

# Phelps Helps



Volume 15, Issue 2

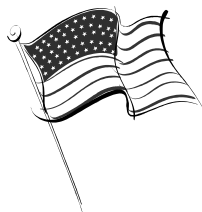
Summer 2007

**Meetings held at the  
Nebraska Prairie  
Museum  
on the first Monday of the  
month at 2:00 PM.**

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## Inside this issue:

Early Oxford	2
Harlan County	3
Loomis	4
Business Roster	5
Old Time Events	6
James Street Home	8

## New Additions to the Library

### Given by the Holdrege Public Library

- Genealogical Dictionary of New England, Volume I-IV
- The Genealogist's Guide
- American Imprints Inventory, No. 26 -A Check List of Nebraska Non-Documentary Imprints 1847-1876, Published in 1942
- Inventory of the County Archives of Greeley County, Nebraska, No. 39, 1941
- Inventory of the County Archives of Nebraska, No. 61, Central City, Merrick County, Nebraska 1941
- Inventory of the County Archives of Nebraska, No. 58, Loup County, 1941
- Inventory of the County Archives

- of Nebraska, No. 91, Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska 1941
- Inventory of the County Archives of Nebraska, No. 47, St. Paul, Howard County, Nebraska 1941
- The Old and the New "A Genealogy of the Viren Family, By Arthur Viren

### Given by Norma Wickham

- Descendants of Nicholas Verbeck, Sr.

### Given by Ann Heckenlively

- National Genealogical Society Quarterly
- Six Generation Ancestor Tables
- The Treearcher Quarterlies 2003-2006

*(Library Continued on page 3)*

### **CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S HOME PROGRAM WELL RECEIVED**

On May 7th, 2007, Kenneth Mosman, presented an interesting program about the Christian Children's home that operated in Phelps County from 1889 to 1954.

Sixty-five interested individuals came to hear this history including six Home Kids.

Ken Mosman is a member of Holdrege Area Genealogy Club, is compiling a book as a tribute to the children who resided at this home. The book introduction has this quote. "These children are a part of the history of Nebraska, deserving of our admiration for their stability, adaptability and contributions to our society."

Mr. Mosman would like to hear from any Home Kid or any relative of a Home Kid, or former employee of the Christian Children's Home.

You can contact [slater68949@rcom-ne.com](mailto:slater68949@rcom-ne.com) or write to Holdrege Area Genealogy Club, Box 164, Holdrege, NE 68949.

## Early Oxford Settlers from an Oxford History

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Cook and family, migrated from Montford, Wisconsin to Nebraska in 1874. The family consisted of a son Elmer Cook, six years of age and daughters Emner, Ollie, Millie and Ida. The Cook family along with the N. A. Pettygroves and Richard Bishops came by covered wagon, settling about three miles north west of Oxford. The Cooks first location was where the former Fred Schoen farm is.

In order to hold school for their children, Mr. Pettygrove volunteered to be the teacher. The first school was a dugout with wooden boxes used for desks and seats.

School books had been brought from Wisconsin to assure the children of an education in their new frontier home. Miss Fannie Adams of Oxford was later secured for a teacher in the little school.

Later the Cook family moved about ten miles north of Oxford where their daughters Ethel and Nettie were born. They also lived for many years south of Oxford on the old McCourtney place where their mother passed away. The Cooks retired to Oxford in about the year 1894 where Jacob Cook passed away in 1915.

In 1900 Elmer Cook married Miss Clara Huff, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Huff. The John Huffs with their four children, Frank, Clara, Walter and Bessie came to Nebraska from Ohio in 1881 by train. This was but a short time after the railroad was built through Oxford where the family soon grew to twelve children and were all raised to adulthood on this location.

Elmer Cook passed away in 1935 and his wife in 1955. They were the parents of Mrs. Mae Fisher of Oxford. Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Cook and Mr. and Mrs. John Huff were Mrs. Fisher's grandparents.

## Committee Plans Outdoor Games and Pupils Cooperate

Holdrege Citizen, April 28, 1932

Marguerite Johnson Teacher, Dist. 17 (Also called Bell school)

Section 29 in Sheridan Township, Phelps County, Nebraska

This week we have been having fun with games upon the school ground. The committee decided upon the game one for each day and most of the time all of us have tried to make the plan succeed.

The order committee has been doing some fine work. They have made a chart on the wall on which is written the name of the children and small square for each day. The children who whisper, are noisy, and turn around the least,

receive a pink square: those who are next receive an orange square and those that are not obeying any receive a black one. This week only one has had a black square more than one day. Children on the committee are Ann, Verlen and Orlo.

We have had perfect attendance this week.

Mr. Larson put our screens on this week and some days we have not needed a fire so it makes us feel very summer like.

Warren and Ruth are reading of the run away pets. They never knew about how pets feel about

things.

Orlo and Naomi are reading about the Fox and his Bag. They are now learning to tell how people feel by the expression on their face.

Ruth has learned the Poem: "A Boys' Mother" in language.

Park is memorizing the "Star Spangled Banner" and Lorraine and Anne are memorizing "Way and Heaven by Holland.

Verlen is writing the conjugations of troublesome irregular verbs.

For art work Friday we colored a bunny with a carrot in his arms.

# Harlan County, Nebraska

## HISTORY OF ALMA, NEBRASKA - 1906

Here follows a very interesting letter, written by J. M. Haite, dated April 14, 1880, and placed in the corner stone of the old frame court house, on the day of its dedication.

**NOTE:** The Phelps Helps Newsletter highlights Harlan County in this section. With many of our subscribers interested in and from Harlan County, and since Harlan County is a connecting county to Phelps County, the Phelps Helps will publish history information on Harlan County.

Besides these there were a few persons living with John Guyer's and others stopping with Borden's, who kept what was called the Eagle hotel. None of these were actual citizens, but rather transient people. Today we have an actual population of about 300 people.

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To whom it may concern: Twelve months ago this little village contained the following people:

- Wm. Downs and family ..... 5 Persons
- G. D. Borden ad family ..... 4 Persons
- John Dawson and wife ..... 2 Persons
- Frank Shaffer and family..... 5 Persons
- John Guyer and family ..... 3 Persons
- James Billings and family ..... 3 Persons
- Wells Willits .....1 Person
- Total Inhabitants (April 1879)..... 23 Persons

What we will be in the way of a populace in the future, I do not pretend to say now, you perhaps can conjecture.

The iron on the B. & M. R.R. division was laid to Alma Jan. 13, 1880. Company commenced building depot Feb. 10 1880; telegraph poles and wire put up Feb. 16th 1880; first regular train run to Alma, March 1, 1880; depot burned March 2, 1880; company commenced building another depot March 16, and completed it in two weeks. The corner stone for the new court house was laid April 14th, 1880. The progress that will be made from this date forward you know better than I can tell you in this letter before the events transpire. The life and prosperity of Alma today is attributable to temperance, energy and courage. These then and to these we may add a united effort.

Your obedient servant - J. M. Hiatt

*(Library Continued from page 1)*

Given By Trevor Cobeldick

- Cobbledick, Cobeldick, Cuppleditch Lines

Given By Sandra Slater

- Nebraska Ancestrees, Vol. 28, number 3 & 4

Donor Unknown

- National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in Nebraska, Lue R. Spencer Genealogical Library, Grand Island 1978

Given By Alex T. G. Hawke

- New Beginnings, The Swedish Immigrants in Swedish America

Given By Jana Nation

- Wolf Pack 1996 Year Book, Loomis, Nebraska

Given By Frank Hilsabeck

- Nebraska High School Sports

Given By Mildred Meyer

- The Viking 1940, Bertrand, Nebraska

Given By Larry Hanson

- The Purple and Gold Year books, Holdrege, Nebraska 1955, 1956, 1957

Given By Florence Skallberg

- The Viking Year Book, Bertrand, NE 1940
- 100th Anniversary Immanuel Lutheran Church booklet, Bertrand, Nebraska

# Church Dedication at Loomis

June 9, 1899 Newspaper unknown

Last Sunday was an eventful day for Loomis. The Swedish people had a notable missionary gathering and the Methodist folks dedicated their pretty church. The country had emptied into the town until the town had the appearance of a Fourth of July celebration. Holdrege and Bertrand were also well represented at the dedication. The church was crowded to its utmost capacity.

The main dimensions of the church are 46x46 feet with folding doors shutting off a class room when desired. Large gothic windows, Florentine cathedral glass circular seats of oak, hard oil finish of the fine grained natural wood, platform and altar carpeted with green and aisles covered with suitable matting made of a pleasing impression upon the audience.

Dr. Phillips of Holdrege officiated. After the introductory service conducted by Revs, Wickam and Kenniston, he preached one of his characteristic sermons. Revs. Pierce from Urbana and Kiplinger from Holdrege were also present.

Treasure Doherty's report showed a value of the property to be \$2500 with an indebtedness of \$600 still resting upon it. Dr. Phillips proposed that the entire debt be secured then and there. It seemed a big undertaking in the face of what had already been done but the doctor with remarkable skill and tack showed himself master of the situation, for in just twenty minutes the sum of \$607 was pledged.

The remarkable day closed with an impressive evening exercise,

love feast, the Holy Communion and reception of the members by the pastor, Rev. Keisling. Six adults and four children united. Dr. Phillips preached another powerful sermon inciting all to higher attainments and more Christ-like living.

At the close a rising vote of thanks was tendered the doctor for his services and the church of Holdrege for closing their doors and lending us their preacher for the occasion.

The new building with its graceful spire, four-gabled roof and well kept grounds is an ornament to the town, enhancing the value of property and doubtless all those contributing will rejoice that they have stock in it.

# Holdrege Business Roster of 1887

continued from previous issue...

*(This information came from the Souvenir Historical Edition in the Holdrege Daily Citizen in June of 1958)*

**P. O. Hedlund**, county clerk, was elected in 1882. He was a Swedish Native and immigrated to this country with his father and mother in 1876. The family settled in Phelps County in the same year.

**A. J. Dunlavy**, owner and operator of the Holdrege Meat Market. He came to Holdrege after a short residence in Sacramento. He was a native of Illinois.

**Salas Latta** came to Holdrege when the town was founded and went into partnership with James A Ruby in the livery business. He sold out his interest to John. McAvoy and started a livery stable of his own. He also was a livestock buyer and operated yards immediately south of the town.

**M. Grady** operated an exclusive clothing store in the building now occupied by Ledlies. He came to Holdrege in 1885.

**R. T. McGrew** was cashier of the First National Bank. He opened the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Phelps Center in 1882, moving it to Holdrege in

1883. The following year the bank was succeeded by the First National Bank. A. L. Clark of Hasting was president of the institution.

**Hall and Patrick**, law firm was established in February of 1885. Both men were from Springfield, Illinois where they were admitted to the bar in 1882.

**H. Sewell** of the firm of Sewell and Knowlton, opened a law office in Holdrege in 1885. Mr. Sewell had practiced law in Canada for 12 years. Mr. Knowlton took care of the loans and insurance end of the business.

**S. A. Dravo** came to Phelps County in 1880 and moved his established law office from Phelps Center to Holdrege. He had read law in Iowa and was admitted to the bar in 1879.

**G. Norberg** was elected county attorney at law, and operated a land and loan office. He located in Holdrege in 1886.

**J. M. Harbaugh**, attorney at law, also does a general land and loan business. He came to Holdrege shortly after the establishment of the town.

**G. H. Johnson** practiced law and operated a land and loan

office. He located in Holdrege in 1886.

**D. M. Duff** was Holdrege's first grocer and druggist. He came here from Beatrice and had been in the drug business for 14 years. He built a new brick building on West Avenue, and the interior of his store gave customers the impression they "were in a large business house in New York or Chicago."

Holdrege physicians of 1887 included

**Dr. McCurtain**, graduate of Louisville and Chicago medical colleges:

**Dr. S. E. Cook**, resident surgeon of the B & M railway, graduate of McGill University in Montreal, Canada

**Dr. E. B. Guild**, from Iowa and was a Drake Medical college graduate, came to Holdrege with the establishment of the town, moving from Phelps Center;

**Dr. J. T. Miller**, graduate of Rush medical college in Chicago, located in Holdrege in 1885.

**A. Smith** came here from Oxford. He operated the City Bakery with a lunch counter in conjunction.

*To be continued in the next Phelps Helps Newsletter...*

# Old-Time Events Recalled

## Bertrand Herald Mid Century Addition - 1950

On the 17 of September 1885, the three Westfall brothers Newton, Michael, and Marion with their families left Urbana, Ohio by train for a long trip west. Their destination being Bertrand, where a brother Amos Westfall, had lived for many years. We arrived in Bertrand in the evening of the 19th. We did not leave the train as my father had arranged with the conductor to take us as far as the crossing where Alton Maaske now lives. The charge for this was 50 cents. A man named Dennis Wandling lived near there and took us in his wagon to my uncles home two miles distant. It was after dark when we reached there.

There house was a roomy sod building and very nice and housed twenty of us very nicely.

There were sixteen in our party. My father Michael brought lumber from Ohio to build a house and he, being a carpenter, and with the help of others, soon had it completed and we were at home in the new country. We were a little homesick at first. There we no trees for shade nor grass to play on, the wind blew and we were not used to the dust.

The school house was Tracyville, which still stands, had just been completed and school was in session. We were soon enrolled there and were two busy to be discontent. The sod school house stood just across the road from it. We just missed getting to go to

school in it. Frank Farmer was the teacher. If any pupil misbehaved we made them learn their thirteen's. (Multiplication Tables)

A Sunday School was held in the school house with a Mr. Whitaker as superintendent. It was well attended and was the only place there was to go. It was decided to buy an organ for Sunday School and we had to raise money. So ice cream socials and box suppers were held and we soon had the organ. Etta Brand was the organist.

In time a literary society was organized and good programs were put on and we had lively debates. Wilson Winslow was one of the forceful speakers. We also had spelling matches and later a man named Johnston came and organized a singing school. It proved to be interesting and worth while, both young and old taking part. Good programs were given and people came for miles around.

There were no fences and one could take short cuts to any place they chose to go. The winters were severe with much snow and occasional blizzards and fuel was not plentiful. We had to resort to burning corn at times, also cane seed.

My father and his three brothers were Civil War Veterans and the first social affair we attended in Bertrand was a "bean supper" given by the veterans here. They had a

short program. The only number I can recall was a bean song, the chorus of which ran thus: Beans for breakfast, Beans for dinner, Beans for Supper, Beans, Beans, Beans!" It was sung to the tune, Go Tell Aunt Rhody."

They had a three piece band here at the time. A bass drum played by Marion Westfall and a snare drum, a man named Willey played the fife. Their music was appreciated.

In September, 1885, school was in session in Bertrand in a building on the west side of Main street. Mrs. Shoemaker, mother of Helen Dewey was teacher.

A millinery store was kept by Mrs. Keyes, in front room of her house. That house is now the home of Myrtle Westfall. Mr. Keyes was a real estate man.

Life in the new country was not always as smooth sailing for us but it has been a great experience. We learned the "art of doing without", which now seems almost a lost art and one which young people know little or nothing about. We have never regretted having been brought west for although Ohio is a great state, we have had opportunities here that we would not have had there and in closing I want to submit, (with apologies to Kelly Barnett) poem which expresses our true sentiment.

*(Old Time Continued on page 7)*

*(Old Time Continued from page 6)*

## Allegiance to Nebraska

*Nebraska we love you, your  
boundaries are home.*

*We have neither desire nor  
intention to roam.*

*For bright azure of skies and  
zephyrs soft soughing.*

*We have yielded our hearts to the  
lure of your wooing.*

*There is bloom from the time  
violets spring.*

*To the goldenrod's brilliance of  
which poets sing;*

*We treasure the beauty and wealth  
of your fields.*

*And garner rich harvests your  
fertile soil yields.*

*Pure crystal the streams that  
course your fair breast,*

*Kind nature as lavish bestowing  
the best.*

*Prime cattle that graze on the  
richest grass.*

*Have merit and volume that none  
can surpass.*

*Fine modern homes grace your  
far reaching plains,*

*The product of labor that  
industry gains.*

*The latch-string is out in true  
western style.*

*And hearthstones bid welcome to  
happy worthwhile---*

*Your cities and hamlets are  
outstanding quite,*

*Your highways and byways a  
source of delight.*

*Your youth are a marvel of beauty  
and brains.*

*The equal of any the  
world contains.*

*There is ozone superb in each  
breath of the air.*

*With pride we esteem your most  
fair of the fair.*

*And now we are closing the same  
as we started.*

*Nebraska we love you and  
will not be parted.*

**SOD-HOUSE** –  
*Hazel Street and  
her father, James  
Wesley Street,  
pose outside their  
sod house in  
Williamsburg  
Township of  
Phelps County.  
Built by Mr.  
Street in 1892-  
1894, the location  
of the house has  
remained the  
same and lived in*



*by Miss Street until 1970 until her death in 1970. The property is now owned by Carl L. Nelson, whose farm is located in that section number 35. Because it is not economically feasible to move or preserve the sod house for historical reasons, the Historical Society will hold an open house in the soddy August 8th, 9th, 10th, 1976 showing the place as it would look furnished with beds, settee, and organ of early pioneer time period. All visitors are welcome. Refreshments will be served. Picture provided through Mr. and Mrs. Roy Epping's personal collection. Epping's were life-long neighbors of the Street family.*

# James Wesley Street Home

Written by Lorena Smith for the Holdrege Citizen in August 1976

Nestled among the cedars and trees which now nearly hide it from view of the road is the place that Hazel Street spent all 70 years of here lifetime, secluded and lonely long after her father died in 1940.

A man of English descent coming from Illinois in 1892 to build for himself a home at the southern edge of Sand hills in Phelps county, James Wesley Street soon found and Married Emma Hemming, whose parents had homesteaded north of Elm Creek.

In 1894, even as the grasshoppers were eating holes in his shirt, he added a larger room to the north of his original little soddy, and proceeded to continue fighting and overcoming the rigors of hardship which accompanied all immigrants during the years of drought and disease of that period of Nebraska History,

Three of her first born, all boys, were laid to rest in the Williamsburg Cemetery during their infancy. In 1900 the daughter Hazel was born. During the early 1920s Mrs. Street passed away but Mr. Street and Hazel continued to live in the sod house. They raised chickens, milked a couple of cows, made garden, and used horses to pull the farm machinery until some time in the 30's, when he gave up active farming and rented his land to Carl N. Nelson, his neighbor to the northeast.

When Mr. Street died in 1940, Hazel stayed, having no desire to move from her birthplace which, symbolic of all sod houses, was cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

About 1950 Hazel allowed herself the convenience of electric drop light. She even did some changing in 1952, when she asked, Mrs. Roy Epping, to paper her living room. (Sod houses were usually plastered on the inside, directly over the sod, soon after erection, but a papering job was always a "Bumpy" affair because of the uneven walls resulting from the layering of the sods).

Although the place has been empty for six years, the curtains at the windows remained and they have been washed and re-hung for this open house occasion.

Friends and relatives recall the warm, homey smells of food cooking on a wood stove, homemade popcorn, the feelings of peace of quiet which lingered in their minds long after their visits at Hazel's house.

Miss Hazel acquired an eighth grade education in the country school southeast of her home. She learned to play a piano and considered it one of her luxuries to own and enjoy. But she never had water piped into the house from the nearby windmill, nor did she bend to progress enough to install indoor toilet facilities. In the summer she cooked on an "oil stove" in the

"Summer Kitchen", a lean-to on the west side of the house by her father.

Hazel died in January of 1970, and in the fall of that year, many of the old-time pieces of furniture and machinery were sold at action.

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## IN THE 1500'S

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s:

These are interesting...

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons

*(1500s Continued on page 9)*



*(1500s Continued from page 8)*

and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, Don't throw the baby out with the Bath water..

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying It's raining cats and dogs.

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house.. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, Dirt poor. The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance way. Hence the saying a thresh hold.

(Getting quite an education, aren't

you?)

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old..

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could bring home the bacon. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and chew the fat.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the upper crust.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone

walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a wake.

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, thread it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift.) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be saved by the bell or was considered a dead ringer.

And that's the truth...Now, whoever said History was boring !!!

## HAY THERE

The Board of Trustees of the Village of Holdrege, in October of 1884, adopted an ordinance which prohibited the stacking or piling of hay, straw or other like material in the village, except in buildings, mowing or some enclosed structure with a roof.

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Holdrege Area Genealogy Club  
PO Box 164  
Holdrege, NE 68949