

HISTORY OF WESTERN NEBRASKA AND ITS PEOPLE

BANNER, BOX BUTTE, CHEYENNE, DAWES, DEUEL, GARDEN,
KIMBALL, MORRILL, SCOTTS BLUFF, SHERIDAN, AND
SIOUX COUNTIES. A GROUP OFTEN CALLED
THE PANHANDLE OF NEBRASKA

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pioneers can hardly realize it is the same country. Mr. Ryburn has been a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows since he was twenty-one years of age and filled all chairs.

GOTLEIB C. MANSER, pioneer settler and well known business man of Big Springs, is one of the essentially self made men of the Panhandle who came here with little but the determination to succeed and two willing hands with which he worked, and he has made good. Today, he is one of the most substantial men of the community and has the distinction of being the first blacksmith of Big Springs. Mr. Manser was born in Germany, December 24, 1860, the son of Jacob and Rosina (Meister) Manser, both natives of that land. The father was a blacksmith in his native land who came with his family to the United States in 1886; settled in Amherst, Colorado, where he engaged in business at his trade. The mother died there in 1911 and the father in 1913, leaving a family of nine children, but Gotlieb is the only one living in the Panhandle. He was educated in the public schools of Germany and also learned the blacksmith's trade from his father. Mr. Manser came to this country ahead of the rest of the family, sailing from Europe in 1882. Soon after reaching our shores he located in York county, Nebraska, where he engaged in business as a blacksmith two years before coming to Deuel county to file on a homestead northeast of Big Springs in Keith county, but lived their only two years as he came to Big Springs in 1886 and opened a blacksmith shop, the first in the town. For eight years Mr. Manser carried on this business then moved back to his farm to engage in agricultural industries for nearly a quarter of a century. He was sober, industrious, not afraid of hard work and by these qualities became a successful rancher. When he came Mr. Manser says that all he had was his two bare hands and today he has two sections well improved. He has made his way independently, is essentially self-made by steady work, his native ability and perseverance and is still a young man in years. At first he did not do much farming as the country was not yet adapted to that but raised cattle and fed some, having at one time over a hundred head. Since he retired from the land his sons have charge of the farm. Mr. Manser recounts that at first the settlers had no wood and burned buffalo chips; wagons were the only means of transportation and for three years he hauled water six miles for family and stock, paying

five cents a barrel for it. Since returning to town Mr. Manser has again turned to his trade as he feels he is too young to give up all active life. He owns a fine home in Big Springs.

February 2, 1888, Mr. Manser was united in marriage with Miss Anna Miller, the daughter of John and Anna Miller, pioneer settlers of Deuel county, and seven children have been born to the union: Otto, at the home place; Charles, married, lives on a home farm; Tillie, Emma, Lillian, Bennie and Mattie all at home.

Mr. Manser is a Republican and a member of the Methodist church. He is a progressive man in his business and ever ready to help any movement for the development of his community and county.

RILEY FORD, early settler, well known ranchman and today a member of the retired colony of Big Springs, is one of the few men today who knew and associated with the cowboys who had charge of the great herds of cattle that ranged over the anhandle in the early eighties. He was born in Rockford, Illinois, June 15, 1862, the son of Cebra and Harriet (Gates) Ford, the former a native of Ireland while the mother was born in France. Mr. Ford came to the United States to engage in farming; settled first in Ohio, then Illinois and from that state moved to Iowa in 1865. Mrs. Ford died there in 1872, and her husband in 1892. He was a general farmer, a Republican in politics but never held office. There were four children in the family but Riley, of this review, is the only one living. He received his education in the public schools of Iowa and when old enough determined to have a farm of his own. Learning that there was plenty of cheap land in the Panhandle he came here in 1885, locating in Deuel county in June of that year. The trip was made across the country in true pioneer style in a wagon drawn by horses, living in the covered wagon on the way. Locating on a homestead five miles south of Big Springs, Mr. Ford at once erected the usual frontier home—a sod house—a sod stable and was ready for his family when they come five months later. At that time there was only one habitation between Big Springs and Julesburg, the land being unbroken prairie. The family was discouraged many times due to the poor crops so many years from drought and at first they had to haul water over two miles for family use and the stock. However, they could not sell, stuck it out and in the end won out with a comfortable fortune. Settlers made the best of the situation in those days; held parties in