*Named for the 14th president of the United States, Franklin Pierce, the county was originally established and its boundaries defined in 1856. Redefined a few years later, it acquired a six-mile square area from* *Cedar County and a tier of precincts from L'Eau Qui Court to the north. Pierce County's incorporated towns include: Pierce (county seat), Hadar, McLean, Osmond, and Plainview.*

# PIERCE
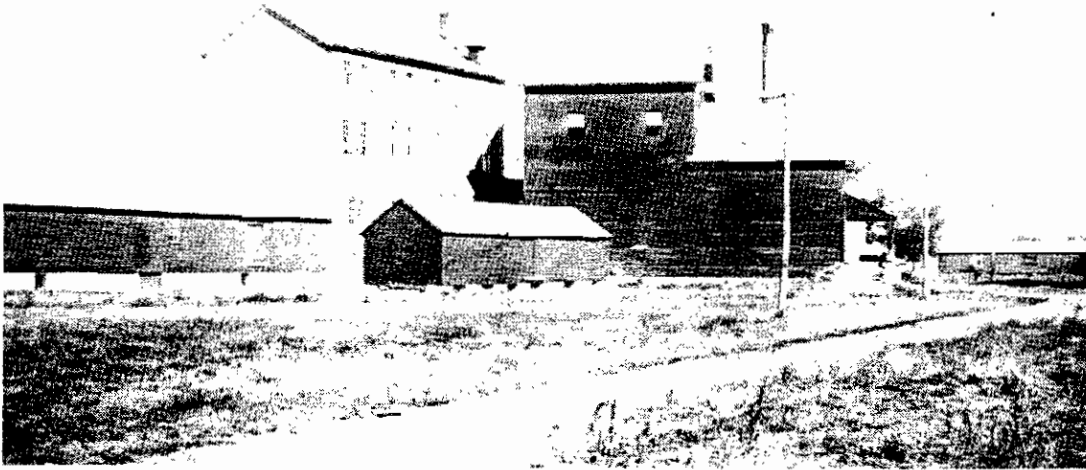


The Village of Pierce was at the right place at the right time, and was named a county seat in 1870. Trails became roads and soon businesses of all kinds were available. A flour mill was built, using power from the North Fork in 1880.

## PIERCE     PIERCE COUNTY

On May 4, 1871, a 56-block town plat was filed with the Pierce County register of deeds and our town officially came into being. The land originally had been granted to Daniel Green, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, giving him rights to certain lands "in the great undeveloped western area." His widow later gave title to George Ware, who in turn sold a quarter section to James Brown for $500. Robert Lucas also purchased a half interest, so these two men are considered to be its founding fathers.

While Pierce County had been in existence since 1859, very few settled in the area until a colony of Germans arrived from Wisconsin in 1869. In the wave of migration that followed, things developed rapidly.

Brown built a cabin on the banks of Willow Creek in 1870. Being at the right place at the right time, near the center of the county, the site was chosen county seat in an election that July. By adding several rooms, Brown's home served as a hotel, post office, and temporary county office.

A courthouse was built on the town square in 1871, the same year that an elementary and secondary school was established. Trails quickly became roads as people clamored to locate businesses and offices in the "new town." The Pioneer General Store was established in 1873, and a newspaper, the "Pierce County Call," in 1877.

A flour mill, built in 1880 by S.F. Gilman, used power from a dam on the north fork of the Elkhorn River. The mill prospered, shipping "Golden Crescent Flour" to many parts of the country on the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad line that had been extended through Pierce.

By 1883 a ten-block addition was needed, and the town took steps to incorporate. The following year the 32-block

Gibson Addition again increased the size of Pierce.

A creamery was established in 1885. Butter from Pierce found markets over a wide area of the Midwest. Pierce also had a cigar factory, a brick yard, and an ice plant. Time and progress eventually eliminated these industries.

The flour mill was destroyed by fire in 1908. When it was rebuilt in 1913, it was powered by electricity generated by the mill's own power plant, which also provided electricity for the entire city of Pierce.

The North Fork River was prone to flooding and in many instances the entire east side of town was under water. The old mill dam went out in a 1924 flood, but was rebuilt as a WPA project in the 1930s. The old mill, which had been idle for several years, was destroyed by fire in 1932. The area then developed as a park named for the late Mr. Gilman, with the mill pond providing a place for boating
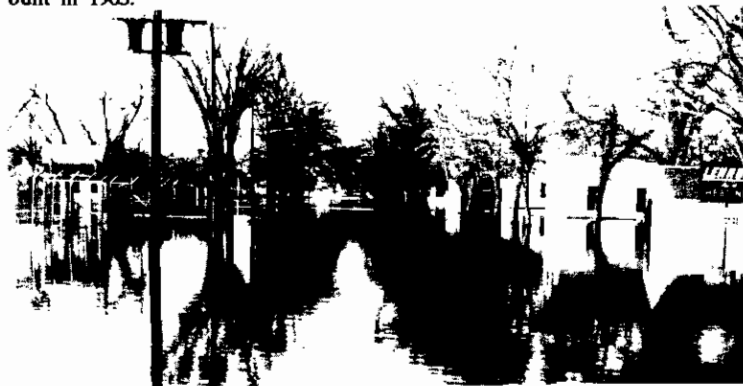


Back Then... The beautiful old courthouse, built in 1889, fell to the wrecking ball in 1974, despite opponents' wishes.
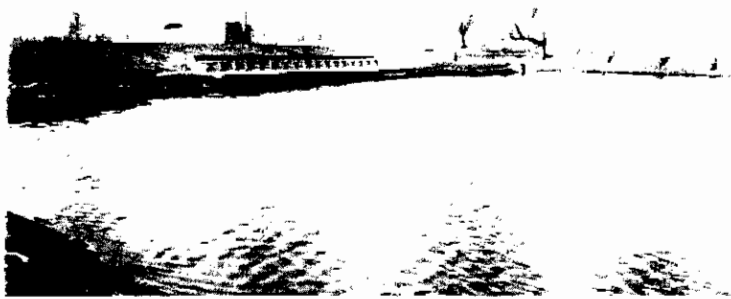
Left: Gilman's power plant provided electricity for the mill and the town. The six acre lake remains in the Gilman Park.

Below: Pierce experienced many floods, this one in 1951, until control dike was built in 1963.

swimming, and fishing. When the dam washed out in 1963, the U.S.Army Corps of Engineers built a dike to control the river, sparing the city further losses by flooding.

The population of Pierce, only 73 in 1880, was 1,200 in 1910. After several decades of decline, the town grew to 1,360 in 1970. The census taken in 1980 recorded a population of 1,550.

Present-day Pierce has six churches and three schools with an enrollment of just over 700. Well-equipped and trained volunteer fire and EMT rescue units are ready in case of emergencies. There are two doctors, a physician's assistant, and a dentist, in addition to an 86-bed nursing home with a new Alzheimer's unit.

Recreational facilities are not lacking. The 50-acre Gilman Park includes a six-acre lake, swimming pool, baseball and soccer field, museum complex with four buildings, and an area for picnics. There are two more soccer fields, a soft ball diamond, tennis courts, and a six-lane bowling alley. Rod & Gun Club property has two lakes, and the community is proud of the nine-hole grass greens golf course. The 1,600-acre Willow Creek State Recreation Area, just two miles from Pierce, includes a 700-acre lake. Water that was once a constant threat now provides an economic boost to our primarily-agricultural base.

A third Pierce County courthouse, replacing one built in 1889, was completed in 1975. Our town, laid out as a county seat with wide brick streets, is certainly one of Nebraska's progressive communities with a promising future.
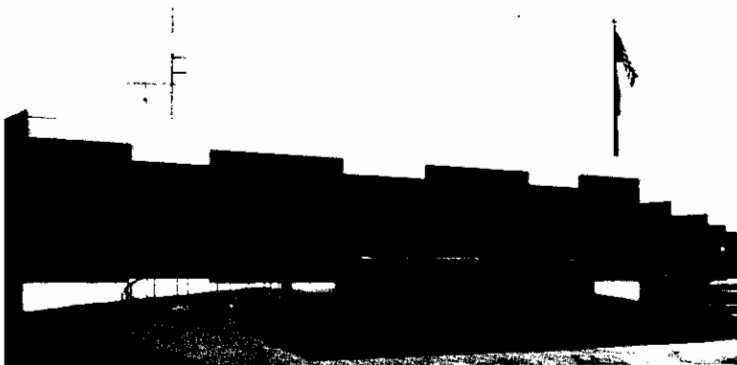
By Donald R. Zimmer, 417 South Elm, Pierce, NE  68767.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: "Along Pioneer Trails," a History of Pierce County by Esther Kolterman Hansen.



Left: Nine-hole golf course at Pierce.

Below: A picnic area at Willow Creek State Recreation Area near Pierce.





...& Now Above: The new courthouse at Pierce, built in 1975.

Right: Present day main intersection in Pierce.

# HADAR



A German colony of less-than harmonious members was established in Pierce County. The pastor, called to settle their on-going arguments, finally erected a post on which he wrote "HADER," meaning quarrel or fight. A post office established near the railroad chose the name, which was then spelled Hadar.

Both two and three-horse teams pull the walking plows to turn the sod. [Kramer]

## HADAR          PIERCE COUNTY

In about the year 1869 a caravan of 52 wagons left Wisconsin and traveled westward in search of new homes. The story is told of the man who built a crate that was fastened on the side of his covered wagon to house two pigs. The trip took so long that a larger crate had to be built before they reached their destination.

Comprised of German immigrants, the group, while of the same religious faith, were far from compatible. They managed to disagree on everything: the route to take, when and where to set up camp, and their position in the wagon train.

When they finally arrived at the place that had been selected by the committee, there was another argument.

Left: Two hogs being prepared for a three-day wedding celebration.[Ziska]

Right: Old quonset building/filling station, now abandoned.[Harris]

While some were pleased with the selection, others wanted to turn back and locate on land they had seen in Madison County. Still others wanted to go further, in search of "something better."

The argument continued and became quite heated. Following services held at Herman Braasch's home on a Sunday morning, (which nearly ended in fisticuffs), the people decided to call Rev.Heckendorf, a minister from Wisconsin, to serve the colony and help settle the dispute

When he arrived it was apparent that neither side would budge, so the minister dug a hole in the boundary line between the properties in question, and placed a long pole in it. Using black axle grease from the wagons, he wrote on the pole in big letters "H-A-D-E-R," which in German means fight, quarrel, or wordy argument.

Thus called to task, the colonists either located on the land that was available, went back to Madison County, or traveled further north. The sign remained, to keep the memory of this dispute constantly in mind.

The community was still far from tranquil. Two neighbors living on opposite sides of a small creek, continued to quarrel. One of them, August Raasch, is said to have named it "Hader Vasser," meaning "hate water."

A cemetery plot containing two acres north and east of the community was sold to the Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran church by Gottfried Koehl for $10. The deed was

iled on February 1, 1879, making it the first cemetery in the county.

The lack of railroad facilities in Pierce County had not only deterred immigration, but made life quite difficult for pioneers who had settled there. In 1879, after much debate, a group of investors from the Western Railway Construction Company of Missouri Valley, Iowa, entered into a contract with the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Company, to build a line about 65 miles long, from near Norfolk to Niobrara. This would put a railroad within reach of the people in Pierce and Knox counties.

The line was completed through Plainview in 1880, a distance of just over 31 miles. No depot was built in the German settlement, located only a short distance from Norfolk. A siding where produce and livestock could be loaded and disbursed was a non-agency station. However, a post office was requested by the residents. With the pole only a short distance from the railroad still bearing the word "Hader," it was decided to submit this as the name. It was accepted, but the spelling was changed to "Hadar."

The importance of the rail line was obvious. A number of homes and businesses were established before the Pioneer Townsite Company got around to platting a town in 1883.

Information about growth of the town and its present activities have not been submitted. An old atlas (late 1890s) lists Hadar with a population of 15. In both 1940 and 1955, the population was listed at 133. In 1980 the population was 290. Its location near Norfolk would appear to provide employment opportunities for people who prefer to live in a smaller community.

From material compiled by J. Graff



The beautiful Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church at Hadar, not far from the modern brick parochial school.– [Harris]

Below: Hadar's K–8 public school building.[Harris]
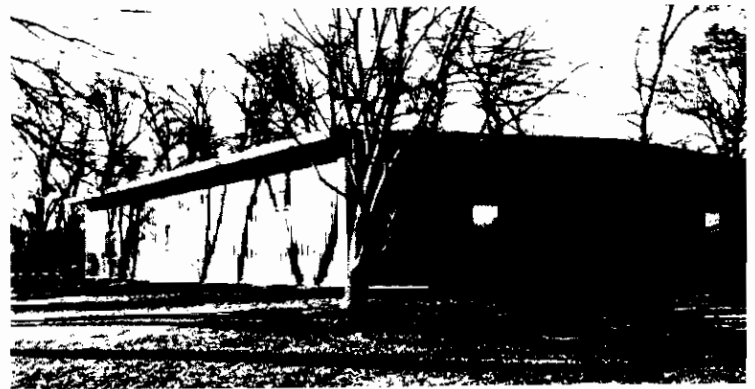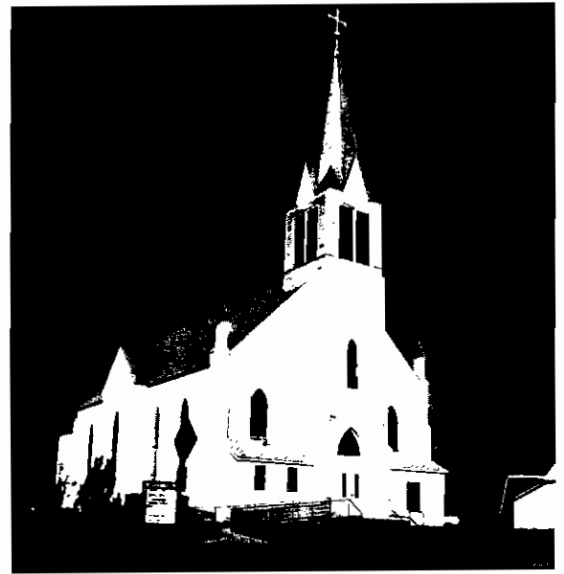




McLeanites mixing sand, cement, and water to make sidewalks, 1915.

## McLEAN          PIERCE COUNTY

The northeast precinct of Pierce County, which now contains the Village of McLean, was annexed from neighboring Cedar County. When Pierce County was organized, some county officials went to Lincoln to request the change. When Cedar County's people learned of the "theft," they attempted to have the matter reversed, but to no avail. A state law was enacted, however, prohibiting such shenanigans in the future.

In 1889 School District 43 was organized and a schoolhouse built on Joseph Rohdes' land. Nine year later, in 1898, a man named Marrow learned that a railroad was to go through the area. He bought the land on which to build a town and named it "Marrowville." The old school was sold, and a new school building was constructed.

The Pacific Short Line from Sioux City to O'Neill was built in 1890. When E.O.Sharron built an elevator along the railroad right-of-way, he and his friends thought the town should be called "Sharron." After much bickering, it was decided to name it for the section foreman who installed the side tracks for the town, Donald McLean.

With the money-panic in 1893, a town did not immediately spring up out of the cornfield. A lumberyard was built in 1899 by Edwards and Bradford. In 1900 a grocery store was built, a saloon was established by Henry Eiekman, and a hotel/restaurant was built by Schuyler Fox. A second elevator, the Atlas Company, still in use, was built early in the 1900s.

Another period of growth occurred in 1904 when an implement store was opened by McConnel & Sweet, and Mr. Ackerman built his blacksmith shop. Art McConnel started the first bank in 1905. The meat market and a livery stable were built in 1907, and stockyards in 1911 by Webb Kellogg. Dr. Austin practiced medicine in the early 1900s, and James Watson established a drug store. Many of these businesses changed hands as people moved on to other businesses or other towns.

The Methodists, who previously held services in the schoolhouse, built a church in 1912. The following year a Lutheran Church was built.

A larger brick schoolhouse was needed in 1913 to handle the increased enrollment. A number of businesses upgraded their establishments to a second-generation facade of brick or block. The newspaper, the "McLean Herald," was being published in 1915 by Miller and Whitton, and sidewalks were laid, replacing the boardwalks.

A city hall and jail was built next to the city well, and in 1919 the Colonial Theatre was built by John Wupper. A larger auditorium was owned by John Volk, and used for movies, dances, and social events. At this time McLean had a very active community club, with as many as 150 persons attending meetings.

For several years the Sharron Elevator furnished electricity to McLean from its small power plant that was shut off at ten p.m. In 1923 a power line was installed to the town.

The worst tornado in Pierce County history hit the area north of McLean on June 17, 1937. The farmsteads of Strathman, Kraemaer, Petersen, Rohlfs, Munson, and Bloomquist were hit the hardest.

In 1937, during the Depression and drought, free outdoor movies were started. They continued on a weekly basis during the summer months, except for a couple of years during World War II, until 1957.

A water system was installed in 1949.

In 1954 McLean's Schomberg Elevator had the distinction of having collected over 2,200 tons of corn cobs. They were shipped by rail to a processing plant in Omaha.

The high school, established in 1921, had 134 graduates in the 30 or so years it operated. The elementary school voted to close in 1978, and District 43 was dissolved in 198_.

McLean has seen many businesses consolidate or close, and a number of its buildings torn down. A new fire hall was built in 1968.

The 1980 population was listed at 81. A reunion of high school graduates in 1988 brought many alums back for a day of reminiscing.

From material submitted by Caryl Chrisman, McLean, NE 68747.



McLean's street front, at sunset, 1990.[Harris]

# OSMOND



looking southwest, 190?

## OSMOND        PIERCE COUNTY

Osmond, population 880, sits at the threshold of its second century. A centennial celebration is being planned for July 4-8, 1990.

The town was chartered in 1890. Born on the virtually treeless prairie of northern Pierce County, Osmond, like many other blossoms on the plains, was the child of the railroad. Little documented evidence of the town's birth is available. Some writings about the early years do exist, however most accounts have been handed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth.

The origin of the town's name, "Osmond," has a number of theories, but no concrete facts. Writings indicate the location was chosen because a settlement had been established there 10-20 years prior to chartering.

James Busfield and Frank Dorsey, engineers for the fledgling Pacific Short Line Railroad, are credited with having laid out the town on land purchased from Hans Petersen Sr. and his wife.

Early settlers to Osmond include: Huwaldt, Bruegman, Koehler, Rosburg, Kortina, Petersen, Nissen, Manzer, Fleming, Billerbeck, Gregersen, Henrichsen, Nelson, Schmitz, Kratochvil, Mehrens, Rohrberg, Luebbers, Cizek, Kumm, Friday, Record, Thomsen, Leedom, Pochop, Fuelberth, Pfanstiel, Goeres, Schmit, Book, Buchanan, Marek, Hoeppner, Broekemeier, Matteson, Rodgers, Stewart, Sattler, and Schumacher.

The town grew quickly, with the usual array of businesses. Professional persons served the town on a commuting basis before practices were established. From this beginning, stores and services were added as community needs and desires dictated.

There were of course good years and lean ones, blizzards, hail, floods, grasshoppers, and drought. Each took its toll. Fire proved to be the greatest loss to the city when the entire west block of the business district was destroyed in March 1904. A city fire department has been in existence since 1902, with a rural fire district formed in 1941. The two agencies merged in the mid-1980s.
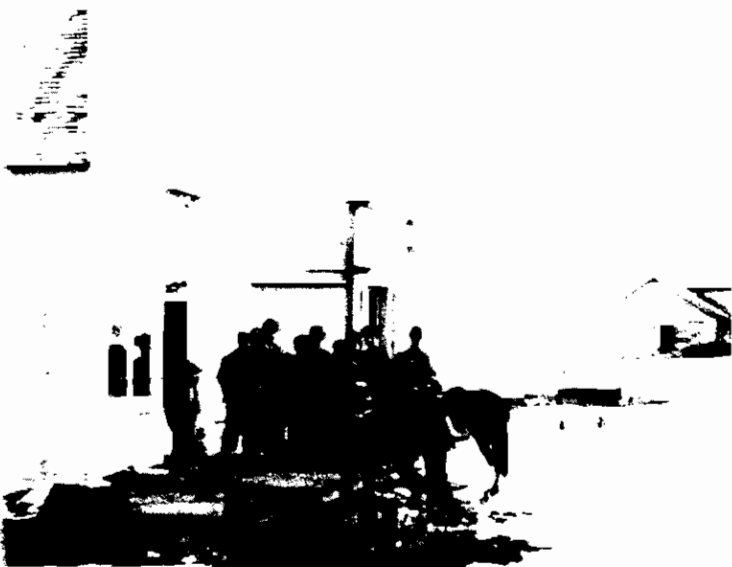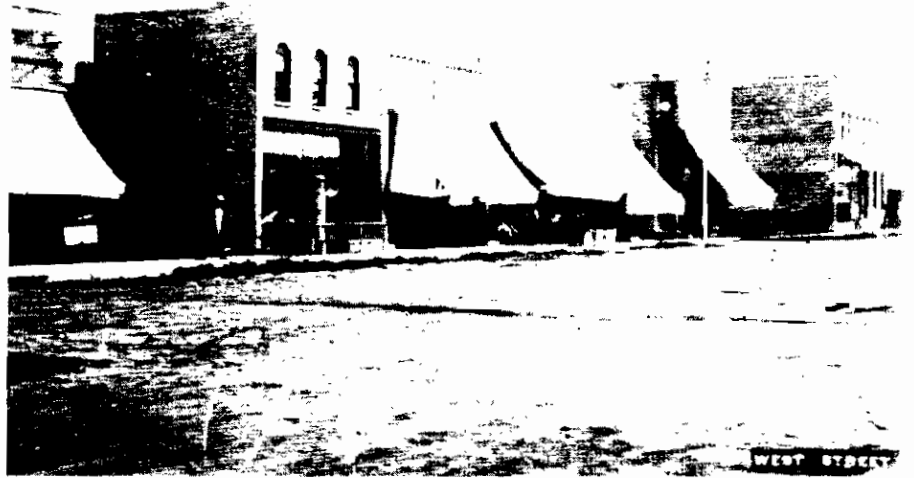




Above: Looking southwest, toward the railroad. Three elevators near tracks, business district at the right.
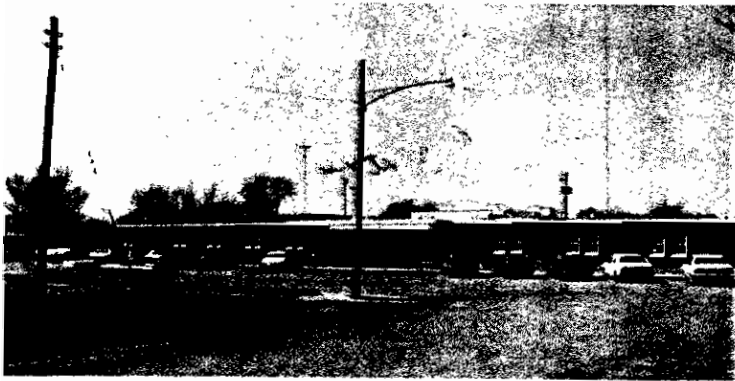
Left: Bunch of the boys on a snowy day, 1890s.

Right: West side of business district, rebuilt after the 1904 fire.
Dirt streets were paved in 1949.

Below: Dr. John Mayer's office, early Osmond physician.

Below: Osmond's General Hospital, serving the town and several neighboring communities.





Churches, a high priority in the community.

In addition to a public K-12, Osmond also has Lutheran and Catholic parochial elementary schools.



Whether from crop or business loss, the residents of Osmond have risen to the occasion and the town continues to grow. The latest hurdle came as a result of the economic decline of the early 1980s. A number of businesses closed and some farmers were forced to liquidate their operations. The picture has changed significantly as the decade ends. New businesses have appeared, others have expanded or are making plans to do so, and a second development corporation has been formed to promote growth. A progressive community club and city council have also enhanced development.

Religion and education have always been high priorities in the community. The Methodist church was the first on the scene in 1890, followed by the Presbyterian, Catholic, and Lutheran in the next five years. Before buildings were erected for worship, services were held in homes. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches merged in 1967.

Osmond Community Schools serve elementary and high school students from a sizable area. It is the result of the 1959 consolidation of the city school district (that originated in 1889) and 14 rural districts. In addition, the Lutheran and Catholic parishes maintain elementary schools.

Osmond General Hospital serves the town and several neighboring communities. This 37-bed facility is approved for acute, skilled, and intermediate care. The community has both a resident doctor and dentist.

Industrially, the town is home to light agricultural equipment manufacturing plants, a grain terminal, farm implement dealer, road construction firm, and a large irrigation and farm equipment supplier. Some 50 other retail and professional firms accommodate the needs of the residents and farming community.

Service organizations include: Woman's Club, Legion and VFW Posts and their auxiliaries, hospital auxiliary, and a number of extension and 4-H clubs. Recreational opportunities are also plentiful, with a swimming pool, tennis court, bowling lanes, a park, and a baseball-softball complex.

By Bernice Herbolsheimer Blecha, Box 306, Osmond, NE 68765

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: A centennial book is being published. Contact Bernice Blecha for information at the above address or call (402) 748-3712.

The Osmond Fire Department, in existence since 1902, is pictured with their equipment in 1940. The city and rural fire district merged in the mid-1980s.



# PLAINVIEW



James Pendergast (born 1836, died 1904), built this sod house for his wife Margaret upon their arrival in Nebraska in the 1870s. It was located two miles east and one mile north of the Village of Plainview. [Ray Pendergast]

## PLAINVIEW      PIERCE COUNTY

Plainview is a farming community whose ancestry is predominantly Danish and German. Prospects of free land brought settlers in the early 1870s by way of Wisconsin and Illinois. Arrangements were made at the land office at Niobrara, after which homesteaders walked or rode on horseback to the land they had chosen.

Severe winters brought unbelievable hardships, and summers saw the scourge of grasshoppers destroy crops, gardens, and the last bit of hope that remained. Some returned to more settled regions, only to return a few years later to try again to master the hazards of the Nebraska plains.

Railroads, wanting to expand their business, were pushing to get towns located and settled. In 1880 the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad was completed from Norfolk to Plainview. Representatives of that company came to lay out the blocks and streets of our town. Two men, working in that capacity, gave their names to one of the additions near the depot. Incorporation papers were filed on April 5, 1886.

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Below: Baseball players work out as the second new school building is being constructed, 1920.







Above: Plainview's current school complex.

Below: Locust Street in the early 1920s.[Baber]

Far Right: Same view today, with a few new buildings, and current transportation. [Bonge]

The Pacific Short Line from Sioux City to O'Neill wa built in 1890. Now owned by Burlington Northern, it is the only line still serving Plainview. Local and outside trucking companies have replaced rail service for most items, so the primary rail traffic now is the moving of grain to markets.

The rural population has dwindled over the years. Young farmers, replacing those who retired, are using larger machinery and farming more land. Where there was once a large farm family and a set of buildings to house livestock and machinery on each 160 acres, there is now only one farmer on 640 acres or more. Corn, beans, alfalfa, and oats are the main crops. Cattle and hogs are raised and fed on some farms, and there are several commercial feed lots in the area. There is a great deal of grain storage available.

The shifting population has effected the town, recording an all-time high of nearly 1,500 in 1980. Several rural churches have closed. Some rural folk joined existing churches, while others moved their buildings to town, or have built new sanctuaries. At the present time Plainview has six churches, with Lutheran and Methodist being the largest denominations.

Schools have also changed to reflect the current trends. Plainview has a K-12 school system. Children above the sixth grade from the neighboring town of Brunswick are brought to Plainview by bus. There are tentative plans for sharing teachers and facilities with other towns to lessen the cost, and improve the quality of education available. The high school graduated 50 seniors in May 1989.

There has been a creamery in Plainview for many years, which processes the milk from the dairy





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In addition to free overnight camping, Chilvers Park in Plainview has a shelter for picnics, playground equipment (left), and a well-supervised swimming pool (below).



farmers into butter. Recently the creamery up-dated the facilities, and continues to be a receiving station for milk. The town helped to improve the creamery location by razing the old building and preparing the site for the new one.

The City of Plainview had a slow but steady growth until the last few years. Business people and citizens are concerned about the empty buildings on Main Street. While these problems are common to many small towns in Nebraska, the town is trying to cling to the good things that are here and enhance them with new ideas.

The community — both town and rural people — have organized for that purpose. The results have been very encouraging. Some businesses have expanded, and a pizza shop opened not long ago. People who left Plainview mid-century to work in cities have shown an interest in returning for retirement in the quieter, safer, home-town atmosphere of Plainview.

An annual three-day festival, "Klown Days," is held early in June to thank the people in the trade area and to honor special rural and town citizens. In 1986 the 100th anniversary of the founding of Plainview was noted with a week-long celebration.

We are especially excited about tourism opportunities. Our town...Plainview is near the future Ash Fall Fossil Park, and not far from Grove Lake, and the Missouri and Niobrara rivers, all easily accessible via U.S. Highway 20 and Nebraska 13 and 14.

By Margaret Bonge, Box 15, Plainview, NE 68769, and Leone Roe.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: Plainview Centennial History Book, 1886-1986, a 400-page history of the town and its people. Copies available at the Plainview Public Library and Nebraska State Historical Society Library.
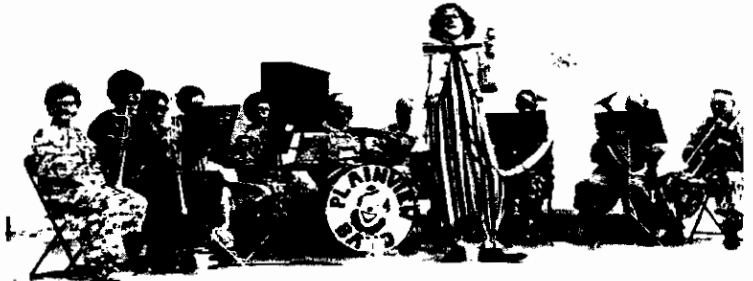


Above: Ambassadors for the town since 1955, the Plainview Klown Band perform in the beautiful bandshell in the park for regular and special occasions.

Below: Aerial of the Plainview Country Club, lake and golf course.

Below left: Les Falter, Norfolk Printing, presenting co-editors, Margaret Bonge, Leone Roe, and Jan Curtiss, with first copy of the centennial history, 1986.