

FIRST SETTLEMENT OF GENEVA, ALLEN CO.

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Secretary of the Kansas Historical Society: The two most prominent motives that led to the settling of Geneva were, first, a desire on the part of those who effected that settlement to assist in counteracting and defeating the nefarious attempt then being made to spread the curse of slavery over the virgin soil of Kansas; and secondly, to contribute something towards giving character to the population of the embryo State, by establishing a Church of Christ on the then extreme outposts of civilization, and by inaugurating and setting in motion such educational agencies and facilities as should be found practicable.

The purpose to effect such settlement originated in two places, to wit: St. Johns, Mich., and Java, Wyoming county, N. Y. A number of gentlemen in each place forming themselves into branches of what was afterwards called the "Union Settlement Company," each appointed a man to constitute a locating committee. Prof. Moore was appointed by the Michigan branch, and the writer by the New York branch, who, in the discharge of the duties assigned them, left their homes in the month of February, 1857, and proceeded to Kansas, to accomplish the object for which they were appointed.

Kansas Territory was then in a very unsettled state, and it was impossible to forecast what the events of the opening year would be. The committee carried no arms themselves, but remembering the atrocities of the preceding year, when to procure the stipulated pay for a pair of six-dollar boots, Free-State men were wantonly shot down for their scalps, and hunted and killed everywhere like wild beasts, we were not very strongly inclined to reprove those of our fellow-emigrants who had provided themselves with Sharp's rifles, and who, it was obvious, intended to use them if it could not be avoided.* We felt, I imagine, very much as the conscientious Quaker did who hired a profane bystander to curse his neighbor's cattle that refused to be driven out of his field. He did n't like, he said, to do the swearing *himself*—it was against his principles—but he thought the cattle *richly deserved* it.

The committee, after visiting various portions of the Territory, finally fixed on the Neosho Valley as being, on the whole, a place best adapted to carry out the objects contemplated by the company. On the beautiful "divide" which contains the site of Ge-

* In Wilder's Annals, page 105, is mentioned the murder of Hopps by Fugit, Aug. 19, 1856. The following is quoted from the Annals:

"Fugit was arrested in 1857, after Henry J. Adams became Mayor of Leavenworth. A letter in the St. Louis Democrat, dated May 27, 1857, says:

"Fugit is the same person who made a bet in this city (Leavenworth,) last August, that before night he would have a Yankee scalp. He got a horse and rode out into the country a few miles, and met a German, a brother-in-law of Rev. E. Nute, named Hopps. He asked if he was from Lawrence. Hopps replied that he was. Fugit immediately leveled his revolver and fired, the shot taking effect in the temples, and Hopps fell a corpse. The assassin dismounted from his horse, cut the scalp from the back of his head, tied it to a pole, and returned to town, exhibiting it to the people, and boasting of his exploits. The body of the victim was found shortly after, and buried on Pilot Knob, about two miles distant from this city. This same Fugit is one of a party who, when the widow came from Lawrence to look for her band's corpse, forced her on board a steamer, and sent her down the river."

neva, a few wagon tracks were then the only visible indications that a white man had ever been there. On the neighboring divide, however, a few claims had been taken, and abandoned through fear of the Border-Ruffians; and occasionally, along the river, three miles distant, a family might be found, who still remained for the purpose of using the rich, unoccupied prairies as ranches for their stock. These would have preferred that the country should not be settled at all.

Having fixed upon a beautiful and healthy elevation, some three miles from the Neosho, as a desirable spot to lay out a village, the committee reported to the company the result of their labors; and early in the month of April, 1857, a number of families arrived, accompanied by several young men who sympathized with them in their undertaking, or who wished to try their fortunes in a new country. Among the leading men who constituted the first settlers of Geneva, may be named: Rev. G. S. Northrup, Dr. B. B. L. G. Stone, J. H. Spicer, J. M. Mattoon, J. C. Redfield, Prof. Moore, Hiram Moore, C. Holman, George Esse, S. T. Jones, G. Waite, the writer, and others. The number of families and persons properly constituting the first settlers, cannot now be accurately ascertained, as quite a number either did not remain, or subsequently left.

As is the common experience of settlers in a new country, these families suffered great privations during the first years of their pioneer life. Situated more than 100 miles from their base of supplies, with no shelter but their tents to protect them from the fierce storm or the burning sun, poorly supplied with utensils for working the soil, and ignorant of the proper methods of cultivation, dependent for the necessaries of life on their limited store, and often prostrated with malarial diseases, nevertheless, for the most part, bore up with a fortitude and cheerfulness worthy of their undertaking, and went steadily and determinedly forward to the accomplishment of their object.

Immediately on their arrival a Sabbath school was organized, and meetings for public worship and for mutual edification and improvement were instituted. A common school was soon opened by Prof. Moore and his excellent lady, and this was supplemented, a few years later, by an academy, in which the higher branches of education were taught.

The "Colony," as it was called, was found to embrace persons who had been members of churches of different orders, and these, to obviate the evils which denominational rivalry is liable to produce, and also for the purpose of combining the influence of all the friends of a pure Christianity, unanimously agreed to form a church from whose polity and creed should be eliminated whatever was regarded by any body of intelligent evangelical Christians, as being destitute of scriptural authority, and to retain and employ only such doctrines and measures as all such bodies conceded to be not contrary to the word of God. It hardly needs to be said that nothing indispensable to church order and discipline was found to be wanting, and that no change was needed to make it in all respects a Congregational church. This fact is entitled to the closest and most careful study of all friends of Christian union.

The town of Geneva was laid out in the same spring, and a hotel erected and building commenced. The colonists were to a man staunch teetotalers, and no intoxicating liquors have been sold there to this day. In the following spring L. L. Northrup opened a store and commenced the sale of goods. He likewise the same season erected a steam saw mill, thus furnishing the settlers the means of obtaining a supply of lumber for purposes of building, fencing, etc.

Neosho Falls, a town three miles distant, was laid out the same year, on the Neosho river, and a flouring mill, driven by water power, erected, thus furnishing additional conveniences, the want of which had previously been greatly felt. The experiences of the settlers during the famine of 1861 and the war of 1861-5 do not differ essentially from those of the settlers of other towns of Kansas, and it is therefore unnecessary that I should describe them, or continue the subject further, unless particular items of information should be desired.