Cheyenne County

Produced by Connie Snyder.

Part 1

CHEYENNE County is located in the extreme western part of the State. It is one of the largest counties of the State, being 102 miles in length from east to west, and fifty miles in breadth from north to south, and contains 5,100 square miles, or 3,264,000 acres. The elevation above the level of the sea, is, in the eastern part, about 3,350 feet, increasing to 5,000 feet on the western boundary.

There are a number of streams intersecting the county, the greatest of which are the North Platte River, which flows in a southeasterly direction across the county, from the extreme northwest, and the Lodge Pole, flowing across the southern half of the county, in an easterly direction. The last-named stream is a tributary of the South Platte River, into which it empties at Julesburg. Besides these are Blue River and Coldwater, Red Willow, Wild, Rush and Pumpkin-seed Creeks, tributaries of the North Platte, which afford an abundance of clear running water for stock-raising purposes, and would also be sufficient for irrigating the narrow but fertile valleys bordering them. There are also hundreds of "draws," or cañons, many of which have running water, and the most of which, unless in exceptionally dry seasons, afford an abundance of water for the immense herds of cattle roaming over these prairies.

EARLY HISTORY.

Relating to the early history of the county, previous to its organization in 1870, but little can be narrated, beyond a description of events daily transpiring along the great freight roads up both the North and South Platte, which are but similar in their nature to those described in another portion of this work.

In early days, previous to the construction of the Union Pacific Railway in 1867, the only settlements were at the ranches on the great emigrant and freight roads, started and kept up at first to supply freighters and emigrants and for the purpose of trading with the Indians. Afterward, the ranches were located nearer to each other,

and kept up as mail and stage stations, also as telegraph stations, after the building of the famous Creighton telegraph line, in 1861.

During the early troubles with the Indians, between 1850 and 1860, several battles were fought on the North Platte River, notably among them that of Ash Hollow, where Gen. Harney defeated a large body of Indians, in 1855. It was at this battle that Gen. Harney received the title of "The Hornet," from the Indians. The latter being unfamiliar with the long range at which rifle shots could be fired with accuracy, first beat a retreat, and, halting on a knoll, where they thought themselves out of danger, they turned their backs to the soldiers and indulged in many inelegant and taunting gestures; these were soon brought to a close by a well-directed volley of rifle shots that caused the Indians to fly in disorder. Little Thunder, afterward a Brule Chief, in describing this fight to W. M. Hinman, then interpreter at Fort McPherson, says Harney was called "The Hornet" because the Indians at this time regarded themselves as badly stung.

There were also about this time several sharp fights with the Indians near Julesburg, which place, though just across the boundary of Nebraska, in the present State of Colorado, has a history which concerns the earlier history of Cheyenne County so closely that it will frequently in this narrative be necessary to refer to it. Julesburg derives its name from a Frenchman named Jules Beni, who owned a ranch at this point, which was, at the time of the mail and stage routes, used as a ranch for the keeping of stage horses. The noted desperado, Alf Slade, was at that time Superintendent for the stage company and Jules had charge of their stock at this point. Though an efficient Superintendent, Slade was one of the most cruel and desperate characters who ever frequented the frontier, and any little difficulty or altercation with him usually resulted in the slaughter of his opponent in cold blood. One day, having some difficulty with Jules, he told him he would cut off his ears and wear them as a charm on his watch chain. Slade then started across the yard for his arms, and Jules, knowing the other's threats were generally no idle boast, shot and wounded him. Then, fearing the vengeance of Slade and his associates, he at once fled to the brushy cañons in the vicinity, and remained concealed for some days, until he could prevail on one of his associates to take charge of his cattle. He then left the frontier, going to St. Louis, where he remained some time, but returned, in 1860, to Cottonwood Springs, a little more than 100 miles east of his

old ranch, and on the Platte River, where he established a grocery store, intending to remove his cattle to this point. As soon as the proper arrangements were made, he, accompanied by a few men, started westward for his cattle, which were then on the North Platte, near Fort Laramie, but he had only got well started on his return trip, when he was overtaken by Slade, with several of his men. Slade, on coming up to Jules, shot and wounded him, after which he cut off the poor Frenchman's ears, and finally, put him to death, by slow and cruel tortures of the knife. He then, after giving a share of the murdered man's cattle to the ranchmen who had been keeping them, drove off the remainder as his own property. After drying the ears of poor Jules, the monster attached them to his watch chain, where he wore them as a fulfillment of his terrible threat and as a warning to all who dared oppose him. Some years afterward, however, Slade came to a violent death, he and several associates being hanged by a vigilance committee. His cold-blooded murders and desperate deeds became too terrible to be borne, even by men whose lives had long become inured to scenes of bloodshed.

Julesburg continued, for many years, to be the most important station between Cottonwood or Fort McPherson, as it was called, after the location of the fort there in 1863, and the Rocky Mountains.

Quite a town had grown up; Fort Sedgwick had been located here and garrisoned by United States soldiers, when it was surprised, on the 2d day of February, 1865, by a large body of Sioux Indians, who, after a short but sharp battle, succeeded in killing fourteen soldiers and a number of settlers. The greater portion of the latter, however, escaped to the fort, located a short distance from the settlement, where they witnessed the plunder and burning of the town. The Indians, after stealing all they wished, ornamenting themselves in the most fantastic manner from their spoils, among other things tying long pieces of cloth to the saddles of their ponies and to themselves, to be used as streamers, set fire to the town and rode about in a wild manner, waving the scalps of their victims, keeping up their heathen orgies for some hours.

While the town was yet burning, quite an amusing incident took place at the telegraph station where a large number of glass jars containing nitric acid were stored. The Indians first thought these jars contained alcohol, but, on investigation,

learning their mistake, they in their rage, broke the jars, letting the acid run out upon the earth floor. Upon this they set up a war dance, but the acid burning through their moccasins, their amusement was soon turned to a very thoroughly earnest dance, while yells of agony rent the air. Of course, they could not guess the cause of their pain, and, rushing out from the building and running about in agony, continuing their yells, they attracted the attention of several of their comrades, who promptly proceeded into the building to investigate. These, too, soon came out in the same uncomfortable predicament, and, with the added yells of rage and agony, the surprise of all may be said to have been complete. Nor did these Indians ever understand the cause of this occurrence, but, in their superstitious ignorance, ascribed their troubles to supernatural power, thinking themselves injured by the evil spirit. The above incident was told, some years after, around an Indian camp-fire, in the presence of Hon. S. F. Watts, now a member of the Nebraska Legislature, who was thoroughly conversant with the Sioux language.

These troubles with Indians were kept up for many years. Stock was run off from the ranches. Settlers were attacked and killed, stages and emigrant trains were attacked, and, unless the greatest caution was used, there was great danger that small and unprotected parties would be surprised by Indians. At one ranch--that of a French Canadian, known as French Louis--attacks were made and stock run off, at intervals of every few weeks, until, when nearly ruined, and about the time of the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad, in 1867, he removed to Sidney, then just laid out, and started a store, selling supplies and whisky to the men engaged in the construction of the railroad.

The Indian war was practically ended in 1869, when Gen. Carr, then in command of Fort McPherson, under the guidance of Buffalo Bill (W. F. Cody), then chief of scouts, pursued a large body of Sioux up the Platte River, and, overtaking them a short distance from Fort Sedgwick, defeated them with great slaughter. This battle was fought on Sunday, July 11, 1869

Though the war was considered ended, it was for some years unsafe for small parties to venture any great distance from the larger settlements. The savages were somewhat cowed by their defeat, but yet murders and stealing of cattle and horses were quite frequent.

ORGANIZATION.

On the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad to within about fifty miles of the western boundary of the State, in the fall of 1867, a town was laid out and called Sidney. The town grew quite rapidly, and the settlement of Cheyenne County centered here. Previous to 1870, however, this county was attached to Lincoln County for revenue and judiciary purposes; but this proving unsatisfactory to the citizens, a meeting was held in the summer of 1870, when it was resolved that steps at once be taken to effect a separate organization. Thomas Kane was appointed to go to Lincoln, the capital of the State, and effect arrangements with the Governor that the county might be organized that year. After listening to the representations of Mr. Kane, Gov. David Butler, in August, issued a proclamation calling a special election for the purpose of electing county officers. At this election, the following officers were elected: Thomas Kane, Treasurer; John Ellis, Sheriff; D. Kelliher, Judge ; H. L. Elsworth, Fred Glover and Charles A. Moore, Commissioners, and H. A. Dygart, Clerk, though he only held the office for a short time, when the vacancy was filled by D. A. Martin.

The early records of the county are very incomplete, a great portion of them not having been preserved, and the writer has to derive the greater part of the earlier history of the county from the memory of the early settlers. There may be some events, therefore, concerning this organization that are not here recorded. The first regular election was held in October, 1871, one year after its organization. At this time, Dennis Carrigan was elected Commissioner; George C. Cook, Sheriff; George W. Heist, Judge; James A. Moore, Treasurer, and L. Connell, Clerk.

The first school district in the county was organized at Sidney in 1871. In the fall of that year, some half a dozen voters met in the village of Sidney and organized a school district, and elected C. E. Borgquist, Moderator; Dennis Carrigan, Director, and Joseph Clayborne, Treasurer. The first school was taught in the winter of 1871-72 by Mrs. Irene Sherwood, at her residence, there being some ten or twelve pupils in attendance. This school has developed until at the date of this writing (1882), there are 150 pupils in attendance. There are two departments and the schools are regularly graded, with three grades in each department. Prof. J. M.

Brenton is Principal, and has charge of the grammar and high school department. Mrs. N. L. Shelton has charge of the other department, in which are the primary and intermediate grades.

In the entire county of Cheyenne there are but three school districts, that of Sidney, just described; one at Antelope, having fifteen pupils of school age. and one at Lodge Pole, having about the same number of pupils.

The first white child known to have been born in the county was Fanny, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fisher, who was born at Sidney in 1869. Miss Fanny is now just blooming into womanhood, and is one of Sidney's brightest young ladies.

It is believed that the first marriage of white persons in the county was that of Henry Neuman and Miss McMurray, who were married in September, 1869. The courtship of Miss McMurray and Mr. Neuman was commenced in Sidney, when it was but a very small village, at a time when there were but few ladies in the county, and their married life has been a prosperous one. They are still residents of Sidney and are one of the first families of the town.

The first newspaper established in the county was the Sidney Telegraph, the first number of which was issued in May, 1873, by L. Connell, it being a four-column folio sheet, independent in politics.

The military post at Sidney was established late in 1867, and, during the following year, Fort Sidney was established, which has since remained a military post of considerable importance.

INDIAN TROUBLES.

After the organization of the county, the Indians gave no particular trouble, except an occasional attack on herders or surveying parties unprotected by soldiers or small parties who ventured out. Of course, there are many such incidents as these, where parties were killed and scalped, though there was no real Indian outbreak. To illustrate about the character of these attacks, we relate the following: In the summer of 1872, Prof. I. W. LaMunyon, now a resident of North Platte, had

charge of a surveying party, surveying the lands along Pumpkin-seed Creek, being attended by a company of cavalry from Fort Sidney. No hostile Indians having been seen, and, apprehending no danger, this company took occasion one day to ride off to Sidney, leaving the surveyors unprotected. Some time during the day, while engaged in their labors, the party was attacked by a band of Indians. A hole of some feet in circumference and about two feet in depth had been dug for the purpose of storing casks of water, etc., and to this Prof. LaMunyon led his men, where they took refuge, putting up their water casks and provisions about the sides for a better protection. Here they endured an attack of several hours' duration. The plan of attack was that generally adopted by the Indians--to put their ponies on a full run, and, riding in single file, throwing themselves on the outer side of their ponies, shoot under their necks, while describing a circle about the besieged. Though a sharp firing was kept up on both sides for several hours, strange to say none of the surveying party were hurt. Many of the ponies of the Indians were killed, and several Indians were slain. Finally, the soldiers appearing in sight, the Indians fled, and, though pursued, made good their escape.

STOCK RAISING.

The first large herd of cattle brought into the county was in 1869, when Edward Creighton started a stock ranch, bringing in a herd of several thousand head. Previous to this time, the danger from Indians was so great that cattle had to be closely guarded to prevent them from being stolen. The luxuriant growth of the richest of wild grasses upon the prairie, and the dryness of the climate, which insures the preservation of its nutritious qualities during the winter; together with the fact that the winters are usually very mild with but little snow, and little shelter therefore is required--these things render this county peculiarly well adapted to the raising of cattle, now the main industry of the county.

The cattle business has continued to increase till there are now in the county probably nearly 300,000 head, though the assessment returns show only 110,000 head. But the reader must understand that in these new counties where stock run at large, and where this is the one great interest of the county, the returns for assessing purposes are generally made for only from one-third to one-half of the number really owned in the county. One of the reasons for this perhaps is that, as the cattle

all run at large, only being collected or "rounded up" once during the year, and that during the summer after the assessment in the spring; and as it is impossible to estimate, with any accuracy, the percentage of loss through cattle thieves, accidents, or losses during the winter ; it is thought better that the number and value of cattle be under rather than over estimated. There are also a considerable number of horses raised in the county. These may now be estimated to number about 20,000. The sheep-raising interest has been given but little attention until quite recently. The number now in the county may be estimated at 8,000. This industry is very profitable, and many of the owners of the smaller herds of cattle are fast disposing of their cattle to invest in sheep.

The raising of cattle as a business is here conducted far differently than in an agricultural community, where there are crops to be protected. The land being all, or nearly all, Government property, it is by mutual consent of the cattle owners divided among themselves into tracts termed "ranges," each range comprising an acreage in proportion to the number of cattle owned by the proprietor, and generally consisting of several thousand acres. The proprietor has no legal title to his range, but simply builds a ranche, and sometimes two or three on the range claimed by him. His rights to this are maintained by a mutual understanding among the cattle owners, and this right is respected by his brother cattle owners, and any encroachments by outside parties are promptly punished by the proprietors of the ranges, assisted by his men, who are known by the suggestive appellation of "cowboys."

The prairies for thousands of square miles are one vast pasture, where the cattle, with no respect to ownership, are allowed to roam wild. These cattle, however, are "rounded-up" or collected each year, and the younger ones branded with the owner's private mark.

To those unacquainted with the methods of carrying on the immense cattle business in this great free pasture region of America, these "round-ups" need to be described: Late in the spring, after the grass has attained considerable growth, so that cattle may with grazing a few hours in the day obtain sufficient food, large bodies of men termed cowboys are organized, after which they scatter out over a vast extent of territory, frequently embracing several thousand square miles, and

ride toward a common center, driving all the cattle they can find before them. These cattle are all supposed to be branded, each owner having a private brand by which his cattle are known, and, as fast as the ranges are reached, all the cattle bearing the brand or private mark of the owner of that range are "cut out," together with the calves accompanying them, and left in charge of the cowboys in the employment of this owner, who proceed to corral them, after which they are counted and the young are branded. This is generally kept up about three months during the summer, usually being completed some time in July. These round ups are attended with considerable excitement, as the cattle are wild, and unused to the sight of mankind. When being driven in large herds, it requires much skill, experience and good horsemanship to cut out, that is, to separate, the wild steers one by one, as the range to which they belong is reached. While these annual round-ups are made as thorough as possible, there are, of course, many cattle that are not secured, therefore it is impossible for an extensive cattle owner to ascertain with accuracy just how many cattle he owns.

Of late, so much has been said and written regarding the lawlessness of the "cowboys," it is eminently proper that a word concerning their real character be given a place in this work. In the first place, it must be said that, whatever his faults, the cowboy is a hard and faithful worker. His life on the broad and unsettled plains is one of freedom and liberty. The greater portion of his life is spent where law, legally executed, has little force. From the very nature of his habits he becomes somewhat rough and wild. The rifle or pistol is the only effective protection of life or property, and where such is the case--where each man takes the law in his own hands, and where he is deprived of the refining influences of society, where rough sports and daily exercises are such as to fit him physically for his hard and wild life, it is but natural that he becomes somewhat hardened in his nature and that he becomes daring and reckless of life. It is not strange that, when released from rough and wild life, he enters upon drinking sprees, and with a crowd of congenial spirits, gives himself up to the coarser instincts of his nature. Nor is it strange that, when a large crowd of these rough men are brought together in a frontier town, where drinking and gambling are the attractions and principal amusements, they let themselves loose, and, crazed with poisonous liquor, their deeds are many times lawless and horrible to witness. Still, these men have many excellent traits in their rough nature. They are honest; a thief is despised, and if one

falls into their hands, he is, generally, promptly shot or hanged. They despise cowardice, and are wont to try to inspire terror in the breasts of a "tenderfoot," as they term those who are from the more civilized settlements of the East, and are unaccustomed to the rough life of the unsettled plains, and woe unto the "tenderfoot" if he proves himself a coward. Yet these very men, rough in their natures as they are, will spare no effort, or acknowledge no difficulty too great to attempt to surmount, no danger too great for them to risk, to aid even a stranger who is in distress.

AGRICULTURE.

The soil of Cheyenne County is fertile, and well adapted to the raising of all kinds of crops common to this latitude; but from the great elevation above the sea level, the rainfall is slight, and crop-growing is not successful, except when irrigation is adopted. On some of the streams, notably on the Lodge Pole, where the farmers have adopted the plan of irrigation, bountiful crops have been raised, especially potatoes and other vegetables. We observe in Sidney that potatoes raised here bring about one-fourth greater price than those brought in from the East, the quality being much better. Some seasons there is doubtless a sufficient rainfall to insure the growth of crops along the valleys of the streams, but such seasons are very infrequent. There is an increased rainfall each year, but as yet not enough to make crop-raising a success.

The county is now in a flourishing condition. There are outstanding only $22,000 in bonds. County warrants sell for 98 cents. The taxable property as returned to the Assessor is: personal property $1,988,793 and real estate $79,241, or a total $2,068,034. In these returns, however, as far as they are a guide in estimating the wealth of the county, it must be remembered that probably less than one-half of the personal property is assessed at all, and this is at but little more than one-third of its actual value.

The officers of Cheyenne County at present are: Commissioners, A. J. Walrath, T. H. Lawrence and J. W. Haas; Clerk, J. J. McIntosh Sheriff, S. O. Fowler; Judge, J. Neubauer; Treasurer, James Sutherland; Superintendent, Joseph Oberfelder; Surveyor, L. H. Bordell; Coroner, J. A. Carley.

The county is divided into six precincts. Their names and population, according to the census of 1880, are as follows: Sidney, population 1,157; Antelope, population 54; Potter, population 62, and the three combined precincts of Big Spring, Lodge Pole and Court House Rock having a population of 262. The entire population of the county, according to this census, was 1,535.

Along the Union Pacific Railroad, extending the entire length of the county from east to west, are several telegraph and mail stations, but the only town in the county of any importance is Sidney.

Part 2

SIDNEY.

View

This is the county seat of Cheyenne County, and was, as has been before stated, laid out in the fall of 1867, at the time of the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad to this point. The town was laid out by the railroad company, and the first building was one of logs, which had been the ranch of French Louis, some four miles south of here, but the Indians having made frequent raids, stealing his stock till he was nearly ruined, he removed to this point, where he occupied his building as a whisky saloon and sold supplies to the railroaders. This building is now occupied as the county hospital. Early in 1868, Charley Moore erected a building used as a hotel; also as a general store and whisky saloon. About the same time, Tom Kane erected a store for the sale of general merchandise. Let it be understood by the reader that in these times whisky was a staple article in trade in all grocery or general stores. Mr. Kane also kept the post office here, he being the first Postmaster. D. Carrigan at this time erected a building, which he occupied as a saloon.

No town at this time was nearer than 100 miles in any direction, and, as this settlement was in the very center of a stock-growing region, it soon grew to be a

prosperous little village. The railroad company made Sidney a freight division, and at once erected a round house and other necessary buildings.

Though prosperous as a frontier town, Sidney had a population of only about 500, till after the discovery of gold in the Black Hills country. That region was opened up in 1876, and, as Sidney was the best located point, there were stage and freight stations soon established, and the greater portion of the immense travel was direct from this town. In the great rush of travel to the Black Hills, hundreds of strangers thronged the streets daily. Large and commodious business houses were erected and stocked. The population soon increased to 1,000 or more; all was activity, and money seemed to literally flow into the town from all directions. A bridge was built across the North Platte, to accommodate the stage and freight companies, as well as the vast stream of private wagons and conveyances that continued to pour into the Black Hills country by way of Sidney.

Thus was the route opened, not only to the Black Hills, but to all the military posts and Indian agencies to the northwest, including the Big Horn and Powder River Districts. The wholesale houses of Sidney did an almost fabulous amount of business, in the sale of goods to supply all this country. A large number of six-horse mail coaches, making time at the rate of ten miles per hour, were put on the route. The freight business carried on along this route was immense. It was no uncommon event for 1,000,000 pounds of freight to leave Sidney daily. One business firm alone frequently shipped as high as 400,000 pounds of freight per day.

With these large crowds of strangers, many of them a rough class of adventurers; with this as a common center for the cowboys for hundreds of miles of country; with this as headquarters for hundreds of "bull-whackers"--as the ox team drivers on the freight road were termed--and the drivers of mules and horse teams on this route--known as "mule-skinners "--it is not strange that they, when at rest from their labors and "turned loose," as it were, among the saloons and dance-houses of the town, soon became, not only objects of wonder and curiosity, but of terror as well. The rush, buzz, noise, cracking of whips, shouting of drivers, orders of "bosses," etc., served to create a din and noise to be heard throughout the town and many times their broils and reckless use of fire-arms endangered the lives of

peaceable citizens and mere lookers-on. Then in the evening and through the entire night, when every store, saloon and other business house was brightly lighted, the billiard balls clicking merrily as they chased each other over the green cloth in the billiard halls; the rattling of drinking glasses; the breathless silence of the faro rooms; the boisterous shouting and laughing in the bar-room; the half wild, and often, half intoxicated men and women in the dance-houses; the busy merchant, flushed with excitement, as he flits about the store to attend upon his waiting customers who pay down the cash for everything--when all these are described, the reader has a good idea of Sidney as it was in 1876 and for a few years following.

Sidney was then emphatically a rough frontier town, and, with the gathering of this motley crowd, it is not surprising that murders were frequent and that crime ran rampant. Though murder was so frequent, yet there has never to this day been a murderer executed legally, though in some instances the people have taken the law into their own hands and occasionally lynched a desperado. One of these events that created some excitement at the time was the hanging of Charles Reed, in May, 1879, for the murder of Henry Loomis. Mr. Loomis was a young man generally respected, and the circumstances attending the murder and hanging were about as follows: Loomis and others, one evening, were walking up street, and, passed the house of a woman, the mistress of Reed. This woman was standing outside her door, and Loomis addressed her. She chose to regard his remark as an insult, and called upon Reed for protection. The latter immediately drew a pistol and shot Loomis, inflicting a wound in the thigh, from the effects of which he died the next day, after having his leg amputated. Upon his death, Sheriff Zweifel began a search for Reed, found him concealed in the bluffs north of town and brought him back, lodging him in jail. All day long, a crowd was gathering in the street for the purpose of lynching Reed, should Loomis die. Some time during the following night, a large crowd, thoroughly armed, that the guards might be beaten back, proceeded to the jail and quietly took Reed out and hanged him to a telegraph pole, giving him the choice of being pulled up by the neck, or of having the rope placed around his neck and then to climb up a ladder and jump off. He chose the latter and coolly bade the crowd good-bye, and, jumping off, was soon in eternity.

It would be unnecessary to give an account of the scores of murders committed, or of the lynchings, as these affairs are greatly similar in detail. Sufficient is it to

say that the town is becoming more moral in its tone, there now being only four murderers in jail here, and their crimes were all committed outside of the town. The last lynching that has taken place was in March, 1881, when one McDonald was hanged. The town had generally been under control of a gang of gamblers, and, early in the year 1881, it was determined by a number of the citizens of Sidney to break up the gambling and disorderly houses of the town. A raid was therefore made on them and considerable trouble between the two factions was engendered. The Sheriff being absent, William Strate was made a jailer, and left in charge of the jail and was made a Deputy Sheriff for the time, and he was one of the leaders of this movement. The gamblers resisting, a general row ensued, during which many of them, and among them an ex-Sheriff of the county, were arrested and incarcerated in the jail. The man McDonald, with some others, resisted, declaring they would not be arrested, and that they would shoot the man that attempted it. These threats were made in the excitement of the moment, and there was probably little idea of carrying them into execution. However this may have been, there was trouble, and McDonald, who had been one of the leaders of this opposition, and a few of his associates, were arrested and confined in the jail. During the night, and it is supposed, with the connivance of the jailer, McDonald was taken out and hanged to a telegraph pole. McDonald, though a rather hard character and a gambler, was perhaps no worse than scores of others, and, aside from his petty lawlessness and the threat of violence made during this excitement, nothing detrimental to his character was known.

The above was the last lynching that has occurred, though there was serious talk of taking out and hanging one of the murderers confined in the jail for a cowardly and brutal murder committed in the early part of the present year, but better judgment prevailed.

It will be worthy of mention that Sidney is the place where the famous outlaw, "Doc" Middleton, now confined in the State penitentiary for life, committed his first crime. In a fight with a number of soldiers, he killed one in self-defense, and, fearing that trouble would ensue, he fled to the unsettled country to the northward and became a highwayman. Occasionally, however, he, with his band, came in the vicinity of Sidney. On one of these occasions, in April, 1869, Charles Reed, who was hanged the following month for the murder of Loomis, undertook to betray

Middleton and his associates into the hands of the authorities. Middleton and his men had stolen some horses near Ogallala, and were pursued by Sheriff Hughes, of Keith County, with a number of men, and, with the assistance of Reed, they were discovered in the bluffs west of town, and, though Middleton escaped, one of his men, Joe Smith, was shot and killed. The next day, Middleton, meeting one of his acquaintances, whom he knew before going to the bad, sent in word that if he could be assured of a pardon for the killing of the soldier in 1877, he would willingly give himself up and stand his trial for the other crimes committed by him. This being refused, he kept up his wild life, till some time after he was captured by detectives, some sixty miles north of Columbus, and taken to Cheyenne, where he was tried for crimes committed in Wyoming, and sentenced to prison for life.

For some years murders were so frequent in and about Sidney that the citizens became hardened and careless as to the taking of life, and but little attention was given to murders committed in drunken broils. It was quite frequent in the dance-houses here that some one would be killed during a quarrel, but no attention would be given to the matter further than to tumble the corpse into a corner out of the way until the dance and the amusements of the evening were over, and then take the corpse out for burial. That the reader may have some idea of the disregard for life common to the frontier, we give an account of a single dance at one of the ranches. During the winter of 1881, a dance was gotten up at a ranch north of Sidney; women and whisky were provided and arrangements made to have a good time. The men in attendance were soldiers, cow boys and border desperadoes. The dance proceeded without serious interruption till about half-past 10 o'clock, when the effects of bad whisky began to be seen. Men and women became noisy, boisterous and quarrelsome; but still no one was killed till a soldier accidentally shot himself, death resulting in a few moments. As his body obstructed the floor, it was thrown into a corner, and the music and dance went on. Quarrels were numerous, and after awhile a row ensued, shooting being commenced between Jack Page, who is now in jail at Sidney awaiting trial, and another party. Shots were fired among the crowd, and the shooting soon became general. Several men were wounded and one woman was shot in the back, but Page killed his man and his body was also thrown into the corner, out of the way, and the dance was again resumed. But it was only a short time till there was another outbreak. The lights were then blown out, another man was killed, and finally, the dance was broken up.

Now, while so much has been written here in reference to the roughness of the town, it must not be understood that there was no good society. While, as a frontier town, law was disregarded, yet a man could seek almost any society to which he was inclined. If the stranger attended his own affairs, and kept away from drinking and dance houses, he was perfectly safe. The business houses were as free from quarrels as they are in more Eastern towns. The class that made the trouble were not residents, but desperate characters drawn together from all parts of the world, who, of course, when they came into town, proceeded to have a good time in their own depraved manner, and the rows were generally confined to the streets or the saloons. It is true, loose women and gamblers made Sidney a temporary residence, and, during the great rush of travel to the Black Hills, reaped a rich harvest. These, however, have nearly all gone, and the days of lawlessness in Sidney may be said to be past. The present Prosecuting Attorney of this Judicial District, V. Bierbower, is a resident of Sidney, and, being familiar with the crimes peculiar to the frontier, will doubtless prosecute until crime becomes unpopular in his district, judging from the fact that during the last term of court, out of twenty-eight prisoners arraigned, he succeeded in convicting twenty-seven.

THE SIDNEY OF TO-DAY.

The greater part of the Black Hills travel by this point has ceased, and Sidney is beginning to settle down as a quiet and prosperous little town in the center of the strock-growing region. Its trade throughout Sioux County on the north, and with the stock ranches, insures its continued prosperity.

The schools of the town have been described on another page, and we only say litre that they are in a thriving condition.

The only two churches having houses of worship erected are the Catholic, with Father Conway in charge, and the Methodist, with Rev. J. Turner as Pastor. There are also many citizens here representing the Episcopal, Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches, though these are not organized; but services are sometimes held.

The Sunday schools are in a flourishing condition.

There is one newspaper published here--the Plaindealer-Telegraph--it being a consolidation of the old Telegraph and the Plaindealer. The history of the two papers is as follows: The Telegraph was founded in May, 1873, by L. Connell. In December, 1875, he sold it to J. B. Gossage, who, in January, 1876, admitted G. B. Darrow as a partner. In 1879, the Telegraph was again sold, and a joint-stock company was formed, with Brainard & McNulty as Editors. In 1880, James McNulty assumed entire control, and continued to publish a creditable paper until March, 1881, when the Telegraph was sold to A. C. Drake, editor of the Plaindealer.

The Plaindealer was established in October, 1878, by W. H. Michael, who, upon retiring from the profession, sold it to A. C. Drake. As before stated, this gentleman purchased the Telegraph, and the two papers were consolidated. Mr. Drake continued the paper until his death, when Mrs. A. C. Drake took charge of it and still continues to publish the Plaindealer-Telegraph, the only newspaper in the county. It is a bright and newsy paper.

Fort Sidney is still located here, and is still quite an important station for operations to the country northwest of here.

The cemetery here is well filled, when we consider the fact that it is only a little more than ten years since it was started by the burial of a man killed by Indians. There are about two hundred graves; only a few of those buried here, however, died of natural death. There are a few children buried here who died from natural causes, but of the adults, only a very small percentage. Some were killed by Indians, but by far the greater number were either murdered or killed in drunken brawls. Many of these were soldiers. There are also a few Pawnee Indians, who either died of disease or were killed in fights with the Sioux while engaged in the service of the United States Government as soldiers.