

**The Collected Writings**

**and Remembrances**

**of**

**Blaine L. Wells**

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# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 1 - 7,500 Residents in Washington County

It was reported in the Topeka Daily Capital this year that Washington County now has a population of 7,500 and that we lost more population percentage wise than any other county in the state. This report rather shocked me, so I became interested in finding out just how much of a drop this was from the 1930's, the period that I grew up in.

I turned to the 70th Anniversary Edition of the Washington County Register for some figures. I found that the population for Washington County in 1938 was 16,824. The cities of the county were reported to be 5,711 and the people living on farms to be 11,113.

For the year 1938 assessor reports show that there were 521,108 acres of farmland in Washington County. This included 158,727 acres seeded to wheat, 65,155 acres to corn, 33,846 acres of oats, 6,750 acres of barley and 17,420 acres of alfalfa.

4,010,369 gallons of milk were produced, 1,704,033 dozens of eggs, 380,727 chickens were raised, 18,298 turkeys, 14,420 calves, 22,735 pigs, 2,454 lambs, 537 horse colts and 171 mule colts. Looking at these figures about the agricultural products produced in Washington County in 1938 I can't help but wonder what part of them came from the Ray Wells farm and how much milk this country boy took away from the cows and how many of those eggs reported were found by me. Most of my night and morning chores had to do with these products.

Blaine Wells

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 2 - Sling Shots

One of the favorite toys we had when I was a boy was the sling shot. Only we never called them sling shots, we called them nxxxx shooters. My wife says I can't use that word now. Anyway, every boy I ran around with had one hanging out of his hip pocket. For ammunition we used rocks. I was never very proficient with this weapon. The only way I could hit a target was to select one large enough for my talents: horses, mules, cows, windmills, barns, etc. Probably, the only thing I can brag about when discussing sling shots is that my grandfather was a master with this weapon.

O.J. Wells was my grandfather's name and he ran a garage in Morrowville during the 1910-20's. Don't hold me to these dates. Anyway, granddad was a local celebrity with his ability to use the sling shot. He was also popular with the local boys as he would help them make sling shots and instruct them on how to use them. I have been told stories of his ability to hit targets from quite a long distance. For ammunition, he used ball bearings that he would get from worn out car parts.

Grandfather Wells always carried his sling shot and his enthusiasm for this weapon got him in trouble with Grandmother Wells.

The story told to me was that one day Grandmother needed one chicken for Sunday dinner so she asked Granddad to catch her one. This was right down his alley. He went to the barnyard where the young chickens were feeding and proceeded to use his sling shot to get his bird. He was such a good shot that he would hit the chicken in the eye killing it instantly. According to Grandfather this was the best way to kill birds as no eatable part of the bird was damaged by the shot. Grandfather was enthusiastic and so proficient, that when finished he not only had one chicken for Grandmother Wells, there were eleven others to accompany it.

When Grandfather took his successes to Grandmother, she rose to the occasion and told Granddad that she also wanted him to pluck the feathers and butcher the birds and she would gladly cook them.

My family had many a laugh about Grandfather's enthusiasm in using the sling shot to provide meat for his Sunday dinner.

Blaine Wells

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 3 - Saturday Nights

Saturday night in the 1930's was a high point in the week for this country boy. It seems most of my energies were directed by this day. All week I would figure ways to secure some money to spend when we went to town on Saturday.

It was an unwritten rule at our farm that any hen eggs found outside the hen house belonged to the person who found them. If I wasn't flush with money, I would look for these hidden nests. As I remember, eggs most always were worth a penny a piece. There was another way of securing a stray coin or two. Older brothers sometimes were willing to pay for some little task I could do for them. Another source was Mother. She would check with me to see if I had been able to find some spending money from my sources and if I had none, she promised to help out if there was any money left from the cream check after buying groceries. As I remember, this wasn't a too reliable source as the Wells family seemed to need a lot of groceries each Saturday.

Finally Saturday would arrive, chores were done early, the cream and eggs were made ready and put in the family car. All of us had to wash extra clean and put on fresh clothing. For me, this meant changing to another shirt and blue overalls.

Mom and Dad were at last ready and we piled into the car and away we went to the town of Morrowville. On the road, Mother would always get around to checking how clean my ears were. I can report to you that my ears never seemed to pass inspection. Mom would dampen the end of her handkerchief with her tongue and proceed to ream out my ears. It seemed to me the more I protested the harder she would dig. Anyway, I always figured that my large ears were caused by Mom cleaning them on the way to town on Saturday night.

We finally arrived in town and the first stop was the creamery to drop to drop off the cream and eggs. Dad would park the car and Mother would tell me to behave myself and then I was on my own for a few hours. As I remember, my first stop was Bertha Leshner's Variety Store. This nice lady sold penny candy and I would check out what she had on hand. Sometimes she would mark down the price on some of her candy. This I would buy; I figured quantity was better than quality. My favorite candy was black licorice. Licorice was sold in long strips and plugs. Plugs were best because you could pretend that it was chewing tobacco and when we played cowboys at home I got so I could spit almost as good as Dad.

Various activities took place on Saturday night for the older folk. The men took turns playing horse shoes, sometimes a boxing ring was put together and many of the men put on quite a show. Even boys my age got to take our turns. On rare Saturdays a show came to town. I mean a show in a tent with real actors. Most people in this area probably have watched the Chick Boy Shows. My favorite was entitled, "The Death of Jesse James". I really cried when Jesse was shot towards the end of the show.

These are some of the things I remember about Saturday night. Youngsters, as your Granddad, if he liked to go to town on this special night and see what he tells you.

Blaine Wells  
November 1987

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 4 - Yellow School Bus

As I sat here the other day wondering what to write about, a big yellow school bus went by. I thought to myself that school transportation had certainly changed since my time of attending country school.

Most people in the area lived in the country and furnished their own transportation to school. The two most common methods of getting to school were walking or using a horse.

When I started to school, we were a farm family living almost two miles from a country school named Pursley. We had a very nice saddle horse named Queen. She was good dependable transportation. Brother Dale was the pilot and I was just a passenger on Queen. I always had a lot of confidence in Dale and whatever he decided. I knew it was the thing to do.

I can still remember coming to school in the morning. Hubert and Kermit Menzies, on a big bay horse, would be coming from the east. Mildred and Harvey Zach would be driving a horse and buggy from the north, and the Wells boys riding old Queen came from the south. I am certain there were others riding horses, but these are the ones I remember. Anyway, to get back to my story, just as soon as you would see someone else coming to school from another direction, it became necessary for you to be the first one on the playground of the school. The race would begin. I always felt that the horses were having as much fun as anyone. They would lay back their ears and act as if their morning oats depended on the outcome of the race. It was a wonder someone didn't get killed as many a time you would meet another horse or buggy on the bridge turning into the school yard. If you won the race for the day, you could grin at the others and know you had the best horse in school.

I also remember that Queen was not furnished with a heater so when it was bitter cold and Dale would decide it was too cold to ride, he would tie the reins about Queen's neck and tell me to grab her tail. He would also get a good hold and set Queen to trotting towards school. If you fell down you were dragged until you again gained your feet. Dale would brag on me about how tough I was so there was no way that you could get me to let loose of that tail or cry or any of those sissy things.

Blaine Wells  
January 1988

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 5 - Kansas Dust Storms

In 1934 & 1936 wind erosion stripped earth from thousands of square miles of rich farmland and pasture. The region from the Panhandle of Texas north to the Dakotas was nicknamed the Dust Bowl. Starting in 1951 drought again became so severe that by 1955 some 13 million acres were "dusted out". The drought struck most heavily in Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

This information came from Compton's Encyclopedia.

Many people can remember going to country school on a fine spring morning and by noon the wind would be blowing heavily and in the West you could see a huge black cloud begin to appear. Then the bright day would almost turn night in just a few short minutes.

Were you afraid? Well, I can answer for myself. Definitely yes. The only thing that helped was the calm way that my teacher went about the school room explaining what was happening. She began to light the kerosene lamps that hung in various places around the room.

You can imagine how much studying took place. The teacher would be looking out the window, probably wondering what to do. Whether to send us home or keep us there and turn us out at the regular time. Remember she was on her own. She was the only adult there. She didn't even have a telephone so she could call parents. I now greatly admire the courage she radiated to us on this scary day. She kept us in our seats going through the motion of studying.

I remember seeing my dad walk into the schoolhouse. He had a blue handkerchief over his face. He was covered with fine dust. I was so relieved that he had come for me. Soon other parents came to pick up their children.

Dad had brought another large handkerchief for me to dampen and put on my face so I could breathe on the walk home. What a scary time for me. I didn't know what really was happening, but I was certainly happy that Dad was there to take my hand and walk me home.

Blaine Wells  
April 1988

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 6 - The Wind Machine

When Samuel Peppard and his crew set sail in their wind wagon in May 1860, people at Oskaloosa in Northeast Kansas shook their heads. They called the wind wagon "Peppard's Folly". Surely they said that strange contraption would never reach the Rocky Mountains.

Samuel Peppard was a millwright by trade and at the age of 23 moved to Kansas settling in Oskaloosa in Jefferson County. There he established a saw and grist mill on the Delaware River.

After gold was discovered near Denver, life became rather dull in Oskaloosa and a drought in 1859 made things worse. The call went out far and wide "Pike's Peak or Bust". Samuel Peppard and his friends began to catch this gold fever so when they decided to go and try their luck, Peppard suggested they use a wind wagon for transportation. His friends laughed at the idea at first. Finally he convinced them it was the fastest way to the gold fields, so they finally agreed to try this idea.

This wind wagon was nothing more than a wagon with sails pushed along by the wind. Several others had attempted to make wind wagons before Peppard but were not too successful.

Peppard and friends started construction early in 1860 and by early May of that year the wind wagon was finished. A newspaper reporter from Topeka after inspecting the wind wagon wrote for his paper describing it. He reported that it was made of rough lumber. It was about three feet wide and eight feet long. The bed was placed upon a running gear with axles six feet apart. The wheels were all the same size and about as large as the wheels of a buggy. A ten foot mast was fastened to the front axle. The wagon had a brake and rudder for steering. The craft weighed 350 pounds and carried a crew of four men and a cargo of some 500 pounds. After a trial run the wind wagon was ready. Samuel Peppard and three friends set sail for the gold fields near Denver.

They decided that they would follow the Oregon Trail, which at this time was the main traveled route to the West. They set out from Oskaloosa and traveled northeast until they reached the Oregon Trail near the Little Blue River near Marysville, Kansas.

At times the deep ruts helped the wind wagon's travel but most of the time Samuel found the best sailing was on the open prairie. He reported that his best time was two miles in four minutes. His big problem was that when he traveled this fast it caused the wheels to heat so they would have to slow down. One day he said that they went 50 miles in three hours and in doing so they passed 625 teams going west.

I imagine they had many little difficulties not reported. They had several scary times when Indians chased them and buffaloes kept getting in their way, but the amazing thing was that they were able to travel at such a high speed which was so much faster than the normal horse and wagon travel.

The crew managed to hold their craft together until they were about 50 miles northeast of Denver. They were caught in a storm and the wind wagon was demolished. Thus ended a journey of more than 500 miles.

To me this was an amazing feat by these young men to travel so far so fast. Remember this was in 1860. Anyway this true story caught my interest when I read it. The wind wagon passed through Washington County before it was a county. I can imagine them stopping at the Hanover Pony Express Station for an evening meal and then traveling on west. What an exciting time this must have been.

I found this story in *True Tales of Old Time Kansas* by David Dary.

Blaine Wells  
June 1988

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 7 - The Old Swimming Hole

They tell me we are now experiencing the dog days of August. I wonder what these people have against poor old Rover that they blame all of our hot dry days on him.

The other day when I was working at the golf course, it was hot and I was standing on one of the greens, hand watering the high spots to keep the grass from burning. The temperature was above 100 degrees and with sweat running into my eyes, I began to think about more pleasant things. Soon my thoughts were about the old swimming hole. Gee, to be young again and jumping into the cool water.

My favorite swimming hole was located just west of Morrowville in one of the bends of Mill Creek. We would follow the railroad track until we came to the railroad bridge. From there it was a mad dash to the creek bank. It is quite a trick taking off your pants and shirt on a dead run, but this was the way we boys would do it. It was an honor to be the first in the water. I imagine the water was not over five foot deep at its deepest point, but to me it was a grand place to go. I remember the joy I experienced when my friends and I would splash and dunk one another. One day while splashing and jumping about, I discovered that my feet were not touching the bottom. I had somehow learned to swim. With great enthusiasm I soon became the best dog paddler in the group, or if not the best, the happiest.

During all my growing up years whenever I could get to town in the summer, we boys would slip off to our favorite swimming hole. You have not really lived if you have not made a slippery slide in a steep muddy creek bank and then slid down the slick mud into the water. Also we enjoyed a rope tied in the top of the tree that shaded the area. We would get up in the tree, swing out and drop or dive into the water below.

I know now that my old swimming hole was not as grand as the modern pools we have today, but it was wonderful because it belonged to anyone who wanted to jump in and cool off. I have not visited this spot for many years, but after writing this for the paper, I think I shall take a walk one of these days to visit my old swimming hole. Do you ever think I can talk my grandsons into joining me and maybe we can get wet together?

Blaine Wells  
August 1988

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 8 - Halloween

When I think of the month of October two important things come to mind, the first my birthday and second the fun we had on Halloween night. Since my birthday is not interesting to anyone else but me, I would like to tell you of some of the pranks that were done by the boys of Morrowville on Halloween.

First we would scout the town and plan what we would do on Halloween. I believe this scouting and planning were more fun than the actual deeds. When Halloween came, we boys had to convince our parents that we would stay out of trouble. My dad had a special way about his warning on Halloween. He told me that I could go and do some Halloweening, but if I got into trouble with the law, I had to suffer the consequences. He wouldn't come to my rescue. I believed him because my dad always meant what he told you.

Finally Halloween night came and I was off to town on our good old dependable saddle horse Queen. You see, I took Queen to town because I had a plan that I would rope some shocks of corn that someone had down by the railroad tracks. Boy, was I going to show the others how a country boy could use his dependable saddle horse to move heavy objects into the street. Well, here is really what happened. When I rode down to the cornfield and threw the first loop over the first shock of corn, things began to liven up. You see, it was dark and old gentle Queen didn't know what she was tied to and when she began to pull on command, she heard a strange rustling noise so she decided to get away from there in a hurry. She proceeded to buck me off and run off down the street. Well, that didn't turn out like I expected.

I remember the fun we had when we jacked up a Model T car and placed each rear wheel in half a watermelon. When the owner came and got in and tried to drive away, all it would do was sit there and spin. We thought this was a grand joke.

Another favorite prank on this special night was to see how many outdoor toilets we could upset. If the owner would happen to object, this made it the more exciting. I remember our favorite toilet was owned by an old gentleman who made his brags that we would not dare upset his toilet because he was going to sit in his toilet with a loaded shot gun and would salt and pepper anyone messing with his toilet. The first thing we did was to sneak up and lock the door on the outside and then push the toilet over. The old gentleman was inside and he used some pretty choice words on us, but boy was this fun. Some of the older boys soon went back and helped the old man out of his outside prison.

We did other things such as seeing how much junk we could find in the alleys and take in to the main street. Finally the town marshals thought we had done enough tricks so they took down all our names and told us to report the next morning to help put the displaced articles back. We went home pleased with our evening fun.

Blaine Wells  
October 1988

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 9 - Cold Weather, Longjohns, and Head Lice

It was the month after Christmas and most of the excitement was past for another school year. The country school that I attended was typical I imagine of the better than one hundred country schools in Washington County in the 1930's.

I remember January as a month of very cold weather, longjohns and head lice. For the younger set I should explain that longjohns was long underwear worn by both boys and girls that attended these country schools. We wore them to keep us warm while walking to school and doing chores at home. These longjohns worked wonders for keeping us warm while we were outside but people my age will tell you that sitting at your desk and as the day wore on you would itch more and more. Students would spend most of their time scratching instead of studying.

I remember one winter day the boys decided it would be great fun to exchange caps and coats at recess to fool the girls when we played hide-go-seek. This exchange worked great for fooling the girls but guess what happened to me? Well, as I remember it, it was sometime before I went home, I began to feel something crawling on my scalp, and as time went by I began to itch and scratch. That evening, Mother noticed that I was scratching more than normal so she checked my hair and announced that I had a good case of head lice. Did she immediately take me to the doctor? She did not. Mother knew how to handle these unwanted visitors. The first step in her treatment was to cut my hair as short as she could with a pair of scissors. The second step was to get the kerosene can and pour some kerosene on my scalp, rubbing it in with her fingers. If you have ever had this done to you, you have my sympathy. My head felt like it was afire. Mother then rinsed out the kerosene and to make me feel better began to feed me warm bread and butter with my favorite jelly on it.

To end this story, Mother's treatment was a success and you can bet I learned a valuable lesson: never, but never, exchange caps with anyone.

Blaine Wells  
December 1988

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 10 - Washington County's Historical Bridge

Last month at our board meeting for the Washington County Historical Society, it was reported that the old bridge located in Lincoln township on the line between sections 3 and 10 was designated as a historical site registered with the state of Kansas.

Pauline and I decided that we should go and see it. This bridge is just north of the Bolejack Homestead where Pauline grew up. She and her family had crossed the bridge many times when they went to visit relatives who lived just down the road a hop, skip, and a jump. Anyway we drove to the site and took some pictures of the bridge which seemed to have gotten smaller with the passage of time. It might have been the large bridge put in right west of it made it seem small. The county engineer described it as a simple truss bridge and he showed me a copy of the letter which gave the number 001010871303500 to this bridge as a state historical site.

It being such a nice day, Pauline suggested that we go two miles west to visit the Chepstow Store. She remembers going to this store as a child with her dad and sisters. She said it seemed a long ways to the store as they went in a lumber wagon.

Pauline and her sisters considered this quite an adventure as they seldom got to visit any store. She remembers that her dad always saw to it that they got some candy to eat on the way home. Looking on the map, it is only 2 ½ miles from her home to Chepstow but it seemed longer even by automobile. This is a very hilly narrow road. I suppose this makes it seem longer.

When we arrived at Chepstow, the store building was still standing but showing its age. We took some pictures and I am wondering what the history is on this store. I would like to know who some of the store keepers were and if some other businesses were here also. I am going to seek some of this information. If anyone can help me I would be grateful.

From the store we turned north and stopped at the Chepstow Cemetery. We stopped and walked around looking at the tombstones. The oldest stone we could find was for James R. Wilson. He was 45 years old and a veteran of the Civil War. There are several more veterans of this same war buried here. This is a beautiful little cemetery and many names on the stones had a familiar ring to them. It seems many of the names are used here in the city of Washington today. This was new land right after the Civil War so I am guessing as soon as the war was over many veterans got into their wagons and headed West ending up around Chepstow.

Pauline and I enjoyed ourselves and plan to visit other early communities that exist in our beautiful county of Washington.

Blaine Wells  
February 1989

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 11 - Threshing Oats

A short time back I attended a threshing event that took place on the Cumro Brother's farm which is located on the east edge of Hollenberg. The Cumro's were nice enough to let interested persons attend this event which is becoming a rare sight in the modern age of combines.

Talking to Maurice Cumro, he explained that last summer they felt that letting this crop of oats ripen and then combining them was not the way to harvest this crop. They felt there would be too much shatter if they waited and used the combine. So they got out a machine called a grain binder which cuts the oat straw and ties it into bundles. The advantage of using a binder is that you can cut oats when they are not quite ripe, thus less shatter. They then loaded the bundles on wagons and hauled them to the area where they wanted to stack the crop. The bundles were carefully put into the stack so when they wanted to thresh, the bundles could be gotten out without too much trouble. This spring they decided was the time to thresh oats.

When I arrived they already were at work threshing. The separator or threshing machine was made by the Woods Brothers. It is a 20 inch machine which is an average size for farms in this area. The separator was set so the feeder was at the edge of a stack of oats and two men were pitching bundles into the threshing machine. Pitching bundles is hard work so this throwing of bundles was done by several men changing or taking turns.

Maurice had the job of stacking the straw after the threshing machine had taken out the grain. The straw was blown out the back through a long pipe which can be extended to keep the straw in a big neat pile. As the grain was separated from the straw it is augured up into a small bin which has a scale attached to weigh the grain before it is augured into a wagon. This scale was set to weigh 16 pounds which is the weight of a half bushel of oats. By this method you can look on the tally and know how much grain has been threshed.

It was a nice afternoon. I took several pictures of the event. I also became acquainted with Bill McCalley, a neighbor of the Cumro's. Also a young man came up and had to tell me his name. He was David Mosher who used to sit in my math class in Washington Junior High. My, how people grow. The David I remembered was a much smaller edition. Others I talked to were Clif Perkins who helped pitch bundles and several others that I can't recall their names.

Again thanks to the Cumro Brothers. We were again able to look at a threshing machine in action and remember our childhood on the farm when threshing was a common item of business during each summer.

Blaine Wells  
April 1989

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 12 - No Summer in 1816

The following newspaper article came to me in 1958. We kept it because it was so unusual. The article could have been named "No Summer in 1816".

Melvin Cairns

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bolejack brought a clipping into the Greenleaf Sentinel office this week that was found among the keepsakes of Mrs. Bolejack's mother, Mrs. Wm. Burke, who came to Kansas from Pennsylvania in 1881 and settled in the community north of Barnes. Presumably this clipping was passed on to Mrs. Burke by her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Jake Rosebaugh who lived in the east during the time of no summer. The information in the following article was taken from an old dairy [sic] begun in 1810 and kept unbroken until 1840.

"January was so mild that most persons allowed their fires to go out and did not burn wood except for cooking. There were few cold days, but they were few. Most of the time was warm and spring-like. February was not cold. Some days were colder than January, but the weather was about the same. March from the first to the sixth was inclined to be windy. It came in like a small lion and went out like a very innocent sheep.

April came in warm, but as the days grew longer the air became colder, and by the first of May there was a temperature like that of winter with plenty of ice and snow. In May the young buds were frozen dead, ice formed a half inch thick on the ponds and rivers, corn was killed and cornfields were planted again and again until too late to raise a crop. When the last of May arrived in 1816 everything had been killed by the cold.

"June was a cold month. Frost and ice were as common as buttercups usually are. Almost everything green was killed; all fruit trees were destroyed. Snow fell 10 inches deep in Vermont; 7 inches was in New York state and Massachusetts. Everyone looked, longed and waited for the warm

weather, but warm weather did not come.

"It was also very dry; very little rain fell. All summer long the wind blew steadily from the north in blasts laden with snow and ice. Mothers knit socks of double thickness for their children and made thick mittens. Planting and shivering were done together and the farmers who worked out their taxes on the country roads wore overcoats.

A farmer near Tewksbury, Vt. owned a large field of corn. He built fires. Nearly every night, he and his men took turns keeping the fire and watching that the corn did not freeze. The farmer was rewarded by his tireless labors by having the only crop of corn in the region.

"July came in with snow and ice. On the Fourth of July ice as thick as window glass formed throughout New England, New York and part of Pennsylvania. Indian corn which had struggled through May and June, gave up, froze and died.

"To the surprise of everybody, August proved to be the worst month of all. Almost everything green in this country and Europe was blasted with frost. Snow fell at Barnet, 30 miles from London, England on August 30.

Newspapers received from England stated that 1815 would be remembered by the existing generation as the year in which there was no summer. There was great privation and thousands of persons would have perished in this country had it not been for the abundance of fish and wild game."

Blaine Wells  
June 1989

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 13 - Early Teacher's Contract

Enosdale Consolidated District 23 was organized in 1951 to consolidate Triumph District 54 and Excelsior District 127. It was located at Enosdale half way between the original schools in the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of section 26 in Coleman township. The first teacher was Bernice Seymour, and the last teacher was Ruth Tuma in 1961. (Blaine Wells was a teacher in this school in 1941-42.)

School teacher's contracts have undergone drastic changes according to a clipping from the Glasco Kansas Sun. As the magazine advertisement states, "YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY BABY . . ."

This was a blank teacher's contract from the year 1923. The first striking thing about the standard contract is the eight months schools at \$75.00 per month. That was followed by the following form:

Miss \_\_\_\_\_ agrees:

1. Not to get married. This contract becomes null and void immediately if the teacher marries.
2. Not to keep company with men.
3. To be home between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. unless in attendance at a school function.
4. Not to loiter down-town in ice cream stores.
5. Not to leave town at any time without the permission of the chairman of the board of trustees.
6. Not to smoke cigarettes. This contract becomes null and void if the teacher is found smoking.
7. Not to drink beer, wine or whiskey. This contract becomes null and void if the teacher is found drinking beer, wine, or whiskey.
8. Not to ride in a carriage or automobile with any other man except her brother or father.
9. Not to dress in bright colors.
10. Not to dye hair.
11. To wear at least two petticoats.
12. Not to wear dresses more than two inches above the ankles.
13. To keep the school room clean.
  - a. To sweep the classroom at least once daily.
  - b. To scrub the classroom at least once weekly with hot water and soap.
  - c. To clean the blackboard at least once daily.
  - d. To start the fire at 7 am so the room will be warm when the kids arrive.
14. Not to use face powder, mascara, or paint the lips.

In contrast today's school contracts and administrative policy do not refer to dress codes, make-up or out of school time. Contracts and pay are the same for both men and women and custodial work is furnished.

The starting salary in the local school district for the 1983 -84 school term was \$12,725.00 per year or \$1414.00 per month based on a nine month school year.

Blaine Wells  
June 1989

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 14 - Misjudging an Early Snow Storm

"It can snow in November," was the statement I made to some ladies who were working at the Washington County Museum, but I could not remember what year it was that we got a big snow storm on the day before Thanksgiving. I knew it had to have been in the 1950's. Janice Hardenberger spoke up and said it was in 1952. She remembered it well as she had a terrible time getting home from college. Jo Rippe remembered this storm as she was transporting children to school and had an exciting time getting them home that day. So I can imagine that many people living in Washington County can remember this storm and could tell a tale about it.

I can remember this storm well as I was teaching school in Clifton at the time and was also in charge of the buses. The high school music department had asked for a bus to go to Concordia for a program on Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Anyway, as I remember the occasion, the weather began to look more like snow on Tuesday and when we listened to the newscast on Wednesday morning they were predicting heavy snow for our area on Wednesday. So the high school checked with me again and I told them to go ahead with the bus to Concordia as I felt the weather could not be too bad so early in the school year.

You see, Blaine figured he knew more about the weather than the weather man in Topeka. But before the day was over, I learned a valuable lesson, "Don't fool around with Mother Nature."

By ten o'clock it was snowing heavily and by eleven I was calling Concordia to suggest that our bus come home right away. Word was sent back that they were staying in Concordia as the highway patrol would not permit anyone to leave that city.

By that time all of the remaining buses were at the school so we loaded up and started them on their routes.

I believe this was the time that my hair started to turn gray as everything I did seemed to be wrong. In 1952 we didn't have radios in the buses and we couldn't tell how the buses were progressing on their routes. I stayed right beside the telephone and each driver called that they had delivered the children but the roads were so bad they decided to stay with friends at the ends of each route.

By this time, I was feeling better as most of the rural children had gotten home. I had only one bus load that didn't get delivered as their bus was stranded in Concordia. We called around town to aunts, Grandmothers, etc. of the children and found a place for each to stay on Wednesday and Thursday.

The weather began to clear on Friday and by Saturday we started to take the remaining children home. The roads were still blocked but one of the drivers said he would take his big truck loaded with bales and break track for me. I drove a four wheeled jeep loaded with children and followed this truck. He traveled cross country as the roads were impossible. He didn't bother to open fences; he just hit them going as fast as he could. Some farmers had to fix fence the next spring.

Well, to end this tale of my first experience with a big snow, I learned never to take a chance like I did on this storm. Every child got home safely and everything turned out all right but you can bet the rest of time I was in Clifton that when we were in doubt about the weather, the Clifton school played it safe and went home early.

I took a lot of kidding over sending buses home unnecessarily, but I didn't want to tempt Mother Nature again.

Blaine Wells  
December 1989

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 15 - An Article on Schools in 1882

The month of September brings everyone's focus on children returning to school. I thought that the reader would be interested in what was written on this subject in the year 1882.

The first impulse of the people upon whom devolved the responsibility of giving form to society in primitive Washington County was to inaugurate a system of education which should in the future insure a safe foundation for permanent prosperity. The progress in this direction was at first necessarily slow, but as the population increased, the demands were readily met with, until today neat school houses-those monuments to Western progress adorn every prairie and valley in the county.

To Washington City belongs the honor of having the first school within the borders of the county, although the first school house was built in Charleston Township in 1864.

School District No. 1 was organized in 1861, Miss Agnes Hallowell, now Mrs. Phil Darby, being the first teacher. The school was first held in a log cabin built some time previous by D. Ballard and G. Pierce. District No. 2 was organized in 1864, in Charleston Township, their first school house being built that same year. School District No. 1 was the first to issue bonds for the purpose of erecting a school house. In 1869, bonds were issued for the sum of \$2,200 and what is now known as the old stone school house was built. A striking contrast is to be observed between this ancient structure and the elegant school house just erected in Washington City at the cost of \$12,000. At present, only the main building and west wing have been completed. Its seating capacity will be 500, and will contain six departments. It will be heated by steam, and supplied with all the appurtenances of a first class graded school.

Below we give an extract from the County Superintendent's report for the school year ending July 31, 1880:

Total number of children between 5 and 20 years	5,370
Total number of enrolled in school	4,105
Average daily attendance	2,281
Number of schoolhouses in county	113
Number of school districts in county	115
Estimated value of buildings and grounds	\$50,268.00
Average salaries (monthly), males	\$25.80
Average salaries (monthly), females	\$20.00
Amount paid for teachers during the year	\$19,833.00
Bonds issued during the year	\$3,930.00

This was taken from the *Historical Plat Book of Washington County* published in 1882.

Blaine Wells  
September 1989

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 16 - Mormon Spring Historical Site

3 miles south of Washington, Washington County,  
in section 23, T3S, R3E

There is a tradition that some Mormons passed this way and carved their names into a rock cliff on Ash Creek, hence its name Mormon Spring. Names can still be seen on the low cliff, but none are old. The site is on private ground, permission is required, and the spring is hard to find.

I have never found any Mormon reference to Mormons traveling through this part of Kansas, which is 15 miles west of the main Oregon Trail, and it is difficult to explain how this spring acquired its name. The name possibly comes from the fact that one little known variant of the Oregon Trail turns southwest at Topeka, toward Eskridge, Wabaunsee County, then northwest across the Kansas River near Junction City and Fort Riley, then follows the Big Blue River north to near Waterville, Marshall County; this trail runs northwest across Washington County via the Mormon Spring, finally rejoining the main Oregon Trail along the Little Blue River in Jefferson County, Nebraska (see map 3).

On U.S. 36 in a roadside park 1 mile east of Washington is a Kansas historical marker.

Several historic trails crossed this area. Seven miles west the Fort Riley-Fort Kearny road ran diagonally south-to-north and four miles southwest, on Ash Creek, was a favorite Mormon campground. The Parallel Road from Atchison to the Colorado gold fields, much used in 1860, was three miles south. The main stem of the Oregon-California Trail, formed by the junction of roads from St. Joseph and Independence near the east border of Washington County, clipped the northeast corner as it ran toward the Platte River in Nebraska.

Kimball, Stanley B. *Historic Sites and Markers Along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Blaine Wells

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 17 - A Town Called Morrow

Morrowville was formerly called Morrow. In 1870 Emerson White, nephew of Rufus Darby, homesteaded the land where the town of Morrowville now stands. It later was purchased by Cal Morrow and Pap Simpson who, with the prospects of the Burlington Railroad in the early eighties, conceived the idea of a town. This town was named Morrow for its promoter. As time passed, difficulties were encountered with the mails, there being a Kansas town of a similar name (Morrill) so the post office was changed to Morrowville and gradually the town accepted the new name.

Hugh Garrett was proprietor of the first general store. Dr. French had the first drug store, and William A. Nye had the first hardware store. Alex McLaren had a second general merchandise store and a short time later William Shaw built and became proprietor of the hotel.

This information was found in an edition of the *Washington County Register*. This newspaper was celebrating seventy years of publishing a paper for Washington County. This edition came out in 1938.

Blaine Wells

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 18 - Jo's Memories of Christmas

Christmases are made of memories-A toy here, an event there.

When I think of Christmas, I first think of the Christmas Eve program at church. We all had our "pieces" to say. At our house, Santa came while we were at church. Oh, how exciting it was to go home and "see what Santa brought."

One special time, I actually wanted a doll. (Most of the time I wished for trucks or tractors but little girls didn't get "boys" toys in those days.) My little sister wanted a doll, too. We dreamed of beds for the "babies."

When we got back from church, there were two dolls (big ones-almost 18-inches tall) and two doll beds painted a bright (barn) red. We enjoyed those for many years and I still have mine.

It wasn't until I was much older that I realized Dad had made those cribs out of orange crates and painted them with the paint available. How he must have worked to get the head and foot boards rounded so nicely.

Another time I got a bike. Oh what a fulfillment of a dream. I really didn't notice that it had been repainted (but mother had a fit cause it wasn't totally dry and I got barn red paint on my clothes). Guess Santa waited till the last minute back then, too.

I had suspicioned there was no real Santa but I couldn't figure out how the gifts appeared while the folks were at church. Until one year, I was in front saying my piece when Dad walked in the door at the back of the church. I had never imagined that Dad would drive all the way back home during services to play Santa.

Thanks, Dad, for the many happy memories.

Jo Rippe

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 19 - A Collection of Grasshoppers

As a young farm boy, I was fascinated with collecting various items found around our farm. I remember collecting rocks, tree leaves, toads, and I had a wonderful time collecting grasshoppers.

I remember this year as a time when we had thousands of grasshoppers. These hoppers were different than the normal kind. The normal grasshopper was the flying kind but this particular year, the hoppers that hatched out were the wingless kind and were much larger. What was so interesting to me was the hoppers were of many different colors. Many wore bright coats and some had spots of black on a background of green or red. I thought they were beautiful so my collection began.

I found some straight pins in Mother's sewing basket and proceeded to mount these beautiful hoppers on a board by piercing them through the back. What great fun. I probably had fifty specimen on my mounting board the first day. I then decided that I had to find a safe place to store my collection. It seemed logical to me that I should store them under my bed so they would be out of the way and safe. After several days Mother began to smell what she called an unpleasant odor in the house. It smelled all right to me. After her morning search, she found that the odor was coming from under my bed. She didn't even consult me but burned my precious collection in the kitchen cook stove. She then informed me to store all future collections outside the house. I can't understand why she would be upset, but this ended my collecting grasshoppers.

Blaine Wells  
May 1990

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 20 - Walking to School

Picture this setting: A foggy fall September morning, four little sisters ready to go to country school, late as usual, parents hurrying us and we are protesting about cutting across the neighbor's pasture. We were told to forget about the Hereford cattle. I hated that pasture and those cows. We grabbed our tin lunch buckets, coats, and ran. The fog was so dense, we had trouble finding the fence separating the pastures. All of us crawled under it, hoping to save our dresses from a tear. Up the hill we charged. We could always pretend we were a mighty army protecting our country from Indians. It also gave us a feeling of being able to defend ourselves from those huge monsters, the Hereford cattle. We picked up our feet and walked single file. I was in the lead, walking carefully through the tall wet grass, when we came to a small clearing. There stood a coyote, motionless, huge and looking me in the eye. I was frozen to the spot and I know my heart stopped beating. I couldn't move, but the coyote did. Gracefully he faded into the fog. I have never forgotten the picture that coyote made as he stood there. His powerful body, sleek gray hair, ears back, tail down and mouth open all made an impression that has lasted a life time. I now know the coyote was nothing to fear, but those Herefords were tame compared to that wild creature.

Pauline Bolejack Wells

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 21 - A Kansas Tornado

Liz was debating the problem in her mind when D.J. settled it by announcing, "Liz, your time is too near. The flies are driving the horses crazy. We're staying home and that's that."

It was a hot humid Sunday in June. The year was 1896.

D.J. and Liz, my grandparents, were discussing the revival meeting being held at the Spring Valley Church in Washington County, Kansas. Liz wanted to go but she was big with child. It was due in just a little more than a month. She had four other children to care for and secretly was glad the problem was settled.

The children amused themselves by watching friends and neighbors go by in their lumber wagons and buggies to the revival meeting.

Liz and D.J. spent the afternoon reading their bibles and watching huge gray clouds forming in the southwest. It was becoming very hot, humid and sticky. D.J. said, "Those clouds bear watching."

Around 4 P.M. it became quite dark. My grandparents were worried but tried not to show it. They knew they had a good cave nearby, but they were thinking about the people at the church. They had no place to go to escape a possible tornado.

Suddenly D.J. shouted, "I see a twister. Everyone to the cave. Liz, you take little Clarence. I'll see to the others." Down they went, with an ax and kerosene lantern. The children were crying. Grandmother comforted them the best she could. All was still. Then a great rush and roar of wind was heard. It began to rain. They waited for a spell. Grandfather finally decided it was safe to venture outside. Both of them were wondering about their little house and outbuildings. As they came out of the cave and saw that the worst of the storm had missed them, both of them exclaimed, "Thank God!"

"Now," D.J. said, "I've got to get up the road to the church and see how our friends fared. I'll be back as soon as possible."

As he came over the last hill what a sight met his eyes. The church was demolished. The roof and sides had been completely carried away. The floor remained with the pews still in orderly rows. Grandfather asked if anyone was hurt. The only one hurt was a farmer friend who had a broken leg. One of the odd things that happened during the tornado was that it had picked up a team and buggy which had been tied on the south side of the hedge and deposited them on the north side still tied without any damage to the team or buggy.

This story was told to me by my grandfather, D.J. Bolejack, who homesteaded south of Barnes just north of the Spring Valley Church.

Marjorie Bolejack Wells

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 22 - List of Post Offices in Washington County Year 1882

City	Postmaster	Location
Albia		T1S R2E Sec 1
Ballard Falls	N. Recard	T3S R5E Sec 13
Barnes	Henry Ober	T4S R5E Sec 16
Brantford	Gus Luddell	T4S R1E Sec 7 & 18
Butler	M.H. Capwell	T5S R4E Sec 6
Blocker		T2S R2E Sec 16
Chepstow	_____ Hustleman	T5S R5E Sec 7
Clifton	William Funnell	T5S R1E Sec 35
Dewitt	H.S. Dewitt	T3S R1E Sec 14
Greenleaf	W.K. McConnell	T4S R4E Sec 4
Haddam	R. Vincent	T2S R1E Sec 2
Hanover	August Jaedicke	T2S R5E Sec 9
Hollenberg	J.W. Clapp	T1S R4E Sec 8
Hopewell	R.J. Adams	T1S R1E Sec 1
Koloko	W.H. Blanchard	T5S R4E Sec 4
Kimeo	W.H. Knight	T5S R4E Sec 21
Linn	F.K. Fisk	T4S R3E Sec 27
Palmer	F. Nadeau	T5S R3E Sec 7
Reiter	C. Kingsbury	T4S R3E Sec 7
Strawberry	J.G. West	T4S R2E Sec 7
Vining	P.A. Wilson	T5S R1E Sec 34
Washington	P. Rockefeller	T3S R3E Sec 1 & 2

Information taken from *Historical Platbook of Washington County*, published by J.S. Bird in 1882.

Blaine Wells

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 23 - Fishing in the 1930's

"Well, boys," Dad announced at the supper table, "you have worked hard this summer so if you can get the cultivating done tomorrow, we will go fishing the day after."

Say, did my ears prick up at this casual remark from Dad. I was always ready to go fishing.

The next morning, my brothers were up early getting the horses in the barn, fed and harnessed. This was all done before our family would sit down to eat. Dad always believed in feeding the horses first and the family second. Breakfast was a hurried affair as the Wells brothers knew that Dad meant what he said, "Get the work done today or no fishing tomorrow."

My older brothers, Lyle, Guy and Dale each took a team and hitched them to one row riding cultivators. They left the barnyard in high spirits. By this I mean the horses were on a dead run so they could get the work completed in record time. Later they told me that the horses were shown little mercy as they had to trot or at least go on a fast walk with little rest at the end of each row. I can imagine the quality of workmanship by the Wells crew on this day suffered, but they finished the field by evening. Dad never inspected the field or the fishing trip might have been canceled.

Boy, oh boy! Fishing tomorrow! I could hardly wait. The way our family fished was not quite like we fish today. We had a long seine that we would put in the creek and drag it a ways then go to the bank with it and remove the larger fish and place these captured fish in the sacks that Dad and I were in charge of. We would repeat this process until our sacks were full.

The only creek that we ever seined was Mill Creek. When the Wells crew went out everyone knew what he was supposed to do. Lyle was on one end of the seine and Guy was on the other. Dale was the center man whose job was to make certain the center of the seine stayed on the bottom so no fish could escape.

I remember one time Dale was complaining that there was a large turtle in the seine and he was afraid he would be bitten. Lyle assured him that a turtle would not open his mouth under water. Well, this turtle did not know these rules so he bit Dale's thumb. I can honestly report that Dale has put his fingers in a turtle's mouth more times than the rest of the family combined.

The fishing trip was a success as we had two sacks of channel cats and a few carp. The seine was cleaned and put in the car and we were ready to start for home. All were tired, muddy and happy over our day.

When we Wells boys get together we often talk about the fun we had fishing.

Blaine Wells  
July 1990

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 24 - Early Settlers Killed by Indians

The year was 1860. It was autumn in north central Kansas, the a Kansas Territory. The leaves of the trees that grew along Elk Creek, which runs close to the eastern border of what is now Cloud County, were changing colors and the crisp air hinted that winter would soon be here. Few white settlers had pushed as far West as Elk Creek. In fact, few white people had settled west of the Blue River which runs near Marysville, Kansas.

In that fall of 1860, Lew Cassel crossed the Blue River and made his way west to Elk Creek. Lew Cassel was a fur trapper and he came to the Kansas Territory to trap beaver. Looking over the area he found that Elk Creek ran into a larger stream called the Republican River. Along this river Lew found another white man by the name of Moses Heller. Moses Heller had built a small cabin and was trying to make a living hunting, fishing, and farming.

These two white men soon discovered the presence of Indians in the area. Moses Heller seemed to get along well with the Indians, but Lew Cassel was a hot head and didn't get along with any Indian. That winter Lew found several of his traps robbed of beaver so he laid in wait for the robber. He soon caught the Indian that was taking his pelts and killed him. To stay out of trouble from other Indians, he placed the body under the ice in the river.

For several years Cassel continued to live in the area making a living by scouting, hunting and trapping. In May 1866 Cassel agreed to guide some friends on a buffalo hunt. Their goal was what is now known as the Brown Creek area, just across the line that runs between Cloud County and Jewell County

Early one morning, Cassel, Walter Haynes, John C. Roberts, T. B. Tallman and the two Collins brothers started west. They were going to have great fun hunting buffalo as well as furnishing meat for all their friends at home.

When one week passed, then two weeks and the hunters had not returned, a search party was organized to go find out what happened to them. Late on the first day the search party found out from some friendly Otoe Indians that the hated Cheyenne Indians were in the area. This spelled trouble as the Cheyenne were not very friendly with any white man caught shooting buffalo. The Otoes pointed out the general area where the Cheyenne had camped a few days earlier.

The search party went to investigate this camp site. There they found some harness buckles, and one searcher found the pocketbook that belonged to Walter Haynes. Another found land filing papers that had belonged to Lew Cassel.

As the searchers got to Cheyenne Creek, there they found the missing wagon, with bodies of six hunters scattered about. All of the bodies had been scalped. The searchers dug graves and buried the six men. The searchers returned to their settlements and reported the sad news.

During the following spring, they were removed and interred near Clifton, Kansas. The scene of the battle was about twelve miles west of the present day Concordia, Kansas.

This article was of interest to me as few settlers of Washington County had been killed or molested by Indians. If my information is correct, Walter Haynes was one of the first to stake a claim on the site of what is now Clifton. Pioneer Haynes and the others were buried in the cemetery west of Clifton.

My information for this article was taken from a book called *Old Time Kansas*, by David Dary.

Blaine Wells  
September 1990

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 25 - An Interview with Alvin Mcleod

I recently visited with Alvin Mcleod who was celebrating his ninety-seventh birthday on February 12. His friends call him "Mac" and he lives in Washington. He is still quite active. He drives his car and picks up some friends each day to go eat lunch at "Friendly Corners". Mac is a very sociable person and enjoys telling stories about his war experiences and about the years he was sheriff of Washington County.

Alvin's parents were Dan and Arabell Mcleod. Alvin had two brothers, John Earl and Ernest Neal. When Alvin was born, his parents were living on a farm seven miles north and ½ east of Washington. Alvin found when he reached manhood that finding a good job was harder than he imagined it would be. He remembers working as undersheriff for his father when he was twenty-two years old.

At this period of his life, Alvin faced having to go into the army as the United States had declared war on Germany in 1917. This conflict was later named World War I. Dr. Henry Smith in 1918 was asked by his government to form a medical corps to serve the American troops in Europe. Dr. Smith asked the young men of Washington County to join him. Alvin was one of the thirty men who volunteered for service under Dr. Smith.

This group of men trained for three months at home. Their headquarters was the Armory Building that was located directly south of the jail in Washington. This building had been torn down. We have a picture of this group of soldiers standing in front of the Armory in the historical museum. Come in and examine it.

After this first training in Washington, this group was sent to Fort Sill in Oklahoma. Mac didn't like training in Oklahoma. When asked why, he said they were surrounded by Indians and by golly some of them were sure good looking. Looks to me that Mac enjoyed the scenery much more than he let on.

At Fort Sill the men were trained in various medical skills. Alvin was selected to be a dental assistant, where he learned to fill teeth and also to pull them. With their training completed, this group of men was shipped overseas. His group landed in England and after only one week was sent to France. This medical corps was attached to the 139th Infantry 35th Division. Alvin said it seemed to him to be up hill all the way as he walked carrying a pack of dental equipment from one battle field to the other.

He remembers the Battle of Argonne Forest best. The Allied army and the German army had fought over this territory three years before the Americans had arrived, so the Argonne Forest was no longer a forest, but a place of trenches, shell holes, death and misery. Company C of the American group contained 250 men and after this battle only ten men had come through without a scratch. A lot of their time was spent in trenches. I can imagine that discomfort felt by soldiers under these conditions.

The war was over in 1919 and Alvin was shipped home. He worked at various jobs, taking time out to be married in 1921. Some of these jobs were paving streets, clerking in Ben Simon's store, running a tank wagon for Standard Oil, and later he was promoted to a salesman for Standard. Alvin built and operated a filling station, was elected sheriff of Washington County and finished his working years carrying mail for 25 years.

He stated that he had to quit because he had reached the ripe old age of seventy. Alvin went on to say that he had been retired for 27 years now. So I did some rapid figuring, and thought seventy years and twenty-seven years does add up to ninety-seven good years.

Alvin, we salute you on your 97th birthday. Just looking and talking to you, one could

guess you to be about retirement age now. Alvin just got his new drivers license, so you can bet he will make the century mark. Any other way you look at it, he would be losing money if he didn't.

Blaine Wells  
February 1990

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 26 - St. Valentine's Day

St. Valentine's Day will soon be here. Get your valentines made or bought so you can give them to the ones you love.

People once believed that the birds began to mate on February 14th. The keeping of St. Valentine's Day as a day for lovers probably grew out of this belief.

As a result of this custom, there was a lady by the name of Esther Howland, who saw an opportunity to capitalize on this. Back in 1847 Esther received a very fancy homemade valentine from a friend and decided to make and send some homemade valentines of her own the following year. This Yankee lady from Worcester, Massachusetts, found she could create eye-catching models of her own. She used her imagination and finally her brother took some of her valentines to show the merchants he called on to see if they would care to stock them in their stores. These valentines were soon to be very popular. As a result of her efforts we now can buy valentines from most department stores at this time of year.

I imagine most everyone can remember their first valentine. I believe going to a little rural school where we didn't celebrate too many events, Valentine's Day was especially a fun time.

In my day, a boy didn't let on he thought little girls were very nice. In fact, you avoided girls for fear the other boys would tease you. Valentine's Day would give you an opportunity to give a valentine to some cute little classmate without others knowing. Anyway we didn't seem to mind giving valentines on this day. It seems to me that the valentines that were sold in the local variety store in Morrowville had a lot of flashy colors, moving parts, etc. The small ones sold for a penny and some of the real fancy ones sold for a quarter.

Blaine Wells

## **WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **27 - Pony Express Highway**

The Washington County Historical Society is very pleased that interest is being shown in renaming a portion of Highway 36 to the PONY EXPRESS HIGHWAY. We feel that in doing this, it would go a long way in publicizing this area as having a major tourist attraction.

We are so proud that the only original Pony Express Station is located in Washington County and we wish to share this bit of history with others who love historical landmarks.

Blaine Wells

President of the Washington County Historical Society

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 28 - The Teacher and Old Pete

Being a school teacher, I have always been interested in gathering stories about schools and the social activities of the pioneer community.

The country school was the center of all social gatherings. Some of these activities were box suppers, spelling bees, arithmetic speed contests, debates, etc.

The school board consisted of three prominent people in the community. This was an important position and they took their positions seriously. The communities were proud of their schools and looked forward to watching their children in various programs which were presented at appropriate times throughout the year.

The teacher was the person who normally was used as a model for children, one who mothers looked to as a potential candidate for a son-in-law and often was the one upon which the young men played tricks.

My mother told me a story that has always stuck with me about an event that took place in the country school in which she attended in the early 1900's. In this school there were fifty children enrolled. This included anyone between the ages of six to twenty-one. The older boys only attended when their dads didn't need them. It was the task of the teacher to keep a record of where each student was in reading and math so that when a student returned after an absence, the student would be able to start where he had left off.

In this community, the older boys caused the teacher many problems. These boys were proud of the fact that the year before, they had run off three men teachers. The school board was having a time finding anyone tough enough to teach this school.

As the story goes, a small man with a limp came to the community and applied for the position as teacher. The school board was certain that he would not do at all. They told him that he was not big enough to discipline the older boys. The teacher was certain that he could handle the discipline and told the board that he would teach for a month and if he failed it would cost the school nothing. Since there were no other applicants the board decided to give him the job.

On the first day of school, this teacher showed up riding an old crow bait of a horse called Pete. All the students came early to greet him and to watch the new teacher perform. After their first look at him, they knew he wouldn't last the first day.

The teacher never said a word to the children but rode up to the schoolhouse front porch and got off of old Pete. He turned to the horse and told him to get up on the porch. Of course old Pete did not understand what he was to do, so the teacher told him again to get up on the porch or he would shoot him. Old Pete just stood there, so the teacher pulled out a pistol and shot the old horse right between the eyes. Complete silence. The teacher walked into the schoolhouse and rang the bell. The children came in and took a seat. The teacher went to his desk, took out the pistol, laid it in a handy position, looked at the students and told them that school was in session.

I once had a professor in college tell me that before you can teach a student, you must first get his attention. I believe this pioneer teacher got the attention of his students.

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 29 - Methodist Episcopal Church of Washington, Kansas

The following brief history was prepared by H.C. Sprengle and A. Brown and any irregularities may be attributed to the fact that no records were to be found prior to 1872, the compilers depending entirely on memory to fill the deficiencies:

"This church was organized in the year 1861, with Revs. R.I. Hartford and \_\_\_\_ Robertson as ministers. These two ministers were then acting in the capacity of missionary circuit riders. Rev. Robertson filled the pulpit the following year, 1862, and was followed by Rev. Buffington who served the church two years, 1863 and 1864, he being followed by Rev. Taggart in 1865. Rev. James Phillips was the preacher for the years 1866 and 1867; then Rev. E. Chilson for part of the year 1868, when he left, the pulpit was filled by Rev. M.P. Welty, a local preacher the remainder of that year and part of 1869, when Rev.E.J. Fulford was sent as a supply and remained until the close of 1870. In 1871 Rev. Robertson filled the pulpit for the first six months and Rev. John Woodburn the last six months. Rev. E.W. Vandeventer was sent by the Conference for the years 1872 and 1873. Rev. E.R. Brown was pastor for the years 1874,1875,1876 and was followed by Rev. A.N. See for the years 1877-78.

From 1874 to 1878 the Methodists occupied the Presbyterian Church 1\2 of each Sabbath; the Church services previous to that time having been held in private houses and in the schoolhouse; but during the ministry of Rev. See a very pretty church building 32X50 with tower attached, was built and was dedicated September 8, 1878, by the then Presiding Elder, Rev.W.J. Mitchell officiating. In 1879 Rev. J.C. Dana was pastor and was followed in 1880 by Rev. Henry Frank, who was transferred to the Minnesota Conference in the middle of said year, and was succeeded by Rev. R.F. Kephart, a transfer from the Minnesota Conf.

The first regular Presiding Elder sent by Conference to this part of the work was \_\_\_\_ Taylor. His successors were in the following order:

R.L.Harford, N. Green, G.S. Dearborn, H. Holman, W.J. Mitchell and J.H. Lockwood.

Up to the year of 1880, Washington was the central point on the Washington Circuit and was made a station by the Conference of that year. The membership now numbers about 135. The Church is out of debt and enjoys a reasonable state of prosperity; has a good Sabbath School with an enrollment of 140."

Information taken from *Historical Platbook of Washington County, Kansas*. Published by J.S. Bird in 1882.

Blaine Wells

## Washington County Historical Society

### 30 - Winter Weather

To me winter starts in November. I have seen some good old snow storms during this month, so I guess that is why I say winter starts in November.

In the 1920's & 30's most people lived in a rural setting. We kids seldom had any organized play. If we had time on our hands we would invent a game, go see a neighbor or even pick a fight with our brothers and sisters. To me each year something exciting seemed to pop up and I would throw myself into it and have a great time. What did we do that was exciting? Riding our sleds down a favorite hill was always a popular sport for the younger set.

I remember how excited we were when the first heavy snow came. Dad would make quite a production of getting out our sleds, inspecting each runner and board to see that each was in good working order. The last operation on each sled was making certain that the runners were free of all rust. Dad provided each of us with a piece of brick so we could shine the runners on our own sled. After showing Dad our work several times, we would gain his OK and then we were free to hit the slopes. Oh what a wonderful feeling this was and we would not have traded places with anyone else in the world.

When the snow got extra deep and packed from the cold, we had a great time making underground rooms, or maybe I should say, underground snow rooms. We would make secret tunnels out of some rooms so we could hide from our friends who might come to visit. Our planning was always a lot of our fun.

If you grew tired of playing in the snow, you could spend some time in the hay barn. The big barn at home was always full of alfalfa in the winter. It was great sport to slide from one level to the other. If you got tired of this you could jump from one level to the one below. I have been known to show my ability in jumping in front of an admiring audience and one time I remember jumping and I didn't land as planned. I hit my chin on my knees and saw plenty of stars and they weren't the real ones either.

My oldest brother Lyle had several greyhounds so he and his friends would take them out in the fields to chase jackrabbits. This is a good way to get exercise. To see the dogs work together to catch the rabbit was very exciting, but to see the finish it would be necessary to run to the nearest hill as they would be so far ahead of you that you could only see the finish from this high point. It was quite a sight to see two dogs carrying one rabbit back to Lyle and dropping it at his feet and all they got out of it was a pat on the head and a bit of praise.

Another sport for boys my age was hunting rabbits with a rifle. We had a neighbor lady who would pay us ten cents for each cottontail we would bring her. I bet her husband sure got tired of eating rabbit.

Blaine Wells  
November 1990

## Washington County Historical Society

### 31- Hokey Pokey

Did you ever hear of a substance called hokey pokey? This is not the correct name, I am quite certain. But this is what the Wells clan called it when I was growing up. Dad seemed to always have a supply on hand. I think he used it to pour down gopher holes to control these pests which always lived in our alfalfa patch. Anyway my older brothers used it to have fun with down at the barn. They used to get on the roof of a shed and when the mules would walk under the shed they would pour some hokey pokey on their backs. As this liquid would turn to gas it would get very cold and this would cause the mules to run and buck. Oh what fun! Brother Dale said that Lyle and Guy poured some of this on his head and he became so excited he almost jumped off the shed roof. At least they held him down until he promised not to jump or tell Mother on them.

Now my story jumps to the 1950's when I was teaching in Clifton. As a young principal, I was very certain I could handle any situation that might arise.

As I remember teaching in Clifton, it seemed to me that most of the families living in town had dogs and when the children came to school their dogs came with them. I didn't mind having the dogs at school, but they weren't always peaceful. Fights would break out among them and this disturbed the peace among the students. So this young principal set out to solve the dog problem in this school.

Hokey pokey came to my mind. This would get the dogs to run home and they would be afraid to come back. I planned this caper very carefully so I would not be blamed in any way. I first went down to the Lutz Drug Store and got Dayton off in a quiet corner and asked him if he knew what hokey pokey was. He laughed and assured me he did. I swore him to secrecy and ordered a pint of this secret weapon. I went back to school, got Jim Sinnott, our custodian, to agree to do my next dirty work for me.

Here was my plan. After the noon hour was over and the students were all in their rooms, Jim was to go outside to where the dogs were resting and he was to pour some hokey pokey on their backs. It always took a little while for the weapon to work so Jim could get back inside so no one would be the wiser.

The next day we put our plan into action. After the noon hour was over, I was watching from the office window and Jim carried out his part of the plan. As the hokey pokey began to get cold the dogs began to howl and run. The only hitch in my plan was instead of running home, the dogs ran around and around the school house howling and howling in a very disturbed state. You can imagine what it did to the normally orderly classrooms. Up went the windows, students were crowding each other to see what the noise was about. Soon millions of questions came to the office. The principal couldn't figure out what had happened and could not explain it to the school.

This happened almost forty years ago, so I hope the dog lovers of Clifton will forgive me for spoiling the sleep of their pets on that warm spring day. It didn't solve anything, but I certainly remember the excitement a few drops of hokey pokey caused. I wonder if any former students remember this event. I would enjoy hearing

from you.

Blaine Wells  
January 1991

## Washington County Historical Society

### 32 - Struggle to Survive

This morning I was reading from the 1882 Plat book of Washington County. I looked up from my reading and glanced out of the window at the snowstorm in progress. This storm had canceled our annual visit with all the little trick-or-treaters who usually come to visit us on Halloween eve. Anyway I began to think about what a secure life I enjoy. You see, I had just finished reading about the difficult living conditions some pioneers endured while settling in Washington County. I would like for you to read this account of a family's struggle to survive. This account was taken from Dr. Williamson's journal which was written in 1868.

Dr. Williamson wrote:

In one instance, I was traveling with Mr. Raub of Ash Creek, in February 1868. At sundown, it commenced storming; we came to a solitary cabin and asked permission to stay the night. I saw that he hesitated. I still urged him to let us stay. Finally with tears in his eyes, he said, "You are welcome but we have nothing to eat. For three days I have traveled to get a little meal. I have been to the Republican and back today and you can see that my sack is still empty."

We went into the house with him dividing with him what provisions we had. When his hunger was appeased, he told his story. He had emigrated from Wisconsin with a family of six children. He was an intelligent, educated and industrious man. He had expended all his means and could get no employment and was destitute of food and sufficient clothing for the winter.

His daughter, a girl of fifteen years, as I could see had nothing to wear but an old dress body with a piece of an old tattered government blanket attached to it for a skirt.

He said, "I have been, I hope, a Christian for many years, but this evening it was almost in my heart to say that God had forsaken me but I will never doubt his Providence again."

When we left him in the morning, I told him to be of good cheer as we would return in two days. We went to Junction City and asked the merchants for help for this destitute family. The merchants gave generously and the two men returned with enough goods to see this family through the winter.

This story had a happy ending and has brought home to me what a fortunate person I am to have a good home, plenty to eat, a good church to attend and many friends. I hope to share some of my warm feelings with others during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons this year.

Blaine Wells  
November 1991

## Washington County Historical Society

### 33 - Hunting

A few weeks ago my brother Blaine made mention of my greyhounds when I was a boy at home. I would like to tell of one experience that DeVere Lindsley and I had one time at a jackrabbit hunt with our hounds. I don't recall the number of hounds we had with us, probably four or five. This was spring time and a rainy season. We made a pact between us to carry back all the rabbits that our hounds caught. As I recall, we went toward Paul Henderson's big section of land. In the course of the afternoon the hounds had caught six jackrabbits, so we decided it was time to start for home. To get to DeVere's home we had to cross a huge pasture. The hounds got three more jacks so if you are keeping count, you realize this made nine and a real load for us. We were determined to keep our pledge to carry all rabbits caught so the hounds would have plenty to eat for a few days. The only place we fed them was at home so they would not be so apt to eat them before we finished the hunt.

By this time we were getting tired. Each of us carried four jacks and we kept spelling each other with the ninth one. We had to cross Salt Creek after we got to the Lindsley property. It had been drizzling part of the afternoon so we were pretty well soaked and about a quarter of a mile to Salt Creek the clouds just opened up and the rain came down in sheets. When we got to the creek it was already rising. We debated about what to do with our rabbits and how to get across the already rising water. The more we talked the more the creek was filling up with water. We just took a firm hold on the rabbits and waded into the water. As I remember, the water came up to our arm pits. With much struggling we got the rabbits across and then began coaxing the dogs to swim across. With all finally across we still had another quarter of a mile to go before we got to DeVere's home. It was needless to say that we were tired, but on reaching home we fed the dogs and then we flopped down in the house for a long rest.

I would like to tell DeVere that I stand corrected if some of this tale does not completely agree with his memory of the trip.

Lyle Wells  
March 1991

## **Washington County Historical Society**

### **34 - August Soller's Life**

The museum has received a scrapbook filled with newspaper clippings that August Soller collected and was of interest to him. August Soller was an immigrant from Switzerland who came to Washington City in the 1880's to make a new life for himself. He later married and raised two sons, Albert and Walter. Both became prominent bankers in Washington.

I would like to share two clippings with you. The first is a clipping that tells about his early life and the second is a clipping that shows August selling real estate as one of his many activities. This real estate is in the area where my house now stands and gives us a little picture of what our section of the city looked like in the 1890's.

#### **Clipping number 1**

August Soller, present deputy county clerk, takes a position next week in the William Cumming's bank in Linn. We have known August ever since he came to this country six years ago. He was then an uneducated Swiss boy, but bright and industrious. He has ever since bent every energy in an effort to rise in the world and by persistent hard work and study he has become one of the best educated young business men of this city. Also by strict integrity and honesty has merited important positions in our County Offices. August Soller has acquired a standing and influence over public affairs that is extremely flattering for so young a man. We wish August much success.

#### **Clipping number 2**

Property for Sale Cheap. A nice home consisting of 18 lots in block 11. It is a half block from the courthouse and business part of Washington. Two good houses on the premises, two wells, stable and outhouses, a fine orchard of over 110 apple, cherry, plum and peach trees, eleven years old from 5 to 7 inches in diameter. A large strawberry bed and half of two lots has a vineyard. This is a rare opportunity for somebody contemplating a move to town to secure a desirable home, where they can let their children attend our excellent school or the Friends Academy. For further particulars inquire of August Soller.

(This ad appeared in the Washington paper in 1890.)

August Soller is just one example of many who came to this country and made their contribution to making this country a great place to live.

Blaine Wells  
August 1991

## Washington County Historical Society

### 35 - Gathering Eggs

Anyone whoever grew up on the farm in the 1930's knows that one of the daily chores of the younger children was to gather the eggs. Some families didn't gather eggs; they picked them. Anyway, we gathered eggs on our farm. It was a sad day in my life when Dad decided it was my turn to take over this chore.

The hen house on our farm was made out of poles and covered with wheat straw. This was made by Dad after we had had a fire which burned our house and chicken house, so Dad decided it would fit his pocketbook better to make a hen house himself.

I shall now try to relate to you some of my trials with these old hens as I tried to do my chores. Dad started me on this chore in the spring when several of the old hens wanted to set on their eggs to hatch some young. If you have ever tried to reach under a setting hen and take her eggs, you know what I mean. The hen would peck at your hand while you were reaching in and sometimes she was successful in pinching you. To a young lad, this was a frightening task. You knew you had to do it or you would have to settle with Dad and this I most certainly did not want to do.

I soon figured out a way to handle these grouchy old hens. When no one was watching, I would quickly reach in and grab the old biddy by the neck and throw her out of the nest, then gather the eggs in peace. I became rather good at this procedure.

I can remember another scare I had while gathering eggs. The hen house was semi-dark as there were no electric lights or windows. You had to gather eggs under these conditions. You would reach into the empty nests and gather the eggs left behind by the hens. Imagine my terror when I reached into an empty nest expecting to find some eggs and put my hand upon an old bull snake who was in the nest also harvesting eggs. I believe this started my hair to turn gray. It took a long time to gather enough nerve so I could check the nests after this snake episode.

Another exciting time that took place in our chicken house was the time I found a skunk stealing eggs from us. Being a farm boy, I had encountered skunks before and knew what a stink they could raise when aroused. I knew I had to get him out of the hen house and make certain he didn't return. Dad wasn't around so I decided the only way to deal with Mr. Skunk was to get the shotgun and shoot him. I ran to the house, got the gun and loaded it. As I ran back the hen house, Mr. Skunk was just coming out the door. I took aim. Mr. Skunk raised upon his front feet and took aim, but I must have pulled the trigger before Mr. Skunk. As the pellets hit the skunk, the gunstock hit this mighty hunter and knocked me on my behind. As I got up and saw I had made my first kill, Mr. Skunk lay dead and not a bit of unpleasant odor did I encounter. Needless to say, I was very proud of myself and each time I told my tale to others the story got bigger and better.

So you see, I have reasons for not wanting to gather eggs. I would much rather bring in the wood and leave the egg gathering to Sis.

Blaine Wells

## Washington County Historical Society

### 36 - Courting

From the pen of some newspaper reporter in the 1880's comes this light account of the young ladies attending the teacher's Institute here in the city of Washington. I thought you might enjoy his efforts.

Several young men about town who have not received a smile from a female for the past year, are counting on completely "mashing" the gay and festive school ma'ams from the rural districts, who attend the Normal Institute, which commences next Monday. Although the average Kansas school ma'am is rather slow in dealing out her unadulterated affections and pure love, and is a little shy and fretful when pursued by anything that wears pants, nor don't take much stock in light, surface sentiment, yet we believe that during the Institute weeks that all the front and back porches, second story verandas, front gates and blue grass lawns of our city will be occupied (if not utterly ruined) by those dashing, self-made knowledge-seeking girls and their temporary fellows in making love and future matches from six in the evening until the ringing of the school bell calls them from these rustic places of wooing and cooing to the place of study. But young man, keep a safe distance from the rural school ma'am or else she will fool you. Her mission on earth is far beyond that of marrying any common paper collar dude, such as we have here in Washington, and run chances of his furnishing water while she teaches school to furnish the bread.

I hope you enjoyed this and remember this was written in the 1880's. I bet some of the mothers who read this account of the County Institute were a bit upset to say the least.

Blaine Wells  
January 1992

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 37 - Wood Burning Stoves

Do you remember the wood burning stoves we had in the 1920's? There were at least two of these monsters in each rural home. Beside each of these stoves was a wood box in which the younger members of the family had to fill full of wood. Each evening and morning you would dutifully carry in sticks of small wood to use in the kitchen and larger chunks of wood for the heating stove in the family room. On the back porch you were to check the kerosene can to see if it contained enough fuel so Dad could start the fires early each morning before anyone else was up. Also on the back porch was a bushel basket that must be filled full of cobs from the pig pen. Woe to any child in charge of these chores to forget his duty. Dad would see to it you didn't forget the second time.

At six o'clock each morning at our house, Dad would call up the stairs, "Boys, it is time to get up."

One time I remember there was a minor rebellion in the Wells brothers' ranks. The night before we decided to ignore Dad's call and pretend we were asleep.

For the second call came, "Boys, it is time to get up."

There was no response from us. In fact I believed we had won our point from Dad. For a few minutes there was no response from down stairs. Then we heard two quick steps up the stairway and to my dismay, Dad appeared with a razor strap in his hand.

Whack! Whack! came the only sound in the bedroom. The Wells brothers suddenly came awake, jumped out of bed, grabbed our pants and down the stairs we charged. I don't remember the order we arrived in the kitchen, but we were very quiet as Dad stood and looked at each of us. It seemed to me that there were sparks coming from his eyes.

Finally he spoke, "Boys, it is time to do your chores."

He didn't get any sass from anyone. We knew he had made his point and there was no need to hash over any minor ones. The rest of our growing up years, we responded when Dad called up the stairs, "Boys, it is time to get up."

Blaine Wells  
May 1992

## Washington County Historical Society

### 38 - Harvest

In a few days harvest in Washington County will be over and plowing of the wheat stubble will begin. This reminds me of the time that Mr. Diller of the Morrowville Bank talked my dad into renting an 80 acre piece of land north of town. This eighty had not been farmed for several years and had been planted to sweet clover.

Dad said to me that this was a good chance to make some money as all we had to do was to plow under the sweet clover and plant wheat. This sweet clover was to act as a fertilizer for the wheat crop. Dad also indicated that if I worked hard and did my share, I could expect a part of the profits. Boy, what a chance for this twelve year old boy to become a millionaire.

Dad sent me to the field with our F-14 Farmall tractor to start plowing. If you remember this tractor you will realize it was the smallest tractor in the area and could pull a small plow behind it turning under 28 inches of ground each time it made a furrow. I soon learned a lot about farming and more about plowing under a field of sweet clover which at times grew as high as our tractor was tall. This clover was tough to turn under and would at times become clogged so I had to stop and pull the clover out a little at a time. What a mess! It was hot. I was thirsty and thoroughly disgusted with the way I was to become a millionaire. Anyway, by the time Dad came over, he saw that I was greatly put out so he suggested that we should take turns plowing. He suggested that he would plow for an hour and that I could rest in the car, then I could take my turn again. It sounded like an improvement in the arrangements, so I was happy.

As I sat in the old Dodge slowly time began to drag so I began to look through the glove compartment for something to amuse myself. Hurrah! I found just the thing to have some fun. There before my eyes was Dad's box of chewing tobacco. This box had several plugs in it. I was curious about chewing tobacco. I had seen Dad bite off a corner of a plug and then chew with a great deal of pleasure. He was also pretty good at spitting a nice stream of tobacco juice at a target such as a grasshopper or a cricket he would find on the ground. Hey! This was something I could do.

This was an ideal time for me to try out my skill in tobacco chewing and spitting. I plotted that Dad wouldn't miss one plug, so I would take one and go over under a tree to practice. I grabbed a plug, took a big bite out of it and began to chew. Hey, I was learning to be a grown-up. I was chewing tobacco.

Something was wrong. I wasn't feeling like a grown-up. I guess I forgot to not swallow some of the juice as I was becoming a little dizzy but was determined to carry out my part in this growing up process.

Well, to shorten this story, Blaine was very sick and when Dad came for his break, he looked the situation over and suggested that maybe since he was older he should take an extra turn.

Dad never let on that he knew that I had tried chewing. This was a

lesson for this young farm boy. It is better to wait your turn to grow up. I never tried this again, so I learned my lesson well.

For your information, we finished the plowing and planted the wheat. I guess we made money, but I never became a millionaire with my share of the profits.

Blaine Wells  
July 1992

## Washington County Historical Society

### 39 - Grandmother Wells

I remember my grandmother Wells very well as I was never very comfortable visiting at her house. It was so different from our country home where my mother was very easy going most of the time, and she would let us play with all our toys in the house and never seemed to mind when toys were left on the floor. Eventually, she probably picked them up, anyway I don't remember worrying about them. Well, to get back to Grandmother Wells, she lived in town and it seemed that every time we went to town we would stop over for a visit. Grandmother was a very fine lady and everyone loved her, I am certain. But as I said before, I was never too comfortable visiting her. She was a small lady in stature, but very big on her expectations on how her grandchildren should act when visiting in her home. She soon explained to each of us how we were to act when visiting her. She showed us where she kept the toys and that we could get out one toy and play with it as long as we wanted. When we were tired of it, we were to put it back and then we could take out another. Before we left for home, she checked to see if everything was put up and then we were free to go. This was very upsetting to this good little boy as it was so different from what I was used to. Do you remember the fruit that used to set on the table in the parlors of many homes fifty or sixty years ago? These bowls contained bananas, apples, pears etc. Grandmother Wells had such an arrangement in her front parlor. I eyed this bowl of fruit every time I visited; finally temptation got the better of me and I grabbed an apple and took a big bite out of it. Imagine my surprise when I realized it was not a real apple but a big blob of paraffin painted like an apple. I was terribly afraid but knew that I must replace the apple in the bowl, bite down, so Grandmother would not see that her apple had been bitten into by her grandson. I lived in fear for quite sometime that I would be fingered for this crime. It was a long time before I wanted to go to her house for a visit. As far as I ever knew, Grandmother never solved this crime, but to this young boy, you can bet it was never repeated or forgotten.

Blaine Wells

## Washington County Historical Society

### 40 - The One Room School

I remember when I went to school  
Some of us walked and some rode a mule,  
To that one room house upon a hill  
Went Mary and I, Fred, and Bill.  
Our teacher had forty scholars,  
Her monthly wage was sixty dollars;  
She taught eight grades from nine to four,  
Then banked the fire and swept the floor.  
Her subjects were not just two or three,  
She taught them all from A to Z;  
And then she taught us how to spell  
In the one room school we loved so well.

Seated two to a seat, our faces red,  
We tried to grasp what the teacher said.  
Lunch was a homemade sandwich or two-  
No cafeteria to serve hot stew.  
We needed no gym to make us strong,  
The two mile walk home was plenty long.  
I'm told kids are learning more today  
From specialized teachers with higher pay;  
But I remember that one room school  
Where we all were taught the Golden Rule.

By Marguerite Mosby

Taken from a 1983 *Grit* paper

## Washington County Historical Society

### 41 - The Bright Smile at the Door

When day has almost vanished,  
And brightly sets the sun;  
When 6 o'clock is striking,  
And as the work is done;  
I fondly wander homeward,  
My bosom brimming o'er  
With joy when I discover  
The bright smile at the door.

At work what always cheers me,  
What makes my spirits light,  
When birds sing in the morning,  
When stars are out at night?  
What gildeth all my visions  
And makes my soul explore  
Unnumbered happy valleys?  
The bright smile at the door.

Oh, where's the charm so certain  
To lead the wanderer home,  
To guide his erring footsteps  
Wherever he may roam;  
That leads him ever homeward  
From every foreign shore?  
A memory e'er alluring-  
The bright smile at the door.

A gay and loving welcome  
May cheer the poorest meal,  
A little word of kindness  
The sting from grief may steal.  
A life to me is fairer  
And sweeter than before,  
Since I have learned to look for  
The bright smile at the door.

Oh, wives, where'er your dwelling,  
However poor it seem,  
You'll make of it a palace  
More fair than man can dream,  
If fondly you'll remember  
How much a man sets store  
By love's reward of labor-  
The bright smile at the door.

This poem appeared in a Washington County paper in November 1881.

--Author unknown

## Washington County Historical Society

### 42 - Forty Years Ago

I've wandered to the village, Tom,  
I've sat beneath the tree,  
Upon the schoolhouse playground,  
That sheltered you and me;  
But none were left to greet me;  
Tom, and few were left to know,  
Who played with me upon the green,  
Just forty years ago.

The grass was just as green,  
Tom, Barefooted boys at play  
Were sporting, just as we did then,  
With spirits just as gay.  
But the master sleeps upon the hill,  
Which, coated o'er the snow,  
Afforded us a sliding place,  
Some forty years ago.

The old schoolhouse is altered some;  
The benches are replaced  
By new ones very like the same  
Our jackknives had defaced.  
But the same old bricks are in the wall;  
The bell swings to and fro;  
Its music's just the same, dear Tom.  
Twas forty years ago.

The spring that bubbled 'neath the hill,  
Close by the spreading beech,  
Is very low; twas once so high  
That we could almost reach;  
And kneeling down to take a drink,  
Dear Tom, I started so,  
To think how very much I've changed  
Since forty years ago.

Nearby that spring, upon an elm,  
You know, I cut your name,  
Your sweetheart's just beneath it, Tom;  
And you did mine the same.  
Some heartless wretch has peeled the bark;  
Twas dying sure, but slow,  
Just as that one whose name you cut  
Died forty years ago.

My lids have long been dry, Tom,  
But tears came in my eyes;  
I thought of her I loved so well,  
Those early broken ties.  
I visited the old churchyard,  
And took some flowers to strew  
Upon the graves of those we loved  
Just forty years ago.

Some are in the churchyard laid,  
Some sleep beneath the sea;  
And none are left of our old class  
Excepting you and me.  
And when we are called to go,  
I hope we'll meet with those we loved  
Some forty years ago.

*--McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader*

## Washington County Historical Society

### 43 - My Papa's Overalls

I went back to my home today;  
It was the first chance that I had  
Since Pa passed on to be with Ma  
And left me his sole remaining heir.

He'd leave no wealth he'd said to me;  
It'd take the farm to pay his debts;  
Hard years, bad health, all took their toll,  
His saving's just put him away.

I opened the old picket gate and  
Stepped upon the rotting porch.  
The tears sprang quickly to my eyes  
As they fell upon his empty chair.

The kitchen was all swept and clean,  
The bedroom shiny as a pin;  
Then, on a peg above the bed,  
I saw papa's overalls.

From launderings they were faded out;  
The bottoms were all worn and frayed;  
A patch was sewn upon one knee,  
Another patch upon the hip.

But never garment looked so fair  
Or so much love and honor bore-  
I saw there all the hours of toil  
My father did upon that farm.

His work went on from sun to sun;  
He did it all for love of me,  
To put me through those years of school  
So I could be "someone of worth".

He'd leave no wealth, Pa said to me  
Sometime before he passed away;  
He did not know the legacy  
He left for me there on the wall,

The toil, the love, the sacrifice,  
All tied up in those overalls-  
Dear Lord, let me be worthy of my legacy;  
Pa's overalls.

--Josie Patrick

## Washington County Historical Society

### 44 - Speech

My name is Blaine Wells. I am a retired educator and am president of the Washington County Historical Society. On behalf of the 300+ members of the Historical Society, I would like to emphasize to you how proud we are that the Hollenberg Pony Express Station is located in our county.

G.H. Hollenberg, himself a colorful character, was responsible for much of the early development of Washington County. Some in this room are direct descendants of people who were brought to America by Hollenberg. That is an important lifeline in our county's history.

If you choose to recommend that a visitors' center be built at Hollenberg Station, we see an important tie to many other areas of interest in the county.

I point with pride to the beautiful Catholic churches at Hanover and in Kimeo, our Washington County Historical Society Museum in Washington, the home of the first bulldozer in Morrowville, Haddam's jail and the initial point marker northwest of Mahaska, which marks the intersection of the 6<sup>th</sup> principal meridian and the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel. We also would direct you to Clifton where the city maintains a nice museum. We foresee that location of a visitors' center here would allow for cooperative programming between the Park Service and our society, and the opportunity for better interpretation of parts of our local history.

As president of the local group charged with the preservation of area history, trivia and folklore, we think that's a grand idea and urge you to locate the center at Hollenberg Station.

Thank you,  
Blaine Wells

This speech was delivered to the United States Park Service on July 24, 1991, to urge them to put a visitors' center at the Pony Express Station near Hanover, Kansas.

## Washington County Historical Society

### 45 - Thanksgiving Remembered

This week we are celebrating Thanksgiving and to me it is a special time for remembering. I remember as a child it was a time to go to a grandparent's house and visit with cousins that you did not get to play with since the last holiday. We had so much to tell each other and to teach each other games that we had invented since last year. Oh yes, don't forget the food being prepared in the kitchen. It smelled so good that you could hardly wait to sample it.

Now I am no longer a child, but a grandfather and this Thanksgiving holiday is even more precious. Grandmother Wells and I can hardly wait for our five children and their families to come bursting through our front door shouting and laughing their joy in coming to visit the old house that holds so many memories for all of us. We take special pride in each grandchild who has something important to report to their grandparents. We have so much to thank our Lord for because he has been so good to the Wells clan. So when we sit down to eat a bountiful dinner, I plan to tell Him how much we appreciate all the blessings we have received. I am going to end with a poem that shows the joys of Thanksgiving.

#### Thanksgiving Day

Over the river and through the wood,  
To grandfather's house we go;  
The horse knows the way  
To carry the sleigh  
Through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river and through the wood-  
Oh, how the wind does blow!  
It stings the toes and bites the nose,  
As over the ground we go.  
Over the river and through the wood,  
To have a first-rate play.  
Hear the bells ring,  
"Ting-a-ling-ding!"  
Hurrah for Thanksgiving Day!

Over the river and through the wood  
Trot fast, my dapple-gray!  
Spring over the ground, like a hunting-hound!  
For this is Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river and through the wood,  
And straight through the barnyard gate.  
We seem to go extremely slow,-

It is so hard to wait!  
Over the river and through the wood-  
Now grandmother's cap I spy!  
Hurrah for the fun!  
Is the pudding done?  
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!

--Lydia Maria Child

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 46 - Old Stories

The quiet repose of the south side was broken Monday by a mad cow dashing through the law office of Doug Lowe and the dental rooms of D.J. Hallowell. She came near taking justice with her in the form 'Squire Woodbury, who narrowly escaped her horns and she left by the back door as swiftly as she came. It will always be a question on that side as to whether she wanted Paul to investigate the herd law for her or whether she wanted Hallowell to put her in a set of upper teeth.

Reports say there is another wedding soon by which we will lose the belle of the neighborhood, but then it was given to me as a secret so I won't give it away. Respectfully, Sorghum Lapper.

Jacob Miller, bookkeeper at Leidigh and Parks Lumberyard, received a very interesting letter last Saturday. The letter was written March 6, 1886, the stamp was washed off and part of the letter was copied on the inside of the envelope, which showed that the letter had laid in water. The following letter was attached to the letter:

P.O. New York, July 6, 1886 the mail forwarded from Queens.  
This piece is a portion of that vessel off town, Ireland, and  
damaged by sinking of the wreck July 1st. Fire Island on March  
14th. Recovered from the wreck July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Henry G. Pearson, P.M.

(postmaster)

These clippings came from newspapers printed in the 1880's. I hope you enjoyed them. I wonder if our United States mail would make the effort to forward damaged mail like this postmaster did in 1886.

Blaine Wells  
September 1992

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 47 - THE PRICELESS GIFT

Friendship is a priceless gift  
That cannot be bought or sold.  
But it's value is far greater  
Than a mountain made of gold.  
For gold is cold and lifeless,  
It can neither see nor hear.  
And in the time of trouble  
It is powerless to cheer.  
It has no ears to listen,  
No heart to understand,  
It cannot bring you comfort  
Or reach out a helping hand.  
So when you ask God for a Gift,  
Be thankful when he sends  
Not diamonds, pearls or riches,  
But the love of real true friends.

--Author unknown

## Washington County Historical Society

### 48 - Third 'R' Not Really So Tough

Always interesting, I was especially attracted to this week's "Museum Musings" by Frances Wienck on the topic of that backbone of education, "uh-Rith-muhtick." Reading was always a cinch for me in grade school, but I seemed to have no sense whatever for that other most basic of the 3 R's. Arithmetic, like the parts of speech in grammar, remained more or less mysterious to me until I began to teach it.

As an adult, laying it out on an elementary level made it seem so simple, but I always remembered how confusing arithmetic was for me as a child. It was this remembering that made it possible for me to empathize with my pupils.

I vividly remember the day it occurred to me that there were really only four operations to math, and if one learned to add, subtract, multiply, and divide, one could lick any problem in the book.

It was with great enthusiasm that I related this discovery to my principal, himself a contributor to the "Museum" column. "It's even simpler than that," smiled Mr. Wells with his inimitable kindness, patience and wisdom. "Things either get more or they get less." And thus did I happily concern myself from then on out. Wisely, he left it to me to help my pupils discover which of the four ways things become more (by adding or multiplying) and which ways less (subtracting or dividing). Incidentally, some of my favorite "Musings" are from the experiences and pen of Blaine Wells. I look forward to reading many more of them.

PS: Yes, Old Buckshot, my husband, Fred, really does go after the white cabbage butterflies with his pellet gun. It works, too!

Lorine Gleue  
Belleville

## Washington County Historical Society

### 49 - Always Interesting

Dear Sir,

This letter is in reply to your request to our city Mayor for information regarding the city of Washington, Kansas.

1. The reason for naming Washington, Washington.  
The men who founded our city were great admirers of the first president of the United States, so they named our city after him.
2. The date Washington was named was September, 1859.
3. The name was decided upon when D.E. Ballard, George Pierce, James Darby, H. Lott, and Thomas Bowen banded together to form the Washington Town Company so they used the same name for their first city.
4. The first mayor or head official was George Pierce.  
The present mayor of Washington is James Smart.
5. I could not find a census for Washington City in 1860, but there were 383 residents in Washington County on this date. When they voted to make this area into a county and to name the county seat city, there were only 73 votes cast and all were from the city of Washington.
6. The present population of Washington is 1,388.

We are proud of our city. In Kansas our land is divided into cities, townships, and counties. Our Founding Fathers named all these divisions the same name. You guessed it, Washington.

Washington, Kansas, is in a rural area made up of small cities and large farms. We love the rural life and have dreams that our children will grow up here and find satisfying vocations and continue to live in this area.

Sincerely,

Blaine Wells  
President of the Washington County Historical Society

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 50 - Flour Sack Underwear

When I was a maiden fair,  
Momma made our underwear.  
With five tots and Pa's Poor pay,  
How could she buy lingerie?

Monograms and fancy stitches  
Were not on our flour sack britches.  
Panty waists that stood the test  
With Gold Medal on the chest.

Little pants the best of all,  
With scenes that I can still recall.  
Harvesters were gleaning wheat,  
Right across the little seat.

Tougher than a grizzly bear  
Was our flour sack underwear.  
Plain or fancy, three feet wide,  
Stronger than a hippo's hide.

Through the years each Jack and Jill  
Wore this garb against their will.  
Waste not, want not, we soon learned,  
And a penny saved is a penny earned.

Bedspreads, curtains, tea towels, too,  
Tablecloths to name a few.  
But the best beyond compare  
Was always that flour sack underwear.

--Author unknown