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Article Summary: Buck, a newspaper correspondent, lived on the very edge of settlement in the 1870s. His letters report on the growth of the Red Willow colony and provide rare details about daily life in the Wild West.

Scroll down for complete article.

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Photographs / Images: Royal Buck, site of the Red Willow Colony

RED WILLOW COUNTY LETTERS OF
ROYAL BUCK, 1872-1873

EDITED BY PAUL D. RILEY

ON JULY 11, 1869, General Eugene A. Carr's Republican Valley Expedition defeated a force of Cheyenne and Sioux at the Battle of Summit Springs, and as a result the Republican River Valley of southern Nebraska could be considered virtually free from hostile Indians.¹

Within three years of that victory, scattered frontier settlements had spread to within sixty miles of the Nebraska-Colorado boundary, and seven new Nebraska counties had been or were in the process of being organized. Lacking a railroad, however, the region would remain a frontier for another decade. For several years buffalo herds roamed not only between the small, unfenced patches of sodcorn, but into the patches themselves. Mail routes were established, but stage lines and railroads were things

¹ James T. King, "The Republican Valley Expedition, June-July, 1869," *Nebraska History*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (September, 1960), pp. 165-199.

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Historical Society.*

of the future—regularly discussed and regularly promised, but always in the future.

The following letters describe the first two years in one of those frontier settlements, that which was located at the mouth of Red Willow Creek, which runs into the Republican River from the north. The settlement and the later county took the name of the creek.

Many frontier communities had correspondents who wrote regularly to eastern Nebraska newspapers, but the majority of their reports seem pedestrian when compared with those written by Royal Buck, for he did more than report on the growth of Red Willow and exaggerate its future importance. Buck hoped to attract settlers to the region, but he was also a literate man, a former newspaper editor, and he was interested in all that he saw and heard. He lived further west than any other Republican Valley newspaper correspondent, on the very edge of settlement, and his letters describe a portion of the American Wild West.

Royal Buck was born in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, on May 2, 1820, where he lived until 1845, when he moved to Madison, Wisconsin. After a few years of teaching school Buck was elected county clerk, and in 1848 he was married to Eveline M. Wyman. She died in 1852, and the following year, he married Thankful P. Reed. By his first wife, he was the father of one daughter, while he and his second wife were the parents of two daughters and one son.

In 1860, Buck and his family moved to Nebraska City, where, during the Civil War, he served as Register of the Land Office. During the same period he edited a newspaper and took an active part in local Republican party politics. After the war, he ran a grocery store and also served as deputy assessor of Internal Revenue for the area.

In November 1871, Buck was elected president of the Republican Valley Land Company, which planned to found a colony in southwestern Nebraska. During the latter part

of that same month he led an exploring party to the region, and the mouth of Red Willow Creek was selected as the future townsite. The plans for a formal colony failed, but, in May 1872, Buck led a small group of the original stockholders to the selected region.

Due to a nation-wide depression, locally intensified by grasshopper hordes which destroyed crops for several years in succession, the Red Willow settlers did not prosper, and, when the county seat of their new county was located at Indianola, rather than at Red Willow, the blow was so severe that no town developed.

Upon the death of her brother, Mrs. Buck inherited a substantial estate near Washington, D.C., and, in August 1889, the Buck family moved to Branchville, Maryland, where Royal Buck died, November 20, 1890. Mrs. Buck died in Denver, December 27, 1914. Both are buried in the Indianola cemetery.²

Unless otherwise indicated, the letters are written from Red Willow, Red Willow County, Nebraska, so that, in most cases, the return address has been omitted, as have all but two names indicating to whom the letters were being written, for the majority were written to various state newspapers. Some rhetorical promotional propaganda has been deleted. Name spellings have been corrected, when noticed, and obvious typographical errors have been given the same treatment.

² Raymond E. Dale, "Otoe County Pioneers: A Biographical Dictionary" (unpublished manuscript, Nebraska State Historical Society), pp. 373-375; Albert Watkins, "The Beginning of Red Willow County," *Nebraska State Historical Society Publications*, XIX (Lincoln, 1919), pp. 29-63. The latter contains Royal Buck and Isaac J. Starbuck, "Centennial History of Red Willow County," which was prepared for the Red Willow 4th of July celebration, in 1876.

In Camp, Kearney City³
[Sunday,] May 19, '72

. . . We left Nebraska City on the 3rd inst. and our first Sabbath camp was made at Paisley, only about 30 miles from town. On Wednesday following we halted at Beaver Crossing in Seward Co. after being most thoroughly drenched in several thunder storms. Here we overtook Messrs Black,⁴ McKee⁵ and Prickett⁶ all storm-bound, and we all remain until Monday the 13th, when we early place our teams in line and while fording the Beaver, brother McKee's wagon upset and all hands detailed to "right up" which takes about an hour. No particular damage is done beyond the breaking of one wagon bow, and considerable mixing up of provisions, feed, dishes and farming utensils. We are soon on the road and reach York centre in good time to pitch our tents for the night. Here Mr. Thomas⁷ and family with their large herds of stock join us; and our train consists of three horse teams and three ox teams and about 75 head of loose stock. At "Porcupine Ranche"⁸ (old freighters know where that is) . . . we are overtaken—or rather met, by a fierce thunder shower and hail storm about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and we had just time to raise our tent before the ground is an inch deep on a level

³ *Nebraska City News*, May 25, 1872. Kearney City was a post office located two miles west of the recently abandoned Fort Kearny military reservation. J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1905), I, 98.

⁴ John F. Black, a member of Buck's exploring party of 1871, was the fourth homestead filee in Red Willow County; his claim was in S18, T3N, R28W. John F. Black, "The First Expedition," *McCook Republican*, September 23, 1904; U. S. General Land Office. Records [hereafter cited U.S. Land Office], (MS, Nebraska State Historical Society), Vol. 65, p. 6.

⁵ This man has not been further identified; there were several families of this name living at Nebraska City.

⁶ James H. Prickett homesteaded in S18, T3N, R28W; he was a losing candidate for county commissioner at the election of May 27, 1873. U.S. Land Office, *op. cit.*, Vol. 65, p. 6; Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁷ T. P. Thomas homesteaded in S21, T3N, R28W, where he opened the first store in Red Willow County. He is also credited with being the first rancher in southwestern Nebraska. During the previous decade, Thomas had operated a road ranch, along the California Trail, near Plum Creek. U.S. Land Office, *op. cit.*, Vol. 65, p. 7; *Lincoln Daily State Journal* [hereinafter cited *State Journal*], July 27, 1875.

⁸ This road ranch was located on the Nebraska City Cutoff of the California Trail, near the western edge of York County; it was established in 1863, by Samuel Lushbaugh, agent to the Pawnee. A. T. Andreas, *History of Nebraska* (Chicago, 1882), pp. 1487, 1500.

with water and the "ditchers" having lively work to keep a dry spot for our beds. But as John Brown once said "I never knew a storm so fierce as not to be followed by sunshine"; so, here the storm passes and the sun shines on us before he sets, and we retired to our tents in good cheer. Since then we have escaped the storms, but the roads have been soft, some parts of the way *very* soft and badly rutted. We reached this place last night in good time to pitch our tents for a Sabbath camp, having traveled about 110 miles during the week, considering the storms and mud is considered a first rate week's journey.

The grass is getting very good and our teams and stock are all doing well. "Old Billy" ("Congregational Billy") and Jenny work together in perfect harmony and are often spoken of as the finest team on the road, and never fail to do their whole duty.

Our party are all well, all seem to enjoy themselves hugely and all are able to do a first rate job of eating. Mr. Prickett had the misfortune to get his foot under the wheel of his wagon the other day, and the consequence is he is somewhat lame but Reed's Overland linament and much sympathy is relieving the patient, and soon the damage will be repaired.

The country looks fine and everywhere as we pass do we see houses being built and farms being opened. It is astonishing how fast this western part of the State is being settled and improved. This morning we had the pleasure of a call from brother Sydenham⁹ of the *Central Star* together with his accomplished lady. He is, as you know, most enthusiastic in the advocacy of the removal of the National Capitol to the Fort Kearny Reservation. He is a live man; and is doing much for the development of this part of the State, but I strongly suspect that he will never be able to secure the removal of the National Capitol. Tomorrow we expect to put our teams in line for Plum Creek from which point we strike southwest to the Republican, and hope to reach Red Willow as early as Friday. . . .

⁹ Moses Henry Sydenham (1835-1907) served as post sutler and postmaster at Fort Kearny, from 1858 to 1871. He then moved two miles west of the military reservation to Kearney City, where he edited the *Central Star*. He married Electa Atwood, at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, on September 17, 1866. Morton & Watkins, *op. cit.*, I, 98.

[Monday,] July 1, '72¹⁰

. . . Well, we have been here a little over one month, living in our tent and under a temporary shed made of small poles and green boughs. This is very popular here, almost every settler is doing the same thing and all the military forces (two companies)¹¹ likewise. Two or three homesteaders have built rude log houses. As I sit writing I can count up twelve homesteaders within the radius of 1½ miles—all alike just commenced. Many more are scattered about here and there, up and down river and creeks.

The colony [with] which our company started for this place have turned in all along the valley, wherever the best claims were to be found, and comparatively only a few have reached this point. . . .

As I have said the settlement is entirely new. The first furrows were plowed this spring and by immigrants who have traveled from three to five hundred miles, and I look around in several directions and see some fine corn fields which have a promise of a bountiful harvest. A Mr. King,¹² who has a claim a few miles down the river, told me yesterday, that he has a field of corn which is now beginning to tassel out, and is as high as a man's head. Other fields I have seen, in which the corn is standing from one to four feet high. These fields, of course were planted early. My own, about 6 or 8 acres, is just nicely up and looking well.

Potatoes we have some fear of not making a success this year; have a new enemy to this plant in the shape of a slim greyish bug about half an inch long that gathers upon the vines and strips them of their leaves at a fearful

¹⁰ *Nebraska City News*, July 13, 1872.

¹¹ Camp Red Willow, April-September 1872, was located in S16, T3N, R28W, on the east bank of Red Willow Creek, directly opposite Buck's settlement. The camp had been located there against the possibility of Indian trouble. Russell F. Loomis, "Pioneer Tells Story of Hardships and Pleasures of Early Days," *Indianola Reporter*, October 30, 1924.

¹² John S. King was the first permanent settler in Red Willow County, settling just within the eastern boundary in 1871. Though he made his living by hunting and trapping, he is credited with having planted the first crop in the county. When William Berger was killed by lightning in 1875, King was appointed county commissioner to replace him. During the late seventies, King was committed to the state mental hospital. He was killed by a train about 1881, age 38. John F. Black, "Pioneer Days in Red Willow County," *Indianola Reporter*, June 27, 1918.

rate. An acre of potatoes is attacked and in one or two days completely ruined. We have no drug stores where we can get "bug poison". We have to fight or let our vegetables go. I am going to fight awhile at least.

The soil here opens good—is light and loose; very little turf. A day or two after plowing it will harrow up almost as mellow as old ground. The subsoil is good and holds moisture excellently.

. . . The first week or two that we was [*sic*] here, we had no showers—except at a goodly distance, but since then we have had about two per week. On last Friday night (28th) a regular old fashioned drencher passed down the valley. Some of the settlers say it fell near a foot deep of solid water. One man told me yesterday that near him was a prairie dog town and then the rain filled their holes and drowned hundreds of dogs—that they floated out and were lying dead all about the prairie. He also said a buffalo got caught in a torrent which came down a ravine and was drowned and floated out into his potato field. . . . Yesterday—Sunday—we had another fierce little shower with a good deal of hail and another heavy shower passed round us to the south east. To-day the weather is sultry and showers are on the border. We have had some very hot weather, so you see we need showers.

Our town business goes on slowly—but few settlers as yet except prairie dogs. . . . We are expecting a portable mill here from North Platte in a few days. Byfield brothers¹³ and Mr. Fleming¹⁴ arrived here a little over a week

¹³ John Byfield (1846-1906) and his brother, William (1850-1918), were natives of Ontario, Canada. John came to Nebraska City in 1870, where he and another brother, Edward, manufactured the Byfield Cabinet Organ. William came to Nebraska in 1871, and, that same year, he was a member of Buck's exploring party; he made the second homestead filing in Red Willow County, in S18, 19 & 20, T3N, R28W. John's homestead was in S20. John opened a store in his sodhouse, carrying supplies for buffalo hunters, where he also purchased hides and smoked buffalo meat. John left Nebraska in 1876, and William left in 1879; six years later William returned and lived there until 1910. John moved to Massachusetts, where he became active in the woollens industry, and he patented several inventions, which aided in modernizing operations. U.S. Land Office, *op. cit.*, Vol. 69, p. 223; Miss Genet Byfield (daughter of John), letters to editor, Nov. 15 & Dec. 1, 1965; Misses Roxanna M. and Helen L. Byfield (daughters of William), letters to editor, Oct. 28, Nov. 26, & December 31, 1965.

¹⁴ Milton K. Fleming homesteaded in S6, T3N, R28W, on January 10, 1872; his filing was canceled March 10, 1874. U.S. Land Office, *op. cit.*, Vol. 65, p. 2.

ago. The former have already a sod house built, and are actively at work on their homesteads. Mr. F. has also been running the breaking plow briskly. Buffalo are plenty and are "fat and forty." Plenty of them fattening for the fall hunt.

[Saturday,] Aug. 17 [1872]¹⁵

. . . Our saw-mill is slashing out lumber, and several white roofs tell that some of our people are patronizing. The proprietor Mr. W. M. Hinman¹⁶ from North Platte is now sawing out lumber for his own house—a very good one—which will be erected in a few weeks when Mr. H. will move his family here for permanent residence. There are several families expected from North Platte.

We have had a visit from the Pawnee Indians.¹⁷ About 2500 of them have been here and are still holding their annual hunt and have had their camp some 15 or 20 miles up the Republican from this place. They are under the direction of the military and agents, and consequently their hunting is very orderly and safe to settlers but it makes buffalo scarce. A large party from Fort McPherson—mostly officers accompanied by their wives, have also been on a hunt in which they joined the Indians. They returned a day or two since.

Capt. Spaulding¹⁸ of the Cavalry Company stationed here goes to North Platte next week to bring his wife and several other ladies, and it is also expected that Senator

¹⁵ *Nebraska City News*, August 24, 1872.

¹⁶ Washington Mallory Hinman (1819-1904) founded a road ranch in 1856, on the California Trail, in present Lincoln County. He played an important role in Lincoln County history both before and after the four years (1872-1876) that he lived at Red Willow. *Compendium of History, Reminiscence and Biography of Western Nebraska* (Chicago, 1909), pp. 772, 773.

¹⁷ The Pawnee, on their annual summer buffalo hunt, were under the direction of John B. "Texas Jack" Omohundro. George Bird Grinnell and Luther H. North were along for part of the hunt. Donald F. Danker, ed., *Man of the Plains: Recollections of Luther North* (Lincoln, 1961), pp. 170-173.

¹⁸ Edward James Spaulding, commander of Camp Red Willow, served as a captain in the U.S. Second Cavalry, 1862-1886; he served at Fort McPherson for several years. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, 1903), Vol. I, 909.

Hitchcock¹⁹ will be among the party and will spend several days here on a hunt.

Other distinguished personages are also expected. In consequence of so many Indians hunting up in the valley and so many surveying parties out also, an extra Cavalry Company have been ordered here and are on the ground so we now have two Cavalry and Infantry companies here.²⁰

We are having very timely and abundant rains this summer. Since about the 18th of June, we have had at least two good substantial showers per week, and what is rather peculiar they are almost invariably at night. Red Willow creek comes up about once a week full banks—took our bridge out once, and a new one now occupies its place on a grade above high water.

We are now beginning to reap the fruits of our planting. Plenty of beans, peas, corn, potatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, squashes, melons, &c. The early planted fields of corn are very fine—comparing favorably with your Otoe [County] fields although on sod.

By the way, I must not forget to tell you that we have had an increase in our population of Red Willow—weighs 7½ lbs. and no doctor bills. His name is "Enterprise";²¹ and he has a pledge from the President of the Republican Valley Land Co. that he shall have the first deed executed of a choice town lot. . . .

[Wednesday,] January 1, 1873²²

. . . So far as I know, all our settlers here are reasonably happy at this time, as far as good health, plenty of plain food with appetites sharp enough to make it luxurious, well housed, warmly clothed and a quiet sense of se-

¹⁹ No record of this hunt has been found.

²⁰ "Tuesday, September 3, 1872. . . . We run across a body of troopers from Red Willow Post, numbering forty seven men, going up the [Frenchman] Fork as an escort for surveyors west and south of us." William J. Harmon, "Surveyor's Diary, 1872" (microfilm, Nebraska State Historical Society). Harmon was a member of a survey party which surveyed Hayes County, in 1872; the party was led by William A. Richards, afterwards governor of Wyoming.

²¹ The identity of this child has not been learned.

²² *Nebraska City News*, February 1, 1873.

curity with a hope looking to the future for more enlarged comforts, and joy is concerned.

The weather so far has been all that could be desired for winter. Early in November we had some rather "blustery" weather so that the Republican river closed up quite solid, but towards the last of the month it became quite mild, and the ice nearly all disappeared.

December came in a little colder and on the 21st inst. it got most intensely cold, and the mercury falling to 20° below zero, one night only, but we had no wind with it, no snow; . . . we have only had about 1½ inches of snow, and very little wind.

Stock are still ranging and doing well without hay. Mr. T. P. Thomas who has some 75 head of cattle, has not fed at all, and his stock are looking fat and sleek. . . . In the timbered portions is a kind of grass which usually keeps green all winter, and when stock can get into these ranges, they do better than on the best of hay.

The best of ranges were burned off last fall, destroying also a large amount of timber, but we feel that there can be no very great loss without some small gain. We have lost some winter grazing ground, and much dry wood, but we have had the mosquito harbors destroyed, so we shall hope to have less of these troublesome pests next year.

We have had a very dry season indeed, have had no rain worth speaking of, since last September; then it was very light. I sowed about 10 bushels of winter or fall wheat in September, but the ground was too dry to bring it up, but partially, and thus it stands to-day, and what the spring will do for it is quite probemactical.

Game here is getting scarce; has been ever since the Pawnees were here last September. On Thanksgiving Day a party of five of us with two teams started out for a load of buffalo meat. We went across to the Beaver creek about fifteen miles south and went up that stream 55 miles, near its source—were gone ten days and were obliged to return with only four buffalos; and I don't suppose we saw over fifty during the hunt. But in July last we could not have traveled over any ten miles of the route without seeing four times as many. Between the Indians and the army of hunters who have been up and down on these buffalo ranges during the entire fall, the buffalo have nearly all been driven off. Though many have been killed, yet the

herds have been frightened further south and west. It is safe to say that over one hundred hunters have returned from the head waters of the Republican, Beaver creek and Frenchman's Fork without getting a single buffalo.

After this, hunters must look elsewhere for buffalo meat. There have been a great many trappers up the valley this winter and the furred animals are getting scarce also. Early in the fall the wolves used to make night hideous, with their yelping and howling, but now we seldom hear a sound from them. It is all explained by the piles of skeletons around the trappers' camps. Strychnine is a fatal trap for the wolf. I think herds of sheep would be quite safe here now.

We still continue to have some new accessions to our settlement. Some half dozen or more persons have come in and taken claims since October, and we hear of many more coming in early spring.

Though we have no soldiers here now, we feel quite secure, and no one fears any molestation from Indians.

If you have any recruits for Red Willow and the Republican valley . . . send them along early. There is plenty of hay for stock all along the road and those who come early can make a good crop next summer. Those who came on last spring early raised very good fields of corn and potatoes, while those who waited for grass for teams on the way made an entire failure. The hot dry winds of August came on just in time to blast and wither up all late planted fields, so I say to all who propose coming in the spring, come early, and bring plenty of good seeds with you.

[Wednesday,] Feb 19, 1873²³

Hon Robert W Furnas
Governor of Nebraska

Dear Sir:

Enclosed please find proceedings of a public meeting held here this day by which you will see we have organized a Military Company for our home protection. We *are* in

²³ Petition to Governor Robert W. Furnas, Executive Manuscripts, Nebraska State Historical Society.

some danger of molestation by indians in consequence of the killing of "Whistler" and two other chiefs by whitemen in December last,²⁴ and we therefore ask for sufficient arms and ammunition to equip our company which numbers about seventy five men.²⁵

Yours Truly

E.S. Hill, Capt²⁶

J H Prickett, 1st Lieut²⁷

Royal Buck Orderly Sargent L H Lawton 2nd ^{"28}

Would prefer "Center pined [*sic*] Needle gun."

²⁴ For several years following 1870, the Cut-off band of Oglala Sioux, under Chief Whistler, lived on the Medicine in present Frontier County. In the fall of 1872, the band moved to a hunting camp on the Stinking Water, where the women and children remained, while the men went on a buffalo hunt on the Upper Republican. In late November, Whistler, Fat Badger, and Hand Smeller were murdered by hide hunters or trappers, in the vicinity of the Republican Forks. The most reliable evidence implicates Mortimer N. "Wild Bill" Kress and Jack Ralston. Joseph G. Rosa, *They Called Him Wild Bill, the Life and Adventures of James Butler Hickok* (Norman, 1964), pp. 143-154. Letters relating to this incident are in the papers of Governor Furnas, as well as the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers; most of these identify Kress as the killer.

²⁵ In spite of the provocation, the Cut-off Sioux remained peaceful. It is interesting that the settlers did not petition the governor or start writing letters to the newspapers until nearly three months after the murders, when the possibility of an Indian up-rising was slight. Forty years later, Page T. Francis, a Red Willow pioneer, gave one explanation: "As ammunition was a little high and guns scarce, we organized a company of militia to protect ourselves from the Indians. . . . We reported our dangerous position to the government, and we got a provision of eighty needle guns. . . . That was a scare put up . . . [but] we . . . got a lot of government guns, and they killed a lot of buffaloes." Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁶ Edgar Strong Hill (1834-1929) was a founder of Indianola and the first county judge of Red Willow County. *McCook Republican*, August 9, 1929.

²⁷ See footnote 6.

²⁸ Leslie H. Lawton (1848-1926) was a pioneer rancher of southwestern Nebraska, running cattle in both Red Willow and Hitchcock Counties. He was a brother-in-law of George W. Rowley, the rancher at Wauneta Falls, who was killed by the Cheyenne in 1878. *Palisade Times*, December 17, 1926.

[Wednesday,] Feb 19th 1873

Persuant to call of the Citizens of this place for a meeting to be held at the House of John Byfield for the purpose of Organizing a Home Protection Company when the following officers were Elected

Captain, E.S. Hill
 First Lieutenant, J.H. Picket [*sic*]
 Second " " L. Lawton
 Ord Sargt, R. Buck
 Attest D.E. Brothwell Secy²⁹

Lowell, Neb.,³⁰
 March 25, 1873.

Hon R.W. Furnace [*sic*] Governor

Dr Sir:

I have been informed that a law was passed by our late legislature providing that before any new county can be organized an affidavit of three tax payers of the proposed county must be made, that said County has 200 inhabitants. I enclose such affidavit and would ask that you would appoint the following gentlemen as a board of election viz: Washington M. Hinman, Edwd S. Hill and Leslie H. Lawton Judges and John Byfield and Joseph Berger³¹ clerks

Fix the time for election and let us be informed at an early day and greatly oblige

Yours Truly
 Royal Buck

P.S. A friend suggests that perhaps the necessary papers have already been sent. if so pay no further attention to this.

²⁹ D. E. Brothwell was the Red Willow candidate for county clerk, in the first election of May 1873; he was defeated by Isaac J. Starbuck. Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

³⁰ Royal Buck to Robert W. Furnas, Executive Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society.

³¹ Joseph Berger was one of several brothers from Cass County, who homesteaded in Red Willow County. Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

State of Nebraska

SS

Kearney County

Royal Buck, John Byfield and John S. King being duly sworn on oath say, that they are citizens, property holders and tax payers of Red Willow County State of Nebraska and that to the best of our knowledge and belief said County of Red Willow now contains a population of two hundred inhabitants, and we ask of his Excellency the Governor the appointment of a Board of Election for the organization of said County and the election of County officers thereof. . . .

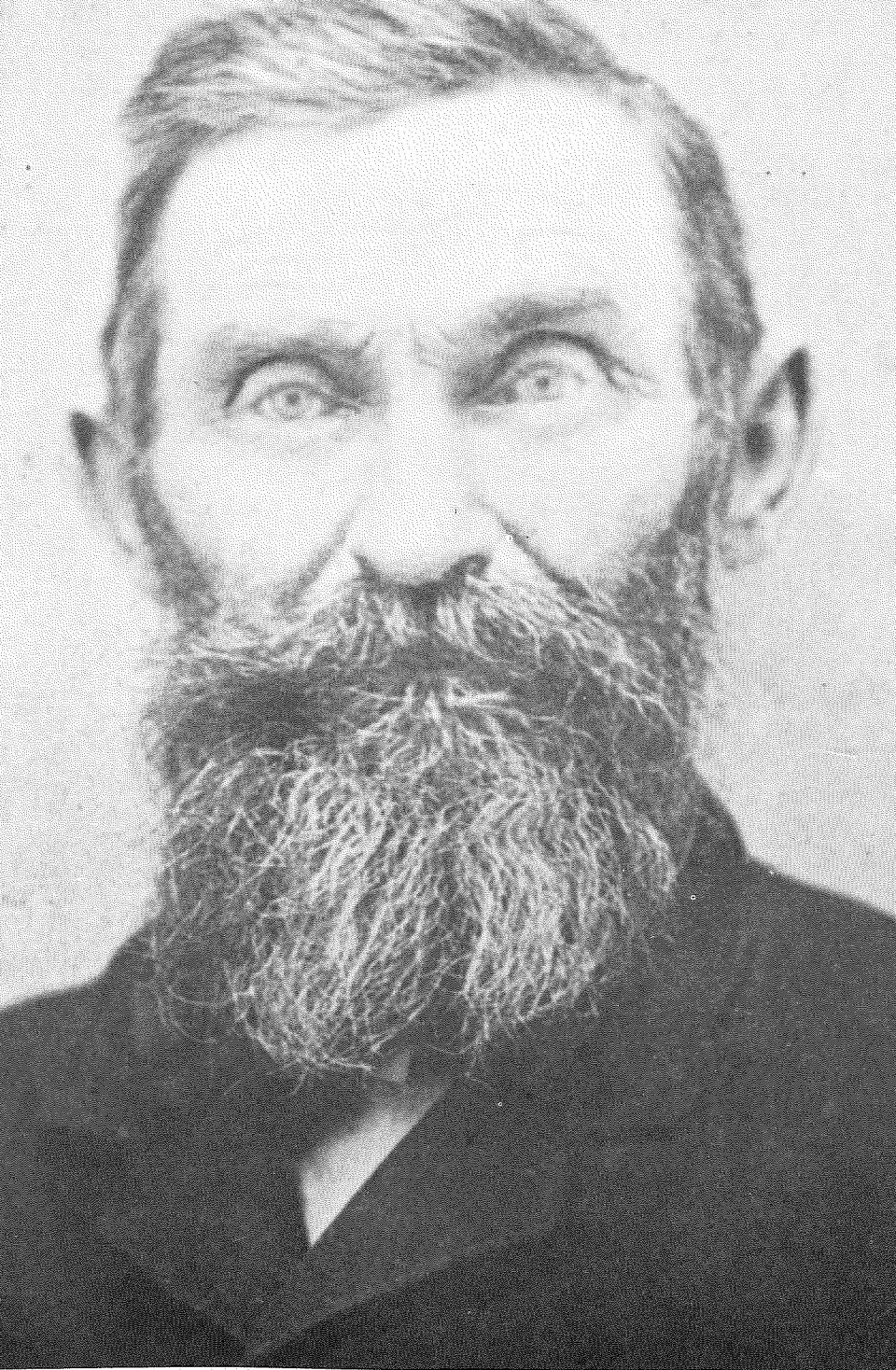
[Wednesday,] May 7, 1873.³²

I have, during the past week, been reading the accounts given by different newspapers of the fearful storm, which visited most of Nebraska, between the 13th and 20th of April.³³ The record is indeed fearful in the extreme, but we here in this upper Republican Valley were in blissful ignorance of the "stirring times" our friends further east were having. We were visited by a severe wind for several days bordering hard on a *gale*, with some rain, followed by about half an inch of snow and a pretty severe freeze, but in comparison with what was experienced east of us, it was only a slight "squall." Nobody frozen, no cattle perished—or even thought of doing so, and no houses, shanties, or even tents blown down. On the whole, we were glad we were in this valley, when we read the accounts of the storm.

The dry weather with us seems to have come to an end, at present, at least. A month ago many of our citizens began to fear a drought, but all apprehensions of that kind have now disappeared. The "windows of heaven" have been open for the past eight or ten days, and it has not only rained most every day or night, but it has *poured* much of the time. In one night not far from six inches of solid water fell, and if there is any "dry earth" now, it must either be laid up and sheltered or else it is down too deep for plows to find it.

³² *State Journal*, May 13, 1873.

³³ This was the famous Easter Blizzard of 1873.



Royal Buck



Site of the Red Willow Colony. The Republican River is in the background. Photograph courtesy of the *McCook Daily Gazette*.

Our farmers are as busy as bees, plowing, harrowing and planting. The weather remains cool, just right for labor, and horse work, and vegetation is coming forward very rapidly. The cattle now find it quite luxuriant grazing and are gaining rapidly in flesh.

The buffalo have made their appearance among us again—not in large herds however—and our citizens have no difficulty in securing plenty of most excellent meat. The young cattle and calves are very fine.

Immigration is coming in quite briskly. Every day, almost, brings new land hunters, and they have very little difficulty in finding good claims.

Blackwood, as I wrote you in a former letter,³⁴ has its first settler. He came down here last week reporting that he had already five neighbors and were putting in the plow in earnest. . . .³⁵

Yes, we are going to have an election; but, Mr. Editor, don't say much about it down there, for we don't want any "flowing in" here of your eastern politicians. We are going to elect a full set of county officers on the 27th inst. and start our county off in high color, and when the next apportionment is made we expect to be called upon to elect at least one Senator and two Representatives, and if we don't send in a competitor for Bro. Tipton's place . . . I fear we shall be behind every other county in the State, that's all.³⁶ And as it is planting time I can't afford to write you a long letter. . . .

P.S. I like to have forgotten to tell you that we now have regular mail service, by hack, once a week from Lowell. In two or three weeks it will be increased to tri-weekly. The first hack came up last week bringing mail and eight passengers. . . .

³⁴ The files of the *Lincoln Daily State Journal* are incomplete and this letter has not been found.

³⁵ George C. Gessleman, the first permanent homesteader in what is now Hitchcock County, located at the mouth of the Blackwood, in April 1873, southeast of Culbertson. Galen E. Baldwin, "Early Days in Nebraska," MSS, Nebraska State Historical Society.

³⁶ Thomas P. Tipton, one of Nebraska's first two United States Senators would be up for re-election at that term of the legislature.

[Monday,] June 2, 1873.³⁷

. . . The spring has been very backward—probably two weeks later than usual for this latitude. The dry weather in October continued without interruption until the first of May, when the rains began to pour upon us in copious effusion. The first storm gave us near six inches of solid water; since then we have had a constant succession of heavy rains and showers. Several times it has rained without interruption from six to twelve, and in one instance for twenty four consecutive hours. At no time since the first of May have we been without rain for more than five or six days. The ground is now most thoroughly saturated and prepared for a vigorous growth of vegetation, and never have I seen it come forward faster than during the past two weeks.

What little of wheat and oats were sown are coming forward splendidly. The first plantings of corn are up ready for the cultivators, so also are potatoes. Early peas are nicely in bloom and gardens begin to promise early returns for the labor bestowed.

A goodly number of immigrants have already arrived and selected claims, and are putting in the plow with vigor. Stock men are also here and coming. During the past week three of this class have come with a large herd of cattle and taken claims up the Red Willow.³⁸ Another herd passed on up to Blackwood and Frenchman's Fork, a day or two since.³⁹ In March the first settler—a young man by the name of Gessleman, took the first claim at the mouth of Blackwood creek—eighteen miles west of this place. There are now some eight or ten others located there.

The buffalo have returned to us again and we now have no trouble in going out almost any day and getting a supply of fresh and very nice tender beef for the killing. Some fifteen or eighteen miles south of us on the Beaver

³⁷ *Nebraska City News*, June 14, 1873.

³⁸ Stephen Bolles (1842-1911) and William (1842-1914) and James Doyle are probably the three men, as they settled on or near the Red Willow, in the spring of 1873. They were active in ranching for many years in several southwestern Nebraska counties. Both Bolles and William Doyle served as county officials of Red Willow County. *McCook Republican*, May 5, 1911 & July 17, 1914.

³⁹ Galen E. Baldwin (1848-1925) and his family arrived at the mouth of the Blackwood, May 30, 1873. He was elected the first sheriff of Hitchcock County, and he was a small-scale rancher. Baldwin, *op. cit.*

a large number of hunters are engaged in killing buffalo for the hides. They are marketed mostly at Hays City, [Kansas,] and are taken to supply eastern and southern tanneries. It is said the old bull hides make excellent thick sole-leather. The hunters get about \$3 per hide.

Well, we have had our first election for county officers, under a proclamation of Governor Furnas.⁴⁰ The election was held on the 27th of May and we polled sixty-four votes: and what of it? I will tell you. Soon after the passage of the act defining our boundaries, a well known town-site operator formerly in the employ of the B.&M. R.R. Co. appeared among us, and it was soon "noised around" that a bargain had been made with some homesteaders living some five miles east of Red Willow, by which a town was to be built immediately, and that the Land Office would soon be removed to it, and that of course it would be the county seat.⁴¹ As the election drew near importations of voters from along the line of the B.&M. who had completed their service at Harvard and other points, begun to be frequent, mostly all single men; and carriages came also, and strange drivers were crossing streams and prairies in search of hunters and trappers who still lingered on grounds occupied during the winter. And when election day came, then came also not less than twenty men who had never been known in the county before, claiming the right to vote, and all fresh from a bounteous dinner table prepared at the expense of this same meddling foreign speculator, and all taking a solemn oath that they were citizens of the county and had resided in it for the last forty consecutive days. Among them appeared some six or eight citizens and residents of Orleans in Harlan county. Even the postmaster—a merchant also—and his clerk came with panting team—having driven sixty miles to reach the polls, and taking the election oath put

⁴⁰ The election was held at the home of Wilburne Morris, S15, T3N, R28W. Those elected were: commissioners, W. S. Fitch, W. B. Bradbury, and W. H. Berger; probate judge, E. S. Hill; sheriff, G. A. Hunter; county clerk, I. J. Starbuck; surveyor, P. T. Francis; county superintendent, Edward Lyon. Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁴¹ According to E. S. Hill, D. N. Smith, town site selector for the B.&M.R.R., approached Buck for permission to buy the site of the proposed town of Red Willow. When Buck refused the offer, Smith approached Hill, who had homesteaded at the mouth of Coon Creek, a few miles to the east. Hill accepted the offer and sold his homestead to Smith; the town developed there became Indianola. Edgar Strong Hill, "Reminiscences of the Early Days of Indianola and Red Willow County, Nebraska," *Indianola Reporter*, March 7, 1918.

in their ballots for this fraud; and when *enough* votes were in, yet there were other strangers standing around saying, "I will swear in my vote if it is necessary."⁴²

Of course honest voters and meritorious projects and enterprises have no chance with such a crowd. The malcontents of course carry the election and leave in great glee. The next morning the townsite speculator with his crop of surveyors and flagmen leave the county to fight out their enterprise in another tribunal, and the county now has not as many voters as it had on election day. But some of these gents(?) are known, and if they don't have to answer before the courts on charges of perjury and illegal voting then I am no prophet. . . .

A few days since a young man⁴³ who has taken a claim on the Beaver creek about 15 miles south of here, was coming over to Red Willow on foot—no companion but his trusty gun. When about half way across the divide he came upon a buffalo cow with a young calf. The cow ran off, and left the calf, and the young man went up to it and after handling it a few minutes the calf turned and followed him and he walked on about two miles, when suddenly a herd of some three hundred buffaloes came rushing upon him. He turned and shot twice into the herd, dropping a buffalo at each shot. But this only enraged them the more and his safety was only in flight and concealment.

On these divides are frequent draws or water courses where there are some steep places and gullies washed out by the water, and our hero made hot hasty for one of these and reached the banks before he was overtaken, but he was obliged to knock his calf down with his gun to prevent it from betraying his hiding place. He had just time to step into one of these gullies when the whole herd came charging down over the gully and passed by; and three times did that herd pass around him, roaring and bellowing, but did not discover him. He waited until he was fully assured that they had left, when he ventured out and resumed his journey, not caring to see any more buffaloes for that day.

⁴² There seems little reason to doubt Buck's charge of fraudulent voting, as it was a common practice in many frontier elections, particularly when the site of the courthouse was to be selected.

⁴³ The Buck and Starbuck history identify the young man as "a Mr. West, living or camping near Danbury." Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

I have just learned that the heavy rain on Saturday night caused a terrific flood in Blackwood creek. A company of soldiers were camped on the bottom and the flood came up on them with such fury that their camp was flooded. Six men and twenty-five horses were drowned. Their supplies were mostly washed away and some of them saved their lives by climbing trees where they were obliged to remain until morning.⁴⁴

An immigrant camped on the bottom, lost two horses and his pants with over \$200 in money. . . .⁴⁵

[Friday,] Aug. 8, '73⁴⁶

The Pawnee Indians who have been up this valley on a hunt for the past two or three weeks, came to grief, on Monday of this week.⁴⁷ The Sioux learning that they were in the neighborhood of Frenchman's Fork, set a trap for them, and it was a success. Before the Pawnees were aware of the trick, they were surrounded and the work of death was going on at a fearful rate. The Pawnees beat a hasty retreat, but left over 100 men, women and children on the ground, dead and prisoners in [the] hands of their enemies.⁴⁸ They lost about 200 ponies also. A company of

⁴⁴ Alex Moore, Captain, Co. F, U.S. 3rd Cavalry, with one guide, one wagonmaster, five teamsters, and fifty-five enlisted men, left Fort McPherson, May 27, 1873, on a routine expedition to the Republican. At the time of the flood, about 9 P.M., May 30th, the command was camped in the creek bottom, probably in the northeast corner of T4N, R32W. Alex Moore, "Report to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte," as published in the *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 12, 1873.

⁴⁵ "Dan Murphy was sleeping in a tent under some trees when the wave washed the tent upon him. He never could tell how he got out from under it; however he reached a safe landing and found . . . that he had brought his pants along . . . but his pocket book, said to contain several hundred dollars, was missing. . . ." Charles A. Gessleman, "The Blackwood Flood," *Trenton Torpedo*, June 11, 1886.

⁴⁶ *State Journal*, undated clipping in Furnas collection.

⁴⁷ The Battle of Massacre Canyon occurred Tuesday, August 5, 1873.

⁴⁸ William Burgess, Agent to the Pawnee, reported in September 1873 that a special census of the tribe identified sixty-nine Indians who had been killed in the battle. The eleven taken prisoner had been returned. "Massacre Canyon Number," *Nebraska History*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (July 1935), p. 141.

soldiers⁴⁹ were on the ground the next day and found 73 dead, wounded and dying Pawnees still there. The Sioux were camped a few miles up Frenchman's Fork. The scattered remnant [*sic*] of the Pawnees passed down by here on Tuesday, a sorry set indeed.

"Heap squaws and papposes killed," they say. There were some 800 Pawnees, and over 1,000 Sioux.

There is very little sympathy for the Pawnees, as every one feels that they are a filthy, thievish set, and have no business up so far in the valley.

. . . Our contested election case came off last week, at Arrapahoe, before Justice Colvin, and resulted in a decision in favor of Red Willow, as the County Seat, and the Red Willow officers. The case showed the most palpable frauds on the part of the Indianola gang of migratory voters. . . . Importing voters from Harlan county doesn't win in this county. I suppose we shall have two sets of officers running in this county in a few days.⁵⁰

[August 1873]⁵¹

It was indeed a regular massacre, and the canyon in which it occurred has been named by those visiting it since, "Massacre Canyon." It has its outlet into the . . . Republican, about 15 miles west of Frenchman's Fork. This canyon runs back five or six miles, is quite deep [in] places, and is not on an average over 25 yards wide, and on both sides the level table land comes out to the brink of the bank. The Pawnees were traveling up this canyon, and were within about two hundred yards of its head. They had killed a buffalo or two, and had evidently halted to

⁴⁹ The military unit was Co. B, 3rd U.S. Cavalry, commanded by Capt. Charles Meinhold, on a routine expedition to the Republican. Contrary to many accounts, they had no knowledge that the Sioux were in the region and their being in the vicinity was completely by chance. The battle was over before they learned of it, and they were unable to make contact with the Sioux, who had fled back to their camps on the Frenchman and Stinking Water. D. A. Powell, A. A. Surgeon, letter, Omaha *Daily Herald*, August 21, 1873.

⁵⁰ The decision from Colvin's justice court at Arapahoe (or Arapahoe, as it was spelled at that time) was reversed at a term of district court, in Beaver City, June 22, 1877. Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁵¹ *Nebraska City News*, September 6, 1873. This letter of Buck's was published as a news article, rather than as a letter.

dress them, when the Sioux came in upon them. There is no evidence of any marked resistance on the part of the Pawnees. The first thing we met in the canyon was the loading thrown off their ponies, and this was done within a space of fifty yards, and over this space the ground was literally piled up with packed meat, robes, hides, tents, camp kettles, and in fact everything they carry on their hunting expeditions. Several yards below this scene of confusion the slaughter commenced, and for nearly four miles down the canyon the dead bodies are still lying bleaching in the sun or putrifying in the water or slough holes which are there. In one place is a pond hole two or three rods long, where, I should judge, near twenty bodies were lying in the most sickening state of decomposition that could well be imagined. The retreat of the Pawnees seems to have been in great haste and confusion down the canyon, and in only one place is there any signs of resistance. This was about a mile and a half from the commencement of the retreat; here eight warriors took shelter behind a sort of bank or opening on one side of the canyon, and all of them are lying there in death, a squaw and pappoose with them. It was a badly selected place for resistance, as they were in full view from the opposite bank, from whence the deadly shots must have come. In fact their retreat down the canyon was most fatal to them, as it gave the Sioux free access to them from each bank, shooting down all the time, so that their own warriors were not in the least danger of being hit by their own shots from the opposite side. This can in no sense be called a battle. It was a *massacre* and nothing more, and near one hundred victims are lying on the ground and full two thirds are squaws and papposes. All or nearly all are scalped.

This has been a severe loss on the part of the Pawnees both in life and property. Probably not less than one hundred ponies were captured and killed, and they lose the meat and hides of seven hundred buffaloes. Most of the meat was nicely (?) dried and packed. It has been a harvest to some of the hunters and settlers up the valley, as several large loads of plunder have been shipped down the valley, and much more is stored waiting for shipment. . . .

[Friday,] Sept. 5. [1873]⁵²

The time lengthens. Hitchcock county, next west of Red Willow, was organized on the 30th ult., by an election of the following officers: County Commissioners, F.U. Martin, W.W. Kelley and T LeGrand; clerk, W.Z. Taylor; treasurer, J Kleven; surveyor, J.H. Conklin; probate judge, A.J. Vanderslice; school supt. D. Murphy; coroner, J. Miller.

Nineteen votes were polled at the election, and it will be seen that there were not quite offices enough to go around, but the balance will be needed in the way of justices, constables, &c. It must not be understood, however, that only nineteen men are resident in the county. The others have not been there a sufficient length of time to entitle them to vote. Of course the citizens of the county could not be left to attend to their own matters. One of Mr. Smith's "chore boys" from this county, and another of his "cats paws" from Harlan county, went up to superintend the election. I understand that they did not vote, however. Perhaps the present lively prospect of prosecution for illegal voting in this county had a wholesome restraint upon them.

The County Seat was located on section 17, town 3, range 31, west and the town is to be called Culbertson.⁵³ John Kleven is to be postmaster. The selection is on a beautiful table overlooking Blackwood and Frenchman's Fork, on the latter stream. Some buildings are already being put up on the town-site. A store of goods will be on the ground in a few weeks. North Platte will be the nearest shipping point, being only 90 miles distant.

In my former letter,⁵⁴ I wrote you that General Vifquain had passed up the valley with a party of Frenchmen, seeking a point for the settlement of a colony. I learn that they have made a choice of lands in Chase County, on

⁵² *State Journal*, undated clipping in Furnas collection.

⁵³ Culbertson was named for Alexander Culbertson, legendary fur trader of the Upper Missouri country, prior to the Civil War. In 1873, Culbertson was living at Orleans, Nebraska, with his daughter and son-in-law, George H. Roberts, former attorney general of Nebraska. Roberts had close ties with the Burlington, and this probably explains why the town was named after Culbertson. Charles E. Hanson, Jr., "Marking the Grave of Alexander Culbertson," *Nebraska History*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (June 1951), pp. 120-129; *Beatrice Express*, September 18, 1873.

⁵⁴ This letter has not been located.

Frenchman's Fork, and a large settlement is expected this fall or early in the spring. It is a good location, with plenty of timber, water and good land, and a fine stock range.⁵⁵

Mr. Samuel C. Longshore⁵⁶ from the Pawnee Agency, has been up the valley looking up the property of the Pawnees, lost in the recent encounter with the Sioux. He visited various parties in this and Hitchcock counties having some of the property, and also the grounds where the massacre took place. He found the meat which they had packed, in a condition to justify transportation to the agency, and accordingly five teams have been up and loaded and on the way to Plum Creek, when [*sic*] it will be shipped by car to Columbus. These teams have about six tons on, and as many more are still on the ground.

Before the agent came, . . . several parties were boasting of having secured from two to five hundred hides and other property of value which the Pawnees had left, but since his advent these parties "had some of the property but it had been stolen."

One incident is amusing. A certain man who was among the first on the ground, had secured a goodly number of hides and other articles, employed a neighbor to take his team and haul his plunder back on the prairie a mile or more and pile it up, and the word was given out that it had all been stolen. Two days after he went to look for his treasure, and sure enough somebody had stolen it indeed. It took a long tedious search, weary traveling in following crooked wagon tracks, but they were not found until the agent had left. Whether the Pawnee will ever get it or not is uncertain.

The grasshoppers have paid us a visit, and our corn fields and gardens look sad. Those who were depending on corn for stock this winter are now putting up hay. The

⁵⁵ Nothing further is known of this proposed colony, though it is known that Victor Vifquain was active in promoting French settlement.

⁵⁶ Samuel C. Longshore, a teacher at the Pawnee Agency, was authorized by Agent Burgess, on August 25, 1873, to travel to the site of the battle and collect whatever Pawnee possessions he could find, and he was further authorized to contract bills in getting the goods hauled by wagon from the Republican valley to the Union Pacific Railroad. Pawnee Agency Documents, Oklahoma State Historical Society (photostatic copy, Nebraska State Historical Society), Vol. I, p. 453.

corn has been greatly damaged by these pests. On many fields [there] will not be over one half a crop. Misery loves company. We are not alone as we learn from the eastern part of the state that the "hoppers" have been there, too.

[Thursday,] Dec. 18, '73⁵⁷

. . . Our harvest was not as bountiful in many respects, as we anticipated, owing to the appearance of an army of grasshoppers about the time our corn was hardening. The corn worm also did us much harm. Between these two plagues our full harvests were only about half a crop. Sod-corn was almost entirely destroyed by these pests.

The experiments with spring wheat and oats were very satisfactory. The [former] yielded about twenty bushels to the acre. Oats not measured, but apparently as good as your "Otoes" produce.

Immigration has continued to flow in upon us steadily; even during the past two or three weeks several families have arrived and taken claims up Red Willow Creek. There is a very marked contrast between the present time and one year ago; where then were wild wastes are now many fine neighborhoods, and lights in the windows can be seen at night in many directions.

In August last we organized a Union Sabbath School, which meets every Sabbath at the house of your humble servant. We have near fifty members—mostly adults. In September we had a Sunday school picnic at Driftwood, eight miles up the river in which the citizens of that place (Valley Grange), united with us and we had a jolly good time; several short speeches, a tip top dinner, croquet, swings, boat rides, etc. The grove where it was held was a wild buffalo pasture one year ago.

The prairie fires came upon us on election day, with a rushing, mighty wind. There were some narrow escapes. but nobody hurt in this neighborhood. At Driftwood, however, considerable damage was done. Mr. G.B. Nettleton, our worthy county superintendent of public instruction, was burned out, losing all his household goods, clothing, etc.,

⁵⁷ Undated, unidentified clipping (probably *Nebraska City Press*) in Furnas collection.

and hay. Several others suffered severe losses in the way of burned house logs, haystacks, corncribs, and one new hewed log house nearly completed.

Since the long evenings have come, our citizens, stirred up by the young folks, have indulged in sundry social gatherings and surprise parties, which are participated in by both old and young with much zest. One was a donation party for the benefit of Mr. Nettleton, at which near \$75.00 in bedding, clothing, and money were contributed.

A literary society has also been organized and meets once a week, at which essays, selected readings, declamations, and debates, interspersed with music, and bi-weekly papers are the order. The exercises are very interesting, and many of the productions are of a high order.

Our autumn has been beautiful and pleasant, but winter came in with something of a rush. We have had two or three little flurries of snow which did not stay long, but on the 10th inst we had a fall of about six inches of snow, which still stays with us; but it has been very quiet since—no wind, but quite cold. Nine degrees below zero is the coldest yet experienced, and the sunshine for the past two or three days begins to make the snow look thin.

Hunters have been almost as thick as grasshoppers were, and thousands of tons of very choice buffalo meat has been taken down the valley to feed you hungry easterners. But those who now want buffalo meat have to go not less than one hundred miles west for it.

Our friend Byfield established a hunter's camp, a few weeks since, up the Frenchman's Fork, about one hundred miles west from here, for the purpose of killing a carload of buffalo meat, which he designed taking to Canada. But two wagon loads killed and the buffalo migrate, and Mr. B.'s carload is *non est*. I learned that a few days since a company of five hunters fell in with a herd of about forty elk, up Red Willow about thirty miles, and killed twenty of them. Pretty good shooting.

Quite a number of our settlers have made entries under the Timber Culture Act, and many more entries would have been made but for the absurd and unreasonable ruling of the Commissioner, in requiring the entire area of 40 acres to be planted the first year after entry. . . . I will say that the ruling practically defeats the object of the law, for any man at all posted in tree culture knows that

“raw prairie” can’t be prepared and planted to timber in one year with any prospects of success. Again, suppose a man makes his entry in the summer, too late to plow, how is he to plant 40 acres within one year? Perhaps Mr. Commissioner thinks tree planting can be done at all seasons. . . .

Christmas is coming and our Sunday School is to have a Christmas tree, and old Santa Claus is expected to load it, but I fear it will not be very gay, for toy shops and variety stores haven’t yet made their appearance here.

Quite a number of our citizens have been remembered by eastern friends in the way of well-filled boxes and barrels of clothing and other necessaries which are a very decided help in passing through “the narrows” of this pioneer life on small means. I only wish all our settlers’ hearts were made glad by the reception of similar favors. . . .

/Monday,/ Dec. 29, '73⁵⁸

. . . Since I last wrote you we have gathered our harvests of corn and other late crops, and we can’t boast of any very “big things” in this regard, for grasshoppers and other worms did us much harm. Our experiments the past season in farming in this valley are quite satisfactory however, and every farmer here will go to work in the Spring with good courage. Immigration here has been very fair. . . .

The new claims which I notice in various directions, the new names which are constantly being added to our postoffice list, and the very large increase of letters mailed and received, tell of a goodly number of new comers among us. . . . A few weeks since I took a trip up Red Willow about forty miles, and I am free to say that some of the finest stock ranges are yet unoccupied up this creek, that there are in the State. There are now settlements up about 12 or 15 miles. . . .

On Christmas eve we had a Christmas tree for our Sabbath School, and about 80 persons were present, and received fruit from it. Of course we had no toy shops from which choice selections could be made, but the ingenuity of our ladies was brought into action, and the tree was a decided success. This will be noted as the first Christmas tree in Red Willow county.

⁵⁸ *State Journal*, undated, Furnas collection.

Our worthy County Superintendent of Public Instructions, Mr. G.B. Nettleton, has been busy for a week or ten days past, in districting of the county. Red Willow is District No.1. There are some four or five other districts in the county. We shall proceed to organize, and hope to have a school in running order soon.

Two of our enterprising young men have prepared and put in market a fine kiln of excellent brick. These, with our excellent quality of building stone, give us materials for putting up good buildings, but we want men with money to use them. . . .

We have had a beautiful autumn here but very dry. Since December came in we have had several little snow squalls, which just whitened the ground, and on the 11th ult, quite a heavy storm took place, the snow falling to a depth of about six inches, which has remained with us until within a few days past. It has now mostly disappeared. We have had but little wind this month and not very cold weather. Only once, I believe, has the thermometer indicated as low as nine degrees below zero.

The principal herds of cattle are being wintered so far without hay, and are doing well. . . .