Townships

Survey System in Ordinance of 1785 – Problems in the original colonies with boundary disputes. Parcels of land were odd sized and shaped, with boundary lines marked by streams, trees, rocks & other natural markers which may or may not remain in place. Also, land claimed was the best land, however irregular in shape it might be which left odd, irregular patches in between which remained the property of the state but had very little value.

       This Ordinance set up a system of survey and sale of the Northwest Territory. The land was to be divided by parallel lines drawn north-south and east-west to form townships six miles square. Each north-south tier was called a range, the east-west tiers were called townships. The township square was divided into 1-mile squares called sections. The sections could be divided into fourths, eighths, etc.

       When the land was sold, a whole piece – section, quarter section, etc. – was sold. The buyer had to take the bad with the good. The result would be fewer boundary disputes and no left over patches of land of little value left in the hands of the government.

The Federal Union, A History of the United States to 1865, John D. Hicks, 1952, p. 171.

"ORIGINAL SURVEY OF BUFFALO COUNTY - On the establishment of Fort Kearney in 1848, the war department ordered a military reservation of ten miles square surrounding the fort to be surveyed and established. Accordingly the Fort Kearney military reservation was surveyed in 1848, (Morton history), this being the first survey of record in the county, and it appears that the lines thus established were recognized in all future surveys in both Buffalo and Kearney counties. In 1866 the second and third standard township lines in the county were surveyed and established by H. C. F. Hackbusch, the third standard being the present north line of the county and the second standard the line between townships eight (8) and nine (9). In 1866 range lines 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 were run by George F. McClure. In the same year, 1866, the township and section lines in ranges 13, 14, 15 and 16 were run by Edwin R. Farnsworth and H. C. F. Hackbusch and in 1868 the township and section lines in ranges 17 and 18 were run by W. J. Allason. This completed the original survey of the county."

History of Buffalo County, Samuel Bassett, 1917, p. 14

Survey timeline:

1848 – Survey of Fort Kearny military reservation

1866 – All range lines (the north-south lines) were surveyed by George McClure

       The line between townships 8 & 9 the county's north boundary were surveyed by
          H.C.F. Hackbusch.

       Township and section lines for Ranges 13-16 were surveyed by Farnsworth &
          Hackbusch.

1868 - Township and section lines for Ranges 17 & 18 were surveyed by Allason

Formation of Townships

       In 1883 the state legislature passed an act regulating the organization of a township. At this time the county adopted the township organization act providing that the county board of supervisors at their first session should divide the county into townships and designate the name of each township. It was at this time that all the townships in the county were named.

Barb O'Neill in Pleasanton on the Loup 1890-1990

Before this time the divisions in Buffalo County were called Precincts. (some counties never changed that designation term even though they divided their counties as the law described.) Precincts in Buffalo County in 1875 were

       Shelton

Gibbon
Center
Kearney
Crowellton – Odessa in 1877
Western – later Elm Creek
Grant
Schneider
Cedar
Loup
Buffalo

Townships in Buffalo County –
     Buffalo County has 6 columns of Ranges and 4 tiers of townships, each 6 miles square, except for the bottom tier which includes those parts of the next township which are north of the Platte which is our southern boundary.
     Every so often an extra column of sections is added to a range to adjust for the curvature of the earth. One was added on the west side of range 16 so each township is 7 sections wide instead of 6.

-----------13 (east edge of county) ------------

CHERRY CREEK TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 12, RANGE NO. 13
- Named for one of the creeks in the township
-

GARDNER TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 13
- Named for George L Gardner, who claimed a homestead there in 1875

SHARON TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 10, RANGE NO. 13
SHELTON TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 13
- Shelton & Sharon were originally called Wood River
- Name probably changed when Wood River Center name was changed
- Welsh letter in 1873 to Postmaster General:
  "Washington, D. C.
  Dear Sir:
     You are hereby notified that the name of this post office has been changed from Wood River Center to Shelton and you will govern yourself accordingly."
- Don't know when the two townships split.

PLATTE TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 8, RANGES 13 AND 14
- East half, below Shelton Township was called Island Township
- Assessor's book – 1882 – Format of this book was different. Asked for more than animals, wagons & household furniture.
- Crops raised were mostly wheat and corn along with some oats, and one 15 acre field of barley. Also asked for number of fruit trees and forest trees. Four were listed:

Fruit trees	Forest trees
25	1000
25	200
12	6

This man had seven acres of land, 3 in oats and 4 improved [must be where the fruit trees were] He also had 2 horses, 1 beef, 400 lb of hogs, 1 wagon, 1 sewing machine, $10 worth of tools, $10 worth of household goods, and $100 value of improvements.

-------14---------

GARFIELD TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 12, RANGE NO. 14
- Contains Ravenna & Poole

SCHNEIDER TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 14
- Named for Dr. Schneider, native of Saxony, who came in 1873 and left in 1874

VALLEY TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 10, RANGE NO. 14

GIBBON TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 14
When the railroad was built, a siding was placed at what is now the town site of Gibbon and named Gibbon Siding in honor of Gen. John Gibbon, who served in the Mexican and Civil War

----------15---------------

BEAVER TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 12, RANGE NO. 15
- Named for Beaver Creek
- Contains Sweetwater

CEDAR TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 15
- Named for Cedar Creek where first settlers lived

THORNTON TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 10, RANGE NO. 15
- Named for S. W. Thornton one of the first settlers, came in 1874

CENTER TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 15   Also all of town No. 8, range No. 15, embraced in Buffalo County.

-----------16-------------
(The range with the extra column of sections)

LOUP TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 12, RANGE NO. 16
- Named for the Loup River which flows on its southern boundary
- Contains Pleasanton

RUSCO TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 16
- Named for W. Rusco, who settled there in 1876.

DIVIDE TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 10, RANGE NO. 16

RIVERDALE TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 16
- Also town No. 8, range No. 16, as embraced in Buffalo County.
- Collins Township – Town No. 8, Range 16, Sections 24-26, and town No. 8, range No. 16, as embraced in Buffalo County – was formed after 1917.

SARTORIA TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 12, RANGE NO. 17
- Township government organized in 1884
- Sartoria & ½ of Scott were first called Taylor Township

SCOTT TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 17
- Named for Benjamin Scott who filed the first claim in 1873
- Scott township was formed from three rows of sections in Sartoria township and three from Grant in August 1887.

GRANT TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 10, RANGE NO. 17
- Named for William Grant who came in 1874
- Contains Amherst
-

ODESSA TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 17
- Also that portion of town No. 8, range No. 17, within Buffalo County.
- Odessa was originally called Crowelton

HARRISON TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 12, RANGE NO. 18

ARMADA TOWNSHIP-TOWN NO. 11, RANGE NO. 18
- Named for the town of Armada
- Contains Miller

LOGAN TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 10, RANGE NO. 18
- Original name was Buffalo
- Assessor's book, 1876
  All odd numbered sections were owned by the UP.
- No one else owned any land in the township yet. According to Bassett there were two homestead claims filed in 1878 and one in 1879.
  14 names listed with property assessed. Totals for the township were
  >   7 horses
  >   4 mules
  >   12 cattle
  >   8 carriages/wagons
  > $227 other
  >   no value for household furnishings.
  >   4 dogs

ELM CREEK TOWNSHIP--TOWN NO. 9, RANGE NO. 18
- Also that portion of town No. 8, range No. 18, embraced within Buffalo County.
- Elm Creek was Western

Responsibilities of the Townships

Elected officials:
Representative to County Board of Supervisors
Justice of Peace – handled minor law enforcement issues & disputes
        Township Board members – Representative to County Board served on township board
Budget:
        General fund
                Paid meeting day stipend to board members ($2/day)
                Later – liability and bonding insurance
        Relief fund – for indigent in their township (local welfare system)
        Roads and Bridges fund – largest portion
                Township maintained roads & built bridges
                Purchased road graders & other road maintenance equipment

Shifting of Responsibilities
        Welfare - County Poor Farm opened
        Roads & Bridges – Contracted with county
                Today 16 road graders
                County roads & Township roads

125 years later – Is it time to Change?

"Township System on its way out?" [Hub article]
Discussions about eliminating been going on for 6 months
26 Townships – all but 3 contract with county for roadwork
Meeting of township officials last year – 17 attended, 15 favored eliminating

"Phelps gathers ideas on ending townships" [Hub article]
Phelps Co. has 15 townships
Had a meeting recently with township officials

The Situation today –
Statewide - 27 of 93 counties still have townships [1/3]
Buffalo County – 3 of 26 townships active – Shelton, Gibbon, Elm Creek
        Road maintenance main responsibility
        Shelton also has library in Shelton & cemetery (which gets funds from Hall Co.)
If we change –
County Board changes to County Commissioners if townships are eliminated.
        May be 3-member or 5-member or could be 7-member
Procedure to change:
        People vote on it
                Put on ballot by petition or by vote of County Board
                Specify # of Commissioners as part of that vote

Bibliography

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