The William E. Stanley Connection to Lane County: The 1990 Presidential Address

by Ellen May Stanley

FACTS ABOUT WILLIAM EUGENE STANLEY, who served two terms as the fifteenth governor of Kansas, are readily discovered in historical sources. Governor Stanley, for example, was born in Knox County, Ohio, in 1844, attended the Ohio common schools and Ohio Wesleyan University, then joined a law firm and was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1868. Two years later, young William arrived in Jefferson County, Kansas, and began practicing law. Other published facts about Stanley relate that in 1872 he located in Wichita, served three years as Sedgwick County attorney, and then served one year in the Kansas legislature.

Surprisingly, printed historical sources omit Stanley's financial investments in Lane County in the late 1880s. The purpose of this paper is to rectify that omission, and in doing so to also support University of Kansas history professor Dr. Rita Napier's theory that capitalists were as vital to pioneer Kansas town establishment as were homesteaders.

Ellen May Stanley of Dighton served as the 1990 president of the Kansas State Historical Society. Her presidential address, a condensed version of this article, was delivered at the Society's 115th annual meeting in October 1990.

3. Dr. Napier included this theory in a talk, "The First Town Organizations," during the KSHS centennial annual meeting, October 29, 1975.

A brief historical sketch of early Lane County is necessary before considering Stanley's entrance onto that frontier. Lane County's boundaries were defined by the Kansas legislature in 1873 and named for Sen. James H. Lane. The first Lane County settler, Anthony Broderick, applied for the county's initial homestead, October 1, 1878. A few days later, four men left Great Bend seeking homesteads in western Kansas. When reaching Rush County, these pioneers invited surveyor Richard Deighton to accompany them in their search for the land of paradise and to survey their claims. Upon arriving at the current intersection of Highways 96 and 23, in what is now Dighton, and deciding that they had found the perfect location, Ben F. Goforth, Amaiah Goforth, S. S. Dennis, and E. B. Titus chose quarter sections of land joining at that site.

The following spring, William A. Watson arrived on the scene. Watson, a Methodist minister, preempted the relinquishment of B. F. Goforth, the southwest quarter of the original four claims joining at the present center of Dighton. At this time, a post office was established and named Deighton for surveyor Richard Deighton; later the "e" was dropped. With the establishment of a post office, a store and blacksmith shop were built, and the pioneer town immediately sprang into notoriety. But during the following hard times, Amaiah Goforth, Dennis, and Titus abandoned the idea of trying to build a town.

5. Lane County Herald, May 3, 1888.
6. Ibid; the U.S. Tenth Census, Kansas, microfilm, vol. 10, list 12. William A. Watson as a Methodist Episcopal minister, age 53. Publication notice of Watson's final proof intention on his preemption claim (Goforth's relinquishment) is in the shortened newspaper Progress, Dighton, May 18, 1880.
Watson, however, was not to be dissuaded. "During the long years of drouths and discouragements, while other towns sickened and died, Mr. Watson never lost his grip. He preached, prayed, peddled books and hand organs, quarried stone, in short, he did anything and everything to hold on until his anticipations should be realized." 7

Watson, in July 1881, had the northeast forty acres of his quarter platted as the town of Watson. The town's founder then purchased Amaziah Goforth's homestead, the adjoining northwest quarter, and in 1885 platted the southeast forty acres as Watson's Addition. 8 Although the town's name was Watson, the post office continued as Dighton. 9 Furthermore, S. S. Dennis sold his relinquishment to John Schiereck, who surveyed and platted Schiereck's Addition to Watson in May 1885. Later, E. B. Titus sold his relinquishment to William Walker, who had it surveyed and platted as Walker's Addition to the town of Watson. 10 Consequently, land in each of the four adjoining quarters were included in Watson or its additions.

The town and county continued to grow and two years after the first settler arrived, Lane County's population was 601. 11 However, times were hard. The spring of 1878 began with sufficient moisture, but dry weather appeared in the fall, continued through 1879, and with little intermission extended through 1882. 12 Furthermore, windmills, barbed wire, farm machinery, and railroads, the four factors which historian Walter Prescott Webb suggested were essential to settlement of the High Plains, were scarce in Lane County. 13 This scarcity resulted from the forty or fifty mile transportation expense from the nearest railroad. No mention of windmills and only one reference to fences appeared in the county's only newspaper, the Lane County Gazette, during its short life from 1880 to 1882. Further, as late as 1886, only 4,010 of the 25,623 acres in Lane County farms were fenced. 14 Moreover, only one business, the Dighton Plow Factory and Blacksmith Shop, advertised farming equipment. The proprietor, C. A. Shaffer, manufactured the first plow in Lane County. Undoubtedly, it was a primitive implement. Railroads did not reach the county until 1887. Furthermore, no capitalists, such as bankers or loan agents, were listed in the U.S. 1880 Lane County Census or the Kansas Agricultural Census of the county compiled in June 1885. Therefore, homesteaders lacked the availability of loans with which to buy additional land and farming and survival necessities.

7. Robert W. Baughman, Kansas Post Offices (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1911), 35; Record Group 26, p. 644, National Archives: Lane County Herald, May 3, 1888.
8. Plat Book, Register of Deeds Office, Lane County Courthouse, Dighton, Kansas, Lane County Herald, May 1, 1885; Dighton Herald, March 25, 1886; Dighton Journal, September 15, 1887.
9. See masthead of Lane County Herald, May 1, 1885.
10. Plat Book, Register of Deeds Office, Lane County; Dighton Journal, September 15, 1887.
11. The author's handwritten recording of the U.S. Tenth Census, 1880, Lane County, copied from microfilm, vol. 10, lists 601 inhabitants; the Third Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture (1882), page 299, under Lake County, notes: "In 1880, according to the United States census, a population of 632."
13. Lane County Gazette, June 2, 1881, notes that one farmer had completed a fence of barbed wire around a field of thirty-five acres. For acreage see Fifth Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture (Topeka: State Printer, 1884), 315.
Consequently, many families moved to supposedly greener pastures farther west or returned to their homes “back east.” Accordingly, the 1885 Kansas Agricultural Census totaled only 278 Lane Countians.  

Nevertheless, the Lane County Herald editor bragged, a month before the 1885 census, that the town of Watson was bound to boom. Two months later, he wrote that the buildings extended down a row nearly a quarter of a mile east of the public well on Long Street. Undoubtedly, this well featured a pulley, rope, and bucket; however, the Herald noted that the Walker Brothers were going to erect a windmill, “an ornament to the city, a western monument.” Possibly, this was the first windmill in the county. Also in June 1885, the first advertisement for loans from a local real estate firm appeared in a Lane County newspaper. 15 Bank newspaper ads did not appear until the fall of 1885.

At this time, the county contained 2,180 quarter sections of land. Therefore, if a family lived on each quarter, the dream of thousands of persons inhabiting Lane County was not unrealistic. Though some farmers filed for homestead and timber claims plus additional preemption quarters, their numbers were few. 16 Also the 1885 Kansas Agricultural Census, which registered 278 Lane Countians, recorded 85 households with an average of 3.27 persons. Of this number, 28 percent of the households contained only one member. Since these primarily were young bachelors and most of the married couples were of the child-bearing age, the possibility of an increase in family population was inevitable. Eight families in the 1885 census, for example, represented six members per family, four households contained eight members per family unit; and one family claimed ten members.

Consequently, because of the possibility of an increase in family size, more settlers moving into the county, and the growth of the principal town, Watson, the stage was set for the entrance of capitalists. In the fall of 1885, several Wichita investors, noting the development of Lane County and realizing that soon it would be organized with Watson as county seat, journeyed to Lane County with the intent of buying the pioneer town. Upon arriving in Watson, the capitalists immediately approached William A. Watson and asked the purchase price of his town. Watson,

15. Lane County Gazettte, February 25, March 3, 1880; Lane County Herald, May 26, June 2, August 2, 1887; U.S. Tenth Census, 1880, Lane County, microfilm, vol. 10, author’s library; Kansas State Agricultural Census, 1885, Lane County, microfilm rolls 192-199, Forsythe Library, Fort Hays State University.

16. Lane County Herald, May 1, June 26, July 3, 31, 1885.

17. All of Lane County’s land was eligible for homestead, preemption, or timber culture claims, except for two sections of each congressional township, which were school lands. The latter could be purchased for a reasonable price, however.

realizing the unique situation of possessing the winning hand, set a high price. At this time, the Wichita financiers, who had not achieved their status through ignorance, withdrew to the outskirts of town. After a brief consultation, they returned to Watson with an offer considerably lower than his price. Watson, again confident that he owned the only town in the center of Lane County, refused their offer. Again the capitalists withdrew and gathered in a circle on the prairie. At the conclusion of this conference, the Wichita assembly conferred with John Schiereck, who, as previously mentioned, had platted one-fourth of his adjoining quarter as Schiereck’s eastern addition to Watson. The capitalists purchased Schiereck’s remaining three-fourths; the purchase price was four thousand dollars.

The Wichitans then organized under the name of the Dighton Town Company. The members and officers of the company, their professions and hometowns were: W. B. Smith, president, capitalist,
Wichita; H. Imboden, vice-president, City Roller Mills, Wichita; the Honorable W. E. Stanley, secretary, attorney, Wichita; J. O. Davidson, treasurer, president of Citizens Bank, Wichita; William Barnard, manager, Dighton; H. L. Hill, Wichita Horse and Mule Market, Wichita; Frank C. Weir, merchant, Wichita; and N. H. Morrison, physician, McPherson. The company also purchased land east of Schiercke's quarter and in December platted the land purchased from Schiercke, replatted Schiercke's Addition to Watson, and named both plats Dighton. They named the main street of Dighton, Wichita Avenue. Furthermore, all business buildings on that august thoroughfare were required to be no less than two-stories high and forty feet deep.\(^{18}\)

As late as May 1885, the town of Watson claimed no more than seven inhabitants and three houses. By February 1886, Dighton and Watson had increased to over 350 inhabitants, contained 19 residences and 55 businesses. These included six grocery stores, three banks, three lumber yards, six land and real estate offices, one company of well drillers selling Perkins Wind Mills, and two newspapers. The *Lane County Herald* began publishing on May 1, 1885, in Watson; the *Dighton Journal* began publishing February 18, 1886, on Wichita Avenue in a building furnished by the town company.\(^{19}\)

To protect its interests, the Dighton Town Company actively promoted and participated in the building of the town. The company completed sales of lots in Dighton mounting to nine thousand dollars and contracted for the erection of twenty-nine two-story business houses, plus a three-story hotel on

18. *Dighton Journal*, June 26, 1886; *Lane County Herald*, August 19, 1886, May 3, 1886; Schiercke's final preemption receipt, the town company's president W. B. Smith's purchase from Schiercke, and Smith's sale to the Dighton Town Company are in Final Receipt, vol. 1, p. 189; Deed Book 2, p. 500; Deed Book 4, p. 54, Register of Deeds Office, Lane County. The November and December editions of the *Lane County Herald* are missing from the Lane County Historical Museum newspaper collection and the microfilm. Therefore, new stories of the Wichita capitalists' arrival in Watson are not available. Frank C. Weir's last name was variously spelled as Weir and Wier; the more common spelling has been used in the text.

Wichita Avenue. The value of the first thirty days of town building was seventy thousand dollars. The hotel, built by the town company and called the Avenue Hotel, was a three-story, fifty by one hundred feet, structure. The Journal editor described it as follows: "Rising over the circular stairway, in the north wing, is the outline of what is to be a beautiful glass dome, forty feet from the ground. Over the southeast corner and pointing up to the clouds and twinkling stars is the tower." The building could be seen for many miles in every direction and, predicted the editor, would become a noted landmark. After the opening of the hotel, managed by Frank C. Weir of Wichita, a number of its "cozy and well-furnished chambers" were assigned to leading businessmen and capitalists of Dighton who desired the comforts afforded by the best and largest hotel in western Kansas. W. E. Stanley of Wichita signed its register on August 2, 1886.\(^{21}\)

In addition to money and business, the Wichita capitalists brought other vital elements to the pioneer town of Dighton—culture and class divisions. The capitalists, claimed the Journal editor, compared favorably with the brightest and keenest businessmen in any city in the state. Further, they introduced an intellectual class of people into the county.\(^{22}\) The Avenue Hotel represented the paramount factor in Dighton's society. The management not only graced its parlors with a grand piano but conducted the crowning social event of the season, a ball, which eclipsed anything previously held in Dighton. The Ness City orchestra furnished the music, and a number of "the Ness City elite society participated in the whirl of enjoyment." The affair, noted the Lane County Herald reporter, was "very chaste and elegant, nothing being done that the most fastidious could object to." The reporter then described the costumes of twenty women, including "Miss Nannie Trotter who looked bewitching in black grosgrain silk, with lace overdress, passementerie trimmings, and diamond ornaments." The gentlemen were attired in "conventional black, white ties and pumps, and were distressingly gallant."\(^{23}\)

21. Ibid., February 18, March 18, April 29, 1886; Lane County Herald, August 5, 1886.


23. Lane County Herald, December 1, 1887.
Scenes from Dighton's Wichita Avenue show a busy town with a wide range of businesses (the three-story Avenue Hotel is at far left of top photo).
Not all the social events, however, were held in the hotel. Mrs. N. B. Sawyer, wife of one of the bankers, entertained "a select company of her lady friends at 4 o'clock tea in her cozy residence in the suburbs of Dighton, last Thursday afternoon." Twenty-four of the elite of Dighton's society were present, and "the reception was an occasion of rare social pleasure." In addition, Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Keith entertained the State Bank's stockholders and their wives at the Keiths' "handsome residence on South Wichita Avenue, with an excellent supper served at half past seven o'clock." Furthermore, some of the Dighton "ladies" organized a croquet club, and "now the sound of the mallet and the soft peals of laughter are wafted across the Avenue on the evening's balmy breeze." The Silver Cornet Band also was organized. The gentlemen who composed the band were some of the best citizens, and the band was one of the city's chief sources of pride and pleasure. Moreover, the journal editor suggested that schools, clubs, and parties made life worth living in a western town like Dighton. "The society of a city, is as much or even more of an attraction to the eastern person as are its brick blocks and broad streets." 24

When the county's population reached 2,725, Gov. John Martin issued its organization proclamation on June 3, 1886. 25 Six days later a group of Dighton citizens met for the purpose of selecting the county seat. After a chairman and secretary were elected, W. E. Stanley, "from Wichita and a member of the Dighton Town Company," was introduced. Stanley said that, in his opinion, Schiereck's Addition was a legal part of the town of Dighton, and if Dighton was selected as the county seat and located on block ten of Schiereck's Addition, the town company would erect a building for county purposes. The structure would not cost less than two thousand dollars. Several men then addressed the meeting urging harmony and mutual action. Journal editor R. W. Montgomery moved that Block 10, Schiereck's Addition, be named the county seat. There was no second to the motion. T. J. Barkley moved to adjourn and the motion lost. Barkley then moved that the name of Watson be voted as county seat, and that "we pledge ourselves to change the name from Watson to Dighton as soon as the necessary legal steps can be taken." The motion carried. Then T. J. Womack moved that the county's buildings be placed upon Block 10, Schiereck's Addition. The motion carried. Also, Womack moved that Stanley be requested to draft petitions to present to the district court for changing the name of Watson to Dighton. That motion carried. Stanley, in behalf of the town company, said that as the name of Watson had been selected the county seat, the town company was released from its promise to build the county buildings, but if the commissioners selected Block 10 in Schiereck's Addition the company would renew the offer. After a vote of thanks to the Dighton Town Company for its very liberal offer the meeting adjourned.

Both of the county's editors included stories of the meeting in their papers. The journal, however, concluded its story with the following statement: "The parties who are trying to sway the people of this county against the town of Dighton are engaged in some mighty dirty work and we will take pleasure in exposing them." Nevertheless, sufficient Lane Countians signed petitions asking that the name of Watson be changed to Dighton. When the petitions were presented to the district court at WaKeeneey, Judge Osborne ordered a special term of the district court to be held in Ness City, August 4, to make the name change. The journal editor on June 26 optimistically concluded that this action eliminated "happily and peacefully, what might have been a disastrous conception." 26 Unfortunately, his story after the Ness City District Court session portrayed a different mood.

A number of Dighton people went to Ness City on August 3, recorded the journal editor, "to witness W. A. Watson perform the two horse act." Watson had given his word to change the name of Watson to Dighton. Yet, according to the editor, he walked into court and asked to have the application dismissed on the thinnest quibble ever brought to the notice of a court. Judge Osborne "promptly and emphatically sat down upon him." Watson then flopped around his attorneys and demanded an immediate hearing, but his attorneys, claimed the editor, had too much good sense to ask of the court. So at the insistence of "those who in good faith are disposed to stand by their pledges," the case was postponed to the regular term of court, the third Tuesday in November. The opposition paper, the Lane County Herald, contained a brief story about the district court fiasco. It concluded with the news that the county seat was still called Watson. That story also listed those representing change as Stanley, Womack, and Grinstead. 27

Two weeks later, twenty-six men signed a Herald article protesting the journal editor's comments. The

24. Ibid., August 5, 1886, January 27, 1887; Dighton Journal, July 29, November 18, 1886, February 23, 1888.
26. Dighton Journal, June 17, 24, 1886; Lane County Herald, June 17, 1886.
27. Dighton Journal, August 5, 1886; Lane County Herald, August 5, 1886. The Grinstead referred to was either V. H. Grinstead, a county judge, or his brother, S. W. Grinstead, a land attorney.
article praised Watson for his work on behalf of Lane County and establishing the town of Watson. According to these men’s statements, a Mr. Lewis, who was either a member of the town company or closely identified with it, purchased from Watson one-half interest in his vacant lots. The latter understood that the town company would sell the Watson lots at reasonable costs. But such was not the case for, as soon as the county seat petition was signed, one of the leading merchants (undoubtedly John Schiereck) moved his stock of goods to Wichita Avenue and locked his Watson building. Also other businesses moved to the avenue, shut their Watson stores, and allowed no one to rent them. Further, Mr. Lewis resold his Watson lots to a Wichita man, who announced no deed to the lots would be signed by that party. Therefore, Watson could not sell to those wanting to locate in the west end. In concluding the article, the Herald writer quoted the town company as announcing that the west end (Watson) would be crushed. Nevertheless, “through many trials and vicissitudes, when assailed by cunning schemes of designing men and again by the lavish use of corporate wealth, the corners [the area around the original four quarters of land homesteaded by the founders in 1878] have always come out victorious.”

Meanwhile, one night in the latter part of August, the post office was moved from Watson to a spot, supposedly halfway between that town and Wichita Avenue. According to the Journal, the move was made by authority of the United States Postal Department. A few of the west side people were somewhat excited and indulged in language not polite. But the best citizens in town and the country acknowledged the propriety of the removal. Understandably, the Journal’s reaction to the move was counter to that of the Herald. The latter doubted that the postmaster had received proper authority from the Postal Department. Furthermore, the move was unexpected by nine-tenths of the patrons of the office. The Herald would have supported the move, if the office had been moved halfway between Main Street and the avenue, but the new site was inconvenient for the country patrons whose rights should have received as much consideration as those of the townspeople.

However, the comments of the country patrons indicated support for the town company’s east end. One, who referred to himself as one of the country folks from Wilson Township, mentioned the closed business houses on the Amen Corners, the four corners where the country folks loomed when they were in town. This loafer did not “care a snap” about the post office move, but was alarmed that all the twenty-five cent lunch counters were closed. He was not ready to enter the $15,000 hotel with its tableware and fine linen to satisfy his hungry appetite. Perhaps, in five years, country residents finally would learn how “to swallow elephants, where they now have to live in sod shanties, lap sorghum, and swallow little critters.” Further, he expected that those who lived out in the county would catch up with the town folks and wear the plug hats, smoke Havana ten centers and Cuba five centers and board their white dogs at the hotel.

Furthermore, the Alomota correspondent claimed that the people in his township approved the bold stand taken by the Journal in the question of the county seat. Moreover, the Farnsworth correspondent, mentioned that though he lived in the country, he

28. Lane County Herald, August 19, 1886.
29. Dighton Journal, August 26, 1886; Lane County Herald, August 26, 1886.
30. Dighton Journal, August 26, 1886.

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WARRANTY.

The Perkins Wind and Ax Company, of Mishawaka, Ind., do hereby warrant the Perkins Wind Mill to be a good, durable, self-regulating machine, built in a substantial and workmanlike manner, and do not blow down unless the tower goes with it, or against any wind that does not disable good, substantial buildings in the vicinity.

Linzy, Mickel and Johnson

Proprietors,

Dighton, Kansas.

Dighton's home newspapers provided evidence of county development. Advertisements, such as those shown here, appeared regularly and offered a rich array of goods and services.

WE LEAD THE VAN.

Livery & Feed STABLES.

WALKER BROS.

Proprietors.
thought that the best move ever made in the interests of all Lane Countians was that of the Dighton postmaster, when he said to himself, with the U.S. Government on his back, "I will move to the center of the corporate town and sail forth!" Also he noted the liberal donation of Stanley on behalf of the Dighton Town Company to pay for building a courthouse. Lane County people, he suggested, should appreciate the Dighton Town Company since it had spent, in Dighton alone, $3,300,000,000 with wrenching one dollar from the pocket of the farmer or discounting the earnings of the honest laborer. 31

During the controversy, investors arrived in Dighton, saw the feud and left town without investment contracts. After several months, the residents in Watson and Dighton realized that conditions must change. Consequently, a meeting of taxpayers, Watson businessmen, and the Dighton Town Company compromised on an agreement. The town company agreed to buy the remaining one-half interest of Watson's property and erect a structure suitable for temporary occupancy of county officers, located midway between Main Street and Wichita Avenue. The Watson men agreed to annex their town to Dighton as Watson's Addition, incorporating Dighton as a third class city. Universal rejoicing broke out with the announcement of the agreement. The cornet band discoursed sweet music while marching up and down Main Street and serenading along the avenue. All ill feelings were eradicated and everybody was happy. Even the journal and Herald editors postponed their duel and occupied themselves with assisting the "ladies" in planning a grand banquet and full dress ball to be given in the deserted Schrieck building on the corner of Main and Long. Frank Weir, proprietor of the Avenue Hotel, was expected to keep up his reputation and bring in a fatted calf on a platter. 32

Although a depression spread through the United States in 1887, it was slow in reaching Lane County, according to reports in the county's newspapers. One compared the county to a Garden of Eden, with hundreds of immigrants pouring into the paradise. Another referred to the county as "Lucky Lane," with plenty of rain and rich productive sod, in fact, a prairie wonder. The third newspaper, the Dighton Republican which began publication in June 1887, claimed that Dighton was building more elegant structures than any other city of its age in the West. 33

Indeed all seemed to be booming in Lane County and its county seat. The 1887 newspapers featured advertisements of ten Dighton companies executing personal or real estate loans. Furthermore, three banks resided within the city limits of Dighton. Moreover, newspaper advertisements for windmills, barbed wire and fence posts, and farm implements included the Hart Brothers Hardware's ad of its Iron Turbine Windmill and Buckeye double acting force pump, and T. W. Fisk's best pony sod breaker, the celebrated John Deere plow, planter and lister. Also the St. John and Marsh Company sold number one fence posts at fourteen cents, and the Holton Brothers had a carload of barbed wire at rock bottom prices. Furthermore, in May 1887, the first train, a branch of the Santa Fe, entered Dighton. When the spike connecting Dighton and the outside world was driven, several hundred citizens, including the high school band, gathered at the new railroad and welcomed the completion of the road. A few months later, the Missouri Pacific laid tracks in the northern part of the county. Thus, the frontier settlement ingredients, according to Walter Prescott Webb, were now in place in Lane County. Much of the responsibility for this phenomenon was the result of the Dighton Town Company's endeavors. The businesses accompanying the Wichita capitalists and those that developed as the result of the company's involvement in Dighton, possessed sufficient funds to bring goods from the railroad centers. Consequently, barbed wire, windmills, and farm implements were available to the county's homesteaders. Though the railroads probably would have entered the county even without the presence of the town company and its town founding, the company's rapid development of Dighton and its involvement with the Santa Fe, undoubtedly, caused the railroads to enter the county at an earlier date. After the resolution of the county seat conflict, for example, the Lane County Herald reported that members of the Dighton Town Company spent several days in Topeka, where they closed arrangements with the Santa Fe. 34

The town company also advanced the county's cultural development. A two-story frame courthouse was built by the town company, as Stanley had agreed, at a cost of $2,000. Community groups, including the Baptist and Presbyterian congregations, met in the courthouse. Prior to 1887, the Dighton school met in a sod structure, replaced by a magnificent new two-

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31. Ibid., August 26, September 16, 1886.
32. Dighton Journal, November 11, 18, 1886.
33. Dighton Journal, March 9, June 30, 1887; Lane County Herald, April 14, 1887; Dighton Republican, July 6, 1887.
34. The ads appear in the 1887 three Dighton newspapers. The banks and their owners are listed in Dighton Journal, October 15, 1887.
35. Lane County Herald, November 11, 1886, February 9, May 26, June 2, July 21, August 2, 1887; Dighton Journal, May 26, 1887, February 23, 1888.
36. Lane County Herald, April 21, 1887; Dighton Journal, June 25, 1887.
story brick building in 1888. The town company's taxes would have aided in the financial cost of the schoolhouse. Furthermore, the company gave land on which the Methodist and Christian churches were built. Prior to the erection of these structures, the churches had met in business buildings or in homes. Also, several of the capitalists, such as William Barnard, manager of the Dighton Town Company, and John F. Andrews, president of the State Bank located on the avenue, were involved in the organization of and served on various boards of the churches. Social events thrived in Dighton and the county. However, the evolution of class divisions was evident. In addition to special occasion balls, such as Thanksgiving, the Dighton young people formed a Social Club and held balls at the Avenue Hotel each Friday evening. Their rural peer group held dances at Broderick's Grove. Moreover, the rural bachelors gathered at John Cavanaugh's sod house, in the southern part of the county, for a croquet party and a spread of melons and taffy. The rural bachelors' entertainment provided a contrast to the genteel teas and croquet parties held by the capitalists' wives and sisters in Dighton.

Although the Lane County newspapers were promoting the boom and bragging about conditions in Dighton and the county, a careful "reading between the lines" indicates that the air was beginning to escape from the boom bubble. Many dissolutions of Dighton businesses appeared in the fall of 1887 and continued into the following year. The S. P. Hart & Company's hardware stock, for example, was bid in for mortgage, and J. D. Holder made an assignment of his stock of drugs and jewelry to Dr. H. O. Beeson. But the closing of the business that surprised nearly everybody was that

87. Dighton Journal, October 20, 27, November 10, 1887; Lane County Herald, April 22, 1886, September 15, October 13, 1887, May 10, September 6, 1888.
of the Lane County Bank on Monday morning, December 1, 1887. The firm, according to the journal editor, always was considered reliable and was believed to be doing a fair paying business.  

Five months later, J. M. Rush and Charles A. Rogers of Ness City arrived in Dighton and began making arrangements for a First National Bank. They purchased a lot on Long Street as well as the counters of the defunct Lane County Bank and opened business in one of the business rooms on Long Street, with capital stock of $50,000. In February 1889, the new First National Bank’s three-story brick building opened on its lot on Long Street. The new building, declared the journal editor, was the “handsomest bank building in western Kansas.” Of the five banks established in Dighton in the late 1880s, only one, the First National Bank, survived the nineteenth century. That august body, the only current Dighton bank, celebrated its centennial anniversary on May 14, 1988.  

In May 1888, headlines of the Lane County Herald notified its readers that the Dighton Town Company had dissolved. W. E. Stanley was included in the out-of-town members who journeyed to Dighton for the dissolution meeting. The company’s property, consisting of monies, notes, and real estate worth $150,000, was amicably divided into ten equal shares, each member receiving one share. The members, noted the optimistic editor, were shrewd, practical men of affairs who recognized a good deal and proposed to hold and improve their Dighton property, for “they sniff in the near distance the inspiration of a second Wichita.”  

Apparently, the smelling capacity of the Wichita capitalists was not trustworthy, for the year 1889 proved to be the final one for the Dighton Town Company’s participation in Lane County. In February 1889, the greater portion of the brick row on Wichita Avenue, owned by the Dighton Building and Improvement Association, was transferred to the Honorable W. E. Stanley.  

Also, during the first part of that year, fires destroyed two businesses on Wichita Avenue. The bucket brigade and “Green’s old tank” were Dighton’s only defense against fire. Causes of the fires were unknown, and although insurance covered at least one of the losses, neither of the owners chose to rebuild. If the primitive fire-fighting equipment was insufficient to combat small blazes, it definitely was inadequate to conquer the conflagration that blazed at five in the morning one day in May 1889.  

Dighton citizens were horrified when awakened, at that early hour by the ringing of the school and church bells, to learn that the Avenue Hotel was nearly covered with flames. Within minutes, nearly all the townspeople assembled near the hotel, helpless in preventing the fire’s destruction of Dighton’s finest building. The origin of the fire was never determined. The next day, William Barnard, town company president, arrived in Dighton from Wichita after receiving the news via a telegram. A few days later, the city was full of insurance adjusters who allowed hotel manager Frank Weir $10,000 for the damage, $2,000 less than his policy designated. Before the end of the year, most of the businesses on Wichita Avenue had either burned or the owners had moved to other localities. One current Dightonian recalls, as a boy, roller skating in the deserted large two-story buildings on the avenue. Later, huge basement holes revealed the sites once owned by would-be-wealthy entrepreneurs.  

Today the high school and homes occupy the Dighton spaces once filled by large two-story business structures built by capitalists such as former Kansas governor William E. Stanley. And, despite his involvement, no mention of Stanley’s Lane County connection is reported in historical sources. The only exceptions are found in the 1885-1889 editions of the Lane County Herald, the Dighton Journal, and the Dighton Republican.  

38. Dighton Journal, December 1, 29, 1887, January 12, 1888.  
39. Ibid., April 12, 19, 1888, February 29, 1889; Dighton Herald, January 6, 1888.  
40. Lane County Herald, May 24, 1888.  
41. Dighton Journal, February 21, 1889.  
42. Lane County Herald, January 10, April 11, 1889.  
43. Dighton Journal, May 23, 1889; Lane County Herald, May 23, June 6, 1889; Claude Morris, interview with author, Dighton, Kansas, 1976.  
44. See sources listed in note 2.