sixth Principal Meridian."

The family had to haul lumber from Fairmont to build their home; it took many trips and many days to get the material. They endured many hardships like everyone else in those early days, but they were of sturdy stock.

When Walferd was a young man, he got a job traveling for an implement company. His mode of transportation was by horse ("Old Flora") and buggy. One of the towns in his territory was Sidney, Iowa, where a John Chaney was the implement dealer. His wife and their young daughters ran the hotel, the only one in town, and Walferd made his headquarters there when in that area. Walferd had a good voice and loved to sing, so in the evenings the young people would gather around the organ in the "parlor" and sing. Rosalie Chaney played the organ and sang. It was on these occasions that he met Rosalie and wooed and won her. In October, 1896, he drove "Old Flora" to Sidney and they were married. He had established a home just south of the one where he had spent his boyhood, and for many years was a farmer.

The work on the farm became too strenuous, and so he decided to run for the office of county clerk. He was elected in 1906 and appointed Alfred Rosenquist as his deputy. After his term of office, he returned to the implement business, later ran the Ford Garage, and, during the last few years of his life, had a filling station across from the southeast corner of Courthouse Square. During the years of the implement business and the garage, Lyle Cumberland was his "right-hand man" and a very close friend.

Walferd was always inventing ways to compensate for his not being able to walk far or to work as others did. He made his arms do much of the work for his legs, and thus developed great strength in his arms. He contrived a way to fix a girl's bicycle (as this was easier for him to handle), put the chain on the left side, so that he could pedal with his one good foot, and built a small platform on which to rest the heel of the crippled foot. Before the streets were hard-surfaced, it was difficult for him to ride on the frozen, rutty roads in winter and the muddy roads in summer. A city ordinance prohibited the riding of bicycles on sidewalks, but the city councilmen made one exception: they allowed Mr. Peterson to ride on the walks because of his affliction. The children of the town always respected his handicap and

would step off the sidewalks when they saw him riding down the street. Walferd often expressed his appreciation of this privilege.

It was a source of satisfaction to him when, riding past the schoolhouse playground on his bicycle, the young boys would ask him to stop and chin himself on the bars, as he could far outdo any of them.

Mr. and Mrs. Peterson reared a family of nine children, all of whom were graduated from the Geneva High School and all of whom attended the University of Nebraska: Mrs. Leta Tomlinson of Chino, California; Mrs. Dazel F. Camp of Geneva, Nebraska; Mrs. M. Murle Abrahamson of Ralston, Nebraska; Dr. John C. Peterson (deceased); Mrs. Rose L. Hammond of Lincoln, Nebraska; Mrs. Marion L. Calder of Lincoln, Nebraska; Mrs. Helen M. Biba of Carbondale, Colorado; Frank W. Peterson of Homestead, Florida; and Dr. Paul L. Peterson of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Both Walferd and Rosalie Peterson were useful, respected citizens, serving their community in many ways. Mr. Peterson was on the school board from 1919 to 1922 and both of them were active in the Congregational Church until their health failed. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1946 at the church, with all their children present, and many of their grandchildren.

Walferd's greatest pride was his family. Now, his granddaughter Mary Camp Portwood and Dr. David Portwood, a Geneva dentist, and their family are taking their place in the community he so respected and loved. —Mrs. C. C. Camp



Photo from Mrs. Dazel F. Camp taken in 1946  
Family of Mr. and Mrs. Walferd Peterson. Left to right: Mrs. Leta Tomlinson, Mrs. Dazel F. Camp, Mrs. Murle Abrahamson, John, Mrs. Rose Hammond, Mrs. Marion Calder, Mrs. Helen Biba, Frank and Paul. Seated: Mr. and Mrs. Walferd Peterson.

Many of the early pioneers in the West had their origin in Europe. This was true of the **Frederick Rhoda** family, early settlers in Fillmore County. Frederick Rhoda and Sophia Siefert were born and raised in Schwerin, Mecklenburg, a province of northern Germany. These young people embarked from Hamburg in the early 1850's. By train they journeyed from New York City to La Porte in northern Indiana. Why they chose Indiana is not known; they may have known someone there, perhaps a relative. Both were able to find employment at once in the new land.

After their marriage they lived for a few years at Flint, Michigan. By 1862, Mr. and Mrs. Rhoda and two sons, Frank and Charley, were back in Indiana. Glowing accounts of cheap land and abundant crops "out West" were ever before them. In 1863 or 1864, the family again moved, this time to a farm near Atalissa, Iowa. Here their next children, David, William, Sophia, and Emma were born.

A friend of Mr. Rhoda's wrote of the prosperity of the prairies of Kansas. In July, 1870, the family went by covered wagon to the home of a friend near Lyons, Kansas. They found no prosperity—in fact, only dire poverty and near starvation. Mrs. Rhoda and the three younger children took a train at St. Joseph, Missouri, to return to Indiana. Mr. Rhoda, Frank, and Charley made the trip back by covered wagon. The story is told that the boys made most of the trip

on their ponies. In Kansas they chased herds of antelope. By the spring of 1871, the family was on a rented farm owned by General Orr near La Porte. The next nine years on the farm were fairly prosperous ones. Crops were good—all gleaned and threshed by hand. The youngest children of the family, Marshall and Ella, were born here. Their third son, Marshall, born March 9, 1872, lived but eleven days.

The “Call of the West” was ever present, thanks to the advertising of the railroads. In 1878, Mr. Rhoda came to Fairmont, where he was met by H. G. Bliss, land agent for the C. B. & Q. Railroad. From Fairmont, they drove overland by horse and buggy to see available land. The N ½ of Sec. 25 in Chelsea township was chosen. The price was \$6.60 an acre. All was virgin prairie. There were trees in sight along Turkey Creek and on some tree claims. Several settlers were already well established in dugouts. Henry Wilson, later county judge of Fillmore County, was hired to start breaking the prairie.

Between 1879 and 1880 the family made preparations for moving to Nebraska. In July, Mr. Rhoda became ill with typhoid fever. Before this, he had suffered an injury to the pancreas, caused by the kick of a colt. The injury, aggravated by the attack of fever, brought his untimely death at the age of 40, on August 7, 1880.

With the help of her four sons, Mrs. Rhoda proceeded with their preparations and held a farm sale on September 30, 1880. An immigrant car, with Frank and Charley in charge, was loaded with livestock, furniture, and family possessions. The rest of the family followed by train, arriving in Fairmont on October 5, 1880.

The family lived in a rented house in Fairmont for six weeks. During that time, the sons, with the help of carpenters, erected a small frame house on the NW ¼ of Sec. 25, set up shelter for the livestock, and dug a well.

Early years on the prairie were filled with hardships and homesickness. Armed with ambition, hard work, and their own crafts and skills, they soon found things shaping toward a better outlook. Having grown used to natural woods in Indiana, they simply had to plant trees. They planted and tended long rows of osage hedge; a large grove of native trees gave shelter and protection around the buildings; and an apple orchard flourished for many years.

In thinking of those times, it is easier to think of what there wasn't than of what there was. The first three-month term of school opened in District 30 on December 19, 1881, and was attended by four of the Rhoda children. Chelsea, District 32, held spring terms which they attended.

The sod for making the schoolhouse in District 30 was taken partly from the SE ¼ of Sec. 25. By 1883, a small frame building replaced the sod schoolhouse.

In the spring of 1881 they planted their first crops: spring wheat and barley, and later buckwheat and oats. The new land did produce good crops when drouth, grasshoppers, and hail didn't interfere. The nearest town was Tobias, where the surplus grain was hauled overland. A load of wheat to the mill meant flour for bread for many months.

The Rhoda boys owned the first wire-tying binder in this area. Remnants of this binder are on display at Pioneer Village, Minden, Nebraska. The brothers also owned a road grader, a well-digging outfit, and a horse-powered corn sheller. All were put to frequent use in the neighborhood.

Abundant wildlife meant food for the pioneers. Grouse, prairie chickens, and quail were the most numerous. The story was told that flocks of prairie chickens on their way to roosting ground would blot out the setting sun. The blizzard of 1888 destroyed the game by the thousands.

As the country rapidly filled with settlers, the Rhoda family was drawn into the many activities of the community. There were religious meetings at the schoolhouses, as well as revival and protracted meetings at the Brethren church and tent camp meetings in the groves of near-by farms. The brothers helped build Chelsea Church. There were spelling bees, singing bees, and literaries at the schoolhouses, and quilting bees in every home for the ladies. When a new barn or granary was built, a square dance was held, attended by

young and old from far and near. There were several excellent fiddlers and callers in the area. Pioneer life was not all hardship and hard work: there was plenty of entertainment as well as spiritual life.

The Rhodas acquired other farms near their original purchase. Charley Rhoda lived on the old home place until the 1920's. All of the land is still in the family. Emma, William, and Charley married. There are 8 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, and 16 great-great-grandchildren. Ella Rhoda, whose 95th birthday was October 5, 1967, is the surviving member of the family.

—Miss Lillie C. Rhoda



Courtesy of Lillie Rhoda

The Frederick Rhoda family taken about 1887. Back row, left to right: William, Emma, David, Ella. Front row: Charles, Mrs. Rhoda, Frank.

In 1872, **William Shackelford** (November 20, 1813- February 9, 1898) and his wife, the former Catherine Miller (January 10, 1823-August 25, 1909) of Troy, Ohio, came from Clinton County, Indiana, to Fillmore County. They had joined the great company moving westward. Not all their five sons and daughters came to Nebraska. A son, Austin C. Shackelford (November 2, 1847-June 21, 1928) and his wife, Delana J. Like (December 13, 1852-January 6, 1921), whom he had married in 1870, homesteaded in Chelsea. They took 80 acres—the N ½ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 22, T6, R2W. Also in the company of pioneers were daughters, Elvira, with her husband Matthew Young, who also homesteaded, and Clara (Mrs. O. Stone). Another daughter, Eliza, came the following year (1873) with her husband, James Swayze. Many close relatives remained in Indiana and Ohio.

At a later date, Austin C. Shackelford gave a *Signal* reporter an account of the famous Easter storm of April 13, 1873: “It began with a light rain. Early in the afternoon the rain turned to snow and the storm continued three days with tremendous violence. It was all open country here then with nothing to check the wind or provide shelter for man or beast except the rude dugouts and sod stables.”

William and Catherine saved many old letters. Eliza wrote to them from Russiaville, Indiana, January 2, 1873: “Did mother's trip out there make her sick or did it cure her of that neuralgia? Clara, you must not eat too much buffalo meat, you will get to be a giant. Are you going to school? You must write to me.” At that time, letters were addressed to Empire P. O., Fillmore County. One from their son told of the cold weather in Indiana and then continued: “I would like very well to have that Jack rabbit's cotton tail that you promised me to go in the toe of my boot for I froze my big toe so it hurts.”

A note from a niece, Ida Compton, in Troy, Ohio, April 24, 1873, remarked, “. . . there was an excursion going out to Nebraska and ma had a notion to go but she did not like to go by herself, it was \$29 there and back.” Catherine's brother George wrote: “You speak of those Mexican cattle with their long horns, they are quite a show.” Other letters told how Mat Young helped the Swayzes get located. On February 9, 1875, from Covington, Ohio, George Miller wrote to his sister Catherine Shackelford: “. . . they are making up a car load of provisions here to send to Nebraska to the sufferers. There

was also some, over \$300, sent to Missouri from here." (George's daughter and family had settled in Missouri.) On June 27, 1875, L. Sims wrote from Clinton County to William: "I understood you wanted some dandelion seed, they seem to be scarce, but I'll send a few if that is not enough let me know and I will send more. I suppose you only wanted to get a start of them." Sims wrote again on July 10, 1875: "... I am truly glad to hear that you have escaped the grasshoppers."

From Nebraska, on July 14, 1875, Eliza Swayze wrote: "... this finds us well at this time. It rains here every day or night and has for the last month and the crops are very slim here. There is no harvest at all and no corn over four inches high. The gardens, nobody ever got a smell of anything they planted. Everybody is pretty disgusted here. The grasshoppers have about all left. We have had some of the hardest storms here this summer that ever was. We looked for our house to go lots of times. It shakes like the cars starting every storm. It has blown off twice but not since we lived in it. If nothing happens we don't expect to stay here longer than a couple of weeks for Jim is about run out of work."

Letters sent to William and Catherine Shackelford in the 1880's were addressed to Alpine, Fillmore County.

The Swayzes stuck it out. June 4, 1883, Jim Swayze wrote to a friend: "We have come to life again. I rented the farm east of my house where we went to look for the deer tracks but we live where we did. I have 37 acres of oats and 25 corn, give one-third corn and one-fourth oats. I bought a team on time. We have a cow paid for. Have been fishing several times, got some nice pickerel. Tell the old man if he wants to squirrel hunt to come down. There are lots of them here, can kill all he wants close to the house, both kinds, gray and fox squirrels. It has rained more here than it ever did in Indiana but has not damaged anything yet for me. Council Bluffs washed off last Saturday, only 28 lives lost. Corn looks good. Come over as soon as you can."

A letter to William Shackelford, August 7, 1888, was addressed to Dudley, Fillmore County. He was a Methodist and a Mason. After the death of her husband in 1898, Catherine returned to Indiana to spend her last years with relatives there.

William had sold out when he left Indiana, bringing notes from the sale which were later handled by Lewis and Cicero Sims, brothers, bill collector and lawyer, of Frankfort, Indiana. A letter from William's brother, S. H. Shackelford, of Tipton County, Indiana, said that he sent the Swayzes's boxes by freight after they came to Fillmore County in the fall of 1873. Catherine's brother, Elliott Miller, had a dry goods store in Troy, Ohio; her brother George later sold his bookstore there and moved to Covington, Ohio. Their parents died a few years after Catherine came to Nebraska. The mother's letters to Catherine expressed deep regret at not seeing her daughter again.



Courtesy of Ruth Fox  
Machine shop of Austin Shackelford (left), and son, Jason (standing in center of picture).

In addition to farming in Chelsea township, Austin C. Shackelford operated a blacksmith and machine shop in Dudley. For recreation, he gave singing lessons to a group of young people who met for practice in the Chelsea church. Without an organ at first, they used a tuning fork and song books.

The children of Austin and Delana were Jason D., Minnie (Mrs. Robert Fox), Frank, Ina (Mrs. Albert Eslow), Daisy, Oska, Elva, and Nellie. Three sons had died in infancy. The greatest tragedy which ever came to this family was in 1894: within 34 days the four youngest children, girls aged 5 to 14, died of diphtheria, the last one on the day before Christmas.

There were crop failures, and Austin's barn was struck by lightning and burned. Bees outgrew their hives and moved to the house; some of the siding had to be stripped off to remove the honey. Like all the early settlers, they set out fruit trees of all kinds, berries, rhubarb, and Osage orange hedge for fence posts. Most of these grew abundantly.

In April, 1896, Jason D. Shackelford married Cora Fox, daughter of Joseph G. Fox. A month later, Jason's sister Minnie married Robert Fox, brother of Cora. Minnie and Robert moved to a farm near Ohioa. Austin moved from the homestead to Geneva, a block east of the mill, where he operated a blacksmith shop with his son Jason. Years later, Jason had his own shop on the east side of the Courthouse Square. He played a cornet in the Geneva Band. As a pastime, he learned to crochet beautifully, taught by Cora, who was a dressmaker. They had no children.

Austin attained a high degree in the Masonic Lodge and Delana was in the Eastern Star. They were Methodists. Their daughter Ina became a skilled tailor. Ina met and married Albert Eslow in California, where she worked. They moved to a homestead in Canada; but the change of climate from the Imperial Valley was too severe, and Ina died a short time later.



Photo from Ruth Fox  
Mr. and Mrs. Austin Shackelford (about 1910).

Robert Fox (June 13, 1866-June 22, 1951) and his wife Minnie (September 27, 1874-May 16, 1944), with their infant daughter Grace, moved in 1899 from the Ohioa farm to the Shackelford homestead in Chelsea. Their daughter Ruth was born in this same house where her mother had come to life. Minnie gave organ lessons, and Robert continued his sideline of watch and clock repairing, which he had learned as a young man in Gallipolis, Ohio. He had come to Fillmore County in 1892, seven years after the arrival of his father, Joseph G. Fox. Later Robert moved to farms west of Geneva. Grace died in 1961. Ruth, a University of Nebraska graduate, became a medical technologist. After working 30 years in Verona, New Jersey, she retired and now lives in Geneva.

Austin's son Frank graduated from Geneva High School in 1898 and became a pharmacist. In 1908, he married Anna Masters, a schoolteacher from Exeter. Geneva relatives went to the wedding in Exeter, making the trip by train. Frank later moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Frank and Anna had two daughters. Melva married Chester Burton, a lawyer

in Duluth; they have two sons, Bruce and Gary. Dorothy, remaining in Minneapolis, married Stanley H. Raitz, now deceased. They had a son, Darryl, now a helicopter pilot, married and living in Miami, Florida; and a daughter, Judy (Mrs. Jerry Pertl), of Minneapolis. The Pertls have two sons, David and Douglas; Mr. and Mrs. Darryl S. Raitz have two sons, Mark and Jeffrey.

Oscar L. Stone and his wife Clara (daughter of William Shackelford) had a son, Delbert, and a daughter, Zella, who went to school and grew up in Fillmore County. The Stones later moved to University Place, Nebraska (now a part of Lincoln), where they lived near Matthew Young. Delbert, a widower, lives in Lincoln. His son Dale lives in Chicago, Illinois, with his wife and son Craig.

Zella, widow of John Schoenholz, lives in Davenport, Nebraska, next door to her daughter Gladys (Mrs. Royal Hardinger). Royal is a pharmacist. Their son Don is married, lives in Lincoln and has a son, Jeffrey, and a daughter, Shari. Don Hardinger is an auditor in the Labor Department of the State of Nebraska.

Matthew Young and his wife Elvira (daughter of William Shackelford) settled on a homestead in Fillmore County in 1872, on coming to Nebraska from Indiana. Matthew served in the Union army during the Civil War, Company "G," 89th Indiana Regiment of volunteer infantry. He was a Methodist and a Mason. They had five children: Mrs. O. P. McNees, Mrs. S. J. Pester, Mrs. J. L. Vodra, Bertha, and A. H. Young. They moved from the farm to Geneva in 1904, and in 1907 to University Place, Nebraska, where Matthew died in 1911.

—Ruth Fox

In the spring of 1888, Mr. and Mrs. Leonidas Stephenson sold their land in Champaign County, Illinois, and moved to Geneva, Nebraska, where they bought a farm southwest of town and a home in Geneva (now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gibbons). They lived here until Mr. Stephenson passed away in 1895 at the age of 75 years. Mrs. Stephenson continued to make her home in Geneva with a widowed daughter, Mrs. Anna Buckles, who came to keep her company. Mrs. Stephenson passed away at the age of 90.

In 1889, a son, Henry Stephenson, and his family came from Illinois to Geneva. He purchased the farm now owned by the Lauber brothers. They lived here many years, later moving to Franklin, Nebraska, where they passed away.

In 1890, another son, John Stephenson, and his family sold out in Illinois and moved to Fillmore County, locating two miles east of Geneva on what is now Highway 41, on the farm now owned by the Nichols brothers. The John Stephensons had three children, Alice, Helen, and Willard (who died at the age of 18). Mrs. John Stephenson passed away in 1942 and Mr. Stephenson in 1947.

In 1892, Mr. and Mrs. John Babb, parents of Mrs. John Stephenson, came from Illinois and purchased the farm which is known as the Stephenson home place, now farmed by William (Bill) Watmore, son of William and Alice Stephenson Watmore.

The Stephenson farm now owned by Helen Stephenson Shickley and Alice Stephenson Watmore was homesteaded

by Frederick Heiderstadt in the early 1870's. This SW ¼ of Sec. 4 was a tree claim and had a 20-acre ash grove along the south line. Mr. Heiderstadt was the grandfather of Mrs. Ed Watmore, Mrs. Susie Ward, and Fred Meyer.

Alice Stephenson Watmore started school in District 45, called the Blain school. The William Sprout young folk—Grace, Lee, and Melvin—who drove a team and spring wagon to school, picked up the children of Mrs. Nancy Purviance, Fannie, Lee, and Willis; Alice Stephenson rode with them. The Sprouts lived on the farm now owned by Mrs. Effie Larson and occupied by her son Don and his family. The Purviances occupied the farm now owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Bernasek.

At the time there were two rooms in Blain school, with 90 pupils and two teachers. Professor Lewis, father of Mrs. Flora Houchin, was the teacher at the time of the 1888 blizzard. Other early teachers were John Burke (father of Mrs. Alice Hassler, Miss Julia Burke, and Mrs. John Koehler), Milton Ames, Ed Lane, Frank Brannick, Mrs. Anna Buckles, and Robert Case.

—Mrs. William Watmore Sr.

(Died August 18, 1966)

There is one Chelsea resident whose early life differed from that of most people. He is Charles Weiss, better known as "Charley." At the age of seven, he was one of 24 orphan boys brought to Geneva from New York in 1889 under the auspices of a group known as the Children's Aid Society. He went first to the Fred Stewart home west of Geneva, but began work at an early age for several farmers in the Chelsea community, one of these being Emmor Fox. By dint of work and saving, he was able, with the help of his wife, Lola Owens, to start farming on a rented place and eventually to acquire his own land and property. His residence in the township has been continuous, and his son Bernard and his daughter DeVee Anderson have farm homes in the Geneva area.

Two other boys who came to Chelsea township with Charley were Andrew Holt, who made his home with the Jimmy Robinsons across the road from the Wilson Miller farm, and John Cuneo, who stayed with the Cash Bumgarner, just west of the Fred Fox home, until he was 17. For many years he wrote, from his new home in San Francisco, appreciative letters to Mrs. Flora Bumgarner, who spent her latter years in Geneva. (She died in 1961 at the age of 100 years and 4 months.) "Andy" Holt, now deceased, married a Geneva girl, Marcella Flory, and served as lineman and finally as manager of the Geneva Telephone Company until the family's removal to York. Mrs. Robinson made her home with the Holts for many years.

—Wilma (Mrs. O. E.) Nelson

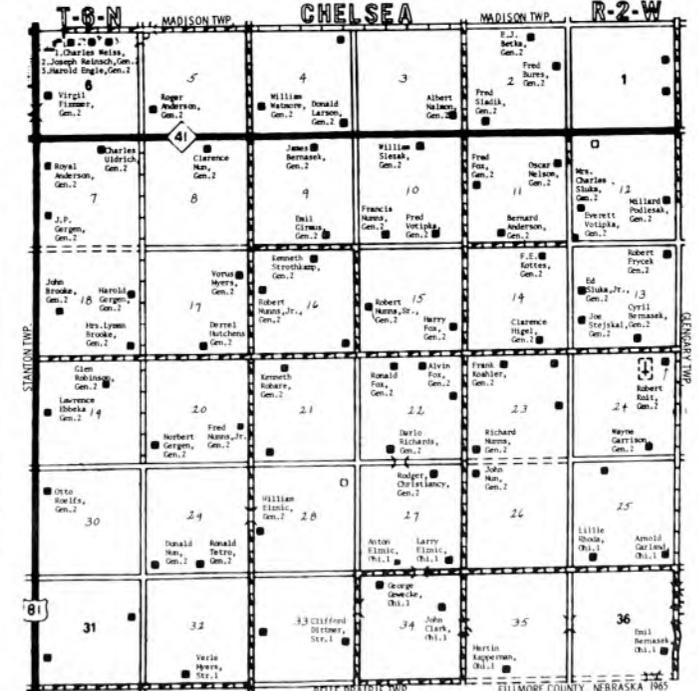


Photo from Mrs. Jim Matejka

Mr. and Mrs. John Stephenson and children, taken in 1890. From left to right: Mr. Stephenson, Helen standing in front of Alice, Mrs. Stephenson holding Willard.



Photo from Fred Fox  
Taken about 1929  
Chelsea Church with Rev. Ray Hinkle  
standing near the church.



Photo from Fred Fox  
Rev. E. H. Pontius



Photo from Mrs. Melvin Anderson  
Five horse hitch on two bottom plow



Photo from Fred Fox  
Harvesting on Fred Fox farm in 1914. James Delaney on binder.



Photo from O. E. Nelson  
Oscar Nelson and his 1926 Buick



Photo from Mrs. Melvin Anderson  
Wheat shocks



Photo from Charles Weiss  
"Topsy" Driving horse and buggy owned by Charles Weiss. taken  
in 1906.



Photo from Mrs. Melvin Anderson  
Loads of Prairie Hay