

Hub, Nov. 13, 1889 – Township Election – Cedar Township – E. W. Carpenter, supervisor, S. Remington and A. J. Stover, Justices of Peace, L. C. Valentine, assessor

Majors never was a town or even a village, rather it was a community of people. There was a church and cemetery located in the northeast quarter of Section 15, and a school, and a post office all in the area but not all grouped together in one location.

Early Residents of Cedar Township

From Bassett's History of Buffalo County, Vol. I, 1916

Homestead Claims Before 1880

Cedar Township - Town No. 11, Range No. 15

1873 - M. A. Young, I. Bates, Joseph Clayton, S. A. Marshall, S. Kinsey, E. West, E. W. Carpenter, Joseph White, S. J. Houston, J. M. Treichler, S. Higgins, J. Dance.

1874 - A. St. Peter, J. McCool, J. Rink, H. Luce, J. E. Miller.

1878 - W. C. Tillson, J. Mapes, C. H. George, V. Vater.

1879 - A. Barker, J. Barker, G. W. Duncan, J. M. Shields, A. J. Stover, C. W. Putnam, D. McCool, W. Bigsty, T. Hunnegbun, G. A. Tuppen.

From Bassett's History of Buffalo County, Vol. I, 1916 - page 300-302

EARLY SETTLEMENT OF CEDAR TOWNSHIP

by Hon. James E. Miller

Cedar Township comprises all of town No. 11, range No. 15.

The first homestead selections were made by (E.) West and (S. J.) Houston, two soldiers of the Civil war, from the State of Ohio. After making selection of the east half of section No. 14, they returned to their homes in Ohio. They returned in the spring of 1873; made their filings on their homestead claims, and hired E. W. Carpenter to break five acres on each quarter, when they again started for Ohio, but were detained at Grand Island three days by the great storm of April 13-15; 1873, and were never heard from again.

The first actual settlement in the township was made in the spring of 1873 by John Davis on section No. 2, E. W. Carpenter and Joseph White on the west half of section No. 14, and Samuel Higgins on section No. 22. These settlers were located on their claims during the great storm in which Mrs. John Davis lost her life. On Sunday morning, April 13th, Mr. Davis started for Grand Island on foot, following the section lines east. The storm overtook him before he arrived at his destination. He left his wife in their dugout with the understanding that she would go to the home of E. W. Carpenter for the night, a mile or more to the south. The storm came so suddenly (at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon) that it seems she did not dare to leave home. It appears that she undressed and went to bed, and that in the night the ridge pole broke with the heavy load of dirt (the dugout had a dirt roof). The rafters protected her so that she might have remained in the bed. The door was barred, and it appeared she forced her way through the window. She left with but little clothing and without her shoes. When the storm ceased (at sundown) on Tuesday, neighbors went to the Davis home, and not finding her, began a search, and found her body on a ridge about sixty rods southeast of her home. Mr. Davis arrived that evening. They buried her near the dugout. The place has changed owners several times and it is likely all traces of the grave is lost.

The same year (1873) M. A. Young and Joseph Clayton settled on the west half of section No. 10, Capt. J. M. Treichler on the southwest quarter of section No. 22, Maj. John Dance on the northwest quarter of section No. 25, and Mrs. S. Higgins filed on the northwest quarter of section No. 26 for her children by a former husband. In October, 1873, the writer with his family arrived at Kearney, and meeting John Davis, was persuaded to investigate his neighborhood, and after

looking for a location in Platte and Boone counties concluded that the abandoned homesteads of West and Houston suited him. He with Henry Luce filed contests and secured homestead papers and made permanent settlement.

The foregoing constituted the settlement during the winter of 1873-74, which was a mild, dry winter. The summer of 1874 was very hot and dry, a little wheat was harvested, but no corn. About the middle of July the migrating grasshoppers completely covered the ground and devoured nearly every green thing. It looked as though we had struck the wrong country, but we all stayed except Major Dance.

In the spring of 1874 Robert Haines of Center Precinct called on us for the purpose of estimating the value of our personal property and securing the names of our children of school age so that his school district could get the state apportionment due school districts. We at once took the proper steps to head off this scheme by organizing our township and forming School District No. 20 by taking the north twelve miles from School Districts Nos. 11, 6 and 16. We drew our share of the state apportionment, and hired Mrs. E. W. Carpenter to teach our school.

She furnished the room and taught three months for \$30.

So satisfactory was her work that we employed her the next summer to teach in the same room. However, by this time teachers' wages had advanced 100 per cent. (The records disclose that on February 17, 1874, on petition of J. E. Miller and other legal voters, County Superintendent J. J. W. Place created School District No. 20, and issued a formal notice to the legal voters in the new district to meet at the home of E. W. Carpenter on March 6, 1874, and perfect the organization of the district.)

Those were flush times in 1876, having had fair crops in 1875, settlers began to flock in, and we had to build a schoolhouse. The materials were "Made in Nebraska." The walls of the schoolhouse, two feet thick, were of sod and plastered with gypsum dug from a nearby bank. The joists and rafters were from cottonwood trees, and the roof was made from willows and sod. The materials for the floor, windows and the door had to be imported. The architects and the builders were home grown. This commodious edifice afforded ample room for school purposes, as well as a place for church, Sunday school and political meetings. It became a great seat of learning and many graduates from the school are holding positions of honor and trust.

Our first precinct election was held in 1874. Eleven votes were cast, which cost the county \$14, and they were well worth the money. The year 1876 was a poor one for crops. It will be long remembered by early settlers as the last and greatest sweep of the migrating grasshoppers. These pests covered the cultivated portions of South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and the western half of Iowa. The year 1877 was one of the most productive years in our history (as a county), and prices for grain ruled unusually high, especially for wheat. From this date for twelve successive years there was not a crop failure.

We first got our mail at Gibbon, then changed to Kearney. During the summer of 1879 we sent a petition to Washington for a mail route and a postoffice. We failed to send a name for the office, so the postoffice department named the office Majors, in honor of the blue-shirted statesman of Nemaha County, Col. Thomas J. Majors.

E. W. Carpenter was appointed postmaster, and William Grant of Kearney mail carrier. This star route was later extended to the home of Erastus Smith, where later Ravenna was located. Mr. Carpenter continued as postmaster until the office was discontinued in 1907, a period of twenty-eight years. His income from the office the first year was \$9, and probably did not exceed \$30 in any one year during the time he held the office. This was certainly a great sacrifice on the part of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Carpenter in the interests of the neighborhood, and I am sure it was so considered by all patrons of the office.

Mrs. E. W. Carpenter taught two terms of school of three months each. She was a highly useful woman in our community. Her death occurred April 13, 1907.

The first church organized was the United Presbyterian. It was organized in John McCool's sod house by Rev. David Inches of North Bend, Neb., on December 20, 1882. The charter members were: John McCool, Mrs. Rose Ann McCool, James E. Miller, Mrs. Ann J. Miller and

George W. Duncan. The church had a scattering supply for a pastor until 1885, when Rev. Isaac A. Wilson was installed as pastor. The church increased rapidly until it about reached the one hundred mark, when some of the members moved to Poole, in Beaver Township, and started a church there. Others moved to other states, greatly weakening the congregation. In 1915 the church had a membership of about thirty. In 1915 the pastor for the two churches--Majors and Poole-- is Rev. E. C. Coleman.

From Bassett's History of Buffalo County, Vol. II, 1916, page 140-143

HON. JAMES E. MILLER.

As a member of the Nebraska senate Hon. James E. Miller made a record of legislative service resulting in permanent good to the state and, moreover, he is known as a man of rugged honesty and unsullied rectitude, his character worth gaining him the high position which he occupies today in public regard. For a long period he was identified with agricultural interests but is now living retired in Kearney, having gained in former years the measure of success which now provides him with all of the comforts and some of the luxuries of life.

Mr. Miller was born at Tarentum, Allegheny county, Pennsylvania, on the 28th of May, 1837, and is therefore nearing the eightieth milestone on life's journey. He is a son of James Miller, a grandson of Gideon Miller and a great-grandson of Gideon Miller, Sr. The progenitor of the family in America was probably of English birth and at all events it is known that the family has been represented on this side of the Atlantic from a period antedating the Revolutionary war. They became residents of western Pennsylvania at an early day, when the Indians were numerous in that section of the country. Gideon Miller, Jr., married Miss Rachel Coe, a daughter of Benjamin Coe, who was an officer of the Revolutionary war and in recognition of his services was given a grant of four hundred acres of land on Bull creek in Allegheny county. James Miller in 1826 aided in laying out the town of Tarentum, where he conducted a store, operated a grist and saw mill and also served as postmaster. There the youngest of his children, James E. Miller, was born, and it is said that his was the first birth in Tarentum. Having arrived at years of maturity, James Miller wedded Nellie McConnell and they had a family of five children, of whom but one is now living.

With his parents James E. Miller removed to Scott county, Iowa, in 1844, when that state was still under territorial rule, and there he grew to manhood. The year after the arrival of the family in that locality both his father and mother died. They were pioneer settlers of the locality, being among the first to establish a home in Scott county.

James E. Miller had but little opportunity to secure an education and there were few pleasures in his youth, for he was left an orphan when but eight years of age and instead of being sheltered by parental care and love during his youthful days he was forced to spend his time among people who cared more for what he could do for them than for what they could do for him. Necessity forced him to work for others until he reached the age of eighteen years, when he started out to earn his livelihood unhampered by the restrictions of those whom he served. For two years he worked for himself and during that period practiced the closest economy as well as industry, thereby earning enough to enable him to pay his tuition at Knox College Academy in Galesburg, Illinois. When he had reached the age of twenty he had saved enough money to buy four yoke of oxen, with which he broke the prairie for two years.

In 1860 Mr. Miller became a victim of the gold fever and with a company from eastern Iowa crossed the Missouri river at Nebraska City, where the company divided. A part of the number took the Platte valley route, passing through Nebraska before Lincoln was founded. They proceeded by way of Fort Kearney and saw thousands of buffaloes. In fact such great herds crossed their path that at times they were detained on their journey, having to wait until the animals went on. At length they reached their destination, near Pikes Peak, but in that fall Mr. Miller returned to civilization in time to vote for Abraham Lincoln. It was his intention to go again to the gold fields in the following spring but the unsettled condition of the times prior to the Civil war decided him to the contrary.

On the 25th of November, 1861, his patriotic spirit aroused, Mr. Miller enlisted in Company B, Second Iowa Volunteer Infantry, with which, he served for three years and eight months and was then honorably discharged

at Louisville, Kentucky, on the 12th of July, 1865. He participated in every battle and campaign of his regiment, including Fort Donelson, Shiloh, the siege of Corinth, Iuka, the second battle of Corinth and thence proceeded to Chattanooga after the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. It was at this time that he with his companions reenlisted and they joined Sherman's army in time to participate in the Atlanta campaign, taking part in the battles of Altoona Pass, Peachtree Creek, Kenesaw Mountain, Jonesboro, and in fact all of the principle engagements up to and including the capture of Atlanta. Mr. Miller was with Sherman on the famous march to the sea, participating in the siege and capture of Savannah. He thence proceeded northward through the Carolinas, taking part in the battle of Bentonville and finally concluding his military career by participating in the grand review at Washington, where thousands of victorious soldiers marched through the streets of the capital amid cheering thousands who welcomed their return.

After the war Mr. Miller returned to Iowa and engaged in farming in that state until 1873, when he came to Buffalo county, Nebraska, and homesteaded a quarter section in Cedar township. He first built a sod house and in the early days experienced all of the hardships of pioneer times. For thirty-one years he lived upon that place and witnessed the transformation of the county from a great expanse of unbroken prairie to a thickly settled, prosperous district showing all of the improved conditions of modern times. Year by year he carefully tilled the soil and converted his land into productive fields, becoming the owner of one of the fine farm properties of the county. In 1904 he sold his homestead place and removed to Monmouth, Illinois, to be near his daughter, who was attending college there. In 1911, however, he returned to Buffalo county and settled in Kearney, where he has since lived, enjoying a rest which he has truly earned and richly deserves.

On the 16th of March, 1866, Mr. Miller was united in marriage to Miss Ann J. Duncan, a daughter of James and Jane (Wilson) Duncan, who were at that time farming people of Scott county, Iowa. Mrs. Miller was born in Allegheny county, Pennsylvania, March 16, 1845, and in April, 1855, went with her parents to Scott county, Iowa, where she remained until after her marriage. Together Mr. and Mrs. Miller have lived in happiness for the golden period of fifty years. Nine children have been born to them: John A.; James C.; Lorena Jane, the wife of John J. Foster; William Van, who died in infancy; Frank G.; Fred D.; Louis D., who died in infancy; George C.; and Grace E.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Miller are members of the United Presbyterian church. In politics he was an ardent republican and is now a progressive democrat. In 1898 and again in 1900 he was elected to the state senate by a fusion of the democrat and populist parties and while serving in the upper house of the state legislature he became connected with many important measures which have had to do with the betterment of the state. His efforts therein were of permanent good, for he carefully considered each question which came up for settlement and supported only such measures as his judgment told him were of worth to the commonwealth. He introduced and secured the enactment of a statute providing that in all public schools in the state there should be taught "the elementary principles of agriculture, including a fair knowledge of the habits and structure of common plants, insects, birds and quadrupeds." Nebraska was the first state to provide for the teaching of agriculture in the public schools. His political integrity, like his rectitude in other relations of life, remained unquestioned. He has ever held to the highest standards of manhood, has never used intoxicants, has never been known to take advantage of his fellowmen in any business transaction nor sought to lessen the opportunities of a fellow traveler on life's journey. On the contrary he had held to the highest principles and in every possible way has endeavored to assist others.

Tales of Buffalo County, Vol. 10, No. 3

THE HIGGINS HOMESTEAD *(The Jochem Farm)*

by Dan Reese

Dan Reese is a Kearney State College student from Kearney. The following article is based on a project he prepared for a History Class. Dan is a grandson of Elizabeth Jochem and William Henry Reese.

Samuel Higgins claimed the first homestead in Cedar Township in Buffalo County. Higgins was born in Maine on March 30, 1811. His father, William Higgins, served in the War of 1812. In 1837 Samuel set out to see the country, spending time in several states and finally settling in Grant County, Wisconsin. His first wife Matilda gave him nine children. His second wife was Priscilla Ellen Wamsley Ewer. They were married in Wisconsin on November 26, 1865. Mrs. Ewer had five children from her first marriage, and Samuel and Priscilla had two offspring, but one of them died. The Higgins family arrived in Buffalo County on November 10, 1872.

Higgins, a carpenter, built a small shanty near Gibbon to house his family while he sought out a claim. He found his farm on the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 22, in Cedar Township, built the usual dugout in the side of the hill, and took up residence. Occasionally Indians passed through begging for food and feed for their horses. One night some difficult Indians tried to break into his dugout, but Higgins succeeded in driving them off. Shortly after the Higginses arrived, John Davis and his wife settled in Section 2, also making a dugout in which to spend the winter.

The building of a place to live was not easy in those first years in Cedar Township. Even for a dugout, the materials used were either those at hand or had to be transported some distance, usually from Gibbon some twenty miles away. As described by Harry Crawford, in *Where Buffalo Roamed*, p. 62:

... An excavation was made in a bank or hillside deep enough to make sides and one end, at the outer end a door and window frame were set up and sod chinked with wet clay was laid to complete the walls. A heavy log was laid lengthwise, supporting smaller poles for rafters. Brush was laid on these, then a layer of coarse hay, and finished with sod and clay to turn the rain. As to the floor, dirt was the common thing in such habitations.

The spring of 1873 brought other settlers to the area -- the Joseph Whites, the Eleazer W. Carpenters, Irwin Bates and Samuel Kinsey. On Easter Sunday, April 13, 1873, nature unleashed on the settlers one of the most devastating snowstorms recorded in the history of the area. The morning was still and balmy and the sun shone bright and warm. John Davis left in the morning to walk to Grand Island, planning to return the following day. His wife was to spend the night at the Carpenter home. The Whites spent the day with the Higgins family, but started home when the weather became threatening at about four o'clock in the afternoon. The storm came without warning and raged from late Sunday afternoon to Tuesday evening. The Whites barely made it home safely. The Higginses lost their cow, which smothered under the snow, but a calf was dug out of the snow four days later, alive but hungry.

When Mrs. Davis did not arrive at the Carpenter home, neighbors investigated on Wednesday after the storm and discovered that the roof of the Davis dugout had collapsed during the storm. Mrs. Davis could not be found, and a search party was organized. Her body was found on Thursday, barefoot and scantily clad. It was thought that she must have crawled through the window of the fallen-in dugout, thinking that she must get to the Carpenter home for shelter.

In 1874, Higgins built the house that stands yet today. The unique house was built into the side of the hill. The lower brick story contained a large kitchen, a small bedroom, a storage room, and a pantry. The upper wood frame story included a large parlor, a large bedroom, and two small bedrooms. The kitchen door exited to the south and the upstairs parlor to the east. The home is much like the earth homes of today, the lower story is cool in summer and warm in the winter.



Home of Samuel Higgins, front view (looking West) Photo Courtesy of Evelyn Kreutzer. Henriette Jochem in foreground (?)



Side view (looking NE) of the Higgins-Jochem home, 1917 (??). Photo Courtesy of Evelyn Kreutzer.



Handhewn Beams in northwest room of lower story of Higgins home, in foreground, 10 x 12 inches; others 6 x 6 inches. Photo Courtesy of Evelyn Kreutzer.

Trying to raise a crop was difficult. Grasshoppers destroyed the first three corn crops. Samuel set out many cottonwood, ash, maple, and boxelder trees on the westernhalf of the quarter section, and later filed a timber claim on it. His wife also planted apple trees near the house. Today a large grove of trees still stands along the creek that cuts through the farm. Near the house stands at least one apple tree. Priscilla, on January 29, 1874, also filed for the Northwest Quarter of Section 22 in Cedar Township on behalf of the children of her first husband, Rural (Reuel) Ewer, who died while a soldier in the Civil War.

Samuel and Priscilla later separated, Samuel moving to Kearney to live with a daughter from his first marriage. Priscilla and their son Sampson Grant Higgins remained on the farm. By June of 1892 the land was transferred to Sampson. In turn he agreed to care for his mother for the rest of her days. Priscilla (Ellen) Higgins died on March 20, 1897.

In April, 1897 Sampson deeded the farm to one of Samuel's daughters, Nancy Higgins, and soon thereafter, title was transferred to Charles and Lucinda Israel. The Israels mortgaged the land to William Dean in 1905 and Dean purchased their remaining interest in 1906. Dean then sold the farm to John and Helen Anson in 1911. After John Anson's death in January of 1915, the farm was sold at auction on January 20, 1916. Karl Jochem, acting for his mother Henriette, was the top bidder. The sale was finalized and Henriette's name was placed on the title in March of 1916. The Jochems had lived on three different farms in the neighborhood in the previous five years.

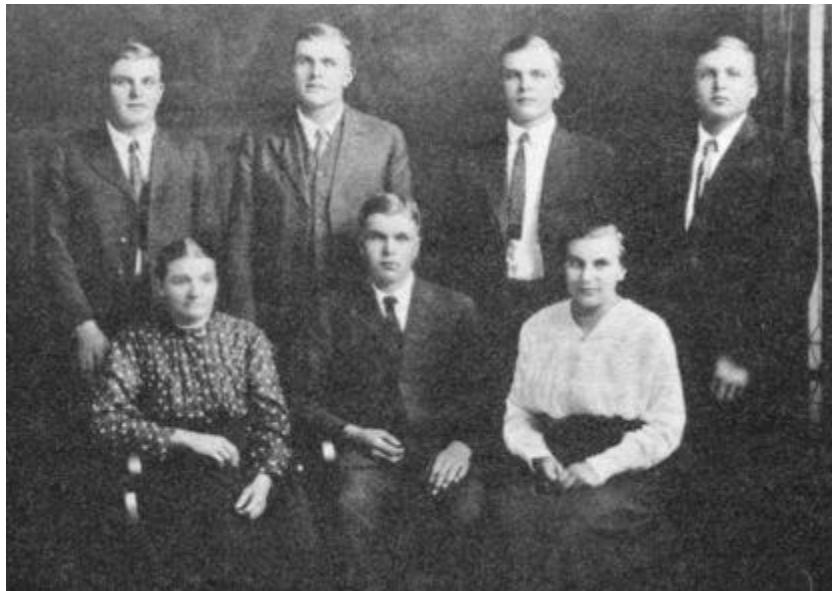
Henriette Jochem was widowed when her husband Gustav died in July of 1915 leaving seven children: Gustav, Jr., George, Karl, Justine, Elizabeth, Samuel and Jacob. The Jochems were natives of Zeyer, West Prussia, and all but George were born there. Gustav Jochem had made

three trips to America, the first shortly after his discharge in 1887 from the Prussian merchant marine. He worked as a carpenter in the Baltimore shipyards. He returned to Zeyer and married Henriette on November 15, 1888. Their first son, Gustav, Jr., was born March 21, 1890. Later that year Gustav brought his wife and baby son to Chicago. They lived in and around Chicago and Milwaukee where Gustav helped to build the Cudahy meat packing house. They returned to Germany in 1895 because of the national economic panic. By this time they had a second son, George, who was born February 21, 1892 in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. The family lived in Zeyer and farmed near Schatzdam for the next thirteen years. During this time the rest of the children were born. On March 22, 1907 the entire family returned to America, Gustav, Jr. leaving ahead of the others in order to avoid conscription into the military. The rest of the family sailed aboard the *Gera* coming to Chicago where Gustav and Gustav, Jr. worked as carpenters building passenger cars for the railroad.

Daughter Justine, who had been ill for an extended time, died on April 19, 1910. The family left Chicago for Nebraska the next day. Justine's body was taken along and was the first to be buried in St. John's cemetery in Cedar Township. When Gustav died from kidney failure on July 11, 1915 while on a trip to Truman, Minnesota, his body was returned and also buried beside his daughter in St. John's.

The Jochems set to work on their farm, adding a smokehouse cave, a large three door machine shed, a sheep shed, and a barn to the existing corn crib, two chicken coops, and a small blacksmith shop. The barn built by Higgins had burned during the time that his wife owned the land. Framing lumber for the new barn came from a silo built by one of the previous owners. The Jochems sawed and sold lumber from the many trees planted by Samuel Higgins. They also replaced the wooden windmill with a newer steel model.

The second son George Jochem served with the American Expeditionary Forces in France during World War I. He saw action in the battles of St. Mihiel and the Argonne Forest.



The family of Henriette Jochem, left to right: (back row) Karl, Gustav, George and Samuel; (front row) Henriette, Jacob and Elizabeth. Photo Courtesy of Evelyn Kreutzer.

The parlor of the home was the scene of the remaining daughter Elizabeth's marriage on March 3, 1920. While a blizzard raged outside, she married William Henry Reese, a neighbor. Elsie

Reese, William's sister, and Samuel Jochem were the witnesses to the wedding performed by Reverend A. R. Sander of the nearby St. John's Lutheran Church. Karl Jochem had married William's sister Frieda a year earlier. The three other sons either married or moved away from home. Gustav Jr. married Lena Jochem, George married Anna Gruhn, and Samuel moved on but never married. Jacob, the youngest, continued to live on Henriette's farm until the death of his mother on December 14, 1952. She was buried beside her husband and daughter in St. John's Cemetery.

After Henriette's death, Jacob bought the farm from his brothers and sister. For many years before and after his mother's death, Jacob kept detailed records of the farming operation. The farm books showed income and expenditures to the penny. Included were wages paid to numerous people from the neighborhood hired to help with the farming operations. He continued to farm the land until his retirement to Ravenna in 1968. Prior to his retirement, and during summers afterwards, he continued to live in the old house though it had never had electricity, propane heat, or a regular phone. A telephone was installed briefly but was thought too expensive and was removed during the depression of the 1930's. The old house was changed very little over the years, but has aged badly. The square nails barely hold some of the siding on, and the old shingle roof leaks in numerous places. The downstairs storeroom with its brick floor attests to the age of the structure with its hand hewn beam ceiling.

After Jacob's death on May 6, 1985 the farm was sold at auction. A great number of antiques and old farm machinery were sold at the all-day auction of July 20, 1985. The selection was large and over 350 bidders showed up to see what Jacob called "his junk". The crowd included antique dealers, museum representatives, and sightseers. Perhaps it was fitting that the family ownership, begun with an auction, should end seventy years later with another auction.

SOURCES

Where the Buffalo Roamed, World Publishing Co., Shenandoah, Iowa, 1967; *Biographical Souvenir of the Counties of Buffalo, Kearney and Phelps*, F. A. Battey & Co., 1890, Land Records, Buffalo County Register of Deeds; Buffalo County Cemetery Records; *Memoirs of May Stover*, Buffalo County Historical Society; *Stove(r)-pipe(line)*, Nos. 5 & 6, Rod Stover; Interviews with Nancy Wick, Riverdale, and Evelyn Kreutzer, Odessa.

Central Nebraska Press - November 1, 1877

Trouble in Cedar Township - Running disagreement between E. W. Carpenter and John Davis. Carpenter's cattle got into Davis's potato field. M. A. Young, law enforcement for that township, was called. Carpenter appeared before J. Miller, Justice of Peace. The case was to be heard by the district court in Kearney and Carpenter was to put up bail of \$500 which he did not have so he was brought to the jail in Kearney.