

The Kearney Boom

Some Factors Leading to the Boom

1880's Events Leading up to the Boom Period

* **1. Good weather**
 "Rain follows the plow"

2. Homesteaders
a. Native born Americans

From east – Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana

Racine Land Seekers, ... stopped at the 'Becket' house about one block south of the U P track, ... February 1878

2nd or 3rd move for many – census records of children's births

Civil War veterans – settled at home, no land available

Been away from home once, not afraid to leave again

6 GAR Posts – Kearney (2)

Joe Hooker Post #28 – Shelton

G K Warren Post #113 – Gibbon

Cedar Mountain Post #220 – Ravenna

Jewett Post #228 - Miller

b. Immigrants – When did your immigrant ancestors arrive?

Banghart & Robbins – pre-Revolutionary War

Anderson & Jepson – 1870 (Swedish crop failure in 1869)

Ratsch - 1870

Raddatz – April 1880 Jepson – 1880

Beulke – 1887

Answered RR & Land company ads for free land.

Bad Economies (crop failures)

Wars (1860's & 1870's) Prussia vs. Austria then

Franco-Prussia war – continued military service required.

1870's – Kearney had been the junction through which transcontinental travelers passed. Until the B&MRR completed their track from Hastings to Holdrege and on west.

<h4 style="text-align: center;">Some Factors Leading to the Boom</h4> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weather 2. Homesteaders <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Native born b. Immigrant 3. Kearney Canal

1880's – Kearney became a rural town supporting an agricultural economy.

* **3. Kearney Canal – (See June-July 1978 BT & Doraleen Weed)**

For Irrigation or Industry?

<p>Kearney Canal Irrigation or Industry? Financed by city or privately?</p>
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- First mentioned by homesteader in Elm Creek area in 1873
- First proposed to Co. Board of Supervisors by farmers in Jan 1876
- Kearney Board of Trade
 - Organized in April 1881
 - Considered Canal at second meeting –
 - (a) water for city [cleaner then?]
 - (b) power for milling & manufacture
- Controversies
 - Usage – power, fire protection, irrigation
 - Financing – 1) City or 2) private or 3) partnership of both

* **Joint Effort**

Kearney Canal & Supply Co. \$100,000 capital @ \$20/share; 5,000 shares

Had to be 2/3 subscribed,

But 25% paid to come into existence (\$25,000)

(A sign of problems to come)

City of Kearney – \$30,000 bonds

Authorized in city election

<p>Financing Kearney Canal & Supply Co. \$100,000 – 5,000 shares @ \$20 City of Kearney \$30,000 – bond issue</p>
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Construction

1882 – Started in fall – 2 miles completed before winter

1883 – Continued in Spring – 12 more miles

1884 – More work done, running out of money

Conflicting reports on -

How much had been spent

If it was done or not

1885 – George W. Frank bought 4/5 stock in Kearney Canal & Supply Co
(\$80,000)

More work done on canal,

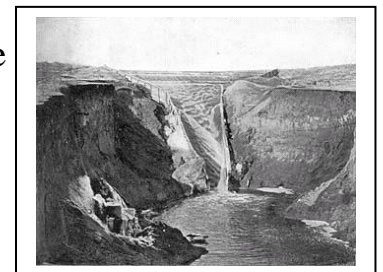
Contract let to drive pilings in embankment of reservoir

* 1886 – Canal was finished in June but tailrace was not quite done

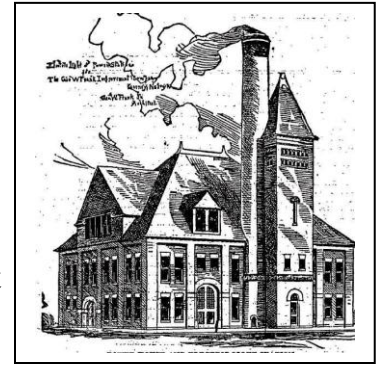
(Wasteway – where water runs over when reservoir is full)

Washed out

Soon repaired



- 1887 – Construction of the ice house on Kearney Lake
 - Kearney Canal & Supply Co.
- * Got franchise to build an electric plant
 - Kearney Electric Light & Power Company formed
 - First electricity from steam engine until power plant was completed
 - Done September 1888 - 75¢ per lamp per month



1888 - H. D. Watson (and maybe some other eastern investors) bought 1/2 Frank interests

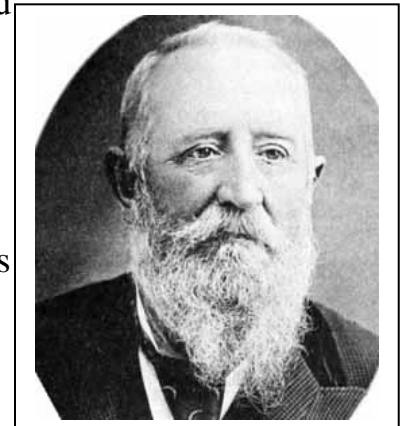
Three Men Instrumental in Building the Boom

(Ever wonder who brought George W. Frank to Kearney?)

* 1. William W. Patterson –

- 1831 – Born in Warsaw, NY.
- 1838 – Orphaned at 7
- 1838 – 1843 – Influential Patterson’s in his life
 - Lived with Uncle Peter – a judge (5 yrs, to age 12)
- 1844 – 1845 – Attended a seminary school (2 years, to age 14)
- 1846 – 1847? – Uncle George – guardian & ex-gov. of NY (1 year, age 15)
- 1847? – 1849? – attended academy to prepare for college (about 17)
- 1849? – 1856 - Worked in dry goods store instead of going to college (probably 18 years old)
- Store owned by Cousin Augustus Frank
- Got military and engineering training in “Nat. Guard”

- 1856 - Age 25 – Minneapolis – saw water power potential
- Real estate business before & after Civil War
- (Injured in war)
- 1870 – Corning, IA – health
- C. B. & Q Railroad, founded Creston, sold lots
- 1871 – Laid out Lowell for B & MR RR
- Tested soil in area, found underground water
- Reported findings to D N Smith
- Came to Kearney to stay that summer



1872, Feb. – Superintendent of Collins Sunday School

Feb 25 1872 Mr Collins preached today with good affect from Isaiah 2 chap 2 verse And then proposed to organize a Sabbath School Col Patterson tried to elect him for Superintendent but Mr C had the plan and put P in before he was scarcely aware of it.. .. [Louisa's diary]

1879 – Married by Asbury to Pattie Giddings, seamstress from Lincoln

Engaged in real estate business [as in Minneapolis]

For Railroad [South Platte Land Agency]

For Perkins & Harford

Privately – bought town lots, farm land

– part of ne ½ Sec 10 – s. of 11th, tailrace goes through

[Yanney Park area]

– quarter section along railroad 8 miles east toward Gibbon

1893 – died and is buried in Kearney

(Augustus Frank, his cousin, was brother to George W. Frank

George was living in Corning, IA when Patterson moved there.)

*2. George W. Frank –

1830 – Also born in Warsaw, New York -

Mother – Jane Patterson Frank

1854 – Had a dry goods store with brother Augustus

(Patterson worked here in 1856)

Also had land dealings

* 1868 – built a house in Warsaw – 2 ½ story, Italianate

The first “Frank House” - Remodeled in 1901

1869 – Left Warsaw and went to Corning, IA

Corning, laid out in 1857, dormant for 12 yrs

Built another mansion by an artificial lake he created

Considered the largest lake in eastern Iowa.

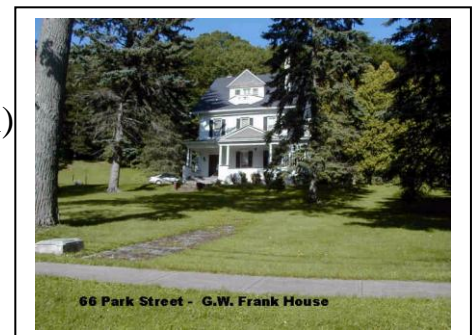
1885, August – Purchased half interest in Canal

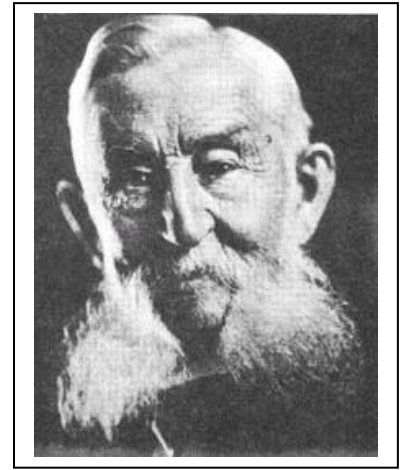
(Probably recommended by cousin, Patterson)

Moved to Kearney

1889 – Built a 3rd home

1906 – Died at the home of his daughter in Lincoln





* 3. Henry D. Watson

Can't find anything about him before he came to Kearney or what brought him here.

Said to be from Greenfield, Mass.

1888 – Bought ½ of Frank holdings

– Canal Co., power plant, & 2000 acres of land

1889 – Took charge of the Watson Ranch [unknown # of acres]

Proprietor of *Kearney Enterprise* newspaper, *Hub* rival

Made frequent trips East to bring potential investors to Kearney

Had many connections with people with money in the east

1895 – Boom was over – Frank & Watson separated businesses

Post-Boom – continued to manage ranch but empire fell apart

1905 - Cultivated friendship of writer Gene Stratton Porter.

He & wife visited her and husband in Chicago.

The Porters visited the Watson Ranch.

He showed her around

She took photos for article for *Country Life in America* magazine

His best fields (Industrial School's best fields)

His celery farm (Black's celery farm)

The ranch home (Frank House)

The ranch manager's home (Juan Boyle's house – country club house)

Lawsuit followed publication

Some files say Watson had to pay damages

Magazine did not print retraction

When asked “How did you manage to interest Eastern capital in this project?”

He said in a joking manner, “There is a sucker born every minute, all I need is one a week.”

Frank & Watson Business Differences

– must have been going on almost from the time Watson bought in

1895 – settled through arbitration

* Frank got:

Frank Improvement Co. properties
Canal & Water Supply Co.
Electric Co.
Electric Street Railway Co.

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- Canal & Water Supply Co.
- Electric Co.
- Electric Street Railway Co.

* Watson got:

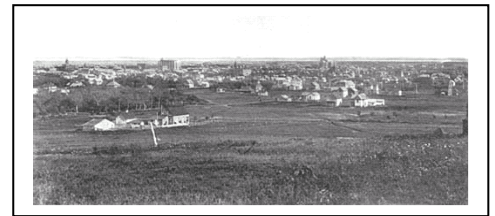
Heavy holdings of city property
West Improvement Co
Kearney Land & Investment Co
Capt. Anderson & Keck ranches
[aka Watson Ranch]
Various farmland from Kearney
to Stevenson Station

Watson got:

- Heavy holdings of city property
- West Improvement Co
- Kearney Land & Investment Co
- Capt. Anderson & Keck ranches and various farm land from Kearney to Stevenson Station

But did any of this have any value at that time?

* **Life in Kearney during the Boom**



Boom Period Society

Many who came here were young men who had graduated from eastern colleges. They came with their ideas of social customs.

Opera House and Midway Hotel provided facilities for their events.

Winter parties in hall over the *Enterprise* or at the Midway

Pavilion at Kearney Lake – Dance above, store private boats below
- Toboggan slide beside it

Big GAR reunion summer of 1889 –
Reenacted battle of *Monitor & Merrimac* on Kearney Lake

Card parties and dancing parties in homes
Parties of one kind or another weekly

Shoe social - All ladies behind a screen, tips of shoes showing.
Gentlemen choose a shoe.

Organizations and Societies

“The Assembly” – A club at the Midway

Tennis, croquet, riding in summer

Dancing club in winter

Pavilion built on west 26th St. –

Had observation tower on top, equipment storage below

Tennis and croquet courts laid out

Bachelors Protective Union – an active organization of young single men

Benevolent, Secret & Other Societies (in city directory)

[No TV for evening entertainment. Go to a lodge or club meeting]

Kearney Chamber of Commerce

State Businessmen’s Men’s Assoc

Modern Woodman of America Hope Camp [an insurance company]

[Reminds me of present day investment club]

Kearney Typographical Union #109 [more than one newspaper in town]

Bricklayers Union #7

Knights of Labor

Ministerial Association

Preachers’ Aid Society West Conf. of M. E. Church

National Guard

Sedgwick Post #1 GAR – three groups

Soldiers & Sailors County Assoc. (met at GAR hall)

Daughters of Veterans of America

Kearney Boating & Park Association

Kearney Musical Society

Masonic organizations – 6 divisions

Knights of Pythius organizations

Dilworth Assembly #2, K of P sisterhood

Oddfellows – 5 different organizations including

Daughters of Rebecca & Naomi Rebecca
Foreman Lodge #12 of A O of U W
I O of G T
Jem Lodge #14

WCTU
Women's Relief Corps of Nebraska

YMCA
Ladies Auxillary YMCA

Interesting Events

March 23, 1890

--All parties having manure are permitted to haul the same and throw it on the nearest corner of the Industrial School farm. That is, of course, if it is not filled with tin cans and other rubbish that would injure a farm. They are glad to get it on this farm and persons should haul it there as it is as close as places they usually find.

[Predecessor to dumping couches, etc. in road ditches?]

April 10, 1890 – Courthouse being constructed

The statue of justice was placed on top of the new courthouse.

Nine feet tall, blindfolded, balance in left hand, sword in right.

June 12, 1890

The buffalo head was placed in position on the courthouse. Made of sheet metal.

Uncle Henry Fieldgrove likes a joke as well as any man in the world...

Sat. Henry Fieldgrove was in Kearney [lived near Shelton] and he called at the police court to see the boys and swap yarns. The bailiff was sitting with his legs crossed. Fieldgrove slipped up and clamped a ball and chain on his ankle. Ball and chain were not in use because the key had been lost. They had to go to a blacksmith to have them cut off.

* Midway Hotel fire – March 24, 1890

Businesses in the hotel:

Barber shop Saloon
Hatter Tailor
Attorney Physician
9 real estate offices
Insurance agent

[The Frank Enterprises:] - George W. Frank Improvement Co
 Electric Light Co
 Kearney Land and Improvement Co



Fire started on roof caused by sparks from the smoke stack.

1 fatality – [125 guests & employees]

Worden Dramatic Co. staying there

Harry Deming was property and baggage man.

Jumped feet first but hit a wire which turned him.

An awning was held to catch him

He fell through landing on his head
& side of face.

Lived until 11 p.m.

Widowed Mother lived in South Omaha.



* March 27, 1890 – 3 Days Later

Coroner's Jury verdicts:

1. On March 24th in the morning **Harry Deming** died by jumping from his room when the Midway Hotel burned. “,,in our opinion, the said Harry Deming having his clothes on and shoes upon his feet, and from the evidence of Edgar Glenn, it is our opinion that he was sufficiently notified, but owing to the smoke and confusion did not heed the notice.”

2. On March 24th after 2:30 p.m. **William Schreve** fell off a pile of lumber, death was accidental, the lumber was blown over by a severe wind.

Plans began immediately to rebuild

April 17, 1890 [2 ½ weeks later]

Debris from the Midway Hotel was put on South Railroad St.
between Central and A
Cleaning in preparation for rebuilding had begun

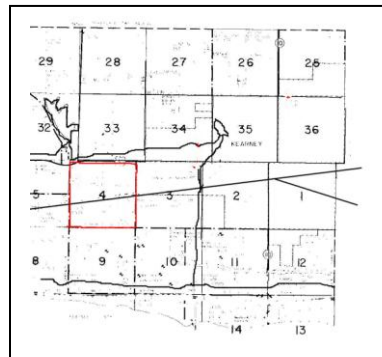
* **New Midway** completed in 1895



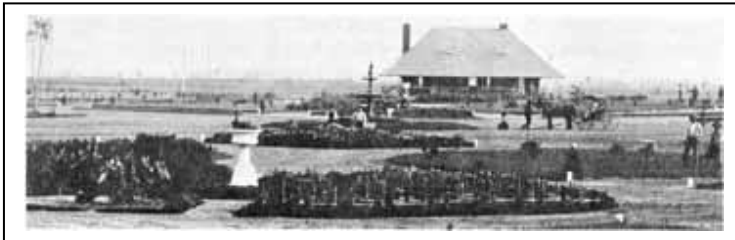
Boom over but became a landmark on the Lincoln Highway

West Kearney

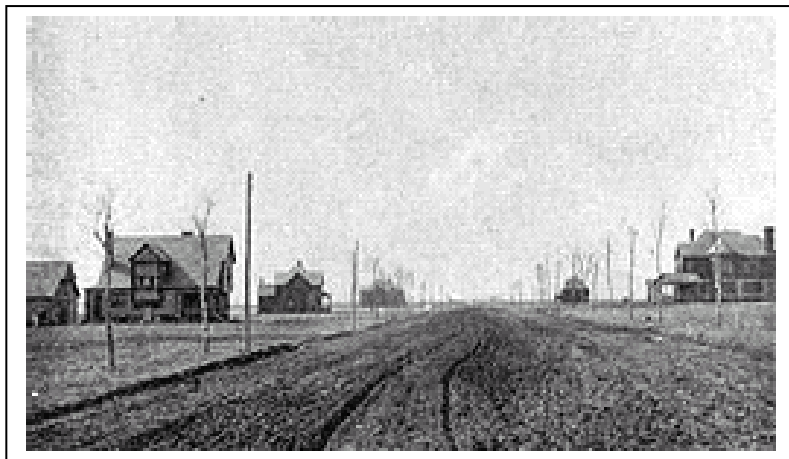
* A town in Section 4
George Norris sold his land
Platted cattycorner



* Had its own depot and park in center



* Big houses built there – Grand Ave in West Kearney

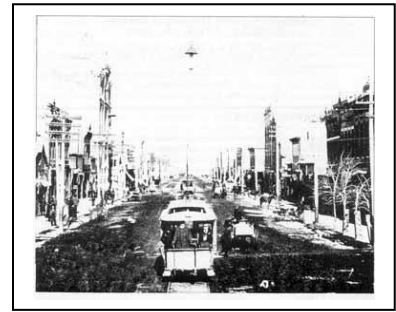


Support Businesses

* Electric Street Railway

Horse drawn line possibly started in July, 1889

Street car barn was on Central Ave



Plans for electric railway began in 1889 –

Replaced horse drawn trolleys with 6 cars powered by electricity

Add 10 miles of track and use as much of the old as possible

Would be able to go 12 miles per hour

Would take \$75,000 to make the change over

Issues –

Build track on side of street – neither side wants it (June 1890)

Complaint about fence around Opera House, also under construction

– horses too close to motor car (July 26)

Construction –

Building track on the south side (July 1890) [on 25th]

Old tracks on Central torn out to make way for the new

Had to cut the UP rails to let the street car rails through

Route – [no map but we can guess]

East 25th to Calkins residence, north to 27th St., east to East Lawn

West to Kearney Lake & garage in Power Plant

South on 8th Ave to Riverside Park

Start date – July-Aug 1890

Apparently operated on whatever lines were finished

End date –

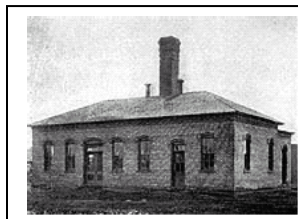
Unknown 1893?

After closing the cars possibly went to Boulder, CO

Utilities -

* Kearney Gas Co.

Kearney Water Works



City water & Sewer lines were put in during the Boom

Nebraska Telephone Co.

Carriage & Wagon Makers – 7 (some did blacksmithing also)

Harness Makers – 5, one was a woman

Cigar manufacturers – 5, one a woman

Usually had a store also.

Some worked on second floor of downtown businesses

House Movers & Raisers

Elias Gardner

July 19, 1890 – got contract to move buildings from fair grounds to new location

Oct 14, 1891 – 10 of 20 cottages built on 35th St. are being moved to a site west of the cotton mill near others which are being constructed. Gardner has the contract.

Edward. B. Pickering

William. F. Pickering

* **Hecht Beef & Pork Packing Company**

Location: Packing house on Central

Slaughter house on tail race south of 11th, east side of tailrace
[across from Yanney Park]

Years of operation: 1879 - Involved in court case suing someone for payment for work he had done.

[Court records in Archives]

1891- died

Comments:

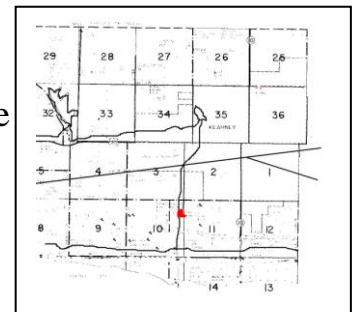
Born in Germany

Also operated a truck farm

Shortly before July 1, 1889 – packing house had burned.

Aug. 10, 1889 – Lost 45 acres of vegetables to hail, worth about \$2000.

Tomatoes, corn, cucumbers. Raising for the canning factory



Aug. 21, 1889 – ordered a carload of meat to sell during reunion week on the grounds sold very little and took a \$250 loss.
Built a grandstand for viewing parades and other events connected with the Reunion, hold 2000 viewers

Sept 30, 1889 – Large hotel built for the packing house moved to 19th & Central, West side of the street
Hotel operated by R. F. Francis. No name for it yet

Oct. 11, 1889 – Built two tenement houses near 2nd ward school (s.e. part of town near Bryant)

July 9-16, 1890 – Disagreement with Pochon, a gardener on his truck farm

Aug. 13, 1890 – dissolved partnership in packing business.
Decided to rebuild on his own land at 2nd Ave & 3rd St. [on Turkey Creek?]
Moved ice house from old location
Planned 30'x50' with ell 30'x40'

For a year tried to keep business going –
Bought packing house supplies
Shipped a ton of meat west
Front page ad for vegetables, ham, bacon and lard, & cold storage rental

Sept 12, 1891 – Wm. Hecht in serious mental condition due to financial reverses

Sept 23, 1891 – died at asylum in Lincoln.
Reportedly not sane during much of the time before his death
Refused to eat and would throw himself against the walls and floor of his cell, thus accounting for the bruises on his head and face.

Sept 25, 1891 – funeral at Congregational church, burial in Kearney cemetery.
Cause of death was given in cemetery records as exhaustion.
He was 38 years old [26 back in 1879]

Brick Yards (5)

*Hibberd Brickyard

Location: Site of Kearney Catholic, football field;
between A & B, 37th & 39th

Years of operation: 1880 - 1932

Comments: Also made paving bricks.

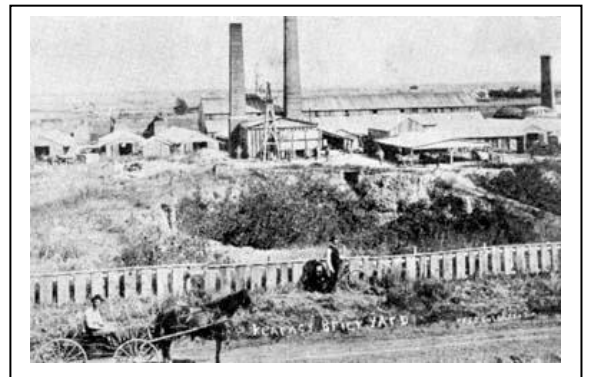
Victim of depression

Richard Hibberd died at age 88 in 1932

Electric trolley ran to the brickyard.

Small houses were built by Hibbard near the brickyard and rented to workers

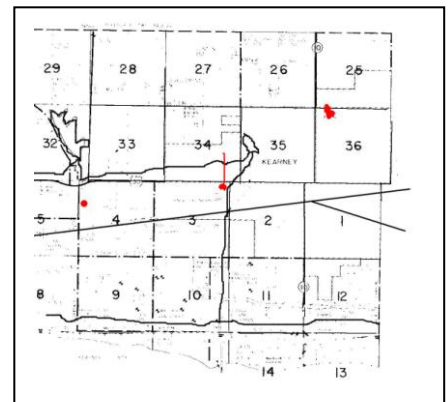
After the Bust, many of those houses were moved to the country



*Billy Mannix Brickyard

Location: East of Hibberd, between B & C

Comments: Eventually taken over by Hibberd
1891 – Mannix bought the Winsor Hotel.



S E Coleman Brickyard

Location: North of Hibberd on 4 acres for drying yard, kilns and pit
[north of 30th at Arrowhead condos]

Years of operation: about 1886-1888 [early in the Boom]

Comments: In 1889 city directory Coleman was listed as a brick mason.
He is not listed in 1890.



*Kearney (Pressed) Brick Company

Location: south of Campus Lutheran (along Kearney Canal tailrace)

Years of operation: July 1889– 1892

Comments: Clay dug from side hill where Kearney Country Club stands

Claimed go be first in the world to be operated by electricity.

Electric motor car went to top of grade by clay pits &
carried clay down to the kilns

A UP railroad spur carried finished bricks away

Hurley Brick Works (West Kearney Brick Yard)

Location: Near the cotton mill (maps show a brickyard south of the cotton mill, on west side of tailrace, today it's the south end of Sheen's trailer court)

Years of operation: about May 1890 – Sept 1893

Hurley to provide vitrified brick for next section of curbs & gutters.

* Furnished the brick for the Andrews building.

Comments

Sept 23, 1891 – Hurley and one of his employees came to blows in a disagreement. Hurley appeared in police court and paid a fine of \$9.70



Sept 25, 1893 – A. S. Hurley shipped his household goods to Hamburg, Iowa