



THE OBERLIN HOUSE, above, was built by J.A. and Sarah (Moore) Rodehaver in 1879. She assisted him in the business until he petitioned for divorce in 1885, after which she operated it until selling it in 1888.

Woman played role in helping form the City of Oberlin

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkansas.com

She helped get the first minister to town, helped her husband in the post office and helped pick the sites for the Oberlin City School and the Oberlin Cemetery.

Sarah J. Moore—Rodehaver—Gilmore—Harvie was the first working woman in Oberlin and the first white woman in the city.

Mrs. Harvie was born in Ohio on Oct. 3, 1846. Eighteen years later she married John A. Rodehaver. The couple lived close to her parents for the first eight years of their marriage. While in Ohio, they had three children, Blanch, Bertha and Carl.

Mr. Rodehaver traveled to Decatur County, Kansas in the spring of 1873. On April 29, he settled in the southwest quarter of section 1, township 3 south, range 29 west and built a log house with a single roof and board floor.

That September he sent for his wife and kids.

After the move, improvements were made to the land, the house was moved across a half-section line and additions were made, including a log bedroom which served as the area's first hotel.

The north 100 acres of the quarter were platted in April 1874 and the town was named Westfield. Later the name was changed to Oberlin.

Mrs. Rodehaver worked as the assistant to her husband, who was the postmaster at the Sappa postal office.

An article about her says that "the sitting room of the hotel was used for practically all public meetings at first and Mrs. Rodehaver

was instrumental in getting the first minister to Oberlin for a church service."

In 1879, the couple built the Oberlin House. An article in *The Oberlin Herald* reported that Mrs. Rodehaver paid for the building with inheritance money. She helped manage the hotel until the fall of 1885 during which Mr. Rodehaver petitioned for a divorce.

After that was final, Mrs. Rodehaver took over the hotel.

In 1888 she sold the hotel. During the three years she had it, there was a short period of time when the hotel was rented to other managers.

Information about Mrs. Rodehaver has her saying that during the boom days of 1886 and 1887, the hotel was banking \$75 a day after all the expenses, including the help.

After selling the hotel she moved to Nebraska where she married Ed Gilmore. The couple moved back to Decatur County. Mr. Gilmore died in 1898 and Mrs. Gilmore returned to Oberlin.

She married one more time, to J.T. Harvie in November 1907. In 1923, Mr. Harvie died.

According to a sketch of her life from the Last Indian Raid Museum, Mrs. Rodehaver owned 1,440 acres of land, almost all of it in Decatur County. She also owned two city homes and other property.

She died in 1932 at the age of 85. It's said that Mrs. Rodehaver helped pick the sites for the Oberlin City School and the Oberlin Cemetery.

Mrs. Rodehaver also wrote an early history of Oberlin by hand.



S. Harvie

Looking for the Perfect Drive?

Check Out **DEVENY'S**
We always sell for less!
Check out these great deals!

2007 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Big Horn Quad Cab Long Box, 4x4, Diesel 41,000 1-Owner miles Only... \$31,995	2006 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Mega Cab, Diesel, Auto, 4x4, Local 1-Owner Only... \$27,250	2004 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Quad Cab, Short Box, 4x4, Diesel, Auto, Local Trade Only... \$16,995
--	---	---

1999 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Quad Cab, Long Box, 4x4, Diesel, Local Trade, Perfect 10! Only... \$15,250	2001 Dodge Ram 1500 SLT Quad Cab, Short Box, 4x4, Local Trade Only... \$6,995	2008 GMC 2500 HD SLE Crew Cab, Short Box, Diesel 4x4, Auto, Clean 1-Owner Only... \$32,750
---	---	---

2007 Jeep Compass Sport 4 Cyl., Auto, Excellent MPG Only... \$13,995	2007 Chrysler P.T. Cruiser 4 Cyl., Auto Only... \$8,995	2005 Chrysler T&C Limited Stow & Go Seating, Heated Leather, Navigation, 1-Owner Only... \$14,750
--	---	--

2001 Chrysler T&C LX Rear Heat & A/C, 54,000 Local Trade Miles Only... \$6,250	2004 Buick Redevious CXL AWD, Leather Seats, Alloy Wheels, Local Trade Only... \$7,495	2003 Chevy Suburban LT 4x4, Leather Seats, Rear Heat & A/C Local Trade Only... \$11,995
--	---	--

"It's Not A Deal Until It's A Deveny Deal!"

DEVENY

CHRYSLER-JEEP-DODGE-RAM
 401 East B Street - McCook, NE 69001 (308) 345-5200 · 1-800-345-0031
 www.devenychryslerjeepdodge.com

