

THIS IS THE OLD McPHERSON HOUSE, the first hotel in the city of McPherson which stood where the Grand Building now stands. This picture shows it after the addition was built onto the original structure in 1878. The smaller part of the building was moved to McPherson from King City and was opened for business in June, 1872, by William West, one of the original Astabula colony. In 1872 it was purchased by B. E. Smith, who ran it until his death, July 17, 1886. His wife and sons continued the business until February, 1887, when they sold out to W. J. Bell. It was then moved to Ash street until it burned a few years later. The pioneers shown in the picture apparently were guests at the time. It is recorded that Eli Williams, D. P. Lindsay, G. L. McCourt and E. A. Colburn were among many of the early day businessmen who slept in this house.

## Readin', 'Ritin', 'Rithmetic Wasn't All Of Old School Days

By Edith I. Haight

From one room housing a few pupils in a "subscription" school in 1873 to a school plant of six fine buildings, adequately equipped and expertly staffed.

From "blackman" and "dare base", played by a few pupils at recess with but nominal supervision, to planned physical development and organized sports for all.

From one rigid course which every student must follow to several courses, each flexible enough with its numerous electives to fit individual differences and abilities.

During the more than 70 years that spanned these extremes, the youth of the community knew adventure, thrills, heart-break, pride in achievement, romance, intrigue, fun, and some hard work.

The first high school class was graduated in 1883, under the leadership of E. W. Hulise, and had four members: Pearl Shirk, Stella Myers, Gertrude Christian and Randa Waitt.

The smallest class, of one, Charles Webster, finished in 1886, and the largest, of 127 members, carried the honors in 1937. A total of 2,645 students have completed the high school courses.

Among outstanding personalities of teachers of earlier days were Lydia Chatterton, Sally Davidson, Addison Lundum, Hettie Brockett, J. D. King, Nora White, and Mame Curry, whose names bring varied and vivid memories.

In 1891 the 11 members of the graduating class invited the 38 former graduates to a banquet and a get-together, where the McPherson High School Alumni Association was organized. With few exceptions, if any, this organization has held a meeting every May since. Each class in turn provides entertainment for the group to welcome the succeeding class, to renew old friendships and associations, and to compare achievements of the past ten, twenty or thirty years.

One of the institutions of early school days was Speaking Day, which came once a month on Friday afternoon. Every one put on his best or next to best clothes with the addition of crisp ruffled aprons for the girls. One by one, pupils came to the platform in the front of the room, made a bow, and recited a memorized "piece." Another bow, and one was safely back in his seat, the ordeal over for four weeks.

The fourth grader who repeated Shelley's "To a Skylark" really deserved a medal. In the upper grades "Whoa, Nebuchadnezzar" and "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight" were popular favorites.

A little girl living on East Euclid always brought teacher a pink geranium blossom to wear that special day. Her progress through the lower grades could be followed by observing the teachers who wore that particular pink flower.

If you were in school in 1893, some of your work was doubtless displayed in the acres of school exhibits at the Columbian Exposition at Chicago, and if you were in the high school, you shared in the honor of receiving a handsome medal and the only blue ribbon award to a Kansas school. Later honors in music, debate, sports, and scholarship carried no greater thrill than did this first one. The bound volume of high school work that won the award is now in the State Historical Society files in Topeka.

East side, west side oral spell-

ing matches were important events when corresponding grades met to compare strength. The boy who missed the first word could be just as proud of his room's victory as the girl who spelled the last one. Besides, one group always got to walk across town.

Elation and chagrin came from the custom of marking the pupil's report card with his rank in his class. Any rank above ten brought satisfaction, but alas for those who stood near the bottom of a class of 40 or more. When one girl brought home a card marked "Rank 1," her parents heard with mingled pride and amusement her announcement, "I'm the rankest one in the class."

Mention of the band brings happy memories of the band room on the corner of the lot, of the trips taken and the concerts given, and all the jolly hours and hard work of practice and performance.

For high school students in whose lives romance played an especially important part, there were many spots suitable for a rendezvous with the chosen one. In the old high school building a retired spot just inside the east entrance was a favorite, or under the stairs that led to the sky parlor; in the present Wickerham building the north landing under the kindly eye of Urania, the south landing with the approval of Diana, and even the radiator just outside the office door was convenient. In the present high school building the long halls and various landings offer trysting places for all.

How necessary it became to sharpen a pencil, or go to the dictionary, or get a book from the library shelves just at the time a particular some one had a similar need.

Other interesting experiences might include helping to ring the big bell in the old brick building, commencement in the "Opera House," the strange behavior of the sub-freshman class, being chosen as queen or attendant for All Schools Day, being elected to the Honor Society, a crucial basketball game, the last lap in the relay race, tacky day, joining the Spizzeringum Club, receiving a football letter, participation in a special program or the school play.

Perhaps such recollections of school days seem unrelated to the three R's and their modern equivalents. But didn't some one say, "Don't let your studies interfere with your education"?

## Wine, Women, And Song At Fuller's Ranch

The first permanent settler came to McPherson County in 1855, when Charles Fuller started his ranch along the Santa Fe trail, on Turkey Creek, seven miles east of McPherson.

Fuller's ranch was noteworthy not only as a place to stop and as a cowboy rendezvous in later years, but for the fact that two women were there. The two were French girls, Clara and Norma Noma, who cooked and served meals.

Early travelers on the trail recommended Fuller's ranch as offering good accommodations, good liquor, and good food and with the scarcity of women, that, too, made the ranch a byword among the pioneers.

## Opera House Opened In '89

By Ed Wetlepp

The opera house was an important community center in the life of any small town in the early days. Public meetings, political rallies, stage shows, minstrels, opera, musical comedy, all paraded through the opera house, for in those days the motion picture was still to be born.

McPherson started early with its opera house and its first was built in 1880. Although it was built primarily for the Bank of McPherson, the second floor was arranged for an opera house.

This building still stands. It is the present home of the McPherson and Citizens State Bank. It is one of the oldest buildings on Main Street.

The old opera house narrowly escaped destruction in the great fire of 1883 which wiped out the west side of Main Street from Marlin to Euclid, but its "sturdy brick construction withstood the heat from the terrible holocaust."

The town was growing. The time had arrived when McPherson could support an opera house which was built from the ground up as an opera house. On March 25, 1888, the Opera House Company, E. G. Clark, president, held a meeting and decided to build just such a place.

Construction started almost immediately. It was an impressive structure, showing great faith in the future of McPherson. Its cost was estimated at \$42,000.

On August 2, 1888, with construction almost completed, the land and building were mortgaged for \$18,812.50. Opened Jan. 28, 1889

Jan. 28, 1889, was the big day, the grand opening. Tickets for the opening performances sold from 50 cents to \$1.75 and the building's 900 seats were filled to overflowing.

For this special occasion the Modoc Club of Topeka was imported to present the entertainment, an opera entitled "Chimes of Normandy." Early Daily Republican stories gushed with praise of the show, which included several local artists "spotted" in the cast.

On April 24, 1889, the opera house also became the courthouse when all offices, including the basement, were rented by the county for \$1,400 a year. The theatre section, naturally, was reserved for show purposes.

Through that building, in the next few years, passed some of the great entertainers of the time, a star-studded cast of artists. Many of the great, near great and to-be-great trod the boards.

An Impressive Building The building itself was impressive. Old-timers say that it could be seen for miles across the Kansas prairie. Before the courthouse was built, it was the biggest building in the city, the show piece of central Kansas.

Richard Dale acquired the property on May 13, 1892, for \$21,689.70, and held it until July 7, 1927. At that time it was purchased by W. P. Barker, who mortgaged the property for \$8,500, and still owns the building today.

Now filled with apartments, a furniture store, a restaurant and the Mac Theatre, the old opera house is somewhat the worse for time and wear. Many have made the suggestion that it is an eyesore, that it should be torn down.

Ghosts must rattle their chains and turn over in their graves at the thought.

## "Big Wind" Hit County In North In June 1876

While early settlers had their share of prairie fires and flash floods, one of the most vivid days in the memories of old timers, especially in the northern part of the county, is June 17, 1876.

That was the day of the "big wind." A cyclone swept down on the county, blowing across the northern part of the county mostly.

A number of persons were injured in the cyclone although none was killed.

Houses by the score were destroyed and damaged and the early settlers said that the cyclone uprooted huge trees along the Smoky Hill River and left a tangled, ruined mess in its wake.

The pressure was applied to the board of commissioners and on July 30, 1872, the bond election carried. On January 6, 1873, the commissioners were authorized to turn the \$200,000 over to the railroad but on February 24 the authorization was withdrawn.

The "go ahead" signal was given the board on March 17 and the county clerk was ordered to issue \$75,000 in bonds and deposit the sum with the state treasurer in Topeka. Socks To Recall Bonds

On July 28, 1873, the county attorney, for some reason or other, wanted the \$75,000 in railroad bonds returned from the state treasurer's office but the county commission did not agree, however, on August 11 the bonds were recalled from Topeka because the railroad did not fulfill its part of the contract and by September 1 all the bonds had been returned. This was the end of the first real attempt to build the steel rails into the county.

Not until January 6, 1879, was another attempt to take fire to get the tracks laid into the county. Smoky Hill Township voters wanted to subscribe to the capital stock of the Salina & Southwestern Railway, which had agreed to build a line from Salina into and through Smoky Hill Township at \$4,000 per mile for every mile built into the township. The proposed line was to pass through Lindsborg. The petition requesting the purchase of the stock in the company was signed by John A. Swenson and 108 others. Railroad From The East

On January 21 the same year a request was received by the commissioners to subscribe to bonds to the Marion & McPherson Railway to the extent of \$120,000. This proposal figured out to \$4,000 per mile from Marion to McPherson. The proposal called for the line to start from the Santa Fe tracks at Florence, to be built north to Marion and then west to McPherson and eventually on west to Lyons. The proposal said the line was to be finished to McPherson by October 1879 and to extend to the west line of McPherson County by October 1881.

This plan meant that two railroad proposals were before the voters in the county. On February 21, 1879, the Smoky Hill Township bonds passed by a vote of 149 to 7. Four days later on February 25 the election on the Marion & McPherson bonds carried.

On August 28 McPherson township offered a plan to issue bonds for \$22,000 to help finance the building of the Kansas & Southwestern Railway into the township from Lindsborg. First Rails Laid

The Kansas & Southwestern was the first line to build into the county and on August 1, 1879, the new line and a depot had been completed 3.685 miles into the county from the north and the county paid \$14,740 to the new company. On September 29, 1879, McPherson township voted 268 to 50 to subscribe to bonds for the Kansas & Southwestern.

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Recalls Experiences

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Today McPherson County is well supplied with rail connections in every direction. The lines include the Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Missouri Pacific and Rock Island. Heavy tonnage of freight is carried on these lines and today modern Diesel streamliners pull long passenger and freight trains into McPherson. The railroads have kept pace with the development of the county. The roads faced and conquered the hardships the pioneer settlers endured and today rail service is one of the vital cogs in the future expansion and prosperity of this area.

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## Railroads Followed Early Pioneers Into McPherson

By L. E. Lindell

Early in the 70's when the pioneers started settling in what is now McPherson County rumors spread like a prairie fire over the treeless plains that "the railroads are building into McPherson."

Since that first rumor the railroads have not only built into the county but have played a big part in building the county to its present high position in Kansas agriculture and industry. They were instrumental in opening up new towns and communities and adding to the material wealth and prosperity of this part of Kansas.

The railroads had a feeble and shaky start from the time stock was sold to the pioneers to help finance the first rails into McPherson County. The records show that on April 1, 1872, the city of Lindsborg asked the county commissioners to buy stock in the new Salina, Sedgwick & Southern Railway Company to the extent of \$150,000. The commissioners turned down the Lindsborg request, so the first effort to finance the rails into the county fell through. This line was to run from Salina to Lindsborg, McPherson, King City, Lake View and then on to Sedgwick City.

Ask For Bond Issue

The citizens of Lindsborg were not to be shouted down by the commissioners' refusal, so two months later, on June 5, 1872, sixty Lindsborg voters signed a petition calling for a vote on a \$150,000 bond issue to buy stock in the proposed railroad from the north.

The commissioners didn't act upon the petition at once, and one month later, on July 1, the Lindsborg voters withdrew their petition and submitted a second one calling for an election to vote on a \$200,000 bond issue to buy stock in another proposed railroad, to be known as the Salina, Atlanta and Raymond Railway. This line was to extend south from Salina to Lindsborg, New Gottland, McPherson, King City and on south. A branch line was to extend from Lindsborg west to Ellsworth.

The pressure was applied to the board of commissioners and on July 30, 1872, the bond election carried. On January 6, 1873, the commissioners were authorized to turn the \$200,000 over to the railroad but on February 24 the authorization was withdrawn.

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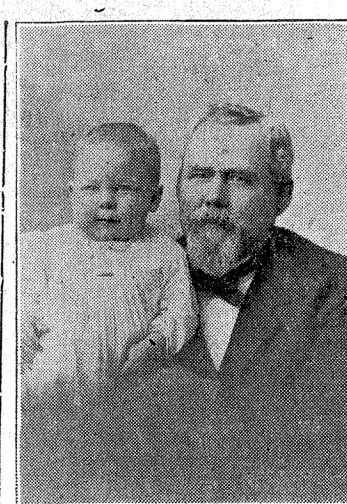
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ELI P. WILLIAMS & GRANDSON, 1877—Founder with Cottingham of McPherson Bank, now the McPherson and Citizens Bank, member state legislature.

## Log Cabins Used By Early Settlers

Finished lumber was a rarity almost unknown to the settlers of 75 years ago. Logs went into the making of the first frame homes and were used in the rough, with the bark on.

Cottonwood logs were used mostly, being more plentiful than other kinds. There were some walnut, elm and ash on Sharps Creek and a few elm and ash, some box elders and an abundance of cottonwoods on the Smoky. Boards, sawed from green cottonwood, warped badly.

Space between logs and boards used in building a house were filled with a sort of plaster, a mixture of dirt or clay, sand and water. Sometimes the plaster hardened too much, fell out, and the whole task had to be done over again.

Bugs, found under the bark of some of the trees used in building the early homes became a real nuisance. The bugs changed their home from the bark of the tree to beds, becoming what are now called bedbugs.

## History Of Daily Republican Traced Back To First Paper Here In 1872

The McPherson Republican is so old that its early history is shrouded in the mists of the days that memory has forgot. Few definite facts are available. There are no complete files of the newspaper of the early days of McPherson and the writers of history do not at all agree.

They do, however, agree that the first newspaper published in McPherson was the McPherson Messenger, published by the Yale Brothers—A. W. and L. B. A few of the early copies of the Messenger are extant, including Vol. 1, No. 1. This first issue is dated December 19, 1872 but was actually published a week earlier, according to a statement in that issue.

This McPherson Messenger was the beginning of The McPherson Republican. In May, 1874, its name was changed to the Independent and in December of 1879, the name was again changed, this time for good and it was thenceforth called The Republican.

Old timers and some modern writers disagree as to the direct descent from the Messenger to The Republican. S. G. Mead, who changed the name to Republican in 1879 always maintained that the descent was direct—Yale sold to McClintick and McClintick to Mead. Yet the many writings on early days do not make it that simple.

The State Historical Society in its August issue this year states: "In August, 1873, A. W. Yale went into other business. This left L. B. the sole editor and proprietor. On August 21, 1873, the Messenger was closed out for debt and bought by the McPherson Publishing Company. On December 13, 1873, it came under the control of I. F. Clark and George W. McClintick."

A copy of the McPherson Messenger dated April 29, 1874, lists it as Vol. 2, No. 10 and states it is published by Clark and McClintick. This volume and number show that nine issues must have been skipped since Yale Brothers first number.

A copy of the McPherson Independent, dated June 17, 1874, gives George W. McClintick as proprietor and editor. Its volume number is two and its issue number is 17, which is an exact continuation of the issue number of the Messenger of April 29, 1874, which Clark and McClintick owned. Evidently McClintick considered his Independent as the lineal descendant of the Messenger.