

## PREFACE

What was going on in Rice County 100 years ago — In the Centennial Year of 1876?

Some of the answers are to be found in the following "History of Rice County" written in 1876 by an original settler by the name of John M. Muscott. The "history" was published serially in the Rice County Gazette, a Sterling newspaper that in 1891 was consolidated with The Sterling Bulletin by long-time Bulletin editor, J. E. Junkin. The original manuscript contained 21 chapters and appeared in The Gazette between March 30 and October 26, 1876, with the editor printing one or two chapters each week — or none at all, as the limits of space dictated.

It can in no way, at this date, be considered a "history" of Rice County for the reason that it covers only the first five years of the County's existence. Likewise, Sterling was only four years old at the time and Lyons did not exist when the early chapters were put in print. However, because its publication was almost contemporary with the beginnings of the county, it can be considered more or less authentic and accurate.

The Centennial Year of 1876 was an important one for Rice County. Citizens voted, on April 12 to abandon the original County Seat of Atlanta and to locate the County government at a new site termed "The Centre" — some two miles northeast of Atlanta. The vote was 457 to 336 in favor of "The Centre" over Peace. Then too, one week later, on April 18, the residents of Peace took action to change the name of that booming young town to "Sterling." Also the touchy matter of "The Strip," the contested south boundary of the county was more or less resolved in that year. In 1872 the State Legislature had removed from Rice County and included in Reno a five-township strip that included Hayes, Walnut, Medford, Salt Creek and Grant — Township 22, ranges 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. In 1876 a strong effort was made by D. J. Fair, Hon. Ansel Clark, legislator; J. H. Ricksecker and others, to have this land returned to Rice County. But the campaign failed and the matter settled for all time.

The author of this early history was a man of about 55 or 60 years of age, a native of New York who had passed the bar in 1840. He lived on a farm at Atlanta and solicited what legal business he could. The entire "history" can be viewed as a "puff" for Rice County, a real estate promotion piece that extolled at length the soil, climate, water resources and other attributes of the area. However, it is amusing to note that in the matter of lawyers, Muscott makes it plain that the county can in no way support additional ones. The same with physicians — the climate was so solubrious that no one became ill!

Anyway — Muscott's "history" is presented here in full, along with some related items of interest gleaned from The Gazette of that year and included in an Appendix. The reader must be forewarned that parts of the document are very dull — lists of township officers, population figures and agricultural reports. However, if the reader will suffer through these "begats" we feel he will find considerable of interest and historical value. The "begats" are included because even in these somewhat tedious lists, a Rice County person of today may find the name of an ancestor.

Probably nowhere is there as complete an account of the very early days of Rice County. We felt it should be preserved and made available to those interested in the beginnings of a county which Mr. Muscott was convinced fell little short of the Garden of Eden.

Max Moxley  
Editor, Sterling Bulletin 1945-1975.  
(Sterling, Kansas, July 4, 1976.)

*Why it was written in the first place.*  
 [Rice County Gazette — 1876]

The following joint resolutions on the celebration of the Centennial in the several counties and towns explain itself:  
*Be it resolved.* By the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That it be, and is hereby, recommended by the Senate and House of Representatives to the people of the several States that they assemble in their several counties or towns on the approaching Centennial Anniversary of our National Independence, and that they cause to have delivered on such day an historical sketch of said county or town from its foundation, and that a copy of said sketch may be filed, in print or manuscript, in the Clerk's office of said county, and an additional copy, in print or manuscript, be filed in the office of the Librarian of Congress, to the intent that a complete record may thus be obtained of the progress of our institutions during the first Centennial of their existence.

Approved March 13, 1876.

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**WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL TEMPERANCE CONVENTION.**

The great Temperance and Religious Awakening which prevailed throughout the United States two years ago, resulted in the formation of a Society known as the Woman's

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