

Man wrote about how he found success in northwest Kansas

By Evelyn Ward
Sherman County Historical Society
June 22, 1904: R.E. Hall Shows How a Man Can "Make It" in Northwest Kansas — Mr. R.E. Hall says in the Kansas City Star: "I came to this country nearly twenty years ago, when most of the land was government land, a 'vast expanse of prairie land, untouched by the hand of man.'
"There were no settlers at all, except a few who were located along the water courses and who depended almost entirely on stock raising for a livelihood. Then there came a great rush, and the whole country was filled with settlers, each eager to secure a piece of land, many of whom had scarcely a cent upon their arrival and a very few had any amount of capital.
"Under these conditions, many hardships and failures were inevitable. Many of those who had a small capital to begin with met with sad disappointment and failure, owing to a lack of knowledge of the conditions and methods of farming which are peculiarly adapted to this climate and soil, and the result was that large numbers of settlers were compelled to abandon their lands after having secured a loan of from \$300 to \$500 on each quarter section.
"This money thus obtained was either exhausted in improvements or living expenses, and then the depreciation of land values began until it became hard to find a purchaser at any price.

today in history

"At that time, there were no railroads and everything had to be freighted long distances by wagon, so that extremely high prices prevailed on all kinds of products.
"Common lumber sold for \$30 per thousand feet; barb wire from \$6 to \$7 per thousand pounds; flour \$1.50 per sack of fifty pounds; potatoes \$1.00 to \$1.50 per bushel and all other products consumed were in proportion.
"Hay sold as high as \$20 per ton and had to be hauled from 20 to 30 miles. All kinds of live stock were high, so that the poor settler had to pay from \$50 to \$60 for a milch cow and \$10 to \$12 for a sow shoat to begin his herd of swine with.
"Horses sold for from \$200 to \$300 per team. So it can be readily seen that with the few hundred dollars secured on this land, the settler would not be able to fit himself out for farming to begin with.
"Under these conditions, I became discouraged and began to look about for, as I thought, a better country. I looked over the south and east, but prices were too high, and unhealthful conditions prevailed in many of these regions.
"Then I turned northwest to the Pacific coast in hope of finding the fabled 'Paradise on Earth.' Through Wyoming, I saw nothing which suited my fancy, and Idaho seemed to me only a desolate waste of sand and sage brush.
"Eastern Oregon was not by any means what I was looking for, so I proceeded to the state of Washington, where I found large crowds of emigrants rushing in from all sections.
"There were many improvements and buildings under construction there, but there were many more laborers than was needed and still more coming. Property of all kinds was selling at fabulous prices without regard to its real value.
"I spent five years in that country, in Spokane and Seattle, during which time my wife and I worked almost day and night in the dairy and vegetable business and with rigid economy succeeded in laying by several hundred dollars, after which we returned to northwest Kansas, to Rawlins county.
"Upon our arrival, I bought one quarter section of land and one team and a few cows. After three years, I put down a well and pump for irrigation purposes and began gardening.
"I sold all my cows except two milch cows and bought \$200 worth of young ewe sheep, and my little children tended them. At the end of two years, the wool and increase and the original flock, brought me \$878, and my garden truck business netted me a nice little sum every year.
"On two acres of irrigated land, I sold from \$300 to \$500 worth of

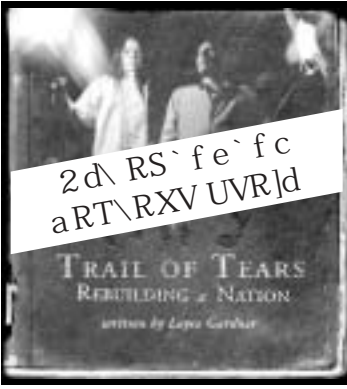
truck each year. To give an idea of the yield, on 1/6 of an acre of onions from seed, I harvested 115 bushels of large red onions which are exceptionally fine, and they netted me an average of \$1 per bushel, which made \$115 for this small piece of ground, or at the rate of \$700 per acre.
"On 350 hills of dwarf tomatoes, or 1/8 acre, I harvested 100 bushels of very fine tomatoes, which netted me nearly \$1 per bushel. On one tenth of an acre of early cabbage, I sold \$50 worth of cabbage.
"My melons and cantaloupes and other vegetables also were very fine and yielded me a good profit. At the end of seven years, I owned 800 acres of well improved land, all fenced; a young orchard; and numerous other improvements, beside thirty head of cattle, ten head of hogs, poultry, etc.
"Having traveled the country for miles south and west in search of sales for my vegetables, I became impressed with the beautiful prairies of Sherman county and decided to sell out my belongings in Rawlins county and remove to Sherman county, where I purchased 1,120 acres of fine land near the city of Goodland.
"In addition to the 1,120 acres, I have other lands leased upon which I pasture fifty head of cattle of my own and others; which I took to pasture by the month.
"My land is all fenced and has good improvements, four and 1/2 acres under irrigation, from which

I am now selling vegetables.
"Now the 1,120 acres of land with \$1,000 worth improvements and fifty head of cattle is the result of only eight years of constant labor, besides caring for a family of small children, who now number seven. The question arises, could I have accomplished this in any other country on earth? I THINK NOT.
"As to the healthfulness of the climate, we have not had a doctor during the eight years; the children are all robust and healthy and never have had malaria and ague.
"Such diseases are practically unknown here. I am only one among many who have met with success in this country. There are a great many who are prospering here; there are many who came to this country without anything, who now own large tracts of land and from 100 to 200 head of cattle.
"There are creamery stations located all over the country from which a great many farmers realize from \$50 to \$100 per month from the sale of their cream, besides raising their calves on the separated milk.
"Our winters are open so that we can graze on the rich cured grass almost every day during the winter season. I have seen stock come through the winter in fine condition without a mouthful of grain or hay.
"Our people are a plain, generous-hearted people; good schools and churches prevail, and morals and politics are in healthy condition. There is not a pauper in the

county, and taxes are all paid up.
"Our water supply is the finest on earth. This whole country is underlaid with a great subterranean ocean — unaffected by drouth; we are always sure of an ample supply of stock water or for irrigating also, clear and sparkling and healthful as the river of life which flowed through the Garden of Eden.
"Besides all the above advantages, we have the finest roads in the world; 75 miles is a moderate day's drive with a light rig. We have no sand to drift and but little mud.
"No wood ticks to bite us and but few mosquitoes to worry us. No hot nights in which to toss upon our beds, gasping for breath; few cloudy dismal days; sunshine most every day in the year.
"Now Mr. Editor, we would advise anyone in the east who is thinking of going to Canada to settle to first come and look at this country, where long excessive winters are unknown, where cyclones and floods come not, where health is the common every day bill of fare; the stock farmer's paradise, where business of all kinds thrive and everyone is happy. I am sincerely yours for northwest Kansas.

R.E. Hall

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