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Article Summary: In 1864, Congress approved the Enabling Act which permitted Nebraska to form a constitution in preparation for statehood. Included in that act, Nebraska was given the right to receive a federal land grant relating to salt springs. Salt was necessary for diet and for food preservation, and sources of salt were considered important natural resources for people who lived far from the oceans. In Lancaster County, however, salt production proved to be not particularly profitable, and much of the saline land was transferred to public land or to individual home owners.

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Cataloging Information:

Names: W W Cox, William T Donovan, Darwin Peckham, J H Ames, J S Gregory Jr, E H George, T F George, Jacob Harbenger, S B Linderman, W Linderman, Anson C Tichenor, Jesse T Green, David Butler, William Leese, M M Towle, E T Mason, Byron P Russell, William Daily, T J Majors, Thomas P Kennard, John Gillespie, James Sweet

Place Names: Lancaster County, Salt Creek, Big Salt Basin

Keywords: saline, salt springs, land grant, Enabling Act, Nebraska Salt Company, Peru State Teachers College, Mt Vernon College

Photographs / Images: Table: Location of Salt Springs in Lancaster County; Drawing: Salt Creek at Ashland, Nebraska, looking toward the Platte Hills; Photograph: Salt Works at Lincoln; Map: Lancaster County showing location of Saline Lands; Map about 1870: Location of Salt Creek; Table: Salt Royalties 1870-1886

THE HISTORY OF NEBRASKA'S SALINE LAND GRANT

BY AGNES HORTON

THE discovery of salt deposits west of the Appalachian Mountains was one of the most important factors in the westward advance of the American frontier. Early colonists were tied to the coastal area by their need for salt, without which they could neither preserve their fish or meat nor maintain the health of man or beast. Large quantities of salt were also used in preserving fish and provisions for export. From 1607 until the Revolution the British shipped nearly a million and a half bushels of salt to the continental colonies from the West Indies, southern Europe, and Great Britain.[1]

When the break came between Britain and the colonists, there was a general cessation of imports and the

[1] Edward Channing, *History of the United States* (Chicago, 1921), III, 110.

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supply of many commodities previously enjoyed was no longer available. One of the indispensable items was salt. Almost at once Congress, the states, and private individuals began making salt.[2] The only method employed in our domestic production was to evaporate sea water in shallow iron pans, for the nation's saline deposits had not yet been discovered. In the production of salt through evaporation the necessary pans were expensive to import, and without skilled ironsmiths they were difficult to make. Salt production under such adverse conditions was carried on only because of the need.

Before the discovery of salt springs in the interior, settlers who had ventured westward were forced to make periodic pilgrimages to the coast. Their objective was to sell or barter their produce and to bring back a supply of salt. The practice was time-consuming and hazardous, but it did have some compensation, for frequently it was the only way in which the early pioneer learned what was going on in the seaboard area.

Shortly before the Revolution the discovery and use of salt springs on the Kanawha and the Holston in North Carolina, and others in Kentucky and central New York tended to make the West independent of the coast. When the Revolution was over the mineral salts west of the Appalachians aroused federal interest and influenced settlement for many years to come. A similar discovery of salt springs in Nebraska foreshadowed an interesting and important phase of Nebraska history.

As early as 1796 and continuing until 1867, Congress made special disposition of lands containing salt springs.[3] At first saline areas were designated for federal use, but when Ohio was admitted to the Union in 1803, the precedent was established of giving such areas to the states in which they lay.[4] This practice continued with the admis-

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[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 392-393.

[3] Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (New York, 1939), pp. 266-267.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

sion of each state up to and including Nebraska. Even as late as 1912 New Mexico, on its admission as a state, was given saline lands as a part of a grant to aid in the support of a university.[5] At first lands classified as saline were excluded from entry under the Pre-emption and Homestead Acts, but after 1877 they were subject to such entry.[6]

On April 19, 1864, Congress approved the Enabling Act which permitted Nebraska to form a constitution and ultimately attain statehood. Under the same act Nebraska was given the right to receive several federal land grants, among which was one relating to salt springs. Section 11 of the Enabling Act read as follows:

> *And be it further enacted,* That all salt springs within said state, not exceeding twelve in number, with six sections of lands adjoining, or as contiguous as may be to each, shall be granted to said state for its use, the said land to be selected by the governor thereof, within one year after the admission of the state, and when so selected to be used or disposed of on such terms, conditions and regulations as the legislature shall direct: *Provided,* That no salt springs or lands, the right whereof is now vested in any individual or individuals, shall, by this act, be granted to said state.[7]

Under this act Nebraska was destined to receive seventy-two sections of land in the vicinity of salt springs. The state was also to have the right through its legislature to dispose of the land and to use the revenue in any manner which the legislators considered proper.

Nebraska's right to receive a saline land grant was based upon the discovery of salt in Lancaster County where a salt basin stretched along the west side of Salt Creek.[8] Within an area of twelve by twenty-five miles through which Salt Creek ran in a northerly direction, were found many springs of salt water.

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[5] *Ibid.,* p. 267.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *U. S. Statutes at Large,* XIII, 47.
[8] See map of Salt Creek, p. 96.

TABLE I

LOCATION OF SALT SPRINGS IN LANCASTER COUNTY*

	Section	Township	Range
Salt Spring No. 1	3	9	6 E
Salt Spring No. 2**	21	10	6 E
Salt Spring No. 3***	23	10	6 E
Salt Spring No. 4	7	9	6 E
Salt Spring No. 5	2	11	6 E
Salt Spring No. 6	5	10	6 E
Salt Spring No. 7	14	10	6 E
Salt Spring No. 8	30	11	7 E
Salt Spring No. 9	24	11	7 E
Salt Spring No. 10	32	11	7 E
Salt Spring No. 11	29	10	6 E
Salt Spring No. 12	6	10	6 E

* Compiled from notations found in the *School Land Abstract*, Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln.
** Big Salt Basin
*** Site of Post Office, Lincoln, Nebraska

An early description of this area was written by Richard Taylor and Thomas O'Neal, territorial surveyors in 1857. This description read as follows:

> Township 10, Range 6E 6 P.M. in Nebr. Territory
>
> The quality of the land in this township is mostly good 2nd rate, well adapted to cultivation. There is but little timber in this township, consists of scattering cottonwood Elm hackberry and Locust on the banks of Creeks.
>
> The water in all the Creeks are [*sic*] Extremely Salty. I discovered valuable salt springs along the bed of creeks, and in Sections 22, 23, and in 34, and 37. A small opperation [*sic*] for boiling the water is carried by a company in Section 22. The Specimins [*sic*] of salt was [*sic*] very fine. No settlement in Township Except in Section 22.[9]

[9] Survey Book (Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln), LXXI. General description made by Richard Taylor and Thomas O'Neal, Deputy Surveyors, Territory of Nebraska. See notations for October 9, 1857-October 15, 1857.

Another description of this area was that made of Big Salt Basin and Salt Creek by W. W. Cox. In July 1861, Cox and a companion, William T. Donovan, arrived at Big Salt Basin and Salt Creek. Cox has given the following account of his experiences there.

> . . . We forded Salt creek, just by the junction of Oak Creek, and what a struggle we had in making our way through the tall sunflowers between the ford and the basin. There was something enchanting about the scene that met our eyes. The fresh breeze sweeping over the salt basins reminded us of the morning breezes at the ocean beach. This basin was as smooth as glass, and resembled a slab of highly polished, cloudy, marble.
>
> The wrecks of some old salt furnaces and two deserted cabins were the only sign of civilization. . . .
>
> In company with Darwin Peckham we commenced making salt on the 20th of August, 1861. We pre-empted one of the log cabins and "bached" it during the fall. Salt was very scarce during war times, and was high in price, and of a necessity great numbers of people came to scrape salt. They came from all the settled portions of the territory, from Kansas, Missouri, and as far east as central Iowa. . . . Going for salt in those days was like going fishing—it was all in luck. If the weather were perfectly dry we could get plenty of it, for it could be scraped up by the wagon load, but three minutes' rain would end the game. We have seen a drove of men that came a full hundred miles arrive just in time to see a little rain clear all the salt off the basin in a moment, and they left to hold an empty sack. We found a goodly number there when we arrived and they were holding the empty sack, for it had just rained and the basin was as black as ink. We remember Milton Langdon as one of the disconsolate pilgrims. The next morning all except our party pulled out, and we were monarchs of all we surveyed.
>
> We immediately built a small furnace, made of sheet-iron salt pans and began boiling salt, and by the time the next drove of pilgrims came we had salt to sell or trade them. Many farmers would bring their sorghum pans to make their own salt, and when they would get enough, or tired, we would trade salt for their pans and all their spare provisions. When the weather was dry many would scrape more than they could haul home, and we would trade for their scrapings at twenty-five cents per hundred and pay in boiled salt at two dollars per hundred. In dry times we would accumulate a mountain of scraped salt, and as soon as the first rain came our scrapings would be worth from fifty cents to one dollar per hundred. Pilgrims would grab for it. They brought all manner of provisions to trade for salt—meat, flour, chickens, butter, fruit, potatoes, eggs; and others were willing to go to the groves and cut and haul wood and trade us; others would haul up a large pile of wood and then rent our furnaces for the night, and would

work all night, and thus get a supply. So we had salt to sell, scrapings to sell, furnaces to rent, and, generally, provisions to sell. One man we remember brought a fine suit of clothes and traded us for salt. A party brought two four-horse wagon loads, 5,000 pounds, of flour from Winterset, Iowa, and we made him an even exchange of 5,000 pounds of salt for it. It was a lively time, for hundreds were coming and going continually during the fall.

. . . . . .

Late in the fall we moved our family to Salt Creek, and wintered in one apartment of the log cabin that W. T. Donovan occupied, and as the salt business always quits when winter begins, we put in the time as best we could.

We took up our abode at the basin with the wife and two children on the first day of May, 1862. . . . The season of 1862 was exceedingly prosperous. Great numbers of people came and went every day. Numerous furnaces were started, and the salt works presented quite the appearance of business.

. . . . . .

As a general rule the settlers enjoyed themselves very well, and were reasonably prosperous, but it was not always so. Sometimes winter storms would shut us off from communication with the world at large, and provisions would get short, and we would be driven to desperate straits. . . . The winter of 1863-64 was a most desperate one. . . .

That winter was one of much suffering. Salt had declined materially in price, and the demand had fallen off; while wood for boiling it had become scarce. . . . The spring of 1864 found the settlement in rather a dilapidated and impoverished condition, but hope soon revived. Immigrants began to arrive in goodly numbers and began opening up farms, and that gave new life and hope to all.

. . . . . .

In 1864 . . . we loaded up our little stuff, tied the old cow behind the wagon, loaded the children and pushed out for the river [Republican].[10]

J. H. Ames, in his reminiscences of the early history of Big Salt Basin, was so impressed with the salt springs found in Lancaster County that he predicted that a thriving salt industry was destined to be established there. His description of the region was as follows:

There is no question of the vast wealth which will some day be derived from this region. The absence of fuel for the purpose of manufacture is more than compensated for by

[10] W. W. Cox, *History of Seward County, Nebraska, Together with a Chapter of Reminiscences of the Early Settlement of Lancaster County* (Lincoln, 1888), pp. 1-25.

the excessive dryness of the atmosphere and the consequent rapidity of evaporation. Brine as it oozes from the soil is about 15%.[11]

Nebraska's government was quickly attracted to the potential of the salt deposits. In his first message delivered to the Eighth Territorial Legislature, December 2, 1861, Governor Alvin Saunders expressed a strong belief that the salt springs were of great importance to the economic progress of Nebraska Territory. He stated that the salt springs, if properly worked, would not only provide salt for the territory at a minimum of expense but would also afford needed employment for many citizens. The (Lincoln) *Nebraska Commonwealth* declared that the salt basin would become the great salt emporium of the West Missouri. Exaggerated stories soon sprang up about the fortunes which could be made once Nebraska's salt industry was in full production.

During territorial days there were several attempts made to establish a salt industry in Nebraska. A. T. Andreas described these early attempts in these words:

> . . . Capt. W. T. Donovan represented the Crescent Company, organized at Plattsmouth for a test of the productiveness of the brine. Another company was represented by William Norman and Alexander Robinson who settled at the "big basin," the most southwesterly of the system and the most promising in its appearance, extent and quality of brine yielded. The latter company was the first to abandon the enterprise, and was followed a year later by the Crescent Company. In 1864 J. S. Gregory, Jr., erected a "bench of boilers" and some solar vats and manufactured salt to sell to the natives, the travelers over the great overland route to the Pacific and the miners of Colorado and Montana.
>
> In 1866 Gregory disposed of his claim to E. H. and T. F. George, Jacob Harbenger, and S. B. and W. Linderman from New Jersey, representing the Nebraska Salt Company. They put in several thousand dollars but received no adequate return. All this time entries had been made on the most valuable of these basins, and these had passed into the hands of J. Sterling Morton, formerly Secretary of the Territory, and Col. Manners, one of the government Surveyors who had made the discovery of the basins in 1856.[12]

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[11] J. H. Ames, *Lincoln: The Capital of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1870), p. 25.

[12] A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska* (Chicago, 1882), p. 1037.

Available records fail to indicate that any company or individual ever derived substantial profits from the salt business; instead, reports reveal that some firms which did not dispose of their holdings in time were forced into bankruptcy. The salt industry of Nebraska Territory had made little progress, financial or otherwise, at the time statehood was attained.

When the state came into the Union in 1867, federal law required that the selection of saline lands was to be made within one year or the right of the land would be forfeited. The entire grant, except 160 acres, was selected in 1867 by state land commissioners appointed by Governor David Butler. Since all of the saline springs were found in Lancaster County, saline selections naturally occurred in that area. Five groups of selections were made, the earliest June 15, 1867, three on June 20, 1867, and one as late as 1890.[13] No evidence was found showing the reason for this last selection which was made after the legal time limit had expired. The first approval date by the federal government was December 23, 1867, and the last approval date came on January 19, 1891. The original total acreage from the five clear lists was 46,033.31 acres.[14] This was just about forty-six acres short of the total allotted to the state. There was evidence that clear lists No. 1-A, No. 2, and No. 3 were found to contain 759 acres which were subject to prior claim. There was no available record which showed whether or not the state attempted to make other selections to cover this deficiency. The original shortage, or forty-six acres, plus the 759 acres rejected because of prior claim, left the state 805 acres short of receiving its total grant. In all, Nebraska acquired another 45,000 acres of land from the federal government as saline lands.

The utilization of the saline lands was markedly different from that of other federal grants to Nebraska. The

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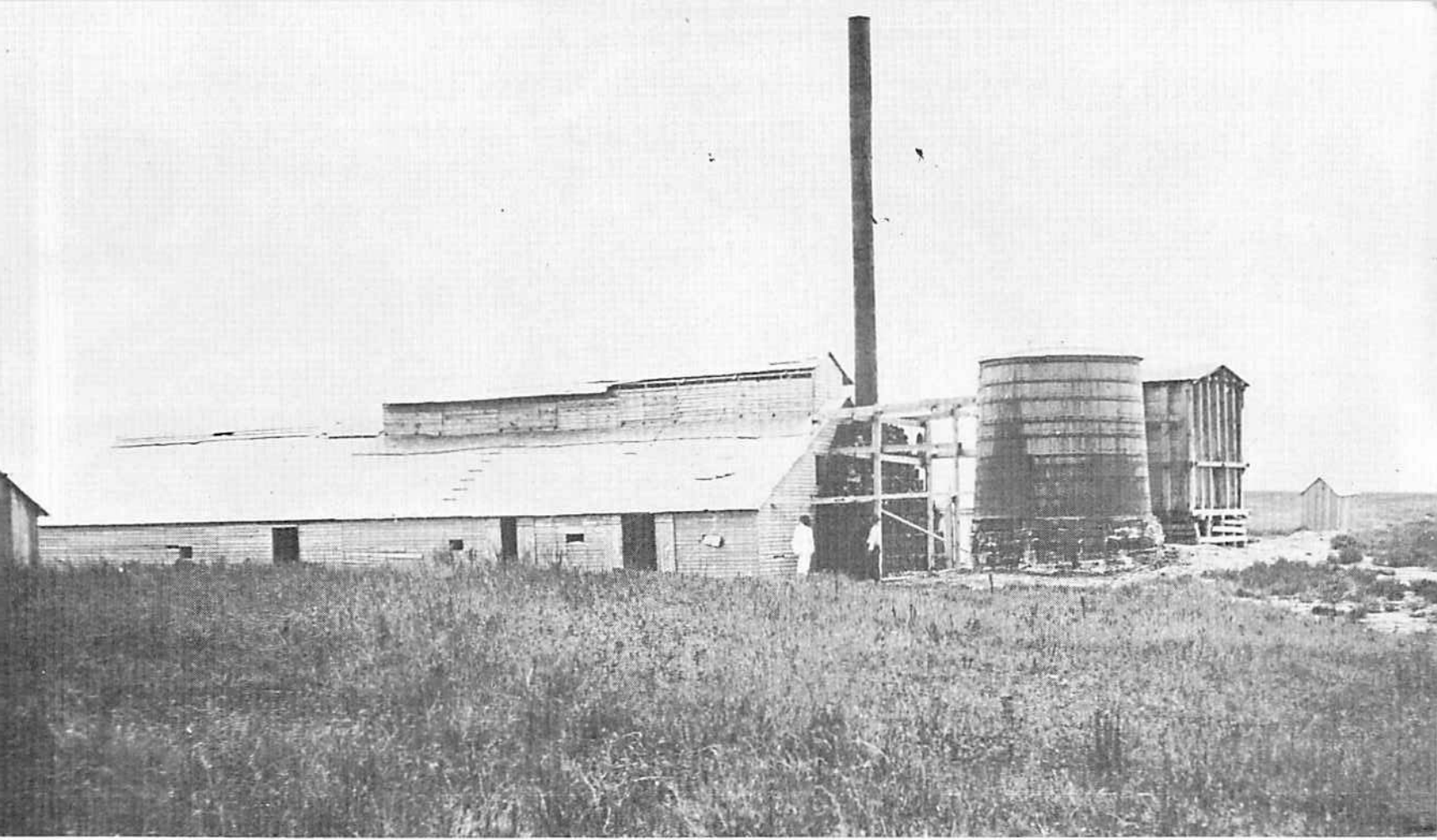
[13] *Saline Land Clear Lists* (Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln), No. 1-A, No. 1-B, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, pp. 240, 245. See map of Lancaster County showing Saline Selections, p. 96.

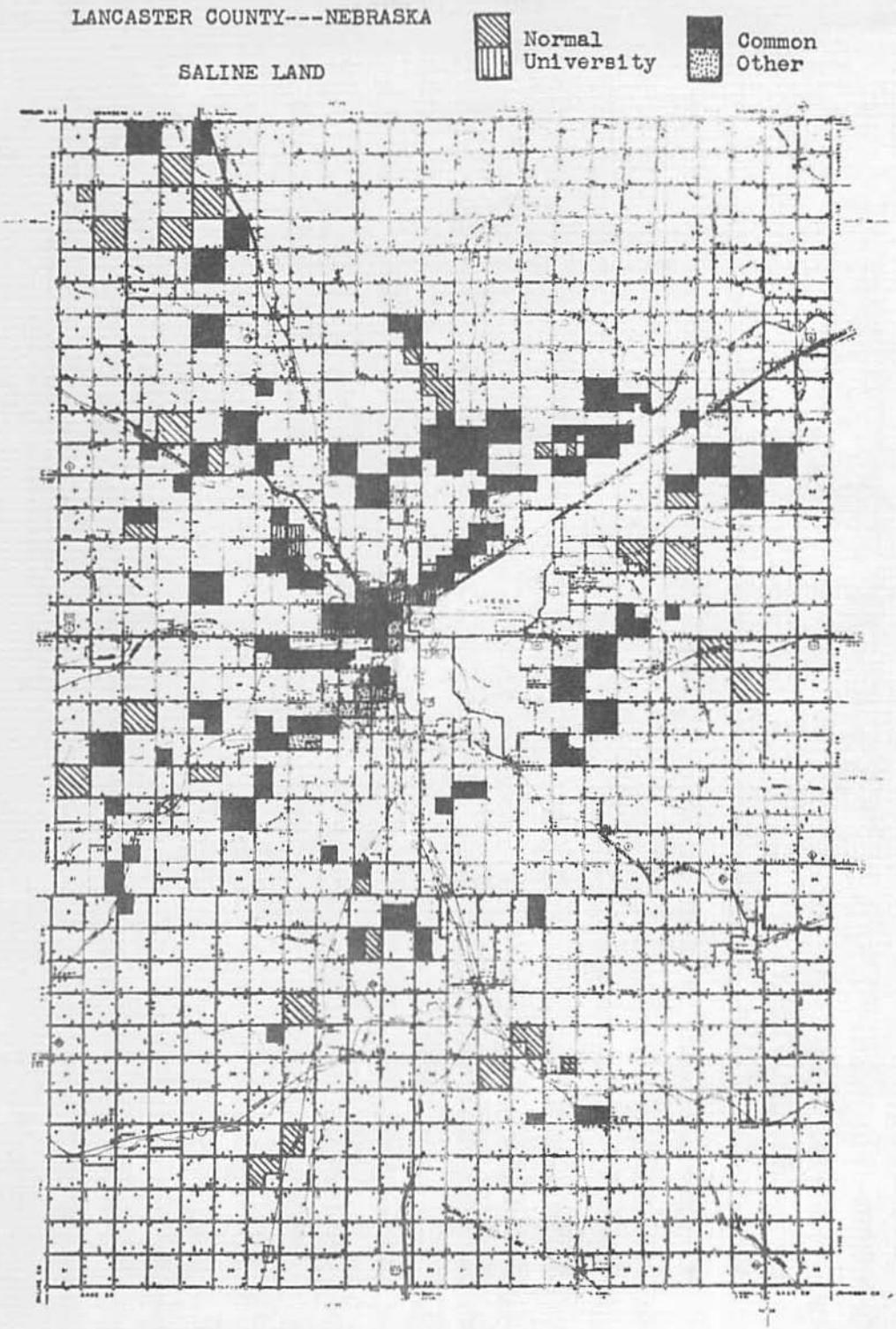
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 240, 245.

SALT CREEK, AT ASHLAND, NEB.,—LOOKING TOWARD THE PLATTE HILLS, FROM THE MILL HILL.

Sketch (Circa 1872) from **Burlington and Missouri River Railroad Lands. . .**

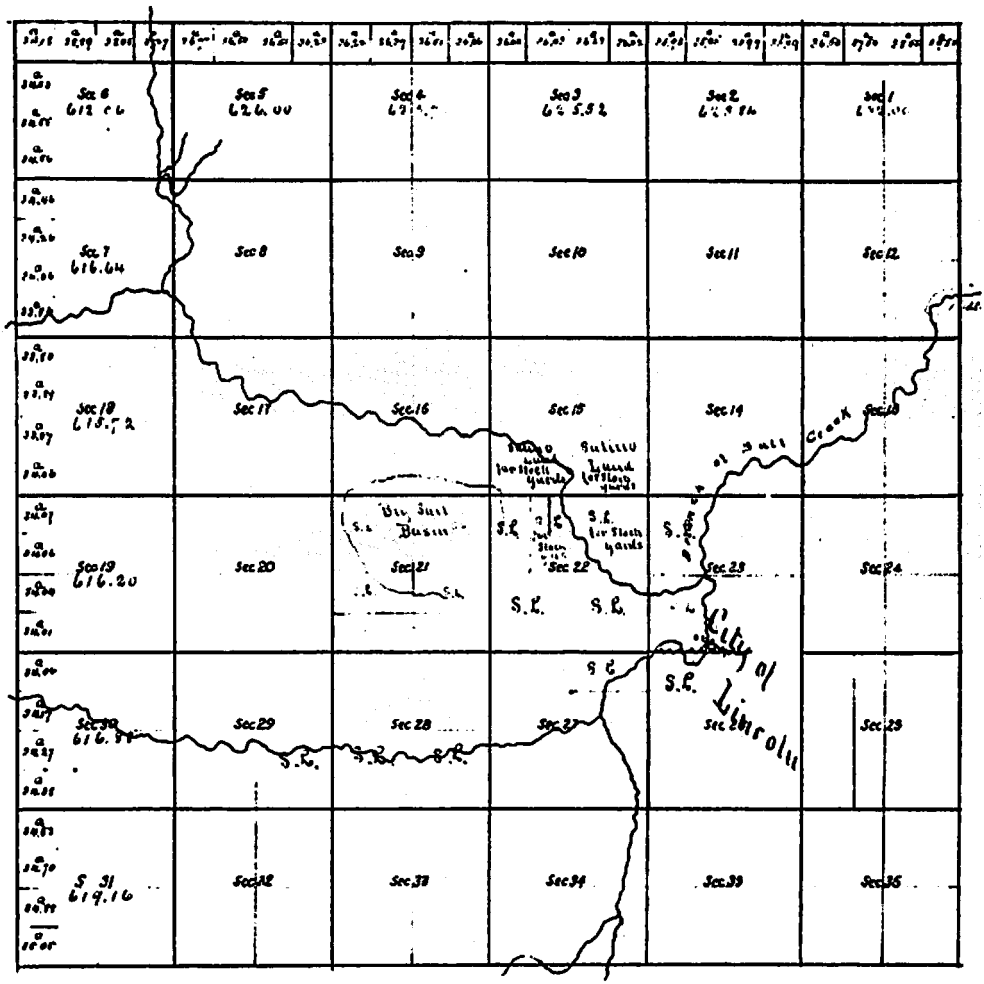


Salt Works at Lincoln



Map of Lancaster County Showing Location of the Saline Lands

(Drawn by Hugh Dillon, State Surveyor)



Map (Circa 1870) Showing Location of Salt Creek

(Saline Land Correspondence File, Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln)

state had discretionary powers regarding not only the sale of the land itself but the expenditure of the revenue arising from such sales. Thus, in the first years of statehood the saline lands became a subject of bitter controversy.[15] There were those who advocated that the revenue from these lands should be used in developing the manufacture of salt at the salt basin just outside the city of Lincoln, and this idea had some influence for a time. On February 17, 1869, Governor David Butler leased 480 acres of Salt Basin to Anson C. Tichenor and Jesse T. Green.[16] The lease was to run for twenty years, and salt manufacturing was to begin within ninety days from the date of the lease. The state was to receive two cents per statute bushel on all salt manufactured during the continuance of the lease. (It is interesting to note that both the territorial and state governments had included salt in the list of standard weights and measures.) The law at the time this lease was executed required that salt be sold by the bushel, each bushel not to weigh less than fifty pounds.[17] However, Tichenor and Green did not hold their lease for very long. During the years from 1869 to 1885 the lease passed through the hands of several individuals. On August 7, 1885, a report was made by William Leese, Attorney General to the Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings as follows:

> In compliance with a resolution, passed by you, June 6, 1885, directing me to procure the cancellation or surrender of a lease contract given by the State of Nebraska, covering the "Big Salt Basin" and continuous lands being N^2 and N^2S^2 Section No. 21 Township No. 10 N. Range No. 6E., I have the honor to make the following report, viz:
>
> On investigation I found that on the 15th day of February 1869 a lease contract was issued to said lands by the State of Nebraska to Anson C. Tichenor and Jesse T. Green, for twenty years, which said lease had passed through the hands and ownership of a number of individuals and parties and that the last assignment of said lease had been made to the Western Salt Association and the said Western Salt Association, on the 18th day of July, 1885, surrendered said lease

[15] Addison E. Sheldon, *Land Systems and Land Policies in Nebraska, Publications of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln, 1936), XXII, 35.

[16] Copy of lease, Saline Land File (Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln).

[17] *Revised Statutes of Nebraska,* 1866, Chapter 55, p. 391.

> to the State of Nebraska for cancellation: And I further found that the said Western Salt Association was the legal and proper assignee and owner of said lease and had good right and lawful authority by its President and Secretary, M. M. Towle and E. T. Mason, to surrender the same: Therefore I now find that by virtue of said surrender made by said Western Salt Association, that the title, ownership and controll [*sic*] of said Salt Basin and land is vested in the State of Nebraska, and that no person or persons, corporation or corporations have any right, title, claim, or interest in or to said Salt Basin or lands by virtue of said lease contract or by virtue of assignments thereof and the surrender is herewith returned.[18]

Attached to this letter was a receipt in the amount of one dollar which was paid by the state to the Western Salt Association for the surrender of the lease.

Table II presents evidence to show that salt manufacturing was not very lucrative in Nebraska.

TABLE II

SALT ROYALTIES—1870-1886*

Year	Salt Royalty
1869-70	$ 83.93
1871-72	50.00
1873-74	52.66
1875-76	88.26
1877-78	27.92
1879-80	47.37
1881-82	4.39
1883-84	11.20
1885-86	9.42
Total	$375.15

* Compiled from the *Biennial Reports,* State Treasurer, 1869-1886 (State Treasurer's Office, State Capitol, Lincoln)

In spite of a total royalty income of only $375 over a period of fifteen years, the state did not give up its efforts

[18] Letter to Board of Public Land and Buildings from William Leese, Attorney General, Lincoln, August 7, 1885, Saline Land File (Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln).

in the attempt to prove that the supply of brine in Big Salt Basin was sufficient for manufacture of salt. On March 5, 1885, the legislature passed an act authorizing the Commissioner of Lands and Funds to enter into further contracts with corporations, associations, or individuals who were interested in the manufacture of salt.[19] In addition the legislature provided that the board should see to it that a test well should be sunk on the salt basin in an effort to discover the strength of the brine, if there were any evidence of solid salt and what geological strata lay beneath the surface.[20] The state allocated the sum of $250 for this project. Byron P. Russell was appointed as the geologist in charge, and he served under the direction of the Board of Public Lands and Buildings. On December 1, 1888, Russell made his report. He described in detail the tools and machinery used on the job, and indicated the type of strata, foot by foot, through which the drill passed. His conclusions were:

> The Dakota beds are the source of the saltness in the basin. At the base of the formation is a brine of 35 degrees. This no doubt is derived from salt held in the beds themselves, caused possibly by evaporation at the time of deposition.
>
> . . . On salt basin proper there is no glacial or loess.
>
> These, however, occur in the near vicinity. The basin is covered with a scanty vegetation, and in the drought of summer becomes almost white by the evaporation of salt.
>
> This boring undertaken by the state had resulted in no discoveries of economic importance. Yet it should be borne in mind that negative results are of no small importance. We know now that there is nothing thus far to warrant the expenditure of money by the state for the development of these salt springs.[21]

With the publication of this report Nebraska's hopes for a thriving salt industry came to an end, and the saline lands were an asset to the state only as other lands were an asset, primarily for agriculture.

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[19] *Laws of Nebraska,* 1885, pp. 366-367.

[20] *Ibid.,* pp. 366-367.

[21] Byron P. Russell, *Report on the Salt Well to the Board of Public Lands and Buildings* (Lincoln, 1888), pp. 27-28.

The disposition of the saline lands and the utilization of the proceeds presents another interesting facet to the history of Nebraska's land story. The state legislature, under special acts, provided for the distribution of the saline grant as follows:

Endowment of Normal School at Peru	12,804.80 acres
State Model Farm	1,280.00 acres
Lincoln Hospital for the Insane	699.04 acres
City Lots	320.00 acres
Common Schools	30,170.40 acres
Total	45,274.24 acres

During the years of the territory and the early years of statehood, many communities appear to have had considerable interest in higher education. Within the short space of two years the territorial legislature had chartered seven colleges and universities, and altogether, the territorial legislature chartered twenty-three such institutions of which one is still in existence, Peru State Teachers College. This college was first established by the Methodists and known as Mt. Vernon College, later to be renamed as Peru Seminary and College.[22] In the winter of 1866-67, William Daily and T. J. Majors, members of the State Council and House of Representatives, being duly authorized by the founders and trustees of the college, offered the land and buildings to the state for the purpose of a state normal school. The state accepted the offer and passed an act, June 21, 1867, to locate, establish, and endow a state normal school at Peru.[23] Two years later, February 12, 1869, the legislature passed a law to allocate land for the endowment of a normal school. This law provided that the governor, secretary of state, and auditor, should within six months after the passage of the act set apart twenty sections of saline land.[24] The state stipulated that

[22] A. T. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1157.
[23] *Laws of Nebraska*, 1867, p. 80.
[24] *Laws of Nebraska*, 1869, p. 66. Also see map of Lancaster County, p. 96.

the revenue from the sale of these funds should be used to support and maintain the college. At this time 12,724.80 acres were selected; a final eighty acres were granted to the normal school under another special act of April 8, 1895. Since the establishment of the first normal school at Peru, the state has established three other normal schools which also share the endowment fund.

The next three grants of area were all much concerned with Nebraska's capital. On June 24, 1867, the legislature passed an act to provide for the location of the capital and for the erection of public buildings on a section of land within "The county of Seward, the south half of the counties of Saunders and Butler, and that portion of the county of Lancaster lying north of the south line of township nine, a suitable site of not less than six hundred and forty acres, lying in one body for a town, due regard being had to its accessibility from all portions of the state, and its general fitness for a capital."[25]

On June 18 Governor David Butler, Secretary of State Thomas P. Kennard, and Auditor John Gillespie, assembled at Nebraska City to make preparations for selecting the site specified by law. The final selection was made July 29, 1867, but was not publicly announced until August 14. The commissioners had chosen the town of Lancaster, later renamed Lincoln. Lancaster colony had been located in 1863 and settled in 1864. Three hundred twenty acres of saline land (located in Township 10 N, Range 6 E, SW¼ of Section 23 and the NW¼ of Section 26) were included in this selection. It was on the saline land that the original town of Lincoln was located. The day following the announcement, the survey was begun, and the site was platted into 750 lots in each quarter section which were to be appraised and sold at public auction, the proceeds to be held as a state building fund for the erection of the first capitol building.

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[25] *General Statutes of Nebraska,* 1873, pp. 1002-1003.

The sale of lots began in Lincoln on Wednesday, September 18, 1867. It was a rainy day and the sale started slowly. There was little enthusiasm and the bidding lagged. Finally the three commissioners and James Sweet came forward and started bidding off several lots above their appraised value. This action on the part of three state officers and Sweet seemed to inspire confidence and sales began in earnest. Several choice lots brought from $30 to $500 each. Speculators were on hand buying lots which they hoped to sell later for a good profit as the town expanded. Some of the saline lots were swampy and unsuited at that time for building or agriculture. Several of the saline lots which lay in the more swampy area are now the site of Lincoln's railroad yards.

The same act in which the legislature provided for the location of the seat of government, also stipulated that "The state university and state agricultural college shall be united as one educational institution, and shall be located upon a reservation selected by said commissioners, in said 'Lincoln,' and the necessary buildings shall be erected thereon as soon as funds can be secured by the sale of lands donated (by the federal government) to the state for that purpose, or from other sources."[26] Two sections of saline land were given to the University of Nebraska to establish a model farm. This was accomplished under the act of June 21, 1867. The pieces of land were not contiguous, and the University sold these lands during the years 1874 to 1879.[27] A model farm was later established in connection with the College of Agriculture, but not upon the land originally designated for this purpose.

A small grant of a section and a few acres was given to the Lincoln Hospital for the Insane. At the time this special act was passed the legislators believed that the hospital could be partially self-supporting by producing much of the food required and at the same time provide

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 1005.
[27] *Abstract of Sales*, Lancaster County, Nebraska (Office of Educational Lands and Funds, State Capitol, Lincoln).

occupation for patients who were able to perform some manual labor. Today this land is owned by the State Hospital, but the actual farming has been taken over by the State Reformatory.

Almost all of the remainder of the saline land was disposed of when the state legislature voted to transfer the saline acreage to become a part of the land heritage of the common schools. The common schools received 30,170.40 acres, by far the largest portion of the saline grant, leaving 1372.68 acres, which are still owned by the state.[25]

With the exception of the land set aside for the model farm, the state arranged and controlled the saline land sale. The University undertook the sale of the model farm lands during the years 1874 to 1879 and on the whole received a better price than that which the state realized.

The saline lands were largely acquired by men and women who were looking for homes. The state began to sell these lands as early as 1871 and continued until 1900. However, the peak years for such land sales were from 1881 to 1884. On the whole the saline lands sold at a somewhat higher figure than Nebraska's other federal grants. The higher price is generally attributed to the fact that close proximity to the capital proved attractive to many settlers.

Nebraska had acquired more than 45,000 acres in the saline grant. Today all of this has been disposed of except 637.62 acres which are under lease and 735.06 acres which remain unclassified. The saline lands were selected from one of the most productive areas of the state, and since it was soon established that their saline content was not sufficient to hinder agriculture, the state easily disposed of these lands. Thus ended one of the most colorful and interesting chapters in the history of federal land grants in Nebraska.

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[25] See map of Lancaster County, p. 96.