# Usually Friendly Indians Were Sometimes Threat To Settlers

By Mark Anson

Along Gypsum Creek, Sanford and Lowell Reese found a number of Indians when they settled in 1866-Indians who were not always friendly. The brothers built themselves a fort to protect themselves from these Indians.

In digging for the fort they discovered a Spanish coin probably dropped by an Indian many decades before. Near the fort they built, were distinct signs of an ancient village believed to be a site visited by Coronado. Hundreds of spear points, arrowheads and other Indian relics could be picked up. Kidnap, Kill Settler

One afternoon the Reese brothers noticed Indians in war paint across the creek. They warned their neighbors and then retreated to their fort. The next morning the Indians had disappeared but a man named Wiley Temple, who lived a mile away, had vanished. They found his body a week later with seven arrowheads in it and the scalp gone.

But after that, the Indians in the vicinity were always quite friendly. In the winter of 1871 and 72 Sanford Reese's son, G. A. Reese, saw about 600 Indians camped near Twin Mounds. a favorite Indian campsite. Camped Near Lindsborg

Indians often passed through McPherson.

Lindsborg settlement and in 1870, McPherson county is rich in in the winter, three hundred In-Indian lore probably dating from | dians camped along the river close the Coronado visit in 1541 up to Indian Creek. Along Turkey until nearly the twentieth cen- Creek several hundred Indians

> Settlers, until recent years, could remember the Indian encampments below Twin Mounds and seeing the young Indians cutting squares of ice from Gypsum Creek then sliding down the hillside on the ice.

Kidnap Mrs. Bassett In 1868 settlers living on Sharps Creek heard that Indians

ty carried away Mrs. Martha Bassett after ransacking the house The Indians stripped her and took her and her baby with them, only to turn them loose after a time to permit them to return home. The raiders, Osage Indians, fled the area.

But most of the Indians were friendly and traveled often from one campground to another greeting the settlers as they passed.

Particularly in the northern part of the county, the settlers were afraid of the Indians in the early days, when the Commanches, Sioux and other tribes were on the warpath and rude forts were constructed and home guards

The early settlers had their share of Indian adventures although in many ways the Indian history of the country reached its climax in 1825 when the Kaws signed a treaty on the banks of Turkey Creek six miles south of

## Colorado Springs Man, Former Citizen Of McPherson, Recalls The Early Days

Ralph C. Weight came into Mc- a heavy wind storm that the old

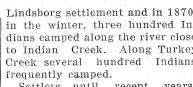
"With my parents, brother and to me and the other boys.

their homes.

College on Kansas Avenue. Peowalking and in time the city railway system became a memory.

"In the 80's more than half of back on the reservation. the business buildings on Main Street were in the course of con-

or lost. I recall the time during



were on the warpath. A war par-

organized.

Al was a nephew of Miss Sadie

Champlin and probably one of

the best football players Kansas

I remember when the first

merry-go-round came to town.

Our leading citizens struggled for

a seat on the thing until as late

as one o'clock in the morning and

the machine had good business for

a month or more. It was said

that the local people paid for the

merry-go-round during its stay

with us. And there was the "Dia-

mond Dick" medicine show at

which the "doctor" dispenses

'Wee-Haw," a marveous cure all

drug. He also carried with him

man by the name of Louis H.

"Some of my happiest times as

boy were spent with other boys

ascention and parachute leap.

ever produced.

Pherson 62 years ago and 20 Methodist Church steeple swayed years ago left to make his home to the extent of knocking bricks in Colorado and now lives in Colo- from the super-structure and was rado Springs. Recently in recall- in danger of toppling over. Al ing many interesting incidents of Champlin carried a rope up inside the early day life in McPherson, the steeple and guy ropes were Wright told of some of the exper- tied to trees across the street and it was held securely in place during the remainder of the storm.

sister, I arrived in McPherson on a June morning in 1885 from our former home in Illinois," Wright said. "McPherson, I believe, was then about 13 years old. We disembarked at the frame depot of the Santa Fe Railroad which was then located near the water tank in the west part of town. On the way to our new home, consisting of a house and block of ground on North Main Street two blocks north of the section line, we passed the Wm. Nelson home on Maple Street and the fish and lily ponds caught my eye and as long as they lasted were a source of interest

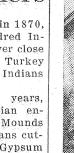
"The Rock Island Railroad had not yet been built into McPherson. I saw its construction and later as the line was extended I remember seeing the first Golden State Limited train pass through

"The water system consisted of a large water tank and windmill with 12 fine horses. I understand located at the northeast corner of that the Wallace Gleason barn on the jail park and a few blocks of Kansas Avenue was torn down water mains had been laid in the before it had a chance to burn. business district of town. Lights were of the kerosene variety. Later arc lights were installed in the huge cattle barn of E. A. in the business area but it was Colburn on North Main. We carnot until some time later that peoried on a vertible circus in this ple began to use electricity in

building and there were many opportunities for such sport. I gave "Later a group of men headed Mr. Colburn credit for being a by Wm. West built a horse car man of rare patience, otherwise line extending from the fair he would have grabbed a pitchgrounds north of town south fork and chased us off the place. across the Rock Island tracks and Then there was the Indian scare from the Missouri Pacific Depot | back in the '80's. Troops came on West Kansas out to McPherson through McPherson on their way to Southwest Kansas to quell the ple had not then lost the art of Indian disturbance, and what a relief it was to us boys to learn that the Indians had been put

When the new century was ushered in, groups from the Lime struction at the same time, re- Kiln Club, with headquarters in placing the frame structures of George Davis' cigar store and othan earlier date. In addition, er groups of Civil War veterans hundreds of homes were built and with quarters under the old maple later on after the boom had col- tree on South Main, would engage lapsed these homes were sold in | in heated discussions as to whethlarge numbers to farmers to be er the New Century began on Janmoved more than 20 miles from uary 1, 1900 or 1901. Whenever McPherson. I remember six and the matter seemed to be about not valued in terms of dollars and stand in groups awaiting the mail. seven room houses newly built to be settled Mr. Tull (father of selling for as little as \$75 each. Edith Jenkins) would throw new There was no inflation in those fuel on the flames in the form of some controversial statement and then he would sit back smil-

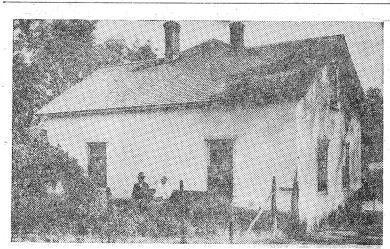
"I have played marbles on the ground now occupied by the court | ing while the rest of them carried house. I forget whether I won on. He got a big kick out of it.



IN 1908, WHEN this picture was taken, this was the oldest residence standing in McPherson County. It was Lindsborg's post office and a wholesale house built by C. E. Norstrom in June, 1868 and was half a mile west of Lindsborg.



JUSTICE HOLMBERG, who had his word in the county seat election, had his office in this building in Sweadal. An early description of the office says "In the cellar he had liquor, in the office justice and rosin weed with a large acwas administered, and in the tower he would watch his working men and look out for Indians from across the river.



ALL THE EARLY SETTLERS met at Bolagshuset, built at Sweadal by the Chicago Company in 1868. It of all the early settlers in the Smoky Hill Valley.

### Major Holmburg Was "Eliminated" At The County Seat Election Of 1873

When the time came to vote | pons on a new county seat for McPherfought bitterly to keep the county position under the court how was moved to Lindsborg.

Driscoll, a former farmer in Reno Now the time had come to vote County, who did a daily balloon on moving it to McPherson. "Livery barn fires were popular

in McPherson. The Joe Solanos livery barn on North Main burned Woodard barn also burned along any illegal votes. He came early to King City and had his hearing so as to be on hand when the vot- before Squire Pier of that place. ing commenced. Some of the Mcmajor carrying concealed wea- own vote besides."

"William Fouts, one of Mcson County, on June 10, 1873, Pherson's citizens, and a Civil Major L. H. Holmburg decided to War veteran, was deputized to take a hand. Major Holmburg find out if possible, so he took seat at his "town" of Sweadal, steps. In this way he could gaze but this failed and the county seat up under Holmburg's coat as he ascended to the voting precinct.

"Joy unspeakable reigned when the gleaming weapon was discov-As the old accounts recount the ered attached to the major's belt.

"The major was detained until tion over the possibility of the observe others voting and lost his

able foot race, a heel and toe walking event, between S. P. Lindsay and Eli Williams. I don't recall who made the challenge but the race was staged and covered a distance from somewhere south Kansas Avenue. Mr. Lindsay, feeling his oats, made the mistake of giving Mr. Williams a handicap and he lost the race.

"I saw the rise and tall of the county fair. No one can say that it did not afford a good time for thousands. The fair grounds were 1885 the grounds were at the north edge of town.

progressed but I seriously doubt tive. if the brand of alleged happiness that people enjoy today can com- own postoffice and the long treks pare favorably with the more unselfish happiness enjoyed by an earlier generation, when people

sounded by the playing of a re-them if they were there. pattern of numbers corded "Then there was the memor- through her headset.

## It's Easier To Get Your Mail Today

"It's a long way to have to go ten blocks to mail a letter at the of the Rock Island tracks up to post office. Why don't they have things a little more convenient?" But 75 years ago the early settlers of McPherson county would have considered that practically nothing.

In the late 1860's the nearest post office was in Abilene, sixty miles away. On one occasion a located southeast of town. In settler who hadn't made the trip for a while discovered awaiting him a two weeks old telegram tell-"Yes, they say the world has ing of the death of a near rela-

> But in 1873 McPherson got its ended.

By 1874 the mail was being delivered to McPherson. At mail were more companionable and time, people use to come to Mchelpful and when happiness was Pherson from miles around and When the carrier came they crowded into Bowker's store and When a dial telephone is cut postoffice and postmaster Bowinto a manual exchange, the op- ker called out the names of those erator often hears the number who had mail and handed it to

Getting one's mail today is much simpler.

# 0

PIONEER McPHERSON visitors watered their horses in this trough at the corner of Main and Marlin. This picture shows the west side of Main between Marlin and Euclid in 1880. The building marked "Printing Office" was the original McPherson Town Company building and served as the first courthouse in the city. This entire block was destroyed by a great fire in 1883.

By Mark Anson

While in 1947 McPherson county residents worry during harvest season about wheat fires, the men and women who settled the city and county 75 years and more ago fought prairie fires that raged through the tall grass and were a constant threat to their

By 1870 the Indians were no longer a danger to early settlers but prairie fires were an enemy with which they often had to contend. They usually plowed a fire guard around their homes; when a fire was seen, they kindled another fire to meet it and to save their home

In Turkey Creek township, Thomas Finnan had a huge cattle ranch but in the middle 70's that was sold when a prairie fire burned all the grass and nearly burned his home and family. Awe-inspiring Sight

Alex Hendry, who recalled seeing Indians with scalps on their belts, thought one of the most awe-inspiring sights he had ever seen was in the fall of 1873 when an immigrant started a prairie fire near Abilene.

. . . All that afternoon we could see the volume of smoke and fire coming across the prairie The fire spread . . . west as far as McPherson city. When the fire reached the old Santa Fe trail in the eastern part of the county and rosin weed with a large accumulation of tumble weed created a bonfire which could not be excelled. The smoke filled the air like big storm clouds and the course of the fire through the Santa Fe trail north of King City and south of McPherson could be traced as the fire reached the trail by its intensely black smoke. Flames Destroyed Game

"The fire traveled with such speed that antelope, wolves and prairie chickens were overtaken and burned by hundreds. The buildings at King City were saved only by the settlers turning out with their teams, plowing furrows and starting a back fire which succeeded in burning a mile in width before the big fire came on. . . It traveled like a railroad express train . . . It was probably twenty miles wide.'

C. H. Way of Canton township started a fire once in a vain hope that he would smoke out a great storm of grasshoppers which had descended on his crops. But he and his neighbors could not control the flames and they burned until they came to a lake and Here Even in The burned itself out. The grasshoppers remained and ate almost all the crops in 24 hours. Great Prairie Fire

In the winter of 1875-6 was the o'clock one February /morning buffalo herds, which furnished black clouds of smoke began to so much meat to early settlers, and "Wilt thou, John?" Then side, while three sat on the bench. after the flames began to leap glers from the herd into McPherthrough the smoke. The fire son county except in rare instanjumped a strip of green wheat 20 ces. He was arrested and as it was rods across to attack the Gateka "Major Holmburg came down impossible to find a justice of the farm where the family successful early settlers on one occasion and my mother received an invitor in possible to find a justice of the ly saved their buildings. Perform saw 18 buffulo resting under the from Lindsborg early to challenge peace in the town he was taken ly saved their buildings. Before saw 18 buffalo resting under the tation to accompany him. Upon the caremony He readily con-Smoky River.

"For hours the black ashes Phersonites held a hasty consulta- after voting time so he could not were in the air, hiding the sun same time, although few ventur- the bride was preparing the wedpouring into the house, around ment. the door and windows, until the faces were black."

raging prairie fire and barely fresh buffalo wallows, but no



JOHN LAMER, 1870—A settler near Lindsborg, the Civil War vet-eran had a 320-acre farm and raised large numbers of cattle and livestock, and was active in county affairs. He was the father of Mrs.

on Main Street with parts of the original structure still in it.

A High Liquor License

There is some question as to whether or not saloons ever operated in McPherson. Some old timers say there were, some say there were not. The records of the county commissioners for 1873 would indicate

"July 28, 1873, the following resolution was adopted by two of the board, Mr. J. W. Sanborn not voting, as follows, to wit: It is hereby ordered that a tax of \$500 shall be levied upon each license granted in McPherson County to a tavern keeper. dram shop keeper or grocery keeper for the sale of intoxicating liquor for very period of twelve months. John Ferm, chairman.'

If any liquor was sold in the county after this date, it was done so illegally, for county record show that not a single one of these \$500 licenses was ever issued.

# Lots Of Game In Early Days

Game was plentiful in McPheron county in the early days and ed back. a wide variety of wild life was to be found in the various parts of

Panthers were rare but there elk and gray wolf, and many coyantelope, turkeys and prairie particularly buffalo fish. were some wild animals including of the settlers trapped the beaver and otter.

The deer and antelope were particularly plentiful. Settlers tell of seeing huge herds jumping out not a sound had been heard. Mrs. ly without the little one. of the tall grass and disappearing again. Antelope meat, deer meat and buffalo meat were plentiful and cheap and many of the early settlers bought this game for their food. Buffalo meat sold for a nickel a pound.

Rabbits, quail, wild ducks and geese were other game creatures frequently seen by hunters and

# Buffalo Were Rare Earliest Days

The great buffalo country of the early wild west was west of reat prairie fire." About 10 McPherson county and the great blow up from the south and soon | sent only old lone bulls or strag-

trees. In the vicinity of Lindsin the neighborhood about the a dugout where the mother of until it was almost black as night, ed within the limits of the settle-

While there was plenty of wild paper on the wall, the carpet on game in the county, W. O. Mathes the floor, and even my babies says there were few wild buffalo in the county after 1866. In that Other early settlers remember year the first settlers who came seeing horsemen fleeing before a to Smoky Hill township found buffalo. Solomon Stephens saw one large herd go through Marguette township in 1868, leaving a trail a hundred yards wide on the prairie.

There is a natural corral west of Marquette, where a few buffalo for the ceremony, but they were hid until surprisingly late in the in such close quarters and the 70's. Indians camping on the streams would sometimes go mind of an ostrich when it tries there to kill one but they always to hide by sticking its head in the went at night for they didn't want | sand. the white man to find the buffa-

Buffalo were rare and when a few did come through they were killed immediately. There were first lady of the land. She placed buffalo trails, though, made by following a leader to water.

In the 1870's Ludwig Engdahl of Marquette hid in the grass when nine buffalo thundered across the prairie toward him. Another time two buffalo passed the schoolhouse west of Marquette.

But those few incidents are buffalo in McPherson county.

# Huge Prairie Fires Raged Throughout Kidnapping Of Mrs. Bassett County To Terrorize Early Settlers Almost County History Legend

By Jessie Hill Rowland

Numerous stories were written at once and took her baby from n the early days about the kid- his resting place. The Indians Bassett filed upon a quarter section of land on Sharps Creek not far from Marquette. Neighbors theirs were stout hearts and not ong after establishing their home, abode with them.

On the 28th of September, Mr. Bassett went several miles up the creek to borrow some corn of his neighbor, Solomon Stephens. While there he was told a band of Kiowas were camping farther up the creek and no doubt had come up from the territory on a thieving expedition. The two men were determined to ascertain definitely their location. They had not followed the creek far when they found the Indians had broken camp and had started directly toward the Bassett home. So terrified was Mr. Bassett that he immediately summoned five or six men to his aid. Among them was Peter Hughes, Solomon Stephens and Mr. Ray. As they neared the Bassett home one of the men became frightened and turn-

was unconscious of danger near. answer. When Mr. Bassett left her in the vere some wildcats, an occasional morning, he thought he had left and wrapped the mother and child enough wood to last during the as best they could. Peter Hughes otes. Buffalo were few but deer, day but it commenced to rain and took the baby on his horse and was cold and raw almost like Mr. Bassett took his wife on in chickens often were killed for mid-winter. Mrs. Bassett, fearing front of him and the party startfood on Gypsum Creek. There there might not be enough wood, ed for Mr. Solomon Stephen's were plenty of fish in the streams, ran hastily to the creek near by home where Mr. Stephen's sister There and, gathering an arm-full, re- Nannie gave Mrs. Bassett clothing turned to their dug-out and was and the baby had tender care but beaver, otter, and coons and some placing some of the wood in the in a short time it died, owing to stove. When she turned around the exposure it suffered during riors in the room. So stealthy Lawrence for burial and the Bashad they been in their movements, setts returned to their home lone-

napping of Mrs. Bassett by the seized two rifles that were at the Indians in 1868. The Bassetts foot of the bed. They then stripcame to Kansas in 1867 and Mr. ped the room of its contents. In one corner stood a trunk that contained some things dear to the heart of the owner. She surreptiwere few and far between, but tiously turned the key in this, but the Indians carried it out doors, broke it open and divided a bright baby boy took up his its contents. When everything had been disposed of, they placed Mrs. Bassett on a pony and handed her baby to her and the band started on their way south. They had not gone far out on the prairie when the chief of the band dismounted and seemed to hold a heated argument with five or six of the other warriors. At length coming to a decision they made motions for Mrs. Bassett to dismount. They then stripped her of clothing and handing her baby back to her, rode on their way. Mrs. Bassett returned weak and frightened to their dug-out, and as it was said before it was bitter cold and she had nothing to wrap around her freezing little baby.

| Bassett stepped over to their bed

It was not long before Mr. Bassett arrived and when he called to her she was too frightened to answer him but he called again, 'My God Mat, if you are alive Let us leave them for a mo-answer me." Realizing that help ment and follow Mrs. Bassett who had come to her, she was able to

The men took off their coats there were five or six Indian war- the Indian raid. It was taken to

## Historian Tells Of A Pioneer Wedding Held In Dugout In McPherson County

By Jessie Hill Rowland

Golden bells.

armony foretells." he one thought of by Edgar Al- made of dried carrots. len Poe. No doubt the happiness was all there, but there could be kinds of sauce, all made out of no ringing of bells to announce wild plums put up in seven differ-

the fact. pioneers and a justice of the peace plain bread and butter and fried and so was called upon many pork. The table was shoved close came the test of trying to live The chairs were occupied and two happily ever after.

On one of these occasions my Near Roxbury in the late 1860's wedding 10 miles from our home, father was asked to preside at a arriving at their destination they borg, buffalo herds roved about were ushered down six steps into ding feast.

> There was but one room and the furniture consisted of two them. The bride returned again chairs, one with only two rounds in a few days with the certificate to the back and bottomless. A to have a correction made, as it bed made of scantlings, a board had been dated the day she called table, a short bench, a stove and for it. a motto hung over the door, "God Pless Our Home." There was no floor and a sheet had been stretched across one corner of the room. The bride and groom were stationed behind this, evidently under the impression it would not be proper to appear until time sheet was so short it put one in

Mrs. Brown, we will call her, was grinding something in a coffee mill, but arose to receive her guests with all the dignity of the buffalo walking in straight lines for my father, seating herone chair for my mother and one self upon the bench she continued turning the coffee grinder. Soon after, some of the neighbors came in and at the appointed time the bride and groom emerged arm in arm from behind the temporary curtain and stepped forward to where my father was sitting. All became quiet and he pronounced nearly the only ones reported of the words that made them one.

Then all sat down to the wed-"Hear the mellow wedding bells ding supper. The sheet that hung across the corner of the room was What a world of happiness their taken down and spread over the table for a cloth. Mrs. Brown's Great must be the contrast of efforts at the coffee mill had Kansas pioneer wedding and turned out some delicious coffee

There were seven different ent ways. The rest of the menu My father was one of the early was quite simple and consisted of to the bed and three sat on that or three kegs finished out the number of seats.

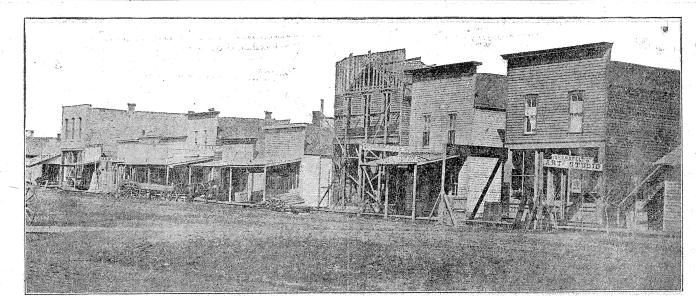
After the supper the bridegroom took my father to one side and the ceremony. He readily con sented and returned home.

One year later the bride called at my father's office and asked for the certificate he had neglected to make out. A nice little baby girl had taken up her abode with

There are almost 700,000 beds in mental hospitals in the United



W. H. COTTINGHAM, 1878-Breeder of horses and cattle, Mc-Pherson Bank officer and mayor of McPherson.



BACK IN THE BOOM DAYS of 1880 there was considerable new construction going on, as shown by this picture of the east side of Main between Elizabeth and Kansas Avenue. Notice the wooden a wnings and wooden sidewalks. The two-story building at the extreme left is the original Republican building, one of the first stone buildings on Main Street and at present believed to be the oldest building