

NEBRASKA FOLKLORE

(Book Two)

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INDIAN PLACE LEGENDS

These legends are representative of two of the outstanding tribes of Nebraska Indians: Pawnee and Sioux. The fact that other versions are extant and that living Indians within the same tribe disagree concerning an authentic version confirm them as true folklore.

Prisoners of Courthouse Rock (Pawnee)

Courthouse Rock, situated not far from the Oregon Trail received its name from western voyagers who thought it resembled their courthouse back home. It stands, a conspicuous landmark, about five miles southwest of Bridgeport. On all sides except one, the walls, smoothed and polished by the wind and rain are nearly vertical and have no projections which might serve as footholds for climbing. From one side an agile man may reach the tableland at the summit.

Sometime in the middle years of the nineteenth century a Skidi (Pawnee) war party camping near Courthouse Rock were surprised by a party of Sioux. The Skidi greatly outnumbered, were driven back and obliged to climb the Rock. The Sioux settled down to starve the Skidi out.

The Skidi leader would go by himself at night to pray to Tirawa for help. One night while he was praying, something seemed to say, "Look hard for a place to get down from this rock." When day came he searched again for a place where his men might climb down.

At length he found a point of rock near the edge of the cliff which stick up above the level of the rest. The wall below was straight and smooth. That night he secretly took all the lariats, tied them together, and found that they would reach the ground. He placed the rope around the point of rock and let himself down. He reached the ground safely and then climbed back again. The next night he secretly told his men he had found a way to get down. They crept through the Sioux camp and escaped. The youngest and least important was ordered down first, the others following. The leader went last.

The Sioux watched the rock until they thought that the Skidi had starved to death. They ascended the cliff and found that their captives had escaped.

Lover's Leap (Sioux)

The theme of this legend has fastened itself to four places in Nebraska, indicating that the Indians' sense of romance was strongly developed regardless of their apparent stoicism. The Lover's Leap of this story is just south of Long Springs branch near Harrisburg in Banner County.

There is another Lover's Leap near Fullerton, Nance County, and one on the White River in Dawes County. Maiden's Leap, the legend of which has the same theme, is about four miles east of Niobrara in Knox County.

Situated on a little table-land just south of a little creek then unnamed, stood a Sioux Indian Village. Thither had come an Oglala brave with his finest ponies to exchange for the chief's beautiful daughter. Tomorrow he would claim his bride.

The daughter loved a brave of her own tribe and was determined not to marry the Oglala. Secretly leaving her father's lodge she found her sweetheart and persuaded him to run away with her when night came. They mounted two of the ponies tied before her father's lodge and rode away. They were seen leaving the village and were soon overtaken. The angry chief had his daughter whipped and the lover put to death.

The next morning the Indian maiden donned her wedding finery and went humming through the village, wending her way to the south. The people seeing her wondered at her taking her lover's death so lightly. The Sioux braves watched her with admiration and envied the Oglala his good fortune. He too looked on in admiration and anticipation and rated his prize the more highly since he had nearly lost her.

As she went up Table Mountain her song took a sadder strain. She paused at the eastern extremity where ages of weathering had made a perpendicular wall to the cliff. All the people were watching her now. She raised her arms to the sun and commenced to sing again. Her song, weird and sweet, was instantly recognized as the death song.

A dozen braves rushed after her, but before they could reach her she threw aside her blanket and stood for a moment as a statue of bronze in the morning sun. Then, with a cry to her dead lover, she leaped over the cliff and was crushed on the rocks below. Thus the cliff received its name.

The Seven Cities of Cibola

This tale of a Texas Indian concerning the "Seven Cities of Cibola" was the basis of a series of expeditions which ended in the discovery of the "Land of Quivera."

About five hundred years ago a Texas Indian slave named Tejo went to his master, Governor Nunez de Guzman, with a strange and startling tale. He said that his father had been a merchant who had traded far to the north bartering the rich plumage of tropical birds for gold and silver and valuable stones. On one of these trips he had accompanied his father to seven cities of wealth and magnificence, where the streets were lined with gold and silver smith shops. Precious stones were abundant, and the people were clothed in rich stuffs and lived in ease and luxury.

Nunez de Guzman got together about 400 Spaniards and 20,000 Indians, and set out in search of the Seven Cities. He got only as far as the province of Culiacan. While waiting there to find a passageway through the mountains, he learned that his rival, Fernando Cortez, had come from Spain. Some of the rich men had changed their minds and were anxious to return to New Spain; so he established the town of Culiacan and returned home.

Spanish leaders, keyed to adventure and conquest, made several attempts to reach these cities, but for ten years no one had been able to get across the mountains which barred the way. But one day in the year 1536 interest was revived in this fabulous region when four persons, spent with hunger, thirst, heat, cold, shipwreck, storms, battle, and disease reached the city of Mexico. They were Cabozo de Vaca, two other Spaniards, and a Negro called Estavan the Moor.

Of four hundred who landed eight years before on the peninsula of Florida, only these four had been able to survive. They had--so they said--traversed the whole continent. They had crossed a great river coming from the north, sandy plains, and precipitous mountains and had marvelous tales to tell of silver, gold, and precious stones, and of people, living in rich and populous cities located in a fertile and beautiful valley.

In the spring of 1540, Coronado set out with 300 Spaniards and 800 natives. Their sanguine hopes were sometimes dimmed by the hardships of crossing mountains and desert: the marvels of the Seven Cities could not entirely do away with distrust and homesickness.

When at last they reached the Seven Cities of Cibola, they found the cities to be hamlets, the minerals of little value, and the gold, gems, and rich stuffs pure figments of their imagination. The whole army broke out into maledictions against Friar Marcos de Niza for deceiving them by his highly colored tales.

Having endured the hardships of coming so far into the wilderness, and reluctant to permit the expedition to come to so ignoble an end, Coronado began to inquire whether there were not other cities which it would be profitable to visit. The natives, anxious to be rid of the Spaniards, assured them that about two hundred miles to the east was a very rich, peaceful, and populous province.

Massacre of the Spanish Caravan

It is generally agreed by students of early Spanish exploration in North America that the scene of this massacre is near the junction of the Loup and Platte rivers. This is within that region generally believed to be the site of the Quivera of the earlier legends.

Having been informed by the Padoka (Comanche) Indians that French trappers had invaded the prairie region in search of mines and were about to descend the Missouri and gain possession of the province of New Mexico, the viceroy of New Spain (Mexico) ordered an expedition into that country. Don Pedro de Villazur was placed in command. One of Villazur's staff was Jean Archibegue, a Frenchman who had betrayed his countryman La Salle into the hands of assassins.

In the spring of 1720 the expedition composed of some 1,500 men, women and children, including some Padoka Indians, set out from Santa Fe. While the reports of boulders of emeralds and mountains of silver may have been discounted, the credulous and hopeful Spaniards took with them a great number of mining tools intending to seize the fabled mines of the Missouri.

After a journey of about 300 leagues they came to that region which they feared was being

invaded by the French. Since leaving Santa Fe about three-fourths of the members of the expedition returned to New Mexico for various reasons, so that, after crossing the Kanza river, not more than 200 remained, of which about 60 were Spanish soldiers.

Upon reaching a river with many islands, the Jesus-Maria (possibly the Platte) Indians were sent ahead to find a ford. As only part of the army had crossed by nightfall, the camp was divided, which caused uneasiness, though misfortune occurred. A native Pawnee offered to lead the Spaniards to a village of his tribe located on the bank of a river far to the north. A few soldiers were sent on in advance of the army with the Pawnee as guide. On the following day one of these soldiers returned with information that they had found in a valley about eight leagues distant a great number Pawnee dancing and singing according to their custom. The Spaniards advanced to within five leagues of the Indians and pitched camp. The next day the army proceeded to follow the creek and came opposite to an Indian village across from the Spaniards. The Indian interpreter said they asked for peace and desired the chief to come to their village the next day.

At the conference on the following day the Indians said they were Pani-Maha. The Spanish commander promised to give them a great many gifts if they would deliver the French into his hands. This they promised to do. All night the Natives danced intermittently.

The next afternoon the Pani-Maha suggested a dance. They asked for the dances of the Spaniards to use in the dance and they were given them. As the savages danced they formed in groups about the Spaniards. Suddenly their chief fired a pistol which he had obtained from the Spaniards, and at this signal the Indians attacked the unsuspecting Spaniards and killed them in a very short length of time. So quick and murderous was the attack that only flight was thought of. Several caught and mounted their animals, but only two succeeded in escaping. General Villazur and Jean Archibeque were among the slain.

BALLADS

These ballads were sung in pioneer Nebraska. They have come from the people themselves, having been repeated by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie

Mrs. Cecile Larson, of Lincoln, Nebraska, says that as a child, in Greeley County, her mother used to sing her to sleep with old ballads.

Oh! bury me not on the lone prairie.
Those words came softly but mournfully
From the pale lips of a youth who lay
On the cold damp ground at the close of day.

He had wasted and pained until over his brow
Death's shades were but gathering now.

He thought of home and loved ones nigh,
As the cowboys gathered round for to see him die.

Oh! bury me not on the lone prairie,
Where the wild coyotes will howl o'er me,
Where the rattlesnakes hiss and the wind blows free
Oh! bury me not on the lone prairie.

In fancy I listen to the well known words,
To the free wild winds and songs of birds;
I've thought of home and the cotton bowers,
And the scenes we loved in childhood hours.

I've hoped to have been laid when I died
In the churchyard there, 'neath the green hillside:
By the bones of my father let my grave be;
Oh! bury me not on the lone prairie.

They heeded not his dying prayer,
They burned him there on the lone prairie
In a little box just six by three
His bones now rot on the lone prairie.

I've Got No Use for Women

R.E. Carlson, when a boy in Madison County, Nebraska, remembers hearing "I've Got No Use for Women" sung by an old Norwegian named Elmer Langass. He used to sing this ballad with a gusto and verve which, in his Norwegian dialect, gave it an irresistible drollery.

I've got no use for women,
A true one may never be found
They want a man for his money;
When it's gone, they'll turn him down.
They're all alike at the bottom,
Selfish and grasping for all.
They'll stick to a man when he's winning.
And laugh in his face at his fall.

My pal was a straight young puncher,
Honest and upright and square,
Till he turned to a gunman and gambler;
But a woman sent him there.
Swift and sure his gun play,
Till his heart in his body lay dead.
When a rascal insulted her picture,
He filled him full of lead.

All night in the darkness they trailed him
Through the mesquite and chaparral.
And I couldn't but think of the woman,
When I saw him pitch and fall.
If she'd been the pal she should've,
He might have been rearing a son,
Instead of out there on the prairie,
To be falling by a Ranger's gun.

The cowboy was fatally wounded,
His chances for life were too slim.
Where they were putting his body
Was all that worried him.
He raised his head on his elbow
And the blood from his wound flowed red.
He looked at his pals grouped about him,
And whispered to them and said:

"Oh, bury me out on the prairie,
Where the coyotes may howl o'er my grave.
And cover me over with boulders,
That some of my bones be saved.
Wrap me up in my blankets
And bury me deep 'neath the ground,
And cover me over with boulders
Of granite so huge and round."

They buried him out on the prairie,
And the coyotes may howl o'er his grave;
But his soul is at rest with its Giver
From the unkind cut that she gave.
And many a similar puncher,
As he rides by that pile of stones,
Recalls some similar woman
And is glad that it's not his bones.

But The Mortgage Worked the Hardest

This ballad written by Will Carlton was one of the many sung in the 1890's at Farmers' Alliance meetings. It was a decade of political controversy, aggravated by drouth and widespread financial panic--comparable only to more recent events, as when, in January of 1933, 5,000 aroused farmers marched to the Nebraska State Capitol building to make demands for farm relief from the legislature.

We worked through spring and winter,--through summer and through fall,

But the mortgage worked the hardest--and the steadiest of them all.
It worked on nights and Sundays;--it worked each holiday;
It settled down among us--and never went away.

Whatever we kept from it--seemed almost as a theft;
It watched us every minute; it ruled us right and left.
The rust and blight were with us--sometimes, and sometimes not;
The dark-browed, scowling mortgage--was forever on the spot.

The weevil and cut worm--they went as well as they came;
The mortgage stayed forever,--eating hearty all the same.
It nailed up every window, stood guard at every door,
And happiness and sunshine, made their home with us no more.

Till failing crops and sickness--we got stalled upon the grade,
And there came a dark day on us, when the interest wasn't paid;
And there came a sharp foreclosure, and I kind o'lost my hold,
And grew weary and discouraged, and the farm was cheaply sold.

The children left and scattered, when they hardly yet grown:
My wife, she pined and perished, and I found myself alone.
What she died of was a "mystery," the doctors never knew,
But I knew she died of mortgage--just as well as I wanted to.

If to trace the hidden arrow was within the doctor's art,
They'd ha' found a mortgage lying--on that woman's broken heart.
Worm or beetle, drouth or tempest on a farmer's land may fall,
But for first-class ruination, trust a mortgage 'gainst them all.

ANIMAL LEGENDS

Such legends are for the most part stories of the supernatural power of a supreme being known to the Pawnee as Tirawa.

A Story of Faith

Once long ago before the Pawnees had doctors' dances, there was a certain small boy in one of the tribes. He had peculiar ways and kept to himself. His mother or father sometimes found him with mud smeared over his face and head. This was a sign of a doctor, showing that the boy had faith in the earth from which roots used for medicine are taken.

His parents did not understand his ways, but they did not interfere. After he had grown up he seemed very thoughtful. He would often sit by himself fasting and praying. His father, who was a brave but not a chief, was well-to-do and had plenty of horses.

When anyone fell ill, this young man would go to them and cure them. The doctors in the tribe

wondered how he could do this: He had never been taught by them. He did not want to be with the doctors. He preferred to be alone. Some of the bad doctors became jealous of him. They had great influence because the people believed they could lay a curse on a man.

His name became so great that it was well known among the other bands of Pawnees. A great doctor from another village paid a visit to this young man and to find out where he got his knowledge and power. The young man greeted him courteously and entertained him in his lodge. The great doctor said, "You may come to me for advice." Although it was contrary to Pawnee custom, they smoked the doctors tobacco all night long. In the morning he departed.

A short time after the doctor left, the young man began to be ill. He felt drowsy and heavy and seemed to be swelling up with some strange disease. The doctor had poisoned him in some way. The boy felt disgraced and did not know what to do. He prayed and fasted for several days at a time, and was so despondent that he thought of killing himself. He did not tell his trouble to anyone.

He went out on a hill to mediate and pray, and had not returned when the tribe set out on a hunt. The father left a horse in the village upon which he might follow the tribe. When he came back, the village was empty except for a fine horse which his father had left for him. He did not follow the tribe, however, but rode eastward for several days.

One day he stopped and tied his horse to a tree and prayed aloud, "My Father, through you I live and through you that man put me in this condition. You are the ruler and nothing is impossible to you. I pray you take this illness from me." Then he said, "To you, fish of the rivers, you, birds of the air, you animals that move upon the earth, and you, oh Sun: I offer up this animal. If you have any power, intercede for me." After saying this he stabbed his horse and killed it. He placed it upright on its knees and skinned it that the animals might feed upon it.

Although the tribe was camped on the Republican River he went on to a hill by the Platte River called Pahuk by the Indians. As he felt very badly he stayed there several days. One night, having fallen asleep exhausted by weeping and praying, he was awakened by a voice saying, "What are you doing here?" A second and a third night he had the same experience and each time he saw no one. On the third night he answered the voice, saying, "Whoever speaks to me, take pity on me."

As he lay with his head toward the east on the fourth night, something touched his shoulder. When he looked up he saw a large animal with big black eyes and a whitish body, (Pah) an elk.

The elk said, "Right here under you is the home of the (Nahurac) animals. We know your trouble. If one animal's home fails to help you, I will take you to another; if that fails, to another. If they cannot help you we still have the One above." Having said these things he vanished.

As the man was absorbed in thought a voice roused him. It said, "I have passed here many times and have heard you crying." Looking up he saw sitting by him a little bird blue above white below, with red legs. The boy replied, "Oh, my brother, you understand; take pity on me." The bird said, "You must not talk that way to me. I am only a servant. Tomorrow night I will come again and whatever I do, you do also." The bird disappeared and the man felt a little hopeful.

The next night when the time came the bird flew close and said, "Come, we will go to the edge of the cut bank." When they reached the edge the bird said, "Do as I do." So when the bird dived off the cut bank, the man followed. As he sprang he felt like a bird and could sail this way and that. When he reached the water it seemed that he was standing in the entrance of a lodge and could see the fire burning within.

The bird flew in ahead of him and said, "Here he is." As he stepped forward the bears growled and the other animals all made sounds. Although a bear stood ready to seize him on one side of the entrance and on the other a snake was rattling, coiled as if to strike, something behind seemed to push him ahead. Knowing that he must enter, he looked neither to the right nor the left, but walked straight ahead. As he passed them they sank back and were quiet. Then the Nahurac made a noise of welcome. Looking around he saw all kinds of animals--beaver, garfish, otter, and a sandhill crane. The man looked very pitiful, and the bird servant said, "I have taken pity on this man and I want you to take pity on him." It was very quiet; as the man looked about he saw all the animals roll their eyes. Then the bird stood up and said, "My rulers, I am your servant and am always obedient. I am weary of the crying of this poor-minded man. Pity him because I pity him."

The bird took the young man's pipe, walked over to the beaver, the head doctor, and held it out to him. The beaver stretched out his hand and withdrew it; as the bird continued to cry, the beaver took the pipe. All the animals were pleased. The beaver said, "I take pity on my servant, but it is impossible for me to promise to help this man." He passed the pipe to the next doctor who said, "I am poor; I have not much power." The pipe went around the circle. The white beaver then said, "None of us have the power to help you. There is another lodge at Pahowa. Go there." The Nahurac made medicine and when the young man awoke he was lying on the hill where he had slept the night before.

He wept all day. The elk came at night and said, "Go to sleep and I will take you to Pahowa. That night the bird came and dived into a spring. As the young man followed, he found himself again at the door of a lodge. The same thing happened and the animal doctors told him of another lodge on the west side of the Loup River. He went to sleep and awakened on top of the ground near Pahowa.

That night the elk took him while he slept to a place near the bank of the Loup River. The bird led him over the bank to the Nahurac lodge at that place. Here were the same head doctors. They could not help him and told him to go to an island in the Platte near Lone Tree (Central City). The elk took him to the island and the bird led him to the lodge under the center of the island. They sent him back to the lodge at Pahuk in the same manner as he had before. The animals were glad to see him. This time the man himself asked the animals to help him. The white beaver took the pipe and said, "My brother, I have done this to see if any of the other lodges were equal to me. I have an animal who will undertake to rid you of your trouble." He walked to a certain ground dog and held out the pipe. The ground dog hesitated a long time. At last he reached out his paws, and the Nahurac made a very big noise.

The ground dog said, "I have accepted this pipe for the sake of our servant who has been so faithful to our commands. And if I fail now, we can do nothing for him."

After the doctors had smoked, they told the young man to sit down between them and the fire. These twelve animals paced back and forth. At length the head doctor told him to stand and asked the other Nahurac to sing. The ground dogs danced, made their hands go up and down, made their jaws go as if eating but they did not open their mouths. Next they told him to lie down with his feet toward the entrance. The head ground dog jumped over the man's belly and seemed to be eating a big piece of flesh. Each one ran and jumped over the man and as they jumped each one was eating a piece of flesh. As they were jumping, the swelling gradually disappeared from the young man.

The head ground dog said, "Now, Nahurac, you see the power I have. That is the reason I do not travel on top of the ground. My appetite would overpower me and I would kill men and eat them."

The young man had been unconscious since he first lay down. The ground dogs did not know how to restore him. The head doctor, the beaver said to the bears, "This man belongs to you. Let me see what you can do." The head bear said, "Very well. I will let you see what I can do." First the bears began to sing. Then the head bear jumped on the man and acted as if he were going to tear him to pieces. The other took hold of him and shook him until at last his blood began to circulate and he began to breathe. After a while he regained consciousness. He felt as he had many months before and he found that his trouble was gone. The head bear stood by him and said, "Nahurac, you have seen what I can do. However dangerously wounded I may be I know how to cure myself if I have any breath left in me." The bears then sat down in their places.

The man arose and thanked the Nahurac. He stayed several days observing their ceremonies. They taught him their ways and their secrets. One day the head doctor said, "I wish to ask a favor of you in return for what we have done." The man agreed, and the head doctor continued, "See that my animals that move in the river are fed. I move in the water, you live in the air, but we live where there is no air. The heaven is the house of Tirawa and we all live inside of it. When you do the things we have taught, you must blow a smoke to each of these head doctors, and to Tirawa you must blow four smokes. Blow four to the north and to the east, for something may then foretell all events to you while you sleep. Now, go home and after a short time pay a visit to the doctor who caused your trouble.

The young man arrived home in the night. His father had long mourned him as dead and was poor in mind on account of it. He went into his father's lodge and awakened him. His father said, "Is it you or your ghost?" The son replied, "I am not a ghost."

He asked his father to summon his uncles and other relatives and ask them to bring a blue bead, a pipe, some Indian tobacco, and some buffalo meat. The relatives came to rejoice and bring the presents. The boy took the presents down to the river and threw them in; they were carried to the Nahurac lodge at Pahuk.

After a few days the young man mounted his horse and went to visit the doctor. When he reached the village, someone said to the doctor, "There is a man at your lodge." The doctor was a little uneasy: he said he knew what he had done to the boy. He thought, however, that he knew so much that no one could overcome him. He welcomed the boy and took him into his lodge.

After they had eaten the evening meal, the young man said, "When you were at my lodge we smoked your tobacco; tonight we will smoke mine." While they smoked the boy moved his jaws as if eating. At daylight the boy said he must go. When he reached the river he blew upon the ice which immediately melted and was full of blood. The young man had learned the ground dogs' secrets.

The people found the doctor dead in his lodge. He was hollow; his blood and inside had gone down the river to feed the animals. The boy had fulfilled his promise to the Nahurac and had revenge upon the doctor.

Reminiscences of Dad Streeter

These reminiscences of George W. Streeter, who prefers to be known as Dad Streeter, relate experiences and events in which he participated while living in Nebraska during the 1880's. "Dad" lived the life of a roving cowboy.

Whacking Bulls and Skinning Mules

When I reached the age of fourteen, in 1881, I went to the office of the Niobrara Transportation Company at Sidney and asked for a job driving a stage coach. They didn't need a stage driver, but were looking for a bull whacker. So I took the job of bull whacking, which carried about fifteen tons of supplies.

The oxen were teamed up in this manner: A hitch, consisting of a long chain reaching from the ring in the lead team's yoke to the front axle on the lead wagon, guided the freighting wagon. This chain had to be strong enough to pull the entire load. Then there were smaller chains, about 12 feet in length, from each of the other yokes back towards the wagon and welded where they intersected the large chain. These shorter chains only had to be string enough to hold what each team could pull.

When I hitched up my team the herder would drive the oxen up to the wagons while I held the lead team's yoke and called their names, after which they would take their places. Then all I had to do was lower the yoke, and put in the blow keys until all ten teams were hitched ready to travel. When I unhitched I reversed the process.

While driving I usually walked beside the wagons. But when there was snow, or when crossing streams, I sat on the lazy board. This was a broad thin board with one end fastened firmly to the bottom of the front wagon and extending horizontally three feet past the lower edge of the box on the left side between the wheels, giving it a very comfortable springy seat.

I had only made a few trips with the oxen when the boss gave me a mule team of the same number of wagons and animals. The hitch was very much the same, only the mules, instead of using yokes wore harnesses that consisted of collars, hames, a broad saddle band and chain tugs. Each mule had a small rope, called a jerk line, fastened to his bit that passed through the hame ring of the animal to each spand and extended back to the front wagon. This rope made a line of

communication between the driver and the jerk mule.

If the driver wished to turn to the right he gave the line a series of short light jerks, if to the left a steady pull; these the team obeyed instantly. If more speed was required the driver would crack his whip. If he wished to stop the train he would holler "Whoa!" and set the wagon brake.

A good jerk mule was always worth a good price, since he guided the entire team. A common jackass could not possibly fill the bill. The jerk mule, with his mate (who was guided by a jockey stick--a stout stick about three feet long, running from his halter ring to the hame ring on the jerk mule), guided the end of the long chain. The other teams pulled the load. The wheelers, who were hitched to the wagon like an ordinary team, guided the wagon tongue. On the high wheeler was a stock saddle for the driver.

Driving Stage

I had only made one trip to Deadwood with the mule team when one of the stage drivers quit. That gave me the job I had been waiting for, which consisted of driving from four to eight horses hitched to a Concord coach. The size of the stage and the number of horses used depended on how many passengers were leaving Sidney, which was the starting point. Some of the rigs could carry twenty passengers and their baggage. Our average time was ten miles per hour, over all kinds of roads--there were no good roads. All the driver was required to do was to drive. The hitching and unhitching was done by flunkies, who were kept at the stage stations along the route for that purpose.

One day I had only one passenger, a large fat man, who became violently seasick from the swaying of the stage. Thinking fresh air might make him feel better, I invited him to ride on top of the stage with me, although it was against the rules. All went well until we reached Break Neck Hill, which was a long steep grade going down to the White River near Fort Robinson.

As there was snow on the ground I knew my brake would not do any good, so I got out to put the rough-lock on, and to my horror it wasn't there. It had probably been taken out for repairs and not put back. So I took the desperate chance of going down the hill without a brake. My wheelers, although a large powerful team, were not able to hold the heavy rig, so we found ourselves gaining speed every second. I was lashing the leaders with all my might to keep them out of the way, realizing that if the wheelers became tangled in the leaders' stretchers they would cause a pile up that would kill both the passenger and myself. My passenger, not realizing that, and thinking I was trying to scare him, made a grab for the lines. In defense I threw them on the horses' backs. Then he tried to take the whip away from me, but that was useless, although he was much the larger and stouter, because it took too much of his time and energy to keep from falling off the seat. We reached the bottom of the hill in safety, but right at the bottom was a small stream that was only partly frozen over, so when the front wheels went in, instead of rolling up over the ice they went under and held fast. The abrupt stop caused us both to sail throughout the air for about fifty feet. We landed without any serious injury. The horses broke loose from the stage and ran into a clump of willows. When the shock had subsided the willows straightened up, lifting the lead team off the ground. I got out my ax, which we always carried for emergencies, chopped down the willows, to the team out, hitched on the rig again, and by

driving at a good run the balance of the way, reached the station on time.

The manager of the line, Mr. Crabtree, was there. My passenger immediately told him about my reckless driving, swearing he would never ride over that line again if he didn't fire the crazy kid who drove him in. The boss looked at him, and said: "You goggled eyed--you can ride or walk, but that kid is the best driver I've got."

Cattle Kate and Calamity Jane

That morning after I quit I put my saddle on Ned, went to the store and bought a half sack of flour, a package of soda, a slab of dry salt sowbelly, a little salt, a frying pan and a can to carry sourdough in. I filled the saddle pockets with the smaller articles, tied on the others behind my saddle and hit the trail for Texas. I depended on my old .45 Colt to furnish fresh meat along the way.

I slept on the ground, rolled in a saddle blanket. I did most of my traveling in the night, keeping as much under cover in the daytime as possible on account of the roving bands of Indians, whom I did not care to meet alone for fear they would take a fancy for my scalp or horse. I finally reached Dodge City, Kansas. There I met a herd of about five thousand head of cattle bound for a ranch on the Yellowstone River, near Miles City, Montana. The herders were short of help, so I hired out to them for the duration of the drive.

After reaching our destination I once more put my saddle on Ned and started south. When I reached the Platte River and the Old Heart Ranch, which had been turned into a hotel, saloon, and gambling hall, I stopped for the night. During the evening, when whiling away the time watching a game of stud poker, where they were using great piles of silver dollars for chips, with plenty of gold for larger bets, a young woman walked in with a gun in her hand and shouted: "Hands up, everybody." Then she went to the poker table and raked all the money in sight into her apron; after which she backed out of the door and rode away without anyone raising the least objection.

I asked the bartender who she was. He replied: "That's Cattle Kate, and I don't blame her for what she's done. She owns a small ranch west of here on the Sweet Water; where she, Jim Averil and his little kid nephew live. Old Henricks, of the 71 outfit, was sore at them for taking up government land that he claimed as part of his range, and to which he has no right or title. That tall fellow, who was playing stud, is her foreman; the rest of them belonged to the 71 outfit. Kate's foreman sold a bunch of steers today and got the money, then Kate appeared on the scene. I guess she got all of her money and more, and I'm glad of it."

The next day I traveled on and met another cattle herd near the north boundary of Indian Territory, known as the Staked Plains. It was a prairie-dog town about 125 miles in extent, that the old Santa Fe Trail crossed. The little prairie-dogs would come out of their burrows at the least sound and stand straight up on their hind parts on a little knoll beside their holes, giving the whole landscape the appearance of being covered with stakes spaced ten feet apart each way, and extending as far as the eye could reach.

This herd of cattle was headed for a place on the Little Missouri River, near the Montana and Dakota line. I joined them and went north again. One of the herders was a young woman they called Calamity Jane. She could do a man's work, and was a number one cowhand. She drove her peculiar appellation from her habit of telling a hard luck story to nearly every stranger she met, and, after gaining his sympathy, prevailing upon him to give her a few dollars.

DANCE CALLS

"Ladies bow and gents bow under
Hug'em tight and swing like thunder

These, and similar lines, were once part of a popular form of entertainment in Nebraska--the old-time dance. Towns were few and far between in the early days and settlers had the natural urge to get together in groups, a longing intensified by their isolation. So the practice arose of using first one and then another prairie soddie, barns or machine sheds for dances. The caller and fiddler (often the same man) would begin, positions would then be taken, and the dance would be on.

The environment of the Nebraska square dance was usually rustic. John Hartje, of Lincoln, used to conduct dances in a machine shed on his farm, with a dozen kerosene lanterns furnishing the illumination. "Scovie" Seidell, one of the State's most popular callers, would take his place beside the orchestra and call: "Choose your partners, choose your partners and be ready to go." The dance usually began with a grand march, executed according to the following call:

Fall in by couples and once around the hall,
Then down the center, one by one;
Then around and meet,
Down the center in couples,
One couple to the right, one to the left,
Around the hall again.
Meet in fours, down center by fours,
First four to the right, second four to the left;
Around by fours and meet in the center in eights
Down center by eights.

The quadrilles, sets of four couples, were then formed. "Scovie" would nod to his orchestra and they would begin to play a popular tune of the day, such as "Leather Breeches," or "Old Zip Coon," as "Scovie" called:

Now salute your partner,
Opposite lady too.
Join hands and circle to the left.
Promenade back.

"Scovie's" voice, clear and sharp, would rise louder and louder above the music and the shuffle of the dancers' feet as he continued:

First four forward and back,
Forward again and right and left.
Forward and back.
Right and left home.

The dance was on as the caller improvised one call after another, in time with the music.

The Quadrille

(This call was often used by Mr. and Mrs. John Hartje for their own farm dances in the vicinity of Roca.)

First four forward and back,
Forward again and right and left,
Forward and back.
Ladies change,
Change right back.
Half promenade.
Balance all and swing.
All the men left,
Grand right and left
Till you meet your partner.
(Side four repeat once more.)

Second Change

Balance all and swing your partner.
First couple round the outside,
In the center and six hands around.
To your place and swing your partner
(Repeat to 4th couple)

Third Couple

Balance all and swing.
First couple face out.
Sashay right, sashay left.
Ladies to the right,
Gents to the left.
Forward and back,
Forward again,
And swing your partner to your place.
Second couple, Third couple,
Fourth couple, repeat as above.

Honest John

(Tune: "Honest John")

(This call has good rhythm and is unusually artistic for a square dance.)

Balance to your places and all swing.
All the men left and promenade.
First couple lead out to the right,
Hold right hands.
Sashay by and how do you do. [Couple makes a low bow.]
Sashay back.
That was pretty well done
Right and left through,
Right and left back
And on to the next.
(Repeat three more times.)
Second couple, Third couple,
Fourth couple, repeat as above.

Pop Goes the Weasel

(Called by William Carson: Nearly everyone knows the popularity of this tune among old-time fiddlers. Few however, know the square dance of this name. Yet, when the "Pop" was twanged on the fiddle strings in the early days the ladies immediately made an arch with their hands and the gents ducked under.)

First lady out to the couple on the right,
The monkey chased the weasel.
Circle three and half around,
"Pop" goes the weasel.
It's on the next,
The gent solo
The monkey chased the weasel.
Second lady, Third lady,
Fourth lady, repeat as above.

Mr. Patrick Oliver drove a horse car in Lincoln for a number of years. He also called at square dances, at one time (over 40 years ago), when the only music was a man whistling. The following are calls he used.

Put on Style

First couple balance and swing,
Lead out to the right of the ring.
Right hand your partner

Sashay by and honor your partner.
Sashay back and put on style.
Right and left through
Right and left back.
Lead to the next.
(Repeat three more times.)
Second couple, Third couple
Fourth couple, repeat as above.

Form a Star

Four gents to center of the bar
And back,
Four ladies to the center
And right hands across.
Swing half around
Back by the left.
Pass your partner once and swing.
Pass your partner twice and swing.
Pass your partner three times and swing.
Clear around and swing your partner.
Balance home.

EARLY NEBRASKA COOKING

Early Nebraska cooking, because of its lack of variety, often became unappetizing for even the least fastidious settlers. Sowbelly (salt pork), corn meal and coffee were nearly always on the table for the main meals.

Corn

Corn, because it was cheaper and easier to grow than other foods, was the staple diet. Attempts were made to break the monotony by serving it in many different ways, but it still remained, as one old settler said, "corn!" Corn muffins, griddle cakes, corn cake, hominy, dry corn and milk (parched corn, ground and eaten with milk), corn on the cob, corn gruel (for invalids), were some of the ways in which attempts were made to disguise it on the table.

Coffee and Substitutes

Coffee was sold green. The pioneers had to roast and grind it themselves. If they didn't own a small coffee mill, the beans were mashed in a bad. When the pioneers couldn't get to town or

were short of money, a substitute coffee was used, Mrs. Nicholas Sharp, who lived in Gage County as early as 1867, tells of mixing corn meal and sorghum together until it made a gummy dough, then baking it in the oven until it became browned. It was pulverized before being placed in a coffee pot with water. The only resemblance this mixture had to boiled coffee was the color. When the amount of real coffee in the house was limited, a common practice was to reinforce it with a substitute. Some frontier connoisseurs even went so far as to consider two parts of dried peas to one part of coffee as being better than "straight" coffee. One settler tells how the Indians taught her to make "corn coffee." This was done by baking a whole ear of corn until it was burnt black, then putting it into the coffee pot. Other makeshift coffee substitutes consisted of parched barley, rye, and dried carrots.

Sorghum and Sugar

Very little canning was done in the 1870's because white sugar was both scarce and expensive. Later, as time went on, it came into more common use until virtually everything that required sweetening contained sugar in place of sorghum or honey. But sorghum, prepared at local sorghum mills, was the prevalent substitute for sugar for many years. It was used in pies, jellies, custards, bread and coffee, although honey and maple sugar, with their more delicate flavors, often took its place when they could be obtained.

On some occasions, when not even sorghum could be obtained, a substitute of substitutes was used in the form of boiled-down watermelon juice. Mr. Swanson, who lived in Boone County during the 80's, mentions another sugar substitute in the form of clean corn cobs boiled down for their syrup. He adds, "It was good corn syrup, too. I remember how we boys liked it."

Smoked Meat

It was natural for the settlers to look forward with keen anticipation to butchering, since it meant fresh meat for the entire family, and the neighbors, who, when they butchered, returned like portions of meat. A portion of pork, after being fried, was kept in large clay crocks, which were filled with lard. Some of the meat was smoked.

Nicholas Sharp, who came to the State in the 70's, says that a makeshift smokehouse was sometimes made out of an inverted barrel placed over a small trench. Holes were bored in the sides of the barrel for the insertion of sticks. The meat was hung on these sticks, under which a smoky fire was kept burning in the trench. After the smoking process, hams were wrapped in gunny sacks and covered with flour paste. This paste made an air-tight covering that helped to mellow the meat.

Preserving Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables of many kinds were dried for off-season use. Pumpkins were sliced into thin rings and strung on cords in the sun as were squash, apples and even rhubarb. Pumpkin,

according to Miss Estella Allen, who lived near Filmore during the 70's was also kept for winter use by cooking until most of the moisture had evaporated, then it was made into patties and thoroughly dried in the sun. String beans were strung and dried on cords. When cooked, both pods and beans were used.

Attempts were always made in the summer and fall to preserve fruits for winter use, though without sugar, which was scarce. Nicholas Sharp says that wild plums, always plentiful, were put in barrels after they had been scalded, and weighed down with a lid. Their own liquid, which turned into a form of vinegar, kept the fruit, although they were always sour and often unpalatable. When it was possible to obtain sorghum from the local mills, usually in the fall, the plums were sweetened with this sweet molasses, and stored in jars. Tomatoes were kept in the same way except that a string salt brine was added. The brine had to be soaked out with cold water before the tomatoes could be eaten. Mr. Sharp, in his reminiscences, adds that prairie chickens and fish were salted down and kept in the same manner.

Cook Stoves

One of the early cook stoves, (which was also used for heating the house) was the hay burner, used because of the scarcity of wood in a plains country. This resembled the ordinary cook stove except for the method of fuel feeding. Fuel was supplied by two iron pipes, or cylinders, about three feet long, packed full of hay and fastened to the rear of the stoves. A spring forced the hay into the fire box as it was needed. A supply of a dozen pipes were kept filled and on hand for reloading the stove.

Buffalo chips, before the years of settlement, had been a common fuel; later, when corn was raised on a large scale, corn cobs were substituted for hay. The hay burner was then replaced by the common iron cook stove, still used by most of the Nebraska farm homes today. This stove was in wide use in the 70's in the eastern portion of the State, where wood could be found along the creek banks. Much of the wood, however, was green cottonwood that wouldn't burn readily. The sticks of wood had to be placed in the oven to be dried out before being used for fire.

In the summer, cooking was sometimes done out-of-doors in a "fire trench," a small pit dug in the ground about a foot deep, two feet long, and wide enough to allow the pans to be placed over it. Mrs. Annie Ducker, who came to Custer County in 1873, tells of her father's first dugout, for which furnishings were so scanty that they had to use a blanket for a door. They had no cook stove at first; so, in order to bake bread, her brother dug a hole in the side of an earth bank and built a fire in it. This rude fireplace was used for several months. The practice was also common among ranchers on the round-up and freighters camping along the trail.

Another kind of cooking apparatus, used by the German-Russian settlers, was the brick oven built into a wall of the home. This oven was heated by lighting in it a fire of straw, hay or other material and allowing it to burn out. The brick walls of the oven retained enough heat for cooking or baking.

The following recipes are over 50 years old:

Buckwheat Cakes

(The Nebraska Farmer published this recipe in 1877.)

Mix one-half cup of wheat flour with one quart of buckwheat flour, add one large tablespoon of salt, then add gradually a scant quart of warm water mixed with one-fourth cup of yeast. Let it raise all night. In the morning add a quarter of a teaspoon of soda, and bake immediately. Bake on a smooth well-greased iron griddle, taking care to scrape it well after each baking and use as little grease as possible. The cakes should not be larger than a small saucer, and should be served at once.

Pork Fruit Cake

One pound of pork, one cup molasses, two cups sugar, one pint boiling water, two eggs, one tablespoon each of cinnamon, cloves and allspice, two teaspoons cream of tartar, one teaspoon of soda, one pound of raisins, chopped, flour to make it the consistency of any stirred cake. Chop the pork fine and pour on the boiling water; let stand until no longer hot. Bake very slowly. The longer the cake is kept, the better it becomes.

PIONEER RECOLLECTIONS

These reminiscences of life in Nebraska during the 1870's and 80's have been obtained through personal interviews with pioneers by members of the Nebraska Writers' Project. In the effort to preserve the flavor of the original word-of-mouth narration, editing has been limited chiefly to selection and arrangement.

A BUGGY RIDE

Gus received an inheritance from the East. I believe his grandfather had died in New York State; and the first thing he did was what every young buck was hankering to do--he got hold of a buggy and horse. He was pretty proud of it too, because the buggy was new and shiny and the horse was a smart black with a star on its forehead. He used it a lot, because he got to going with a freckle-faced Irish girl who lived a ways up my road. The combination of a girl and buggy was bad, because Gus became more high flautin' than ever, zipping around the country with his girl.

The girl's father, fortunately, had not lost his Irish wit. He had always been full of the Old Nick, and after Gus had taken after his daughter he could hardly wait for an opportunity to play some whizzer on Gus. He finally got his chance when Gus came over one evening to take his girl to a dance. It was one of those gloomy nights when the Nebraska moon makes a bare showing through a layer of clouds. That was important, because the old man needed Nature's cooperation for his schemes.

Well, go on with the story: While Gus was in the house waiting for his girl to get fixed up the old

man slipped out and changed the buggy wheels around, putting one rear wheel on the front and a front wheel on the back. As you know, the back wheels of a buggy are larger than the front ones, so one big wheel in front on the left side and one little wheel in the back on the right side would cause the bed of the buggy to set sort of lopsided and twisted. It tended to wobble, too and the wheels wouldn't roll in a straight line.

The girl finally got through primping. She came out, dressed in a freshly-starched gingham dress, with Gus following her. After he had gotten her comfortably settled on the seat, Gus jumped in from the opposite side and gave the horse a whack with his buggy whip. The moon was well under now, so neither could see what had been done to the buggy wheels; the girl noticed the funny way the vehicle behaved, but it being a new rig, didn't say anything for fear of appearing ignorant. She probably thought, since Gus had the latest thing in buggies (he had told her so himself), that the new styles called for an "up-and-down" effect when riding. Still, she didn't like the buggy's behavior and felt a little awkward rolling back and forth, feeling half of the time as if she was on the high seas. But Gus, who was complacently holding the reins, didn't say anything, so she didn't either.

There were a lot of rigs in the yard when they arrived at the dance, so Gus, if he did suspect anything, did not examine his buggy to see what was wrong. Gus just hitched his horse and helped his girl get down.

When going home after the dance, the vehicle acted worse than ever because the horse hit it off at a good clip as he knew he was on familiar ground. The girl, after they got going on the home stretch, didn't know whether she was inside of a cyclone or a churn barrel. She was thrown from one side of the buggy to the other at every turn of the wheels.

The next day Gus found what was wrong and everyone else in the neighborhood did too--the old man had seen to that. "By golly, I never noticed any difference in the danged thing," Gus told us when we confronted him. And I guess he didn't either, because it soon became known that he had popped the question that night to his girl as they wobbled along, and in her bewildered condition she had said "Yes."

PIONEER REMEDIES

(Mrs. Albert Waybright of Ashland, who has always lived within 300 yards of the house she was born in--in 1868--claims to be a good authority on the subject of pioneer remedies. Her father, Joseph Stambaugh, was one of the first settlers in Saunders County. Another early settler in the county married a woman who, in later life, came to be known as "Queen Lil." It seems that the lady, after the death of her husband, tried to settle on another claim without filing papers. When the authorities tried to oust her from her claim, she wouldn't budge; so the neighbors gave her this nickname because the Government was having a similar trouble at this time, with a queen on one of its islands.)

Doctors, during the State's pioneer days, were few and far between; besides, many pioneer families could not afford even the lowest charges for professional services. Consequently, the only aids in times of illness were those remedies that were suggested and exchanged between the

pioneers themselves.

Dog fennel boiled with lard was used a great deal for sore throat; some families, however, thought that the quickest remedy for this ailment was a dirty stocking wrapped around the neck of the patient--the dirt was supposed to draw out the pain. Elderberry blossom tea was thought to be the best treatment for fever. Peppermint, which grew along the creeks, was dried and given for stomach ache. Chokecherry and honey was used for coughs and croup; this was sometimes varied with a hot foot-bath followed with a generous portion of red pepper tea. Skunk oil was commonly used for lung colds. A stubborn cough was often treated with a cough syrup, consisting of an egg placed in a bowl of vinegar in which it was allowed to stand until the shell had been eaten up. The remainder of the egg, with sugar added, was beaten until it became syrup. Hoarhound candy was a favorite for slight colds. A few drops of turpentine on a spoonful of sugar was taken internally for worms. A soap and sugar poultice was used for drawing out sores. Beef tallow was used for chapped hands.

Some people thought a wart could be destroyed by stealing and destroying a neighbor's dish rag. Another superstition was the rheumatism could be cured by carrying around a raw potato, which was supposed to absorb the ailment. Another belief was that eczema could be healed by washing the infected areas with vinegar in which 12 pennies had been placed for 24 hours. Mustard was used for swellings; vinegar and salt for sprains; sulphur, molasses and sassafras for a blood tonic. Pumpkin seed was supposed to be good for kidney trouble; sage tea for worms.

FUNERALS

(T.L. Phillips, of Lincoln, who told of pioneer pranks in "A Buggy Ride" and "A Butchering Bee," gave, in addition, information on pioneer funerals in the 1890's.)

When someone died, the neighbors took upon themselves the business of being undertakers. I've dug many a grave and helped in other ways, even to fixing the glass jars filled with ice around the corpse. The body of a deceased pioneer was usually buried as soon as a home made coffin could be built, since the only embalming facilities were of the temporary sort; stored creek ice placed inside of glass jars was kept next to the body in the summer; the cold weather in the winter was sufficient to keep the body for a few days. The coffins were constructed out of boards or crate lumber. Sometimes, when few boards could be found, the casket was shaped big at the head and small at the feet causing it to resemble an Egyptian mummy case.

It was the custom, in those days, to keep night wakes near the body. Coffee and a light lunch was usually served at midnight. The casket was transported to its grave in a surrey or light spring wagon. A widow would usually wear her black veil and dress for six months after her husband had died.

PIONEER MEDICINE SHOW

The old medicine shows that used to go through Nebraska in the '80's were a constant form of entertainment, although the pioneers were usually talked into buying more trinkets than they

could afford. The Doctor, as the medicine faker called himself, specialized in the sale of electric belts, which were constructed out of copper discs, flannel and leather straps. Many of the people had profound respect for these belts. It was supposed that they set off electric vibrations that were the basis for all life and that they could cure illnesses.

The faker, who always came into town driving a horse and buggy, also sold a magic soap that he claimed would clean anything regardless of how dirty it was. One of these outfits showed up at Hampton one day when I was in town. First the "Doctor" played music on a banjo. Then, as soon as a sizeable crowd had gathered around him he got down to business.

First he gave an emotional lecture on the virtues of his soap. Then he borrowed a handkerchief, a clean white one, from some one in the crowd, and hopped out of the buggy. He loosened one of the rear buggy wheels and smeared the handkerchief with the grease on the axle, causing it to become a sorry-looking sight. Then he got up in the buggy and began washing it with one of the bars of soap he was selling. With very little effort the handkerchief came out as white as snow. This was enough for the crowd, who rushed up to buy as many bars as they could afford.

One of the boys who had purchased a bar tried it out by smearing his handkerchief with dirty grease from his buggy axle in the way the faker had done. Then he rubbed with his magic soap, but the grease wouldn't come off. We learned later that the faker before entering Hampton, had taken off the grease from one of his buggy wheels and substituted tar soap, which looked like axle grease, in its stead.

GRASSHOPPERS OF 1873

(Thomas J. Hartnett, of Hubbard, has lived in Dakota County since his birth in 1861. Mr. Hartnett, now nearly eighty, is a large, ruddy-complexioned man who likes to tell jokes.)

The grasshoppers came to Dakota County in such numbers, in 1873, that they hid the sun. A cornfield would be completely stripped of all vegetation inside of two hours. They tell a story about a man who, when plowing in a field, hung his work jacket with a watch in it on a post. When he came back to his jacket after plowing the field, all that was left was his watch. The grasshoppers had eaten his jacket.

They tell, too, about a man who left his team in the field while he went to his well for a drink of water. When he came back, the grasshoppers had eaten up the team and harness and were playing horseshoes with the iron shoes the horses had worn.

These stories are only exaggerated in their detail, because a swarm of grasshoppers, like a Kansas cyclone, could do anything.

WATCHING AN INDIAN MASSACRE IN 1876

(Elmer Dellett, of Lincoln, came to Nebraska in 1875. The most thrilling recollection of his life--he is now 84--was when he witnessed the Indian massacre narrated below. He was a pioneer

farmer at the time.)

We moved out to Dawson County near Cozad in 1876. That year I saw Hawke, our nearest neighbor, his wife and three children killed and scalped by a band of 120 Rosebud Indians. The Indians, just before leaving, set fire to the barn, which had a thatched roof, and the house too. While the Indians were there, Major North and a troop of soldiers appeared, and I could see the smoke from their carbines off in the distance.

The buildings blazed up and the Indians rode off through Gallagher Canyon and on to Muddy Creek. Major North caught up with them, and when he came back he only had 16 live Indians. I asked him where the rest were and he said, "They're all good Indians now." Only a dead Indian, in those days, was called a good Indian.

I went to Hawke's place after the massacre with a man named Miller, and we found them all dead, five of them. They had all been shot and scalped. The Indians had only cut off a small part of the scalp, about as big as a silver dollar, from the top of their victim's heads. There were also three dead Indians there that Hawke, or his wife, had shot before they died.

RELIGION

(From Frank Faith, of Lincoln, who came from Garfield County in 1855.)

Meetings, before churches were built, used to be conducted by a circuit rider preacher who came through. Sometimes the pioneers would gather in schoolhouses; at other times, in the summer, services would be conducted on the open plains. I remember one time when we met a traveling preacher on the trail and all knelt down and prayed on the prairie. When schoolhouses were built close together, we held regular meetings in them; later, as the settlements grew, churches were built.

(Mrs. A. A. Eager, of Lincoln, who tells the following story, settled on a claim in Saunders County with her husband in 1871.)

I was married in 1871 at the age of 18. My husband was a cattle breeder, stockman and farmer. I felt so bad about the lack of church facilities that I got on my horse and invited everyone for miles around to come to our house for a Sunday service. Then I asked a man to preach for us, but he didn't think anyone would attend the meeting, so refused. On Sunday morning our 16-foot square house was so filled with people that some of them were forced to sit on benches outside the doorway. I, naturally, became very nervous with so many people and no minister. So the only thing I could think of to do was to read from a book of sermons my father had given me. There was not a dry eye in the house after I got through. Later, for a number of years, a traveling minister held services in our house.

CLAIM JUMPERS

(Frank Faith, of Lincoln, who pioneered in Garfield County in the 1880's, had a number of

contacts with claim jumpers.)

Claim jumpers, in the 1880's, were a worry to every homesteader. Sometimes they would take over a place when its owner hadn't gone any further than to town for supplies. After they had gotten a toe hold they were pretty hard to get rid of, too.

I remember one old man, called Fuzzy, who had a claim north of us in Rock County. He had fixed it up with a good well, a shack and some other improvements. The old man used to go away and stay for three or four weeks at a time. At one time, when the old man was absent on one of his jaunts, a shifty-eyed man took over his claim, shack and all. He said the old man had gone away for good and had turned the claim over to him.

We were worried about old Fuzzy, but in a month he showed up and tried to take over his claim. The jumper drove him off his own place with a rifle.

The old man then came over to see me. I took him to Horse Buster Hodge, a cowhand and settler, who was usually the leader when a "committee of force" was needed. The boys got together that evening and rode over to the claim, Fuzzy going along. The claim jumper was waiting for us outside of the cabin, gun in hand. He didn't say anything, just stood there.

Hodge had coiled lariat hanging from his saddle. He took it off as he jumped down from his horse, then faced the claim jumper without saying a word, trying to stare him down. It made the claim jumper nervous, especially after Hodge began dangling his rope. Then Hodge, after a few minutes of silence, said, "This claim is his," pointing to old Fuzzy. "We're here to back him up. Get goin'."

The tough guy muttered a few words, then laid his gun down, while the boys went into the cabin and pitched his stuff out. Hodge's parting words to him were that it would be healthier for him if he made tracks and made them fast. He was never seen again in that part of the country.