

Gardner Township

Bassett

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GARDNER TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 13

1874--D. Barrett, A. Bromley, Wm. Barrett, S. Chandler, J. T. Badger, T. J. Smith, Saml. Urwiller.

1875--Geo. L. Gardner, Luke Barrett.

1876--Geo. K. Peck, Wm. Weeces.

1877--W. S. Elliott, Emma T. Peck, S. McCutchen, Henry Willey, G. W. Archer, C. Riddle.

1878--Max Schlund, Claus Sothmann, F. Hentz, H. Muhlbach, R. Beekman, H. Cassidy, J. H. Barrett, G. H. L. Harding, J. G. A. Muhlbach, Jas. Hutchinson. S. R. Hankins, C. C. Knapp, W. L. Lewis, L. Krenzwieser, V. E. Bush, H. Harris, J. G. Harris, Elizabeth J. Aufderhide, John Luce, Robt. Taylor, F. Urwiller, Thomas Carroll, Emil Keehler, C. Karp, George Best, D. Scrivin, J. Urwiller, F. A. Muhlbach, W. F. Muhlbach, J. P. Curry, J. B. Wrightington, Joanna Dean, A. G. Welch, Henry Decker, J. Hendrickson, D. Riley, F. Rohrbach.

1879--Samuel Urwiller, E. Muhlbach, F. A. E. Novck, John A. Hogg, E. Riley, L. Waldron, James Cleary, George S. Post, Wm. Sprect, E. J. Stephens, J. Y. Swigart, George W. Carr, Danforth Demary, C. N. Klammer, John Stuber, R. J. Welch, Eli Campbell, P. Dooley, J. Billingsly.

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GEORGE L. GARDNER.

George L. Gardner, who was the first settler of Gardner township, still owns four hundred and eighty acres of land in that township but makes his home in Shelton. He is enjoying a period of rest and leisure to which his labor in former years justly entitles him. His birth occurred in New York state, July 22, 1843, and his parents were William T. and Eunice B. (Roushey) Gardner, also natives of the Empire state. They were married there but subsequently removed to Pennsylvania, and in 1878 they came to Buffalo county, Nebraska. While living in New York the father followed the tanner's trade but engaged in farming in Pennsylvania and in this state.

George L. Gardner is one of a family of six children, four of whom are still living. He was given excellent educational advantages, as after completing the course offered in the common schools he attended the Smithfield Academy and the Waverly Institute at Waverly, New York. He remained at home until 1861, when, as a youth of eighteen years, he enlisted in Company F, Sixth Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, with which he served at the front for three years and two months. He enlisted as a private but was promoted to the rank of sergeant, and his record is one of which he has every right to be proud. He was engaged in forty-two battles, including the seven days' fight before

Richmond; Bull Run, which continued for three days; and Antietam, in which he was shot through the right lung. This wound incapacitated him for military service for three months, but as soon as he had recovered he returned to the firing line and fought in the three days' battle of Gettysburg; in the battle of the Wilderness, which also lasted for three days; in the battle of Spottsylvania Courthouse, a six days' engagement; in the four days' battle at North Anna river; and in the last battle of Cold Harbor. He was mustered out at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, June 11, 1864, and returned home, where he remained until the spring of 1875. In that year he came to Buffalo county, Nebraska, and took up land in what is now Gardner township. He was the first settler within the limits of that township, which was named for him, and he had to face all of the obstacles that usually confront the pioneer. However, he had faith in the future of the county and persevered in his work of developing a farm from the wilderness, and brought his land to a high state of cultivation. As the years passed the township increased in population and the inconveniences and hardships of pioneer life gave way to the advantages of an advanced civilization. He still owns four hundred and eighty acres of land, but since 1895 has lived retired in Shelton, where he owns a fine residence.

Mr. Gardner was married in 1883 to Miss Anna L. Walters, by whom he had five children: Edna N., the wife of G. L. Bastian; Clara, the deceased wife of Ralph R. Bennett; Lois E, who was principal of the local schools for four years but is now teaching in the high school at Scotts Bluff; Mary E., who is principal of the Morrill high school; and Elma, who died in infancy. The wife and mother passed away in May, 1899, and was buried in Shelton cemetery. In June, 1915, Mr. Gardner was again married, Mrs. Laura Wickwire becoming his wife.

Mr. Gardner casts his ballot in support of the candidates and measures of the republican party and served for two terms as supervisor of Buffalo county. Fraternally he is identified with Shelton Lodge, No. 99, A. F. & A. M, in which he has filled the position of master for four years, and he is also a member of Joe Hooker Post, No. 28, G. A. R, thus keeping in touch with his army comrades of former days. His wife is a member of the Presbyterian church. The same public spirit which prompted him to offer his life if need be to preserve the union has manifested itself in times of peace in a willingness to subordinate private interests to the general welfare and a readiness to cooperate in movements seeking the advancement of his community.

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JOHN A. HOGG.

John A. Hogg is now living retired in Shelton, although in former years he was actively identified with farming interests. He was born in Butler county, Pennsylvania, on the 29th of March, 1844, being a son of Robert and a grandson of Robert Hogg, Sr., who was one of the prominent figures in the War of 1812. In 1865 John A. Hogg became a resident of Iowa, establishing his home in Poweshiek county. He had previously taken up the carpenter's trade in Pennsylvania and continued to work at that occupation in Iowa. He was married in 1865 to Miss Margaret Hall, the daughter of a carpenter, William Hall, and for four years he and his father-in-law worked together but in 1872 Mr. Hogg turned

his attention to commercial pursuits, establishing a grocery business in Mitchellville. In seven years, however, he lost all that he had made in the years of his connection with carpentering and building.

In 1879 Mr. Hogg arrived in Nebraska and after paying freight on his goods and meeting other necessary expenses he found that his cash capital amounted to but three dollars. He secured employment on the Shelton mills at a dollar per day and a week later, demanding more salary, was given a dollar and a quarter per day. After the millwright took charge he was paid a dollar and a half per day, for his ability in the line of his trade was recognized. In 1879 he traded a gold watch for a relinquishment on a homestead, on which he subsequently built a sod house. He lived in that primitive structure for a year without having a floor in it. He occupied the homestead until 1906, when he took a trip to Oregon with the twofold purpose of recuperating his health and of visiting his son, Robert W., who had removed to the Willamette valley in 1904, settling near Salem, where in connection with his farming operations he engaged extensively in the breeding of thoroughbred hogs, winning a wide and well deserved reputation in that connection. For two years he was chosen superintendent of the stock exhibit at the state fair at Salem and he also made exhibits of his hogs at the San Francisco exposition in 1915, winning sixteen hundred and seventy-five dollars in prizes, which included the reserve champion prize for sows. He also sold twelve hundred and twenty-five dollars' worth of stock, selling nine animals for nine hundred dollars, which fact shows the high grade of hogs he has raised. In 1908 John A. Hogg returned to Shelton, Nebraska, where he purchased

town property and has since made his home, but he is still the owner of the old homestead, from which he derives a substantial and gratifying income.

As previously stated, Mr. Hogg was married in 1865 to Miss Margaret Hall, who was born in Butler county, Pennsylvania, on the 9th of April, 1844, and is a daughter of William and Minerva (Thompson) Hall. In 1915 they celebrated their golden wedding and the accompanying picture is a group of their ascendants. To them have been born twelve children, nine of whom still survive, as follows: Robert W, who is a resident of Salem, Oregon; Mary M, the wife of L. B. Van Dyke, of Custer county, Nebraska; Lola M., who gave her hand in marriage to A. P. Johnson, a practicing attorney of Broken Bow, Nebraska; Sarah, who is the wife of I. E. Lux, of Crookston, Nebraska; John A., Jr., the proprietor of a book and stationery store at Vancouver, Washington; Floyd Cleveland, an agriculturist of Buffalo county, Nebraska; Elizabeth, who is the wife of M. D. Nutter, a farmer of Buffalo county, this state; Rose F, the wife of Professor Earl Glendon, who is superintendent of the high school at Stapleton, Nebraska; and Irwin, who operates the home farm.

In politics Mr. Hogg is independent, considering the capability of a candidate rather than his party affiliation. In 1889 he was one of the organizers of the Farmers Alliance in Buffalo county and was one of five delegates chosen by that body to find out whether the Alliance wanted to go into political action. He was one of the five representatives from Buffalo county to the St. Louis convention of the people's party, being an anti-monopolist. In 1893 he was elected to the board of supervisors of this county. Fraternally he is connected with Shelton Lodge, No. 99, A. F. & A. M., while both he and his wife are active and prominent members in the Presbyterian, church of Shelton, in which he has served as an elder for seven years, doing all in his power to promote the growth and

extend the influence of the church and bring about that moral development for which the church stands. His life has ever been an honorable and upright one, fraught with integrity in every relation, and those who know him have ever felt that he is worthy of trust.

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SAMUEL URWILLER.

Samuel Urwiller is now living retired at Ravenna but for thirty years was actively identified with farming interests in this county, ranking with the enterprising agriculturists of Cherry Creek township. He was born in Switzerland, July 28, 1844, a son of Jacob and Elizabeth (Lerch) Urwiller, who were also natives of the land of the Alps. The father, who was a weaver by trade, came to America with his family in 1854, settling in Rochester, New York, where he was employed until 1857. He then removed to Marshall, Michigan, where he purchased land and developed a farm, continuing its operation until 1883, when he sold out and came to Nebraska, establishing his home in Buffalo county, to which district his children had preceded him. He and his wife afterward made their home with their children, Mrs. Urwiller passing away in 1886, while Mr. Urwiller survived until December 23, 1891.

Samuel Urwiller was a young lad of ten years at the time of the emigration to the new world. His youth was largely passed in Michigan, where he attended school to some extent, but he is in considerable measure a self-educated as well as a self-made man. His parents were in straitened financial circumstances and the children found it necessary to go to work early in order to provide for their own support. When but eleven years of age Samuel Urwiller secured employment at farm labor and was thus engaged until after he attained his majority. At the age of twenty-three years he began to learn the carpenter's trade, which he followed in Michigan for fifteen years. His entire life has been one of untiring industry and thrift. In 1878 he removed to Buffalo county and secured a homestead on section 4, Gardner township, but he relinquished this and removed to Cherry Creek township, purchasing a preemption of one hundred and sixty acres on section 32. He improved that farm and continued its cultivation for thirty years, transforming it into a valuable property. He resided thereon until 1908, when he rented the place and removed to Ravenna, purchasing a nice home in the western part of the town. Here he has since resided and is now enjoying a rest which he has truly earned and richly deserves. While upon the farm he made a specialty of raising white Hereford cattle and Poland China and Duroc-Jersey hogs. In addition to his home place in Cherry Creek township he purchased eighty acres in Gardner township and through the careful direction of his farm work won notable success.

On the 1st of April, 1868, Mr. Urwiller was united in marriage to Miss Libbie Haselton, by whom he had five children, as follows: Lewis J., who was born March 10, 1869, and resides in Florida; Frederick T., whose birth occurred October 23, 1871, and who follows farming in Gardner township; Charles S., who was born April 21, 1874, and makes his home in Florida; Lizzie M., who was born February 2, 1877, and is the wife of Jacob Richardson, of Peru, Nebraska; and Jessie L., who was born in December, 1879,

and now lives in California with her husband, A. O. George. The wife and mother passed away on the 5th of November, 1883, and on the 4th of July of the following year Mr. Urwiller was again married, his second union being with Miss Emma Vouth, a daughter of Henry and Susanna (Frost) Vouth, who were natives of London, England. The father, a fisherman in England, emigrated to Canada in 1836 and spent the remainder of his life in that country, his demise occurring in 1848. The mother, who survived him for six decades, was called to her final rest in 1908. By his second wife Mr. Urwiller had four children, namely: Dora, who was born June 11, 1885, and died on the 30th of August, 1891; Willie, who was born March 3, 1887, and cultivates his father's farm; Adeline A., who was born December 20, 1889, and is the wife of Walter Puchard, an agriculturist of Garfield township; and one who died in infancy.

In his political views Mr. Urwiller has always been an earnest democrat, giving stalwart allegiance to the party and its principles. He served as township clerk of Cherry Creek township, also as constable and for many years was a member of the school board. His religious faith is that of the Methodist church and he guides his life according to its teachings. His has been an active and well spent life and his career demonstrated what may be accomplished when energy and determination lead the way. Working his way steadily upward, he has achieved financial independence and his life record indicates that success and an honored name may be won simultaneously.

Biographical Souvenir of Buffalo, Phelps & Kearney Counties

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JOHN LUCE, a prosperous farmer in Gardner township, Buffalo county, was born in Wyoming county, Pa., November 20, 1831, and is the son of Abram and Amanda (Osier) Luce. The senior Luce was born in New Jersey, in 1804, and after marriage settled in Pennsylvania. He was a wagon-maker by trade, but devoted most of his time to farming. He died in 1869.

John Luce, the subject of this sketch, was the youngest of a family of six children. His mother, who bore the maiden name of Amanda Osier, died when he was but six days old, and he was reared by his grandparents. His youthful ambition was to be a carpenter and he began serving an apprenticeship at sixteen. After an experience of four years he was obliged to quit work on account of trouble with his eyes, and for two years he was entirely blind.

He regained his eyesight, however, in time to offer his services to the government before the war closed. He joined the Second Pennsylvania heavy artillery, and saw some hard fighting in the battles of the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, Petersburg and Richmond. He helped tear up the Weldon railroad and was stationed at Petersburg for nine months after Lee's surrender. He was discharged January 29, 1866.

In March, 1878, he emigrated from Pennsylvania to Buffalo county, Nebr., taking up a soldier's homestead in Gardner township. His was the fifth family to settle in the township, and it was some time before there was any settlement to speak of in his immediate locality. He came to this country with very limited means and was compelled to practice economy in every way possible. He built a sod house and began breaking the prairie preparatory to planting a small crop the following season. He paid \$2.50 per acre

to have fifteen acres of sod broke, and worked, himself, at sixty cents a day to pay for it. There were no regularly laid out roads in those days, and every traveler selected his own route. He made frequent trips to the Loup for fuel, and during the long and severe winter of 1880-81 he was obliged to burn hay and cornstalks for fuel.

John Luce was united in marriage, October 17, 1858, to Miss Annie MaGee. She was born in Susquehannah county, Pa., October 5, 1838, and is the daughter of Ebenezer and Lucy (Root) MaGee, the former a native of New York and the latter of Connecticut. Her father died in February, 1876, and her mother in 1885. Mr. and Mrs. Luce have had six children - Riley W., Benny (deceased), Mary (deceased), Charley, George and Ella E. In April, 1885, Mr. Luce was instrumental in establishing the Luce postoffice, and has since been the postmaster. He is a member of the I. O. O. F. and Farmers' Alliance, and is independent in politics. He is one of the leading farmers in the township, and enjoys the confidence and esteem of all who know him.

Buffalo Tales

Aug. 1978 – “Early Post Offices in Buffalo County”

Another active community was **Luce** in Gardner Township, named for John Luce, its first postmaster as of September 28, 1885. **Waltham**, August 1885; **Shafer**, January 1886, and **Gage**, July 1899, were served by the Luce post office when those offices were closed.

June 1989 – “Roots in Buffalo County - Germans and Austrians, Part I”

The first Zion Lutheran Church, north Shelton, was built in Gardner township in 1890. Some of the founders were Claus Hadenfelt, Claus Holm, Claus Stotman, W. and E. Reese, W. Schmidt, Frederich Ohlman, C. and W. Puchert, Heinrich Rohwetter, Max Specht, W. Kuster. In 1897 the church was taken down and rebuilt 3 1/2 miles southwest, nearer the center of the German population. It was used as church and school until 1912 when the present building was completed.

July-August 1989 – “Roots in Buffalo County - Germans and Austrians, Part II”

In 1878 the Rohrbachs took a homestead in Gardner Township. When the surveyor informed them that their sod house was in the middle of the road, they built another in the center of their land.

When a prairie fire came through they threw water on the sod house and stayed inside until the danger was past. Several years later they built a two-room frame house with an attic. Dances were held there, with all the

neighborhood invited, and a fiddler providing the music. The Rohrbach's great grandson, Bruce Muhlbach, now owns the homestead.

[2005-Bruce Muhlbach et al trust owns se ¼ 9-11-13 and sw ¼ 10-11-13]

January 1981 – “Sodtown, the Community that Would not die”

In March of 1905 the Sodtown neighbors organized the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company, and plans were made to build a line from Sodtown to Ravenna, Luce and St. Michael. By fall the company had spread like wildfire in every direction and had a total of thirty-four phones. Several miles of line were built, and it was now evident that the company must put in a switchboard and hire an operator.

Luce was then a progressive spot with a store, post office and two blacksmith shops, so the switchboard was installed in the home of the Fox Brothers, who ran one of the shops, and their sister became the first switchboard operator. The name was changed to the Sodtown Telephone Company, many miles of line were built with toll lines to Shelton, Ravenna and Cairo, and service was good. The Fox family continued to operate the board until 1919. By this time a larger board was needed which was operated a short time by George Wrinkle at his store in Luce, but in the winter of 1920 a small house was purchased and remodeled and served as the telephone office for many years.

May-June 1996 – “Historical Background of Churches in Buffalo County, Part I”

There were several Evangelical churches in the early years, Kearney in 1893, Odessa in 1885, Shelton in 1896, and Amherst. One rural congregation started in 1879 in Schneider Township is the present Zion Ravenna United Methodist Church. Their first meetings were in a sod schoolhouse. A small frame church was built in 1880, and later a new building was erected three miles east and one mile north in Gardner Township where it is located today.

July-August 1986 - “Historical Background of Churches in Buffalo County, Part II”

rural Missouri Synod congregation, Zion Lutheran, was organized in 1885 on the eastern edge of the county, north of Shelton in Gardner Township. It was known also as the St. Michael church or the Luce church, but for many years

has been identified as the North Shelton church. A parochial school operated until 1946. Mrs. Floyd Pope, who prepared a history of the church, recalled the custom in the early years of the girls sitting on the west side with the ladies behind them, and the boys on the east side with the men in back of them.