Bypaths of Kansas History

DOINGS AT FORT SCOTT IN 1868

From the Fort Scott Monitor, December 30, 1868.

Meeting of the Bachelor Club.—A regular meeting of the Bachelor Club was held on Monday evening, Dec. 28th, President Crawford in the chair.

All the members of the club were present, including officers, a thing which had not occurred since last year. After the regular business was disposed of and several affecting speeches were made by the members, Vice President Goodlander offered the following preamble and resolutions:

Whereas, as leap year has passed, and but few proposals have been made by our lady friends, therefore

Resolved, That we, the Bachelor Club of Fort Scott, don't intend to wait four years longer for proposals.

Resolved, That we will on New Years day call on our lady friends, and adopt a more social intercourse with the fair ones, by which means we hope to take courage, and propose before another leap year comes.

Billy Robinson immediately jumped on a beer barrel and in a loud and stentorious voice, seconded the adoption of preamble and resolutions, with but one amendment, to strike out “social” and insert “conjugal” so as to read “more conjugal intercourse.” The motion to amend was lost, and the original resolutions were unanimously adopted amid rapturous applause.

Mr. Dieffenbach offered the following additional resolution:

Resolved, That a copy of the resolutions be sent to the ladies, in order that they may be prepared to receive us.

The President stated that it would be unnecessary to send copies of the resolutions, for the ladies were always prepared to receive their friends on New Years Day whereupon Dieffenbach withdrew the resolution and offered as a substitute that “we all take a glass of beer, and adjourn,” which was carried unanimously. The club adjourned to Bull’s Head where the resolution was enforced.

A LETHAL TRIO

From the Leavenworth Daily Commercial, April 15, 1870.

Major Arm[e]ls took us to the Fort yesterday behind his fast pair of ponies. The name of one animal is “Calamity” and that of the other “Sudden Death.” When Arm[e]ls drives, the entire outfit goes by the title of Coronor’s Inquest.” . . .

CANDY PULLINGS IN SMITH COUNTY, THE HOME OF “HOME ON THE RANGE”

From The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, January 25, 1873.

A GOOD PLACE TO GO TO.—When we “go west” again, we propose to settle in Smith county, Kansas. Smith county suits us. It lies on the extreme northwestern frontier, where there is plenty of grazing-ground, and where the chances to “grow up with the country,” are all that could be desired. The
soil is the usual “rich black loam,” there is supposed to be “a never-failing spring of pure water,” on each quarter section; and rich deposits of building stone that is “equal, if not superior, to the Junction City stone” have been (or will be) found conveniently adjacent to all the town-sites. At the time the census was taken in 1870, there were only sixty-six people in Smith county; and the county organization was not perfected until the first of February last. But things have changed in Smith county since then. In the November election, 441 votes were cast; taxes to the amount of $37,500 were levied last year; school houses have been built, churches organized, and a newspaper established; and altogether, Smith county, like the uneasy soul of Old John Brown, goes grandly “marching on.”

It is not, however, on account of its fertile soil, its perennial springs, its wealth of rock, its rapid increase of population, its schools, its churches, its taxes, or even its newspaper, that we look longingly to Smith county. All these things are common in Kansas, and most other counties have more of them than this one can boast of. But Smith beats them all on one thing. It is the county of candy-pullings. The materials and conveniences for this enticing diversion are not very plentiful, but the pulling is immense for all that. They probably pull more candy in Smith county, in proportion to population, than is pulled in any other section of country of like extent on the face of the habitable globe. The candy-pulling has superseded all other forms of social amusement in that locality, and the good people of both sexes and all conditions live and move in an atmosphere of unmixed and unchanging sweetness. They make their taffy of sorghum, and cook it in a camp-kettle, and go out into the open prairie, under the sweet moon and the twinkling stars, to do the pulling. The Smith county newspaper—the Pioneer, published at Cedarville—gives this description of how the thing is managed:

After cooking the sorghum a proper length of time, which time varies from an hour and a half to two weeks according to circumstances, you take it out and pull it, and the more you pull it the paler it will get, and then you go out and sit down on a pile of shingles and cool it. When it gets cool enough you take hold of one end and your girl takes hold of the other end and you pull and then she pulls, and by and by it breaks in two and you turn a double back-action hand-spring towards the north star and she walks off on her ear in the opposite direction.

If you want to change the programme you can take a chunk of the candy about as big as a small curly dog, and stretch it out exactly seventeen feet two inches and a half long, then take one end of it in your mouth and your duck takes the other in her’s; then you commence chewing and prancing until you get yourself into a good state of perspiration, when you swallow eight feet seven inches and a quarter and clasp her in your arms, nose to nose.

There can be no guile in a people addicted to such recreations. The candy-pulling is full of pastoral simplicity; and where sorghum abounds, there all the virtues may be bored for with perfect confidence. Smith county is a good region to go to. There will be no wrangling there, and no wickedness. The reign of taffy is the reign of peace, innocence and supreme contentment. The Smith county folks have done well in the adoption of a social amusement. Let them stick to it and be happy.
IN THE CHIPS

From the Kinsley Graphic, January 17, 1880.

The County Commissioners at their last meeting issued an order to the township trustees that they would allow no bills for coal for the poor, in cases where the poor have teams to gather buffalo chips.

HOW IS IT NOW IN LANE COUNTY?

From the Lane County Republican, Dighton, December 5, 1888.

Stay With the Sod Shanty.—Winter is here, and there are families all over western Kansas that have a blue outlook before them. One can not go out in the morning and push back the sliding door of the great red barn, walk in and arouse the large number of fat cattle, horses and hogs; then turn to the over-flowing bins of oats and corn, and carry feed to them. The scene here in the west is different. The farmer arises in the morning, steps outside his sod house, and the scene that presents itself is indeed attractive and inspiring to view. Sod shanties are in the sky, changed into magnificent cathedrals; miniature forests are across the horizon; magnificent lakes appear where the last rays of the setting sun danced over the buffalo grass with naught to cast a shadow except the numerous prairie dogs, as they scampered about, and sat chirping merrily.

A city appears, smoke is seen curling from the chimneys; the tops of the church steeples glisten, indicative that the great illuminator of the world will soon appear, and sweep this scene of grandeur and beauty away, leaving the great, wild prairies spread out as natural as ever, ready to be brought under subjection, and be made to produce abundant crops, filling the hearts and homes of our people with joy and comfort. Even though the outlook is blue, stay with the sod shanty a little while longer, and success will surely greet you. The most pleasant memories are those which when experienced, seems the hardest to bear. When the time does come that you have your claims under subjection, and you can sow and plant with more surety to harvest, when you have the red barns, the fat cattle and horses, you can look back to the present times, and it will be an interesting story to tell your children as you are gathered about the fireside of the large white house with the green window shutters.