quickly with settlers and businesses

MEN WORKED on putting in the first sidewalks(above) in Oberlin. Construction of the building which housed the department store of Campbell, Dean and Wilbur and H. O. Douglas is shown (below) when the north building was still under construction. It now houses La De Da Unique Boutique and Beauty Salon, left, and the south room of Rockin' R on S. Penn Avenue.

Postmaster names city after town in Ohio

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
k.davis@nwkansas.com

Before the city was incorporated, J.A. Rodehaver suggested changing the post office's name from Sappa to Oberlin.

An article in the edition celebrating Oberlin's Centennial, 25 years ago, states that the village was first called Westfield. It was settled in 1872 on the north 100 acres of the SW1/4 3-29.

The name Westfield was first suggested by William Penn Montgomery, a lawyer from Pennsylvania. He was a homesteading neighbor of Mr. Rodehaver.

Mr. Montgomery also named the streets that are now Cass, Hall, Penn and York.

There was already a post office in Kansas, in McPherson County, named Westfield so it had to be changed. The new name was Sappa with Charles A. Stowell as the first postmaster.

Later Mr. Rodehaver took the job and changed the name to Oberlin after the town of Oberlin, Ohio, where the Rodehaver family came from.

The city in Ohio was named Oberlin after John Frederick Oberlin, who according to the Centennial edition "brought remarkable improvements to a severely underdeveloped mountain valleys in Europe in the 1700s."

Mr. Oberlin is said to have developed roads in the area, housing, agriculture, trades and bridges.

He was an Alsatian clergyman and philanthropist. Research shows that he practiced medicine, founded a loan and savings bank, introduced cotton manufacturing and has a college named in his honor.