

Madison Township

Madison township, in the central part of Fillmore County, is bounded on the north by Fairmont, one the east by Liberty, on the south by Chelsea, and on the west by Geneva townships. Its western boundary is marked by U. S. 81. Turkey Creek flows from west to east across its southern half. The Fremont-Superior line of the Northwestern R.R. runs diagonally from near its northeast to near its southwest corner. The Fairmont-Helvey branch of the Burlington runs diagonally from the midpoint of its northern boundary to the midpoint of its eastern side. The two lines cross at Sawyer, once a town site, now no more than a place name. Most of the land is gently rolling. The principal industry is farming. The drouths of the 1930's and 1950's brought a considerable interest in deep-well irrigation. By the end of 1966, there were 39 irrigation wells registered in Madison township.

Madison township was named for James Madison, the fourth President of the United States, who had represented Virginia at the National Constitutional Convention and was one of the chief framers of the Constitution. When Fillmore County was organized, the election was held on the NE 1/4 of Sec. 30, Madison township, on April 21, 1871. At that time, William H. James was acting governor of Nebraska. The county officers elected were: Elisha L. Martin, C. H. Bassett, and Jesse Lee, commissioners; H. L. Badger, Wilbur Deuel, treasurer; J. F. Snow, sheriff; W. H. Blain, judge; H. L. Badger, surveyor; G. R. Wolf, county superintendent; and T. E. Barnett, coroner.

Burruss

The following account of early-day Burruss was provided by the late Fred Wolter:

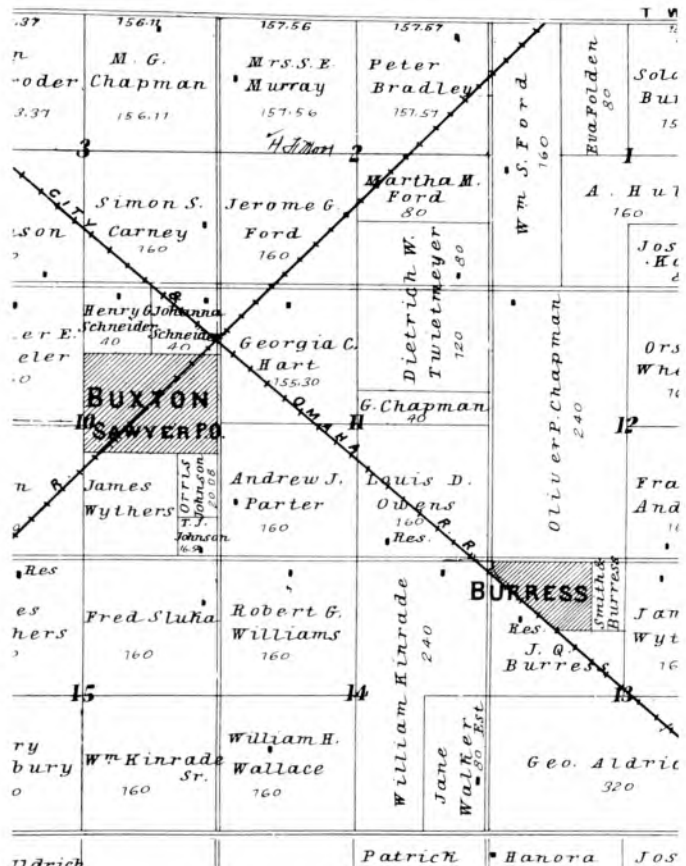
The first railroad was built into the township in 1887 by the St. Joseph & Grand Island R.R. This branch was known for a few years as the Endicott and Stromsburg line, and then for a few more years was known as the Kansas City & Omaha R.R. Since the late nineties, it has been part of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy system.

At the coming of the railroad, the Burruss town site was surveyed on land owned by James Q. Burruss, and a post office was established in his name. The first postmaster was John McLeese. The railroad property consisted of a nice depot, section house, and stockyards. The first station agent was Arthur Boyd. L. E. Davis & Co., of St. Joseph, Missouri, built what was called a scoop house on the siding for storing grain, from which the grain was later scooped into railroad cars for shipment. Boyd Davis was the first grain dealer.

There were three early business establishments. J. L. Davis kept a grocery store which also contained the post office. O. T. Wheeler, who was the country carpenter, put up a store building which was mostly used as a public dance room and for public meetings. Mr. and Mrs. John William Owens conducted a restaurant and boarding house. Living quarters were in the rear of the Davis and Owens places. The depot was the bachelor quarters for the single inhabitants. There were two residences in Burruss, those of the J. Q. Burruss family and of the section foreman, Hans Striggow.

In the spring of 1888, William H. Wolter, a young man from Illinois, built a small blacksmith shop, which in later years was enlarged as business demanded. Mr. Wolter was an efficient mechanic and his trade was in demand over a large territory. He was one of the first auto mechanics in the county. His death occurred at his home in Great Falls, Montana, in 1936.

About 1890, a grain firm from Tobias — Sutfin, Marsh, & Fisher — built a steam-powered grain elevator in Burruss, which proved to be a boon to the community. George Coe, who came from Iowa, was the manager. A few years later, his



Standard Atlas of Fillmore County (1905)
Crossing point of the Kansas City & Omaha and the Northwestern Railroads in Madison township, with adjacent towns.

brother, Charles Coe, joined him in the grain business, and they added a lumber yard to the firm.

During the prosperous early nineties, six or seven new homes were built in the eastern part of Burruss. A Methodist church was also built. Among those serving as pastors were the Rev. John Hull and the Rev. Robert Thompson, young men of the community. The Rev. Thompson later served the Geneva Methodist Church as pastor for many years. Pliny Aldrich built a two-story building for a store and living quarters and post office. His young granddaughter, Sadie Aldrich, made her home with him and attended school. The mercantile business and the building were later sold to John Shade.

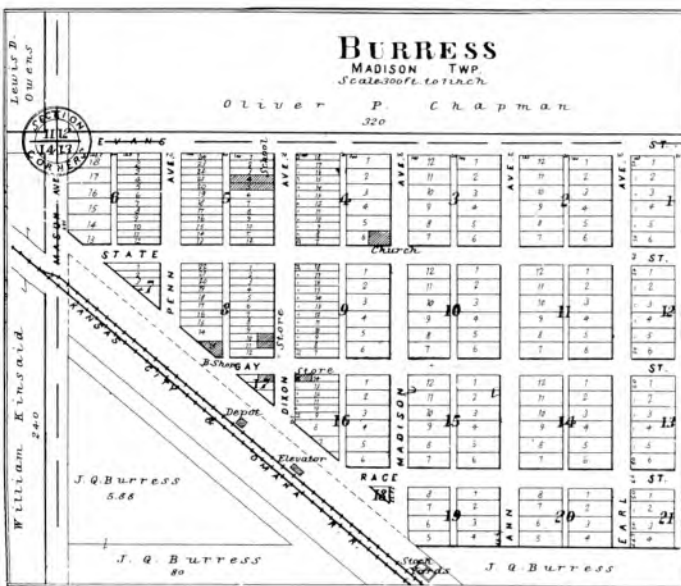
During the lean years of the late nineties, the stores discontinued business and the post office was also discontinued for a short period. However, the patrons immediately petitioned the Post Office Department to re-establish the office, and William Wolter was appointed postmaster. A portion of the blacksmith shop was used as the post office until better crop years came, when the W. H. Cooksey family moved in with a stock of drugs and groceries. Tom Harvey had a grocery store south of Cooksey's. Don Dutcher also came in with a stock of groceries.

As more prosperous conditions prevailed, Mr. Wolter enlarged his building and installed much heavy machine equipment. His younger brother, Fred Wolter, learned the trade with him and then started a shop in Bruning in 1908. He was in business there for 11 years and later spent three years in Ohio. [Fred Wolter passed away on April 15, 1963.]

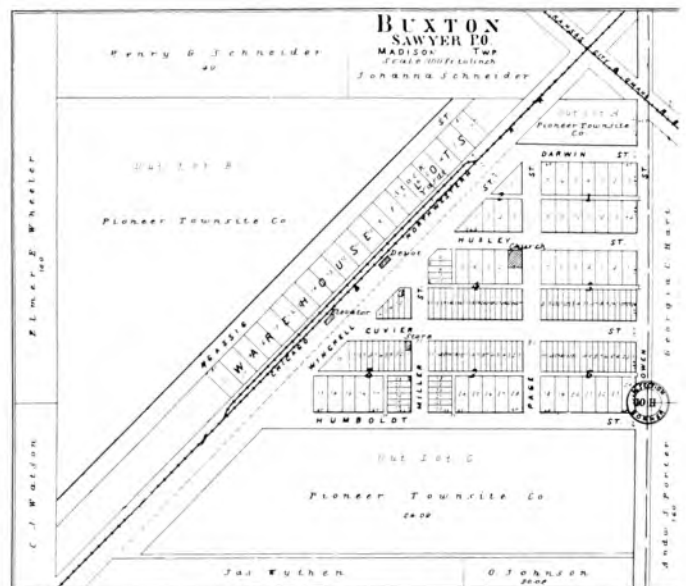


Burlington depot at Burress in 1905—Earl Cooksey and his wife Lillie on the platform. In the building at left of depot Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Cooksey had a store. The John Shades lived upstairs. At extreme left is a portion of the Methodist Church.

Photo from Mrs. Grace Kelch



Standard Atlas of Fillmore County (1905)
Map of Burress in 1905



Standard Atlas of Fillmore County (1905)
Map of Buxton (Sawyer) in 1905

The Burress schoolhouse is now located in Chelsea township on the Wayne Garrison farm, 8 miles S of Burress. At one time, two teachers were employed in the Burress school. The Burress depot is now the Manning Grain Company.

This account of present-day Burress, by Dean Terrill of the Southeast Nebraska Bureau of the Lincoln Star, appeared in that paper in March 1965:

Burress isn't exactly long on people (20), but its three houses rate better, best, and bestest. Every square foot smacks of prosperity: 15 grain-storage buildings, a grocery-service station, a cash register alternately ringing from feed and fertilizer and on-off sale beer.

"Yes, I suppose the investment here now is the biggest in the spot's history," said owner Earl Manning as matter-of-factly as his

cigar would allow. In his 41-year manorship he has also learned to shrug off salesmen's "Manningsville" title to his town.

In reality Burress is also the Sawyer ("had about five people") which was consolidated into the Manning Grain Co. in the '20's. Burress had once bustled as a trade center of 75, but "hasn't shrunk a bit as long as I can remember."

The present populace is mostly Manning, son Tom storekeeping with his father and Dick farming the town's "outskirts." Employee Don Samson occupies the third house with his family, and Earl would have to be classified a commuter since moving to Exeter in 1952.

Although the grocery is housed intriguingly in the old Burlington depot, it is the site's former dance hall that sets Manning's memories in real motion. Only bags of fertilizer nudge one another now on the big floor that "used to pack in 1,000 to 1,200 persons per night."



Photos from Earl Manning
The Sawyer elevator in 1926.



R. W. Wirz repair shop at Sawyer (1926)



Northwestern depot at Sawyer and the Manning residence (1926)



Last passenger train through Sawyer—around 1930.

"The bands got too big and high-priced, though, and a local era ended when we threw the last dance on the Fourth of July, 1949," Earl recalled. "We started filling the hall with grain the next day and found out it held 28,000 bushels."

Counting the mere 21 neighbors now scattered through 28 of Fillmore County's sections, Manning figures little Burress has fared pretty well over-all. Its one big blight is a long-vacant house, picturesque but crumbling, at the hamlet's edge.

"That belonged to the son of the Burress we were named after," apologized the unofficial lord mayor. "Doesn't look so good, but of course it's really sort of a suburb."

SCHOOLS

The first school district organized in Madison township was **District No. 3**, also called at a later date the Brick Schoolhouse. It was organized on December 8, 1871, at a meeting of qualified electors called by the county superintendent of Fillmore County for the purpose of electing officers, locating a site for a schoolhouse, and transacting such other business as might legally come before the meeting. The school board officers elected then were: William H. Blain, moderator; A. J. Beals, director; and B. F. Tibbitt, treasurer.

The site chosen was on the SE corner of the NE ¼ of Sec. 30, T7, R2W, on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Compher. It was decided to build a sod schoolhouse, and sufficient funds were levied to finish this. The first teacher was Robert S. Dye, who taught from 1872 to 1873 for \$20 a month.

Later, after heated arguments, the schoolhouse was relocated on Sec. 28, T7, where a frame building not to exceed \$800 in cost was built. School was to be held for seven months, four months in the summer and three in the winter. The board decided to get a "femail" to teach the summer school and a "mail" to teach the winter. Later they voted to have only three months of summer schooling, commencing the first Monday in May. The three winter school months were to begin in December. They also decided not to allow

the schoolhouse to be used for anything but school, Sabbath, or religious meetings.

In April, 1876, the board agreed to have six months of school commencing the first of August. They voted to hire a woman teacher because she could be gotten cheaper than a man. In 1878, an agreement was drawn up employing Ella Kinrade for \$75 — \$25 a month for a three-month term — in 1879 (unless she violated her contract by being immoral or by committing other gross misdemeanors). In 1886, there were 29 boys and 19 girls attending the school. District 3 was dissolved into District 75 on May 17, 1961.

District No. 17 was organized January 3, 1872, near what is now the Fairmont Air Base. The first teacher on record was Miss C. C. Morgan, who taught from 1872 to 1873 for \$20 a month. This district dissolved June 10, 1943.



Photo from Gesine Luethe District No. 17 in the 1930's



Photo from Joy Case District No. 21 (Burress School) in 1954



Photo from Mrs. Warren Lefever District No. 3 about 1890. Left to right: Unidentified man; William Garrett; Henry Heiderstadt, treasurer; Stewart Heiderstadt; John Kennard, moderator; David E. Garrett, director; Charles Smrha, county superintendent.



Photo from Joy Case District No. 3 in February, 1954. This was the only brick schoolhouse in the rural districts.

District No. 21, the Burress school, was organized on February 7, 1872. The first teacher on record was Anna Williams, who taught from 1872 to 1873 for \$10 a month. The Manning Grain Company of Burress purchased the land formerly used by District 21 and has erected two large grain-storage buildings there.

Arbor Day, April 22, 1896, was a gala day celebrated in the Burress school, District 21, by the 16 pupils, 11 girls and 5 boys, with Miss Margaret Haughawout as teacher.

Each pupil signed his name on a sheet of paper as follows: Maggie E. Haughawout (X-boss), Joy Hart, Blanche Chapman, Nettie Ellis, Anna Coe, Florence Burress, Ralph Owens, Ben Tice, Frank Clifford Andrews, Bessie Burress, Mildred Porter, Mabel Wythers, Edna Wythers, Tom Durkan, Mamie Durkan, Lela Burress, and Henry Burress.

On the back of the sheet in the teacher's writing was the following:

- A is for Anna who wears red dresses,
- B is for Bessie who has brown dresses.
- C is for Clifford, who wears long breeches,
- E is for Edna whose hair is her riches.
- F is for Florence, who is so good,
- H is for Henry, who's no time for food.
- J is for Joy, who was Zaring's pet,
- L is for Lela, who studies you bet.
- M is for Maggie, Mildred, Mamie, and Mabel.
- K is for Katie who sat on the table.

N is for Nettie, who knows about the North Pole.
 P is for Pete, who reaches the goal.
 R is for Ralph, whom we call Pete.
 T is for Tom who changed his seat.
 B is for Bessie, who is a sweet girl,
 Things around her are kept in a whirl.
 It is also for Ben, with a dimple in his chin;
 He's a good boy, so he never stays in.

This was made up by the "X-boss" and pupils of the Burress city school.

This piece of paper was put in an empty red-ink bottle and was placed at the root of a tree that was planted that day with an elaborate Arbor Day program. The tree did not withstand so much publicity and the bottle was exhumed the following year. The original paper is still in the possession of one of the pupils.

District No. 68, the Domling school, was organized June 9, 1873. Located 2 miles S and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile W of Burress, it was annexed to Districts 75, 20, and 19 on August 19, 1961. Sopha Lee, the first teacher from 1873 to 1874, received \$20 a month. In most of these schools there was only a three-month term.



District No. 68 in 1920-21

Top row, left to right: Irene Wilson, Alice Votipka, Reuben Voigtlander, Charles Schmidt, Clarence Delaney, Les Stewart. Middle row: Opal Wilson, Mildred Uldrich, Leslie Wilson, Milton Stewart, Lloyd Voigtlander, Bob Dwyer, Fred Votipka. Front row: Mary Dwyer, Lois Wilson, Edna Voigtlander, Clyde Domling, John Votipka, Frank Bures, Ed Votipka, Frank Domling, Howard Voigtlander. The teacher (not in picture) was Tilly Theobald (later Mrs. Harry Brower).

District No. 85, the Sawyer school, was organized September 28, 1886. The first teacher of record was R. J. Sloan (1888), who taught for \$33 a month. This school was annexed to Districts 19 and 68 on March 17, 1953. Frank Betka purchased the school building and moved it to his farm $\frac{3}{4}$ mile W of Burress.



Photo from Joy Case

District No. 85 (Sawyer School) in July, 1953

District No. 94 was organized in 1884. It was dissolved and annexed to District 20 on January 15, 1953.

Some of the early teachers in Madison township were: Miss Nellie Field, later Mrs. John Shickley of Lincoln; Miss Nellie Fitch, later Mrs. Stephen Ambler of Weeping Water; Miss Eulala North, a Southern girl; Miss Clara Martin, later Mrs. T. C. McCleery of Exeter; Simon Stuckey; B. W. Postlewaite; Annie L. Jackson of Fairmont; Mary E. Burnett of Geneva, later Mrs. Will L. Coleman of Geneva; Miss Eva Williams of Burress, later Mrs. Sherman Moss of Grand Junction, Colorado; Miss Flora Carney of Fairmont, later Mrs. Beebe; Clarence A. Zaring of Geneva, later of Basin, Wyoming; Miss Rose Owens of Burress, later Mrs. Robert J. Sloan; Robert J. Sloan of Geneva; Miss Cora Owens of Burress, later Mrs. J. E. Jones of Exeter; and Miss Grace Porter, of Sawyer, later Mrs. Harvey M. Miller of Seward.

FAMILIES

Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Abbott came from Lebanon, Nebraska, to Madison township in 1912 and purchased 80 acres on Sec. 4. The late S. E. Ralston, then postmaster at Geneva, a longtime friend, was instrumental in their making this decision. They resided on this farm until failing health caused them to move to Fairmont, where Mr. Abbott died in 1939. Mrs. Abbott passed away on January 7, 1948. They had one son, Floyd, and a granddaughter, Betty, now Mrs. Robert Schelkopf.

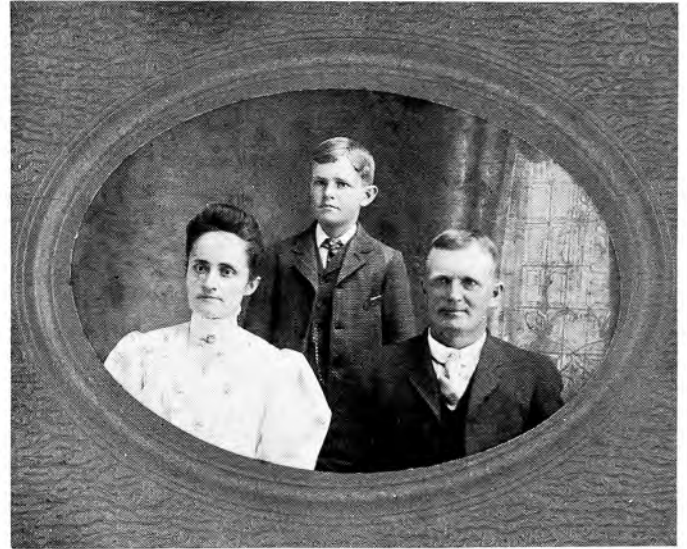


Photo from Mrs. Robert Schelkopf

A. C. Abbott, son Floyd H., and wife, Elizabeth Abbott.

Dr. Chauncey W. Amy and his wife, Dr. Harriette Bottsford Amy, after practicing in Cook County Hospital in Chicago, made their home in Decorah, Iowa. In 1886, the Drs. Amy, with John Williams, a brother-in-law, and John's son Clifton, went to Milligan, where the Williamses opened a drugstore and the Drs. Amy opened an office. Two years later, the Williams family moved to Syracuse, Nebraska. The Amys and their small daughter Abby Louise moved to Burress. Accompanying them was Margaret Dawley.

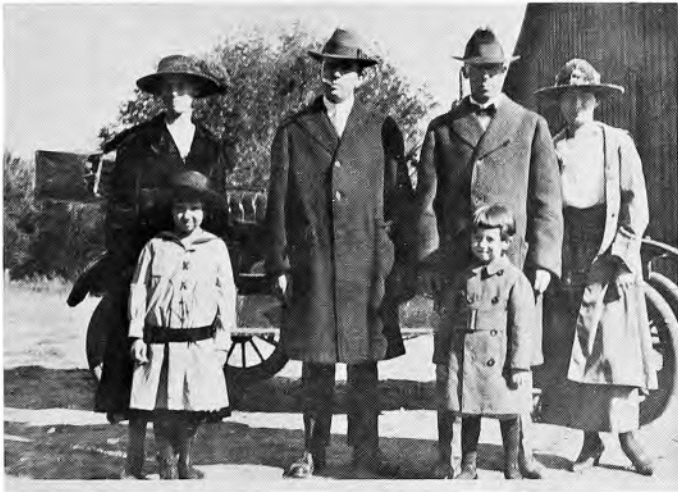
At Burress they rented the John Owens property and opened a drugstore in addition to their medical practice. Mrs. Amy taught in the Burress school for a time and later in the Sawyer school (District 85). In the spring of 1895, the Amys moved back to Decorah, Iowa, where they resumed their medical practice. Their daughter Abby Louise went to Cleveland, Ohio, where she graduated from Western Reserve University. Later she taught in the Cleveland public schools until her retirement, when she went to Whittier, California.

In the fall of 1893, Mrs. Amy, Abby Louise, and Miss Dawley went to Chicago with Mrs. A. L. Hart and her daughters Carrie and Joy to visit the Columbian Exposition, where one memorable event was riding on the famous original Ferris Wheel.

Ernest Fricke and his wife **Anna Klusman** were both born in the province of Hanover, Germany, on the same date, March 16, 1860. Ernest emigrated to America in 1874 at the age of 14 years, with an uncle, who located at Waukegan, Illinois. He went to school in the winter and worked in a dairy which delivered milk daily to Chicago. He returned to Germany at the age of 19, but came back to America after staying there one year. While there, he became interested in Anna Klusman, who came to America in 1882, locating at Elgin, Illinois. They were married on March 22, 1885, and left immediately for Nebraska, where they settled 4 miles S of Fairmont, and became the parents of two daughters and four sons.

Mr. Fricke was very proud of his American citizenship, having attained it in 1879. He passed away in Fairmont on November 21, 1924. Mrs. Fricke followed him in death on March 28, 1936.

—*Caroline E. Plock*



The Harvey Garrett family, about 1920. *On the right:* Harvey and Ida (Theobald) Garrett. *On the left:* Vernon Gaffney (cousin) and his wife Minnie. The children are Kathleen and Harlan Garrett.

Georgia Compher Hart was born near Rainsburg, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, December 18, 1852. She was the second daughter in a family of four daughters and two sons born to Alexander and Barbara Ann Compher. She attended school in a stone schoolhouse in Rainsburg and later at the Alleghany Male and Female Seminary in Rainsburg.

On December 25, 1868, she married in the Masonic Hall at Hollidaysburg to Alex L. Hart of Duncansville, Pennsylvania. The couple lived in Altoona, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Hart was a station agent, and later a clerk in the record offices, of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. When Mr. Hart's doctor recommended that he take up outdoor work, he left this position and came West. In the spring of 1878, he bought railroad land in Madison township, the NW ¼ of Sec. 11, T3, R2W, and settled on the farm where they lived continuously for 62 years.

As soon as their house was built, the family moved in. They put in a small stock of groceries and for a time conducted a store. The stock included McLaughlin coffee, chicory (a coffee substitute), Clark's O.N.T. and Willimantic spool cotton, Fairbanks soap, Ayer's Sarsaparilla, Hoyt's German Cologne, blackstrap molasses, etc. When funds got low and payments on the farm became due, Mr. Hart obtained work at the Charlie Miller bank in Fairmont, making daily two six-mile trips on horseback. He frequently carried two, and sometimes three, neighbor children with him to attend the Fairmont school.

Mr. and Mrs. Hart lived on this farm for 62 years, until his death on October 27, 1940, at the age of 91½ years. Mrs. Hart remained there until the fall of 1941, when she moved to Geneva to make her home with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Case.

Mrs. Hart was a charter member of the Sawyer Presbyterian Church, which was organized by the Rev. J. D. Harvey of Fairmont in 1889. She later transferred to the Fairmont Presbyterian Church, and still later joined the Congregational Church at Geneva. She was a member of the Geneva Tent of Daughters of Veterans of the Civil War, which she joined in 1930. She was also a member of the Geneva Woman's Club and its Nature Study Department, and of the O. K. Kensington of the Order of the Eastern Star.

Mrs. Hart saw the coming of two railroads across the home farm, the Burlington and the Northwestern. In the early years, the railroads created a great fire hazard by not having spark screens in the smokestacks of the engines.

A skating pond, a pony named Boxer, a black-and-tan terrier called Pansy, a tricycle and later a bicycle, and a shiny black Bantam hen and rooster were among the recreational assets of the Hart children and their neighbors. Gingerbread was a popular climax for the skating parties and sleigh rides.

Mrs. Hart celebrated her 100th birthday with a community-wide party at the Congregational Church on December 18, 1952. Her death occurred on February 21, 1953.

The Harts had two daughters, Carrie Esther (Mrs. James Banton), who died August 2, 1926, and Joy (Mrs. Guy Case). The home farm is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Guy Case of Geneva.

Mr. and Mrs. **Oliver Perry Chapman** came to Fillmore County in 1871 and settled on a tree claim, the NW 80 of Sec. 12, T7, R2W. **Lewis Dudley Owens**, **John M. Hiskey**, and **James Hill** came together by covered wagons from Jasper County, Iowa, in November, 1873. Mr. Owens bought a relinquishment on the 80 east of O. P. Chapman. Mr. Hiskey settled on S. E. ¼ of Sec. 10. James Hill located on Sec. 34, T8, R2W.

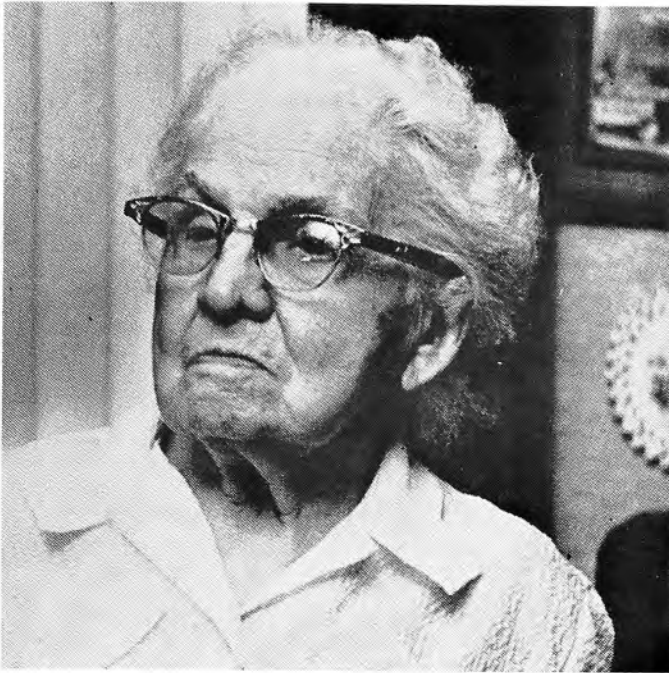
The three men built sod houses on their claims, and on March 12, 1874, Mrs. L. D. Owens, Mrs. J. M. Hiskey, and Mrs. James Hill reached Exeter by Burlington train. At that time the Burlington ran no farther west than Grafton. They reached Exeter about 5 P.M. It was a lovely day and their husbands were there to meet them with wagons. They rode southwest across the prairie on a diagonal road, right into a gloriously beautiful sunset. They all liked the country. They stayed.

In 1881, O. P. Chapman and L. D. Owens bought the SE ¼ of Sec. 11, T7, R2W of the Burlington's land. L. D. Owens traded his 80 adjoining Mr. Chapman's for the Chapman 80 of railroad land and moved to the SE ¼ of Sec. 11, T7, R2W.

Mrs. L. D. Owens's brother, William Totten, homesteaded the Charlie Watson west 80. Their little son Charlie was creeping toward a rattlesnake in the corner of their one-room house, when his mother saw and hastily rescued him. That finished their homesteading; they went back to Iowa. Mr. Owens killed a rattlesnake behind the flour barrel in their one-room sod house. Two of the Owens children were born in the sod house: Claire, born January 31, 1876, and Al, born October 9, 1879. The other children were Frank, Cora (later Mrs. L. E. Jones), and Ralph (nicknamed "Pete").

Mrs. L. D. (Harriet) Owens resided on the farm until 1907, when they moved to Geneva. After the death of her husband, on April 10, 1918, she moved to Exeter in 1923 and made her home with her daughter Claire. Harriet was one of Fillmore County's oldest citizens; she observed her 97th birthday on December 19, 1945. She always enjoyed reading and kept well posted on national, state, and county affairs. She was active around the house until just before her 97th birthday. She passed away on May 6, 1946.

Dr. Claire Estelle Owens and her sister and three brothers attended District 21 near Burress. Claire lost her sight at the age of eight; but, fortunately, the blindness came on so gradually that Mr. and Mrs. Owens could point out colors and the things that would benefit her most after her sight would be gone completely. She was unable to attend school until she enrolled in the School for the Blind at Nebraska City at the age of 16. There she completed her grade-school



Picture from the Nebraska Signal
Dr. Claire Owens (Nov. 28, 1963)

work in two years and high school in four. Music was included throughout the six years. In May, 1898, Claire graduated at the age of 22.

In September, 1898, Claire started teaching music in the Exeter public school and taught there for five years; for three of those years she taught in Fairmont as well. In 1903, she started to study pipe organ at the Nebraska School for the Blind. In 1904, she went to Carson, Iowa, and taught music in four neighboring schools. In 1907, her parents moved from Exeter to Geneva, and Miss Owens then taught music in Geneva and Exeter for five years, commuting by train each day.

In 1917, Miss Owens felt that she should further her education in order to remain self-supporting. In the fall of 1917, she entered the Des Moines (Iowa) School of Osteopathy. She graduated in 1921 and for the next two years practiced osteopathy in Geneva. She then moved to Exeter, where she bought a home. Her brother Al made his home with her.

In 1932, Dr. Owens, an active Democrat, was elected a representative to the Nebraska Legislature and re-elected in 1934, serving in two of the last sessions of the two-house legislature. She had the distinction of being the only blind woman to have served in any state legislature in the United States.

Dr. Owens visited 42 of the 50 states and visited Canada five times. She attended 18 national osteopathy conventions, making the trips alone. At various times she held every office of the American Association of the Workers for the Blind in the Nebraska state association and served for 10 years on the board of the national association. She also served on the school boards of Exeter and Geneva. She was selected for the "Pioneer Woman" of the Fourth District of the Federated Woman's Clubs of Nebraska.

Dr. Owens was the first blind teacher to teach in any public school in the nation. She played the piano for the Sunday School of the Congregational Church at Exeter for many years. Until shortly before her death, she continued to practice osteopathy in her home in Exeter and treated several patients a day. Still active in civic affairs and attending church every Sunday, she celebrated her 90th birthday in January, 1966. She passed away on November 9, 1966.

Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Cooksey and their daughters, Lulu and Maude, arrived by train in Fairmont on April 6, 1880, having come from Dean, Iowa. As soon as possible, they got a team and started for Geneva, which at that time had a population of about 300.

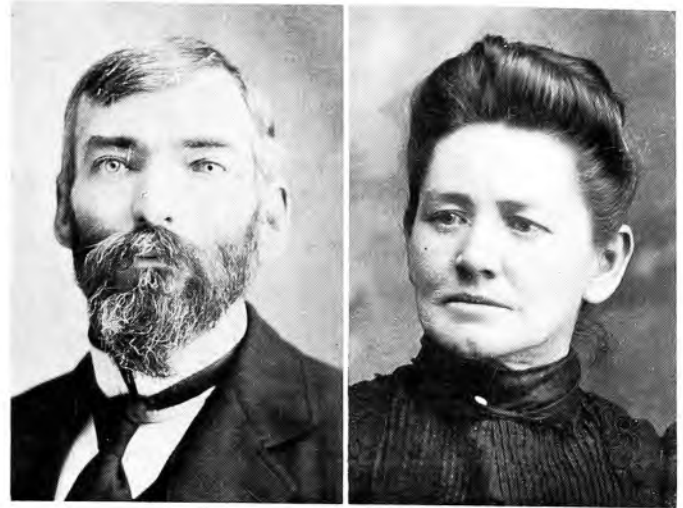


Photo from Mrs. Grace Keleh
Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Cooksey in 1912

Mr. Cooksey was an active man in the business circles of Geneva. He was admitted to the bar as an attorney and was a member of one of the oldest law firms of Geneva, known as Cooksey & Jensen. He was, for nearly six years, postmaster at Geneva, having been first appointed in 1885. His certificate of nomination and appointment, with the post office seal depicting the Pony Express, was signed by President Grover Cleveland, dated February 7, 1888.

Mr. Cooksey was also engaged in the drug business. He also helped to organize the Geneva Iron & Windmill Company and was elected its secretary-treasurer.

The Cookseys moved to Burress in the summer of 1897, where Mr. Cooksey was in the general-merchandise business for nine years. Tom Harvey had a grocery store south of Cooksey's store. Because Mr. Cooksey's health failed, they moved back to Geneva in 1907.

Mr. Cooksey served a term in the Nebraska state Senate, beginning in 1900, and was township assessor at Burress. When his health permitted him to work, he helped Sisler & Hourigan in their store in Geneva. He was a member of the Odd Fellows and the A.O.U.W. He was also a commissary sergeant of Company "G," First Regiment, Nebraska National Guard.

Nine children were born to the Cookseys: Lulu, Maude, Sperry, Earl, Addie, Loren, Grace, Ruth, and Ralph. All but three of the children were born in Geneva. Ruth and Ralph died of diphtheria and scarlet fever in 1904. W. H. Cooksey passed away on March 28, 1912, and his wife followed him in death on July 15, 1933.

Oscar Alfred Ellison, born at Gothenburg, Sweden, January 17, 1847, came to America at the age of 21 and made his home near Chicago. Eliza Jane Iddings was born October 9, 1857, at Fairfield, Illinois. On January 22, 1880, Eliza married Oscar Ellison in Iroquois County, Illinois. While they still lived in Illinois, two children were born to them; in 1883, they moved to Ulysses, Nebraska, where the rest of their children were born. In 1903, they moved to a farm 5 miles NE of Geneva, which they bought from Joe Roesler. Mr. Ellison died on May 13, 1925; his wife Eliza passed away on January 17, 1948. Both were laid to rest in the Geneva cemetery. One of their sons, Roy, died in 1909, and their son Otto and their daughter Nellie passed away in 1958. Another daughter died in infancy. The remaining children were Alfred, Ernest, Mabel, and Melvin.

Ernest and his family moved to the Oscar Ellison farm after Melvin and his family moved to Geneva in 1926. Later, Ernest also moved to Geneva, and his son Ralph and his wife Elsie (Worley) moved to the farm, where they remained until 1948, when they moved to York County.

Roscoe Schlecty and his wife Mabel (Ellison) Schlecty, with their family, came from Lincoln, Nebraska, to take over the Geneva General Hospital in 1942. They operated the



Photo from Mrs. Melvin Ellison

Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Ellison, their home, and their dog "Buster" in the spring of 1917.

hospital until 1946, when they moved to Kansas. While in Geneva, the Schlectys set out the pin oak trees along the sidewalk leading from the street to the hospital.

Melvin Ellison and Bessie Kennard were married in 1915. Both were pupils in District 3 school, northeast of Geneva, in 1904 and 1905. Melvin and Bessie lived on the home farm until 1926, when they bought a house and lot from Mr. and Mrs. Lang in Geneva, on what is now the corner of U. S. 81 and G Street. Melvin moved the house to the back of the lot and built a garage and filling station, which he operated for more than 30 years until his son Orval took over.

David E. Garrett was born in Shelby County, Indiana, March 1, 1862. While he was still a small boy, his parents moved to Michigan, where he attended school near Dailey, Michigan.

In 1880, David Garrett, with his father and his brother Sam, came to Fillmore County and bought railroad land located on the SW corner of Sec. 19, Madison township. Their land adjoined that of William Garrett, a brother of Dave, who had come out in 1875. After purchasing their land in 1880, they built a house and lived there until 1885, when they returned to Michigan.

On September 3, 1886, David Garrett married Sarah McPherson in Niles, Michigan. Mr. Garrett then operated a



Photo from Mrs. Warren Lefever

Five generations of the David Garrett family (1960). Kathleen (Mrs. Jesse) Richards, daughter of Harvey Garrett, holding Steven, son of Gary Richards (at left), David E. Garrett, and son Harvey B. Garrett.

grist mill near Dailey until 1891, when he and his wife, with their two sons Harvey and Hugh, returned to Fillmore County. Here they purchased land on the NE corner of Sec. 19 and built their home and made improvements on their farm. Their youngest son, John, was born in Fillmore County.

Mr. and Mrs. Garrett left the farm in 1916 and moved to Geneva, where they lived the remainder of their lives. Sarah Garrett died April 23, 1956, at the age of 92; David Garrett passed away on January 6, 1961, at the age of 98 years.

David Garrett was known as a kind and patient man, never too busy to lend a helping hand. He was always active in community affairs. While on the farm, he served on the rural school board, and after moving to Geneva, he served on the city council and as township assessor. He was one of the founders of the local telephone company.

Extract from the minutes of the Elm Street Telephone Company:

"Geneva, Nebraska, November 1, 1907, at a called meeting, held at the residence of D. E. Garrett for the purpose of organizing a telephone company, F. C. Tatro was elected temporary chairman and D. E. Garrett temporary secretary.

"On motion, the following officers were elected by acclamation: F. C. Tatro, president; W. H. Garrett, vice-president; L. P. Loghry, treasurer; and D. E. Garrett, secretary.

"The bylaws were then read and adopted as read; moved and carried that this company be known as the Elm Street Telephone Company.

"On motion, the meeting was adjourned subject to call of secretary.

"D. E. Garrett, secretary"

William H. Garrett, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Garrett, was born September 19, 1852, in Franklin County, Indiana. While he was young, his parents moved from Indiana to Cass County, Michigan. His mother passed away in 1874, and after her death William went to Chicago, where he spent the winter working in a wagon factory.

In the spring of 1875, William came to Fillmore County, where he purchased 160 acres of railroad land for \$8 an acre. This farm was the SE ¼ of Sec. 19, T7, R2W, Madison. While building a two-room house and making other improvements, he boarded with the James Loghrys. There he met his future wife, Louisa Loghry; they were married on October 28, 1877.



Photo from Mrs. Hazel Crom

The William Garrett family (November 2, 1905).

Front row, left to right: William Garrett (age 6), Edward James (age 5). Second row: William H. Crawford, William H. Garrett, Louisa (Mrs. William) Garrett, Julia (Mrs. William) Crawford with daughter Louise. Third row: John W. James, Dora Garrett James, Harry Garrett, Thirza (Mrs. Harry) Garrett, John Voigtlander, Ada (Mrs. John) Voigtlander. Back row: Hazel Garrett (Crom), Helen Garrett (McMahan), Amy Garrett (Barnes).

William and Louisa Garrett experienced the usual hardships of all the pioneers, including blizzards, grasshoppers, droughts, etc. His first farming was done with oxen. In 1886, he added a room to the original two-room house; later, he added four more rooms, two downstairs and two up.

Mr. Garrett farmed and raised cattle and hogs. When his eldest son, Harry, married in 1905, Mr. Garrett built a house just west of the home place and he and Harry farmed together. Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were the parents of eight children: Julia, Dora, Harry, Ada, Nellie, Amy, Hazel, and William ("Pete").

Mr. and Mrs. Garrett remained on this farm all their married life. Louisa Garrett died November 5, 1918, and William on November 23, 1926.

Adam Huston was born at Richland Center, Indiana, October 9, 1851, to William and Nancy (Gables) Huston. He came to Nebraska in the spring of 1871 with the Vanslyke families. He took an 80-acre homestead 3 miles N of Geneva (SW $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 18, T7, R2W) in 1872. Adam could homestead only 80 acres because he and Daniel Vanslyke took jointly an 80-acre tree claim; the tree claim was the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 24, T7, R3W.

He hauled lumber from Lincoln by team and wagon to build his home and his farm buildings. On October 5, 1875, he was married to Helen Loghry at the home of the bride's parents by Judge William Blain.



Photo from Vera Lovegrove
Wedding picture of Adam Huston and Helen (Loghry) (Oct. 5, 1873)

Helen Loghry was a pioneer schoolteacher, having taught in District 2, Fillmore County for two terms. She taught a three-month term (April, May, and June) in 1872 and a three-month term in 1873, at a salary of \$12 a month. The following comment appears in the records of the county superintendent:

"Friday, June 28, A.M. 1872
"Visited school in District No. 2. Taught by Miss

Helen Loghry in a dugout. Twelve pupils present. School doing first rate.

John A. Dempster, County Superintendent."

Mr. and Mrs. Adam Huston lived on this homestead all of their married life and were the parents of seven children: Hugh, James, A. D., Ella (Mrs. Charles Pittard), Hattie (Mrs. Sam Lash), Pearl (Mrs. Prentice Murr), and Frank Loghry. They also raised a nephew, Clarence Loghry, from infancy.

They endured the many hardships and experiences of the pioneers of their day. Helen told of the many times she fed roving Indians, dealt with wandering gypsies, and kept many a traveler overnight in her home. She was a beautiful seamstress and, like all the pioneer women, did all the sewing for her family as well as piecing many lovely quilts. All who knew her can remember the flower bed south and west of the house, which was her pride and joy. During the garden season, she never failed to pick a bouquet of flowers for her visitors.

Adam Huston passed away at his home on June 21, 1923, at the age of 71 years. His wife Helen continued to live on the farm and rounded out 64 years there. In her later years, she spent the winters with her children. In 1938, she finally closed her home and went to live with her daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pittard, in Geneva township. She passed away there on January 6, 1940, at the age of 85 years.

The Huston farm is presently owned by Miss Anna Renken.

John S. Kennard was born in 1850 in Huron County, Ontario, Canada, near Toronto. When he was 10, his parents moved to Sterling, Illinois, and in 1878, to Exeter, Nebraska. In 1880, he was married to Elizabeth C. Given at Fairmont. Elizabeth was born in 1858 in West Virginia and moved with her parents to Morrison, Illinois, and later to Exeter, Nebraska. John and Elizabeth met after their parents settled near Exeter — Elizabeth's family, just west of Exeter, and John's 6 miles SE of Exeter, in Liberty township. After they were married, they settled on a farm adjoining that of John's father.

Money was scarce and there was much work to be done. Sod was used for their house and they used boards for the floor and roof. The walls were whitewashed on the inside. Later, they built a frame summer kitchen across one end of the house, and put up a partition to separate the kitchen and living room from the bedroom. A frame barn was built and a well was dug. A windmill near the well once had its mill wheel blown off during a windstorm. It was found within a few feet of the sod wall, resting on a wash boiler



Photo from Mrs. Melvin Ellison
John S. Kennard and family, about 1902. Front row, left to right: Elizabeth (Mrs. John) Kennard, Bessie, J. S. Kennard, and Maude. Back row: Arthur, Effie.

that had been standing under the eaves to catch rain water. On one occasion, a cow broke out of the pasture during the night, came to the house, looked in through the low glass window, and decided that the corner of the sod shanty would be a good place to rub her neck. Around and around that corner she rubbed until the family awakened and drove her away.

Five children were born in the sod house. Twin girls were born in the frame house, built in 1891.

Mr. Kennard passed away December 12, 1934, in Seward, Nebraska. Mrs. Kennard passed away April 24, 1947. Both were laid to rest in the Exeter cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. **William Kinrade** were both natives of the Isle of Man. Mrs. Kinrade was 14 when her people brought her to America; they were seven weeks crossing the ocean. When the wind waved the tall bluestem grass that covered the prairies in the late seventies, Mrs. Kinrade would lie down and cover her eyes. The sight made her seasick; she said that she had nearly died of seasickness when they crossed the ocean.

The Kinrades came here from Kewanee, Illinois. William Kinrade was born in 1835 and died in 1913; his wife, Margaret, was born in 1842 and died in 1927. Their family consisted of two sons, Henry (1869-1904) and William (1867-1948), and three daughters; Ella Kinrade married Joseph McDonald, who died July 16, 1916; she survived him and died on June 13, 1947. Anna Kinrade married Hezekiah Dennis, she passed away in 1951; Ida Kinrade married Bert Tice; she died in October, 1943.

Hiram Lathrop, a Civil War veteran, took a homestead on Sec. 26. While serving in Company "F," Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, he was wounded and his mind was affected. He lived the life of a hermit in a dugout in a secluded spot at the corner about ¼ mile N of what is now known as the Henry Schmidt farm. Once in a while he would sell a load of sand. He was born on October 24, 1839, and died on February 4, 1896.

Le Roy P. Loghry was born in Branch County, Michigan, December 17, 1856, and came to Fillmore County in 1871. His father, James F. Loghry, a Civil War veteran, in 1870 had homesteaded 2 miles N of Geneva on the SE ¼ of Sec. 13, later known as the John Larson place. Ida Platt, who became Mrs. Loghry, was born in Williams County, Ohio, July 28, 1859; she and her parents came to Nebraska in 1874. Older residents of Geneva will remember the Platt House, one of the first hotels in Geneva, owned by her father, J. T. Platt, and located on the west side of the courthouse square.

Mr. Loghry and Miss Platt were married at York on February 25, 1880. In November of the same year, they drove to Furnas County in a lumber wagon and settled on a homestead. They returned to Fillmore County in 1886 and lived on the Platt farm 3½ miles NE of Geneva; after the death of



Photo from Mrs. Warren Lefever
Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Loghry (about 1904)

Mrs. Loghry's parents, the farm was purchased by Mr. Loghry. This place was their home until 1916, when they moved into Geneva.

On February 25, 1935, Mr. and Mrs. Loghry were surprised by a group of their neighbors who came to help them celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary. At the same time, Jacob Kirst celebrated his 86th birthday. Those present were Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kirst, Mr. and Mrs. John Stephenson, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Russell, Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Bradley, and Mr. and Mrs. David E. Garrett.

Mr. and Mrs. Loghry continued to reside in Geneva until the combined forces of age and increasing illness impelled them to end their lives together (as they had lived for 59 years) on June 8, 1939.

Mrs. Minnie Evans, formerly Minnie Platt, Mrs. Loghry's twin sister, was accidentally killed by a Northwestern train near the Loghry home. The *Signal* for April 30, 1895, reported:

Tuesday afternoon about 20 minutes past 4 o'clock, the regular eastbound Elkhorn freight train, when about 2 miles from town, ran over and killed Mrs. Minnie Evans, a deaf lady who was walking on the track from town towards home. The engineer noticed her when about ¾ of a mile from her and when about ¼ of a mile from her gave the alarm whistle, and, she not seeming to notice this, he immediately gave the danger whistle, at the same time reversing his engine and applying the air brakes.

He sounded the danger whistle continuously, but the lady being absolutely deaf the warning was in vain and as the train had been running at about the rate of 35 miles an hour it was impossible to stop it until the engine and five cars had passed over her body.

When struck by the train, Mrs. Evans was within a short distance of her home, and her brother-in-law, L. P. Loghry, with whom she resided, heard the whistle and observed her danger but too late to give her any warning and he was an eye-witness to the frightful accident.

Nathaniel McCalla, a son of James N. and Sarah (Mothershead) McCalla, was born in Scott County, Kentucky, in 1827. After James died there, about 1834, Sarah McCalla and her children—Joseph, Nathaniel, and Nancy—moved to Marion County, Indiana. There Sarah later married John Chinn (the Chinn family was related to Mary Todd Lincoln). After John Chinn's death, Sarah came West with her daughter Nancy and her son-in-law William H. Rhea (see Ray).

Nathaniel married Martha J. Smith at Indianapolis on August 9, 1848, and settled for some time in Iowa. He entered the Union Army from Johnson County, Iowa, and served as a captain¹ in the Civil War, later returning to Polk County, Iowa. Some time before 1871, Nathaniel brought his family to Fillmore County and homesteaded on the NE ¼ of Sec. 30, T7N, R3W. As related elsewhere (see Early History), it was in his dugout that the first election in the county was held, and his teen-age daughter, Emma, was responsible for the naming of Geneva, after one of their former places of residence, Geneva, Illinois.

Nathaniel later lived for a time in Clay County, and died on April 30, 1887, in Pueblo County, Colorado.

—Mrs. Clyde L. Davis

John and Caroline Niehaus—"Grandpa" and "Grandma" to everybody—came from Wisconsin in 1882. They lived a mile north of the Simon Carney family. They had four sons, Will, John, Lewis, and George. Will was grain buyer at Sawyer, John was postmaster there, and Lewis and George were farmers. According to the *Nebraska Signal*:

On Thursday, December 19, 1882, the friends of Mr. and Mrs. K. Tutty, numbering about 60, met together at their residence to witness the marriage of their daughter Aggie to Mr. Lewis Niehaus. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. R. G. Adams at 12 o'clock, after which they retired to the table, which was supplied with all the delicacies of the season and to which all did ample justice.

A partial list of the presents received by the couple may perhaps be taken as typical for weddings of the time: "Linen tablecloth and towels, bedspread, caster and set of tumblers, glass set, vase, goblets, silver butter knife, silver knife and sugar shell, silver card receiver, dinner caster, lamps, silver tablespoons, work box, and rug."

¹All the early Fillmore County sources refer to him consistently as "Colonel" McCalla; there is no way of telling whether this title may have come from a battlefield promotion or whether it represents the kind of "honorary" upgrading not uncommon among early settlers.

Madison Township Homestead Map

James H. Little			Robert H. Woodward			Alvin Adkins			John C. Eldredge			Elind Taylor			William H. Simpton			Blairus Kaath														
C. C. Chapin			James S. Harris						William H. Groves et al			Alonso R. Gleason			Simon Carney			Alfred Corp														
			Seth Woodward			Charles Stare						Christian Waigamood			John W. Rigge			Jubanna Schneider			Oliver P. Chapman			Lewis D. Owens			Ozro T. Wheeler					
			Thomas Morgan									Wm. Tottem			Wm. Waite, Jr.			John M. Hussey						Edward Cornwell			Frank E. Andrews					
David F. Karr			T. W. Grist			John R. Ballard												Robert G. Williams			Samuel Arnold											
John Merrill			Thomas H. Earl						School Land			16			15			William B. Shanklin			William G. Hanes			William H. Walker								
Adam Huston			Edward A. Mercer																													
			Clark B. Green			Adolph Fullgrabe						John Burnett			Donald T. McCall									Edmund D. Place			Giles McClaffin					
												H. F. Tallmadge																				
			William Merrill			Timothy Donovan			William H. Blain						William D. Barnes			Titus Drake						Warren C. Massey			John Wangelin			John Shade		
																		Linus G. Stewart														
Jason J. Morrill			James F. Morrill			Nathaniel McCalla						Orlando Porter			Andrew Burnett						Hiram Lathrop			Robert Sommer			George Walker					
Adoniram J. Beals			Asael S. Glass									Noah Brittenham			Peter Pearson			Tom Lancaster						George L. Purdy			Edmund D. Place					
			B. F. Subitt			Nancy Ray									Fanny S. Krieg			Julius Voigtlander			Frederick Elid											
						Nancy Blain			Aaron M. Davis												Jacob Kirt											
			Mary Day			Albert T. Johnson									Theodore Voigtlander			Major D. Williams									School Land					

Lewis Niehaus died on March 6, 1911; his widow Aggie passed away on February 11, 1960.

Mr. and Mrs. **Andrew J. Porter** and their children — Grace, George, Harry, and Ethel — came in a covered wagon from Dawson County, Nebraska, to Madison township in the late summer of 1876. They were originally from Pennsylvania. They lived the first year on the Stuckey farm ½ mile N of the Simon Carney farm. (The Carney home was where you got the big red Jonathan apples and the girls made chocolate fudge in big, oven-sized pans.) During that year Mr. Porter bought railroad land for the farm which became their home for many years and where their youngest child, Mildred, was born in July, 1888. In 1878, diphtheria took the lives of Harry and Ethel Porter, Lottie Williams, and Louie Stuckey, a son of Joe and Lizzie Stuckey.

Mr. Porter taught school for one winter in the Thompson district north of Madison township for \$35 a month, a sum which kept his family from starving. Mr. Porter and Mr. Stuckey felt the need for religious life in the community and

organized a Sunday school in the schoolhouse across the road northeast of Mrs. Schneider's home. Sometimes itinerant preachers came along and held services. Once, two came at the same time. One couldn't read, and one couldn't preach, so they took turns. Sometimes preachers from other towns came. Mr. Porter served for many years as postmaster at Sawyer. He passed away in 1917, and Mrs. Porter in 1938.

About 1890, the Sawyer church was built from donations and for a number of years was the center of religious life. Mr. Porter was superintendent of the Sunday school and Joy Hart was secretary. On December 11, 1892, the members of the congregation were surprised when, at the close of the sermon, the minister announced that all were invited to remain seated and witness a wedding. The organist, Mrs. B. A. Merritt, played "Here Comes the Bride" as the bridal couple — Frank M. Owens, son of Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Owens, and Miss Eleanor Holmes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Holmes — marched up the aisle and took their vows.

The Sawyer church was Presbyterian and the Burress

church was Methodist; but that made little difference, because all who could attended Christian Endeavor in the afternoon at Sawyer, and Epworth League in the evening at Burress.

Helmuth F. Putlitz was an old and honored citizen of Madison township. For two terms (1891-1899) he was clerk of the district court. He lived at Geneva and his circle of acquaintances included most of the county. Those who knew him well had profound respect for his high personal character and acknowledged integrity.

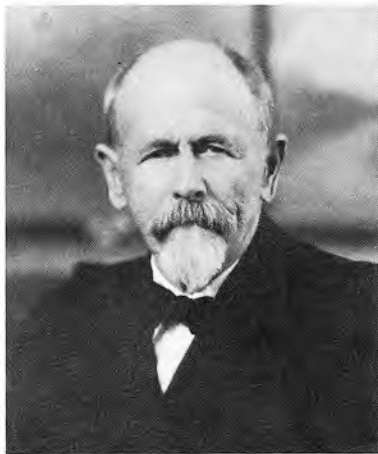


Photo from Mrs. Charles F. Tous
H. F. Putlitz

Mr. Putlitz was born on March 8, 1852, in the Prussian province of Silesia. His parents, Franz and Augusta O. (Mast) von Putlitz, were also Silesian born and reared. His father, a member of the German nobility, served for many years in the Prussian army and rose from a subordinate position to the rank of major. Finally placed on the retired list, he spent his last years as an honored veteran of the struggles that raised his own country to the front rank among the German states.

Helmuth Putlitz spent his childhood and youth in his native town, where he was liberally educated, both in the village school and in a military establishment, where he was prepared for the life of a soldier. But his tastes did not lie in that direction, and at the age of 19, he shipped aboard a merchant vessel, "before the mast," and went to sea as an able-bodied seaman. His first voyage was a long and disastrous one, which took him to the Sandwich Islands. While rounding Cape Horn, the ship encountered such cold weather as to cause injury to many of the sailors. Mr. Putlitz froze one of his hands so seriously that he never recovered its perfect use. This misfortune was enough to convince him that seafaring was far from the ideal life; and when a later voyage brought him to New York City, his long-cherished desire to settle in America induced him to abandon his ship.

He remained in New York for about a year, experiencing considerable amounts of privation and hardship. As soon as he could do so, he moved on westward as far as Monmouth, Illinois, and spent two years working for farmers around there. By diligence and thrift, he reached a position where he could think about a farm for himself. He came on West, and found a desirable location in Fillmore County. He made his preliminary exploration in the fall of 1874, and in the following year he settled permanently on a quarter-section of railroad land in Madison township. Although this was wild prairie when it came into his hands, years of unflagging labor turned it into a beautiful and well-kept farm with solid and substantial improvements.

In 1875, he married Miss Wilhelmina Heiderstadt, the daughter of Frederick and Martha (McClintock) Heiderstadt. She was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where her parents lived for a number of years before becoming early settlers of Fillmore County. Her father was of German extraction; her mother had been born in Carew, Ireland. Mr. and Mrs. Putlitz had five children: Francis F., Helmuth W., Martha, Harry, and Venda.

Mr. Putlitz was for many years a prominent Democrat

and influential in the party's councils in the county; but in later years he embraced and strongly supported the principles of the Populist party. In 1886, he was a candidate for representative in the Nebraska legislature; after a spirited contest, he was defeated, though his vote exceeded that of any other candidate on his ticket. In 1891, he was nominated by the Populists for clerk of the district court, and was endorsed by the Democrats. He was elected by a majority of 125 in a county which up to then had been largely Republican. In 1895, he was renominated and re-elected to the same position, this time by a considerably larger majority, and served until 1899.

He was a member of the Knights of Pythias and the Ancient Order of United Workmen. He and his wife were regular attendants of the Episcopal church, of which she was a member. They held a good place in the affairs of the community and took a full share in its social and benevolent activities.

The *Nebraska Signal* for December 10, 1925, reported:

On November 28, 1875, on a farm three miles east of Geneva, occurred the double wedding of Charles Meyer and H. F. Putlitz, the brides being the Misses Martha and Wilhelmina Heiderstadt. The Meyer and Putlitz families made their homes in Fillmore County continuously since that time, with the exception of about a year, when Mr. and Mrs. Putlitz lived in South Omaha.

On Thanksgiving Day, the double Golden Wedding anniversary was celebrated at the spacious and well-appointed home of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Putlitz in Fairmont, with a dinner in every way appropriate to the occasion. The event was a most happy one. A wide circle of friends in Fillmore County and elsewhere extend sincere congratulations to the honored couples.

William H. Ray (originally spelled *Rhea*) was born near Knoxville, Tennessee, on April 17, 1820. On June 21, 1846, at Indianapolis, he married Nancy McCalla (born January 31, 1829, in Scott County, Kentucky). William, along with an older brother, was apprenticed to a tanner in Tennessee and followed this trade through his lifetime, as well as being a farmer.



Photos from Marie Ray Davis
Sarah Mothershead McCalla Chinn, mother of Nancy, Nathaniel, and Joseph McCalla; Nancy McCalla Ray Blain; William Bane Ray; Leticia Leora Layton, wife of William Bane Ray.

William Ray brought his wife and his mother-in-law, Sarah McCalla, to Fillmore County in 1872 and made his application for a land patent northeast of Geneva—the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 32—on March 6, 1872. The house they erected on this homestead was of sod, 14'x24', with one door and three windows. They had four children: Nathaniel, John Peter, George, and William Bane Ray. William Bane Ray married Leticia Layton, daughter of William and Phoebe Merrill Layton. Their children were: Charlotte Ray Mitchel, Oregon; Von Rob (died when about 9 months old); Betty Ray Davis, Oregon; and Bernice Ray Lincoln Hamilton.

William Ray died on July 30, 1875, and is said to have been the first man buried in the Geneva cemetery. Family tradition reports that he was a very large man, and his casket was so large that they had to remove window casings to take his body from the house. Sarah McCalla died at Geneva on December 19, 1876, and is buried near William Ray.

Nancy McCalla married Judge William H. Blain on November 27, 1879. She died on August 7, 1911, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is buried in Geneva beside the judge.

—Mrs. Clyde L. Davis

John H. B. Renken, born in 1854, migrated from Aurich, Hanover, Germany, to Woodford County, Illinois, just as did Kate Vossler, born in 1866. In 1882, both families moved to Kramer, Nebraska. After John and Kate's marriage on February 24, 1888, they lived on a farm near Dorchester. In 1901, they moved to District 17, Madison township (N ½ of SW ¼, Sec. 18).



Photo from Emma Renken

Wedding picture of John and Kate Renken, February, 24, 1888.

In 1936, Mr. Renken passed away on this farm, and Mrs. Renken passed away in Geneva in 1954. Their three daughters—Anna, Tena, and Emma—remained in Fillmore County and still own the original farmstead purchased in 1901.

Simeon Sawyer was born in Lacon, Illinois, on January 27, 1845. Frances Josephine Devalon was born in Henry, Illinois, on February 28, 1854. Mr. Sawyer, a farmer, and Miss Devalon, a schoolteacher, were married April 7, 1874. On April 12, they left for Nebraska and settled on a farm 3½ miles SE of Fairmont. For several years, Mr. Sawyer farmed and raised stock. He then moved to Fairmont to serve as postmaster. After two years, he was succeeded by John Welch of Fillmore Mills. Mr. Sawyer then went into the implement business with Elmer J. Miller, formerly of Illinois. After that, he decided to take up a homestead and moved to the Sand Hills of Wheeler County, near Bartlett, Nebraska, where he farmed and raised stock. Upon retiring, the Sawyers moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, in April, 1917. The Sawyers celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary at the home of their daughter Eliza (Mrs. William Dumond) on April 7, 1929. Mr. Sawyer passed away at 1625 South Street, Lincoln, on April 12, 1930; Mrs. Sawyer died November 13, 1948.

Seven children were born to the Sawyers: Lucy Eva (Mrs. Le Clare Searles), Frances Elizabeth, Eliza Josephine (Mrs. William Dumond), Mary Margaret (Mrs. William Douglas), Harlan Lemuel, Jennie Gail (who died in infancy), and Russell Devalon Sawyer.

The village of Sawyer was named for Simeon Sawyer.



Photo from Mrs. J. H. Keenan

Simeon Sawyer and family, about 1900. Back row, left to right: Lucy Sawyer (Searles), Frances Sawyer, Eliza Sawyer (Dumond), Mary Sawyer (Brown). Front row: Simeon Sawyer, Harlan, Russell, Frances Devalon Sawyer

Mrs. Etta Schroder came to Nebraska in the early 1870's, at the age of 14, with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. **Henry Schneider**, from Buffalo, Iowa. They came in a covered wagon and stopped to camp for the night with some former friends who had already settled here. They intended to go on to Clay Center, but these friends—four or five families—persuaded them to stop and settle in Fillmore County.

There were families all around them, many from Pennsylvania—named Simpson, Riggs, Hiskey—mostly men who had taken up homestead claims after the Civil War. They found the families that had come on ahead of them so hospitable and so willing to lend a helping hand that they decided to settle here.

In 1872, Henry Schneider homesteaded a piece of land 4½ miles SE of Fairmont. He bought the crop—corn, oats, etc.—and the right for \$90. Mr. Schneider and another neighbor, who had also homesteaded and had built a sod stable for his horses but no house for himself, traveled with several others to Lincoln to record the deed.

The land upon which the town of Sawyer was later built was given by the Schneiders. The post office was then called Sawyer after Simeon Sawyer, the Fairmont postmaster. When the Northwestern R.R. came through, the station was named Buckston. Mr. Schneider built a store with living quarters overhead. The town also had a grain elevator, a railroad depot station house, a schoolhouse, a coal business, a blacksmith shop, and cattle-loading facilities. The Sawyer (Buckston) railway station was later purchased by the Geneva Milling Company, which moved it to Geneva, where it is still used as a warehouse.

Sunday School and church were held in the schoolhouse. In fact, the early settlers' first projects were planting trees and building schoolhouses, for the land was barren except for a few scattered rose bushes—wild, of course. Later, a church (Presbyterian) was built from donations and supplied by a minister from Fairmont, the nearest town. Services were always well attended.

The Burlington Railroad was completed as far west as Fairmont in 1871. Etta Schneider, as a young girl, became a waitress at the Gaylord Hotel, located one block south of the present depot, where it was not unusual to feed as many as 60 persons at one meal.

In 1874, William Schroder came from Illinois and bought railroad land, being given 10 years to pay up on it. It was barren land, with only one wild rose bush on it. It took him an entire year to turn the sod on 80 acres. Later, he married Etta Schneider (December 31, 1875), and they established their home here. The farm is now tenanted by Leo Bures. All the buildings on this farm were built by Mr. and Mrs. Schroder and are still in use, though they have been modernized.

The schoolhouse, which stood near the Schneider home, was later moved to Burress, which was named for J. Q. Burress, who owned the land when the town site was located. The old town house of Madison township was located in the NE corner of Sec. 21, later known as the Oscar Ellison home. The Sawyer church was moved to District 17, located one mile E and 2½ miles S of Fairmont, practically in the middle of what later became the Fairmont Air Base. When the Air Base took over the land, the structure was moved to Friend, where it was again used as a church. The Air Base took out approximately 2,000 acres of Madison township land. Now, although deactivated as a U.S. Air Force base, its remaining facilities, including a total of 160 acres in concrete runways and aprons, remain in use, under the control of the Nebraska State Department of Aeronautics.

William Schroder passed away on June 28, 1917. Mrs. Etta Schroder died on February 6, 1957, at the age of 98 years, 2 months, and 27 days. At the time of her death she was Geneva's oldest citizen.

John Shade was born in Germany in 1831; his wife, Sophia Wangelin, was born there in 1837. Both came to America in 1861. They were united in marriage at Princeton, Illinois, May 28, 1863. In 1872, they came to Nebraska and took a homestead in Madison township, (E ½ of SE ¼, Sec.

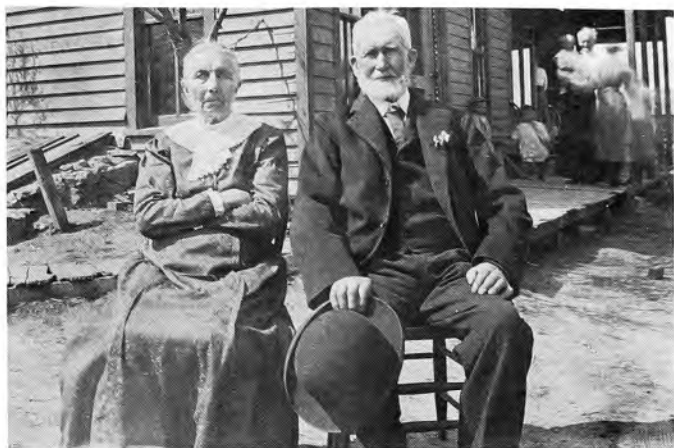


Photo from Mrs. Harold Rocole
Golden wedding observance of Mr. and Mrs. John Shade, taken April 27, 1913, in Burress. Lady in background is Mrs. Jacob Kirst.

24). Twelve children were born to them. About 1893, they sold their farm and moved to Burress, where they kept a store and the post office for several years.

On Sunday, April 27, 1913, Mr. and Mrs. Shade celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at their home in Burress. Old friends and neighbors to the number of 81 sat down to dinner with them. They were presented with a purse of \$23 as a token of esteem.

Mrs. Shade died in 1914 and her husband in 1917. Of their 12 children, six are buried next to their parents, all having died at an early age in the year 1879, apparently in a diptheria epidemic.

This account is taken from a letter written to Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Russell of Geneva on February 28, 1929, by L. G. Stewart, then a resident of Tujunga, California.

"A poor kid 23 years of age living in Chicago lost his father. Having no home, and having his mother to provide for, he took Horace Greeley's advice to come West.

"I put a cover on my wagon and on the 16th day of February, 1870, I started. All I knew was to keep the feed box on the east end of the wagon. I crossed the Mississippi on ice and the Missouri on a ferry boat. I arrived on Turkey Creek April 1, 1870.

"I built a dugout and wrote my mother to leave Chicago the 9th of May. I met her at Ashland, then the end of the Burlington & Missouri Railroad track. My brother Dwight came with her. He was not old enough then to take a claim, but in 1872, we went buffalo hunting and he took a claim on Prairie Dog Creek in Harlan County.

"My brother had brought me half a bushel of walnuts. I planted them and when the trees were about 15 years old I cut out forks and made two chairs. The first chairs mother had in the dugout were made of blocks sawed from cottonwood logs with pegs driven in them for legs. Bedsteads were made of small poles set on forks and we filled the ticks with last year's grass. All I bought was stock boards for table and door and two-by-sixes for door and window frames.

"In regard to Madison township, I took the first claim and built the first house. Beaver Crossing was the post office and the nearest store, and 14 miles north to the Blue River was the nearest blacksmith shop.

"On my way out, I always got my team in a barn and slept in the wagon except for two nights when I got a warm breakfast. I ate frozen chuck out of the grub box because I did not have the price of warm meals.

"I am glad I did not have to witness the sale of our things after being the first settler within 10 miles of where Geneva now is. It was a hard blow on this old pioneer."

Mr. and Mrs. **Frank C. Tatro** came to Madison township from Clay Center, where Mr. Tatro had been working nights for the Orr Brothers Flour Mill. They decided that they would like to make their home on a farm; and in the county paper they found advertised for sale 40 acres, owned by F. B. Donisthorpe, 3 miles N and one mile E of Geneva. Mr. and Mrs. Tatro came over and bought the 40 acres on February 11, 1900. The buildings were in poor shape but could be repaired. They moved here on February 26, 1900. The roads were frozen and rough. The sun shone and made the going worse. There were not many homes on the road to their new place. A good neighbor with a team and wagon brought their household goods. They got to the place at 8:30 p.m. and found the kitchen door open and snow inside.



Photo from Mrs. Cecil Richards
Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Tatro and family (taken December 25, 1930).
Back row, left to right: Duane, Donna, Donald, Dorothy, and Rozella.

They built their one-story house in May, 1900. They had good years and bad ones, drouths and windstorms. They bought the W 40 of their quarter on April 16, 1908, and the N 80 on September 1, 1916. They had the first telephone in the community, which was installed on December 20, 1923.

As the years went by, Mr. Tatro became successful in raising pure-bred hogs, attending State Fairs and winning his share of prizes and several silver trophies. He was one of the first farmers to substitute alfalfa for the red clover and timothy of that day. He seeded his first field of alfalfa in the spring of 1908. It proved to be a crop relished by practically every creature on the farm—cattle, horses, hogs, sheep, and even chickens—and produced good returns. Eventually it came to be widely sown and under right conditions produced three crops of hay and feed through the growing season. It also proved to be a crop that restored fertility to land that had been long used for producing grain crops. Further, it enabled the farmer to care for a more diversified line of livestock and made the dairy business more worth while for those who raised or milked cows.

On September 23, 1933, Mr. and Mrs. Tatro bought the David Garrett farm adjoining their farm on the south in Sec. 19. This place is now owned by Duane Tatro, the older son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Tatro. Duane and his wife built a modern house and made many other improvements. A beautiful yard, surrounded by a white fence, contains many varieties of shrubs and flowers.

The schoolhouse, known as District 17, was at first very small. As more room was needed, about 1907 or 1908, the Sawyer church building was bought and moved to this location, where they also held Sunday School. Then a well was dug, and it was no longer necessary for the pupils to carry water from the homes of neighbors. Then, in 1942, the Fairmont Air Base took over, and that was the end of this country school.

Frank Tatro was the victim of a fatal accident on June 21, 1938, while he was cultivating corn. His team became frightened, apparently because of a broken singletree. He was found in the wreckage by his son Duane, who was working in an adjoining field. He was taken at once to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Lincoln, where he was found to have a broken back, a broken ankle, and internal injuries. He died about 40 minutes after reaching the hospital.

Diedrich W. Twitmeyer came to Nebraska from Jacksonville, Illinois, in the spring of 1882. He homesteaded the S 80 acres and bought the N 80 of SE ¼ of Sec. 2, Madison township. Six years later, he and Dudley Owens purchased 80 acres that lay between their farms, of which each took 40 acres.

Mr. and Mrs. Twitmeyer are deceased. They were survived by their son John and their daughter Elizabeth (Mrs. Gaston).

Grandfather **Thomas Wheeler** homesteaded the SW 80 of Sec. 12 in Madison township and made a pre-emption claim for Ozro Wheeler for him to homestead when he reached the

age of 21. Ozro was about 19 when his parents came to Nebraska. Frank Andrews homesteaded east of the Wheeler homestead on the SE ¼ of Sec. 12. Frank Andrews and Ozro Wheeler were half-brothers.

Robert G. Williams was born June 21, 1827, and served with the Union forces in the Civil War. Isabella Hollingshead was born in Zanesville, Ohio, March 1, 1844. Her father died while she was an infant and her mother passed away when she was a very small child. Her grandmother took the little girl and brought her to womanhood. The grandmother moved with her family from Zanesville into Kentucky and later went to Stark County, Illinois. On April 1, 1861, Isabella was married to Robert G. Williams in Toulon, Illinois, and they immediately removed to Henry County, Illinois. Seven children were born to this union: three daughters—Eva (Mrs. Sherman Moss), Anne (Mrs. Dennis), and Chilotta Jane, who died at the age of ten; and four sons—Edward P., Robert Jr., William T., and Frank C. Williams.

In 1870, the family came to Nebraska, homesteading on the NW ¼ of Sec. 14, Madison township. This homestead has never passed from the family's possession. Mr. Williams was reared as an Episcopalian and Mrs. Williams as a Methodist. They both joined the Fairmont Methodist Church in 1872, a few months after its organization. Mrs. Williams was a faithful worker in the local Red Cross chapter and spent many hours knitting for the soldiers of World War I. In the latter years of her life, she enjoyed relating tales of the relief work she had helped with while her husband was away fighting in the years from 1861 to 1865.

Mr. Williams passed away at his home in Fairmont on June 22, 1908. Mrs. Williams died at the age of 74 during the 1918 influenza epidemic.

One of the earliest settlers in Fillmore County was **Human Wythers**, who had been born in England on December 5, 1830. With his wife Rebekah (born March 3, 1834), he left England on June 26, 1867, and landed in New York City on July 10. They came on west to Morrison, Illinois, February 18, 1879, and arrived at Exeter, Nebraska, on February 22, 1879. They settled on a farm owned by George Sampson of Peoria, Illinois, located ½ mile E of what is now Burress. There were seven children in the family: Mary Ann

(Mrs. Sam Russell), James, Sophia (Mrs. Thomas Pester), Hugh, Sarah (Mrs. Joseph Bradley), William, and Anne (Mrs. Ira Andrew). In February, 1886, Human Wythers bought a piece of railroad land, the SE ¼ of Sec. 1, Chelsea township, and moved there when his son Hugh married Nellie Pester. Human Wythers died on December 5, 1907, and his wife Rebekah on March 23, 1912.

Hugh and Nellie Wythers started housekeeping on the home farm east of Burress. They lived there for 19 years, and then moved to the Chelsea farm, which Hugh bought from his father. Nellie Pester Wythers often got so homesick to see her people that she walked six miles to spend the day with them on Turkey Creek. Hugh had only enough horses to carry on his farm work, and so there were none to drive. Hugh was born May 3, 1862, and died February 18, 1936; Nellie Pester Wythers, born April 12, 1865, died March 18, 1928.

Of the six children of Hugh Wythers, two still live in Fillmore County. Mabel (Mrs. Henry Foster), who attended the Lincoln Business College after finishing high school in Exeter, was a secretary in the office of Deputy Superintendent E. C. Bishop when he started Boys' and Girls' Clubs, a forerunner of 4-H Clubs. Mr. Bishop was enthusiastic about corn growing for boys and cooking and sewing for girls. When Mabel was about eight years old, she lived near Burress and took music lessons from her neighbors, Miss Alta M. Andrews and Miss Claire Owens. When the Burress Methodist Church was built, she served as organist. Her work was quite satisfactory despite the fact that occasionally the minister, at the close of his sermon, would announce: "We will sing the closing hymn without music." When this happened, it was because the young organist was asleep behind the organ.

Edna (Mrs. H. H. Roberts) also lives in Fillmore County. A graduate of Exeter High School, she too attended the Lincoln Business College. She was employed in Lincoln for several years by the Armstrong Clothing Company as Mr. Armstrong's private stenographer. She also worked for the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company.

James Wythers (born July 29, 1855) married Belle Alexander of Ohio and settled on the farm he bought near Sawyer, the NW ¼ of Sec. 15. The family lived there until they retired (February 22, 1906) and built a home in Geneva. In 1915, James' son Loyd married and lived on the place. It is now owned and occupied by a grandson, James Wythers, representing the third generation. James Wythers the elder died on December 11, 1942; his wife Belle (born December 29, 1867) had preceded him on August 9, 1937.



Photo from Mrs. Fred Slepicka
Human and Rebekah (Fletcher) Wythers (photographed in Fairmont about 1890)

