

Phelps Helps



Volume 13, Issue 2

Summer 2005

Meetings held at the Phelps County Historical Museum on the first Monday of the month at 2:00 PM.

The public is welcome!

Phelps Helps Web Page location:



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Welcome New Member!

Bryan & Julie Lindstrom
73147 C. Road
Bertrand, NE 68927

THANKS TO DICK AND MARGERY DYAS

A special thanks to the Dick and Marjorie Dyas for donating a computer to the genealogy library. This will be a good addition to the library as many volunteer hours are done on our computers. This computer will most likely be used for indexing and making labels for our books etc. We also have added several genealogy CDs to the library. We hope you come in and make good use of them.

Your President, Sandra Slater

?;? Query Corner ?;?

The families I am researching are Thomas Laurence Doherty, who was my grandfather, his wife Leona Kiplinger Doherty, my Uncle Robert E. Doherty and my father Norman F. Doherty.

Susan Hunt
1446 Montgomery Ave.
Glendale, CA 91202-1510

HOW LONG DID THE TRIP TAKE?

This Information from the Rocky Mountain Buckeye May 1997

The trip to America took varying amounts of time.

68 days from Rotterdam to Baltimore in 1824

58 days from Breman to Baltimore in 1832

44 days from Breman to Baltimore in 1834

66 days from Breman to New Orleans in 1843

47 days from LaHavre, France to New Orleans in 1854

From 1867-1890, most sailing ships used steam auxiliary engines on days when there was little or no wind.

Many sailing ships remained in service and their fares were often lower than the faster steam ships.

In 1893, steamships made trips from Ireland to New York in only 10 days.

Sod Houses in Harlan, Gosper and Furnace Counties

Below is a listing of Sod Houses built in Harlan, Gosper and Furnace Counties in Nebraska

This List Was Compiled By Beverly Weast of Oxford, Nebraska in 1966

Dugout Soddy - On the banks of Dry Creek in Oxford where Mr. Mary Harms and family lived. (Grandmother of Mr. Robert M. Weast). This is now Arch Dusenberry property.

Soddy - Where Gil Gustafson was killed when the ridge poll and center post collapsed and the soddy walls caved in as they were tearing it down---across the street east of where Rachael Flynn live now the Dietz property.

Soddy - Two rooms with dirt floor that Mr. Arthur A. Weast built in 1883 and had his blacksmith in west end and lived in the east end. This Soddy was located on the place where Lawrence Gennrich lives now. Mr. Arthur A. Weast is the father of Robert M. Weast.

Soddy- Standing yet and is covered with corrugated Steel south west of Edison on some of George Warners Property.

Soddy - About 300 yards southwest of the barn and silo on the Lee Huff place now the M. E. Cadwallader Jr. property.

Soddy-- Two rooms with wood floor and white muslin stretched to make a ceiling. Located about 1 ¼ mile east of Henry Glen. This soddy built about 1880 by J. H. Sherwood, Sr.

Soddy - About 1 ½ miles east of Oxford--built by Gus Cole, father Jay Cole and Grand-father of Ralph and Howard Cole. Gus Cole had a buffalo ranch and was killed by a buffalo.

Soddy - North west quarter of Section 34, Township 1 Range 1 on the North East Corner of the quarter. Built by Hubert Petitjean who Homesteaded and built in about 1879. Located 12 mi south west of Stanford and 6 or 7 miles south east of Precept. Son William Petitjean who was

born in this soddy in 1897. The family moved in 1904 or 1905 from this sod house.

Soddy - Located in Furnas County Nebraska, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Mayo, known as Bub Mayo, one son Oscar, was born in this sod house in 1888. Located on the South West quarter of Section 21, and is about 5 miles south east of Precept. This is my father's Soddy. Information came from Golda Mayo Petitjean.

Soddy - Dugout ¼ mile east of Micro Tower, Oxford, Nebr. Where Mr. Fred Hawley was born in 1883 and lived till 1885. Mr. Hawley's father homesteaded and built this soddy.

Soddy - Dugout ¼ mile south of Micro Towner, Oxford, Nebr. Home of Ira Huff.

Soddy - Had wood floor and two rooms located about ¼ mi east of the now Ed Huffman place where Mr. Fred Hawley's grandmother Forest lived.

Soddy -had dirt floor located 8 miles south west of Oxford, Nebr. About 1 mile west of Glen Cowan place where Mrs. Nettie Norman Howley lived.

Soddy - Dugout - About one mile south of Miles Cadwallader place, where Jim Huff lived south west of Oxford, Nebr.

Soddy -Dugout - Henry Glenn, Sr. homesteaded and built and later traded this soddy and land to Adam Cowan for a livery barn in Oxford, Nebr. Adam Cowan's grandson Glen Cowan now lives on this place and what is left of the old soddy has been plastered up and has been used as a hen house. Located southwest of Oxford, Nebr.

Soddy - Southeast of Edison where John Kunie lived. Located south east of Edison about ¼ mile west of where Bill Goodno lives and east of the Duane and Wesley Warner property. John Kunie kept a bull snake in the wood box to keep the rats and mice away. He was an old bachelor.

HARLAN COUNTY NEWS

Holdrege Citizen Nov. 25, 1936

Justus E. Johnson relates story of one of many hardships made in pioneer days:

Justus E. Johnson, of Orleans, Nebraska, pioneer of Phelps County, tells of one of many hard trips made in the early days in this vicinity, Following is his pioneer story.

"I always enjoy reading the accounts of early days, so I am sending one of my own.

We landed in the center of Phelps County in March 1876, and father took a homestead in section 24-7-19 and built the first sod house on that divide.

I think it was in the fall of '77 that father wanted to go to Spring Creek to get some wood and poles to use in building some sod barns. We had two yoke of oxen---one small yoke of Texas oxen, and one large team of which were a large Durham bull and the other large white ox.

We got our two wagons ready so we could start early the next morning but father got sick that afternoon so we thought we would have to give it up. But that evening Charley Nelson came walking in. He had walked from his homestead eight and a half miles straight south of our place, or three miles straight west of the present Holdrege, Nebraska. He had lived neighbor with us in Illinois, and came out on the same train that we came on. When he saw father was sick and we had made ready to go the next morning, he said, I will go with the boys and help them." Of course we were all glad of that as he was a jolly, good natured fellow and a real man. He was noted for his endurance and great strength.

We got up and started at three o'clock the next morning. It was dark and cloudy. We hardly knew what to do but we kept gong. After a while it began to mist and kept it up until we got to

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.

Spring Creek about nineteen miles southwest of our home. We did not know what time we got there as we did not have any watch.

There was a new road that went from the Platte River southwest to Watson, so we followed that until we got just east of the place where

we wanted to enter the creek. We had been there before so we knew where to go. When we left the road we had about two miles to go west.

When we got to the creek we fed the oxen and ate our lunch. Then my oldest brother Rolf and Mr. Nelson chopped down such trees as were suitable and trimmed them. Then Emil, my other brother, who was fourteen and I, who was eleven, snaked the wood up the creek with the oxen and chain.

It was still misting, and by the time we had enough wood and started to load up it started to snow, and we were surprised to see that it was getting dark. We hurried and got loaded and started toward what we thought was east. We kept on going and it got dark and it was snowing great big flakes, but it was not cold and the snow melted as fast as it fell so we got wet and our shoes were soaked through.

The prairie sod got soft so it was hard pulling for the oxen. When we had driven for a long time two of the oxen were so tired that they lay down and rested. Nelson said he would walk ahead and see if were close to the road. He was gone a long time but he came back and said he could not find the road. After a while we got the oxen up and started again and kept on going, as it seemed, for hours, then the oxen lay down again. After a while we got started again, and kept on going.

My brother Emil and I were so young we did not understand the danger we were

(Harlan County Continued on page 8)

Bethel Lutheran Church 1947 History of Bethel Lutheran

This Church started in Harlan County and Later moved to Holdrege, Nebraska.

The First Swedish Lutherans colonized in the north part of Harlan County in a little community as "Turkey Creek". This was in the years 1873-1875. About a year later these Lutherans arrived: Olof Hedlund, John Smith; A. M. Carlson and G. Davidson.

The perils and hardships of the new land seemed to create a deeper yearning for a religious service. They had bought their Bibles, "Psalmboks" and Postillas with them. They gathered in various homes in the area. Olof Hedlund led the services reading from the "Postilla" on Sunday. These were a collection of sermons by Luther, Arndt, or one of the German or Swedish Pietists. They are usually about 20 pages long and the children would get anxious for the service to end. One layman told Mr. Hedlund he could preach his own sermon and from then on Mr. Hedlund did so. He never became a licensed preacher but he did preach for many years in many churches.

BETHEL ORGANIZED

On November 12th, 1877, a group of Christians met at the home of Gustaf Hanson in

Harlan County. Mr. Hanson's home was located one-half miles west of where the Immanuel Lutheran church of Ragan stood for years ago. The meeting was presided over by Rev. S. G. Larson of Mead, Nebr. It was decided to organize the church.

At this meeting, Mr. Gustaf Hanson was elected as Secretary. The deacons were Olof Hedlund, A. M. Carlson, and August Johnson. The trustees were P. O. Hedlund and Gustaf Hanson.

In addition to the above mentioned men and their respective wives, the following persons were also listed among the 30 charter members.

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith
 Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Habbe
 Mr. and Mrs. John Sjorgren
 Mr. and Mrs. Peter Wilson
 Mr. and Mrs. A. Magnuson
 Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Hultquist
 Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Gustafson
 Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Lindstrom
 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wilson
 August Oberg
 Andrew Smith
 Anna Hedlund

(Continued on page 5)

(Sod Houses Continued from page 2)

Soddy - Where Griggs lived, located about two miles south of Wayne Fish place, south of Oxford, Nebr.

Soddy - Dugout about one mile south of Glen Cowan's where Isaac Grush lived.

Soddy - About 10 miles straight north of Oxford just in Gosper County where Joe Mullen homesteaded and built where Art Trunnells later lived.

Soddy - Located just Southwest of the oxford junction, where Gene Arntt now lives.

Soddy-Dugout - Belonged to Berry family, located about 10 miles Southwest of Oxford, Nebr.

Soddy - Located southwest of oxford, south west of Ralph Ballard Ranch, where Bill Oberquill lived.

Soddy-Dugout - South of Ballard Ranch where Bill Brannen lived.

Soddy - About one mile south of where Nettie Norman Hawley lived. A Helem family lived there.

The above listed homes built of sod are only a small portion of ones in the Oxford territory, as practically all were sod. The closest lumber yard was at Kearney at that time. This is one reason why a water powered saw and grist mill, known as Nabor's Mill was located on the Republican River four miles west of Oxford, was such a popular place to procure slabs for the soddy roofs and lumber for doors and windows.

(Bethel Continued from page 4)

THE SOD CHURCH

For the first year and a half after the church organization of Bethel, the congregation met in the homes of members. On the 11th day of March 1879, the congregation assembled at a special meeting and resolved to build its first church building. It was to be sod, 20 x 36x9 feet. It had three windows on either side. The roof of the building was to be of shingles and the gables of "fit lumber." Cost of the shingles were \$13.05. The building was begun in May and declared ready in June of the same year. The total cost in cash outlay was \$200.76. It was located on a plot of ground donated by Mathias Hedlund. Located on Section 31, township 6, range 17 in Phelps County, Nebraska. This location is about 3 miles north east of Holdrege, Nebraska.

The benches that were built for seating were eventually not too sturdy as they had to be repaired within the first year. A vote to plaster the inside of the church was passed on June of 1879.

Truly this was no imposing structure, for its walls were made of sod, the gables were of wood and the roof was shingled. It had six windows and a wooden door.

The congregations came from miles away. One widow, walked 6 miles on Sundays, to worship there.

THE CHURCH CEMETERY

A cemetery was started near the church and several early pioneers are still buried there. Some burials have been moved to Prairie Home Cemetery near Holdrege, Nebraska. The cemetery in early years is referred to as Chapel Cemetery but is now referred to as the Bethel Lutheran Cemetery. There are about 60 marked burials in this cemetery.

A NEW BEGINNING

The structure of the sod church was beginning to crumble by 1884 and a decision was made to build a wood church in Holdrege. Holdrege was only four months old at the time.

The new church building was 36x60x24, with a tower of 76 feet high. It was built by Stover and Cone. Unfortunately, the construction seemed faulty; the walls sagged and had to be braced with cross iron bars. The building gave more or less grief and disappointed to the congregation. A basement was put under the building in 1893 but was never satisfactory. This church burned in December of 1896 and a second wood structure church was built.

The present Bethel Lutheran Church building was built in 1922. It is a beautiful brick building with lovely stained glass windows that still is actively used today.

Public Wedding

September 28, 1923

On Friday evening at seven-thirty occurred the marriage ceremony, the first public wedding ever celebrated in Phelps County, when Virgil Loren Troxell was united in marriage to Corinne Estess Whitson.

A platform thirty feet square and ten feet high was erected on the lot at the corner of Fifth and East Ave. This was beautifully decorated with a canopy of branches from trees and a profusion of potted plants and flowers and a number of wedding bells illuminated with electric lights.

A choir of twenty male voices appeared on the platform. They were followed by four young men ushers in evening dress and six little flower girls. Immediately before the contracting parties came the ring bearer and the bride and groom were followed by their personal attendants and Rev. Morris of Bertrand.

At the appointed time

the bridal party took their position on the state and the vested choir composed of members of the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs sang "I Love You Truly"

Rev. Morris of the Methodist Church of Bertrand officiated at the ceremony and after reading the wedding services of that church joined the young people in bonds of wedlock. The principals were fully composed during the ceremony and responded to the questions of the minister in a clear voice.

Mrs. Ernest Wright of Detroit, Mich. Sang "I Love You" after C. A. Galloway, president of the Holdrege Commercial Club presented the bride and groom with a purse containing three hundred dollars in gold and in a short congratulatory speech promised that the Holdrege Commercial Club would make a like presentation at their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

The bride was attired in a blue silk gown trimmed

in red and carried a beautiful bouquet of Yellow Ophelia roses presented by the Davidson Floral Company. Miss Neva Troxell and Mr. Orville Troxell of Cozad, Nebraska, brother and sister of the groom were attendants.

The ushers were: Martin Westberg, Bertrand, Johnson, Spencer Bruce and Phillip Johnson.

The flower girls were Gwendolyn Schrack, Mary Charlotte Erickson, Frances Victoria Boldman, Dorothy Frost, Viona Hader and Loretta Flohr, Tom Davis was the ring bearer.

The young people are well and favorably known in Phelps County. The bride was lately employed at the Hested store and the groom is a mechanic at the Ford Garage.

Mr. and Mrs. Troxell of Bertrand, parents of the groom and a number of relatives from Cozad and Lincoln were in attendance.



HARLAN COUNTY SOD HOUSE

SW1/4 Section 25, Spring Grove Township

This two story frame house was built by Jerome Troutman about 1888 or 1889. You can see the sod house in the background at the right. I suspect that the Troutman family lived in the sod house while the frame house was being built. We have no idea as to whom built the sod house.

A Horrible Deed Holdrege Citizen, Friday, January 1, 1897

D. M. Conrad Shoots His Wife and Then Himself. Little Hope For Connard. Mrs. Connard is Resting Easy and Will in all Probabilities Survive

A little after 8 o'clock on Wednesday morning, one of the most deplorable events that have ever occurred here took place when Mrs. Anna H. Connard, one of the primary teachers in our city schools, was shot by her husband, who afterwards shot himself. The affair occurred in front of Bill Scranton's house a couple blocks west of the U. S. National bank. Mrs. Connard and her little boy were on their way to the depot to take the train for Fremont, as Mrs. Connard's mother was very low, Connard and Dr. Shields were accompanying them. A buggy had been ordered to go to the residence of J. W. Rhea's, where they started the night before, but it was delayed and reached the party just as the shooting took place. When Connard drew the revolver on his wife, Dr. Shields got between them and pushed the revolver away. Connard then turned it on Dr. Shields, causing him to get out of the way. He then turned it on the wife and fired, the shot entering about two inches behind the ear and on the left side of the head, but did not penetrate the skull, but following the bones downwards. Mrs. C. put her hands up over the back of her head and a portion of the bone in the second finger of her right hand was shattered and the doctors are trying to save the finger from amputation. Connard then shot at Dr. Shields, who was dodging around the house to get out of the way, the bullet missing him. Connard then turned the revolver upon himself and sent the bullet into his skull, about the middle of his forehead. Mrs. Connard was calling for help all this time and several parities, who were near, arrived. The unfortunate woman was taken to Dr. Palmer's office, but was afterwards taken back to Mr. Rhea's. The bullet was removed about noon by Drs. Miller, Sunbury and Shields. Connard fell over after he shot himself, but was assisted to Dr. Whittier's office, but during the forenoon was placed under arrest and conveyed to the county Jail. His wounds were dressed and a portion of the shattered bone was removed, but the doctors were not able to locate the ball

as they dared not probe for it about the brain. Strange as it may seem, Connard has retained consciousness and talks rationally on all subjects. He ate a little yesterday and was able to walk around some.

Mrs. Connard had been wanting to go to her mother ever since school was out, but he has kept her from it, and from what we can learn, had kept her virtually a prisoner a good share of the time. It seems that he wanted the possession of the boy and objected to her going to Fremont and taking Clinton, as he feared she would not bring him back. Wednesday, Messr's. Einsel, Dravo, Dean and Strong, at Mrs. Connard's request, visited their rooms in the opera house block and as a result of their interview, he promised to let his wife and Clinton go to Fremont the next morning. They stayed at Mr. Rhea's that night, as she was afraid to remain alone with him in their rooms over night. The next morning he came up town, procured a revolver, which was a 32 caliber, and the way he used it shows that he intended to do bloody work. The approach on the carriage seemed to have enraged him and brought on the crisis.

Connard and his wife lived on the Platte several years ago, being in the stock business we believe. He broke up and they went to her folks in Fremont. For the past two or three years they had not lived together till early this fall he came up from Missouri. He has been working in the country a good share of the time. As far as we have been able to learn he has a good reputation, although it is reported he has failed to support the family.

Mrs. Connard is a quiet and refined lady, who has bourne Connard patiently. She told but a few even during the last week of their troubles and then only when necessary for protection. She has been employed as primary teacher in our city schools since a year ago last fall. She has always been very careful, preferring to suffer much, rather than do anything that might bring reproach upon, or cause people to think lightly of her. It has been with such thoughts

(Oregon Continued on page 8)

(Deed Continued from page 7)

as these she, in the past, had met those who had urged her to seek a divorce. Her life conduct has been such as to win her many friends, who hope for her speedy recovery.

Connard seems to be willing to talk of the horrible affair, and says the devil got possession of him when he did the shooting. We understand he claims to be very penitent and that he talks freely of the family troubles, which he attributes to his wife's folks, rather than to himself. As by his own hand he has appealed to the Highest power, he may rest assured that he will meet a just for his fearful deed.

Just as we go to the press we learn that Connard's brother-in-law. Mr. Hill is trying to secure Connard's release, so that he can be taken to David City with him in the morning. Connard, for humanity's sake is entitled to the best care possible under the circumstances, but after trying to commit the foulest deed

possible, should not be allowed to go at large. We consider that it would be a disgrace to the community to have the case against him dismissed. Connard has shown himself unfit to be turned loose. If he is insane, as some claim, he should be sent to the asylum. But because the probabilities of life are against him is not reason for turning him loose so as to commit other devilmint if he should recover. This noon Mrs. Connard is reported to be doing nicely.

(Harlan County Continued from page 3)

in. If it had turned cold we would have frozen to death in a short time. We were hungry and tired, but we kept going, not one of us rode, we walked all the time in the slush.

All of a sudden we saw a light sort of down hill, the first sign of human habitation. We turned our oxen toward that light and in a short time we were there. It was a sod house and the home of Mr. Sandstrom. He lived just one mile west of the present Westmark Church. It so happened that they had a sick baby so they were up at two o'clock and had a light, otherwise we might have kept on clear to the river. They showed the true pioneer spirit. They let us water the oxen and then drive them up to the haystack. Then Mrs. Sandstrom cooked coffee and gave us something to eat. They were surprised that we had come this way when we had been to Spring Creek, but when we got up from the creek we started due north instead of east. Sandstrom wanted us to stay until morning but we said the folks would be worried about us, so we started home.

We had a new road from there to our home. We reached home at 4 o'clock in the morning. Mother was still up and had a lantern hanging on the end of the ridge-pole at the end of the sod house. When we were at home, then for the first time, Mr. Nelson told how scared he had been that he would not be able to bring us home safely.

After resting for a few minutes and drinking some coffee. Mr. Nelson started home, on foot, eight and one half miles after walking and working all day. We wanted him to stay but he said he was not too tired. That's what I call a real he-man.

Justus E. Johnson

Orleans, Nebraska

Man Burned to Death

26 March 1904

Man Burned to death in prairie fire of 1904: Bertrand Herald reports great property loss:

Wednesday was a strenuous and exciting day for the people living in a strip of county extending north from Atlanta to a point due east of Bertrand. Fires started by locomotives on the main line were carried rapidly along by the strong southeasterly wind, West and south of Loomis many farmers were burned out.

At August Steel's, six and a half miles southeast of Bertrand, two residences and everything but a hog pen were devoured by the flames, and August Olson, father-in-law of Mr. Steel, was burned to death. He was old and feeble and accounts differ as to the exact circumstances of his death, but his body was found on the ground burned to a crisp. Mr. Steel himself has been sick for many months and it is said that he had hard work to save his own life. Following is a partial list of the losses reported.

The farm residence of P. S. and A. C. Steel, outbuildings were totally destroyed.

J. L. Court lost 2,000 bushels of grain, his barn and other property.

Irvin Masters lost his barn, three head of horses and a threshing outfit, resides grain and hay.

Charles Peterson was completely burned out.

Wallie Johnson's residence and barn were destroyed. He and his family barely escaped with what clothing they had on.

J. M. Polhemus is reported to have lost his barn and other buildings.

Mrs. Andrew Lohn, who had been missing through the afternoon, was found about 7 o'clock in a ploughed field on the Lohn farm. She had been frightened thither by the flames which destroyed her home. She was found unhurt, but was suffering from nervousness occasioned by fright.

At the Leach farm seven miles south of Loomis, all but the residence was destroyed.

The house, barn and all buildings on the F. H. Porter farm were destroyed. The occupants of the house barely escaped.

An additional account of the fire may be found under the head of Garfield Correspondence. Our correspondent was an eyewitness and assisted in fighting the flames.

When the approach of the fire became known to Bertrand about 4 o'clock there was considerable excitement, and the old residents immediately had vivid recollections of the scenes which took place here at the time of the great prairie fire of 1886. On that occasion a sea of flames came up and out of the canyons half a mile south and enveloped the town. A number of buildings were destroyed, and it was only by the most heroic and exhausting hard work on the part of citizens that the place was saved from being completely wiped out.

When the alarm was given Wednesday several wagonloads of men started at once for the scene of the fire and helped to bring it to a stop.

We wish to thank member Glenn Harrington of Grand Lake, Colorado for donating this hand drawing of the sod Bethel Lutheran Church that was built in 1879.



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