

**GENERAL HISTORY  
OF SEWARD  
COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

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General History of Seward County, Nebraska by John H. Waterman

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BEAVER CROSSING, NEBR. 1914-'15.

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In writing history of Seward County it has been my desire to produce a work of interest to the public and value to the county. All matters of history have been truthfully portrayed so far as I have been able to present them. I have not aimed to make it a high grade scholarly production, touching only the high places in the public attainments and official life of the past, but endeavoured to give an unadorned narration of the real modes of life and progression of the county from its infancy to full growth and maturity. Trusting the worth of the work to stand upon its merits rather than upon its flattery of popular sentiment, no church, society, political party or enterprise has received advertising reading space in it, while all have been fairly and impartially dealt with.

Like other authors I feel that my work is not above, but subject to criticism and ask that such be made with an honest purpose alone and that the value of the work be considered above its faults. I do not disown my errors in writing and printing—there are many to be found in this history—but I am glad to say I have endeavored to make everything plain, readable and comprehensible.

Many people expect to find, in a history of any part of the once "Wild and Woolly West," reading matter in line and spirit with the day and age covered by the narration. And not wishing to disappoint any one I will say: do not open this history expecting to find accounts of blood curdling Indian depredations, buffalo chases and other exciting events. There never was any Indian troubles aside from begging and stealing in Seward County and of course there is no story of them in this book. There were a few buffalo, elk, deer and antelope in the county at the date of its earliest settlement, but they were driven out by the freighters and early settlers. However Indian scares were of frequent occurrence during the period from 1860 to 1870, but I find it difficult to record scares as history. They are not

tangible although real, unavoidable and discouragingly disagreeable to the early settlers.

In mentioning the passing away of early settlers it was not my intention to publish obituaries, nor mention the church, lodge or society deceased belonged to nor the previous military service of any comrade soldier, but merely to mention that part of their life that is connected with the history of Seward County. And I trust there will be no disappointments in regard to this memorial feature of the history. I feel that my neighbors who shared with one another the trials and hardships of pioneer life in that honest, honorable and patient endurance which characterized nearly every early settler of Seward County, has won a brighter crown than can be given by any lodge or church.

I wish to thank all who have kindly assisted me in gathering items of historical interest for this book. With my forty-six years residence in Seward County, during which time the pioneer period has passed and modern conditions are speeding well along in years, I have many times felt myself unable to bring before the public a collection of the historical events which are worthy of record and remembrance, and in conclusion of this introduction will say my work has been a day and night task which I hope may meet the requirements of the most exacting as to history of Seward County.

AUTHOR.

THE PRAIRIES OUT WEST, OR  
THE HOME OF MY CHILDHOOD.

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PART I.

O, who that e'er come from a woodland home—  
Shut in by dark forests like birds in their nest,  
Unmoved by the sight, could look upon the bright  
And boundless prairies spread out in the West?

Where ethereal blue ends the far distant view—  
As though the dim future had ope'd to our sight,  
And we viewed all the space to the end of our race,  
The dark Vales of Sorrow and Hills of Delight.

Where light zepthers race o'er earth's verdant face,  
With coolness refreshing, when weary, to feel,  
Treading waves in the grass and flowers as they pass  
O'er prairies untamed by a husbandman's zeal.

Where shadows flit by of clouds in the sky—  
And darken an instant, grove, valley and hill;  
Like a fugitive thought that's gone ere its caught,—  
That enters the mind, but escapes from the will.

PART II.

O, of all the lands, I ween, that ever I have seen,  
I yet love my native prairies the best;  
Where I played by the rills, and rode down the hills,  
In the days of my childhood, afar in the West.

By day or by night, there are scenes of delight,  
For lovers of Nature, with hearts good and free,—  
But if darkened within by grief, care or sin,  
No pleasure in Eden's sweet bowers we'd see.

There are sanctums secluded, where few have intruded,  
And cool, waving meadows, of flowers profuse,  
Deep valleys, bright glades, and beautiful green shades,  
Where poets might sweetly commune with their Muse.

There are rivers, and rills, and grass carpeted hills,  
Like billows that roll on a storm troubled sea—  
Wild nature is there, in forms the most fair;  
'Tis a land of delight, 'tis the home of the free.







*John H. Waterman, Author.*

## CHAPTER I.

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Introductory. The Vast Plains Area. The Path Finder and his Path the Artery of Civilization on the Immense Prairies West of the Missouri River. Finding Gold in California Establishes the Public High-Way Through the World's Richest Agricultural Region. The California Trail.

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Of the country forming the present central portion of the United States, but little was known a half century ago, and going back a century we find its immensity in area and agricultural wealth buried in a gloom of ignorance. The large rivers had been discovered and in a manner partially explored. And some idea of the Rocky mountains had been gained, their range vaguely supposed to be impenetrable, flanked to their base by arid plains and impassible gulfs. While immense herds of buffalo and other wild beasts lived and fattened upon the rich grasses of the land, the Indian, regardless of the wealth hidden in the rich soil, trod its surface as lord and king, in search of game. Mountain ranges with their peaks capped with perpetual snow frowning down from their lofty heights, cast their shadows back from the setting sun upon the rich soils covered with luxuriant vegetation while imaginary deserts hid the grand panorama from the vision of approaching civilization.

To the first trip across the continent may be charged the error forming the illusionary opinion that the brightest region in America, or the world, amidst which were the great state of Nebraska and its region where bright springs and flowing wells abounded was a baren and impassable desert. What other foundation for this delusive theory, taught by