

EARLY HISTORY OF KEARNY COUNTY

Kearny County, Kansas

Written by Maxine Ridge

Reference: From a paper read by Mrs. Waterman at the Friday club, 5 Mar 1909 and sent to Maxine Ridge by Mrs. India H. Simmons of Lakin, Kansas.

In 1872, named and mapped out by the legislature, was the territory now comprising of Kearny County. The name was given in honor of General Phil Kearny, who was killed in Virginia at the Battle of Chantilly. (*During the Civil War, the ensuing Battle of Chantilly that happened on 1 Sep 1862 in Fairfax County, Virginia, two union division commanders Isaac Stevens and Philip Kearny were killed.*)

In the latter part of that year, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad completed their road through the county, erecting a water tank, small depot, and a fine hotel. Lakin was named after David Long Lakin, one of the directors of the road.

The county is 24 miles east and west, by 30 north and south. It was organized into a municipal township of Ford County, the first election of township officers being held 3 Jul 1879. Forty-one votes were cast. In 1883 the old lines were reestablished and organized into Kearny. Lakin, Chantilly, and Hartland were contestants for the temporary county seat, Lakin winning. In the first election, Lakin lacked 13 votes of having a majority overall, and in the second, Hartland was victorious. It remained there until 1894 when during another election, it was moved back to Lakin. Lakin was laid out in 1882, the old town being up near the Alonzo Boylan house. The first Fourth of July celebration was held near the old John H. Carter place in 1880.

Mrs. Amy Loucks taught at the first school organized in 1870. Reverend Platt preached the first sermon in the county in 1880, the text being "I will arise and go to my father." The first timber claim was "proved up" by John Carter, and the first five-year homestead by Francis L. Pierce. The first paper was called the Lakin Eagle. Taylor and Diehn were the Publishers. In an issue of this paper was a notice explaining that "Youngblood and Henderson brought in 18 head of wild horses. They are good ones. The best people on earth live in and around Lakin."

Kearny County is a paradise for stock, there being 210,000 acres of government land vacant, 24,600 acres of vacant school land, 235,000 acres of railroad land unsold, and nearly all tillable. What is called the great American desert will yet produce enough wheat to feed the world. In 1885, Lakin was made a city, and W. B. Wheeler was the first mayor. The building of the beautiful brick schoolhouse was in 1886.