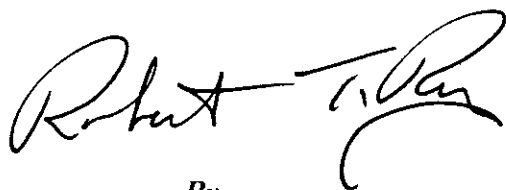


*Trails West To
Red Willow County Nebraska*

*Past and Present
Family History
and
Biography*

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert T. Ray".

By
Robert T. Ray
and
Lois Rutledge

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lois Rutledge".

We wish to dedicate this book to the pioneers, settlers and all those who have made this area grow.

Most of the facts in this book have been taken from other printed materials and other sources. We are sorry for any mistakes and/or omissions in this book.

Copyright © 1982
by Robert T. Ray and Lois Rutledge

FAMILY HISTORIES
and
BIOGRAPHIES

A

WILLIAM F. AKERS

was born February 13, 1848 in Belmont County, Ohio. During the Civil War he served in Company I, twenty-ninth Ohio Volunteers. He married Mary E. Nutt in 1866 and they were the proud parents of five girls and three boys. The family came to Nebraska and settled in the Danbury area. For an extended period of time his health was very bad; so his death on Saturday, January 24, 1914 in Danbury was not unexpected. He was buried in the Indianola Cemetery, Sunday January 25, 1914.

CHARLES F. ALLEN

was born November 6, 1881 in Culbertson, Hitchcock County, Nebraska to Franklin P. Allen and Julia A. Stiewig. When but ten days old on November 16, 1881- his mother bundled him in comforters and a bear robe, and carried him out to the buckboard wagon. His father helped his wife and newborn son into the wagon, and shouted a gruff "Giddup" to the horses. The team was pulling the Allen family and belongings east, -- East out of Culbertson along the banks of a near frozen Republican River, towards the newly created division point of the B & M Railroad, McCook, Nebraska. Late that evening, the Allen's surveyed what was to be their future home and town. What they saw was one sod trading post standing near the banks of the Republican River. That was McCook at that time. That building was the Post Office and Mercantile store. Their first home on the prairie was a canvas tent banked with sod. Franklin Allen and his wife, Julia, had come up from Texas in April 1871. Julia's father was a Christian Minister, and preached the first sermon in Red Willow County. Charles' father was the proprietor of a livery stable and a dray line. He was the first of his trade in McCook and unloaded the first load of freight and lumber at the B & M Station. Charles attended his first school in the "Old Toley" building. It was located upstairs in a one-room affair where "Ogier's" downtown station was located. McCook made strides in educational lines and he finished his education in a new one-room

schoolhouse erected on the site of the present West Ward School.

The blizzard of 1888 hit McCook when Charles was seven years of age. He remembered starting out with his mother in a wagon for Ash Creek. The Allen's had a herd of two hundred cattle on the Creek. The horses pulled the double-tree loose after they had traveled less than a hundred yards. The pioneer mother and son started out again the next day on horseback, and found that their herd had weathered the storm. He recalled that his father sold the herd for twelve dollars and fifty cents a head the next spring.

Charles went to work for his father in 1894, as a youth of thirteen. A year later, he joined the well-known Church of Everetts Outfit. This big cattle outfit drove beef from Texas to Nebraska. He remembered the abundance of wild game, and how his mother once looked out the window of her kitchen one evening and turned to her son and told him not to say a word. She took the saddle rifle down from the wall, aimed it out the back door of their shanty and fired. He went with his mother and helped her drag back a freshly killed deer. In 1903, he started to work with the "Q". He was married to Ethel M. Sheridan in Indianola on July 3, 1904. They were the parents of two children: Virgil and Edna. Ethel died in 1918. On February 18, 1923 he was united in marriage to Anna E. Glog at McCook. He retired from the Burlington in 1946. Charles passed away on Sunday, December 19, 1948 in a Lincoln hospital, following an operation. His body was returned to McCook, and was buried on Wednesday, December 22, 1948 in the River-view Cemetery.

FRANKLIN P. ALLEN

one of the pioneer settlers of Indianola, Culbertson and McCook, Nebraska, was born in St. Charles, Illinois, June 13, 1853 to John P. Allen and Julia Merchant. Franklin came west for his health; crippled in one limb and foot, he rode the range as a cowboy in Kansas and Nebraska. Cattle were brought from Texas and turned over to the cowboys to herd on the plains of Kansas and Nebraska.

After marrying Julia A. Stiewig in Indianola in 1879, he started to haul freight from Indianola to Culbertson (no McCook between these points at that time). He started a livery stable in Culbertson at the time of the Indian Massacre (Pawnee and Sioux tribes). He was living with Bertha Kleven and her

husband, who was the Postmaster of Culbertson. People were notified the Indians were coming. Not being able to get his boot on the crippled foot, he ran and walked with other people carrying his boot in one hand, to the Fort, eight miles away. Living in the vally near the Republican Riber, Mr. and Mrs. Burtless and Frank and Julia Allen toured the ground where the massacre had taken place. At one point they heard a baby crying. Mrs. Burtless found the baby; its mother had hidden the baby in thick bushes to protect it from being killed. The Burtless took the baby home, gave the child a good education, and she grew to be a nice young lady. She and the Burtless son were married and they had one baby girl who received a college education and taught in the McCook Junior High School between 1900 and 1913. The Burtless home property was sold by the daughter to W. H. Reynolds. The location of the property being 407 West D Street.

Frank and Julia had four children: Charles, Jesse, Ida and Cassie T. As small babies wearing long dresses they lived, ate and slept in a large dug-out. When a huge prairie fire came, horses with the harness on were led into the Frenchman River. The straw roof on the barn was burned, tents were burned, chickens ran around without their feathers. On account of the intense smoke and heat, the family was rushed onto sand bars around the waters of the Frenchman River. The fire was gone as fast as it had come.

January 7, 1879 they moved to McCook and lived in a tent south of the railroad track, waiting for a house to be built (the first frame house in McCook), at 204 Edison Street. When the house was finished, people gathered and danced all night. Charlie Allen was the first baby boy to live in McCook and Gurlie Plunket was the first little girl. The business men presented Gurlie a doll and buggy and to Charles was presented a hobby horse.

The only entertainment for young and old was square dancing. On the night of a dance families drove from Culbertson to Indianola. One night a blizzard turned up, nobody could go home so they danced all night to keep from freezing. On another night, Frank and Julia bundled their young baby boy in blankets; Frank was driving a young high-spirited team and they became uncontrolable and started to run. Julia became so frightened she threw the baby out of the buggy, or wagon, into a snowdrift. When the baby was picked up he was still asleep.

Frank started a transportation and livery business with two hacks, transporting people from Indianola to Culbertson and Culbertson to Indianola. Mr. Bill Porter and Joe McBrayer drove these buses. Steve Finn, Mr. Bennett and Oscar Russell had charge of the dray lines. Frank had a deep well and large windmill on the southwest side of the yard and sold barrels of water for domestic use, and in large covered containers, he sold and delivered drinking water.

In 1892 Frank started the construction for the Burlington Railroad on the Beverly Line from McCook, through Palisade and Wauneta. He had seventy-five teams, seventy-five men and two cooks, besides a dishwasher. Water had to be carried for domestic use from the Frenchman River. The men slept in tents. Another tent housed the kitchen and long dining table. The table was made of boards covered with oilcloth. Another tent was a chicken house with plenty of eggs. There were two cows for milk as well.

One spring we had a drouth set in, wind, heat and grasshoppers ruined all crops for the farmers. No matter how much money you had, you couldn't buy food to eat. Mrs. Allen tied a cow in the shade by the house and took long sticks, tied paper or rags on the ends of the sticks and Jesse and Ida kept the grasshoppers and flies off the cow. Mrs. Allen would let the milk clabber and the children would eat sugar on that clabbered milk. That is all the children would have to eat for ten days. One night, after midnight, a knock came at the door and Mrs. Jim Harris was there with a sack of flour. She said, "those children must have bread." The Railroad had brought in two carloads of flour and other necessary food. Others with large families were worse off than the Allens. President Grover Cleveland was criticized for the drouth.

After an illness which lasted for several years, the last two was under constant care, Frank died Thursday, May 16, 1929 in McCook. Funeral services were held on Saturday, May 18, 1929, and was buried in the Riverview Cemetery.

JOHN C. ALLEN

As a pioneer businessman of McCook, he built and operated the original store on the site now occupied by DeGroff's. He sold this business to DeGroff and Weller. While residing in McCook he served two terms as Councilman and for over three months, in 1890-1891, served as Mayor of McCook. He later served as

Secretary of State of Nebraska for two terms. In 1895 he moved to Monmouth, Illinois, where he was a well-to-do banker. He served three terms, from 1924 to 1930, as a Congressman from Illinois. John passed away on January 1939 in Monmouth, Illinois.

WILLIAM H. ALLEN

was born near Springfield, Illinois on April 21, 1844. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War. During this time he received a wound which resulted in his becoming blind. He was married to Sarah A. Gerver at Polk County, Nebraska on December 1, 1869. They were the parents of nine children. The family moved to Red Willow County in 1881 and they homesteaded near Danbury. They moved to Indianola in 1891. His wife died on October 17, 1920 and he died January 13, 1924 at his home in Indianola. He was buried January 15, 1924 at the Indianola Cemetery.

CLYDE ALSTOT

was born at Arapahoe, Furnas County, Nebraska on the 2nd. of June, 1885. His parents had come there from Iowa and had homesteaded the land about 1883. Two years later, Clyde arrived to help on the farm and grew up as a farmer. He remained until 1916 when he departed for Powell, Wyoming. He was unable to stay and so returned to Nebraska, settling in McCook. While in his twenties, young Clyde became interested in a young lady that lived just across the county line in Boone County, just a few miles from his farm. He managed to get the girl friend interested and in February 1914 he was married to Nora Bowers. They were the parents of two children: Corvin and Gary. His chief occupation after his return to McCook in 1916 was running a tire shop. Clyde Alstot was a member of the Rotary Club of McCook, and belonged to the McCook Chamber of Commerce. He died at the Hillcrest Nursing Home in McCook on May 6, 1964 and was buried at the Memorial Park Cemetery, McCook, Nebraska on May 8, 1964.

JOHN WALKER ANDREWS

was born June 5, 1839 in Vermont. During the Civil War he served with Company D, Fourth Iowa Calvary. He was married twice. His first wife was the mother of two children: Milo and Leonard. He married his second wife, Mary Jane Milligan, on September 27, 1878 and they were the parents of three children. John passed away in Indianola, Nebraska on March 29, 1925 and buried in the Cedar Grove Cemetery.

Mary Jane Milligan, wife of John Walker Andrews, was born 1854. She married John, a G.A.R. veteran, on September 27, 1878, who was an early-day homesteader in Red Willow County. He passed away in 1925 after being in poor health for over a year. She passed away in Cambridge Hospital on Saturday, February 15, 1941. Mary was buried Tuesday, February 18, 1941 in the Cedar Grove Cemetery at Indianola, Nebraska. She was survived by one daughter, Nellie and one son, Herman.

Wife of CHARLES H. ANGELL
CORA A. SMITH

was born April 28, 1868 at Lansing, Michigan. At the age of eleven, she moved to McCook with her parents who homesteaded south of McCook. She was married to Charles H. Angell on March 27, 1889, and she was the mother of seven children. They resided in McCook until 1932, when her husband was pensioned, and they moved to Denver, Colorado to make their home. She died at her home in Denver on Thursday, April 23, 1936. On Sunday April 26, 1936, her funeral was held in McCook and she was buried in the Riverside Cemetery.

Wife of JOHN ARCHIBALD
DORA BENNETT

Born in Cork, Ireland on December 16, 1827, she was married to John Archibald 1851 in Ireland. They came to America in 1862, and later settled at Green Bay, Wisconsin, where they lived until 1892 when they moved to McCook. Her husband John, died in 1898. Her death came as a surprise to her family, on Sunday, January 3, 1901 in McCook. She was buried in the Longview Cemetery, January 6, 1901.

H. MARION ASHMORE

was born in 1836. During the Civil War he was a Lt. in Company H, One hundred twenty-third Illinois Infantry. During the war his health was so badly undermined by exposure, that he suffered from ill health later. He and his wife, Catherine, were the parents of two children, one boy and one girl. The family came to Red Willow County in the early days and settled in Indianola. He was County Judge for two terms. He moved to Colorado in 1891. He died near Denver, on Monday, January 28, 1895. His remains were brought to Indianola for burial. He was buried on Wednesday, January 30, 1895 in the Indianola Cemetery.

BARNETT H. ASHTON

was born November 25, 1845 at Paris, Indiana. He was the son of John Ashton. During the Civil War, he was a member of the one hundred twentieth Indiana Volunteers. He came to Nebraska with his brother, J. C. Ashton, in 1871. They were first in Lincoln, then to Harlan County, and finally coming to the Beaver Valley in 1873, where he remained on the homestead. In 1879 he was married to Mary Clark, who was to die before many months were to pass. On November 12, 1885 he was married to Lydia D. Smiley in Red Willow County. He died April 15, 1916 at his home in Danbury and was buried in the Danbury-Marion Cemetery April 16, 1916.

JESSE CLAY ASHTON

was born April 5, 1847 at Paris, Indiana to John and Elizabeth Ashton, who were both born in England. Jesse and his brother, Barnett, came to Lincoln, Nebraska in 1871. They obtained work hauling stone to build the state penitentiary. In 1872 they moved to Turkey Creek near Lexington, where they met some trappers who informed them that the Beaver Valley was the place to homestead. They came as poor men, compared to many of the pioneers who came with wagons loaded with provender, household equipment, grain seed and farm animals. Locating midway between Danbury and Marion in Red Willow County. They were some of the earliest settlers in Red Willow County. One of them brought a vest pocket full of alfalfa seed from Indiana. This was planted in a carefully selected plot and nursed along to maturity with the same care that might have been given to a favored rose bush. Seed taken from this first planting was replanted. It provided the stock which won the Ashton's national renown. At one time they were known as the "Alfalfa Kings", having held the record for yield per acre. Jesse and Bernard were so poor when they first settled in Red Willow County, that it was necessary for one of them to seek work. While one took care of the homestead, the other would walk to North Platte, or other frontier towns to obtain a job. Wages from which would keep them both going. In later years they were regarded as numbered among the most substantial men in the valley. They added many holdings to the land to which they held homestead rights. The town of old Danbury was started on the four corners of sections 22-23-26 & 27 very close to the Ashton dug-out, about one-half mile south of the present Danbury cemetery. Jesse

owned considerable stock in banks and other enterprises. He married Sarah Margaret Hess, June 3, 1879 in Red Willow County. They were the parents of four daughters: May, Lenna, Ethel and Christine, and one son, Alfred. Jesse departed this life at his home in Danbury, Nebraska on April 20, 1932 and was buried April 21, 1932 in the Danbury-Marion Cemetery.

Wife of JESSE C. ASHTON
SARAH MARGARET HESS

was born December 6, 1863 at Springfield, Illinois to Frank and Melissa Hess. She spent her early childhood in Illinois, then came with her parents to Nebraska in 1877. One June 3, 1878 her parents settled on a homestead near the old Danbury Post Office then located just south of the Danbury Cemetery. This was a thriving trading center on the state route from Indianola to Oberlin, through the country which then was sparsely settled. The Hess family were among the pioneers of this vicinity and endured all the hardships common to the lot of settlers in a country subject to sudden extremes of temperatures, visitation of insect pests and periodic droughts. On June 3, 1879, she was united in marriage to Jesse Clay Ashton, and they were the parents of five children. Mrs. Ashton was a member of the Methodist Church and an active helper of the Ladies Aid. She was also fond of attending meetings of the Dorcas Society of the Congregational Church. Even after becoming lame from a broken hip suffered in 1933, she attended those meetings when ever possible and especially enjoyed her visit with her friends. During her last illness she suffered greatly, but maintained a cheerful, courageous spirit and a will to live that prolonged her life considerably. Her spirit left her body 21 June 1943 at her home in Danbury. She was buried in the Danbury-Marion Cemetery on June 23, 1943.

EUGENE B. AUSTIN

was born near Lockport, Niagara, New York on June 7, 1839. He moved to Millington, Illinois in the spring of 1859. He enlisted at the first call of his country for volunteers in 1861, in Company B, fourth Illinois Cavalry. He served three years and three months, being Honorably Discharged and returned to Illinois. He was united in marriage, April 19, 1877, to Ellen McNett at Streator, Illinois. To this union were born two children: Newman F. and Edna. In the fall of 1888 he moved to Fairmont, Nebraska and in the spring of 1889 he settled on a homestead in

Frontier County, where he lived until 1912. They moved to Maywood and lived there till 1915 when they moved to McCook. He was an active and influential citizen, in all affairs of his state and country. He was a member of the G.A.R. Post, and of the I.O. O.F. Lodge #234 at Maywood. He also was a member of the Rebekah Lodge No. 118 of McCook. He was a member of the Methodist Church and remained a faithful member until his death. For the last two months of his life he was confined to his home. He bore his affliction bravely and uncomplaining. He was able to walk about and sit up until within three days of his death which was on February 29, 1920 at McCook, Nebraska. He was buried March 2, 1920 in Memorial Park Cemetery, at McCook, Nebraska.

FRANCIS M. AUSTIN

was born in Jackson County, Iowa on October 21, 1846. During the Civil War he enlisted in Company I, Twelfth Iowa Volunteer Infantry. He was married twice. He and his first wife, Lucasy Jackson, were married September 24, 1874 at Ogden, Utah. They were the parents of two daughters: Bertha M. and Martha J. Lucasy died in 1884. He later was married October 29, 1889 at Jackson County, Iowa to Ella Bell and they were the parents of five children: Marion, Baxter B., Charles M., Bessie B., and Ruth. The family moved to Red Willow County and made their last home in McCook where he died January 29, 1922. He was buried in the Longview Cemetery, McCook on January 31, 1922.

ROBERT W. AUSTIN

was born May 30, 1858 in Pennsylvania. He moved to Illinois at an early age. He was united in marriage November 25, 1880 to Sarah Augusta Troxell at Mt. Carroll, Illinois. They were the parents of three children: Roscoe O., Howard Douglass and Hattie May. The family moved from Stockton, Illinois, where he was engaged as a general contractor. He came to McCook about 1916, where he worked for the lumber mill operated by the firm of Garret & Evans. He served as Police Magistrate and during John E. Kelley's mayorship served as water commissioner. He died Wednesday, July 22, 1936 in his room in the National Hotel. He was buried Saturday, July 25, 1936 in the Memorial Park Cemetery.