SAFFORDVILLE'S INTERESTING CAREER

The town of Saffordville was once a vast plain with buffaloes roaming about. In the year of 1871, the grading for the Santa Fe Railroad was completed, and steel for it was laid in 1872. A small depot was then built, and the first agent was Mr. Pents. The second track was laid in 1897, and it ran from Emporia to Newton. The third track was completed in 1926. The railroad ran along the northern bound-ary of the town, then uninhabited.

The place where the town now stands was a forty acre piece of land jointly owned by three men--Court Wright, who owned half, and Blasdale and Scott, who owned one-fourth each, though now it was definitely divided. Scott was a drunkard, and the last part of his life he wasn't ever sober. Whenever anyone tried to buy the lots, he would never sign his name; and without signature, the deeds were no good. After several years, Ben Scott died, and as it was not supposed that he had any heirs, the lots were sold. The owners secured deeds, and houses began to be built. Later it was discovered that Ben Scott had a brother who had a family; thus all the deeds were worthless. After several trials, the case was settled at Cottonwood Falls.

The first name of the town was Safford, named after Judge Safford supreme judge of the district court of Kansas, who had done a notable act pertaining to the Homestead Act. The mail became mixed with the mail for Stafford; so the name was changed to Kanyon at a meeting of the settlers. This time the mail was mixed with the mail for Canyon City, Colorado, and the name, Safford, was again used. A group of railroad painters painted the name Saffordville on the depot. The mail came addressed to Saffordville, and that name has been retained.

North of the present location of the implement store was a small three cornered piece of land which was deeded to the public for a park. The trustee at that time assessed this land, and the country took it for taxes. A settler, Dave Allen, bought this land and later sold it to the Orient Railroad Company, to whom it still belongs.

The grasshopper invasion was in the year of 1874 about the first of September. The grasshoppers came in millions and were high in the air. They were so thick that the sun was hazy at times. One of the settlers owned some turkeys that were always hungry and would eat anything. At first the grasshoppers began to alight one at a time. Whenever the turkeys would see one, they would all make a rush for it, and it was woe to the grasshoppers. The grasshoppers came fast and the turkeys would separate and then it was each one for himself. Finally, they could eat no more and were led away with disgust. The grasshoppers didn't stay more than three or four days, but they killed everything.

Some of the first settlers of Saffordville were Joe Stone, Joshua Moffat, Dave Jones, Raffe Jones, Saf Jones, Jew Murphy, Dee Miller, M. D. Lyles and a man by the name of Winchild.

There was a drouth in the fall of 1867, and no rain fell for four months. All of the crops were killed, and large cracks were formed in the ground. If a small animal fell into one of these cracks, it would die if not taken out. Two or three houses burned in this drouth period. The walls had dried up and not enough water could be secured to put out the fires.

The first store was built in 1872, and was located just west of where the Scribner's store now stands. Three men built this store to rent. They were: Court Wright, Blasdale and Benn Scott. No one would rent the store, so the back part was partitioned of and was rented to a section hand and his family. A cyclone destroyed this store later. No one of the family was injured, although his wife and little child were in the house when the cyclone struck. Thus, there was never any goods sold from the first store building. The next store was established in the freight room of the depot. The store John Scribner now owns, was once located south of the hotel, and was later moved to its present location. The first owners of this store were Allen and Mills. Allen later bought Mills interest, enlarged the store and built the present hotel. The sale was then made to N. B. Scribner, who in turn sold to his son, John C. Scribner, who still owns it. In 1899 the Woolwine brothers established a store at the spot where Slater's store now stands. Woolwine brothers sold out to Slater and Whipkey in 1916, and Whipkey in turn sold out to Slater in 1927. The first blacksmith shop was built by Tom Johnson at the site where the Slater store now stands. Johnson sold to Ingmire, and Ingmire sold to Church. Church sold out to Ben Jones, and later Jones sold to Nevitt, who now is the present blacksmith. The present state bank was built in 1904. Among the first houses built in Saffordville were the A. E. Bentley, the Saunders house, Riggenburg house and the Shilbuicks house. The post-office was established in the depot and at that time the agent, Frank Gills, was postmaster. The second a postmistress, was Mrs. Bails. She was succeeded by Joshua Moffat, and fourth was B. H. Garth. He was succeeded by M. D. Lyle. Garth again became postmaster. John Scribner, the present postmaster, succeeded Garth. The first rural route was established in 1905. The first mail carrier was John Husband. The present mail carrier is Arthur Selves.

As the town grew, the need for doctors became evident. The first doctor in Saffordville was Miller. Other doctors Saffordville has had are: Sax, Ravenscrof, Conway, and Grubbs. The present doctor is C. F. Hoover, who has been here since 1897. In that year, a section hand died with small pox. Everyone in town was vaccinated and no one took the disease.

In 1898, three men from town volunteered for service in the Spanish-American War--Frank Kent, Ranah Lyles and John Crook.

The first school house was built in 1876. It was not large enough to hold all the students, and a need for a new building was seen. Accordingly a new one was built in 1896. The old one was sold to the Easter brothers and was moved to the Easter farm. It was used for a barn, and is still there. The need for a high school was evident, and one was built in 1902. Before a church was built, both church and Sunday School was held in the school house. A church was built in 1916, and is still in use. In the same year the hall was built for different uses.

The Indians used to warn settlers who settled near the river. They said they had seen the water from bluff to bluff. The settlers did not pay any attention to the Indians warnings, and in 1904, there came a flood and the Cottonwood River overflowed its banks, and flooded everything. Saffordville is located on low ground, and water flowed into almost every house. Two weeks later it overflowed again which was the last flood for nineteen years. Again in 1923, there came another flood. It was the last one until 1926. In 1929 there were two floods one in June, and the other in November. In the period from 1923 to 1929, the river overflowed eight times, causing severe losses to the farmers in the low lands.

The patriotism of Saffordville was again shown in the World War. The men enlisted were: Oscar Obley, James Lyles, Max Lyles, Addison Obley, John and Charles Scribner, Bud Obley, Arthur Selves, Frank Garrison, Frank Carter, Ralph Studabaker, Irving Meyers, Fred Lind and William Stewart.

The town now has a number of lodges. They are the Masons, Woodman, Eastern Star, Royal Neighbors, Ladies Aid, and other social organizations. The Masonic Hall, in which the Masons and Eastern Star held meetings, and the produce shop was located, burned to the ground August, 1938. The school has athletics which include football and baseball. In the summer the chief amusement is baseball.

Saffordville now boasts of three stores, a blacksmith shop, resturant, barber shop, bank, garage, and a produce station. Main Street was graveled in 1921. The town now has the population of about two hundred. The present station is the only one that has been in this town. It was raised upon a high platform, but later lowered.

(Information received from Ben Jones by Victor ~~Slater~~ InMacche)