



Heartwell Lake.



NE spring morning in 1869 a lone horseman rode out across the divide north of the valley of the Republican. He could see only desolation, a vast wilderness, uninterrupted except for the narrow, winding Blue. A few miles away was the California trail, followed in 1842 by John C. Fremont, and later the highway of the Mormons who emigrated to Utah, of the fortune-seekers who braved the terrors of the untamed west in their pilgrimage to the gold fields of California in 1849, of the Salt Lake express and Ben Halladay's overland stage from St. Joe to Sacramento.

Here was the trail of the white man through the land of the Indian and the buffalo. Thousands had passed over the barren plain in search of the El Dorado of the farther west. The horseman, who came to find a pair of mules that had strayed away from his camp on the Republican, saw in a vision a desert transformed into productive fields, a white man's home instead of the neglected, unbroken prairie.

Mortimer N. Kress, known as "Wild Bill," and M. J. Fouts, "California Joe," were ex-soldiers of the United States. For several years they had tramped through the middle west, following the pursuit of the trapper. It was "Wild Bill" who came in search of the wandering mules, and his quest brought him into what is now Adams county. When he returned to the camp he induced Fouts to join him in settling in the uninhabited country.

In the fall of 1869 Kress and Fouts settled upon homesteads



Burlington Station.

in Section 13 of what is now Little Blue precinct. These frontiersmen were the pioneers in Adams county and both have lived to see a greater development than either expected. Kress and Fouts still live upon their original homesteads.

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The organization of Adams county preceded the preliminary work of the Hastings Town Company by only nine months. The first officers of Adams county began their duties on January 2, 1872, and the staking off of the plat of the original town of Hastings was begun on October 1, of the same year.

On November 7, 1871, Secretary of State W. H. James, acting governor in the place of David Butler, who was impeached on June 2, 1871, issued a proclamation authorizing the election of county officers and the location of a county seat. The election was held December 12, of the same year, at the home of Titus Babcock, at Juniata, a month after that town was surveyed. This momentous meeting was attended by some fifty settlers, of whom only twenty-nine were permitted to vote. The others were barred from participating in the organization of the county because they had failed to register, and it was this failure upon their part which gave Juniata the county seat. Most of the voters who had neglected to qualify lived in the central and southern portions of the county. These men favored placing the seat of government at Kingston, a small settlement on the Blue, south of the present city of Hastings. Of the twenty-nine votes admitted all but one were for locating the county seat at Juniata.

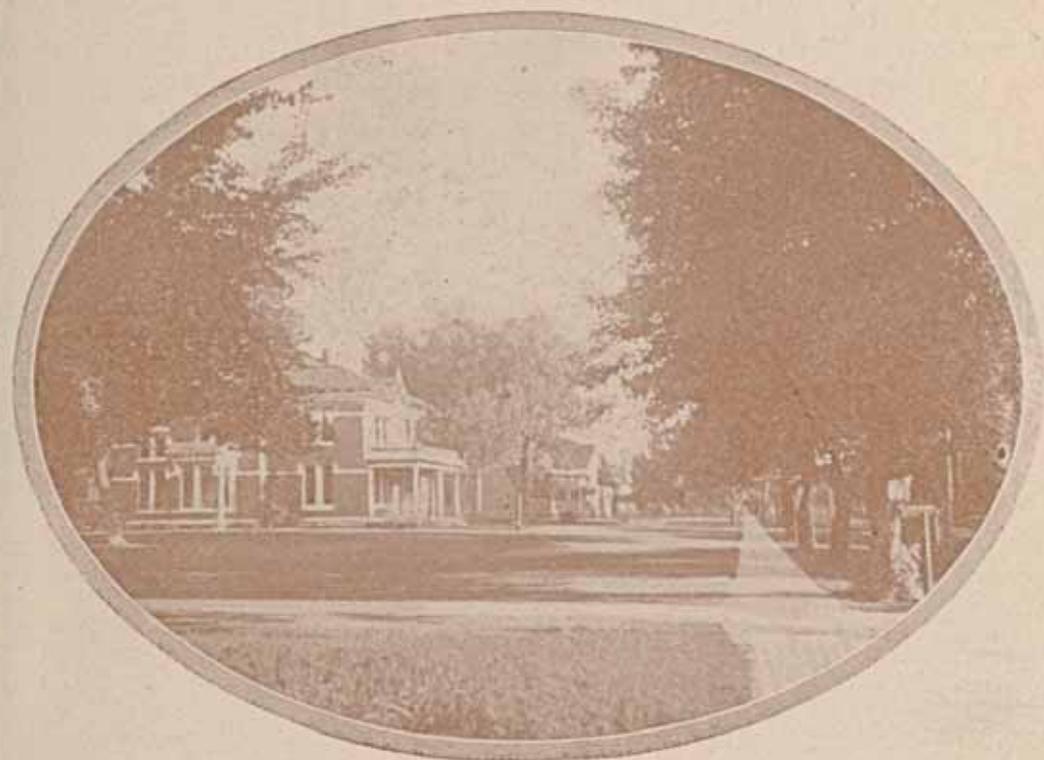
Although there were but a few more than fifty voters in the county, almost as many officers were elected as are now required to conduct the county's business. The twenty-nine votes cast at the initial election resulted in the inauguration of thirteen officials, as follows:

Commissioners, S. L. Brass, Edwin M. Allen, W. W. Selleck; probate judge, Titus Babcock; county clerk, D. R. Babcock; sheriff, I. W. Stark; justices of the peace, W. W. Selleck and Harmon H. Ballou; treasurer, J. S. Chandler; assessor, W. W. Camp; superintendent, A. H. Bowen; surveyor, George Henderson; coronor, Isiah Sluyter.

These pioneers had only the barren prairie upon which to

base their hopes, for the country was wholly undeveloped, with only a settlement here and there, and merely the prospect of the building of a railroad through the county.

The election took place seventeen years after the creation of the territory of Nebraska under the famous Kansas and Nebraska act, which gave the Nebraska territory an area of over 351,000 square miles. Under that act the territory originally included all of the present state of Nebraska and parts of Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas. Beginning at the 40th parallel on the Missouri river the boundary line extended west along the parallel to the eastern boundary of Utah, a short distance northwest of Denver, thence northwest to the northern



St. Joe Avenue, North from Seventh.

boundary line of the United States, east to about the middle of the north line of North Dakota, south to the Missouri river, and thence along the river back to the 40th parallel. The Yellowstone Park was included in this area. Successive rearrangements of boundary lines, incident to the creation of new states, reduced the Nebraska area to 76,840 square miles.

When the election was held the state was less than five

years old and its population was almost wholly in the eastern part. The census taken in 1870 gave Adams county a total population of 19. The first election in Adams county for presidential electors was held in 1872, at which time 124 votes were cast for Grant, and 9 for Greeley.

The history of Hastings dates back to the time when Walter M. Micklem, a native of England, came to Adams county and took for his homestead the west half of the southeast one-quarter of Sec. 12, Town 7, Range 10. The first matter of record of any action or intention upon the part of Mr. Micklem, with others, to organize the town of Hastings was the filing of a plat on October 15, 1872, by Thomas E. Farrell and Walter M. Micklem. This original plat entirely covered Mr. Micklem's homestead and may be described now as being between South and Seventh streets and St. Joe and Burlington avenues.

The filing of this plat was merely a preliminary step and not until April of 1873, after the town had grown to be an important trading point, was there any determined effort made to organize a town government. Early in April, 1873, the Hastings Town Company was formed by James D. Carl, Wm. L. Smith and Wm. B. Slosson, who signed the articles of incorporation on April 8, and by Thomas E. Farrell and Walter M. Micklem, who signed on April 10. The company began with a capital stock of \$4,000 and was organized to develop the town of Hastings. The existence of the corporation was authorized to stand for one year from April 20, unless sooner dissolved.

On April 20, 1874, when the life of the Town Company was about to expire, the county commissioners declared Hastings an incorporated town, and a board of trustees was appointed consisting of M. K. Lewis, A. D. Buckworth, J. G. B. Smith, A. W. Cox and H. A. Forcht. Under this act by the county commissioners Hastings was merely a settlement and the record set forth only the hope of the pioneers, through the filing of the plat, for the development of a town.

On May 4 the trustees held their first meeting and elected the following officers: W. F. J. Comly, clerk; W. A. Smith, treasurer; T. E. Farrell, collector; G. W. Mowrey, marshal; G. D. Pierce, attorney; L. E. Gould, police judge; C. H. Paul, assessor; C. K. Lawson and R. V. Shockey, flue inspectors. M. K. Lewis was chosen chairman of the board of trustees.

The positions held by Mr. Lawson and Mr. Shockey were more important in those days than recent settlers may realize. Nearly all of the early buildings were crudely constructed affairs, and it was the duty of the flue inspectors to see that the flues were placed in such a way as to offer the least possible risk of fire.

The records of the trustees and other officials are not without interest. On January 25, 1874, the trustees ordered a levy of ten mills upon all real estate and personal property for the purpose of raising \$500 to defray the expenses of the government for the ensuing year. Three days later the trustees decided to organize Hastings as a town of the second-class and wards were constituted as follows: All of the town south of the Burlington and Missouri railroad as the First ward; all of the town west of Hastings avenue and north of the railroad as the Second ward, and all east of Hastings avenue and north of the railroad as the Third ward. An election of city officers was called for August 8.

The election was held in accordance with the order of the board of trustees but because of irregularities the returns from the First and Third wards were rejected, leaving to be counted only the votes cast in the Second ward, concerning which the



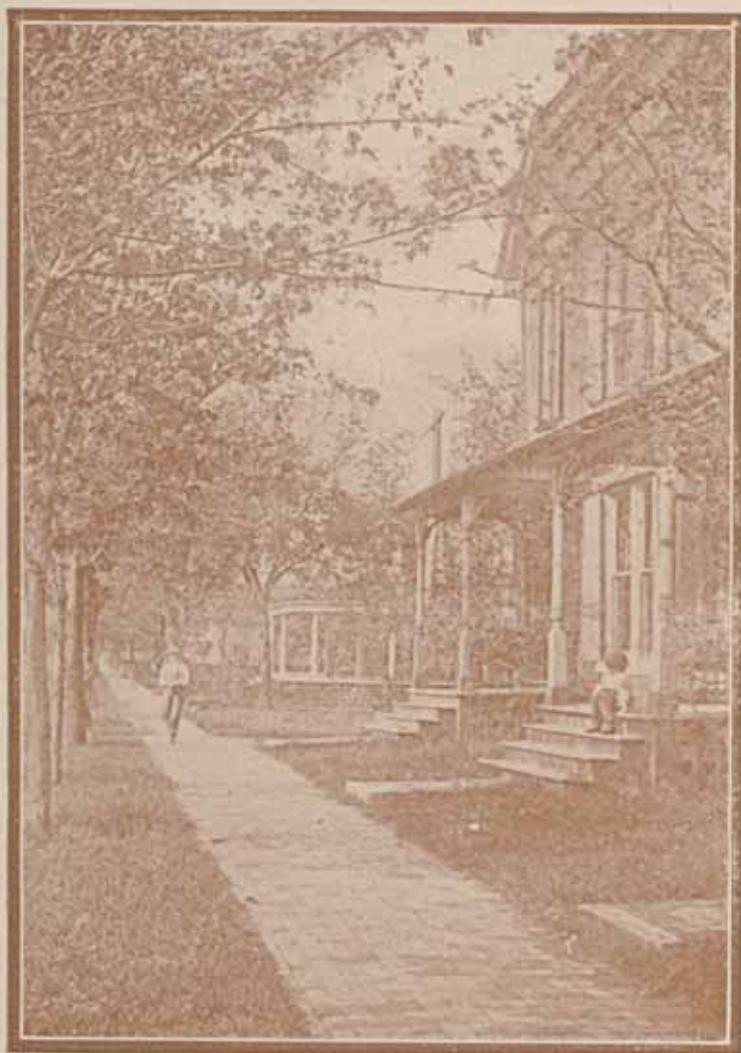
Second Street, East From Hastings Avenue.

minutes of the meeting of August 11 say: "The returns of the Second ward were read and upon a motion a committee of two was appointed to act with the president in examining the returns. The committee reported the returns regular and in proper form, but different from what they were given at the last meeting. On motion the report was received and the committee was discharged."

The returns of the Second ward were then canvassed and the trustees declared the following elected: Mayor, H. A. Forcht; clerk, G. D. Pierce; treasurer, J. G. B. Smith; councilmen, J. M. Smith, and John E. Wood; police judge, L. C. Gould; marshal, Fred Berg. The rejection of the returns from the First and Third wards deprived the people in these sections from a voice in the election, and not wishing to serve the city at large upon a vote cast merely in one ward, all of the officers named in the foregoing list resigned immediately after they were declared elected. Mr. Buckworth moved to call another election for August 27, but the motion was voted down. At the next meeting, however, on September 7, an election was ordered for September 22, which resulted in the election of: Mayor, John E. Wood; police judge, A. L. Wigton; marshal, Alfred Berg; treasurer, Samuel Alexander; engineer, T. E. Farrell; councilmen, First ward, A. W. Cox, J. L. Parrott; Second ward, J. G. B. Smith, H. A. Forcht; Third ward, J. M. Smith, T. E. Farrell.

The positions in the city government were not considered of great responsibility in those days for only three of the officials were required to give bonds, which were fixed at \$500 each for the treasurer and mayor and \$200 for the marshal. The present city treasurer is required to give bond for \$25,000 and the clerk for \$5,000. One of the first resolutions adopted by the council provided for a fine of \$1.00 for each member who arrived at a council meeting later than 7:00 p. m. This rule has never been repealed.

Until 1886 the city was divided into only three wards. In that year the Fourth ward was organized and since then the boundary lines have remained as follows: First ward, south of Burlington main line tracks; Second ward, north of the Burlington and west of the center line of Burlington avenue; Third ward, north of the Burlington and between the center lines of Burlington and St. Joe avenues; Fourth ward, north of



St. Joe Avenue

the Burlington and west of the center line of St. Joe avenue.

Mr. Micklem and Wm. B. Slosson are the only organizers of the original Hastings Town Company living. Mr. Micklem disposed of his interest in the town site company early in the seventies and now lives near Guntersville, Ala. Thomas E. Farrell died in Cripple Creek. Wm. B. Slosson lives in Houston, Tex., but his brother, Samuel Slosson, who became a member of the company after it was organized, is dead. Wm. L. Smith died in California.