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Swedish Settlement at Stotler[1]

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IN A valley drained by Salt creek in northeastern Lyon county is a unique community which is inhabited by people of Swedish descent. This community is known by the name of Stotler. It is a rural community, but of a distinctive character. Most of the inhabitants are children and grandchildren of sturdy Swedes who chose Stotler as their place of abode back in the 1870's and 1880's.

The social as well as the religious life of the community centers in its two Swedish churches. One church bears the name of the Stotler Mission Church and the other is known as the Stotler Lutheran Church. Originally there was but one church in Stotler, but some thirty years ago dissensions arose in the congregation. Differences in regard to doctrinal beliefs caused a number of families to leave the Mission Church and to build another church nearby. These two churches adhere loyally to the faith brought by God-fearing fathers from Sweden. Even today scripture reading and prayer finds its place in the daily program of most homes. The people of Stotler like music, and singing is one of the leading community activities. Various musical organizations find important places in the churches.

The Swedish language has not yet been entirely abandoned. The older folks converse in Swedish and occasionally the younger folks speak Swedish with their parents. In most homes one finds both Swedish and English books. Swedish papers find their way into many of the homes. The Swedish language is still spoken in the churches, but the Swedish services have dwindled in number so that only one regular service each month is conducted in this language. Swedish is used almost exclusively in the Sunday School classes for the older people.

Old Swedish customs are still deeply cherished by both the old and young inhabitants. When a neighbor woman pays a friendly visit to a Swedish friend, the hostess serves the customary Swedish coffee. The hostess would consider it a breach of etiquette not to adhere to this practice. At no time are Swedish customs better brought into play than at the Christmas season. Christmas Eve

1. Historic facts and incidents for this article have been obtained from the oldest Swedish settlers now living in Stotler, and have been agreed upon by more than one reliable individual. Only such material was used as appeared to have its truth definitely established.

is the beginning of festivities. The celebration on this evening is entirely a family affair. Each family gathers at home for Christmas supper after which presents are exchanged around the Christmas tree. At 5:30 on Christmas morning the people, both old and young, gather at church for Christmas services. The old Swedish hymn "Var Halsad Skona Morgonstund" peals forth from the churches, which are lighted by Christmas candles. The old Christmas story is the text of the morning. These services are the height of the Swedish Christmas festivities. As the crimson rays break forth in the east, the worshippers turn their footsteps homeward. The remainder of Christmas Day is customarily spent in family groups. In the evening the children of the Lutheran Church give a program consisting of recitations and songs. A few evenings later a similar program is given by the Sunday School children of the Mission Church. These programs are the children's affairs and are events to which they eagerly look forward. Christmas festivities continue for about a week, during which time the various families invite relatives and friends to their homes. These much-loved Swedish customs will likely continue to be observed for years to come.

The land on which Stotler is located was once a part of the great territory claimed by the Osage Indians. In 1846 it became a part of the Indian reservation for the Sac and Fox Indians of the Mississippi. In 1859 the Sacs and Foxes agreed to sell the western half of their Kansas reservation and by the year 1864 this land was opened to white settlement. The region now included in Stotler was a part of this area. It was purchased by a land company in the East known as Seyfert, McManus & Company. This company later sold the land to private individuals.

When the first settler found his way to the community, the prairie region was the home of wild plants and animals which thrive on the Kansas plains. The red men roamed the region, and frequently pitched their tepees along Salt creek. Except for a few scattered trees along the creek, there was nothing to obstruct the view for a distance of many miles. An early trail (known as the Burlingame trail and the Lawrence-Emporia road) wound its way across the prairie from Burlingame, passed over the region which was to become Stotler, and then continued its way towards Emporia. Over this trail rolled numerous westward-bound prairie schooners, and now and then a government train carrying provisions for soldiers stationed in the western forts plodded over the prairie trail.

It was some time in the latter sixties that the first settler followed this road to Salt creek and built his prairie home near its eastern bank by the side of the old trail. This first pioneer was France Cabbage. His brother, John Cabbage, later chose a site for his home on the other side of the creek. Two other Cabbage brothers, Sylvester and William, owned land in the neighborhood, but they never lived on it. The little huts in which the Cabbage families lived were typical frontier homes with rude furnishings. One old settler tells of having visited one of the Cabbage homes on a stormy day. Snow had blown in through the cracks in the poorly built house and lay in piles on the floor. Straw had been placed over the bed so that it might be kept dry. But it was not the Cabbages who were destined to make Stotler. Before many years passed, both families left the community.

In 1869 a young Swede, Claus Peterson, with his family, set out from Michigan to find a home in Kansas. After arriving in Ottawa, he set out on foot one morning to investigate the land in the vicinity of what is now Osage City. In the evening the weary and hungry Swede chanced to stop at the home of James Fagan, who was a land agent. After being shown the land in the region, young Peterson selected a site on Salt creek adjoining the claim of John Cabbage.

To this land Peterson brought his family and his youthful friend, A. P. Walstrom, with his family. The two young men in partnership bought one hundred acres and built a two-room house out of native lumber. This dwelling was a rude hut with cracks between the boards and no ceiling. The stove pipe passed out through a hole in the roof. For three years the two families lived in this house, each occupying one room. Finally Walstrom decided to move on to his farm of fifty acres. Walstrom and Peterson then dissolved partnership and the former moved his room of the house to his farm.

The first years which these two Swedes spent on the Kansas plains were years of hardship. Both were extremely poor, but industrious. They paid for their land by cutting trees in the Fagan woods, located eight miles to the south. Burlingame, twelve miles away, was the first trading point for the families. Many times Peterson and Walstrom walked to this point and returned carrying what little provisions the families could afford to buy. One day Peterson purchased a plow, and walked home carrying the plow on his back. Finally, each of the men purchased a horse, and thus together they had a team. For four years the families of Peterson, Walstrom, and Cabbage were the only settlers in the community.

These were years of hard work and privation. Now and then in their work the parents and children would pause to watch the white-topped wagons roll by. Scarcely a day passed but some wagon hurried by, and frequently they came in groups of twelve or fourteen. Oftentimes they camped by the creek and came to the Peterson home to ask for hay or other provisions. The prairie schooners were a welcome sight to the busy settlers.

Early in the spring of 1873 two Swedish-speaking families from Galesburg, Ill., came to Osage City in a freight car, which was loaded with stock and rude accommodations. The fathers, Magnus Lungren and John Sutherland, selected land in the neighborhood of Peterson and Walstrom, and immediately built a one-room shack. In this roughly built hut the two families lived together for several months. Towards fall Lungren made a cave on his farm. In this cave the young Lungren family lived for several years. Before the coming of the winter Sutherland dug a cellar under his one-room hut. Thus he was better prepared for the winter snows. In that same year Johan Blex and his family took up their abode in a simple prairie home in this budding Swedish colony.

The following year, 1874, several more Swedes took their places among the home-makers of the community. These had come to Osage City in 1870 or 1871. In 1869 a Swedish committee had been sent out from Princeton, Ill., to investigate the possibility of buying land in the newly opened region in the neighborhood of what is now Osage City. The investigation and report of this committee led to the coming of numerous families. At first the men worked on the building of the Santa Fe railroad, which in 1870 had reached Osage City. Later they worked in the stone quarry and strip mines. The Swedish-speaking settlers who came to Stotler in 1874 were led by Swan Fager, who in February moved his family to the roughly built house in which the John Cabbage family had lived. Mr. Fager worked in the mines in Osage City and consequently was away from home most of the time. In the fall Mrs. Fager and her oldest son dug a cellar, over which they placed the one-room building. Early in the spring of that same year Gust Rudeen and his family built a simple hut on the land which had been owned by France Cabbage. Others who turned their footsteps towards the Swedish settlement that year were Swan Lundholm, Andrew Chelberg, and C. I. Johnson, all of whom built caves as their first Stotler homes.

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The succeeding years saw a stream of other Swedish immigrants come to the community. Among those added to the list of residents appear such names as Lagergren, Anderson, Johnson, Fagerstrom, Hogberg, Ogren, Polson, Bergman, Ericson, Eastburg, Melgren, Sutherland, Lundstadt, Sanders, Christensen, and Olson.

The first years of life in Stotler were trying ones for these colonists. All the settlers were poor and could afford only the most meager living. Many times the meals consisted of black bread and coffee or mush and milk. Before wells were dug, water was taken from the creek. Farming did not progress rapidly. Each settler could at first break up only eight or ten acres. For a number of years corn was planted by hand, a hole being made with a hoe and the corn dropped in and then covered. This was customarily the children's task. Quite early some of the families commenced using hand planters. A two-shovel plow drawn by one horse served as the first cultivator. Corn, cattle, and hogs could not be sold for cash as they are today. Hence the settler would barter a hog or bushel of corn for clothing or groceries in Burlingame or Osage City. If he purchased a plow or other implement, he paid for it with cattle or hogs. Money was scarce, and interest rates were high. There were no banks nearby, and if money was to be borrowed, it had to be obtained from well-to-do individuals, who charged around 20 percent interest.

Since there were no fences to separate the various claims, the cattle were let out in the morning and allowed to roam at will. In the evening it was the task of the children to go after them. This was a chore which in pioneer days was not an easy one. Those who were boys and girls at that time relate how the cows sometimes wandered six or eight miles from home. Tales are told of times when the children were lost and did not find their way home until ten or eleven o'clock at night.

Many were the hardships that the Swedish pioneers suffered. Prairie fires were a constant hazard. Grasshoppers destroyed crops and left the pioneers destitute. Sickness took its tragic toll. In the community cemetery, which is today neglected and almost forgotten, lie the bodies of some seventy or eighty of these pioneer Swedes. Many of them were children who were unable to withstand the hardships of pioneer life. Many incidents are related about the hardships which the Swedes suffered when working in the Fagan woods. The men's bedding was spread on boards in the

open air. In the morning they often awoke to find several inches of snow on their beds.

The hardships of pioneer life fell equally heavy on the women. It was their task to care for the homes during the long weeks when the men were away working. Bravely they met the Indians when they came to the doors to beg for food. An incident is told of an Indian who came to the John Sutherland home when the young wife was alone with her infant. After eating what he wished, he lay down by the stove. The young wife had outside work which she had to attend to so with heavy heart she left the child alone with the Indian. After finishing her work, she anxiously rushed in to see if her child was still alive. To her great surprise and joy, she found the Indian quietly rocking the crying child. The Indian slept behind the stove during the night and left early the following morning.

The inconveniences and fears of pioneer life were many. There were no calendars in the homes and this often resulted in a confusion of days. The story is related of a man in the settlement who started to Osage City one day with a load of potatoes. As he was passing his neighbor's house, he was informed that it was Sunday. (The Sabbath was strictly observed in this community.) On another Sunday visitors to one of the homes found the housewife washing, and it was with difficulty that the guests could persuade her that it was not a week day. There was also an absence of newspapers. It happened one day that the cavalry returning from one of the Indian wars passed through the community. Some of the settlers thought that war was commencing. One mother became so frightened that she took her children and with them she hid in the cornfield. In the earliest days of the community letters had to be mailed at Osage City or Burlingame. This was a great inconvenience. Early one morning a woman from Rapp, a neighborhood east of Stotler, arrived at the Lagergren home. This woman had arisen at three o'clock and had walked the five miles to Stotler in order that she might receive assistance in writing a letter to her husband. After writing her letter, she returned to Rapp, and then walked five miles to Osage City to mail her letter.

The Swedish pioneers were sincere Christians, and immediately upon establishing their homes they began assembling in the various homes for the purpose of reading and studying the Bible. Each home had its daily period of Bible reading and prayer. As soon as the school was built the pioneers commenced having services

there. Frequently traveling preachers visited the settlement. Rev. C. P. Melgren, one of the settlers in the community, was called as the first pastor.

One of the earliest projects in the community was the building of a school. This was done in 1874. The site was a treeless hillside. The building was small and had but three small windows on each side. Desks and seats were made of rough native lumber. A rudely built teacher's desk and a stove were also installed. To this rudely furnished school, eight pupils came during the first year.

Before many years elapsed a post office was established in the Swedish community. It was named in honor of Jacob Stotler of Emporia, who was influential in its establishment. The post office of Stotler was first located in the home of A. P. Walstrom, later in the S. P. Lundholm home, and still later in the William Sanders home. The Stotler post office was used until the starting of the rural routes from Osage City in 1901. For many years a mail wagon brought the mail from Osage City on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. When the railroad reached Miller, the mail was taken from there. The first survey of the Missouri Pacific Railroad crossed Stotler and hopes were at once raised that Stotler would become a town, but these hopes were soon doomed to disappointment.

By the eighties and nineties the second generation had begun to play a prominent part in the life of the community. In the early eighties the school building became too small to accommodate all the pupils and consequently a larger building was erected. The number of pupils in the school at one time reached seventy-five, and for a number of years the enrollment ranged between sixty and seventy. Usually three pupils sat in each seat in those days.

Among the subjects taught were reading, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, spelling, and penmanship. From this list the pupils were permitted to select almost any subjects they pleased. Spelling and penmanship were the most popular. For a number of years the school term was six months in length. Pupils did not attend regularly. The larger boys and girls sometimes attended for only two or three months during the winter season. There was no such event as graduation. Consequently, boys and girls continued to go to school until they were twenty or twenty-one years old. The first examinations in the Stotler school were not given until the term of 1895-1896. At that time the pupils thought that it was a terrible ordeal to answer questions over a whole month's work. Pupils were not placed in grades and no report

cards were given until 1898. Before that time the pupil's progress in school was designated by his being in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, or Fifth Reader. The Stotler school during those years was made up almost entirely of Swedish pupils. Much to the displeasure of the teacher the pupils talked Swedish continually on the playground.

For many years the social center of Stotler was the school. It was the scene of many happy events in the eighties and nineties. There were singing schools, which met at the school and which attracted large crowds of young folks. Then there were night schools in which various subjects were taught. There were also literary meetings, which were the highlights of social life. It is said that young folks within a radius of eight or ten miles would wend their ways to the Stotler school for "Literary." The programs of the literary society varied, but of most interest were the debates, and the ciphering and spelling matches. Ordinarily the young folks walked to these events. Family visiting was common. It was not unusual for a father and mother to load their family of six or ten children into the lumberwagon and go to visit a neighboring family.

The church which was organized when the first pioneers came to Stotler prospered. Until 1892, the year in which the Mission Church was built, services were held in the schoolhouse. These meetings were well attended although almost everyone walked to services. Groups of twenty-five or thirty young folks would leave the school together and would have a hilarious time on their way home. Even prayer meetings were well attended in those days. Of outstanding interest were the "Mission Meetings," which were held almost every year. Swedish-speaking people from other towns came. They were met in Osage City and were taken to Stotler in lumberwagons. Houses were small and since there were not enough beds to accommodate the guests, many of them slept on the floors of the various homes. Sometimes several preachers came to the meetings. The buildings in which the services were held were packed with listeners. Revivals frequently broke out at these meetings. Oftentimes the settlers in Stotler went to Osage City to attend revival meetings. It happened quite often that the fathers loaded their families into lumberwagons, drove the ten miles to Osage City, and returned after the meeting in the evening.

As the years passed the colonists in Stotler prospered. The rude huts gave way to larger houses. Large fields of corn and wheat appeared. Trees grew up around the homes. Roads were laid out

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and bridges built. The telephone found its way into most homes. Daily newspapers brought news from distant places. Today Stotler is a typical rural community in outward appearance. The Swedes have built a community which fills its place in Kansas. The Swedish descendants are loyal Kansans, but proud of their Swedish heritage. Many Swedish ideas and customs are so firmly entrenched in the hearts of the young folks that they will be an influence in the community for years to come.

The Kinsley Boom of the Late Eighties

Final Installment

James C. Malin

ALONG with the swelling of the buds on the sand hill plums each spring, the annual crop of settlers came to replace those who had starved out the year or years before. Weeks before the plum thickets were white with bloom, the emigrants headed West in white-topped wagons or in trains which deposited them at desolate way stations. The immigrants hoped to make their fortune, and the communities to which they came hoped for a large crop of immigrants, if of nothing else, because of the stimulation to the year's business which flowed from this importation of cash even in the limited quantities possessed by these small farmers. During frontier and drought years about the only cash which came into a frontier town was railroad taxes and wages, and the spendings of the homeseekers. It was with anxiety and no doubt with foreboding that they looked for signs of a big immigration in 1888. On January 28 the *Daily Mercury* recorded, whether fancifully or not—the point need not be pressed—that "the prairie schooners are beginning to sail westward." On February 1 it announced that 50,000 copies of the paper would be printed in March for circulation in the East. The immigration prospects were summarized February 7 from the Larned *Chronoscope:* "Had there not been a partial failure of crops in some localities of this state last year the immigration would have been unprecedented." The article pointed out further that "the distressing drought last year in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Missouri will create in the minds of the people of those states an uneasiness and a disposition to look for a better place," and in view of the additional burden imposed by the financial depression in that region, this discontent would be intensified. It was estimated that the emigration from that quarter would be divided, about four-fifths to the West and one-fifth to the South. The prediction was made further, that the terribly cold winter in Dakota and Nebraska and the high temperature on the Pacific coast would direct most of the emigration to Kansas and Texas. Southwest Kansas boomers thought that their region had not received a fair share of publicity from the state immigration bureau and organized a Southwestern Kansas Immigration Society. The *Daily Mercury,* February 28,

reported that a meeting had been held in Kinsley at which a decision was reached to have Edwards county represented, money was pledged, and committees appointed to interview the county commissioners for aid, to manage the advertising program, and to welcome visitors. As late as May 30 the *Mercury* reported that the railroads were working up a big immigration and that "in a few weeks it will be pouring in upon us like an avalanche."

Kansas had her rivals at the boom business in 1888. The San Luis valley of Colorado was being opened as an irrigated district under the management of T. C. Henry, formerly of Abilene, and his advertisements in the *Mercury* promised home markets, no crop failures, no hot winds, no chinch bugs, no grasshoppers, no blizzards, and no coal famines. The most threatening rival, however, was Oklahoma, not yet opened to settlement. For several years the Oklahoma boomers had kept up the agitation and in 1888 the opening appeared imminent. A mass meeting was held in Kinsley as in many other Kansas towns to protest to the Kansas delegation in congress against the pending bill. In discussing the call for the meeting the *Daily Mercury,* February 11, maintained that the movement was the work of "town-lot boomers, land sharks in some of the border towns, backed up by Kansas City. . . . The opening of this Indian country will rob Kansas of 100,000 people direct while it will have the effect [of] diverting fully that many more from settling in Kansas." When the appointed time arrived it was reported that the board of trade rooms were packed with citizens voicing similar views.

The protest of the Greensburg *Republican* was reprinted on February 18:

> Kansas City would be the principal winner, and can afford to spend money lobbying this measure through congress; but the state of Kansas would be the principal loser and ought to oppose it. It would be worse than a failure of crops, or a siege of drought and a grasshopper raid combined. If our senators and representatives in congress do not oppose and defeat this measure the shadow on the dial of Western Kansas will go back five years.

Six days later in another exchange the voice of the Salina *Journal* was echoed in the same key.

The railroad question was raised early in the year and January 31 the *Daily Mercury* declared that the Frisco and Rock Island railroads would extend their lines during the course of the year, and Kinsley was just waiting and doing nothing. If these companies came there must be some inducement, and the editor insisted that

Kinsley must present its case. On February 10 the same paper reported that the Omaha, Kansas and El Paso Railroad would be built from Kinsley to the south line of the state "at once, or in a short time at least." A four-line item in the same issue, however, leaves a reader wondering. It read: "The officers and directors of the Kinsley and Milkyway Rapid Transit Company will meet this evening for the purpose of discussing the practicability of running a branch line to the moon." Was it just another vagary of Hebron's sense of humor, or had the printer's devil put one over on the "Old man"? The issue of the following day recorded that the stockholders meeting of the O. K. & E. had been held the preceding day, officers were elected, with Hebron of the *Mercury,* secretary, and the president had reported that arrangements had been made to finance construction to the south line by way of Ford City. For some reason new flights of fancy did not come easily to the *Mercury* in booming railroads in 1888. The leap-year issue of February 29 reprinted substantially a last year's article about the Santa Fé cutting out its arcs. The only other significant mentions of railroads occurred on April 6, when the president of the O. K. & E. appeared before the board of trade stating that construction would begin as soon as the bonds were voted, and April 17 when a promise was made of a speedy bond election.

One of the most peculiar features of the boom of 1887, as it was reflected in the press of Edwards county, was the neglect, almost omission, of agriculture. There were no discussions of field crops, or of live stock, varieties of products, adaptation, or methods of production. The ballyhoo was railroads, town lots, and manufacturing. The farmer came into the picture only as an incidental factor connected with the other three subjects. Other cities and towns had behaved similarly.

During the long winter the Kansas boomers themselves became conscious of the omission, and there were numerous instances where western Kansas papers in 1888 began to emphasize the necessity of building a sound prosperity on the product of the local farms. In this connection the *Mercury* fell in line urging the business men to get behind the sugar factory and to assist in modernizing its machinery to produce sugar as well as syrup. This would provide a market for sorghum, the sure crop of Edwards county, and on January 12 it returned to the rural question suggesting "that it was high time an effort was made to boom our farming lands, just a little. City building is all right and proper, but the country

must be kept in the line of procession. . . ." A few days later it advised all farmers to plant a little flax, in view of the papier maché plant, and even if there was no market for the straw the seed was as valuable as any other crop.

The failure of crops the preceding year was so serious that many farmers did not have seed to plant another crop. As early as February 22 the *Mercury* reported that Greensburg had raised $800 to buy seed for Kiowa county, but except for flax seed, Edwards county did not act until March, when the board of trade arranged to advance seed of all kinds to farmers unable to buy through the usual channels.[15] They would do nothing about the sugar mill, however, and a meeting reported in the *Mercury* April 6 that Bennyworth, the owner, stated that it was too late to expect to renovize the mill for the current season. The conclusion seems justified that, except for the imperative matter of spring seed, the business and boom leadership, although conscious of something lacking, did not understand how or where to take hold of the agricultural problem. Their peculiar talents were much more fitted to the attempt to revive the industrial boom of 1887.

The first boom article in 1888 of the type so common the year before was printed by the *Daily Mercury,* February 3:

> Already our people have caught the inspiration of the great boom coming, and are marching in time to the music. There are more new buildings planned in Kinsley today than ever were built here in any two years of the city's history, and there are more inquiries being made by eastern people regarding our city than ever before; and it is safe to presume that when spring opens there will be such a rush to Kinsley as our most ardent and enthusiastic boomer never dreamed of . . . By the middle of April or the first of May the probabilities now are that more than a million dollars worth of buildings—business houses, hotels, factories and machine shops will be in the course of erection.
>
> In addition to all this we have here one of the finest and best waterpowers in the state, a stream, whose banks on either side might be dotted with mills and factories and still not exhaust its power.

Fortunately for Hebron's equanimity the phrase "Oh, Yeah" had not yet been invented. He might have pointed in defense to the report in the same issue of the paper, however, that the First National Bank had just declared a four per cent dividend on its first six month's business and placed $1,500 in its surplus fund besides. The next day the headlines to the news story of the meeting of the board of trade ran "Over forty new members added. . . . Four hundred dollars subscribed in ten minutes. Which amount will be quad-

15. *Daily Mercury,* March 9, 1888.

rupled at the next meeting, Tuesday evening. Everybody jubilant over our prospects. 'Tis not Wealth, nor Fortune, nor High Estate, but Git up and Git that makes men Great. Measured by this standard our people are Great. Great is Kinsley and the *Mercury* is Her Prophet."

Again on February 11 the *Daily Mercury* expounded its theory of booming:

> There are several hundred towns in Kansas, each represented by a good newspaper or two, and each clamoring to be heard on the subject of the merits of the locality in which it is located. These towns may be compared to as many men in a room, all talking at once and each anxious to be heard. Speaking for the *Mercury* we propose to talk loud enough to attract attention.

The big meeting at the Opera House February 10, under the auspices of the board of trade, was reported in the local papers and in the Topeka *Commonwealth*. The features of the evening were speeches by the men representing the two big manufacturing enterprises, packing and papier maché. R. R. Beemis, president, and George W. Adams, secretary, spoke for the Interstate Packing Company, and George Quigley, of Randolph, Mo., patentee, and F. E. Parker spoke for papier maché. The *Daily Mercury*, February 15, pictured Kansas " 'Tis a land of mighty rivers flowing over sands of gold. All nature conspires to boom sunny Kansas in 1888." [16] The issue of February 18 boasted that "God might have made a better country, but doubtless He never did," and on February 17 declared that—

> The prospects of Kinsley could not well be brighter than at present. . . . Should the present plans materialize, Kinsley will, in the very near future become the leading manufacturing and commercial city of Kansas. Not a second Hutchinson or Wichita, but a city of from fifty to seventy-five thousand in the next two years.

But like the wasp and his relatives the sting was in the tail, because near the end of the article he added the qualification: "We must, however, have the nerve to grasp our opportunities. So far our people have done nothing, absolutely nothing." The particular enterprise then being urged was the organization of a stock yards company, because without such facilities Kinsley could not become a live-stock market.

Until this spring boom revival there had been nothing explicit published concerning the method of subsidizing industries in this money-

16. The sentence " 'Tis a land of mighty rivers flowing over sands of gold," was taken from a song of the pioneers which usually bears the title "Out in the West." It may have had originally a definite authorship, but it took on the character of a folksong with different versions and with an indefinite number of stanzas.

less country to attract them to Kinsley. The first definite reference occurred in the above editorial on the stock-yards company, and in the next issue the matter became the subject of a full-length article.

The plan was for land owners in the city and vicinity to list their lands and to pledge in so doing half the profits from the sale of the lands as a bonus to the new industries. The explanation represented that the same principle was involved as in federal land grants to railroads of alternate sections. The grant of lands made the railroad construction possible and enhanced the value of all land near the road. The same idea applied to Kinsley bonuses meant that without the prospective industries the land would enhance in value very slowly, while with the industrial development all land would be benefited. Half of these profits on land listed on the bonus plan would accrue to the companies during the period in which their capital investment was unproductive, and the other half retained by the land owners would exceed greatly the whole profit obtainable if the industries did not locate there. For a community without cash such a scheme sounded attractive.

The organization of the Kinsley Water Power and Land Company with a capital stock of $300,000 was announced in the *Daily Mercury,* March 1. A meeting was reported March 28, at which the officers of the packing house and papier-maché factory presented a proposition for a canning factory. They solicited an offer of a suitable bonus to transmit to the canning interests they were representing. A committee was appointed and the next day the report was published that an understanding had been reached which it was thought would be favorably received.

Under the caption "No Boom for Kinsley," the *Daily Mercury,* April 10, presented in display headlines "A plain unvarnished statement of facts. It is what we are sure of that makes us happy. Kinsley not driven to false representations to create a market for town lots." The article which followed employed much the same technique as the notorious article of December 15:

> Our readers will remember that a few weeks since we stated that we were through with writing boom literature. That we have religiously lived up to this promise our patrons can attest. Indeed so well pleased are we at the result of the experiment that nothing could induce us to publish a boom article. . . . A plain statement of facts concerning the great enterprises going in here is sufficient.

Then followed reference to the "mammoth packing house and papier-maché factory" and the announcement that work on the packing plant would commence April 17: "With the mammoth

industrial and commercial enterprises going in here the great need of our city was felt to be in the line of more railroads. This long-felt want, we are happy to state is about to be filled."

The bond election for the O. K. & E. was to be called at an early date. The D. M. & A., about which hope had almost been given up, would arrive about mid-summer and would connect with the King-man-Larned road at Turon. The Frisco and Rock Island would be built also before the end of the season. These were the predictions of the *Mercury*.

A week later the *Daily Mercury* carried five boom articles. One of them mentioned under "Possibilities" the desire of the Portable House Company of Grand Rapids, Mich., to locate there, and the board of trade was said to be corresponding with a boot and shoe company of Massachusetts. Another article announced the organization of the Union Stock Yards Company, and the possibility of a second packing house. There were certain peculiar things about the issue of April 17. Except for a few locals the issue was reprinted complete April 18. One of the articles was a reprint from the previous year, "Kinsley's Find," the story of the waterpower, published as though it was a new discovery. This reprinting of the ebullitions of 1887 was becoming a habit, and this was the fifth time it had occurred within a few weeks.

During the remainder of April and May the booming continued, the *Mercury*, April 2, for instance announcing self-consciously, "The population of Kinsley to be quadrupled the present season, this is no lie, we have our little hatchet with us." Three days later, in competing with Ralph M. Easley of the Hutchinson *News* in bragging like small boys about their respective towns, Hebron boasted that his town "becomes a competitive [live stock] market with Kansas City, St. Louis and Chicago." And before long, he continued, Hutchinson would be buying Kinsley paper, and Kinsley canned goods, and would be patronizing Kinsley as its wholesale center instead of Kansas City and Wichita. On April 26 the paper recorded the arrival in Kinsley of the president of the papier-maché company, but nearly a month later he arrived again, to start operations on the plant. In the meantime the packing house was actually under construction, and May 21, the *Daily Mercury* reported thirty-six men at work. *Banner-Graphic* locals recorded progress also, from week to week, commenting that it was not so important how fast the work was done, as that work continued to be done at all. The *Daily Mercury* gasped for breath May 22 assuring its readers that

"The Mercury will 'say something' just as soon as there is something to say. It will not be a great while either." It was June 20 before it committed another boom article, an exhausting effort from which it never recovered, and then on July 14 it quietly expired, leaving a brief note of farewell, half hopeful of a glorious resurrection in the life to come:

> We'll see you later. As soon as business livens up and Kinsley starts out on another boom we'll be on the ground with the *Daily Mercury* to carry the news to Mary. For the present we propose to give the people a rest. . . .
>
> At the present time a daily is hardly a necessity in Kinsley, and when regarded in the light of a luxury it is just a trifle too expensive.
>
> There is no necessity for moralizing or philosophizing over the matter—the daily is a thing of the past. Good bye. We'll come again sometime—perhaps.

Eighteen-eighty-eight was another year of short crops. Corn was the principal field crop, and August 9 the *Weekly Mercury* admitted there was no use denying that the dry weather has injured the yield, but enough would be raised for home consumption and to spare, and even "should the worst possible luck befall us, Edwards county will raise four times as much corn this year as last." There was a little wheat acreage that year, but the crop was reported fair. Oats were rather generally very short. After viewing the prospects, the *Banner-Graphic* concluded July 6 that "we are now convinced that what Kansas needs more than anything else is scientific farming aided by a little more capital." It was thinking of farming, however, in terms of corn. Comments on crop prospects later in the season pointed to the planting of a larger wheat acreage than formerly, but West Kansas had yet to find itself in this matter.

The year which had begun with such apparently high hopes of retrieving the disaster of 1887, turned to disappointment long before its close. The immigrants had not come, neither had the railroads, nor the industries, the rains or the crops. Drought had come again and stayed. A correspondent wrote to the *Banner-Graphic* that "while crossing the Arkansas during the summer, I noticed clouds of dust rising from the river's bed. It struck me quite forcibly that the river needed irrigating, just enough to lay the dust." In hopes of aiding the farmers to meet their dire need of money income, the Kinsley board of trade attempted to establish a periodic live-stock auction in September, advertising from Newton west, in order to get better prices for stock. The project died. The board again agitated the sugar-mill question, but with no better results. Finally the farmers called a meeting to give consideration to the establishment

of cheese factories. Eventually two coöperative plants were organized, at Kinsley and at Lewis, which afforded some cash to the communities immediately adjacent to those towns.

Even while booming was most hysterically insistent, news items inadvertently revealed more than was intended. Many of the less tangible boom towns, such as Fargo Springs or Ravanna, collapsed as quickly as they had come. Others suffered disastrous fires, which frequently visited boom towns, by coincidence, after the bubble had burst. In March, 1888, at Coldwater, a whole block burned, and at Cimarron the whole north side, except one brick building. Taxes for 1887, which became delinquent after June 30, 1888, were advertised in August. At the top of the first column, the *Mercury* printed a short paragraph from an exchange: "Kansas is one of the biggest and grandest states on the American continent. It has 106 counties, is a total abstainer from strong drink, Republican in politics, prolific in soil, and inexhaustible in resources." Then followed five columns of tax-delinquent real estate; three of Kinsley city lots, and two of farm lands. It is evident that Kinsley's boom resources were about exhausted, but not quite. Several near-by towns, early in 1888, had promoted the boring of test wells to locate salt, or coal, or gas. Although Kinsley had ridiculed this movement at the time, it had admitted condescendingly that more salt underlay Kinsley than Hutchinson. Kinsley had anticipations of bigger enterprises in those days. By December, 1888, the town was somewhat humbled, however, and a movement was organized to bore a hole in the ground for just anything. Like the other booms it failed, no hole was bored, and Kinsley was left still wondering "what might lie beneath the surface." By January, 1889, the Kinsley fire department was reported to be "getting plenty of practice."

The dispersal or eclipse of the boomers was relatively a quick process. Most of them, after the collapse, fell into such obscurity that their departure or later activities were not made a matter of specific record. Along with the boomers, many of the established business enterprises passed out of existence. The Edwards County Real Estate Co., managed by Arthur, the official booster of the board of trade, was dissolved in February, 1890. The real estate and loan agents, instead of carrying quarter-page advertisements, disappeared altogether from the *Mercury* in 1890 and were represented in the *Graphic* by only two obscure notices. The stores continued to sell for "cash only," and came to boast of the virtues of the "spot cash idea."

A prolonged depression brings forth other marks of its demoralizing ravages, and usually the last phase of a boom and its collapse is the rise of political discontent. In 1887 there had been a People's party movement in the county elections. In 1888 the national and state elections provided a wider range of agitation. The Knights of Labor became active as early as January, and in the late summer political organization produced vociferous Union Labor and Prohibition parties. The Democratic *Graphic,* while supporting the Democratic ticket, nevertheless gave aid and comfort to the other two minority parties, avowing that as neither had a newspaper through which to present its views, the *Graphic* would undertake to give them full publicity. The Republican ticket was elected, but the leaders of discontent set about preparing a continuous system of agitation, partly through the organization of a Union Labor club which held meetings every week for discussion of economic issues, especially money and tariff.

The political campaign opened early in 1889 for a year in which only county officials were elected. The *Mercury,* May 30, took notice of the so-called People's party movement, insisting that the people were really quite unaware that such a "spontaneous uprising of the 'people' " was taking place. Rather it was a movement with two or three politicians as wet nurses and "the capital stock . . . is in its name . . . spelled with a capital P. Its assets will be based upon the supposed gullibility of the 'People'." A week later the *Mercury* again belabored the political "soreheads." In the November election the People's party polled a modest vote, but did not elect any candidates. Their boom was not yet ripe.

The next stage in the evolution of the political boom began in January, 1890, when the so-called Edwards County Farmers Alliance was organized at Kinsley with county-seat politicians as ringleaders. The unsuccessful People's party candidate for county treasurer in the election of the preceding November was chosen president, and the candidate for register of deeds secretary. In spite of the name this was merely the Kinsley subordinate alliance, and in a few weeks others were organized throughout the county. The real County Farmers Alliance was organized at a delegate convention held at Lewis February 17. The Alliance was represented as nonpolitical, and in that guise drew membership without respect to party lines. But as summer wore on it became clear that the leaders of the Union Labor party of 1888 and the People's party of 1889, combined with regular Democrats, were really in control and

were determined on using it for political purposes. During its early months the Alliance discussed agricultural problems, especially those touching the marketing of farm products, but later in the year they turned almost exclusively to the political issues of 1890 as they were drawn between the Republican and Democratic parties, the Alliances opposing the Republican party on tariff, trusts and money. In effect, the Alliances took essentially the Democratic position on all the main issues of the campaign.

In March the Kinsley Alliance, renamed Sunflower, adopted a political platform and pledged itself not to support any candidate who would not pledge himself to it. The state Alliance, later in the month, took similar ground. The Republican *Mercury* supported the Alliance movement through the early part of the year, but denounced the attempts of the political element, especially the Sunflower Alliance, to make it a political party. Finally, July 24, with the calling of Alliance nominating conventions to put candidates of their own into the field, the *Mercury* turned definitely against it, declaring that "The Alliance is now an opposition political party, and of course must be treated as such." The Kinsley Sunflower Alliance, not satisfied with casting votes against the Republican party ring in the county, voted August 30 a boycott of the *Mercury*. Shortly afterward, the County Alliance, acting as a People's party central committee, issued a call for a People's party convention to meet September 13 to nominate a county ticket. The outcome of the election in November was a clean sweep for the People's party in county offices, including a mortgage company lawyer for county attorney.

The aim and excuse for booming was to get rich quick. It was a speculation or, to put it more vulgarly, a form of gambling. In the boom the mania had passed through several phases, in each of which a particular feature had received a larger emphasis than others; the small-farmer boom based on free government land or cheap government and railroad land, then the townsite boom, the railroad boom, and the industrial and town-lot boom. With the collapse of the boom as a whole, the emotional defense of a disillusioned and nearly desperate people alternated between religion and politics; religion from January to planting time, and politics from harvest (or the time when harvest should have come) to November, but in the nineties it settled down to politics pretty much all the year round. The political program took the form of an appeal to the government to rescue them from their folly and from

the visitations of nature, and quickly to make them rich. They blamed their misfortunes on the political party in power, on somebody else, not on themselves. The protective tariff, they said, required the farmer to buy in a protected market, and sell in a free market; the trusts forced prices of finished products to the maximum, while manipulating the markets for raw materials so that the farmer received less than cost of production; the bankers, through control of credit and curtailment of the volume of money, beat down farm prices and wages, strangled the producing classes, and consolidated in their own hands the wealth of all.

These boomers being gamblers themselves found it not unnatural to use the gambling terminology in their political revolt, and, holding a bad hand, accused the dealer of dishonesty and called for a "new deal," [17] the People's party. It is admitted that this diagnosis of the movement is not complete, but in touching on the Populist movement as a phase of the boom, this aspect of it must be sharply emphasized. Undoubtedly the movement had two important aims, recovery of losses and reform, but the motives were badly mixed, and it is probably impossible ever to know exactly where to draw the dividing line between them.

While there can be no doubt that a higher price for farm products would have afforded the community a larger income, there is serious question whether a moderate difference in price through these years would have changed materially the situation as a whole. The outstanding fact for some ten years after 1886 was that the commercial surplus of farm products at any reasonable price would have yielded a wholly inadequate income on a normal capitalization of land, improvements and equipment, both urban and rural. Viewed in terms of the inflated capital values resulting from the boom, the situation was hopeless for most land holders, especially if in debt. Only a limited number of land owners, however, and mostly speculative buyers, had purchased farms at highly inflated figures. For the most part to the average resident farmer of Edwards county high price land was not the dominant factor, for in large measure they had received their farms free as homesteads or timber claims, or at low prices as preemption claims. If they were heavily in debt, it was for improvements, or because of insufficient income resulting from crop failures and low prices, or because of small farm units and insufficient working capital, or combinations of these elements. The question of the size of the farm unit scarcely received mention in the contemporary

17. Kinsley *Mercury*, May 30, 1889, "We the People."

press discussions. The quarter section farm predominated and relatively few men had adequate capital to operate that efficiently, while the minimum-sized unit should have been a half-section or larger.

The Populist enthusiasts among historians have been prone to interpret the party almost entirely in terms of reform, although they are not agreed on just the nature of the reform. In Edwards county it is significant, therefore, to test briefly the current hypothesis. On July 13, 1893, the People's party convention met at Larned to nominate a candidate for the judgeship of the sixteenth district. A bitter fight ensued in which the worst of old line party tactics were employed in selecting Fred S. Hatch, and Editor French, in reviewing the episode in the Populist *Graphic,* concluded with the vehement declaration that "the methods pursued by his [Hatch's] supporters in Pawnee county . . . were a disgrace to the party and an outrage on its members." Nevertheless on November 3, the last issue before election, the *Graphic* called on all Populists to vote the ticket straight. The same issue also praised W. S. Hebron, former *Mercury* editor and former postmaster, recently dismissed from government service for embezzlement, for his remarkable Populist speeches in which he "completely captured" his audience.

After some years in control of the county offices a Populist voter protested in the *Graphic* against the fact that no reform had been instituted. He said that he voted for the party because it promised to reduce taxation, but his taxes had been increased 33 per cent; county officers' fees were retained by the incumbents instead of being applied to reduce taxation. The *Graphic* defended the party record, one of the main points being that the officers were following strictly the law. The issue was then joined squarely by the protestor:

> The present officials are to blame because, as reformers, they have not made the slightest attempt to expose these old Demo-Republican laws. No, the moment they get to sucking the public teat, I am sorry to say, they went to "sawing wood" and said nothing, just like their Demo-Republican predecessors.[18]

Somewhat later one of the county officers was "smoked out" and replied in the *Graphic,* March 29, in a classic of reform literature. He warned that the discussion of salaries and fees "may create dissension in our party," and then continued:

> The article referred to above implies that it would greatly please him, or them, for the present incumbents of the county offices to preach their own funeral sermons and proclaim themselves fools at one and the same time

18. Kinsley *Graphic,* March 1, 8, 1895.

by taking less than the Republican statute makes it lawful for them to take. If there is a readjustment of salaries of county officers desired by the tax payers of this county, it will have to come through the People's party. The present law is Republican. I have worked for reform for 20 years, and will not be the last to advocate it now. Let us be active, harmonious and united, and never let it be said that the People's party lost their prestige in Edwards county by petty dissensions in their ranks.

If further illustration is necessary it may be found in the conduct of the register of deeds, T. H. Evans, in 1897. At that time the owner of a half-section of land in the Ohio City project sold it, but the fees which accumulated in the filing of the papers on the numerous tracts into which it had been subdivided amounted to more than $700. The purchaser then refused to accept delivery and though the transfer was not completed Evans sued the owner to recover his fees. Judgment was rendered in favor of Evans September 7, 1897, for $766, plus costs of $34.80, and the land was sold by the sheriff to satisfy the claim. Mrs. Evans bid it in at $200, the court accepted the bid, and the transfer was recorded May 14, 1898. Two days later the property was sold by Evans for a consideration of $1,200.[19]

A correspondent of the *Graphic* in the issue of May 31, 1895, put his finger on a vital spot in a jeremiad on the crop outlook of the season: "If it don't rain pretty soon and the wind stop blowing, we will have to have another campaign to redeem Kansas this fall." The election did not turn out that way, however, even though the harvest was nearly a failure. The People's party and the Republican party divided honors evenly in county offices. In other words Populism was slipping, and in the presidential campaign of 1896 they fused with the Democrats and did whip up a campaign to redeem Kansas. In order to accomplish this, and in the face of sharp minority protests, they threw overboard their reform platform and united the whole opposition to Republicanism on the single issue of silver.

The weakness of the People's party was not so much in the inadequacy of the reform program, even though that was defective, but rather in the "reformers." As individuals, they themselves had not been regenerated. Certainly nothing can be said in defense of the Republican county ring in Edwards county, but the Populists were little if any better. Whatever the good intentions in the beginning of the reform agitation, it turned out to be primarily a case

19. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1897. Records of the Register of Deeds, Edwards county, Kansas, for the south half of S. 29, T. 24, R. 18.

of the outs trying to oust the ins by capitalizing on the misfortunes of the post-boom period.

The liquidation of the boom and the accompanying readjustment was a long-drawn-out process, covering over a decade. The people never did quite learn that prosperity would not return next year with a big spring immigration, a bumper corn crop, or a new industrial plant of some kind. On January 10, 1889, the *Mercury* seemed almost convinced:

> It must be confessed that times are a trifle dull at present, but it should be remembered that it is only about six or eight weeks until the grass will start to grow.
>
> P. S. We have been consoling ourself with this reflection for a week, but now that we have reduced it to writing we can't for the life of us see where the consolation comes in. We don't propose to eat grass, by a darned sight.

Six weeks later one cannot be so sure that booming was over:

> The "booming" business seems to be over in Kansas and nobody cares to renew a boom of any kind; but the people of Kansas never let up on business enterprises, and are always keeping an eye on the main chance. Every town in Kansas, however small or unimportant, has something on foot to benefit the place. Salt wells, gas wells, coal mines, sugar mills, canning factories, foundries, creameries, paper mills and many other enterprises and industries are being considered and pushed forward. . . . It is this spirit of watchfulness and perseverence that keeps Kansas at the head of the procession.

The *Banner-Graphic* on March 15 was much less restrained in its article which opened with a similar condemnation of "wild speculation" and then urged the energetic development of "the grand and varied natural resources" of the country; gas, paint, salt and other substances—even diamonds might turn up.

To the disaster of drought and depression in western Kansas was added the opening of Oklahoma, which drew from the *Graphic* the second-hand, but no less fervent, comment that "Now that we have Oklahoma, hell is no longer a necessity." Kinsley and Edwards county sent forty or fifty of its citizens with good references to assist in the boom. The *Mercury* made the claim that there was not a farmer in the crowd. Kinsley was well represented in Guthrie, Lisbon, and Kingfisher. One lumber dealer loaded his stock in a car and joined the other forty-six lumber yards at Guthrie, while Hebron, in addition to editing the *Mercury* at Kinsley, edited a paper at Kingfisher. Although the Kansas boomers in Oklahoma had complete schooling in the art, and possessed absolute confidence in their extraordinary talents, they found it quite impossible to make a fortune out of nothing, and by the middle of the summer many

were returning. They found that even Kinsley offered greater prospects than Oklahoma.

During the spring of 1890 several conventions were held throughout southwest Kansas in the interest of an immigration bureau,[20] and in later years there were similar revivals, but all met the same fate. Population was moving out, not in. At the peak of the boom in 1887 the state census reported Kinsley population at 1,206 and the county at 4,717. Except for an increase in 1893, the decline in inhabitants was continuous until 1897, when the city figures were 681 and the county 3,024. The county did not again reach the boom numbers of the year 1887 until 1903, and the city of Kinsley until 1904.

In contrast with the boom period the economic history of the county in depression is concerned almost solely with agriculture. Kinsley, the city, settled back into the obscurity of a country village where farmers brought their eggs and butter on Saturdays and traded for a few groceries. Its only distinction was the doubtful one of a county court house with an empty treasury.

The certainty of the sorghum crop kept the sugar-mill issue alive, but not enough capital could be raised to modernize the machinery, so the plant operated only as a syrup mill. Kaffir corn was relatively new to western Kansas and the papers carried several articles during the spring in which its culture was discussed. There was no kaffir boom, but gradually the new plant became established as a reliable dry-weather forage and seed crop. For some time certain live-stock men had taken the initiative in coöperating with small farmers in horse breeding and in 1889 substantial shipments began to eastern points. Probably also part of the horses shipped were the better class of horses sacrificed by hard-pressed farmers to secure a little cash. These out-shipments of horses continued for the next two years. During this season several live-stock men entered heavily into the transient cattle business, buying their stock in Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona for grass fattening or even finishing in Edwards county. Many of these cattle were sold in small lots to farmers, or were handled by farmers on shares or a rental basis. In the following years, in addition to this type of business, Kinsley became for a time an important distributing point for western cattle to be placed in the eastern Kansas bluestem pastures or in the corn-belt feed lots.

The wheat yield of the county in 1889 was large, but the acreage was small, and the corn crop was fair, but the price almost nothing.

20. Kinsley *Banner-Graphic*, February 28, March 7, 1890; *Mercury*, March 8, 1890.

There was much talk of burning corn instead of coal. The Edwards County Bank in September offered loans to farmers to enable them to buy cattle to feed hoping thereby to aid its patrons to realize a larger income on the corn. Hay shipments were large during the winter and supplemented other sources of income. In the spring an attempt was made to interest farmers in raising castor beans, but they did not make anyone rich. The good wheat yield of 1889 was followed by another in 1890, and Turkey hard winter wheat was gaining the ascendancy. Short items in the papers indicate clearly the trend:

> The wheat crop of this county this year will relieve a number of farmers of quite a large amount of indebtedness and put them on their feet so that they can be a little more independent in the future.—*Graphic,* June 27, 1890.
>
> An immense crop of wheat will be sown this fall, as it is the only thing a man can rely on to meet his taxes and interest.—*Graphic,* July 25, 1890.

The *Mercury* reported August 21 that the wheat acreage would at least be quadrupled over the last year, and "taking into consideration the prices that farmers are realizing for their grain this year it is by odds the most prosperous of any in the history of the county." Kinsley implement men were well pleased with this development because they sold an unusual amount of machinery, especially drills.

General conditions were not as favorable as these optimistic reports indicate. Corn and feed crops were short and before spring live stock was reported suffering from the severity of the winter and from scarcity of feed. During 1891 dry weather and chinch bugs damaged all crops, but the short yields were offset to some degree by high prices during August and early September. Later in the fall prices of both grain and live stock collapsed. Among the newer experiments induced by these conditions was an emphasis on irrigation and alfalfa as forms of insurance against complete loss of farm income.

The drift toward wheat and the prolonged depression caused absentee landowners to take more aggressive steps to realize some income from their unsalable holdings. The years 1892 and 1893 were especially noteworthy for the amount of sod broken for these absentees. The temporary increase in population and the enlarged farming operations of 1893 caused a turn in the tide of the horse business and heavy importations from the East were recorded. Then crop failure stopped the movement and outshipments were resumed the following year.

The time came when even wheat did not produce and again ex-

periment was the order of the day. Broom corn had been fairly certain as a supplementary money crop, but in 1894 the price was abnormally low. Renewed interest was taken in pump irrigation and in alfalfa. An attempt was made in 1895 to start hemp culture. The cheese factory was revived by Kinsley business men to replace the coöperative plant of earlier years, but most farmers had disposed of their milk cows in order to raise wheat during the wheat boom and the milk supply within reasonable distance of this factory was insufficient.

The crop failures of 1894 brought disaster to a large part of Kansas, and government relief seemed to be the only way out. The legislature acted accordingly. Among the relief measures was one authorizing the distribution of seed to farmers in the form of loans in the fourth, sixth and seventh congressional districts; one for the distribution of coal; and another requiring local officials to make fireguards at public expense. By March 8, Edwards county had advanced coal to 100 families in amounts ranging from 500 to 800 pounds, and ninety-nine applications for seed were filed. By a perversion of the fireguard law, local officers in western counties decided to make fireguards in the spring instead of in August in order to get protection, to save moisture and to get money into circulation among farmers. The first two allegations were probably excuses, while the last was the reason.

The winter wheat crop was reported from South Brown township in the *Graphic*, March 29, 1895, as "wheat dull; twenty-five cents per acre asked, no bids, no sales." Root blight had killed most of the wheat. South Brown reported again May 31: "We have no wheat that will make twenty bushels to the acre, but we have 'scads' of it that will go twenty acres to the bushel." The pastures by this time were reported dry enough to burn, and the same correspondent reported further "Weather cold—sand drifting—people blue—fruit killed or blown away—hurrah for Kansas." In July he suggested again, with his usual shrewd cynicism, that "If wheat should bring $1 per bushel, we suppose the farmers of Edwards county will sell every cow, pig and chicken they have, and try to get up another overproduction." [21]

Nature and the price system suceeded, however, in preventing both dollar wheat and overproduction. On August 2 the *Graphic* reported that the grasshoppers were stripping the leaves from the trees. Two weeks later, the smut damage to corn was estimated

21. *Graphic*, July 12, 1895.

at one-third. As late as September 27 the local items reported "No wheat sown yet, and but little preparation made in that direction, owing to dry weather," but October 11 the Lewis items recorded rains that put the ground in fine condition, while South Brown commented that "This cool, dry weather is hard on flies, grasshoppers, chintz bugs, Republicans and other pests." Yields for the season were reported at the same time as two bushels per acre for wheat and mostly about ten for corn. The best market for such corn as was raised was the Laird ranch near the east line of the county, which paid seventeen cents per bushel for ear corn. During the winter of 1895-1896 some outside relief came to this part of Kansas from the Santa Fé railroad which was engaged in laying new steel. Homesteaders came to Kinsley from as far south as Oklahoma to earn a little cash by working on the steel gang.

The year 1896 was similar only in a different manner. Among the new crops offered to the farmer was peanuts, but there was little opportunity to make them a money crop. The early summer was dry and damaged early corn, but during the remainder of the crop season rainfall was favorable. Irrigation plants were idle. The curse of the season was of different origin. Insects of all kinds appeared in appalling numbers. Possibly the extremely dry, hot weather of preceding seasons had upset the balance in the insect world by killing off certain species that normally preyed upon others. Whatever the explanation they ate "everything . . . green, except the inhabitants," according to the South Brown correspondent. Grasshoppers finished what the dry weather left of the early corn as well as the peach crop. Whitehead army worms cut off the wheat heads just before they matured. Potato bugs ruined the potato crop and disappeared only when there was nothing else left to eat. Red ants damaged the corn, aided by cut worms and grasshoppers. South Brown challenged any township to "show more worms, greater variety, and better quality." In the midst of calamity the South Brown Populist cynic pretended to be hopeful that the next season would be "free from all kinds of pests" under "McKinley and protection." The wheat that had promised twenty bushels per acre yielded five, and in late October the grasshoppers and drought were playing havoc with the next year's crop. Corn yields made about 70 per cent of the expected crop.

Everybody was agreed on at least one thing, that the famed Kansas "Eyetalian climate" was not performing according to the specifi-

cations of the real-estate agents. Instead of man limiting himself to the adaptation of his mode of living to the conditions provided by nature, he is perennially cursed with the urge to change and to improve upon nature to make it conform to his wishes by rain-making, irrigation and timber growth. Private advisers had been urging throughout the decade that farmers irrigate and plant orchards and windbreaks. The state government now revised its irrigation law and the government was again aiding and abetting man's conspiracy by advertising that forest trees would be furnished free, except freight, to all who would apply to the commissioner of forestry at Dodge City. Black locust trees predominated in the tree stock offered, but other varieties included on the list were honey locust, white ash, box elder, alianthus and elm.[22]

If Kansas people could have thought of other crops to experiment with no doubt they would have given them a trial. At that time the agricultural colleges and experiment stations had not developed far enough to have accomplished much toward doing this experimental work under a system of governmental subsidy. The farmers did their own experimenting, for the most part. A decade of drought had not resulted in the discovery of any crops that could survive with certainty. Cattle, hard winter wheat, sorghum and kaffir corn, while not drought proof, had made the best showing, although the verdict against the corn tradition, associated naturally with live stock, had not been decisive.[23]

22. *Ibid.*, November 29, 1895.

23. An amount of land in cultivation in Edwards county is given in the following table compiled from the reports of the State Board of Agriculture. As the figures given there include prairie grass under fence it has been necessary to adjust the printed figures to determine the number of acres under the plow.

Year	*Acres*	*Year*	*Acres*	
1883	15,726	1891	54,172	
1884	22,364	1892	62,047	
1885	29,904	1893	72,908	
1886	50,621	1894	79,556*	[69,556] ?
1887	33,777	1895	93,441	
1888	39,177	1896	89,331*	[79,331] ?
1889	44,588	1897	84,800	
1890	31,200	1898	94,706	

* There are serious defects in most of these statistics, and some years are clearly out of line. The declines in field crops in 1887 and 1890 are possibly too extreme. The figures for 1894 and 1896 are unquestionably defective. The item most clearly out of line in the computations is that of prairie under fence. The figures for the five years most concerned are given below:

Year	*Acres*	*Year*	*Acres*	
1893	16,195	1896	8,810	[18,810] ?
1894	2,837	[12,837] ?	1898	30,102
1895	13,759			

It does not seem reasonable that the fluctuation in fencing could be so great from year to year, otherwise the farmers must have spent most of their time tearing down and re-

Bank failures, tax delinquency, tax evasion, tax deeds, mortgages, stay laws and redemption laws were painful subjects, but were the intimate and persistent companions of Edwards county people during this dry decade. The historian is more fortunate than they, inasmuch as he can exclude such subject matter altogether from his narrative or limit the space allotted it for his particular purpose. Both defensive devises are resorted to here. The first bank failure was that of the Edwards County Bank in October, 1890, followed by the Exchange Bank in 1893. The *Graphic*, February 16, 1894, carried the announcement of the dissolution of the First National Bank and its reorganization as a state bank with a reduced capital. The reasons for this action were set forth in a short statement which is highly significant to the historian of the national banking system:

> We have taken this step because the limited amount of banking business in this section does not pay the expenses incident to the National system and leave us a reasonable interest on the amount of capital required by law to be invested in order to retain a national charter.

The personal property valuations in Edwards county for purposes of taxation in 1883, before the boom, totaled $112,844. This item rose to $309,551 in 1886 and then decreased to a low of $32,307 in 1896. In Wayne township at one time only three persons paid

building fences. The figures in brackets are suggested as being more nearly in accordance with conditions as reflected in the press.

The changes in the field-crop program in Edwards county by decades is tabulated below, in the average acreage per farm:

Year	*Corn, acres.*	*Oats, acres.*	*Winter wheat, acres.*
1885	16.5	7.22	4
1895	40.6	16.4	97.8
1905	45.2	5.5	145.0

The above table gives some indication of the increase in acreage per farm under the plow for the decade, as well as the shift to wheat as the principal crop.

The average yields of corn, oats and wheat for the county is given in the table below:

Year.	*Corn, bushels*	*Oats, bushels*	*Winter wheat, bushels.*
1885	32	35	20
1886	25	25	5
1887	15	20	10
1888	10	13	11
1889	33	34	20
1890	10	25	19
1891	28	28	14
1892	10	29	16
1893	5	2	1.1
1894	5	0.15	0.1
1895	10	15	2
1896	12	3	3
1897	10	17	12
1898	13	24	9
1899	24	17	6
1900	13	16	16
1901	5	14	14
1902	14	16	7
1903	15	22	16
1904	15	22	10
1905	28	25	14