

## Olathe - What the first woman saw

In this item, Mrs. Emily L. Millikan recounts her experiences related to her May 28, 1857 arrival in the Kansas Territory. Arriving with her brother, Dr. J.B. Whittier, Millikan explains that she was the "first woman resident" of Olathe, Kansas. Millikan also discusses such things as traveling via wagon, visiting the Shawnee Mission, and meeting Native Indians. Millikan states that the first women she encountered in Olathe were "two big squaws who unexpectedly stuck their heads through a broken pane of glass in the room where I was and greatly startled me."

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### OLATHE - WHAT THE FIRST WOMAN SAW.

By Mrs. Emily L. Millikan.

On May 28th, 1857, fifty years ago last May, in company with my brother, Dr. J. B. Whittier, I arrived in Olathe, the first woman resident of our now beautiful city. We came from Manchester, New Hampshire, by rail to Jefferson City, Missouri, the then terminus of the railroad, and by steam boat from that point to Kansas City. At St. Louis we had stopped at the Planter's House where the accommodations were very poor. The rats were by far the most numerous guests although there were not so many as we found at Kansas City. There was but one hotel at the latter place, which, with one small store, and a few small dwelling houses near the river, constituted what is now the thriving metropolis at the mouth of the Kaw.

There was a stage from Kansas City to Santa Fe which ran once a month, but as we did not happen to be lucky enough to meet it, we had to remain in Kansas City all night. The second day we got a conveyance, in the shape of a covered wagon, for Olathe. This I considered quite romantic as I had never seen one of the kind before.

After leaving Shawnee Mission, we passed only a few shanties on our way to Olathe, as we followed the old Santa Fe Trail, arriving at Indian Creek about dark. There we found a kind of an Indian hotel, with meagre accommodations, but I preferred to sleep in the wagon while my brother and the man that drove the team slept under it. That was my first experience in camping out.

Sometime during the night there was a long train of Mexicans passed near by where we were camped for the night. This disturbed my slumbers considerably as they made such a tremendous noise by the bellowing of cattle and the cracking of the whips; you could hear them in the stillness of the night for miles away. Their wagons were as near like a boat on wheels as anything I can think of. Each wagon was drawn by six yoke of oxen and sometimes with more, and a Mexican mounted, riding as driver, shouting the cracking his whip. There were often as many as forty or fifty wagons in the train, and it was not uncommon to see a large number of oxen or mules following to be used as a supply in case one of the animals of the team died.

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Well, we got through the night all right. In the morning we started quite early for Olathe and as we came up the hill in front of where we now live in full view of the little town, the early morning sun shone on the prairie covered with beautiful flowers, and I thought it looked "beautiful - O-la-the". We soon arrived in Olathe, our destination. The words of the poet Whittier came to my mind:

"We crossed the prairies, as of old  
The Pilgrims crossed the sea,  
To make the West as they the East,  
The homestead of the free."

Fifty years have added the conveniences of living in Olathe, but have not added to the beauty of the spot. We found Mr. Connor, my brother's partner, ready to welcome us. They had come here in April and made arrangements to open a hotel, and then my brother returned to Manchester for me.

There were only fifteen young men here then, and no women. The first women I saw after I came were two big squaws who unexpectedly stuck their heads through a broken pane of glass in the room where I was and greatly startled me. I invited them in and chatted with them a while, although I couldn't understand a word they said. It was three weeks after arriving in Olathe before I saw another white woman. Mr. Connor went down somewhere near Edgerton and got a girl to work for us by the name of Lizzie Bowles; later her sister, Martha Bowles, worked for us. She that is now Mrs. Martin Ott and a friend of hers stopped with us for a while at the hotel. After that my brother went to Kansas City and got a woman to work in the hotel by the name of Mary Whalen, afterwards known as Mary Tappy or Mary Kirby. It has been said that she was the second woman here, but that is a mistake. She had a little girl by the name of Mary Ann Whalen, about six months old, I think, when she came here.

The first white child born in Olathe that I have any knowledge of was a daughter of Mr. James Hamilton. It was born in the first dwelling house built in Olathe. This house was built by Jonathan Millikan and now stands on Poplar Street on the north side between Cherry Street and Kansas Avenue. There was, however, a colored child, a slave, born previous to that on the north side of the square. Aaron Mann was the first shoemaker, came here from Princeton.

When I came here there was a small building on the north side of Santa Fe Avenue near where the Hotel Olathe now stands,



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and a small store building on Kansas Avenue near the present site of the Avenue House. The latter was built by Dr. Barton and Charles A. Osgood in which a grocery store was then kept by Herman Scott and Jacob Thuma. The hotel where I lived was the next building erected, consisting of a kitchen and two bed rooms in one side and another building close by so that one could step into the other, consisting of a dining room and office; in the second story of the latter building there was only one large room. This hotel stood near the northwest corner of the square at Kansas and Santa Fe Avenues. There I lived until cold weather. Then my brother got me a place to board with a family by the name of William Tuttle. He was one of the oldest settlers and lived on a claim north of town in a log house. I boarded there until after Henderson H. Boggs built the Avenue House, as it is called now, on the west side of Kansas Avenue. He kept it a while and sold it to Mr. Hobart and Mr. Thuma who soon sold it to my brother. We lived there until three weeks before I got married to Mr. Millikan, which was on the 25th day of November 1858.

The first minister who preached in Olathe was an Episcopalian by the name of Drummond. The next was a southern Methodist by the name of Charles Bowles and then came I.C. Beach, a Presbyterian preacher, the father of Doctor and George Beach. Dr. Barton was the first physician and was practicing when he left Olathe. John M. Giffen printed the first newspaper which was called the Olathe Herald. John P. Campbell and Charles Mayo were the first lawyers. Col. Burris and others came in 1858. C.E. Waldron established the first bank in a small room where the North Odd Fellows building is now located. Martin Ott was Olathe's first baker and S.F. Hill handled the first stock of dry goods and groceries, and was Post Master.

In the fall of 1858, J.B. Whittier, sold out his interest in the hotel to Ben Dare, who in turn sold out to S.F. Hill and left town. Mr. Arnett taught the first school. The first death that I remember of was that of a gentleman from Ohio by the name of Bishop; he died at the hotel and was buried in the old burying ground. It has been said that Mr. Jenkin's death was the first, but I believe that he died the following year in Spring Hill and was buried by the Masons. Mr. Milliken and I attended the funeral.

I was here when Quantrell plundered the town and heard

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the fatal shots that killed the Judy boys. I was also here when he made the raid on Lawrence and when the news came that he was coming to Olathe the second time on his return from Lawrence, the men ran in all directions. We were happily disappointed as Quantrell passed Olathe on the south. Mr. Millikan, John P. Campbell, William Bronaugh, and Jiles Milhoan had gone to Topeka on business and I thought they had about sufficient time to get back to Lawrence. But fortunately, by stopping about ten miles the other side of Lawrence to get breakfast they missed that terrible raid. They saw the ruin and havoc and dead and dying strewn all around town, a fearful sight, with women and children weeping and wailing on every side.

I have seen Olathe grow from its infancy to be one of the most thriving and beautiful towns in the State of Kansas, have been familiar with the various changes that have taken place in the citizenship and have known personally of its pleasures and its sadness. And I feel, as only those can feel who have been here during the fifty years covered by my experience, so completely identified with its history in progress and success.