

# Odessa Township

**Bassett, Vol. I, HISTORY OF BUFFALO COUNTY. p. 117-118**

ODESSA TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 17

Also that portion of town No. 8, range No. 17, embraced within the limits of Buffalo County.

## **Bold names on 1875 tax rolls**

1871— 2

**Dan A. Crowell,**  
B. Allen Crowell.

1872— 20

**R. D. Gould,**  
**J. Zerk,**  
**D. Brown,**  
E. Christianson,,  
C. Christianson,  
J. F. Suplee,  
S. Tolefsen,  
**R. Vails,**  
S. W. Homer,  
Flora Thomas,  
H. Brown,  
**J. B. Vincent,**  
**M. Fagley,**  
H. F. Leonard,  
Wm. C. T. Kurth,  
Geo. W. Tovey,  
J. Ratliff,  
M. Homer,  
**J. E. F. Vails,**  
**John D. Seaman.**

1873— 9

**C. S. Greenman,**  
E. N. Lord,  
Geo. D. Aspinwall,  
**George Hall,**  
**R. F. Watters,**  
Theadore Knox,  
James Sturrock,  
A. Ream,  
**J. E. Chidester,**

**J. Homer, Jr.**

1874— 7

**James Halliwell,**  
D. Harpst,  
John T. Brown,  
Edward Keltner,  
**Wm. F. Reeves,**  
**J. M. Grant,**  
**Thomas Maloney.**

1875— 1

George Jones.

1876— 2

H. Ransom,  
Catherine Edwards.

1877 — 0

1878— 10

F. W. Nickols,  
J. Vails,  
George A. Bailey,  
Susan C. Hurlburt,  
**R. D. Gould,**

David Hostetler, - D. C. Hostetter – homesteaded on island in Platte south of Stevenson  
Siding, now Alfalfa Center

H. H. Achey,  
Susan Grant,  
**L. C. Skelley,**  
Ada Grant.

1879— 8

J. Segard,  
**John Davis,**  
W. Broat,  
Cordelia M. Waite,  
J. B. Neal,  
John Work,  
George T. Broughton,  
Wm. H. McNutt.

## **Buffalo Tales**

THE FARMING COMMUNITY OF BUFFALO COUNTY, 1886, Compiled by Alice  
Shaneyfelt Howell, *February 1987*

### ***Kearney New Era of 1886 – GRAND WOLF HUNT***

March 27, 1886 - The enterprising farmers and stock raisers of Odessa Precinct have made all the necessary arrangements for holding a grand circle hunt on Saturday, April 3.

Coyotes, gray wolves, and foxes have become very troublesome in this precinct, and an attempt will be made to round them up and exterminate them.

The boundaries of the drive will be the north and east sides of Odessa Township, the Platte river on the south, and one mile in Elm Creek township on the west. The north line will be driven under the captaincy of Mr. Wilson; the east line under R. E. Barney; south line under M. S. Richards; west line under L. A. Blanchard.

All parties will observe the following rules:

Strict obedience to the order of the Captains.

No one allowed to shoot unless the game is outside the line and there is no prospect of recovering it.

No intoxicating liquors will be allowed on the ground.

The lines for the circle will be formed at 9 o'clock A.M., those engaging in the sport meeting at points designated by the respective Captains, and the distributed forces as equally as possible will move toward the center of the circle, not faster than four miles an hour.

Each person is requested to bring a horn or something with which to terrify the wild animals. Mr. J. H. Richards has been chosen Field Marshall for this occasion and will see that everybody secures fair play and enjoys themselves....

*Odessa, July 20* - Last week when the thermometer stood 108 in the shade, I and my pony Button took a trip over the valley to the new town of Odessa. Along the way I found that almost every farmer was busily engaged with either the Deering binder or header harvesting their grain, which is in abundance in this section of the country; which is noted for good land and good farmers and beautiful buildings and groves surrounding.

Just in the immediate vicinity of the village I had a brief conversation with Mr. Richards, who is an Englishman, and carries on farming extensively . . . His house is of modern style, neatly painted; his granary and stables are built to taste and also neatly painted; his crops are all good.

I next visited the farm of Mr. B. F. Tussing. Two years ago he purchased an excellent farm of one hundred sixty acres within a mile northwest of Odessa. He is making preparations to build a new house next summer and is planting avenues of walnut trees in various directions, and all are looking good. His wheat crop is the best I have seen.

On my return I met three teams heavily laden with sand from the Platte river for plastering a new two-story house which Mr. Hunt is building on his farm at Stanley. They report crops good in the vicinity of Stanley.

Bush and jack rabbits are plentiful. Prairie chickens scarce and I think quail will be plentiful. Unless some water is turned into the canal soon, fish will suffer.

-Grand Curiosity

*August 7, 1886* - The appearance of the whole country has taken a sudden change since my last. In consequence of the great drought, farmers and business men were all discouraged; but how soon the Giver of all good gifts sent the rain. Let all that is on earth give glory to God.

I notice that nearly all the small grain is harvested and safely put in shocks . . . In my last item about Odessa I omitted to mention the happy home of Mr. Otto Olson. His farm consists of eighty acres, all of which is laid out in beautiful style; his grain, corn and meadows are excellent, and his grain is neatly stacked. Everything looks prosperous. When he appears on the road it is

behind a beautiful young black horse. He was born in Sweden and has been eight years in Buffalo County. ..

*My Sanctum, September 30, 1886* - First frost of the season the night of the 27th. Overcoats in use on the 26th inst. Wild geese plentiful and chickens scarce.

A few days ago I had the pleasure of visiting the new village of Odessa which will be booming before long. The U.P. railroad has placed a station house here which will be finished in a short time. The elevator is doing a rushing business in all sorts of grain under the able management of Mr. Lynch. The new school in Odessa is opened and taught by Miss Tuft of Kearney.

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**EARLY DAYS AT ODESSA, from *Ten Generations of Grants*, by Myron Scott, *MARCH 1979, narrated by John Marshall Grant to Myron at Marysville, Washington in September of 1925.***

We settled at Odessa. We each took out a preemption on land which we could patent as we improved it. The boys and I dug down about four feet and put up some old railroad ties, putting them up log fashion, and then put a roof on it. We slept in that dugout about six months although, as the other two boys were away most of the time, I lived there the most.

Meanwhile we built a sod house - took a plow and just plowed up the sod. We plowed about three inches thick and cut the sod in strips about three feet long. For this we used the sod of the blue stem grass which grew in the swales, not the buffalo grass which grew about four inches high. There was another grass there that grew waist high on the bottom land along the Platte. We built the sod house on the side of the ravine. When finished it measured about 20 by 35 feet. We plastered it on the inside to give it a smooth surface and then put on a shingle roof - not a grass roof like most of them. It would leak a little here and there but it was snug and comfortable in the winter and didn't heat up in the summer.

The only trouble with our sod house was in keeping the vermin out of it. Those sod houses were great places for mice to work in. We lived in that house about two years and then a flood came. Whenever there was rain in the hills above us the water would come down the ravine. One day there was a cloudburst in the hills. We could see it in the hills although there was no rain on the plain where we were. Soon a wall of water came down the ravine and overflowed everything until the water stood two feet deep in the house. It was an unusual storm. It lasted only about half an hour. It was the only time it happened like that. Mother and the girls, Dess, Adah, Helen and Stelle had come only just that spring and were in the sod house at the time. It was enough for them.

So that summer we went to work and built a frame house on the other side of the ravine. We went to Kearney for the lumber. It was the first frame house in that community and was the most conspicuous house around there for several years....

The buffalo had been mostly killed off in the Platte valley when we came there. I never saw but one buffalo. He was a stray, a big fellow, who came one fall....

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*A Double Murder in Odessa: The State of Nebraska vs. Frank Dinsmore*, By Ross Huxoll,  
March - April, 2006

In August of 1898, Frank L. Dinsmore moved from Louisiana to Odessa, Nebraska where he worked as an agent for the Omaha Elevator Company. Dinsmore did not own a house of his own because his job required him to travel frequently. In Odessa, Dinsmore boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Laue and their three small children. On July 20, 1899, Dinsmore married Lillian Bloomfield of Chicago, Illinois. He had known her twelve years prior to their marriage, and they continued to reside with the Laue family after the wedding....

Around midnight on a cold December 4 night in 1899, Dinsmore called Doctor H.S. Bell of Kearney requesting that he come to Odessa immediately. According to Dinsmore, Fred Laue had killed Mrs. Dinsmore and then shot himself in the head....

Because Mrs. Dinsmore had no obvious wounds, Dr. Bell and Coroner Hodge insisted that the body be sent to Kearney for an autopsy.... The doctor concluded that she likely died after ingesting either prussic acid or cyanide potassium.... Sheriff Silas B. Funk immediately arrested Dinsmore and placed him in the county jail in Kearney....

A surprising confession by Mrs. Laue, however, focused all of the attention on Dinsmore. She confessed to County Attorney Nye that Dinsmore had murdered both her husband and his wife. According to Mrs. Laue, Dinsmore was a hypnotist who had placed "hypnotic powers" over her that she could not resist. These "powers" that Dinsmore exerted over Mrs. Laue began the previous May and included sexual relations between the two. Mrs. Laue claimed that Dinsmore, unhappy with his marriage, became infatuated with her and he proposed that the two run away together. She reportedly refused his offer. Dinsmore then suggested that they kill their spouses. Mrs. Laue rejected the idea at first, but Dinsmore threatened violence if she did not comply. Along with his death threats, Mrs. Laue stated that he used his "unaccountable power" over her to make sure she kept quiet about his murder plot.

On the night of the murder, Mrs. Laue confessed that Dinsmore came down from his upstairs room and told her that he had killed his wife. Then, he informed her that he had to "finish the job," and went into the Laue's bedroom and shot Mr. Laue as he slept. With his murderous task completed, Dinsmore arranged the bodies in such a position that it appeared as if Fred Laue had murdered Mrs. Dinsmore and then shot himself....

With the threat of vigilantism, Buffalo County authorities made arrangements with Lincoln County to safeguard Dinsmore. Under the cover of darkness, Sheriff Funk and two deputies escorted Dinsmore via train to North Platte where he remained under armed guard in the Lincoln County jail until his preliminary hearing....

A man that replaced Dinsmore at the Omaha Elevator Company, for example, found a receipt for prussic acid in one of Dinsmore's desk drawers, the same type of acid that Dr. Bell concluded may have killed Mrs. Laue. The state also obtained a package of cards that were found at the murder scene with the inscription "F.L. Dinsmore, Professional Hypnotist, Odessa, Nebraska." The state secured the cards as evidence to try and prove that Mrs. Laue's earlier statement about Dinsmore hypnotizing her was in fact the truth. The *Nebraska State Journal* also reported that while living in Beatrice during the early 1890's, Dinsmore routinely boasted of being a hypnotist and gave exhibitions of his "wonderful hypnotic powers about the hotel during the evening hours."...

Hamer and Brown asked Judge Homer Sullivan for a change of venue. Judge Sullivan granted the request and transferred the Dinsmore case to neighboring Dawson County....

Dr. Bell who testified that the blood from Laue's wound ran from the temple to the back of the head and that he found the body lying on its side, an impossible position to be in if Laue had in fact pulled the trigger himself. Dr. Bell concluded that Laue's body must have been moved after he had been shot....

Mrs. Laue testified that she had agreed not to warn the victims prior to the night of their murders because Dinsmore had her under his powerful "spell."...

As the day's proceedings concluded, Sheriff Funk placed Dinsmore in the Dawson County jail. The authorities erected a wire fence around the east and north sides of the jail as an added security measure against curious crowds....

The defense focused all of its attention on the closing arguments. Dinsmore's attorneys attempted to persuade the jury that Mrs. Laue was the real killer. Hamer, for example, suggested that Mrs. Laue fired the fatal shot that killed her husband and then poisoned Mrs. Dinsmore, the wife of the man whom she was determined to call her own. The defense portrayed Mr. Dinsmore as the one who had been hypnotized, not Mrs. Laue....

The prosecution's final arguments focused on the testimony of Dr. Bell, who stated that Mr. Laue could not have committed suicide but must have been killed elsewhere and moved to the bed....

When asked by Judge Sullivan if they had reached a verdict, the foreman announced that Dinsmore was guilty of murder in the first degree....sentenced Dinsmore to death by hanging on July 20, 1900, coincidentally on what would have been Dinsmore's first wedding anniversary....

Governor Dietrich saved Dinsmore's life by commuting his death sentence to life imprisonment....

Dinsmore made the most of his new home in the state penitentiary. He served as an instructor for the advanced commercial courses taught inside the prison. The warden also put Dinsmore in charge of the prison hospital and pharmacy....

In 1919, Dinsmore again benefited from an act of executive clemency when Governor McKelvey pardoned him on the Fourth of July. Nebraska's "Fourth of July Pardon Law" allowed the governor to pardon two convicts every Independence Day as a good will gesture....

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**EPISODES IN THE LIVES OF EARLY BUFFALO COUNTY WOMEN, Compiled by  
Emma Jane Wilder, *January-February, 1992***

**Hadassah Grant Seaman (1841-1911)**

Hadassah managed the Odessa Post Office after she and her husband arrived in Buffalo County in 1873, and long before the expansion of population and good roads. It has been a family story that Odessa was named for Hadassah. This is indeed credible since it has been found that the town, Peake, was named for its first postmistress, Jeannie Peake, in 1884.

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***RAILROADS IN BUFFALO COUNTY, by Alice Howell, May 1978***

The early stations on the Union Pacific route in Buffalo County were Shelton, Gibbon Switch, Kearney Station (near present day Buda, the least distant for passengers bound for Fort Kearny), Stevenson's Siding, Crowellton (present day Odessa), and Elm Creek.

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***EARLY POST OFFICES IN BUFFALO COUNTY, by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell, August 1978***

**Shelton** replaced Wood River Center February 3, 1873, **Kearney** replaced Kearney Junction April 26, 1875, and Crowellton became **Odessa** on February 29, 1876. **Shelby**, established September 19, 1876, became Buda two years later, George Flaherty, P.M.

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***THE WATSON RANCH - Part I, by Philip S. Holmgren, October 1979***

A search of official records will do little to help clarify the exact size of the Ranch since the Watson property was never a consolidated unit. It can be described as an aggregation of properties under one management. That management was H. D. Watson. In addition to the land which was in his possession, Mr. Watson was the controlling factor in three companies each of which owned hundreds of acres of land. W. C. Scoutt puts the total of land held at about 7,000 acres, while an item in the *New Era Standard* of June 9, 1909 has the figure of 10,000 acres. The last figure appears to be a little inflated, but no more than the stories repeated by those with some association with the ranch both before and after its breakup. The common descriptions were that it extended from Kearney to Odessa from the Platte River into the hills north of what is now Highway 30.

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***Kearney's 50th Anniversary Pioneer Celebration: The Come Back Letters, By Mardi Anderson, January-February 2006***

Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Hostetter...We took a homestead on the Island South of Alfalfa Center now. was called Stevenson then. We had no School nearer than Odessa or Kearney over 6 miles either place We tried to get a School house at Stephenson one end got beat several times So the men decided they would take there wives along 9 of us ladies went & beat them 3 votes they chalenlenged [challenged] our votes and had no (—?) Sworn we all had children school age and we got the School house...

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***The Acheys Remember Kearney's Early Days, Edited by Mardi Anderson, May-June 2006***

The Acheys were related to the David Hostetler family and took a homestead near them at Stevenson, now Alfalfa Center, in Odessa Township about 1880.

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**MOSES H. SYDENHAM, First of the Visionaries, by Margaret Stines Nielsen, April, 1981**

For many years Moses 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, which had averaged twenty-five when "a Mrs. Hutchason" had tried to run it alone, increased to eighty-three. When attendance began to dwindle among the younger members, they called in Reverend 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....

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**ROOTS OF BUFFALO COUNTY -THE SCANDINAVIANS, Part II, by Margaret Stines Nielsen, February 1984**

**Farris**

Swan Farris accompanied a group of schoolmates from Sweden to Chicago in 1856. During the next few years he worked at a variety of jobs on the Mississippi: from raftsmen to cabin waiter to building levees along the river. For a time he drove an express wagon in New Orleans, hauling slaves from Arcade Hall to the railroads and boat landings. He was opposed to slavery, however, and with the outbreak of the Civil War, went to Galesburg where he operated a restaurant and dealt in real estate.

He was living in Chicago when a doctor recommended that he seek a change of climate for his health. As he had accumulated land in Odessa township and in Phelps County, he moved to Kearney with his second wife, Cecilia Peterson Farris. They bought "a handsome residence at 1810 7th Avenue." Mr. Farris died in 1926 at the age of 90, a wealthy man. He had accumulated a collection of old coins, and of rare books, some dating to the 1400's. In a hand-written will with several codicils, he left the collections to Luther College in Wahoo, and bequests of \$1000 to \$5000 to other Scandinavian colleges, institutions and churches. One bequest went to "the Charitable Home for Needy, Epileptic and Feeble-minded Children of Axtell, on condition that the home is permanently established." Another went to the Children's Orphan Home at Phelps Center.

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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHURCHES IN BUFFALO COUNTY, Part I, by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell, May - June, 1996**

There were several Evangelical churches in the early years, Kearney in 1893, Odessa in 1885, Shelton in 1896, and Amherst. One rural congregation started in 1879 in Schneider

Township is the present Zion Ravenna United Methodist Church. Their first meetings were in a sod schoolhouse. A small frame church was built in 1880, and later a new building was erected three miles east and one mile north in Gardner Township where it is located today.

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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHURCHES IN BUFFALO COUNTY, Part II, by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell, *July - August, 1996***

S. C. Bassett, in his *History of Buffalo County*, (1916), mentions unorganized religious services. In Crowellton on the Union Pacific between Odessa and Kearney, Sunday School was held in the schoolhouse and "was attended by everybody in the neighborhood." This was in 1874....

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**THE LEBANESE IN KEARNEY - Part II, by Minnett Yanney Steinbrink, *May 1986***

**Jacobs**

Mike Jacobs came to the United States about 1900 and located in Gothenburg where he joined his brothers in farming, with peddling as a sideline. Later he farmed for himself. He liked his new land and immediately applied for citizenship so that his wife, left in Syria, would automatically become a citizen and would not have to stay at Ellis Island. Becoming a citizen took nearly five years, so that when he sent for his wife Helen and their first child Mary, she was five years old before her father saw her. They moved to Buffalo County, farming near Odessa and Kearney. Mike and Helen had eight children. A son Jake resides in Wood River.

**Buffalo County GenWeb site**

**Towns and Post Offices, Past and Present**

**Buffalo County, Nebraska**

**Odessa\***, station on the main line of the U.P.R.R., about 10 miles west of Kearney. Replaced Crowelltown post office in 1876.

**Nebraska STATE GAZETTEER Business Directory, Omaha: J. M. Wolfe & Co., Publisher, 509-510 Paxton Block 1890**

**Odessa**, a station on the main line of the U.P. Ry., in the southwestern part of Buffalo county, 10 miles west of Kearney, the county seat. Population, 50.

**Brown Wm L**, postmaster.

Gursinger G M, sta agt.

Ireland W W, blacksmith.

Rall C, justice.

Richards H, justice.

### **Township officers, 1890**

ODESSA -

Supervisor, B. F. Tussing

Clerk, C. B. Brown

Treasurer, Henry Richards

Assessor, J. C. Bowen

Constables, W. W. Ireland,

Willard Broat

Road Overseers:

district 9, Edward Fielding;

district 31, S. B. Halliwell.

All of Odessa.

### **1919 Atlas map**

Includes extra land (about a mile wide) across the south side because of the Platte River

North channel of Platte divides out about a half mile into the county forming a small island and a large island which extends over into Riverdale (now Collins) township

Odessa road between Odessa and Amherst was in existence in 1919. Not section line straight, possibly a route dating back before the establishment of roads on section lines.

Section 7 – school on south edge in center (half mile road goes by, no ns section roads). Dist. 93

Section 10 – school in nw corner – Midway School, Dist. 67

Section 23 – school in nw corner – Dist. 115

Section 24 – school in ne corner (2 miles apart) – Macedonia, Dist. 78

Odessa School – Dist. 12

Section 3 – school on east edge near north side of section, on south side of railroad track, Odessa Dist 12

Section 28 – cemetery in ne corner, east side of Odessa Road which wiggles into this section instead of staying on the section line.

### **Buffalo County Cemeteries, read by Ft. Kearny Gen, Soc., 1979**

Odessa Township – two private burial sites

Section 11 [the section 11 near the river not the one up north] – A stone in a fenced area

MOORE, Albert – 10 Sept 1837 – 20 July 1898 – son of Edward, born Delaware Co. N Y  
(land owned by Archie Holoubeck in 2005)

Section 21 [may be the cemetery marked in the ne corner of Sec. 28 in the 1919 atlas]

“This area was set aside for burial of the people living in what is now Odessa area from 1869-1900. Most of these people were moved to the Kearney Cemetery and surrounding cemeteries. There are no headstones in this location in 1979.

It has been told that the following children were never moved.

2 Lynch children

1 Scholtz child

### **Tax Assessor’s Record – Crowellton Precinct – 1874, 1875, & 1895**

Property owners – Eight in 1874 – 12 in 1875 – Six in 1895

25 residents on personal property tax roll;

31 residents on personal property tax roll;

11 residents on personal property tax roll

#### **Brown, Henry**

Christian, Edwin [no personal property]

Gould, R. D. - \$100 cash, 3 horses, 1 carriage/wagon

2 horses, 6 hogs, 1 dog

2 horses, 2 hogs, 1 dog, 1 carriage/wagon

Chidister, John E. – 3 horses, 2 cattle, 120 sheep, 2 carriage/wagon, 1 dog

3 horses, 4 cattle, 88 sheep, 1 hog, 2 carriage/wagon, 1 dog

2 horses, 4 cattle, 83 sheep, 1 hog, 2 carriage/wagon, 1 dog

Crowell, D. Allen – 1 horse, 1 cattle, 1 hog

1 horse, 1 cattle, 1 hog

1 horse, 1 cattle, 1 hog

Clelland, Thomas – 2 horses, 1 cattle, 1 carriage/wagon

2 horses, 1 cattle, 1 carriage/wagon

2 horses, 1 cattle, 1 carriage/wagon

#### **Davis, Dan**

Greenman, C. S. – 3 cattle, 2 hogs, 1 carriage/wagon

#### **Greenman**

Homer, Joshua – [no personal property]

[no personal property]

#### **Leonard, H. F.**

#### **Malony**

O’Leary, ----- – [no personal property]

Saraie, Pat O. – [no personal property]

#### **Sord, E.**

### Other names on personal property tax rolls –

Aspenwall, J. O.

#### **Aspenwall**

#### **Brown, DeWitt**

Christianson, Charles – 5 horses

#### **Christianson, Charles**

#### **Delahuaty**

Fagley

Grant, J. W. - \$30, 2 horses, 2 mules, 2 cattle, 6 hogs, 1 carriage/wagon

Grant

Hall

Halliwell, O.- 1 mule

Halliwell

Harper

Hamilton

McClery, Matthew

Morgan

Reeves, James

Reeves, William

Skelley

Seaman, John

Vailes

Vincent

Veach

Waters

Zeck