

## Odessa

**Name** – 1<sup>st</sup> – Crowellton after the first homesteaders in 1871, Dan A. & D. Allan Crowell  
2<sup>nd</sup> – to Odessa on Feb. 29, 1876 possibly after Hadassah Seaman (family story)

**Early stations** on the U P route in what is now Buffalo County

Shelton

\*Gibbon Switch

\*Kearney Station (later renamed Buda) closest to Ft. Kearny

\*Stevenson's Siding (later called Alfalfa Center)

Crowellton (later renamed Odessa)

\*Elm Creek

\*original

**Post Office** – 4<sup>th</sup> along U P line

Crowellton, established Dec. 6, 1872 with Edward Delahunty as Post Master

Crowellton was only a place where mail was thrown off.

(Coming from the west) If the conductor was cooperative, he would let passengers off but sometimes he would make them get off at Stevenson's Siding, three miles east.

Stevenson had a section house, Crowellton had a post office

Haddasah Seaman managed the P O after she and her husband arrived in 1873

**School** - School District # 12 organized October 17, 1872.

(Only district in county west of here was Elm Creek Dist. 9)

(Dist. 11 was Buda)

The district included all of range No. 17.

[The whole column of townships second from the west including Sartoria, Scott, Grant and Odessa]

In July 1873 (school census time) there were 18 children of school age and that J. Marsh Grant was director of the district.(board pres.)

First teacher - Thomas Maloney

Second teacher - George D. Aspinwall

**School House** - Almost the first building erected in Odessa was a schoolhouse

Wind promptly blew it away, leaving the floor.

It was as immediately rebuilt, and Mr. Maloney resumed his school.

**Religion** – Mr. Greenman and others started a Sunday school which met at the schoolhouse. It was attended by everybody in the neighborhood.

Mr. Lord, a theological student, preached there sometimes.

J. B. Vincent, homesteader, wanted to preach; he was a religious fanatic, came to the meeting with a 12-pound clasped Bible. Mr. Lord happened to state that the Bible was not originally written in English; this Mr. Vincent indignantly denied.

Another religious fanatic, a man by the name of Mitchell, used to speak at meetings held during a revival by Reverend Mr. Summers (afterward pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kearney). He would become greatly excited--a soul under conviction. One day detectives came out from Illinois and arrested him for murder.

There were several Evangelical churches in the early years ... Odessa in 1885

For many years Moses Sydenham had conducted church services and organized Sunday Schools in the settlements of Kearney and Buffalo Counties. In 1895, he took on "special Missionary Work" at Cottonville, a cluster of tenant houses near the Cotton Mill. Among the three hundred people in this settlement "some were desecrating the Sabbath by 'tearing around' like a lot of heathen." Mr. Sydenham offered to conduct a mission service and take a Sunday School class. The Sunday School increased to 83 from 25.

When attendance began to dwindle among the younger members, they called in Rev. Gill, a "Revivalist" preacher from Odessa. The evangelist "shouted and sweated to good effect". An evangelical church of sixty members was established and an old building moved from Kearney was to serve as a church.

**Social Activities** - Prof. D. B. Worley of Gibbon taught singing school at the schoolhouse in the winter of 1874.

A literary society was started the same year in which budding oratory was encouraged.

Amateur theatricals, attended by wagon loads of young people from Elm Creek, were the gala occasions.

Dancing parties were not infrequent at the homes of the settlers in both communities, Odessa and Elm Creek.

## **The People Who First Settled Odessa Area**

**First homesteaders:** Dan A. Crowell and D. Allen Crowell, in 1871

D. Allen Crowell - prominent minister in the Methodist Church

Served as pastor of the Methodist Church at Kearney in 1873-4

“Crowell was evidently a man of strong conviction and great courage, for in 1874, when a prominent member of the church was alleged to be guilty of irregularities in connection with the building of the church, the pastor promptly preferred charges against him. They were sustained and the recalcitrant brother was excommunicated.”

Dan A. Crowell - county superintendent  
county commissioner  
taught in the Kearney schools.

**Other prominent people who settled in the Odessa area:**

**George D. Aspinwall** - first to be elected and serve as clerk of the District Court

**J. E. Chidester** - county commissioner.

**George W. Tovey** - an 1872 settler - large of frame--brown-eyed and slow of speech.

He would never commit himself; would always qualify every statement he made, and was a favorite of the young people.

He and his homesteading partner, whose name is forgotten, would have responded more often to social demands, but they were obliged to accept alternately, as they possessed but one white shirt between them.

**Mr. and Mrs. Theadore Knox** - settled at Gibbon in the winter of 1871-72

(Orig. colony Apr. 1871)

Kept boarders during the period in which the courthouse was being erected

Moved the family to their homestead claim near Crowellton in March, 1873.

Finished claim started by George Tovey

Mrs. Knox selected Odessa to take the place of Crowellton as township name.

**The Grant Family - Mrs. Susan Grant, 4 daughters & 2 sons** (2 sons had died)

**Sons & foster brother** - came in 1872

**Susan and daughters** – came in 1873 from Indiana, P O in her home at one time, social center

Daughters:

**Hadassah Grant Seaman** – came 2-13-1873 & homesteaded. Moved to Kearney. Had her brother's books which she lent out before library was built. Was first librarian. 1890-99.

**John D. Seaman** - served as state senator, 1879, Republican

Helped secure first water rights for Kearney Canal

& locating State Industrial School at Kearney

Built concrete block houses (stone houses) & Stone School

**Adah Alfretta Grant Webb** (Mrs. E. Richard.) – came in 1873, finished proving up John's homestead when he left. Mother of Fred & Milton Webb (Webb's we knew/know are descendants)

**Mary Estelle Grant Scott** – came in 1873, Myron Scott's mother

**Helen Marr Grant Skelley** - came in 1873

**Sons:**

**Ben Ami** – died of measles in Civil War

**Bunyan** – (youngest) died of consumption

**John Marshall Grant (Marsh)** – Brought his library of 300 volumes acquired at fire sale

**Silas Wright Grant**

Irish family of 3 orphans, two were Thomas & Maggie Maloney. Came to Odessa

**Maggie Maloney** - married Silas Grant

**Thomas Maloney** - one of the first licensed teachers in the county. Left Odessa in the spring of 1877. He has lived in Washington and Arkansas, and Arizona where he was in Arizona legislature.

# Odessa

## **The Place**

Name

Railroad Stations

Post Office

School

Religion

Social Activities

## **The People**

Crowell

Aspinwall

Chidester

Tovay

Knox

The Grant Family