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## Article Title: The Brownville Story: Portrait of a Phoenix, 1854-1974

Full Citation: Marion Marsh Brown, "The Brownville Story: Portrait of a Phoenix, 1854-1974," *Nebraska History* 55 (1974): 1-141

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1974Brownville.pdf>

Date: 10/10/2014

Article Summary: As a river town, Brownville flourished in territorial days. When its hopes for a railroad eventually died, however, it struggled to maintain its population and businesses even though its arts organizations remained vigorous.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: Richard Brown, Andrew S Holladay, Frederick Schwartz, John McPherson, Robert Wilkinson Furnas, William Thurber, Jeremiah Campbell, Ben Thompson, John Brown, Stephen W Kennedy, J Sterling Morton, Thomas W Tipton, George Strouf, J D N Thompson, Robert Thompson, Daniel Freeman, A D Marsh, Obadiah B Hewett, Joel W Converse, John L Carson, Charles Neidhart, Benson M Bailey, Terence R Duren, Rose Carson

Nebraska Place Names: Brownville (Nemaha County)

Keywords: Richard Brown; Andrew S Holladay; John McPherson; Robert Wilkinson Furnas; *Nebraska Advertiser*; *Nebraska Farmer*; *Brownville Telegraph Bulletin*; Brownville Lyceum, Library and Literary Association; Nemaha Valley Bank; Brownville, Ft Kearney and Pacific Railroad; Underground Railroad; grasshoppers; Panic of 1857; Temperance Society; gold fields; John Brown; Nemaha County Agricultural Fair; Nebraska State Fair; telegraph line; Lushbaugh and Carson (banking firm); First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry; Second Nebraska Cavalry; Thomas W Tipton; Jayhawking; Land Office; Union League; Joel W Converse; John L Carson; Red Ribbon Club; J Sterling Morton; Arbor Day; Grange; cattle drives; Choral Union; Silver Cornet Band; Benson M Bailey; *Mary J Arnold*; Rose Carson; Brownville Historical Society; Brownville House (later Marsh House); Marsh Hall; Christian Church; Minick House; Lone Tree Saloon; Robert V Muir House; Opelt Opera House

Photographs / Images: Brownville; Richard Brown; Robert W Furnas, age 18; inset front page of the *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 14, 1856; first hotel in Brownville; arrival of mail boat; earliest photograph of Main Street, c. 1857; steamship *Henderson* taking on Union troops at Brownville; inset *Brownville Advertiser* ads, territorial years; Brownville House (hotel), built 1857-1858; state map published in the *Nebraska Advertiser*, December 30, 1858; banker John L Carson; building erected on Main Street in 1857 for Carson's offices and the Ponn store; earliest Nebraska church in which continuous services have been held (built 1859); Colonel Furnas and the Second Nebraska staff, 1863; Mexican War cannon secured for protection during the Civil War; Middleton Building, where Daniel Freeman filed the first homestead claim in the US; Smith Hill, 1866; Senator Thomas W Tipton; Main Street about 1869; Union Hotel, built 1868; 1900 photo of the Muir House, built 1868-1872; 1870 Nebraska State Fair in Brownville; State Bank of Nebraska, built 1870; Catholic Church, built about 1870; Governor Furnas; marble works opened by Charles G Neidhart in 1867; Walnut Grove Cemetery; the Brick Block (3 views); interior of Marsh Opera House; the *Belle of Brownville*; Bailey House; Brownville School; Baptist immersion service about 1890; Burlington Depot; apples packed in barrels for shipment; Furnas in his orchard about 1900; Carson House (2 views); Tipton House; Lone Tree Saloon building; Oldtime Fiddlers and Country Music Contest; annual art show; Terence Duren; "The Arrival of Mail by Packet Boat," Duren mural in the Brownville Post Office



*Like Rome, Brownville was a city built on seven hills.*

# THE BROWNVILLE STORY

— I —

## THE BEGINNING

The year was 1854, just a half century after Lewis and Clark's valiant expedition into the Louisiana Territory, and thirteen years before the state of Nebraska would be born. Following the extinguishment of the Indian title and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the vast area known as "Nebraska Territory" had just been opened for settlement. On a hot, muggy day in late August, an enterprising young man from Holt County, Missouri, paddled his canoe across the Missouri River to take early advantage of the opportunities the "new land" offered. His name was Richard Brown.<sup>1</sup>

Either he had surveyed the situation earlier, or he believed in preparedness, for he brought with him tools to fell some of the cottonwoods that fringed the west bank of the river. Tools to split the logs the trees afforded. Tools with which to begin the construction of a cabin. On this, his first work day in the wooded wilderness—August 29, 1854—he laid the foundation for the first cabin of one of the first towns to be settled in Nebraska Territory: his brainchild and his namesake: Brownville. The town was incorporated by act of the Legislature two years later.<sup>2</sup>

Two of Brown's friends from across the river, William Hawk and a man with the fascinating name of Taulbird Edwards, helped him complete his cabin. Richard Brown had not been long in Missouri when he dreamed his dream of founding a town west of the river and began putting it into action. He was a native of Nashville, Tennessee, the son of a plantation owner whose holdings included not only land and registered livestock, but slaves as well. Richard left Tennessee for Oregon, Missouri, when he was in his late 20's, already married and with a family, to establish a home in the West. Missouri soon proved to be not far enough west. And so it was that he crossed into Nebraska Territory.

A rather short man, spare of build but wiry, with deep blue eyes and dark hair, he was a dynamo of energy which he had

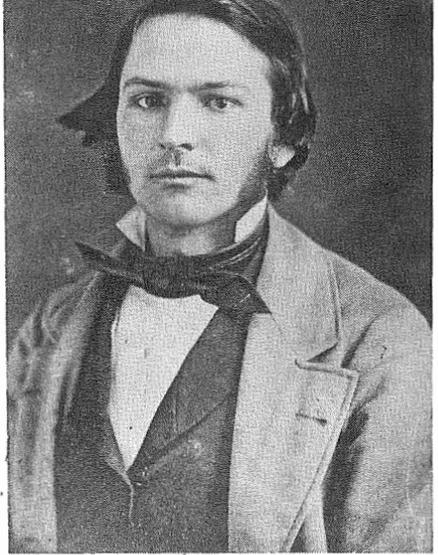
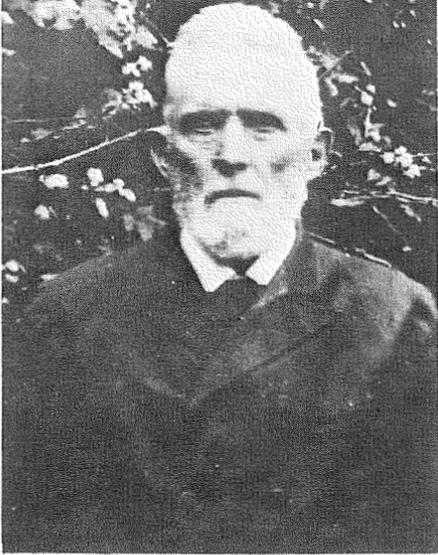
the common sense to direct well. Although he had slaves, he himself was not afraid of hard physical labor.

His enthusiasm for his town-to-be was contagious. Before the summer was out, other cottonwood cabins were built on the west side of the Missouri by men from its eastern shore. In less than three months, on November 12, 1854, then-Territorial Governor Thomas B. Cuming announced the boundaries of Forney County (which was later renamed Nemaha) and designated one precinct, or place of voting, "at the place known as Brownville, at the house of Richard Brown." He named Richard Brown, Allen L. Coate, Albert J. Benedict, and Stephen Sloan "clerks of said election."<sup>3</sup>

Also, within three months of the erection of Richard Brown's historic cabin, the first birth; the first marriage, and the first death had occurred in the frontier settlement. It was well on its way to becoming a town. Though mud clogged the "streets" until the first freeze came to turn them into unyielding ruts, the first autumn held both promise and beauty. The soil was rich. There was a fine natural stone wharf. There was game in the woods. The wooded bluffs, when frost had touched them, turned into a kaleidoscope of colors, while the river front, fringed with cottonwood and willow, became a glittering gold band. Besides their beauty, the trees on the hills offered a bountiful harvest of nuts, for among the oak and elm and sycamore were black walnut and hickory. It was a propitious beginning.

Many thought so. As a result, within the first year after Richard Brown had started the ball rolling, a general store had been opened by William Hoblitzell and Isaac T. Whyte; the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ or "Campbellite") had been organized with Elder Joel M. Wood as pastor; a three-month term of school had been taught; Dr. Andrew S. Holladay had come to care for the sick; Richard Brown had been appointed the young town's postmaster; a steam sawmill had been erected; a flatboat ferry plied back and forth across the river; and Brownville had been named the county seat of Nemaha County.<sup>4</sup>

Although the town was not officially surveyed and granted a charter until the spring of 1856, the townsite had been laid out by Allen L. Coate, surveyor, a year before, and was, by the time



*Brownville was named for Richard Brown (left), who founded it in 1854 (photo taken about 1890). . . . Robert W. Furnas (right) at age 18 while an Ohio resident. He brought printing equipment to Brownville in 1856 and became editor of the Brownville Advertiser.*

of its incorporation, a booming town. It was on February 23, 1856, that the Territorial Legislature passed an act incorporating the town of Brownville.<sup>5</sup> As soon as weather permitted, Allen Coate did the official survey. On May 31, 1856, he filed the plat he had prepared, and it was certified by him before William H. Hoover, Nemaha County Clerk.<sup>6</sup> Coate wrote:

Brownville is one of the most flourishing Towns in Nebraska, of the most rapid growth and flattering prospects as it enjoys a situation perhaps surpassed by none and enjoyed by few in America. It stands on the west bank of the Missouri River, 27 miles North of the Kansas Line and 20 miles south of Nebraska City. It is already a large & prosperous town, although the spot was in the midst of the Forest inhabited only by Red Men and wild animals, as late as 12 months ago. . . . The town is laid out with much taste and presents a fine appearance, several broad streets meet from different points at a Public Green, situated on a gentle elevation which commands a pretty view of the river and where a new Court House is to be completed. . . . The town site is a little uneven in a place or two & gradually ascending from the River to a distance of one and a half miles, where borders an undulating Bench of fertile Land reaching West to where the Nemaha River winds its way through the handsomest groves of Walnut Timber this side of the Atlantic. . . . It is the nearest and most convenient place for Shippers to land Freight for the Forts & Annuities for the Indians. Also best crossing, nearest and best Route for Emigrants on their way over the Plains, and therefore bids fair to become the principal Town of Nebraska.<sup>7</sup>

During the year that ensued between the time the town was laid out and the time it was incorporated, "activity" was the keynote. It was there in the sounds: the ring of axes; the whirr of saws at the sawmill; the pounding of hammers; the shouts of workmen. It was there in the smells: the pungent odor of woodsmoke from the cabin chimneys; the fresh fragrance of new lumber; the strong smells of man sweat and horse manure. It was there in the sights: cabins going up; goods being unloaded at the wharf; shelves of stores being stocked; "shingles" being hung out; and people: men, women, children—bustling about, all in their particular way helping to build their city.

By the spring of 1856, word had gotten around: Brownville! This was the place to bring your family, the place to set up shop, the place to build your future. For this was a town with a future—a big future!

Mail was arriving twice a week, though a bit irregularly. Although Richard Brown was official postmaster, he was too busy with his burgeoning town to take care of the mail. This job he delegated to Frederick Schwartz, who had come to town to cut and sew men's suits, men's trousers—anything that "Mama" couldn't manage to make for "Papa"—and who, as a friend of Postmaster Brown, had found himself designated deputy postmaster. There was a story that he carried the mail in his stovepipe hat. "It was said that the deputy carried letters and papers in his hat, but I do not record this as an actual fact," said Dr. Andrew S. Holladay in a Fourth of July speech he delivered in honor of the nation's centennial, "and would only say that his hat would have been amply capacious and room left had he been so disposed to accommodate the community."<sup>8</sup>

At any rate, there was a charge for the deputy's services, for time taken from tailoring must be recompensed. If a person went to the postoffice (a table in Schwartz's shop) to pick up a piece of mail, the charge was one cent. If he asked to have it delivered, that charge was doubled.<sup>9</sup>

Later, when a newspaper had been established in Brownville, names were frequently run of people who had mail, unclaimed, at the postoffice.

In the blizzardy month of February, in the first year of Brownville's history, a young lawyer named Daniel L. McGary

# Nebraska Advertiser.

AN INDEPENDENT WEEKLY NEWSPAPER DEVOTED TO MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST TO THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

VOLUME I

BROWNVILLE, NEBRASKA

COURT, N. T., SATURDAY, JUNE 14, 1856.

NUMBER 2.

### Nebraska Advertiser

W. F. WURNAS,  
PUBLISHER.

### JAMES W. GIBSON

COUNTY SURVEYOR,  
PHYSICIAN, SURGEON

### W. M. WICKS

DRY GOODS, GROCERIES,  
HARDWARE, ETC.

### PHYSICIAN, SURGEON

DR. J. W. WICKS

### DRY GOODS, GROCERIES

W. M. WICKS

### Notice

THE PUBLIC STATE  
OF NEBRASKA

### Sweet Talk

#### ASHBURN WIFE

ASHBURN WIFE  
I have been thinking of you a great deal lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

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### Notice

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OF NEBRASKA

arrived to take care of the legal problems involved in the affairs of a fast-growing town.<sup>10</sup> But even more important to the growth of that town was the birth of its first newspaper.

During the fall of 1855, with Brownville only one year old, a second M. D. arrived, but an M. D. of many interests and projects other than those connected with medicine: Dr. John McPherson from Tippecanoe, Ohio. He was pleased with the looks of the new town, thought its prospects excellent, and

decided to move not only his family to Brownville, but his printing outfit as well. He traded a one-half interest in his printing equipment, valued at \$3,500, to Richard Brown for Brownville town lots. The agreement between the two men stipulated that Dr. McPherson would publish a weekly for no less than one year. Dr. McPherson had orders for 750 copies of the Brownville paper when it should begin publication, 500 of them local, the remainder from people in Miami County, Ohio, the county from which the doctor came.<sup>11</sup>

Far more important than these advance orders, however, was the man he had chosen not only to see to the transport of the printing outfit from Ohio to Nebraska Territory, but also to be editor of the neophyte newspaper: Robert Wilkinson Furnas. Future years would show that in bringing this man to Brownville, Dr. McPherson was doing much more than starting a newspaper, though the paper proved to be a good and an important one. For Robert W. Furnas was to be one of the most influential men in the New West, of inestimable value to Brownville, to the Nebraska Territory, and eventually to the state of Nebraska.

When Robert W. Furnas came down the gangplank of the steamboat *J. H. Lucas* onto the Brownville wharf on April 6, 1856, he lacked one month of being 32 years of age. He had already had a versatile career, and Dr. McPherson must have seen in his past achievement a hint of the infinite possibilities for the use of his talents in a frontier community.

Robert Furnas was born near Troy, Miami County, Ohio. He lost his parents when he was only eight years of age, they having died of cholera. They were of English Quaker stock and were natives of South Carolina. At their death Robert went to live with his paternal grandparents in Troy. When old enough to be apprenticed, he went into tin and printing. Thus his relationship to the press, with which he was to be identified all his life, began early. Before he left Ohio for Nebraska Territory, he had done book and job printing and had published a newspaper in Troy. He had also held various positions in railroading, as station agent, conductor, and engineer; and a few years before coming west, he had gone into the insurance business.<sup>12</sup>

A building on 2nd Street (the numbered streets ran north and south, numbering from the river, west) between Main and Water

Streets was to be the home of the new enterprise. Before the presses were moved in, a bevy of young people held a dance in the building "to dedicate it."<sup>13</sup>

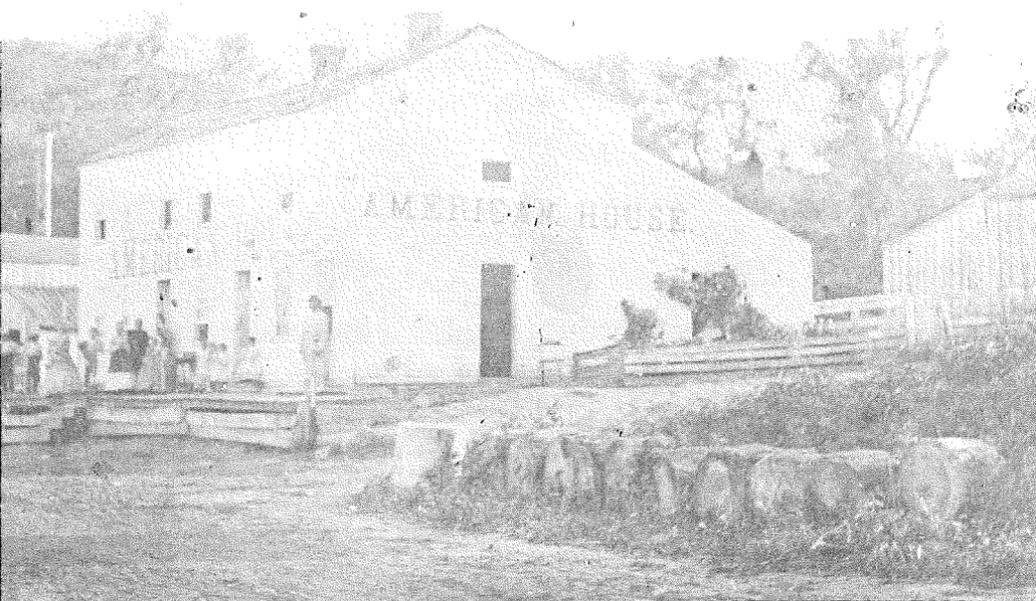
It was two months before the first issue of the paper reached its subscribers.<sup>14</sup> There was some delay due to the late arrival of a part of the press. But the great day finally arrived. On Saturday, June 7, 1856, the first issue of the famous *Nebraska Advertiser* appeared. The paper, said the masthead, was to be "an independent newspaper devoted to matters of general interest to the community at large."<sup>15</sup> John L. Colhapp and Chester S. Langdon, printers who had arrived with Furnas and the printing outfit, had set the type. Robert W. Furnas, editor, had done the writing. He waxed eloquent in his "Salutatory": "At the call of duty," he wrote, "we bestir ourself, and at an expense of our peace and happiness, tread the path she lays out for us—tread it though paved with thorns and sown thick with perils."<sup>16</sup>

The paper was seven columns in width and consisted of four pages. Subscription rates were \$2.00 for one year; \$1.50 for six months. The front page of the first issue contained poetry, a "Select Tale" entitled "Too Good Credit," and four columns of advertisements. There were some items of national news. There was a "Farmers Department" which had helpful hints on "Cut Worms," "How to Expel Rats," and "Deep Tillage." About the only local news was an announcement that the Nemaha Guards were "hereby commanded to parade at the Armory in Brownville, on Saturday, June 21, 1856, in full uniform, with 14 rounds of blank cartridge. By order of the Captain, [Oscar] F. Lake."<sup>17</sup>

The advertisements, however, threw much light on the local scene. Editor Furnas himself ran an ad *for* himself: "R. W. FURNAS, LAND & LOT AGENT, INSURANCE AGENT AND AGENT FOR AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS." Already, he was showing his diversity.

"NEW GOODS AND CHEAP GOODS, JUST RECEIVED: DRYGOODS, GROCERIES, ETC." were advertised by Benjamin B. and J. D. N. Thompson, names which were to be prominent in Brownville in the years to come.

Another doctor was advertising: "E. M. McCOMAS, PHYSICIAN, SURGEON AND OBSTETRICIAN, 2 mi. from Brown-



*First regular hotel in Brownville, originally called the Nebraska House. Built by Taulbird Edwards early in 1856.*

ville, on claim near Mr. Cummings: Tenders his services to the citizens of Nemaha County.”

“FLAX SEED TO LOAN,” read another ad, and again the *Advertiser* was showing the versatile interests of its editor. “We have at this office a few bushels Flax Seed to loan to farmers wishing to sow.”

But most revealing of all was a column headed “WANTED IN BROWNVILLE,” a bit of reading material which should have inveigled almost anyone wanting a job to “Go West, Young Man, Go West.” The wanted list read: “Carpenters, Stone Masons, Brick Layers, Plasterers, Waggon-Makers, Plow Makers, Shoemakers, Saddlers, Tin & Copper Smiths, in short to all kinds of Mechanics and day Laborers, we guarantee as fine an opening for profitable business as can be found in the Western Country.”<sup>18</sup>

The Free Press in Brownville, Nebraska Territory, was off and running, and one of its main duties was to bring settlers to the new town. In this, it was eminently successful.

## A MUSHROOMING NEOPHYTE

Robert Wilkinson Furnas had been a Whig in Ohio. When he came to Brownville, Nebraska Territory, to publish the *Nebraska Advertiser*, he was bound by Dr. McPherson's announced policy that the paper would be politically independent. Shortly after publication of the weekly was begun, Dr. McPherson either sold, traded, or gave his half interest in it to Editor Furnas. The transaction, however, included the stipulation that the paper remain politically neutral for at least one year.<sup>1</sup>

So Editor Furnas devoted his energies to enticing new settlers and to encouraging agricultural and horticultural development during the *Advertiser's* first year.<sup>2</sup> The town he advertised had ample room for settlers. It was comprised of 174 blocks, each divided into sixteen 45 foot by 150 foot lots. One of the blocks had been reserved for a park and another for a public square.<sup>3</sup> With 172 blocks—2,752 lots—for business and homesites, and a current population of 400,<sup>4</sup> uncrowded conditions could be advertised along with the other advantages of Brownville.

Emigrants, largely from Ohio and Missouri, arrived with every steamer, most with a cow, a few chickens, and perhaps a hog or two, plus team and wagon and household goods. It was an exciting time. While the man of the family bargained for a lot and raised a cabin, or, if he were lucky, purchased one already built, his family was lodged at one of the several boarding houses or at the Nebraska House, a real hotel of which the town was very proud. Taulbird Edwards had built it in a handy location on the river bank early in 1856 and leased it to Albert J. Benedict, who advertised regularly in the newspaper:

### NEBRASKA HOUSE

Front Street near the Steamboat Landing

A. J. Benedict.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of the settlers were unusually cultured and well educated for that time. They were desirous of the best of opportunities for their children. So they were happy to learn,

during the summer of '56, that William Thurbur, who had been appointed County Superintendent of the Common Schools in Nemaha County, had organized "School District #1, embracing the town of Brownville, together with claims, or farms of Judge Benedict, William Furguson, Thomas L. Rickets, Joel M. Woods and James W. Coleman."<sup>6</sup> Interest increased when a town meeting was called to elect a school board. People turned out as if it were a social gathering to discuss possible candidates with their neighbors. When the meeting had been called to order, nominations were made from the floor and A. J. Benedict was elected President of their first school board, Robert W. Furnas, Secretary, and Homer Johnson, Treasurer.

But even more important than electing their Directors was the matter of getting a schoolhouse under way. So, with enthusiasm running high, they passed a resolution that "power be delegated to the Board . . . to levy sufficient tax, collect the same, select a site and proceed in the erection of such a building as they may deem proper."<sup>7</sup> Though it took several months for the Board to accomplish the mission given them, the citizenry of Brownville was happy in the knowledge that educational opportunities awaited its children in the not-too-distant future.

Before the year 1856 came to a close, another cultural-educational step was taken. The first meeting of what was to be officially named the "Brownville Lyceum, Library and Literary Association" was held. A partial organization was effected at this meeting, and plans laid for future programs. The first series, it was decided, would feature debates. The day after Christmas saw their inauguration when Richard Brown and H. S. Brown took the affirmative side of the question: "Resolved that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was right," and George W. Bratton and Dr. Andrew S. Holladay defended the negative. Other even more sprightly subjects followed, to be debated with fervor and to liven the long winter evenings for the townspeople: "Resolved that the Indian has a greater right to complain of the whites than the Negro"; "Resolved that all kinds of livestock should be restrained from running loose within the city limits"; "Resolved that the Christian religion, as received and practiced, has been an injury to the human family."<sup>8</sup>

But not all was "great and good" as the young town

stretched its limbs and grew so rapidly and vigorously that it seemed it would attain the stature of a giant. There were growing pains. One day in summer the town awoke to the horrible news that during the night a whole family had been murdered in their beds and their house burned down over them. A German family comprised of Jacob Friend, his wife and five children—ranging in age from an infant to a young woman of 17—lived a little below the town limits on the river bottom. They had all perished “by the hand of violence.” Suspects, picked up one by one, were a group of five men: “Amos Davis, identified as a Mormon, John Patterson, George W. Lincoln, Warner Hoops, and [?] Meyers.”<sup>9</sup> Patterson was apparently the first to confess his part in the crime; then Meyers. The motive for the crime, according to the *Advertiser*, was “booty or to wreak personal vengeance.”<sup>10</sup>

And there were the claim jumpers. Conspicuously, warning notices were displayed weekly in the paper: “LOOK OUT,” read one. “All persons forwarned from buying SW½ of Sec. 25, Twship. 6, No. Range 15, E. of 6th Princ. Merid. . . . now occupied by Thos. Heddy, as I have a right to said claim that is indisputable.”<sup>11</sup>

Such warnings were not always heeded, and violence resulted. One Jeremiah Campbell had taken up a claim in Brownville precinct. “While absent at work, a Canadian by the name of Thomas Gallaher went upon the land and began making improvements.”<sup>12</sup> When Campbell returned from work and caught the Canadian with hammer in hand, he did not wait for “due process.” He took the law into his own hands on the instant. He shot the intruder, and his aim was excellent. Gallaher’s days on the land—any land—were over.

Campbell was arrested and tried for murder, but the decision of the Court was that his act was justified. He was given his liberty and returned to his claim.<sup>13</sup> Bootlegging, too, had its place in the town’s illegalities. On March 16, 1855, a law had been passed by the Territorial Legislature prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquor in the territory.<sup>14</sup> It did not stop the stills in the hills of Brownville.

So life went in those early years of the thriving settlement: the good with the bad, the bitter with the sweet; but always



*The mail boat arrives, bringing news from across the Missouri River.*

there was action, and often there was excitement. Bolstering it all was business.

As the breath-takingly busy days clicked off the months of the 1856 calendar, the merchants, the builders, the mechanics, the craftsmen, the doctors, and lawyers were beginning to need a place of safe-keeping for their money. There were fewer transactions carried on now by barter and more by cash. A load of watermelons would be brought to town and sold out, for silver, in a few hours. Goods on merchants' shelves went out faster than they could be replaced. Fresh beef was brought in once a week by Andrew Skeen from his farm and sold out in less time than it took to butcher and cut up the animal.<sup>15</sup> Brick was being made from the local clay as fast as hands could fashion it, and all night the fires from the kilns cast a red glow against the black sky. Westfall and Marlott, brickyard proprietors, were advertising: "We have now ready for sale 100,000 good merchantable brick."<sup>16</sup>

The constant building and preparation of lots for building meant much hired labor that must be paid in cash. "Never has there been so much improvement going on in Brownville as at present," wrote Editor Furnas in his paper. "We count from the window where we are writing, 25 carpenters and masons at

work on one square."<sup>17</sup> And in the same issue he reported that Jimmy Entwister was "digging down his lots on the Bluff," that he would soon have them down "on a level," and that they would then be worth \$1,000 each.<sup>18</sup>

Yet with all of this bustling business up and down the streets of the town, the river front was the scene of the most action. The original ferry for which Richard Brown had received the franchise in 1855 had been sold 'a couple of times during the ensuing year, the second time for a reported sum of \$5,000. Its owners advertised "an excellent ferry boat capable of accommodating all who may want to cross. The banks of the river are solid and unchangeable and the landing on both sides splendid."<sup>19</sup> This ferry was horsedrawn, but transported heavy and frequent loads across the river. Rates were advertised as follows:

For every 2 horses, mules, or oxen & wagon .....	\$1.00
For each individual pair of horses, mules, or oxen .....	.25
For each horse or mule & buggy .....	.75
For each led horse or mule .....	.25
Loose cattle per head .....	.10
Loose sheep or hogs per head .....	.05
For each footman .....	.10

"Footmen," people without vehicles, could also cross by skiff, operated by the ferry company, advertised as available at all times of the night to carry passengers over the river.<sup>20</sup>

But by no means was all of the river trade via ferry. During the months of 1856 in which the river was navigable, thirteen different steamships plied the Missouri, whistling as they came 'round the bend to disgorge passengers and freight at the Brownville levee. Then excitement ran high. Men left their work, women left their cooking, children left their play to converge on Wharf Street. Amidst the mooing of cattle, neighing of horses, and the shouting of men, as passengers disembarked and cargo was unloaded, threaded the little lesser sounds: cries of welcome as the face of a loved friend or relative was discovered in the press on the gangplank; the excited barking of a dog that had followed his master into the commotion; the restive whimpering of a tired child. Sometimes there was a band to welcome the new arrivals, and for a time it would drown out all other sound.

When the loud whistle announced the coming of a steamboat, the boys hastened to the wharf, and it was a cruel father indeed who would command his boys to saw wood . . . when a steam boat was pulling in. . . . And not only the boys, but the girls, young men, young ladies, businessmen, and even the aged and infirm came down to the river. . . . It is related that when the arrival of the first boat of the season had been announced that young men forgot decorum and hastened out of the church; the young ladies were restless and wondered if the preacher would ever quit, the deacons slipped out to look after the boys lest they fall in the river, and the preachers . . . hastened to the concluding paragraphs, made a short prayer and requested the congregation to sing the four line doxology, and then went to the river.<sup>21</sup>

There was the *Council Bluffs Packet*; there was the "fine passenger steamer," *The Genoa*; there was the *Missouri River Packet*, described as "new, elegant, fast running"; there was the *St. Louis and Council Bluffs Packet*; there was the *Admiral*; there was the *J. H. Lucas*, which made the record run of the year from St. Louis to St. Joe in 60 hours and 57 minutes;<sup>22</sup> there was the *Edinburg*; there was the *Omaha*. And there were others. The smoke from their engines daily made squiggles against the blue sky, and people worried not about pollution but rather delighted in the business the steamers brought.

It was no wonder there was a thriving business in cordwood. James W. Coleman advertised:

TO STEAMBOAT MEN

Cord wood for sale at \$2.25 per cord  
Wood yard 1 mile above Brownville, Nebr. Territory,  
on the Nebraska Shore.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed there was need for a bank to take care of all the money that business was bringing in!

On March 10, 1856, the need was met when the Nemaha Valley Bank opened its doors.<sup>24</sup> An act of incorporation the preceding January had authorized "Clement Brown, J. S. Brown, B. B. Frazier, Volney Brown, Richard M. Waterman and Richard Brown, their heirs and successors, to establish and maintain in Brownville, a bank with a capital stock of \$50,000, further authorizing them to issue notes, bonds and other certificates of indebtedness."<sup>25</sup>

When the big bank safe arrived via the steamer *St. Mary*, there was a larger crowd than usual at the landing. This was an

important moment. Also, the safe posed its problems. It was not an easy piece of "furniture" to move onto shore! And once ashore it took eight yoke of oxen to pull it from the river to the bank building.<sup>26</sup> After a few months of operation, the bank became associated with a Council Bluffs firm, and plans were laid to construct a two-story brick building to house it.<sup>27</sup>

All was not culture, crime, and commerce, however. There were the days and nights of fun and frolic. The Fourth of July celebration in 1856 was worthy of the country whose Independence it commemorated. Almost two weeks before the great day, a citizens' meeting was held at the Court House and responsibilities meted out. J. D. N. Thompson would lead a committee to make dinner preparations. The Marshals were empowered to procure an orator, a reader of the Declaration of Independence, and to prepare a program of exercises for the day.<sup>28</sup>

When dawn broke on the festive day, huge fires were already blazing in the long pits that had been dug for barbecuing. As they died to coals, there began, under direction of Benjamin Whyte, the all-day job of roasting the beef, buffalo, elk, deer, wild turkey, and split pig which had been procured for the feast.<sup>29</sup> As the tantalizing, delicious aroma of roasting meat drifted over the town, nearly every inhabitant of the county arrived to spend the day. The huge trees furnished picnic shade. The occasion for a day's respite from labor, and a gourmet meal besides, furnished high spirits. It was Brownville's first gala, and it was worthy of the name.

When the time came for the program, the grounds were bright with sprigged muslin dresses where women sat on the grass; with gay parasols where the sun crept too close; with unfurled flags and bunting where the performers were assembled. R. J. Whitney acted as master of ceremonies; County Superintendent William Thurbur as Marshal, with N. Myers as his assistant. Henry W. Lake read the Declaration, and Robert W. Furnas delivered the patriotic oration.<sup>30</sup> Music was led by William Thurbur and his wife; and a young man named Jack Chastain<sup>31</sup> with violin under chin, was the first (though he knew it not!) of Brownville's "Old Fiddlers."

Full of food and of fervor for their country and their town, the celebrants finished off the day with a dance in the evening



*Earliest photo of Main Street. Probably taken in 1857, since excavation for the Brownville House (completed 1858) is in evidence. View is toward the river.*

at McPherson's Hall, "a new and commodious building, rushed through to completion for the occasion."<sup>32</sup>

Government and politics were given their share of time and attention, also, by the citizens of the mushrooming new town. The first term of the Territorial District Court was held in Brownville in 1856.<sup>33</sup> Interest ran high in city elections. The first Mayor elected was Dr. Andrew S. Holladay; the second, Luther Hoadley.<sup>34</sup>

There were also the county office contests, in which, in 1856, Brownvillians John W. Hall and Immer L. Knight were elected Commissioners; William H. Hoover, Clerk and Register of Deeds; James W. Coleman, Sheriff; Albert J. Benedict, Probate Judge; William Hoblitzell, Treasurer, and Allen L. Coate, Surveyor.<sup>35</sup>

Running for any office was important, but most important of all were the posts of Councilman and Representative to the Territorial Legislature, for in this legislative body lay power which could help or hinder the growth of their city. Robert W. Furnas early entered the contest for Councilman. In the September 27 issue of the *Advertiser*, he bemoaned his lack of time for "editing" that week, as he was both seeing to the erection of a dwelling to house his wife and babies and electioneering. He had made one "stump speech" in his behalf as Councilman, and had talked with the people whenever opportunity offered. He must have spoken well, for he received every one of the votes cast for Councilman from Nemaha County in the 1856 election. (This office in the Territorial Legislature became that of Senator in the State Legislature.) William A. Finney, Samuel A. Chambers, and Isaac C. Lawrence joined Robert W. Furnas at the capital as Representatives.<sup>36</sup>

The winter of 1856-1857 was not an easy one for settlers in their cottonwood cabins. Despite the abundance of wood for fuel, there were times when icy winds found their way through the chinks and it became difficult to keep warm. The first snow of the season fell in early November. By January 22 there were between 15 and 20 inches on the ground. Temperatures plummeted. At one point, thermometers registered 32 degrees below zero.

Finally spring did arrive, however, though its advent seemed most deliberate. "Spring is coming," wrote Editor Furnas. "All

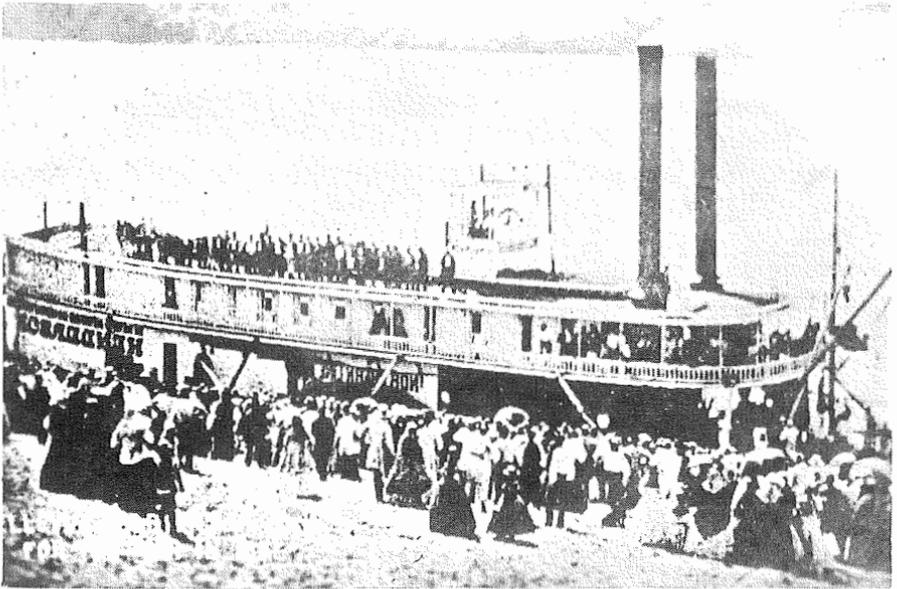
around trumpet the approach of Spring save the 'Old Muddy!' She is yet silent—looks grim and sour, unwilling to be sociable."<sup>37</sup>

It was a spring of great portent for Brownville. Events of significance began happening even before the "silent . . . grim and sour" river broke its silence with the cracking and crunching of breaking ice which denoted the arrival of the spring thaw. The first of these events occurred on the 9th of February, 1857, when the Territorial Legislature passed an act amending the one of the previous year which had incorporated the town of Brownville.<sup>38</sup> This act was more complete and specific than the first, and resulted in Mayor Andrew Holladay's journeying to Omaha and entering in the land office, under the "Pre-emption Law," the land upon which the town was located. The Mayor's prompt action made Brownville the first townsite in Nebraska to be so entered. When he returned, warranty deeds were made out and given to the owners of the lots within the city limits.<sup>39</sup> The "settlers" were no longer mere "squatters." And Brownville was no longer a mere "settlement."

The second event of vital importance to the community occurred when in March Congress passed an act establishing three additional land districts in Nebraska Territory, with the office of the first termed "the Nemaha Land District," to be located in Brownville. This was indeed a boon. Shortly, George H. Nixon of Tennessee was appointed Registrar of the land office in Brownville.<sup>40</sup>

As the ice in the Missouri broke up and the muddy river again stirred to life, the town of Brownville stirred with it. No longer content to build for the present, she must make plans for the future. Grand plans!

At the time that James Buchanan was inaugurated fifteenth President of the United States, the West was beginning to talk railroads. Brownville was not to be left behind. On February 23, Articles of Incorporation for the Brownville and Fort Kearney Railroad were filed, with Isaac T. Whyte, Robert W. Stewart, James M. Hughes, Robert Holladay, Andrew S. Holladay, Robert W. Furnas, Oscar F. Lake, William H. Hoover, Henry S. Mayo, John G. Telford, and William Barbee as incorporators. Section 2 of the Articles of Incorporation stated that the business of the association should be to build a railroad "with



*The whistle of a steamship meant excitement at Brownville's stone wharf. The Henderson (above) is taking on Union troops during the Civil War.*

double or single track from the Missouri River at Brownville . . . or at any point on said Missouri River, within fifteen miles above or below said town . . . to New Fort Kearney, and thence to the west line of the Territory of Nebraska, with power to connect with other road or roads. . . ."<sup>41</sup>

Although this initial impetus for a railroad serving Brownville lay dormant for the next ten years, it was chapter I, page 1 of a dramatic story which, as it unfolded, would involve the town for many years, and which, in the end, would be a major factor in her downfall.

Another evidence of the stirring of enterprise in the lively two-year-old town was the organization of the Brownville Stone and Stone Coal Company. Stone was plentiful in the vicinity for the digging, and for some time there had been veins of "stone coal" reported on farms near Brownville. Now coal had actually been discovered within the corporate limits of the town. When J. D. N. Thompson was having a well dug "within one square of Main Street," the diggers came to "a strata of a fine quality of stone coal twelve inches in thickness."<sup>42</sup> One of the well diggers was an old miner, and he reported that he had no doubt coal could be found ten feet farther down which would be well worth mining. So on March 21, the mining firm

was incorporated, with Dr. Andrew S. Holladay as President, W. Hoblitzel, Treasurer, and Oscar F. Lake, Secretary.<sup>43</sup> Capital stock of \$50,000 was subscribed within forty-eight hours. Coal was really not needed for fuel as wood was plentiful, but at least two mines were opened. One of the reasons for this enterprise, according to a director of the company, was to call attention of immigrants to the many attractions of the town.<sup>44</sup>

A company was also formed to build a three-story brick hotel on Main Street, for it was felt that the growing town needed a modern hotel in a central location. Members of the company donated six lots for shares, and for a time a lottery was planned, tickets to be sold at \$5.00 each, to bring in money to aid in the project. This plan was not carried out; nevertheless, construction of the new hotel, which was to become the famous Brownville House, did begin that summer.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the fact there there was something of a financial crisis in 1857, the year continued to be generally a good year for Brownville. The number of steamships docking at her wharf increased from thirteen the previous year to forty-seven. As many as a hundred people disembarked from these vessels on a single day.<sup>46</sup> During one week in summer, over 300 tons of freight were unloaded at the dock.<sup>47</sup>

Two new newspapers came to town: The *Nemaha Valley Journal*, which moved in from Nemaha City and was published as a daily for a short time;<sup>48</sup> and the *Daily Snort*, a humor sheet put out by Langdon & Goff from the *Advertiser* offices. (Chester H. Langdon had become co-publisher of the *Advertiser* with Robert W. Furnas by this time.) The *Snort*, sadly, was short-lived. " 'Old rye' was the legal tender in payment of subscriptions. A score of issues was enough to send the little paper 'to the tomb of the Capulets.' "<sup>49</sup> August 20 saw the first "EXTRA" on the streets of Brownville, a special one-page edition of the *Advertiser*. It bore the banner, "KANSAS & NEBRASKA," and was comprised entirely of an article with the byline of C. W. Giddings which extolled the prospects for farming, mining, and commerce in the Territory—and did not neglect the anticipated railroads which would bring added prosperity.<sup>50</sup>

Before the river froze again, a steam ferry, the *Nemaha*, replaced the old flat-boat. The boat was 86 feet in length, 30 in

width, and drew 16 inches of water.<sup>51</sup> Guns saluted her the day she went into operation, and cheering crowds saw her off on her first trip across the river. The celebration continued that night with a dance at McPherson's Hall.<sup>52</sup> Another event of note, connected with the river, was Henry Hoffman's catch of a 120-pound catfish!<sup>53</sup>

And perhaps most important of all, Robert Furnas's campaign for agricultural and horticultural development was paying off. Before year's end, the first apples were picked and the Nemaha County Agricultural Society was formed.<sup>54</sup>

Brownville Advertiser *ads of territorial years. The livery stable ad appeared in the spring of 1857; the ferry ad in the fall of 1857; and the millinery ad in the spring of 1860.*

## BROWNVILLE



### Livery Stable,

J. W. COLEMAN,

INFORMS the public that he has procured a stock of New Carriages, Buggies, etc., and as fine Horses as are to be found, and has opened a

#### LIVERY STABLE,

Second Street between Water and Main,

Brownville, N. T.

All persons wishing anything in his line can be accommodated at all hours.

ALSO

Horses and Carriages bought and sold.

### To Ladies of Brownville,

#### MRS. MARY HEWETT



Announces that she has just received from the East a magnificent stock of

### MILLINERY GOODS

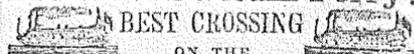
Consisting of

STRAW, FRENCH CHIP,  
GIMP, LEGHORN,  
SILK, & CRAPE  
BONNETS.

French Flowers, Straw Trimmings, Ribbons, etc., To which she invites the attention of the Ladies of Brownville and vicinity, feeling assured they cannot be better suited in style, quality or price.

April 12, 1860

### Brownville Steam Ferry!



ON THE

#### MISSOURI RIVER.

The Route from Brownville to Ft. Kearney, and from thence to California, is the nearest and most practicable.

#### JOHN CODINGTON & CO.

ANNOUNCE to the Traveling Public that they are now running as a Ferry across the Missouri river at *An entirely new, substantial and commodious*

### STEAM FERRY BOAT,

Which arrangement will secure a certain and safe passage at, all times and in all kinds of weather. The Proprietors do not assert boastingly, or for the purpose of gaining custom merely, but are governed by facts, when they say this is the best crossing of the Missouri River in Nebraska, and when they say the route from Brownville to Fort Kearney and from thence to California is the nearest for evidence they refer the reader to the map of the Country; and are warranted in saying it is the most practicable route by personal experience, as well as that of hundreds of others who have traveled it.— We claim therefore that this crossing and route holds out peculiarly favorable inducements, to persons going to California, and solicit their patronage. Notwithstanding our superior arrangements for a safe and speedy crossing, our charges are the same as other Ferries in Nebraska, all being regulated by Legislative enactment.

☞ Recollect that with our facilities of Power, no kinds of weather will prevent our Boats from making regular trips at all hours.

☞ A skiff and hand will be in readiness to cross foot passengers at all times of night.

n20—November 11th, 1857.

## UPWARD AND ONWARD

When the *Advertiser* was one year old, Editor-Publisher Furnas wrote:

One year ago we landed our press and materials in Brownville. Never having seen the place, we acknowledge its half dozen log cabins, hazel brush thickets, and otherwise wild and rude appearance made no favorable impression on our mind.

Now the cabins are gone, and in their place costly dwellings or business houses. From every direction comes the rattle of the carpenter's saw and hatchet and the ringing of the mason's trowel. Houses spring up as by magic. The hazel bush has disappeared from our streets; some of which are already graded, and the plow, scraper, spade and laborer doing their work on others. . . . At the end of a year we are surrounded by all the noise, bustle, and busy hum of city life, and our watchword is still 'Onward.'

. . . We verily believe less than 10 years will find Brownville the most populous and business city in the Territory.<sup>1</sup>

On the last day of the year 1857, he estimated the population as 700 or 800, and went on to say: "Brownville will deserve to be called the mighty 'Queen of the West.' . . . Brownville will stand at the head of the list of important places in the Territory, the glory of Nebraska and envy of her competitors."<sup>2</sup>

While Furnas's use of words may have made his claims for Brownville and her future sound more extravagant than the claims of the man on the street, their thoughts on the subject were much the same: Brownville was the fastest growing, most progressive town in the Territory; there was no limit to her future greatness; and she was bound to be *THE* city in Nebraska.

In the meantime, there was another drama perpetrated by the fact that only the Missouri River separated Brownville from a slave state. It was on September 5, 1857, that Archie Handley, who lived two miles south of town, reported that he had seen three Negroes passing his house, going north. He said they were armed.

The moment his story had been told, men began saddling their horses and grabbing their guns. At this time there was a standing reward of \$100 in Missouri for returning any runaway slave to his owner. There were pro-slavery men in Brownville, for many of the town's settlers were from Missouri; also, because of the frequent trips of the ferry back and forth across the river, there were usually Missourians on the streets of the town. This was the case the day Archie Handley told his tale. So quite a band assembled to fan out in the heat of excitement to hunt down the fugitives.

One group of four, led by a man named Myers, a Missourian, rode into a willow thicket just below the town. For Myers, at least, this was a bad choice of hunting ground.

As the horses, snorting their disapproval, pushed into the thicket along the river, their riders saw their prey. The three Negroes had been seated on a fallen log, resting, but when they heard the horses approaching, they sprang up, weapons in readiness. The guns from both attackers and attacked spit fire, and Myers fell from his horse. Pandemonium broke loose as his cohorts jumped from their saddles to go to his rescue and to attempt the Negroes' capture. Their efforts in neither case were successful. Myers lived but a short time, and the slaves not only escaped, but escaped on the horses of their would-be captors.

When help had arrived, and the body of Myers was taken back to Brownville, the town seethed. The affair had taken on a different aspect. A man had been killed. The "murderer" must be caught and brought to justice! Before nightfall, one of the "guilty" trio was in Brownville in the hands of the law—and of two surgeons. He had been brought in by a farmer named Kelley at whose house, a couple of miles west of Brownville, he had been left by his comrades because he was unable to ride. He had been shot in the arm and was bleeding profusely.

With Deputy Sheriff Ben Thompson in charge of the fugitive, he was taken to Dr. Holladay for medical attention. Examination showed the arm to be badly splintered, and Dr. Holladay called in Dr. McPherson for consultation. They came to the decision that the only course was to amputate. This they did, and the patient was left at the American House to come out from under the chloroform into a world which must have

looked very bleak to him. Ben Thompson remained with him.

Word of Myers' death and of the capture of the wounded slave had of course crossed the river, and crossing in the opposite direction, there immediately came a stream of men bent on revenge. It was beyond belief that a slave should shoot a white man! Reasonable men in Brownville tried in vain to explain that it was a "shoot-out." The Missourians were not interested. Their anger was rife both against the Negro and the Abolitionists. They stormed the American House and demanded the prisoner, whom they were bent on hanging. But Thompson stood firm. He represented the law, and the law would determine what would be done with his man—not a mob. As the Missourians milled about the streets and the townsmen saw that they were armed, the Abolitionists began to assemble and arm also. Unspeakable taunts and threats were hurled at them by the visitors.

Darkness fell, and once more the men from Missouri and their sympathizers went to the Nebraska House and demanded the Negro. Once more Ben Thompson refused.

In the morning Judge C. W. Wheeler went to Richard Brown and told him something must be done to halt the riotous proceedings, "that the Free State men had borne all the insults and abuse that they could bear, and that they were prepared to defend themselves. Richard Brown, although a slaveholder, was a man of peace, and did what he could to allay the excitement." By evening of the second day, the Missourians must have been convinced that Brownville was going to stand firm in seeing the law upheld, for they recrossed the river to home ground. Brownville sighed a collective sigh of relief.<sup>3</sup>

There was a Coroner's inquest on Myers' death, and Henry Hudson Marsh, a young man who had come from New York State to taste the salty life of the West, testified that before Myers died he said that the bullet which hit him had come from "the Big Negro's gun."<sup>4</sup>

The following Monday the wounded Negro was brought before J. D. N. Thompson, Justice of the Peace, and bound over for the next term of District Court. But his case was never to reach trial, for a few days later the "Big Negro" who reputedly had killed Myers and made his temporary getaway, was

captured in Iowa. "He was at the head of ten other runaways. When overtaken, he fired three times at his pursuers, when he himself was shot down. The other negroes then surrendered. They had in all 30 revolvers," reported the *Advertiser*.<sup>5</sup>

The story of the man who lost his arm took a rather ironical turn when the master from whom he had escaped, having been notified of his whereabouts, came to town to claim him. The man was outraged to find that the value of his property had been grossly decreased by the loss of an arm. With vehement oaths, he showered his wrath on Brownville.<sup>6</sup>

No, all was not peace and tranquility in Brownville in 1857 and '58, even though her seven wooded hills held out inviting arms to the weary traveler and the seeking settler. Yet the kind of excitement generated by the runaway slave incident was the exception rather than the rule.

The kind of excitement which was "the rule" was that involved in starting new businesses, building the first church, organizing a Sabbath School, seeing the completion of the new hotel, organizing a brass band, watching harness races, opening a medical college. Scarcely a day went by without a business or professional "opening."

An A. Mesmer was advertising his services as saddle- and harness-maker on Main Street.<sup>7</sup> Thompson and Marsh were running an ad for their Brownville Saloon, announcing their "readiness to tickle the epicurean tastes of the Brownvillians and others with every variety of good things . . . oysters, sardines, lobsters, fresh venison, prairie chicken and such like—and some of that glorious good ale with which to wash it down."<sup>8</sup> J. W. Coleman was advertising his livery stable, with horses and rigs to let; Dr. J. L. McKee, his services as "Physician and Surgical Dentist. Teeth Plugged & filled in the most approved manner."<sup>9</sup> Miss Mary Turner, an advanced "Woman's Libber," announced the opening of a millinery store;<sup>10</sup> Evan(?) Worthing, of a bakery.<sup>11</sup>

But despite this apparent boom, money had become tighter, and there were financial problems. Editor Furnas told his subscribers that it took over \$10.00 a day to publish the *Advertiser*, independent of paper, ink, and interest on money invested.<sup>12</sup> He offered to accept cash, hotel scrip, beef, pork,

chickens, butter, eggs, corn, wheat, lumber or wood in payment for subscriptions.<sup>13</sup>

Besides the national money panic of 1857, which of course affected Nebraska Territory and Brownville, the year saw an invasion of grasshoppers which hurt the farmers, and thereby the local economy. On September 17, Editor Furnas, in the columns of his paper, lauded the departure of these invaders: "The space above terra firma, as far as the eye can reach, has been filled with grasshoppers moving in a south easterly direction. Glad they are going at last. Many Farmers, no doubt, would have been better pleased with the grasshopper armies had they . . . practiced the old saying 'short visits make long friends.'" <sup>14</sup>

The first bank that had opened in the city, the Nemaha Valley Bank, after changing hands several times, had been forced to suspend payment for a time in the fall of 1857. It reopened briefly, but was soon numbered among those past recuperation. "J. L. Carson, O. B. Hewett and J. S. Minick were appointed trustees to wind up its affairs, giving penal bonds in the sum of \$20,000."<sup>15</sup>

Despite this casualty, the town was not left without banking facilities. B. F. Lushbaugh and John L. Carson had established a private banking house under the firm name of Lushbaugh & Carson on January 14, 1857, and Carson continued in the banking business in Brownville for the next twenty-five years.<sup>16</sup>

There was considerable agitation for a church building in 1857. Church services were being held by several sects in the schoolhouse, and the *Advertiser* was receiving letters saying it was time for Brownville to erect a house of worship. By February, 1858, the paper reported that Luther Hoadley was "going to work . . . to secure the erection of a Presbyterian Church Building the coming season."<sup>17</sup> By October of '58, Hoadley's enthusiasm and considerable financial backing had resulted in Brownville's first church. The building was erected on the corner of 2nd and Atlantic Streets, designed for a Union Church. It had a seating capacity of 300 and its dimensions were 40 feet by 60 feet. The Reverend Ames Billingsley was the first pastor.<sup>18</sup>

While this was the first church edifice in town, two others were built within the year, one by the Christian denomination,

the other by the Congregationalist.<sup>19</sup> The latter, with the Reverend Thomas W. Tipton as its pastor<sup>20</sup> (a man whose name was to become permanently associated with leadership in Brownville and Nebraska), was constructed of brick. It stood high on a hill on College Street, smiling beneficently on the village below. This church still stands today, a beautiful little building of Greek Revival architecture with a white steeple. A Methodist congregation still worships there each Sunday. It is the oldest church building in the state in which services have been held continuously.<sup>21</sup>

In 1858 there were five denominations in Brownville, fully organized and holding regular church services, each with its own minister: the Christians (Disciples of Christ or "Campbellites"), Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists.<sup>22</sup>

The previous year the Brownville Union Sabbath School had been organized. It had as officers the Reverend J. B. Wells, Superintendent; Luther Hoadley, Assistant; John M. Graham, Librarian; R. T. Rainey, Secretary; John L. Carson, Treasurer.<sup>23</sup>

While things were going well with the religious sects, the construction of the new hotel had run into financial difficulties. Its stockholders had given up the idea of a lottery in which farm land and town lots were to have been given as prizes.<sup>24</sup> Finally, after some delays and periods of cessation in building, the stockholders voted to issue scrip, payable one year after issue, at 20 per cent, to complete the building. At this time "the entire walls were up." The property was mortgaged to Dr. McPherson, who was not a stockholder, for \$6,000, and all scrip was to go through him.<sup>25</sup> By the end of January, 1858, the *Advertiser* reported that plastering had begun on the hotel walls and that "we may safely look for the Brownville Hotel to open coeval with the opening of navigation."<sup>26</sup>

Three weeks later an ad appeared: "Brownville Hotel for rent or sale. Fine new brick hotel—will be completed by April 1. 50 x 80 feet, 3 stories."<sup>27</sup> By June 24 it had been leased to Robert Morrison and Cyrus W. Wheeler, who had named it "The Brownville House."<sup>28</sup> A dance planned for the opening on July 4 had to be postponed "owing to uncontrollable [*sic*] circumstances."<sup>29</sup> But the dance (referred to as a "social hop" in the newspaper) was held on the 13th.<sup>30</sup>

Who made the music for the dances which were the most popular form of recreation in the young town? Very early Brownville gained a reputation for her music. At the time of the opening of the Brownville House, a brass band had been formed, the forerunner of the renowned "Silver Cornet Band." As early as February of 1858, when a free dance was held to celebrate Washington's birthday, there was "music by the brass band conducted by Gents Marsh, Banning and Dye [who played] at opening ceremonies, and during the evening as a Cotillion Band."<sup>31</sup>

This dance celebrated another birthday in addition to Washington's—or rather an actual birth—that of the Brownville Medical College.<sup>32</sup> This ambitious project had, however, known a gestation period of over a year. On February 9, 1857, it had been incorporated by an act of the Territorial Legislature, its capital stock \$100,000 with shares at \$25.00 each. An attempt was made to obtain a donation of land from the government for the erection of a suitable building to house the college, but the attempt was unsuccessful.<sup>33</sup> The Reverend Thomas W. Tipton's church would have to house the Medical College.

On the night of the dance celebrating the opening of the college, an address was given by Uriel C. Johnson, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence. The following day lectures began, with five professors in action, three of them M.D.'s. One of these was slated to lecture on anatomy, one on the practice of medicine, and one on *materia medica*. The two remaining lecturers were to offer classes in chemistry and medical jurisprudence. The Reverend Thomas W. Tipton was President of the college; Dr. William Arnold, Dean.<sup>34</sup>

The whole course, a total of forty lectures, was offered for \$5.00—12½¢ per lecture! The first lecture, delivered by Professor Arnold, was on "The Bones"; the second, on "Pathology," by Professor Holladay. The *Advertiser* commented that not all who would attend expected to become doctors. One lecture, the Editor noted, was worth the total cost of the course.<sup>35</sup> This aspiring educational enterprise died a natural death at the end of its first series of lectures.<sup>36</sup>

Another type of lecture was being heard in Brownville with some frequency at this time—the temperance lecture. For there were those among Brownville's citizens who would bring liquor



*The famous Brownville House, three-story brick hotel, built in 1857-1858; in use until destroyed by fire in 1903.*

across the river from Missouri and there *were* those who would brew their own. Temperance lectures were to become much more frequent in the years ahead, when saloons that dispensed liquor had invaded the town. At this instant in the town's history, saloons were generally offering a different kind of refreshment. William A. Finney, for example, had "opened a confectionery, soda, and ice cream saloon on 2nd Street."<sup>37</sup>

As the spring of 1858 opened up, it offered some interesting sport to break the monotony. On March 4, Editor Furnas reported that he had gone on a wolf hunt for "some relaxation and excitement." There were a half dozen greyhounds and "about as many men and horses" involved.<sup>38</sup> But he failed to tell his readers how many wolves were hunted down!

Then there were the horse races. A track called the Newmarket Course, a short distance outside the city, had been readied for this sport. When the spring rains were over, the spring races began. On Saturday, May 13, the first race was run, with two entries: Dr. Hall's grey mare, Flying Cloud, and Milton F. Clark's black colt, War Eagle. Flying Cloud won by two lengths.<sup>39</sup> No doubt considerable money had changed hands on the first race of the season!

For those whose interests were more culturally oriented, there were art exhibits. At one time, 12,000 feet of canvas was on display at Johnson's Hall "exhibiting the Missouri River from Sioux City to St. Louis—over 1,000 miles, giving an accurate view of all towns." The artist was a Mr. Simons.<sup>40</sup> And there were books. Attorney Daniel L. McGary had received "some very valuable books from our Delegate to Congress, Hon. Fenner Ferguson," for the Literary Society. These were to set the officers of the Society to thinking about a lending library for the near future.<sup>41</sup>

And to make music there were the hurdy-gurdies—not always appreciated. During the summer they were numerous. "Our streets have been filled with an unusual number of these noisy nuisances the past week," reported the *Advertiser* in mid-June. And the Editor added a warning: "They, like most hand trunk peddlers, are on the lookout for little articles of value that may be 'laying around loose.' So be careful when they're about."<sup>42</sup>

In 1858 the first attempt to move the County Seat from Brownville was undertaken. The prophetic contest gave voters the opportunity to voice approval or disapproval of a suggested move of location to St. George, a settlement which was to become a part of Auburn. The attempt was unsuccessful.<sup>43</sup>

During this year also the settlers were plagued with the fear of losing the land which they had acquired under the pre-emption laws. An announcement by the Federal Government of public land sales to be held in September meant that settlers who as yet had been unable to pay the required \$1.25 an acre to the government for the land they had improved would either have to mortgage it for the amount due, or lose it "on the block." Interest rates zoomed. There were reports of money lenders charging as much as 40 per cent. There were also reports of farmers selling off what little livestock they had in order to pay up on their claims—even to their only team of horses, essential to their farm operations.<sup>44</sup>

It was a sad time, but Brownville was not going to stand by and see farmers stripped of what they had worked so hard to develop. There was also another angle to the impending land sales which would be very detrimental. They would put available land into the hands of speculators or "capitalists," and this would discourage the further immigration of settlers.

Meetings were held, resolutions adopted, and a plan of action determined upon—a plan which it was hoped would at least delay the land sales. But this was August, with the land sales advertised for the following month. The plan must be put into motion with dispatch.

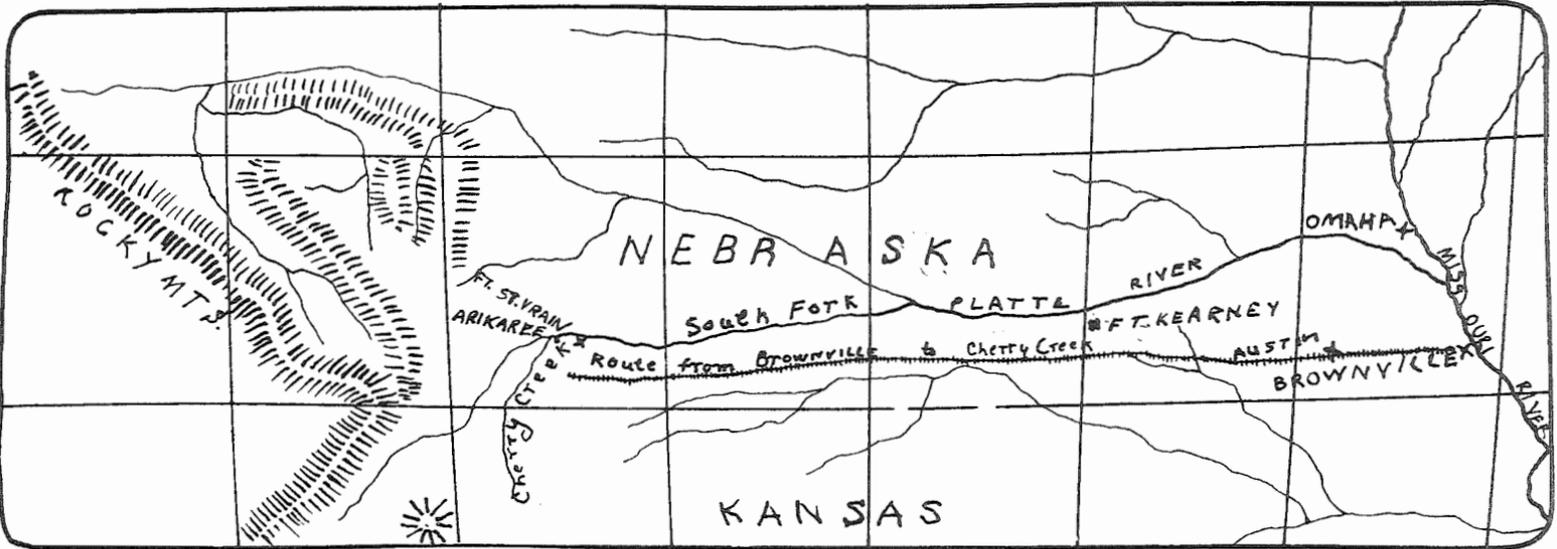
The resolutions were urgent: "Whereas, Owing principally to the financial crisis which has swept the entire country the past 12 months, . . . there are very many actual settlers now unable to procure means to pay for lands before the sale." President Buchanan was quoted: "It ought ever to be our cardinal policy to reserve the public lands as much as possible for actual settlers, and this at moderate rates." And they ended:

Therefore; Be it Resolved, that even at as late a day as the present, we entertain a hope that something may yet be done by the proper authorities to avert what we are sure will result in greatly retarding the progress and development of this country.

That we humbly, yet earnestly, ask a postponement of the sales of lands in Nebraska, more especially in the Nemaha Land District, for at least two years.<sup>45</sup>

One copy of the resolutions was to go to the President of the United States, the other to the Secretary of the Interior. But they were not to go by post. On a motion of J. D. N. Thompson at the meeting at which the resolutions were drawn, Richard Brown of the Nemaha Land District and J. Sterling Morton and Judge C. F. Holly of the South Platte Land District were to be requested "to proceed with Hon. J. Craig to Washington to procure, if possible, postponement of the approaching land sales."<sup>46</sup>

There was no question about the delegates' accepting the challenge. They left immediately. In addition to the resolutions, they drew up a written petition which they submitted to the President. The Hon. James Craig, who had been in Brownville at the time plans were laid for the assault on Washington and who accompanied the delegates, added his bit at the end: "Having visited two of the land districts in the Territory within the last 20 days," he wrote, "I concur in the foregoing statement in reference to the failure of crops, scarcity of money, and sickness in many families I visited. I join unhesitatingly in asking postponement of the land sales."<sup>47</sup> The prompt action



*This map appeared (but with lettering etched onto a black background) in the Nebraska Advertiser, December 30, 1858.*

and logical arguments won the day. At least they won a year's delay.

The *Advertiser* came out with an "Extra" on August 29 to announce the good news. Word of postponement of the land sales had reached the St. Louis *Republican* via telegraph on the 25th; had been picked up from that paper by the St. Joe *Gazette*, which paper reached the *Advertiser* in Brownville on the 29th. Editor Furnas wasted no time. He had his "Extra" out that very day. The regular edition of the paper the following Saturday ran ecstatic headlines:

GLORIOUS NEWS  
Let the Settlers Rejoice!  
The Watchword Again Is  
ONWARD  
Nebraskians [*sic*] Rule  
LAND SALES IN NEBRASKA  
postponed for  
ONE YEAR<sup>48</sup>

Both farmers and townsmen breathed freely again.

And Editor Furnas went on to new fields. His new promotion had to do with the "Nebraska gold fields!" Gold had been discovered on Cherry Creek, "about 551 miles" west, and Brownvillians should bestir themselves to build a road from their town to connect with the established trails west. Then the gold seekers would be sure to make Brownville their outfitting point. Editor Furnas drew a map to show his plan pictorially. The road, he said, would go "through one of the most delightful countries in Nebraska . . . with pure water, and lumber for camping . . . none better through which to survey and make a road." If such a road were not built before April 1, he asked rhetorically, whose fault would it be? Brownville had every advantage as an outfitting point: plenty of goods of all kinds, immense crops of corn (although a couple of months before, crop failures had been reported), all kinds of grain for feed for animals, and their fine steam ferry that ran in all kinds of weather.<sup>49</sup> But Furnas couldn't win them all. Though a 100-mile trail was laid out,<sup>50</sup> his dream road was never built.<sup>51</sup>

## THE GLORY YEARS

Those whom the “gold fever” infected did not wait for roads to be built for them. Largely they made their own trails across the plains. Many headed for the “Nebraska Gold Fields,” and many for Colorado’s. Each spring, wagon trains formed at Missouri River ports and snaked their way west. Hundreds of trains and individual freighters outfitted in Brownville in 1859, 1860, and 1861. Then the Civil War intervened, turning most men’s minds and feet in other directions.

Conflict between free- and slave-staters began in Kansas and Nebraska before 1861. Being in such close proximity to Missouri, a slave state, Brownville was bound to be involved in matters relating to the slavery question, although in these early years the town seems to have been little concerned with the question of slavery as a national issue. John Brown had been in southeast Nebraska and there were rumors of an Underground Railroad trade in the area, as well as rumors of local citizens’ furnishing a “station” on the route.

One Underground Railroad incident involved “Squire” Stephen W. Kennedy near Brownville. He was confronted with a human cargo at his farm home three miles west of town on a bitterly cold early morning in January, 1859. Not yet out from under the feather-ticking, he was hailed from outside by loud and persistent shouts, followed by pounding on the cabin door. Shivering, he stumbled from his warm bed onto the icy floor and made his way to the door to see what was wanted. To his dismay, two covered wagons stood in his snow-packed doorway. Beside the door stood a much-bundled man, his breath making spirals of steam in the frosty air.

The dialogue between the two might have gone something like this:

“What is it, man? Come in out of the cold before you freeze your bones.”

"I was wondering if we could cook breakfast in your kitchen."

"Why—why—yes, of course. Come on in. I'll just go get into my trousers, then I'll build up the fire."

As Kennedy reported to his wife and they dressed hastily in their frigid bedroom, the bustle in the kitchen told them plainly that the man must have a large family. "In fact, there are *two* wagons," he told his wife.

When they opened their door, the sight which greeted them was one that would remain indelibly etched in their memories as long as they lived. For there in their small kitchen was literally a crowd—a mixed crowd of blacks and whites—at least two dozen milling about, poking up the fire in the cookstove, warming their hands, setting out skillets and opening parcels of food. There were two Negro women who were beginning breakfast preparations, a little black baby cradled in the rocking chair in front of the stove, and a bevy of black men and white men.

It was not until one of the women called, "Breakfast ready, Cap'n Brown," that it dawned on Squire Kennedy who his guests were and what their mission was.

"Are you John Brown?" he asked of the man called "Captain."

His famous guest replied in the affirmative. Squire Kennedy, more bemused than ever, was nonetheless a man of his convictions, and he expressed them now: He was not for slavery, but neither was he in favor of Brown's methods.

John Brown, however, wasn't going to take the time to argue his cause or his methods; all he wanted was to get his cargo breakfasted and on their way. When they had finished their corn pone and bacon, cleaned up after the meal, and started to load the wagons, their guard, who had been left at the end of the lane, gave the alarm. There were men coming! How could they get their wagons out?

Squire Kennedy went to see who the men might be. He returned with a chuckle to report that they were only some zealous scholars on their way to school early.

After his guests had departed and normal family life could

get under way for the day, Kennedy began to think of the problems this visitation might give him.<sup>1</sup>

Then came the January thaw, and one of Hoadley and Muir's lumber teams broke through the ice when crossing the river, drowning one of the oxen.<sup>2</sup> By the 10th of March the ice had broken up and the first steamer arrived, causing a flurry of excitement. It was the *Omaha*, called a veritable "floating palace," and she had made the trip from St. Louis to Brownville in four days!<sup>3</sup> Her whistle was music to everyone's ears, but to the boys of the town it was like a sprung lock suddenly releasing the door to spring. Shouts of "Steamboat! Steamboat!" rang through the streets as from all directions they converged pell-mell on the wharf.

A week later the *Advertiser* was reporting a revival and increase of trade because of the Cherry Creek mines.<sup>4</sup> Joseph Baker and Absalom C. Edwards returned from them for "better mining supplies," and reported that \$8.00 to \$10.00 a day could be made there when spring opened up. And equally good news: They had made the trip back in only 20 days.<sup>5</sup> Wagon trains began assembling and equipping in Brownville in April. Almost every day at least one wagon sporting a "PIKE'S PEAK OR BUST" sign was sighted. The proverbial one that returned a month later with a new line added: "BUSTED, BY G--!" was by no means the only one that failed to make it all the way, or, finding the hardships too great and supplies too scanty, turned back even after reaching its destination. In fact, it was reported that not one out of one hundred "returning from the mines" ever got there.<sup>6</sup> However, still others, undaunted, kept starting out. Some men took their families. "Daily one or more trains leave for the mines," the *Advertiser* said in April.<sup>7</sup>

Following the prospectors, overland freighting began in earnest, for it was obvious that more supplies than those which went with the gold seekers would soon be needed if they were to survive. So from twenty to sixty covered conestoga-like wagons would depart in trains westward, carrying food — bacon, flour, sugar, and other staples; work clothes; tools. With a load of from three to five tons, a wagon required several yoke of oxen to pull it.<sup>8</sup>

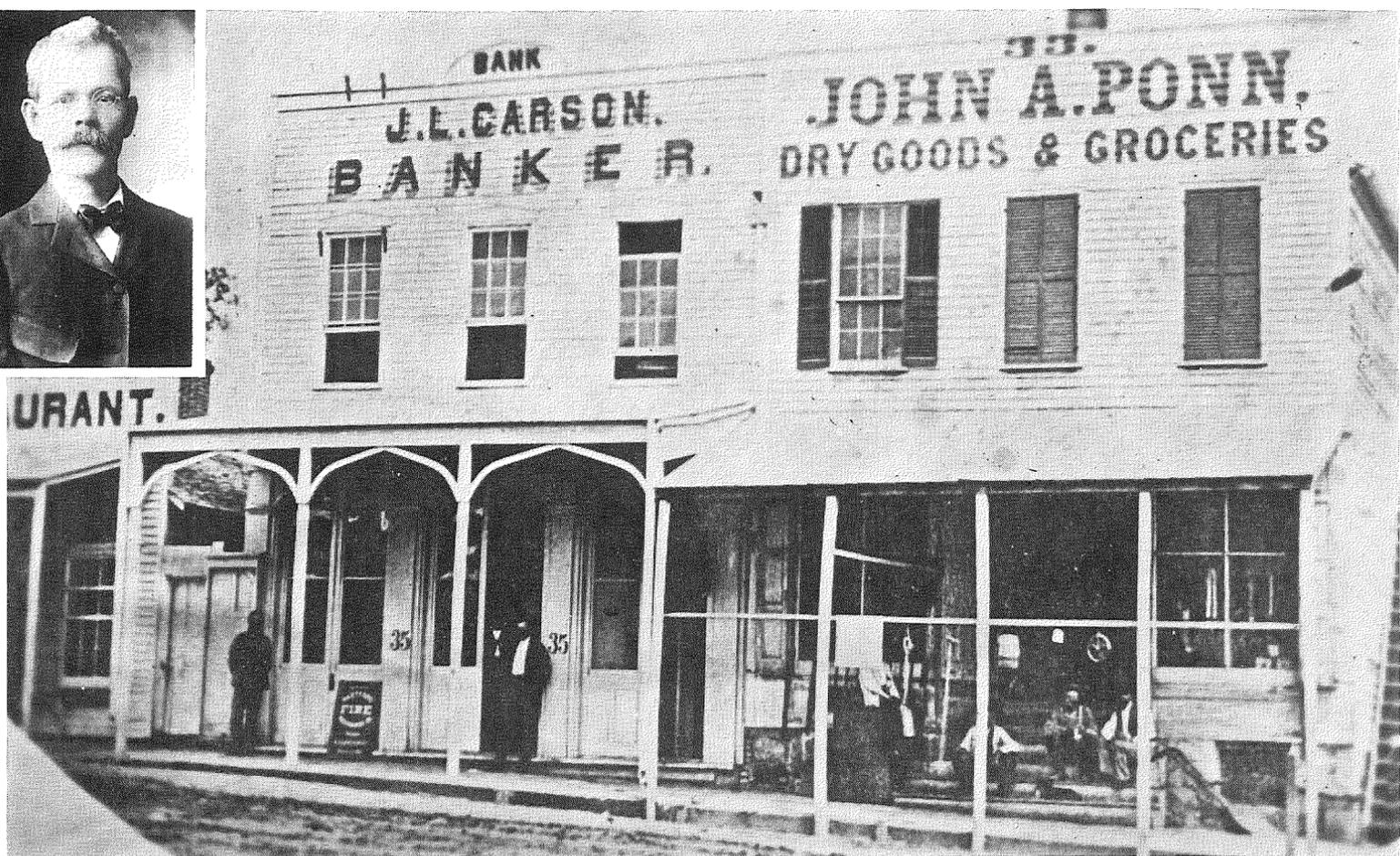
Each spring there was much bustle and much profitable

business in Brownville, with both prospectors and freighters frequenting the streets. Pike's Peak travel was even more brisk in 1860 than in the preceding year. On April 19 the *Advertiser* stated that an encampment of "Pike's Peakers" who had been "stopping for several days past in the lower part of the city . . . left for the diggings. They formed quite a caravan."<sup>9</sup> By the first of May, the fever had gotten to some Brownvillians: "After long preparation, the Brownville Boys have left for the Peak. Some of our best citizens were among the number—4 wagons, 6 yoke oxen, 1 pony."<sup>10</sup>

At times there were encounters with Indians. One story of the 1860's recounts how George Strouf, J. M. Burress, Isaac and Frank Rue, en route to Colorado with a wagonload of freight each, came upon the wreck of a wagon that had only recently fallen victim to an Indian attack. The men had been killed, the wagon burned, and the oxen that had pulled it had of course been taken by the Indians. Although the Strouf train was only seventy miles from Denver, it seemed doubtful that it would reach the safety of the city. No Indians were in sight, but the trail for the next half mile lay through a dense thicket of underbrush where any number could be hiding. What to do?

After a brief council Strouf said he would take his gun and proceed on foot, since he had the greatest stake in the goods. If he made it across the ravine and through the thicket, he would discharge his gun twice, the signal for the others to follow. This seemed as good a plan as any, but Frank Rue said that inasmuch as he had no family, he should be the one to go. Frank Rue won the argument, and after what they thought might be a final handshake all 'round, started out. Shortly, however, his two shots rang out, and after a few quick shoulder-slaps of joyous relief, the others followed safely with the wagons. However, on his next freighting trip, Strouf is thought to have lost his entire train at Plum Creek, Nebraska.<sup>11</sup>

Not only did Brownville tradesmen profit from the wagon trains going west; they also had a good business with the farmers who had settled on the plains to the west, and drew considerable trade from across the river in Missouri. Sixty-three wagons and carriages in from the country were counted from one office window one afternoon.<sup>12</sup> Nebraska City was



*Building erected on north side of Main Street in 1857 for John L. Carson (inset), one of Nebraska's most influential 19th century bankers; Ponn store opened in 1859.*

reportedly complaining that Brownville was getting "more than her share of Ranch trade."<sup>13</sup>

But Editor J. R. Vanatta of the Forrest City, Missouri, *Monitor*, after spending a week in Brownville, while admitting his "surprise" at the town's trade from Missouri, thought it admirable: "There is one feature in regard to the business transactions of Brownville that . . . certainly is quite commendable on the part of the merchants; and that is the large amount of trading that is being done there by Missourians living on the opposite side of the river, and it is not confined to those residing on the Missouri Bottom, but extends over a large portion of the country."<sup>14</sup>

Other visitors, too, praised the enterprise of the thriving town, and Editor Furnas missed no opportunity to pass the good word along via the columns of his paper: "A gentleman from Michigan who spent several weeks in our place this spring, paid the place the following compliment . . . : 'Why,' said he, 'I am perfectly astonished at the business done in your town. There is three times the activity, "*git up and howl*" and business done in your young three year old of fifteen hundred inhabitants, than in my native town of over four thousand. . . .'" An Omahan, who debarked from the steamer *Florilda* "while she was covering the levee with freight, took a stroll up town. 'Sir,' said he, 'I had no idea you had so much town here! Your ultimate prosperity is beyond a doubt.'<sup>15</sup>

And still the emigrants came. There was "a heavy emigration . . . to this part of Nebraska this Spring," according to the *Advertiser* in early June. "This week . . . a train of wagons that had just crossed the river extended from the river to 3rd Street."<sup>16</sup>

However, despite the flourishing present of Brownville and her promising future, her founder, Richard Brown, decided to leave her and move on to new frontiers. In September of 1859, both he and Daniel McGary, the first practicing lawyer in Brownville, left with their families for South Texas, intending to make it their permanent place of residence.<sup>17</sup>

The autumn of 1859 saw the inauguration of two projects important to an agricultural-horticultural area: the publication of a monthly paper devoted to the interests of farmers and fruit-growers, called the *Nebraska Farmer*, founded and publish-

ed by Robert W. Furnas;<sup>18</sup> and the Nemaha County Agricultural Fair, in which Furnas also had a guiding hand.<sup>19</sup> The first issue of the *Nebraska Farmer* was published in Brownville on October 1.<sup>20</sup> The paper is still in existence today, as a thriving agricultural journal.

The first County Fair was held October 6 and 7<sup>21</sup> on grounds that had been readied just south of town. Governor Samuel Black was in attendance,<sup>22</sup> along with a few thousand others, to wonder at the splendid apples that were being raised in the county—giant Big French and Pippins weighing a pound each; and the other fine produce grown in the fertile soil of southeastern Nebraska. George B. Davis exhibited a white beet 20 inches in circumference and weighing 13 pounds; a Mr. Stafford, carrots that were 2 feet long; and George Marshall, a pumpkin 5 feet in circumference.<sup>23</sup> The fair was reported a great success.

Though Robert Furnas had been ridiculed in 1855 when he began planting fruit, he had now for several years been stocking a large and successful nursery as he continuously urged people to plant both fruit and shade trees. In promoting the latter he suggested that trees on a lot would increase its value as much as \$50.00 to \$100.<sup>24</sup> Now a second nursery had been opened by Bratton & Favorite called The Brownville Nursery.<sup>25</sup> Many settlers had heeded and were heeding Furnas's campaign, and it was, literally, beginning to bear fruit.

Although it would seem that Robert W. Furnas of Brownville and J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska City had much in common in their interest in tree planting, politically they were poles apart, and Republican Editor Furnas wrote many an article chastising Democratic Editor Morton, whom he referred to sneeringly as "one of Buchanan's officials."<sup>26</sup> (For Buchanan, Furnas had even less regard. When he vetoed the Homestead Bill in 1860, Furnas wrote of him as "the old booby who has disgraced the Presidential Chair, his party, and the country.")<sup>27</sup>

As early as March, 1859, Furnas was advertising his *Nebraska Advertiser* for sale, "being desirous of engaging in other business."<sup>28</sup> On November 24 he used the columns of the paper to announce: "I have disposed of my interest in the material of the *Advertiser* office to L. E. Lyanna."<sup>29</sup> As the years went by, other matters would from time to time take Robert Furnas

away from the *Advertiser* temporarily, but he kept coming back to it for another decade.<sup>30</sup>

The summer of 1859 saw progress on improving the streets in Brownville. A committee of two, Colonel Charles B. Smith and John L. Carson, who had been appointed by the City Council, were busy as early as April securing subscriptions to be added to tax monies for grading and paving Main Street.<sup>31</sup> On August 4 an item in the *Advertiser* reminded property owners that they had only until August 15 "for grading, paving, and guttering for sidewalks in front of the buildings on Main Street."<sup>32</sup> But it was not until well into December of the following year that an item appeared stating that with just a few more good days, Main Street, under Commissioner Samuel R. Summers, would be "in perfect order, from 3rd Street to the river—paved and guttered."<sup>33</sup>

Without a doubt, however, the most thrilling event of the year 1860 was the completion of the telegraph line from St. Joseph to Brownville and the transmission of the first telegram over the wires. On August 28 the Stebbins Telegraph Line, also referred to as the St. Joseph, Brownville and Denver Line,<sup>34</sup> was linked to Brownville. The following day was a day of celebration, the equal of which had probably been known to Brownville citizens only on the occasion of their first Fourth of July jubilee.<sup>35</sup> The telegraph office was on the corner of Main and 1st<sup>36</sup> in an upstairs room in the Hoadley Building.<sup>37</sup> The telegram sent from this office was the first "wire" transmitted from Nebraska Territory. It went to the Associated Press and read as follows:

Brownville, Neb., Aug. 29, 1860.

Nebraska Sends Greeting to the States: The telegraph line was completed to this place to-day, and the first office in Nebraska formally opened. Our citizens are jubilant over the event, and now realize the advantage of being connected with their Eastern friends and the 'rest of mankind' by means of a 'lightning line.' Onward!<sup>38</sup>

The first telegram ever received in Nebraska also came into Brownville that day. The *Nebraska Advertiser* had sent a message to the *St. Joseph Gazette*: "The *Advertiser* sends greeting. Give us your hand. Hot as blazes; thermometer 104° in the shade. What's the news? R. W. Furnas."<sup>39</sup> In reply, the *Gazette* wired:

"Editor of *Advertiser*: We are most happy to return your greeting. Thermometer at 100°, and rising like h-l. You ask for the news: Douglas stock fully up to the thermometer, and rising as rapidly. St. Joe drinks Nebraska's health. Pfouts & Cundiff."<sup>40</sup>

The big celebration came that night. "Bonfires, illuminations, fire balls, music, burning gunpowder, speeches and toasts were the order of the day. After thirty-five rounds were fired—one for each of the states, one for Nebraska and one for the telegraph line—Colonel George H. Nixon delivered an address."<sup>41</sup> Other speeches followed, including one by Mayor Theodore Hill. Then came the parade led by the exuberantly tooting Brownville Brass Band. This ended the official celebration, but rumor had it that a barrel of wine was carried up to the telegraph office, the head broken in by Dr. McPherson, and that an unofficial celebration continued into the morning hours.<sup>42</sup>

Before the welcome of the telegraph, Brownville had extended another warm welcome—to her founding father, Richard Brown, who, after having a taste of Texas, had returned to his "first love." A letter received from him in February anticipated his return. Texas, he wrote, was not as great as expected.<sup>43</sup> Then on May 17 he was back. "Hon. R. Brown—This gentleman, one of our oldest and best citizens, and who, last year, removed to Texas, has returned and located in this city. After a . . . peregrination through the Territory and Southern Kansas, Mr. Brown concludes there is no better point in the country than Brownville, Nebraska, and consequently returns to his 'first love.' We are glad of it; he is welcome here, where he has a host of friends."<sup>44</sup>

Evidently, Richard Brown meant to stay. Before the summer was over, he had built "a fine brick residence . . . on Main, between 3rd & 4th,"<sup>45</sup> the house which Banker John Carson was later to purchase and build onto; which still later his daughter Rose Carson was to bequeath to the Brownville Historical Society; and which today is open for public viewing during the summer months.

Richard Brown moved his family into their new home that fall, and just before Christmas opened a drug store in the "splendid new building on the corner of Main and 1st

Street.”<sup>46</sup> He was again making himself a part of “his” town, presumably a permanent part. But those who thought so—which may well have included Brown himself—were not taking into consideration the fact that the slavery issue was fast building to a climax.

The results of the election of 1860 brought another newspaper EXTRA to the streets of Brownville. It blazoned the news that the success of the Republican ticket in Nemaha County had been 100 per cent. Among others elected to office was the Reverend Thomas W. Tipton, who won a seat in the Territorial Council.<sup>47</sup>

Now that news was being received by telegraph and that national news was “hot,” the office of the *Advertiser* started publishing a three-column daily sheet called the *Brownville Telegraph Bulletin*. Beginning with the news of Lincoln’s election to the Presidency, it continued through February of the following year.<sup>48</sup> The editor commented that Brownville had been the first town in the Territory to have such a sheet; that since its inception, both Nebraska City and Omaha had started similar publications.<sup>49</sup>

On January 10, 1861, the *Advertiser* had a long editorial on slavery, secession, and the possibility of war. It ended, prophetically: “We are for peace; for anything before internal war, with all the attendant horrors . . . but we are afraid that it [war] will come.”<sup>50</sup>

Although the land sales had taken place in 1859 as scheduled, after the year’s postponement secured by Brownville efforts, the farmers who had weathered the economic storm were doing well. These, however, were the strong. “Those that remained had something special, the indomitable courage and determination to succeed by sustained effort.”<sup>51</sup> Much corn was being raised. There were 50,000 bushels in storage in Brownville in the spring of 1860,<sup>52</sup> of which 6,000 to 8,000 bushels a week were being shipped out by steamer.<sup>53</sup> The farmers had received between 20 and 30 cents per bushel for their crop.<sup>54</sup> In the fall some 5,000 bushels of wheat were shipped; the price of wheat was higher—about 75 cents a bushel.<sup>55</sup>

Business at the Land Office was extremely brisk that year. In July 201 preemptions were filed.<sup>56</sup> In August they picked up



*Methodist Church, built in 1859 for the Congregationalists but purchased by Methodists in 1861. Earliest Nebraska church in which continuous services have been held.*

rapidly with 180 filings in the first week.<sup>57</sup> In one seven-day period 39,808 acres were “taken up.”<sup>58</sup>

Business was brisk at the post office also; in one quarter 3,894 letters had been sent out from Brownville.<sup>59</sup> And it was equally brisk all up and down Main Street during the years 1859 and 1860. The *Advertiser* had put on a carrier boy.<sup>60</sup> The scrip issued for the building of the hotel on Main Street—the Brownville House—had long since been ceremoniously burned.<sup>61</sup> Dr. McPherson had sold the building for a reported sum of \$5,000 to “B. Cogswell, Esq., of Atchison, Kansas,” who “newly furnished” the house and opened it “in style.”<sup>62</sup> A wagonload of items such as baskets, made from domestic willows growing along the rivers, was brought to town for sale.<sup>63</sup> The city had a thriving jewelry store, the second in the Territory, its proprietor a German named Joseph Schultz.<sup>64</sup> A soda fountain had been opened in Twin’s drugstore.<sup>65</sup> A fine new “Banking House” was erected by Theodore Hill for the Lushbaugh and Carson banking firm.<sup>66</sup> It was “the most

admirably arranged Banking House in Nebraska," with "an open front of the latest style," circular counter with an arch over it, and consulting rooms in the back.<sup>67</sup> (Lushbaugh withdrew from the bank partnership the year following this move, and John Carson continued alone.)<sup>68</sup>

Religious sects must have been flourishing also. For the first time the friendly call of a church bell rang out in Brownville on Sunday mornings. The Presbyterians had secured "a magnificent church bell" for their new church. It had been brought in on the steamer *Emilie*.<sup>69</sup> The Methodists held a week-long series of religious meetings,<sup>70</sup> and the Christians "immersed" fifteen converts as the result of revival meetings.<sup>71</sup>

Likewise, men's lodges were thriving. The Brownville Masonic chapter had been organized on September 27, 1857, as the Nemaha Valley Lodge, No. 4, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons at the home of Jesse Noel. Besides Noel, there were present George W. Bratton, Chester S. Langdon, Robert W. Furnas, Milton F. Clark, J. G. McCatteron, N. Goodrich, Jeremiah Marlatt, J. R. Crow, C. Dodge, Moses M. Connor, J. Colter, A. J. Jones, John G. Skeen, J. W. Dentry, and W. (Uriel?) C. Johnson. The lodge worked under "dispensation" of another state until June 2, 1858, when it was chartered by the Territorial Grand Lodge.<sup>72</sup> In the summer of 1860, the Grand Lodge met in its third annual session in Brownville. The visiting and home-town Masons "formed a procession and marched to the Presbyterian Church for a lecture . . . then to Whitney's Hall for a sumptuous repast."<sup>73</sup>

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows also had organized in 1857. Present at the organizational meeting were Richard Brown, John L. Doyer, Robert W. Furnas, Henry Emerson, H. K. Newcome, and W. W. Brown. A charter was granted and the lodge was organized as Brownville Lodge, No. 5.<sup>74</sup> By 1860 lodges had initiated many more Brownvillians.

Wives, left at home while their men had a night at the Lodge, were not long idle. Not only did they prepare many a "sumptuous repast" for the lodges, they also formed their own organizations — lodge auxiliaries and church aid societies — in which they worked diligently, usually to make money for their particular group. They had their sewing circles. They gave

“fairs” at which they sold their handiwork. “Only those articles of the substantial and useful classes” were offered by one such group, according to their publicity.<sup>75</sup> Often the women put on church suppers, oyster stew being one of the favorite dishes. Music and speeches furnished the entertainment. At one of these given by the Presbyterian women at the Bank Hall, the music was reported to be “soul stirring.” The newspaper account of this event ended with the line: “It’s Brownville against the world for social gatherings.”<sup>76</sup>

Certainly Brownville was having her full share of social gatherings, cultural experiences, and entertainment in these years. The Literary Society at this time was sponsoring a series of eight well-attended lectures. One of them was delivered by the Reverend Thomas W. Tipton on “Demosthenes and Webster”; another by him on “Humbug”; Dr. Andrew S. Holladay spoke on “Sources of Disease”; Dr. William Arnold, on “Immortality of the Soul”; Judge Obadiah B. Hewett, on “Manifest Destiny of the United States”; W. C. Johnson, on “The Historian, the Statesman, and the Divine”; Robert W. Furnas, on “The Manifest Greatness of Our Country”; and E. W. Thomas ended the series with an oration using the lengthy title, “The Influence of the Institutions of the Middle Ages on the Present State of Society.” The Literary Society also had a library, with pleasant quarters in the new bank building.<sup>77</sup> And there was always plenty of reading material available in periodicals on sale at the postoffice by the current postmaster.<sup>78</sup>

Theatrical troupes came frequently to town. A week of performances were given by the Ryan Theatrical Group, with Mrs. Kate Denin Ryan playing a lead.<sup>79</sup> The Austin Family gave a concert of vocal and instrumental music.<sup>80</sup> Mabrie’s collection of wild animals visited town in the summer<sup>81</sup> to the delight of the children. Davis and Crosbie’s Circus gave three performances on July 4.<sup>82</sup> Winchell’s Drolleries entertained one Saturday evening at Johnson’s Hall, representing “40 odd characters . . . Dutch, French, Yankee, Irish . . . old men, young men.”<sup>83</sup> In summer numerous “Pic-Nic’s” were held by church groups, by groups of young people, by the Union Sabbath School. There were frequent dances, often referred to as

“hops.” In winter there were sleighing parties and great balls. The winter of 1861 saw heavy snows and more real winter than any time since 1856. Eighteen inches of snow covered the ground by the end of January,<sup>84</sup> and sleighing was excellent. So the jingle of sleigh bells made music on crisp winter nights as young men went courting via sleigh, or as organized sleighing parties visited other towns such as Rock Port, Missouri. The livery stables did a good business renting out cutters and fast-stepping steeds.<sup>85</sup> Among the balls that winter was one given during the Christmas season by A. M. Barnes, held at the home of Judge R. J. Whitney and described as “the most brilliant affair of the kind that ever came off in the vicinity of Brownville.”<sup>86</sup>

For people with other interests, there was a billiard parlor. And the *Advertiser* ran a regular column similar to today’s bridge features, called “Chess Problems,” with answers provided the following week.

With all this “entertainment” going on, there was opportunity for thieves to prey on the unsuspecting, and they took full advantage of it. Horse thievery was so prevalent that an Association for Protection against Horse Thieves was formed, with a membership fee of \$1.00. The President of the association had the power to call out riders to capture such robbers.<sup>87</sup> A panel was cut out of the door of the City Bakery by thieves, but they failed to attain their goal of gold, being frightened away by a family returning from church.<sup>88</sup> Thieves at the Seigel & Greenbaum Clothing Store, however, were more successful. This store was broken into and some \$300’s worth of clothing taken. The local paper in reporting the robbery expressed the opinion that there was a “regular, organized gang of thieves along the river.”<sup>89</sup>

Then all other news lost its impact when, on April 18, 1861, the *Advertiser* carried the news: “WAR COMMENCED!”

## THE WAR YEARS

The spring that saw the opening volley of the War Between the States found Brownville "in a sound healthy condition." Business was good and trade from the West excellent.<sup>1</sup> A church publication, the *Presbyterian* in Philadelphia, carried a five-inch story on Brownville which said the town had "improved rapidly the past year," and people were "still erecting new buildings." No houses bore "For Rent" signs, the writer stated unequivocally. "For the size of it, this is by far the most business [-minded] town in the Territory" with "strong inducements to emigrants," the article concluded. "Prospects were never so encouraging."<sup>2</sup>

J. D. N. Thompson had just been appointed the new postmaster. "The Colonel is one of our oldest inhabitants . . . among the very first who settled in Brownville," the *Advertiser* commented.<sup>3</sup> Professor James R. Dye had removed from Nemaha City to Brownville to organize a "Saxe Horn Band," and he had developed a choir as well.<sup>4</sup> Richard Brown had sold his interest in the drug store and had gone into the dry goods and grocery business "in Strickler's new building on Main Street."<sup>5</sup> Eleven new advertisers appeared in one issue of the newspaper.<sup>6</sup> New houses were being constructed all the time. Rufus T. Rainey had "a neat little cottage" going up "on the hillside in Middle Brownville." John W. Middleton was building a residence on the corner of Main and 4th Streets.<sup>7</sup>

Then on May 9 came the proclamation by Acting Governor Algernon S. Paddock asking for volunteer forces: "No company should number less than 40 . . . and cannot exceed 64." As a matter of fact, the Brownville Union Guards had been formed several months prior to this proclamation, with Reuben C. Berger as captain, John H. Morrison, Austin W. Matthews, and Chancey P. Richardson as lieutenants. The company was trained by Sergeant Isaac Baldwin, who had known service in the regular army.<sup>8</sup> Its purpose, with Missourians making threats from across the river (any loyal men from Nebraska who set

foot on Missouri soil would be treated to a dose of cold lead)<sup>9</sup> was for home protection.

On May 16 news came over the telegraph wires that 2,100 volunteers had been sworn into the Union Army in St. Louis.<sup>10</sup> On May 23 the *Advertiser* reported that a great number of families were crossing the river, fleeing from slave-holding Missouri; that the steamer *Emilie* had touched the Brownville wharf going up river ("we are credibly informed" under the employ of the Southern Confederacy) and was distributing munitions and arms along the Missouri; that the newspaper office was preparing to print to order national flags from 24 inches by 37 inches to 1 inch by 1½ inches, as well as "Stars and Stripes envelopes"; and that a "Call for Nebraska Volunteers" had been officially issued.<sup>11</sup>

The call was soon answered, for patriotism was running high in this town which was already noted for its exuberant enthusiasms. But even before the military succeeded in organizing, the Brownville Union Band made its debut, and patriotic hearts pounded to the beat of the drum. The band had eight members and a fine band wagon "drawn by four spankin' bob-tail nags."<sup>12</sup> On May 26 the first Civil War meeting, with plans for enlistments, was held, and on June 8 Company C of the First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry was organized. Today a plaque in Boettner Park on Main Street commemorates the departure of this company. J. D. N. Thompson of Brownville was named captain; Thomas J. Majors of Peru, first lieutenant; and William A. Pollock of Brownville, first sergeant.<sup>13</sup> The ladies of the town presented the volunteers with a "stand of colors" made especially for them. Dr. John McPherson made the presentation for the ladies,<sup>14</sup> for women's place was still very much in the home. The steamship *Omaha*<sup>15</sup> took the company of 169 men<sup>16</sup> to the city of Omaha to join the rest of the regiment. On July 30 the regiment embarked from Omaha on the steamer *West Wind* for Missouri, but it was involved in little real fighting during the first year.<sup>17</sup>

At home a relief committee was formed for soliciting aid for the families of the volunteers. Dr. McPherson was chairman, with Dr. Holladay and Editor Furnas as his assistants.<sup>18</sup> And of course the greatest July 4 celebration since that of 1856 was

planned and executed. There was a sunrise salute and the church bells pealed. The largest crowd ever to assemble in Brownville was there for the celebration. The week before, the *Advertiser* office had printed hundreds of flags, and they were everywhere: floating from house tops, awning posts, fence posts, on dinner tables, horses' heads, and boys' caps "until the very air appeared to be alive with them." The Home Guard, led by the band playing rousing martial music, marched from the Presbyterian Church to the grove in the center of Brownville, where stands, tables, and chairs had been set up.<sup>19</sup> Plentiful food, the reading of the Declaration of Independence, and the usual speeches brought Brownville patriotism, already burning brightly, to a blaze.

Later in the month, Captain Thompson "in good health and fine spirits" was welcomed home on furlough, and he reported others in Company C to be in equally good condition. At the same time, the Reverend Thomas W. Tipton was made Chaplain of the Nebraska regiment.<sup>20</sup> In August the pay of the volunteers was "raised to \$13 a month."<sup>21</sup>

But despite the war fervor, business moved ahead at home and life went on much as usual. "Notwithstanding the peculiarly embarrassing time," wrote Editor Furnas, "handsome improvements continue to be made." Joseph L. Roy had built a "very neat two-story brick residence on Main between 1st & 2nd, and Mr. [David] Gwin was preparing to build a fine residence on the hillside in Middle Brownville."<sup>22</sup> Also Richard Brown was putting a two-story addition on his house.

Likewise, there was commercial building going on. A new warehouse on the river had been built by Theodore Hill because the old one had become too small, and Luther Hoadley had built a "handsome addition to his building on the corner of Main & 4th." Also Rogers & Brown had built a livery stable on 1st between Main & Atlantic.<sup>23</sup> New businesses continued to open up, and men, though fewer than before, continued to shuttle to and from the mines. In one week a forty-wagon train was loaded with goods in Brownville and headed for the Rocky Mountains.<sup>24</sup> And "Hank" Marsh, who had been out to the mountains all spring and summer, a reporter noted, had returned "in good order and well condition. We never saw him look better."<sup>25</sup>

Dances continued to be a frequent and popular form of entertainment for those who remained at home. One held in "Don's new storeroom," was well attended, and featured both the music of the Brownville Brass Band and Buck's String Band. "Buck, Dye and Marsh handled the stringed instruments with neatness and dispatch."<sup>26</sup>

Another newspaper had come to Brownville in May of 1861 — the *Union*, which had first seen publication at Aspinwall. Its patriotic creed was stated in the first Brownville issue: "It matters not with us who is President, Democrat, Whig, Know Nothing, or Republican. We are for our country, first, last, now and forever."<sup>27</sup> However patriotic, the sheet was not successful financially and after a six months' struggle was absorbed by the *Advertiser*.<sup>28</sup> Even this well-established paper was by then feeling the financial pinch of war and was back to bargaining by barter. Hopefully, it ran the following "subscription rate," which not only told its own story of the comparative price of wheat and corn, but more especially the publishers' need for staples to feed their families during the winter months.

1 yr. ....	4 bu. wheat
6 mo. ....	2 bu. wheat
3 mo. ....	1 bu. wheat
or	
1 yr. ....	.8 bu. corn
6 mo. ....	.4 bu. corn
or	
1 yr. ....	9 bu. potatoes
6 mo. ....	6 bu. potatoes <sup>29</sup>

Although Robert Furnas during the early months of the war retained his interest in the *Advertiser*, he soon became too involved in the business of war to do the editing, and Thomas R. Fisher, who by then had a financial stake in the firm, became editor.<sup>30</sup> In March of 1862, Newspaperman Furnas was commissioned Colonel of the First Indian Regiment raised in Kansas. After brief service against secessionists in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) north of the Arkansas River,<sup>31</sup> Colonel Furnas received a telegram from Acting Governor Paddock asking him to assist in recruiting the Second Nebraska Cavalry Regiment. He therefore resigned his commission and returned

to Brownville to do the Governor's bidding. He enrolled Company E from Nemaha County and became its Captain. (Other Nemaha units were Company C, captained by Theodore W. Bedford, and Company M captained by Sterns F. Cooper.) In December of 1862, Furnas' son William, a corporal in his father's company, died of typhoid fever in an Omaha military hospital. The following March, when the Second Cavalry was fully manned, Colonel Furnas became its commanding officer.<sup>32</sup>

In April the Second was ordered to Sioux City, Iowa, to join General Alfred Sully in an expedition against the Sioux. Operating out of Fort Randall on the Nebraska-Dakota border, the expedition caught up with the Indians at White Stone Hills in June, 1863, in what is now Dickey County, North Dakota. The Indians were routed with great loss, while the Second suffered seven killed, fourteen wounded, and ten missing.<sup>33</sup>

Additional Home Guard units were also formed during these years, for Brownville's proximity to slave-holding Missouri made the strongly Union citizens uneasy. One was the Paddock Guards, named for Acting Governor Paddock who gave the unit a check for \$50.00 with which to buy colors. This organization was officered by A. W. Matthews as captain and R. F. Barrett and William H. Hoover as lieutenants.<sup>34</sup>

Whether the military units were to remain at home or go to the field, they were taken seriously. The citizens of the town expressed their patriotism in many ways and at every opportunity. One instance occurred when the City Council passed a resolution requesting all business houses to close from 3:00 until 5:00 p.m. each Thursday "for the purpose of drilling in the several militia companies in the city."<sup>35</sup>

News of the soldiers on the battle line was sometimes good and sometimes bad. Eventually the First Nebraska Infantry Regiment, with its Company C of Nemaha County men, saw real action. In February of 1862, the regiment first saw action at Fort Donelson in Tennessee, where it engaged in the decisive battle which broke the first Confederate line of defense for the Mississippi Valley. The men fought bravely and well—so well that they received the personal praise of General Lew Wallace.<sup>36</sup> Their next engagement of importance was with General Wallace's division at Shiloh or Pittsburg Landing, where they

saw hard fighting. The Union troops were charged again and again by the Confederates but held their ground. Finally, at a sudden charge of the Nebraska First, the enemy was routed. However, casualties among the Nebraskans were heavy, with between twenty and thirty men killed.<sup>37</sup>

An unsavory war story reached its climax in Brownville in the spring of 1862. Robert Thompson, son of J. D. N. Thompson, highly respected citizen and first captain of Company C, had enlisted in the Rebel Army the preceding fall. Even prior to this "treasonous act," he had aroused the wrath of his home town. As the steamer *Omaha* had pulled away from the Brownville shore carrying the men of Company C, the young man was heard to say he hoped the boat would blow up and destroy the whole regiment; and that if he ever met his father on the battlefield, he would shoot him, "the first man."<sup>38</sup> Now, after some six months' absence, he had returned to the home of this father, whom he had not had the opportunity to shoot, expecting refuge. He found not refuge, but his father. Captain Thompson had been mustered out of the army because of continuous ill health. True to his loyalties, the father immediately reported his son to the authorities, and the young man was arrested for treason.<sup>39</sup>

By the time the war had been going on for a year, depredations by Jayhawkers had become a common practice, one which was not only resulting in an alarming loss of livestock, especially horses, but also in destruction of property and fear for life. The term *Jayhawking*, of Kansas coinage, referred originally to abolitionists operating against avowed traitors to the Union. However, in a short time bands of desperados bent simply on thievery and plunder had taken advantage of the situation, camouflaging their unlawful acts under the name of Jayhawking. Finally the situation became so serious in Brownville and vicinity that an anti-Jayhawk meeting was held, presided over by J. H. Maun, and an organization planned to put a stop to the raids. A committee comprised of J. E. Crow, Judge Cyrus W. Wheeler, Judge Obadiah B. Hewett, Richard Brown, and Theodore W. Bedford drew up the following resolutions:

There is reason to suppose that our civil laws, in the present unsettled condition of affairs, will not afford the people of this vicinity



*Colonel Robert E. Furnas (front, left) and the 2nd Nebraska Staff, 1863. Others: seated, Lieutenant Colonel William F. Sapp, Surgeon Aurelius Bowen, Major George Armstrong; standing, Major John Taffe, Major John W. Pearman, Adjutant Henry W. Atkinson.*

that protection to which they are entitled . . . therefore:

Resolved, That we will use all means for the protection of the lives and property of those persons who have or may enter into this organization, and who shall take the oath to support the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved, That any person who refuses to enter into this organization, for the general protection of the lives and property of our citizens, has no lawful right to expect protection at our hands.<sup>40</sup>

Members were charged a \$1.00 fee, and Judge Wheeler kept the membership list.<sup>41</sup>

A military organization was formed to protect the enrolled citizens against marauding, and it proved eminently successful.<sup>42</sup> Support of the Governor and the Legislature was secured and arms were furnished by the Territorial Government. The strength of this "home band" was soon noised about. They located many horses that had been stolen, captured them from the robbers, and returned them to their owners.<sup>43</sup> The so-called Jayhawking activities grew fewer and fewer. Brownville could take care of her own!

Then came the cannon! Not to disperse Jayhawkers but to give a feeling of greater security to a Union town close enough

to Rebel-sympathizing territory to be apprehensive. "The cannon so long asked for by our citizens arrived here Monday last on the steamer 'Lamona,' " it was reported on April 17, 1862.<sup>44</sup> It was a cannon which had seen service in the Mexican War. It still sees service today, when at the Spring Festival held annually by the Brownville Historical Society the Muzzleloaders Organization shoots off a volley which shakes the seven hills of the village.

Yet times were hard, the greatest economy necessary. Various substitutes for coffee were tried: pieces of pumpkin or Hubbard squash baked till dark brown (a piece one-half the size of a hand, it was recommended; should be placed in a pot of boiling water and boiled for fifteen minutes),<sup>45</sup> parched rye, barley, wheat, okra seeds, and dried carrots.<sup>46</sup>

By the fall of 1862, there were not sufficient funds to continue the free school which the town had been so proudly supporting for five years. "Owing to the financial condition of this School District, there cannot be a regular free school this winter," the *Advertiser* stated on November 8:

About \$60 can be applied from public funds toward support of schools. There will be two schools: one a 4-month term taught by Mr. Debbins, starting Nov. 11. Orthography, reading & writing, \$4; Geography, arithmetic, English Grammar, and philosophy, \$5; Algebra, bookkeeping etc., \$6. Toward the payment of this school, \$40 will be applied. As one school is not sufficient to accommodate all the scholars, there will be another opened in about a month by a female teacher, for small children, to which \$20 of public funds will be applied.<sup>47</sup>

What this amounted to was that pupils received one month's free education that term.<sup>48</sup>

Patriotism was not dimmed by the hardships imposed by war; Brownville called a Union League meeting and drew "one of the largest gatherings of people ever seen in any part of Nebraska."<sup>49</sup> The out-of-towners came marching in with banners and martial music, "making a caravan about a mile in length." Townspeople formed their own procession at the foot of Main Street, and all marched to the Methodist Church. The building could hold only a fraction of the crowd, but with doors and windows open, those standing outside were able to hear the speeches.<sup>50</sup> Following these, resolutions were drawn up pledg-

ing full support to the Union: "We pledge ourselves to an unconditioned loyalty to the government of the United States; to an unswerving support of its efforts to suppress the rebellion; and to spare no endeavor to maintain, unimpaired, the national unity, both in principle and territorial boundary. The primary object of this league is . . . to bring together all loyal men . . . in a common union, to maintain the power, glory, and integrity of the nation."<sup>5 1</sup>

On the home front, however, there were also matters of local import which needed the attention of the citizenry. The first serious loss by fire since the town was founded occurred when Theodore Hill's house on Front Street burned. The fire in the smokehouse where fresh pork was being smoked to supply the family with bacon and ham, somehow got out of control, burned the smokehouse to the ground and set fire to the nearby residence. Had the wind been in the right direction, the press pointed out editorially, the best portion of town "extending from 1st Street to 3rd, on Main, could not have been saved, from the fact that we are entirely destitute of any kind of fire apparatus."<sup>5 2</sup> From that time on, the *Advertiser* made frequent and prophetic appeals for the city fathers to do something about fire protection. Another fire in the Exchange Bank, caused by an overheated stovepipe in the County Clerk's office, damaged a portion of the Literary Association library<sup>5 3</sup> and influenced Brownvillians in determining the location of a city well. It was decided to dig the well on the northeast corner of 1st and Main as a central location and "advantageous in case of fire."<sup>5 4</sup>

The well was dug, and though it was scarcely adequate as the sole solution to fighting fires, it met a definite need. Its "pure, sweet" water, icy cold, was for many years a boon to the stream of emigrants going west through Brownville, to the farmers who came in to trade, to the townspeople themselves, and to the influx of people who flooded the Land Office, starting with the New Year, 1863.

In 1862 the Congress of the United States passed the first Homestead Law, signed by President Lincoln on May 20. The new law was as important to the town of Brownville as to these who took up land under its provisions. The law stipulated that any citizen, either the head of a family or 21 years of age, could

acquire a tract of public land not to exceed 160 acres. His claim must be filed with the nearest Land Office, accompanied by a \$10.00 fee. There were other provisions of the law, the most important being that to acquire title to the land, the homesteader must settle on it and cultivate it for at least fourteen months. It was the filing, however, that brought much business to Brownville. It also brought her fame.

The Land Offices were to be open to accept the filing of claims at the beginning of the new year, 1863. This of course meant January 2 as New Year's Day was a holiday. By December 31, however, Brownville was thronged with "visitors" who wanted to be on hand the minute the Land Office opened. Each had found the tract of land he hoped to make his own. He envisioned his whole future as tied to this piece of "good earth." He must take the first step to make it legally his at the earliest opportunity — which was two days hence. The hotels and boarding houses were full. Everyone was in a holiday mood.

A New Year's Eve party and dance was scheduled at the Brownville House, and with true western hospitality, the townspeople invited all visitors to attend. Among these was a young man named Daniel Freeman, a soldier in the Union Army

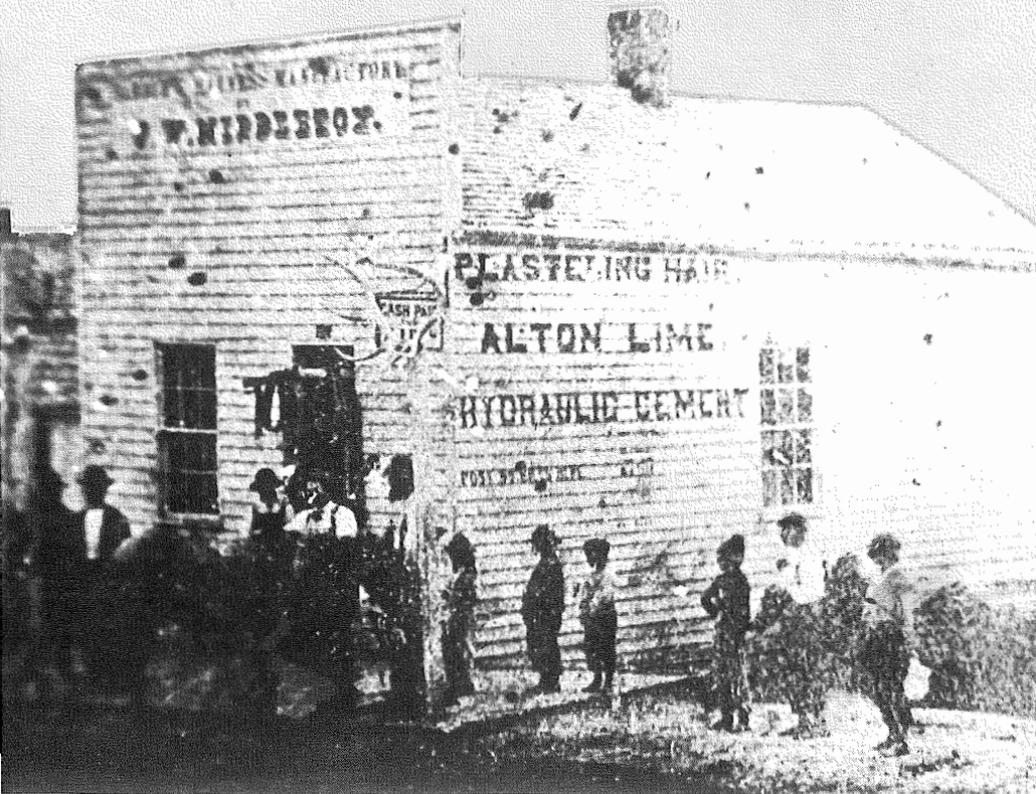
*Mexican War cannon, secured for protection during Civil War. Extant, it is the property of Brownville Historical Society. The cannon was used to celebrate Fourths of July, new ferry launchings, flag raisings.*



who had secured a furlough in order to come to Nebraska and stake out a claim which would be his security when the days of war were over. He had found the land he wanted, a quarter section on Cub Creek near Beatrice, and had then ridden horseback to Brownville, the nearest town with a land office, to file his claim. But he had a problem. He was due back with his regiment in St. Louis on January 2. At the dance he told his story. It fell on sympathetic ears. The Land Office was opened for his benefit at midnight. One minute later he filed the first claim for the first homestead in the United States. Thus it was that Brownville registered an important "first" in the nation's history, and through her, Nebraska lay claim to the first homestead.<sup>55</sup>

The year 1863 ushered in so dramatically, bumbled unevenly along for Brownville as for the rest of the country, straddled as it was with the unwanted burdens of war. News of the First Nebraska Infantry continued to make the home folks proud, but reports of casualties brought sadness. The regiment fought well at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and won praise from those in command. They took part also in the battles of Milford, Jacksonport, and Clarendon, Arkansas. They were made a cavalry regiment in October, 1863, and did important duty in Missouri and Arkansas. When news came of the capture by Confederates of Lieutenant William A. Pollock and some seventy men at Jones Hay Station in Arkansas, there was general gloom. But it was not until the men were paroled in St. Louis that their true state was learned. They had marched 300 miles barefoot, over gravel and stones. They were completely destitute, having been robbed by the Rebels of everything they possessed. They were paroled in September; they would receive no pay until November. An urgent appeal was put out in Nebraska: for dishes, stationery, needles, and thread—anything and everything which would help them to rehabilitate themselves.<sup>56</sup> Cash in the amount of \$142.50 was collected in Brownville and sent to the men.<sup>57</sup> A day of fasting was observed by the town with all business houses closed and religious services held at the Presbyterian Church.<sup>58</sup>

Not only were the citizens of the river town participants in history, they were also observers of historic events that were taking place. Not all of these pertained to the war. The



*Middleton Building, which housed the Land Office where Daniel Freeman, home on leave from the Army, filed the first Homestead claim in the United States.*

steamships that passed by or stopped at the Brownville wharf offered a window to the world outside. In May, 1863, 700 squaws and Indian babies were on the steamer, *Florence*, the first installment of Minnesota Sioux being moved from Minnesota by way of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to Dakota.<sup>59</sup> The first week in June five or six boatloads of the Sioux passed by.<sup>60</sup> Other ships carried Mormons. On June 11, the *Denver* had on board 800 Mormons, emigrants from Europe, Africa and Asia.<sup>61</sup> On its run the following week, the same ship carried “about 1,000 Mormons, appearing to be mostly German.”<sup>62</sup>

And there were the personal tragedies: drowning in summer—“two little Berg boys age 7 & 9 who had gone ‘bathing’”;<sup>63</sup> the 15-year-old son of Richard E. Case, an only child<sup>64</sup>; an unidentified boy of about twelve<sup>65</sup>; more than one “colored boy”—unnamed—who fell into the river when helping to load or unload freight. In winter there was much illness,

especially among the children, and many deaths. Stark notices appeared that meant heartaches within homes: "Died. Infant, 1 yr., 2 mo., 16 days. Helen W., Daughter of C. P. and Rachel Richardson."<sup>66</sup>

Liquor was flowing now in Brownville and added its bit to the hot tempers which sometimes flared against the purported "Secesh," sometimes against authority. The home of James Emmons, a suspected "Reb," was attacked with considerable damage done to the house. Lawrence Rains and Edward Hahn were accused by Emmons of the depredation, which led to Rains' attacking Emmons on the street. No one interfered. Later Hahn met Emmons and beat him severely.<sup>67</sup> However, when the case against the two attackers came up for hearing, it was dismissed.<sup>68</sup> Even the long-time good citizen Dr. McPherson came in for criticism in this case. He was accused in a letter signed "Union League" of harboring, aiding, and abetting a rebel. At that time he was the proprietor of the Brownville House and had taken Emmons in off the street following his beating by Hahn. He replied that his protection extended only to keeping a man from being murdered in their streets in broad daylight.<sup>69</sup> The *Advertiser* commented that Emmons might be "secesh" but that "we must adhere to the law."<sup>70</sup>

Another incident occurred only a couple of months later, this one blamed directly on William Harden's being "in liquor" to the extent that he was "deranged." The guard on duty at the guard house was quietly walking his beat when he was accosted by Harden, a stranger who demanded his revolver. When his demand was denied, Harden shoved the guard aside and attempted to break into the guard house. This failing, he hurled himself on the guard in a frenzy. This time the guard used his revolver. William Harden fell. Though the man died, the guard was exonerated.<sup>71</sup>

Probably the bloodiest of all Brownville stories of the day, although it did not take place in the town, was the story of Allen Edwards. Literally it was a hair-raiser. Taulbird Edwards, one of the first men to set foot on the soil that now underlay the streets of Brownville and a relative of Al Edwards, was also involved. Al Edwards' parents had both died while he was still a boy, and after a period of working on farms adjacent to

Brownville, he had taken a job as teamster for a freighting outfit that carried supplies across the plains to the West. He was then just 18. On July 18, 1864, when he was on his first trip, the wagon train was attacked by Indians on Walnut Creek, near Fort Zarah, Kansas, about nine miles from the present site of Great Bend. The teamsters of the forward wagons whipped up their teams and were able to reach the fort, but those in the rear were cut off by the Indian charge, and there was nothing to do but fight it out. Both Al and Taulbird Edwards were in wagons to the rear. The teamsters, greatly outnumbered and inadequately armed, fought off the Indians for most of a long day, but finally their horses and mules were captured and the wagons plundered. Of the twenty-five teamsters, ten were dead and five were wounded. Taulbird Edwards was among the dead. Al Edwards was among the wounded—not the victim of an arrow, but the victim of a scalping. He was taken to Fort Larned, Kansas, and placed under the care of the Post surgeon. And his story has a “Believe It Or Not” ending, for Al Edwards lived to tell his own story—many times. He lived to be 78.<sup>72</sup>

They were bloody times, those years of the Civil War, when more lives were lost than in any previous armed conflict in our history. And while they were for Brownville “the worst of times,” they were also “the best of times.” There were rumors that Richard Brown, who had again departed the town he had founded, this time because of the violent anti-slavery feeling, would soon return.<sup>73</sup> The war-sparked talk of changing the town’s name had ceased. There was again a daily *Telegraph Bulletin*, and now it was bringing news of battles won by the North.<sup>74</sup> Marsh Brothers and Zook had opened a book store with “a select stock of books and stationery, and the latest Eastern papers”;<sup>75</sup> the “latest Eastern papers” also carried hopeful notes and news that was good news to Union men. It was time to begin looking ahead. A petition for the erection of a Courthouse in Brownville was presented to the District Court.<sup>76</sup> A drive had also been started for funds with which to build a seminary and high school building.<sup>77</sup>

Though it was too soon for jubilation, there were rumors of peace.

## THE POST-WAR YEARS

As 1865 was ushered in, still without confirmation of the peace rumors, Brownville's first brewery was under construction by Conrad Schreiner;<sup>1</sup> the Walnut Grove Cemetery Association had been formed;<sup>2</sup> the management of the Brownville House had been taken over by Messrs. Thralkill and Co.;<sup>3</sup> Haskell's Great Exhibition was coming to town with a tent that would hold 2,000;<sup>4</sup> an ordinance had been passed prohibiting the erection of wooden buildings in any of the lots fronting on Main Street in Blocks 1 and 2, 19 and 20;<sup>5</sup> the "Mite Society" had been formed;<sup>6</sup> and another residence, that of Joshua Rogers, with all the furnishings, had burned to ashes.<sup>7</sup> This fire had prompted another plea by the *Advertiser* for an organized fire department with hook-and-ladder equipment. Whether or not this plea prompted the action, the City Council did pass an ordinance creating the office of Fire Warden and making it requisite that stove pipe be run only into brick chimneys.<sup>8</sup>

Then rumor became fact: Grant had captured Richmond! Lee had surrendered! This meant the war's end! And Brownville held her own exuberant twenty-four-hour celebration. The "big gun," her prized cannon, was brought out and fired again and again. And all night "a grand illumination" lit the streets of the town as the noise of jubilation continued.<sup>9</sup> But all too soon the glad news was followed by the sad. Little more than a city election had taken place in Brownville, making Charles G. Dorsey the new mayor,<sup>10</sup> when there came the tragic news of the assassination of President Lincoln. All columns in the *Advertiser*, the day this news was told, were heavily bordered in black.<sup>11</sup>

Though with a feeling of great loss and an equal feeling of trepidation for the future, the City Fathers of the ten-year-old town that had mushroomed to prominence must see that the civic projects already started were completed and others begun.

The new high school and seminary building was under construction. A call had gone out by the builders for "150,000

brick and 160 perch of stone."<sup>12</sup> It was to be a two-story building, plus full basement, 48 feet by 60 feet plus a 9-foot by 20-foot vestibule.<sup>13</sup> When completed it would accommodate 500 pupils. Dr. McPherson was one of its staunchest supporters. Working with him in its behalf were, among others, Luther Hoadley, J. H. Morrison, and John L. Carson. The cost of the building was expected to run to \$30,000.<sup>14</sup> Two rooms and the basement were to be ready for occupancy by December 1, so Professor Obadiah B. Hewett, a graduate of Bowdoin College of Brunswick, Maine, was hired to supervise the "Graded School," which was to use this area.<sup>15</sup> Plans called for primary pupils to be charged \$3.00 for the term; intermediate pupils, \$4.00; grammar school students, \$5.00; and advanced students, \$6.00.<sup>16</sup>

Agitation continued for the building of a courthouse. Signing himself simply "M.," an anonymous correspondent in an open letter to the newspaper, after lauding Brownville highly, wrote: "Then if the authorities of the county would give heed to the presentment of the late Grand Jury and build the Court House they recommend, it would add much to the character and convenience of the place."<sup>17</sup> In early 1865 it was announced that a two-mill levy would be put up for the voters to accept or reject; its purpose, the erection of a "County Building."<sup>18</sup> One of the gross inadequacies which spoke eloquently to the townspeople in favor of such a building was the present county jail. Still in use was an old log cabin, which made jail breaks ridiculously easy. When prisoner Charles Randall, jailed for grand larceny, escaped, the *Advertiser* said, "Our jail is not sufficient to hold a thief of ordinary energy, and it is a farce to incarcerate any but a drunken man in it."<sup>19</sup>

The people spoke. There would be a new courthouse. By July 20 County Commissioners Philip Starr, Henry Steinman, and Stephen W. Kennedy had contracted with Beckell and Gates to erect a building to house county offices, court rooms, and jail. Commissioner Kennedy would act as superintendent of construction, and James Medford was stipulated as carpenter.<sup>20</sup>

A new project of a different nature sprang to life in the summer of '65: the formation of a Board of Trade with John L. Carson, president.<sup>21</sup> Its stated objective was "to bring in trade and travel."<sup>22</sup> Was it the work of the Board of Trade or simply

the call of the frontier which resulted in the spring influx in 1867? There was such a burgeoning horde of newcomers that the housing situation was critical. So a joint stock company "for building tenement houses" was formed and citizens solicited to buy stock in it.<sup>23</sup>

John L. Carson's new bank building had been completed "with the finest front on Main Street."<sup>24</sup> When he moved his business into it, it was described as "decidedly the finest finished building in the city."<sup>25</sup> Its owner was accredited equal respect: "Captain Carson," he was now called, having acquired his rank while serving in the Commissary Department during the war.<sup>26</sup>

In the meantime the city fathers themselves were having problems. The city now owned the steam ferry, and at this time rented it to a Mr. Cogsdell for \$20.00 a month. When word got out that another bidder had offered to pay \$30.00 a month for its use, the Mayor and Council came in for blasts of criticism. Cries of "Politics!" and "Favoritism!" assailed them. The *Advertiser*, protesting, pointed out that the ferry had cleared \$400 a month under Robert B. Muir's management.<sup>27</sup> The editor said bluntly that he thought the city finances were not being carefully handled and asked for a financial statement from the Council.<sup>28</sup> While apparently no financial statement was forthcoming, the Council did produce. The city well acquired a pump!<sup>29</sup>

Coexistent with all the progress in the city, day-to-day events took their normal course. There were recreational activities. With the war over, there was a resurgence of the sport of horse racing. Typical was a race set up between "Ben Roger's chestnut sorrel, Honest Bill, and a horse from Missouri," in which ten days before the event \$5,000 in bets had been taken.<sup>30</sup> Trotting matches were also popular that season.

There were the usual marriages, the usual births and deaths: The citizens were surprised on hearing of a "regular elopement," that of "Sgt. M[ichael] Barrady [Barada] and Miss Walupa Thompson."<sup>31</sup> Born to Davidson and Angeline Plasters, July 29, a son who was named Jessie.<sup>32</sup>

Deaths were common, and their victims young: "DIED, Aug. 28, of lung fever, age 25 years, Mrs. Nancy Zook, wife of P. M.

Zook of this city.”<sup>33</sup> Henry Hudson Marsh, postmaster since 1862, died of the same ailment in the same year, leaving a young wife and two small children; his age, 32. Then word was received of the death of one of the town’s elder statesmen. Samuel G. Daily, who had been a representative to the third Territorial Legislature and an untiring worker in rallying and organizing “the loyal party” in Nebraska during the war years, had died in New Orleans. On October 5 it was reported that “the remains of Hon. S. G. Daily arrived in this city, on the steamer *Glasgow* yesterday, and was placed in the Masonic Hall. The funeral will take place today at 1 o’clock.”<sup>34</sup> Soon thereafter an association was formed for the purpose of erecting a monument to the memory of Daily, subscriptions at “\$1.00, thus bringing it within the reach of every loyal man, however poor, to contribute his mite.”<sup>35</sup>

And in the course of everyday affairs, there was here and there a humorous incident shared by the community.

Following the death of Postmaster Henry Hudson Marsh, his brother Albert D. Marsh, deputy, had been made postmaster.<sup>36</sup> The following appeared in the *Advertiser* a few months after he took office:

There is a letter in our Post Office from some member of the Veteran 1st Nebraska Cavalry, now on the Plains, directed ‘To the Prettiest Girl in Brownville, Nebraska.’ The writer is doubtless in search of his affinity and we hope he may be successful, but in the meantime our Post Master is in a fix; he being a bachelor, has also ‘aspirations,’ and should he deliver it according to his judgment it might interfere with his arrangements. Won’t some fair damsel help him out of the scrape? Don’t all speak at once.<sup>37</sup>

But certainly not all post office business in 1866 was facetious. Post office hours were posted as follows:

Opens, 7:30 a.m., closes 9 p.m.  
 Eastern Mail closes at 5 p.m.  
 Northern Mail closes at 6:30 p.m.  
 Western Mail closes Mon., 7:30 a.m.<sup>38</sup>

In the hours between 7:30 a.m. and 9 p.m., much mail must have gone in and out, for business transactions were many. Business and professional establishments had increased rapidly, and the town now boasted the following:



*Smith Hill, 1866, Brownville, Nebraska.*

10 first-class dry goods and grocery stores, which also kept a generous assortment of hardware, cutlery, boats, shoes, farm implements etc.	
1 exclusive grocery store	1 merchant steam flouring mill
1 exchange bank	1 steam sawmill
3 boot and shoe stores	1 merchant tailor shop
3 drug stores	1 brewery
2 saddle and harness shops	1 cabinet shop
2 exclusive clothing stores	1 cooper shop
2 tin and stove stores	1 barber shop
2 shoemaker shops	1 restaurant
2 first-class hotels	1 meat market
2 wagon maker shops	2 brickyards
1 plow factory	3 saloons
3 blacksmith shops	3 doctors
3 livery and feed	8 lawyers
2 confectionery stores	1 pay and free school
3 churches	2 billiard rooms
1 book store and news depot	1 telegraph
1 millinery	1 steam ferry
1 watch and jewelry store	1 newspaper
	1 calaboose

“A flourishing western city of 5,000 souls,” said the *Advertiser*.<sup>39</sup>

While there were only three church edifices at this time, there were also denominations lacking a building of their own, holding regular services. The Reverend George W. Davis was conducting services for Episcopalians in the Presbyterian Church. (“The Training of Children” had been his topic one Sunday, and all parents had been invited to attend.)<sup>40</sup> Now the members of this denomination had subscribed \$500<sup>41</sup> to fit a place of their own for worship: “McPherson Hall has just been finished up by the Episcopalian denomination as a place of worship. [The hall] is 22 feet wide by 70 feet long, with good high ceiling [*sic*]. Fitted up with taste and nicely seated, it is by far the finest Hall in the city.”<sup>42</sup>

The Baptists were also holding services at this time, sometimes in homes of members and sometimes in the schoolhouse, with Elder Stephen L. Collins preaching.<sup>43</sup> But it would not be long until they too would have their own house of worship. This came about indirectly as a result of Brownville’s one and only tornado.

On the night of May 11, 1866, the tornado descended, and while it lasted only about fifteen minutes and took no lives, it struck terror to the hearts of all and resulted in considerable property damage. Huge hailstones accompanied the storm, and rain fell in such torrents that the streets were flooded, and on the bottom land near the river, water stood two feet deep. It was the wind, however, which did the most damage. The Joseph Loveless house on Main Street was partially unroofed; Theodore Hill & Company's warehouse on the levee was completely unroofed; William T. Den's warehouse was demolished; William A. Pollock's brick kiln was badly damaged; Foster's residence was unroofed; the grist mill damaged; the First Presbyterian Church was blown from its foundation; and the Christian Church, on the corner of 4th and Atlantic Streets was not only unroofed, but also the south and west walls were blown down. The total property loss was estimated at between \$5,000 and \$6,000.<sup>44</sup>

The lot on which the Christian Church had stood, together with the ruins of the building, was purchased by the Baptists, who subsequently erected a 35 foot by 50 foot building on the site.<sup>45</sup>

A new steam ferry made its debut in the summer of '66. Named the *Idona*, it made regular trips every half hour, and was "all that could be desired: swift, elegant and commodious. Her length, 80 feet; breadth 33 feet, and draws only 10 feet of water. She has a center wheel 15 feet in diameter, a 16 foot boiler, and 5 flues."<sup>46</sup> The boat was a considerable improvement over the *Nemaha* which had done duty for nearly ten years. It had a capacity of twelve two-horse teams and wagons, and as many passengers as could "crowd aboard." It was owned by J. C. Yantis and had cost \$13,000 to build. It was under the management of W. S. Morgan. The sound of its whistle every half hour made sprightly music and put an added spring in the steps of all who were interested in Brownville's progress—which meant all of her "5,000 souls."<sup>47</sup>

The Literary Society was "branching out," helping the town's cultural activities to keep pace with those of business. George Francis Train of Boston, politician, author, and entrepreneur, who was said to have obtained real estate holdings in Nebraska valued at \$30,000,000,<sup>48</sup> was invited to speak.

Obviously, he had been a previous visitor to the town, probably at the Land Office, for in the letter in which he accepted the invitation, he said, "My visit to your beautiful town has been too pleasant, courtesy of your people too marked, for me to decline your kind requests." Proceeds from the lecture, he suggested, "would not be misplaced if they went to the purchase of a bell for the substantial and elegant school house your citizens are showing such enterprise in erecting."<sup>49</sup> However, Train's arrival and his speech caused more excitement than anticipated. On the day he was to speak, handbills appeared throughout the town bearing the message, "NIGGER OR NO NIGGER, that is the Question." When given the podium, Train spoke for two and one-half hours against Negro suffrage. When the speaker sat down, to his obvious amazement the Honorable Oliver P. Mason entered from the back room, took the stand, and did a very effective job of refuting Train's arguments.<sup>50</sup>

A little later, Bayard Taylor, a world traveler from Kennet Square, Pennsylvania, was invited to speak at the Society. His fee was \$100, and he allowed the organization to choose between two topics: "Russia & the Russians" or "Ourselves and Our Relations."<sup>51</sup> There is no record of refutation on this occasion!

Now in the field of statesmanship it was Thomas W. Tipton to the fore. Not long out of the army, he took up the fight for Nebraska statehood. In August of '66, the *Advertiser* made note that he had been called to Washington; that the bill for admission of Nebraska as a state had passed both houses of Congress. "All that is now lacking is the President's signature, which it is reported he will not grant."<sup>52</sup> On December 6: "The Hon. T. W. Tipton left for Washington last Sunday week. He will not leave a stone unturned which would facilitate our admission. To his energy is mainly due the prompt response to the Director of Statistics with regard to the population of Nebraska."<sup>53</sup> Councilman in the Territorial Legislature in 1860 and an orator of note, Mr. Tipton had "taken the stump" in behalf of Lincoln's presidency and had become well known in political circles. He was a logical choice to turn the final screw in making Nebraska a state in the Union.



*Thomas W. Tipton of Brownville served as United States Senator from Nebraska's admission as a state (1867) through 1874.*

In the meantime there were political matters of less widespread importance, but of importance in the town of Brownville. No longer speaking in a facetious tone, the *Advertiser* reported on the small political plum, the post office, which, with President "Andy" Johnson at the country's helm, had been taken from A. D. Marsh and handed to W. W. Hackney: "In connection with this change, . . . the office was taken from A. D. Marsh *who is now supporting and caring for the widow and children of one of the staunchest Democrats that ever set foot in Brownville!* We allude to Henry Marsh, so zealous a Democrat that he once or twice was sacrificed on the Democratic ticket. He obtained the office through a Republican, and even while avowing his Democracy, was permitted to retain it under a Republican administration. But things have changed—he can vote no more—the position pays a little something—it is taken from the support of the widow and family of a Democrat who has passed away, and given to a live Democrat who is in independent circumstances!"<sup>54</sup> After a few months, however, A. D. Marsh again "secured the prize."<sup>55</sup> And an addendum: He eventually secured another prize. He married his brother's widow Mary Jane Thompson Marsh.

Another local political matter that was provoking dissension at the moment pertained to the position of Register of the Land Office. In 1865 Charles G. Dorsey had been appointed to the office by the President, the appointment confirmed by the Senate. In November, 1866, he was informed that he was being

removed and that Theodore Bedford had been appointed in his place; that as soon as Bedford filed bonds, he would take over the office. However, when Bedford had filed bonds and had them approved, Dorsey refused to turn over the books, plats, and papers on the grounds that his appointment was for a four-year term and that the President had no right to remove him. A Mr. Jamison, the receiver, after being notified of Bedford's appointment, refused to act longer for Dorsey, which meant applications filed for land were not entered. The result: The Land Office was virtually inactive.<sup>56</sup> Citizens took sides in the controversy, some for Dorsey, some for Bedford. But Dorsey was persistent, and on February 14 the newspaper blazoned word of his success. "BEDFORD REJECTED!" read the headline. "On the 8th, the Senate rejected the nomination of T. W. Bedford as Register of the Land Office in this city. This settles the Land Office difficulty at this place."<sup>57</sup>

The year 1867 was a busy year. It saw the completion and opening of the high school.<sup>58</sup> It saw the disappearance of the school's first administrator with monies meant for teachers' salaries.<sup>59</sup> It saw Nebraska admitted to the Union as the thirty-seventh state.<sup>60</sup> It saw Thomas W. Tipton elected to the United States Senate.<sup>61</sup> It saw the return of Colonel Robert W. Furnas to Brownville.<sup>62</sup> It saw Catholic services begun under the Reverend John A. Hayes.<sup>63</sup> It saw the reinstatement of the County Fair. It saw the completion of a brick Courthouse.<sup>64</sup> It saw the formation of a baseball club.<sup>65</sup> And it saw the stirring-to-life of the sometime dormant interest in building a railroad to the west.<sup>66</sup>

## THE RAILROAD DREAM

After Professor Charles A. Baker, a graduate of Harvard, "with good experience," had absconded with school funds, Professor J. M. McKenzie "and Lady" were secured to finish the term. The *Advertiser* commented: "Better teachers than whom are not in the West." The high school would "go on as though nothing had occurred to interrupt it, and the past . . . forgot in the excellence of the present."<sup>1</sup> The schoolhouse, in the interim between administrations, was "painted and otherwise finished up," so that it was "complete and the finest in the West."<sup>2</sup> The course of study was tremendous:

Primary: spelling, reading, writing, mental arithmetic, written arithmetic, geography and English grammar. Higher departments: orthography with the nature and sounds of letters, reading and elocution, common and physical geography, grammar and rhetoric, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, surveying, navigation and other branches of mathematics; natural philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, physics, botany and geology, mental philosophy and logic, music; also Latin, Greek and other languages.<sup>3</sup>

In the classical languages such texts were used as Harkness' *Latin Grammar*, Andrew's *Latin Reader*, Cicero's *Orations*, Virgil, Horace, Homer's *Iliad*, Arnold's *Greek Composition*, and Smith's *Classical Dictionary*.<sup>4</sup> So, after a brief false start, Brownville's school system was on its way to becoming an outstanding one with a reputation which would draw students from considerable distances as well as graduate students with an education coming close to that received in a liberal arts college today.

The State Teacher's Association held its first convention in Brownville, October 16-18, 1867, and continued to convene there each fall for years. For these meetings river boats carried the teachers to and from Brownville on half-fare rates. Once there, the teachers attended sessions that included lectures, the reading of essays, discussions, and committee reports. Professor George Dye, "the music man" was there "to intersperse the exercises with music."<sup>5</sup>

Real estate, as well as education, was in a healthy condition in 1867. In one week W. H. McCreery sold his residence and three lots on Atlantic Street to Dr. T. W. Blackburn for \$2,050; Cyrus W. Wheeler sold his house and two lots on the same street to Robert V. Muir for \$2,000; and R. J. Whitney disposed of a half block on Main Street to C. Kauffman for \$1,800. "These buyers are all new men," said the *Advertiser*. "These three transactions bring to this city parties who control at least \$100,000 of capital."<sup>6</sup> Colonel Furnas was making extensive additions and improvements to his residence, and his gardens were a show place. People considered it a treat to get to walk through his flower, fruit, and kitchen gardens.<sup>7</sup>

Brownville was a good town in which to live. Nor were all her considerations serious ones. She had her little jokes and little mysteries which added spice. One day the incoming mail from Beatrice was lost in a creek known as Long Branch, about seven miles west of the Little Nemaha. The horse and buggy carrying it went down with it, but the driver and a young lady passenger escaped. The bridge over the creek had been covered with water for some time, the driver crossing it regularly in this condition. This time, however, when he drove "on," it turned out to be "in," for the bridge had washed away since his last crossing. "The driver," it was reported, "came near losing *both mail and female*!"<sup>8</sup>

Probably no joke to some was an ad for Coe's dysentery cure which read: "TOURISTS—No one should leave home without Coe's Dysentery Cure."<sup>9</sup> Another for the same product began: "In this age of luxurious living, late suppers, and rich food . . ."<sup>10</sup>

"In this age of . . ." in Brownville, Nebraska, 1867, there were also intriguing mysteries. There was the mysterious disappearance of the Methodist minister, the Reverend B. C. Golladay. He left home one day for Nebraska City and failed to return. However, he mailed a letter from that place to his wife, a letter "affectionate and loving, containing directions how to obtain possession of his property, commending her to the care of kind Providence, and stating his determination to visit the bottom of the Missouri River and remain there until life had left its frail tenement."<sup>11</sup> There were those "carnal minded" citizens who thought he might be with a lady who had left town

a few weeks previously.<sup>12</sup> Some six weeks later, a letter was received from "the Reverend," mailed at Keokuk, Iowa. News of this, when reported in the paper, carried a more charitable note: "It is here believed he is insane."<sup>13</sup>

Another small mystery appeared in the streets one day and was reported by the *Advertiser*: "A rather queer character, name unknown to us, hailing from New York, has recently stopped in this city. He does nothing but pick up old shoes, buttons, pins, and old victuals. He wears rings in his ears and sometimes a large brass ring in his nose. He has just finished a residence cave in the bluffs along the river. Altogether he is a queer, dirty, lazy character, half-witted and harmless."<sup>14</sup> This "rather queer character" made himself a Brownville resident for a couple of years. And though he remained a mystery, his name did not. He called himself "Quisby." When he finally moved on, there appeared in the *Advertiser*, in a column headed "LO-CALS" and signed by Editor John L. Colhapp, the following poetic tribute:

Old Quisby's gone, that good old soul, we ne'er shall see him more;  
he built himself a new flat boat in which he left our shore. He was a  
sharpish man to trade with boys, and such as those; sometimes he wore  
rings in his ears, and sometimes in his nose. He thought he owned the  
universe, and right content was he; on rotten apples or oranges specked,  
he'd take a mighty spree. He lived in a dugout for a year, then moved  
on top of ground; yet, sillier men than he oft' in better clothes are  
found. He kept guns, and pistols too, in his dug-out retreat; his face was  
dirty, his hair unkempt, his temper never sweet. He cut adrift last  
Monday, for St. Louis he did sail; the boys have burned his shanty, and  
that shall end our tale.<sup>15</sup>

But there was serious business with the railroad. Now that the war was over, Brownville, in order to become the Nebraska metropolis she had long dreamed of becoming, must have a railroad. Talk from across the river of a proposal to extend the Mississippi and Missouri River Air Line through Missouri brought Brownvillians to their feet with a bound. Their town was the natural terminus. Hopes of an inter-coastal rail connection, dormant during the war years, soared again. Brownville was the natural link to the West. There were three good reasons: (1) Geographically, she was astride the shortest route between the oceans and was the county seat of Nemaha

County which had 8,500 residents; the "hinterland" of Johnson, Clay, Saline, and Fillmore Counties, had over 6,000 more. (2) Economically, she was in fine shape, and possible coal in Nemaha County and salt springs in Saline County would enhance the value of any route west from Brownville. (3) A federal land grant could easily be secured, as there was as yet none in that part of the state, while "at the same time some 500,000 acres of Nebraska internal improvement lands were still undistributed."<sup>16</sup>

Beautiful! But this time, Brownville's enthusiasm was to usher in her doom. On May 28, General David Moore, President of the Air Line across the river, paid a visit to Brownville, and a new "Brownville, Fort Kearney and Pacific Railroad" company was formed. A month later it was announced that the company would accept subscriptions to its stock. Included among its sponsors were Jarvis Church, Robert Furnas, John Carson, and Dr. John McPherson, who was named President of the company. In three days \$100,000 was subscribed. By the end of August, the railroad corporation was "proudly declared to be a 'fixed fact.'" It was a time of rejoicing. The possibilities of Brownville's future were boundless! When the surveyors of the Air Line reached Scott City across the river in early September, they were escorted to Brownville by Dr. McPherson, Colonel Furnas and Senator Tipton, and a regular "Fourth-of-July" celebration was held. The cannon was brought out. There was music. There were speeches. The visitors were guests of the city over the weekend. Before leaving they reported that northern Missouri counties had already voted nearly \$750,000 for the Air Line. Seventy miles of the road would be let for construction that fall.<sup>17</sup>

Now Brownville must get busy on *her* road. An enthusiastic mass meeting on November 14 resulted in two petitions which, it was hoped, would get the Brownville, Ft. Kearney, and Pacific under way so that by the time the town was linked to the East by the Air Line, it might also be linked to the West. One petition asked the city to appropriate \$1,000 for delegates to go to Washington to work on getting a railroad land grant. The other asked the County Commissioners for a referendum on subscribing \$300,000 to the capital stock of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific Railroad Company!<sup>18</sup>



*Main Street looking east, about 1869.*

The year 1867 was drawing to a close. The *Advertiser* said confidently: "Brownville is certainly the liveliest, thrivingest, grow-biggest and fastest town of its size on the Missouri. *Patience, gentlemen, the train will arrive soon.*"<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime the arts were not neglected. Music was thriving. Professor Dye's students gave an "excellent" concert.<sup>20</sup> And Mrs. G. M. Graham was now teaching piano.<sup>21</sup> Art was thriving. Miss Eliza Johnston had an exhibit of her oil paintings and crayon sketches.<sup>22</sup> Reading was thriving. Marsh & Company's circulating library contained 1,000 volumes and the proprietors were "constantly adding to it all the latest publications by the best authors."<sup>23</sup>

But the days were not all serene and quiet. Brownville suffered a minor earthquake.<sup>24</sup> The "upward bound" stage upset on its way out of town. "No one hurt, but all hands scared a heap."<sup>25</sup> Over 300,000 bushels of corn and 200,000 bushels of wheat were shipped out from her wharf after harvest. Eggs were also becoming a sizeable export.<sup>26</sup> Citizen William H. Valteau, proprietor of the Brownville Billiard Parlor, challenged John Shoaf of similar occupation in Omaha to a match of billiards—"1,000 points up" for \$500—and won.<sup>27</sup> Christ Church, Episcopal, was built, consecrated by Bishop Robert H. Clarkson, and opened for services.<sup>28</sup> And James Oliver Carson, son of John L. Carson and wife, died, age 3 years, 7 months, and 15 days.<sup>29</sup>

By January of the New Year—1868—the petition for a special election saw fruit. A referendum was set for January 7 "whereat electors of the county are to vote on borrowing \$350,000 to aid in the construction of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific Railroad and for the levy of a tax not exceeding 7% annually for the next 20 years to pay the principal and interest."<sup>30</sup> A fast and furious campaign got under way. In the last days before the vote, the officers of the company promised that if the request for a land grant failed in Washington, they would *not* ask for the \$350,000, even though voted.<sup>31</sup>

The voters approved the bonds.<sup>32</sup> It was now time to go on strong for the federal land grant, and this was largely up to Senator Tipton, although \$1,000 had been provided by the town and \$500 by the county to defray the expenses of three other men to go to Washington to give what help they could.<sup>33</sup> On January 29 and February 19, Senator Tipton introduced his

first bills for the coveted federal land grant.<sup>34</sup> Confident of success in this department, the Brownville company hired Joseph Smith, Chief Engineer of the Air Line road, to make a preliminary survey for their proposed road as far as Big Sandy on the Little Blue. Simultaneously, J. W. Blackburn was appointed financial agent for the Brownville and Fort Kearney to raise funds along its route westward.<sup>35</sup> When these two men returned with their report, the first small cloud of doubt dimmed, temporarily, Brownville's bright star. The survey for the desired ninety-five miles through Nemaha, Johnson, Gage, and Jefferson counties would cost \$8,000. To grade, bridge, iron, and tie those miles, Smith estimated would require \$625,000. Blackburn's report that he had secured promises for only \$4,450 toward the survey presented a sad contrast to Smith's figures.<sup>36</sup>

Added to this was discouraging news from Washington. The Brownville request for a land grant had a low Senate priority due to other matters of national importance. Senator Tipton did report the Brownville Railroad Bill on June 5, but no action was taken on it. With his return home in August came the end of hopes for a land grant in the year 1868. "Brownville and her railroad had run into the discouraging disparity between buoyant hopes and economic reality."<sup>37</sup> So for nearly a year the boosters of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney, and Pacific Railroad were comparatively quiet, at least in Brownville. Elsewhere, it would be learned, they were still working.

And while they worked, life went on in the village which they planned to make a city by linking it with iron to the raw West and the seasoned East. A second newspaper came to town, the *Brownville Journal*, published by Henry T. Sanders. "This speaks well for our young and thriving city, which can now sustain two first class newspapers," said the editor of the *Advertiser*.<sup>38</sup> The Court and County officers moved into the fine new brick county building—likewise the occupants of the jail.<sup>39</sup> George W. Fairbrother was elected Mayor.<sup>40</sup> A city flagpole that reached 156 feet into the sky, "the longest in Nebraska," was raised with great ceremony. "The cannon was let off several times."<sup>41</sup> Reckless driving was becoming a concern of the community. Two children were run over during one week.<sup>42</sup> The Harmonia Society was formed by German



*Union Hotel, built in 1868. Originally known as the Reynolds House.*

settlers "to encourage immigration and mutual enjoyment in their own way and custom."<sup>43</sup> A class in dressmaking was initiated by Mrs. John Palladay,<sup>44</sup> and a penmanship class by J. McCook Gore.<sup>45</sup> Wood coffins, "all sizes" were available, "ready made or made to order on shortest notice."<sup>46</sup> Sadly, a good number of these were needed that fall, for deaths from typhoid and "inflammation of the bowels" were frequent.<sup>47</sup> A "Bazar" [*sic*] was opened on the corner of Main and 3rd by Mrs. M. E. Bargis, offering for sale "fancy goods and notions."<sup>48</sup>

By the spring of 1869, the officers and directors of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific had developed a new technique. There were other railroad causes more popular than their own at the moment. They would attach themselves to these. First evidence of this approach was to be seen in a new bill introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Tipton, designed to assist another road—the Midland Pacific—but including a provision for the Brownville land grant.<sup>49</sup> The second example occurred during the same summer when the Brownville company officials took advantage of public interest in the St. Louis

and Nebraska Trunk Road, which was building southward, to secure county funds for their company. The County Commissioners were petitioned to hold a referendum for voting \$132,000 to the Trunk Line—and, at the same time, \$118,000 for the Brownville, Ft. Kearney line.<sup>50</sup> This election was set for July 24, and again the *Advertiser* got on the band wagon: "All other matters sink into petty insignificance, in comparison to this great work . . . much of our destiny hangs in the balance; and a strong persistent united effort should be made to decide it in our favor," the editor wrote on July 22. And so it was decided—if voting the bonds could be said to be in Brownville's favor. Through their alliance with the popular Quincy (Illinois)-based Trunk Line, the local company had carried the day—this time without the bond issue's being contingent on receipt of federal lands.<sup>51</sup>

Now Brownville's railroad enthusiasm again rode high with the wind. With advertisers heading their ads, "The Railroad is Coming," business boomed. At 10 o'clock one morning, Judge Alexander W. Morgan counted 184 teams on Main Street from 3rd Street to the river.<sup>52</sup> Colonel Furnas mailed seventy-nine letters in one day, addressed to nearly every state in the Union.<sup>53</sup> There were now twelve attorneys and five physicians practicing in the city.<sup>54</sup> The Baptists completed their church.<sup>55</sup> The state Sabbath School convention was held in Brownville.<sup>56</sup> The school district paid their teachers well: the principal, \$100 per month; male grammar school teacher, \$75.00, female, \$70.00; intermediate teacher, female, \$70.00; primary teachers, female, \$50.00. A good school was held for nine and a half months of the year.<sup>57</sup> The post office was moved again. It had been moved so often that "about every other business house in town has a slit cut in the door for receiving letters!"<sup>58</sup> The third county fair since the war was held, with fine agricultural exhibits and a new attraction in the Ladies' Riding Match, in which Miss Mary Haywood took first place.<sup>59</sup> And Colonel Furnas again took over the *Advertiser*, as editor and business manager.<sup>60</sup>

By the end of that year—1869—the route of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney Railroad was finally settled. It would go west from Brownville to the county line, then to Beatrice via Tecumseh, across the Little Blue River and on to the Republican, which it

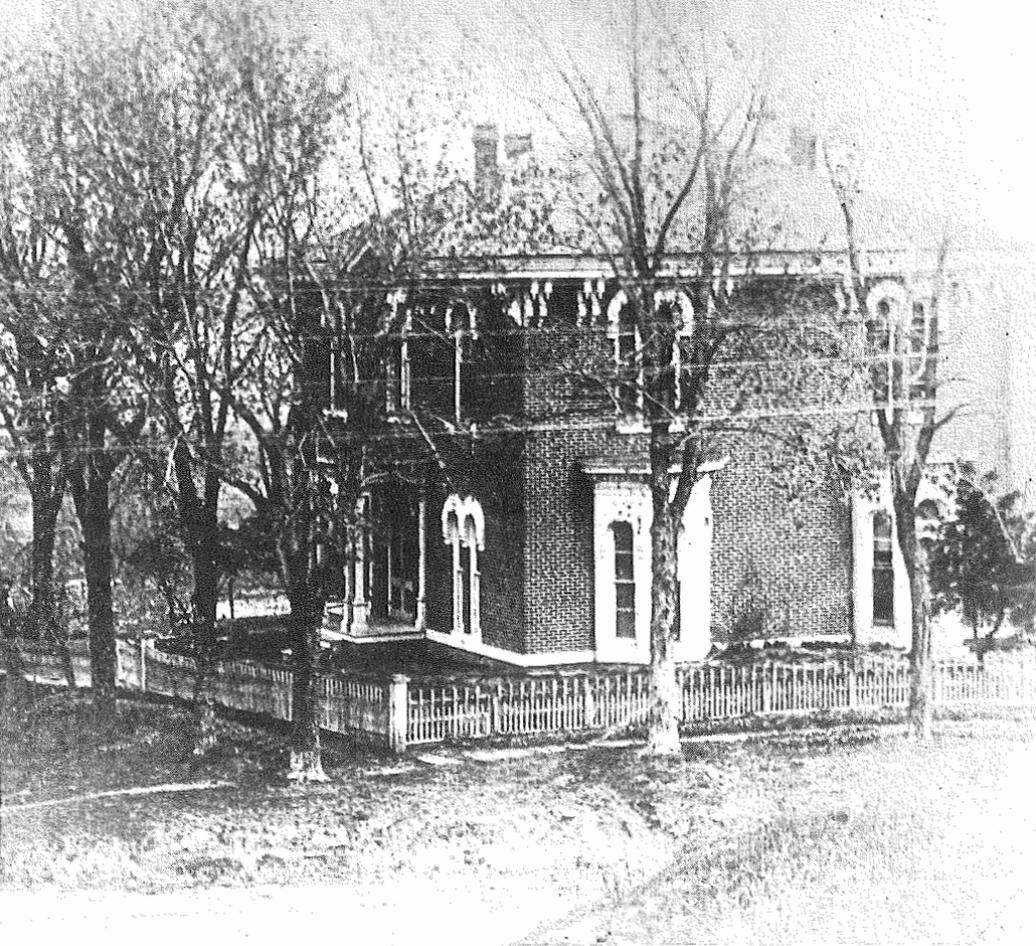
would follow out onto the plains.<sup>61</sup> Also by year's end, a number of "debutts" had marked the progress of the town which supported that road with such vigor. A local Y.M.C.A. was formed with an auxiliary of a half dozen women.<sup>62</sup> The soon-to-be-famous Silver Cornet Band, boasting ten members, made its first appearance, "making the air melodious with a concord of sweet sounds."<sup>63</sup> A French restaurant opened.<sup>64</sup> Another newspaper, the *Brownville Democrat*, began publication under Editors Andrew S. Holladay and George W. Hill.<sup>65</sup> A contract was let to have Main Street sprinkled regularly, to keep down the dust.<sup>66</sup> And Professor Wellington Rich came to town to take over administration of the public school, which he was to make famous.<sup>67</sup>

Then there was the *big* "First." While there had been many petty robberies in Brownville in her fifteen years, the first one of national note occurred on the 28th of August, 1869, when the office of the United States Express Company was robbed of \$15,000.<sup>68</sup> There was no problem in determining that it was an "inside job." There was no problem in determining who the inside-job man was. J. K. Baer, local agent, went about the town paying off all his debts on Friday, the 28th. On Saturday morning he was missing. He had written a letter to the editors of the *Democrat* which left no doubt:

Gentlemen: I suppose before you read this, you will have heard the rumor that I have absconded with a large amount of money, which you can believe is true and no mistake. The amount is about \$12,000. Suppose you will get a job of printing circulars, giving a full description of me, when the Superintendent (Mr. Quick) comes down. . . . Wonder how much reward they will offer for my arrest? Expect it will be pretty large, though. . . . There is one thing, however, that you can give me credit for . . . : I don't leave Brownville owing different parties any money, not even the printer, as I have paid all my just debts. Well, I expect when you hear from me next, it will be to the effect that I am in the hands of an officer, as I know there are ninety-nine chances that I will be caught to one that I will escape; but I prefer to take the one chance for \$12,000. There is only one thing that I feel sorry for, and that is my wife, but I do not think she will trouble herself much about me (at least I would advise her not to). Won't this make a splendid local for you!

J. K. Baer"<sup>69</sup>

As he had predicted, Baer's one chance in a hundred was not



*Muir House, photo about 1900. Built 1868-1872, it is one of Nebraska's finest examples of Italianate domestic architecture. Extant and restored.*

enough. He was apprehended, returned, tried, and sentenced to one year in the penitentiary. The light sentence was locally considered an outrage, and when, after serving only three months of his sentence he was pardoned by Governor David Butler, Brownville citizens found his fate hard to believe and harder to accept.<sup>70</sup>

Then the year was 1870. The month was January. The days, the 20th and 29th. Referendums had again been called for, for voting funds to the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific. Brownville precinct on the first date voted \$100,000 to the capital stock of the road; the city of Brownville, on the second, voted \$60,000 to the same. Now the total of public funds committed had reached the staggering sum of \$278,000—and not a single physical sign of the railroad had appeared.<sup>71</sup>

But it would come! "It must be a very faint heart," said Editor Colhapp in the *Advertiser*, "that is not of good cheer for the future of Brownville, for it is good; and the shadow of a population of 50,000 in ten years is cast before. . . ."7<sup>2</sup> And so, indeed, it seemed. For on June 13, Senator Tipton's bill granting to the Midland Pacific and to the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific alternate odd sections of land, ten to the mile, clear across the state west passed the Senate.7<sup>3</sup> The imminence of this magnificent land grant of nearly 6,000,000 acres at long last seemed to bring Brownville's big dream very close to the point of reality. Via the newspapers, the Board of Directors of the railroad called attention of individual stockholders to the fact that the time had arrived when money must be forthcoming. A corps of engineers was surveying the first ten miles west of Brownville, and it was "the determination of the Board to push the enterprise with all possible energy and rapidity." They wanted subscribed stock to be paid up promptly and wanted more buyers. J. A. Johnson had been appointed collector for the company and solicitor for further subscriptions. "Just as soon as the engineers can complete their office business," the first ten miles would be put under contract. "People need have no further doubt as to the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific Railroad. *It will be built,*" the *Advertiser* assured the skeptical.7<sup>4</sup>

Then came a day in October when the first physical sign of the road *did* actually appear. On the fourth of that month, the town rallied excitedly for ground-breaking ceremonies for the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific Railroad. School was let out, business houses closed, and the populace massed at the site.7<sup>5</sup> Was it really coming true, this ephemeral, will-o'-the-wisp dream which had for so long been held tantalizingly before them, yet always just out of reach? The crowd was hushed to silence by a salute by the city gun squad. Then Hiram Alderman, oldest citizen of the county, turned the first spadeful of earth.7<sup>6</sup> All the promises of Brownville's future greatness seemed on the threshold of realization.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END

During the three months following the land-breaking ceremonies for the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific, dirt flew and whistles sounded; the sawmills turned out railroad ties by the thousands. A veritable shanty town sprang up at the mouth of Honey Creek north of Brownville along the ravine through which the road was to proceed westward. Grading went on apace. Ties were piled along the graded "track."<sup>1</sup> Some 200 men and teams at work<sup>2</sup> made the valley ring with oft-repeated shouts of "Gee," "Haw!" "Whoa!" and "Giddap!"

But time went by and no word came from Washington concerning Congressional approval of the land grant act passed by the Senate the previous June. In fact, no encouragement for House approval was forthcoming. Work at Honey Creek slowed. Activity lessened. And by spring the shanty town had become a small ghost. Work on the track of the Brownville and Ft. Kearney had virtually halted.<sup>3</sup> Dissatisfaction with the "general statements and indefinite . . . promises" of the directors of the road even erupted in the pages of the *Advertiser*, hitherto their staunch supporter.<sup>4</sup>

The *Advertiser* had now become a daily.<sup>5</sup> Its rival, the *Democrat*, had done likewise.<sup>6</sup> And though "hard times" were beginning to breathe down people's backs bringing general gloom, the town of Brownville was suddenly less dark than before. Gas lighting had been installed! All up and down Main Street dusk saw the rosy bloom of street lamps as they were touched, one by one, with the lighter's wand, making "matters look quite city like."<sup>7</sup>

Another bright light shone on Brownville when the State Fair was secured for that city two consecutive years, 1870 and 1871.<sup>8</sup> The county fair grounds south of town served as a fine site; a main building 100 feet by 100 feet, containing five rooms, was built, and Brownville acted well the part of host city.<sup>9</sup> She now had four hotels besides a number of boarding houses and several restaurants to take care of visitors. Her

business and professional men worked diligently preparing booths and "setting up." The fair held in Brownville on September 29, 1870, was Nebraska's third State Fair. It drew nearly double the entries of fruit, grain, vegetables, livestock, and other exhibits of previous fairs and was considered a great success. Season tickets were \$2.00; single admissions, 25 cents; two horses and carriage were admitted to the grounds for 50 cents per day; hacks and other such vehicles carrying passengers, \$1.00 per day.<sup>10</sup> There was "taxi service" too. A livery stable advertised this provision via spring wagon. The wagon would carry eighteen passengers and it would be an "Express" to the fair grounds.<sup>11</sup>

Before the railroad issue became active again, a second bank was opened in Brownville, the State Bank. A new building was erected to house it.<sup>12</sup> A Catholic church was also built.<sup>13</sup>

For some time it had been rumored that "Eastern money" was interested in the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific. In September, 1871, the rumor was given substance when the company "underwent virtually a complete reorganization" as it contracted with Benjamin E. Smith and William Dennison of Ohio, and Joel N. Converse of Indiana to complete the construction of the road.<sup>14</sup> The stock held by the local directors and five other individuals was transferred to the construction company, as well as all the property owned, subscriptions, and other assets of the railroad company.<sup>15</sup>

The Big Dream, almost buried in despair, lived again. And this time it seemed very close to moving from dream to reality. Work was almost immediately resumed at Honey Creek, and evidence, too, was present even on Main Street in Brownville: Teams drawing huge piles for the construction of bridges were making frequent trips through town. A locomotive was reported to be on its way from Pennsylvania.<sup>16</sup> Complete optimism reigned. "The 'toot' of actual, moving, living trains will be heard within our city within the next sixty days," said the *Advertiser* with absolute confidence.<sup>17</sup>

In November, Converse visited Brownville with further assurances that the great day of the actuality of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific was drawing near. Thirty-six hundred bars of iron, he said, had left St. Louis for Phelps City, Missouri, directly across the river from Brownville. A barge had been



*The Nebraska State Fair was held in Brownville two years: 1870 (above scene) and 1871.*

purchased to ferry the locomotive to the construction site. Track laying would begin about the middle of the month.<sup>18</sup>

On November 13 twenty-five carloads of iron for the railroad did reach Phelps City, and a couple of weeks later, the great and long-awaited day finally arrived. At two o'clock on the afternoon of November 28, amid cheers of the multitude assembled, Superintendent Henry M. Atkinson "drove the first spike into the tie that held the first rail of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific."<sup>19</sup>

By mid-December ten miles of track had been laid, and on December 29 the company received 19,989.12 acres of state land under the Act of 1869.<sup>20</sup> The County Commissioners paid the construction firm of Converse and McCann \$40,000 for the work completed, and the *Advertiser* eulogized: "Our citizens have full confidence in the honesty of purpose of Converse, McCann and Co. in taking hold of our road, and in their ability and desire to extend it westward at a rapid rate."<sup>21</sup>

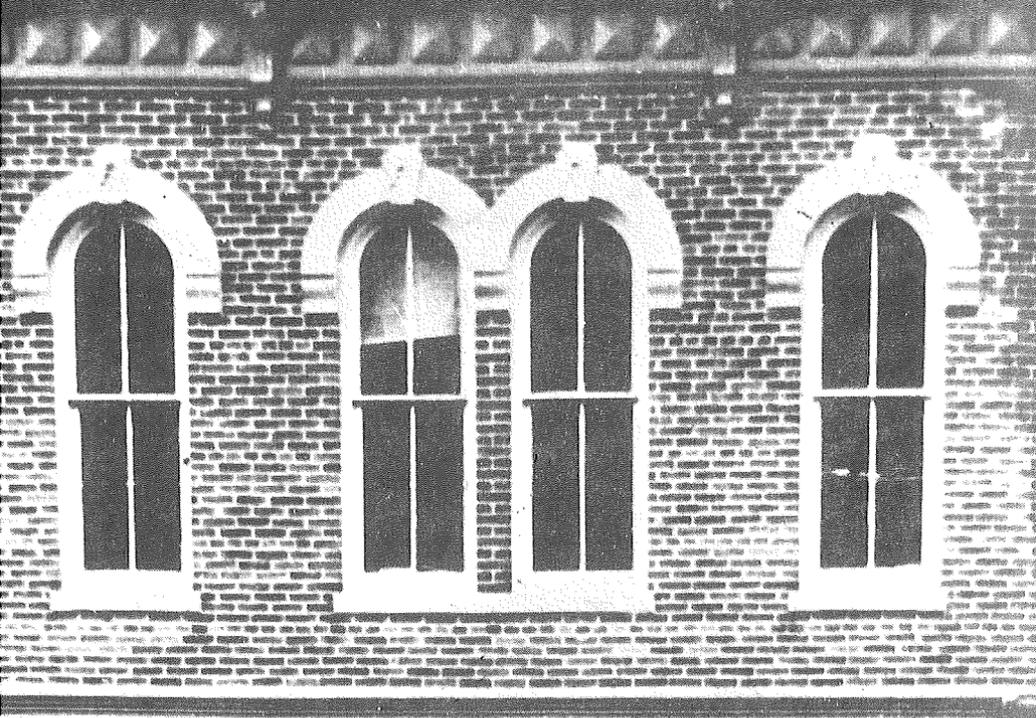
As the railroad proceeded westward in the year 1871, not all thought followed it. The schools were not being neglected. Obadiah B. Hewett, Director, announced that a more strict procedure was to be initiated in regard to absences and tardies.

Parents had been too lenient. So "the Principle [*sic*] of the Brownville Public Schools has been authorized and instructed to require the pupils in attendance to make up all lost time and all lessons not recited by reason of absence."<sup>22</sup> And from S. W. McGrew, County Superintendent, came this criticism and admonition to teachers: There was too much whispering, not enough work and study; too much formality and not enough life or animation; too much contradicting both in classes and to the teacher.<sup>23</sup> Discipline needed tightening up. Also, Superintendent McGrew stated that he did *not* want teachers who swore; that he *did* want ones of good moral character who would influence the morals of the children.<sup>24</sup> The welfare of the children was not being neglected!

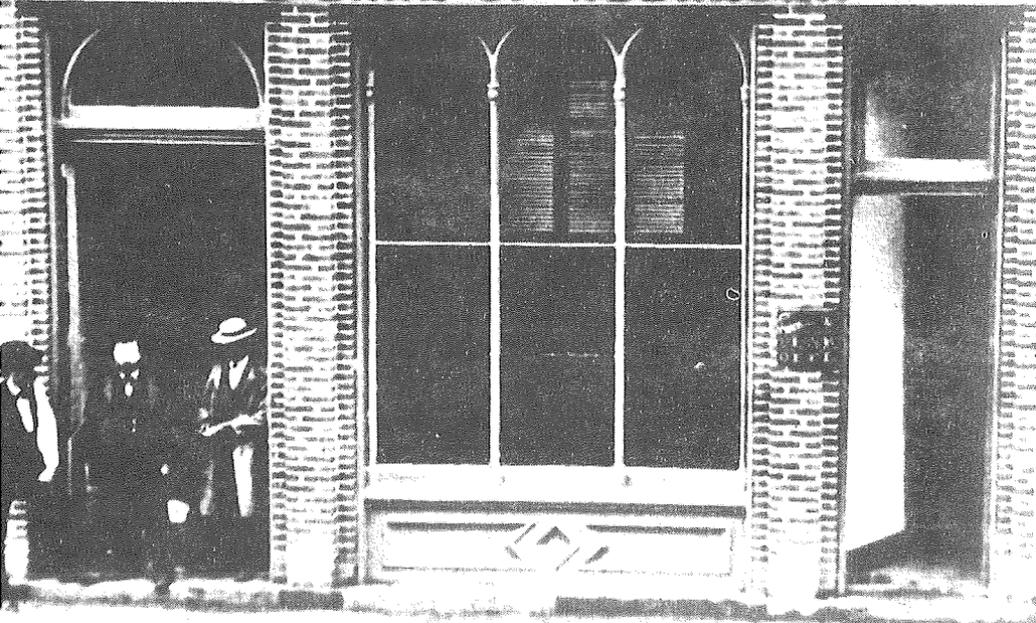
Nor was fishing neglected. A catfish weighing exactly 100 pounds was caught, laid out on the sidewalk, and bets taken as to its weight.<sup>25</sup> Neither was entertainment neglected. The "Baker Family" came to town, added fifty local voices, and presented a cantata, "The Oratorio of Esther."<sup>26</sup> Another group, referred to as "The Davis Troupe," young ladies who performed on brass and strings and included vocal selections, delighted the town.<sup>27</sup> And Brownville musicians themselves were forming the Brownville Musical Union.<sup>28</sup>

The year 1872 was ushered in with Robert V. Muir having completed "the best residence house in the city," at a cost of about \$10,000—a two-story brick "with deep cellar" and "surmounted with an imposing and roomy cupola."<sup>29</sup>

The young year also witnessed a story of crime fit for the raciest "Western." A strange pair were seen walking up Main Street from the river crossing early one evening, a man accompanied by a young woman dressed in men's clothing. A chill drizzle was falling and not many people were out, but the couple was being observed from behind windows. Suddenly there was action! The young woman screamed and fell. The young man bent briefly over her, then disappeared rapidly into the dusk. Men poured from the nearby stores. "I've been stabbed! I've been stabbed!" the young woman cried. "He took my money!" She was picked up and carried to the nearby Star Hotel and Dr. Holladay was soon on the scene. His patient was identified as a prostitute, age 18, from Lincoln. The man she had been with (a Missourian) had removed \$40.00 from her



# STATE BANK OF NEBRASKA



*Two-story brick built to house the State Bank of Nebraska in 1870. Extant and in use as Garber's General Store.*

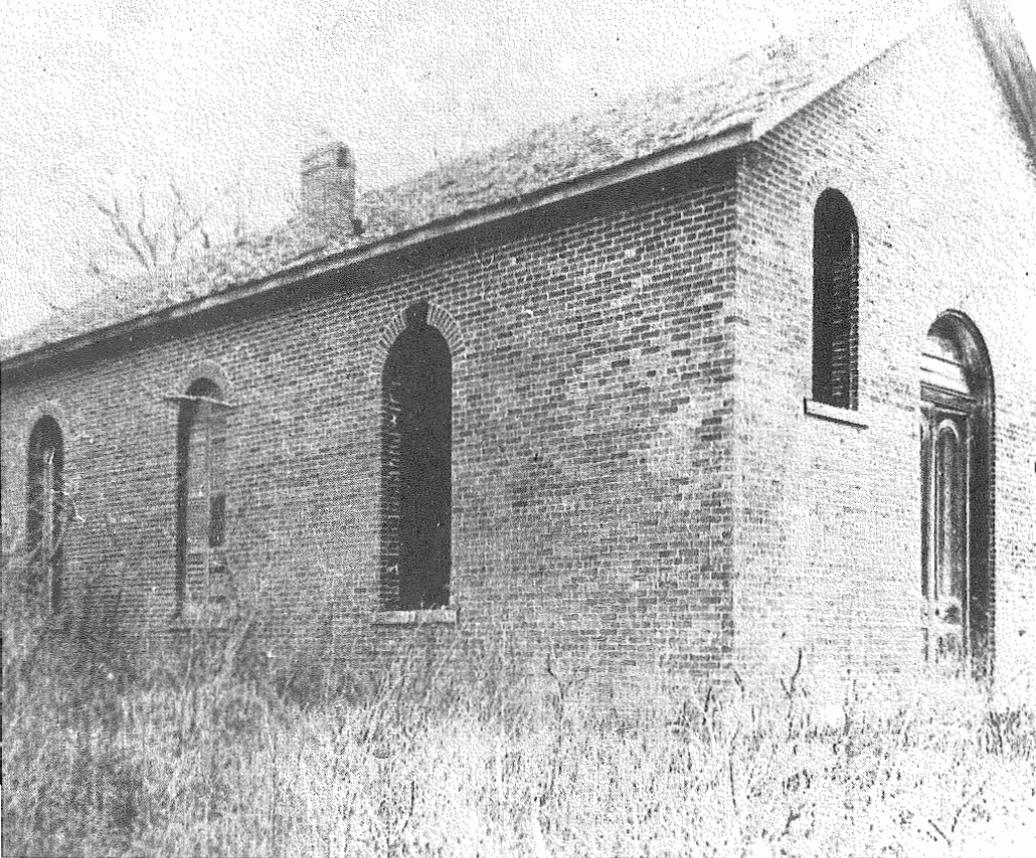
shoetop before fleeing. Marshal Campbell was dispatched across the river for the criminal and brought back his man.

But in the meantime, the young woman had to be removed from the hotel because some of the guests objected to her presence. She was carried across the street to a saloon where the fire was built up to keep her warm through the night. "In our mind," editorialized the *Advertiser* in its account, "Christ was a better man than these complainants."<sup>30</sup> By morning some well-meaning Christian women in the town had offered to take her into their homes and care for her. For two weeks she recuperated, being well attended by Dr. Holladay, and during this time the ladies tried hard to reform her, but with little success. She could neither read nor write, and they were unable to interest her in trying some means of livelihood other than the one she had been pursuing. After two weeks of Christian care and missionary lectures, she had had enough. She was able to dress, and she took a hasty departure via the ferry to Phelps City and the train thence to St. Joe, Missouri, never to be heard from further in Brownville!<sup>31</sup>

A much more respectable, indeed a very highly respectable visitor, had come to town and decided to stay: Charles Neidhart, German by birth, stone-cutter by trade. On a very small scale, he had opened his "Marble Works" in Brownville and had begun chipping out headstones to order for families who had buried loved ones in Walnut Grove Cemetery. But the business was to grow, as was his reputation, until he would be making monuments for distant cities, his name well-known as a fine artisan.<sup>32</sup>

#### And the Big Dream?

On April 1, 1872, local control of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney Company ended. At the annual meeting of stockholders, only Henry C. Lett, Henry M. Atkinson, and Andrew J. Ritter retained their positions as directors. The Messrs. John L. McGee, Robert W. Furnas, John L. Carson, A. S. Stewart, and Freeman A. Tisdell "declined re-election."<sup>33</sup> Joel N. Converse, Benjamin E. Smith, William Dennison and their ally from Nebraska City, D. J. McCann, controlled the other four positions on the board.<sup>34</sup> Although delivery of county bonds was contingent upon completion of the road bed by the end of July, the "new command" asked for and was granted an



*Thought to be the Catholic Church, built of Brownville brick about 1870.*

extension to November 1.<sup>35</sup> During the summer and fall the good sounds of “workin’ on the railroad” came again to the ever-hopeful ears of Brownville. The sawmill ran full blast cutting ties. A site was chosen near the levee for the depot. And once more men and teams were at work as grading continued westward.<sup>36</sup>

But all this activity came to a sudden end when a bitter quarrel broke out between Converse and the county commissioners because the company had failed to complete grading to the county line by its extended deadline of November 1. Converse was demanding that \$30,000 in bonds be turned over to him, saying he had “understood” that he was to be given a grace period to the first of the year. His demand refused, he threatened to abandon the whole project.<sup>37</sup> Finally, however, he suggested a compromise whereby the county should pay the unpaid remainder of the grading bill, \$16,500, and put in trust the rest of the \$78,000 (the amount remaining of the \$118,000 voted for the Brownville, Ft. Kearney road in the election of

July, 1869), to be delivered to him as soon as "iron had been laid" to the border of the county.<sup>38</sup>

This proposal hung fire for a number of months, but was finally agreed to July 8, when the Commissioners turned over the bonds to John L. Carson and William Hoover as trustees to be delivered to the Converse company "when the road is completed through the county and regular trains running thereon."<sup>39</sup>

Still Converse showed no eagerness to renew work on the road. Instead, he found excuses for delay. After another six months or so of inactivity, he announced that the completion of the Brownville and Ft. Kearney road was contingent upon the completion of the St. Louis and Nebraska Trunk Line which was to pass through the county—that the Brownville Railroad would not be profitable without connections to Chicago and St. Louis which the other road would provide.<sup>40</sup>

But the longest, darkest shadow of things-to-come was cast when at the end of November, ties and rails from those first ten miles of track, viewed so proudly and hopefully by Brownville as her sure link with a glorious future, began to be torn up. This, President Lett admitted, was being done at the order of Converse. The ties and rails, he said, were only being "borrowed" for use in completing the Trunk Road, which Converse continued to insist, must be finished before the other. Excuses flew again: The river ice had softened sooner than anticipated, so Converse could not get the needed iron from the Missouri shore. He had to have the materials immediately in order to meet a deadline he had on the Trunk Road.<sup>41</sup>

For the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific, and for Brownville's glowing dream of railroad greatness—it was the beginning of the end.

## STARTING THE DOWNHILL SLIDE

Still it was not until August of the following year—1874—that the town was finally and irrevocably convinced that Joel N. Converse would never complete the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific Railroad. As a result the Commissioners decided to sue for recovery of the \$78,000 worth of bonds they had deposited with John L. Carson and William Hoover as trustees—only to discover that they had been sold or transferred to a mysterious “G. Moodie.”<sup>1</sup> The Brownville and Ft. Kearney was a lost cause. Only debt and years of litigation remained. In the interim the general money panic of 1873-1874 had taken its toll, railroad “schemes” such as Brownville’s having played a considerable part in precipitating it. Yellow corn was selling for 17 cents a bushel, white for 20 cents; live chickens went for \$2.00 per dozen; eggs sold for 8 cents a dozen and butter for 12½ cents; country hams went for 7 cents a pound. The farmers were feeling the pinch.<sup>2</sup> The *Granger*, whose publication had been started in January by R. O. Whitehead, was in financial trouble by April. Its publisher tried to borrow \$1,000 from Carson’s bank, was unsuccessful, and had to give up the enterprise.<sup>3</sup> (It was at this time that J. D. Calhoun and Frank M. Vancil dropped their publication of the Brownville *Democrat*, changed over their former publication and became the publishers of the official county organ of the Grangers.)<sup>4</sup>

The loss of the State Fair to Lincoln, after its two successive and successful years in Brownville, was a blow.<sup>5</sup> Dropping again to a county fair was a decided let-down. Too, there was the diminution in business from rural settlers. Even in 1872 the *Advertiser* was bemoaning this loss: “One year ago, Brownville enjoyed the trade of the country west and southwest for a distance of over 100 miles. Then there were no railroads west of us, and a large section of the country paid tribute to our merchants and business men of all classes. Such is not the case today, and in consequence of the building of roads west of us, our former trade has been cut off to a large extent.”<sup>6</sup> The Union Pacific railroad across Nebraska was hurting Brownville



*Robert W. Furnas, Nebraska's  
third governor, 1873-1875.*

in more ways than one. And a few months later the *Advertiser* said: "19/20 of the immigrants now go on west. The river counties are in a decline."<sup>7</sup> Also the grasshoppers were taking their toll in these years. Fields were left bare, bark stripped from the twigs and trees. Mr. Furnas lost several thousands of dollars worth of nursery stock in this way.<sup>8</sup> There was also more crime to contend with now, much of it blamed on "the demon rum." A stone mason who had drunk too much was put out of the Sherman House. He retaliated by punching holes in the windows of the hotel with his fist.<sup>9</sup> Marshal Campbell and a woodcutter, Thomas Wells, got into a big fight when the Marshal tried to arrest Wells for drunkenness. Wells used a pocketknife to stab the Marshal five times about the neck.<sup>10</sup> There were three suicides in one year: Messers McFall, Bolen, and George Dye, the musician. Dye, "about 38," had lost his wife six months before. He reportedly had for some time had "spells" when he was low spirited, at which times "his brain would be heated and feverish, and he would bathe his head in cold water." He shot himself in the head with a revolver.<sup>11</sup> A call was made for the City Marshal to stop the vile swearing of "urchins" in the streets.<sup>12</sup> Two 15-year-olds got in a fight on the school grounds, "the son of Wm. Hannaford and the son of Peter Whitlow." Hannaford stabbed Whitlow with a pocketknife and was put under \$4,000 bond for appearance in District Court.<sup>13</sup>

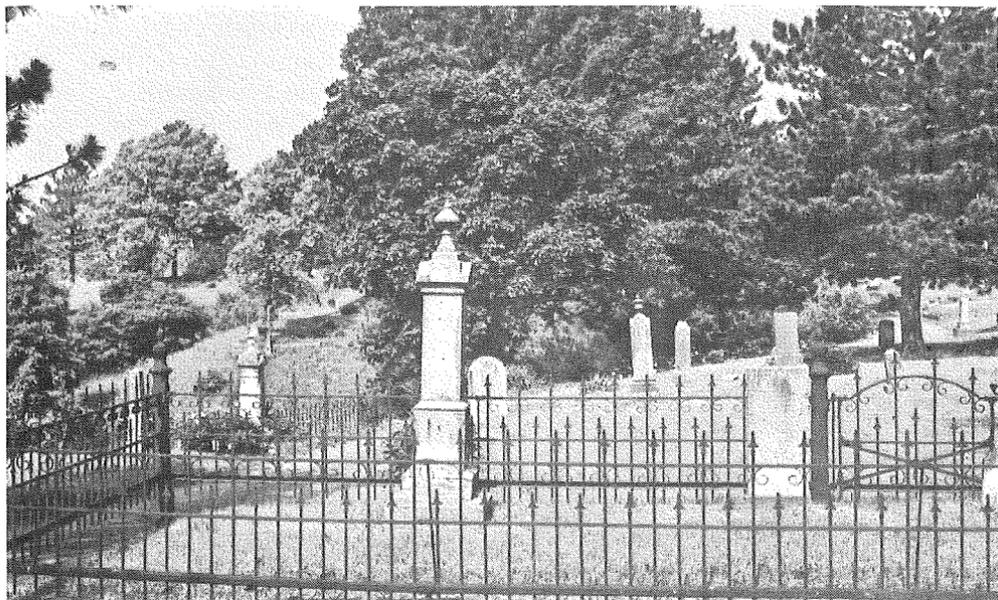
Then there was the post office robbery, which caused almost as much excitement as the earlier express robbery. Pollock was postmaster at the time, and when he went in one morning, discovered that a window had been broken and that certain mail he had put aside for special attention, including several registered letters, had disappeared. A young man named McCreery, who had previously been in trouble with the law, was accused and put in custody of the U.S. Marshal.<sup>14</sup> However, when a U.S. Mail Detective was put on the case, he soon informed Pollock that he had discovered the thief—and that it was not McCreery. In fact, it was the postmaster's own son Billy, a young married man, who had committed the burglary, getting a total of \$173 from the registered letters he had taken.<sup>15</sup>

Incensed with the liquor trade and what they thought was turning their town into a disgusting series of brawls and crimes, the members of the Temperance Society went to work in earnest. The Berry Washingtonians, organized some half dozen years earlier, had been replaced by the Sons of Temperance. In March, 1874, they reported the addition of fifteen members,<sup>16</sup> and the same month temperance electors met in convention at the Court House, adopted a platform, and set up their own municipal ticket, nominating A. H. Gilmore for Mayor.<sup>17</sup> Shortly thereafter they held a festival whose proceeds netted them \$150.<sup>18</sup> They secured Professor George E. Church from the young University of Nebraska at Lincoln to lecture on temperance.<sup>19</sup> But they did not win the election. Freeman A. Tisdell became the new Mayor.<sup>20</sup> However, the "drys" did not give up.

Neither did others give up, even when the railroad dream was gone. Brownville had many good men, and they continued to play important roles. In the fall of 1872, Robert W. Furnas became a candidate of the Republican Party for Governor of the state. Prior to this time he had served four years in the Nebraska Legislature and one year as chief clerk of the Senate. His town appreciated him. When he returned to Brownville after receiving the nomination, he was given a gun salute and a serenade.<sup>21</sup> He had done a great deal for his state in agriculture and horticulture. It was said of him that he had "planted and caused to be planted more trees on the great prairies of



*Charles G. Neidhart (center and inset), stone carver from Germany, opened a marble works in Brownville in 1867. He made monuments for the town's Walnut Grove Cemetery as well as for Eastern buyers.*



*Walnut Grove Cemetery.*

Nebraska than any other twenty men in it.”<sup>22</sup> Arbor Day had been adopted by the State Board of Agriculture in 1872 through a resolution introduced by J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska City, Furnas’ political rival. After waging a successful campaign for the governorship, Furnas was elected and served well during his 1873-1874 term. While Governor, Furnas proclaimed a State Arbor Day and asked Nebraskans to observe it, though it was not until 1885 that the Legislature designated an official Arbor Day.<sup>23</sup>

There was still much that was progressive going on in Brownville. The town now boasted a tobacco factory, the only one west of the Missouri River.<sup>24</sup>

Charles Neidhart had erected a new brick building designed specifically for his business, including both a work room and a display room for his monuments.<sup>25</sup> He was by this time employing four helpers locally and had opened a branch shop in Falls City.<sup>26</sup> He imported large shipments of Italian, Vermont, and Tennessee marble.<sup>27</sup> Both his original designs and his fine workmanship had gained fame in the Midwest. The *Chicago Reporter* mentioned the excellence of his rustic designs. In 1875 he was working on a 12-foot monument of Vermont marble for a cemetery in St. Joe.<sup>28</sup> He had many orders from St. Louis. But with all this, he did not forget Brownville. He took a position on the City Council. And he presented a beautiful altar cross to the Christian Church, “an exquisite piece of workmanship . . . of three kinds of marble. . . . In the center is cut IHS heavily gilded.”<sup>29</sup>

Conventions of various groups still met in Brownville: A Music Convention was held in the summer of ’73, with some 200 students in attendance. A concert by a 150-voice chorus climaxed the event.<sup>30</sup>

A reunion of Civil War soldiers drew a large crowd. Ben Thompson was in charge of arrangements and decreed that each old soldier should “bring his own basket” for lunch.<sup>31</sup> But the celebration began long before lunch time. In fact it began with the cannon firing thirty-seven rounds at sunrise. It continued all day and well into the night, with the soldiers forming on Main Street at 10:00 in the morning and marching to the picnic grounds, Theodore Hill’s grove on 1st Street, the Brownville Band leading out. Later in the day there was a meeting in

McPherson Hall for business; still later, a dinner with appropriate toasts and responses and more music furnished by the band. In the evening there were fireworks, and to climax all, a grand ball.<sup>32</sup>

The first Grange (a farmers' organization) in the county had been organized in 1873, and gradually the movement had spread. The object of the Grangers was to oppose monopolies and dispense with retailers or middlemen by buying directly from wholesale houses. Catalogues were secured from wholesalers and studied diligently by the farmers who were urged to boycott local merchants. Although originally the movement was not to involve religion or politics, out of it grew the "people's independent anti-monopoly party," a short-lived splinter group which put up local candidates for the State Legislature with some success. The activity of the Grangers added light spice to Brownville politics for several years.<sup>33</sup>

More exciting to the youth of the town were the cattle drives which brought thousands of Texas longhorns through town, filling the air with a cloud of dust, the shouts of drivers and the whistle of lariats. An advance rider warned that the cattle were coming, and vehicles and pedestrians scurried off Water Street just south of Main, the route used by the cattlemen.<sup>34</sup> The cattle were wild; and their horns, arm length and sharp pointed as spears, were dangerous and destructive when driven by the frightened, frenzied bulk of an enraged animal. Sometimes such a one broke from the herd and went cavorting about Main Street, playing havoc with everything in its path—packing boxes stacked outside a store, a bench on which only a moment before bewhiskered and overalled men had sat passing the time of day. For days following a cattle drive, the boys of the town tried to rope everything on four legs, from dogs to hogs.<sup>35</sup>

But most exciting and by far most destructive of all events in these years were the fires. Often several would be reported in one day, usually in winter. Such was the case on a December Sunday in 1872 on which the house of George Berkley was completely destroyed and the American House also had a fire.<sup>36</sup> Even worse was the February day in 1876 when a gale was blowing and there were four alarms and three serious fires during the day and night.<sup>37</sup> There was concern, there were meetings, there were committees appointed to do something



*The Brick Block in its heyday, looking west.*

about a fire department. But still the fires continued, and still nothing was done about securing equipment and developing an adequate fire-fighting system. Mayor Freeman Tisdell in January of 1875, after a fire had destroyed J. R. McGee's house and its furnishings, called a meeting of citizens, which resulted in a committee's being named to contact fire departments in other cities and get information.<sup>38</sup> A year later at a city council meeting, it was agreed that something should be done at once about getting fire-fighting equipment.<sup>39</sup> In the meantime fire continued to take its "small" swipes, surely prophetic of the annihilating sweep it would take one day in the future.

To take their minds off their troubles begot by railroad schemes and fires, the town continued to hold tremendous Fourth of July celebrations each summer. Spelling bees brought together not only local townspeople but also participants from the surrounding farms and nearby towns, "young and old, male and female, married and unmarried," where such difficult words as "charivari" would be spelled without a second's hesitation, and the evening would go on until only one person was left "standing."<sup>40</sup> The Silver Cornet Band performed at home and abroad, gaining a splendid reputation which would "challenge any in the State."<sup>41</sup> It was invited aboard the steamships to entertain between Brownville and St. Louis, between Brownville and Omaha.<sup>42</sup> And there were the town's little jokes that were passed along, bringing chuckles all up and down the streets. There was the story of the elderly man in the post office who received a postcard, the first he had ever seen. He tried to open it. Frustrated, he put on his glasses and tried again. Still no luck. Finally, he turned it over, saw the message, and commented, "Well, this fella must've been short on paper, so he wrote on the back side of the envelope."<sup>43</sup>

Still, nothing could for long take the minds of those involved with the railroad situation—and they were many—off their troubles. In the fall of 1875, Joel N. Converse had made an attempt to merge the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific with the Midland Pacific or Nebraska Railway, and he claimed that he succeeded.<sup>44</sup> On the first ballot of the stockholders, the vote went against consolidation. Converse had voted 1,200 shares. When the count was reported, he claimed that he should have voted 12,000 shares, "hunted out the ballot, changed the figure,

told [C. B.] Smith, the clerk, to change the record and to put that and the proceedings in his pocket."<sup>45</sup> Jefferson Broady, an attorney (and a stockholder), who had been practicing in Brownville since 1867,<sup>46</sup> had been appointed as one of the tellers; he protested the action and demanded that Converse produce his shares. Converse refused. So Converse declared the merger to have been effected. Broady secured a motion by the meeting that it had been defeated.<sup>47</sup> The *Advertiser* reported that "the consolidation meeting . . . didn't consolidate worth a cent."<sup>48</sup> And by the end of the year, the first of the suits that were to be aired in the courts for the next eight years was filed.<sup>49</sup>

On February 1, 1875, Brownville did actually hear the long-awaited whistle of a locomotive and see a big black monster spouting steam come chugging into town. It was not, however, a fulfillment of the dream of connecting East and West. The train came in from Nebraska City on a north-south line that was an extension of the Midland Pacific, referred to as the Nebraska Trunk Line. Still, it was a train. And after all the years of waiting, its arrival caused great rejoicing. Despite the biting wind, most of the town turned out to see and hear. School was dismissed. Business houses closed. And when the train arrived "at a few minutes after 11 o'clock . . . crowded with excursionists, the cannon thundered, the band played, flags waved, and the people cheered."<sup>50</sup> The visiting notables, including Governor Silas Garber, were escorted to the Union Hotel, banqueted, and warmly welcomed until mid-afternoon when the excursion train started on its return trip. The still-optimistic *Advertiser* said, "February 1, 1875, was the happiest day, all relevant things considered, that Brownville ever saw and augurs the best."<sup>51</sup>

## THE FALL

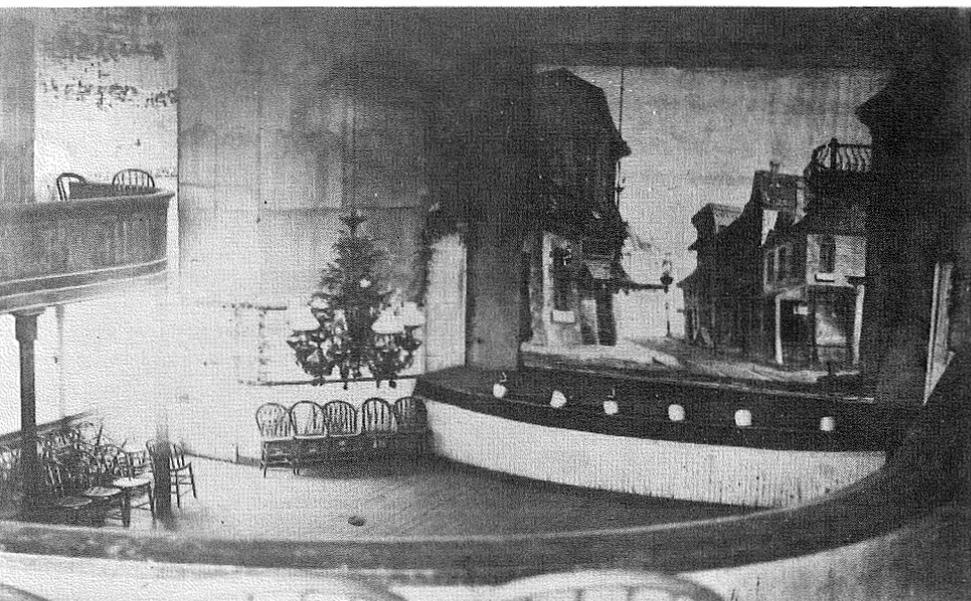
But “the best” was not forthcoming for Brownville. The loss of the Brownville, Ft. Kearney and Pacific was in itself a heavy blow; the years of litigation, the incurred indebtedness, and the high taxes that followed, an even heavier one. As with many a disaster, it seemed that the first touched off a second, the second a third, and on down the line like a set of tenpins. And times were hard.

The *Advertiser*, long with a \$2.00 annual subscription rate, reduced it to \$1.50.<sup>1</sup> Where once there had been two columns of business cards on the front page of the paper, there was now only a handful. “Times are too hard to advertise now,” one business man was quoted as saying.<sup>2</sup> Part of the financial difficulty in the years 1875 and 1876 was due to crop loss. Grasshoppers had riddled fields in 1874 so that, except for some “tolerable corn” raised on the Missouri River bottom, crops were nearly nonexistent that year.<sup>3</sup> By May of ’75, the grasshoppers were at it again, stripping the wheat fields. And Governor Furnas, who had planted sixty acres of orchard that spring, reported that they were eating the buds off his trees.<sup>4</sup> By June there were literally clouds of them descending, even causing the Trunk Line Railroad trouble, “oiling” its tracks to a dangerous slickness and “riding the cars” to the distraction of employees and passengers alike.<sup>5</sup> By August people’s dispositions were worn thin, and town and countryside alike were stripped bare. It was evident that harvest time would see “the shortest crops in 20 years.”<sup>6</sup>

The first of the many law suits that grew out of the legal tangle which enmeshed the “remains” of the Brownville and Ft. Kearney was filed by the County Commissioners, represented by Jefferson H. Broady, in December. “There is an effort being made,” said the Falls City *Globe-Journal* in January of ’76, “to extricate the Brownville and Ft. Kearney Railroad from the tangle Dr. Converse brought about when he consolidated it and tore up the track. Brownville claims the consolidation was fraudulent and irregular and an effort will be made to get it out



*The Brick Block showing the Marsh House (originally the Brownville House) with verandahs added in 1878.*



*Interior of Marsh Opera House as photographed by author Willa Cather in 1894.*

of limbo.”<sup>7</sup> But years were to elapse, many suits were to be filed, and some optimistic moments were to be experienced before the final Supreme Court decision brought the litigation to an end—the beginning of the end, also, for Brownville.

During those years, however, there was one joyful note that did not diminish. It was the sound of music. For Brownville’s interest in music and her own talented performers kept the air alive with song. Sometimes it was the song of instruments, sometimes that of voices, sometimes of both. The Choral Union continued to sponsor an annual Music Convention.<sup>8</sup> A chorus of as many as 100 voices was always heard in concert during this event.<sup>9</sup> The Silver Cornet Band continued to give frequent “grand promenade concerts.”<sup>10</sup> Miss Fannie Arnold was beginning to make a name for herself as a pianist and piano teacher. She and her pupils gave “musical entertainments” of high caliber.<sup>11</sup> Mrs. J. W. Ford was giving both piano and organ lessons.<sup>12</sup> Miss Alice Hitt, “one of Brownville’s sweetest singers,” not only gave vocal lessons, but also sang solo leads in numerous musical productions.<sup>13</sup> One such was “Pinafore,” directed by Cora Gates, another fine local musician. “Pinafore” was presented on Thanksgiving night and, by request, repeated the following evening.<sup>14</sup> Brownville talent was also presented in musicals in other towns. Miss Fannie Arnold and a cast of thirty-five played “The Sorcerer” to an appreciative audience at Falls City one cold winter night.<sup>15</sup>

Drama also had its day. The John Blake Dramatic Association (named for Dr. John Blake, deceased, who had insisted that the local dramatic club present *good* plays) was active, giving frequent performances.<sup>16</sup> Traveling stock companies played the town often, some of them reported to be very good, others, poor. The Walters Company, one of the better ones, “closed a week’s run” and could well “have run another week.”<sup>17</sup>

It was during these years that the Brownville House was renovated, verandahs added, the interior refurnished, and the establishment renamed “The Marsh House.” All of the town’s hotels had become run-down, so this was a needed renovation and a source of pride when finished. Under Joseph O’Pelt, former manager of the Union House, the Marsh House thrived, becoming “the most popular hotel in the State, and it was not unusual for from thirty to fifty commercial travelers to ‘stop over with Jo’ from Saturday till the following Monday.”<sup>18</sup> In a

three-story attached brick to the east of the hotel was the top-floor hall which was the home of the arts during these years. Known as Marsh Hall, it was the scene of both dramatic and musical productions. Stairs leading to it were reached through a passageway from the hotel. Hence, traveling stock companies and other performers found the Marsh House-Marsh Hall a very convenient combination. The first class to graduate from the Brownville High School also used this hall for its "public exercises" on May 30, 1878.<sup>19</sup>

Yet even as early as 1876, citizens were looking backward to "the good old days." Regarding a reception held by the Presbyterian ladies for their new minister, a news account said, "At nine o'clock the crowd was escorted by 30's to the dining room where a sumptuous feast was laid out—a reminder of days gone by."<sup>20</sup>

Also that year and the next witnessed the most rampant, destructive floods the Missouri had thus far unleashed. In July of '76, the river cut into the shore so far that it reached the tracks of the under-a-year-old Nebraska Railroad, and track had to be taken up to save it from washing down stream with the swirling current.<sup>21</sup> Other years saw equally severe floods, and at one time the Nebraska City *News* said, "Brownville seems to be a doomed propinquity [*sic*]. Not only can she not succeed in getting additional railroads, but even the one she has is gone down the river with the flood."<sup>22</sup>

In July of '77, Captain Benson M. Bailey "on account of the encroachments of the Missouri River, moved out of his fine brick residence on the levee . . . and workmen have since been engaged in tearing down the house and removing such material as can be used in another building. The river is still high, and unless it falls rapidly, it will cut Levee Street out in a few days."<sup>23</sup> Mr. Bailey had his home rebuilt out of the materials of the original house, but this time well out of the way of the river—on Main Street between 4th and 5th, where it still stands today, a property of the Brownville Historical Society used as the organization's House Museum.

Still busy in 1881, "Old Man River" cut his relentless way into the area where the State Fair had been held until where livestock barns and exhibit halls had stood the main channel churned. Loaded skiffs and flatboats plied frantically over the

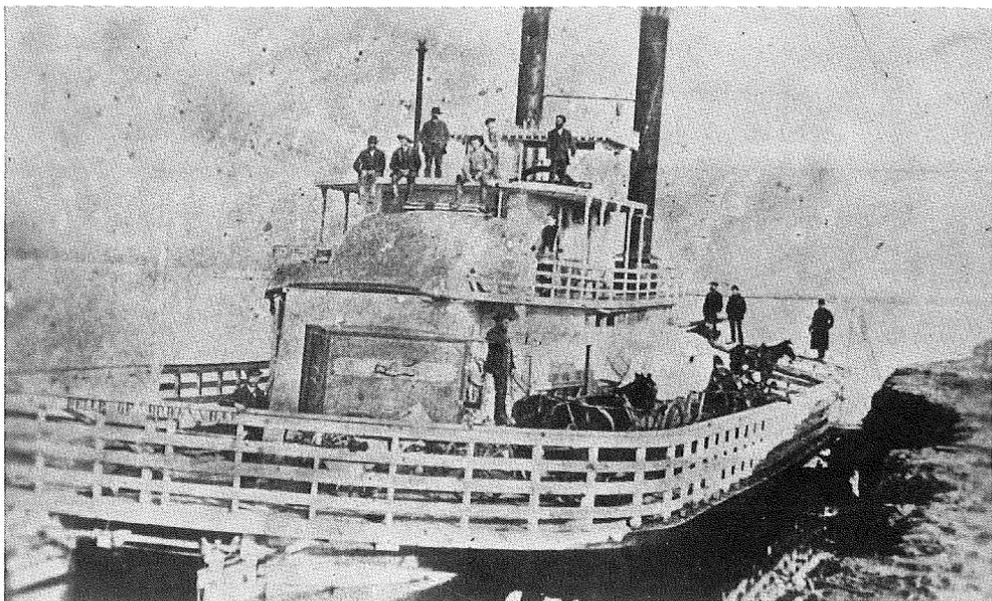
inundated bottom lands in an attempt to retrieve struggling livestock. The Court House and the Opera House became temporary homes for some 200 flood victims.<sup>24</sup> The muddy, seething river which had played such a vital role in the town's progress was taking an equally strong part in her demise.

Almost as active as the river in the late '70's was the Temperance Movement. Now the town sported a "Red Ribbon Club," its members wearing a red ribbon in their lapels to indicate their views on liquor. Benson M. Bailey was president; Major John S. Minick, first vice president; Robert W. Furnas, second vice; A. H. Gilmore, secretary; and William H. Hoover, treasurer.<sup>25</sup> At an early meeting of this organization, John L. Carson offered a room over the First National Bank Building free for one year, as a meeting room for the club and as a library and reading room. The library, he proposed, should be free to all for use *in* the hall, but in order to check books out, a person would have to be a member, for which privilege he would pay \$2.50 a year.<sup>26</sup>

Petitions were circulated by the Red Ribbon Club for presentation to the City Council, requesting that no more liquor licenses be issued in Brownville, and "almost all" seemed to be signing.<sup>27</sup> The City Council reacted to pressure and in March of 1879 passed an ordinance "to prohibit and suppress tippling shops and saloons in the city of Brownville." Brownville was a Temperance Town!<sup>28</sup> Following this startling development, the town proceeded to elect a straight Prohibition Ticket in April.<sup>29</sup> And by June 6 there was "only a beer saloon in town."<sup>30</sup> This, of course, was by no means the end of the town's troubles—with liquor and with other matters. Illegal liquor sales kept the lawmen busy. By 1880 the *Advertiser* was "demanding" that the "cider houses" that were selling liquor be closed. This, the paper claimed, "could be done any hour." In the same issue was a report of Johnny Smith's being arrested for selling whiskey and being fined \$25.00 and costs; and of Dr. Crane and his two sons being arrested for the same offense.<sup>31</sup>

And women were complaining of the high weeds on Main Street, which hung over the sidewalks. They were wet in the early morning dew and bedraggled the skirts when one went marketing.<sup>32</sup>

Also fires were still a major hazard. There was a frightening



*The Belle of Brownville, a steam ferry that served the Brownville crossing in the 1880's.*



*The Bailey House, built originally near the river, was moved in 1877 to its present location on Main Street. Extant and used as house museum of the Brownville Historical Society.*

one in the Marsh Hall during a temperance lecture.<sup>33</sup> Another within the same thirty-day period, at "Johnny Smith's shop on North Main," caused the editor of the *Advertiser* to say: "If it had occurred late at night, North Main probably would be in ashes. This should be a warning. We hope the City Council will employ a fire inspector."<sup>34</sup> Another hope and another warning, only one of many over the years which went unheeded.

Taxes were oppressive, going as high as seventeen cents on the dollar.<sup>35</sup> The citizens, with purses drained, cried out for relief. It was suggested that the mayor's and council's salaries be cut.<sup>36</sup> Petitions went to City Hall urgently appealing for a "repeal of all ordinances in restraint of trade," asking that no more tax be levied than absolutely necessary to pay current expenses.<sup>37</sup> The tax rate and the pending law suits discouraged new settlers so that "emigration" ceased.

Then the *Mary J. Arnold*, the steam ferry, the pride of the town, sank. She was only about 100 yards below her wharf when she struck a snag. It punched a hole in the bow a foot in diameter, and water came rushing into the hold. She put on steam, and "with cool Knoble at the engine and steady-handed Jack Sedoris at the wheel" she managed to hobble in. The boat was "unfreighted of its teams and passengers, all without injury to anyone," but without a minute to spare. As the last team hurried safely onto land, the boat settled to the bottom of the muddy river. Not considered worth salvaging, she was "relieved of her steam works and shorn of her pipes and stacks." The *Advertiser* ended its account of the wreck with the words, "Goodbye Mary Jane!"<sup>38</sup>

There was a sad goodbye, as well, to many citizens during these years; this was because of the dread disease, diphtheria. Deaths of 17- and 18-year-olds were as numerous as were those of children.

The *Mary J. Arnold*, however, unlike precious lives, could be replaced—and was. On Sunday, July 18, 1880, at about 11:30 a.m., a new steam ferry, the *Belle of Brownville* arrived at her wharf. The Silver Cornet Band and a number of prominent Brownvillians met the *Belle* at Aspinwall and escorted her to her destination. The day was pleasant, and hundreds gathered to welcome her to home port. The boat, made to order for Bailey,

McGee, Harmon and Carson, was large and commodious. Brownville was proud!<sup>39</sup>

And she still had reason to be proud of a number of outstanding citizens. When a meeting was called in Lincoln to organize the State Historical Society, names of charter members who signed that day included, from Brownville, John L. Carson, Robert W. Furnas, J. L. Edwards, and Thomas W. Tipton.<sup>40</sup> The State Horticultural Society still had as president Robert W. Furnas.<sup>41</sup> These were typical examples of Brownville citizens' participation in state matters of import.

There was a bright day too when, in May, 1880, the Circuit Court found for the Nemaha County Commissioners in a suit to block the mortgage foreclosure on their bonds, now held by one Joseph T. Thomas, a former Converse associate. The Court's decision held that the claims of the mortgagee were invalid since they were dependent on a clearly fraudulent construction contract. But this bright day was short-lived.<sup>42</sup> The case was contested, and the Supreme Court of the United States in December, 1883, reversed the verdict of the lower court.<sup>43</sup> The effect of this decision on Brownville was disaster. Financially, it meant ruin.

Along with this disaster went the loss of the County Seat, which Brownville had held for nearly a third of a century. Twice before, on petition of the required number of citizens of the county, elections had been held on relocation of the County Seat, once in 1858 and once in 1876. In the election of 1876, Brownville had received 825 votes, Sheridan (now Auburn) 658, and Peru, 66.<sup>44</sup> Fate was still with Nebraska's "first city" then, but she was weakening. Nine years later she turned completely away. The *Republican* (the *Advertiser*, after twenty-six years, had removed from Brownville to Calvert in 1882)<sup>45</sup> reported simply that in the recent election there had been 689 votes to retain Brownville as the County Seat, 1,816 votes to relocate.<sup>46</sup>

People had been emigrating from rather than immigrating to Brownville ever since the railroad indebtedness had raised taxes to an untenable high. The population had shown a decrease as early as 1873. By 1880 it was almost halved, and in the next decade, chiefly after the loss of the County Seat, people moved out in droves. In 1890 there were only 457 brave or foolhardy souls left.<sup>47</sup> The beautiful brick homes built so joyously thirty



*After the fire in 1903, only stark skeletons remained as reminders of the once stately Brick Block.*

years before stood vacant, their sad window eyes staring over a ghost town which so short a time before had been vibrant with life and hope and dreams. Decay set in. Willa Cather in 1894, long before she had become a famous novelist, wrote an article about Brownville for the *Lincoln Journal* in which she said, "Even the Lone Tree saloon is falling to pieces, and that, in a western town, is the sure sign that everything is gone." Yet, she did not find the dilapidation unsightly, for she had a feeling for history. "It is a gentle, sunny, picturesque sort of decay," she wrote, "as if the old town had lain down to sleep in the hills like Rip Van Winkle."<sup>48</sup>

But what was left of her was brought wide awake once more when her old bugaboo—fire—again came to town, this time not to be stopped until flames had wiped out the beautiful "brick block," the row of two- and three-story buildings erected in 1865 on the south side of Main Street. Coincidentally A. G. Gates, who had been the contractor for the brick work, died the same week. This final conflagration, the culmination of all those unheeded warnings over the years, occurred in the spring of 1903. The town had no way to fight the fire, discovered about 1:00 a.m. The Marsh Hotel and Opera House, which had rung with music and known such gay balls; the Court House, which had heard so many trials and housed so many prisoners; the store buildings in between—all went up in roaring flames, with only a blackened brick shell left here and there to write the last page of the story of Brownville's demise.<sup>49</sup>

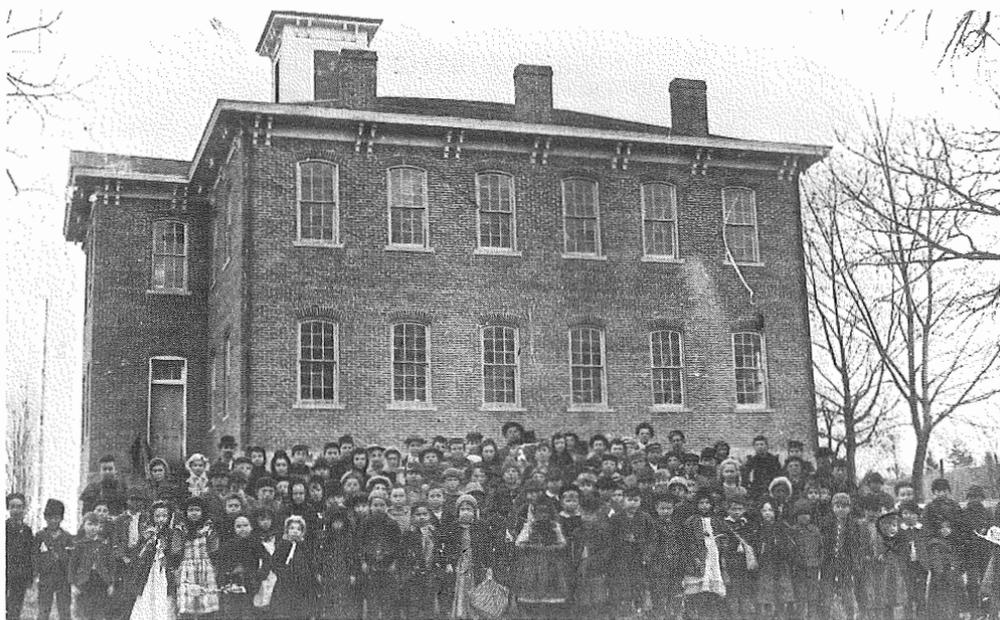
## THE YEARS BETWEEN

But like the proverbial phoenix—the bird that consumed itself in fire, then rose to start another life—Brownville would rise from the ashes. This, however, would not occur until a quiescent half century had passed. During those years the exodus continued until the population figure reached an eventual low of 174.<sup>1</sup> Old men sat in the sun on benches in front of the General Store. Old women sat in rocking chairs on creaking front porches.

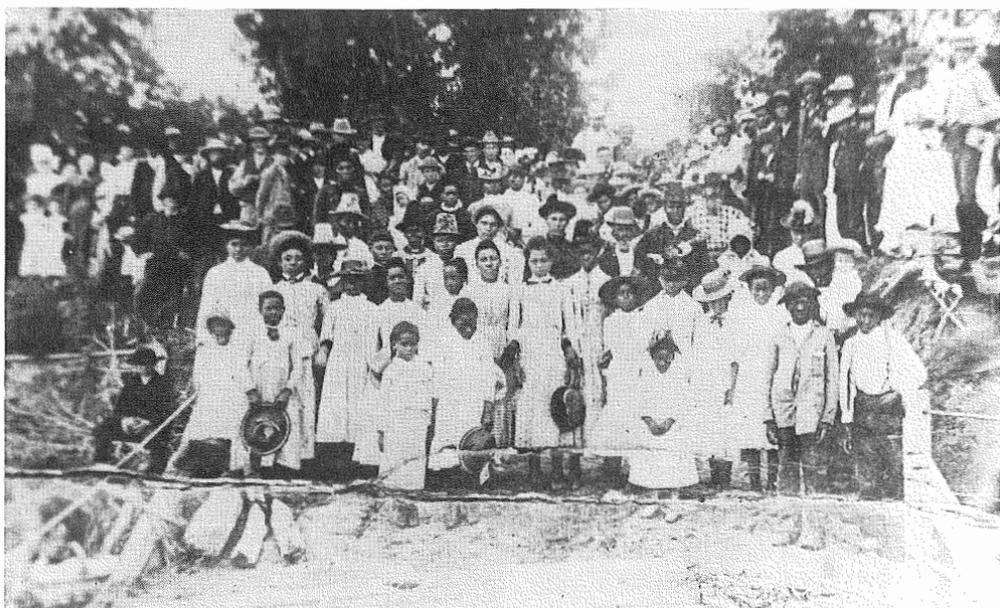
The exodus, though, did not include Governor Furnas, who continued to live on his 100-acre fruit farm on the outskirts of town until his death in 1905. He had said, “I hope to die in harness,” and that he did. Still active in the state horticultural and agricultural organizations at the age of 81, he had attended within a fortnight of his death a meeting of the State Board of Agriculture, of which he had been secretary for many years. At his death he was lauded as the father of Nebraska horticulture and life-long promoter of agricultural advancement. Dr. George L. Miller, editor of the Omaha *World-Herald*, at the State Historical Society annual meeting said truly: “He . . . won for himself enduring honor, and a name which will never be erased from the written annals of our state.”<sup>2</sup>

Governor Furnas died in Lincoln where he had gone for medical treatment. After services were held in the capital, his body was sent by special train to Brownville, accompanied by both state officials and Masonic officers. The casket was opened at the depot, where many hundreds had gathered. There the funeral procession formed, and, led by Masons, proceeded to the Walnut Grove Cemetery. It was the largest funeral ever held in Brownville, with the procession extending for five blocks. Of the many who had left Brownville, most returned to pay final respects to one of the great men the pioneer town had nurtured.<sup>3</sup>

At the time the exodus began, Brownville had a sizeable Negro population. A Negro Baptist church had been organized



*Brownville School in 1897 retained high standards and remained a source of pride even after decline of the town had set in. Built in 1866, the school at first offered courses today reserved for college.*



*A Negro Baptist immersion service at the river, about 1890.*

in 1882,<sup>4</sup> and many an immersion followed in the muddy Missouri. In 1892 a Negro, Henry Brown, ran for mayor and, though defeated by Charles Schantz, must have received a respectable vote. A Brownville newspaper had this to say of him:

“Henry Brown, the colored mail carrier between this place and Phelps City, stands up to the task with a fortitude and promptness which should commend him to all who receive mail from this office.”<sup>5</sup> Little by little, however, the blacks left also, until there were only two families left, the Greens and the Harpers.

Ghost stories abounded. There was the one connected with Captain Bailey’s house, the house that brick by brick had been moved out of the path of the river to higher ground on Main Street. The deaths of both Captain and Mrs. Bailey were clouded with suspicion, and murder was suspected. One night Captain Bailey and his sons, returning home from a lodge meeting, were unable to open the front door. Something seemed to have been propped against it. Gaining entrance from the rear, they found Mrs. Bailey’s body slumped against the door. She was thought to have been poisoned by ice cream, and Dame Rumor had it that the crime had been perpetrated by a widow who had “set her cap” for the Captain. However, even after getting rid of his wife, she was unsuccessful in her attempts to snare him. After a time he too died suddenly; this time the poison was thought to have been in oyster soup served him by the scorned widow. As a result of these stories, ghosts were said to walk in the house. There was an upstairs bedroom door that would never stay shut after the Captain’s demise. Even when latched, it would burst open.<sup>6</sup> Was the Captain trying to get out to tell his story? To get revenge?

Another mansion, surrounded by lovely gardens, sitting high on a hill, a showplace in the late ’70’s and early ’80’s, was Minick Manor. It waited well into the 20th Century to sport its ghost—a gentle ghost. Once it housed the family of John and Alice Minick. Alice Lockwood Minick was the first woman to receive a law degree from the University of Nebraska, and the fifteenth woman admitted to the United States Supreme Court.<sup>7</sup> However, it was not the ghost of Alice that in later years haunted the House of Minick but that of her niece Helen

Hitte, who had been brought up from infancy as a member of the Minick family. Helen became a teacher, and in the years of her young womanhood had an unhappy love affair. Her fiance hanged himself a few days before the date set for their wedding.

The Minick house was willed to Helen Hitte, and after she had taught school in Omaha for forty-one years, she returned to Brownville to make her home in the beautiful mansion. She became a recluse and lived in only two rooms of the house, with just her cats for company. She tacked the window shades to the windows for fear of being spied upon and seldom ventured from the house.

After her death, when the house was sold and people began living in it again, there was the sound of footsteps in an upstairs room. Other unexplainable noises from the upper floor led to the story that the ghost of Helen Hitte was in occupancy. There is a postscript to that story. Still later, when Artist Tom Palmerton and his family were living in the Minick house, the ghost was exorcised by an Omaha clairvoyant who took the ghost of "Charlie," Helen Hitte's suicide-lover, to Brownville, where the two ghosts were said to have been happily reunited.<sup>8</sup>

There were others besides ghosts who returned to Brownville periodically during "the years between." Among these were members of the Carson family. Although Banker John Carson moved with his family to Lincoln after discontinuance of his bank in Brownville, (the bank was reorganized and moved to Auburn as the Carson National Bank in 1882) his Brownville house was left completely furnished and the family used it as a summer home. Mrs. Carson and the children spent several weeks there each summer for a number of years.

There was still a General Store, where groceries and household supplies could be purchased—Vandevanter's General Store—and where children could buy penny candy. There was a small cafe. As automobiles began to make their inroads even on the narrow dirt roads around Brownville, a garage was opened on Main Street in one of the unpretentious frame buildings that had replaced the once-fine "brick block." And there was a grain elevator near the depot, where farmers brought their grain. On the streets where once there had not been room to tie up a team, there was now only an occasional team and wagon, an occasional horse and buggy, and an occasional Ford touring car.



*Burlington Depot, from which carloads of fruit were shipped. Built in 1875, it closed in 1951.*



*Apples were packed in barrels for storage and shipment during the heyday of the fruit industry.*

One industry, however, remained for a number of years—the industry which Robert W. Furnas had started on its upward way the same year Brownville as a town had started on its zig-zag way. This industry had not zig-zagged; it had climbed steadily. Ridiculed when he had first planted fruit trees in 1855,<sup>9</sup> Furnas had been the instigator and the prodder of horticulture in the Brownville area from that day on. So even after the town itself had entered the years of its long sleep, the fruit industry prospered. In the late '80's, the '90's, and the early 1900's, there was "fruit on many hills all the way to Nemaha."<sup>10</sup> Orchards and vineyards extended north and west of the town as well. Apples, grapes, and strawberries were the three largest crops. Apples were packed in barrels and lined the depot platform to be shipped out by boxcar. In strawberry season, all hands, including those of children, were recruited, for the highly perishable fruit had to be picked, packed, and shipped rapidly. It was sometimes necessary to hold the train, which arrived at 10:00 o'clock in the morning, until after 2:00 in the afternoon to ship out the day's picking.<sup>11</sup>

The Brownville Fruit Growers Association shipped carloads of grapes to brokers and wholesale dealers who distributed them in a number of states.<sup>12</sup> The fruit industry continued to thrive even after the method of distribution changed, and trucks carried out bushel baskets of apples instead of the train's carrying barrels of them. It was not until the early 1930's that Brownville's one remaining industry began to taper off. Lack of adequate moisture in those years lessened production, and when in 1940 the Armistice Day freeze killed many orchards, Brownville's one last industry came close to its end. A few small orchards continued, but the big business was over.<sup>13</sup>

And despite some modern improvements—such as the bridge that in 1939 was built across the river, at long last connecting Brownville with the East; and the U. S. Engineers' work on the river to control flooding—Brownville's long sleep only deepened.

The town's long involvement with music and theatre, however, did not die at once. After the brick block burned, there was still an Opera House. Called the Opelt Opera House, it was located on the second floor of a brick building on the north side of Main Street, above the Lone Tree Saloon. This building

is still standing today, and is the home of the Brownville Mill. Masonic suppers, featuring the traditional oyster stew of the early years, continued to be held, and never a one but which featured a piano or vocal solo for entertainment. The town took pride too in the success of blind-deaf pianist Helen May Martin whose mother, Helen Smith Martin, had grown up in Brownville and there received her musical education,<sup>14</sup> which she in turn passed on to her daughter.

Only an occasional flash of excitement ignited the few remaining residents at such an event as the signing of the Armistice in 1918. That day rang with cheers and resounded with the boom of the cannon. It was almost like one of the early-day Fourth of July celebrations. Happy all the way—except for one small boy (the grandson of Henry Hudson Marsh, pioneer postmaster, book-store proprietor, and musician) who, when the Kaiser was strung up and burned in effigy, sobbed uncontrollably. He thought they were burning Santa Claus!

Then there were the Brownville “Homecomings,” summer picnics when people came from far and wide to renew old acquaintances, eat watermelon, and drink lemonade from tanks in which large chunks of ice floated. But in the heat and dust even these gatherings were muted and somnolent.

In 1951 the train depot, built with such high hopes in 1873, was closed.

Brownville’s sleep indeed seemed the sleep of death.



*Robert W. Furnas in his orchard about 1900.*

## THE PHOENIX RISES

But there were those who thought Brownville's sleep should not be the sleep of death; that her past should be preserved in the present so future generations might see something of their heritage, the noble heritage of Nebraska's first pioneers. Among them was Artist Terence R. Duren.

A number of artists had discovered that "the deserted village" offered interesting and picturesque subjects for their palettes. But only Terence Duren saw the importance of saving the few beautiful brick houses that remained, already beginning to crumble from the long years of neglect. Only he dreamed of restoration so that people could see what life was like in their grandparents' and great-grandparents' day. And of bringing back the sounds of music and the lights of the theatre, which had been an integral part of Brownville life a hundred years before.

Terence Duren, a Nebraska-born artist, studied at the Art Institute in Chicago, worked in Fontainebleau, France, and in Vienna, Austria, and taught art in Cleveland before settling permanently in his home town of Shelby. By the time he became interested in Brownville, he had become nationally and internationally known for his intricately detailed oils depicting 18th- and 19th-Century life.<sup>1</sup> With his artist's imagination and his interest in the past, Mr. Duren could not let sleeping Brownville lie. "To me, Brownville will always be our capital city," he said.<sup>2</sup> "I wrote thirteen letters to people in Brownville, trying to get them interested in doing something with Brownville's past—in forming a historical society."<sup>3</sup> Finally, he wrote a fourteenth to Mr. and Mrs. G. C. Kennedy.

From Terence Duren's prodding, there resulted a meeting of a dozen people interested in "the preservation of Brownville." The meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Adolf Wensien, who lived in one of the beautiful 100-year-old houses in the town. This was in December, 1956. At that first meeting of what was to become the extremely active and effective Brownville Historical Society, Mrs. G. C. Kennedy was elected

president; Mrs. Adolf Wensien, secretary; and Jefferson Broady, treasurer. Each of those present put one dollar in the treasurer's hands.<sup>4</sup> That was the beginning.

In the first year of its existence, the Society drew up a constitution and bylaws, marked historic sites, opened a Museum, set dues at \$2.00 per year and put a membership committee to work recruiting, started a newsletter called *The Bulletin*, held an art exhibit and sponsored the first Fall Festival, which was to become an annual event.<sup>5</sup>

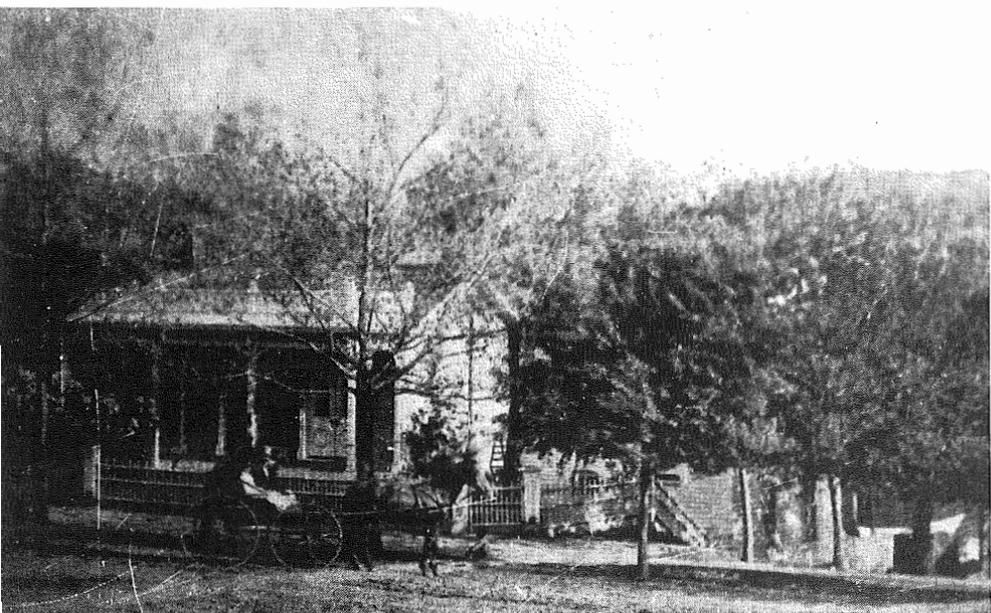
Terence Duren's dream had taken a leap into the realm of reality. Eighteen months after its first meeting, the Brownville Historical Society incorporated.<sup>6</sup> It listed 219 "charter members."<sup>7</sup> By the close of its second year, it had a balance in the treasury of \$1,458.56,<sup>8</sup> had added sixty-three more members, had named Terence Duren its Art Counselor, had made an arrangement with Rose Carson to "show" the Carson House on Main Street to visitors, and had received an award of merit from the American Association for State and Local History. All of this had been accomplished not by magic but by hard work. Nor had any fairy godmother scattered greenbacks to finance the work. All monies came from dues, donations, and festival fees.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most noteworthy early projects of the Society was a "Living Still-Life" display and contest held in the fall of '57. Inspirations for the displays were suggested in an eighteen-page booklet, *Decoration with Fruits, Vegetables, Flowers, and Americana*, compiled and illustrated by Duren. In the old City Hall Building, exhibits made of local materials were arranged: fruits, vegetables, fishing gear, driftwood, autumn flowers, natural woods, antiques, Americana, "in much the same fashion as an artist might paint a picture."<sup>10</sup> First prize for most effective exhibit went to Arthur Earl, native and current citizen of Brownville. In his "still life" he used for his central figure a grindstone, hung with bright colored grains, vegetables, fruits and flowers; against it leaned a scythe—the whole depicting a bountiful harvest.<sup>11</sup>

In the four years during which the original officers, re-elected annually, directed the organization's activities, the Society purchased the Captain Bailey House in Brownville for a



*The Carson House as it looked after 1880 additions and much as it looks today. Extant and open to the public.*



*The original house, built by town founder Richard Brown in 1860; later purchased and built onto by banker John Carson.*



*The Tipton House, built by Senator Tipton for his daughter Mrs. H. M. Atkinson. Italianate architecture. Extant and restored.*



*Once the home of the Lone Tree Saloon, now home of the Brownville Mill.*

permanent Museum;<sup>12</sup> published a fifty-page booklet, *Flashes from the Story of Colorful Old Brownville*, researched and written by Vice-President and *Bulletin* Editor Glenn Noble of Nebraska City;<sup>13</sup> built a food stand to furnish snacks for hungry visitors;<sup>14</sup> started official "tour group" visitations; and named Richard Rowen of Lincoln Curator of the Museum following the death of Hoxie Howe, the initial curator.<sup>15</sup>

By this time other things were happening in Brownville. Slowly she was beginning to awaken from her long sleep. Two antique shops had been opened. The Brownville Mill, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Courtney M. Miner, featuring stone-ground flours, was doing a nation-wide business.<sup>16</sup> Also people were beginning to buy up some of the fine old houses to restore them for vacation homes.

In 1961, John Sanders of Auburn, editor of the *Nemaha County Herald* and the *Auburn Press-Tribune*, a member of the same Sanders family that had produced editors and publishers of newspapers in Brownville and Nemaha in the '80's, became president of the Society.<sup>17</sup> The organization's activities continued apace, with thousands now attending each Spring and Fall Festival. In 1961 Mrs. George Boettner of Rock Port, Missouri, deeded the site of the present park on Main Street to the Brownville Historical Society.<sup>18</sup> It was christened "Boettner Park" in honor of Mrs. Boettner and her late husband. This was the spot where Company C of the First Nebraska had mustered at the outset of the Civil War. Following this acquisition, the Society purchased eight lots east of the park site. The Spring Festival added a Flea Market which was also to become an annual event. And the first Tour of Homes was held when seven houses, deemed interesting because of their history, their beautiful architecture, and their expression of the culture of Brownville a century before, were opened for public viewing. Also as a feature of the Fall Festival in 1961, the first Old Fiddlers' and Country Music Contest was sponsored by the Society.<sup>19</sup> Continuing what Jack Chastain had started with his violin at Brownville's first Fourth of July celebration, the event was immediately popular. As a result it was added to the list of annual attractions, and the sounds of pickin' and strummin' bring many thousands of visitors to the historic town each August.



*Oldtime Fiddlers and Country Music Contest (above), annual event of the Brownville Historical Society, draws contestants and crowds. . . . One viewer (left) out of many enjoys annual art show held under the trees in Brownville.*

Typical of the private restoration going on at this time was the colossal undertaking of newlyweds Randel and Jane Smith. They undertook the restoration of the Tipton House, a beautiful brick built by Senator Tipton for his daughter in 1862, which Mrs. Smith had bought at a tax sale for \$5.00 while she was still University of Nebraska coed Jane Crooker. When taken over by Jane, the stately eight-room mansion, long deserted, had solid walls—three bricks deep, in fact—but that was about all. It required a new roof and windows. Plumbing had to be installed, the interior plastered, painted, and papered.<sup>20</sup>

A house found in better repair, and one of the loveliest in the town, was the Robert V. Muir House, renovated with patience and care by Richard Rowen and his parents Mr. and Mrs. Earl Rowen of Lincoln. It too was built of native brick, its style of architecture what is commonly called "Hudson River Bracketed." (The name comes from the numbers of these large, cube-shaped houses with overhanging cornices upheld by large carved brackets which were built along the Hudson River in Upper New York State from about 1850 to 1870.) This house was completed in 1870, the woodwork of butternut, bird's-eye maple, and black walnut which was cut in Robert V. Muir's own sawmill in Brownville. The Rowens restored the elegant rooms with their 12-foot ceilings and 8-foot windows to their original beauty, and furnished them in the style and decor of 1870.<sup>21</sup> The house was later purchased by Mrs. Harold LeMar of Omaha, who did further restoration and furnishing, making it a show place typical of 19th-Century elegance.

Following the presidency of Sanders, Glenn Noble of Nebraska City; Randel Smith of Randolph, Iowa, and Brownville; Don Gappa of Omaha and Brownville; and John Rippey of Brownville have guided the Brownville Historical Society through the comparatively few but extremely productive years of its existence.<sup>22</sup> In 1965 it purchased the Christian Church, which had stood on Main Street at 6th for sixty-two years, and moved it to their property south of Boettner Park, where it was converted to a Little Theatre. The building was air-conditioned, plumbing installed, dressing rooms and work rooms built in the basement. Two years later negotiations were made with Nebraska Wesleyan University at Lincoln for a group of drama



*Nebraska artist Terence Duren (1906-1968) painted "The Arrival of Mail by Packet Boat," a mural on the Brownville Post Office wall. Duren (inset, right) was instrumental in starting Brownville's historical and cultural revival. (Courtesy, Lincoln Journal-Star.)*



students under the direction of Professor Henry H. Blanke to present repertoire theatre on its stage yearly during July and August.<sup>23</sup> The very successful program is now an annual drawing card for Brownville, bringing in some 7,000 persons during the season.

On December 27, 1966, Rose Carson died, leaving to the Society her Brownville property, which she had graciously allowed to be shown to the public since 1958.<sup>24</sup> In 1968 the Society built a replica of the original Brownville Land Office on its original site just east of Boettner Park. The documents pertaining to Daniel Freeman's homestead filing are on display in this building, which also doubles as Society office and Tourist Information Center.

But in the meantime the Village of Brownville itself was shaking off the ashes and raising its head. Postmaster Adolf Wensien, a Brownville native, and wife purchased the two buildings joining the post office on the north side of Main, did extensive remodeling, and in 1966 opened a fine restaurant and dining room. Decor and furnishings, dress of waitresses, and the excellent food all harkened back to Brownville's Victorian heyday. The establishment was named for its early predecessor, The Brownville House.<sup>25</sup> A new Christian Church was built on the location from which the old had been removed.

In 1970 a group of women interested in putting handcrafted items on sale opened the "Brownville Bazar" (the spelling of the word "Bazar" being used as it was in an early-day emporium of the same name). A cooperative enterprise, the shop continues to be well stocked with handmade items at all times and does an excellent business.<sup>26</sup>

Jim Garber, a native son, a graduate geologist who had been working for some years with engineering firms in the East, decided to "come home again," disproving Thomas Wolfe's famous line, "You can't go home again." For Jim Garber did, with city-girl wife. He came home to Brownville and opened a General Store in two of the old original buildings on the north side of Main Street.<sup>27</sup> Now citizens and visitors alike could buy groceries, meat, hardware, notions, toys, drygoods. They did and they do.

Two fine artists came to make their homes in Brownville: Jim

Brown, potter, and Tom Palmerton, already well known throughout the country for his oils and acrylics, who came as the Brownville Historical Society artist-in-residence in 1969 and stayed to open an art school of his own.

Nor were the City Fathers any longer sleeping. After 111 years of drawing water from wells—and for a few years hauling water in—the town approved a city water system, which was installed and opened for use in 1967.<sup>28</sup> At long last, a half dozen years later, it voted its first sewer system, still in the process of installation in 1974.<sup>29</sup>

The largest industry to add to Brownville's revived prosperity is the nuclear plant built by Consumer Public Power three miles south of town, called the Cooper Plant. With construction starting in 1968, the \$100,000,000 plant has employed many hundreds of workers in the process of building. An expansion plan to include a second unit, to be completed in 1983, has been announced.<sup>30</sup>

To further the arts and give music the prominent place it once held in Brownville, a sister organization to the Brownville Historical Society, the Brownville Fine Arts Association, was formed in 1971. Sponsoring summer workshops for music students, giving concerts throughout the season, manning the annual Fine Arts Day, and opening a regional art gallery have been among their projects which have added to Brownville's cultural resurgence.<sup>31</sup>

Probably most important of all to Brownville's historic preservation was the entry in 1970 in the National Register of Historic Places of thirty-two sites "worthy of preservation for their historic value." Research for the entries was done by John Q. Magie, former Historic Sites Curator with the Nebraska State Historical Society. Of these sites, he said: "Virtually all of these buildings, many of them vacant and near ruin a few years ago, are now owned and occupied by persons sympathetic to their historic and architectural value."<sup>32</sup>

The Phoenix has risen.

## NOTES

### I – THE BEGINNING

1. Dr. Andrew S. Holladay, "History of Nemaha County," *Nebraska Advertiser*, (Brownville), July 2, 1876.
2. *Brownville and Nemaha County in 1859*, Brownville: R. W. Furnas, Book and Job Printer, 1859, p. 3; A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, p. 1141.
3. Holladay, *op. cit.*
4. Andreas, *op. cit.*, pp. 1137-1145.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 1141.
6. Official Records of Nemaha County, Office of the District Court, Auburn, Nebraska.
7. *Idem.*
8. Holladay, *op. cit.*
9. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 5, *Auburn Tribune*, August 14, 1952.
10. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1138.
11. Bill M. Woods, "History and Influence of the Press in Nemaha County, Nebraska," p. 1. Manuscript at Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.
12. *Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the Robert W. Furnas Papers, 1844-1905*, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966, p. 1.
13. Woods, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
16. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 7, 1856.
17. *Idem.*
18. *Idem.*

### II – A MUSHROOMING NEOPHYTE

1. Robert Garrett. "A History of Brownville, Nebraska," Master's Degree Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1927, p. 64.
2. *Guide to Microfilm Edition, op. cit.*, p. 1.
3. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
4. *Idem.*
5. *Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville), July 12, 1856.
6. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1856.
7. *Idem.*
8. A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, p. 1146.
9. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 21, 1856.
10. *Idem.*
11. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 5, 1856.
12. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 6 *Auburn Tribune* (Auburn, Nebraska), August 21, 1952.

13. *Idem.*
14. J. H. Dundas & Son, *Granger History of Nemaha County*, Auburn, Nebraska, 1902, p. 31.
15. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 20, 1856.
16. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1856.
17. *Ibid.*, September 13, 1856.
18. *Idem.*
19. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1857.
20. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1857.
21. Dundas, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
22. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 9, 1856.
23. *Ibid.*, August 16, 1856.
24. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1146.
25. *Idem.*
26. *Nebraska Advertiser*, October 18, 1856.
27. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1146.
28. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 28, 1856.
29. *Nemaha County Centennial 1855-1955* (Souvenir Program), Auburn, Nebraska, August 16-19, 1955.
30. Dr. Andrew S. Holladay, "History of Nemaha County," *Nebraska Advertiser*, Brownville, Nebraska, July 2, 1876.
31. *Nemaha County Centennial, op. cit.*
32. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 5, 1856.
33. Dundas, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
34. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1141.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1131.
36. *Idem.*
37. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 26, 1857.
38. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1141.
39. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 26, 1857.
40. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1145.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 1132.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 1141.
43. *Idem.*
44. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
46. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 7, 1857.
47. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1857.
48. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
49. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.
50. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 20, 1857.
51. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1857.
52. *Idem.*
53. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 13, 1857.
54. Holladay, *op. cit.*

## III - UPWARD AND ONWARD

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2. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1857.

3. A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western History Co., 1882, p. 1140.
4. *Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville), September 17, 1857.
5. *Ibid.*, November 26, 1857.
6. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1140.
7. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 10, 1857.
8. *Ibid.*, November 12, 1857.
9. *Idem.*
10. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1858.
11. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1857.
12. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1858.
13. Robert Garrett. "A History of Brownville, Nebraska," Master's Degree Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1927, p. 24.
14. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 17, 1857.
15. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1147.
16. *Idem.*
17. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 25, 1858.
18. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1143.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 1143-1144.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 1143.
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22. Andreas, *op. cit.*, pp. 1143-1144.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 1144.
24. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
25. *Nebraska Advertiser*, November 5, 1857.
26. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1858.
27. *Ibid.*, February 18, 1858.
28. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1146.
29. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 1, 1858.
30. *Ibid.*, July 15, 1858.
31. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1858.
32. *Idem.*
33. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 8, *Auburn Tribune*, September 4, 1952.
34. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1143.
35. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 25, 1858.
36. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1143.
37. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 2, 1857.
38. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1858.
39. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1858.
40. *Ibid.*, October 8, 1857.
41. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1858.
42. *Ibid.*, June 17, 1858.
43. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
44. Clevenger, *op. cit.*, No. 16, October 30, 1952.

45. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 19, 1858.
46. *Idem*.
47. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 9, 1858.
48. *Ibid.*, September 2, 1858.
49. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1858.
50. William E. Lass, *From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake*, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, 1972, p. 138.
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## IV – THE GLORY YEARS

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5. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1859.
6. *Ibid.*, May 26, 1859.
7. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1859.
8. Dundas, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
9. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 19, 1860.
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11. Dundas, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.
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15. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1859.
16. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1859.
17. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1859.
18. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1859.
19. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1859.
20. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1859.
21. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1859.
22. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1859.
23. *Nemaha County Centennial, 1855-1955* (Souvenir Program), August 16-19, 1955.
24. *Nebraska Advertiser*, March 29, 1860.
25. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1859.
26. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1860.
27. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1860.
28. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1859.
29. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1859.
30. Newspaper Film Record Book (071 N34a), Nemaha. Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.
31. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 28, 1859.
32. *Ibid.*, August 4, 1859.
33. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1860.
34. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 30, 1860.

35. A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, p. 1141.
36. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 30, 1860.
37. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1141.
38. *Idem.*
39. *Idem.*
40. *Idem.*
41. *Idem.*
42. *Idem.*
43. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 23, 1860.
44. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1860.
45. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1860.
46. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1860.
47. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1860.
48. Bill M. Woods, "History and Influence of the Press in Nemaha County, Nebraska," 1944, p. 5.
49. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 17, 1861.
50. *Ibid.*, January 10, 1861.
51. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 16, *Auburn Tribune*, October 30, 1952.
52. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
53. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 10, 1860.
54. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
55. *Idem.*
56. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 4, 1859.
57. *Ibid.*, August 11, 1859.
58. *Ibid.*, September 1, 1859.
59. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1860.
60. *Ibid.*, December 27, 1860.
61. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
62. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 26, 1860.
63. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1860.
64. Nemaha County Centennial, *op. cit.*
65. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 16, 1859.
66. *Ibid.*, September 1, 1859.
67. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1859.
68. Harrison Johnson, *History of Nebraska*, Omaha: Herald Printing House, 1880, p. 460.
69. *Nebraska Advertiser*, October 13, 1859.
70. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1859.
71. *Ibid.*, June 2, 1859.
72. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1145.
73. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 7, 1860.
74. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1145.
75. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 3, 1859.
76. *Ibid.*, October 13, 1859.
77. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1146.
78. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 14, 1859.
79. *Idem.*

80. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 8, 1859.
81. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1859.
82. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1859.
83. *Brownville Telegraph Bulletin*, December 15, 1860.
84. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 24, 1861.
85. *Ibid.*, January 31, 1861.
86. *Ibid.*, December 22, 1859.
87. Garrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.
88. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 9, 1859.
89. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1859. Owners of the store were Henry Greenbaum and David Seigel.

## V - THE WAR YEARS

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2. *Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville), February 2, 1860.
3. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1861.
4. *Idem.*
5. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 11, 1861.
6. *Ibid.*, February 21, 1861.
7. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1861.
8. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
10. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 16, 1861.
11. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1861.
12. *Idem.*
13. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 14, *Auburn Tribune*, October 16, 1952.
14. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 13, 1861.
15. Glenn Noble, *Flashes from the Story of Colorful Old Brownville*, Brownville Historical Society, Inc., Brownville, Nebraska, 1959, p. 22.
16. J. H. Dundas and Son, *Granger History of Nemaha County*, Auburn, Nebraska, 1902, p. 52.
17. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
18. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 13, 1861
19. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1861.
20. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1861.
21. *Ibid.*, August 15, 1861.
22. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1861.
23. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1861.
24. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1861.
25. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1861.
26. *Idem.*
27. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
28. *Guide to Furnas Papers*, p. 1.
29. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 29, 1861.
30. Bill M. Woods, "History and Influence of the Press in Nemaha County, Nebraska," 1944, p. 6; Newspaper Film Record Book of (071 N34a), Nemaha,

Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.

31. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I*, Vol. VIII, Washington, D.C., G.P.O., 1883, p. 659.

32. Robert C. Farb, "The Military Career of Robert W. Furnas," *Nebraska History*, Vol. XXXII, March, 1951, pp. 18-41; Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1130.

33. Farb, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-41.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

35. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 23, 1862.

36. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

37. A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, p. 233-234.

38. *Nebraska Advertiser*, March 27, 1862.

39. *Ibid.*, April 3, 1862.

40. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1129.

41. *Nebraska Advertiser*, December 19, 1861.

42. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 54-56.

43. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1129.

44. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 17, 1862.

45. *Ibid.*, January 30, 1862.

46. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 10, *Auburn Tribune*, September 18, 1952.

47. *Nebraska Advertiser*, November 8, 1862.

48. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1862.

49. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1863.

50. Garrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

51. *Idem.*

52. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 10, 1862.

53. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1864.

54. *Ibid.*, December 22, 1864.

55. Allen Carpenter, *Nebraska*, Children's Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 75.

56. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 22, 1864.

57. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1864.

58. *Ibid.*, April 9, 1863.

59. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1863.

60. *Ibid.*, May 23, June 4, 1863; Nathaniel West, *The Ancestry, Life and Times of Hon. Henry Hastings Sibley, LL.D.*, St. Paul, Minnesota: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1889, p. 292.

61. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 11, 1863.

62. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1863.

63. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1863.

64. *Ibid.*, August 8, 1863.

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67. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1864.

68. *Idem.*

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70. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1864.

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74. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1864.

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#### VI – THE POST-WAR YEARS

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3. *Nebraska Advertiser*, March 23, 1865.

4. *Idem.*

5. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 26, 1865.

6. *Ibid.*, February 9, 1865.

7. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1865.

8. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1865.

9. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1865.

10. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1865.

11. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1865.

12. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1865.

13. *Ibid.*, May 4, 1865.

14. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1143.

15. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 4, 1865.

16. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1865.

17. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1864.

18. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1865.

19. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1866.

20. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1132.

21. *Nebraska Advertiser* June 22, 1865.

22. *Ibid.*, June 1, 1865.

23. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1867.

24. *Ibid.*, August 31, 1865.

25. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1865.

26. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1149.

27. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 1, 1865.

28. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1865.

29. *Idem.*

30. *Idem.*

31. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1865.

32. Nemaha County Census, Brownville, 1870, p. 22.

33. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 31, 1865.

34. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1865.

35. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1865.

36. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.

37. *Nebraska Advertiser*, March 8, 1866.

38. *Ibid.*, March 22, 1866.
39. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1866.
40. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1865.
41. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.
42. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 3, 1866.
43. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 1142; *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 17, 1866.
45. *Idem.*
46. *Nebraska Advertiser*, August 16, 1866.
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48. *New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia*, New York: Unicorn Publishers, Inc., 1952, Vol. 13, pp. 12, 198; *See also*, Willis Thornton, *The Nine Lives of Citizen Train*, New York: Greenburg, 1948.
49. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 17, 1866.
50. *Idem.*
51. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1866.
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53. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1866.
54. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1866.
55. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1145.
56. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 21, 1867.
57. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1867.
58. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1867.
59. *Idem.*
60. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 28, 1867.
61. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1867.
62. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1867.
63. *Ibid.*, October 3, 1867.
64. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1132.
65. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 7, 1867.
66. *Ibid.*, April 25, May 23, 1857.

## VII – THE RAILROAD DREAM

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3. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1867.
4. Robert Garrett. "A History of Brownville, Nebraska," Master's Degree Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1927, p. 57.
5. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 12, 1867.
6. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1867.
7. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1867.
8. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1867.
9. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1867.
10. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1867.
11. *Ibid.*, September 12, 1867.
12. *Idem.*

13. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1867.
14. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1867.
15. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1869.
16. James J. Blake, "Brownville, Ft. Kearney & Pacific," *Nebraska History*, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Vol. XXIX, pp. 239-240.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.
19. *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 6, 1867.
20. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1867.
21. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1867.
22. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1867.
23. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1867.
24. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1867.
25. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1867.
26. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1867.
27. *Ibid.*, September 19, 1867.
28. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.
29. *Nebraska Advertiser*, December 26, 1867.
30. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1867.
31. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 243.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
33. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
34. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
38. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 2, 1868.
39. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1132.
40. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 9, 1868.
41. *Ibid.*, September 17, 1868.
42. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1868.
43. *Ibid.*, January 2, 1868.
44. *Idem.*
45. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1868.
46. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1868.
47. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1868.
48. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1868.
49. Blake, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
52. *Nebraska Advertiser*, November 4, 1869.
53. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1869.
54. *Ibid.*, October 14, 1869.
55. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.
56. *Nebraska Advertiser*, October 21, 1869.
57. *Ibid.*, April 8, 1869.
58. *Ibid.*, June 3, 1869.
59. *Ibid.*, September 23, 1869.
60. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1869.

61. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
62. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 7, 1869.
63. *Ibid.*, March 18, 1869.
64. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1869.
65. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1144.
66. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 6, 1869.
67. Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
68. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1142.
69. *Idem.*
70. *Idem.*
71. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
72. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 20, 1870.
73. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
74. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 19, 1870.
75. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
76. *Idem.*

## VIII – THE BEGINNING OF THE END

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4. *Idem.*
5. *Daily Advertiser* (Brownville), September 5, 1870.
6. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 22, 1870.
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8. Glenn Noble, *Flashes from the Story of Colorful Old Brownville*, Brownville Historical Society, Inc., Brownville, Nebraska, 1959, p. 39.
9. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 7, 1870.
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13. *Ibid.*, p. 1144.
14. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 257.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
17. *Nebraska Advertiser*, October 5, 1871.
18. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 259.
19. *Idem.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
21. *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 11, 1872.
22. *Ibid.*, April 14, 1870.
23. *Ibid.*, June 2, 1870.
24. *Daily Advertiser*, September 10, 1870.
25. *Brownville Daily Democrat* (Brownville), July 26, 1870.
26. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 27, 1871.
27. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1871.
28. *Ibid.*, August 3, 1871.

29. *Ibid.*, January 11, 1872.
30. *Ibid.*, February 22, 1872.
31. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1872.
32. Andreas, *op. cit.*, pp. 1153-1154.
33. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 4, 1872.
34. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
35. *Idem.*
36. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
39. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 4, 1872.
40. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
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## IX – STARTING THE DOWNHILL SLIDE

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3. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1874.
4. A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, p. 1444.
5. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 8, 1872.
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7. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1872.
8. J. H. Dundas and Son, *Granger History of Nemaha County*, Auburn, Nebraska, 1902, pp. 91-92.
9. *Nebraska Advertiser*, February 2, 1871.
10. *Ibid.*, December 17, 1874.
11. *Ibid.*, June 1, 1871.
12. *Ibid.*, June 26, 1873.
13. *Ibid.*, April 2, 1874.
14. *Ibid.*, December 17, 1874.
15. *Ibid.*, March 5, 1874.
16. *Ibid.*, March 19, 1874.
17. *Ibid.*, March 12, 1874.
18. *Ibid.*, June 25, 1874.
19. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1874.
20. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1141; *Nebraska Advertiser*, January 21, 1875.
21. *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 19, 1872.
22. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1150.
23. James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1955, pp. 332-323; James C. Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1942, pp. 163-164.
24. *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 11, 1872.
25. *Ibid.*, March 18, 1875.
26. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1154.
27. Barton Clevenger, "Epochs of Early Nemaha County History," No. 29, *Auburn Tribune*, February 5, 1953.

28. *Nebraska Advertiser*, March 18, 1875.
29. *Ibid.*, December 22, 1870.
30. *Ibid.*, August 14 and 21, 1873.
31. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1873.
32. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1873.
33. *Nemaha County Herald* (Auburn), August 12, 1955.
34. Noble, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
35. *Nebraska Advertiser*, November 14, 1872.
36. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1872.
37. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1876.
38. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1876.
39. *Ibid.*, January 6, 1876.
40. *Ibid.*, February 11 and 25, 1875.
41. *Ibid.*, March 13, 1873.
42. *Ibid.*, June 3, 1869.
43. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1873.
44. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
45. *Idem.*
46. A. C. Edmunds, *Pen Sketches of Nebraskans*, Lincoln, 1871, p. 279.
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48. *Nebraska Advertiser*, October 21, 1875.
49. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1875.
50. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1875.
51. *Idem.*

## X – THE FALL

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2. *Ibid.*, January 7, 1875.
3. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1875.
4. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1875.
5. *Ibid.*, June 17, 1875.
6. *Ibid.*, August 5, 1875.
7. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1876.
8. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1875.
9. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1875.
10. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1877.
11. *Ibid.*, August 30, 1877.
12. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1877.
13. *Ibid.*, December 4, 1879.
14. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1879.
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16. *Ibid.*, August 3 and 10, 1876.
17. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1878.
18. A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, p. 1146.
19. *Nebraska Advertiser*, May 23, 1878.
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21. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1876.

22. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1881.
23. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1877.
24. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1881.
25. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1879.
26. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1879.
27. *Idem.*
28. *Ibid.*, March 13, 1879.
29. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1879.
30. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1879.
31. *Ibid.*, December 9, 1880.
32. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1878.
33. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1879.
34. *Ibid.*, January 2, 1879.
35. James J. Blake, "Brownville, Ft. Kearney & Pacific," *Nebraska History*, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Vol. XXIX, p. 271.
36. *Nebraska Advertiser*, March 15, 1880.
37. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1880.
38. *Ibid.*, February 26, 1880.
39. *Ibid.* July 22, 1880.
40. *Ibid.*, August 29, 1878.
41. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1878.
42. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.
44. Andreas, *op. cit.*, p. 1130.
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48. *Lincoln State Journal*, August 12, 1894.
49. *Nebraska Advertiser*, April 24, 1903.

#### XI -- THE YEARS BETWEEN

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5. Clevenger, *op. cit.*, No. 32, Feb. 26, 1953. *The Negroes of Nebraska*, Works Projects Administration, Woodruff Printing Company, Lincoln, Nebr., 1940, p. 28. *Nemaha County Granger* (Auburn), December 8, 1891, April 14 and 21, 1893
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7. *Ibid.*, May, 1967.
8. *Omaha World-Herald*, March 14, 1972.

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10. Noble, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
13. *Idem.*
14. *News*, Kansas City, Kansas, March 24, 1961.

## XII – THE PHOENIX RISES

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2. *Lincoln Evening Journal* (Lincoln), April 25, 1960.
3. Personal Testimony of Terence Duren to Marion M. Brown, Lincoln, Spring, 1956.
4. Minutes, Brownville Historical Society, December 16, 1956.
5. *Ibid.*, December 7, 1957.
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10. Ruth McCauley, "A Living Still Life Show at Brownville, Nebraska," *The Spinning Wheel*, Taneytown, Maryland, September, 1958, p. 24.
11. *Idem.*
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14. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1959.
15. *Ibid.*, November 20, 1959; January 22, 1960.
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17. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1960.
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23. *Sunday World-Herald, Magazine of the Midlands*, Omaha, August 13, 1967.
24. *Lincoln Evening Journal & Nebraska State Journal*, January 4, 1967. *Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, March, 1967.
25. Minutes, *op. cit.*, 1967-1968. *Auburn Press Tribune*, May 20, 1969.
26. *Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, October, 1969, Summer, 1970.
27. Robert McMorris, *Omaha World-Herald*, February 13, 1971.
28. *Press-Tribune*, *op. cit.*, January 10, 1967.
29. Personal testimony of John Rippey, Brownville.
30. *Sunday World-Herald*, Omaha, August 15, 1971, Section B.
31. Minutes, Brownville Fine Arts Association, 1971-1972.
32. Magie, *op. cit.*