

JOHN DIDIER -- 1827-1918

John B. Didier, one of the oldest pioneers of the state, died Thursday morning [September 26, 1918,] at the home of his daughter, Mrs. August Last, in Barada township, aged 91 years and 6 months.

He was born in France on Christmas day, 1827, and came to America twenty years later, crossing the ocean on a sailing vessel. He settled in Cincinnati, O., and found employment with a company of French fur traders. In 1849 he went to St. Louis. Three years later he was sent to Fort Laramie, Wyo., and placed in charge of an Indian trading post, where he remained until the post was closed on account of Indian troubles. He then returned to St. Louis.

While at Fort Laramie he witnessed the famous fight between a company of soldiers and a tribe of Sioux Indians. The Indians were accused of stealing and butchering a cow, and, enraged at the actions of the soldiers, fell upon them, 1,500 strong and massacred the entire company.

Didier came to Richardson county in 1854 where he resided on the same farm until his death. In 1855 he was married at Brownville, Neb. to Marie Peneau, daughter of a French Canadian, who was a post trader at Fort Laramie. Eight children were born to the union, five of whom are living. They are Henry, living in South Dakota; John, of Jackson, Nebr.; Mrs. Mary Deroin, Rulo, Neb.; Mrs. Cecelia Longkar, South Dakota; and Mrs. Myrtle Last, residing on the home farm. FALLS CITY NEWS, ~~Feb~~<sup>Two</sup> Oct 1, 1918, p.2, c.3

....He was united in marriage at Brownville, Nebraska, in 1855, by Judge Whitney, to Miss Marie Peneau, the daughter of Louis Peneau, a French Canadian, who like himself was a post trader at Fort Laramie. The elder Peneau died at Ft. Laramie, and the daughter together with other relatives later came east to Brownville, where Mr. Didier met her. To this union were born the following children: Henry, now a resident of So. Dakota; John, at Jackson, Nebraska; Paul, deceased; Peter, deceased in Kansas; Mrs. Mary Deroin, residing near Rulo; Mrs. Cecelia Longkar of So. Dakota; and Mrs. [August] Myrtle Last, who together with her husband and two sons are now making their home on the old homestead, near Barada.

Ibid., Fri., Oct. 4, 1918, p.7, c.4&5

[not located in the Richardson County territorial census records of 1854, 1855, 1856, or 1860.]

Didier, John, 43, farmer; real est \$4500; per est \$1000; b. France  
  , Mary, 36, Ind., cant read or write, b. Mo.  
  , Henry, 15, Ind., farm asst, b. Neb.  
  , Margaret, 13, Ind., at home, b. Neb.  
  , Amanda, 11, Ind., at home, b. Neb.  
  , Peter, 7, Ind., at home, b. Neb.  
  , Paul, 4, Ind., b. Neb.  
  , Hanna, 1, Ind., b. Neb.  
Canion, Mary, 20, Ind., b. Mo.  
  , Adolphus, 15, Ind., farm laborer, b. Neb.  
  , Tasulu, f, Ind., 11, b. Neb.  
  Joseph, 8, Ind., b. Neb.

1870 Cen. Neb. Richardson Co. T3N R16E, p.15

George, Fred, 60, farmer, b.France, pts.b.France  
    , Elisebeth, 47, b.France, pts.b.France  
    , Edmund, 19, farm laborer, b.Neb.  
    , Lewis, 17, farm laborer, b.Neb.  
    , Lena, 14, at home, b.Neb.

Didier, John, 54, boarder, farmer; b.France, pts.b.France  
1880 Cen. Neb. Richardson Co. Barada Pre., p.3      House 20

Didier, Mary, 46, farming, cant read or write; b.Neb., pts.b.unk.  
    , Henry, 24, farmer, b.Neb.  
    , Peter, 18, cant read or write, b.Neb.  
    , Pall, 16, cant read or write, b.Neb.  
    , Mary, 14, cant read or write, b.Neb.  
    , Celie, 12, cant read or write, b.Neb.  
    , Julia, 10, cant read or write, b.Neb.  
    , Gertie, 2, b.Neb.  
    , Jennie, 5, granddaughter, b.Neb., pts.b.Neb.

1880 Cen. Neb. Richardson Co. Barada Pre., p.5      House 42

Diddier, J.B., 59, farmer, b.France, pts.b.France  
    , Mary, 52, b.Dacota, fb Iowa, mb Dakota  
    , Henry, 28, laborer, b.Neb.  
    , Margaret, 26, b.Neb.  
    , Peter, 24, farm laborer, b.Neb.  
    , Sarah, 23, wife, ill with dropsey, b.Ill., fb Ky., mbVa  
    , Paul, 19, farm laborer, b.Neb.  
    , Mary, 16, b.Neb.  
    , Celia, 13, b.Neb.  
    , Julia, 10, b.Neb.  
    , Carrie, 7, b.Neb.  
    , Martha, 4, b.Neb.  
    , Jennie, 11, g.daughter, b.Neb., pts.b.Neb.

1885 Cen. Neb. Richardson Co. Barada Pre., p.5      House 36

George, Fred, 65, farmer, b.France, pts.b.France  
    , Susanna, 52, b.France, pts.b.France  
    , Louis P., 29, laborer, b.Neb.  
    , Lena C., 19, b.Neb.

1885 Cen. Neb. Richardson Co. Barada Pre., p.4      House 35

Falls City, Neb., July 21.--The distinction of being the oldest living pioneer of Richardson county without question belongs to John B. Didier of Barada Precinct, who at a proud pinnacle of 90 years, may also have claims as just covering southeastern Nebraska.

Mr. Didier came to this locality, settling on his farm in section No.3 in township No.3 north of range No.16, sixty-three years ago, or in 1854, when it was only a vast stretch of wild plains, inhabited only by the Indian and wild animals. There were a few others who came to this country as early, but most of them have long since died.

He has lived to take part in many wonderful changes here and talks interestingly of the early days and hardships incident thereto. Mr. Didier is a native of France, where he was born December 25, 1827. He was a son of Professor John B. Didier, a man of learning and for many years a professor in the schools of France.

The younger John B. Didier grew to manhood in his native land and there received a good education. He crossed the Atlantic in a sailing vessel in 1847, and located in the city of Cincinnati, where he was employed as a clerk in a large store for a time. In 1849 he came to St. Louis, carrying with him a letter of introduction to one of the leading merchants there at that time. He was given a position by this firm, for whom he worked for a year, when he was sent among the Indians of Missouri, with whom he traded for a year.

In 1852 he was sent to take charge of a store owned by the firm on the North Platte in this state, which store was established by P. Choteau, one of the most prominent firms in St. Louis in the early days.

Later, on account of trouble with the Indians, the post was discontinued, but not until a battle [Grattan Massacre] took place between the United States soldiers and an immense band of Indians. The soldiers were nearly all exterminated, as the odds were greatly against them, there being only forty-seven of the soldiers as against some three hundred of the redskins. All of Mr. Didier's assistants fled from the post at the first sign of trouble, he alone remaining, notwithstanding the danger. He regarded his first duty was to guard the property of his employers, and returning, reported the loss of the store, for which the company was later reimbursed by the government in the sum of \$37,000.

After settling up with the company he left St. Louis some two months later, coming to St. Joseph, Mo., on a steamboat, and from there made his way overland to Richardson county, where he took up 120 acres of land, which still constitutes his home.

It was wild land, upon which no white man had ever trod, and to be of service had to be subdued, cleared and broke up, and in due time made into the well improved, comfortable and productive home he now enjoys in his declining years. He had no neighbors and endured all the privations incident to life on the then frontier, when neighbors were few and trading centers far remote. His closest trading point was St. Joseph, Mo., which he must reach by an overland journey, and, as he says, when he came to it there was but one place on the townsite, and that owned by a fellow-Frenchman, Joseph Robidioux, from whom he could obtain supplies, the latter being the founder of that now metropolis. It was six years after he came into the country before he saw a steamboat on the Missouri, and seventeen years before the railroad made its appearance in the south part of the county.

Didier has remained on his place continuously until the present time, witnessing all the changes, the erection of Nebraska as a territory, the first attempt at a county government, the scramble and bitter fight of seventeen years' duration over the location of the county seat, which embittered many of the early settlers for years afterward; the use of oxen in the fields in this county, the cradle for harvesting the grain, the coming of the steamboat, the prairie schooner, the railroad; the building up of towns, and now the automobile and aeroplane. He left his native home years before the war of 1870 and has lived to see it again engaged in a death grapple with its ancient enemy, Germany. He has resided as long continuously on one farm as any man in the state and, in fact, is the second white settler in Richardson county.

Mr. Didier was married in Brownville Neb., in 1855, by Judge Whitney, to Marie Pinto, a half-blood Indian maiden, the daughter of Louis Pinto, who was a post trader at Fort Laramie, where his death occurred. ~~xxx1908~~. The death of Mrs. Didier occurred in 1908. She was the mother of eight children.

Mr. Didier is now in his 90th year, and is still hale and hearty, having lived an abstemious and upright life--one calculated to lead to longevity. He is widely known throughout the county and his record is that of a public-spirited, industrious and honorable office. Politically he is a democrat, but he had never sought public office or leadership, being content to live quietly in the Barada hills he has [sic] so long and loved so well.

[photo with his daughter, Mrs. Last.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### SOME PROMINENT PIONEERS.

#### JOHN B. DIDIER, PIONEER.

The distinction of being the oldest living pioneer of Richardson county, without question, belongs to John B. Didier, of Barada precinct, who may also have a claim as just, covering southeastern Nebraska. He came to this locality, settling on his farm in section 3, in township 3, north of range 16, sixty-three years ago, or in 1854, when it was only a vast stretch of wild plains, inhabited only by Indians and wild animals. There were a few others who came to this county as early, but they have long since died. He has lived to take part in the many wonderful changes here and talks interestingly of the early days and hardships incident thereto. Mr. Didier is a native of France, where he was born on December 25th, 1827. He was a son of Prof. John B. Didier, a man of learning and for many years a professor in the schools of France.

The younger John B. Didier grew to manhood in his native land and there received a good education. He crossed the Atlantic in a sailing vessel in 1847 and located in the city of Cincinnati, where he was employed as a clerk in a large store for a time. In 1849 he came to St. Louis, Missouri, carrying with him a letter of introduction to one of the leading merchants there at that time. He was given a position by this firm for whom he worked for a year, when he was sent among the Indians of Missouri, with whom he traded for a year. In 1852 he was sent to take charge of a store owned by the firm on the North Platte, three miles south of Ft. Laramie, Wyoming, which store was established by P. Chouteaux, one of the most prominent merchants in St. Louis in the early days.

Later, on account of trouble with the Indians, the post was discontinued, but not until a battle took place between the United States soldiers and an immense band of Indians. The soldiers were nearly all exterminated as the odds were greatly against them, there being only forty-seven of the soldiers against some three hundred of the redskins. All of Mr. Didier's assistants

fled from the post at the first sign of trouble, he alone remaining, notwithstanding the danger. He considered his first duty was to guard the property of his employers and, returning, reported the loss of the store, for which the company was later reimbursed by the government in the sum of thirty-seven thousand dollars. After settling up with the company he left St. Louis some two months later, coming to St. Joseph, Missouri, on a steamboat, and from there made his way overland to Richardson county, where he took one hundred and twenty acres of land, which place still constitutes his home. It was wild land, upon which no white man had ever trod and to be of service had to be cleared and broken up and in due time made into the well-improved, comfortable and productive home he now enjoys in his declining years. He had no neighbors and endured all the privations incident to life on the then frontier, when neighbors were few and trading centers remote. His closest trading point was St. Joseph, Missouri, which he must reach by an overland journey and as he says, when he came to it there was but one place on the townsite and that owned by a fellow Frenchman, Joseph Robidoux, where he could obtain supplies, the latter being the founder of what is now a metropolis. Mr. Didier was six years in the county before he saw a steamboat on the Missouri and seventeen years before the railroad made its appearance in the south part of the county. He has remained on his place continuously until the present time, witnessing all the changes, the erection of Nebraska as a territory, the first attempt at a county government, the scramble and bitter fight of fifteen years' duration over the location of the county seat, which embittered many of the early settlers for years afterward, the use of oxen in the fields in this county, the cradle for harvesting the grain, the coming of the steamboat, the prairie schooner, the railroad, the building up of towns and now the automobile and aeroplane. He left his native home twenty-three years before the war of 1870 and has lived to see it again engaged in a death grapple with its ancient enemy, Germany. He has resided as long continuously on one farm as any man in the state and, in fact, was one of the first white settlers in Richardson county.

Mr. Didier was married in Brownville, Nebraska, in 1855 by Judge Whitney, to Marie Pineau, a half-breed Indian maiden, the daughter of Louis Pineau, a French-Canadian, who was a post trader at Ft. Laramie, where his death occurred. The death of Mrs. Marie Didier occurred in 1908. She was the mother of eight children. Mr. Didier is now in his ninetieth year, and is still hale and hearty, having lived an abstemious and upright life—one calculated to lead to longevity. He is widely known throughout the county



alone remaining, notwithstanding to guard the property of the store, for which he was paid in the sum of thirty dollars. In company he left St. Louis, Mo., on a steamboat, and returned to his home. It was made into the well-known place in his declining years incident to life and trading centers remote. It was there he must reach by boat. There was but one place where he could go. Joseph Robidoux, the founder of what is now a city before he saw a steam-railroad made its appearance on his place continued changes, the erection of a county government, the location of the settlers for years afterward, the cradle for harvesting the schooner, the railroad, the aeroplane. He left his home in 1870 and has lived to see the enemy, Germany. He was any man in the state and Richardson county. Nebraska, in 1855 by Judge Hiden, the daughter of Louis at Ft. Laramie, where his occurred in 1908. She was in his ninetieth year, and a long and upright life—one lived throughout the county

and his record is that of a public-spirited, industrious and honorable citizen. Politically, he is a Democrat, but he had never sought public office or leadership, being content to live quietly in the Barada hills he loved so well.

#### DIDIER WITNESSED INDIAN BATTLE.

Besides being the oldest living pioneer of this county, John B. Didier can lay claim to being the last of those still among the living who witnessed the Indian fight at Ft. Laramie in territorial days.

The clash between the soldiers and the Indians occurred on August 19th, 1854, and was the result of a dispute which arose over a lame cow, which was the property of some Mormon immigrants, a large number of whom thronged the Oregon trail en route to Utah at that time.

The Indians, who were a part of the Brule, Ogallala and Miniconjon Sioux, numbering between a thousand and fifteen hundred, were encamped south of Ft. Laramie, between the trading posts of the American Fur Company which at that time was in charge of James Bordeaux and that of P. Chouteaux, Jr., & Company, which was in charge of John B. Didier.

In relating the story, Mr. Didier says the Indians, with whom he was on the best of terms, claimed that the animal in question had strayed from the immigrant train and had wandered into their camp, where it was killed by one of the young members of the tribe. The owner of the cow, a Mormon, upon learning what had happened, at once appeared at the post at Ft. Laramie and calling upon the commandant in charge, made claims for the loss of the cow.

On the following day, Brevet Second Lieutenant John Grattan appeared at the Chouteaux trading post with, as Mr. Didier says, a company of forty-two soldiers belonging to Company G of the Sixth Regiment of Infantry, having with them two howitzers and small arms, and were on their way to demand satisfaction from the Indians. Mr. Didier, well knowing the disposition of the Indians, pleaded with the officer to desist from attack, pointing out how greatly the Indians outnumbered his little band. The undertaking seemed foolhardy to Mr. Didier, and he says he can explain it in no other way than that the officer and his men were drinking, or might have been under the influence of liquor. He inquired, asking Grattan, what he intended to do, and the latter replied that he "was going to give the Indians hell." Mr. Didier says he knew it would be suicide for the soldiers and advised as much, but was powerless to interfere.

A demand was made upon the Indians to surrender up the members of

the tribe responsible for the killing of the cow, which they as promptly refused to do. Receiving this reply, the howitzers were brought into play as well as the small arms, resulting in the killing of one of the Indians. If the demonstration had been planned to cover the Indians, it failed most signally of that purpose, for they at once fell upon the small detachment in force and in a few moments the entire band was wiped out with one exception, and this one shortly after succumbed to his injuries.

Word of the extermination of the soldiers was quickly carried to the fort, and a lone messenger was at once dispatched to the trading posts, advising those in charge to repair to the fort for protection, as it was thought the Indians would kill and pillage the French traders. Mr. Didier received the message, but like the other French traders, from long association, had no fear of violence from the Indians. He says they did appear at his post within a short time and helped themselves to whatever they cared to remove, but in no way molested his person.

Mr. Didier was an eye-witness to the fight from first to last and says it was most unnecessary and should never have happened; that the soldiers bungled the affair badly, and that from his conversation with the Indian chiefs the affair could have easily been settled without resort to arms, if the soldiers would have accepted remuneration for the dead animal and not have demanded that the Indians guilty of the slaughter and theft be turned over to them. In this position he is borne out in a similar report made by the other French traders. It is not recorded that the Mormon ever got any return for the cow, which had been the cause of so much trouble and the loss of so many lives.

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DAVID THOMAS BRINEGAR, PIONEER.

David Thomas Brinegar came to Richardson county in May, 1855, from Holt county, Missouri, which is just east and across the Missouri river, and pre-empted a fractional one hundred and sixty acre tract one and one-half miles southwest of where the village of Salem was later built. He paid the United States land office, in due time, one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre for the farm, on which he has made his home for the past sixty-two years. There were very few settlers in Richardson county when Mr. Brinegar crossed on the ferry at St. Stephens in the northeast part of the county. How few there were was established by the vote for members of the Territorial Legislature in the fall of 1854, when John A. Singleton was elected,



JOHN B. DIDIER.

The oldest pioneer of Richardson county, if not the oldest in southeastern Nebraska, is John B. Didier, of Barada precinct, who came to this locality sixty-three years ago, when it was only a vast stretch of wild plains, inhabited by Indians and wild animals. He has lived to see and take part in many wonderful changes here and talks interestingly of the early days and customs.

Mr. Didier was born on December 25, 1827, in France. He is a son of Prof. John B. Didier, a man of learning and for many years a professor in the schools of France. He and his wife, Anna, grew to maturity in France, where they were married and made their home until 1848, when they immigrated to America, living the first year in Cincinnati, Ohio, and later in New Orleans, Louisiana, then returning to France, where they spent the rest of their lives.

John B. Didier grew to manhood in his native land and there received a good education. He crossed the Atlantic in a sailing vessel in 1847, located in the city of Cincinnati, where he clerked in a large store for a while. In 1849 he came to St. Louis, Missouri, carrying with him a letter of introduction to one of the leading merchants there, for whom he worked one year, when his employer, Choteau, sent him among the Indians of Missouri, with whom he traded for another year. In 1852 he was sent to take charge of a store on the North Platte, which store was established by P. Choteau, one of the best-known merchants of St. Louis in the early days. But later, on account of the Indian troubles, the post on the North Platte was closed. A battle took place nearby between United States soldiers and an immense band of Indians, but the soldiers were nearly all killed, as there were only forty-seven against three hundred Indians. All of Mr. Didier's assistants fled from the post, he alone remaining, notwithstanding the danger. He regarded it as his first duty to protect the property of his employer. Returning to St. Louis he reported the loss of the store, for which his company got damages in the sum of thirty-one thousand dollars from the government. After settling up with the company he left St. Louis, two months later, coming to St. Joseph on a steamboat, and from there came overland to Richardson county, September, 1854, where he took up a homestead of one hundred and twenty acres, in what is now section 3, Barada precinct. It was wild land, but he went to work with a will, cleared and broke up the sod and in due course of time had a well improved and productive place.

and a comfortable home. He endured the hardships and privations incident to life on the frontier, when neighbors were few and trading centers far remote. He has remained on this place continuously to the present time, perhaps as long as any man in the state has lived on one farm—sixty-three years. In fact, there is no doubt but that he was the second white settler in Richardson county.

Mr. Didier was married at Brownville, Nebraska, in 1855, by Judge Whitney, to Mary Pino, a daughter of Louis Pino, a French-Canadian, who was a post trader at Ft. Laramie, where his death occurred. The death of Mrs. Mary Didier occurred in 1908. She was the mother of eight children, named as follows: Henry lives in South Dakota; John lives in Jackson, Nebraska; Paul is deceased; Peter died in Kansas; Mrs. Mary Deroin lives in Kansas; Mrs. Cecilia Longkar lives in South Dakota; Mrs. Myrtle Last lives on the home farm, which her husband is operating, and they have two children, Albert and Harvey.

Mr. Didier, who is now in his ninetieth year, is still fairly hale and hearty, having lived an abstemious and upright life—one calculated to lead to longevity. He is widely known throughout the county and his record is that of a public-spirited, industrious and honorable citizen. Politically, he is a Democrat, but he has never sought public office or leadership. Religiously, he is a Catholic.

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#### SAMUEL KIMMEL.

Samuel Kimmel, one of the real old settlers of Richardson county and a well-to-do retired farmer and stockman who has for many years past made his home in Falls City, where he and his wife are very comfortably situated, is a native of the old Keystone state and became a resident of the state of Illinois when about seventeen years of age, but has been a resident of this county since 1870 and has therefore been a witness to and a participant in the development of this region since pioneer days. During the days of grasshoppers, hot winds and panics in the seventies he had a mighty hard time of it keeping his belongings together here, but affairs presently took a turn for the better and he prospered largely, having been able to retire on a competency when he was fifty years of age.

The Kimmels are an old American family, having been represented on