

# **Samuel Bassett**

“Nebraskans I Have Known, III Samuel Clay Bassett” by Addison E. Sheldon, *Nebraska History Quarterly Magazine*, Vol. XX, No. 3, July-September, 1939, page 159-168.

## **Sheldon Meets Bassett**

The first met during 1897 legislative session. Bassett was secretary of the Nebraska Dairymen’s Association. He was one of the founders of the Dairymen’s Association in 1885.

Sheldon was a member of the House Finance, Ways and Means Committee. The issues before them were:

1. Request for \$2000 for support of the Nebraska Dairymen’s Association.
2. Request for \$6000 to establish a Dairy Farm School ion the Ag Campus of the State University.

(They were successful and the Nebraska School of Agriculture operated until 1929 when it merged with the College of Agriculture.)

There was opposition to all requests for funding of new items in appropriation bills by the Populists who had a legislative majority and had been elected on a platform of rigid economy. Nebraska was just coming out of a financial depression and crop failures and there were no government programs like in the ‘30’s.

Also there was strong prejudice against “book larning” by farmers in Nebraska.

Bassett was described by Sheldon AS “a practicing teat-puller on his dairy farm near Gibbon.”

So it was a difficult struggle to get this funding approved.

## **Bassett in the State Legislature**

Served two terms -1885 and 1911

Republican

First trip to a Republican State Convention – All delegates were provided free tickets to ride the Railroad to get there and then were expected to vote as the railroad said.

## 1911 – difficult decision on a bill to call for vote on moving the state capital out of Lincoln

City of Lincoln had voted out saloons in May 1910. The liquor power in Nebraska wanted to punish the city by removing the capital.

State Constitution required a vote by the people. The theory of those who wrote the Constitution in 1875 (and wanted the capital to remain in Lincoln) was that Lincoln could get together enough support not only from within the city but also from other parts of Nebraska which would oppose any city who was challenging Lincoln. Rivals of the challenging city would not want the new trade center competition.

Liquor interests drew up a bill providing that in this election by the people the names of all the cities who wanted to be capital would be listed and people would vote for the city they wanted. If Lincoln did not get the majority that would mean the majority of the people did not want the capital in Lincoln, even if no other city got the majority. Lincoln would then be eliminated and not included in the follow-up election.

Kearney was an active candidate and political leaders here had it all figured out how to win after Lincoln was eliminated.

Bassett saw through the plan. In the first place he thought having the vote was bad publicity for the state. Second, travel and trade routes had already been built on the premise that Lincoln was the permanent location of the capital. Third, he did not believe Kearney would be selected.

He knew this was just a move by the “wets” to get Lincoln. The day of the final vote, after the lobby and promoter lobbyist had applied their pressure and all his political friends and supporters Buffalo County had visited, a large package was handed to him on the floor of the Legislature. In it was a petition from home with 1200 signatures asking him to vote for the bill.

When his name was called, he stood up and said “No!”

### **Bassett as a Founder**

1871 - One of the founders of his community

1871 – secretary of the first Republican County Convention

1875 – one of founders and first officers of Buffalo County Agricultural Society

1911 got bill Passed for teaching agriculture in rural schools

1885 – one of founders and first president of the Nebraska Dairymen’s Association. This organization was instrumental in the revolution of Nebraska from a grain state to “cow country”

1910 – one of the leaders in founding of “The Farmer’s Congress” an association where farmers of both radical and conservative opinions could meet and debate the issues in a friendly format, helping to pave the way for changes in farm society.

1916 – Founder of the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement

### **Bassett as a Scientist**

Had interest in farming, forestry, social science, government. A natural observer and recorder of facts.

### **Bassett as a Literary Character**

Was a writer

Started with letters to local newspapers, speeches

Wrote two-volume History of Buffalo County

1914-1923 – Wrote “Echo Farm Musings” a column which appeared each Monday morning in the *Nebraska State Journal*.

### **Imagination and Humor**

Liked to surprise his friends – put friends initials in adhesive tape on Jonathan apples so when they ripened the initials would stand out.

Once when up on ladder in orchard doing this he fell, was injured, and thereafter was confined to his home.

Now he read a great deal and wrote. Developed a religious philosophy which was nature based. His many friends from across the state would stop in to visit.

~~Died February 9, 1907~~ that's the date of his wife's death

1926 – his portrait was hung in the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement

## **Samuel Bassett Probate Record**

BCHS Archives

Died 14 March 1926

Heirs – 4 daughters, 3 sons

Mary

June

Samuel B. Jr.

Martha

Laura

A. Bronson

Clark

Will dated 7 April 1921

1. Pay funeral expenses, debts, and estate admin. Expenses
2. June & Laura got personal property. It was not to be sold or disposed of at public auction
3. Each grandchild gets \$25
4. June & Laura got S1/2 SE1/4 6-9-13 – 80 acres
5. Other 5 children got N1/2 SE1/4 6-9-13 – 80 acres

6. Dividing line of this total quarter section, known as Echo Farm, "is a line of box elder trees as now growing and extension of east and west."
7. A. Bronson gets gold watch for his lifetime. Then it goes to Samuel P., son of Samuel B. [Samuel P. was Samuel B. Sr.'s grandson]
8. Heirs pay expenses listed in #1, indebtedness to be charged upon the real estate. (tombstone & lettering cost \$18.00)
9. Family plot in Riverside Cemetery at Gibbon to be free burial for all descendants.
10. Clark & Bronson appointed executor

The  $\frac{1}{4}$  section valued at \$20,000

Personal property valued at \$426.56

Lincoln Highway Group

W. E. Amos, Proprietor

Auto Supplies & Repair Work

Undertaking & Funeral Directing

Bassett funeral expenses paid \$210.00, paid in full

19 grandchildren listed with birth dates and place of residence

Seven grandchildren of legal age each got their \$25

Other 12 were to collect theirs as each turned 21.

The \$300 was paid by the estate to the court, received by J. M. Easterling, county judge. Letter sent with the check was written by estate lawyer, John Dryden, "from which you are to pay the twelve minor grandchildren as they reach their majority." – Jan. 11, 1927

Note from the judge to the Exchange Bank in Gibbon, Jan. 11, 1927, enclosing the check for deposit at interest. "Make certificate to run to County Judge, Buffalo Co. and return to me. Mark on it Bassett minor legatees."

1. 1<sup>st</sup> minor, George Wayne, turned 21 on 23 Mar 1927. His father wrote a letter asking about the \$25. Judge replied saying the money was in a 6 month CD at 4% interest, to wait until the time expires.
2. 9 Aug 1928 – Judge asked for 1/12 of the total (\$318.90) which was \$26.58. Deposit the rest in another CD.

The 12 grandchildren:

Lucia Mevis Prontz – Pd \$26.58 on 8-11-1928

George Wayne Prontz – Pd \$27.63 on 8-30-1929

Edward Morey Pontz – Pd \$27.63 on 8-30-1929

Horace Samuel Prontz – Pd \$7.35 and assigned 1/9 interest on balance due from bank. The \$7.35 was 25% of his money due + interest

Helen Lucia Prontz – Pd 7.35 with promise to get \$20 more when the Old Exchange Bank was liquidated. That would equal 1/8 of the amount remaining.

Henry Harrison Prontz

Barbara Bassett Prontz

Marion Phillip Prontz

Benjamin Dwight Prontz

Samuel Clark Bassett

Henry Darwood Bassett

Lucia May Bassett

Law suit filed against the judge for nonpayment

There were 9 claims remaining - seven for \$40.75 each; Horace & Helen for \$20.08 each.

\$299.93 was needed to pay the claims, if granted

Settlement – 17 Aug 1938 - \$108.08 total was received from the judge in full settlement.