

was then being mined only a short distance from the town. Within three miles there was building stone of superior quality sufficient to construct a large city, and as fuel and building material are vital factors in the development of the great plains and by no means abundant in all sections, I felt some confidence that the little town might in time attain to some importance.

That was ten years ago.

To-day I am again in the same latitude and longitude, and in a city bearing the name of Concordia. One or two old buildings and very few names and faces have a familiar look, but all else is as changed as if it belonged to a different age and civilization. The metamorphosis of a repulsive worm into a beautiful insect presents scarcely a greater contrast than the change wrought in this brief period in the aspect of the town and country about me. A few evenings back I stepped into a Pullman at Kansas City and out at Concordia in the morning in time for breakfast. In place of the dirty hamlet I find a city of 5,000 people, possessing both natural and artificial attractions rarely found in western towns. There are numerous buildings, public and private, that would be creditable to a city of ten times larger than this, and I note with pleasure the fulfillment of the prophesy concerning the seven hills. They are traversed by well graded streets lined with shade trees, through which are seen many pleasant homes and velvety lawns. I see electric lights, a very perfect system of waterworks and four of the great railway systems of the West. The Missouri Pacific, the Union Pacific, the Burlington & Missouri, and the Santa Fe

complete for the carrying trade of the city, and other roads are casting covetous glances hitherward. Several manufacturing enterprises are in successful operation and others are projected.

But not the least surprising feature of the situation is the fact that, wonderful as has been the growth of the city, it has not outstripped the country. My astonishment is not abated as I drive through the valleys and over the hills, for on every side are the constantly recurring evidences of enterprise and material prosperity. Substantial buildings, good fences and numerous shade and fruit trees abound in a profusion that is simply marvelous. I often stop upon the crest of some of the higher hills and let my eyes roam over the many miles of valley and upland dotted with the homes of prosperous farmers and beautiful with growing grain and miniature forests, and my heart swells with pride in the consciousness that the American people have so rich a heritage and are not lacking the wisdom and enterprise requisite for its highest and most speedy development.

The star of enterprise in its westward flight has reached the mid-continent and hangs suspended over that vast alluvial plain between the great river and the greater mountains. In a brief space of time - so brief that but few additional silver threads on the head of the writer can certify its flight- a desert has become a garden; the valley of the Republican one of its pleasantest nooks; and the City of Concordia a sun-kissed flower of rare beauty and brilliant promise.



Lady Shirley's SOCIETY PAPERS

First Edition, February 2025

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE,
EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Dearest Readers,

According to the much-heralded poet Jo McFarlane, "They sought the simplest things: a place to be that held their dignity, support of self and family, fulfilling things to do, respect and being listened to." When considering the beginnings of our community and where we find ourselves to-day, this author would agree...my name is Lady Shirley. You do not know me, nor may I ever be truly known. But if you are reading these papers of record, then rest assured: I certainly know you and this community in which we reside, in which we love, in which we call home.

Should there be any doubt as to the intentions of this author, know that I shall endeavor to bring you only the most helpful, intriguing, historical, and hopeful of words. For if there is any doubt as to why Concordia shall be the place to be, this author shall dispel it. For I have at my disposal a most powerful tool, my (digital) pen. I shall endeavor to wield it well, with care and honesty, a portrait of our past as well as a celebration of the present day, and glimpses to the future unknown. Join me, dearest reader, as we uncover stories forgotten and untold.

*Yours truly,
Lady Shirley*

CLOUD COUNTY BEGINNINGS

What tale is there to be told without setting a proper stage? Let us step into the early days of our founders viewing our fair Ton with excited eyes the future grandeur they knew possible. A view quite

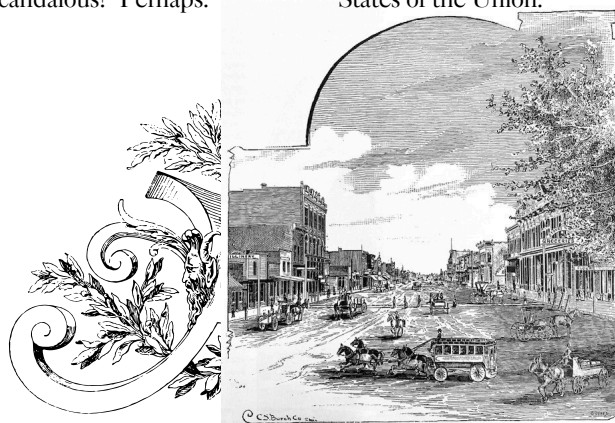
different from the bustling highways of to-day, but all the while still with many of the charms and qualities we hold dearest to our hearts, my gentle reader. This author must ask, shall we start at the beginning?



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our county, Cloud County, began its organization in 1866. Originally the founders were to call it, like this author, Shirley. However, as one's reputation is of utmost importance, they would not see fit to name our beloved county such a name that befit one of ill repute, a prostitute if you must know. This author proudly assumes her name and makes it her own as a scoff at such a claim. Scandalous? Perhaps.

But this author is no strumpet and has nothing of which to be ashamed. Thus, at its formation in 1867, our name became Cloud County for its namesake Colonel William F. Cloud, a most honorable and highly distinguished gentleman indeed who ranked amongst the Union Army. Just one year later, the grand state of Kansas would officially assume her proud position as one of the foremost States of the Union.



WHAT OTHERS SAY OF US

The following extract is from a letter written by a special correspondent to the *Kansas City Times*, July 13, 1888.

CONCORDIA, KAN., July 13. - It was very early in the spring, half a score of years ago, that I looked for the first time upon the bleak prairies of Northern Kansas. I came from among New England hills, where I had from earliest childhood gazed on mountains clothed in unfading green, and been surrounded by forests whose primal glory had suffered but little from the hand of man. Therefore to me the change from mountains to plains, and from encircling woods to treeless wastes, was attended by novel sensations not wholly complimentary to the scene before me. If not exactly a desert, the country looked to be a wilderness in whose vastness only a hermit could sign for an habitation

There was nothing to inspire enthusiasm. A chilly piercing wind rattled at the windows, the sky was a sombre gray, and mile after mile the prairie presented the same unvarying dull brown hue of scant and lifeless vegetation. The occasional dugout or sod house or board shanty added no cheerfulness to the landscape; on the contrary, they had an air of despondency which harmonized with the face of nature and with the feelings of the traveler.

The scene within was no less provocative of melancholy. The car was not luxurious nor quite comfortable. The road bed was not smooth, and the rate of speed was quite exasperating. Yet the situation could have been worse, for the roughness of the road helped my digestion and provoked an appetite that was a surprise to

me and a grief, no doubt, to those next interested. It is a face, too, that even at the rate of 20 miles an hour a considerable distance will be covered in the course of a day's ride. And thus it was that shortly after nightfall I reached a town bearing a euphonious name suggestive of brotherly love and peaceable neighbors, and boasting a hostelry renowned along the line for the gratifying manner in which it filled the long felt want of the hungry traveler.

I tarried at Concordia.

It was a wretched little burg. The streets were slippery with mud of a most abominable nastiness, and the buildings, I will venture to say, were as small and unattractive as those of any town of its size in this very remarkable State. To inspect the city, as its proud inhabitants termed it, was a task which would have consumed but little time, had my friend who volunteered to show me the town confined himself to the then present reality; but he did not. It was not the little dirty frontier town that he wished me to see, but rather the beautiful city, the "Queen of the Valley," and the North Star of the State. In short, he set out to show me the "future great" - and he did it. I was shown that portion which was to be the site of great wholesale houses. The unfenced prairie showed no sign of impending change. The streets were pointed out which would at no distant day be lined with the retail places of Concordia's Stewarts and Macys. The present squalor was before me. The picture of future grandeur faded and left no sign. Then I was taken upon one of the seven hills which lay to the west and south of the village, and was assured that on these would be

built the costly houses of a prosperous and happy people. I looked. At a little distance a prairie dog sat at his castle gate, and his neighbor, the bird of ill omen, ruffled her feathers and uttered a solemn hoot of derision; while from another eminence came the dismal protest of a coyote. The ground was pre-empted by actual settlers and I doubted if their titles would soon be questioned.

I remained in the vicinity a number of weeks and saw considerable of the adjacent country. I found but little to delight the eye or awaken enthusiasm. The roads were trails, the buildings were rude and primitive. It was too early in the season for the cultivated fields to give promise of a coming harvest, and the remarkable depth and richness of the soil was not sufficient to repress a feeling of distrust for its agricultural utility. Then, too, the atmospheric phenomenon which was developed during the month of March was most disagreeably impressive. If in February the region possessed the requisite characteristics of a wilderness in the succeeding month it became a holloing wilderness. The full meaning of this phrase must remain a matter of conjecture save to those who have been pushed, and hauled and cuffed, and twirled by the breezes which then blew during the boisterous month when winter fled before the impetuous charge of summer.

Before departing I became convinced that Concordia had two or three things in her favor. There was the possibility that the Republican Valley would develop into an agricultural district, having few equals. There was unquestionably an abundant supply of coal, for a good quality of surface coal