

A HISTORY OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS

by

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## Mueller Scholarship

This study was made possible through the generous assistance of the INA BELLE (WILSON) MUELLER SCHOLARSHIP FOR GRADUATE RESEARCH IN HISTORY established by Colonel Harrie S. Mueller (1892 - 1975) of Wichita, Kansas, for the purpose of facilitating research activity in the preparation of a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation in studies related to Kansas history in order to enlarge the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the state's heritage.

## PREFACE

Stevens County, Kansas, is a prosperous agricultural community located in the heart of the world's largest natural gas field. The history of the county, unlike most American farming communities, is not one of steady, constant evolution. On the contrary, Stevens County's past is filled with extremes. A period of land speculation and rapid settlement in the 1880's was followed by drought and depression in the 1890's. In the first two decades of the 1900's, resettlement and a wheat boom returned prosperity to the county; by 1933, depression and dust engulfed the area. A bloody county seat fight, the struggle for a railroad, and the discovery of natural gas further complicated the historical development of the county.

Much of Stevens County's erratic history can be explained by its geographical location. The county is located in southwestern Kansas, on the southern Great Plains. The land and the climate of the plains dictated the way the area developed. The flat, treeless prairies and the climatic cycles have been tempered somewhat by human resourcefulness. However, limited water supplies, reoccurring droughts, constant winds and the semi-arid climate remain uncontrollable. The physical characteristics of the land made the county's history a story of human efforts to adapt to the environment. Stevens County's story also parallels the general development of the southern plains region and reflects the history of the entire area.

This history of Stevens County is a general account of the community from pre-settlement to 1970. Set in a chronological framework, the eight chapters deal with the major events in the county's history. The narrative begins with a description of the land and its first inhabitants, the Plains Indians. The other topics covered are the settlement of the county, the county seat fight, and the affects of the drought and depression on the rural community. These are followed by the coming of the railroad, resettlement of the county in the first

decades of the 1900's, and the development of natural gas resources in the county. The history also includes a study of the dust bowl years of the 1930's and the 1950's, and the changes made in the agricultural system. The final chapter describes the modernization of the county and suggests what will be the future course of the community. The text of the history is followed by a series of appendices with additional information on the county.

In writing this history of Stevens County, the author relied on several different sources of information. These included general accounts of the Great Plains, special studies on the southern area, newspapers and some interviews. The Kansas State Historical Society provided most of the specific material and all of the pictures used in the text. Government studies, soil surveys, and state agricultural records were also valuable sources of information. Mrs. Edith C. Thomson's history of the county was extremely helpful. Her book, a county history being compiled by the Stevens County Historical Society, Harry Chrisman's new family history of a county pioneer, and this thesis should provide a thorough study of the community. There is a scarcity of material on the southwest Kansas region and the High Plains; it is hoped by the author that the bibliography included in this study will help other researchers in their quest for material on these areas.

From this study of Stevens County several conclusions can be made about the community and the surrounding region. First, the land and its climate dictated the lifestyles of the people. The settlers had to adjust from the forested, humid lands of the east to the treeless, semi-arid plains. Secondly, the cycles of drought and wet weather created a speculative attitude toward the land; most people took advantage of the good years and left the county during the bad years. Thirdly, it was not until the dusty 1930's that a search for a more suitable system of agriculture began. Since that time, with the development of natural gas resources and irrigation facilities,



southwestern Kansas has attained more stability and is an important agricultural area. Finally, this study of Stevens County highlights the need for a more detailed history of southwestern Kansas and the southern Great Plains. The area and its agriculture, the history of irrigation, and the story of the natural gas industry are neglected subjects. More extensive studies of these topics would provide a better understanding of the region and perhaps help people make future adjustments to the land and its climate.

The author would like to thank several people for their assistance in preparing this study. The librarians at the Kansas State Historical Society gave much time and effort to finding material on Stevens County. Russell Smith, Mrs. Horner and other people of Stevens County also supplied personal information on the county which proved very helpful. Dr. Homer E. Socolofsky, of the Kansas State History Department, gave many hours of his time guiding the progress of this history. Finally, the author's husband provided much appreciated help, suggestions and moral support so that this history could be finished.

## CHAPTER ONE - The High Plains - The Land of Stevens County and Its First Inhabitants

Treeless, undulating prairie stretches for miles in every direction, interrupted only by the shallow valley running along the dry Cimarron River. Short grasses cover the sandy soil except for places where the farmer's plow has worked, and there, wheat, sorghum, or corn stand waving with the wind, waiting for the harvest. Much of the small wildlife still makes its home among the grasses, safe now from the footsteps of the buffalo, but still wary of the steady plod of cattle. The climate seems hospitable with the clear blue sky reaching down to meet the golden, level plains; but the farmer remembers how fickle the weather can turn, denying the much needed rain or bringing him the unwanted hail or dust storm. This is the High Plains country of the United States, where physical boundaries of Stevens County have been mapped out and where the history of the county begins.

Stevens County is located in the southwest corner of Kansas, bordering Oklahoma in the south and one county east of the Colorado State line. The county has a semi-arid climate, characteristic of the southern Great Plains, and averages eighteen inches of rain per year, with seventy-five per cent falling during the spring and summer months. The climate gives the county an average growing season of 178 days, which has varied from 148 days to 204 days. The mean annual temperature in the county is 57 degrees, but the area has experienced Fahrenheit temperatures as high as 116 degrees and as low as -22 degrees. As reported in a state geology survey, "The summer days generally are hot, but due to the movement of the wind and the low humidity, the nights are relatively cool. The winters are moderately cold, but generally are free from excessive snowfall and damp cloudy days."<sup>1</sup> The area experiences alternating cycles of dry and wet periods which affect crop production and settlement in the county.<sup>2</sup> The area

is also subject to natural hazards as are other regions of the country, though here dust storms, prairie fires, hail and thunderstorms have inflicted the worst damage.

The land of Stevens County is characteristic of the High Plains region of the United States. The whole area is a gradual upward sloping prairie, with the elevation at Stevens County approximately three thousand feet. Seas covered the area during the Paleozoic Era, approximately forty-five to fifty-five million years ago.<sup>3</sup> This left a subsurface soil of marine rock and sandstone. The top soil of the land is primarily sand and gravel; debris deposited for thousands of years by streams flowing eastward from the Rocky Mountains. This surface material is fairly level, except for two areas of sand hills running east-west across the county. The land is generally good for agriculture and the majority of the land today is used for crop production, with irrigation or dry farming techniques employed to counter moisture deficiency of the land and the high evaporation rate of the climate. The lack of surface water in the county, discounting the normally dry Cimarron River in the northwest corner, makes the people dependent upon ground water for all their needs.

The native flora of the land, still visible in some areas of the county, consists of buffalo and blue stem grasses, and a variety of wild flowers.<sup>4</sup> Cottonwood trees are the only type of timber native to the area, and survived only along the Cimarron River until permanent settlement of the region. With the coming of the white man, other trees were planted, but the climate was too harsh for most to survive. Today, both towns of the county have trees lining the streets, and a few hardier trees still can be seen standing in the midst of crops, around farm yards, or among the prairie grasses.

The native animals of Stevens County are typical of those inhabiting the High Plains. These creatures are noted for their mobility and the way they have adapted to the treeless prairie. Antelope, prairie dogs and coyotes all survived in the grasslands region. Some prairie dog towns remain in the native pasture areas, and on occasion, antelope or coyote may still be

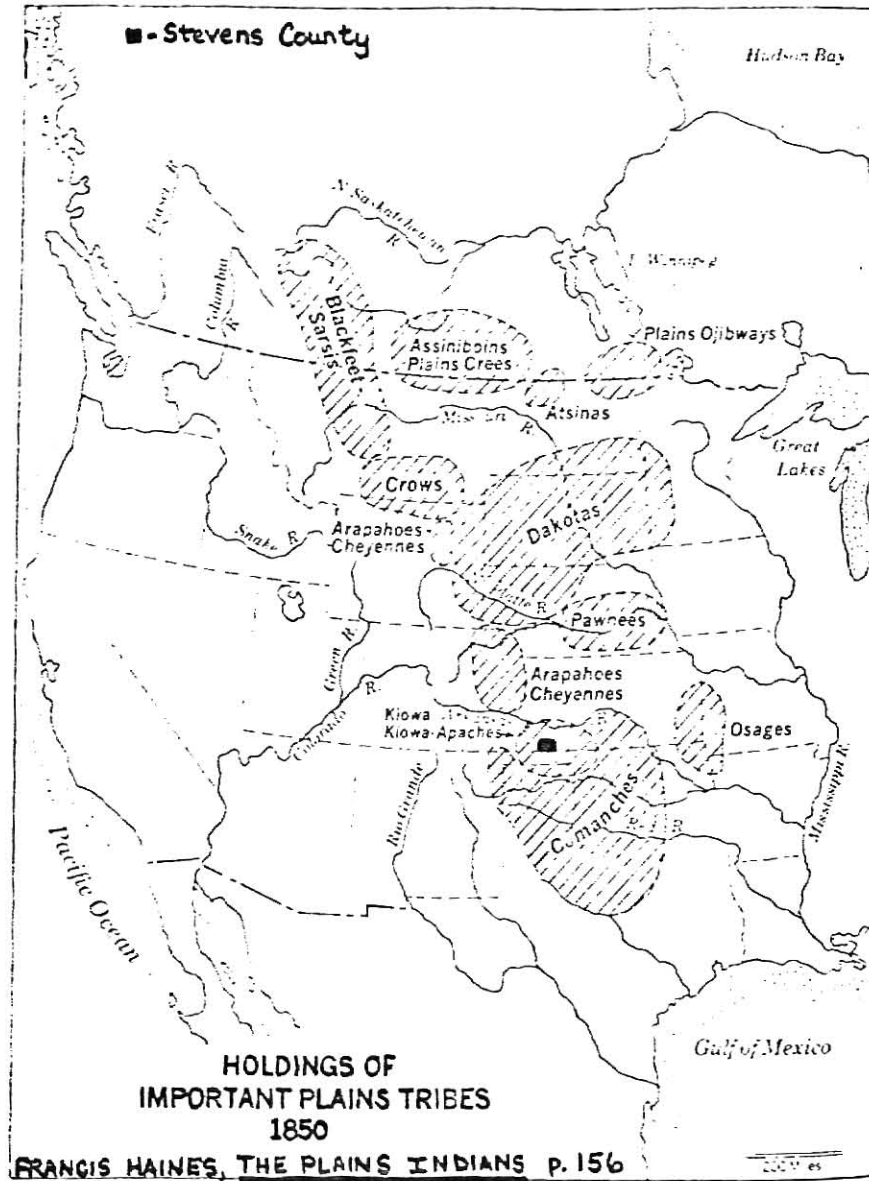
seen today. Jack rabbits were another species that inhabited the area and often found themselves the victim of mass hunts by settlers who found the creatures annoying or destructive to crops. County-wide hunts are still held today, with the proceeds from the kill often going to charitable organizations. There is also an abundance of game birds in the county, especially ring-necked pheasants. The birds have provided good hunting for residents throughout the county's history.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most notable animal of the county was the American Bison. The land of Stevens County was part of the grazing grounds of the southern buffalo herd which occupied the High Plains.<sup>6</sup> The buffalo were ideally suited for the level, grassy prairies and occupied the area until the 1870's, when buffalo hunters quickly exterminated the herd.

Just as the animals adapted themselves to the prairie, the first people living in the Stevens County area also adjusted their lifestyles to suit the land. No significant information is available on the prehistoric inhabitants of the county. The nomadic Plains Indians are the first known people to use the land as a home and hunting ground. In The Plains Indians, Francis Haines outlines the migration of certain tribes into southwestern Kansas. The Comanche had moved from southern Arizona into the mountains of Colorado and around 1700 they obtained horses and pushed eastward on to the High Plains. Haines explains that "By 1780 they held most of eastern Colorado, western Kansas, western Oklahoma, and a large part of northern Texas. Estimated population in 1780 was 12,000."<sup>7</sup>

The Comanche Indians dominated the area around Stevens County, but they shared the land with a smaller group of Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache. These Indians migrated to the area in the early 1800's and allied themselves with the Comanche.<sup>8</sup> Both groups used the area of western Kansas until 1867, when the Treaty of Medicine Lodge assigned them lands in the Oklahoma Territory.<sup>9</sup>

The Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache had the general characteristics of the Plains Indians. They were hunters and

## INDIANS OF STEVENS COUNTY



their main food source was the buffalo. The Indians followed the movement of the herds and rarely had permanent settlements, though staying in one particular area of the region at certain times of the year was not uncommon. The tribes had no agriculture, but traded or stole other foods or materials they needed from neighboring village Indians. The horse was an important element in their lives, providing more mobility to follow the buffalo as they moved across the plains.<sup>10</sup>

Though the Indians did claim the Stevens County area as part of their territory, and undoubtedly used it as hunting and camping grounds, they tended to concentrate more in the Oklahoma panhandle and down into Texas. By the late 1870's, with the buffalo gone and the U.S. Army enforcing treaty regulations, except for an occasional reservation Indian who might pass through the area, the tribes no longer roamed the Stevens County area.

Whereas Indians inhabited the area of southwestern Kansas until the mid-1800's, white explorers claimed the region as early as the 1540's. The Spanish, after establishing themselves in Mexico, looked northward for possible riches. Coronado made his famous trip into the Great Plains in the early 1540's, but failed to find the mineral wealth he sought. Instead he found grasslands similar to his native Spain; good for farming, but of little interest to the gold-hungry conquistadors. Coronado and his men explored the Kansas area, but it is unlikely they passed through Stevens County. Yet, the explorers claimed the entire area for Spain and for the time the future Stevens County became Spanish territory.<sup>11</sup>

The French also explored the Plains region, but they arrived almost two centuries after the Spanish. The French trappers and traders, like the Spanish, had little use for the prairies. The French were more interested in the fur trade along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Some trading between the French and the Plains Indians did go on, but it is doubtful the foreigners reached the Stevens County area. However, just as the Spanish placed the plains region within their jurisdiction,

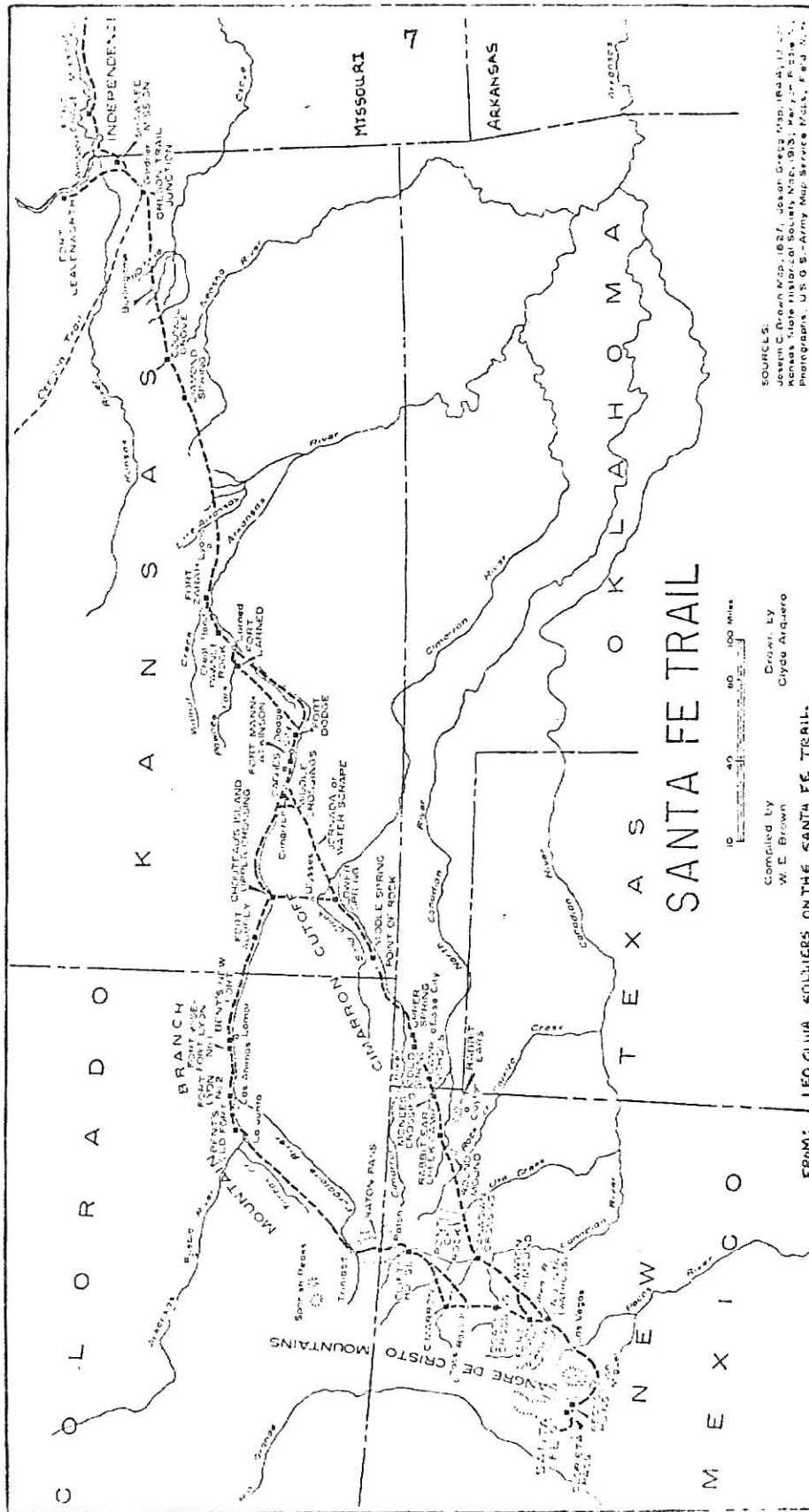


the French also laid claim to the area, and continued holding title to the land intermittently until the early 1800's.<sup>12</sup>

The Americans were the next group of whites claiming the Great Plains. President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the monumental Louisiana Purchase from the French in 1803, which established United States jurisdiction over a large portion of the land west of the Mississippi River. It was not clear whether this purchase included southwest Kansas until the Onis Treaty with Spain in 1819. At this time the southern boundary of the purchase was clarified and it excluded the Stevens County area. It was not until the Mexican War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848 that southwestern Kansas became United States territory.<sup>13</sup>

When the Louisiana Purchase established United States claim over the western area, several explorers were sent into the territory to learn more about the region and its usefulness. Zebulon Montgomery Pike, in 1806, was leader of the first American party to explore the plains. He reported the area was uninhabitable and would serve as a satisfactory barrier to keep Americans in the eastern region of the country. Fourteen years later Major Stephen Long headed a mission similar to Pike's. Long explored the plains extensively and developed conclusions comparable to his predecessor. More importantly the Long expedition gave the plains the label the "Great American Desert," because of their arid character. Long described the area and foreshadowed the difficulties future settlers would face: "Although tracts of fertile land considerably extensive are occasionally to be met with, yet the scarcity of wood and water, almost uniformly prevalent, will prove an insuperable obstacle in the way of settling the country." Long then echoed Pike's sentiments that the area would impede westward expansion as well as keep enemies from easily attacking America's frontier.<sup>14</sup>

The label "Great American Desert" remained with the area until settlement began in the 1860's. Meanwhile the plains were used by traders and travelers as a road to the west coast



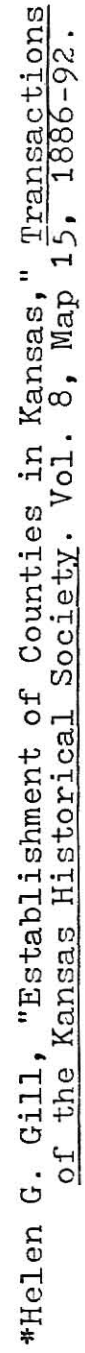


or the Mexican territory. In the early 1820's, the Santa Fe Trail was opened, going from central Missouri to Santa Fe, and cutting through the northwest corner of present day Stevens County. The trail started when word that a profitable trade with Mexicans existed. Santa Fe was far from supply depots in Mexico proper and Americans found a great demand in the town for goods and materials for which Spanish gold, silver or furs would be paid. After gaining independence from Spain, Mexicans openly welcomed American traders to Santa Fe.<sup>15</sup>

The portion of the Santa Fe Trail running through Stevens County was first used by the famous trapper and Indian trader William Becknell.<sup>16</sup> In 1822, on his second trip to Santa Fe, Becknell sought a smoother route for his trade wagons than the rough Raton Pass. Instead of continuing west, he turned southwest near present day Dodge City and headed down to the Cimarron River. This route became known as the Cimarron or Dry route because the traders traveled fifty-eight miles before reaching water at Lower Springs or Wagon Bed Springs on the Cimarron. From the springs the traders followed the Cimarron River through Stevens County into Colorado, then Oklahoma and on to Santa Fe.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to traders using the trail, military personnel also traversed the route, first to provide protection for travelers and later in campaigns against the Plains Indians. In Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail, Professor Leo E. Oliva identifies the various troop movements and suggests that soldiers traveled along the Stevens County portion of the trail. There were also numerous skirmishes along the route between soldiers and Indians, and it is probable such incidents occurred on the land later known as Stevens County. The activity along the trail continued until the 1880's, when a network of railroads replaced the need for the route. Today the portion of trail running through Stevens County is marked, but the route is no longer a major road for travel in the area.<sup>18</sup>

With the growth of the Santa Fe trade American interest in the High Plains also increased. At first the area continued



to serve as a highway for travelers to the far west, but by the 1850's enough interest in the area had arisen for establishment of a territory. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of May 30, 1854, created the territories of Nebraska and Kansas, which included Stevens County.<sup>19</sup> In 1855 the first territorial legislature began setting county lines, and with its second act it formed Washington County which encompassed Stevens County.<sup>20</sup>

Following the first establishment of counties came a series of revisions as the Kansas area became more settled. In her master's thesis, "The Establishment of Counties in Kansas," Helen G. Gill outlines the various changes made until county boundaries of today became permanent.<sup>21</sup> In 1860, Peketon County was organized and again this included the Stevens County territory. By 1866, Marion County was enlarged to include Peketon County so southwest Kansas once more was under new jurisdiction. Stevens County first appeared on the map under its own name in 1873, when all of western Kansas was organized into smaller counties. The county was named after Thaddeus Stevens, a United States Representative from Pennsylvania and an ardent abolitionist.<sup>22</sup> In 1883, settlement of the area was not extensive enough for Stevens County to remain a separate entity and it was incorporated into Seward County. This situation lasted only until 1886, when enough settlers moved to the county to warrant its reestablishment. The county was laid out along the old boundary lines, with the exception of a three mile wide strip added to the western border. This last jurisdictional change made Stevens County 729 square miles or 466,560 acres, the size the county retains today. With permanent boundaries now established, a new phase in the history of the county began.

## CHAPTER TWO - BOOM DAYS - SPECULATION AND SETTLEMENT

Permanent settlement of Stevens County did not occur until twelve years after the county was first established in 1873. During the period 1873 to 1885 the only white men found within the county's boundaries were transients. Travelers along the Santa Fe Trail rarely camped in the county, but rather pushed on along the route to better grounds. One group that stopped in the county was recorded in the federal census of 1880. Presumably the census taker found the group at their camp and included them in the report for that year. The twelve men all listed various occupations dealing with the freighting business and it is a fair assumption that they were on their way to or from Santa Fe when recorded as residents of the county. <sup>23</sup>

Buffalo hunters also traversed the Stevens County area during this period. By 1873, these hunters were traveling through southwest Kansas in pursuit of large herds of buffalo. In Lost Trails of the Cimarron, Harry Chrisman suggests these men scoured the Cimarron River region looking for the bison. <sup>24</sup> The hunters were generally successful at finding big herds and killing hundreds of buffalo for the hides. The hunters played an important role in opening the Stevens County area to settlement. Just as Santa Fe travelers reported on the land and its possibilities, these hunters spread similar stories. In addition, the hunters cleared the land of buffalo and left the area open for cattle ranchers and farmers.

The cattlemen were the first group to take advantage of the vacated prairies. By the late 1870's the open range system of ranching replaced the long cattle drives of the previous decade. Cattlemen brought large herds onto the plains to graze on the native grasses. The area of Stevens County was among the land used by various ranchers during this period. Twice a year roundups were held by the ranchers to brand the cattle and drive a certain portion to the closest railhead,

either Trinidad, Colorado or Dodge City, Kansas.<sup>25</sup> This system lasted until the mid-1880's, when a blizzard and the coming of the farmer put an end to the open range system.

The cattlemen had ranch headquarters scattered through southwest Kansas. No information is available as to whether such headquarters existed in Stevens County during this period. Since the 1880 census included no listing of cattlemen or ranchers, it is probable no ranch headquarters were in the county. However, cattle were pastured within the county's boundaries until the farmers closed off the open range with their barbed wire fences.

The influx of farmers to the area in the mid-1880's gave Stevens County its first permanent settlers. These people were participating in a land boom which swept over southwest Kansas in 1884, and was part of a larger state-wide period of high prices and land speculation. J.S. Painter, in a paper presented to the Kansas State Historical Society in 1888, dramatically, but fairly accurately, describes how this transition from cattleman to farmer came about. "Five years ago that portion of southwestern Kansas known as the Garden City land district, which embraces fourteen counties, was a treeless, unproductive waste, a solemn, expansive wilderness of unbroken prairies, windswept, storm-bent and uninhabited, save by a few hardy, enterprising stockmen, who for the most part, led a roving, pastoral life and grazed their growing herds, without let or hindrance, upon the native grasses of the public domain." Painter goes on to discuss the area and then continues: "But in 1884 a change came, and immigrants from all parts of the East began to settle on the bottom lands of the Arkansas and lesser streams. They came slowly at first, increasing in numbers each successive month until in April, 1885, a boom commenced that never before was equaled in the settlement of any country."<sup>26</sup>

The land boom attracted many different people to the open lands of Stevens County and southwestern Kansas. They all shared a common trait; they wanted a part of the prosperity

and profits of the area. The farmers were looking for inexpensive land or land available for homesteading. Most of these people came from the Midwest or cornbelt region. The farmers believed the climate had changed in southwest Kansas and the wet years of the mid-1880's were there to stay. The rich soil of the area promised to produce large crops which would make these settlers more prosperous than they had been elsewhere. Initially, if they homesteaded, their only investment was their labor and the cost of improvements for the land. This meant a good profit could be realized on the 160 acre homesteads, which could later be sold or mortgaged.<sup>27</sup>

Speculators or boomers were the first people into the county. They quickly established town and land companies to deal with the incoming farmers. These speculators, more often from Kansas than elsewhere, were out to make the maximum profit for the least investment of time and money. Stevens County's first permanent town was established by just such a group of men hoping to benefit from the land boom prices.<sup>28</sup>

The last group of people who came to the area were those who provided the services for the growing population; the hotel keepers, the grocery store owners, the newspapermen and other businessmen. These people, as well as the hangers-on which materialize around any boom area, helped settle the towns. They also provided materials or goods for the settlers, while realizing a good profit because of boom prices.<sup>29</sup>

Stevens County, though further from the railroad than many of the other counties in southwest Kansas, experienced the full affects of the land boom. Transportation facilities to the county were limited to stage lines bringing people from the railheads at Hartland and Dodge City. The Panhandle Stage Company was incorporated in January, 1886, and ran from Hartland to Stevens County.<sup>30</sup> This brought settlers from the Santa Fe Railroad into the area. By 1888, a stage line also ran from the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad at Liberal to Stevens County. Other shorter stage routes connected the various cities in Stevens County with each other and



with Garden City, Meade Center and towns in Colorado and New Mexico. The stage fare usually ran \$3.50 to Garden City, \$4.00 to Hartland, and more or less for other cities depending upon the distance.<sup>31</sup>

If settlers did not use the stage to reach Stevens County they employed their own means of transportation. Many farmers simply loaded their goods into their wagons and took the long ride across the flat plains to the county. This was less expensive, but more time consuming for the settler. However, they could use their wagons for temporary shelter until they built housing for their families.

Once people reached Stevens County they faced several problems before they could settle permanently. The lack of wood and surface water in the county meant other resources had to be used for housing, fuel, and water supplies. The buildings erected in the early days of Stevens County were of two types: wood and sod. Town structures were made of wood freighted in from the railhead at Hartland. Though expensive, the wide-spread use of these buildings reflected the boom atmosphere, when credit was used extensively by settlers. Most farmers could not afford the wooden structures at first and they utilized the only building material native to the county - the prairie sod. These houses were cheap, cool in the summer and warm in the winter; however, leaky roofs and an occasional snake tainted some of the better qualities of the "soddies." For fuel, some people could afford to freight in wood or coal. Other settlers used cow chips, corn or knots of dried grass for cooking and for heating homes. Wells were hand dug for water, usually eighty to one hundred and twenty feet deep, and windmills became the common method for pumping the water to the surface.<sup>32</sup>

The first people to establish a town in Stevens County were a group of men from McPherson, Kansas. In 1881 they looked over the area and chose a townsite near the center of the county. They formed a town company, with sixteen members, and began planning development schemes. It was

not until 1885, however, that they started actual work on their new town. In the summer of that year, as the land boom was reaching a peak on a larger scale, the McPherson men built the first shanties on the townsite.<sup>33</sup> Jeremiah Evarts Platt, a Congregational minister traveling in southwest Kansas during this time, came upon the townsite as these first developments were taking place. In a letter published in the Manhattan Nationalist, Platt described what he found in Stevens County after his long ride from neighboring Seward County. "Thirty miles west of this, on a beautiful level prairie, fifteen miles from any human dwelling, I found a dozen men from McPherson trying to build a town which they called Hugo, and which they hoped would soon become a great city, the county seat of Stevens County. They had three small box houses and a tent, and were digging a well, then down only sixty feet, but they had no water except what they hauled in wagons fifteen miles, were then reduced to half a pailful, and expecting no more until the next day." Platt explained that he had to ride the fifteen miles to the Cimarron River to get water for his horse. He then continued his description of the area: "There is not a tree in the county and only three families of actual settlers, yet a large portion of the best claims are filed on, either as tree claims, homesteads, or preemptions, and people seem to think the county will be full of settlers in a year, and that the land ere many years will be worth twenty to fifty dollars an acre."<sup>34</sup> Platt finished by questioning whether the climate would continue favorable and crops would continue to do as well as in 1885.

The McPherson group finished digging the public well and continued putting up buildings and making improvements in the townsite. In August, the town was platted on 640 acres (section 16, T 33 S, R 37 W) and officially named Hugo, after the French writer Victor Hugo. The name was later changed to Hugoton because of a post office conflict with Hugo, Colorado, and the label has remained with the town since then.<sup>35</sup>



As more people moved into the area, additional towns were formed, businesses established and community activities started. Most towns grew along the same pattern as Hugoton, with activities directed by a town company. When a townsite was chosen, the first buildings up were a real estate office or a hotel, often one in the same. James Dappert remembered coming to Hugoton in October of 1885 with his father to look over the land. There was no hotel in the town yet, but there was a 14 by 18 frame building serving as a real estate office. There also was a small general store and four or five other buildings which made up the entire town.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the building of towns, churches and schools were established as soon as a community formed. In Stevens County the first permanent school house was built in Hugoton in 1886, and was soon followed by schools erected in the different towns. Both Hugoton and Woodsdale built large, elaborate two-storied schools; Hugoton's later served as the county courthouse until 1952 while Woodsdale's was abandoned and razed in the 1890's. By 1887, there were twenty-one school districts in the county, with eight regular school houses. This number of districts grew to thirty-four in 1893, and by the next year thirty-six school buildings existed. This number did not increase until the early 1900's when more settlers entered the county.<sup>37</sup>

Most of the early school houses were one room buildings and the schools had an average enrollment of twenty or thirty pupils. With one or two teachers for each school, the children were taught the basic subjects of writing, reading and arithmetic.<sup>38</sup> The county school records of 1888 list textbooks such as the Barnes' readers and the Harpers' primers as being used in many of the county's schools.<sup>39</sup> In the first years of the boom period, the schools were in session about thirteen weeks, but by 1890 they averaged twenty week sessions. The county school superintendent also directed a normal school in the summer.<sup>40</sup>

New communities in the county often organized churches

at the same time schools were created. Many times a church building would serve as a school or vice versa, and if neither structure was available, a courthouse, community building or farm house served the purpose. Jeremiah Platt visited southwest Kansas to organize Sunday schools in the newly settled area. Though there were not enough people to establish church activities when he went through Stevens County, as soon as more people came, churches sprang up throughout the country. The immediate need for a church reflected the strong religious faith of the settlers. Both Hugoton and Woodsdale had Methodist Episcopal churches early in their settlement. The Hugoton church was organized in 1886, by a group of settlers who first started a Sunday school. In October of that year they received a charter for the church and by Christmas, 1887, they had their own building. The church cost over \$2,200, with wood and other materials freighted in from Hartland. The church was struck by lightning twice, and in 1891, after Sam Wood was murdered on the doorstep, the congregation abandoned the structure.<sup>41</sup> Many other churches were deserted when the boom collapsed, yet congregations continued services despite the exodus of people. The emphasis on religion never faded and today, with a population of little over 4,000, the county boasts eighteen organized churches.<sup>42</sup>

Both schools and churches were formed so quickly and successfully because of their important function in the community. Beyond the mere educational and religious training they provided, these institutions gave the people opportunities to socialize. Spelling bees, literary contests, religious pageants, and other activities served as a creative outlet. School and church functions also provided isolated farming families with a chance to enjoy the companionship of their neighbors.

From the very beginning Stevens County residents organized numerous other social activities. Various holidays were marked by special celebrations and dances. As early as New Years Day, 1886, a party was held at the Hugo Hotel to mark the occasion.

Numerous social groups were formed, including various lodges, political organizations and women's clubs. Woodsdale even organized a brass band for the advancement of the art of music. Baseball teams were formed in the larger towns, and other sporting events such as races and hunts were yearly events.

Two important services which appeared when a town was established were post offices and newspapers. Thirteen post offices were in operation during the boom period in Stevens County.<sup>43</sup> As soon as a group of people settled in one part of the county, they established a post office. Not all post offices had daily service and the smaller communities received mail only tri-weekly. However, the post office served an important function. It gave official status to the town and kept the people in touch with the outside world. Many of these post offices were abandoned during the 1890's or the resettlement period, with the reduction of population and later better transportation facilities eliminated the need for so many offices.

Almost as numerous as the post offices were the newspapers in the early period of Stevens County's history. In the 1887 report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, two newspapers were listed for the county. By the next report, four more had started in business, including the Hugoton Hermes, the only paper still published in the county.<sup>44</sup> Between the years 1886 and 1897, twelve different newspapers were printed in Stevens County.<sup>45</sup> There were usually five or six newspapers printed concurrently up to 1890, while the population of the county never exceeded 2,500. Today only one local newspaper services the county whose population is just over 4,000.

The large number of newspapers during the early settlement period was due to the boom atmosphere. In an article about southwest Kansas, Jay Baugh explains the reasons for the multiplicity of newspapers. He points out that each town desired to attract people. The easiest way to advertise the community was through a newspaper. Besides this function, newspapers were needed for publication of official notices and

homestead filings. Finally, as illustrated by the Stevens County papers, any person with a cause or particular political affiliation could easily set up a newspaper.<sup>46</sup> The Hugo Herald not only was a Democratic paper, it also opposed the Woodsdale Democrat during the county seat war. The newspapers served as the primary means for settlers to get local news and learn about national and world affairs. Though only one paper remains in print in the county today, it still fulfills the same needs its predecessors did in the boom days.

When not visiting town or enjoying community activities, the majority of settlers in the county were busy farming the land. The prosperity of the area rested on the agricultural potential of the land. In the years from 1885 to 1887, rainfall was plentiful and the virgin soil yielded bountiful crops. The people believed that the climate had undergone a permanent change with the extension of farming into the area. J.S. Painter reflected on this belief as he described the area in his 1888 paper: " It is not only a wonderfully varied and fertile soil, adapted to the production of all kinds of cereals, vegetables and fruits that can be grown in the temperate zone, but has a superb climate, not surpassed, taking everything into consideration, and only equaled by a few places on the American continent."<sup>47</sup> This false notion about the permanent change of climate was widespread and led people into greater agricultural production.

The settlers of Stevens County who cultivated the land faced many hours of hard work. After establishing a farmstead, digging a well, and locating the boundaries of his land, the farmer tackled the tough prairie sod with his plow. The use of a steel plow and a sturdy team of horses, mules or oxen were the best combination for cultivating the soil. The first year little was done other than turning over the sod and cutting holes in it for the seed. With each successive year cultivation was easier and the soil could be prepared better for planting crops. Eventually new machinery such as a grain drill, a reaper, and a thresher helped to ease the hard

job of plains farming.<sup>48</sup>

The major crops planted in the early years of Stevens County were corn, sorghums, and broomcorn. Corn did well the first four or five years, but by 1890 it was replaced as the dominant crop by the sorghums, broomcorn, and winter wheat. The reason corn did so well at first was the fertility of the soil and the wet weather of the mid-1880's. However, by 1890 dry conditions returned and corn crops suffered because of the lack of moisture. Other crops did better, but by 1894, drouth and the lack of people severely reduced the production of crops in the county.<sup>49</sup>

During the boom period a number of settlers established orchards. Apple trees were the most popular, followed by peach, plum, cherry and a few pear trees. Out of a total number of 16,224 fruit trees palnted in 1888, only one apple tree bore fruit.<sup>50</sup> In the next few years other trees produced fruit, but the advent of dry weather killed any chance of orchards being productive or profitable. Today, only a few of those original trees remain and orchards of the ambitious nature of the early days are nonexistent.

Livestock was also an important agricultural commodity for the farmers during the boom period. Horses, oxen and mules were the major power supply for the farmer's plow, as well as necessary for transportation and freighting. Milk cows were also important in this era, but not on a large scale. The cows provided the milk for dairy products which the settlers needed. The agricultural reports show this period was a low point for the cattle industry, with fewer than one thousand head in the county in 1889.<sup>5</sup> This statistic reflects the dominance of the farmer over rancher, and the wet weather conditions over dry. It will be shown later that the cattle again increased during the 1890's when farming proved less successful.

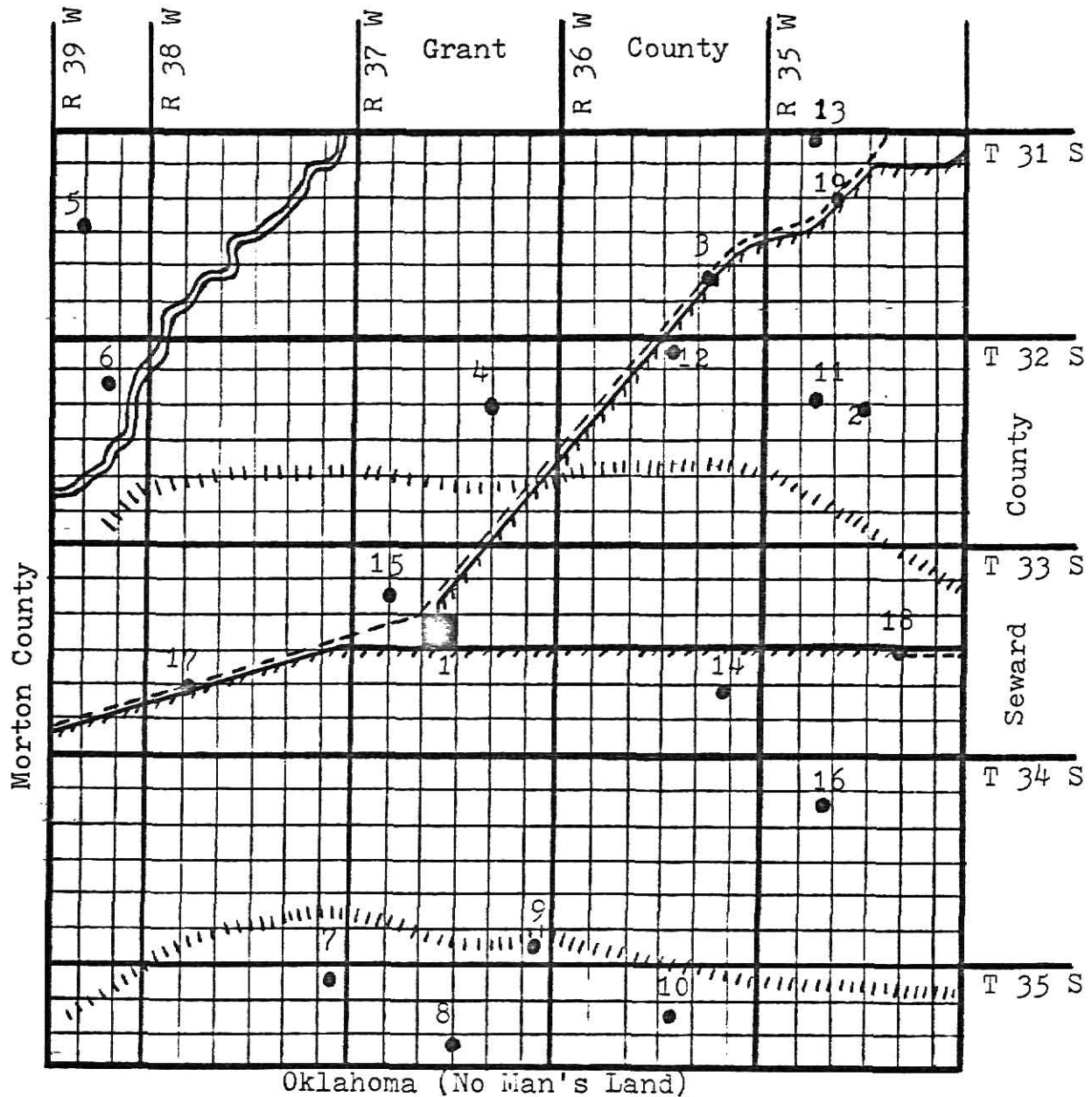
By the spring of 1886, Stevens County was well on its way to being completely settled. Four towns in addition to Hugoton were established and six more would be located in



the next year. Referring to the map on page 22, the location of the different towns and dates of organization are illustrated. Not all the names of the towns have their origin identified, but some can be explained. Lafayette, founded by a group of Quakers, was presumably named after the Marquis de Lafayette, of American Revolution fame.<sup>52</sup> Moonlight and Voorhees were named for politicians; the one for Thomas Moonlight of Leavenworth and the other for Senator Voorhees of Indiana. Woodsdale was also named after a politician, Sam Newitt Wood, who founded the town.<sup>53</sup> Niagara, according to Kansas Place Names by John Rydjord, was named after the famous falls in New York, though two more contrasting places would be hard to imagine. Valparaiso is a Spanish word meaning "valley of paradise" and first used to describe the lush valleys of central Chile.<sup>54</sup> Zella or Pearl City may have been named after a sweetheart of an early settler. Moscow had no connection to its Russian counterpart, but instead, like Hugoton, resulted from a post office change. The town was originally labeled Mosco after a member of Coronado's expedition, but a post office clerk added a "w".<sup>55</sup> For the remaining towns of Macon, Dermot, Waterford and Znojmo there is no available explanation of their names.

Despite the growth of these various towns, Hugoton continued to dominate the county. The only town which challenged Hugoton's control was Woodsdale, established in June of 1886. Located seven miles north of Hugoton, across a line of sand hills, the town was started by Sam Wood, a Kansas politician, free-stater, and fiery newspaperman. Wood established his town with high hopes for its future in the area and had his eye set on getting the county seat located in his community. In a manner similar to his counterparts in Hugoton, Wood realized the local government position would insure his town more stability as well as increasing land values and the growth rate of the community. Unfortunately, Wood began his enterprise a little later than he should have, for Hugoton residents had already started on the first steps to making their

## TOWNS OF STEVENS COUNTY



- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Hugoton 1885    | 11. Valparaiso 1886    |
| 2. Moscow 1887     | 12. Zella 1886         |
| 3. Moscow 1913     | 13. Waterford 1888     |
| 4. Woodsdale 1886  | 14. Znojmo 1880's      |
| 5. Dermot 1887     | 15. Indianapolis 1885? |
| 6. Moonlight 1887  | 16. Ematon 1905        |
| 7. Niagara 1887    | 17. Feterita 1918      |
| 8. Macon 1886      | 18. Woods 1922         |
| 9. Voorhees 1887   | 19. Cave               |
| 10. Lafayette 1886 |                        |

--- Railroad  
 --- Highway

||||| Sandhills  
 === Cimarron River

town the county seat.

Stevens County, though reestablished in 1885, was still an unorganized county without its own government. Hugoton residents, early in 1886, petitioned Kansas Governor John Martin to declare the county organized. Their stated motivation was the need to institute a herd law for protecting farm lands from unfenced cattle. Undoubtedly these people realized the other benefits which organization would bring the town and the county. Not only would more settlers be attracted to the area, but with organization they hoped Hugoton would be made the county seat, and the town's residents would then control the local government.<sup>56</sup>

Hugoton residents sent a memorial to Governor Martin in May, 1886, stating their belief that the required number of 2,500 residents for organization were in the county; they asked the Governor to order a census taken to verify the count. On May 24, 1886, Governor Martin ordered J.W. Calvert, a Hugotonian, to prepare a census of the county. On August 3, the Governor received the census showing 2,662 people living in the county. He declared the county organized the same day and appointed H.O. Wheeler, John Robertson and J.B. Chamberlain county commissioners, John Calvert county clerk, and named Hugoton as the temporary county seat.<sup>57</sup> Martin also ordered the commissioners to hold a special election for selecting permanent county officers and the county seat.

The new county commissioners decided the special election for officers and the county seat would be held on September ninth. The commissioners then established precincts and polling locations for the county. Whether by lack of foresight or on purpose, all three voting places were in the central area of the county. For some residents in the northern area, where Woodsdale was located, the polls were difficult to reach because of the sandhills. This arrangement and the dominance of Hugotonians in the organizing the election outraged Sam Wood, who protested against the plans. This started what



can aptly be called the most embarrassing and notorious event in Stevens County's history.

The residents of Hugoton, in their attempt to make their city the county seat, touched off what historians call the "Stevens County Seat War." Whether "war" is the correct term is still being debated, especially by the county residents who prefer the term "controversy." Perhaps a more appropriate nomenclature would be "fight," for though the Stevens County affair numbered more deaths than similar controversies of the day, there was never a massive outbreak of violence. The conflict was primarily a clash between the strong personalities of the major participants and the uncontrolled, speculative nature of the times.

Stevens County was not unique in experiencing a county seat fight. During this boom period, several of the counties in southwest Kansas had trouble locating their county seats. These political struggles reflected the speculative character of the boom, when a county seat was more likely to prosper economically and attract more money, business, and a railroad. Usually the problem was settled legally and peacefully, though vicious mud-slinging and underhanded political practices were common. All together, including the four deaths in Stevens County, only nine people died in three county seat fights during this period. Though not usually bloody in any respect, the county seat fights often retarded the development of the region, making settlers and railroad companies both leary of establishing themselves in a county with an unstable local government.

Stevens County became immersed in controversy when Sam Wood protested the election plans. Wood's outrage was probably a product of fear that he might lose the county seat and lingering hope he could prevent Hugoton from gaining it. Believing that his town would soon be in a position to challenge Hugoton, Wood sought to delay the election. Besides his usually strong verbal denunciations of his enemy, he gathered information showing the census taken in Stevens County had been

falsified. Forging census documents was not an unusual practice in that day, and it seems that many of the so-called residents of Stevens County did not exist except on old hotel ledgers or other records. Wood knew that no more than thirteen hundred people were settled in the county and he hoped to use the information to get the census declared invalid.<sup>58</sup>

Wood was arrested on August 25, 1886, for criminal libel and taken to Hugoton where he was released after putting up bond. Following this arrest, the first major "event" occurred in a series taking place over the next two years. Wood, with I.C. Price, was "kidnapped" by Hugoton men on his way to Topeka with information about the census. He was taken into No Man's Land for a "hunting trip."<sup>59</sup> Two divergent stories are told by the opposing factions as to what actually occurred; Hugoton residents declared Wood arranged the kidnapping, and Wood stated he was spirited away to stop his protests. Whichever is correct, Governor Martin was notified of the occurrence and sent the Larned Sheriff and state militia commander, General McCarthy there to investigate the situation. Wood had been "rescued" by Woodsdale residents by the time McCarthy arrived and the General saw no need for remaining in the county.

Despite the incident, and Wood's desire to call the National Guard to the county, the election was held and the results made official. Hugoton became the county seat, John Calvert county clerk, A.P. Ridenour sheriff, J.L. Pancoast county attorney, O.W. Kirby county treasurer, and J.E. Hunt, J.B. Chamberlain and W.A. Clark county commissioners. It looked as if Sam Wood was beaten, but he refused to give up the fight.

Wood started two projects during the following months that helped keep the controversy alive: a law suit, and a newspaper. The law suit was initiated by Wood's law partner A.M. Mackey in Topeka. It called for the Kansas Supreme Court to review the laws organizing Stevens, Morton, and Seward Counties and declare them invalid, because of certain legal technicalities. The Supreme Court took the case, but it did not reach a decision until January, 1889, when it ruled against Wood.

In March, 1887, Wood started his newspaper, the Woodsdale Democrat, and he began lambasting Hugoton and its residents. Wood was an editor most of his life and was known for his outspoken opinions. Of course, Hugoton, with two newspapers, the Herald and the Hermes, responded in like manner to Wood's attacks. This continual bombardment between newspapers, including the Moscow and Voorhees gazettes, kept the dissension alive in the county and helped ally people with different groups. The papers were the primary means of communication for many settlers, who often did not venture beyond their communities. The newspapers played an important role in stirring up the people against their neighbors in opposing parts of the county.

In spite of the inflammatory newspaper reports, the county got through the election of November, 1887, with a normal amount of controversy. As Joseph Snell remarks in his master's thesis, "The Stevens County Seat Controversy," this was an "interesting interlude" during which only two occurrences affected the county seat controversy.<sup>60</sup> Of later importance in the county seat fight was the move Sam Robinson made during this election from Woodsdale to Hugoton. Robinson was a rather shady character who had wanted the nomination for county sheriff but was not chosen by the Woodsdale caucus. Thus snubbed, he moved down to Hugoton with his hotel, and became marshal of that town. The second outcome occurred when John Cross protested the close election, called for a recount, and was declared county sheriff by two votes. The significance of these two incidents became apparent later when the "Stevens County Seat War" ended in murder.

The next episode causing trouble was Sam Wood's call for a railroad bond election. Railroads were an important guarantee for the economic security of an area and every town in the boom period made some effort to attract a railroad. There was an attempt by Hugoton residents to get the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic Railroad, known as the "Darling Mary Ann," to run a track through the county by way of Hugoton. Wood fought the call for a bond election, but failed to stop it and Hugoton won the vote in January, 1887. Unfortunately the railroad failed to meet

its deadlines and nothing came of the scheme. This time, however, Sam Wood proposed a bond election to raise money for one of two railroads. Wood and some of his business associates formed the Wichita, Springfield and Trinidad Railway Company. They wanted to offer the bonds to either the Chicago, Kansas and Western Railroad (a Santa Fe subsidiary) or the Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska Railroad (a Rock Island Company) to lay a track from Wichita through Woodsdale to Trinidad, Colorado, with a spurline down to Voorhees. Hugoton residents were opposed to the idea, for it would give Woodsdale the economic advantage of the railroad and lure people away from Hugoton. They also believed Wood's "paper" railroad would never materialize, yet it would stop any other railroads from building through the area. Hugoton residents realized they must prevent Wood from winning the election or Hugoton might become a ghost town. The importance of the bond election to both factions made the issue highly emotional and created a head-on conflict between the towns. Not only were the results of the clash deadly for four men, they also proved harmful for the community as a whole.

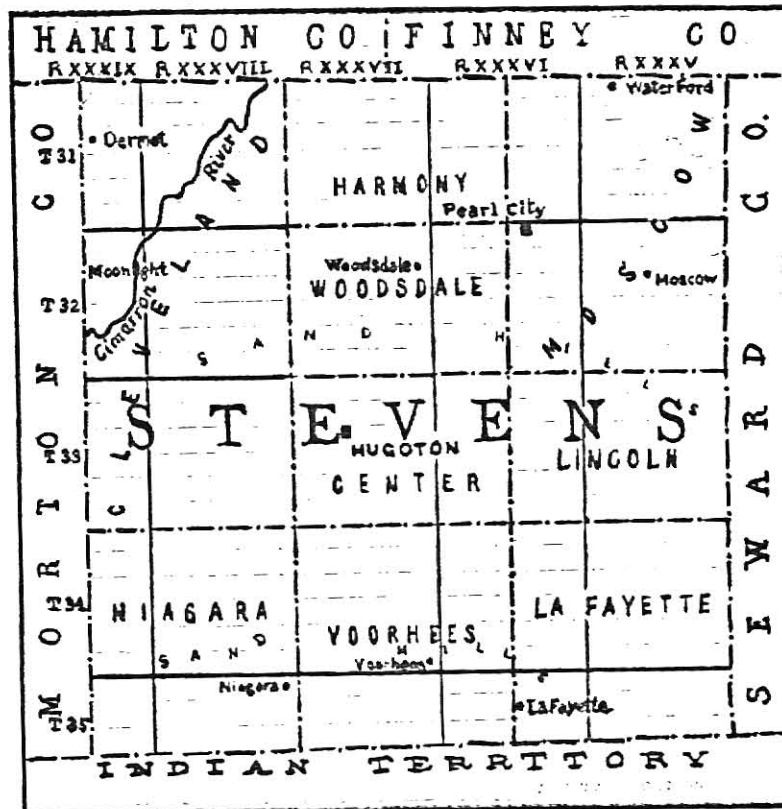
By 1888, much of Stevens County's land was homesteaded and the many communities were thriving with the influx of new people. While the wet weather lasted, eastern farmers adjusted quickly to the open, fertile land. Many of the towns now resembled those the pioneers had left to come west. The people were getting comfortable with the flat, treeless prairies and many residents settled down to enjoy their good fortune. Few people realized, however, that 1888 would bring an end to the rains and the start of Stevens County's first historic drouth.<sup>61</sup>

### CHAPTER THREE - DEATH AND DROUTH - 1888-1905

The year 1888 is the turning point in the land boom period in Stevens County. The county seat war came to a violent conclusion and was followed by a period of drouth. Both circumstances caused wide spread disillusionment within the county. People left the area for better land and more peaceful conditions.

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MAP OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS, 1888.



The county seat war reached its climax as the railroad bond election approached. The election was planned for June 1, 1888, and both factions worked hard to get support for their side.<sup>63</sup> At one meeting of a series held in the county to "discuss" the bonds, the first violence broke out. During a meeting taking place on May 27 at Voorhees, Woodsdale supporters became restless as the different factions started arguing with

each other. While trying to calm down the crowd, Deputy Sheriff Gerrond was struck by Sam Robinson and suffered a scalp wound. Though the blood-letting acted to disperse the crowd, it also stirred up resentment against Robinson and his compatriots.

On June 1, the election took place, but two county commissioners from Woodsdale refused to canvass the vote in Hugoton, fearing they would be attacked. They, and Sheriff Cross, wrote Governor Martin explaining the situation and notifying him that Hugoton had armed itself and stood ready to fight Woodsdale.

While waiting for the Governor's response, Gerrond, Woodsdale's Sheriff Ed Short, and a William Houseley, went to Hugoton with the idea of arresting Robinson for his previous attack on Gerrond. What happened next both factions explained differently, each accusing the other of firing the first shot. Someone started shooting when the Woodsdale group entered the town and after an exchange of thirty shots the three men fled the premises. No casualties resulted from the confrontation, unless a bullet bruised foot of a farmer is counted. However, the event caused even greater animosity between the towns and on June eighth, Governor Martin ordered National Guard Brigadier General Murray Myers and Lieutenant Howard M. Davis to the county to make a full investigation of the situation.

The two men found Hugoton armed and Woodsdale supposedly the same way. The men interviewed several people and reported their findings to Governor Martin. The governor had Attorney General S.B. Bradford obtain a writ of mandamus from the state Supreme Court ordering the county commissioners to canvass the election. With two companies of National Guard in the county keeping things quiet, the commissioners, after several attempts, finally determined that the bond election had been defeated. By July 19, the National Guard started home and most people hoped that matters were settled in Stevens County.

What happened two days later ended any chance for peace in the county. Deputy Sheriff Short started the chain of events which led to the murder of four Woodsdale men. Short, learning



that Sam Robinson had gone to "No Man's Land" on a hunting trip, decided to try to arrest Robinson while he lacked support from the Hugoton faction. Short and a posse went after Robinson and cornered him. Thinking he would need assistance to flush Robinson out, Short sent for help from Woodsdale. Sheriff Cross, with Robert Hubbard, Rollin Wilcox, Cyrus Eaton and Herbert Tonney responded to Short's request and set off for "No Man's Land."

Before the Woodsdale party reached Short, Robinson escaped and Short started on his way back to Stevens County. Sheriff Cross, failing to locate Short, also started back to the county. Their horses being tired, Cross and his party halted at Wild Horse Lake, the site of a haymakers camp, to rest before going further. It was here that Robinson, now accompanied by a group of Hugoton men, found the five Woodsdale residents. Again two contradicting stories are told about what happened, but this time four eye-witnesses refuted the Hugoton account.

According to nineteen-year-old Herbert Tonney, one of Cross's men and the only survivor of the posse, Robinson and his group caught the Woodsdale men unarmed. Robinson then started shooting, first killing Cross, then Hubbard and Eaton. J.B. Chamberlain shot Tonney, but only wounded him in the shoulder. Tonney feigned death while Robinson found Wilcox and shot him. After making sure they had killed all the men, or so they thought, Robinson and his group rounded up the haycutter and his son who had witnessed the murder and headed back to Hugoton.

The haycutter, a Mr. Haas, had sent one of his sons for help, and a group of Voorhees men responding to the call met Tonney on his way back from the lake. The group took the boy to Voorhees and there he told the story of the murders. Several men went out and recovered the bodies, and as they passed near Hugoton on their way to Woodsdale, Chamberlain rode out to look at the dead men and then forced the wagons to go through the town. Mrs. Christiana Smith, who lived just outside of Hugoton at the time, saw the incident and knew the Hugoton men must have been shocked when they found only four bodies

in the wagons.<sup>64</sup>

On July 25, 1888, after hearing the reports of the murders, Governor Martin sent General Myers, Attorney General Bradford, and Captain John Wallace to the county. On their arrival they found the towns armed and awaiting attacks from the opposing forces. On the advice of the three men, Governor Martin sent the entire Second Regiment of National Guard to the county, along with a band and Section B of the First Light Artillery. Both towns were disarmed and all weapons confiscated. Deputy U.S. Marshal Charles Jones arrested the Hugoton men accused of the slayings. After thirty days the National Guard went home and the county seat fight was considered settled, with Hugoton the victor and Woodsdale doomed to obscurity.

The arrested men, Charles E. Cook, Orrin J. Cook, A.M. Donald, Sam Robinson, J.B. Chamberlain, James Wrigley and J.W. Calvert, were indicted and to be tried in April, 1889. However, jurisdiction problems caused the case to be thrown out of the courts. Sam Wood finally arranged for the accused men to be tried at Paris, Texas, since the district court there had jurisdiction over "No Man's Land." Six men were found guilty and sentenced to hang on December 19, 1890. They appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court and finally, in 1895, the case was taken off the court docket and the men were cleared of all charges.

Sam Robinson, who escaped the second trial, went to Colorado and was later convicted of attempted robbery of a store and post office, and was sentenced to the Colorado State Penitentiary. Ed Short left the county about the same time as Robinson and was later killed in Oklahoma. Sam Wood also met an untimely death. While in Stevens County in response to criminal libel charges against him, Wood was shot as he left the Methodist Church where court was being held. James Brennan was charged with the murder, but never came to trial because an impartial jury could not be found. In 1895 charges were dropped against Brennan. This meant none of the deaths resulting from the county seat fight were ever legally avenged.



In the summer of 1888, when the four Woodsdale men were murdered, the county experienced the first failures of the boom period. Several of the other newspapers in the county expressed the fear that the county seat fight was driving people away. However, as the "Stevens County Seat War" came to a close, a period of unfavorable weather and crop failure descended on the southwest region of Kansas. The boom in Stevens County lost its rosey color as people became disillusioned with the land. They now understood that the climate change in the mid-1880's was just another phase in the wet-dry cycles which continually plague the area. The people realized that the county was financially insecure and that without stable agricultural production the boom would collapse.

The land boom had been based on false speculation and the belief that a railroad could be attracted to the county. Without the services of that transportation facility, land values would drop and businesses fail. This knowledge, together with the dry weather and the opening of Indian Territory in 1889, convinced many people to leave for better homesteads elsewhere.

Population statistics show that the migration out of the county was slow at first.<sup>65</sup> The rush into the Oklahoma area accounted for the first outward wave of settlers, with a second set following them when the Cherokee Outlet was opened in 1893.<sup>66</sup> Also in that year, a general depression struck the nation, which further lowered farm prices and land values. Discouraged by the worsening drouth, approximately five hundred settlers left the county between 1893 and 1894. From this date there was a steady, slow decline until 1898, when the population began a long, gradual rise as prosperity and better weather conditions returned to the county.

From a prosperous, booming land the county declined into an indebted, drouth-ridden area. The effects of the land boom were felt for many years after the collapse. The overspeculation of those few years left Stevens County with many different interest payments on municipal bonds it could not

meet. The loss of income from the decrease in population left the county with more liabilities than assets. Without railroad taxes the county had no regular and reliable source of revenue and it defaulted on most of its monetary commitments. The problem reached bankruptcy proportions, forcing the county commissioners to hire two Wichita lawyers in 1897 to defend the county against bond indebtedness charges.<sup>67</sup> The county helped relieve some of the pressure by selling tax delinquent lands. This helped keep the county solvent and got more land under taxation to assure future revenue for the county.<sup>68</sup>

While all the southwest region of Kansas experienced financial problems, it also underwent adjustments in agricultural production. In the relatively wet years, farmers primarily produced wheat and corn. The drouth made these crops no longer feasible and broomcorn and sorghums replaced them. This change in the type of crops produced was the first of many made throughout the county's history. The modification also marked the beginning of several attempts of the inhabitants to cope with the semi-arid climate.

Besides producing different crops, the settlers who remained in Stevens County also considered irrigation as a solution to their problems. Irrigation was not a new idea to this area, but it had been ignored for several reasons. Some settlers felt irrigation was against God's will, believing He used the drouth to punish sinners. Other people, primarily investors, tried to muffle any talk of irrigation because they felt such ideas would scare away potential customers and destroy land values. Finally, people were unfamiliar with the techniques of irrigation and feared the high costs of any watering operation.<sup>69</sup>

Concerned citizens in Stevens County toyed with the idea of irrigation but nothing came of the flirtation. The Hugoton Hermes, now the only newspaper in the county, constantly pushed irrigation in early and mid-1890's. The newspaper felt once irrigation was started, people would return to the area and

land values would go up. The pages of the weekly paper suggested various methods of collecting water (including using buffalo wallows ), in the belief that "conservation of water over a large area would increase the rainfall and prevent the hot winds."<sup>70</sup> The paper even published a short poem directed at stimulating interest in irrigation:

MORAL

If you live in the great southwest,  
Oh! Never, never stop to rest,  
Nor wait until it is too late.  
Right now commence to irrigate,  
By flooding or by percolation  
Be prospered now by irrigation.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to printing items on irrigation, the paper reported on different meetings held in the county and surrounding area to develop an irrigation program. The county commissioners even went as far as trying to get an irrigation experimental station in Stevens County, with the full blessings of the newspaper.<sup>72</sup>

Before irrigation had enough time to become established in the area, the rains were starting to return. In 1896, Stevens County farmers still suffered because of the low prices for grains, especially wheat, but they were now growing bountiful crops. The growth in production forced the farmers to look for a new outlet for their crops if they wanted to make a profit. Since the national market was depressed and transportation facilities limited, they turned to a local market: the cattle rancher.<sup>73</sup>

Stevens County, during this transitional period, once again experienced a growth in its cattle industry. The drouth, by making crops hard to grow and discouraging farmers in the area, had reopened the prairie for grazing purposes. The number of cattle grew slowly until 1897, and more rapidly thereafter. At first affected by the drouth and the depression, the industry recovered slowly as the population steadily decreased. The deserted homesteads became the grazing pasture for cattle as the remaining settlers increased their

herds and other ranchers entered the area. Sorghums and even broomcorn were used or sold for forage, thus creating a beneficial situation for both the cattlemen and the farmers.<sup>74</sup> By 1900, the industry was well established in the area and five years later it peaked at 14,046 cattle in the county. Though no railhead was close by, the cattle were easily driven to Liberal for shipment on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway.

The complementary production of cattle and crops gave Stevens County a way to weather its financial difficulties. This change from crop production to diversified farming and ranching gave the settlers more flexibility to deal with the unreliable weather and the isolated position of the county. Despite the fact that recovery was slow for the county the settlers who remained during this period never lost hope. Again, the Hugoton Hermes must be used as an indicator of the society's temperment in the drouth period. The newspaper reported the numerous activities of the community now slowly concentrating itself in the county seat. Many of the boom towns, including Woodsdale, were deserted, and the settlers traded and socialized mainly in Hugoton. During this period many of the regular social events continued, despite the loss in population. Hugoton's baseball team kept its schedule, losing a game to one of its arch rivals, Ulysses, in August 1895.<sup>75</sup> The social calendar remained jammed with parties and celebrations on all the important holidays. The Hugoton Literary Society held recitals and musical programs, while groups such as the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias continued their organizations. Not to be out done by the rest, the different political groups in the county, such as the Populists and Republicans, also kept the people involved in activities.

The schools reflected the degree of stability in the community during the hard times. Stevens County's schools remained open and active, though school enrollment decreased

with the general decline of population.<sup>76</sup> Also, the county continued their normal school to attract teachers, people, and money to the area. The teachers in the county also held a meeting in October 1895, to form a Stevens County Teachers Association, lending permanence to the school system and the society as a whole.<sup>77</sup>

By 1895, the county had reversed its downward progress and was steadily improving. While agriculture recovered, the community continued to make itself appealing to outsiders. The people who remained were determined and capable, such as the Smiths and the Currys. They could see a future for the county that other disheartened settlers could not picture. Opportunity existed for those who stayed in the county, for they could consolidate their holdings and supplement them with land now at lower prices.<sup>78</sup> By 1900, the county was financially stable and it, as well as the rest of southwest Kansas, was once more luring people to the area.

Stevens County lagged behind other counties in this resettlement period because it still lacked a railroad and was farther than most counties from a railhead. The county did not experience an appreciable increase in its population until after 1905, when the area regained its rosey complexion of the boom days. However, this time the county had a solid economic foundation and could cope with the rapid growth. Prices were not inflated and development progressed more normally than the first boom. By 1908, the population had almost doubled and the Hugoton Hermes, in an article entitled "Stevens, The Queen of Counties", reported the remarkable growth of the area.<sup>79</sup> Now, all that remained to secure permanent prosperity for the county was a railroad, and that, the Hermes predicted, would not be long in coming.

## CHAPTER FOUR - THE RAILROAD COMES TO STEVENS COUNTY

Stevens County successfully weathered the rough years and by 1908 was quickly becoming a major agricultural producer. This, with the continued good weather, gave the county an increased measure of financial stability. Stevens County needed only one more item to guarantee its new economic status: the railroad. With that transportation facility connecting Stevens County to outside markets, the inhabitants could look forward to a more secure future.

The struggle to bring a railroad to Stevens County was hampered for many reasons. The land and climate were natural barriers against rails being laid through the area. Not only was the county isolated from major centers of trade, it also relied upon two unsteady industries. Both cattle raising and crop production fluctuated with the wet and dry years, and railroad companies had to consider what would happen to their investments during the drouth years. Along with this, railroads made more money if the area was more heavily populated than Stevens County. These factors made the drawing power of the county on railroads not as great as if it was located in a less isolated area or in a more favorable climate. As K.L. Bryant explains in his history of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, "In the 1870's, when the Santa Fe was still trying to decide how to get out of Kansas and on to New Mexico, A.A. Robinson sought to persuade the board to build along the Cimarron cut-off to the Santa Fe Trail... the Atchison management decided against the topographical advantages the route offered because of the sparse population in the area and the almost desert-like terrain." <sup>80</sup>

Though the railroads may have been reluctant to build through the county, during the first boom period many were willing to take a chance. Most towns along the proposed route voted bonds for the building of the railroad, making it less of a financial risk for companies to build through



the area. Unfortunately, as already discussed in the previous chapters, the county seat fight prevented the rails from materializing in Stevens County. Both Hugoton and Woodsdale failed in their attempts to get railroads to build through their respective location. By the time the county seat controversy was settled, the land boom was over and railroads were no longer willing to invest in the area.

During the drouth and recession of the 1890's, Stevens County had no economic advantages that could possibly attract a railroad. By 1908, however, the county was again financially appealing to railroads wanting to make a good investment. The population of the county was growing rapidly, which meant more money and markets in the area to support a railroad. The farmers were doing well, producing large crops of broomcorn, sorghum, and wheat; these men were looking for a railroad to take over the hard job of freighting their harvests to the railhead at Liberal in the neighboring county. Cattle ranchers were also prospering, having greatly increased their herds over the last few years, and they could benefit from a local railroad by which to ship their cattle east. <sup>81</sup>

On March 20, 1908, another bond election for a railway was held in Stevens County. The people voted in favor of aiding the Kansas and Texas Railroad if it would build through their community. With the bonds passed and the survey already made, Stevens County residents expected daily to hear about the railroad's construction. However, the Kansas and Texas failed to get the project underway and the people started looking for another solution to their railroad problem. <sup>82</sup>

At this time several rumors were reported of other companies planning to build through the county. One proposal called for an electric railway to be built through Hamilton and Stanton counties into Stevens County, and on to Liberal. <sup>83</sup> The second possibility was for the Rock Island Railroad to build from Liberal, through Stevens County, and on westward

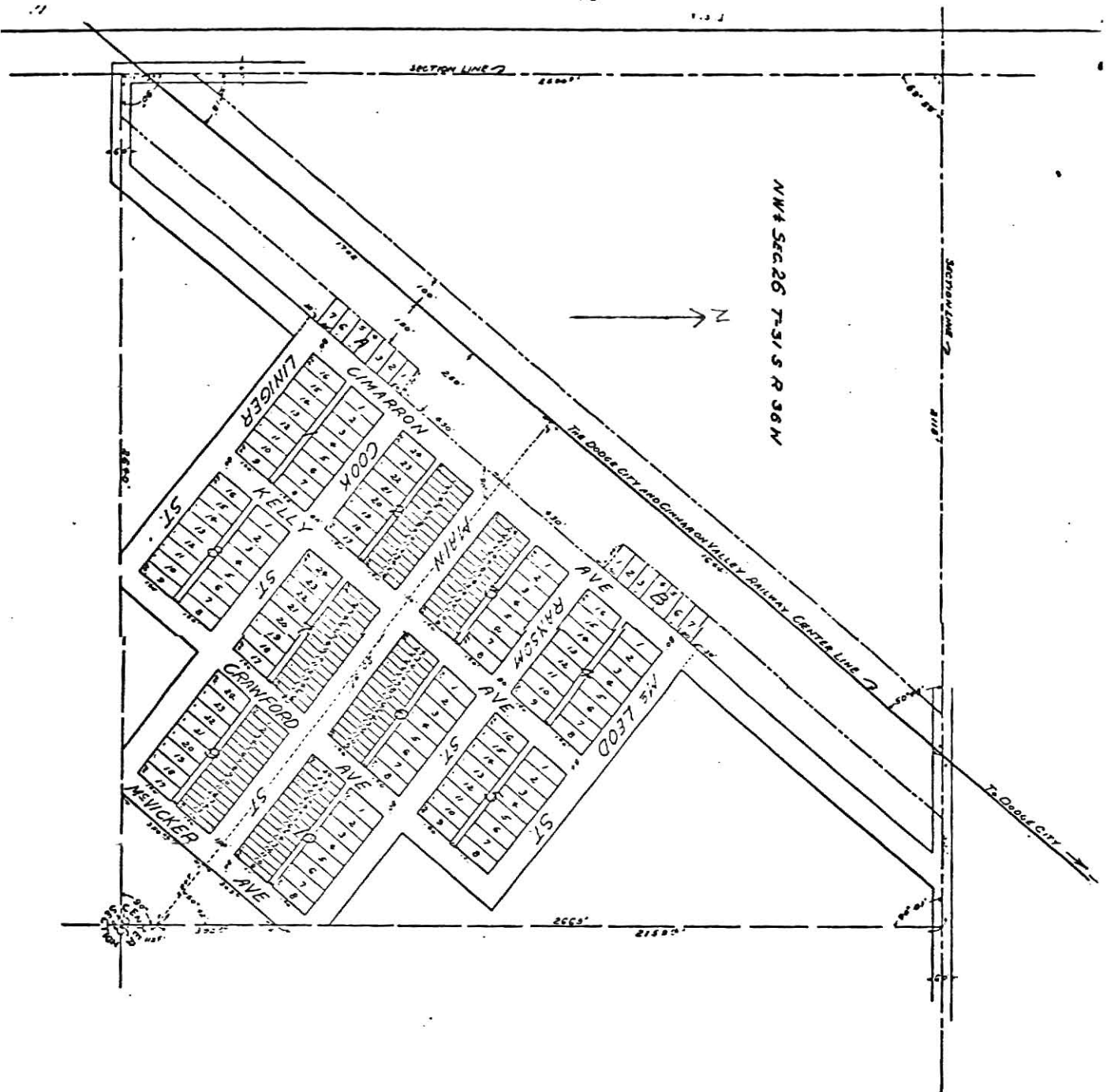


to Richfield in Morton County.<sup>84</sup> There were also hopes that the prospects of gas and oil in the county would bring a railroad into the area.

The people of Stevens County were still wondering whether any of these plans would bring a railroad when, in November of 1911, they received news of another development. At that time it was reported the Dodge City and Cimarron Valley Railway had been chartered. This company was to start immediately on the Colmar cut-off of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, and would run its tracks through Stevens County on its way southwestward.

Apparently this line of the Santa Fe had been on the drawing board since the proposal of A.A. Robinson in the 1870's. However, it was not until the broomcorn and wheat markets of the area prospered that the few men who had remained convinced of the route's feasibility could get the line surveyed and built. In 1910, the route was finally laid out, running "south and west from Dodge City some 228 miles through Elkhart, Kansas, to Clayton, New Mexico, and on to the Atchison main line at Colmar between Las Vegas and Raton."<sup>85</sup>

With the confirmation of the railroad actually coming to Stevens County, the area began to prepare for it. Two major developments took place in the community in anticipation of the railroad. They were the founding of the town of Moscow in the northeast corner of the county, and the improvements made in the town of Hugoton. Moscow was built on the line of the railroad, taking its name from a post office six miles away. The town was established around the railroad's depot and water plant. By the time railroad tracks were laid, Moscow had a stockyard, two grain elevators, two implement houses, two dry goods and grocery stores, one hardware store, a restaurant, and two houses. And the town kept on growing, creating Sunday schools, baseball teams, and other community organizations.<sup>86</sup> Today it is the second largest town in the county and continues as an important grain shipment



**MOSCOW**  
STEVENS CO. KANSAS

PLAT OF MOSCOW  
ESTABLISHED 1913

point for farmers.

Hugoton also built up its facilities to accommodate the new business the railroad brought. A depot, water plant, section house, grain elevator, and three stockyards were constructed. In addition to the buildings already in town, three lumberyards, two banks, three big stores, a real estate office, a hotel, a pool hall, two blacksmith shops and fifty or sixty houses were built.<sup>87</sup> A poem appearing in the Hugoton Hermes characterizes the change in the town:

Hugoton took a Van Winkle nap;  
But now she's the best town on the map;  
With hotels and stores, and banks and things;  
And all the good things prosperity brings;  
And the Santa Fe railroad too, by jing!<sup>88</sup>

Again there was an increase in new homestead entries, and Hugoton flourished as the population continued to grow in the county.

The railroad made its way to Stevens County quickly after the initial decision to build. By January 17, 1913, the tracks had gone through Moscow and were about to be laid in Hugoton. By April 25, the railroad was within six miles of Elkhart and the Kansas border. By this time the people of Stevens County had almost completed their plans to celebrate the railroad coming to the community. They had vetoed the idea of an earlier ceremony when the railroad first came through because they would not be able to accommodate a large crowd.<sup>89</sup> They also were hoping for a good rain storm to settle the dust. But by the end of April, everything was ready for the railroad celebration and they decided to go ahead with it, despite the lack of rain.

On May 8, 1913, the county held its celebration. Arthur Schultz, a reporter for the Topeka State Journal, wrote a long article about the activities taking place in Hugoton. "Not less than forty of the 105 counties of the state were represented at the Hugoton show. Of the crowd of 5,000, nearly 2,000 were hauled to the picnic in the two special trains operated from Dodge City by the Santa Fe. Probably 500 auto-

mobiles lined the streets of the little town, or were stationed on the fenceless plain at points convenient to the scene of the celebration. Every county in western Kansas sent delegations. Added to the crowd, was the Hutchison band, and the cowboy's band from Dodge City,..."<sup>90</sup> The people of Liberal, in neighboring Seward County, also organized a processsion of automobiles which streamed their way into Stevens County for the celebration.<sup>91</sup>

The Hugoton Committee for Safety held a big barbecue for the people attending the celebration. There were twelve beeves, several sheep and over 20,000 buns used for the feast.<sup>92</sup> Along with the barbecue, baseball games, horse races, bronco busting and other athletic contests took place in the morning. A big circus tent, brought from Dodge City, was set up and the various state officials and other dignitaries orated there in the afternoon.<sup>93</sup>

The celebration day was topped off with a ball held in the circus tent. Approximately one thousand people danced until midnight to the music provided by a ten piece orchestra.<sup>94</sup> Just as the ball was over, and the people were returning to their homes or the waiting trains, rain began to fall. As Schultz described it: "The rain came in big heavy drops and splashed against the windows of the Pullmans, as the tired visitors hunted their berths. From uptown a half a mile away, there came a loud cheer. It was from the residents of the short grass country, expressing their thanks for the blessings of the day and the benediction of rain, the second within the week."<sup>95</sup> The rain was a fitting end to a long awaited day for the people of Stevens County.

The official welcome of the railroad to the community marked the end of isolation for Stevens County residents. They finally had the economic advantages a railroad brings to a region. No longer were they without a direct tie to the agricultural markets of the east. They were freed from the long hauls of crops to Liberal and from freighting manufactured goods back to Stevens County. Even the type of crops

produced could change; now more wheat could be grown and less emphasis on hardier, drouth resistant crops could be made by the farmers. The community profitted immensely from the Santa Fe business and the effects were very obvious. Yet, the people of the county were also going to find in later years that not all their railroad worries were gone. They had the railroad but along with it they had its problems. The need for more cars to ship grain out of the county, high rates, and poor service put a taint on the memories of May 8th, 1913.

The people of Stevens County, as wheat and other crop production increased, found that one railroad did not always solve freighting problems. By the 1920's, farmers not near the railroad line still faced the difficult task of hauling their large crops to the grain elevators at Hugoton and Moscow. One additional town had been built along the railroad in 1918 to ease the freighting burden. Feterita, located southwest of Hugoton, had storage facilities for farmers in that area of the county. However, the establishment of this town did not help farmers in the eastern and southeastern parts of the county.<sup>96</sup> It was in 1922 that the last railroad scheme to involve Stevens County was formed with the idea to reach these isolated farmers.

O.P. Byers, a prominent railroad man in southwest Kansas, established his own company in the early 1920's. His Kansas and Oklahoma railroad, headquartered at Liberal, was organized to build a railroad from Liberal to Baca County, Colorado. The line would provide rail service to a neglected agricultural area, benefitting both Byers and the farmers.<sup>97</sup>

Controversy surrounded the building of the Kansas and Oklahoma through Stevens County. During 1922, the Hugoton Hermes continually reported on the progress of the railroad and the obstacles in the way of its completion. Byers had asked the residents of Center Township in Stevens County to vote bonds for the support of the railroad. The first bonds voted were found to be illegal and not until the summer of 1922 were other bonds approved. Legal technicalities, and the

desire of some people to stop the building of the railroad, slowed the progress of the line even longer. Finally, in November, the Kansas and Oklahoma reached the new town of Woods and stopped.

Woods, presumably named after Sam Woods, was located about fourteen miles east of Hugoton.<sup>98</sup> On November 21, lots were sold on the town location, many of them going to Liberal businessmen.<sup>99</sup> A grain elevator was erected and a new railroad terminus was opened for the farmers in the area. The town and the shipping service did a fairly good business until the mid-1930's. Some Hugoton residents complained that more grain cars were available on the Kansas and Oklahoma line than on the Santa Fe. It seems the Kansas and Oklahoma even got the business of these dissatisfied farmers.

The railroad lasted only until 1937, when the rails were abandoned and then removed. Undoubtedly the depression and the dust bowl conditions were responsible for the demise of the Kansas and Oklahoma in Stevens County. The town of Woods refused to die with the railroad, but instead was greatly reduced in size. Today the town consists of two or three buildings and a small grain elevator.

After the abandonment of the Kansas and Oklahoma railroad, no other lines were built through the county. Today only the Santa Fe railroad provides the necessary rail freight services for the county. More goods and materials are hauled by trucks now, but the grain is shipped by the railroad. The railroad remains an important part of the economy of the county; and despite poor railroad service, May 8, 1913, is still remembered as one of the greatest days in Stevens County's history.



## CHAPTER FIVE - RESETTLEMENT - THE PEOPLE, THE COMMUNITY, AND AGRICULTURE

### The People

The second wave of settlers into the Stevens County area in the first decade of the 1900's differed slightly from that of the previous boom period. These new settlers were also attracted by the flat, open lands which were relatively inexpensive or still available through homesteading. Many of the people moving into the area were successful farmers who wanted to enlarge their land holdings. They felt southwest Kansas offered the greatest opportunity to do this at the least expense. Others coming into the county had few resources and looked for a chance to better their position in southwest Kansas. Ranch hands, farmer's sons, laborers, and others could homestead the land and establish a lucrative farming enterprise. They could also sell their lands after proving up their homestead and make a tidy profit for their investment.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike the first settlement era, native Kansans dominated the second wave of pioneers.<sup>101</sup> They simply moved from their eastern homes into the promising southwest region. With the majority of the incoming population from Kansas, the remaining numbers came from Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and other neighboring or midwestern states.<sup>102</sup> Foreign born people made up a very low percentage of the influx; they only measured 2.4 per cent and 1.9 per cent of the population in the 1910 and 1920 federal censuses.<sup>103</sup>

During this second settlement period Stevens County experienced a growth in its black population. Southwest Kansas never had a significant number of blacks living in the region, but during the early 1900's a noticeable increase in blacks occurred. Stevens County had no blacks in 1880, nineteen in 1890, and five in 1900. During the next twenty years, the black population grew from 81 in 1910 to its peak at 169 in 1920.<sup>104</sup>



The blacks came to the area for the same reasons as white people: the inexpensive land and the chance for improvement. The few blacks which had remained during the first depression years had done well and were a fine example of the opportunities open for blacks in the area. John Curry had brought his family to the county in 1888 "without a dollar." He and his wife, ex-slaves from Kentucky, had traveled west for health reasons. By 1895, Curry and his family were considered well-to-do by their white neighbors. They owned three-quarters of a section of land, a home in town, a team of horses, a team of mules and two wagons. The family remained in the county until the last of their children died in the 1960's, and were successful, well-accepted citizens of the county.<sup>105</sup>

With this noticeable influx of blacks, the county experienced a period of racial unrest while it adjusted to the change. This was an era of intense discrimination against blacks throughout the United States and the county was not immune from its affects. Segregation had been given legal sanction by the Supreme Court decision in Plessy versus Ferguson (1896) and blacks were being subjected to the "separate but equal" doctrine throughout the country.<sup>106</sup> In Stevens County, blacks such as John Curry, who had been treated very fairly, saw a change come about in many of the white people's attitude toward the blacks. The segregation philosophy, as well as the threatening rapid increase in blacks, stimulated this growth in discrimination and racial unrest.

Agitation against the blacks in the county started when a group of white people began supporting the segregation philosophy. As the Topeka Daily Capital reported, "The foes of the blacks included farmers living all over the county as well as the inhabitants of Hugoton, the county seat. In the principal stores of the town it was a common sight to see signs and placards bearing inscriptions such as these: 'No niggers wanted here, Stayout', 'Trade of Negroes not solicited or desired at this store'." <sup>107</sup> Though this news report may be

slightly overstated, a definite movement against the Negroes developed in the county, and it eventually ended in a court case upholding the civil rights of the black citizens.

The racial unrest in the county found a scapegoat in Major Stokes, a rather outspoken black farmer who had some trouble with his white neighbors. A group of about twenty-five to thirty local citizens assembled on a night in January of 1908, with the purpose of running Stokes out of the area. Fortunately the black farmer was absent from his homestead at the time and avoided bodily harm, though the "nightriders" did destroy some of his property and burned several bales of broomcorn.<sup>108</sup> Stokes did not escape further persecution however, for they soon arrested him for the alleged killing of a white farmer's horse and placed him in jail to await trial. He was sentenced to eleven months in jail and fined fifty dollars by a judge who believed "it would protect Stokes more to have him in jail until the mob spirit cooled down, than it would to turn him loose or give him a light sentence..."<sup>109</sup>

While in jail, Deputy Sheriff Hamby told Stokes if he would sign a relinquishment for his land, he would suffer no further harassment by the nightriders. Stokes finally agreed; he and his step-daughter, with whom he had been accused of living immorally, signed over their land for \$100.00 each. They then allowed him to "escape" from the jail and leave the county with his family. The Hugoton Hermes commented on his departure in their February 28 edition, saying:

He is right in saying that Stevens County does not want him. Neither does the county want any more of his kind. The county is also rid of the dirty wench who posed as Stokes' daughter and whose character is as black as his, and right here is a mighty good place to say that there are more of his class here yet who stand a mighty good chance to land in jail and even the penitentiary.<sup>110</sup>

The incident left the black community feeling insecure about its position in the county. Two black farmers, John

Curry and Stephen Tilford, wrote a former citizen of the county, L.J. Pettijohn, informed him of the Stokes trouble, and asked for help.<sup>111</sup> Pettijohn brought the incident to the attention of U.S. District Attorney Harry J. Bone, who referred the matter to the Secretary of Interior for investigation. Bone replied to the black farmers, detailing the steps being taken on the case and assured them that no one would be allowed to force the blacks from their land or deprive them of their civil rights.

In January 1909, the federal grand jury in Kansas City, Kansas, made indictments against eight members of the night-riders. The men charged were J.T. Moorhead, Joseph E. Hamby, Bruce Hall, Noble Madden, Charles Madden, John Cline, Ed Downey and Floyd Cady. They were charged "with oppressing, threatening and intimidating one Major Stokes on account of his race and color, and of having caused said Major Stokes to relinquish and release and remove from the homestead taken up by him..."<sup>112</sup> The trial, to be held in Wichita, finally got under way in September, 1909.

U.S. District Attorney Bone, a well known and skilled lawyer presented the prosecution's case.<sup>113</sup> Bone based his argument on evidence from the government investigation and the testimony of certain citizens of the county. Colonel William Potter, who had been an actual member of the nightriders, held the limelight. Potter's evidence faced the greatest amount of attack by defense attorneys.

The attorneys for the defendants were Judge David M. Dale and Sam B. Amidon, prominent lawyers from the Wichita area.<sup>114</sup> The attorneys had three lines of defense to support the night-riders' case. They first argued the charges against their clients were unjustified and that it was not illegal to discriminate against blacks. The Judge refused to accept this reasoning and did not accept a motion for dismissal based on these arguments.

The attorneys for the defense had more success with their next two arguments. They presented a large number of witnesses who testified that all the nightriders were "outstanding indi-

viduals." They also declared the defendants were justified in their actions against the "uppity" Major Stokes, an unlikeable individual and a trouble maker. This line of defense proved helpful for the nightriders, for most of them were prominent citizens in the county and had better reputations than Stokes. This fact made the nightriders' actions seem more legitimate than if Stokes had been of better character.

The third line of defense focused on the testimony of Colonel Potter. The attorneys pointed out that the defendants could not be convicted on Potter's testimony alone. They then suggested that Potter's statements were impeachable because he was a "...habitual user of cocaine and opium or either of them..." and his evidence must therefore be viewed with caution.<sup>115</sup> This degradation of Potter's character, as well as "the artful wiles of counsel for the defendants," seemed enough to convince most of the all male jury that the men on trial were innocent. The trial ended in a hung jury, with two of its twelve members voting for a guilty verdict. Judge Philips dismissed the jury and set a new trial date for the next court term in March, 1910.

District Attorney Bone immediately began planning for the second trial. He believed that the defendants were guilty and he wanted another well-organized, thorough investigation done in Stevens County. Bone insisted upon the use of special government agents, in lieu of the local and state authorities, some of which had refused assistance because they were sympathetic to the defendants. Bone also planned to break the "clannishness" of the county by offering immunity to anyone involved in the raid who would testify for the government against Moorhead.

By the time the trial reconvened on March 15, 1910, Bone had been successful with his plans. Five of the accused nightriders turned state's evidence and promised to provide testimony which would help convict the leaders of the mob: J.T. Moorhead, Joseph Hamby, and Bruce Hall. With this new evidence against them, the remaining three defendants pled

guilty to the charges of depriving civil rights. Bone was now assured of a conviction.

On June 7, 1910, the retiring Judge Philips handed down the final sentences. Though the government asked for the maximum fine of \$5,000. to be assessed against the defendants, the results were more lenient. The Judge sentenced Moorhead and Hamby to one day in jail and fined them \$100.00 each to be paid to the U.S. Government. Judge Philips gave Hall a thirty day jail term and also fined him \$100.00. Each of the defendants paid one-third the court costs, which totalled more than \$2,000.00.<sup>116</sup>

This case reestablished the rights of blacks in Stevens County. It also relieved some of the racial tension and restored better relations between the two groups. Such people as John Curry and his family could now remain in the county and enjoy a good, prosperous life. The black population continued to grow until 1930, when the depression and dust bowl starved out many blacks and whites.<sup>117</sup> Racial problems between the two groups remained at a minimum throughout the remaining history of the county. The blacks, though having a close community, are well accepted members of Stevens County's society.<sup>118</sup> In a land like southwest Kansas, people look at ability more than color as a basis for acceptance and success.

Besides the black people of the county, no other minority figures significantly in an analysis of the population. Migration into the county continued until the 1930's, but the characteristics of the people remained the same. In the Twenties, a noticeable number of "suitcase farmers" entered the area, but again they were predominantly native Kansans.<sup>119</sup> The post World War II migration also follows this pattern, though fewer blacks entered the area than in previous decades.

#### The Community

With resettlement, Stevens County again became a bubbling community. New towns appeared, social activities increased, and the county modernized its image. The continual growth



of population stimulated the changes made in the county and by the 1930's, the prosperous community looked toward a bright future. <sup>120</sup>

Hugoton continued as the principal town in the county. As the county seat and the main shipping point on the Santa Fe Railroad, Hugoton remained the center of county activities. The majority of business interests located themselves in the town, making Hugoton the main supplier of goods and materials for county residents. Two out of the three banks in the county, the Hugoton State Bank and the Citizens State Bank, were in Hugoton. <sup>121</sup> This made Hugoton the financial center for county inhabitants. The town expanded when the railroad came through the county. This expansion and modernization of the town continued as the county developed into a major agricultural and natural gas producer.

Hugoton also had the first modern conveniences in the county. In 1903, the first telephone line was run along barbed wire fencing from Liberal to the Hamby Hotel in Hugoton. In 1908, W.B. Crawford established the first switchboard in Hugoton, serving thirty telephones, and he made his wife the first "hello girl" in the county. In 1920, after several changes in the system, Southwestern Bell took over the 160 telephones. The system expanded with the gas industry in 1930, but experienced a leveling off period in the worst years of the dust bowl. Today the telephone network is a modernized version of the early barbed wire system and it serves the whole county. <sup>122</sup>

The first automobile also came into the county during the resettlement period. R.M. Crawford and Ed Joslin traded a quarter-section of land for a one cylinder "Winton" with a teller stick. They got the car sometime in June, 1905, and it lasted about thirty days. <sup>123</sup> The first automobile to carry the mail from Liberal was a Reo, driven by Guy Kimzey in 1908. The service only continued until 1912, when the railroad replaced the need for it. <sup>124</sup> However, county inhabitants now had the mail delivered to them by car. Automobiles, trucks and motorized farm machinery grew in popularity and usefulness as

manufacturers improved the equipment. As the vehicles increased in use, they created numerous changes in the lifestyles of the residents. The country post offices were needed less; people could now travel more and be less isolated on their farms; and freighting and farming operations were made easier. Today, most freighting of materials is done by trucks, and automobiles remain an essential part of the inhabitants' lives.

Hugoton also had the first light and power plant in the county. In January, 1920, the city made a contract for an electric and water installation to be built in Hugoton. By October, the plant was finished; by the end of 1920, the city had continuous light service and a more modern water system.<sup>125</sup>

These civic improvements increased after natural gas was discovered in Stevens County. On November 23, 1930, the Topeka Daily Capital reported that Hugoton and the county needed many changes to accommodate the gas business. The desire for a new courthouse to replace the old frame building erected as a school in 1887, was overshadowed by the problems of paving streets, supplying more building space, and enlarging water and power systems. In the end, all these improvements were left undone until the county shook off the affects of depression and the dust bowl.

Though most of the activity during resettlement took place in Hugoton, several other communities experienced changes. A number of small towns or settlements were established in the county from 1905 to 1930.<sup>126</sup> The number was not as large as the first boom period, but the communities were similar to their predecessors. The small settlements usually consisted of a post office and a few building ( except for Moscow, Feterita and Woods.) Most of these small communities vanished from the map as the automobile became more popular. When the postal service motorized its rural mail system, it also discontinued many of the small post offices. Cars made it easier to shop and socialize in Hugoton and people had less need for the country store or small town. By the 1930's, only Hugoton,



Moscow, Feterita and Woods remained in existence.

Social activities, now concentrated in Hugoton and Moscow, increased as the population grew in the county. The importance of social organizations and gatherings in the county has already been stressed. During the resettlement period, community activities continued playing an essential role in the lives of county residents. Visiting neighbors, dinner parties, dances, masked balls, special celebrations and observances of important holidays remained popular social activities. Many groups and organizations established in the previous boom period continued and flourished. Different lodges, such as the Masons and the Odd Fellows, enlarged their memberships while other organizations founded new chapters in the county. Women's groups also grew; these included the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Red Cross.<sup>127</sup> The Woman's Club of Hugoton was founded in 1913 and federated in 1914.<sup>128</sup> This group, one of the first Woman's Clubs organized in southwest Kansas, had an outstanding record of community achievements, including founding the county's public library during this period.<sup>129</sup>

Church and school activities remained important to the people of the county. Revivals and similar religious gatherings were common place. More churches were built and others enlarged to accommodate the increased population. During this time, the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Hugoton moved out of the courthouse into a new edifice. Between 1906 and 1930, the congregation expanded and moved twice, finally into a larger church on south Main Street in 1923.<sup>130</sup>

Schools also were expanded or new buildings erected for the additional children in the county. The first high school opened in 1911; this allowed county children to continue their education beyond grade school without having to move to Liberal. The first year the school operated, fourteen students attended classes. In 1915, the first group to graduate consisted of only three women: Mary Stoner, Gertie Helfrich,

and Zana Madden. All three ladies went on to become teachers in the county.<sup>131</sup>

The county schools supplied many of the community's activities. Included in these were the old standards: the spelling bee, debating clubs, literary societies and sports teams. The first group of high school students had two literary societies around which they organized most of their activities.<sup>132</sup> In addition to the town of Hugoton's athletic teams, the schools had basketball and baseball teams which competed against other schools in the area. These athletic competitions always were popular with the residents and rivalries were apt to develop between towns.

Inhabitants also enjoyed the various political activities going on in the county. Stevens County has been a stronghold of the Republicans throughout its history. However, other political groups always have been present to offer opposition for the Republicans. During the first boom period, rivalries between Democrats, Republicans, and Populists kept the political scene lively. The People's Alliance, or Populists, and Republican Party dominated this early period, with the Prohibitionists having a small representation. By 1910, the Republicans controlled the political scene in the county. Stevens County residents helped elect Harding and Coolidge in 1920 with 876 Republican votes; opposition in the county cast 346 votes for Cox and Roosevelt, and 39 votes for Debs and Stedmen. The Prohibitionist and Socialist party, as well as other third party groups, always had a small following in the county. However, the Republicans continued as the strongest political party and remain so today.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to the activities of individual groups, the community held functions of interest to all people in the county. Thus, people with musical talent, literary experts or other interesting people came to entertain the community. Lyceums and chautauquas were held once or twice a year. In August, 1920, a chautauqua had five days of concerts, lectures, operas, plays and a picnic.<sup>134</sup> The county fair held each year

also offered a varied program of entertainment for people in the county and the surrounding area. While emphasis was on the agricultural related events, it was also a highlight of the social season in the county.

The community's development and activities altered very little during World War I. Only 114 men out of the county's population of about 3,000 served in the armed forces; not all of them saw active duty.<sup>135</sup> Russell Smith, a native son and resident of the county since 1906, said little changed in the community during the war. Most men had agricultural deferments and they remained home to produce crops. County residents stepped up farming and cattle ranching slightly during the war, but besides the added work the county continued along its previous course until the 1930's. Then the depression and dust brought a drastic reduction of community activities.

#### Agriculture, 1905-1930

In the period from resettlement of Stevens County to the "Dirty Thirties," southwest Kansas developed into an important agricultural area. It was during this time wheat farming became a big business in Stevens County and cattle ranching again diminished in significance. Farm size increased, mechanization of agriculture occurred, winter wheat became the dominant crop, and the "suitcase farmer" came into existence. These factors, coupled with a period of wet weather extended farming throughout the county and helped bring on the dusty conditions of the 1930's.

Agriculture, from the establishment of the county, was the main activity of its inhabitants. The first settlers, unable to adapt their humid climate farming techniques to the dry conditions, were forced to leave the area to the cattlemen. During the transitional period of the 1890's most people believed the High Plains could be used only for ranching. Willard Johnson, who prepared a government study in 1901 on the utilization of the High Plains, echoed these sentiments. Johnson pointed out that the problem of how to productively

use the plains was complicated by their cycles of arid and humid weather. He called the plains "the most alluring body of unoccupied land in the United States because of their flat, fertile land and the periods of humid weather which attracted farmers to the area. Yet, for the farmers to make agriculture productive over a long period of time they needed additional water sources to weather dry spells. Johnson concluded, however, that "the High Plains, except in insignificant degree, are non-irrigable, either from streams, flowing or stored, or from underground sources, and that therefore, for general agriculture, they are irreclaimable; but that on the other hand water from underground is obtainable in sufficient amount for reclamation of the entire area to other uses..."<sup>136</sup> Cattle ranching and similar pursuits constituted these uses.

Johnson's study failed to consider the character of the settlers coming into the plains. This new wave of farmers, like their predecessors, also speculated on the land in an effort to improve their financial status. However, these farmers had a more tenacious attitude and they had a better understanding of the climate. The farmers knew reoccurring dry spells were a part of the plains climate; but they had two things which convinced them drouth could be weathered: optimism and scientific farming. The people of Stevens County and the surrounding area realized no rainfall and prolonged drouth meant poor crops; it also meant that the rains would return the next year or soon after. They recognized the weather cycles and always held a hopeful attitude about the rain. Perhaps their speculative nature made the farmers so confident. They knew the land was highly productive and profitable; that knowledge could keep the farmer optimistic during years of low rainfall. This optimism was not severely tested until the 1930's, and then it never completely disappeared.

Dry farming techniques and drouth resistant crops also made the new farmers less fearful of dry weather. Dry farming developed out of the new scientific approach to agriculture which emerged around the turn of the century. The general

principles of dry farming showed how to preserve more moisture in the soil for crops.<sup>137</sup> Though the drouth of the 1930's would prove the use of a dust mulch over the soil as disastrous to the land, the basic ideas of dry farming did improve crops. Not all farmers used the techniques; wheat speculation and suitcase farming in the 1920's caused many people to ignore the methods for quicker procedures. Initially, however, dry farming did alleviate some of the fear of dry weather on the plains.

Along with better farming methods, drouth resistant crops gave farmers a better chance for success. In Stevens County, until wheat acreage took over in 1920, broomcorn and varieties of sorghums were the dominant crop.<sup>138</sup> The county harvested the largest crop of broomcorn in Kansas for 1910. Though this crop involved a large amount of work to harvest, it was extremely profitable for farmers who sold it for brushes or forage. Sorghums, in particular milo and kafir corn, replaced broomcorn as the major crop in 1913. A reconnaissance soil survey report on western Kansas, issued in 1912, explained why sorghums became more popular. The survey concluded that "No other crops have done so much to put the agriculture of this area on a safe basis as the non-saccharine sorghums of which the most valuable are kafir, milo maize, and sorghum or cane. The great value of these crops is due to the fact that they have their growing season in time of the greatest probability of rain and also that they withstand drought and hot winds more successfully than any other crops of the region."<sup>139</sup> These crops did exceptionally well in Stevens County when the rainfall was low in 1910, 1916, and 1919. Sorghums were mainly for forage or grain and they sold at a good profit.

The history of wheat production in Stevens County is one of ups and downs until the 1920's. L.J. Pettijohn brought the first wheat to the county in 1892. He served as an agent for an eastern loan company which held title to a large amount of land in Stevens County. The company gave Pettijohn the wheat



seed and he planted it on the loan company's land. He harvested about 4,000 bushels of the grain and hauled two loads of wheat to the railhead at Liberal. Pettijohn was paid fifty-six cents a bushel and fifty-eight cents a bushel for the two loads, which did not cover the cost of freighting the grain to Liberal. He kept the rest of the seed, gave it to settlers on credit and figured to collect after the harvest. However, the dry weather prevented the crops from growing, no seed was obtained, and the first phase of wheat production in the county ended.<sup>140</sup>

Wheat acreage in the county was below 10,000 acres until 1915, even after the railroad came through. In 1916, wheat went up to 21,454 acres and then fell to 3,617 acres the next year. By 1920, however, county acreage in wheat grew to 29,043 and until 1931, it continued to increase. The expansion of wheat in Stevens County acreage occurred for several reasons. First, the coming of the railroad cleared the way for more wheat production in the county. Arthur Schultz, in his report for the Topeka State Journal on the Hugoton railroad celebration remarked on the difference the railroad made to the county's agriculture.<sup>141</sup> The transportation facility reduced high freighting costs and the farmers no longer needed to grow crops for the local livestock markets. Farmers could reap the advantages wheat had over the other crops: higher prices, a better market and easier harvesting.

Secondly, wheat acreage increased because World War I stimulated farmers' interest in the crop. Both the demand for wheat and the price went up during the war when it was "considered a patriotic duty to raise as much wheat as possible."<sup>142</sup> Stevens County farmers planted more wheat in 1916, but the lack of rainfall brought and kept the acreage down until 1919. Instead of wheat, farmers planted more sorghums to supply feed for the increased number of cattle in the county.

The improvements of farm machinery also stimulated the increase of wheat acreage in Stevens County. With the introduction of tractors around 1915 and combines in the early



1920's, the production process of wheat was simplified. The machinery easily adapted to the flat plains and allowed planting and harvesting to be done faster and with less labor. With the extra time and money, farmers expanded their land holdings and planted more wheat. The machinery also replaced the need for horses and mules; this meant fewer acres of forage were grown and more land was available for wheat.<sup>143</sup> In Stevens County, both the number of tractors and combines increased rapidly in the 1920's. The county had 140 tractors in 1924; by 1930 there were 334. Combines increased at an even faster rate; there were 40 in 1924, and 239 in 1930.

Favorable weather, a good market, high prices and the better farm machinery created a period of agricultural speculation in southwest Kansas.<sup>144</sup> During the 1920's, more land was cultivated in Stevens County than previous years, and the 1931 figure of 270,309 acres was not equaled until 1954. Wheat acreage in Stevens County went from 19,043 acres in 1920 to the peak of 166,989 acres in 1931, a figure which has not been surpassed. At that time, about sixty-one per cent of the land under cultivation was planted in wheat.<sup>145</sup>

With more land under cultivation, farm size increased in Stevens County. A comparison of figures from the 1920 and 1930 federal agricultural censuses illustrates the change. In 1920, the average farm size was 471.0 acres, while in 1930 it was 573.3 acres. Along with this increase in size, the number of farms decreased in the county. In 1920, there were 666 farms reported, and this number decreased to 634 farms in 1930. Both these trends were a result of farmers wanting to benefit from the good wheat prices. More land meant more profits to the farmer who had machinery and land bills to pay and who wanted to make a quick fortune. Those farmers who could not afford machinery or lost money on their crops usually sold out to the more successful farmer. This trend to fewer farms of larger acreage continued into the 1930's when it accelerated dramatically.

Agricultural expansion and the wheat speculation of the

1920's brought the farmers' cooperative to Stevens County.<sup>146</sup> This agricultural organization helped farmers market their grain and get agricultural supplies at lower prices. Farmers' cooperatives built their own grain elevators and other facilities to eliminate middle man payments and arbitrary storage rates. The town of Feterita, southwest of Hugoton, was established in 1918 by a farming organization. A grain elevator and a farmers cooperative store were built, along with a railroad siding for grain cars.<sup>147</sup> Hugoton and Moscow also had farmers associations created during this time. These cooperatives were important developments for the farmers in the county and remain so today.

Stevens County and southwest Kansas experienced side affects of the wheat speculation which later caused the "Dirty Thirties." First, the suitcase farmer, and his cousin the sidewalk farmer, entered the area. These suitcase farmers were predominantly eastern Kansans and they came to take advantage of the wheat prices. They bought or rented land in the county and visited it twice a year, for sowing and harvesting the wheat. Their speculative attitude about agriculture harmed the communities in which they farmed. The suitcase farmer abused the land to make the highest profit possible. They planted continuously, without summer fallowing, and they ignored conservation techniques. The farmers took advantage of the wet years to make maximum profits, then abandoned the land when drouth came. Their misuse of the land proved a terrible burden for local farmers during the 1930's.<sup>148</sup> Stevens County never had a large number of suitcase farmers as compared to neighboring counties; however, the twenty per cent among this group did contribute to the blowing conditions in the 1930's.<sup>149</sup>

Finally, wheat speculation resulted in the cultivation of land which never should have been used for crops, or used only with conservation practices. Farmers, in the interest of profits, cultivated areas of the county which were very susceptible to wind erosion. Soil surveys made of the county

after the 1930's showed that much of the land should be cultivated only when using intensive conservation practices. The remaining areas had soil which should not be cultivated, but used only for limited grazing. These acres had the most severe wind erosion in the 1930's, while much of the other land experienced moderate erosion.<sup>150</sup> It was the cultivation of these lands without care for the soil which made Stevens County a part of the dust bowl.

Agriculture, from 1905 to 1930, underwent great changes in Stevens County. The area became a major producer of broom-corn, sorghums and wheat. Cattle diminished in importance and remained so until World War II stimulated a growth in livestock production. Meanwhile, both crops and cattle suffered from the speculation and intensive farming of the 1920's. Depression and drouth ended the prosperous years and replaced them with dust. However, Stevens County was luckier than many of its neighbors; for along with the dust came natural gas to make the "Dirty Thirties" a little more tolerable.

CHAPTER SIX - "THE BUBBLE BENEATH THE PLAINS" <sup>151</sup> - NATURAL  
GAS DEVELOPMENT IN STEVENS COUNTY

"Crawford #1 gas well, southwest of Hugoton, caught fire on June 17, 1927, and burned about a week before it was extinguished." Thus starts a caption describing a picture of the well fire in the centennial edition of the Hugoton Hermes.<sup>152</sup> The fire threw flames forty to sixty feet in the air, which could be seen for a great distance across the prairie; people from the surrounding area flocked to the well for a close-up look at the spectacular fire. The blaze continued burning until June 23, when Tex Thornton, a renowned well fire fighter, put out the fire with a blast of nitroglycerin. This fire was the first of several blazes which occurred as more gas wells were drilled in Stevens County. Crawford No. 1 marked the beginning of natural gas development in the county and the first inkling that a much larger gas field existed in the region.

As more wells were drilled, the boundaries of the gas reserves were established and the world's largest natural gas field was mapped out. The gas field, with Stevens County at its heart, covers approximately two-and-one-half million acres in southwest Kansas, and continues down through the Oklahoma panhandle a few miles into Texas.<sup>153</sup> The area in southwest Kansas, named the Hugoton gas field by the Kansas Nomenclature Committee, refers to the gas produced from a specific layer of permian rock.<sup>154</sup> Geologists determined that the area was a huge monocline, sloping upward to the west. The monocline left room for the gas to collect under its structure in the porous rock and a fault at the upper end of the monocline prevented the gas from escaping.<sup>155</sup>

Though Crawford No. 1 marked the start of production in the Hugoton field, the first gas was discovered earlier just outside of Liberal, in neighboring Seward County. A well drilled in 1920 by the Traders Oil Corporation on the

Boles farm (section 3, T 35 S, R 34 W) struck gas while the company searched for oil. They found a gas zone between 2,600 and 2,800 feet, but the Traders Corporation had no interest in any fuel but oil and they had the well plugged.<sup>156</sup>

This interest in finding oil, rather than gas, continued through the 1920's in most of southwestern Kansas and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas. In 1926, the Independent Oil and Gas Company hired Walter L. Sidwell to drill a well on land leased from R.M. Crawford in Stevens County. Sidwell began drilling Crawford No. 1 in December, and by May, 1927, he struck gas at approximately 2,600 feet. Sidwell had discovered a gas zone about 200 feet wide, later named the Hugoton pay zone. The Independent Oil Company wanted Sidwell to continue drilling for oil, while he wanted to produce the gas. Sidwell agreed to drill further for oil on the condition that if he found none, he could have the rights to the gas. Sidwell drilled down to 3,500 feet, discovered no oil, and plugged the well back to the gas zone. He then contracted with two men, Arthur K. Lee and Gus Hardendorf, to market the gas from Crawford No. 1.<sup>157</sup>

Lee and Hardendorf, combining parts of their first names, established the Argus Gas Company and opened the first gas distribution system in Stevens County, with the intention of supplying gas to certain towns in the southwest region of Kansas. In August 1928, the company began furnishing gas to the town of Hugoton from the Crawford well. By 1930, the company owned or controlled the five existing wells in the county and started an expansion of their distribution system.

Argus Company established contracts with the Missouri Valley Gas Company and the Missouri Pipe Line Company, who arranged to buy and distribute the gas as far as Omaha, Nebraska. These contracts were the first of a series which eventually brought the gas into the hands of two major companies. The Missouri Valley Gas Company and Argus became the Republic Natural Gas Company, while Missouri Valley

Pipe Line Company changed to the Northern Natural Gas Company. The Republic Natural Gas Company and the Northern Natural Gas Company increased drilling operations and expanded the distribution systems, making the gas available to more profitable markets. Operations slowed after the initial activity in the field and business almost halted from 1932 to 1935 because of the depression and dust bowl conditions. Development increased gradually after 1935, with the major activity starting in 1944, when World War II stimulated production. The scarcity of materials during the war sometimes limited the number of new wells which could be drilled. However, with the return of peace, gas production began a steady climb. The peak year for drilling wells was 1949, and by 1953 the gas reserves of the county and field were known and 415 wells were in operation.<sup>158</sup> By this time, other major companies, pipeline corporations, and independent operators entered the gas field. Gas activity continued, with a renewed interest in finding oil. In 1966, a report of gas and oil production in Stevens County listed 816 gas wells and 15 oil wells producing fuel in that year.<sup>159</sup> Today, the county remains the largest producer of natural gas in the state, with a possible future in the oil industry.

The most important step taken in developing the Hugoton gas field was establishing a market for the fuel. Both the Northern Natural Gas Company and the Republic Natural Gas Company and their subsidiaries started pipelines to local and regional areas. However, the Panhandle Eastern Company first linked the gas field, and Stevens County's reserves, to a larger market. The company, under its subsidiary the Missouri Kansas Corporation, started a line from the Texas gas field up through Kansas to the Illinois-Indiana border in 1931. Stevens County did not get hooked to this line until 1938, when a new pipeline brought the county's gas to the main line near Liberal. By World War II, gas from Stevens County and the surrounding area traveled along the



1,300 mile pipeline to points as far east and north as Michigan.<sup>160</sup>

Experts found the natural gas of the Hugoton field sweet, or sulfur free, and rich in minerals.<sup>161</sup> The good quality of the gas, as well as the large quantity, made the field extremely profitable. Stevens County benefitted before many other counties because it had land available for lease when the initial gas discoveries were made.<sup>162</sup> The economic potential of the county increased as producers sought to tap the rich gas reserves there.

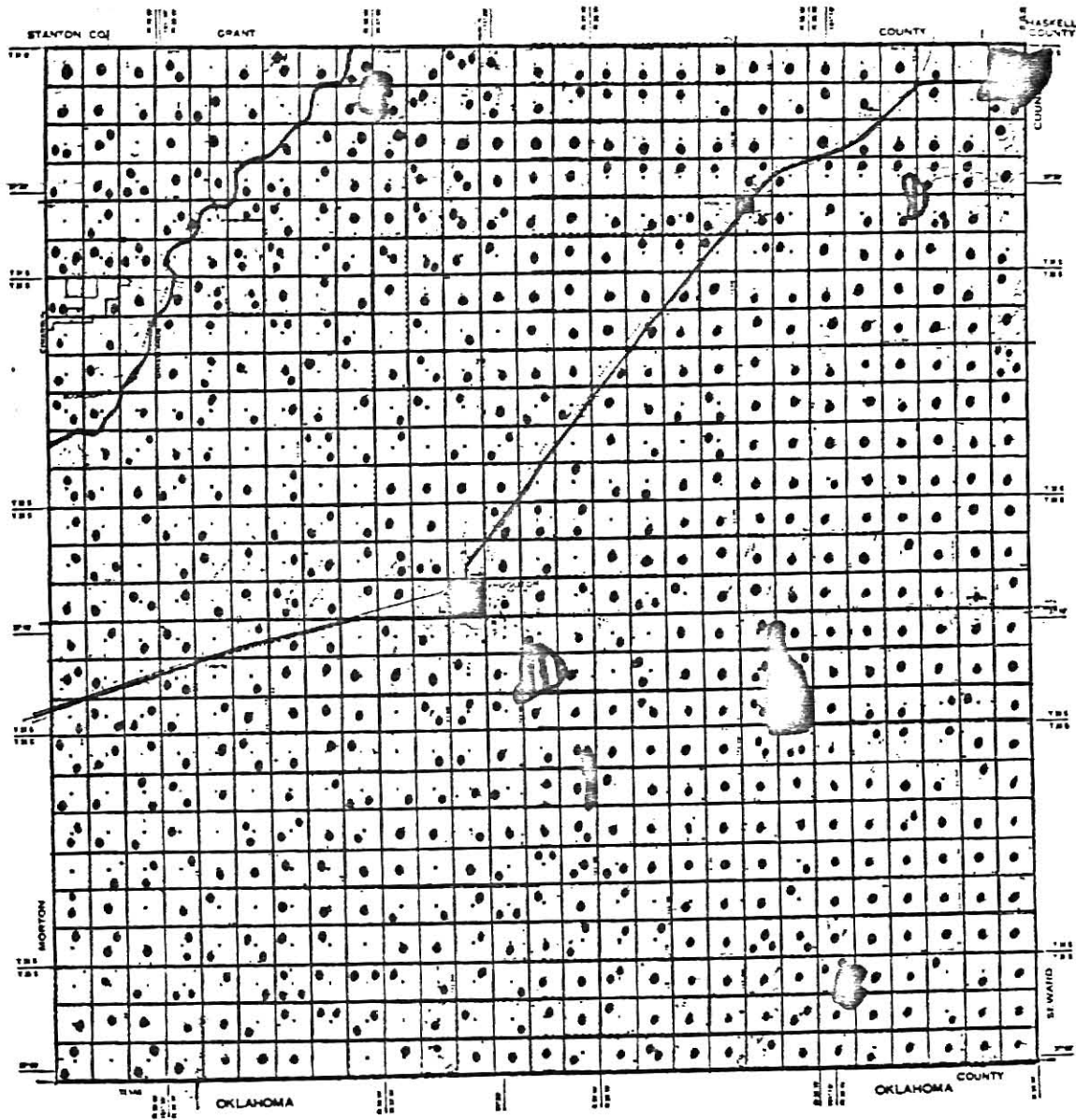
The development of gas in Stevens County followed the pattern established in earlier oil production. At first one well was drilled per 160 acres, but in the late 1930's, the Kansas Corporation Commission changed the regulation to one per 640 acres.<sup>163</sup> The company drilling the well leased the right to the section of land from its owner, usually a farmer in the county. The owner received a royalty payment of one-eighth the value of production in addition to use of the gas for domestic purposes and for irrigation pumps.<sup>164</sup> The company's activities came under the regulations of state and federal agencies as soon as they established a well site and drilling started. Though controls on the gas industry by government authorities were slow in developing, by 1940, authorities instituted and enforced regulations which restricted production, prices, and the shipment of gas. The state agency, the Kansas Corporation Commission, monitored the activities of the companies in the state: specifically they dealt with pricing, the amount each well could produce, and helped protect the rights of property owners. The Federal Power Commission, with the Natural Gas Act of 1938, had control over companies transporting gas across state lines. The federal agency regulated the price of gas, the amount available for shipping, and the operation of interstate pipelines. The controls of each commission are still in effect today, though they are continually being reworked according to the needs of the gas field, the con-

sumer, and the gas companies. <sup>165</sup>

The drilling methods used in Stevens County and the Hugoton field changed as the industry expanded and new techniques developed. The rig which drilled the Crawford No. 1 was a cable tool or sputter, and it involved a long procedure utilizing a large amount of water, not readily available in Stevens County. This system was replaced by the more efficient rotary rig, introduced to the county by Walter Kuhn. He and his brother Howard, expert drillers, played an instrumental role in developing the gas resources of the county. This innovation in drilling was followed by improved equipment and better processing techniques, such as adding acid to the well, to create larger production amounts and a better quality gas. <sup>166</sup>

The discovery and development of natural gas in Stevens County was an important event in the history of the county. Economically, gas placed the county in a better situation and it could now weather bad agricultural years more easily. The people were skeptical at first about the future of the gas industry in the county. They had heard about and seen other discoveries of gas and oil dissipate before they could amount to anything. However, as various companies expanded drilling operations and they discovered the true extent of the field, the county residents were convinced of their good fortune. The fact that every section in the county had gas resources confirmed the optimism of the people. While still new, gas producers told county residents that the field would last two hundred years. This estimate continually diminished as reserves were scientifically measured and confirmed. By the 1950's, the more realistic number of thirty to forty years was being given. <sup>167</sup> However, the people of the county to this day believe it will last longer. New discoveries of gas at the 4,000 feet plus level, and the continual drilling and capping of supposedly "dry" wells by gas companies, have worked to reconfirm the belief of Stevens County residents in the future of their gas field.

## GAS AND OIL RESERVES IN STEVENS COUNTY



■ - OIL

▨ - GAS AND OIL

● - GAS WELLS

The development of the natural gas resources of the county began slowly. The first benefits came to the county when companies piped the fuel into Hugoton and when they used gas for more drilling. The depression and the dust bowl hindered operations but with the late 1930's and then World War II, the gas industry in the county grew rapidly. It was at this time the county also started changing and improving. Much like the affects of the railroad when it came to the county, the communities of Hugoton and Moscow adjusted their lifestyles to the new business of the gas industry.

Hugoton, as the principal community of the county, experienced the most changes. The city now had to meet the demands for additional facilities such as housing, food services, retail stores and public services. Buildings were needed and built to house the various gas companies and other new businesses attracted to the county. A building boom hit Hugoton in late 1945 when more materials were available for housing. Hugoton and the county began improving the streets, installing better sanitation facilities and generally building itself up to fit its new role as a modern, wealthy city.<sup>168</sup>

Hugoton also applied to the Kansas legislature for their right to drill its own gas well. In 1945, the Kansas legislature passed House Bill No. 175, which allowed Kansas towns to drill municipal gas wells.<sup>169</sup> The people of the county then voted to drill the well and the city made a contract with the Northern Natural Gas Company to start the well. Walter Kuhn and Dewey Price were in charge of the drilling and they hit the Hugoton Pay Zone on August 8, 1945. The town now had its own well and it paid off the cost of drilling by 1947. After the city made these payments, the yearly royalty payments went into the general fund of the city and provided Hugoton with a more stable economy and a more secure future.

The people of Stevens County wanted their natural gas resources developed, but they also wanted to preserve the quality of life in the area. They fought against the building of a carbon black plant in the county because of its air pol-

lution and inefficiency; they successfully blocked its establishment.<sup>170</sup> Cleaner industries, however, they welcomed. The Panhandle Eastern Pipeline Company, in 1945, and the Northern Natural Gas Company, in 1951, built compressor stations in the county. The Hugoton Plains Gas and Oil Company established a gasoline plant in the county in 1950. All these industries were acceptable to the people of the county, for they brought more jobs and added income without harming the environment.<sup>171</sup>

Besides the financial benefits the gas brought the land owners and the county, the new industry also provided twenty-five per cent of the jobs for the area. Though most of the drilling crews and well builders were not local people, many of the jobs in the plants and more permanent administrative positions were filled by county residents. This gave the county an outlet for its excess population created by land consolidation and the increased birth rate.<sup>172</sup>

The economic benefits of gas for the county became a counterweight to the fickle climate of the area. With the additional revenue, the people could survive harsh dry years and the loss of crops without suffering as much as other non-industrial counties. In the 1950's, when dust storms and dry weather returned to the county, the people had their natural gas interests keeping them solvent until rain returned. The natural gas revenue, and the fuel itself, also allowed farmers to irrigate their crops.<sup>173</sup> The extra money helped pay for the equipment, while the cheap fuel powered the irrigation pumps. Though irrigation will be discussed at a later time, it is enough to say now that the amount of irrigation done today would not be feasible without natural gas resources.

An indirect contribution made by natural gas to the county was the building of its Natural Gas Museum. With Hugoton being called the natural gas capital of the world, people expressed interest in the history of natural gas development in the county. During the centennial year of Kansas, the Stevens County Historical Society opened the gas

museum. The facility houses information on the gas industry, in addition to material on the history of the county. With the aid of the historical society and other people, the museum is destined for a good future, preserving the heritage and relics of the county and its gas industry.

The drilling of Crawford No. 1 in 1927 greatly affected the future of Stevens County. The gas provided additional income to county residents and helped stabilize the economy. More industry and the development of irrigation were a direct result of the gas discovery. Finally, the county weathered the dusty Thirties and Fifties more easily with the help of the gas industry.



## CHAPTER SEVEN - DANGER: DUST AHEAD - STEVENS COUNTY, 1930-1950

On April 19, 1935, the Hugoton Hermes reported that a dust storm had engulfed the southwest Kansas area on the previous Sunday. The journal said that: "Showing up in the northwest horizon, and extending for miles east and west, a great wave of dust, at least 2,000 feet high or more rolled over Stevens County Sunday, striking Hugoton at four p.m. and for twenty minutes visibility was at zero. It was total darkness. The dense cloud continued until a little after midnight." The report continued to describe the dust cloud as a foaming, boiling mass of fine, light colored dust followed by a larger, darker whirling wave of black dirt and silt; it made a dramatic contrast with the bright, blue sky and the level plains. The article concluded by commenting on the reactions of the people to the dust cloud, saying that "In spite of dire experiences of the storm, when it was approaching it was stated by many who saw it as being a pretty sight, watching it come toward us."

This dust storm characterizes the storms which continually besieged Stevens County during the "Dirty Thirties" and twenty years later in the mid-1950's. The first time these storms wrecked havoc on the High Plains the area was given the label of "Dust Bowl." <sup>174</sup> At this time Stevens County experienced a drouth which caused widespread wind erosion and a drastic reduction of its agricultural production. The extended period of drouth forced the county's farmers to adjust their farming methods to suit the fluctuating plains climate. In the 1940's the return of wet weather and good grain prices caused many people to overlook the new conservation farming techniques as they again began extensive cultivation of the land. However, the return of drouth and dust in the 1950's finally convinced people that they must employ conservation methods for farming to have any kind of stable future. By 1960, the county's residents had modified their lifestyles to a new agricultural system.

The dust bowl of the 1930's developed from the extended period of drouth and the great plow up of the 1920's. Both drouth and dust storms were not new to the area but this was the first time they reached a destructive level. James Malin, in a series of three articles, pointed out that dust storms were a common element of the weather pattern in Kansas..Malin, from various weather records and newspaper reports, showed that before 1900 settlers in western Kansas often put up with blowing dust each spring, when the strong wind would carry off soil unprotected by crops or native grasses. <sup>175</sup> In the 1930's, with much more land cultivated and the topsoil dry from the lack of rain, the spring winds were much more devastating.

The year 1931 marked the turning point of farming conditions in Stevens County. This was the peak year of acreage in crops, as well as the high year for wheat acres and production results. In 1931, the county's population also reached a high of 5,351 after a steady climb since 1900. The only low figures recorded during 1931 were the price of wheat and the inches of rainfall. <sup>176</sup> Overproduction and a high yield per acre flooded the wheat market in 1931. The high wheat prices of the mid-1920's, averaging one dollar and ten cents per bushel, fell to thirty-one cents per bushel in 1931. Farmers were stunned and unsure of what to do with the almost worthless bumper crop of wheat. Most farmers put the grain into storage, few realizing it would later help them weather the dusty depression years ahead.

The next year rainfall remained low and farmers harvested almost one hundred thousand acres less than the previous year. They cut wheat production one-third and planted more sorghums. By 1933, rainfall returned to normal, but the acreage continued declining, with only 9,490 acres of wheat harvested. In 1934, with the wetter season of the year before, farmers again increased their acreage of wheat and harvested about seventy-seven thousand acres. Just as the acres went up, the rainfall again declined and the long drouth started. Not only did Stevens County get just under nine inches of rain that year, but also the spring and summer months had more sunshine and

higher temperatures. Dust storms were more frequent now and of a higher severity: By June, 1934, insufficient moisture throughout southwest Kansas caused pastures to be burnt by the sun and crops failed to materialize. The number of cattle in Stevens County started declining and continued on a downward trend until 1939 brought better weather. Farmers kept planting crops, but now they replaced most of the wheat with the hardier sorghums. Crop failure continued into the next year.

The year 1935 was the worst of the dust bowl era for Stevens County.<sup>177</sup> Agriculture was not the only thing adversely affected by the drouth and dust; in 1935, the health of county residents also suffered from the dusty conditions. In the first days of May, the Hugoton Hermes reported on the effects a series of storms had on the people.

The health of Stevens County residents has become more critical this week than last. Monday was a balmy day, but we awoke Tuesday morning with dust blowing into our fresh-air-windows which covered up the designs on linoleum covered floors. Nostrils were drifted full and our hair was heavy with silt. Under such existing conditions, people are becoming weakened and their bodies are breaking down with illness. 178

People complained of sore throats, chest pains, headaches because of sinus irritation, and bronchial coughs. Anyone with an illness found their condition worsened by the dust, which made breathing more difficult. Babies, children and old people were very susceptible to illness and several of them were sent out of the county.

People tried various ways to prevent the dust from entering homes, but it proved an impossible task. The Hugoton Hermes reported that people pasted strips of paper and cloth over cracks around windows. They also hung wet sheets over the doors and windows to stop the dust. Both methods helped somewhat, but dust still sifted into the houses.<sup>179</sup> People found no escape from breathing and living with the dust until the winds calmed and the dirt settled.

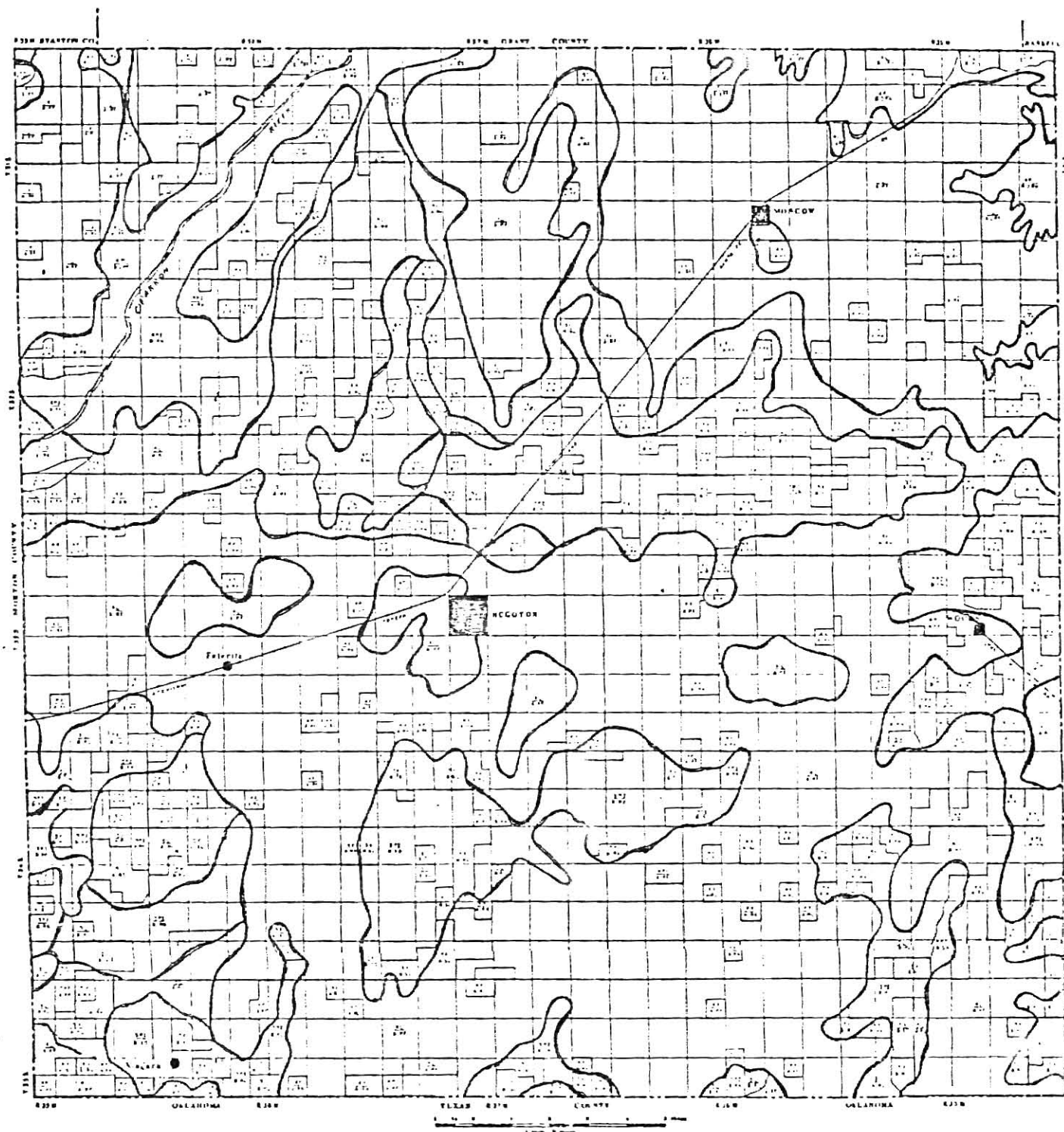
The people in Stevens County coped the best they could with the dust. Dust storms greatly restricted their lifestyles;

businesses closed down, people were confined to home, and schools were dismissed until the storms dissipated. People waited out the storms and took advantage of the rare dust free days to do shopping, clean house or visit friends. The Red Cross issued dust masks to people so they could travel about more easily when the dust was bad. Some people could not stand the daily repetition of storms and they left the county; an outward migration started which did not stop until the population hit 3,051 in 1943.

Storms affected the people both physically and mentally. Yet many county inhabitants constantly expressed optimism about the future, whether it was tomorrow or the next year. A perfect example of the confidence people had in "tomorrow" was the Hugoton Hermes. The newspaper continually reported dust bowl conditions in a positive light. It was not until the dust severely threatened the people that the newspaper reported more about the problems in the county. Even then the paper over-emphasized any good weather or rain. When a rain storm in May brought enough moisture to stop the dust from blowing the newspaper reported with big headlines that "what was once apparently a vast desert of sifting sand will soon be green pastures and fields of grain."<sup>180</sup> One week later, after dust storms had ravaged the county again, the Hugoton Hermes mentioned little about the return of dusty conditions. Other newspapers, such as the Garden City Daily Telegram, were just as optimistic and constantly berated eastern papers for painting such a poor image of the dust bowl and its inhabitants.<sup>181</sup> This confidence in the future of the land, based on previous experiences, kept many people in the area.

The optimism of the people did not allow them to overlook the damage done to the land during 1935. Statistics for that year help show the situation in the county and how it occurred. There were 612 farms in the county averaging 585.6 acres per homestead. From a soil survey done in the county in 1936, certain facts show what happened in the county.<sup>182</sup> The survey emphasized the direct correlation between the number of

# SOIL CONSERVATION MAP OF STEVENS COUNTY \*



- Areas outlined experienced the worst wind erosion in 1936.

\* Arthur H. Joel, Soil Conservation Survey. Jan. 1937.



tenant farmers and the high amount of soil erosion. In Stevens County farms operated by full owners amounted to 107, by part owners 194 and operated by tenants, 310 (presumably many of these tenants were agents for suitcase farmers). There were 358,365 acres of land in farms, 63.3 per cent cultivated, 14.8 per cent idle or in summer fallow and 21.9 per cent in pasture. The high number of acres in use, as well as the large amount of tenants who neglected the land, meant a large amount of Stevens County acreage was affected by erosion. Out of the total 466,560 acres in the county, approximately 358,970 acres, or 76.9 per cent, had serious erosion problems. The remaining 107,591 acres, or 23.1 per cent experienced slight erosion. This wind erosion caused about a fifty per cent crop failure rate in the county for 1935, as well as providing physical harm to the people.

The decline of agricultural production and the affects of the dust storms continued until 1940, when rainfall returned to over eighteen inches. During the Thirties farmers repeatedly planted crops, but results were poor. The southeastern part of the county, as well as around Moscow, fared the dusty conditions the best. The northwest corner of the county suffered the most. During 1938, more rain fell in the spring and helped crops for awhile. In an article "Stevens County 'Dust Proof' for 1939," the Hugoton Hermes reported conditions appeared greatly improved, except for the bare northwest corner. This year farmers finally had sufficient rain to start crops correctly, and both weeds and grasses showed up throughout the county.<sup>183</sup> By this time farmers employed new methods to stop blowing dust and to conserve moisture. Still, it was not until 1940 that agriculture recovered completely and returned to pre-dust bowl production levels.

During the 1930's the federal government started the first comprehensive relief program to deal with the High Plains drouth. Previous government involvement in the plains area consisted of limited seed relief and studies of the drouth cycles.<sup>184</sup> With a national depression, compounded by the dry weather, the



government established agencies to help the farmers in the plains region. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, founded in 1933, gave financial aid to needy farmers.<sup>185</sup> The Hugoton Hermes, on September 22, 1933, ran a list of farmers who applied for money from this program based on the average acreage of their land from 1930 to 1933. Stevens County set up a wheat production control association and a county agricultural adjustment administration office to coordinate the federal program and help farmers get their share of the 866,128 bushels of wheat allotted in 1933.

By 1935, the conditions in the plains received national attention when the dust storms spread to the east coast. The severity of the drouth stirred the government into additional action. It authorized soil surveys, such as the one provided in 1936, to be done of the dust bowl area. The government used the results of the surveys and other reports on the area to deal with the drouth stricken area. These reports analyzed the situation in the plains, why it occurred, and offered solutions to the problems. Stevens County was a direct beneficiary of such reports.

In 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt referred to Congress a report by the Great Plains Committee entitled "The Future of the Great Plains."<sup>186</sup> In the letter of transmittal by the President, he stated the problems of the area and what must be done. President Roosevelt indicated that the plains had a more basic problem than just dealing with drouth and depression. As he said, "The problem is one of arresting the decline of an agricultural economy not adapted to the climatic conditions because of lack of information and understanding at the time of settlement and of readjusting the economy in the light of later experiences and of scientific information now available." He explained how settlers used agricultural methods from a humid climate to farm the semi-arid plains. The extended drouth proved that such methods were ill-adapted to the plains. Roosevelt concluded that "A new economy must be developed which is based on the conservation and effective

utilization of all water available, especially that which falls as rain and snow; an economy which represents generally a more rational adjustment of the organization of agriculture and cropping plans and methods to natural conditions." He finished the letter by recommending a long range program to deal with the plains climate and coordinating efforts of the federal, state and local governments.

A program based on these recommendations was devised, with the federal, state, and county governments working together. The Federal Soil Conservation Service, established in 1935, helped farmers use their land better. In 1936, the Social Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act provided payments to farmers who employed conservation practices.<sup>187</sup> Stevens County's farmers received \$254,791 in 1937 and \$292,604 in 1938 for plowing, listing or chiseling the land to decrease blowing.

Kansas also passed two laws which worked with the federal legislation to help farmers. In 1937 the Soil Conservation District Law permitted counties to establish soil conservation districts. Stevens County did not utilize this legislation until after 1948. However, the other state law passed the same year benefited county inhabitants more. The law authorized county commissioners to inspect blowing lands. If the erosion of the land affected neighboring fields, the commissioners could force the owner to use conservation methods to control the blowing. This law proved effective in forcing unwilling or neglectful farmers into caring for their land.<sup>188</sup>

The county provided help for farmers who needed additional funds or could not get aid from state and federal agencies. In 1936, the county issued emergency funds to destitute farmers.<sup>189</sup> Similar programs of aid continued until the return of better weather. The county and the town of Hugoton provided other types of help. The city park was plowed and plots given to people to grow food.<sup>190</sup> The county also worked with federal programs, such as the Works Projects Administration, to provide jobs for people. This coordination of programs got the

county swimming pool built, roads resurfaced and civic improvements made in the towns.<sup>191</sup> Finally, the county had the tax revenue and the additional business of the natural gas companies to supplement the local economy. This meant more money was available in the county treasury for relief programs and agricultural needs.

The federal programs introduced newer farming methods to prevent soil erosion. These conservation practices included contour farming, terracing, summer fallowing, and planting cover crops and native grasses to hold the land. At first farmers hesitated to follow many of these practices because they meant spending additional time and money. The farmers used the practices more after 1935 and when the government paid for fuel.<sup>192</sup> By the 1940's, many of these practices were forgotten with the return of wetter weather.

Federal studies also recommended a better system of land use for the southern Great Plains. Federal reports suggested an increase in farm size to better facilitate agricultural operations.<sup>193</sup> Stevens County underwent a drastic change in the average acreage of farms, as well as the number of farms in the county. The farmers who remained in the county during the dust bowl days consolidated their land holdings with acreage abandoned by others. With land at low prices, it was a perfect opportunity for farmers to expand their operations. In 1935 there were 612 farms in the county with the average size of 585.6 acres. By 1940 there were 433 farms averaging 739.1 acres. This trend continued in the ensuing years, going from 426 farms of 893.9 acres in 1950 to 400 farms of 1,171.1 acres in 1969. This change allowed farmers to develop a more efficient system of agriculture better adapted to the flat open plains; a larger land unit permitted more variation in crops and greater production per farm to cope with farming costs.

Along with these suggestions and practices, studies re-introduced irrigation as a means to alleviate problems in the area. Irrigation had always been a solution suggested for the area during dry periods. In his study of irrigation in south-

western Kansas, Richard Pfister shows that the farming practice was big along the Arkansas River during the 1880's.<sup>194</sup> Stevens County never had an irrigation program in its early settlement and until the dust bowl days no attempt was made to begin one. The greatest hinderance to irrigation in the county was lack of surface water for irrigation canals. Other early day irrigation projects depended upon a group of wind mills to pump water to the fields, which proved to be an expensive operation. By the time of resettlement better weather alleviated the need for irrigation and no big investment was made in developing the practice.

With the dust bowl conditions farmers reconsidered the use of irrigation. Farmers had natural gas available for powering pumps and making ground water more accessible. The county's first irrigation well was drilled in 1934; but wide spread irrigation never caught on before the return of rain in 1940.<sup>195</sup> In 1942, only two farms had a total of 472 acres irrigated, using four wells powered by natural gas.<sup>196</sup> Up until 1950 irrigation increased in use slowly and by that time eleven farms irrigated a total of 1,615 acres.<sup>197</sup> All during the 1940's irrigation was never seen as important because rainfall reached record breaking amounts and acreage again climbed to new highs.

The 1950's heralded a more permanent change in attitude toward irrigation and other conservation methods suggested during the "Dirty Thirties." What happened to bring about wide scale use of irrigation? It was the return of the dust bowl conditions. With 1940, Stevens County's agriculture recovered from the affects of the dust bowl. World War II stimulated the growth of the agricultural economy as the demand for livestock and grain grew. Both the amount of acreage cultivated and the number of cattle in the county increased rapidly. In 1939 only 131,817 acres were harvested but by 1943, 223,365 acres were cultivated. Similarly, in 1939 only 4,320 head of cattle were in the county; by 1943 there were 14,590 head of cattle. Both wheat and sorghums were produced in greater quantities, and yields were higher because of the exceptionally wet weather.

After the war the livestock totals dropped, while cultivated acreage continued to expand. In 1948, total acreage was 267,800, while wheat crops reached a high of 148,000 acres.

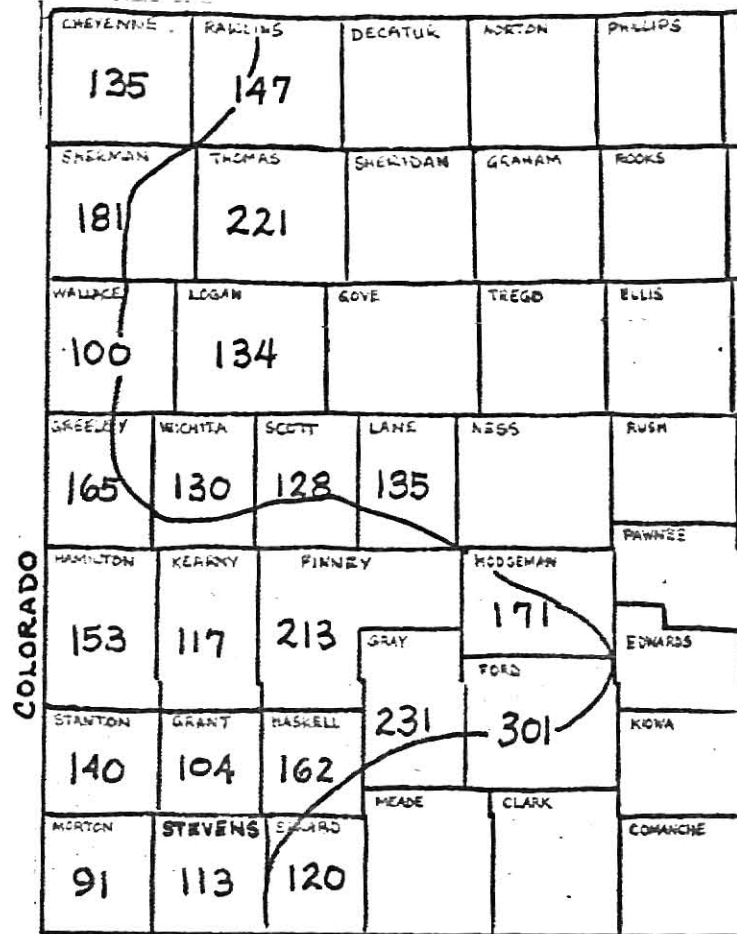
This rapid growth of agricultural production worried some people about the future of the plains. In 1947, Secretary of Agriculture Clinton P. Anderson wrote an article entitled "Soil Murder on the Plains" for the Country Gentleman.<sup>198</sup> Anderson warned that overproduction could create another dust bowl if farmers did not continue using conservation methods. He felt the rapid growth in agriculture must be blamed on World War II and the return of the suitcase and sidewalk farmers pursuing profits from high grain prices. Anderson stressed the lessons of the "Dirty Thirties" and hoped farmers would work to prevent a reoccurrence of the dust bowl. Unfortunately, farmers left Anderson's message unheeded.

A dry cycle hit Stevens County in 1952, when it had about seven inches of rain. In 1954, only thirteen inches came and in 1956, 7.49 inches of rain were recorded. The dry weather, coupled with overcultivation, brought about dust storms equaling or more severe than the 1930's. Fortunately, the inhabitants were better off this time with the increased production of natural gas and the revenue from it. This time they had money to see them through the dry years. With these resources and the right to use gas without charge for irrigation, the number of irrigation wells increased rapidly between 1954 and 1956 in the county. By 1956, there were one hundred irrigation wells in the county, with twenty thousand acres irrigated.<sup>199</sup> This number steadily increased, despite the return of better weather conditions, until 142 farms in 1969 irrigated 65,724 acres in the county. Farmers finally learned the lesson of the dust bowl and turned to irrigation as a partial solution to dry conditions.

Stevens County shook off affects of the second dust bowl by 1957. Rains increased and agricultural production followed. Farmers now incorporated conservation methods and irrigation into their system of agriculture. Through the use



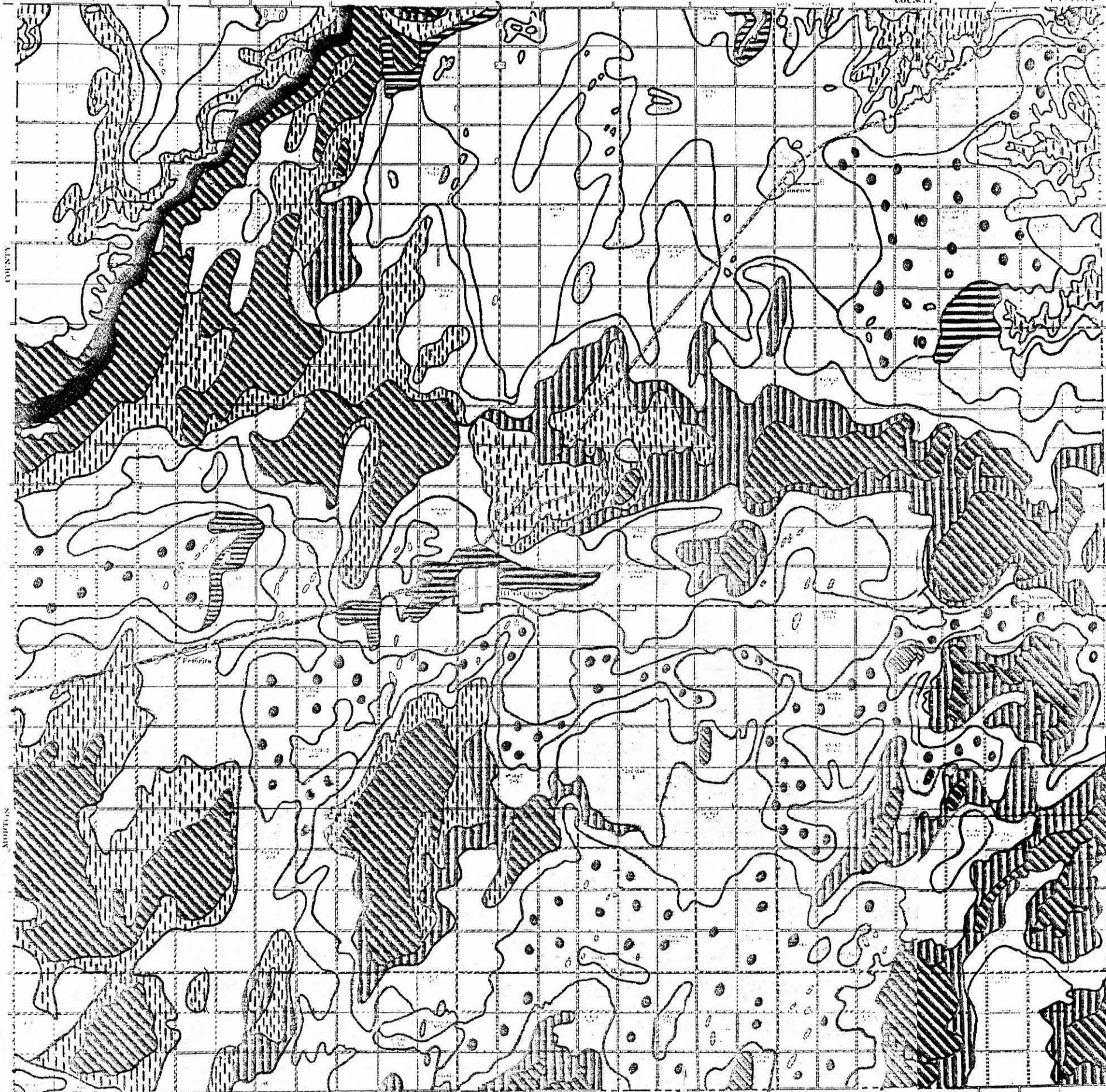
Topeka Capital, Feb. 27, 1954



**KANSAS DUST AREA**—This map prepared by E. H. Teagarden, Kansas State College, shows the area where dust storms the past seven days have destroyed an estimated one-third of the 1954 wheat crop in 15 counties, and endangered another third. Numbers in each county represent thousands of acres of wheat allotted for seeding last fall. The shaded area along the Colorado-Kansas border is where most damage has occurred and represents a total of about 2 million allotted wheat acres.

of soil surveys, farmers now understood what methods to use on their land. Farmers, with the aid of agricultural extension services, and other agencies, also worked out long range programs for agricultural production of their land. In 1950, Stevens County established a soil conservation district which worked hard in the following seven years to combat soil erosion.<sup>200</sup> Included in the program was reseeding lands to native grasses; 465 acres planted in 1956 brought the total to





## SOIL MAP

- Suitable for cultivation:

With Intensive practices



Limited use with  
Intensive practices



- Not suitable for  
cultivation:

Suitable for grazing



- Not suitable for  
cultivation or  
grazing:



16,683 acres. Finally, farmers joined the newly formed Southwest Kansas Irrigation Association and similar organizations which offered help and information on improved agricultural methods. 201

Stevens County survived two dust bowls and emerged in better shape to face the future. The people finally realized their eternal optimism must be supported by practical farming techniques. Farmers failed to recognize the restrictions on full scale cultivation of the county until the dusty 1950's. Reinforced by a second experience with severe wind erosion, county residents willingly adjusted their farming methods to ones better suited for the plains climate. This change in farming practices stabilized the agriculture of Stevens County. Total acreage, crop acreage, and the land in use are now relatively constant. Over cultivation and crop speculation are no longer a threat. However, it remains a question whether an extended period of drouth can bring back a third dust bowl to Stevens County.

## CHAPTER EIGHT - STEVENS COUNTY: TODAY AND TOMORROW

The small road sign planted beside the two lane highway marks the start of Stevens County's boundaries. For the next twenty miles a traveler drives through level, cultivated fields intermingled with rough prairie. One or two broken down buildings and an occasional farmstead stand out against the expanse of blue sky. At one point a cattle feed lot interrupts the near emptiness of the land. The horizon is finally broken by a grain elevator off in the distance. The town of Moscow comes into view, nestled at the foot of the elevator. Three or four dirt streets, lined with small houses and large trees make up the whole of the town, and Moscow is soon left behind for more miles of open land. A small group of sandhills flank the road, with the white blossoms of the yucca plants and little yellow wildflowers scattered among the short grasses. Emerging from the hills, a visitor again sees grain elevators standing in the foreground. This time a green oasis spreads out around the base of the elevators. The road leads into a small, sprawling town, full of nice brick homes, neatly trimmed green lawns, numerous big, shady trees and a busy modern main street. A sign welcomes the traveler to Hugoton, the "natural gas capital of the world" and the county seat of Stevens County.<sup>202</sup>

Today Hugoton dominates the scenery in Stevens County. In the last thirty years the town has grown, with the majority of the county's population concentrated there. Most of the county's farmers live in Hugoton, along with the large number of people who work in non-agricultural jobs. The town serves as a shopping center for three counties. Hugoton boasts its own water, gas and sewer systems; wide, clean, curbed, paved street; a well-lit municipal park with a swimming pool; one of Kansas' finest schools systems; and exceptionally friendly people.<sup>203</sup>

Hugoton reached its present status through a series of changes which took place in Stevens County after World War II.

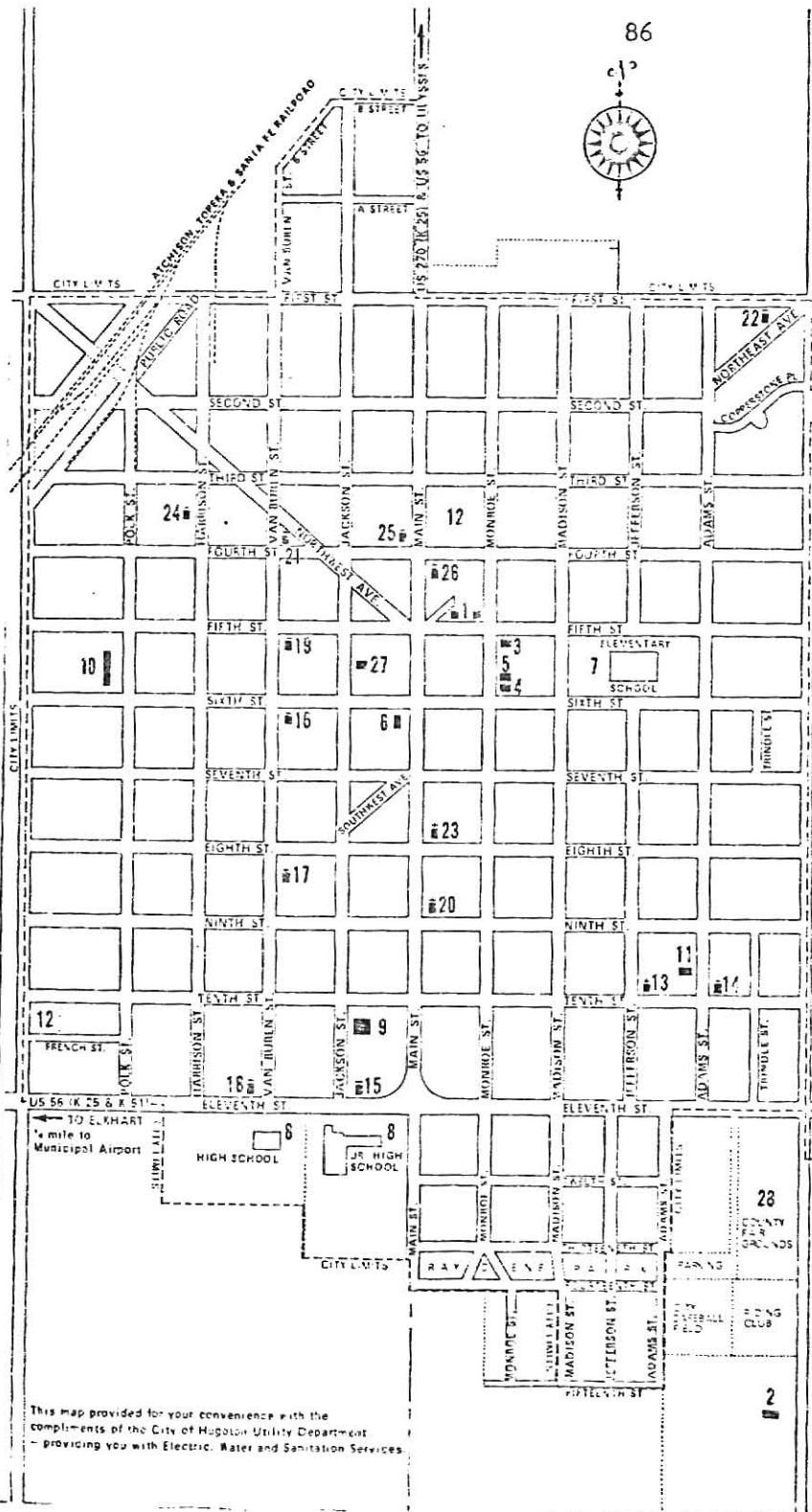


GAS CAPITAL OF THE WORLD  
CITY OF HUGOTON, KANSAS  
A PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY



114 EAST FIFTH STREET  
HUGOTON, KANSAS 67951

- 1 City Hall & Power Plant No. 1
- 2 Power Plant No. 2
- 3 Stevens County Library
- 4 Stevens County Court House and Memorial Hall
- 5 Stevens County Jail-Dispatch
- 6 Chamber of Commerce Office
- 7 Elementary School (Kindergarten through sixth grade)
- 8 Secondary School (Junior High and High School) Grades seven through twelve
- 9 Stevens County Hospital
- 10 Project Manor-Nursing Home
- 11 Stevens County Gas and Historical Museum
- 12 City Parks
- 13 First Church of God In Christ
- 14 Faith Lutheran Church
- 15 St. Helen's Catholic Church
- 16 First Christian Church
- 17 Hugoton First Church of God
- 18 Church of Christ
- 19 Church of The Nazarene
- 20 Hugoton United Methodist Church
- 21 Assembly of God Church
- 22 Trinity Baptist Church
- 23 Hugoton Baptist Church
- 24 Pentecostal Holiness Church
- 25 El Bethel Church
- 26 Pentecostal Holiness Church
- 27 Post Office
- 28 County Fair Grounds



This map provided for your convenience with the compliments of the City of Hugoton Utility Department - providing you with Electric, Water and Sanitation Services.

The town's population increased from 1,349 in 1940 to 2,781 in 1950, then more than half the county's inhabitants. This trend of people settling in Hugoton, still in process today, came about for several reasons. The gas companies, with their offices in town, attracted a few people with jobs and related business. Farmers abandoned their isolated homesteads for the benefits the town offered their families. While the automobile made it easier for a farmer to live in town and drive to his land, the towns provided better schools and a more enjoyable community lifestyle.

The biggest force pushing people into Hugoton came from the agricultural situation in the county. When farmers expanded their land holdings to larger, more efficient units it meant fewer people owned more land. The number of farms in the county stabilized around four hundred; this allowed fewer opportunities for the excess population to work the land. In addition, increased mechanization of farming eliminated jobs for farm laborers. These people who could find no place in the agricultural system went to Hugoton for work.

By 1950, most people in Stevens County worked in non-agricultural jobs. The federal census for that year lists 573 people in farm jobs, while 836 people had other employment.<sup>204</sup> This trend became the normal pattern of employment and remains today. The increase in non-agricultural jobs meant more people lived in Hugoton, where the work was located.

The change from an agricultural to a non-agricultural work force did not mean farming diminished in importance. On the contrary, agriculture remains the mainstay of Stevens County's economy. The increase in non-farming jobs simply reflected the growth of industries dependent on agricultural production. Especially important are the retail and wholesale trades, professional and service industries and transportation facilities.<sup>205</sup>

The natural gas industry provides fewer jobs; but similar to agriculture, gas business creates related jobs dependent on the industry. A large number of lawyers, abstractors, cement contractors and other professionals exist in the county because



of the gas industry. The natural gas revenue also stabilizes the agricultural industry and provides additional income for county inhabitants when crop production is down. Finally, the gas income gives the county a lower, more favorable tax rate and an ample energy source which attracts more small businesses than other counties in southwestern Kansas.

Hugoton has undergone several face lifts in the last thirty years. Many civic improvements came about because of the increased gas developments and the return of agricultural prosperity. Other changes marked steps in the modernization process going on in towns throughout Kansas. The volunteer fire department had its equipment upgraded. A country club golf course was built west of Hugoton. Near the course the county-city owned airport was established. A bowling alley was added to the town. The county built a home for the elderly residents of the area and situated it near downtown Hugoton. In 1950, the county constructed a twenty bed hospital. This eliminated the long drive of inhabitants to Liberal or Garden City when they needed intensive medical which the county's two doctors could not provide. Stevens County adopted the "county unit system" in 1948 to service and finance roads in the area and then paved more of its highways.<sup>206</sup> Today all but a few county roads are black-topped.

The schools of Stevens County have retained their important function as centers of educational and community activities. Through a series of reorganization laws passed by the state of Kansas after 1945, the number of school districts in the county decreased from over thirty to two.<sup>207</sup> The consolidation of the districts into larger units resulted from better transportation facilities, the decrease of rural population, and improved schools in the towns of the county. All of Hugoton and three-fourths of the county are in school district 210; Moscow and northeast corner, along with part of Grant Seward counties make up district 209. In addition to the district changes, the county now has two high schools, one in Hugoton and one in Moscow. The schools of the county are con-

stantly being upgraded; for example, in 1967 Hugoton completed a new carpeted and air conditioned annex to its primary school.<sup>208</sup>

The numerous civic improvements made in Hugoton during the post World War II period are symbolized by the new county courthouse erected in 1952 to replace the 1887 building. The push for a new building began in 1930, but the dust bowl years diverted attention from the issue. Finally, the county built the modern, two-story courthouse and memorial auditorium. Governor E.F. Arm dedicated the building on September 6, 1952, during the festivities of the county fair and Gascapeade.<sup>209</sup> The county razed the beautiful, old courthouse the following year, ending seventy-five years of service as a school, church, community center and courthouse. The Hugoton Hermes reported that older residents hated to see the building demolished, but that "persons of more recent years did not have the personal feeling for the old building and they felt it should be replaced by modern construction."<sup>210</sup> The 1887 structure was one of the oldest and last original buildings in the county; like its contemporaries, the courthouse finally succumbed to the pressures of modern America. Today, only the cupola and bell are left as a reminder of the past.

The changes in the agricultural system and the development of a sounder economy in Stevens County produced a more stable society. The county experienced a decrease in the migration of people to and from the county, which makes the community much more homogeneous. The county still has its problems as does any other small American community. A higher divorce rate, infrequent cases of juvenile delinquency, and assorted crimes plague the county.<sup>211</sup> Welfare and community assistance for the needy also increased with a revision of the Kansas constitution in 1937, which set up a board of welfare in the county. The number of people on welfare in the county averages about fifteen per thousand and most of these are elderly people.<sup>212</sup>

Today, Stevens County is a modern, prosperous, agricultural community dominated by the pleasant town of Hugoton. For almost one hundred years the county and town have had years of plenty

tempered by depression, indebtedness, isolation and dust bowls. The success of the community is a testimony to the tenacity and faith of the people who settled and remained in the county. The ability of these people to deal with hard times and survive makes a person wonder about the future. How will the inhabitants deal with over-population, energy problems, water shortages, inflation and the perpetual drouth cycles?

The natural increase of Stevens County's population has only two possible outlets; migration or more industry to create jobs. The excess population gives the county a good, relatively young work force, but there are few employment opportunities in the community. Emigration has been the traditional solution for this group of people. New industries in the county would offer the alternate solution.

Large manufacturing concerns and industries have never developed in Stevens County. Manufacturing outfits never numbered more than three, and that amount existed in 1919.<sup>213</sup> Most of these businesses were small and employed less than ten people. The gas business is the only large scale industry in the county; again employment has been on a small scale with a constant number of jobs. Both manufacturers and industries are not attracted to the county because of the low population density, the distance from major marketing areas, and the limited resources of raw materials in the area.<sup>214</sup> Though gas supplies and a low tax structure make the county appealing, the low water supply, high shipping costs and the small number of consumers outweigh the positive aspects. For this reason, chain stores and other large concerns avoid the area. A small business, based on agricultural products could take advantage of the area's benefits and successfully service the small population.

The major drawing power of the county is its gas reserves. Not only do they attract business, they also boost the economy and allow irrigation. The question still unanswered for county inhabitants is how long will the gas continue to flow. Gas companies offer no estimation of the supply. Based on previous

appraisals of the geological surveys, the gas will be depleted in twenty or thirty years. When the gas stops flowing the county will lose an important source of energy and income. The plains are ideally suited for solar and wind energy facilities, but these sources could not quickly replace the gas power and additional revenue on which the county functions today.

If gas supplies are depleted, Stevens County will again rely solely on its agriculture. This could put the county back into a pre-1930's situation. Today, farmers produce sorghums, wheat and irrigated corn. The sorghums and corn feed the increased number of livestock in the county, creating a complementary and profitable system of agriculture. Wheat remains an important crop for export from the county. With natural gas available for irrigation systems, truck or garden farming is a possibility for the future, as California and other areas become more populated.<sup>215</sup> Without gas, however, irrigation would cease and crops using the system would become almost non-existent. Other crops would again be subjected to dry cycles and low yields. Even this year, with irrigation, blowing dust and low rainfall have hurt the crops in the county.<sup>216</sup> Without gas and its revenue, crop losses would be greater and more destructive to the economy. Coupled with a falling ground water level, inflation, and high credit rates, the loss of gas would be very harmful.

Hope for Stevens County lies in the development of additional gas reserves. Wells have been drilled below 5,000 feet, with some striking gas. If larger reserves can be discovered and developed, the county will escape a return to the past. Otherwise, with limited water resources and the fluctuating climate, the agricultural community will have to readjust once more. Extensive conservation practices along with a reduction of crop acreage will likely occur. More pasture land and expanded livestock production will replace the crops. Hopefully a balance will be found to prevent dust bowl conditions and allow the people to survive the dry cycles of the High Plains. The population will decrease to a number capable of existing on the new

system of agriculture. The people that do remain in the county will be the ones who believe, as their predecessors did, in the land and its future.

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## FEDERAL CENSUS, 1880, STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>PLACE OF BIRTH</u>
John C. Kelley	45	Freighting	Ohio
Henry Kelley	40	Mule Driver	Ohio
Harry Burch	26	Mule Driver	Indiana
Henry P. Buck	28	Mule Driver	Kentucky
Patrick Quinn	34	Mule Driver	Ireland
Michael Quinn	30	Mule Driver	Ireland
Ivan Obraah	25	Cook	New Mexico
Jesus Obraah	21	Herder	New Mexico
S. Obraah	17	Mule Driver	New Mexico
John O. Dowd	40	Mule Driver	New Hampshire
Peter Kelly	33	Mule Driver	Indiana
Jack Cummings	24	Mule Driver	New York

## POPULATION STATISTICS

	TOTAL POPULATION	NATIVE WHITE	FOREIGN BORN	BLACK	SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
1880	12	10	2	0	0
1890	1,418	1,399	0	19	451
1900	620	532	21	5	181
1910	2,453	2,313	59	81	615
1920	3,943	3,699	73	169	802
1930	4,655	4,479	33	142	1,209
1940	3,193	3,082	-	111	1,055
1950	4,516	4,414	20	79	995
1960	4,400	4,326	8*	66	1,255
1970	4,198	4,141	7**	50	1,046

\* Includes six Indians, two Japanese.

\*\* Includes seven Indians.

Refer to information  
in Chapter Five -The  
People, for a complete  
explanation of the  
county's population  
composition.

TOWNS OF STEVENS COUNTY <sup>1</sup>

1. Cave - A present day unincorporated town on the southeast corner of section 8, T31S, R35W, and along the tracks of the Santa Fe railroad.
2. Dermot - Located on section 15, T31S, R39W. Established by the Dermot Town, Land and Investment Company which was incorporated June 1, 1887. The company had eight trustees: N.P. Allen, W.E. Allen, W.E. Davis R.C. Crandon, C.E. Blewett, R.H. Chrism, H.M. Gilbert, all of Dermot; I.B. Nall, Louisville, Kent. Dermot was platted July 1886 and the first buildings started by N.P. Allen and W.E. Allen. At one time there were two general stores, a blacksmith shop, livery barn, school and post office. The town was vacated in 1893 and most of the buildings, except the school, moved to other parts of the county. About 1908 a readjustment of county lines moved Dermot into Morton County.
3. Ematon - A small community located fifteen miles from Hugoton. The Hugoton Hermes, July 10, 1908, called it a quaker settlement. Polk's Kansas State Gazetter, 1912, lists a daily mail route and a general store run by Fred J. Bowman. The town is shown on the map of Kansas mail routes in Baughman's Kansas in Maps, p. 94.
4. Feterita - An unincorporated town, still in existence, located southwest of Hugoton on the Santa Fe railroad, section 29, T33S, R38W. Established in 1918 as a grain collection point, the town is named for a type of sorghum grown in the area. A post office was established in 1919 and discontinued in 1937.
5. Hugoton - Located on section 16, T33S, R37W. It was established in 1885 by a group of McPherson, Kansas men and was originally named Hugo, after the

french writer Victor Hugo. It is the county seat and the largest community in the county.

6. Indianapolis - Unidentified town located near the center of the county on land districts maps for 1885-86. Baughman's Kansas in Maps, p. 87, has it located near present day Hugoton.
7. Lafayette - Located on section 10, T35N, R36W. The town was established by a Quaker group in 1886. An article in the Topeka Daily Capital, December 6, 1916, reporting the closing of the post office in worth quoting. "This will write "finis" on the history of the town started thirty years ago by Doctor Furness as leader of a colony of Quakers in that section. Mayor E.R. Kimzey, of Hugoton, and his father A.A. Kimzey, hauled the lumber from Hartland on the Santa Fe nearly eight [?] miles to build the two story building and livery barn that marked the beginning of Lafayette. For the last few years the post office has been kept at country dwellings until now there are only four families getting mail at Lafayette, the others being supplied by the star route that passes thru from Hugoton to Liberal." The town had a population of fifty in 1888 and 1891 and it had three weekly stages to Hugoton, Oak City and another town. In 1912, the majority of people left in the town were involved in livestock production.
8. Macon - Located on section 16, T35S, R37W, near the southern line of the county. It was established by the Macon Town Corporation in June, 1886. There were eight directors of the company: Eli P Williams, W.H. Cottingham, L.H. Roberts of McPherson; M.F. Fletcher, W.O. Gray of Canton, Kansas; W.M. Donald, E.M. Cook, C.Friese of Hugoton.
9. Moonlight - Located on section 11, T32S, R39W. (Mrs. Thomson records it as section 17, 16, 20, 21.) The town

was established by the Moonlight Town company, incorporated in March, 1887. The five directors were S.N. wood, C.S. Toby, A.A. Dunmire of Woodsdale; J.F. Appleby of Moonlight; A.R. Beatty of Laken, Kansas. The town was named for Thomas Moonlight, a politician from Leavenworth.

10. Moscow - Presently located on section 26, T31S, R36W. This town was established in 1913 when the Santa Fe railroad built through the county. The original location of the town was section 16, T32S, R35W, and it was established in June 1887 by the Moscow Town Company. The company had nine directors: J.T. Hopkins, W.J. Wines, J.R. Boswell of Woodsdale; S.I. Drysdale, J. Adkins of Valparaiso; J.W. Galloway, A.P. Ridenour, J.E. Hunt of Fargo Springs (Seward County); J.F. Van of Voorhees. The town was named after Mosco, a member of Coronado's exploration party. The town remained small during the boom period, though it did support a newspaper. In 1891 Moscow had a population of 15, mail service tri-weekly, and a justice of peace, music teacher, shoemaker and real estate man.
11. Niagara - Located on section 1, T35S, R38W, and established in the fall of 1887. Polk's Kansas State Gazetteer for 1888 and 1891 list it only as a post office. The town is recorded on the soil survey map prepared in 1936, though there is no record of how large the community was at the time.
12. Valparaiso - Located on section 8, T32S, R35W. The town was established in late 1886 by the Valparaiso Town Company, whose purpose was to build a town near the post office built in July 1886. There were five directors of the company, all of Valparaiso: E. Dudley, G.R. Porter, W.S. Nomby, J.K. Bosmed, S.S. Wilbur. (Note: a witness to the signing of the town charter was S.N. Wood, implying the town had his blessing.) In 1888 the town had a pop-

ulation of 15, a church, school, grocery store, general store, hotel and restaurant.

13. Voorhees - Located on section 36, T34S, R37W. It was established by the Voorhees Town and Land Company in April, 1887. There were thirteen directors of the company: J.K. Holmes, D.C. Bridges, H.P. Ulyton, A.H. Burtis, W.I. Harwood, G.L. Holmes, all of Garden City; J.W. Reich, W.C. Edwards of Larned; Colonel A.S. Johnson, George R. Peck of Topeka; Alex Davezac, John Gordon of Covington, Kentucky; W.J. Buchan of Wyandotte; J.R. Hallowell of Wichita. The town was named after Senator Voorhees of Indiana. The town was an ally of Woodsdale during the county-seat fight and it supported a newspaper for three years.
14. Waterford - Located on section 5, T31S, R35W. A small community, with a post office established in 1888. In 1888 it had a population of 15. The Dead Town File of the Kansas State Historical Society Archives suggests that the town could have been a farm post office located in Grant county for a short period and then in Stevens County.
15. Woodsdale - Located on parts of section 12, 13, 14, T32S, R37W. The town was established in June, 1886, by the Woodsdale Town Company. The five directors were S.N. Wood, W.W. McLane, W.H. Kerr, H.C. Gibson, and Q. Rolstin. The town was the rival of Hugoton for the county seat. The town had several newspapers and was a thriving community for a few years. The population for 1888-89 was 500, and in 1891 was 150. Of interest is the listing in Polk's Kansas State Gazetteer of 1888-89 of a meat market run by Ed Short and Sam Robinson, rivals in the county-seat fight.
16. Zella or Pearl City - Located on section 3, T32S, R36W. The town was established by the Zella Town Company in July, 1886. The company had five directors:



Joseph Neer, L.H. Lyon, J.S. Hoare, all of Zella; C.E. Cook, A.W. Donald of Hugoton. The population in 1888 and 1891 was 50. The town had a weekly paper and numerous businesses. The town was vacated in 1893 and resettled in the first decade of 1900. In 1908 there were two teachers, a carpenter, a grocer, dentist, dressmaker, veterinary, and blacksmith. Also, the town has a telephone exchange out of Hugoton. There is no explanation of the town's double name.

17. Znojmo - Located on section 26, T33S, R36W. It was established in the late 1880's by a Bohemian group. ( Mrs. Thomson dates the town from 1905.) In 1916, the town lots were sold for delinquent taxes. Most of the lots were in the name of Anton B. Chapek. The town was probably named after a village in Czechoslovakia where the settlers had come from.

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1. Information for this section on the towns of Stevens County was taken from the following sources unless otherwise cited. Material on specific towns found in the Dead Town File of the Kansas State Historical Society Archives; yearly information from R.L. Polk and Co., Kansas State Gazetteer and Business Directory (Chicago) for years cited; general information from Edith Campbell Thomson's History of Stevens County.

POST OFFICES OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS <sup>1</sup>

POST OFFICE	ESTABLISHED	DISCONTINUED	FIRST POSTMASTER
Bruce	Feb. 26, 1889	Jan. 28, 1890	Daniel L. Betts
Clarence	Mar. 29, 1890	Aug. 15, 1895	C.A. Youngren
Dermot	Jy. 20, 1886	Aug. 31, 1929	Nathan P. Allen
Ematon	Mar. 14, 1905	Je. 30, 1919	Elihu M. Anderson
Feterita	Oct. 25, 1919	Mar. 31, 1920	Warren C. Trapp
	Dec. 8, 1922	Apr. 30, 1937	
Hugoton	Apr. 1, 1886	-	George C. Kroh
Lafayette	Jan. 8, 1887	Dec. 15, 1916	John Moore
Moonlight	Je. 7, 1887	Apr. 30, 1891	John F. Appleby
Moscow	Apr. 28, 1888	May 31, 1909	Edward Dudley
	May 3, 1913	-	
Niagara	Aug. 6, 1887	Dec. 31, 1894	Sylvester Maher
	May 19, 1905	Oct. 30, 1926	
Sibon	Dec. 23, 1911	Jy. 18, 1912	William A. Sibon
Star	Oct. 19, 1912	Dec. 26, 1912	James Hoskensin
Stevens	Apr. 1, 1908	May 15, 1913	Bertie McStevens
Traver	Feb. 27, 1904	Dec. 30, 1911	Josephine Traver
Valparaiso	Jy. 22, 1886	Apr. 28, 1888	Edward Dudley
	(Valparaiso office moved to Moscow)		
Voorhees	Feb. 5, 1887	Apr. 30, 1891	Franklin P. McGinnis
Waterford	Je. 22, 1887	Apr. 14, 1894	Timonthy Nihill
Woodsdale	Nov. 18, 1886	Mar. 31, 1915	Mrs. Lizzie Rice
Zella	Jy. 22, 1886	Mar. 15, 1909	John H. Ellis

1. Robert W. Baughman, Kansas Post offices. Kansas Postal History Society Publication, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, 1961.

NEWSPAPERS OF STEVENS COUNTY <sup>1</sup>

1. Dermot Enterprise - Established June 2, 1887 and discontinued in 1888.
2. Hugoton Hermes - Weekly newspaper, established on August 4, 1887 by Charles M. Davis. It is the only paper to survive from the 1880's to the present. (It was not published from February, 1890 to December, 1893. ) It is a Republican newspaper.
3. Hugo Herald - Established February 13, 1886 and discontinued in 1889. The paper was printed in Hugoton and played an important role in keeping the county-seat fight going with Woodsdale. C.E. Cook was one of the first editors.
4. Hugoton Ad-Viser - Established in June, 1934 and discontinued in October, 1934.
5. Morning Star - The Hugoton Ad-Viser was changed to the Morning Star in October, 1934. The newspaper was discontinued in May, 1935.
6. Moscow Review - Established in April, 1888 and lasted until December of the same year. The Moscow Review was a supporter of Woodsdale during the county-seat fight.
7. Southwest Kansan - Established in January, 1896 and discontinued in 1897. The paper was published in Hugoton.
8. Stevens County Sentinel - Established January, 1893 and discontinued in 1894. The paper was published in Woodsdale and then moved to Hugoton in early 1894.
9. Stevens County Tribune - Established January, 1890 and discontinued in 1892. The paper was published in Woodsdale.
10. Woodsdale Democrat - Established in March, 1887 and discontinued in 1889. The paper was started by Sam Wood.
11. Woodsdale Sentinel - Established in March, 1889 and discontinued in 1892. The paper took over the Woodsdale Democrat and was run by Sam Wood.

12. Woodsdale Tribune Sentinel - Established in July, 1892 and discontinued in 1893. The paper was changed to the Stevens County Sentinel in 1893.
13. Voorhees Vindicator - Established in October, 1887 and discontinued in 1890. The paper supported Woodsdale during the county-seat fight.
14. Zella Gazette - No dates available.

Short-Lived Newspapers:

15. Stevens County Eagle - Established in March 1889 and discontinued in May of the same year in Woodsdale.
  16. Woodsdale Times - Established in October, 1886 and discontinued in November of the same year.
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1. Information on the newspapers of Stevens County from:  
 William E. Connelley, History of Kansas Newspapers.  
 Kansas State Historical Society and Department of Archives, Topeka, 1916; Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August, 1961. ( Information for Hermes article compiled by Edith C. Thomson.)

## STEVENS COUNTY MEN SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES, WORLD WAR I

## ARMY:

## Hugoton:

Arnold, George  
 Baggerly, Earl W.  
 Baker, Marvin S.  
 Bane, John E.  
 Barber, George P.  
 Barton, James L.  
 Block, George E.  
 Brown, Glenn D.  
 Bruce, Clifford  
 Bruce, Everett  
 Bruce, Henry  
 Bruce, James E.  
 Burrows, Kenneth M.  
 Cooper, Raymond D.  
 Coulter, Harry A.  
 Cox, William J.  
 Day, Ben H.  
 Downey, Earl J.  
 Elliott, David W.  
 Faucett, William E.  
 Floyd, Harry J.  
 Forward, Glenn L.  
 Frazee, Whitney B.  
 Fulkerson, John F.  
 Gerrond, James R.  
 Gillespie, Griggs T.  
 Grubbs, Ralph  
 Gustafson, Edward W.  
 Hall, Earnest A.  
 Hampton, Earl D.  
 Harmsen, Arthur M.  
 Hargrove, Malcolm F.  
 Headrick, Leslie A.  
 Humphreys, Floyd G.  
 James, Alvin  
 Jennings, Milton  
 Joslin, Donald

Joslin, William R.  
 Kascak, Joseph P.  
 Kemp, Frank H.  
 Lancaster, William A.  
 Lautaret, Edward E.  
 McClure, Roy D.  
 Martin, Ernest R.  
 Mills, William J.  
 Morgan, Jay A.  
 Neal, John H.  
 Parker, Clyde T.  
 Parsons, James R.  
 Ray, Manning C.  
 Reeve, Jesse W.  
 Richardson, Rueben E.  
 Richardson, Lemuel I.  
 Roehr, Elmer G.  
 Roehr, Wallace W.  
 Rowden, Charley G.  
 Schmitt, Waldo D.  
 Schweitzer, George F.  
 Stitt, Logan D.  
 Thorpe, Gomer S.  
 Tolbert, William  
 Van Dyke, Shannon W.  
 Vogt, Jacob D.  
 Webber, Leonard, A.  
 Wilcox, Clement C.  
 Williams, Delbert D.  
 Williams, John W.  
 Willis, Howard L.  
 Wilson, Everett L.  
 Wilson, Oba  
 Wilson, Vernon R.  
 Wolfe, Harold W.  
 Woodcock, Randall W.  
 Young, Robert E.

## Moscow:

Bailey, John  
 Clark, William L.  
 Crosley, David V.  
 Crosley, Deroy J.  
 Dudley, Tolman L.  
 Eberhart, Rueben J.  
 Franzmeier, Bernard S.  
 Gilbert, Harry J.

Knisely, William H.  
 Lewis, Dee S.  
 Lowery, Lige  
 Miller, Marvin  
 ONeal, Lester L.  
 Ragan, Levi O.  
 Rosel, Franklin D.  
 Scranton, Ira E.

## Moscow:(continued)

Gray, James H.  
Hall, William H.  
Harmsen, Ralph H.  
Hubble, Everett E.  
Jones, Charles E.

## Ematon:

Chaffin, Charles H.  
Kile, Lloyd M.  
Nix, Earl C.

## Niagara:

Hicks, Herman L.  
Lafayette:  
Bechtle, Fred L.

## MARINE CORPS:

## Hugoton:

Phillips, Ernest C.

## Moscow:

Olney, Lloyd P.

## NAVY:

## Hugoton:

Moreneau, Louis

## Moscow:

Grimes, John N.

Sloan, Wilbur H.  
Summers, Ivan F.  
Thomason, Fred  
Tilford, Albert O.

Rawlins, James A.  
Sessler, Ralph E.

Horner, Omar

Farmer, Earl A.

Williams, Harlan O.

Stitt, John A.



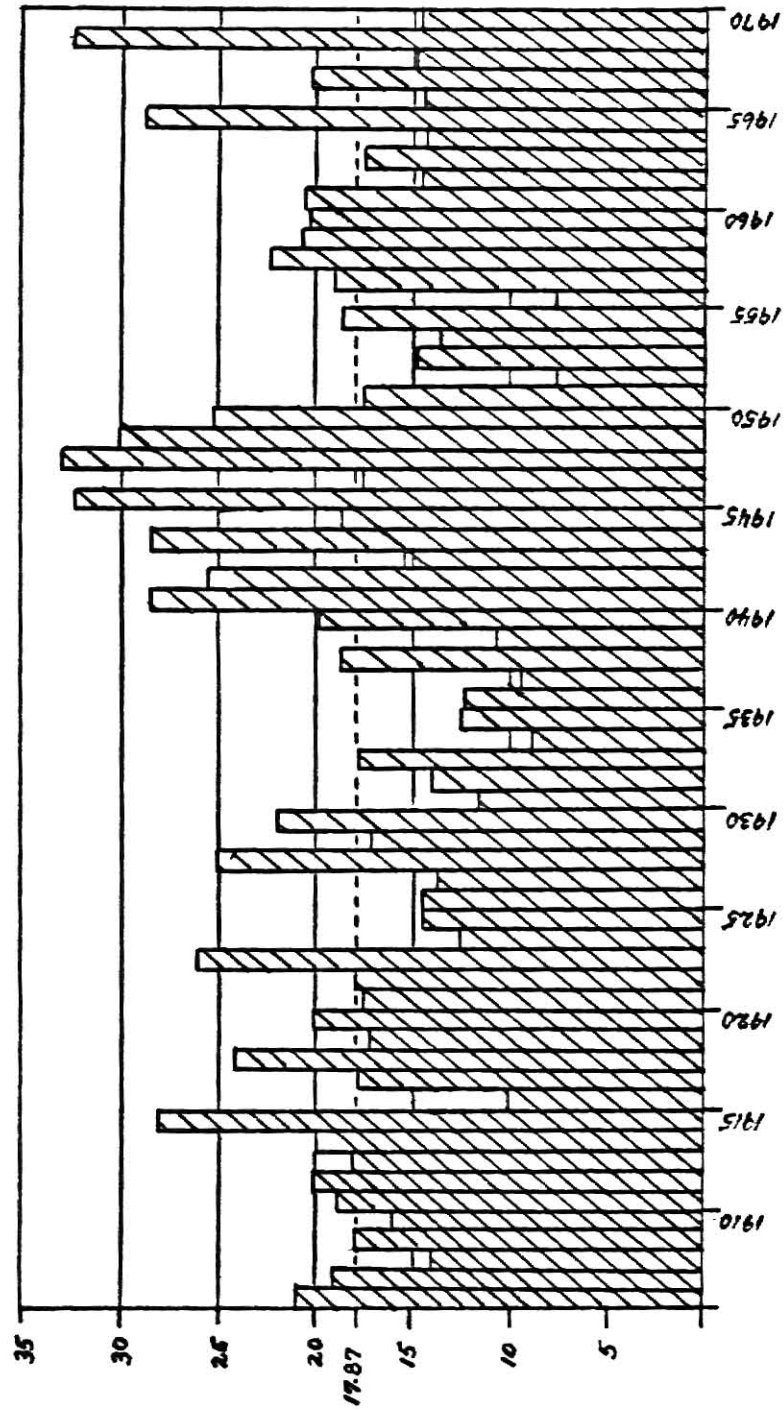
STATE REPRESENTATIVES OF STEVENS COUNTY <sup>1</sup>

- 1887 - John L. Pancoast; Republican; Hugoton.
- 1889 - A.S. Beeler; Republican; reelected in 1891.
- 1893 - A.H. Drew; People's Party.
- 1895 - Frank Murphy; Republican; Hugoton.
- 1897 - James T. Dalton; People's Party; Hugoton.
- 1899 - Charles H. Wright; Republican.
- 1901 - George H. Storms; Republican; Lafayette.
- 1903 - William Willis Martin; Republican; Richfield, Morton Ct.
- 1905 - John S. Stout; Democrat; Hugoton; also served in 1909, 1915 and 1917.
- 1907 - G. Porter Craddock; Republican; Richfield.
- 1911 - James W. Phillips; Democrat; Hugoton; reelected in 1913.
- 1919 - Edward White Joslin; Republican; died after elected.
- 1919 - Charles E. Dudley; Republican; Moscow.
- 1921 - John A. Kelley; Democrat.
- 1923 - Robert Morrison Crawford; Republican; also served in 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, and 1933.
- 1935 - James Roy Parsons; Democrat; reelected in 1937 and 1939.
- 1941 - William F. Hubbard; Republican; Hugoton; he served until 1955.
- 1955 - Paul A. Wolf; Democrat; Hugoton; reelected in 1957 and 1959.
- 1961 - Paul Sundgren; Republican; Hugoton; also served in 1963 and 1965.
- 1965 - Howard Drew; Democrat; Hugoton.
- 1967 - Water Ford; Ulysses.

1. Information from the Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August, 1961; also from

Stevens County was designated as the 124th District with Morton County; in 1911 it was changed to the 125th District; in 1941 to the 124th District; in 1967 to the 122nd District.

## ANNUAL PRECIPITATION IN STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS



## AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Agriculture has always been the principal industry in Stevens County and will probably remain so. The following information was compiled from biennial reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture to help show the amount of crop and livestock production in the county.

The types of crops grown in the county have varied throughout its history. Everything from cotton to soybeans have been tried, some with success. The acreage chart outlines the principal crops and their relation to the total amount of acres harvested each year. In addition to the different plants on the chart, other crops grown in the county include the following:

Spring Wheat - This crop has never been planted extensively because winter wheat proved more adaptable and profitable in the county. The highest acreage of spring wheat, 2,887 acres, was harvested in 1908.

Rye, Oats, and Barley - These three crops have been planted periodically in the county. Usually a small acreage of one, two or three of them was planted each year. The largest acreage was in barley, when 18,400 acres were harvested in 1922. Generally, barley averaged around 4,000 acres a year, while the other two were less.

Soybeans - This crop entered the statistics in 1969, when less than 200 acres were harvested. In 1970 the amount was 270, and by 1972 it was below 200 acres again.

Cotton - This crop was grown in Stevens County in 1891, 1906-07, and 1911. The largest acreage was in 1907, when 158 acres were harvested.

Sweet Potatoes (1919 - 21), Irish Potatoes(1917 -69),

Cowpeas (1917 - 7), Castor Beans(1889 - 1,371), Buckwheat (1913 - 21), Alfalfa (1953 - 900), Sugar Beets (1909 - 2), and Popcorn (1937 - 12) - All of these crops were tried in the first fifty years of the county's history. Only castor beans were harvested on more than 1,000 acres in a year. The numbers in parenthesis are the year and largest acreage harvested for each crop.

Watermelon and other melons - Melon crops were grown in the earliest years of settlement to provide seed for eastern seed companies.

Truck farming - Production of vegetables has never been extensive in the county, though irrigation would now allow more of this type of farming. Farmers only produce enough vegetables for themselves or a small local market.

Orchards - Fruit trees were first tried in the 1880's and 1890's. The semi-arid climate has never allowed orchards to be successful in the county. However, a few trees were kept up into the 1940's. Also grape vines have been tried periodically. The harvests from both the fruit trees (apple, pear, peach, plum, and cherry) and the vines have never been more than twenty to forty bushels per year for each group. Again, this provided enough fruit for the local market.

In addition to crop production, livestock has played an important role in the agricultural system in Stevens County. The livestock chart shows the amount of animals in the county on an annual basis. The fluctuation in the number of cattle in the county should be noted. Horses and mules no longer figured in the statistics after 1961. Chickens entered the livestock tables in 1937, with 35,777 listed. The number of chickens (over three months old) for every five years is as follows:

1940 - 40,610; 1945 - 44,500; 1950 - 26,600; 1955 - 12,000; 1960 - 7,000; 1965 - 4,000; 1970 - 500. Today, cattle and hogs are the most important livestock in Stevens County.

To give an accurate picture of the farming situation in Stevens County a chart containing farm statistics follows the previously mentioned charts. The information on farms was compiled from the United States Agricultural Censuses.

## CROP ACREAGE IN STEVENS COUNTY

YEAR	WHEAT	CORN	*SORGHUMS	BROOMCORN	TOTAL ACRES HARVESTED
1888	53	9,936	4,769	425	19,654
1889	585	14,225	3,438	2,396	26,792
1890	1,514	142	3,026	3,317	18,162
1891	5,660	4,043	2,576	3,366	23,463
1892	5,212	2,766	1,962	5,187	24,549
1893	7,310	2,138	4,179	7,702	27,110
1894	2,620	819	4,170	4,607	15,161
1895	290	797	3,787	4,590	11,548
1896	456	783	3,949	1,846	11,879
1897	132	648	3,998	1,418	9,657
1898	325	370	5,100	1,395	8,635
1899	71	407	4,778	1,560	7,897
1900	8	672	5,906	2,168	10,956
1901	66	424	6,061	1,425	39,225
1902	153	240	9,534	2,078	57,606
1903	173	579	10,807	1,960	37,776
1904	114	35	50,537	3,085	86,761
1905	484	405	11,254	3,285	117,832
1906	2,466	624	10,198	3,914	45,280
1907	3,477	2,259	9,993	4,278	65,046
1908	7,641	8,596	19,667	8,366	82,726
1909	4,792	11,730	28,128	13,654	115,938
1910	8,327	4,510	29,338	15,045	104,366
1911	2,826	6,281	33,591	11,074	137,818
1912	6,606	3,149	30,982	14,811	131,579
1913	6,563	5,339	38,361	7,318	-
1914	9,370	2,527	28,918	7,089	-
1915	12,626	3,494	37,947	4,123	** 62,536
1916	21,454	9,339	34,342	5,664	77,216
1917	3,617	7,183	67,963	11,893	99,065
1918	7,850	3,501	75,209	11,299	100,645
1919	23,654	4,870	76,184	4,318	118,897
1920	29,043	5,575	81,437	5,917	130,076
1921	56,091	15,476	45,073	2,335	132,726
1922	39,616	18,957	62,564	4,159	149,464
1923	-	15,695	118,886	15,395	171,363
1924	55,544	10,910	74,287	12,350	171,760
1925	61,032	11,436	80,538	6,745	168,353
1926	101,333	7,947	73,377	8,990	196,605
1927	5,937	19,888	109,921	7,662	151,674
1928	66,893	16,864	88,601	10,850	193,867
1929	131,050	14,549	55,828	12,895	231,507
1930	131,204	17,901	43,239	19,365	227,845
1931	166,989	15,262	59,491	6,935	270,309
1932	51,302	26,017	55,269	8,585	187,982

\* Sorghums include sorghum, milo maize, kafir corn, jerusalem corn, and feterita for grain, forage and silage.

\*\* Fenced prairie is no longer include in total acres.

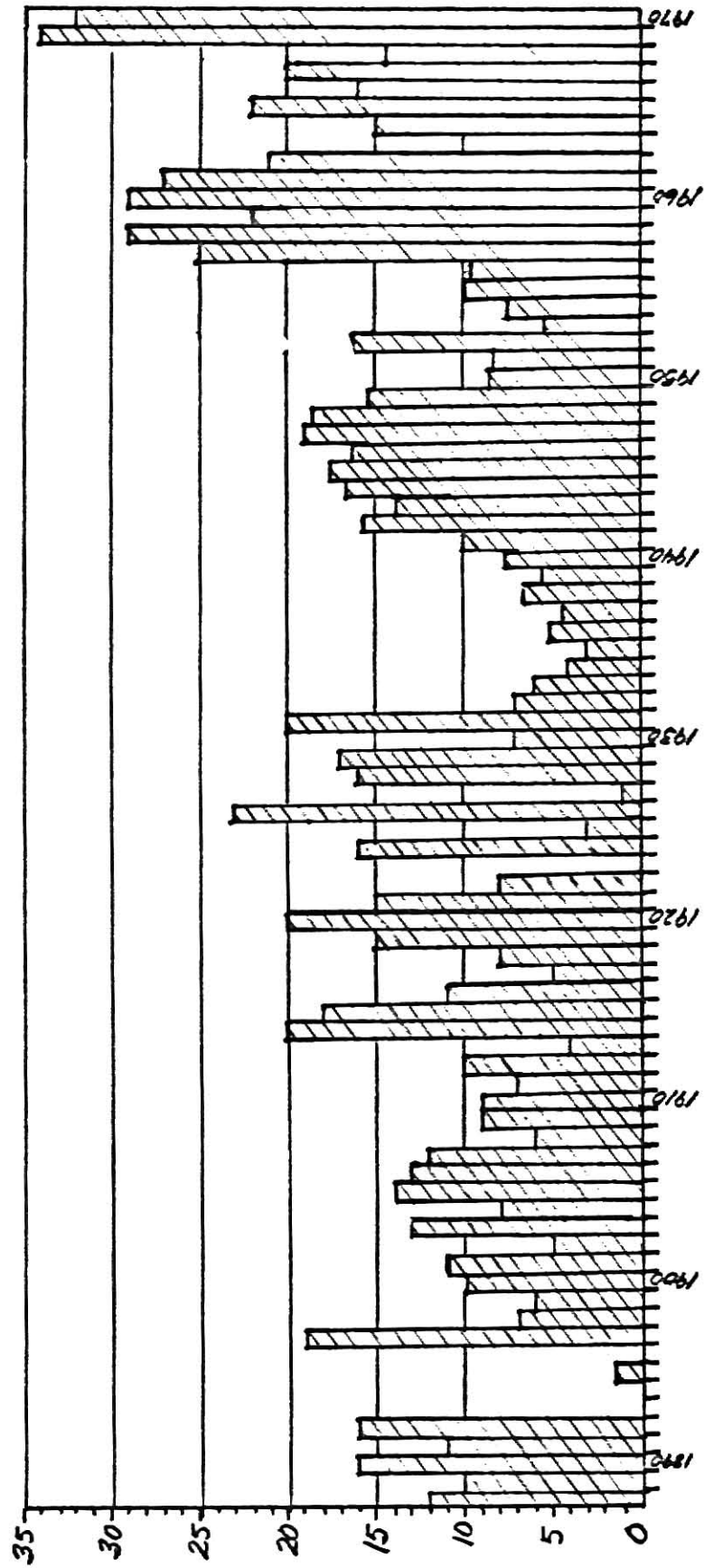


## CROP ACREAGE IN STEVENS COUNTY (CONTINUED)

YEAR	WHEAT	CORN	SORGHUMS	BROOMCORN	TOTAL ACRES HARVESTED
1933	9,490	19,311	78,084	13,785	152,280
1934	77,289	6,381	62,851	16,990	180,869
1935	16,271	8,633	117,845	19,716	174,979
1936	30,181	4,591	129,671	12,520	181,586
1937	24,500	-	76,870	10,060	115,212
1938	45,600	-	96,290	11,270	159,380
1939	59,000	-	61,000	5,555	131,817
1940	51,000	-	113,040	10,730	196,490
1941	63,100	590	87,130	5,230	170,240
1942	97,000	2,590	93,800	2,910	206,160
1943	106,000	2,040	103,850	4,560	223,365
1944	76,000	700	137,030	4,310	240,150
1945	122,000	100	109,500	1,960	241,360
1946	125,000	120	106,610	2,610	236,770
1947	145,000	210	96,630	1,990	246,070
1948	144,000	60	106,920	1,640	254,740
1949	148,000	160	118,190	1,080	267,800
1950	108,000	60	142,460	400	252,520
1951	51,000	710	193,060	450	248,280
1952	108,000	580	129,500	1,030	242,510
1953	79,000	1,400	129,900	- *	214,590
1954	97,000	70	173,900	-	277,910
1955	55,000	260	221,900	-	280,410
1956	71,000	240	146,200	-	219,800
1957	10,000	300	257,000	-	271,610
1958	97,000	590	170,000	-	272,340
1959	96,000	1,300	179,000	-	280,060
1960	102,000	4,400	143,000	-	254,930
1961	102,000	2,750	116,000	330	- **
1962	94,000	2,080	124,800	580	-
1963	72,000	2,100	157,600	360	238,940
1964	84,000	1,900	131,100	270	222,460
1965	94,000	2,900	135,800	240	241,220
1966	94,000	3,000	139,600	200	240,720
1967	106,000	3,400	136,300	-	250,860
1968	81,000	6,000	146,500	-	237,510
1969	73,000	14,400	133,600	-	224,630
1970	79,000	18,500	133,400	-	236,690

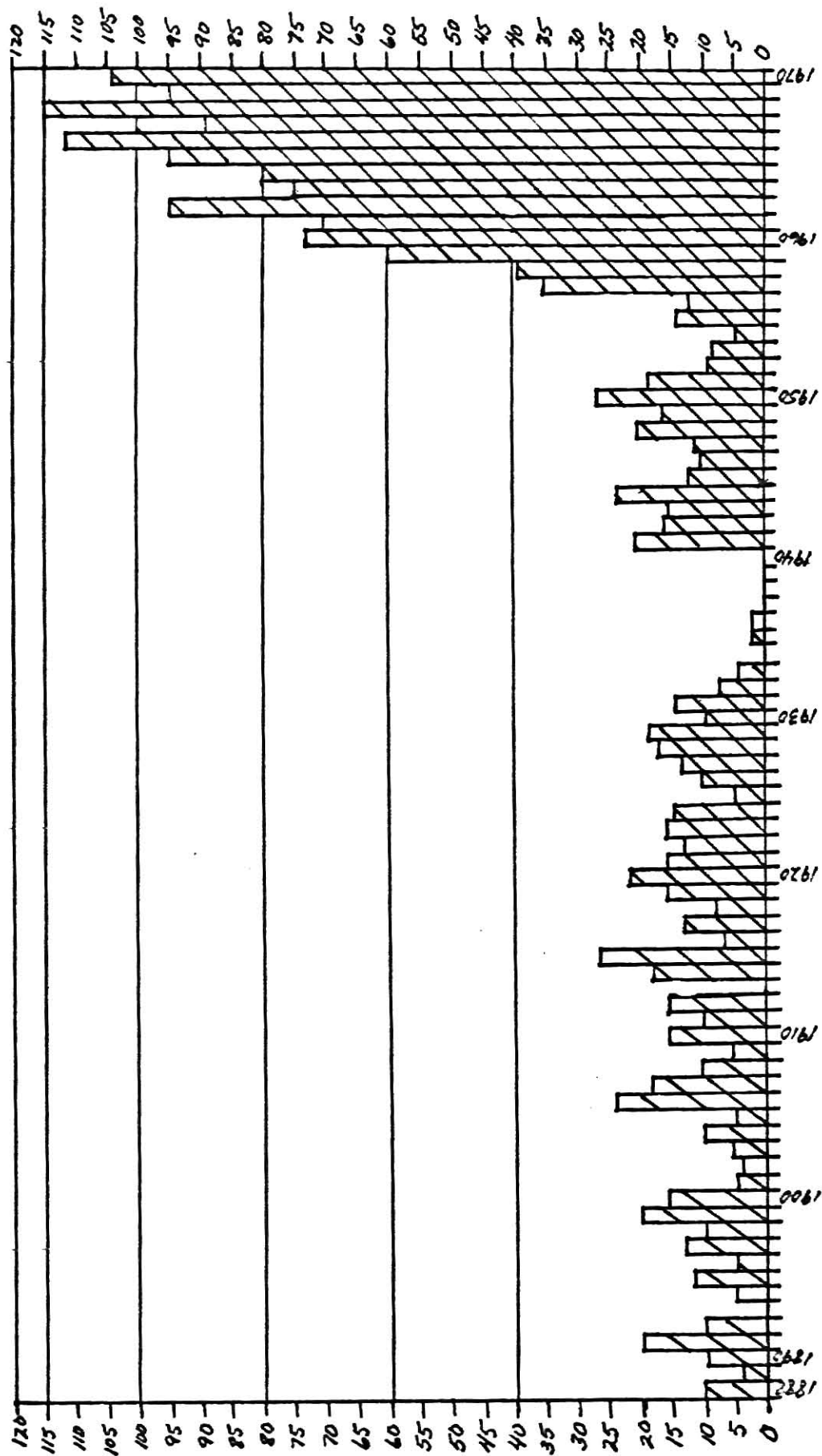
\* Broomcorn not included in statistics in reports.

\*\* Figures unavailable.

ANNUAL WINTER WHEAT YIELDS - BUSHELS PER ACRES <sup>1</sup>

1. Information from biennial reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

ANNUAL CORN YIELDS - BUSHELS PER ACRES



## LIVESTOCK IN STEVENS COUNTY

YEAR	MULES- HORSES	MILK COWS	CATTLE	SHEEP	HOGS
1888	985	813	779	3	261
1889	923	935	1,388	1	436
1890	765	744	1,150	1	920
1891	714	758	1,607	13	836
1892	808	741	1,589	20	499
1893	1,017	803	1,914	20	563
1894	719	650	1,015	386	246
1895	782	714	1,474	53	158
1896	886	805	1,855	64	310
1897	758	760	2,211	70	321
1898	761	409	4,108	81	257
1899	839	571	6,623	60	213
1900	789	460	5,306	75	228
1901	762	169	8,175	116	210
1902	906	264	10,314	76	210
1903	1,463	582	13,321	113	177
1904	1,555	481	12,462	143	211
1905	1,466	337	14,046	123	283
1906	1,529	422	9,103	-	352
1907	1,436	490	7,436	6	807
1908	2,592	802	7,929	3	2,092
1909	2,895	1,035	10,679	25	2,114
1910	3,253	1,524	5,629	-	1,306
1911	4,000	2,679	5,800	1,200	1,035
1912	4,195	3,385	5,273	1,200	1,389
1913	4,219	3,328	5,836	1,215	1,332
1914	4,264	2,935	4,166	1,320	861
1915	4,358	3,660	7,008	157	2,491
1916	4,855	4,498	7,843	64	2,992
1917	4,953	919	8,777	21	2,243
1918	5,821	1,972	10,290	105	2,244
1919	7,045	2,893	11,269	76	2,283
1920	7,520	1,734	11,450	84	2,296
1921	7,953	2,324	7,531	108	3,464
1922	8,017	2,587	7,111	72	4,798
1923	8,392	2,529	6,060	15	5,700
1924	8,120	1,956	6,111	2	4,559
1925	7,995	2,596	4,940	3	2,419
1926	7,155	3,190	2,855	-	1,109
1927	6,683	2,498	3,392	-	1,963
1928	6,084	2,354	2,515	21	2,058
1929	5,678	2,539	3,084	8	2,304
1930	4,261	2,366	3,354	290	1,552
1931	3,429	1,682	6,258	297	1,570
1932	3,163	1,899	5,810	243	2,129
1933	2,993	1,963	6,736	216	2,569
1934	2,773	2,569	5,778	240	2,069
1935	2,411	2,842	4,176	100	896

## LIVESTOCK IN STEVENS COUNTY (CONTINUED)

YEAR	MULES- HORSES	MILK COWS	CATTLE	SHEEP	HOGS
1936	1,554	1,854	3,166	111	602
1937	1,222	2,880	2,220	587	891
1938	763	2,230	1,930	74	790
1939	610	2,210	4,320	450	1,430
1940	600	2,240	2,340	280	3,140
1941	590	1,620	4,800	2,630	2,880
1942	590	1,630	10,530	3,980	4,740
1943	610	1,830	14,590	20,190	8,810
1944	710	1,710	9,610	12,530	9,730
1945	650	1,500	7,700	25,800	2,450
1946	600	1,430	6,070	26,000	2,700
1947	520	1,300	8,400	60,000	1,840
1948	500	830	5,770	7,200	1,700
1949	490	770	7,230	16,810	2,260
1950	490	830	5,970	19,810	2,050
1951	480	650	6,150	5,620	1,370
1952	450	620	9,280	3,880	1,610
1953	290	600	6,800	4,150	1,560
1954	330	600	15,900	19,720	800
1955	290	450	9,150	4,660	600
1956	320	400	8,600	1,110	750
1957	280	350	5,150	110	800
1958	280	300	6,700	110	800
1959	380	200	7,800	110	2,000
1960	490	200	11,800	3,210	1,400
1961	-	200	11,800	7,300	2,000
1962	-	200	14,800	5,200	1,700
1963	-	200	15,800	1,200	1,400
1964	-	200	17,800	300	1,300
1965	-	150	13,850	200	1,200
1966	-	100	17,900	200	700
1967	-	100	18,900	100	800
1968	-	150	16,850	200	700
1969	-	100	14,900	200	800
1970	-	150	17,850	100	1,400

## FARM STATISTICS

	NUMBER OF FARMS	AVERAGE SIZE FARM	LAND IN FARMS	LAND IRRIGATED
1900	123	-	54,761	-
1910	628	-	224,770	-
1920	666	471.0	313,703	-
1930	634	573.3	363,498	-
1940	433	739.1	320,013	Below 200 acres
1950	426	893.9	-	1,615
1959	390	1,059.8	413,309	36,291
1969	400*	1,171.1	468,446	65,724

\* Number of farms by type (sales over \$2,500): 313 - cash grain; 2 - dairy;  
 47 - livestock; 5 - ranches; 3 - general.



## WILD FLOWERS OF STEVENS COUNTY \*

Sunflower  
 Dandelion  
 Frost Flower  
 Common Thistle  
 Prickly Pear  
 Long Flowered Gilia  
 Bindweed  
 Plains Ground Cherry  
 Black Nightshade  
 Rocky Mountain Bee Plant  
 Curly Dock  
 Curly Top Lady's Thumb  
 Plains Milkweed  
 Western Wall Flower  
 Pepper Grass  
 Portulaca  
 Pale Echinacea  
 Low Pea Vine  
 Wild Alfalfa  
 Low Broom Snake Weed  
 Catalpa Tree Blossoms  
 Catclaw Briar  
 Meadow Salsify  
 Burr Ragweed  
 Common Yarrow  
 Broom Snakeweed  
 Black-eyed Susan  
 Rush Skeleton Plant  
 Resin Weed  
 Lance Leaf Salvia  
 Blazing Star  
 River Dock  
 Round Head Lespideza  
 Canada Milk Vetch  
 Loco Weed  
 Common Dwarf Mallow  
 Tansy Aster  
 Golden Wand  
 Wild Lettuce  
 Yellow Clover  
 Henbit  
 Gaillarda  
 Summer Poinsetta  
 Wild Onion  
 Guara  
 Broad leaf Aster  
 Plains Chinese Lantern

Yucca  
 Snow-on-the-mountain  
 White Thistle Poppy  
 Devil's Claw or Unicorn  
 Blace Medic  
 Bush Morning Glory  
 Virginia Ground Cherry  
 Buffalo Burr  
 Wild Begonia  
 Golden Weed  
 Pennsylvannia Smart Weed  
 Snowball Sand Verbena  
 Long Leaf Erigonum  
 Spreading Yellow Cross  
 Purslane  
 Plains Larkspur  
 Plantain Leaf Pussy Toes  
 Oxalis  
 Sandhill Sage  
 Camomile May Weed  
 Trumpet Creeper  
 Upright Mentzelia  
 Yellow Goat's Beard  
 Lead Plant  
 Partridge Pea  
 Plains Coreopsis  
 Rayless Thelesperma  
 Common Golden Rod  
 Pitcher Sage  
 Gay Feather  
 Spiderwort  
 Tansy Mustard  
 Illinois Bundle Blower  
 Wild Honeysuckle  
 Scarlet Globe Mallow  
 Finger Poppy Mallow  
 Goat Head Burr  
 Mouse Ear  
 Thread Leaf Groundsel  
 Low Poppy Mallow  
 Aromatic Aster  
 Caper or Spider Flower  
 Prairie Onion  
 Canada Garlic  
 Common Evening Primrose  
 Kansas or Western Ragweed  
 Silver Leaf Nightshade

\* Compiled by Oleta Wilson

## PHOTOGRAPHS OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS

- A. Stevens County - Late 1890's.....
- B. Railroad Celebration.....
- C. Farming in Stevens County.....
- D. Dust Cloud Over Hugoton.....
- E. Drifts of Dust Around a County Farm .....
- F. Gas Well - Stevens County.....

\* Photographs furnished by the Kansas State Historical Society. Copies made by Sheena L. Sheldon, Houston, Texas.

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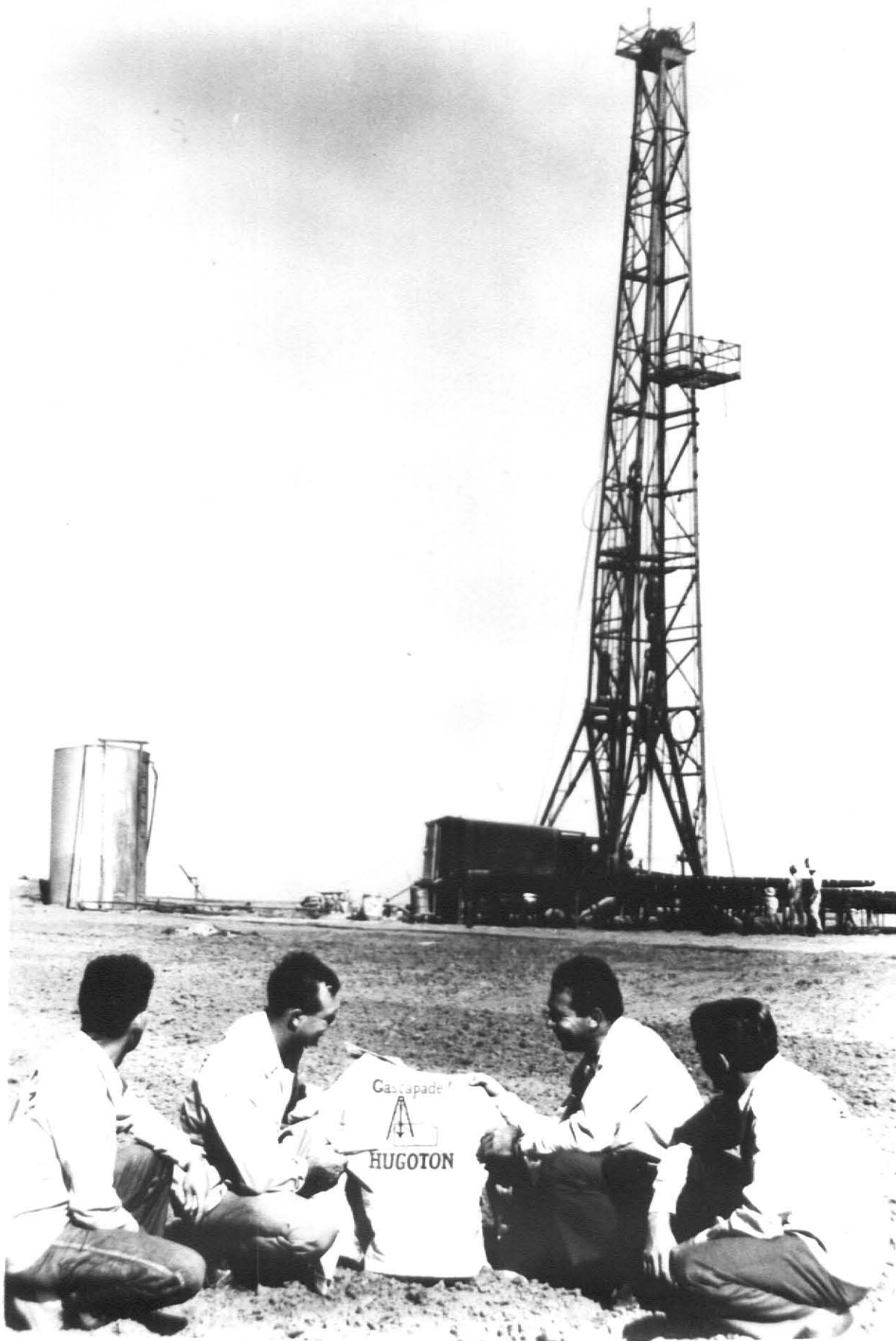


Dust Clouds Rolling Over the Prairies  
Snarell Studio Dodge City, Kansas





*Drifts of Dust Around a Western Kansas Farm  
near Dodge City Kansas. #19*



ENDNOTES

1. Thad G. McLaughlin, Geology and Ground Water Resources Grant, Haskell and Stevens Counties, Kansas. Bulletin 61, State Geological Survey of Kansas, Univ. of Kansas, 1946, p. 9, 21.
2. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Survey of Stevens County, Kansas. Series 1958, No. 13, Washington, D.C., issued Oct. 1961, p.27.
3. Ibid, p.25; McLaughlin, Geology and Ground Water Resources, p. 31.
4. Grace Muilenburg, Floyd W. Smith and Lowell Brandner, From Desert to Breadbasket. Agricultural Experiment Station, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, 1975, p.3; A listing of the types of wildflowers can be found in the appendices.
5. Ibid; Soil Survey of Stevens County, Kansas, p.25; Hugoton Hermes, Jan. 5, 1956.
6. Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self, Historical Atlas of Kansas. Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, 1972, Map 35.
7. Francis Haines, The Plains Indians. Thomas Y. Crowell Co., N.Y., 1976, p.103-4.
8. Ibid, p. 120-22.
9. Ralph K. Andrist, The Long Death. Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1964, p. 145-46.
10. Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains. Ginn and Co., Boston, 1931, p. 47, Chapter III.
11. Ibid, p. 106-8; Dr. Socolofsky suggested that Coronado returned to the Rio Grande on a route close to the Santa Fe Trail.
12. Socolofsky and Self, Historical Atlas, Map 7.
13. Robert W. Baughman, Kansas in Maps. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, 1961, p. 32-33.
14. Webb, The Great Plains, p. 155-57.
15. Leo E. Oliva, Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail. Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, 1967, p. 5-7.
16. Ibid, p.9

17. Ibid, p. 17.
18. Stevens County has a marker on the southwest quarter of section 10, T 31 S, R 38 W, overlooking the Cimarron River. The marking of the trail was undertaken by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1905. County Commissioner R.T. Beatty, at his own expense, picked up the marker at the Santa Fe Railroad depot at Lakin, hauled it to the county and placed it in the chosen spot. "Report on the Marking of the Santa Fe Trail," Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Board of Directors of the Kansas State Historical Society. Topeka, July 1906 - June 1908, p. 14, 26.
19. Socolofsky and Self, Historical Atlas, Map 21.
20. Helen G. Gill, "Establishment of Counties in Kansas," Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society. Vol. 8, Topeka, 1904, p. 449.
21. Ibid.
22. Similar to many other Kansas counties, Stevens County was named after an important Civil War personality. Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868) helped formulate and institute Radical Reconstruction policies; he also proposed in Congress the Fourteenth Amendment. Stevens had a sincere desire to help black people and he requested that when he died he would be buried in a black cemetery rather than just a place close to a black burial ground. Refer to Socolofsky and Self for more information on names of Kansas counties.
23. United States Bureau of Census, Federal Census of 1880, Stevens County, Kansas. Refer to appendices for listing of people and vital statistics.
24. Harry Chrisman, Lost Trails of the Cimarron. Sage Books, Denver, 1961, p. 27.
25. Harry Chrisman, Personal Letter, February 10, 1977.
26. J.S. Painter, "Southwest Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections. Vol. 4, 1886-88, p. 282.
27. Paul W. Zickefoose, "Population and the Labor Force," Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, 1953, Part 2, p. 7-13, 19-20.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Panhandle Stage Company Corporation Charter. Corporation Books, Vol. 19, p. 520-21. The Kansas State Historical Society Archives.
31. R.L. Polk and Co., Kansas State Gazetteer and Business Directory. Chicago, Vol. 6, 1888-89, information by town; Edith Campbell Thomson, History of Stevens County,

p. 21, 113.

32. Fred L. Parrish, "Kansas Agriculture." Reprinted from John D. Bright, ed., Kansas: The First Century. Lewis Hist. Publishing Co., Inc., N.Y., 1956, p. 410-11.
33. Edith Campbell Thomson, History of Stevens County, p. 8; Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August, 1961.
34. Louise Barry, ed., "Circuit-Riding in Southwest Kansas in 1885 and 1886," Kansas Historical Quarterly. Vol. 12, 1943, p. 385-86.
35. Victor Hugo was a popular writer who died in May, 1885. It is not known why the McPherson men picked the name.
36. James W. Dappert, "My First Trip to Stevens County, Kansas," Hugoton Hermes, February 16, 1940. General information, unless otherwise cited, comes from the Hugoton Hermes.
37. Dept. of Public Instruction, Biennial Reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Kansas Superintendent of Public Instruction, Topeka, Sixth and Ninth Reports. Mrs. Thomson lists districts in her history.
38. Ibid.
39. Report of the Superintendent of Schools, Stevens County. 1888 Report, County Courthouse, Hugoton, Kansas.
40. Biennial Reports, Superintendent of Public Instruction.
41. Seventieth Anniversary Celebration Publication of the Hugoton Methodist Church. The Kansas State Historical Society Library, June 1957.
42. Information on present day Stevens County compiled while visiting the county.
43. Robert W. Baughman, Kansas Post Offices. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, 1961, p. 232. Refer to appendices for complete list of post offices.
44. William E. Connelley, History of Kansas Newspapers. Kansas State Historical Archives, 1916, p. 304; Edith Campbell Thomson, A History of Stevens County, p. 132-34. Refer to appendices for complete list of newspapers.
45. Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. Fifth Report, p. 546; Sixth Report, p. 488.
46. Jay Baugh, "Southwestern Kansas, 1900-1925," Contemporary History. The Cultural Heritage and Arts Center, Dodge City, June 4, 1970, p. 5-9.
47. J.S. Painter, "Southwest Kansas," p. 285.
48. Fred Parrish, "Kansas Agriculture," p. 410-11.
49. Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. Refer to appendice for a list of crops and production figures.



50. Ibid; Agricultural information, unless otherwise cited, comes from the Biennial Reports for the years discussed.
51. Ibid; Livestock information is listed in the appendices.
52. John Rydjord, Kansas Place - Names. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1972, p. 127.
53. Dead Town File, Kansas State Historical Society Archives. Listed by name of town.
54. John Rydjord, Kansas Place - Names, p. 261, 99.
55. Edith Campbell Thomson, A History of Stevens County, p. 16, 12.
56. Joseph Snell, "The Stevens County Seat Controversy." Master's Thesis, Univ. of Kansas, 1961, p. 2. Information on the county seat fight, unless otherwise cited, comes from Snell.
57. D.W. Walker, Stevens County, Kansas. Fairfield, Penn., February 27, 1935, p. 2.
58. Ibid, p. 4; The Supreme Court commission investigating the census found approximately 1,200 people.
59. No Man's Land today is part of Oklahoma. Henry Bascom Kelly, in "Tragedy and Trial of No Man's Land," (The Green Bag, Boston Book Co., Boston, ND), p. 3, describes the area as being 33 miles wide north to south and 210 miles long east to west. It was bounded on the east by the Cherokee Outlet, on the south by Texas, on the west by the Territory of New Mexico, on the north by Kansas and Colorado. In 1890 much of the area was made into Beaver County, Oklahoma. During the Stevens County fight no state claimed legal jurisdiction over the area and it was some time before Sam Wood determined that the district court of Paris, Texas could handle the murder trial. Elmer T. Peterson, in "The Battle of Phantom Cities," (Saturday Evening Post, May 14, 1927), reported that the U.S. Congress attached No Man's Land to Oklahoma Territory after the murders at Wild Horse Lake.
60. Joseph Snell, "The Stevens County Seat Controversy," p. 34.
61. The word "drouth" will be used in this paper instead of "drought." "Drouth" is a more personal form used when the settlers talk about dry cycles.
62. Sixth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, p. 488.
63. Joseph Snell, "The Stevens County Seat Controversy," p. 40.
64. Paul I. Wellman, "The Bubble Beneath the Plains," Saturday Evening Post. Vol. 215, December 12, 1942, p. 21.
65. Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. Population statistics, unless otherwise cited, come from these reports.



66. Paul W. Zickefoose, "Population and the Labor Force," p. 20-23.
67. Stevens County Commissioner Records, Vol. A, November 6, 1897; O.P. Byers, "Early History of the El Paso Line of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad," Kansas Historical Collections. Vol. 15, 1919-22, p. 575.
68. O.P. Byers, "Early History," p. 575.
69. Hugoton Hermes, 1893-1896.
70. Ibid, April 6, 1895.
71. Ibid, June 8, 1895.
72. April 6, 1895.
73. Ibid, December 22, 1894; Personal Letter, Harry Chrisman.
74. Hugoton Hermes, January 25, 1896. The Centennial Edition of the Hermes lists the brands of cattle in the county.
75. Ibid, August 10, 1895.
76. Biennial Reports, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1890-1900.
77. Hugoton Hermes, May 27, 1908.
78. Paul W. Zickefoose, "Population and the Labor Force," p. 22-23.
79. Hugoton Hermes, May 27, 1908.
80. K.L. Bryant, History of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1974, p. 265-66.
81. Refer to appendice for livestock statistics which show the increase in cattle in the county.
82. Hugoton Hermes, May 20, 1908. Covers election and the results.
83. Ibid, May 22, 1908.
84. Ibid, December 18, 1908.
85. Bryant, History of the A.T. and S.F. Railway, p. 265-66.
86. Hugoton Hermes, April 18, 1913.
87. Ibid, April 4, 1913.
88. Ibid, May 2, 1913.
89. Ibid, January 17, 1913.
90. "When the Santa Fe Came To Hugoton," The Earth. June 1913, p. 11.
91. Ibid.
92. Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August 1961.
93. Ibid, January 17, 1913; May 2, 1913.
94. "When the Santa Fe Came to Hugoton," p.11; Hugoton Hermes, May 2, 1913.
95. "When the Santa Fe Came to Hugoton," p.1 .

96. The northwest corner of the county, because of its terrain and the presence of the Cimarron River, did not produce as much grain and did not need the railroad closer.
97. Hugoton Hermes, January 27, 1922. Information on the K and O Railroad comes from the 1922 issues of the Hermes.
98. Dead Town File. An alternate explanation might be that the town was named after a Liberal man who was a major investor in the town.
99. Hugoton Hermes, November 24, 1922.
100. Paul W. Zickefoose, "Population and the Labor Force," p. 75-76.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid, p.28.
103. United States Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920.
104. Kansas Statistical Abstract. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, 1974, p.9.
105. Hugoton Hermes, January 26, 1961.
106. Lewis Killian and Charles Grigg, Racial Crisis in America. Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1964, p.5.
107. Topeka Daily Capital, April 19, 1910.
108. Letter to the Attorney General, February 22, 1909. Record of the U.S. Attorneys and Marshals, District of Kansas, Federal Record Center, Kansas City, Missouri. Information on the Stokes case, unless otherwise cited, comes from these letters.
109. Ibid, Letter to Carr W. Taylor, February 15, 1909.
110. Hugoton Hermes, February 28, 1908.
111. It is not known why L.J. Pettijohn decided to support the black farmers, nor why District Attorney Bone did.
112. Court Case No. 466, United States District Court, Federal Records Center, Kansas City, Missouri.
113. Topeka Journal, August 19, 1918.
114. Information on Sam B. Amidon in Kansas - A Cyclopedia of State History. Standard Publishing Co., Chicago, 1912, Vol. 3, Part II, p. 1206-08; on Judge David M. Dale from Biographical Record - Sedgewick County. Biographical Publishing Co., Chicago, 1901.
115. Court Case No. 466, Instructions to Jurors, No. 14, 18, 19.
116. Journal B, Second District, United States District Court.
117. Kansas Statistical Abstract, p. 9.

118. Interview of Russell Smith.
119. "Suitcase Farmers" were people who lived outside the county yet farmed land in the county. The cousin of the suitcase farmer was a "sidewalk farmer" or a person who lived in town and farmed land.
120. Though the population increased, there was also an out migration. In-out migration occurred during prosperous and bad years in the county. Refer to Paul W. Zickefoose, "Population and the Labor Force," p. 76-77; A.D. Edwards, Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community-A Case Study in Haskell County, Kansas. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Farm Security Admin. and Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Social Research Report No. 7, Washington, D.C., January 1939, p.19.
121. Kansas Bank Commission, Biennial Reports of the Bank Commission. Topeka, The Twelfth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Twenty-Fourth reports. The Hugoton Bank was chartered on May 11, 1907 and voluntarily nationalized between 1918 and 1920. The Citizens State Bank was chartered April 12, 1913 and remains today. The Moscow State Bank was chartered June 18, 1915 and liquidated December 21, 1937.
122. Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August 1961.
123. Ibid, January 5, 1956.
124. Ibid, January 12, 1956.
125. Ibid, January 20, 1920; October 29, 1920; December 24, 1920.
126. Refer to appendices on towns and post offices.
127. Hugoton Hermes. Information from 1910 and 1920 issues.
128. Hugoton's Woman's Club Yearbook, 1955-56. Kansas State Historical Society Library.
129. Kansas Traveling Libraries Commission, Stevens County - A County Library Study. Topeka, 1959. The library became a tax supported institution in 1924. An adobe building was erected in 1934 with National Youth Administration funds. It was remodeled in 1953. A more modern building, located near the courthouse now houses the small, but well used library.
130. The First Methodist Church Anniversary Publication.
131. Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August 1961.
132. Ibid.
133. Biennial Reports of the Secretary of Kansas, State of Kansas. For decimal years 1890-1950; State of Kansas Election Statistics, Primary and General Elections. For 1960, 1970. Also Hugoton Hermes, 1910, 1920
134. Hugoton Hermes, August 13, 1920

135. Kansas Adjutant General, European War Roster. Vol. 2-4, Kansas State Historical Society Library.
136. Willard Johnson, "The High Plains and Their Utilization," Twenty-First Annual Report of the United States Geological Survey. Dept. of Interior, 1901, Part 4, p. 611.
137. George N. Coffey and Thomas D. Rice, Reconnaissance Soil Survey of Western Kansas. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, Washington, D.C., 1912, p. 91, 97.
138. Refer to appendices for comparison of production figures.
139. Coffey and Rice, Reconnaissance Soil Survey, p. 94-95.
140. Hugoton Hermes, April 10, 1936.
141. "When the Santa Fe Came to Hugoton," p. 11-12.
142. A.D. Edwards, Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community, p. 45.
143. Ibid.
144. Paul W. Zickefoose, "Population and the Labor Force," p. 68-70.
145. Stevens County never had more than 280,060 acres in production, about sixty per cent of the county's land. The remaining area is in summer fallow, pasture, sandhills, municipal property and the Cimarron River.
146. Robert S. Eckley and W. James Foreman, "Agriculture," Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, 1951, Part 5, p. 11-12.
147. Topeka Daily Capital, July 5, 1918.
148. A.D. Edwards, Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community p. 50-51.
149. Leslie Hewes, The Suitcase Farming Frontier. Univ. of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1973, p. 51-52.
150. Soil surveys referred to are: Arthur H. Joel, Soil Conservation Reconnaissance Survey of the Southern Great Plains Wind Erosion Area. Technical Bulletin No. 556, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Jan. 1937; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and Kansas Agriculture Experiment Station, Physical Land Conditions Affecting Use, Conservation, and Management of Land Resources - Stevens County. November, 1954; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Survey - Stevens County.
151. Paul I. Wellman, "The Bubble Beneath the Plains." Title of article used for chapter heading
152. Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August 1961.
153. Robert S. Eckley, "Mineral Resources and Industries," Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, 1955, Part 3, p.2.

154. Margaret O. Oros and Douglas L. Beene, Oil and Gas Development in Kansas During 1966. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Bulletin 190, 1968, p. 9; Walter A. Ver Wiebe, Oil and Gas Resources of Western Kansas. Mineral Resources Circular 10, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Vol. 39, 1938. On December 28, 1937, the Kansas Nomenclature Committee named the field.
155. Paul I Wellman, "The Bubble Beneath the Plains," p. 96. The first clue to the structure was the way the Cimarron River curved around the field.
156. Garvin Taylor, "The Hugoton Gas Area of Southwestern Kansas," Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Field Conference of the Kansas Geological Society. Topeka, September 1934, p. 57; L.W. Kesler, Oil and Gas Resources of Kansas in 1927. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Mineral Resources Circular 1, Vol. 29, June 1, 1928, p. 52.
157. Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August 1961. Unless otherwise cited, information on the gas comes from the Hermes, August 1961 edition.
158. Robert S. Eckley, "Mineral Resources and Industries," p. 3, 26. In 1954, 460,000 out of the 466,560 acres in the county were under lease to gas and oil companies.
159. Margaret O. Oros and Douglas L. Beene, Oil and Gas, p. 136-37, 172.
160. Information on the development of pipelines from: Anthony Folger and Roy Hall, Development of Oil and Gas Resources in Kansas. Mineral Resources Circular 2, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Vol. 34, February 15, 1933. They reported that in 1929 a pipeline was laid to Dodge City and other communities in southwest Kansas; Kenneth K. Landes, Mineral Resources of Kansas Counties. Mineral Resources Circular 6, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Vol. 38, June 1, 1937. He reported that pipelines carried gas from Stevens County to cities in Colorado and east of the county; Kansas Chamber of Commerce, Progress in Kansas. In reports of January, March, April and August are details of different pipelines being built.
161. Paul I. Wellman, "The Bubble Beneath the Plains," p. 96.
162. "Owners of Gasser Which Opened World's Largest Field Disappointed in It," Garden City Daily Telegram. Southwest Kansas Resource Edition, June 8, 1937.
163. Robert S. Eckley, "Mineral Resources and Industries," p. 6; Buddy R. Guest, Resource Use and Associated Problems in the Upper Cimarron Area. Research Paper No. 19, Univ. of Chicago, Chicago, June 1951, p. 43.
164. Robert S. Eckley, "Mineral Resources and Industries," p. 12-13.
165. Ibid, p. 6, 9-12.



166. Hugoton Hermes, Centennial Edition, August 1961; Interview with Mr. Clay Horner.
167. Estimates of the field's resources were made by several sources. Included are: Progress in Kansas, January 1936, p. 23, 200 years; Kansas City Times, April 11, 1935, 175 years; Robert S. Eckley, "Mineral Resources and Industries," p. 4, 30-40 years; Paul I. Wellman, "The Bubble Beneath the Plains," 200 years.
168. Hugoton Hermes, November 2, 1945; Paul I. Wellman, "The Bubble Beneath the Plains," p. 96.
169. Kansas Senate - House Journal, Twenty-fifth day, February 13, 1945, p. 108. The bill reads as follows: "H.B. 175, by Mr. Hubbard: An act authorizing cities of the third class situated in a recognized and established natural gas field to drill a gas well and to produce and sell natural gas therefrom, acquire a drilling site, and make necessary contracts for such purposes and to devote the proceeds to government uses and purposes of the city."
170. "Stevens County, Kansas, in a Carbon Black Plant Protest," Kansas City Times. February 25, 1942.
171. Richard Pfister, "Manufacturing," Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Part 6 1953, p. 54-55.
172. Ibid, p. 59; Buddy Guest, Resource Use, p. 81.
173. Art McIntire, "Oil and Gas Industry Gives Boost to Old Dust Bowl Area," Topeka Daily Capital, June 11, 1954; Don Pinkston, "Stevens County Farmers Add Irrigation Facilities to Remedy Lack of Rain," Wichita Eagle Magazine, June 10, 1956.
174. Fred Floyd, "A History of the Dust Bowl." Doctoral Dissertation, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, 1950, p. 17. Floyd explains the origins of the term "dust bowl."
175. James C. Malin, "Dust Storms, 1850-1900," Kansas Historical Quarterly. May, August, and November, 1946, Vol.14.
176. Thad G. McLaughlin, Geology and Ground Water Resources, p. 24; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Monthly Weather Reports. Kansas Section, Topeka, 1933-39. All rainfall and weather statistics come from these two sources.
177. This is the author's opinion, based on the study of statistics and general information from newspapers and reports. It is after 1935 that both the people and the government take action to improve the situation.
178. Hugoton Hermes, May 3, 1935.
179. Ibid; General information gathered from the newspaper on the dust conditions.



180. Ibid, May 24, 1935.
181. Garden City Daily Telegram. Southwest Kansas Resource Edition, June 8, 1937. A special edition of the paper was prepared and sent out to 400 cities to show conditions in the area were not as bad as reported.
182. Arthur H, Joel, Soil Conservation Reconnaissance Survey, p. 20, 66.
183. Hugoton Hermes, September 23, 1938.
184. Thomas Frederick Saarinen, Perception of the Drought Hazard on the Great Plains. Univ. of Chicago, Dept. of Geography, Research Paper No. 106, 1966, p.17; Hugoton Hermes, February 16, 1895.
185. A.D. Edwards, Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community, p. 85.
186. The Future of the Great Plains. Report of the Great Plains Committee. House Document No. 144, Seventy-fifth Congress, First Session, February 10, 1937.
187. Robert S. Eckley and W. James Foreman, "Agriculture," p. 118, 115.
188. Ibid, p. 188-21.
189. Hugoton Hermes, March 27, 1936.
190. Ibid, March 31, 1933.
191. Ibid, January 31, 1936; June 19, 1936.
192. Ibid, April 3, 1936.
193. The Future of the Great Plains, p. 74.
194. Richard Pfister, "Water Resources and Irrigation," Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, 1955, Part 4, p. 48-53.
195. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Survey - Stevens County, p. 18.
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204. Figures of farm, non-farm working force for:  
1940 - 518 farm; 488 non-farm  
1960 - 503 farm; 1,199 non-farm  
1970 - 458 farm; 1,165 non-farm
205. These industries include farm machinery outlets, clothing, grocery and drug stores, lawyers, clerical workers, truckers, and government employees.
206. Paul E. Malone, "Government in the Economy of Southwestern Kansas," Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas. Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Part 9, 1951, p. 93.
207. William E. Mays, Sublette Revisited: Stability and Change in a Rural Kansas Community After a Quarter Century. Florham Park Press, Inc., N.Y., 1968, p. 93.
208. Hutchinson News, November 27, 1967.
209. The Gascapade was organized by the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Hugoton, to promote the town and gas industry.
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211. William E. Mays, Sublette Revisited, p. 124. Crimes, in order of highest frequency, that occur throughout southwest are: 1. Bad checks - most people, especially in an agricultural community used to an extensive credit system, do not feel it is a big crime to write a check that will bounce; 2. Breaking and entering, and larceny - the sparse population and the trusting nature of the people create many opportunities for this type of crime; 3. Driving while intoxicated; 4. Violent crimes.
212. Paul E. Malone, "Government in the Economy of Southwestern Kansas," p. 67.
213. Richard Pfister, "Manufacturing," p. 7, 9, 20.
214. Ibid, p. 61-65.
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Interview. Mrs. Oleta Wilson, Hugoton, Kansas.

A HISTORY OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS

by

SEONAIID L. EATON

B.A., University of Houston, 1973

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Stevens County, Kansas, is a prosperous agricultural community located in the heart of the world's largest natural gas field. The history of the county, unlike most American farming communities, is not one of steady, constant evolution. On the contrary, Stevens County's past is filled with extremes. A period of land speculation and rapid settlement in the 1880's was followed by drought and depression in the 1890's. In the first two decades of the 1900's, resettlement and a wheat boom returned prosperity to the county; by 1933, depression and dust engulfed the area. A bloody county seat fight, the struggle for a railroad, and the discovery of natural gas further complicated the historical development of the county.

Much of Stevens County's erratic history is explained by its geographical location. The county is located in southwestern Kansas, on the southern Great Plains. The land and the climate of the plains dictated the way the area developed. The flat, treeless prairies and the climatic cycles have been tempered somewhat by human resourcefulness. However, limited water supplies, reoccurring droughts, constant winds and the semi-arid climate remain uncontrollable. The physical characteristics of the land made the county's history a story of human efforts to adapt to the environment. Stevens County's story also parallels the general development of the southern plains region and reflects the history of the entire area.

This history of Stevens County is a general account of the community from pre-settlement to 1970. Set in a chronological framework, the eight chapters deal with the major events in the county's history. The narrative begins with a description of the land and its first inhabitants, the Plains Indians. The other topics covered are the settlement of the county, the county seat fight, and the affects of the drought and depression on the rural community. These are followed by the coming of the railroad, resettlement of the county in the first decades of the 1900's, and the development of natural gas resources in the county. The history also includes a

study of the dust bowl years of the 1930's and the 1950's, and the changes made in the agricultural system. The final chapter describes the modernization of the county and suggests what will be the future course of the community. The text of the history is followed by a series of appendices with additional information on the county.

In writing this history of Stevens County, the author relied heavily on general accounts of the Great Plains, special studies done on the southern area, newspapers, and some interviews with county inhabitants. The Kansas State Historical Society provided most of the specific material and all of the pictures used in the text. Government studies, soil surveys, and state agricultural records were also a valuable source of information. There is a scarcity of material on the southwest region of Kansas which limited the depth of the history.

From this study of Stevens County several conclusions can be made about the community and the surrounding region. First, the land and its climate dictated the lifestyles of the people. The settlers had to adjust from the forested, humid lands of the east to the treeless, semi-arid plains. Secondly, the cycles of drought and wet weather created a speculative attitude toward the land; most people took advantage of the good years and left the county during the bad years. Thirdly, it was not until the dusty 1930's that a search for a more suitable system of agriculture began. Since that time, with the development of natural gas and irrigation facilities, southwestern Kansas has attained more stability and is an important agricultural area. Finally, this study of Stevens County highlights the need for a more detailed history of southwestern Kansas and the southern Great Plains. The area and its agriculture, the history of irrigation, and the story of the natural gas are neglected subjects. More extensive studies of these topics would provide a better understanding of the region and perhaps help people make future adjustments to the land and its climate.