

Miller was first called Hancock – Kearney Hub

Armada sued the K & BH RR to give them a depot. – Kearney Hub

History of Buffalo County Vol. I by Samuel Bassett, 1916, p. 287-290
[edited for format]

CHAPTER XXXIX

ARMADA TOWNSHIP AND MILLER -- LIST OF EARLY SETTLERS -- WM. CRAVEN STARTS IN BUSINESS IN A SOD HOUSE WITH A CAPITAL OF \$9 -- POSTOFFICE ESTABLISHED IN ABOUT 1884, NAMED ARMADA -- VILLAGE OF MILLER INCORPORATED IN 1890 -- NAMES OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES -- NAMES OF POSTMASTERS -- NAMES OF PHYSICIANS -- THE FIRST NEWSPAPER -- THE MILLER INDEPENDENT TELEPHONE COMPANY -- BANKS, SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, LODGES -- W. C. T. U. ESTABLISH A LIBRARY AND REST ROOM.

ARMADA TOWNSHIP -- MILLER

The first settlement in Armada Township appears to have been by H. C. Harbaugh, A. J. Fannell, Wm. Carr, R. Burney and Thomas Jeffry in 1873; John Mercer, J. H. Brown, Robert Miller and Oscar Hamilton in 1874; I. Lamb and J. F. Mackey in 1875; A. L. Armstrong in 1877; Wm. M. White, G. A. Roach and H. Zarrs in 1878; J. L. Abel, R. F. Simpson, F. B. Craps, A. F. Burt and H. T. West in 1879.

In the year 1881, Wm. Craven, a soldier in the Civil war and a native of North Carolina, purchased ten acres of land, built a sod house in which on a capital of \$9 he began the keeping of a store. A postoffice had been established about three miles distant, a petition was circulated and the postoffice moved to that point, William Craven named postmaster, and the name of Armada given to the embryo commercial center. When the K. and B. H. Railroad was built into the township the village was moved to the railroad and named Miller. Miller was incorporated in the year 1890, with J. Millspaugh, M. O. Polter, A. B. Cherry, H. S. Pease and Dr. E. W. Northrup as its first board of village trustees. The names of the present board of trustees are: Dr. J. P. Norcross, chairman; J. W. Miller, A. E. Kappel, Ray Cox and J. M. Robinson; Ross Brown, village clerk.

[MILLER BUSINESSES]

Miller has three grain elevators with a grain storage capacity of 160,000 bushels.

A post office was established in 1890 and the names of those who have served as postmasters are in the following order: A. B. Cherry, H. S. Pease, B. F. Harbaugh, H. S. Pease, L. W. Hall, L. K. King.

The names of the physicians who have served the people of the locality are: Dr. E. W. Northrup, Dr. J. P. Norcross, Dr. C. R. Watson.

[NEWSPAPERS]

The first newspaper was edited by Charles M. Huston, 1891-1893.
The Miller Sun, edited by F. W. Pace since 1915.

[TELEPHONE]

The Miller Independent Telephone Company was organized in 1906 with a capital stock of \$2,500. Its first officers: J. P. Norcross, president; L. W. Hall, manager; F. D. Brown, treasurer. The names of those most active in promoting the company were J. P. Norcross, L. W. Hall, F. D. Brown, L. P. Wells, N. Maddox, C. M. Huston, R. M. Pierce. This company began business with forty phones in operation. In the year 1915 the company had a capital stock of \$4,500 and 150 phones in use. Its officers: J. C. Power, president; P. M. Jacobson, vice president; L. W. Hall, manager; F. D. Brown, treasurer.

[BANK]

The First Bank of Miller was organized in 1889 with a capital stock of \$25,000. Its officers: J. E. Dickerman, president; W. C. Tillson, vice president; F. D. Brown, cashier.

In the year 1915 the bank had a capital stock of \$25,000; surplus and undivided profits, \$25,000; deposits, \$100,000. Its officers: K. Dickerman, president; K. H. Dickerman, vice president; F. D. Brown, cashier; Ross Brown, assistant cashier.

The bank occupied its present (1915) quarters in 1909.

The Bank of Miller was organized in 1889 with a capital stock of \$25,000; the first officers, Mathew Maddox, president, W. L. Maddox, cashier. In the year 1915 the bank had a capital stock of \$25,000; surplus, \$7,000; deposits, \$40,000.

The banking quarters were destroyed by fire November 9, 1915, the bank occupying its new quarters early in the year 1916.

[SCHOOL]

School District No. 54, Miller, was organized in 1890, the first district officers H. S. Peace, P. L. Anderson, C. H. Aron. At an expense of approximately three thousand five hundred dollars a school building was erected in 1893.

The Miller School has ten grades and employs four teachers; the present (1915) district officers are Charles Aron, C. M. Houston, L. W. Hall.

[CHURCHES]

The United Brethren Church was organized at Miller in 1890 with a charter membership of some twenty-five or thirty; among the names which can be recalled are Henry C. Green, J. W. Wylie, W. F. Triplett, J. W. Stevens, Wallace Pierce and A. Boyd. The first pastor was Rev. A. Boyd. A church building was erected in the year 1893 at an approximate cost of fifteen hundred dollars. The membership of the church in 1915 is forty-six; its pastor, Rev. William Buswell.

Church of Christ of Miller was organized in 1913 with a charter membership of fifteen; H. Ehreman and J. P. Norcross were chosen elders, and Wm. Fisher, deacon. The first pastor was Paul Young, evangelist. A church building was purchased in 1914 at a cost of \$1,500. The membership in 1915 was twenty; the church has no regular pastor, A. J. O'Neal serving as resident evangelist.

A Methodist Episcopal Church was organized at Miller in 1890, with a charter membership of twenty-five; the first pastor, Rev. S. J. Medlin. A church building was erected in 1893 at an approximate cost of two thousand dollars. This church organization disbanded and sold their church edifice to the Church of Christ.

The Christian Church at Miller was organized in 1905 with a charter membership of thirty-five; the elders were J. P. Norcross and H. Ehreman; the deacons, D. F. White and Ray Cox. The first pastor, Rev. J. W. Walker. A church building erected in 1907 cost approximately sixteen hundred dollars. The present membership is forty. Rev. Charles J. Shook was pastor up to 1913, since that date the church has been without a resident pastor.

[OTHER ORGANIZATIONS]

In the year 1910 there was instituted at Miller an organization of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union with a charter membership of about twenty. Among those most active in this movement, as called to mind, were Mesdames L. W. Hall, F. D. Brown, J. G. King, Ray Cox, A. E. Kappel, H. W. Fox, Wm. Fisher, C. A. Sea and Miss Ruby Aron. The members of the union have a library of about two hundred volumes, a club room for meetings and support and care for a rest room for ladies.

Jewett Post No. 228, Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Nebraska, was instituted at Miller in 1885 with thirty-five charter members. In 1915 the post had a membership of eleven, J. W. Stevens, post commander.

A. F. & A. M.

Square and Compass Lodge No. 213, A. F. & A. M. of Nebraska. Organized in 1888 as Armada Lodge U. D., moved to Miller in 1890 and chartered as Square and Compass Lodge No. 213, December 14, 1891. Charter membership, eighteen: Peter L. Anderson, Henry R. Berkheimer, Frank D. Brown, Oliver R. Bryan, Arthur F. Burt, Willard J. Clark, William M. Craven, Henry C. Green, Howard C. Harbaugh, Nathaniel H. Hawk, Frank J. Himmelwright, Darius B. Jones, Isaac R. Kidd, Erie W. Northrup, Thurston W.

Sibley, Samuel Veal, Cyrus W. Wright, James W. Wylie. First officers: William M. Craven, W. M.; Howard C. Harbaugh, Sec'y. Present membership, forty. Present officers: Ross Brown, W. M.; C. R. Watson, S. W.; D. W. Friend, J. W.; F. D. Brown, Treas.; L. W. Hall, Sec'y.

Miller Camp No. 973 M. W. A. was instituted with a charter membership of thirteen: Mark Aspinwall, Frank D. Brown, Wm. Lamma, Mark O. Petter, Peter L. Anderson, David Cummins, M. J. McNally, Joseph W. Stevens, L. B. Irwin, Harvey Brown, John W. King, Erie W. Northrup, Edward Wilson. The first officers were: L. B. Irwin, V. C., Edward Wilson, Mark Aspinwall, clerk. In 1915 the membership was eighty-five. A. N. Bliss, V. C., A. E. Scranton, clerk.

Logan Lodge, Knights of Pythias, No. 125, was instituted March 12, 1890, with officers and charter members as follows: W. L. Maddox, P. C.; M. B. Potter, C. C.; H. C. Green, V. C.; Charles Porter, P.; Jos. Millspaugh, M. E.; C. M. Huston, M. F.; J. W. King, K. R. & S.; A. B. Cherry, M. A.; Thomas Walker, I. G.; F. C. Potter, O. G.; G. E. Tarbox, W. A. Hackett, E. C. Wilson, E. B. McElhinney, Allen Bush, Edward Bush, Thomas Cook, Edward Moore, L. S. Pease. In 1915 the lodge had a membership of forty-two. Its officers: A. N. Bliss, C. C.; J. W. Larson, V. C.; Ross Brown, P.; A. C. Andrews, M. W.; J. J. Norcross, K. R. & S.; H. M. Crusinberry, M. A.; L. W. Hall, M. E.; George Comstock, M. F.; C. M. Houston, I. G.; L. S. Baker, O. G. Miller.

Lodge No. 303, I. O. O. F., was instituted May 1, 1905. The charter members being: A. W. Osborn, N. G.; S. B. Montgomery, V. G.; Wm. Tiede, Secy.; E. E. Cole, Treas.; L. A. Hazzard, J. E. Elmore, E. F. Wagner, C. W. Draper, James Sennett, J. G. Hall. In 1915 the lodge had a membership of twenty-five. H. M. Crusinberry, N. G.; H. Reir, V. G.; A. E. Scranton, Secy.; E. E. Cole, Treas.

History of Buffalo County Vol. II by Samuel Bassett, 1916, p. 272-273
[edited for format]

FRANK D. BROWN.

The prosperity which the First Bank of Miller is enjoying is in large measure due to the business acumen and sound judgment of Frank D. Brown, who has been its cashier since its organization. He was born in the state of New York on the 9th of September, 1862, a son of A. C. and Sarah (Rogers) Brown, both likewise natives of the Empire state and both now deceased. He received his education in the public schools of his native state but when twenty-one years of age determined to try his fortune in the middle west and removed to St. Paul, Nebraska. He engaged in the stock business there until 1887, when in company with J. E. Dickerman, he organized The First Bank of Armada, which later became the First Bank of Miller and of which he has since been cashier. He is thoroughly familiar with the routine of banking practice and also understands the

basic financial principles which underlie the banking business. He also keeps in close touch with local conditions and with the general trend of business throughout the country and is thus able to so direct the affairs of the bank that the interests of depositors are carefully safeguarded and at the same time dividends are returned to the stockholders.

Mr. Brown was married in January, 1888, at St. Paul, Nebraska, to Miss Nela A. Norton, likewise a native of New York, and they have two sons: F. Ross, who is assistant cashier of the bank; and Claire Norton, who is at home.

Mr. Brown gives his political allegiance to the republican party as he believes that its policies are based upon sound principles of government. His fraternal affiliations connect him with the Masonic blue lodge and chapter, the Modern Woodmen of America and the Knights of Pythias, and in his life he exemplifies the spirit of brotherhood which is at the foundation of those orders. He has been engaged in banking in Miller for twenty-eight years and is well informed in regard to the history of the town. He furnished the data in regard to Miller for this history of Buffalo county. He has been an important factor in the business and financial life of Miller and has also done his part in promoting the civic advancement of the town.

Buffalo Tales, *Volume 13, No. 9, October, 1990*

ARMADA, THE GEM CITY 1873-1890

by James Bish

The area which became Armada, and later Miller, was a vast unsettled frontier grassland throughout most of the nineteenth century. Located in the upper Wood River valley in northwestern Buffalo County, this area experienced the initial stages of settlement shortly after settlers began to locate on the available land along the Platte River in southern Buffalo County. As Platte River valley land became scarce, a few adventurous pioneers made their way up the valley of the Wood River. The earliest known settlers were Aden L. Armstrong and Brinton Harbaugh. During the early spring of 1873 these two men settled about a mile apart on the north side of the river, and both constructed a small sod house.

In October of that year Oscar Hamilton, John Mercer and William H. Smith also staked out claims in the northern valley of the Wood River. These three men had previously lived in Ohio and they traveled out to Nebraska together. They were good friends, and Hamilton and Smith were related. They first arrived at Plum Creek (now Lexington) looking for a place to settle, and not finding available land there, they journeyed northeast to the Wood River valley and filed claims immediately west of where the town of Armada would later be located. There, on the north banks of the river valley, Smith and Hamilton dug a hole in the side of a hill, which became their home. Mercer settled about a mile further west, also in a dugout on the north side of the river.



The Will Craven family were the first residents of Armada village. Back Row: Ossie, Effie, Myrtie and Nettle; Front Row: Josie, Will, Neva, Elmyra and Charles.

Between 1874 and 1876 few settlers located in the area. Devastation by both drought and grasshoppers brought difficult times, and the economy was also suffering from a national depression. By 1875 Otis Halstead had settled just west of Mercer in Dawson County, and Henry Green had located between the Harbaugh and the Smith-Hamilton abodes. It appears that these few pioneers were the only settlers during the early 1870's in the area which later became Armada. When these early pioneers reminisced about those early years, Oscar Hamilton told about that first rough winter of 1873-74. He said that all he and Smith had to live on during that winter were "fifty pounds of flour and two bushels of potatoes. Before green grass struck us, the seats and knees of our unmentionables were nothing to boast of, however, accepting without a murmur anything eatable in the way of cornbread, skunk bacon and such, we managed to pull through." He added that by April 1874 both he and Smith looked like "the tail end of a mostly hard winter."

Harbaugh, Halstead and Mercer remembered that there were few ways of earning money in those early years. They turned to hunting and trapping for a livelihood. Plenty of elk, antelope and deer lived in the hills, while along the streams beaver, mink, wildcat and even an occasional bear could be found. Mercer claimed that to survive he would often "shoot a deer and trade it for flour and such articles of food as he stood in need of, and in that way he managed to get along." Halstead and Mercer became so well known as hunters and trappers that the mile span of the Wood River between their homesteads, located on either side of the Buffalo-Dawson county line, became known as Trappers Grove. Eventually a school and a post office would be built in Dawson County near that location, named "Trappers Grove" in honor of these two early pioneer trappers.

It was not uncommon to see small bands of Indians traveling along the river during those early years. William Craven, who would eventually open the first store in Armada, remembered on one occasion seeing "as many as two thousand Indians in one body going to and from their hunting expeditions." Usually, however, Indian bands sighted were very small in number.

John Mercer claimed that "even his dugout did not protect him from the ravages of the grasshoppers in 1874, '75, '76," that he remembered seeing grasshoppers at least "three inches thick and they didn't seem to smother each other." Those years were difficult for the settlers and new settlement was practically non-existent because of the drought and grasshopper devastation.



A store in Armada (unidentified)

In 1875 Aden Armstrong successfully petitioned the Postal Department to establish a post office in his home, and on October 25 of that year Armstrong's sod home became the first post office, and he was appointed postmaster. He requested that the new post office be named Armada after the town in eastern Michigan's Macomb County where he grew up. In addition, Armstrong thought the definition of an armada, "a fleet of armed ships, representing strength and power with a determination to push ahead and overcome all apparent difficulties" exemplified the new settlements in the region. The Postal Department approved the name and mail service under the name of Armada began.

Armstrong was impatient about the slowness of the federal government in funding the new mail route so delivery could begin, so in order to expedite mail service, he paid for the mail delivery for about six months before the Postal Department appropriated funds to get the route started. By 1876 settlers in the upper Wood River valley had weekly mail service.

The discovery of gold in the Black Hills, over 300 miles northwest of Armada, had a major impact on the area. In 1877 prospectors flooded into the Black Hills of Dakota Territory. They needed equipment and supplies and the nearest railroad to bring these supplies was located in Nebraska's Platte valley. Communities in the Platte valley began to compete for the trade resulting from outfitting the Black Hills miners.

Sidney, Nebraska, got off to a very good start, establishing itself as a main freighting center at the head of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. Kearney also competed for the freight business. In the spring of 1877 the Kearney to Black Hills stage route was proclaimed. With daily stage service, this route was advertised as the "shortest and best stage and freight route from all points in the East and South." The route went through the Armada area and for the first time, Armada was shown on the map. It would become an important mail and stage stop. The Kearney to Black Hills freight route operated only during 1877 as it could not compete with the more established Sidney-Black Hills Trail. However, during its existence, many persons became introduced to the beauty and fertility of the upper Wood River valley.

Although the Black Hills route was only temporary, a more permanent freight route continued to operate along the same trail to Broken Bow in Custer County. This overland freight traffic was a major factor in the establishment of a permanent village of Armada. By 1880 over thirty families had settled within a three-mile radius of Armada. These included the families of Armstrong, Mackey, Jeffreys, Wade, Grover, Fritz, Rawlings, Brown, Green, Burt, Hamilton,

Smith, Jones, Harbaugh, Fennel, Roach, Burley, Davenport, Minor, Esler, Mollard, Miller, Boyd, Simpson, Able, White, Mercer, Thiede, Zarrs, Nelson, Veal, Hough, Scott and Patterson. With the large number of pioneers settling in the region between 1876 and 1880, the need for a general mercantile store became a primary concern.



Charles M. Houston, editor of *The Armada Watchman*, April 25, 1889 - July 10, 1890, continued as editor of the *Miller Union* with its first issue on July 17, 1890.

During June of 1881, Will M. Craven built a sod house on the very location that was to become the townsite of Armada, and his family moved in. This was the first structure built. By early fall of 1881, Craven began offering part of his small soddy to weary travelers along the stage route, a common practice in those days. At the same time he purchased \$9.00 worth of goods to distribute to local settlers, thus establishing the first business in Armada. The merchandise included coffee, sugar, tobacco a tobacco cutter, and other small notions.

With the establishment of Craven's store it was logical that the Armada post office be located in the residence of Will Craven as most settlers were making weekly trips to his place for supplies. On November 1, 1881, Craven became postmaster and the post office was moved to his store and residence. Craven's store would be the only business in the area for the next three years.

In July 1884, the Postal Department established daily mail service from Kearney to Broken Bow and made Armada the point where the mail coach would change horses. This brought the establishment of other businesses near Craven's store. During the summer of 1885, finding his soddy too small to serve as store, post office, hotel and residence, Craven built the first frame building for his store. Also during that summer W. H. Fox built a frame building and began a livery business, and Brinton Harbaugh established the area's first farm implement business in a small building adjacent to the livery. In the next five years other business houses, as well as residences, were constructed and the village continued to grow. In 1886 Oscar Hamilton built a hotel, and during 1887 the First Bank of Armada, W. A. Milton's Blacksmith and Carriage Shop, and H. S. Pease's Drug Store opened. Also during that summer Will Craven built a two-story frame house on the location of his earlier sod house. This was to be the nicest home ever built in Armada. It still exists on the same location and currently (1990) serves as the family home of Raymond Hazzard, Jr.

In spite of a harsh winter with a shortage of coal, when spring arrived in 1888 at least ten new residences and businesses were built and by early summer the town boasted a population of 110 persons. It was also in the spring of 1888 when Armada citizens were first able to read a

newspaper printed from their own town. On May 9, Will A. Hale began publishing *The Armada Times*. In December 1888, he sold the newspaper to R. A. Reid who changed the name to *The Armada Watchman*. Because of poor health Reid sold the paper to Charles M. Houston on May 25, 1889.

Armada continued to grow through 1889 and was considered one of the most prosperous villages in Buffalo County. The *Kearney Enterprise* called it the "Gem City" in describing the flourishing village with "its beautiful streets, abundant shade, swift flowing river, magnificent farms, stately residences and prosperous people." Businesses were expanding and new settlers continued at a steady pace to locate in and near the town. Armada citizens also began hearing that a railroad would soon be built to their town. In 1889 the future of Armada could not have looked brighter. Amidst this optimism, on Memorial Day on 1889, the local citizenry turned out for a grand celebration. A procession headed by Civil War veterans marched through the village and north to the Armada Cemetery located one-half mile northeast of the town. The activities included music, prayer, and speeches, but much of the day was spent in remembrance of those who fought and died in the Civil War, as well as those who had since passed away. Armada had its share of former Union soldiers on that Memorial Day. The paper listed over forty veterans living in the area.

But the grandest celebration Armada would ever have occurred later that summer on the 4th of July. Activities began at ten o'clock in the morning with a parade, followed by musical entertainment and speeches before a picnic dinner at noon. Afternoon activities included baseball games, with a \$25.00 purse going to the winners, following which the new game of football was exhibited, then a greased pole contest, wheelbarrow, sack and foot races, and lawn tennis and croquet, two of the more popular sporting activities of the day. These activities were followed by a supper picnic and horse and carriage races. Winners in the horse racing events took home \$150.00 in prize money. As the sun went down local residents settled in to watch what they called a "grand display of fireworks" and activities were capped off that day with an evening dance. The *Kearney Hub* said that of all of the 4th of July celebrations in the county, Armada had the largest attendance.

Armada continued to grow into 1890. In the time span of 1888 to 1890 over forty residences and businesses were built in the new village, increasing its population from near 50 in 1887 to near 250 by 1890. There were four church congregations: Presbyterian, United Brethren, Methodist and Christian which met in the homes of various members, and plans were in the works for the construction of at least two churches in 1891.

None of this was to become a reality. In the summer of 1890 the railroad did come up the Wood River valley, but it was built on the south side of the river and Armada was located on the north side. As a result, citizens deserted Armada, relocating their homes and businesses one mile southwest across the river in the new town of Miller where the railroad depot was located.

Aden Armstrong's hope that Armada would have the strength and power to push ahead and overcome all apparent difficulties would not be realized. The town was not able to overcome the railroad depot location. However, the Armada name has survived over the last one hundred years. Today the township in which the village of Armada was located, and where currently

Miller exists, is named Armada Township, and the cemetery which served the people of Armada, and has since served the people of Miller, is still, one hundred years later, called the Armada Cemetery. In these instances the name Armada has survived as Mr. Armstrong had hoped.

SOURCES

Anderson, Mardi, "Freighting in Buffalo County," 1986 *Tales of Buffalo County*, Vol. III; Manken, Norbert, "The Sidney-Black Hills Trail," *Nebraska History*, Fall, 1949; *Biographical Souvenir of Buffalo, Kearney, and Phelps County*, 1890; Billington, Ray, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 1972; *Miller Area Heritage*, 1983; *Armada Watchman*, April 1889-July 1890; *Kearney Daily Hub*, June 1889-July 1890; *Kearney Central Nebraska Press*, April-November, 1877. More on the history of Armada can be found in *Tales of Buffalo County*, Volume 1, pp. 21, 36-37, 43-47, 118 (*Buffalo Tales*, May, August and October, 1978 and April 1980.)

About the author. Jim Bish grew up in the Miller area, graduated from Sumner High School, attended Kearney State College graduating in 1983 with a B.A. in Education, majoring in History; later attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha, receiving a Master of Arts in History in December 1989. He currently teaches history in a Virginia High School.

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THE OPERA HOUSE - Part I

by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell

The interior plan of the opera house distinguished it from the community hall. A stage with wings, dressing rooms and storage areas for costumes, flats and properties were essential to the opera house. A curtain on the stage was also a requisite. Pastoral scenes might adorn the curtain, but more often it would carry advertisements of local business firms. Seats were movable. These were common type chairs which could be rearranged to line the walls of the room when a dance or an athletic exhibition was held. Later folding chairs were used. More's Hall in Kearney and Abels' Hall in Miller were more commonly known as halls but had the features of an opera house and were at times referred to as such.

Buffalo Tales, May-June, 2005

Fifty Years of International Harvester Company in Buffalo County

... dealers in Buffalo County. The towns of Ravenna, Shelton, Gibbon, Kearney, Elm Creek, and Miller each had an International Harvester dealership. The surrounding areas also had Harvester dealerships and ...

BIOGRAPHICAL SOUVENIR OF BUFFALO COUNTY, pg
141-3 & 144-8, 445-47

WILLIAM M. CRAVEN, the pioneer merchant of Armada, Nebr., was born in Randolph county, N. C., August 12, 1836. His father, L. D. Craven, was born in the same county and state, October 29, 1811. He emigrated to Morgan County, Indiana, in 1836, but subsequently removed to Owen county, where he resided until he came to Nebraska in April, 1871. He was a shoemaker during the early part of his life, but found farming a more congenial occupation. His wife Lovey Spoon, died in November, 1884, a member of the Methodist church, of which Mr. Craven is also a member. The grandparents on both sides were Carolinians by birth. William M. Craven served an apprenticeship at carpentering before he had reached the age of maturity, and at the age of twenty-one he was a contractor and builder, at which occupation he continued until the war began, when he enlisted in May, 1861, in the Forth Indiana infantry and was sent immediately to the scene of conflict. He participated in the battles of Rich mountain, Cheat mountain, Greenbrier and Winchester. He was in the Army of the Potomac until August, 1862, and then re-enlisted at brigade headquarters, this time in the 1st brigade, 3d division and 15th corps, and marched with Sherman from Huntsville, Alabama, to the sea, and was mustered out July 9, 1865, at Louisville, Kentucky. He came out of his long and honorable service without a scar, but not without great suffering from the exposure incident to camp life. During his encampment on Cheat mountain it rained every day, except nine, for three months. After the war he returned to Indiana and resumed his former occupation of contracting. He was married August 24, 1865, to Miss Myra Starbuck. They have seven children-- Elfie M., Myrtle M., Mettie F., Osa L, Charlie E., Josie M. L., and Nevie F.

William M. Craven came to Buffalo county, Nebraska, in the Spring of 1871, and took up a homestead near Shelton, where he remained until 1876. He then spent nearly three years farming in Arkansas, but he was not pleased with the country and concluded to return to Nebraska. Shortly after his return to this county he moved to Buffalo precinct, where he purchased ten acres of land near the present thriving little town of Armada, and erected a small sod house, in which he kept a little store, in the fall of 1881. He started on a capital of \$9, but by honest dealing he has prospered until he is now doing a flourishing business in a neat little store on one of the prominent four corners of Armada. When he commenced business there was no town thought of, the postoffice then being located three miles east of there. A petition was finally circulated and the postoffice was removed to Armada town, and Mr. Craven was made postmaster. He now has twenty acres of land adjoining the town, and has also one hundred and sixty acres in the township. When Mr. Craven first came to the county it was exceedingly wild and sparsely settled. He has seen as many as two thousand Indians in one body going to and coming from their hunting expeditions. Wild game such as buffalo, antelope and deer, was plenty almost anywhere. His crop was completely destroyed three years in succession by the grasshoppers and he and his family were subjected to great inconvenience and suffering thereby. It was just at this period that he concluded to emigrate to Arkansas. He has been postmaster for five years and has filled various local offices. He belongs to the Odd Fellows and Masonic lodges, and is a member of the G. A. R.

JOHN H. WILSON, an enterprising boot and shoe merchant at Armada, Nebr., was born in Woodford county, Ill., October 27, 1857, and is the son of William S., and Mary (Tomb) Wilson. His father was born in Highland county, Ohio, March 10, 1833, but moved to Illinois when a young man. He served in the war of the rebellion, enlisting in the fall of 1864, in the Eighth Illinois infantry, and had served only about eight months, when he was killed in the battle of Fort Gaines, Ala. He had always lived an upright, consistent life, was an active member of the Christian church and was highly respected by all who knew him. His wife is still living, is also a devoted and conscientious worker in the cause of religion, and is a member in the highest standing in the Christian church. But little is known of the paternal grandfather of the subject of this brief biographical sketch except that his name was James Wilson, and that he died about 1856. The maternal grandfather is Matthew W. Tomb, who is a native of Ohio, but who emigrated to Illinois in 1855. He is a leading agriculturist and a prominent man in the community where he resides, has held various local offices and is a respected member of the Christian church. He and his faithful wife, who bore the maiden name of Elizabeth Moore, are still living. John H. Wilson is the eldest of six children, one of whom is now dead; and upon him devolved largely the care and responsibility of his mother, with whom he remained until eighteen years of age. He began life for himself at twenty-one as a farmer in Illinois. In the spring of 1885, he immigrated to Buffalo county, Nebr., and purchased railroad land near Armada, which he successfully cultivated for three years. In the meantime he purchased eighty acres more land, making in all 240 acres, a good portion of which he now has under special cultivation. His land lies within one and one-half miles of the town of Armada and is also in what is known as the Wood River valley.

In September, 1888, Mr. Wilson moved to Armada and engaged in the boot and shoe business. He began with a limited amount of capital, and by industry and fair dealing he has succeeded in building up a substantial business, with a rapidly increasing trade. He enjoys the entire confidence of all his patrons and has built up a reputation for selling goods that are "all wool and a yard wide." He was married January 3, 1883, to Miss De Laura T. Foster, and this union has been blessed with two children -- Stanley A. and John F. Mrs. Wilson was born in Marshall county, W. Va., December 4, 1857, and is the daughter of James and Etheline (Wellman) Foster, both natives of that state. Her father died in 1878, but her mother is still living. Her paternal grandfather, James Foster, was born in Ireland, emigrated to America in an early day, and first settled in Pennsylvania, but later in West Virginia. He died in 1865, at the age of eighty-four. His wife was a native of Pennsylvania and died in 1881. The maternal grandparents of Mrs. Wilson were Virginians by birth.

Mr. Wilson has held various town offices of responsibility and has several times been re-elected assessor for his township. He and his estimable wife are both members of the Christian church and earnest advocates of temperance.

RICHARD DARBYSHIRE, a young and enterprising man of Armada, Nebr., was born in Burlington, Iowa, September 16, 1859. His father, Thomas Darbyshire, was born in England and came to America when nine years of age. He lived in Iowa, principally at Burlington. He followed farming mostly, and died in 1884. Richard's mother, who bore the maiden name of Naomi Adams, was a native of Kentucky as were also her parents. Richard Darbyshire remained with his parents until he was twenty-one and then began farming for himself. After he had farmed a couple of years he began dealing in horses, in which business he had marked success. He came to Nebraska in 1884 and resided near Armada for two years, then bought and sold farms and made considerable money in his various real estate transactions. In 1886, he began driving the stage on the Kearney and Broken Bow line and continued for about eight months, during which he had an interesting experience. He frequently drove sixty miles a day when the thermometer registered from thirty-three to thirty-four degrees below zero, and was often compelled to shovel his way through snow banks and make schedule time in all kinds of weather. He drove for days at a time when he would be the only team on the roads. The rules of the mail service imposed a heavy fine on mail carriers for being behind time without a most satisfactory excuse, but he was never fined the entire winter, which was one of the severest in the history of the country. The Union Pacific Railway Company was fined frequently for being late with the mails that winter, but the disagreeable weather was no barrier to young Darbyshire in preventing him from delivering the mails on time. He is now in the livery business at Miller, Nebraska and has one of the best barns in the county.

BENJAMIN F PEASE is a well-to-do farmer in Armada township, Buffalo county, Nebr., was born in Ontario county, N.Y. and is the son of Granger and Anna (Fish) Pease, former of whom was born in Connecticut and the latter in New York. His parents moved to Michigan in 1839, where his father died in 1858; his mother was a Quakeress and passed to the eternal land in 1842.

B. F. Pease began to learn the cooper trade when he was eighteen, and followed it for five years. He was married October 24, 1859, to Martha Judd, by whom he had one child--Herbert. She was born in 1838, and was the daughter of Henry and Elvira Judd; the former was a native of Connecticut and the latter of Massachusetts. Mrs. Pease died in 1868, and Mr. Pease was next married, May 30, 1872, to Charlotte Odell, by whom he had three children -- Charles, Salina and Floyd. Mr. Pease enlisted, August 12, 1861, in the Eighth Michigan infantry and served four years. He participated in the battles of Coosaw, S.C.; Pulaski, Wilmington, Ga.; and James Island, S. C., where he was taken prisoner, but was exchanged four months afterwards; and was also in the battles of Blue Springs, Ky.; Jackson, Miss., and Knoxville, Tenn. His brigade was under Gen. W. T. Sherman after the siege of Knoxville, but reorganized and joined the Army of the Potomac. He served with his regiment in every engagement, from the Wilderness to the evacuation of Petersburg, April, 1865; re-enlisted January 1, 1864, and was mustered out July 30, 1865, having entered the army as a private and rising to the rank of first lieutenant. He came to Nebraska in May, 1884, and settled in Armada

township, Buffalo county. He took a soldier's homestead, which he now has well improved, and has increased his acreage until his farm now contains 320 acres under a good state of cultivation. He and his estimable wife are members of the Methodist church, and he is a member of the G. A. R., and a highly respected citizen in the community.

JOHN MERCER is one of the substantial farmers and stockmen of Armada township, Buffalo county. He was born in Roxburghshire, Scotland, August 31, 1845, and is the son of George and Isabel (Locky) Mercer, both of whom are natives of Scotland. His father came to America in 1852, and settled in Canada, his wife and family following in 1861. He was a shoemaker by trade, and a member of the old established Church of Scotland, and died in 1862. Young Mercer identified himself with the Union cause by enlisting in the navy August 18, 1864, and belonged to a crew on board the Miami which was ordered up the James river and lay at Dutch Gap canal during the winter of 1864-5. He received his discharge at Philadelphia in June, 1865. After the war he went to Watertown, N. Y. where his mother and two brothers had moved, and engaged with Smith & Lamb, woolen manufacturers; he also worked in the large steam woolen mills at Utica, and at Bridgetown, Me. He afterwards came west and worked in woolen factories in Ohio and Michigan, and as he was thoroughly familiar with almost every department connected with the manufacture of woolen goods, found no trouble in procuring employment at any first-class factory. In the fall of 1873 he concluded to "go west and grow up with the country," and accordingly he turned up in Buffalo county, Nebr., and within a reasonably short time he was a proprietor of a No. 1 homestead, located in the rich and fertile valley of the Wood river, of which he was one of the first actual settlers. The country was naturally wild and exceedingly dreary to one coming from the far East, and it made no other impression on the mind of young Mercer. He was forty miles from any town, in a country where elk, antelope and deer roamed at will, and along the small streams of which were plenty of beaver and wildcats. He was fond of hunting, and followed it almost exclusively for three or four winters. It afforded him considerable amusement and besides it was quite profitable. In fact, there was no other way of making money, and even a bachelor like Mr. Mercer could not live in a wild prairie country without money. He lived in a dug-out, which, in those days, was the only house that guaranteed its occupant absolute shelter from the frequent atmospherical disturbances. But even his dugout did not protect him from the ravages of the grass-hoppers in 1874-5-6. He has seen them three inches thick, and they didn't seem to smother each other either. A good many settlers got discouraged and left, but he concluded to stick by his claim as long as he could live. He would go to the hill, shoot a deer and trade it for flour and such articles of food as he stood in need of, and in that way he managed to get along. In the fall of 1880 a prairie fire swept everything he had, including his hay and grain in the stack, --everything, in fact, except a patch of sod corn.

John Mercer was married October 11, 1885 to Pauline, daughter of James and Rachael (Spriggs) Stewart. She was born in Marshall county, Ill., February 15, 1854, and has borne him two children--John C., born December 24, 1887, and

Edward James, born March 26, 1890. Mr. Mercer belongs to the G. A. R., and is a republican in whom there is no guile. He has two hundred and forty acres of fertile land and takes great pride in breeding good horses, of which he is a splendid judge.

ARTHUR F BURT was born in Delaware county, Ind., January 1833, and is the son of Dickerson and Margaret (Killough) Burt, the former of whom was reared in Massachusetts and the latter in Ohio. Dickerson Burt first taught school after he came to Ohio, and subsequently graduated from a Cincinnati medical college. He practiced his profession in Muncie, Ind., and also had the honor of being appointed the first postmaster of that town. He was married to Margaret Killough, March 3, 1827, by whom he had four children, and whom he lost by death February 9, 1835. Arthur Burt lived with Cornelius Vaursdell, an old Christian preacher, until he was thirteen, and then started out for himself, and followed railroading for several years. In 1852 he made quite an extensive tour of the country, after which he followed farming in Ross county, Ohio, for several years. He was married January 13, 1859, to Elizabeth Campbell. They have seven children -- Christena A, Juda V., John A., Dora L., Rosa E., Lizzie L., and Mary B.

Mr. Burt served in the late war, enlisting August 15, 1862 in the One Hundred and Third Illinois infantry. He participated in the struggle at Holly Springs, but being injured on the march to Vicksburg, he was afterwards transferred from field service to the veteran reserve corps, and put on detached service, being sent to Rock Island, Ill., where he ran the machinery connected with the government prison until mustered out in July, 1865. He followed farming in Illinois for several years after he returned from the war, and went to Missouri in 1872, where he spent four years. He came to Armada, Nebr., in May, 1879, and took up a homestead. He was among the first to settle in the country south of Armada, and had no neighbors on the south of him nearer than twelve miles. He is independent in politics and is an esteemed and worthy citizen. Mr. Burt has recently been appointed inspector for the K. B. & H. R. R., (sic) in which position he is giving full satisfaction.

CHARLES M. HOUSTON, editor and proprietor of the *Miller Union*, was born at Sidney, Iowa, June 8, 1869, and is a son of Harry A. and Jane E. (Irwin) Houston. His father is a native of Pennsylvania and his mother of Ohio. His father has been actively engaged in the newspaper business for more than twenty years, during which time he has published papers in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Wisconsin. He is a clear and forcible writer, and at one time was a member of the editorial staff of the *Kansas State Journal*.

Charles M. Houston, the subject of this sketch, learned the printing business in the home office at Sidney, Iowa, and is thoroughly familiar with every department of a well-regulated country newspaper office. He went to Armada, Buffalo county, Nebr., in April, 1889, and immediately purchased the office of *The Armada Watchman*, which paper he published until July, 1890, when he removed

said paper to the new town of Miller, and changed the name to *Miller Union*. The paper was started in May, 1888, by W. A. Hale, who conducted it until December, 1888, when it passed into the hands of The Watchman Publishing Company, with R. A. Reed as editor. After the paper became the property of Mr. Houston, it was materially improved in tone and general make-up. It was republican in politics, and enjoyed a fair advertising patronage. Young Houston, at the age of nineteen only at that time, made a success in the newspaper field where two publishers had failed before him. He is a chip off the old block, and will make a reputation in the newspaper world equal to that of his father.

Early in the spring of 1890, the Union Pacific Railroad Company decided on constructing the Kearney and Black Hills branch, and in speaking of this decision the *Miller Union*, of August 28, states that "The Hancock Land & Improvement Company owned a section of land to the south and west of old Armada, about a mile through which the railroad was graded. Early in the month of June, the said Hancock Company had their land re-surveyed and platted into a town-site and made the people of Armada the following proposition: To all those engaged in business in Armada and owning either business or dwelling-houses, the Hancock Company would give them lots in the 'new town' (which they had named Miller), and would move their buildings from Armada to Miller free of cost to the owners. And to those business men who were not owners of buildings in the village of Armada who wished to build houses they would give them warrantee deeds to lots when buildings were erected. * * * * * The people of Armada, seeing the determination of the Hancock people to build up Miller, and knowing of the vast advantages they would have over Armada, came to the conclusion that it was about time that they were taking steps whereby they might become citizens of Miller. Accordingly, most of the citizens of Armada accepted the proposition of the Miller people; and about July 1st the first building was begun in Miller, which was a residence built by L. A. Hazzard on corner of Stephenson avenue and Fifth street. July 17th, the *Miller Union* made its first appearance and was issued from a barn, which had been hurriedly erected for a shelter from the weather until better quarters could be secured."

At present, besides churches, there are over thirty business firms in the place including banks, and twenty-one dwelling houses, and others under contract to be built.

HENRY C. GREEN, one of the highly prosperous and influential farmers near Armada, Nebr., was born in the county of Kent, in Delaware, February 22, 1842, and is the son of James P. and Hester (Conley) Green, both of whom are natives of Delaware. His father was a farmer and a member of the Baptist church. He was born in 1804 and died in 1855. Mrs. Hester Green was a member of the Methodist church and died in 1849.

Henry C. Green had only such educational advantages as were afforded by the common schools of the day, and his opportunities even then were not the best. When he was but fourteen years old he lost his father, and after that sad event he went to live with a neighboring gentleman. He enlisted at the age of nineteen in the First regiment of Delaware infantry, and rendered honorable service in the late

war. He participated in the engagements at Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville; was severely wounded in the left leg at the last named battle and was removed to the hospital at Potomac creek, where he remained until June 14, 1863, when he was transferred to Washington, where he remained until the war closed. He was confined to his bed for twenty-seven months and was unable to walk for some time after his discharge- January 1, 1865 - and so remained in Washington until he had sufficiently recovered to be able to travel. He was there when President Lincoln was assassinated and witnessed the grand review after the war closed.

He returned home and attended school at Wilmington, Del.; for two years, and then entered Crittenden's Commercial College in Philadelphia. In the fall of 1868 he embarked in mercantile business in Wyoming, Del., and in February, 1871, came to Buffalo county, Nebr. He took a soldier's homestead near Gibbon, where he remained a little more than two years, after which he spent about two years on the Fort Kearney reservation. In 1876 he conducted a large cattle ranch near Burr Oak, on the Loup river, and was at this business for about four years, when he purchased land in the Wood River valley and went to farming. He now owns several tracts of valuable land and is one of the most successful farmers in the county.

DARIUS B. JONES, ex-commissioner of Buffalo county, was born in Chautauqua county, N. Y., August 9, 1834.

His father, Miles Jones, was a native of Massachusetts and settled in Illinois, in 1859, where he died in 1881. His

mother, who bore the maiden name of Pamela K. Turner, was born in Canada, and died in 1879.

At the age of eighteen young Jones concluded to learn the blacksmith trade and accordingly went to Canada, when he served an apprenticeship. In 1856 he went to Kansas and joined an emigrant company, under the direction of the Massachusetts Aid Society. It was during the great excitement concerning the extension of slavery into Kansas, and when John Brown and Jim Lane were popular leaders of the anti-slavery Movement. He knew both of these men and for a time shared in the kicks and cuffs received by these heroes. He spent several years on this battle-ground, during which he received his share of the hardships inflicted by the Kansas raiders. In 1862 he went to Illinois, where he remained for ten years; during which time he was engaged in the mercantile business at Elmwood. His next move was to Iowa, where he spent five years as a merchant at Emerson, Mills county. In 1879 he moved to Buffalo county, Nebr., and took a homestead in Armada township. He has since purchased considerable additional

land and now has four hundred and forty acres. He like many others had to hustle when he first came here, and has hauled cedar posts for one hundred and thirty miles to market and there would receive small pay for his labor; but it was the only way there was of making money in the winter time.

He was married November 29, 1857, to Margaret B. Cowan, who was born in Canada, in 1832, and is the daughter of Hugh and Mary Cowan. This union has been blessed with fourteen children - Mary P., John A., Laurence P., Ella, Hettie, Arthur, Annie, Effie, Willie, Alice, Fred, Addie, Flora and Frank (deceased).

Mr. Jones has served one term as county commissioner, having been elected in the fall of 1882. He is a republican and quite prominent in the councils of the party in the county. He is a Mason and Odd Fellow, and one of the well-known and popular men of Buffalo county.

A. L. ARMSTRONG is one of the first settlers of Armada precinct, Buffalo county. He is a native of Genesee county, N. Y., and was born Nov. 5, 1831.

His father, Aden Armstrong, was a Canadian by birth, but emigrated to New York in an early day, where he met and afterwards married Lydia Aldrich. In 1833 the senior Armstrong moved to Michigan, and located in McComb county. He was one of the first settlers in that county and was for many years one of its most prominent citizens. He held various local offices and was active and influential in the political affairs of the county. He died in 1854.

Aden L. Armstrong, the subject of this sketch, was one of twelve children, and, being reared in a new country, did not enjoy the common school privileges accorded the youth of today. At the age of eighteen he began serving an apprenticeship at the carpenter trade, and worked about ten years in McComb county, Mich., at his trade after learning it. He then moved to Kalamazoo county, and engaged in farming for a few years. When the war broke out, Mr. Armstrong

threw all his influence on the side of the Union and in April, 1862, was commissioned by the governor of Michigan as a recruiting officer. He traveled over the state and used every means in his power to induce men to enlist and save the Union. August 15, 1864, Mr. Armstrong enlisted in the New Third regiment Michigan infantry, was promoted to duty sergeant before leaving the state and saw considerable active service until the war closed. He participated in the engagements at Decatur, Ala., and Franklin and Nashville, Tenn. He was taken sick at Jonesborough Tenn., and sent to the hospital at Nashville where he remained two months, and was mustered out July 15, 1865. He had served as orderly from November, 1864, until he was mustered out.

In 1869 he went to Mills county, Iowa, and worked at his trade about four years, and in the spring of 1873 came to Buffalo county, Nebr., locating, as above stated, in Armada precinct. He selected his homestead on the banks of Wood river and was one of the first to settle in that fertile valley. The country was of course new and wild and neighbors were few and far between.

Mr. Armstrong was married Feb. 19, 1853, to Miss Amelia Rice, a native of Connecticut, born Feb. 19, 1833. To this union were born seven children, as follows - Elias (deceased), Elmer (deceased), Rose, Lenettie, Stella T., Comer C. and Earnest. Mrs. Armstrong died Feb. 11, 1883, and Mr. Armstrong married for his second wife, June 6, 1883, Miss Mary E. White, who was born in Illinois in 1861.

Mr. Armstrong caused to be established the Armada postoffice in 1876 and was appointed postmaster. He was located then about three miles east of the present village of Armada. In order to get the office established, Mr. Armstrong paid for carrying the mails from Kearney once a week for six months out of his own pocket. He has held various local offices and has always affiliated with the republican party. He is a member of the Masonic, G. A. R. and Good Templar fraternities, and is an ardent temperance man, not having tasted a drop of liquor in his life, and has always been actively identified with temperance movements. He has 320 acres of land located in the Wood River valley, 200 of which are under a good state of cultivation.

Miller Heritage Book

Schools: First school in the area was District 54, Trappers Grove, organized in 1880. In 1881 it was established in Armada and in 1890 in Miller. For two years school was held in the United Brethern Church until a school building could be built. The high school closed in 1958. The 7-8 grades met in the Miller school for the next two years and then went to SEM. The K-6th grades continued to meet in Miller up to 1978.

First Frame House: Built by William Craven. Owned by Raymond Hazzard, Jr. when the Miller book was written. It was the first frame house in Armada. Called the Half Way House because it was half way between Kearney and Broken Bow.

Banks: Armada State Bank – Maddox & Aspinwall

First Bank of Armada - Brown [became Brown's Bank in Miller]

Churches: United Brethren – built in 1893 in Miller

Methodist Episcopal

Baptist - disappeared

Presbyterian – united with Sumner

Christian Church – organized in late 1889. Built in 1906

Miller: Named for Dr. George L. Miller an Omaha man who was very interested the railroad being established.

Summer 1890 - 52 buildings were moved across the Wood River. Some were businesses and some were homes.