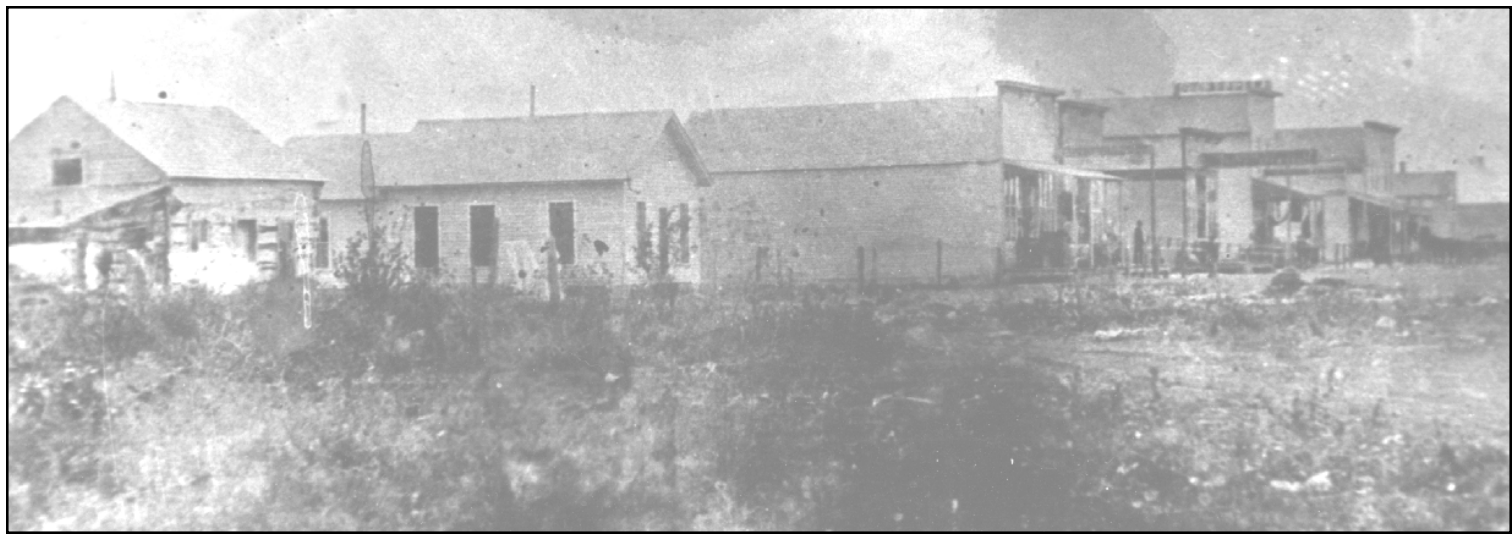


Oberlin moved forward



OBERLIN was already a thriving community when this picture was taken in 1879.

Oberlin was not a boom town in the early years. It started small and grew steadily.

The Kansas Legislature created Decatur County in 1873 but a year earlier the area, that is now Oberlin, was already a settled community going by the name of Westfield.

J.A. Rodehaver staked out the town site of Oberlin in April 1874 on land he had settled the previous year. The town was not officially incorporated until 1885, however.

The first house was a one-room log cabin. Soon J.A. Van Wormer of Lawrence moved to the area and put up a two-story frame structure. The boards were hand hewn and hauled from 16 miles up the South Sappa. He had a store on the lower level and lived above.

By 1877 the town had a blacksmith shop and soon built a school.

Charles A. Stowell was the first post master for the area. He was succeeded by Mr. Rodehaver. The name Westfield was dropped for the post office because McPherson County

had beaten Decatur County to the name. The new post office was called Sappa.

In October 1878 the name was changed to Oberlin at Mr. Rodehaver's suggestion. The name came from Oberlin, Ohio, where the Rodehaver's came from.

William Penn Montgomery, who had suggested the original name of Westfield after the town where he went to school, Westfield, N.Y., was a homesteading neighbor of the Roderhavers. He named the streets of Cass, Hall, Penn and York.

In the spring of 1878 the town got its first lawyer, G. Webb Bertram. The first frame house was built in the fall of 1878 by George Colby. Also in the fall of 1878 the town's first doctor, A.W.

Bariteau built the first drug store.

Even in those days Oberlin was not a one drug store town because by the spring of the next year Maddox & Son went up in competition with the doctor's apothecary.

R.A. Marks started the first lumber yard in January 1879.

In the summer of 1875 saw the first wedding in the county — Calvin Gay, 65, married Maggie Robinson, 15.

Oberlin Allen was born on January 7, 1879, the first white child born in Oberlin.

The county and town began to grow in earnest in 1878 and 1879 and in '79 the first county government was organized with the first elections in 1880.

The arrival of the U.S. Land Office in May 1881 helped the county population swell, since all land claims had to be registered at the office and most people preferred that distance to be as short as possible.

The Bank of Oberlin was started in February 1880 by Mr. Marks. It was a private bank and there was no F.D.I.C. to protect the investments.

While Oberlin boasted several saloons and a selection of lawyers, the first church in the county was the Presbyterian, dedicated on August 9, 1883.

The town of Oberlin was incorporated in 1885 and the legal notice was printed in *The Eye*, a weekly newspaper printed in the community.

Oberlin was off and running.

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