

It's Worth Repeating

FORD COUNTY KANSAS IS BORN

(Editor's note: This is the second and concluding installment of a series in which Heinie Schmidt tells of the founding of Ford county. In the first episode, he recounted the steps leading up to the taking of the first census.)

By Heinie Schmidt

The next step in the legal procedure for the founding of Ford county was taking the census and reporting its findings to the governor. The report began, "I, Isaac Young, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Kansas, and will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Census Taker of Ford County, Kansas, So help me God. Sworn to and subscribed before me a Notary Public, in and for Ford County

Kansas, Dodge City. Herman J. Fringer. Notary Public."

The list of names as certified by the census taker are attached, and shows a total of 609 names. However, two signed "no name," leaving the bona fide number at 607. The law at that time required that a county have a population of at least 600 before it could be legally organized.

This report is sworn to by Isaac Young in the following language: "I, Isaac Young, Census Taker of Ford County, Kansas, do hereby certify that the within and foregoing is a true copy and correct enumeration of the bona fide inhabitants of said county to the best of my knowledge and belief." The report is dated Jan. 11, 1873, and is duly signed and notarized.

It is evident from the order in which the names appear on

the census report that the census taker started at the Dodge House hotel on the corner of Central avenue and Front street, and worked west the entire three blocks. A study of the names will convince anyone that the census taker enumerated all the cowboys, freighters, buffalo hunters, dance hall girls, gamblers, and loafers along the street.

This theory is borne out by the fact that the names of many known to have been residents of the county at that time are not included in the census report, among them were G. M. Hoover, H. L. Sitler, O. A. Bond, John Riney, Andrew Johnson, A. J. Anthony and Col. R. J. Hardesty.

Among the enumerated were the following who played an important role in the frontier days of Dodge City. Loran Warran, killed by the Indians and buried on the prairie near Dodge City; James Kelly, scout with General Custer and the city's second mayor; Pat Ryan, buffalo hunter and founder of Ryanville (now Ford); Edward Masterson, killed by Texas cowboys Walker and Wagner while serving as city marshall; Thomas Nixon, killed in a gunfight with Mysterious Dave Mather while serving as city marshall; Jack Bridges, the city's first marshall; Bat Masterson, frontier sheriff and peace officer; George B. Cox, proprietor of the famous Dodge House hotel; R. W. Evans, sr., first postmaster of Hays and father of R. W. (see page 6, section 2)

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Evans; James Lee, partner of P. G. Reynolds, sr. in the operation of the Lee-Reynolds stage lines; A. I. Peacock, owner of the Lady Gay dance hall; and Dan Kelly who may have been the same Dan Kelly who wrote the music to our state song, "Home on the Range."

The final legal step in the county's organization was the proclamation declaring Ford county, Kansas, organized. Here it is as it appears in record "A" on page 1 of the records in the county clerk's office in Dodge City.

"WHEREAS: a Memorial signed by forty householders, residents of Ford County, Kansas, and legal electors of the State whose signatures have been duly attested by the affidavit of three householders

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