

THE HISTORY OF ONAGA, KANSAS.

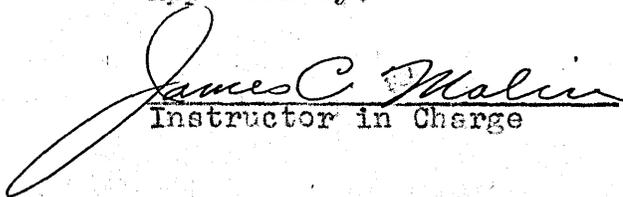
by

Mildred E. O'Meara

A. B. University of Kansas, 1922.

Submitted to the Department
Of History and the Faculty
of the Graduate School of
the University of Kansas in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Approved by:


Instructor in Charge

Head or Chairman of Department

May 25, 1929.



I wish to express my thanks to
Professor James C. Malin for his stimulating
interest and kindly criticism in the preparation
of this thesis.

Mildred E. O'Meara

CONTENTS

Chapter

IA Sketch of the Early History of Pottawatomie County	1
II The Settlement of the Community	15
III The Founding of the Town	33
IV The Growth of the Town	49
V The Economic Development of the Community	70
VI The Educational and Religious Development	101
VII Life in Onaga	113

CHAPTER I.

A SKETCH OF EARLY HISTORY OF POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY.

The town of Onaga is located in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, about forty-five miles northwest of Topeka. The name of the county indicates that the early history of the region was closely connected with the Indians. The name when spelled strictly after the Indian pronunciation is Po-dak-wak-dine.¹ Variations of the spelling are Potawatomi and Pottawantomie.²

When white men first passed through the region it was occupied by the Kanza Indians. In the year 1819, Professor Say, a member of the Long Expedition, mentioned in his report to Major Long, his visit to a village of Kanza Indians located in the western part of this county on the Blue River. "On the morning of the nineteenth of August, they passed a wide and fertile prairie to the Vermillion, a stream which enters the Kanza from the north. It is but four feet deep and about twenty yards wide. Here they halted in the middle of the day and dined on the flesh of a black wolf, the only game they

.....

1. J. S. Merritt, Lecture on Early History of Pottawatomie County. 1879. Manuscript Collections. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.
2. C. J. Kappler, (Editor) Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties. (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1904)

were able to procure. About Vermillion Creek are some open forests of wood, extending far on either side. The trees are from fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter, standing at considerable distance from each other. On the following day the Kanza village was descried at a distance. The detachment immediately halted to arrange their dress, and inspect their fire arms. It was thought the more necessary as no party of whites had visited the village since a number of the Kanza had received a whipping at Isle au Vache, and it was a matter of doubt whether the party would receive a friendly reception. As they approached the village, they perceived the tops of the lodges red with crowds of natives; the chiefs and the warriors came rushing out on horseback, painted and decorated, and followed by great numbers on foot."1 Mr. Say and his party were received with the utmost cordiality, despite their fears.

In the spring of 1880 the Secretary of the Kansas Historical Society caused the site of this village to be surveyed and mapped. The situations of the lodges are yet plainly marked by circular ridges and depressions, ranging in diameter from less than ten feet to fifty feet. These, numbering about one hundred and sixty, were accurately

.....

1. R. G. Thwaites. (Editor) S. H. Long's Expedition. Early Western Travels 1748 - 1846. (Cleveland, Ohio. The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904.) Vol. XIV, p. 186ff.

measured and located by Mr. H. W. Stackpole of Manhattan.¹

The region was visited by another famous traveler in 1842. John C. Fremont recorded his trip through the present Pottawatomie County thus: "June 17, we left our camp at seven, journeyed along the foot of the hills which border the Kansas Valley, generally about three miles wide and extremely rich. We halted for our dinner after a march of about thirteen miles, on the banks of one of the main little tributaries to the Kansas, which look like trenches in the prairie, and are usually well timbered. After crossing the stream, I rode off some miles to the left, attracted by the appearance of a cluster of huts near the mouth of the Vermillion. It was a large but deserted Kansas village, scattered in an open wood, along the margin of the stream, chosen with the customary fondness for beauty of scenery. The Pawnees had attacked it early in the spring. Some of the houses were burnt, and others blackened with smoke, and weeds were already getting possession of the cleared spaces.....

"We breakfasted the next morning at half past five and left our encampment early... Quitting the river bottom, the road ran along the uplands, over a rolling

.....

1. Kansas Historical Transactions. 1881 p. 287 Editor's note.

country, generally in view of the Kansas from eight to twelve miles distant. Many large boulders, of compact sandstone, of various shades of red, some of them four or five tons in weight, were scattered along the hills... At the head of the ravines I remarked, occasionally, thickets of saix long folia; the most common willow... The morning of the twentieth was fine, with a southerly breeze and bright sky; and we were on the march at seven o'clock. The country today was rather more broken, rising still, and covered everywhere with fragments of silicious limestone, particularly on the summits, where they are small and thickly strewn as pebbles on the shores of the sea... We crossed at 10 A. M. the Big Vermillion, which has a rich bottom of about one mile in breadth, one third of which is occupied by timber. Making our usual halt at noon, after a day's march of twenty four miles, we reached the Big Blue, and encamped on the uplands of the western side, near a small creek, where was a fine large spring of very cold water. This is a clear and handsome stream, about 120 feet wide, running with a rapid current, through a well timbered valley. Today antelope were seen running over the hills, and at evening Carson brought in a fine deer."¹

.....

1. Samuel M. Smucker, *The Life of John C. Fremont and his Narratives of Exploration and Adventures.* (New York, Millian, Orton and Mulligan, 1856) pp. 77 - 79.

This picturesque county was ceded by the Kanza Indians to the Federal Government, who in turn, by a treaty, ceded it to the Pottawatomios. The treaties were negotiated at Council Bluffs, Iowa, June 5, 1846, and on Pottawatomie Creek, near the Osage River, June 17, of the same year.¹ By these treaties the Pottawatomios ceded to the Federal Government all their claims to lands for the consideration of \$850,000 and in return were given 576,000 acres or thirty square miles of land on both sides of the Kaw River. The government was to deduct \$87,000, payment for this grant of land, from the whole sum of \$850,000 due the Indians. In the fall of 1847, a group of Pottawatomie Indians visited the region and selected the site for their future home.²

In anticipation of the arrival of the Indians Catholic missionaries came to the territory in June 1848 and established St. Mary's Mission.³ Comprising the group of missionaries were Father Verreydt, Reverend J. B. Wheeler, Reverend Maurice Cailland, Brothers Marcellus and Rengan, Mesdames Lucille Methron and Mary Ann O'Connor, Sister Mary and Sister Louise.⁴ On the twentieth day of September

.....

1. Keppler, p. 557

2. The Westmoreland Recorder, July 5, 1908.

3. J. S. Merritt, Lecture on Early History of Pottawatomie County. 1879.

4. Ibid.

1850, L. R. Palmer, a government physician to the Indians, arrived at the Mission. In an address delivered July 4, 1876, at St. Marys, he recalled the early days at the Mission as follows: "There were a few log cabins at St. Marys, occupied by missionaries. In the immediate neighborhood of the Mission, and in close proximity to each other, were many Indians residing in cabins and tents, in great fear of raids from the wild tribes on the western plains. The Pawnees were much dreaded by the border tribes on account of their frequent incursions into this part of the country in quest of scalps and ponies. There was not in this region a person who could be termed a white settler. There were a few whites - employees of the government - mechanics, residing among and working for the Indians, liable to be removed at any time, and a few traders licensed to sell them goods."¹

This small group of whites was not interested in the creation of a territory for they were there for other reasons, but as early as 1852 Missourians cast their eyes on this little group. At an Indian trading post called Uniontown, there was held, in the spring of 1852, a meeting looking toward the formation of a territory. L. R. Palmer,

.....

1. St. Marys Times, July 14, 1876.

who was present at the meeting, said of it, "About half a dozen persons, residents of the state of Missouri, assembled together in a shed - one of them took from his hat a paper upon which he had written a set of resolutions brought all the way from Missouri, and asked the assembled multitude to vote on them. The noes were not called for. Two or three of these persons were sporting gentlemen and the others were merchants who had furnished goods for the Indians and always came at such times to collect. The resolutions recited that there were hundreds of families in that vicinity in the interior of the territory, who were bona fide settlers and whose lives and property were in constant danger for want of civil protection and memorialized Congress to organize a territorial government. They purported to be the unanimous expressions of a large number of citizens assembled together for the purpose of calling the attention of Congress to the perils that threatened them. Immediately this memorial was printed in southern papers and to it the attention of Congress was most earnestly called!"¹

While it is doubtful if this action had any real effect on Congress, the Missourian's efforts were more fruitful a few years later. As soon as the territory was organized in 1854 and the territorial government was

.....

1. St. Marys Times, July 14, 1876.

put into operation, Governor Andrew Reeder called an election, to be held in March, 1855, for the selection of the first legislature. At St. Mary's Mission, eleven votes were polled, seven in favor of the free state candidate, E. P. McCartney, and three in favor of M. Marshall, the proslavery man.¹ One vote was thrown out. The election of the free state man was assured unless at some other polling place in the district more votes were polled. And that was exactly what happened. An election had been held at Marshall's Ferry on the Blue River, and 250 to 300 votes had been cast for Marshall. Many votes were cast by Missourians who had proceeded by the Fort Leavenworth and Fort Kearney Military Road to the Blue to vote.² These two instances seem to be the only ones in which Missourians interfered with voting in this county.

But not only were the proslavery interests active in this election; the free state forces mustered votes also. According to the census taken in January and February, 1855 the voting strength of the Tenth District was sixty votes.³ In addition to the proslavery votes, according to the testimony of Isaac S. Hascall, about 150 free state men passed up the Military Road and voted.

.....

1. St. Marys Times, July 14, 1876.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Report of Special Committee on Troubles in Kansas, House Reports, 34 Congress. 1st session, no. 200 p. 88.

The men came from Pennsylvania at the instance of Governor Reeder.¹ The greater part of the men were dissatisfied with the country and soon left.

The territory embraced by Pottawatomie County was included in the counties of Calhoun and Riley, in the first organization of counties by the legislature of 1855.² But this arrangement proved confusing, for many residents did not know to which county they belonged, and in the latter part of the year 1856, Dr. L. R. Palmer drew up a petition asking the legislature to create a county called Pottawatomie. The petition presented by Charles Jenkins and J. A. J. Chapman to the Lecompton Legislature was granted, February 20, 1857.³ Pottawatomie County was created out of the territory between the Big Blue River and the west boundary of Calhoun County by pushing the latter eleven miles east of the former line.⁴ On September 21, 1857, the commissioners, who had been appointed, met and divided the county into six civil townships, namely; Shannon, Blue, St. George, Louisville, Vienna,

.....

1. Report of Special Committee on Troubles in Kansas. House Reports, 34 Congress. 1 session. p. 269.
2. Helen Gill, The Establishment of Counties in Kansas. Kansas State Historical Collections VIII, p. 449.
3. The Westmoreland Recorder, August 23, 1906.
4. Gill, p.452.

and Pottawatomie.¹ In 1876 the number was increased to fifteen² and by 1882, there were twenty one townships,³ In 1858, the legislature abolished the board of county commissioners and provided, instead, a board of supervisors - one from each township.⁴ The next year the first taxes were levied in this county in the form of a poll tax.⁵ In 1866 the board of county supervisors was replaced by three county commissioners.⁶

The greater part of the lands of Pottawatomie County were railroad lands.⁷ The Union Pacific, through the southern part of the county, received from the federal government the customary grant of each odd numbered section on each side of the track for a distance of twenty miles, except those sections included in the Indian Reservation, or any others which had been granted by the government prior to the railroad grant.⁸ The Central Branch of the

.....

1. The Westmoreland Recorder, August 23, 1906.
2. St. Marys Times, July 14, 1876.
3. A. T. Andreas, History of Kansas. (Chicago, A. T. Andreas 1883) II p. 975.
4. St. Marys Chief, January 12, 1878.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. The Westmoreland Recorder Period, January 7, 1886.
8. Ibid.

Missouri Pacific received the same grant in Nemaha County, but some of the sections granted lay in Pottawatomie County.¹ In fact, these grants overlapped and were the cause of much difficulty to the settlers. Such lands were known as "lap lands." By 1879 the title to such had been cleared and the land opened to settlers.²

One fifth of the county was included in the Pottawatomie Indian Reservation. In 1861, by a treaty with the Indians, made on the Kaw River, the land was given to the Indians in severalty, except a portion to be held in common, located in Jackson County.³ The rest of the Indian land was sold to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in 1867,⁴ so that by this date, all the land of the county, with the exception of the lap lands, was open to settlement.

As early as 1853, squatters had begun to settle upon claims; the first one was taken by Robert Wilson, which was the land now occupied by the city of Louisville.⁵ In the fall of that year he erected the first house in the county,

.....

1. The Westmoreland Recorder Period, January 7, 1886.
2. The Onaga Journal, May 29, 1879.
3. Kappler, p. 824.
4. The Westmoreland Recorder and Period, January 7, 1886.
5. Ibid., July 12, 1906.

outside of the Indian reservation.¹ After the war the flood of immigration began to pour in. The population of the county in 1860 was 1,529 persons, in 1870, 7,848 persons, and by 1874 the population was 10,054.² The settlement was so rapid that an old settler of the county observed that, "The citizen familiar with the geography of the country in 1866 found, when getting out in the country in 1870, that he was lost; his old landmarks were gone; the old trail that he had travelled across the country was supplemented by turnpike roads following section lines and enclosed by fences."³

This ever increasing stream of settlers was admitted to the county by three main roads, namely; The California Trail, The Military Road, and The Parallel Road.⁴ The California Trail followed the route of Fremont when he crossed in 1842. The second road was laid out in 1853 when Fort Riley was established. It followed the California Trail through this county until reaching the Vermillion at Louis Vieux's Ford. Here the government, at an early

.....

1. The Westmoreland Recorder, July 12, 1906.
2. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture. (Topeka, State Printing Works, 1904.) p. 188.
3. The West Moreland Recorder, March 3, 1888.
4. The Westmoreland Recorder, July 19, 1906.

date, built a bridge, the first in the county. From this point the road continued in a north westerly direction, crossing the Blue at Junetta, where the government had a ferry. As all supplies for Fort Riley, which was an important post even in those days on account of Indian troubles, passed over this road. The traffic was very extensive. The big government mules were constantly going and coming on this road until the Union Pacific was completed. The Parallel Road was a part of the old Pike's Peak Trail.¹ It is erroneously called the Parallel Road, however, for the road follows a meridian correction line and not a parallel line. Settlers coming from Atchison and St. Joseph usually followed this road to America City and then struck off across the prairie.

But all the travel was not westward. Many came to Kansas with high hopes but weak hearts. It might be said of them, they came, they saw, they left. Mrs. Allen, living in the western part of the county records in her diary, October 22, 1856, "Mr. Morgan and son from Brooks, Maine, desired supper and lodging. He wished to sell a bag of flour as the scarcity of timber and the expense of moving conspired to make him conclude that he

.....

1. The Westmoreland Recorder, July 19, 1906.

had better return to Maine. Gave us seed corn and apple seed, and sold socks for their supplies."¹ On October 25, 1855, she notes, "Mr. Lincoln left his shot gun to pay for his board and goes to Massachusetts."²

.....

1. Mrs. Chestina Allen, Diary. Manuscript Collections,
Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.
2. Ibid.

CHAPTER II.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.

The settlements, upon which the future Onaga was to depend, were made along the Vermillion River by native Americans from the older states beginning in 1856 and 1857; by Germans along Dutch, Hise and Mill Creeks; and by French on French Creek about the same time.¹ In the sixties, Irish settled on Coal Creek and French and Belgians on Mound Creek.² The creeks just mentioned are all tributary to the Vermillion. It was very necessary that the settler locate near a stream, for he then was certain of fuel, game, wood and water. The most desirable place was at the bend in the creek, for after the pioneer had cleared the ground in the bend, he had only one side to fence.

Most of the immigrants, who settled on the Upper Vermillion, came by way of America City, Nemaha County, a stopping point on the Parallel Road.³ In the early spring of 1856 Newcomb Ireland and Samuel Dickson went out on the Parallel Road west from Atchison in search of a townsite and selected the present site of America City.

.....

1. F. F. Crevecocur, Old Settlers Tales. Onaga Republican Press. 1902 p. 5.
2. Ibid.
3. The following story of America City from The Westmoreland Recorder, December 27, 1906.

The fact that there were no settlers within perhaps twenty miles mattered not to these two undaunted promoters, who could see a future city on the stretches of the prairie. So they surveyed and platted a townsite and named the streets. Then they started east to secure settlers. Near Atchison, they met a party of nine families coming west to find new homes. As they had no definite location in mind, they were easily converted to the charms of the country surrounding the future America City and settled there - about one half of them in Pottawatomie County, becoming the first settlers in this region. America City then became the point at which the settlers struck south across the trackless prairie down the Vermillion Valley.

It is hard to imagine the great difficulties of travel which the pioneer had to overcome. Mr. J. H. Randal, a member of the first party, recalled that when he wanted to go anywhere he yoked up his oxteam and tied a good sized log behind his wagon, so that he might find his way home.¹ The prairie grass was so tall and bewildering, one could easily lose his way. The wagons had no brakes and the oxen could not hold back the load so the ever inventive pioneer had to devise some method to descend the hills. Sometimes he tied a stick, about

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, June 5, 1890.

eighteen inches long, to a rope fastened to the wagon box and forced the stick between two spokes, which would cause one wheel to slide. Or he might wrap a chain around the tire of a wheel, in which case the chain would plow a furrow down the hill and thus hold back the wagon. If the descent were very steep, he was forced to snub down the hill. By this method the traveler tied a rope around the rear axle, then once around a near-by tree, and by retaining hold of the other end of the rope, he could let the wagon descend the length of the rope. If the hill were long it would be necessary to repeat the performance. As there were few roads, the settlers, in general, followed the streams. Sometimes they traveled on the ridge or high ground separating the creeks, thereby avoiding the gullies and sloughs.

One of the first settlers, who followed the Vermillion from America City, was Moses Day, a native of France. He and his wife and son arrived at Vienna from Iowa, May 11, 1857.¹ Mr. Day had come earlier in the year, with a land warrant from the government; selected his land; placed a stake at each corner to indicate his claim; and returned

.....

1. Crevecoeur, p.94

to Iowa for his family. They were the first settlers in what is now Vienna Township. Others soon took up the land in this region and by 1860 there were 615 persons in the township.¹ It must be remembered, however, that at this time there were but six townships in the county and Vienna embraced all the northeastern part of the county. The following table shows the places of nativity of the settlers:²

Indiana	176
Kansas	92
Ohio	39
New York	38
Iowa	38
Missouri	32
Illinois	29
Virginia	26
Kentucky	10
Pennsylvania	8
Vermont	5
Wisconsin	4
Michigan	2
Massachusetts	2
Tennessee	1
New Jersey	1
Delaware	1
District of Columbia	1
Maine	1
Germany	82
France	11
Ireland	2
England	1
Wales	1

.....

1. United States Government Census. 1860. V Pottawatomie County, K.T. Vienna Township, pp.18-34.

2. Ibid.

Residing in this township were one hundred and seventy farmers, one teamster, four carpenters, two plasterers, three laborers, and one physician.¹ There were one hundred and eighty nine houses, and twenty six of them were unoccupied. It was so easy to put up a one room shack or cabin in those days, and so easy to become discouraged and return home.

Characteristic of the Kansas pioneer was the early establishment of schools and church. Vienna was not different in this respect. School District One of Vienna Township was one of the first in the county.² The first District Board was chosen December 6, 1862. During the winter of 1862 and 1863, the district supported a three months school, taught by Mrs. Almon Benton, the wife of the county superintendent. As the school house was not built until 1863, the school was held in a room of the teacher's home. The number of pupils in attendance is not available, but the number of school age was twenty nine. The following winter, a six month's term was taught by Mrs. Benedict, with sixteen pupils enrolled. The teacher's salary was ten dollars a month.

A Sunday School was organized at Vienna as early as 1862. It too, was held in a private home until the school house was erected. The annual report of the Vienna

.....

1. United States Government Census.
2. Data on schools from The Westmoreland Recorder, June 13, 1907.

Sunday School for the year 1876¹ stated that a service was held every Sunday except one. It also mentions that the monthly concerts given by the school proved an interesting feature. The average attendance was twenty nine and the average percent of attendance of pupils enrolled was eighty two. In recalling his boyhood in Vienna, Mr. Frank B. Landon recently said, "And that little old school house... where we had such wonderful times, splendid schools--we thought-- Lyceum, Sing School, Spelling School, Church, Good Templars Lodge, etc. That little school house was the educational, religious, and social center of the community. Its influence for good was far reaching and ever lasting."²

Although Vienna consisted of but a country store, a mill, and a postoffice, the real Vienna was dotted on one-fourth sections of land, north, east, south, and west. The spirit of optimism, of neighborliness, of determination to overcome the many hardships, made a community not to be measured by wood and stone. Vienna, while never incorporated, was regarded as a town. The following item appeared in The Pottawatomie Gazette, July 17, 1867. "Vienna is one of the best towns of the county. Its lands are good,

.....

1. The Kansas Reporter, January 18, 1877.
2. Letter from Frank Landon to writer, April, 1929.

timber and water plenty, and its citizens industrious, intelligent, energetic and enterprising farmers. Although Vienna has a larger population than any other town in the county, except Louisville, we understand there is some good land yet, affording excellent chances to those wanting homesteads." A post office was established here in 1863 with Jacob Meusch as postmaster, but was discontinued by 1884.¹ From 1870 to 1877 Amos Landon kept a store at Vienna and was for several years the postmaster. In 1877 he moved to Onaga and became the first postmaster there.²

Although Vienna was the nucleus from which Onaga was to be built, there were other settlements within a radius of ten miles. The first settler in what is now Mill Creek Township was Solomon Hicks, who arrived with his family and located his claim, April 20, 1856.³ Francis McQuire was the first man to settle near Onaga townsite. When the Civil War broke out, Mr. McQuire, a southern sympathizer, was very unpopular and his life was made miserable by the loyal citizens. But it happened that George Cockrill, who owned a farm in Missouri and was visiting in the vicinity at the time, was a Union man and he likewise found his home environment unpleasant. An exchange

.....

1. United States Official Post Office Register.
2. Crevecoeur. p.24.
3. The Westmorland Recorder, December 27, 1906.

was made and each found a more congenial neighborhood.¹

Another settlement centered about the Pleasant Valley school located four or five miles north of Vienna. Religious services in this community were held very early. Even before 1860, Missionary Knipe held services from time to time in the settlers' homes.² In 1859, a Fourth of July celebration was held in the Pleasant Valley neighborhood, probably the first ever held in the Vermillion Valley.³ A large pole, about sixty or seventy feet high was erected and the flag raised. This served as a guide post for the settlers who came many miles to celebrate. It was estimated that there were about two hundred people present- some of men and boys were barefooted. It is significant to note that only five horse teams were present. Ox teams conveyed many settlers while a large number came on foot.

A few miles north of Pleasant Valley was a settlement of Swiss French, known as Neuchatel.⁴ Alfred Bonjour was made postmaster in 1864. A store, known for many years as the French Store, was started about 1867. This group

.....

1. Crevecoeur. p.58.

2. Ibid. p. 83.

3. Ibid. p.82

4. Ibid. p.5.

contained two former members of the French Chamber of Deputies who had fled in exile to England after the coup d'etat of Napoleon III in 1852.¹ One of them, Jules Leroux, edited a paper on his farm called, The Star of Kansas, its principal interest being the political emancipation of the French people.² The French settler frequently built houses by driving poles in the ground, then nailing rails to these and filling the space between with red clay.³ Often the roof was thatched with coarse grass. Such rude structures were replaced with frame houses after the advent of the saw mills into the community. Neuchatel, made up of French, Swiss and Belgians, easily adapted itself to American customs. But it was not always easy to do and indeed not always accomplished. One peasant couple came to America but failed to understand American methods of agriculture. They were hard working and even went to the length of picking up all loose stones on their eighty acres. After this pathetic and unsuccessful attempt to learn the ways of pioneers, they returned to France, still wearing their peasant costumes.

.....

1. Crevecoeur. p.131.

2. Ibid.

3. The Onaga Herald, March 15, 1900.

Some Germans came in the late fifties, as already mentioned, and established a community known many years later as Duluth. They settled on the creeks northwest of the present location of Onaga. The Germans were industrious and prosperous farmers. Usually upon arrival, the German built a dug out in the south slope of a hillside, but as soon as he was able, replaced this with a stone house, usually two stories. They also used stone for barns and fences. The Germans, speaking a different language, with a distinct religious organization and an entirely different background, retained a decided nationalistic spirit. They organized a school in 1863¹ and erected a stone church in 1871² but maintained the mother tongue in both. They were devout Lutherans and the minister frequently assumed a patriarchal attitude in acting as spokesman for his parish. The prosperity of the Germans added noticeably in the material development of the community, but because they adhered so closely to German customs they were considered apart from the community. People spoke of "the German settlement", as a bit of foreign soil.

The Irish colony was promoted by a colonization society in St. Louis. They came with wonderful energy a

.....

1. The Westmoreland Recorder. June 13, 1907.
2. The Onaga Herald. September 22, 1898.

and enthusiasm but too often it was misdirected. They were poor farmers, hard drinkers, and ready fighters.

While it is true that these settlers had widely different backgrounds, yet when they came to this new and untried country, they had much in common. Immediately upon arrival, the settler's first concern was his home. This, in the case of the immigrants from the eastern states, was usually built of logs, hewn on two sides to form the inner and outer walls. The spaces between the logs were filled with mortar and small stones, or if the builder could not afford lime, clay was used.¹ The shingles were often slabs, rived from oak or other suitable timber, about three feet long, six inches wide, and one half inch thick.² In most settlements a sawmill was established early, so that, at least some sawed lumber could be used. Usually the house contained one or two rooms with an attic above. A pioneer mother of the county noted in her diary in 1855, "Moved into our new home today. It consists of two rooms on the lower floor and the attic. We nailed up quilts to make it more comfortable. It has a puncheon floor and the roof is called extra good for this place."³ As glass for the windows could be ob-

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, March 15, 1900.

2. Ibid.

3. Allen Diary. February 26, 1855.

tained only in Leavenworth, ninety miles distant, the settler frequently went without this convenience many months.¹

The school houses were similar structures--usually put up at a "raising" or "bee" as the procedure was called. In the diary, this notation appears, "William and Charles went to the Eubanks to a raising and on the twenty first to Esq. Dyer's to another raising."² An old settler, recalling the period of 1868, remarked, "There were just three families living on Indian Creek then, and one family on Coal Creek. The old timers said that the high lands would never be settled but it was only a short time until the people of the East heard that Uncle Sam would give them all a farm in Kansas--so here they came, and in a short time we found it necessary to build a school house. We went about it in Eastern style, by calling the neighbors together with their axes and teams; then we went to the timber and in a short time we had a school building up, chucked and daubed with mud."³ The interiors of the school houses were often very crude. Often slabs of of native sawed lumber fastened to the longer walls formed the seats, while other boards nailed in front served as desks.⁴

.....

1. Crevecoeur. p.9.
2. Allen Diary. December 18, 1854.
3. The Westmoreland Recorder, March 3, 1888.
4. The Onaga Herald, March 15, 1900.

After the pioneer was established in his rude home, he still had many problems to face. Sorrow and tragedy came frequently to him. The most common illness was ague. The first physician in this region was Dr. Purcell who came in 1858. But he was a poor man and unable to supply much quinine, the universal remedy for ague, for at this time the price was seven to eight dollars an ounce.¹ In 1859, Dr. John F. Koentz, a native of Holland, and Dr. Hubsman settled on farms in the community. During the Civil War, both physicians gave their services to the Union, and the community was without medical service until the return of Dr. Koentz at the close of the war.² Dr. Peter Dockler, a native of France, educated in Paris, and a veteran of both the Mexican and Civil Wars, located at Neuchatel.³ He later moved to Onaga. From these points he served settlers living in a large radius, riding horseback eighteen and twenty miles to visit a patient. Many times the physician never saw his patient, but compounded some medicine and gave it to the messenger who had often ridden a great distance to describe the symptoms.

.....

1. The Onaga Herald. March 15, 1900.
2. Crevecoeur. p.
3. The Westmoreland Recorder. October 11, 1906.

The facilities for burial were very meager. As no hearse was available, in the early days, the coffin was wrapped in a sheet and carried in a wagon to the grave. Later spring wagons were commonly used for this purpose, and not infrequently the one owner of a spring wagon in the neighborhood was asked to loan his vehicle for a funeral.¹ The coffins were made by a farmer artisan - usually of walnut. It was the common custom to measure the corpse with a string and send the string to the carpenter.² Before settlements were organized interment was made on the family land.

Among the trials which the pioneer had to face were prairie fires. The dead grass on the prairies proved a constant menace each spring and fall. As late as 1879, a prairie fire broke out and ran some ten miles. Much property was destroyed - one settler lost his stable, corn cribs, corn, hay and implements.³

The drouth of 1860 was so severe and left the settlers so destitute that they were forced to seek aid. The group at Vienna were promised aid at Atchison. Mr. Francis McQuire, previously mentioned as a proslavery man,

.....

1. Related to writer by Mrs. L. L. O'Meara, April 1929.

2. Ibid.

3. The Onaga Journal April 3, 1879.

was appointed to distribute the aid, but the settlers found that the wrong man had been given the office and aid did not relieve those most deserving of it.¹ In this community, as in others, it was shown that some people work for their own benefit instead of the good of the group. At Pleasant Valley, aid, consisting of corn and beans was distributed. The goods were shipped in grain sacks, stamped with S. C. Pomeroy's name on them. Mr. Pomeroy was the general agent for the distribution of aid in Kansas. Later the sacks were made into clothing and the name, S. C. Pomeroy, often appeared in quite conspicuous parts of the settler's apparel.²

Much suffering was again experienced following the grasshopper invasion of 1874. The insects appeared suddenly one day in such vast numbers that they darkened the sun. People were terrified! The waving green crops were soon consumed and the settlers left destitute. One farmer, hoping to save his corn, began immediately to cut and shock it, but the grasshoppers found the corn in the shock just as palatable.³ Many of the experiences of the pioneers at this time were heartbreaking. Mr. Amos

.....

1. Related to the writer by Charles Day, resident of Vienna since 1857.
2. Crevecoeur, p. 82.
3. Story related to writer by Mrs. S. E. Leinbach, resident of Vienna since 1868.

Landon, a resident of Vienna, wrote in recapitulation of his diary of this year: "It has been a year of great financial difficulties. A year of great extremes in heat and cold, and one of the most distressing drouths ever known. Very little grain or hay raised, very many people suffering - great numbers leaving the state."¹

One problem which the settlers along the Vermillion did not have to face was that of hostile Indians. For many years after the organization of the territory, a few Indians lived in the timber along the streams. They lived in log cabins or, more frequently, little huts, built of poles and thatched with grass. Each Indian received eleven dollars a quarter from the government, and they were usually the only people in the community with any cash.² The Indians proved a timely market for the small amount of excess grain, which the settler could produce at a time when markets were twenty to forty miles distant.

But the pioneer's life was not all hardships and privations. There was the happy side, too. The following items from Vienna, which appeared in the Kansas Reporter, August 17, 1877, illustrate well the settlers interest in the realities of every day existence:

.....

1. Extract from Amos E. Landon's Diary, quoted in letter from Frank Landon to the writer April, 1929.
2. Related to writer by Charles Day, April, 1929.

"Peach pie for dinner.

"Sunbonnets and calico dresses are undergoing repairs in view of the Teacher's Institute.

"Miss Eva Lewis has invited about ten couples to spend next Saturday evening at her home. Miss Lewis has a piano, so there will be no lack of music."

By 1877, the railroad had come to the Vermillion Valley. Then the greatest hardships of the pioneer's life were over. He was now close to a market and contact with the rest of the world. Many men had succeeded, during those twenty years, in establishing themselves very comfortably. Their success was due, for the most part, to pluck and determination. Typical of this class of pioneer was O. J. Grover.¹ He and his wife came to Pleasant Valley in 1859, with a total capital in currency of fifty cents. From 1861 - 1874, he represented his district in the state legislature. In 1877 he raised 10,000 bushels of corn from 135 acres.² The kind of pluck required was well illustrated in the following story, which appeared in the Kansas Reporter, March 29, 1877. "A farmer, a few

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, August 19, 1897.

2. The Wamego Tribune, May 18, 1878.

miles north of here, dug his well as deep as he could throw the dirt out, and then made a ladder of some old poles and took a sack in the well with him, filled it with dirt and carried it up the ladder, and so on until the well was dug. The performance was reversed when it came to walling."

But more outstanding perhaps, than the pioneer's pluck and determination, was his ever ready hospitality. J. S. Merritt, in an address at an Old Settler's Reunion, spoke of this characteristic as follows: "The pioneer's cabin was always open to the wayfarer, his latch string was always out, homely and substantial hospitality was always within. The traveler was always sure that at night when he reached the cabin of a settler, he would be welcome, that the homely fare of the family, consisting of corn bread and bacon and sometimes a cup of coffee and a piece of venison would be cheerfully spread before him. That the roof which sheltered the family would shelter him, and the rude puncheon floor, upon which their blankets were spread for a bed, would furnish room for his blankets and a place for repose."¹

.....

1. The Wamego Tribune, June 6, 1879.

Philip Scherer 40

H. W. Miller 40

Philip Scherer 50

NINTH ST

ST

EIGHTH ST

ST

SEVENTH ST

ST

GILLETTS ADD.

ST

ST

ST



Albert Kuttnerman

2

SIXTH ST

ST

Carl Brubaker
H. F. Colburn

FIFTH ST

ST

32 ADD

FOURTH ST

Public School

10

WESTERN ST

THIRD ST

ST

34

SECOND ST

ST

CO. ROAD N° 269

LAKEWAY

CLOTON ST

LUCIEN ST

RAILWAY

LEONARD ST

PROSPECT ST

MISN ST

DI ERAY ST

F. B. Pichel

H. H. Dehmann

Union Pacific R.R. Co

Mary J. Day

L. A. McBride

H. Krause

Mary J. Smith

D. J. Haines

Mrs. J. Smith

L. A. McBride

F. B. Pichel

W. S. Goodlove

ROAD N° 11

ONAGA
MILL CREEK TWP.
Scale 300 ft to one inch

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDING OF THE TOWN.

The Kansas Central Railroad was the prime factor in the founding of Onaga in the fall of 1877. In 1872, the Kansas Central, narrow gauge, was built from Leavenworth to a point fifty miles west. The company was under contract, with the county of Leavenworth and the municipalities giving aid to it, to construct at least 100 miles per annum, until its main line reached Denver.¹ But there was no attempt on the part of the Railroad Company to fulfill these terms, and today its western terminus is Miltonvale, Kansas. During the summer and fall of 1877, the road was extended from Holton west to the Vermillion Valley, reaching that place in December, 1877.² The Kansas Reporter, July 19, 1877, carried this item in regard to the location of the future townsite of Onaga. "The chief engineer, together with some leading members of the company, were expected on the Vermillion Valley yesterday to drive the terminus stake and locate a site for a depot." And thus another town was to rise on the prairie as the railroads pushed westward.

The name, Onaga, is an Indian name, but the exact source of the word is in doubt. It is quite possible that

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, June 25, 1891.

2. The Wamego Tribune, November 2, 1877.

the original Indian name was spelled Onego, for the Wamego Tribune, November 2, 1877, under the heading, "Onaga Items," includes this statement: "Spell it Onego, not Onaga." The Onaga Democrat, December 31, 1885, in an account of the history of Onaga, states that Onaga was the name of a noted Pottawatomie chief, and was selected for the town out of a number of names selected by Mrs. James S. Merritt, of Wamego. The Kansas Historical Collections (VII p. 482) gives this information, in regard to the origin of the name: "From Onago, a Pottawatomie Indian name from the head rights book of the tribe, by R. W. Jenkins, with the final "o" changed to an "a" by Paul E. Havens." In Indian parlance the name means small potatoes.

The original townsite, surveyed, September 22, 1877, by Mr. Frank Alvard, was located on land belonging to Mr. E. D. Gillet and Mr. George DeGraw.¹ The town is located on the west slope of the Vermillion River, on a series of hills rising to the north of a small stream, known as Hise Creek. The Railroad winds along the base of the hills between the town and the creek. The depot was located at the foot of the main street, called Leonard Street, which runs eight blocks north on gradually

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.

rising ground. The majority of, the business houses, then as today, were located on Leonard between Third and Fourth Streets and on the first block of Third Street west of Leonard. Onaga's situation is admirable for drainage purposes, but the early residents experienced great difficulty in securing an adequate water supply. The residences were built higher on the hills north of the business district, and water was hard to obtain there. The hills are rocky, affording excellent limestone for building purposes.

The first building was started September 15, 1877.¹ Mr. E. B. Ellis described the ceremony in this manner: "Mr. Amos Landon was the first to take initial steps toward founding the city by immediately commencing excavation for the foundation of his hotel. Mr. Haven, (President of the Central Townsite Company), with pick in hand, broke the wild turf wherein should be built the chief cornerstone of the Landon House, and in the presence of those assembled, dedicated the town to prosperity, and future political, commercial and moral greatness."² The hotel was a frame building, twenty four by forty feet,

.....

1. The Onaga Courier, September 15, 1898.

2. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.

two stories high with an attic and a stone basement. It was finished and opened to guests early in the winter.¹ The second building, and the first to be completed, was a grocery store, erected by J. B. Hubbell. This building was also frame, twenty by fifty feet, and a story and a half in height.² Mr. Hubbell came to Onaga from Holton, attracted by the opportunities of a new town. A third building, constructed during the month of November, 1877, was a saloon, operated by Mr. David Scott of Elk Creek. His petition to secure a license contained over 100 signatures.³

Early the next spring, in addition to those just mentioned, newcomers began to open up businesses in Onaga. By November, 1878, when the town was but one year old, there were eighteen kinds and places of business.⁴ There were also a considerable number of residences and more in the process of construction. By the spring of 1879, the town had many solid business men - all enjoying a profitable trade. Henry Rolfs,⁵ a merchant who had

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 5, 1879.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., November 21, 1878.

5. Ibid., March 6, 1879.

formerly conducted a grocery business in Chicago, came to Onaga and in the fall of 1878, erected the first stone building. The structure, including the basement, was three stories high. The third floor was made into a public hall. Another merchant was Henry Storch,¹ who was born in Bavaria, Germany. He had arrived in America in 1867, with only six dollars in his pockets and no knowledge of the English language. Working his way westward, he arrived in Atchison and became a partner of his uncle, who was engaged in the mercantile business. In the spring of 1878, he arrived in Onaga and built a store building, twenty two by eighty four feet, the largest building in the town at that time. He soon enjoyed a thriving business and in the first year, shipped out over thirty five thousand pounds of butter. A fourth merchant was A. Hyman,² who came to Onaga from Leavenworth in the spring of 1878. His sales amounted to more than \$30,000 the first year. Thomas O'Meara,³ who had been engaged in the mercantile business in Atchison and America City, moved to Onaga, April 1879. He was stocked with dry goods, groceries, millinery, toilet goods and shelf hardware.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

In the early days of Onaga's history the hardware and lumber business was especially profitable. The extensive building in the community called for large quantities of lumber. The farmer, who had now been brought closer to markets, could sell his produce in Onaga and return home with lumber for new improvements or a new piece of farm machinery. One prosperous firm was composed of the four Thomas brothers,¹ who had come to Onaga from Muscotah, Kansas. They erected a large building, eighteen by one hundred and thirty feet, two stories high. Their business interests were quite extensive, including a banking business, a large grain elevator, the largest stock of lumber west of Leavenworth, and in addition, a line of shelf and heavy hardware. They handled the John Deere Manufacturing Company implements; a full line of wagons and wagon material; the Champion Reaper and Mower; also brick, lime, hair cement and chimney flues. A competing firm was the Roger Brothers Hardware Company.² They came to Onaga in the spring of 1878 and built a store room thirty by sixty feet, two

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.

2. Ibid.

stories high, and also sheds for implements. Roger Brothers carried a complete line of shelf and heavy hardware, furniture, carpets and stoves. They also manufactured all kinds of tin spouting and roofing. They were agents for the Buckeye reaper and mower, the Brown and Evans sulky plows, Black Hawk, Defiance, and Imperial riding or walking cultivators and for the Harrison wagons.

Among other businesses operating in the spring of 1879 was a drugstore, owned by C. A. Stokes,¹ a conductor on the Kansas Central Railroad. Mr. George Walker,² who fitted up a shoe store in 1878, had had over forty years experience in the manufacture of boots in Pennsylvania. R. S. Reihl³ from Leavenworth owned and operated a harness shop. J. H. Randel⁴ built a livery stable in Onaga in the spring of 1878. He was well qualified as a guide over the country for he had settled on the Red Vermillion in 1856. Another livery barn and feed store was operated by George C. Clowe and P. M. Askrew.⁵ The Firm of Ledington

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

and Randal¹ had at this time a good trade in horse shoeing, plow making, and wagon and buggy making. Two stone masons, who had formerly lived on farms near Onaga but now returned to their trade, were Charles Music and Washington Miller². In the spring of 1878, S. A. Stauffer³ came to Onaga and started The Onaga Journal. The first issue was May 9, 1878. Mr. Stauffer was an earnest booster for the town. He published the paper until 1885, when he sold it to Mr. Abe Chabin,⁴ who changed the policy of the paper from Republican to Democrat. The name was changed to The Onaga Democrat.

Two men of foreign birth who found prosperity in this new community were Aimee Foure, a Frenchman, and Andrew Clark from Scotland. A townsman quaintly writes of Mr. Foure, "He came to Onaga a year ago without a cent, but today sits at his own table, in his own domicile, and dispenses meat from his own shop. Industry will win."⁵ Mr. Clark came to the vicinity of Onaga about 1870 and engaged extensively in farming and stock raising until 1876.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.
2. Ibid.
3. The Onaga Democrat, December 31, 1885.
4. Ibid.
5. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.

Then he began buying and shipping stock to Eastern markets, shipping in the period from 1876 to 1879, over 15,000 head of hogs and 9,000 head of cattle.¹ He was a man of considerable capital and added materially to the wealth of the community by his active interest in shipping livestock.

During the first years of the town's existence, there was continual building. Not only were new buildings erected, but additions were found necessary. The early citizens did not build for the future but only for their immediate needs. This was probably not due to lack of foresight or faith in the future but to lack of capital. In the fall of 1878, Mr. Landon added a wing, twenty four by thirty feet, to his hotel building - making it the largest in the county.² On the first floor of the completed structure were dining room, kitchen, well room with laundry equipment, pantries, sleeping rooms for the help, and a large cellar. The second or street floor contained a well furnished office with plenty of newspapers, a sample room, a parlor furnished with damask cushioned sofa and chairs, Brussels carpet, and an organ. On the third floor were a ladies parlor and fourteen bedrooms.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 6, 1879.

2. Ibid., February 20, 1879.

The fourth floor was divided into four large, well furnished, and well ventilated sleeping rooms.¹

The town grew rapidly and in the fall of 1878, there was need for several good residences and also some good business rooms although two or three were finished in the month of October.² The greatest bar to progress was the lack of capital. As the editor of the paper reasoned, the demand for buildings existed, the lots were cheap and some one with money could have made a good investment.³ The Onaga Journal,⁴ in summing up the growth of the town for its first two years, said: "Onaga is conceded by all traveling salesmen and land prospectors to be one of the liveliest towns in northern Kansas, doing the largest business of any in the state compared with its age and size. We have two hotels, and one or two boarding houses, besides a good restaurant, but with all our facilities to entertain the traveling public, we fall short of the demand. Hardly a day passes that we do not hear the remark, "do you know where I can get lodgings for the night," and when we have referred them to one of our

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, February 20, 1879.

2. Ibid., October 3, 1878.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., January 22, 1880.

hotels, we are informed that they are full. When we consider that we are yet in our infancy - not yet two years old, we are persuaded that we have a grand future awaiting us. Our population is less than three hundred, with almost every branch of mercantile business represented by men of good business integrity and experience, backed by an agricultural community that cannot be excelled in the west, surrounded by men who count their possessions by the tens of thousands, and in the midst of good coal fields, plenty of timber, beautiful streams of water, fine building stone, in close proximity to good beds of brick clay - nothing can prevent us from becoming one of the best trading points in the state. As an illustration of the trade we have already, we would ask those looking for a location in any business to note the fact, that one firm in our city made sales, in one month, amounting to \$11,000."

While the above picture of Onaga is probably overdrawn, yet it illustrates clearly one characteristic of the early residents - that of unlimited faith in the growth of the town. Their faith and optimism was not unfounded for Onaga was built in the midst of a rich farming community of well established settlers, many of whom had lived in the vicinity for twenty years. The Onaga

.....

Journal described a busy day as follows: "Last Saturday was an unusually busy day in Onaga. Teams were standing in all open lots, and the streets were thronged with country people. The merchants all seemed busy. Especially did the dealers in agricultural implements have a big trade. Scarcely a wagon left but took with it a corn planter, a cultivator, or some other farm implement. An immense amount of marketing - butter, eggs, etc. was taken in by the merchants' for which they exchanged goods or paid cash."¹ With such activity as this it is not strange that businesses soon outgrew their quarters and that the citizens of Onaga foresaw for her a rosy future.

This activity and interest in business pursuits permitted but little attention to be given to the appearance of the town. Although the residents were concerned almost solely with the success of their business ventures, a few made an effort to beautify their homes. The Onaga Journal² recognized their efforts by saying, "It is beginning to look a little more like home since people are beginning to fence in yards, and make preparations for planting shrubbery. Again May 8, 1879, the editor mentioned the

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, May 16, 1878.
2. Ibid., March 27, 1879.

improved appearance of streets, side walks, and yards duee to the newly added porches, picket fences, fresh paint, flowers and shrubs. But there was no concerted effort to improve the town as a whole, and undoubtedly the fences were built to serve a very necessary as well as an ornamental purpose. There was at this time no law requiring the owners of live stock to keep the stock penned. Live-stock roamed the streets at will and often to their own as well as the citizen's discomfort, as shown by this item, "Jake Smith's cattle are havang a wet time of it. Last week a calf tumbled into Hyman's cellar, where there were two feet of water, and Monday morning another was found swimming in Joseph Pecheur's cistern."¹

The lack of city government may have been responsible for the absence of better regulation of the streets. But the conditions were not remedied by the city officials for in 1880 a citizen, in an open letter² to the public, asked for what purpose the side walks and street crossings were constructed. He states that in Onaga it appears that the general use of sidewalks is a storage place for salt barrels, boxes, and obstructions; and that the crossings were apparently made for the farmers, on which to

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, October 28, 1880.
 2. Ibid., November 25, 1880.

stop their wagons. His complaint was that the farmers, in muddy weather, stopped their wagons on the street crossings, so that they might alight on dry walks, while pedestrians were forced to walk in the mud. This was evidently a common practice for the editor of The Onaga Journal complained that he noticed a lady compelled to wade in the mud because a farmer's wagon was parked on a crossing.¹

In common with other American towns, Onaga developed laws and restrictions only when the existing practices made them imperative. Conditions were not anticipated and taken care of in advance. In 1879, the citizens realized that township organization would no longer suffice for Onaga, so steps were taken to incorporate the city. During July, 1879, the following petition was drawn up and signed by sixty two citizens: "To the Honorable John T. Morton, Judge of the Third Judicial District of the State of Kansas, Greeting: We, the undersigned citizens of the town of Onaga, in the county of Pottawatomie and State of Kansas, would respectfully represent that this is a town of more than two hundred and fifty inhabitants, and that we desire to be incorporated a City of the Third

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 29, 1881.

Class, under the Statutes of the State of Kansas, in such case made and provided with the following metes and bound to wit: Commencing at the northeast corner, of the southeast one fourth of section twenty seven, township six, range eleven, thence running south forty five rods and thence west twenty six rods and ten feet, thence north four hundred rods, then east one hundred and sixty rods to the place of beginning. And to the end that we may have a more perfect government of our town, that nuisances may be abated, for the better improvement of our town and streets, and that life and property may be more secure, and to do all things as the law directs a city of the Third Class may, and for other good and cogent reasons, we would respectfully ask that you grant us a corporate capacity at your earliest convenience, for which your petitioners will ever pray."¹

On August 15, 1879, Onaga was incorporated a city of the Third Class. The first city election was called for August 29, 1879, at which time the following citizens were elected to office:² mayor, R. A. Thomas; police judge, Amos E. Landon; treasurer, J. R. Thomas; clerk, G. C. Nold; marshal, K. S. Randel; and these councilmen, R. S. Riehl, Thomas O'Meara, E. D. Gillett, J. H. Randel, and C. A. Viles. The first council meeting was held

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 24, 1879.

2. Ibid., September 13, 1879.

on the sixth of September, 1879, and the first business was to grant a license, costing ten dollars, to the Great Van Amburg Show.¹ The council assembled again on the eighth of the same month and granted dram shop licenses to T. J. Rosa and C. E. Townshend for \$37.50 each, and to August Restow for \$43.75.² Later, on the twelfth of September, the council licensed A. Staab as a dram shop keeper.³

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, September 18, 1879.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GROWTH OF THE TOWN.

Mr. W. F. Challis, a young attorney, was elected mayor of Onaga in 1883.¹ Upon examination of the records he found that the description of the townsite in the petition for incorporation was incorrect. It was therefore found necessary to reincorporate the city, which was done June 15, 1883, with the following description of the townsite: "Commencing at the northeast corner of section thirty four in township number six, of Range number eleven, east of the sixth principal meridian in Kansas, in the county of Pottawatomie, in the state of Kansas, running thence south eighteen rods; thence east twenty six rods and ten feet; thence south forty five rods; thence west twenty six rods and ten feet; then south one hundred and twenty seven rods; thence west one hundred and sixty rods; thence north two hundred and forty rods; thence east one hundred and sixty rods, on and along the north line of said section thirty four to the place of beginning."²

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, April 12, 1883.

2. Ibid. June 21, 1883.

The political history of Onaga runs quite smoothly. There were a few times when the contest for office became rather spirited but at no time did any serious fight take place. A negro, Richard Armstrong, was elected mayor in 1885.¹ It was not the real intention of the citizens to elect him; they intended to give him only a large minority of the votes and thereby humiliate the other candidate. But when the votes were counted, it was found that the plan had worked too well for the negro was elected. As he was unable to conduct the council meetings, Mr. O.J. Grover presided and the mayor simply ratified Mr. Grover's action.²

The first real contest over an issue occurred in 1887. The council had refused the necessary expenditures for the repair of the city well. The "Liberal" ticket, represented by the faction desiring the repairs, was nominated in open caucus on the Saturday afternoon preceding the election. The "City" ticket, which confirmed the action of the Council, was the result of back room politics and the public did not know who nominated them.

.....

1. The Onaga Democrat, November 19, 1885.
2. Related by L.L. O'Mara to writer, April 1929.

The Liberal ticket won, despite the fact that the City ticket made an effort to control the ballots of the sixty six women who voted.¹ Again in 1891, the women's vote was eagerly solicited. The issue involved was the re-licensing of the billiard hall. The editor of the Onaga Herald² complained of their vote for he said it was fair to assume that the women defeated the billiard hall. Either they were misinformed on the question, or as independent voters, could not be relied upon, for they voted for the old council which had already licensed the billiard hall. The female citizens actively entered the field of city politics for a third time in 1893. In the Onaga Herald, March 30, 1893, appeared this notice, "All voters of the city of Onaga, male or female, who are in favor of the enforcement of all the laws, including the prohibition law, are requested to meet at Grover's Hall, Saturday, April the first, to place in nomination candidates for mayor, councilmen, and police judge. (signed) Many Citizens." This meeting was evidently called by the women for there was only one ticket, and it was put up by the women, who

.....

1. The Onaga Democrat, April 7, 1887.

2. The Onaga Herald, April 9, 1891.

outvoted men sixty one to forty five.¹ But this political activity of the women was not sustained, for in the next election only twenty four votes were cast and not one of them by a woman.² There were no issues and few were interested in the outcome. The digging of a city well provided an issue in 1896. It was reported that Mr. J. W. Dunn, a candidate for councilman, was unfavorable to the proposition. Mr. Dunn received thirty six votes and Mr. J. S. Myers, who had been put up quietly, by those favorable to the well, received thirty five.³

Although the Australian Ballot system had been used in Onaga since 1894, it was not until 1897 that the women voters, in any great number, became acquainted with the method. The Onaga Register, April 8, 1897, gave this account of their experiences: "One of the great features of the election was the number of the fair sex who exercised the right of franchise. Forty six ladies bravely marched up to the polls, and encompassed about with the majesty and red tape of that great guardian of the precious liberties of Free America - the Australian

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, April 6, 1893.
2. Ibid., April 5, 1894.
3. Ibid., April 9, 1896.

Ballot System - passed thru the ordeal and triumphantly cast their votes... Several amusing incidents occurred, due, of course, to the inexperience of the ladies in such matters. One lady left her pocketbook in the voting booth and another insisted that one of her lady friends should accompany her into the booth."

After the second incorporation of the city, a more careful check was made on city finances. A notice was published, asking all persons having claims against the city to leave the amount with certain persons named, in order that the city might ascertain its exact indebtedness.¹ The debt amounted to four hundred dollars, so it was necessary to levy a tax of five mills on the \$80,000 worth of taxable property in the city, to raise the necessary amount.² The tax levy was reduced to four mills in 1887³ and increased to five mills in 1889.⁴ It was increased to ten mills on the dollar in 1898 in order to wipe out a debt incurred by reasons of extensive improvements made on street gutters.⁵

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 5, 1883.
2. Ibid., July 19, 1883.
3. The Onaga Democrat, August 4, 1887.
4. Ibid., August 15, 1889.
5. The Onaga Courier, July 14, 1898.

The tax levies are fairly indicative of the even progress of Onaga. There were no booms. There was no over speculation in building. Only when there was a pressing demand did extensions take place. During the summer of 1885, there was a need for a half dozen rental properties, and as most of the desirable building sites had been taken up, an addition known as Gunn's Addition was added to the townsite.

The same conservatism was shown by the City Council in its conduct of fire prevention, street lights, and water. A fire department was not established in the city until 1887, although there had been a need for one long before that time. The first fire occurred in the fall of 1878. A grain elevator, corn cribs, 300 bushels of corn and 600 bushels of barley, together with a small engine were destroyed.¹ The entire loss was about \$1000. The first fire which really threatened the town occurred in February 1883. The blaze started on the second floor of a building occupied by a saloon. The building with its contents and the buildings on each side of it were destroyed.² A second disastrous fire broke out in December, 1886.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, October 3, 1878.

2. Ibid., February 8, 1883.

This time the fire started in the livery barn, which was consumed, then, due to a high wind, the fire spread rapidly, burning a meat market and the Batson House, the town's only hotel.¹

It was now obvious that the council must take some action. Prior to this time, a volunteer fire company of about thirty members had been organized, but disbanded when the city refused them aid in securing the necessary equipment.² By ordinance number thirty four, a City Fire Department was established in June 1887.³ It was to consist of a chief and his assistant, known as the captain, of the Fire Department, and a sufficient number of volunteers to handle the engine and hose. The members of the Department elected the chief by secret ballot and he, in turn, appointed his assistant. The equipment consisted of a hand engine, purchased at a cost of \$2000, 1200 feet of hose, and two large cisterns. The first trial of the engine proved satisfactory as noted by this account: "The new fire bell sounded the first alarm last Tuesday afternoon and the summons was quickly responded to by a

.....

1. The Onaga Democrat, December 13, 1886.
2. Ibid., December 31, 1885.
3. Ibid., June 9, 1887.

grand outpouring of firemen and common citizens, who rushed to the scene of action. In an incredibly short time they had the engine in position, at the upper cistern, and the hose cart on the run, and within ten minutes from the first alarm, a copious stream of water was deluging the building and rapidly subduing the flames."¹

The same deliberate policy was evidenced in regard to street lighting. In fact, not until individual business men took upon themselves the responsibility of providing lights in front of their places of businesses, did the city administration recognize that the need existed. As early as 1889, two enterprising business firms, Miller Brothers and A. Hyman, installed street lamps in front of their business houses.² Mr. J. A. Kester, druggist, in January, 1898, placed a gas lamp in front of his store and kept it in running order at his own expense.³ In August of the same year, a number of business men installed similar lights, which burned gas, generated from gasoline.⁴ At last, the city completed arrangements for the installation of seven street lights, in January 1899.⁵

.....

1. The Onaga Democrat, November 21, 1887.
2. Ibid., December 5, 1889.
3. The Onaga Courier, January 5, 1898.
4. Ibid., August 4, 1898.
5. The Onaga Herald, January 5, 1899.

The question of the water supply had been a serious one from the beginning of the town. The Onaga Journal, September 13, 1878, carried this item: "The town pump has been fixed up in good shape, and at present, supplies the entire community. On last Saturday, five hundred buckets were carried from that well." Many residents had no wells on their premises, often because of the expense of digging. When the town well gave out, they were compelled to carry water from Hise Creek in the south part of town.¹ In the winter of 1879, the creek was frozen over and it was necessary to haul water from the Vermillion about a mile distant.² The town well proved inadequate in the spring of 1882, which called for this complaint: "Last fall during the dry spell, a few of our citizens contributed funds and put down a well and rigged a pump, all for the benefit of the public. All winter our liverymen, and all else that owned a horse, watered at this well. Now the pump has given out and no one seems to want to fix it. The parties who have watered from ten to fifty horses daily are the ones who have had all the benefit, and it seems but justice that they should put

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 9, 1879.

2. Ibid.

it in repair."¹ The situation was met by Mr. Lou Fields, who fitted up a water tank on a wagon and delivered water to the households over the city.² It was necessary to resort to the same procedure in the spring of 1894 as the wells and most of the cisterns failed.³ The question of the town pump was of sufficient importance to constitute the main issue in the city election of 1896.⁴

The council had early shown an interest in street improvement. As the conditions of the streets and sidewalks reflected in a measure the prosperity and progress of the town, more attention was given to this problem of city government than to light, water or fire protection. Street crossings and gutters were installed in 1880 but as the latter were of the open type, they proved an unpleasant feature of travel. The open gutters, crossing the main street were changed to the underground type in 1886.⁵ They were covered with old plank, making travel along the streets much more comfortable. The first crossings were of pine plank, which soon began to splinter, so were replaced by oak plank. Later the city

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 30, 1882.
2. Ibid., May 25, 1882.
3. The Onaga Herald, March 29, 1894.
4. Ibid., April 9, 1896.
5. The Onaga Democrat, September 9, 1886.

installed stone crossings which proved much more satisfactory.¹ A side walk to the school house was built by popular subscription in 1882, and other walks were built by property owners at the same time.² In 1896 the city council ordered several blocks of side walk constructed. The first cement walk was built by the Onaga State Bank in 1899.³ When the first buildings were erected most of them were built with the floor level several feet above the side walk. In 1891, steps were taken to lower the floors to the street level.⁴ This added greatly to the appearance of the street for the entrance steps were then discarded. It was also an advantage to the merchant for he could display his goods more effectively. The change was a slow one, however, for it involved both expense and inconvenience.

Another project to improve the appearance of the streets aroused public interest in the summer of 1900. The city council passed a resolution removing the hitching racks from the streets. The racks were unsightly and obstructed the streets for a few teams tied along the

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, December 4, 1890.
2. The Onaga Journal, October 19, 1882.
3. The Onaga Herald, September 7, 1899.
4. Ibid., April 30, 1891.

streets prevented others from driving up to the business houses to unload produce or load purchases. Besides, as the editor of the Onaga Herald¹ argued, no metropolitan city had hitch racks along her streets, so why should Onaga tolerate them. But the move met with decided opposition - some from the merchants who feared the disfavor of the farmers, and still more opposition from the farmers themselves. A few merchants solved the problem by placing tie rings in the side walk in front of their property. On the day the racks were to be removed, two petitions were signed and presented to the council, one favoring the removal and the other opposing such procedure.² At a called meeting, the council tabled the petitions, but at a second called meeting the pressure of opposition had become strong enough to induce the council to permit the hitching racks to be put back.³ The editor of The Onaga Herald opposed their return with this argument: "It will be remembered that some opposition was met when the town cow was ordered off the streets, but no one wants cows or horses loose on our streets again."⁴ The

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, July 5, 1900.

2. Ibid., June 23, 1900.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

property owners who reinstalled hitching racks were required to use posts of sawed lumber six by six inches, of uniform height, and either gas pipe or four by four wooden rails. This incident is a good illustration of the natural conservatism of the citizens. It also shows the eagerness of the residents to please the farmers, for the business rivalry between small towns was intense. Havensville and Wheaton were less than ten miles away, and the fact was never forgotten when the wishes or convenience of the farmers were considered.

An enterprise carried on wholly apart from any aid from the city government was the Onaga Cemetery Association. The women were active in taking the necessary initial steps. They secured a five acre tract of land about three quarters of a mile north of town. The land was donated by Major U. R. Jenkins.¹ The women then held an ice cream festival to raise funds to fence the land. In spite of their effective work, when the notice was published calling a meeting of interested citizens to elect officers, it was specifically stated that only gentlemen could serve as officers.² When the charter was obtained in September,

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, August 12, 1880.

2. Ibid.

Although the crop of that year was short, the farmers bought liberally during the summer. In one week in July, 1881, Thomas Brothers sold seven lumber wagons, eleven mowing machines, and sixteen sulky hay rakes, together with a large amount of other goods.¹ By 1883, the effects of the poor crop were gone and business was greatly stimulated. The Onaga Journal, May 10, 1883, observed that, "in every part of town improvements can be seen. E. D. Gillett is putting up three new residences on Lucien Street, and new buildings are in the course of erection in every direction." And again, under date of May 31, 1883, the same paper notes, "The lumber trade is booming in Onaga. Last Saturday, we noticed ten teams, at one time, waiting to be loaded with lumber to go to the country. Besides these, several other loads were hauled away during the day. We hear of several new residences, barns, etc. that are in the course of erection in this vicinity." In fact, after the harvest of that year, it was with difficulty that the two lumber yards kept enough material on hand to supply the demand.

The adverse effect of bad crops was experienced in 1884. During the last two months of the year there were four business failures in Onaga. The first to close was

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 28, 1881.

the grocery store of G. W. Black, then C. D. Roger's hardware and implement store, followed by the banking house of Amos E. Landon, and finally D. T. H. Humphrey's drugstore.¹ The pressure of hard times was especially felt at Christmas time. The custom of the community Christmas tree was abandoned and the sale of holiday goods was very slight.²

But this was only a temporary depression, for in the latter part of the eighties, the business of the town grew steadily. The Onaga City Bank was organized in 1886, with an authorized capital of \$35,000 and a paid up capital of \$18,000.³ Three years later, the Onaga Exchange Bank opened.⁴ On July 1, 1899, the former secured a charter from the state and became the Onaga State Bank.⁵ Their statements for January 1896 showed that there was on deposit \$81,866.22, or nearly seventy five dollars for every inhabitant of the community.⁶

By the end of the nineties, Onaga had become a trading center for a large territory. One Saturday afternoon in September, 1899,⁷ at four o'clock, there were one

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 22, 1885.
2. Ibid., January 1, 1885.
3. The Onaga Democrat, July 22, 1886.
4. Ibid., January 10, 1889.
5. The Onaga Herald, July 6, 1899.
6. Ibid., January 9, 1896.
7. The Onaga Herald, September 7, 1899.

hundred and five farmer's teams tied on the main streets, and thirty five tied elsewhere, making in all one hundred and forty teams. Another Saturday in April, 1900, the town presented this picture: "The city was full of people and teams, the saw mill was running, an auction sale of blooded cattle was in progress at the stock yards; three cars of hogs were received at the yards; workmen were busy on the new hotel; the elevator was adding its share to the hum of industry; and the lumber yard was busy. All together, Onaga was about the liveliest town that day in any portion of our busy state."¹

All successful business develops as the result of a demand for it in the community. That an enterprise cannot succeed without a real need for it in the community was clearly demonstrated by the failure of the Onaga Creamery. A company, known as Holt and Holt of Osceola, Iowa, erected and put in operation a cheese factory in the spring of 1886.² The company issued 140 shares of stock at fifty dollars a share, of which Holt and Holt took twenty shares.³ The affairs of the company were to be managed by the stock

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, April 19, 1900.
2. The Onaga Democrat, February 14, 1886.
3. Ibid.

holders, most of whom were farmers of the vicinity.¹ During the first months of operation, the venture was successful. About 5000 pounds of milk was consumed daily for which the farmers were paid sixty cents per hundred pounds.² The cheese commanded a high price in Kansas City. In August of the first year, \$1500 in dividends, representing the profits for one month, were distributed to the stock holders.³ In spite of this auspicious beginning, the amount of milk declined and the management proved inefficient, so by December, 1888, the creamery was forced to close.⁴ The next spring a futile attempt to start up the plant failed, and July, 1889, the Onaga Creamery was offered for sale.⁵ During the summer of 1890, another attempt was made to revive the business, but it was impossible to obtain cream or milk in paying quantities. Finally, in 1894, the property was converted into a feed store.⁶ The failure of this industry was due to the fact that the farmers were interested in beef cattle, which at this time were more profitable than dairy cattle.

.....

1. The Onaga Democrat, February 14, 1886.

2. Ibid., July 8, 1886.

3. Ibid., August 26, 1886.

4. Ibid., December 13, 1888.

5. Ibid., July 11, 1889.

6. The Onaga Herald, October 18, 1894.

During the early nineties, an increasing need for a mill was felt. The grain crops had increased. Farmers now planted larger acreage, made possible by the wider use of farm machinery. The Onaga Roller Mills was opened for business in the summer of 1896.¹ One day in October of that year, the mills shipped 2000 pounds of flour to Wheaton, 2000 pounds to St. Clere, and sold 2700 pounds to firms in Onaga, besides 1000 pounds of feed and general business.² Its patronage extended over a wide area as wheat was received from Soldier Creek and Louisville. The Phoenix Mill was built by a local company at a cost of \$2000.³ It opened for business in 1898. Its equipment included a fifteen horsepower engine, one set of French burrs, a corn sheller, elevators, and meal and buckwheat screens.

Prior to 1898, Onaga's only means of rapid communication had been the telegraph. In this year the Tri-State Telephone Company sold shares of stock in the town and connected Onaga with a long distance line from Kansas City.⁴ The station was in J. A. Kester's drug

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, July 30, 1896.
2. The Onaga Register, October 29, 1896.
3. The Onaga Herald, December 1, 1898.
4. Ibid., May 2, 1898.

store. As early as 1878 some interest in a telephone was shown when some boys rigged up a line across the main street. The Onaga Journal¹ noted that it was possible to hear over the wire although the speakers were fifty feet apart. Dr. E. F. Richardson installed a private line between his residence and office in January, 1898. This was the first telephone in the town.²

The status of Onaga was well expressed by Miss Flora E. Pool, special correspondant of the Topeka Mail and Breeze, who wrote the following account after a visit to the city in 1900: "Onaga lives without one experience so common to Kansas towns. It has no remembrance of a boom, but has simply gained from year to year, the actual credit which is reflected from every business house in town. Ther side walks are an indication of careful administration. The stores are run on an extensive scale and carry stocks worth from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Eight two-story buildings show the reliability of its merchants, and the banks maintain an excellent business, with combined capitals of \$50,000 and deposits of \$200,000. In addition to several fine residences, that originally cost

.....

1. The Onaga Journal,
2. The Onaga Herald, January 6, 1898.

from \$2000 to \$3000, there is a large number of new ones just completed. The business men are not spasmodic, but they know the only way to improve their town is to keep everlastingly at it. There is very little property for sale, few empty houses, and a spirit of improvement that pervades every property owner."¹

.....
1. The Onaga Herald, May 24, 1900.

CHAPTER V.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.

The north eastern part of Pottawatomie County offered many attractive opportunities to the settlers. The country is rolling, well watered by streams and springs, sufficient timber for all purposes, rock for building, good bottom land along the streams, and plenty of prairie for grazing. The first five years of Onaga's growth saw a rapid development of the surrounding country. The editor of the Onaga Journal made this comment in a moment of retrospect: "Five years ago when we came to Onaga, we could drive in any direction from town and rarely meet a fence on the upland. Now all of the high prairie is fenced and thousands of acres under cultivation, producing corn and hogs. There is not more than a section of land unfenced within three or four miles of town, where but a few years ago there was not a house to be seen."¹

Much of the land around Onaga had been homesteaded, although a portion was included in the railroad lands and was purchased by the settlers. In the fall of 1896, the owners of such lands felt much anxiety by the discovery that no patents had been issued to the railroad companies by the government, thus making the title to the land

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, June 7, 1883.

very much in doubt.¹ Soon the farmers were plunged into difficulties for unscrupulous men of the community began filing on land which had been occupied for years and upon which taxes had been paid regularly by the possessors. A firm, at Havensville, offered to furnish information relative to unpatented lands, locate them, and then take a note for two hundred dollars from the homesteader, payable when the land was secured.² The farmers appealed to the Land Office at Topeka, but securing no satisfaction, they took the matter into their own hands and forcibly evicted the would be homesteader. One such man, Ben Ault, hauled a load of lumber to a farm and unloaded it in a field. During the night, the lumber must have been struck by a cyclone or some other propellive force for the next day the lumber was found scattered on all roads leading from the corner of the field for a radius of a mile. One board was found near the scales of the lumber yard in Onaga marked, "Ben Ault,"³ The lumber of other prospective squatters received like treatment. Before the matter was settled, many farmers had paid hundreds of dollars in buying off the homesteaders. One jumper

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, December 17, 1896.

2. Ibid., December 24, 1896.

3. Ibid., December 17, 1896.

offered to settle with the farmer for \$600, at the time of filing his claim. Later he reduced his demand to a good cow and calf, and finally agreed to take a pig.¹ Late in the month of December, 1896, the Commissioner of the General Land Office at Washington expressed this opinion. "While it is true that no patents have ever been issued to the railroad companies, the fact remains that the settlers purchased in good faith and their status has been defined by Congress. As the law now stands, no settler on bond aided railroad lands can be dispossessed of his holdings."² Later in 1898, the matter was definitely settled when the government issued patents to the holders of railroad lands.³

The land, upon which the settlers soon had growing crops, was very fertile. It was virgin prairie, and in the early years of its cultivation produced larger crops than at a later period. Eighty bushels of corn to the acre was not uncommon at first, while by the nineties, fifty bushels to the acre was the general yield. It was the common custom in the early years to exhibit, at conspicuous places in the town any unusually large specimen of crops. Typical of such exhibitions are

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, January 7, 1897.
2. Ibid., December 31, 1896.
3. Ibid., June 9, 1898.

these: "T. H. Kelly, four and one half miles north of Onaga, brought in wheat, the tallest of which is six feet. Hugh Sutherland raised rye, some head containing as many as one hundred and three full sized grains."¹

"Mrs. Perot brought to town a mammoth cabbage, weighing fifteen pounds."²

The settler set out an orchard as soon as he was able. To supply the demand for nursery stock, J. J. Measer established a nursery at Vienna. He raised the usual varieties of fruit trees, and in addition, nectarines, ornamental trees and shrubs and Osage orange plants.³

A reporter for The Onaga Journal, wrote: "From observation, we are led to believe that there are more fruit trees being planted in Pottawatomie County, the present season, than all times past, notwithstanding the many orchards now in successful bearing. We have made it our business, while canvassing this county five different seasons, to learn as far as possible what varieties of apples are succeeding best, and find that the preference lies between Ben Davis, Winesaps and Missouri Pippin for keepers."⁴ A typical orchard is described in this account: "C. W. Thompson started improving his homestead seven or eight years ago,

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, June 7, 1878.
2. Ibid., October 7, 1880.
3. The Kansas Reporter, March 1, 1877.
4. The Onaga Journal, April 17, 1879.

but started his orchard five years ago. He had the grasshoppers to contend with, but by persistently fighting them, and carrying water to the young trees, he succeeded in saving them. He has four hundred apple trees just beginning to bear and as many peach trees loaded down with peaches. He also has cherry, pear, and other fruit trees, also blackberries, strawberries, currants, and all kinds of small fruit. His orchard is enclosed by a hedge fence to protect the trees. This is only one out of hundreds of orchards in this country, all in a thriving condition."¹ Apple production exceeded the demand of the home market, and in the middle nineties, apples were shipped out."²

Many kinds of trees flourished in this locality. One farmer, who lived on the high prairies a few miles west of Onaga, exhibited a sample of maple syrup made from the sap of soft maple trees, which he had planted nine years before. The trees were raised from seed, and in the nine year period had obtained the diameter of eight to ten inches.³ Another farmer planted about twenty

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 19, 1879.
2. The Onaga Herald, November 8, 1894.
3. The Onaga Journal, March 13, 1881.

acres with ground maple, cottonwood and walnut seed. Within seven years time the cottonwood and maple trees were twelve inches in diameter, and the walnuts six to ten inches.¹ In the spring of 1890, and again in 1891, shipments of walnut logs were made to Canada.² The price received was twenty dollars per thousand feet. These logs were from native timber of which a considerable portion was walnut.

In the early period of settlement, not only were the efforts of the settler bountifully rewarded, but nature in her natural state was very generous. The Onaga Journal, June 5, 1879 noted the abundance of the wild strawberry in this item: "Not far from Onaga is a quarter section of land more or less covered with strawberries. Parties are there picking all the time, and still the supply seems not to be exhausted. This is not the only berry patch in this vicinity but almost any direction from town you can run into a patch of this delightful little berry." Certain wild fowl, practically unknown in the region today, were common in the early days. Almost every hill formed a camping ground for prairie chickens.³ In 1880, the workmen on the railroad re-

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 8, 1885.
2. The Onaga Herald, January 22, 1891.
3. The Onaga Herald, March 15, 1900.

ported finding prairie chickens along the tracks with their necks broken.¹ The birds had flown against the telegraph wires with such force as to kill them. The disappearance of the prairie chicken was partly due to the presence of large herds of cattle on the prairie, and the widespread plowing of the sod which destroyed their nesting places.

Almost every quarter section of land for six or eight miles north and northeast of Onaga, had coal cropping out along the bluffs. In January 1879, coal was brought to Onaga from French Creek, and burned by the residents, who pronounced it excellent quality.² By 1885 a shaft had been opened there and was operated with some success. While coal was never mined in paying quantities, its presence added to the faith of the settlers in the possibilities of the future. The editor of The Onaga Journal probably expressed the general attitude when he said, "Verily we have in our midst a rich coal field. All that is needed is a little money to develop the rich veins."³

Another natural feature of this region was a mineral spring, located about a mile north of Onaga.

.....

- 1. The Onaga Journal, October 28, 1880.
- 2. Ibid., January 9, 1879.
- 3. The Onaga Journal, January 9, 1879.

The water was soft, having a temperature about 60° F. and flowed from the main spring at the rate of three gallons a minute.¹ The owner operated a bath house with hot and cold showers, open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays, at twenty five cents a bath.

The state chemist made the following analysis of the water:²

sulphate of calcium	1.41 gr.
chloride of calcium	0.39 "
chloride of magnesia	1.29 "
chloride of sodium	2.46 "
arsenic	0.6 "
oxide of iron	2.22 "

The editor again expressed the belief that only the lack of capital to build the proper sanitarium and bath houses, prevented the community from becoming a rival of Excelsior Springs. In 1891, a man arrived from Topeka to try the medicinal properties of the springs and reported speedy relief.³ In the day of buggy rides, a trip to the springs provided an evening's diversion for many citizens.

But fertile soil alone was not enough to make prosperous farmers; they needed machinery to work the soil. Ami Bonjour, of the French settlement, bought an eighteen inch breaking plow, at Leavenworth, in 1857, at a cost of twenty five dollars.⁴ It was made to run by itself,

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, December 31, 1891.

2. Ibid.,

3. Ibid., July 30, 1891.

4. Crevecoeur, p. 160.

for the attention of the driver was entirely taken up with the three yoke oxen required to pull it. Riding and walking plows were offered for sale in Onaga in 1878. The lister, a combined plow and corn planter requiring but one operation, was popular with the farmers in the early eighties.¹ This machine planted the corn in the bottom of the furrow which made it possible to cover the roots with loose dirt, thereby conserving moisture. The first reaper brought to the locality was an Ohio Chief reaper, owned by four men in partnership in 1865.² The machine required a man to ride on it to rake the grain to one side. The cost of the machine was over \$200, making it almost prohibitive to the general farmer. A resident of Louisville advertised, in 1877, the sale of a second hand Russell mowing machine, which was so arranged, that a reaper attachment could be put on. A new machine of this type was offered for \$135, or the mower alone for \$75.³ The advocates of the reaper pointed out that there was no delay when using the machine; no running after harvest hands; and that the grain, cut during the day, could be stacked after sun down.⁴ In 1882,

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 10, 1881.
2. Crevecoeur, p. 160.
3. The Kansas Reporter, August 16, 1877.
4. Ibid., June 21, 1877.

Roger Brothers sold a Buckeye dropper, which dumped the grain in piles, and the same year, a Buckeye cord binder harvester.¹ It was the first self binder in the vicinity. Binders were expensive and as late as 1896, the purchase of one furnished an item for the paper, as noted by the following: "Mr. George A. McVicar has purchased a brand new binder. It is the finest piece of machinery in the neighborhood and the only binder."² During the late seventies, it was not uncommon to resort to the cradle to cut the grain, especially if the fields were wet.

It was the common practice to demonstrate any new farm implement brought into the community by the implement dealers. The following item, in 1900, is typical of the demonstrations: "Last Saturday, Krouse Brothers exhibited on the streets of Onaga a McCormick corn husker and shredder, the first of its kind ever brought to the vicinity. The machine attracted a large crowd of farmers, young and old, who will watch with interest the success or failure."³ The late nineties saw rapid adoption of two rowed cultivators called monitors. Their sale was so heavy, here as all over the country, that in June, 1897, none were

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, June 22, 1882.
2. The Onaga Herald, June 25, 1896.
3. Ibid., October 25, 1900.

available, even at the factory.¹ In this same period, wind mills were widely installed. Still another machine coming into use was the cream separator. The Rector Automatic separator was advertised for seven dollars.²

Almost every farmer had a wagon, but in the early period they were frequently very crude affairs. Mr. Henry Hoover, one of the earliest settlers, recalled that the first wagon he owned was one which he made himself. It was entirely of wood, cross sections of logs serving for wheels. The lubricating agent was soft soap.³

Wagons were the common means of conveyance, transporting the family to church or carrying the produce to market. The Onaga Journal⁴ mentions, in 1878, that a citizen and his wife were out riding one evening when their wagon turned over, throwing them out. Later the buck-board was used as a lighter conveyance. In the early eighties, it was superceded by the spring wagon. But few farmers could afford one, and like the binder, the sale of a spring wagon called forth such comment as, "Mr. George Toothacher pulled out from Thomas Brothers implement sheds, the other day, a bran new spring wagon. This looks like business, for if there is anything a

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, June 3, 1897.
2. The Onaga Courier, April 27, 1897.
3. The Onaga Herald, August 3, 1893.
4. The Onaga Journal, November 28, 1878.

farmer needs, it is a good spring wagon."¹ In the middle of the nineties, the buggy came into general use. Frequently long strings of buggies, one tied behind the other, were taken through the country and sold to the farmer.

The Onaga Herald called attention to the general use of buggies and spring wagons in these paragraphs: "At church at Vienna Sunday, there were ten top buggies, five road wagons, six double seated spring wagons, and a few saddle horses."² "There are very few farmers, about here, who do not own a good buggy, carriage, or spring wagon. If you don't think so just notice them in town most any day."³

The accounts of the Fourth of July Celebration of the late seventies mentioned only wagons as the vehicles used, but in 1899, carriages were mentioned in the parade.

Another item of the farmer's equipment was the fence. There were in Pottawatomie County, in 1878, 146,790 rods of rail fence, 106,874 rods of wire, 62,427 rods of board, 49,850 of hedge and 45,113 of stone.⁴ Rail and board fences were usually used to enclose the cultivated fields around the buildings, while the wire

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, March 10, 1881.

2. The Onaga Herald, September 17, 1896.

3. Ibid., June 15, 1899.

4. First Annual Report of State Board of Agriculture. p.1189.

fence was used on the prairie.¹ Soon the amount of wire fence was far in excess of the other types because of the comparative economy in cost and time involved in construction. The first kind of wire fence was smooth ungalvanized wire, which served a better purpose in rubbing flies off cattle's backs than it did to turn them.² Extravagant claims were made for barb wire when it was first introduced into this vicinity in the middle seventies. It was said that posts need be set no nearer than two rods, and that two strands of wire were sufficient.³ But it was soon found necessary to place the posts nearer to each other and to use three wires. As the cost of barb wire was at first eighteen cents a pound, though later reduced to eleven and a half, the price made the fence prohibitive, to some farmers.⁴ Inventive minds endeavored to fasten barbs on smooth wire, but it was soon found that the barbs collected in bunches, leaving long lengths of smooth wire. Only the standard barb wire proved satisfactory. Strange as it may seem, many people, instead of welcoming barb wire, condemned it. Livestock did not exercise the proper respect for the new

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, March 15, 1900.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

type of fence and much crippled and disabled stock was the result. Often the farmer was obliged to kill the injured animals. As late as 1891 this unfavorable attitude was expressed by the writer of the following: "We learn that George McVicar had a valuable horse so badly cut by a barb wire fence, last week, that the animal died. The originator of barb wire may have done a good thing for timberless regions, but he got up a plan for killing and maiming more horses than it would take to fence the whole state of Kansas with a five wire fence."¹

When stockmen first settled in the county, they began to raise sheep on an extensive scale, but sheep grazing gave way to cattle and hog raising with the advent of the fence. The eighties saw hog raising on a large scale. Each Monday, early in the morning, wagons loaded with hogs appeared on the street. Some times as many as twenty wagons arrived in one day. The following item gives some idea of the extent of this traffic: "The hoggishest day for a long time was Monday. It was nothing but hogs, hogs, hogs all day; and some of the finest hogs we ever saw were shipped to eastern markets."² If a farmer had several loads to sell, it was usually necessary for him to call upon his neighbors to help haul

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, July 9, 1891.
2. The Onaga Journal, August 2, 1878.

the hogs to market. He would visit his neighbors on Sunday, complete the arrangements; and the next morning saw them on the streets of Onaga.

In the nineties the interest had shifted to cattle. As early as 1879, a traveler noted twenty large herds of cattle distributed at different points on the prairie, visible a couple of miles west of Onaga.¹ Many settlers were unfamiliar with stock raising on the prairies, and during the eighties there was much loss of stock. During a severe winter in 1882, many stockmen lost cattle which had not been properly cared for through the winter.² Upland prairie hay was not sufficient feed for the cattle. Again in 1885, disease carried off large numbers of cattle and many died from lack of water and proper care.³ By the early nineties, the cattle industry around Onaga became outstanding. The railroad company, recognizing the importance of Onaga as a shipping center, installed scales at the stockyards for the use of the shippers.⁴ This was the period of the rate wars between railroads. Competing companies sent their representatives into the community, underbidding one another for patronage, to the detriment of the roads but to the profit of the farmers.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, December 2, 1880.

2. Ibid., March 2, 1882.

3. Ibid., January 29, 1885.

4. The Onaga Herald, March 17, 1892.

It is easy to imagine the interest and excitement which prevailed when a special train left Onaga carrying cattle to Chicago. From the time the sleek, fat cattle were driven from the farmer's feed lots, until they were loaded into cars, they were the objects of interest. To feed several car loads of cattle had required the combined efforts of the working force of the farm, and the cattle's welfare had been the foremost consideration during the entire winter. Often some of the cattle had been raised on the farm and a special interest was felt for them. As the neighbors gathered to help drive the cattle to the stockyards, they speculated on their weight, quality and the price the cattle would bring. And always when the cattle reached the stockyards, many disengaged citizens came to the yards to watch the proceedings. The banker was frequently among the spectators. His interest was very genuine for he often held a mortgage on the cattle.

But the interest in the project was not ended when the train pulled out, for in those days of cut throat competition, the railroads tried to outdo one another in the consideration shown the shippers and attendants, and in the time record to Chicago. The railway companies often had meals served the shippers in the caboose. One man recalled that on a trip to Chicago with a trainload of

.....

cattle, the train lost time in reaching Leavenworth. This was increased by a delay of several hours in the yards in Kansas City. Finally the freight cars were set out leaving only eight cars of cattle when the train left Kansas City Sunday evening. It was then twelve hours late and the company had agreed to have the cattle in Chicago at seven o'clock Monday morning. When the shipper complained to the conductor of the train he said, "Go tell the engineer how fast you want to go. We have a clear track from here to Chicago." The shipper got more than he bargained for; the train went so fast he could not stay on the seat but was compelled to sit on the floor of the caboose. By 12:30 p. m. the next noon the cattle were in the Chicago stockyards.¹ The railroad company had sidetracked their passenger trains for this cattle train in their attempt to keep the shipper's patronage.

Sometimes there were actual races between trains of competing lines to set the record to Chicago. One time in February 1894, a big shipment of cattle left Onaga and at Leavenworth, ten cars were transferred to the Rock Island and twenty one cars to the Burlington. Both trains made the trip in twenty hours and both

.....

1. Related by L. L. O'Meara to the writer, April 1929.

trains were accompanied by the livestock agents of the respective roads, who did their best to gratify the wishes of the shippers. Although they tied for the time record, the Burlington agent pointed out that his road cared for the stock properly upon its arrival, while the stock hauled by the Rock Island were unloaded in the yards in the night during a storm.¹

For the shippers and attendants, it was frequently their first trip to the big city. Young sons of the cattlemen and farm hands owed their first thrill of a great city to railroad passes. The spirit of rivalry extended to the shippers and they even tried to outdo one another in their purchases in Chicago. It was the common custom for them to buy black silk dress material for their wives, and each man tried to buy the best material. Mr. Wasson's expenditure of two dollars a yard was noteworthy of mention in the local newspaper.²

The shipments for the first four months of 1896 included 209 cars of stock.³ Two hundred and fifty cars were sent out during the first nine months of 1898,⁴

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, February 8, 1893.
2. Ibid., December 22, 1892.
3. Ibid., April 26, 1894.
4. Ibid., September 22, 1898.

and from January 1, to December 19, 1899, 233 cars were shipped.¹ Many cattle were shipped into the community from the western states. Usually the feeders were purchased by the the leading cattlemen in the region, and then sold to farmers in two or three carload lots. The railroad service of Onaga was inadequate for western shipments, so the cattle were brought to Alma, a point thirty miles south on the main line of the Rock Island, and then driven across the country. Horses furnished a part of the livestock shipments. Periodically, horse buyers came through the community and bought a carload or two of horses. Through the nineties the shipments averaged ten or twelve cars a year.²

While the railroad was responsible for the founding of Onaga, it did not adopt a policy of fostering actively the development of the country through which it ran. Its mismanagement gave rise to a succession of grievances by the citizens of Onaga. The Kansas Central began running trains to Onaga during December, 1877.³ This was the terminus until 1880. The service was notoriously

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, December 21, 1899.
2. Ibid., March 24, 1892.
3. Ibid., August 7, 1890.

bad from the beginning; a delay of twelve hours caused by the engine jumping the track was not uncommon.¹ Its equipment was entirely inadequate. On an excursion train, in 1880, stock cars were used for coaches.² It was the common practice to use rolling stock on the Kansas Central, which had been discarded as worthless on other lines.³ The dissatisfaction of the patrons is well voiced in this indictment, "As a wheel barrow line the narrow gauge may be a success, but as an institution to build up an interest in our city or vicinity, it is, under the present management, a complete failure. Let us try for something better."⁴

Demand for standard gauge was begun in the early eighties. The railroad company distributed standard gauge ties in 1886 but did nothing toward actual construction. Each fall the patrons were assured that the work would commence the next spring.⁵ After much agitation, the section men began pulling out the narrow gauge ties and replacing them with the long ones. The completion of the project at Onaga was celebrated in the following manner: "Last Friday, July 18, 1890, at 3:30 P. M.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, November 14, 1878.
2. Ibid., June 10, 1880.
3. The Onaga Herald, March 10, 1892.
4. The Onaga Democrat, April 21, 1887.
5. The Onaga Herald, August 28, 1890.

engine No. 427 pulled up to the platform of the depot in Onaga. Scores of citizens repaired to the yards to see the men complete the laying of the standard gauge. As soon as the engine made its appearance in the yard limits, she was hailed with a salute of giant powder, placed in the earth on the north side of the yards, and as the sound reverberated among the hills, engine No. 427 and the narrow gauge engine, standing on the main track east of the depot, responded with two long whistles."¹

Although there was now much less delay in freight shipments, since reloading at Leavenworth was unnecessary, the troubles of the Kansas Central were by no means at an end. New ties had been laid but the same light rails were used, and the standard equipment was much too heavy for them. After a tour of inspection, in May 1891, the Railroad Commission reported to the manager of the company that the road was unsafe and that the public safety demanded immediate attention.² But none was given. In June of that year, a wreck, due to a broken rail occurred, killing both fireman and engineer.³ The next year a wreck sent two stock cars, coach and baggage car over an embankment.⁴ The accident called for this denunciation:

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, July 24, 1890.
2. *Ibid.*, June 25, 1891.
3. *Ibid.*, June 15, 1891.
4. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1892.

"The people are paying taxes every year on bonds by which the road was built, and the company into whose hands the road has fallen, seem to care nothing for the interests, or even the lives of the people. The Union Pacific fought the building of the road for the reason that it would detract business from their lines, and since they have secured control of the Kansas Central, they have done all in their power to injure and prevent business from passing over it. Onaga is eighty two miles west of Leavenworth and our eastern mail arrives, if at all, from four to six o'clock in the evening. Leaving Leavenworth at nine in the morning, making seven to nine hours to cover the distance. From the west the condition is worse."¹

The train was late so often, that to arrive on time was an experience. The Leavenworth Times noted that the mail clerk announced that his arrival in Leavenworth on schedule one day in June, was the first time since the preceding October.²

Finally, in 1896, the light weight rails were replaced by heavy rails and the basswood ties by oak ones.³ A new company, known as the Leavenworth, Kansas City and Western, was formed in the fall of 1897, and

.....

1. The Onaga Herald,
2. Ibid., June 10, 1897.
3. Ibid., October 8, 1896.

thereafter operated the road. This company improved the rolling stock and road bed, expending \$200,000 on it in one season.¹ Passenger service was inaugurated which made it possible to leave Onaga at 6:40 A. M., transact business in Kansas City, and return at 9:21 P. M.² By October, 1898, the trains ran through to Kansas City. In spite of the improvement in the service, much was still to be desired, so much so, that the patrons soon interpreted the letters L. K. and W. to mean, "leave Kansas City and walk."

The poor railroad service which Onaga endured was responsible for continuous agitation to secure other lines through the community. A delegation of citizens was sent to Topeka to confer with Santa Fe officials, in regard to a prospective line through the vicinity, but the effort was futile.³ A proposition for extensions was always enthusiastically received, but usually the interest was solely on the part of Onagans. It is probably true that the lack of better railroad service did hinder the fullest development of the country. The editor of The Onaga Herald made the statement that real estate values had been degraded to such an extent that cultivated farms

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, October 8, 1896.
2. Ibid., June 30, 1898.
3. The Onaga Democrat, March 17, 1887.

along the Kansas Central were worth less per acre than raw prairie land of the same intrinsic value on the lines of the Union Pacific north and south and parallel to it.¹

Although the citizens were loud in their condemnation of the railroad, another means of transportation which they might have improved, namely the highways, long remained uncared for. Frequently there were dangerous places in the roads, causing annoyance for months before any action was taken. The Onaga Journal, November 28, 1878, mentioned a bad place in the road a few miles north of Onaga, where during the summer a man's wagon, with a fine parlor organ in it, was upset. Later a party of young men met with an accident at the same place, and in the fall, a wagon, in which Mr. A. Hyman and his wife were riding, turned over there. The account concluded with this admonition, "It is a dangerous place, and somebody should see to it." A steep hill south of town, known as the Fulton hill was a particularly bad piece of road. There were no side ditches near the top of the hill, and consequently the water ran down the road, making it impassable at times during the year.² About 1896 there was a definite attempt to put the roads in better condition; but the work was hampered by the fact that the labor was done by farmers,

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, June 25, 1891.

2. Ibid. May 21, 1891.

working out their poll taxes, and during the summer months when the farmers were busy, the roads were neglected.¹ During the muddy season, it was not an uncommon sight to see the wheels of vehicles so completely enveloped with mud that no part of the wheel, hub, spoke or tire could be seen.² At such times, an empty wagon was a load for two horses and four horses hitched to a wagon was often necessary. Bad roads had a very noticeable effect on the city for during such periods, business was practically at a standstill.

Because of the dominance of the agricultural interest in the community, farmers' organizations early found encouragement here. An early settler remembered that his father joined the Grange, in 1873, in order to receive aid promised the members of the organization. He sold his only calf for five dollars, most of which sum was required by the Grange, and then lived in daily expectation, through a hard winter, of the promised aid.³ But none was received. Notwithstanding such experiences, with farmers' organizations as this one, Farmers' Alliances were formed in the county in 1881. The resolutions of the County Farmers' Alliance, published in The Onaga Journal, March 25, 1886, follow:

"Where as, the object of this Alliance is to demand justice

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, May 21, 1891.

2. Ibid, January 28, 1897.

3. Ibid, March 15, 1900.

in all the affairs of this government and we ask the cooperation of all the Alliances, Granges, and laborers to help us bring this about through the medium of the ballot box, therefore, be it Resolved, That this alliance will not support any paper, or candidate for any office, that will not work to the best of their ability, for the interests of the farmers and laborers of this county. Resolved, That we may look upon the suspension of the coinage of silver as detrimental to the best interests of the masses of the people of this country, and ask that Congress shall establish the three classes of money now in use; making the three equal in value. Resolved, That we favor the limitation of the ownership of the land of this country, and request all papers, friendly to our cause, to copy these resolutions."

By January 1890, there were sixteen alliances in working order in the county. A county alliance was formed at Westmoreland, in March of that year and by December there were forty-five sub-alliances.¹ One group known as the Red Top Grange, purchased a year's supplies through the exchange of the state, with satisfactory results. Another organization, called the Lone Tree Alliance, made up of farmers a few miles east of Onaga, passed these resolutions:

.....

1. The Alliance News, December 12, 1890.

"Resolved, That we, the members of Lone Tree Alliance no. 1100 refuse to purchase anything but the Hapgood farming implements for the ensuing year, they being the only company selling to the Alliance. Resolved, That we refuse to purchase flour made by the Leavenworth Mills, as they refused to sell to the Alliance, and have shown themselves in every way antagonistic."¹ Earlier in the year, the same alliance had taken cognizance of an attack by disgruntled citizens on the county commissioners, by this set of resolutions: "Where as, it is alleged by The Onaga Democrat, a newspaper published in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, that the county commissioners of said county, have been guilty of gross neglect of the interest of the tax payers of the county, first in letting the contract for the county printing to The Westmoreland Indicator at higher rates than was bid by other good and responsible newspapers with a larger circulation throughout the county. Second, by letting the contract for examining the county treasurer's books to one Moore, who had been in the employ of the county clerk for some time past, agreeing to pay him \$700 when Mr. A.D. Moon, a disinterested party from Beloit, Kansas, offered to do it for \$600, and believing that it is the intention to cover up frauds that are believed to exist in the management of

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, April 10, 1890.

county affairs. Third, by paying \$222 out of the general fund for the publication of the call of the bond election in the township of Rock Creek, Belvue, St. Marys, Louisville and Pottawatomie--all in direct violation of the letter and spirit of the law. Therefore, be it resolved by the Lone Tree Farmer's Alliance of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, That we demand of the County Attorney to make a full and thorough investigation of the above alleged violations of law, by said county commissioners, and if it be found to be true, that he proceed against them in the manner prescribed by law. Resolved, That we tax payers of Pottawatomie County do most earnestly protest against the employment of a janitor at the expense of the county and earnestly demand the dismissal of the same."¹

In the fall election of 1890, the People's Party elected the entire county ticket and both members of the Legislature from Pottawatomie County.² Mrs. Mary Ellen Lease paid a visit to the county seat in July 1891. The editor of The Onaga Herald gave this account of her speech: "Last Friday, along with two thousand curiosity seekers, we went to Westmoreland to hear the wind mill of the Windy Wonder, (Mrs. Lease, of Wichita) discourse upon the windy theories of the wind party. The first feature was a parade, made up of the faithful and the blood washed--518 men, women,

.....

1. The Onaga Democrat, February 27, 1890.
2. The Onaga Herald, October 9, 1890.

and children in the parade. They looked somewhat crest-fallen, and the American flag partook of the feeling and hung its head as if it realized it had fallen into mighty bad company. The proportion of men to women in the parade was one to three.

"At two o'clock, Mrs. Lease began what proved to be a tirade of abuse upon the Republican party. She foasted the Republican party and the 'plutocratic' press, whatever that is. She went on at a great rate at the Congress for the rank and file the niggardly pension of four and one half cents a day, and giving Mrs. General Logan \$10, 000. There were three alliance G.A.R. men sitting near the writer. One of them took a pencil, and he found that four and one half cents a day amounted to \$1.35 a calendar month--sixty five cents less than the lowest pension paid. He seemed to think that the lady lied; he got mad, and with an oath he tore his alliance badge from his coat, threw it on the ground, and with his heel, stamped it into the cold clammy earth. His companion took off his badge also, and threw it down, remarking as he did that he had no more use for it. The last one of the trio moved away and an hour later the writer saw him in the center of a crowd of alliance men, and he also had discarded his badge and was telling the crowd that they

.....

were a lot of fools if they couldn't see through the infernal rebel scheme. A noticeable feature during her talk was the lack of applause. For over two hours the people sat and applauded but twice. Half an hour after she began to talk, the audience began to visit among themselves, and by the time an hour and a quarter had passed, a squad of one hundred and fifty people could have been placed in the center of the audience."¹

Such unfavorable editorial comment probably dampened the alliance ardor in the immediate vicinity of Onaga, for it was not so strong here as elsewhere in the county. The leaders of the alliance at Onaga were two disappointed office seekers. Many people felt that these men were interested in the Alliance movement in order to secure office. A number of the most prominent refused to ally themselves with men of that type. Thus at Onaga, due to the peculiar local situation, the Alliance found fewer supporters than in other parts of the county. Politically The Onaga Herald was a republican paper and its hostile attacks on the alliance contributed to the lack of popularity of the movement. The late nineties were prosperous years for the farmers, and they felt little need for the organization. Their well being was evidenced by this item:

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, July 23, 1891.

"The farmer's premises have an air of prosperity and thrift seldom seen. Many new barns and other buildings have been built, and large numbers of old buildings have been reshingled, repaired, and painted. Miles upon miles of new fencing has been built, and, in fact, everything about their farms show that not only have they been prosperous during the past two years, but, that they have confidence in the future."¹

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, June 8, 1899.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

School District no. 14, which included the city of Onaga, held its first school during the winter of 1863. It was organized, April 4, 1863, as District no. 4 of Vienna Township and changed to District no. 14 of the county the following winter.¹ Three months of school were held that winter, for which the teacher was paid \$11.66 a month.² The average attendance was but six, while the previous year fifteen were enrolled out of a school population of twenty two.³ The first building was evidently a small frame structure, for by 1881, it had been moved from the original location and was being used as a residence and shoe shop.⁴ The second building was a one room stone building, built in 1869 on land purchased from Mr. Joseph DeGraw, and therefore known as the DeGraw School House.⁵ Church services were held in this building after Onaga was built.

So it was that the infant city of Onaga had a well established school when the first settlers arrived in

.....

1, The Westmoreland Recorder, June 13, 1907.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. The Onaga Journal, January 13, 1881.

5. Ibid.

town. By the second winter of the town's history this one room school house, originally intended to serve only a small rural community, had seventy pupils crowded into a space planned to accommodate but forty. The teacher was so burdened with work that she could scarcely hear all of the classes each day.¹ At this time the responsibility of providing proper school equipment did not weigh heavily on the citizens, for in November, 1879, the fuel supply gave out and the teacher was compelled to dismiss the school.² For some days before this, the pupils had gathered brush along the creek, but they finally exhausted even that supply.

The crowded condition of the school demanded action on the part of the citizens and in the spring of 1880, the erection of a new school house was agitated. The need for a new building could not be denied, but its location aroused great difference of opinion. Some wanted it south of the railroad tracks, others wanted it west of the main street near the Congregational Church, and still others wanted it on the hill top on East Fourth Street.³ An election was held at which forty two votes were cast for the last mentioned location, and twelve

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 29, 1880.
2. Ibid., November 6, 1879.
3. Ibid., July 1, 1880.

votes for Third Street. There were 128 votes in favor of the bonds out of 187 possible votes. The question of the site had received much more attention than that of the bond, notwithstanding the fact that there was a difference of but 320 feet in the two sites under consideration. During the summer and fall, a stone building, consisting of four large rooms, and costing \$5000, was constructed. It was opened for use January 3, 1881.¹

At the regular school meeting, held in the summer of 1896, it was decided, by a vote of 181, to adopt the standard graded school course.² A short time after the school meeting, it was discovered that the majority vote of the district was 199 votes, so a special election was held, at which time 206 votes were recorded in favor of the proposition."

The school attendance varied greatly due to the absence of a well enforced truancy law, and also because pupils were frequently needed on the farms in the spring and fall to assist with the work. But that citizens of Onaga were negligent in this matter is evidenced by this item. "We observe that the law requiring all the children

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, December 30, 1880.
2. The Onaga Herald, June 25, 1896.
3. Ibid., August 27, 1896.

of school age to attend school, is not rigidly enforced in our city. Parents ought not to keep their children out of school and permit them to frequent the streets. Street education ruins more boys than it helps."¹ Again as late as 1899, the editor noted that, "Tuesday a lot of boys from ten to fifteen years of age were noticed hanging about the streets playing marbles, instead of being in school."²

Agitation for a high school began in 1893, and the patrons voted bonds to the amount of \$3000 to enlarge the building.³ On the bond issue, there were only four opposing votes out of 185 cast. At this time the north wing was added, making six large rooms available. A one year course of high school study was adopted in 1894, but the course was not recognized until 1899. The course consisted of three year's work, known as the junior, middle, and senior years.⁴ This was the Latin course and admitted students to college without further examinations. The first high school commencement was held May 4, 1900.⁵ Miss Ruby Brown and Mr. Austin Cook were the only graduates.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, October 20, 1881.
2. The Onaga Herald, February 23, 1899.
3. Ibid., April 20, 1893.
4. Ibid., March 29, 1900.
5. Ibid., May 10, 1900.

The favorable reputation of the Onaga schools drew many pupils from outside the district. Thirty four pupils, out of an enrollment of two hundred and twenty three, came from outside the school district in 1899.¹ Many pupils from the rural schools enrolled in the Eighth grade to finish the work of the so called common branches. The tuition was one dollar per month for each pupil.² In the high school, especially, there were many late enrollments each fall, for the older boys were needed to assist with the farm work. When school opened in 1899, the principal had the names of more than twenty students, who expected to enroll in the high school as soon as the fall work was finished.³

The citizens of Onaga were proud of the schools, but their interest was not sufficient to insure a consistent school policy. The school district is the most democratic unit of government, for here the people vote the taxes upon themselves. This fact hampered the development of the school. The length of term depended upon the amount of money available. If there were extensive repairs to be made or other expenditures the term would be reduced from nine to eight months in order to maintain the previous

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, November 16, 1899.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., September 19, 1899.

year's tax levy. The treasurer's report given at the annual school meeting in 1899 showed that the cost of the schools for 1898-1899 was \$2900. Twenty three hundred dollars was spent for teacher's salaries, and \$600 for repairs and incidentals.¹

The school meeting was the place where many personal jealousies and factional differences developed. Frequently the rivalry between churches was made an issue in school elections. The matter was partly adjusted by electing to the board a member from the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational churches. Ordinarily, the attendance at school elections was not large, but if it were known prior to the meeting that some one had a special program to suggest, the opposition marshalled its forces. The selection of teachers was made a topic of town discussion. Often much pressure was brought to bear on board members to secure teaching appointments of home town candidates. Many of these influences were harmful to the best interests of the school.

A part of the early interest in religion was promoted by those active in the life of the town, not so much for spiritual as for business reasons. The founders of the town realized that churches were a very great asset,

.....

1. The Onaga Courier, June 21, 1899.

so they fostered the interest in church organization and church building with the same zeal that they promoted interest in the economic resources of the town. Their attitude was shown in this item in The Onaga Herald, May 12, 1881: "Although our citizens subscribed liberally to the new Catholic Church fund - and in fact the church could not be built without the aid of the citizens - the committee of the organization feel it their duty "to go back" on those who helped them, and go to a neighboring town to get the material with which to construct their edifice. It is an injustice to the town and our merchants, and the subscribers to the fund will not feel very encouraged to pay in their subscription money to a society that will act in this manner." But there were many devout Christians who felt the need of a place of worship, and worked for them, actuated by spiritual motives entirely.

The first organization to consider building in Onaga was the Presbyterian. They offered to build a \$2000 structure if the citizens of Onaga would contribute \$400.¹ Failing to secure the funds, the project was not attempted. In the fall of 1878, the Congregational Society started a church building. This organization

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, September 20, 1878.

had its nucleus at Vienna. Church services had been held in the school house there from an early date until March 1878, when the church organization was moved to Onaga.¹ Services held in the DeGraw School House had attracted large audiences. Some people traveled as many as sixteen miles to attend worship.

The Congregational Church building was started in the latter part of October, 1878. The Reverend Sikes, The Reverend D. C. McNair and Major Jenkins prepared the foundations.² It is worthy of notice that prominent citizens not only provided money to build the church, but actually assisted in the construction. When the Methodist Church was built, a few years later, persons who would assist by drawing sand or stone, or by working on the foundation, were urged to be on hand when the work began.³ In the spring of 1879, the work on the Congregational Church was pushed forward, both when nearly completed, the structure was wrecked by a severe wind storm.⁴ Rebuilding was commenced immediately, and on November 2, 1879, the first church edifice in Onaga was dedicated to the worship of God.⁵ The dedicatory sermon was preached

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, December 28, 1899.
2. The Onaga Journal, November 7, 1878.
3. Ibid., September 9, 1880.
4. Ibid., November 6, 1879.
5. Ibid.

by Peter McVicar, D. D., president of Washburn College, to an audience of about 200 people.¹ The sum of \$500, remaining unpaid on the church, was raised in forty minutes at the service.² Mr. Amos E. Landon and Mr. Joseph DeGraw each gave twenty five dollars, as did Mr. and Mrs. Almon Benton of Louisville, formerly members of the congregation at Vienna. Seventeen boys and girls pledged a dollar each. The following spring, the ladies of the church began to devise means to secure an organ, and in 1886, through their efforts a bell was obtained.³

In the early eighties two more churches were erected. The Methodist Church was dedicated the first Sunday in January, 1881.⁴ This church had the first church bell. The first prayer meeting ever held in the city was held in the Methodist church.⁵ The Catholic church was erected in 1880.⁶ It was served by a priest from the Coal Creek parish. At no time in its history has this church had a resident priest. With the dedication, Sunday, October 4, 1891, of the Baptist church, built at a cost of \$2000, the fourth church was serving the city of Onaga.⁷

.....

1. The Onaga Journal,
2. Ibid.
3. The Onaga Democrat, February 18, 1886.
4. The Onaga Journal, December 16, 1880.
5. Ibid., February 10, 1881.
6. Ibid., September 16, 1880.
7. The Onaga Herald, October 1, 1891.

Two religious organizations in the rural community should be noted. An undenominational church was recognized at Vienna, April 3, 1890.¹ There were twenty six charter members. Although its membership included persons of several denominations, it was dedicated and served by Congregational ministers. The German Lutherans, five miles north west of town, built a new frame church, thirty two by fifty feet, in the spring of 1898.² The bell tower was surmounted by a steeple and cross eighty three feet high. The structure, costing \$15,142, was the finest church in the country.³ The new church replaced a stone building erected in 1876. The congregation was organized in 1875 with nine members. The membership had increased to 250 in 1898. During the twenty two years of the church's history, there had been three hundred and eighty six baptisms, one hundred and thirty nine confirmations, forty eight marriages and seventy two burials.⁴

Extensive improvements on churches took place in the late nineties. The Congregational organization re-decorated the interior of the church, supplied the aisles with matting and the rostrum with carpet and new chairs.

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, April 10, 1890.

2. Ibid. April 14, 1898.

3. Ibid., September 22, 1898.

4. Ibid.

A new organ replaced the old one. The oil lamps were discarded and in their place four incandescent vapor gas burners were installed.¹ The belfry of the Methodist church was taken down and a tower built outside. The gallery and partitions were removed, making the interior one large room. This church had the largest seating capacity of any in town and was used for many public gatherings.² Mrs. Stephanie Pecheur donated a bell to the Catholic Church, in honor of St. Stephen.³ It weighed four hundred pounds and was purchased at a cost of \$140.

An intense revival was experienced in Onaga in 1892. The Baptist Church began early in the season with special meetings, which resulted in numerous additions to the church. Meetings were soon begun in the Congregational Church and later in the Methodist, too. Thirty seven persons joined the church in one day. The editor of The Onaga Herald noticed that at least half a dozen people began to speak to citizens they had heretofore ignored. But the most concrete result of the revival was an organization of young men known as the Young Men's

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, August 24, 1899.
2. Ibid., May 14, 1896.
3. Ibid., October 11, 1900.
4. Ibid., January 14, 1892.

Christian Home.¹ They organized a reading room provided with a generous supply of books and magazines. Meetings were held each Sunday afternoon at three o'clock. Four years later, the Baptist Church held another revival meeting. As a result of this effort, eleven persons were immersed in the Vermillion, December 13, 1896.² The immersion service was attended by a large group of people; many no doubt were prompted by curiosity rather than piety. On this particular occasion it was necessary to break the ice on the creek before the converts could be immersed. Revivals were a popular type of religious service in those days, and helped to promote a religious sentiment in the community.

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, January 14, 1892.

2. Ibid., December 17, 1896.

CHAPTER VII.
LIFE IN ONAGA.

To have lived in Onaga during the first twenty five years of her history meant to enjoy the usual community entertainments - Fourth of July Celebrations, subscription dances, church dinners, singing schools, home talent plays, clubs and fraternal orders. It meant to be annoyed by loose stock in the streets and yards, the depredations of rowdy gangs of small boys, mad dog scares, foul odors from alleys, and many other unsanitary conditions. It meant to be tempted or irritated, as the case might be, by saloons, pool halls, and gambling dives.

Dances, called cotillion parties, provide popular entertainment as shown by these items: "The Onaga Social Club will give a cotillion party at Rolf's Hall, New Year's Eve. Supper at the Landon House. Tickets, including supper, \$1.50 per couple."¹ "The cotillion party at the DeGraw House last Friday evening came off successfully. No disturbance of any kind occurred."² "The cotillion party at the hall was a success, and for real "git down and throw your boots," the boys in this ravine take the rag off the bush. The supper at the Landon House was

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, December 26, 1878.
2. Ibid.

excellent. One lady said it was the squarest meal she ever sat her eye on."¹ In December, 1879, a dance benefit was given, and the proceeds were used for sidewalk improvement. The dances given in the German settlement were always well patronized by the townspeople. These frank comments of the editor make clear their popularity,"... And we observed a few coming home in the morning, who had been there too much. When our German friends have a party, there is always a large turn out and lots of fun."² "The boys say they had a jolly time, and that beer never tasted better."³ The conduct of the young men must have been a trifle crude at times for the editor gave them this advice. "We would say a word to some of our young men who attend the different parties held in and around Onaga, that it is very bad taste to appear on the floor with their coats off - if it is too warm with your winter clothes, come provided with something cooler. But in all events, don't appear in your shirt sleeves on the floor, and keep your pants legs rolled down rather than up - if they are too long cut them off."⁴

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 2, 1879.
2. Ibid., January 6, 1881.
3. Ibid., July 8, 1880.
4. Ibid., August 21, 1879.

Another community "get together" was in the form of church dinners. These were usually given to raise funds for a new carpet or a church bell or furnishings. The first church to be erected was the Congregational, during the year of 1879, and on Thanksgiving Day of that year the ladies of the town gave a dinner as a church benefit. An account of it follows: "Our bountiful harvests during the season just closing makes such a day exceedingly appropriate. The ladies of Onaga seem to have understood the interest of the day and to have breathed its spirit. They organized themselves into a working society for the purpose of raising money to complete the furnishing of the new church edifice, and conceived at once the idea of a Thanksgiving dinner and an oyster supper. The large numbers, who came to the ball for dinner, encouraged the ladies to hope that notwithstanding deep mud and inclement skies, their labors would not be in vain, and to their joy a still larger number assembled in the evening to partake of the oyster supper." Ninety five dollars were the net proceeds of the day. Four years later, when it became necessary to repair the church, a supper was given to secure the funds.

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, December 4, 1879.

A singing class was organized in 1879 to promote singing in the church.¹ Meetings were held each week in Rolf's Hall and were open to all both in town and country. The following year the class was organized by Mr. R.N. Jeffrey. Professor Gilbert, of Leavenworth, held a Musical Institute in Onaga during December, 1879,² Three sessions a day were held with courses for advanced students and beginners. A public concert was given at the conclusion of the Institute.

The most important social event of the year was the Fourth of July Celebration. It was the project which called forth town pride for usually delegations came from near by towns to help celebrate. The business men could be depended on to push the undertaking and thereby advertise Onaga. The Onaga Journal boasted that only two weeks of preparation were required for Onaga's first celebration held in 1878.³ It further stated that "at eight o'clock horsemen were seen coming and by nine o'clock teams were streaming into town, loaded with the honest, pleasant looking faces of the sturdy farmers, their families, and friends. About one o'clock the Lone Tree delegation made its appearance over the hill at the north end of the main street, numbering many wagons loaded

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, August 4, 1879.
2. Ibid. September 4, 1879.
3. Ibid, July 5, 1878.

with industrious farmers of that neighborhood. This delegation was headed by a horseman carrying a banner with the words "Lone Tree" painted on it, and for organization and display, they carried off the laurels of the day." Colonel Roosa and Frank Huston addressed the crowd and Reverend Mr. Stickler read the Declaration of Independence. After dinner such contests as sack races, wheelbarrow races and climbing greased poles furnished the amusement. Dancing continued until morning. It was estimated that 2, 000 people and 300 wagons were on the grounds.

The next year a successful celebration was staged with the Silver Cornet Band from Louisville and a delegation of 500 visitors from Winchester as additional features. In 1884 the main attraction of the celebration was the parade. The procession was headed by the band, then came thirty eight children, each wearing an arm band with the name of a state on it. In the center rode the goddess of liberty seated on a beautifully decorated wagon. This group was followed by the G.A.R. marching in double file, followed by a carriage in which rode the mayor and the speakers of the day. The city officials in a carriage rode next, and then came a long procession of buggies and wagons.¹

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 10, 1879.

It was planned to have a balloon ascension as a special feature of the celebration in 1885, but the balloons did not arrive until a couple of weeks later. The Onaga Journal reported that, "there was more enthusiasm Tuesday evening over sending up the balloons, intended for the Fourth, than was exhibited all day on the Fourth. The first was a twenty foot balloon. It ascended about half a mile and floated as far as any eye could follow. It was seen four miles north and still going. The second was a pig balloon and also made a successful ascension."¹

Probably the most memorable celebration ever held in Onaga occurred in 1898. The Onaga Courier gave this account of the day:² "Never before has such a large, patriotic, and orderly assemblage of people gathered in this vicinity on an occasion. The news of the sinking of Cervera's fleet and the demand by General Shafter for the immediate surrender of Santiago, which was announced early in the morning, swelled the tide of patriotism, and all the immense throng gave themselves over to the fullest enjoyment and celebration of the day. The people began to arrive early in the morning. The 6:40 train from the west brought in from seventy five to one hundred, from towns along the line. For hours the stream continued to

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 23, 1885.
2. The Onaga Courier, July 7, 1898.

pour in, and by noon it is estimated fully 5000 visitors were in the city. About 9:30 a.m. the parade began headed by the Havensville Band, then carriages containing the president and speakers of the day, then a float representing Dewey's play ship, "Olympia", then a company of youth volunteers, the Onaga Fire Department, the Onaga Band, and the volunteer fire company. The Uncle Tom's Cabin band and a number of young men and ladies on horseback, the famous Kazoo band and the citizens in carriages brought up the rear.

"At the grove a program of music and an address by Reverend J.A. Bright of Topeka was given. After dinner there was more music, the reading of the Declaration of Independence by F.S. Haughwout, and Professor A.J. Wilcox gave an address. In the evening another parade took place, the principal feature of which was the representation of the battle ship, "Olympia", during an engagement. After supper many hundreds of people remained to witness the production of Uncle Tom's Cabin, and to attend the dance in Grover's Hall." Although about 5000 people were in the city, there was not a sign of disturbance during the entire day.¹

An inevitable feature of Fourth of July celebrations

.....

1. The Onaga Courier, July 7, 1898.

were runaways. The following account is typical:

"Quite an excitement was created by a team, belonging to Mrs. J.A. Colwell, running away on the celebration grounds on the Fourth. The team was tied close to the railroad tracks, and when the passenger train came along, they became frightened, broke loose, and took a circle around the grounds, tipped the buggy over, and broke it up considerably before they could be stopped."¹ Not infrequently rain storms ruined an otherwise glorious Fourth. A majority of the crowd was miles from home, and it meant a long uncomfortable ride in the mud. Often there was no shelter on the grounds and it was not uncommon to see what had been in the morning a gorgeous flower garden on a lady's hat, now dripping red, blue, and green coloring on a wet and mud besplattered white dress.

Patriotic zeal in the community was very earnest for many citizens had marched in the Union armies. The G.A.R. was the first permanent organization to be installed which sponsored public entertainment. In February, 1882, Custard Post of the G.A.R. was organized in Onaga with about thirty charter members.² On June 6, 1890, a Sons of Veterans Camp was mustered in with twenty two charter

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 7, 1881.

2. Ibid. March 16, 1882.

members.¹ The next year a Ladies Circle of the G.A.R. was organized.² A special interest of the G.A.R. was the observance of Memorial Day. The Onaga Herald recorded these events of Memorial Day, May 30, 1891: "The citizens of Onaga and vicinity have heretofore heartily engaged in the observance of Memorial Day. But at no time since the establishment of the Grand Army post here and the subsequent custom of the observance of this day has there been such an almost universal outpouring of the people on this sacred holiday, as was witnessed last Saturday. Member of the Post went to Vienna and met with friends and families and decorated the graves of five soldiers there. At one o'clock, the officers and members of Custard Post, numbering fifty, and Sons of Veterans, numbering thirty five, and members of the Circle of the G.A.R. met at the Post room, and formed lines and marched to the hall where public services were held... After the exercises the assemblage went to the cemetery and decorated graves."³

The enthusiasm occasioned by the Spanish American War promoted many public gatherings. On May 21, 1898, a new flag staff and flags were dedicated by appropriate ceremonies.⁴ The band played several selections, and then

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, January 15, 1891.

2. Ibid. January 8, 1891.

3. Ibid. June 4, 1891.

4. Ibid. May 19, 1898.

addresses were given by Mr. O.J. Grover and Mr. F.S. Haughwout. Cheers were then given for the eight Onaga volunteers and for Mrs. Middleton who made the flags. The cost was covered by popular subscription. A large American flag, nine by eighteen feet and a small Cuban flag were thereafter run up whenever the weather permitted. On July 14, in response to a proclamation by the President, a number of citizens assembled in the Methodist Church and held a Thanksgiving service.¹ Miss May Jenison, O.J. Grover, J.W. Dunn, and L.G. Ramson were the speakers.

Of the eight volunteers from Onaga, one Fred Fisher, saw service at Santiago. While there he contracted the typhoid fever and died in a hospital in New York. The body was interred in the Onaga Cemetery with military honors.² Another Onaga boy, William M. Shaffer, was sent to the Philippines. Upon his discharge and arrival home, he was met at the station by the mayor and commander of the local G.A.R. post, who escorted him to his home in a carriage drawn by about forty men and boys.³ The band and a large group of citizens were in the procession. A celebration, known as "Shaffer Day" was then given in his honor by the city.⁴ Exercises began in Landon Hall at eight o'clock. On the rostrum sat Will Shaffer of the

.....

1. The Onaga Courier, July 14, 1898.
2. The Onaga Herald, October 27, 1898.
3. Ibid. November 9, 1899.
4. Ibid. November 16, 1899.

20th Kansas and Norris Hayward and Will Thomas of the 22nd Kansas Regiment. After speeches, J.W. Dunn presented a gold watch and chain to Mr. Shaffer. The hall was packed; the line of those who could not get in reaching down the stairway and into the street. At ten o'clock supper was served in Grover's Hall.

The every day life of Onaga was far from dull. The members of small communities have a faculty for entertaining themselves, and in the days of runaways, street fakirs, and campers there was always some kind of diversion. Runaways were common and the following one is probably typical: "Yesterday while Dan Brown was walking up the street his hat blew off his head, and rolled toward Julius Perussel's team which was tied on the street. They became frightened, broke the hitchstraps, and went tearing down the street, and before getting very far from F.B. Landon's store became free from the buggy and stopped near the city well. No great damage was done, only one single tree was broken."¹

During the early eighties, herds of Texas ponies were driven through the country and offered for sale. Their arrival furnished much sport for the men and boys about the town. The Onaga Journal called attention to

.....

1. The Onaga Register, September 17, 1896.

the practice in this paragraph: "If you don't believe there is anybody idle about Onaga, just get a Texas pony out on the commons, and announce that somebody is going to ride it: 119 men and boys, together with a like number of dogs, will appear on the scene in four minutes and a half."¹

Probably the greatest street attraction was the "Medicine Man". A crowd always gathered about him, often blocking the sidewalks. As the editor of The Onaga Herald remarked in disgust, "There will be fake shows and fake "Indian" medicines just as long as there are people ready to pay for being humbugged."² The Onaga Courier described a typical performance as follows: "A long haired medicine fakir traveling under the name of "Comanche Bill" was on our streets last Saturday afternoon, with the smoothest graft that has been seen in Onaga for some time. He first impressed his hearers with the fact that he was a very bad man; that at one time he was the companion of Sitting Bull, and was with Custer in the Big Horn Massacre. He then commenced the sale of medicine, and as an inducement to buyers, he would return the price paid for the package and as much more with it. After this had been done several times, he told the crowd to watch closely his method of advertising

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, January 26, 1882.
2. The Onaga Herald, April 19, 1894.

as he proposed to give them an exhibition of liberality the like of which they had never seen. He would take a bottle of medicine, write his initials on the label and offer it for a dollar, and when sold would wrap the dollar up in a (dollar) bill and place it in full view. This was done after each sale until thirty or forty bottles had been disposed of. He then quietly closed his grips, dropped the money into a wallet, and taking up an Indian tomahawk informed the people that he was an expert in its use, and that with it, he could defend himself against a dozen men armed with bayonets, and then giving the signal to the driver, he quickly drove away, leaving his victims watching for his liberal method of advertising."¹

The residents of Onaga endured the annoyance of stock on the streets for ten years before the city passed measures compelling the owners to keep up their stock. Many citizens complained about the conditions of the streets but there was not sufficient public opinion in favor of restriction until the later eighties. In 1881, the marshall announced that all hogs were to be penned.² But his order was disregarded for the next spring, citizens complained again of the damage to their gardens by a dozen or more hogs running about the town. The country people, too,

.....

1. The Onaga Courier, August 25, 1898.

2. The Onaga Journal, October 20, 1881.

were greatly annoyed for almost every day loose horses or cows destroyed goods in farmers' wagons. Dogs were a source of great annoyance. The editor of The Onaga Journal complained that there were twenty five strange dogs in town, and that the one dollar dog tax should be imposed or the dogs disposed of.¹

The matter was finally acted upon when the Council passed Ordinance no. 43.² It provided that: "No horses, mules, or cattle over six months old shall be allowed to run at large within the corporate limits of the city of Onaga between nine p. m. and five a. m. From the first day of November to the first day of April, no horses, mules, or cattle over six months, nor any hogs or pigs shall be allowed to run at large within the limits of Onaga by day or night." The question was not closed with the passing of this ordinance for loose stock continued to roam the streets and yards. In 1893, the council passed an ordinance imposing a fine of not less than one dollar or more than five, upon any owner of stock who permitted such stock to run in the streets.³

Another condition which was tolerated by the residents of Onaga for years before any concerted effort was made to relieve it was the unsanitary state of streets and

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, December 21, 1882.
2. The Onaga Democrat, August 15, 1889.
3. The Onaga Herald, May 4, 1893.

alleys. A few years after the founding of the town, conditions had become so bad that citizens registered complaint in this item: "We beg leave through your paper to call attention of the proper authorities to the disgraceful state of certain portions of our city, in regard to health. To any one who has to travel East Third Street, it is evident that something should be done. Going down the hill east, the stench from the two opposite hog pens is unbearable, and it is a wonder that the owner of the hotel should allow the back yard to be turned into a third class stock yard. That such things exist right in the heart of our business city is a great shame, and that something should be done to obliterate this evil is the wish of many citizens."¹

This condition continued through the eighties. Pig pens in the city, and garbage and filth in the alleys not only made disagreeable odors but created a great menace to health. As late as 1894 attention was called to the situation by this item: "Every season some one or more citizens complain to The Herald of the condition of a certain alley west of Leonard street. For years this has been one of the most filthy localities in the city, and although some of the residents near by have

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 28, 1881.

been to considerable expense in trying to improve the condition of the alleys, other, it is thought, seem to care but little about it. We hope the new officials will abate the nuisance at once."¹ The great difficulty which was not clearly understood was the unwillingness of citizens to sacrifice their own interests for the welfare of the community. To the citizen who wished to keep a cow and a pig on his premises, the discomfort or welfare of others meant little. He was acting wholly within his legal rights and he failed to see any injury to the community.

This spirit of individualism was carried to the point of lawlessness by some young men and boys of the town. In 1884 a number of young men, were arrested for disturbing Sunday evening worship.² The same performance was repeated in 1896 by a hoodlum gang, part of whom were drunk.³ There was much complaint, about the same time, of petty thieving of whips and articles from farmers vehicles, and of cutting harness of horses tied on the streets.⁴ The same group of rowdies were in the habit of riding at break neck speed through the streets to the

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, May 3, 1894.
2. The Onaga Journal, December 11, 1884.
3. The Onaga Herald, May 14, 1896.
4. Ibid., April 9, 1896.

great displeasure of the more staid citizens.¹ Contrary to a city ordinance, a group of boys enjoyed boarding cars and riding back and forth while trains were switching in the yards. The greatest disturbances occurred on Halloween for the pranks frequently resulted in destruction of property.² The residents endured this rowdyism for many years until a curfew bell was ordered by the City Council to be rung at eight o'clock each evening.³

The problem which overshadowed all of the ones just mentioned was that of prohibition. It has already been noted that the third building erected in the town was a saloon, that among the first acts of the City Council were the licensing of saloons, and also that three rural districts near Onaga were populated by foreigners who were accustomed to plenty of beer and wine. Thus it was that the liquor problem arose with the founding of the town. Ordinances licensing Dram shops and billiard halls were passed by the council,

The ordinances contained the following provisions: any person keeping a dram shop or billiard saloon without a license should be fined not less than twenty five dollars or more than a hundred. The charge was twenty five dollars

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, April 9, 1896.
2. The Onaga Courier, November 3, 1898.
3. The Onaga Herald, October 6, 1900.

a year for the first table and fifteen dollars for each additional table. The saloons were to close at twelve o'clock. The law in regard to sale of intoxicants follows: "Every person who shall directly or indirectly knowingly sell, barter, or give away any intoxicating liquor to any person who is in the habit of being intoxicated, after notice shall have been given him by the wife, child, parent, brother or sister, or by any civil officer charged with the custody of the poor of the city or township or ward, where such person shall reside, that such person is in the habit of being intoxicated; or to any person in the state of intoxication; or to any minor, without the consent of his parent or guardian, shall be fined no less than five or more than one hundred dollars." If this ordinance had been enforced the problem would have disappeared. There were three saloons, "The Onaga House," "The Onaga Retreat," and "The Brown House Around the Corner," each one fitted with billiard tables.

The people of Kansas ratified the Prohibitory Amendment to the Constitution, November 2, 1880. The Legislature, on February 18, 1881 passed a long act of twenty four sections prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors except for medicinal,

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, September 11, 1879.

scientific, and mechanical purpose and regulating the sale and manufacture thereof. The law went into effect May 1, 1881. For a few weeks after the state prohibition law went into effect, practically no liquor was sold, but by July the saloons were supplying their old customers. The following account is typical of the brawls started in saloons: "Last Monday was hog day in Onaga and we will tell you why it was hog day... As soon as the hogs were sold and checks cashed at the bank, the sellers repaired to one of the saloons, and began to fill up with beer and bad whiskey, and it did not take long to raise a disturbance. Mr. Fred Martin, a man of sixty or more years of age, and Dr. Dockler, of about the same age, opened the ball by a street fight, which resulted in Dockler getting pushed thru a door and breaking a large window light. Martin was sent home and Dockler continued to take his whiskey and beer. The fun continued for several hours - pitch, seven up and pool seemed to be the leading amusements, with the temperance whiskey and beer at the end of each game.

"The next and most ludicrous scene it has ever been our privilege to behold, was performed by Ben and George Allen, father and son. This act commenced in the aforementioned hell (saloon, if you please) where they made a display of their pugilistic abilities, and it was hard to tell which carried off the belt. The

.....

father carried off a part of the son's shirt, however, The scene closed something like the mazzeppha play, the wild steed being the old man in the hog wagon on all fours, with his son astride his back endeavoring to hold him there until he could drive out of town. The day closed with numerous small drunks, but nothing transpired worthy of mention, compared with the morning's programme.

"It is certainly very strange that 150 men could assemble at Topeka, spend fifty days, many thousands of dollars, and yet not be able to make a law that can be enforced. Is the Kansas Legislature and Governor St. John, and all other advisors, wooden heads, that they can not enact a temperance law that could be enforced? It seems so. ... Its lively in Onaga on "hog day."¹

The Germans protested vigorously against prohibition. A meeting was held on Sunday, July 31, 1881 at the residence of Mr. Ferdinand Teske, to select delegates to a convention, held in Atchison.² The purpose of the convention was to devise some means of repealing or modifying the temperance law. Seventy nine farmers and business men were present at the meeting. The Germans declared that the law was a detriment to the progress and

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, July 28, 1881.

2. Ibid., August 4, 1881.

best interests of the state.¹ Some business men declared that business would decrease fifty percent if the law were enforced.² The Germans did not let the prohibition amendment interfere to any degree with their liquor consumption, for they rapidly cultivated vineyards and made their own supply.

During the eighties liquor was sold in Onaga in the drug stores, pool halls, shipped in to individuals and sold by them. The editor of The Onaga Journal explained the pocket saloon in this article. "First there must be the drinker who craves the liquor; second, there must be the middle man with a loose coat and large pockets to do the dirty work; and third, there is the sneaking coward who keeps the liquor about his premises and delivers it to no. 2, who pays cash every time, and who delivers it to no. 3 in some out of the way place, a livery stable for instance, and collects the cash with about 100% profit... We must admit that there is more liquor drank and more drunkenness in the city at present, than at any other time since its existence."³

In the nineties the liquor element became more bold and reestablished saloons, called hop shops. The

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, August 4, 1881.

2. Ibid., May 17, 1883.

3. Ibid., March 20, 1884.

Onaga Herald said of such places: "Hop shops have become a regular nuisance. A gang of loafers hang around them and at all hours of day or night they play cards for drink, cigars or money, in violations of statutes of the state. If we must have saloons, let's have the regulation kind - not these miserable dens called hop shops. During the last few weeks drunkenness has become too common. Drunken quarrels and fights occurred, and in one or two instances the authorities were appealed to, to remove men from sidewalks and streets who (men) were dead drunk."¹ Salesmen from liquor houses openly canvassed for orders. At one time a two gallon jug of brandy was reported stolen from the depot. In 1897 this item appeared in the local paper; "Reports have been rife for several days that Onaga is to have a first class saloon soon. Representatives of a large Missouri liquor House have been trying to induce some of our citizens to engage in the business, offering as an inducement, to give ample guarantee against any and all legal prosecution while engaged in the business of retailing liquors. We have this from the highest authority in the city."²

Such open violation of the prohibition law, resulted in a mass meeting of citizens at the Baptist Church.³ Many

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, September 21, 1893.
2. Ibid., January 28, 1897.
3. Ibid., May 6, 1897.

prominent business men were present and spoke in no uncertain terms against law breakers, gamblers and bootleggers. A committee was appointed to determine on some way to get those who wish to violate the state and city laws to leave town. Upon receiving a petition signed by nearly 200 voters, the City Council passed two ordinances.¹ By the first, ordinance number 76, the barter or sale of an intoxicating liquor by a person holding a druggist license was forbidden. The penalty was \$100 and costs. The giving away of liquor to evade prosecution was to be deemed a sale. Ordinance number 77 declared to be nuisances all places where intoxicating liquors were sold contrary to law. The owner must close up after twenty four hours notice by the marshall or be fined \$100. Two "joints" closed up and left town as a result of this action by the city. But the relief was only temporary for the next year, "joints" again dispensed liquor.

During the late nineties arrests were made, but they proved futile because of the difficulty of conviction. The situation was summed up by The Onaga Courier in this item: "There is no denial of the fact that the prohibitory law is violated in this county at the present time, but any one who has ever attended a term of the district court and

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, May 7, 1897.

witnessed the difficulty in securing juries to try these cases, and the efforts of the witnesses to shield the violators, realizes that more than the efforts of the county attorney are necessary to secure convictions. Every fair minded man who was present at the last term of court and heard the testimony in the three liquor cases tried, will admit that sufficient evidence was presented to secure conviction in any case, and yet in one case the jury disagreed after being out over twenty four hours, and in the other two, convictions were secured on but one count in each case while several were charged and proven."¹

By 1900, the Executive Committee of the Law and Order League offered a reward of fifty dollars for evidence furnished to the county attorney which would lead to the conviction of a liquor violator. The arrests by the sheriff and county attorney proved quite effective in putting the "joints" out of business in Onaga. As long as the prosecution was left in the hands of the local officials very little was done. It was the old situation of personal interest on the part of officers and their natural hesitancy to become involved in their neighbor's affairs. Another great drawback to the liquor persecution

.....

1. The Onaga Courier, November 3, 1898.
2. The Onaga Herald, May 17, 1900.

was the lack of continuous interest and agitation against saloons. In May, 1897, a mass meeting of citizens who were outraged by the drunkenness in Onaga, was held. In September of that year the same conditions prevailed, as evidenced by this protest, "The drunken debauchery witnessed on the streets of Onaga last Saturday, commencing early in the afternoon and continuing all night until daylight Sunday morning, was an outrage no civilized community can afford to tolerate. How long are the law abiding citizens of Onaga going to sit quietly and submit to this defiance of law and decency?"¹

During this period temperance lectures were held in Onaga, and at one lecture over sixty persons signed the pledge.² A W. C. T. U. organization was formed in 1890 by twenty two women.³ An auxiliary to the State Temperance Association was organized in Onaga but not a single business man joined.⁴ They were probably afraid that such a stand would injure their business. The temperance movement was ineffective in Onaga because it did not reach the habitual drinker. The pledge signers were not the ones who needed to reform.

.....

1. The Onaga Herald, September 9, 1897.
2. The Onaga Journal, February 19, 1890.
3. The Onaga Herald, July 21, 1890.
4. The Onaga Journal, March 13, 1884.

At the same time that Onaga was struggling with its liquor problem, gambling was very noticeable. A contributor to The Onaga Journal, who signed herself, "An Observer" called attention to the moral condition of the town in this communication: "I do not know whether there is a law prohibiting boys playing pool and cards in our saloons, but there should be something done. Can the city fathers do something for these boys, it is ruining so many of them? For as a mother, it gives me sorrow to see it go on, and would ask the law through the Journal to come to the rescur, if there be any law for such crimes."¹

Four years later the editor of The Onaga Journal made this comment: "Our city has from its first existence, been known as a hard place, and one of the hardest places in the world in which to break up the saloon business, and gambling has been conducted in our midst from the day the town was started. Recently - within the past year - gambling has become too public, and the city council, rather reluctantly, made an effort to break it up. Mild means were used, and the proprietors informed that it would not be permitted, but very little attention was paid to this warning. Tuesday night, Marshal Spangler took under arrest about twenty

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, October 7, 1880.

persons, half a dozen of whom were held to appear Wednesday morning. This is only the start in the direction. No one expects to break up card playing in the city, but it will have to be conducted in a more out of the way place and with more secrecy."¹ In 1892, the City Council instructed the marshal to arrest all crapshooters.² This form of gambling was so common, that it was indulged in on the school grounds.

Although Onaga had difficulty in overcoming saloons, gambling, and other evil influences, it is noticeable, that at no time did her citizens display a spirit of lawlessness. In August, 1896, two brothers became quarrelsome and broke up a public dance. The marshal was called and ordered them to stop fighting. One brother refused and the Marshal shot and killed him. This incident aroused excitement to an intense pitch, but there was no evidence of mob violence.

The passiveness of the citizens may be partly attributed to their lack of understanding. They did not see or at least were unwilling to undertake their part in doing away with corrupting influences. They wanted to promote the best interests of the town but there was no organized effort of citizens and no leadership to accomplish it. A second consideration is the reason for the establish-

.....

1. The Onaga Journal, February 14, 1884.

2. The Onaga Herald, February 9, 1892.

ment of the town. Most of the citizens had come in order to gain wealth for themselves. There was no other motive for the settlement of Onaga. Since the economic interest was the first consideration with her citizens, any more which would in any way hinder its fullest development, was opposed. This was not selfishness; it was business. Another reason for the lack of civil responsibility was the diverse elements of population. Several nationalities as well as widely distant sections of the United States, were represented in the citizenship. Their experiences and traditions were so unlike that they had no common ground upon which to build.

The individualism of the community was especially noticeable in the social life. For the first two or three years the social life of the town was largely community enterprise, but with the coming of churches, fraternal orders, clubs and societies, groups and cliques began to form. At first, the settlers accepted one another, but as they lived together and discovered each other's weaknesses, they began to classify one another. Personal jealousies and ill feelings developed as some citizens built better homes, enjoyed more luxuries, and gained in wealth.

The self interest of the citizens made for them a little world of their own. They were not entirely ignorant of national currents of change and progress, but they were not interested. The patronage of the road boss

.....

was more important to them than the selection of a United States senator. This attitude is not peculiar to Onaga, it is the level of political interest in most small towns. The citizens of Onaga were industrious; they were on the whole, honest sincere men and women striving to live upright lives. They were generous - a crippled man begging on the streets, or any appeal for help always received their assistance. They were gullible - fakirs found them a ready market. They were prosperous - the natural resources were developed as the foundation of a substantial community.

.....

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

DIARIES.

Mrs. Chestina Allen, Manuscript Collection. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

Mr. Amos E. Landon, in possession of Frank Landon, Temple City, California.

LETTERS.

Mr. Frank Landon, Temple City, California.

INTERVIEWS.

Mr. Charles Day, Mrs. S. E. Leinbach, Mrs. L. L. O'Meara, Mr. L. L. O'Meara.

CLIPPINGS.

Pottawatomie County, Kansas State Historical Library, Topeka.

NEWSPAPERS.

The Alliance News, 1890.

The Kansas Reporter, 1877.

The Onaga Courier, 1898-1899.

The Onaga Democrat, 1885-1890.

The Onaga Herald, 1890-1900.

The Onaga Journal, 1878-1885.

The Westmoreland Recorder, 1906-1907.

The Westmoreland Recorder and Period, 1886.

The Wamego Tribune, 1877-1879.

MANUSCRIPTS.

Mrs. J. S. Merritt, Lecture on Early History of Pottawatomie County. 1870. Manuscript Collection. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS.

C. J. Kappler (Editor) Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1904)

Report of Special Committee on Troubles in Kansas, House Reports, 34th Congress, 1st Session, no. 200.

Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture. (Topeka, State Printing Work, 1904)

United States Government Census. 1860 vol V.

The United States Official Post Office Register.

BOOKS.

A. T. Andreas, History of Kansas. (Chicago, A. T. Andreas, 1883) vol. II

F. F. Crevecoeur, Old Settlers Tales. (Onaga Republican Press 1902)

Helen Gill, The Establishment of Counties in Kansas. Kansas State Historical Collections. vol. VIII

Kansas Historical Transactions 1881.

S. M. Smucker, (Editor) Life of John C. Fremont and his Narratives of Exploration and Adventures. (New York, Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1856)

R. G. Thwaites, (Editor) S. H. Long's Expedition, Early Western Travels 1748 - 1846. (Cleveland, Ohio, The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904) vol. XIV.

.....