



Eastern Nebraska Genealogical Society Newsletter

P O BOX 541
Fremont NE 68026-0541



May 2018

Continuing with an early overview of our adjoining Eastern Nebraska Counties:

From: **Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska**

first published in 1882 by The Western Historical Company,
A. T. Andreas, Proprietor, Chicago, IL.

Cuming County

LOCATION AND NATURAL FEATURES

CUMING County is located in the second tier of Nebraska counties from the Missouri River, being west of Burt and north of Dodge County. It is in the northeastern part of the state, being a portion of that fertile region included in the Elkhorn Valley. This included an area of country equal to Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and no agricultural district in the world has so little waste land. The soil is a rich vegetable mould, on the uplands, one foot to two and one half feet deep; this is interspersed with a fine sandy loam. The subsoil is porous, and, as much of the underlying strata is a soft sandstone, there is no such thing as a "baked out soil." It improves also by cultivation--never "runs out"--ground which formerly yielded but twenty-five or thirty bushels of corn to the acre, now producing from fifty to eighty, without the aid of fertilizers.

The county, containing 504 square miles, is well watered, the Elkhorn River being the principal source of supply. It performs some of its greatest eccentricities in Cuming County, favoring that region with over thirty miles of valley. Rock, Sand, Plum, Pebble, and Cuming creeks also diversify and fertilize the country.

In addition to the abundance of water supply there are good limestone ledges, especially in the vicinity of West Point, and excellent clay in places for making brick. Indications of coal have also been discovered, but no paying deposits have yet been worked.

EARLY SETTLEMENT

The following extract taken from the centennial history of Cuming County, written by E. N. Sweet, formerly editor of the *West Point Republican*, is as concise an account of early history of the county for the first two years as can be obtained. For "the truth of history," however, several corrections in the text have been made:

In the summer of 1856, Benjamin B. Moore left Hillsdale, Mich., and accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Anna Moore, daughter, Miss Kate Moore, and three sons, Abram, George, and Oscar, came to Nebraska, and after viewing the country in different parts of the State, came to the conclusion that no portion of it excelled the Elkhorn Valley in beauty and fertility, and accordingly made a claim and erected a cabin at Catherine, or Dead Timber, being the first actual settler in the county. The winter following was an unusually severe one, and the snow fell to such a depth that it



After many years of being located in the basement of Claire Mares' home the ENGS library is moving across Fremont to:

Louis E. May Museum



1643 N. Nye Ave.

Once the move is complete, researchers will be welcome to utilize the combined resources of the Dodge County Historical Society and ENGS. Plans are underway to schedule volunteers to assist individuals in locating the desired research materials. Future ENGS meetings will be held at the museum.

THANK YOU CLAIRE !

Our thanks to Claire for housing and caring for the ENGS research materials while continuously creating additional reference tools. During the time the library has been housed at Claire's home, she has graciously hosted the ENGS meetings and assisted researchers from far and wide.

May 14, 2018 ENGS meeting

Topics: Election of Officers plus a discussion of
future plans and proposed bylaw updates

7 PM at Louis E. May Museum, 1643 N Nye Ave, Fremont, NE

No browse night is scheduled for May, but if you would like to help pack books into boxes on May 28th, please contact Renee Bunck (402-727-6781) or reneebunck@gmail.com.

Note: ENGS PO Box 541 Fremont NE 68026 will not change.

was impossible, for a time, to drive a team to Fontanelle, an embryo town in Dodge County, and in consequence Mr. Moore and his sons were compelled to haul provisions from that place over the snow crust on hand-sled. But, fortunately, the family were enabled to get an abundant supply of fresh meat without going far from home, without money and without price.

The Elkhorn Valley was literally filled with antelope, deer, and elk, and when the deep snow covered the face of the country, they flocked to the friendly shelter of the timber on the river bottoms, and during the winter Mr. Moore and his sons killed not less than seventy of them with axes in and around Dead Timber, the snow crust being firm enough to bear a man, while the animals would break through, thus becoming easy prey. This winter, 1856-1857, was the most severe one ever experienced since the settlement of Nebraska, and caused the death of hundreds and hundreds of animals. Even to this day may be seen the decaying bones of antelope, deer, and elk, which died of cold and starvation in the deep encrusted snow that had drifted into the bottoms and thickets along the river.

In the summer of 1857, the Moore family left their claim at Dead Timber, and settled in what is known as De Witt, on the southwest quarter of section 4, in Township 22, Range 6 east, at which place Mrs. Anna Moore and Oscar Moore still reside. There are now only three of the family living--Mrs. Anna Moore, Mrs. Kate Crawford, wife of Hon. J. C. Crawford, of West Point, and Oscar Moore, the younger son. George Moore enlisted in the federal army and died in the West, Abram Moore was accidentally shot and killed, and Benjamin J. Moore died at his residence on the second day of September 1870.

In March, 1857, Uriah Bruner, John J. Bruner (now of West Point, then of Omaha), Henry A. Kisters, Wm. Sexauer, Andrew J. Bruner, Peter Windheim, Henry Eikey, Charles Beindorf (some of whom still reside in Omaha), and other citizens of Omaha associated themselves together under the name and style of "The Nebraska Settlement Association," and appointed a committee to go up to the Elkhorn and fix upon a proper site for the location of a town.

Early in that month, Uriah Bruner, John J. Bruner, and other members of the association who had been appointed as such a committee, started upon a prospecting tour to the Elkhorn, while the snow was still on the ground, being compelled to build bridges across Bell Creek, in Washington County, across Logan Creek and across Cuming Creek, in order to get their teams across those streams, which were swollen by the floods of spring. Their journey, on account of the bad state of the roads and swollen streams, was necessarily slow, but in a few days they reached the Elkhorn without accident or serious difficulty. Arriving at or near where West Point now stands, the members of the committee were favorably impressed with the general make up of the country, with the beauties of the undulating land, the apparent richness of its soil, and especially were they favorably impressed, and highly pleased, with the splendid stream of water which gracefully wound its way down the broad valley, and its excellent facilities for being improved for manufacturing purposes.

"Here," said they, with one accord, "will we 'set our stakes,' here will we locate a town, and establish industries." The committee made a favorable report to the association at Omaha, and it was unanimously agreed that the report be accepted, and that a town be located as recommended. Accordingly, claims were taken, and the community purchased a steam saw-mill, which arrived at the town site in the month of June; men were set to work putting up machinery; a log house was erected, and during the summer a town site was surveyed (being a portion of the present site

upon which West Point is located) by Andrew J. Bruner. The town was first named Philadelphia, but soon after changed to West Point. The several townships in the county were surveyed into subdivisions during the summer of this year, the survey of the township in which West Point is situated being made August 4, to August 7. Several members of the committee sent out by "the Nebraska Settlement Association," took "squatter's" claims in the neighborhood of the town site, and John Gaul and a man named Smith also made claims. Mr. U. Bruner and John J. Bruner, and other members of the settlement association, remained until the saw-mill was partly completed, but they finally all returned to Omaha, to await the settlement and development of the country.

In the month of March, 1858, John D. Neligh, James C. Crawford, and George W. Houser, of Pennsylvania, and Josiah McKirahan and John McKirahan, of Ohio, arrived in Omaha, and hearing a glowing account of the Elkhorn Valley, came to Cuming County. They were so well pleased with the outlook that they took "squatter's" claims, in accordance with claim laws established by early settlers throughout the State (the lands in Cuming County not yet having been thrown open for homesteads), near West Point, built temporary houses out of adobes, and commenced breaking prairie with a view to permanent location. Some of the party also took pre-emption claims--the first taken in the county by Josiah McKirahan, on the 14th day of April, 1858, being the north-west quarter of Section 21, in Township 22, Range 6 east. Mr. Neligh and Crawford bought the unfinished saw-mill of the "Nebraska Settlement Association" and also its claim to the town site, and during the summer the saw-mill was completed.

Soon after the parties just referred to had made a commencement, other settlers gradually dropped in, among whom were John Bromer and family, and ere long quite a settlement had gathered in the valley, within a few miles of West Point. The citizens soon felt the urgent need of a post office, and petitioned the Postmaster General for the establishment of an office and the appointment of a postmaster. The petition was promptly recognized by Aaron Brown, Postmaster-General, and on the 15th day of May, 1858, an office was established, and J. C. Crawford was appointed Postmaster. About the 1st of the following month, Mr. Crawford's bond having been filed and approved, the post-office was opened in the "Claim-house" on the town site. Mails were carried to and from West Point to Fontanelle semi-occasionally by the Postmaster, or by any traveler who happened to be coming to or going from the so-called town.

To be continued next month...

Cuming County resources:

NEGENWEB – Cuming County
<http://usgenwebsites.org/NECuming/>

Leila Stahl Buffett Genealogy Center
c/o John A Stahl Library
330 N. Colfax
West Point, NE 68788

Elkhorn Valley Genealogical Society
Email: kgmunderloh@Yahoo.com

Cuming County Historical Society
227 N. Main St.
West Point, NE 68788