

The “Little Bit of Germany” on the Prairie: Hanover, Kansas 1869

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And by Residents of Hanover, KS
The Washington County Museum and Historical Society
Washington County, KS



*Chapman Center
for Rural Studies*

Early History

Hanover, Kansas is a beautiful spot on the edges of the tall grass prairie and the Little Blue River. It started with the dream of one man's home, and came to be a thriving town through agriculture and through the movement of mail, people, and goods. Though some of its earliest memories of bustling commerce along the western route have faded, it is not a "lost town". Almost 600 people call Hanover home.

Gerat Hollenberg "Founder of Hanover and Washington County" ¹

In 1858, a newly married couple, Sophia Brockmeyer and Gerat Hollenberg, set up a log cabin at the Junction of the St. Joseph and Independence roads in the northeastern part of what was then the heavily disputed Kansas Territory. Hollenberg was a '49er, an entrepreneur, a visionary, and a great politician, who came to play a pivotal role in establishing the area. Their "Cottonwood Ranch" served as a stopping point for wagons along these roads, which needed to trade goods or lighten the loads on their one-ton capacity wagons.²

A decade later, renamed the "Hollenberg Station", it became an ideal "home station" for Pony Express riders on their way up to Big Sandy, Nebraska. For nine short months in 1869, riders, with few relatives and nothing to lose, galloped the dangerous trail carrying twenty pounds of mail on their way to and from Sacramento, with only a pistol and a knife

¹ Washington County Cemetery. Inscription for G.H. Hollenberg. Washington County Cemetery. Hollenberg died and was buried at sea in 1874, but there is a memorial in Washington County.

² Durst, Duane: Washington County Museum Volunteer. Interview with Author. February 4, 2012. Washington County Museum.

for protection.³ Many stopped at the station for a 27-cent meal and a night or two of sleep in one of the Hollenbergs' nine boarding rooms. As the business at the home station grew, several others joined the Hollenbergs. Some of Sophia's younger relatives came to help with the daily operations. A man who would later become a prominent Hanover community leader, Ezra George Perkins, became the station's clerk and first postmaster. After the cessation of the Pony Express, the settler population of the area continued to expand, and agriculture continued to take shape as a mainstay of life in the Kansas Territory. In 1863, the first saw mill was erected in the area.⁴



Figure 1 Pony Express Rider Depicted by Artist Carl Rakehan. 4/23/2012. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/rakeman/1860.htm>.

³ Lewin, Jacqueline and Marilyn Taylor. *On the Winds of Destiny: A Biographical Look at Pony Express Riders*. St. Joseph, Missouri: Platte Purchase Publishers. 2002.

⁴ Washington County Museum. "The One Hundred Year History of Hanover, Kansas". From the Hanover Centennial: 1869-1969. Hanover, 1969.



Figure 2 The Hollenberg Station Looking South. 2/28/2012. Washington County, KS.

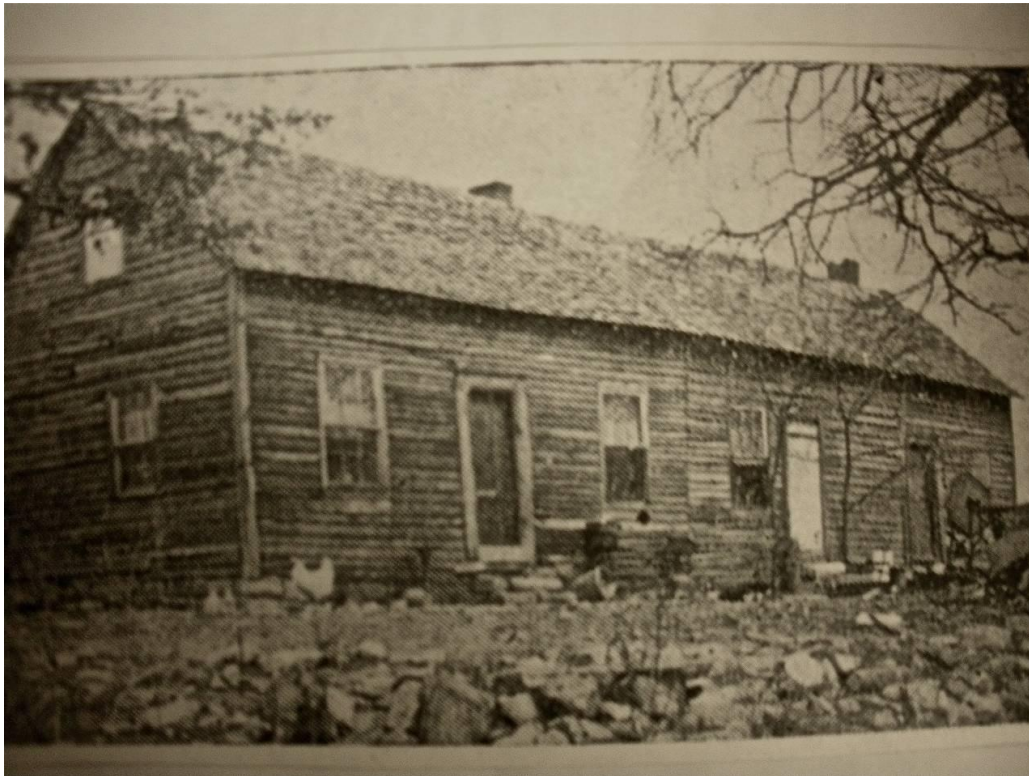


Figure 3 The Hollenberg Station looking South, circa 1910, Washington County, KS. SOURCE: Washington County Museum and Historical Society

Native American Context

New German settlers encountered the Pawnee tribe to the West, the Kansa and Kaw to the South, and Otoe-Missouria Reservation land to the North. The three tribes intermingled with each other quite often and considered each other brothers. The Otoe, also called Jiwere, are closely related to the “Winnebago and Iowa Tribes. [All] were once part of a single tribe that lived in the Great Lakes Region of the United States. In the 16th century the tribes separated from each other and migrated west”⁵ where they joined forces with the Missouri tribe. Although they occupied a large part of Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, the migratory lifestyle of Otoes was organized by villages and planting in addition to hunting by the 1800s. They believe in the animation of all land and the natural world by the supernatural, Wakonta.⁶ This was inconsistent with European beliefs about land ownership. So, in 1855, after a long fight between the Native Americans in the area and the encroaching land demands of the U.S. government, the Otoe reservation was established along the Big Blue River on the Kansas-Nebraska border. The south end of this reservation extended from Nebraska three miles into present day Washington and Marshall Counties. Despite differences in beliefs about ownership, the Otoes traded with early German settlers. Some instances of land and animal use were interpreted by one group as theft, and by the other as hunting or sharing, but there are few accounts of hostile relationships. In the 1870s alcoholism reeked havoc on the Otoe community and a tribal

⁵ “Otoe and Missouriia: Five Hundred Years of History”, The Otoe-Missouria Tribe. 2011. <http://www.omtribe.org/index.php?culture-history>.

⁶ Wooley, David, “The Oto and Missouriia”. *The First Voices: Nebraskaland Magazine*, January-February, 1984, 62:1.

split occurred. While the Quaker band stayed, the Coyote band moved to Oklahoma, opening up new land for German settlement.⁷



Figure 4 Otoe Reservation Map. 1855 and 1881 before and after the great move to Red Rocks, Oklahoma. SOURCE: Washington County Museum and Historical Society



Figure 5 Otoe On a Kansas Ranch 1907, Kansas. SOURCE: Library of Congress⁸

⁷ Armstrong, Sid, Letter to the Author, February 26, 2012; and Dennis W. Zotigh, Museum Cultural Specialist, National Museum of the American Indian, Letter to the Author, February 22, 2012. Manhattan, KS.

In 1864, Hollenberg was a Colonel in the state militia. While most of his duties involved general law enforcement and representation, and altercations with the local tribes were few,⁹ several accounts mention a raid that took place in Oak Grove, KS that involved Col. Hollenberg and other settlers in the region. It is said that a family was attacked by a Cheyenne and Arapaho band from the Northwest and a young girl taken hostage. Col. Hollenberg organized a posse to retrieve the girl and restore order.¹⁰

Plans for Hanover

Longing for his hometown of Hanover, Germany, and recognizing the need for a settlement to accommodate the population growth, Hollenberg laid out plans for the town of Hanover in 1869.¹¹ Originally, the town was organized around a town square surrounded by wood frame buildings.¹² William Kalhoefer and August Jaedicke built the first building which housed living quarters, a general store, a drug store, a bank for salt that could be used as preservative and antiseptic, and a Post Office, run by George Perkins who relocated from the Hollenberg Station. The plans were not even finalized when settlers began to arrive...

Among the earliest to arrive was a wagon train from Ft. Madison, Iowa, headed by Joseph Herynk, a stone mason, his wife and 8-year-old daughter, Rosina Herynk...Other wagons of the train were driven by Tom Hora, John J. Schwartz, Ignatz Masat, Martin Kemper, John Turk, Wenzel Bestak, and Thomas Klecan (One-Hundred Year History).

⁸ Cornish, Geo B. 1907. "Otoe Indians Visiting 101 Ranch: In Full Panopy [sic]. Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/search/?q=otoe&fa=digitized:true>.

⁹ Durst, Duane. 2/4/2012.

¹⁰ Centennial History.

¹¹ Durst, Duane. 2/4/2012.

¹² Washington County Museum, Map of Hanover, 1879.

Civil War Veterans were given tracts of land to begin farming.¹³ Other settlers came from New York City, from Wisconsin, or directly from the low German-speaking regions of Germany or the Bohemian-Czech speaking regions.¹⁴ All were attracted by the already thriving little German community on the Prairie. Most of the Settlers spoke low German up until World War I; and the rich German traditions continue to this day. There was polka and delicious German food at every festivity; but an even more important relic of the German heritage was a cultural pride in education. In 1868, even before the town was laid out, a school district was established at the home of John Oswald to educate all of the young children of the settlers. Only one year later, a one-room stone school building was erected and John Turk became the first teacher.¹⁵

Perhaps most prominent to the community life is Hanover's grain elevator, which was built and continued to expand with the railroad access.¹⁶ The St. Joseph and Denver railroads came through in 1870: causing the town to go through a shift from its primary organization around the town square to a Main Street that was closer to the train Depot. Hotels, restaurants, and other businesses sprang up alongside the increased commerce and emigration. Both the Burlington and the Union Pacific came through town, creating an enormous capacity for grain transport. Jim Scheetz, a descendant of Gabriel Scheetz, one of the earliest settlers of Hanover attributes the success of the town largely to the expansion of the elevator, which has "grown many times over, basically because of the railroad

¹³ Scheetz, Jim, Interview with the author, February 18, 2012. Hanover, KS.

¹⁴ Laue, Irene, Interview with the author, February 28, 2012. Hanover, KS.

¹⁵ Hanover Ledger clipping, Date Unknown.

¹⁶ Washington County Museum, Sandborn Map, 1899.

access.”¹⁷ At one point, a roundhouse, where train engines could be worked on also accompanied the growing industry.



Figure 6 Hanover Elevator 2/28/2012, Hanover KS



Figure 7 R.R. Spur Continues to Reach Hanover, 2/28/2012, Hanover, KS

¹⁷ Scheetz, Jim. 2/18/2012.

Town Boom

The elevator and the railroad combined to create fertile ground for the town to boom. In 1870 alone, two churches went up: The German Evangelical Society and a Catholic church, serving both the German and the Bohemian population.¹⁸ Chronicling all of this growth, W. Bowman began as editor and owner of the first newspaper: *The Hanover Ledger*.¹⁹

Incidentally, the same year that the railroad came to Hanover, the Otoes lost the Eastern part of their land to the U.S. government, and it was then opened for sale as farmland.²⁰ Sid Armstrong, who descends from the Buffalo Clan of the Otoe-Missouria, describes a great deal of tribal planning at the time.

They may have lost part of [their land], but sold what they did have in order to purchase the allotments here in Oklahoma. The Otoes were lonesome, and missed the Pawnees and Poncas, their old neighbors. They got along good with those people and decided to have a council meeting to talk about making the move from the Big Blue. Most had agreed on selling and buying land here in Oklahoma. One exception to the rule was the Elk clan. They are the keepers of the fire. They stayed around the Northeast Kansas area. The Otoes had all moved down here and pretty much had their pick as to where they wanted to settle in Oklahoma. The tribe stayed at the Redrock creek area, and sent scouts down to where Oklahoma City is today, since this is where the government agent offered them land. The scouts returned and said the Redrock area was better. The land at Redrock was for sale, and they purchased it! (Sid Armstrong)

¹⁸ Laue, Irene, Interview with the Author, February 28, 2012, Hanover, KS.

¹⁹ Washington County Museum, *Hanover Business Database*. Accessed, February 4, 2012.

²⁰ Armstrong, Sid. 2/26/2012.

With the newly available land, the Railroad hosted a major land auction to entice buyers to begin farming in the Hanover area.²¹ At the same time, Father Pichler of the Hanover Catholic Church launched an advertising campaign among German Immigrants on the East Coast.²² Between these two efforts, large land plots for farming and two to three acre business and residence lots were sold to the American City dwellers looking for an adventure and new life out west and to immigrants that were fresh off of the boat from Europe through Ellis Island, New York.

AUCTION SALE OF LOTS
AT
HANOVER, WASHINGTON CO., KS.

St. Joseph & Denver City Railroad
Open and Running Daily to Hanover, Kansas.

We will sell at Auction on the premises, on
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, '71,

A large number of Business and Residence lots in the town of Hanover, Kas.

This flourishing town is situated on the line of the Saint Joseph & Denver City Railroad where it enters the valley of the Little Blue River. Being at the furthest south-west point on the line of that railroad, and having an elevated, most beautiful and healthy situation in the midst of a very fertile and rapidly growing country, Hanover must soon become a large and important business place. Its location commands the trade of the north side of the rich and soon to be thickly settled valley of the Republican River, through which, from that point by way of Washington, the county seat of Washington county, and Belleville, the county seat of Republic county, a daily line of stages now runs.

Located about half way between St. Joseph and Fort Kearney, at the end of the heavy, and commencement of the light grades on the St. Joseph & Denver City Railroad, it is the natural point for the change of locomotives, and the machine and repair shops of that Company, which we have not the least doubt will be established at Hanover.

Contiguous to the town site on the West, run the clear and rapid waters of the Little Blue, with an abundance of timber on its banks, and tall and voluminous water sufficient to propel almost any amount of machinery, which when erected, will be tributary of this place.

In order that those attending this sale might have a chance to secure some of the best lots, a number of them have been withheld from the market.

Laboring Men, Merchants, Mechanics, and Capitalists.

Here is a chance to buy lots that will double in value before the credit payment becomes due.

TERMS OF SALE.—Purchasers in the amount of one hundred dollars or less will pay half cash, and the balance with ten per cent interest in six months; where the amount exceeds one hundred dollars, one-third cash will be required, and the balance with ten per cent interest in six and twelve months. Bonds for deeds will be given; or if the purchaser money be fully paid, deeds of general warranty will be executed and delivered.

In order to afford an opportunity to as many as wish to make an excursion over the Railroad to Hanover, or to attend the lot sale, half fare excursion tickets, good for three days, will be sold at the ticket offices along the line of the Saint Joseph and Denver City Railroad.

The sale will commence at 9 o'clock A. M. Refreshments will be furnished free to all.

CHADWICK & NIXSON

Figure 8 R.R. Land Auction Flyer, 1871, Hanover, KS. SOURCE: Washington County Museum and Historical Society

²¹ Bowman, W. "Auction Sale of Lots", *The Hanover Ledger*, September 14, 1871.

²² Laue, Irene. 2/28/2012.

The very next year, 1871, brought W. Wendell's Billiard Hall and the very first brick building in Hanover: Charles Jocker's Brewery. *The Hanover Democrat*, on May 3, 1878, reported that Jocker's manufactured a "superior article" using all of the latest equipment of the time and that Wendell's place was one of recreation and leisure, where "the inner man can be fully supplied by Mr. Wendell and the palatable drinks of the season."²³ *Berns, Snively, & Co* and *Hellman and Turk* were already highly successful grain and stockyards that flourished with the business brought in by the Railroad. With all of this growth, Hanover more than qualified to become incorporated. In 1872, the town elected T.H. Smith mayor.²⁴

Shortly following thereafter, Hanover's beloved founder, Hollenberg, died and was buried at sea on his way to his homeland where he planned to recruit new immigrants. This was a difficult year for the young town as a grasshopper invasion destroyed the crops that were so central to the community sustenance and livelihood.²⁵

²³ *Hanover Weekly Enterprise* clipping. Date Unknown. Accessed at Washington County Museum, February 18, 2012.

²⁴ Centennial History.

²⁵ Centennial History.

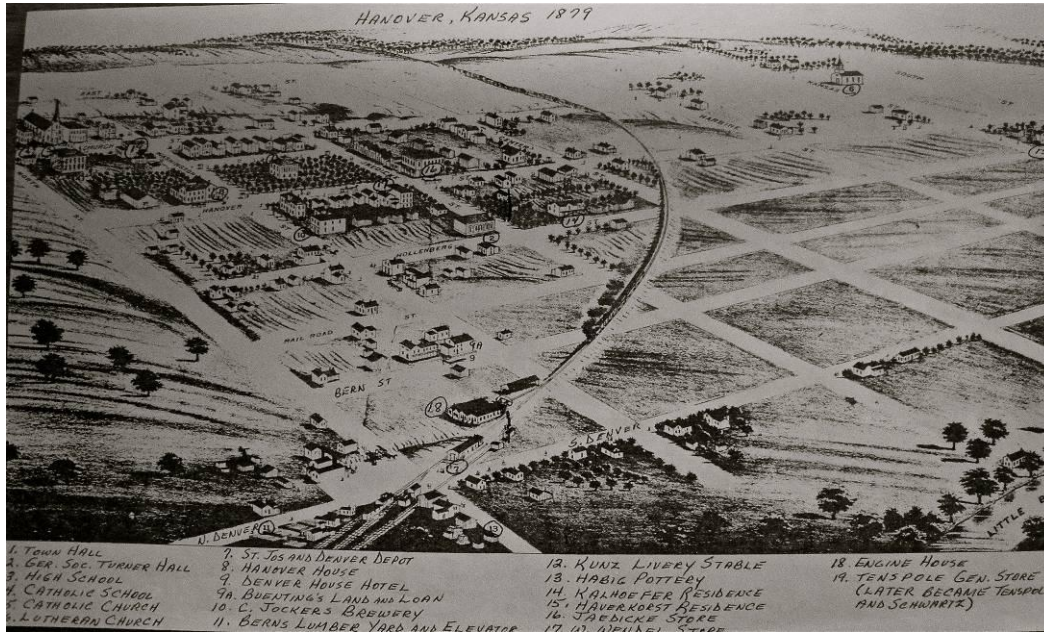


Figure 9 Hanover Map , 1879, Before the shift, downtown Hanover was organized around the town square.
 SOURCE: Washington County Museum and Historical Society.



Figure 10 City of Hanover Map, 1890-1900. SOURCE: 1899 Sandborn Fire Insurance Map & 1901 City of Hanover Tax Records. Compiled by the Washington County Museum Staff in 2010.

Church Community

The hearty pioneer community proved itself to be profoundly strong as they continued to grow in the years after Hollenberg's death. The Zion Lutheran Church and a Methodist Church were established in 1874 to join the two churches that were already active in the community. Both the Catholic Church and the Lutheran church managed to hold church services, activities, and parochial schools for their parish.²⁶ By 1895, five years after the school children began to speak English in their lessons, a new Methodist church began English language services.²⁷ Later, these services combined with the Evangelical Society to form the Evangelical United Brethren.²⁸



Figure 11 Hanover from a Biplane, 1912. SOURCE: Wichita State University Special Collections

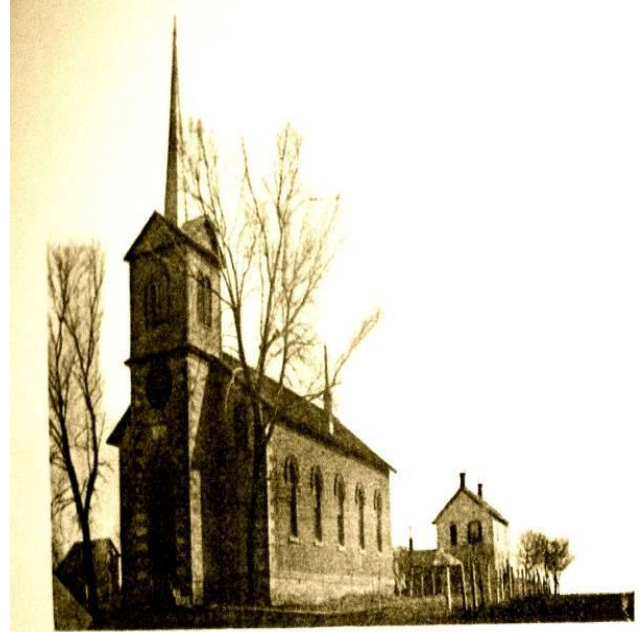
²⁶ Laue, Irene. 2/28/2012

²⁷ Centennial History.

²⁸ Laue, Irene. 2/28/2012.



Figure 12 Zion Lutheran Church 2012



E. V. Luthern Church, Hanover, Kansas.

**Figure 13 Zion Lutheran Church before the 1930s
tornado and addition, Circa 1920. Hanover, KS,
SOURCE: Washington County Museum and
Historical Society**



Figure 14 St. John's Catholic Church 2012



**Figure 15 St. John's Catholic Church circa 1940.
Hanvoer, KS. SOURCE: Washington County Historical
Society**

Bricks and Mortar

“Hanover is considered by all, to be the most beautiful town in the west...A superior quality of brick are made here, as can be seen by some of our buildings.” (Hanover Weekly Enterprise)²⁹

In the early 1870s a family moved to Hanover and started a brick factory. True to its German heritage, Hanover’s first brick building in 1874 was a Brewery.³⁰ In 1874, Turner Hall was built, providing a men’s club, beer garden, plays, music, dances, and even a gymnastics group.³¹ The Jaedicke General store also joined the ranks of the brick buildings. Many more buildings began to spring up, but these three continue to stand in 2012 as memories of the early days of Hanover.

The Gabriel Scheetz family arrived in Hanover in 1878 to farm the land. Gabriel’s son Charles Scheetz, who was 17 at the time, later became a blacksmith.³²

“Grandfather Charlie (Charles Scheetz) married Elizabeth Schwartz, who, at the age of six, came with her parents by covered wagon to Bremen, a few miles east of present-day Hanover. They arrived in 1868, before Hanover, or the town of Bremen, for that matter, was ever begun. John G. Schwartz, my great-grandfather was a farmer. His son William J. Schwartz...started Schwartz Department Store in Hanover.”³³

²⁹ *Hanover Weekly Enterprise.*

³⁰ Scheetz, Jim. 2/18/2012.

³¹ Laue, Irene. 2/28/2012.

³² Hanover Business Database. Compiled by Washington County Museum. Accessed Feb. 18, 2012.

³³ Scheetz, Jim. 2/18/2012.

A family with strong ties to the railroad, the Scheetz family purchased Hanover's first brick building and began operating a restaurant in 1946. Their son, Jim Scheetz, explains,

"Just after my parents were married in 1924, my Dad worked on the railroad. My mom joined the crew as a cook in the meal car where she learned how to cook to please healthy appetites. Her wizardry in the kitchen became well-known when they owned the restaurant."³⁴



Figure 16 Originally Jocker's Brewery: Later the Scheetz' Restaurant (Photo 2012)

³⁴ Scheetz, Jim. 2/18/2012.



Figure 17 Originally the Jaedicke Store (Photo 2012)



Figure 18 Originally Turner Hall (Photo 2012)



Figure 17 Erastus Prall, one of the early residents, with his pet bear cub (W.C.M)



Figure 20 Fire Company 1886- Turner Hall in Background (W.C.M.)

Like Nowhere Else

This once thriving agricultural community's strong ties to German roots, its emphasis on education, its links to the development of the American west through the Pony Express and the Railroad, and its spirit of civic engagement that can be observed in the

volunteers of the Kloppenburg Center, to this day, all set Hanover apart as a unique community that is really like nowhere else. Perhaps nothing encapsulates this uniqueness like the entrepreneurial spirit that drove early settlers to diversify their business ventures, take a chance, and invest deeply in their town.

Newspapers

Many rural communities in the 1900s operated at least two newspapers to cover stories from varying political perspectives. Hanover was no exception, yet its newspaper history is a history in its own right. In 1871, W. Bowman started the *Hanover Ledger*,³⁵ chronicling the commencement of railroad activity and all of the town's initial growth.

Other records of a newspaper indicate that Gerat Hollenberg, himself, also tried his hand at editing in the *Hanover Weekly Enterprise*.³⁶

In 1874, August Jaedicke (of the Jaedicke store) and Louis Moll began to operate the *Hanover Pioneer*, which quickly changed its name to the *Hanover Independent*.³⁷

In 1877, E.N. Emmons began to publish the *Washington County Sun*, which would later become Hanover's present news source. The name lasted for only 22 weeks before Emmons sold the paper to J.M. Hood who renamed it the *Hanover Democrat*. Succeeding Hood as editors and owners of the *Hanover Democrat* were B. Campbell, James Pontius, and B. Dieker.³⁸

While Pontius was editor, it is said that D. Munger, a friend of Hood, returned to Hanover in 1900 in hopes of taking over the *Democrat*, but when Pontius refused to sell,

³⁵ Centennial History.

³⁶ *Hanover Weekly Enterprise*.

³⁷ Centennial History.

³⁸ Centennial History.

began operating a different paper, *The Hanover Herald*. But, in 1948, 27 years after purchasing the *Democrat*, Dieker bought the *Herald*. The two papers merged and were published by Leo Dieker as the *Hanover News* until his death in 1967, when the Sands family purchased the paper. They continue to publish it through the present day.³⁹

“The Days of 49”

“The year 1849 had special meaning for the people of Hanover in regards to the city’s founding father. It was also the year that travel along the Oregon Trail became heavy. But most of all, it signified an era when people of little means were filled with high hopes and great expectations.” (From “Hanover’s First ‘Days of ‘49’”, by Jim Scheetz)

Hanover is known throughout the region for the annual “Days of ‘49 Festival. Irene Laue, of the Washington County Historical Society, a community volunteer who traces her family history in Washington County back to 1882, remembers attending the festival every year starting just as soon as she was old enough to remember.⁴⁰ This continues to be a time of celebration that has included, throughout the years, parades, baseball games, fire-department water fights, a greased pig chase, a pow-wow and dancing with “real Indians”, steer riding, pony races, a kangaroo court, beard and mustache and sun-bonnet judging, sack races, a rooster pull, dances, bands and a rodeo.⁴¹

This festival began in 1933, in the midst of the great depression. The stock market had crashed just four years earlier and a major drought ravaged the country. However, the

³⁹ Washington County Museum. <http://www.washingtoncountyks.net/newspapers.html>.

⁴⁰ Laue, Irene. 2/28/2012.

⁴¹ Scheetz, Jim. “Hanover’s First ‘Days of ‘49’”. Provided by the author. Feb. 22, 2012.

pioneer spirit remained vibrant in Hanover and people tried to return to the mood of the era of prosperity that many of them had experienced in 1948 and 1949. During that time, the gold rush in California had promised riches to many young men, including Gerat Hollenburg and others in the Hanover community. The gold rush had been followed by major economic boom. People moved out west in droves, all hopeful and believing in the American Dream of hard work and prosperity. The festival was an effort to return to this prosperous spirit, to reinvigorate hope and merriment.⁴²



Figure 21 Annual “Days of ’49 Festival in the 1930s (Before it was moved to the fairgrounds) Hanover, KS. Photo courtesy of Loren Doebele. SOURCE: Washington County Museum and Historical Society.

In many ways, the “Days of ’49” Festival encapsulates the spirit that continues to pervade the town of Hanover. It continues to be a community of volunteerism and strength, where residents gather at the Kloppenburg Center, and where much work and dedication

⁴² Scheetz, Jim. 2/18/2012.

has been invested in preserving the history of commerce, of language, of family, and many other important elements of life in Hanover that this project cannot begin to overview.

However, the Washington County Museum contains many aspects of archived history that residents of Hanover have compiled and preserved in a rich collection of a vibrant community's past. Without their expertise, archival work, and memories, this project would not be possible.

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