

**Recollections of Charles E. Dewey,
Preserved by the Kansas Historical Society, Topeka
in the Thaddeus Hyatt papers (2403)
(Reprinted with permission)**

**FCHS Head Light
October 2007**

South Potawatomie Creek, K.T. Dec. 24, 1856

...The undersigned migrated from the "Old Buckeye State" (Ohio) on the 15th day of April 1855 having arrived to my 55th year of life. With me came my Wife and one child, 7 years of age. Also my Wife's Sister & Husband & little boy 3 years of age. We took passage on the Carrs [railroad train] at Clyde, Ohio...Arrived at Kansas City on the 30th of April. consulted Col. P.C. Pomeroy as to the most feasible point to make a settlement. The Col. had traversed the South Potawatomie a few days previous, he found no actual settlers above the junction of the two Potawatomies. The Col. Thought this a good point to locate. He told us there were some "pole Shanties along in the timber, by whom made he knew not but told us to Jump such claims at all hazards" so we did so, not knowing what sort of creature might "turn up "with which we would [be] liable to come in contact. The sequel of this we will tell you ere we close this short narrative. On our passage up the River we had some additions to our little company, so that at the City our band consisted of myself , Wife and child Dan'l Bair, Wife & child, George Dyhamon, Joseph Mattack, & Isaac Pearson all of Ohio, Henry H. Williams of New York, S.M. Molls of Virginia. We hired teams packed up & started for T. Jones the Ottawa Indian Chief. We were 3 days plodding through mud & torrents of rain. Here we turned in upon the hospitality of friend Jones, some 3 days for which we paid the good round price of 50 cts per meal. Here we left our women to seek us & them a home on this Creek. On Friday Eve we arrived at the house of an old Gentleman by the name of Partridge from Wisconsin. The Fall before he had paid \$200 for the claim he was then occupying. He has since been stripped of all he had & was obliged to return to Wisconsin to live out the few days he has allotted him, on the charities of his friends! On the 4th of May we hired George Partridge for Guide & traverse this Creek that day, returned at night to Mr. P's, stayed over Sunday & attended Church services by Elder Adair of Osawatomie, formerly of Ohio. Monday renewed our claim seeking to locate on the East side of the Creek. A part of us then returned for our families while others remained to cover & chink up one of the pole shanties of which there were some 9 in this vicinity. We returned on the 10th of May & put our families with whatever we could of our "plunder" {supplies] into a "Shanty" 10 by 12 ft inside on W.W. William's claim. Every man of the party took a claim but 4 soon abandoned the same with a faint heart...Three men only were left alone & empty handed & empty Purses to do battle with relentless toil & hardships, our nearest neighbor being 5 miles distant (a German) We deputized D. M, Bair to the State in pursuit of a Team & Cow. We went to cutting House logs intending to put up a more commodious dwelling immediately after getting our crops in planted. On getting our team, we were obliged with one yoke of oxen to clear some brush & thinly timbered land for our crops.

To break Prairie was impossible & to hire it done would cost \$4.00 per acre & our purses were empty. We put in 4 acres of corn and 3 bu of potatoes on William's claim, 3 acres on my claim & 1 ¼ on D.M. Bair's. We commenced planting on the 1 day of June & finished on the 25th. We likewise made a good Garden. About this time we had considerable rain with very hot weather. Our Shanty covered with Linden [cottonwood?] bark which had curled up & cracked to pieces. Our floor was Mother Earth, holes between the logs of our Shanty was no impediment to the free and easy ingress and egress of the howling thievish Wolf, the "Mill Dew", Rats and mice for want [of a cat] were all destroying what little plunder we had.

(the first part of a long manuscript)

FCHS Headlight
December 2007-January 2008

While in this condition with our crops yet unprotected by fence, merciless Sickness seized the inmates of our little "pen." I will now advert again for a few moments to the matter of "jumping" claims. The "pole Shanties" on the creek, bore, varying from the 5th to the 14th of March 1855, each marked with the signature of some Dutchman written in German. About the 1st of June a company of some 10 Germans hailing from St. Louis bolted into our peaceable settlement and ordered us all in a very peremptory manner to forthwith leave the premises said orders being coupled with loud and long threats of total extermination of all our persons & confiscation of all our effects, while they, in the meantime were backed up by the strongest authority by "Strong Whisky." On the morning of the 5th of June 14 settlers on South Pot. Gathered together one A Gutten who was threatened an ousting by the "Dutch" at that time and place. We hastily drew up resolutions mutually pledging the defence of each against these, and all other unjust intruders upon our sacred rights. We had scarcely accomplished this little matter, when beheld the Dutch (10 in number) hove in sight "armed to the teeth." With all their "Good & Chattles" & said "Gentlemens, you musht leave dis claims righ aff. We makes dese claims & pais our monish, den you jump dem, tizh na right." We held a short parly [talk] with them, asking them sundry relevant questions until they were completely confounded. We then plainly told them we were perfectly satisfied, from their own crooked, inconsistent & contradictory story, that they had no valid title to any claim heretofore located by them on this creek. Finding themselves unable to bluff us off by lies & deception they then commenced laying plans in, to us, unknown languages, so they supposed they were secure in their plans without absenting in privacy. After having, as they confidently supposed their plans all "cut & dryed" their inflated hope soon & suddenly evaporated to the four winds, by one of our company (D.B. Bair) very appropriately giving them a short piece of friendly advice in their own language & openly exposing their whole plot to the crowd. We then assured them we should now hold said claims at all hazard, & that we considered it very charitable on our part to allow them to take themselves away as sound as they came. They were wise enough to immediately retrace their "Trail." When the secret was out, its history was that sometime in the winter of 1854 an old German from St. Louis being persuaded by one Francis Myres on "Big Pota" (who thought he was shrewd enough to get a few of the old man's "Yellow Boys")

[gold coins] by Stratagem) that he could hold as many claims as he chose if he would hire him (Myres) to erect "pole pens" on them. This old man agreed to pay him \$5.00 each for 9 cabins and he would bring Germans enough to tenant them in the Spring. But in the Spring, new developments made their appearance and the old Dutchman found his claims "jumped" and he refused to fork over to his carpenter. The Old man had previously stored away his goods in one apartment of Myres' house, when upon his refusal to pay the carpenter, he turned the key upon the old Dutchman's effects and thus the "Bees" were at loggerheads in their own hive.

Wm Williams was taken sick on the 4th of July with the Billious [sic] Fever which lasted him some 4 weeks. Williams was averse to the use of Drugs, besides it exhausted a fortune here to employ a Drug M.D. to "carry one through a course of Fever." This fortune none of us was blessed with, at least one that was transferable. But, I, being somewhat versed in the Hydropathic Practice, Williams prevailed on me to undertake to treat him accordingly with all the averse disadvantages attending our situation. The want of a comfortable roomy house instead of crowding 7 of us into a space of 10 by 12 ft, the want of plenty of good water and bathing apparatus, Water from the Creek to carry by hand 80 rods, extremely low & covered with the effects of stagnation, looked & smelled like the contents of the Dyers Kettle. Water to drink and cook with to carry half mile over a steep and rugged bluff, With the exception of giving our patient 4 to 6 baths during the daytime. Mrs. Dewey (Mrs. B. being "Enciente" [pregnant] nursed him the first two weeks, while Mr. & Mrs. Bair & I secured our crops by fence & sawed an acre of ground to buckwheat & turnips.

(to be continued)

FCHS Headlight February 2008

...Myself, Wife & Child were left now alone onto to be ruffled by a few little chickens when we were unable to feed them, neither of us scarcely able to assist the other, although our little girl had recovered so as to feel quite cheerful & comfortable, when in an unthought of moment she was again prostrated and ere we were aware of her danger she lay lifeless in our arms (died 28th of Sept). In short we were so completely unmanned we were unable to care for ourselves, much less helpless childhood. In my settlement with Bair previous to his death he fell some \$50.00 in my debt towards which he transferred he share in the cattle to me in part pay. After his decease his Widow turned out the cow to balance what was yet due. I having settled for some money Bair had loaned to purchase provisions. I now was in possession of a yoke of cattle & one cow but an empty purse. Myself and Wife were yet unable to perform any labor. I could not cut hay, save my corn fodder, save my Buckwheat, dig my potatoes, gather my Beans or cut my firewood. About the 10th of October I had so far recovered as to do a few chores when the fire came across the prairies like a sweeping Tornado. I fought fire bravely from sun up to 9 o'clock at night, but I became exhausted, the winds increased their fury, maddened elements rushed past me like a furious War Stud leaping cleanly every vestige of combustible in its track, & with it laid all my fence. This left all my crops entirely

exposed to the willy brutes called "Horned Cattle." In consequence of my over exertion to beat back the fire, the next day I was bedfast & remained so for a week. The cattle, some 20 in number, took advantage of my inability to defend my crops, marched in and eat & otherways destroyed my corn & buckwheat & beans. I saved enough of corn to winter a dozen chickens, one buckwheat, one bushel. I afterwards fence my turnips bit in a short time the cattle laid low my fence and very soon demolished the last root of them. I dug & buried ten bushels in all, but in the Winter, the Wolves curious to know the contents of those graves, opened them & was careless enough of my enjoyment & of the potatoes to let every one of them freeze. This left me with nothing to eat except some corn meal & little old bacon. The latter was soon devoured & I was obliged to run in debt for the first time for a small piece of beef. But to return to our plight the 22 of October when we had thus lost everything of our hard toil, and got sick & none of the settlers able to assist us, or even themselves, my Wife's Brother and one M.M. Minkler came from Ill to see us wholly ignorant of our condition and in consequence of having been in an exploring expedition, found themselves on arrival here completely "straped." They were thus unable to render us any "material aid" But finding us in a deplorable condition in a deplorable & comfortless "pen" in cold and cheerless November weather & the Widow Bair having rejoined us almost helpless with a totally helpless child to protect, these friends charitably "put to" and erected a log cabin for us. I was now able to be about with them, but could do nothing. We moved into the Cabin the 28th of Nov without its being clinked & having any floor. These friends helped me to get in a rough puncheon floor in a few days. Our Brother was then obliged to return to Ohio. I borrowed money to bear his expenses home which he returned in a few weeks.

Mr. Dewey's saga continues, though with little success and with much sickness. His intentions to remain in Kansas were firm, but his name doesn't appear on maps from the early statehood days, so it would appear that adversity shook his resolve to stay here. The entire manuscript is available at Kansas Historical Society and at Franklin County Historical Society Records Center & Archives.