



~ **Part 6** ~

## **Reflections on a Common Theme Houses With a History**

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# **Houses With a History in the Solomon Valley**

## **CLOUD COUNTY**

### **Rutledge House in Glasco**

There is house on the corner of Main Street and Cemetery Road, on the eastern edge of Glasco, overlooking the fields to the east. It stood vacant for thirty or so years, loosing its luster, yet demanding attention, as the main entry into town wraps around it.

This home was built by one of the early homesteaders in the Solomon Valley, a Civil War veteran who settled and farmed on the land rising east of Fisher Creek. William Rutledge brought with him a link that lingers even now in speaking of the house on the corner. His sister was Ann Rutledge, the New Salem, Illinois, sweetheart of Abraham Lincoln. Ann's death from malaria before she and Lincoln could marry did not dim the memory of their love in the Rutledge family. Ann's little sister Sarah recounted stories of Lincoln, the boarder and suitor, until her death in June 1922.

William Rutledge served the Union in Co. C, 8th Iowa Cavalry, and is credited with building the big house on the corner. At the turn of the century, Bert Nicol lived there with his wife, Leta Day Nicol. She was one of four members of Glasco Rural High School's first graduating class in 1898. And she was the daughter of Owen Day, another Civil War veteran, who homesteaded after the war, and who fought for the Confederacy.

Bert Nicol had a retail business on Main Street, Glasco. It was his start in retail sales, leading to work with James Cash Penny in establishing the nation-wide chain of J.C. Penny stores. This led him to work and live in many places after this start in Glasco.

For many years the house on the corner was known as the home of the Knight family, then the Higl family. The memory of the earliest residents faded.

And for many more years it stood empty, often prompting dreams it could be restored, perhaps as a bed and breakfast. A hunter from Oceanside, California, came each fall to hunt. Occasionally he was accompanied by his wife. Janice Mays was taken by the abandoned old house on the corner. She purchased it, with the hope of restoring it. Janice Mays has made major improvements in the home in the two years it has been hers. She chose the house for its character and charm, not aware of its history. Now she is adding to that history.

## **MITCHELL COUNTY**

### **Perdue House in Beloit**

The historic C. A. Perdue House in Beloit is finding a new purpose as it transitions from a vacant family residence for the past 10 years to a busy office for Mitchell County Regional Medical Foundation (MCRMF) as well as a hospitality home for Mitchell County Hospital Health Systems (MCHHS) patient families.

The original home was built in 1874 by the Scott Family as they lived in a cave, which still exists on the property. In 1879, Dr. C. A. Perdue purchased the home and proceeded to add 10 rooms to allow for greater living area and a spacious home in which he could entertain. Dr. Perdue was a retired Civil War surgeon who became very active in business and social circles in Beloit. The home was well known for parties and events, as well as the prominent home of three generations of the Perdue family. As the Perdue men passed away, Jane Perdue supported herself in the 1920s and 1930s by operating a tea room in the house. It was recorded in the local newspaper that the Beloit Rotary Club was organized in the Perdue Tea Room.

Mrs. Margaret Hanni purchased the home in 1955 and set out to restore it to its original luster. She refinished all of the white pine woodwork in both the downstairs and upstairs. Unique features of the home are the double-thick native limestone and hand-wrought nails.

The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. A person is limited only by their own imagination in thinking about the countless number of family gatherings, social events, parties, meetings, and much more that occurred in this home. But the years have taken their toll. The house is in need of extensive restoration and rehabilitation. Many have looked at purchasing the house as it sat empty for so many years. All who looked were disappointed in the knowledge that it would take a large amount of private funds to transform the house to a livable family home or other appropriate use.

The Perdue House sits immediately west of MCHHS and the hospital board decided to take the opportunity to purchase the house in 2010, with the thought that it would make a perfect home for the newly-formed foundation. The Foundation was established in 2008 to promote and support continued excellence in healthcare in North Central Kansas.

"The Perdue House has a unique and significant history to Beloit," said Susan Concannon, MCRMF Executive Director. "We look forward to creating our own piece of history by using the wonderful foundation provided by this beautiful home."

An added bonus for the Beloit community and the North Central Kansas region is the opportunity to open the second floor of the house to out-of-town patient families as a hospitality home. The area includes 3 bedrooms, bathroom, and a common room, which will be revitalized to offer a place to stay with the comforts of a home.

"By offering a home away from home for families of hospital patients we hope to take a little burden off families' shoulders," said Concannon. "Having a family member sick is stressful enough, so the Perdue House offers a great setting in close proximity to the hospital."

The Foundation is currently fundraising to support the effort to renovate the Perdue House for its current purpose. Nearly \$80,000 has been raised and work has already begun. To learn more about the Perdue House and its future with MCRMF, contact Susan Concannon or Stephanie Simmons at (785) 738-9493 or at PO Box 65, Beloit KS 67420.

## **OSBORNE COUNTY**

### **Osborn Home** (near Alton) by Carolyn Williams

When Russell Scott Osborn came to Osborne County in July 1872 with his wife and six children, he homesteaded the place that came to be named Longview. He named it shortly after arriving because as he looked out over the South Solomon River Valley from the modest rise to the north of what is now Hwy 24, a scant 3 miles west and y north of Alton, he could see forever, he had a "longview." The name was registered in Topeka later by his son Nathan. Since July in Kansas was no time to plant a crop, they built a house and dug a 100-foot well instead. That house and well exist to this day.

Russell Osborn was a veteran of the Civil War, incurred some disability, and was discharged in November of 1864 with the rank of captain. When he homesteaded in the Alton area he had been ordained to preach by the Congregational Association. With that ordination he preached at three churches in the Alton area as well as at the Ash Rock Church in Rooks County. He continued to distribute Bibles farther west, sometimes walking rather than riding and organizing Sunday Schools along the way.

This original stone house is built entirely of stone quarried just a short distance east of where the house still stands on County Road #641. Many other buildings in the area were built from that

same stone quarry, including; a mill along the river near Alton and a portion of the Congregational Church in Stockton.

The house was an imposing structure with moss green trim, standing at the top of the hill. The three stories looked out over the cultivated fields of western Osborne County, near the Rooks County line. The house consisted of a full basement with cement walls; full first story, complete with parlor where guests were entertained, dining room, living room, kitchen with a fireplace on the north wall, and the ever-present bedroom off the kitchen. The second story had two large rooms and two smaller which were used as bedrooms. Later a bath was added to replace one of the smaller bedrooms. There was a full attic consisting of one large room for storage. The present owner has changed the acetylene lighting to electrical, replumbed, added a bathroom where the little kitchen bedroom was once located, and made modern living possible with washer and dryer, TV, computer hook up, etc.. One unique feature is the large "O," representing the Osborn name on the outside of the eastern upper story. It remains to this day.

A large three-sided screened porch was added in 1910. It was called a three-quarter porch and was used for daily tasks such as separating cream, washing clothes, preparing food in the hot summer days, and enjoying the evening breezes without being bothered by the pesky flying insects always present on a farm.

Added later was a lilac hedge and fruit orchard. Osborn's Grandson Kenneth and his wife Wilma Bartholomew built a house a few yards farther north. Wilma lives there today. A nice Red Cedar windbreak to the north adds to the comfort and beauty of the area. Irises and peonies grace the front lawn of her home now.

A great-great-granddaughter of Russell Scott Osborn has written a book about her illustrious ancestor titled Captain Osborn's Legacy, to be released this June 2011, and published by Ad Astra Publishing Co. of Lucas. Little did Russell Scott Osborn foresee that the name "Longview" would include a biography of him and his life here in the Solomon Valley.

## **ROOKS COUNTY**

### **Waller Coolbaugh House** (Stockton)

by Roger Hrabe

The Waller Coolbaugh House at 421 N Walnut in Stockton offers visitors a High Classical Revival residence that, at the time it was built, was considered to be one of the finest homes in northern Kansas. It was built in 1904 by local businessman M. J. Coolbaugh, who organized the State Bank of Stockton.

J. A. Plowman of Jewell County was the contractor and carpenter on the house and saw to the completion in the spring of 1905 for an approximate cost of \$9000. It was noted in local publications of the time, the home "has a noble exterior, graceful in design, unhampered in its effect by the usual gingerbread display." The architect of the building was Frederic J. Klein of Peoria, Illinois, whom Mr. Coolbaugh consulted in person at his office in Peoria, and after giving his views as to the kind of house he wanted, the plans were elaborated by the architect and the result was the design which was given to Mr. Plowman for completion.

The interior of the home features solid oak trim throughout, beginning with the front entrance made of richly carved massive oak doors at each side of the vestibule. A handsome staircase leads to the floor above. Also featured in the home are several ornate fireplaces, antique radiators, and unusual nooks.

The home is now owned by the Waller family of Stockton. Tours are available weekends in June, July, and August. For information, or to arrange a tour, call Eris Waller at 785-425-7227.

## **SHERIDAN COUNTY**

### **Cottonwood Ranch**

(reprinted from Kansas State Historical Society website)

As a young man Abraham Pratt (1827-1901) came to America as a sailor, arriving in California during the Gold Rush of the late 1840s. After less than two years in America he returned to England, resigned from the British Navy, became a liquor merchant and owner of a bottling works, was married in 1855, and became the father of two sons and two daughters. In 1866 Pratt's wife died and he never remarried. Twelve years later, in 1878, Pratt sold his British businesses, returned to

America, and bought 160 acres of land along the South Solomon River in extreme eastern Sheridan County.

In late 1879 or early 1880, Abraham Pratt returned to England to visit friends and relatives. During this visit he convinced his eldest son, John Fenton Pratt (1856-1937), known as "Fent," to come to America and join him at his homestead. In 1880 Fent arrived in Sheridan County. Two years later Abraham's other son, Tom (1861-1940), also known as "Little Tom," came to Sheridan County to live. Throughout the 1880s other Englishmen arrived in the area to homestead or purchase land for ranches and farms.

For their first few years in Kansas, Abraham and his sons lived in a dugout along the south bank of the Solomon River. In 1885 the first section of the house at Cottonwood Ranch was constructed. The original house was a one-room, native-stone building measuring thirty-two and one-half by eighteen and a half feet on the inside, with a sod-covered roof and an earthen floor. During the winter of 1885 a severe blizzard swept through the area, and the temperature was so cold that ice formed on the inside north wall of the house. In late 1888 or early 1889 the sod roof was removed and replaced with wood. Later, two additions were added to the original house; first the west and then the east sections, giving its present appearance.

In its earliest days the ranch-stead consisted of the stone house and at least one outbuilding of sod, which was used as a stable. A sod-walled corral was constructed near the stable. A small, wood-framed structure, which was used as a bathhouse and toilet, was located near the house in the 1880s and still exists at the ranch. In the late 1800s a natural spring northwest of the house was modified to carry water into a storage cistern from which a pipeline was constructed to provide running water in the house.