

## History of Madison County Nebraska

Madison County Nebraska was created in 1856, and organized in January, 1868, by proclamation of Governor Butler. It is located in the northeastern part of the State, bounded on the north by Pierce, east by Stanton, south by Platte, and west by Boone and Antelope Counties, containing 576 square miles, or 368,640 acres. The north half of the County lies in the fertile Valley of the Elkhorn, which here varies in width from three to six miles. Union and Battle Creek "Valleys are from one to two miles wide. The uplands are gently undulating prairies, and comprise about forty-five per cent. of the area. There are few steep bluffs, and the surface is rarely too broken for tillage.

The first settlements were made in June, 1866, by a small party from Illinois, consisting of L. D. Barnes, William H. Bradshaw, D. L. Allen, Mathias Carr and William A. Barnes, who located near the mouth of the North Fork of the Elkhorn, on the ground now occupied by the town of Norfolk. In the following month, a large German colony from Wisconsin settled in the vicinity of Norfolk. In October of this year, Nicholas Paul surveyed the County. Erastus Jones, of Norfolk, was the pioneer merchant of the County. He was followed by Barney Barnes and a Dane by the name of Nelson, who kept an Indian trading post in the fall of 1866.

May 3, 1867, a settlement was established on Union Creek, near the present town of Madison, by H. M. Barnes, P. J. Barnes, W. J. Barnes and F. W. Barnes. Shortly afterward, Henry Platts and Charles Huylar and family located on this stream; and before the close of the year, Henry J. Severance and a number of others, settled in the vicinity. A substantial bridge was erected over Union Creek in 1867.

S. H. Thatch, A. J. Thatch and many others, settled on the Elkhorn, near Norfolk, during the summer of 1867.

Captain O. O. Austin built a house on Shell Creek, in June, 1866, but did not occupy it. John Bloomfield arrived in 1868, and was the first bona fide settler on this stream. He was soon followed by Lewis Warren, George Witcher and William Meniece. In 1869, the Sioux Indians made a raid on the Shell Creek settlements, killed some stock belonging to Lewis Warren and others, and shot a Mrs. Nelson, who afterwards recovered.

January 21, 1868, the first election for County Officers was held, which resulted as follows: Henry M. Barnes, August Raasch, Herman Braasch, Commissioners; Samuel H. Thatch, Clerk; Frederick Wegner, Probate Judge; Fred. Heckendorf, Treasurer; Fielding Bradshaw, Sheriff; August Lentz, Surveyor; Fred. Boche, Assessor; John Allison and William Bickley, Justices of the Peace; Thomas Bickley and Fred. Haase,

Constables. Said election was held at a small frame house located on Taylor Creek. The County was named Madison at the suggestion of the Germans of the Norfolk settlement, who came from Madison bounty, Wisconsin.

In 1869, L. D. Barnes, John Teigden, John Lencke, A. EyJ and J. W. Risk, settled on Battle Creek. The Hales came in 1870 and fettled on Upper Battle Creek. Battle Creek derived its name from the bloodless battle which occurred on its banks between the Territorial militia and Pawnee Indians during the first Pawnee war.

During the summer of 1871, a settler named Fuller was murdered in a field, near Shell Creek. Two cattle dealers, strangers in the County, were arrested on suspicion of being the murderers, but after an examination were released. The mystery of the murder has never been solved.

The first marriage in the County was that of Mr. Frederick Spawn to Miss Frederica Waggener, May 3, 1868. The first natural death was that of Mrs. Carr, in March, 1867.