“They Made Us Dance in the Pig Trough!” Mrs. Blanche Story’s Oral Accounts of Dating, Courtship, Marriage and Sexual Attitudes in Northcentral Nebraska, 1885-1910

Gayle Waggoner

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"THEY MADE US DANCE IN THE PIG TROUGH!"

MRS. BLANCHE STORY'S ORAL ACCOUNTS OF
DATING, COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE, AND SEXUAL ATTITUDES
IN NORTHCENTRAL NEBRASKA, 1885-1910.

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
the Department of Intercultural and Folk Studies
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Gayle A. Waggoner
July 1977
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Dean of the Graduate College
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Directed by: Dr. Lynwood Montell, Dr. Burt Feintuch, and Dr. Jim Bennett

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Oral recollections concerning dating, courtship, marriage, and related attitudes were collected from a single informant, Mrs. Blanche Story of Butte, Nebraska. Through in-depth questioning during twelve tape-recorded interview sessions, value- and attitude-oriented accounts were secured for the years 1885 to 1910, the late frontier period in northcentral Nebraska. These detailed reminiscences focus on common life experiences related to interpersonal relationships and the institutions related to them, resulting in a personal, or folk history. The single greatest problem in research was the lack of documentation for the attitudinal content of the texts. Corroboration of both specific information and broad patterns of behavior was accomplished through the use of the local newspaper (Butte Gazette, 1885-1911), folklore journals, Plains social histories, and standard reference volumes. This presentation of one woman's beliefs and attitudes is academic, yet uniquely individual. The information within this thesis is valuable not only as research material, but also as a personal view of three basic human institutions and the attitudinal system that encompasses them.
PREFACE

On the pages which follow, those who read this thesis will meet my grandmother, Mrs. Blanche Story. She is an eighty-nine-year-old Nebraska pioneer, who tells stories about tornadoes, blizzards, prairie fires, and duststorms; serving dinner to Doc Middleton and his gang of outlaws; Fourth of July celebrations with the Ponca and Yankton Sioux; and trips made by covered wagon when she was only five-and-a-half years old. However, she remembers much more than these spectacular episodes. Hers is an extraordinary memory filled with reminiscences of the ordinary.

For a few days during the past year she became sixteen again—and nineteen, and twenty-three. She re-lived a time in her life, recreating it with great honesty, which most people reduce to a few sentimental tales or bad jokes. I was privileged to have gone back with her, for without her this thesis would not be. Thanks, Gram.
Blanche Staples, age 18
Butte, Nebraska.

Mary Ann Piggott Staples
Chicago, Illinois.

Uncle Will Piner, Mary Ann Piggott,
and Aunt Mary Piner on their homestead in Armour, South Dakota.
Elizabeth Sparks Staples

Fannie Harmon Piggott
INTRODUCTION

Oral historical research is my special interest in folklore and is what I wanted to present as the foundation of my thesis. I further wished to center my study upon Nebraska or the Plains region. Too often oral historians deal with the nation's elite or focus on specific historical events, and for that reason, descriptions of many common life experiences have gone unrecorded.

Allan Nevins, who founded Columbia University's oral history program in 1948, insisted that oral historians must focus on Americans whose lives had been "significant," the decision-makers. Other oral historians followed this example despite occasional suggestions to the contrary. Carl Becker called for a "personal" rather than a "national" view of history in a 1931 essay\(^1\) while Benjamin Botkin offered his now much-quoted definition of folk history as "history from the bottom up" in his introduction to the book of slave narratives Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery.\(^2\) Lynwood Montell published The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History, demonstrating that people at the grass roots

\(^1\)Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," American Historical Review 37 (January 1931): 229.

level were indeed chroniclers of their own lives.

Some years ago at the Sixth Colloquium on Oral History, Richard Dorson included in his address a phrase with which many others had unofficially labeled their research, "oral folk history." He defined it as "the historical perspectives of the folk" and split it into two elements: "oral traditional history" and "oral personal history." My final choice of the related stages of dating, courtship, and marriage was based on my gradual realization that oral collection and documentation of oral personal history topics such as these had not been done--except for simple collection of superstitions, sayings, customs, and traditions associated with them. For the same reason I added marital and sexual attitudes as I became aware that they had not been dealt with in oral history.

I offer oral accounts concerning dating, courtship, marriage, and related attitudes. They were collected from a single informant, my grandmother, Mrs. Blanche Story of Butte, Nebraska. Blanche Story is one of the oldest individuals in the community, and was reared in a three-county area of South Dakota and Nebraska. By Butte standards she is middle class, and further holds an esteemed position within the community by virtue of having lived there all her life and having operated her own beauty salon for some years. She is one of the

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few remaining original pioneer settlers in the region.
Possessed of a willingness to talk about very personal reminiscences, she was able to provide very detailed accounts for the selected period 1885-1910. This roughly covers the time between her parents' marriage and her own, in 1911. As she married at a late age for those days, her memories are concentrated between these years. The period forms a natural time unit: 1885-1910 covers the "frontier" period in northcentral Nebraska, from the days before such towns as Butte were incorporated, through the beginnings of change which accompanied the years just prior to the First World War.

The texts were collected during twelve tape-recorded interview sessions with Blanche Story. Some texts were reelicited as a check for accuracy and detail. I have changed the names of all individuals mentioned by Blanche except for Story or Staples family members so as not to invade their privacy. In-depth questioning was the method used, based on ideas and finding list models suggested by examples from Don Yoder, Michael Owen Jones, and Sean O'Suilleabhan.4 Dealing with one informant, especially because she is my grandmother, encouraged the intimacy and depth questioning necessary for researching an area of such a personal nature. Jan Vansina offers assurance that this type of oral historical data,

"personal recollections," is especially useful for finding out about "social aspects of the past." He adds, "Facts supplied by traditions of this kind are astonishingly detailed, at least when the information is reliable, and very diverse. ... As falsification rarely occurs, they are extremely trustworthy."

Corroboration remains somewhat a problem. Similar fieldwork conducted within the area or region may someday provide a broad information base which may be used to determine data standardarity or idiosyncrasy. Presently, newspapers, folklore journals, and a few books dealing with Plains social history have proved most useful for corroboration. Many of the particulars concerning sexuality and attitudes simply have not been documented previously. Occasionally diaries or letters may offer these types of information, but such specific corroboration is rare.

Value- and attitude-oriented areas of research have been neglected not only by folklorists but also by social historians. Studies by sociologists and psychologists usually are statistical presentations rather than individual, personalized accounts. Happily, though, presentation of folk attitudes and beliefs can be both academic and uniquely personal.

The feminist movement has stimulated many disciplines to begin much-needed research on women's roles, attitudes, and stereotypes, from both historical and contemporary per-

spectives. I offer my thesis as the type of research material which folklorists and other social scientists may find useful. More importantly, however, this work presents one woman's intimate, experiential views with respect to three of the most basic human institutions.

The Story family's roots go back to Ireland, but it was in Iowa, in 1869, that John Story married Caroline Weber. They had four children, the youngest of whom, Harvey (Hod), was born in 1884 near Stuart, Nebraska. In 1890, John Story brought his family to Butte, Nebraska, where he opened a hardware store. Hod worked in that store, played clarinet in a traveling carnival band, proved up on a South Dakota homestead, and in 1911, married Blanche Staples.

Alfred and Elizabeth Staples were married in London in 1861, and thirteen years later they emigrated to the United States. In 1887, their only surviving son, John, married an Englishwoman named Mary Ann Piggott, and the following year Blanche Staples was born to them on a homestead in South Dakota. One year after John and Caroline Story moved to Butte, John and Mary Ann Staples came to a farm on the Niobrara River, just southwest of Butte. Their daughter Blanche grew up in the Sandhills and river breaks, and when she was twenty-three, married Hod Story.

Northcentral Nebraska (Basin, McCulley, Butte, Spencer, Ware, Morton, Bristow, Bush, Lynch, and Mullen Townships and

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6 Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 8 August 1976.
Holt County) lies in the high plains. The area is not flat or rolling countryside, but is filled with the valley and crevices caused by breaks of the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers, Ponca Creek, and many smaller streams. Buffalo, wheat, bluestem, and needlegrasses are common vegetation, with about fifty per cent of the land serving as pasture. While such varied crops as potatoes, vegetables, timothy, and sugar beets have been cultivated there, the largest crop is corn, followed by oats, wheat, alfalfa, clover, barley, rye, and sorghum. Although the average annual precipitation is about twenty-two inches, creeks, rivers, and artesian wells serve to irrigate the crops today.7

When the first settlers arrived, however, the territory had just been opened after a treaty was negotiated between the Sioux and the United States Government in 1889. Eighteen-ninety was not only the year that the Storys and Staples settled in northcentral Nebraska, but also the year that the town of Butte came into being. Named for the nearby Harvey Buttes, the only visual, vertical relief on a treeless plain, Butte's boomtown beginning was auspicious; John Gormley set up a "wagon box store" in 18908 and two years later, as the temporary county seat of Boyd County, Butte City was thriving:

By 1892 Butte had two hotels, five dry goods and grocery

7Luree, Snider, History of Boyd County, Nebraska (Lynch, Nebraska: The Lynch Herald, 1938), pp. 6-8.
stores, three hardwares, one lumberyard, one brickyard, one stone quarry, one feed and flour store, one shoe shop, one furniture store, three livery barns, two blacksmiths, two restaurants, several doctors, a traveling dentist, five lawyers, a barber and three newspapers, The Gazette, The Free Lance, and The Banner. It had a good school and three organized church groups, all of which were building churches. The population at this time was about five hundred.9

Also constructed were a horse racetrack and an amphitheater. Unfortunately, by the end of 1892 and for the next two years, drought and hail ruined the farmers' crops and money was tight. The Drought of '94 caused the Staples family to travel to Holden, Missouri, to try their luck at farming there. Three years later they returned to the banks of the Niobrara.

By 1895 the "vigilanders" (vigilantes) had reached their heyday. What had started as a local community effort to rid the area of horse thieves had mushroomed into a group whose terror tactics, which included hanging and murder by night, struck more fear into their neighbors' hearts than outlaws ever did.10

The turn of the century brought Butte's first serious fire. Most of Main Street was destroyed; however, within six months the town was rebuilt, presenting a smart new appearance which greatly increased its appeal to settlers and stimulated trade. A new schoolhouse was erected in 1900, and by 1911 all twelve grades were taught in it. In 1903 Butte lost to nearby Anoka in the battle for a railroad, becoming "The Biggest


Little Inland Town in Nebraska,11 but its position as permanent county seat assured future growth and prosperity.12 Through the years Butte has become the archetypal midwestern small town, neighborly and friendly; however, due to population loss its days are numbered, as are those of many of the small towns in the region.

The chapters which follow will provide detailed accounts of social life in the Butte community and surrounding Sandhills area for the period 1885 through 1910. These accounts feature specific examples of how men and women met, dated, courted, and married, rather than simple descriptions of typical social events. Concluding remarks will suggest the ways in which these oral testimonies may be interpreted and evaluated.

11Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 13 April 1977.
12Snider, p. 38.
CHAPTER TWO

DATING AND COURTSHIP

By the time Blanche Staples turned "sweet sixteen," she was ready to venture into the world of dating, then into courtship, which eventually would lead her to marriage. There were many ways, in the early twentieth century, that a young woman could make herself appealing to young men.

Clothing and personal appearance were designed to make an impression on the young swains of Holt and Boyd Counties. Blanche characterized fashions at the turn of the century as changing from bustles and flounced skirts to shirtwaists and the Gibson Girl look--perfect for her eighteen-inch waist!

One dress I had I liked better than anything else. It had a yoke that came around in what we called a drop-shoulder yoke. It was blue, real pretty blue material--ten cents a yard--and it had a very pretty little Persian design on it. I had a ruffle around this yoke; this ruffle had lace on it, or in it--insertion or something, I can't remember that. It was a pretty dress because I came in to sew for Mrs. Jones and I had that dress on and she said, 'Blanche, you look just like a fashion-plate in that dress!' She was big and fat; she couldn't have looked like I did in that dress when I was sixteen. I had an awfully little waist; always did... 1

Two women's magazines of the period offer testimony to the appeal of the yoke shirtwaist style. In 1903 when

1Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 12 August 1976.
Blanche was fifteen and nearly ready to begin dating. The Deliniator exclaimed, "The popularity of the shirt waist shows no sign of diminution. . . . The sloping or drop-shoulder effect is a distinguishing feature of many of the newest bodices." By 1907, one Deliniator cover presents three girls wearing drop-shoulder-yoked shirtwaists on a moonlit porch, one reading and two reclining in a hammock.

In the 1909, 1910, and 1911 volumes of The Ladies Home Journal, shirtwaists remain the single most common and popular fashion look. Out of twenty randomly selected issues, over forty fashion features focused on, for example, "Can a Pretty Waist be Made for a Dollar?" "The American Shirtwaist," "The New Shirtwaists From Paris," "Shirtwaists to Wear With Tailored Suits," and "What Is New In Shirtwaists and Blouses," not to mention the shirtwaist's appearance in over a hundred other clothing layouts and advertisements.

Hats, hairstyles, and make-up were additional methods of catching the eye of a gentleman:

I remember when I was a kid, the prettiest hat I had. On the side it had a great big blue 'willow plume,' they called it. It was an ostrich plume, but they would take several plumes and tie them so they hung down--quite long things--and they called those willow plumes when they were made. It was a light hat with that blue, that light blue willow plume on it. I know exactly what I paid for that hat! Thirteen dollars and fifty cents! I remember about that hat because I paid for it myself. My, I thought a long time before I parted with that money! But it was a beautiful hat and it looked nice on me, so that

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2The Deliniator 61 (January 1903): 9.

was my one big splurge.

Most of the girls wore their hair up in a bun, but they brought their hair up and they kind of put it down so it puffed out. The older ladies would pull theirs up tight—but the girls would bring it down and let it puff out all around, and then roll a bun. Sometimes it would be kind of curly in the front.

They were just starting to wear make-up when I was a kid. I used to wear lipstick and powder. Lipstick and powder were all we knew!4

Before a girl began going out alone, it was customary for her mother to have a little chat with her. Mary Ann Staples' advice to daughters Blanche and young Lizzie, was not too explicit:

She used to tell us not to let boys kiss us, and not to get to 'heavy dating' and such stuff as that. Of course, she never used the word 'spooning' because . . . she didn't understand that term! But we got the idea. Spooning. That's what they used to call it. I don't suppose they do now. That's when you get kind of heavy dates. Lots of boys, you know, they wouldn't want to go with a girl if they couldn't kiss them, and you know--heavy dating. 'Sparking' was older than spooning; that was in my grandmother's and grandfather's time. It didn't mean the same thing. If you were just going out with a young fellow, I guess they'd call that sparking. I think spooning meant more kissing, hugging, stuff like that.5

Mrs. Staples' instructions gave the girls much leeway in their behavior. Whatever a young woman may have looked like, she might make herself a little more interesting through flirtation. Lizzie appears to have been an expert:

Especially at a party where they were all around a room, she would probably go over where the boys were and try to talk to this certain boy she wanted, and try to get his attention all the time. I was a quiet type. Oh boy! I never would have! Lizzie was more so than I was--she was a redhead! Lots of times I didn't like the things Lizzie did because she was more forward--the fellows just buzzed around her! She was always ahead of me. She didn't have

4Story, 12 August 1976.

5Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 27 December 1976.
to do anything. She'd just look at them and show them her teeth, and they were all around! She was very talkative and laughed; she was a jolly person. She had a personality, red hair--she was good-looking--she had a personality the boys liked. If you're redhead, you're supposed to be more vivacious and, I suppose, a little more sexy. They'd say, 'She's redhead. She's a go-getter!' You didn't get ahead of them unless you worked pretty fast. The redheads were always the ones who were talked about more.  

Women were not the only ones who flirted. Men might do so also, but had to be careful for if they went too far they might gain a bad reputation.

He could flirt very extravagantly and sometimes do things girls didn't like. When they were dancing, you know, they put this hand and that hand--that thing they do: allemande left--and sometimes he would take the girl's hand and tickle it, squeeze it as he came by. That wasn't much for nowadays, but oh in those days! I didn't tell my dad or mother or they never would have let me gone to one. They were real careful with the girls.  

Despite parental warnings and the threat of a bad reputation, at least one modern dating custom seems to have been fairly usual after the turn of the century:

Kids used to always kiss goodnight, you know. If you went out with a boy in those days, why usually you would kiss him goodnight. It depended on the people; if he was the forward type, he probably wanted to kiss you the first time you went out. But some boys were very retiring and they wouldn't push themselves onto girls like that. They'd go a few times before they'd ever ask you.

Blanche relates that her husband had not gone with her very long before he kissed her.  

Some girls were "nervy" enough to want more than one man:

6 Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 28 December 1976.

7 Story, 28 December 1976.

8 Ibid.
Lots of girls were sort of greedy! They had two boyfriends. Or there might be two boys who really liked a certain girl—they'd probably have tried to ask you out more often than the other would, or maybe they'd have the nicest rig, or maybe the nicest team of horses. And, of course, the fellow with the flashy team and nice new buggy was what you'd want to be seen with.\(^9\)

On the other hand, there were some boys no one wanted to be seen with: "We always knew if some guy had a crush on somebody—you could see that! Sometimes he'd knock over all the chairs to get over to ask you to dance, and you'd turn around and run the other way! I had a fellow like that once." But for the most part, adolescents met and dated quite freely. Blanche recalls, "Oh, I had a lot of boyfriends. I think I had a good time every place I went!"\(^10\)

Some mothers were not very "particular," and their daughters might have begun dating rather early in life: Blanche had to wait until she was sixteen for her first date. The gentleman's name is forgotten, but not the memory of that night:

I don't even remember his name now, but he came up and took me. He had a team and buggy, a top buggy and everything. I don't remember where we went, I guess we just went out riding—it was a beautiful moonlight night, I remember that! And us kids, Lizzie and I always used to sing together; every place we went they wanted us to sing, and I remember that night I sang. He wanted me to sing as we were driving along: 'My Sweetheart's The Man In The Moon.' \(^11\) ... I'm gonna marry him soon, / and behind some dark cloud, / where no one's allowed, / make love to the man in the moon!'\(^12\)

There were many social activities where young men and

\(^9\)Ibid. \(^10\)Story, 28 December 1976.

women had the opportunity to meet in groups, or date. Edward E. Dale's *Frontier Ways* presents a panoramic view of Plains social life which discusses many of the local institutions that the following paragraphs will detail. Some of these activities were not deemed very seemly, especially the most popular: the dance. Going dancing was the major form of recreation in Butte, however, and Blanche's mother had to acquiesce to the inevitable.

We couldn't even dance! We weren't supposed to go to dances! The boys kind of had to play a trick on us to get us to the first dance. They invited us to a party, and of course, parties were okay. Mother let us go. We had gone in this bobsled to the party, a whole bunch of us in a bobsled. It was wintertime, and I think that's the time we all tipped over in the bobsled going there too! Went right over a wire fence! Picked ourselves up and the boys whooshed off the sled and away we went! It was held out here in this old Mitchell house and when we got there--here came the violins out and the guitars, and they were tuning up. I said, 'What's all this?' One of the boys said, 'Well, Blanche, we didn't tell you before you came but this is going to be a dance! We knew your mom wouldn't let you come. So this is going to be a dance.' I said, 'Oh! We can't dance. We've got to go home.' He said, 'You can't go home. Nobody else is going home. We can't take this big sled back so you better stay.'

So we sat down, but it wasn't long before some of the boys came around and pulled us out on the floor. I said, 'I can't dance.' 'Well, you can learn!' So we learned. After, Mom didn't say much. I guess she knew she couldn't keep us from dancing all our lives. Oh, I told Mom right away. I knew she'd hear it. I said, 'Mom, that party last night was a dance.' But she didn't say much about it. And the next time there was a dance, why we could go.

Dances were considered sinful by most frontier communi--


14 Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 27 November 1976.
ties because they involved musical instruments such as the fiddle, and partners held on tightly to each other while they danced. Play party scholarship always mentions the inconsistent reasoning used by townspeople to prohibit dances, but allow play parties. Before dancing became acceptable, when Blanche was fifteen years old, the standard recreations were "parties" at private homes, where the activities included what was labeled "folk dancing." Blanche's account of parties agrees with the general scholarship concerning "play parties," indicating that they were simply known by a different name in northcentral Nebraska. In Holt and Boyd Counties invitations were sent out by word of mouth or the telephone party line, players came by buggy or wagon, parties were usually held indoors, parties began with simple games to break the ice, "folk dancing" was a dancing game in which players swung each other by the hands, music was supplied by the dancers' singing, and most often no refreshments were served.

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15 B. A. Botkin and Mrs. L. D. Ames both recognize "party" as a synonym for "play party." See n. 16 below.

however, cake, pies, lemonade, and coffee were occasionally offered.

First there were 'parties.' We just had parties... At our house the biggest room was the kitchen and that's where we used to dance. First we used to play games like 'Fruit Basket' and stuff like that. And then they finally got to so they'd play those folk dance games—is that what they call them? 'Here comes the preacher, what shall we do? Here comes the preacher, what shall we do? Skip to My Lou, My Darling!' Usually we sang; that was the music! We got into a circle and then we'd skip around, went round and you would go like square dancing—catch hold of this one's hand, and the next one's hand. Then you'd swing on the corners—only it wasn't called dancing! I always just called it 'folk dancing.' I suppose we had sandwiches and cake. You know, I think some of these places we went they didn't even serve refreshments.17

In Butte, dances replaced parties, and they soon became much more popular. The major difference between the two forms accounted for the dance's greater appeal. Blanche concisely explained, "It was because you got up and hung onto your partner!" One of her first boyfriends was a dancing instructor from whom she learned the fancier steps, and thereafter she made the most of her chances to put them to use at the many dance halls in the area:

He was a very proper young fellow; he was a nice boy and the folks trusted him. He was two or three years older than I was. I was going to high school but he was through. He was a dancing teacher, where he came from. He didn't live here very long, but I always went out with him when he was here. He didn't teach dancing here—there weren't enough people to pay. So I learned to dance real good while I went with him. He was a wonderful dancer!

I liked to go to dances with him because—oh boy!—could he dance! We did waltzes and two-steps, polkas and three-steps, and not too many other things, but the common dances, and what they called 'circle waltz.' They'd all get hands, clear round the hall, and then when the word was given you had to dance with the person to

17Story, 27 December 1976.
your right. Each one danced, then while they were dancing, another fellow could go around and tap another guy's arm, and that meant he had to let go of his partner and that fellow could dance with her! That fellow would take your partner, and you would take his.

When we were out in Holt County, down at the mill where the powerhouse was, they used to have a store there. And this store had an upstairs and that was what we called our dance hall. That's where we went for dances then. But when we came to Butte, they had a dance hall here. They had one in Anoka. Different places. Every town had a dance hall. At first it was right at the end of this street, where the drugstore's on--right at the very north end. We danced there a lot. The building is there yet, but they tore the upstairs off and made it into a mortuary. Then we used to dance in the big brick hall too, down in the basement. There weren't church dances, no. A lot of the churches didn't believe in dancing.

Picnics were a popular social pastime, but the biggest picnic of the year came on the Fourth of July and invariably featured a "bowery dance." Most of the time we'd go by a stream, but on the Fourth of July they'd build a great big 'bowery.' They'd build a dance floor; then they'd cut down trees--(they'd build it down on the river where there were lots of trees)--the kind with a fork where they could bring others down and put it on. Wasn't hard to build. Then they'd put boughs on it with leaves, and the boughs would make it shady. So they called it a bowery. They'd usually have some of the country fellows--they could all play fiddles, guitars, and banjos. Sometimes they'd even get a piano there. And of course, they'd dance all afternoon. That was on the Fourth or anytime in summer that they wanted to celebrate. Sometimes they'd have a speaker there, but it would always end up with a dance! Everybody would bring a big dish along for their family, and all around they'd have their picnic lunches. You went with your family--it was a family affair--and when you got there, there were plenty of boys. Families brought their boys, although there were quite a few of these older fellows too, like I told you. They tuned up--you knew when they were tuning up--screetch, scratch! These old violins, you know. As soon as the music got ready, the first guy that had the nerve

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20 The "bowery" at fairs and celebrations is noted in Piper, p. 264.
to ask the first girl— they got up and away they started around the floor. That meant everybody else jumped up and got a girl, and first thing you know, the floor was full! 21

One of the most typical contemporary dating situations is "going to the movies." Blanche and other frontier youth were not at a loss for similar entertainment:

When we were married, they just started to have movies. Before when we were going together, they used to have pictures they could throw on a big screen, but they didn't move. They would sing songs, like In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree, and as they sang the song they would change the picture to go with whatever they were singing about. Now that was the first—before movies started. 22

Yet another favorite social occasion for men and women was the "box social" or "box supper." 23 Invitations for the box social, as for other events, were relayed by the telephone which made its appearance around 1900.

That's one thing we always had over there /Holt County/. I was twelve years old when we moved over there, and a little while after they had telephones. You see the mill was down there, not so very far from our house and the operator of the dynamo—the electrician—was there. He understood about how to do all this. They ran the telephone on the barbed wire fences. They didn't need to put up those wires. So all you had to have was one of these old telephones that you hook up on the walls—which were not very expensive in those days—and furnish your wire to go from your house to your wire fence. They saw to it that all these fences were connected up, so we could always talk to Butte. And talk to all our neighbors; everyone nearly had a telephone. If anybody would ring, if your telephone would ring, everybody would run


23 Melvin Van den Bark notes the Nebraska Sandhillers' use of the phrases "box social" and "box supper." He adds, "The school house is generally the center for 'sociables,' and 'box socials.'" See "Nebraska Sandhill Talk," American Speech 4 (March 1928): 130, and Louise Pound, Nebraska Folklore (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959, p. 197.
to the telephone to listen. So you knew when you were on the telephone that you were talking to the whole party! The party line! A party line nowadays consists of three or four, two or three, but in those days everything was connected! If you were in Butte and were connected up with that line, you could hear what everybody was saying!

The box social supplied an evening of preparatory anticipation, good company, a home-cooked meal, and entertainment:

They were held in the schoolhouse usually in the country, to raise money for, maybe to do something on the schoolhouse. ... It may have been during the week when the men weren't so busy--men had to go. They were the fellows who had the money and did the bidding! Anybody that wanted to come: the more, the merrier, you see!

Women's husbands would bid for their boxes unless some guy thought it was his girl's box and he got fooled! They always tried to fix up their boxes real nice. One of the main things, I think, was fried chicken. Fried chicken and maybe potato salad--things that went with a lunch like that. Or lots of people would have some kind of sandwiches ... But if you were real fancy and wanted a good fancy dinner, it was nearly always fried chicken.

It was something like a shoebox, and you could cover it with plain paper if you wanted, plain tissue paper, and the lid would be maybe the same, or different. And then put like a Christmas box, a decoration like a flower, or a rose, or a lot of times they'd make paper flowers because they didn't have the flowers like they do now made of plastic. Or they'd take ribbon and decorate them--make ribbon bows, maybe red and white, or whatever colors they wanted. If it was a girl and she was going with a boy, sometimes she'd be a little dishonest and tell him just exactly what her box looked like! The rules were that they weren't supposed to know, but everybody knew that they did. There was a fellow who always wanted my box, but I never told him what it looked like. He'd try and find out, ask Lizzie or the other girls--try any means if they wanted to buy a girl's box! If they couldn't find any other way, they'd ask little sisters!

They always had the auctioneer: 'How much do I hear for this box?' 'Beautiful box!' And he'd hold it up all around and show it, turn it around. 'Smells good!' and everything. That was all comedy; they usually had some guy that was pretty good at that--pretty glib. He knew what to say. That was fun too--the auctioning off. I remember sometimes the boxes brought five, six, seven, or ten dollars!

Lots of the boys would work out for some other farmer, and they'd have quite a bit of money. ... If two boys
were wanting a girl, one would outbid the other and they didn't give a damn what it cost--they were gonna get that box! If you had quite a bit of money, and you really wanted a box and somebody else was bidding against you, you just kept going! They'd all gang up on him and bid against him, but when they saw that he was getting a little thoughtful as to whether he had the money, they quit. But they'd get him up just as high as they could! He didn't like that too well, but he wouldn't--right there in front of everybody--be bid down for anything. He had to keep his end of the bidding up, even if it did go to ten dollars and it was probably the last ten in his pocket!

He took the box. He was in possession of that box. That was his box because he had paid for it. The young lady--her name was in it. Her name had to be in the box. They ate in the school seats--if it was in the wintertime there was no other place--the schoolroom was quite large. Big enough so two people could sit in a seat and use the desk for a table. Later there was an entertainment put on by the schoolkids. If he had a buggy there, maybe he took her home!24

Perhaps a school program or literary society meeting,25 held in the evening at the local schoolhouse, does not seem to be the most likely setting for meeting a young man, but Blanche's account is an evocative portrayal of an experience she had never previously revealed to anyone.

I was going to school then--it was country school but I was past the eighth grade. The teacher wanted me to go to school because she was alone there and she didn't have anybody her age. She thought it would be nice to have me there so she wouldn't be lonesome with all these little kids. She said, 'If you'll go to school, I'll get high school books from Atkinson and you can go on with high school.' So I did that.

This was a program we had at the schoolhouse; we used to have programs: they'd give readings, plays. I remember one time I was the Sleeping Beauty. My sister and I, we used to live in the South, so we would sing Negro songs. We'd black up and sing Negro songs, because we heard so much of it down there and we knew how the Negroes spoke it, you know: Stay In Your Own Back Yard, Coon, Coon, Coon,26 and one about a Negro up a tree. We used to

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26Stay In Your Own Back Yard appeared in 1899; Coon, Coon, Coon in 1900. See Späeth, pp. 292-93, 313.
give readings. I remember a big long one I gave one time was Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight! Did you ever hear that? The little kids would recite their little ditties...

I was going to tell you about a fellow who took me home after the program and the silly thing I did. I wasn't expecting anyone to ask to walk me home. This fellow was older than I was. We didn't go clear to the house, and when we got into the lane going to the house, he was going to go back and get his team and buggy. So he was going to leave me quite close to the house there, and he asked if he could kiss me goodnight. Well I didn't even answer, but anyway he up and kissed me goodnight--and I just broke away and tore back into the house! I never told anybody! See, well, I was too young then, and I thought that was awful! My dad didn't like him because he was too old. He said he was too old for me. I don't remember--he was probably five or six years older. But he had lots of money! But I didn't care about the money. I used to dance with him lots! His brother always wanted to go with me too, but Dad didn't like him either, because he was older than I.

Only a few sports were considered suitable for teenage gatherings, in particular, ice-skating, and occasionally, horseback-riding.

We ice-skated about, anyway, once a week. See, we lived pretty close to the river. All us kids on one side, we would all get in a bobsled and go down to the river. Then the boys would build a big bonfire. There'd be people come from what they call Red Schoolhouse Neighborhood, and we were Staples' Schoolhouse Neighborhood, and there'd be some from over farther south--and by the time they got there, there was a whole bunch of them. The boys always knew where the ice was good, and that's where the bonfire would be built on the bank. They'd take something along for lunch they could hold over the fire and cook. Anyway, we had our skates. First we had skates we put on our shoes with a key, and then later on I bought shoe skates. We'd skate--oh boy!--we'd skate as long as we wanted to 'till we nearly froze, I guess, and then we came home.

I've ridden horseback with a lot of boys. Just happened to meet them and away we'd go! But we used to sometimes go in a bunch. Quite a few of us would go.

Baseball as a spectator sport, in this case, was a

27 Story, 27 December 1976. 28 Ibid.
crowd-pleaser, creating a fine excuse for a day-long trip.

This report indicates that double-dates were common then, and enjoyed some parental support:

When I was older, when I went with boys, we used to go up to the ballgames in Gregory, South Dakota. Sometimes it was all four of us.... They used to have two-seated buggies and single-seated top buggies. Usually when they went courting or to take their girl someplace, they used a one-seated buggy. Lizzie and I used to double-date; we used to go with a couple of fellows over in Holt County. The oldest was just a little older than me. We used to go up to Naper to celebrations they had up there. These boys would take us up there--they had a two-seated buggy--and we'd be with them all day. Walk around, and dance where they had the bowery, or they'd take us to dinner. My sister and I went with them to a tournament, what they called the Naper tournament.... I think we went up in the morning and stayed; we didn't at night. We came back because it was quite a long trip. See, we lived in Holt County, and then they had to come to Butte and then go up to Naper. Quite a ways for a team and buggy! Kids used to double-date quite a bit. In fact, the folks kind of liked it if they double-dated, better than a single date.29

Probably the easiest way to meet young men was simply to walk down Main Street on Saturdays and holidays. One surely needed some exercise after a social like the one described below!

The Methodist Church used to have their ice cream socials, had ice cream and cake--oh! That was a big affair. They would make a lot of money because they had all kinds of good homemade ice cream--lot of cream in it--and all kinds of cakes. I think it was twenty-five cents for all the cakes and ice creams you could eat! They would start early in the evening and serve 'till quite late. People would eat, then they'd go away, and come back and eat again! They'd have that on Saturday night when there were a lot of people in town. It used to be on Saturday nights here in town, the streets were just full of people! Of course, all the stores and everything were downtown then. Every Saturday night everybody was on the street, walking. All the kids--us girls--we'd walk up and down

29 Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 10 August 1976.
the street, and the boys would walk up and down the street. And every time the boys met the girls, well, they had to stop and talk. In the end, the boys met the girls. It used to be you could hardly walk on the street there were so many people.

Blanche sketches a brief but detailed picture of one of these chance encounters which led to courtship and marriage for two of her closest friends.

We had a fair—the fair always used to be in Butte. Ver and Lillie and Ethel and myself, there were four or five of us girls that always used to be together. In the old times, whenever there was a fair, the girls would get together and parade up one side the street and down the other. And the boys did too—when they'd pass maybe they'd giggle and laugh, and maybe stop.

Well the Lynch band—there was a woman band leader in Lynch. That was quite a musical town because there were many Bohemians there, and they're very musical, you know. They like the pum-pum, pum-pum, pum-pum. Anyway this band—Charlie belonged to it and also a fellow named Jim Smith. Jim and Charlie were quite good friends and they were walking up and down the street too. They didn't know any of us girls. (I already had a boyfriend but these girls were younger and they didn't have.) Anyway, parading up and down, looking at each other and laughing, they kind of liked the looks of Charlie and Jim. They'd stop and talk, and finally were introduced by someone that they knew, and they paired off—and that's when they first met! Lillie went with Jim and she married him; Ver dated Charlie and she married him!

They were only about seventeen, and I guess I was about nineteen or twenty. We were always together. I used to be at Ver's a lot and Grandma Story's, and Lillie was always there—and in the afternoon when the folks were gone, I'd teach them to dance!

I don't think they went together more than two years; Ver was quite young when she married. She was in high school, is what she was, because when she graduated she went down to the University for her first year, and just went one year. She was going with Charlie then, and that was the reason she was so dissatisfied, because I think she was crazy about him and she wanted to be up here because he was up here! I think they were married in 1914, Lillie and Jim were married after Ver, but Jim was a wild one—he drank. He was awfully good-looking, and so was Lillie—she was pretty.
As a woman got older she began to look for a man who might be suitable to marry. 32 One method of that era which was particularly productive was to join a postcard or letter exchange:

One time there was a family came here from down near Omaha in Sarpy County, hunting pheasants. No! Prairie chickens! They met Grandmother and Grandfather in town, and then they came out to our place. There was a young boy, maybe a year or so older than me, and when he went back he wrote me a lot of letters, sent me his picture.

... another thing I used to do, I joined a postcard club where we got a booklet with the names and addresses of people who didn't live here who wanted to exchange postcards. And many times you'd get exchanging cards with somebody and they would want your picture or something, or they'd always write something on the postcard—and first thing you know, well, they'd keep on writing. I've even had proposals from those postcard exchanges! Just from writing postcards! There was a girl here in Butte—I don't know if she started in with the cards, I think she was writing letters—who got married! There was a list of people who wanted to write letters, but I never participated. I used to exchange postcards with a kid who was about my own age from Newfoundland, and two or three fellows up in Canada, and out east in Massachusetts—I got a lot of postcards! 33

If a woman did not seem to be too interested in or successful at finding a man, self-proclaimed matchmakers tried to "help" her arrange a proper husband. One of these ladies tried to set Blanche up, as did her own grandmother!

There were quite a few matchmakers. In fact, my sister-in-law, George's wife—she was quite a matchmaker. She found a fellow that she thought was just about right for some girl she knew, and then she was always trying to get them together at her house. She'd invite them to

29 December 1976.

32 Andrew G. Truxal and Francis E. Merrill discuss the freedom of a girl in the West to choose the man she wanted to marry, in The Family in American Culture (New York: Prentice Hall, 1947), p. 103.

33 Story, 27 December 1976.
her house, so they'd be together; in fact she did make a
match that way! The teacher that was here, and then there
was a young man here (he was sort of a transient; he
didn't live here)—she did get them together and they mar-
rried. It wasn't common, only the women that thought they
were matchmakers, like Aunt May. She was very, very deter-
mined, and I think she kind of thought she was a match-
maker. I know of two girls that she tried to get together
with some fellow—and it worked! They didn't do it with
me; nobody told me what to do!34

My grandmother was always picking out a boyfriend for
me. We had a bachelor friend that lived just a block
over from our place; he used to come over to our place
quite a bit to help Dad with work, and would eat there.
Grandma thought he was a real nice catch! Because he had
money, and was already started and had his home and every-
thing—but oh boy! That made Dad mad! When she even
mentioned it he said, 'Mother, now you just keep still on
that subject. He's too old for her.' Dad didn't want me
to marry somebody too old; well now, in fact, I didn't.
Hod was only a little over three years older—that was
about right.35

At a certain point in a woman's life her relationship
with a man would change. His visits would become more regular
and perhaps the two would date each other exclusively. The
beginnings of courtship were at hand. Blanche defines
"courting,"

. . . if a young man was your date, and he came regularly—
say every Saturday night or Sunday night to see you—he
was courting you. Sometimes that was as often as a father
would let his girl be courted—Sunday night.36 And when
they got to coming oftener, that was a little too much!
Course if it was a dance or something you were going to,
it could be other nights but I think it was Sunday night
when they used to court.

Would they ever kiss or hold hands at their parents' homes?
"Not before the family. But if the family were considerate
enough to go to bed, they probably did!" The end result of
the courtship was that it gave the couple and their families

36Pound, p. 199.
an opportunity to get to know and accept each other. 37

Blanche remembers her own parents' meeting and subsequent courtship:

Mother /Mary Ann Piggott/ came from England, and my dad /John Staples/ came from England. They both stopped in Chicago. Her aunt ran a restaurant in Chicago and that's where she first came—to help. When that land /South Dakota/ was opened up, her Uncle and Aunt Piner came out here and she came with them. (My dad came over before Mother did; he was only twelve years old and then he lived around Chicago for a long time.) Mother was living there /South Dakota/ when Dad's folks came to the town of Armour, and they took a farm close to where Uncle Piner was. And that way my mother and father met. As soon as they heard these folks were English, they started going together. 38

They found out, of course, they were both from London, and that made kind of a natural tie. Grandma was real happy he had met some girl from England because she nearly died when she came over here. She was so homesick to go back to England. . . . They found out after they met and were acquainted with each other, and talked about different things they did in England, that when they were kids they had been to the same school party. Dad and Mother had been to the same school parties—but then the schools there were so big, especially in London, that you never remembered anybody. 39

Mom didn't like—his name was Staples, you know, and she knew that was some kind of nail—so she always called him Mr. Nails, or Mr. Bolts, or anything else she could think of. She didn't think very much of him, but he was redhead so he never stopped, he kept on coming and asking her to go places. She finally let the bars down and they started going together. She was going with another fellow; anyway, this fellow was bound he was going to go with Mother, and Dad was bound he was! Dad was a lot smarter than this other guy, but this other guy had more money than Dad did. Anyway, Dad won out, because he was a little bit faster-talking than the other fellow. He was plenty glib! 40

She also relates one remembrance concerning her grandparents' courtship:

I've gotten valentines, but they didn't send them like

they used to years before that. Now I have an old valentine that my grandfather sent my grandmother. Oh it was a real fussy thing! He was quite young when he sent it to her. He was the only fellow she ever went with I think.41

Lizzie dispensed with a traditional courtship and married suddenly:

Lizzie did just as she pleased. . . she was already engaged to him. See, she was in town here and he lived in town, and she was already engaged to him before the folks ever knew it. She just announced she was being married and there was nothing they could do about it then. . . . I think she would have gotten proposals if she hadn't married so young. She was only seventeen when she was married. I know of other fellows who would have married her, but she didn't give them the time to ask. She got married before I did, and she married an older man; course, I think I got the nicest fellow, even if I was slower!42

Blanche's reminiscences of her own courtship are comprehensive and illustrate one individual's pattern of four stages of romance: meeting, dating, courtship, and proposal of marriage.

His mother had the store here--his mother, and George, his oldest brother. And he always helped in the store after he got older. I'd always come to town with Mom, and Mom always traded with his mother. So when I was a kid, I even remember seeing him around the store. He was always sneaking around behind the counter and getting candy--he was a great candy eater--and of course, I remember when I was a kid, wishing that my folks owned a store so I could get behind the counter and steal candy! So you see, I knew Hod from the time I was a kid. When we were older, I had boyfriends over there in Holt County, and I remember seeing him in the store. Then I used to sew for Grandma Story and the girls, and I would eat there at the house and he was there too. I knew him but I never went with him.

I was sewing for somebody else, and a girlfriend and I went to a party or a dance--and Hod asked my girlfriend if he could take her home. She said, 'I've got to go home with Blanche.' So he was in the middle and we were both of us walking home with him! And the next time

we went someplace, he asked me! I had a boyfriend in Anoka that I was going with before I met Hod, and after I started dating him this other kid had to go out west. His father owned something out in Washington or Oregon, and he sent this kid out there. I had already gone once or twice with Hod, so when this kid left I started going with Hod. That was just an easy turnover, because the other had to leave anyway. We went to dances; they had plays and musicians--different entertainments would come to what we called our town hall, and we always went to those things. At first when we started going together we weren't very serious, and I used to go with other fellows and he would go with some other girl if he wanted to, but we finally settled down. I quit the other fellows and he quit the other girls, and we went steady. When you're a kid you don't know. Maybe you kind of like this fellow or that fellow, but you don't go with them long enough really. When I went with Hod, we just kept going together. I went with him about three years (I was just in my late teens when I started going with him); we were engaged about six or eight months.

You know when you're in love with somebody and when you're not. I didn't go with the other boys long enough. I went with lots of other boys, with boys I would have married if they'd asked me, but I didn't go with them long enough. You're just playing the field, you know. I had boys that asked me to marry them, yes, before that, and I think I thought enough of them to marry them--but they had to leave, and go to another state to work or something. And I never really said I would! First thing you know I saw another boy I liked better, and just forgot about him. Some were more romantic than Hod; I remember one fellow was from Colorado and he asked me to go back to Colorado with him. Well, I said I didn't know for sure; I said I couldn't answer that right now. Anyway I didn't tell him yes! He was kind of a nice fellow. Later on he married somebody else and had quite a famous son--he was a writer or something and he lived in South America! But I never was sorry I didn't marry him.  

Poets have immortalized it, ministers have preached about it, and thousands of men have gone through with it: "popping the question" has been played up and played down, but it is still the first big step on the road to marriage. Picture Hod and Blanche swinging in a hammock, one of the

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most popular courting "locations" after the turn of the
century; Story's proposal seems to have been anticipated:

It was at this house right up here, right on this
street that goes up where Genevieve lives. They always
had a hammock out on that big porch that faces south.
Then they had another hammock out in the yard, sort of
northeast of the house. If Hod came up to see me, why
we'd sometimes set out in the hammock. They had kids
around there; a little boy was always around the hammock
and sometimes he'd be in the hammock too!

I can remember we were sitting out in the hammock--
I was boarding then up at Weber's and we were sitting in
it. Course I don't know about very many people, I just
know with my boyfriend it wasn't a big thing. He didn't
get down on his knees or anything like that. It just
sort of came naturally. Hod didn't, you know, like
some fellows. All I remember is that in the conversation,
it just came in handy for him to say it and he did! So
it was easy for me. I think he really knew that I'd
marry him before he ever asked me, but I knew he was
going to ask me before he ever did! He didn't come out
and say, 'Will you marry me?' because he was pretty sure
that I would. When two people are going together like
that, you know whether they like you or not, and he was
pretty sure he wasn't going to get let down--because he
was the type of person--he never would have asked me
if he thought I was going to say no.

I liked him when I first met him; I always thought he
was good-looking! He had enough money to buy a home and
he had a job. He had already bought the clothing store,
and after we were engaged, he bought the home. So I could
not have asked for anything more.

44 "Courtship customs changed again in the '90's because
houses were being built with big shady porches. And out under
the trees was a hammock with yellow fringe," suggests Raymond
Schuessler, "A Century of Marriage Customs and Fashion,"
American Heritage 3 (Summer 1952): 61. Several photos of
courting couples in hammocks appear in "The Old Hometown,"
This Fabulous Century: Sixty Years of American Life Volume I
152-55. A man courting a woman in a hammock appears in an
advertisement for dress goods in Ernest Sackville Turner, A
History of Courting (London: Unwin Brothers, Ltd., 1954),
p. 175.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM ENGAGEMENT TO SHIVAREE: THE WEDDING

In northcentral Nebraska engagements were not celebrated in any way. A young man gave his girl an engagement ring, but not necessarily the kind given nowadays: "I got a ring; it wasn't diamonds. We didn't have enough money to buy a diamond ring at first. Seems to me it was an opal."1 Being engaged meant that "you had promised to marry a man and he had promised to marry you." Parents and friends knew about it; Blanche traveled from Butte to Holt County within one week to tell her family.2

After engagement, courting behavior did not change much, even though pre-wedding periods were typically one year long.3 The two went steady, that is, they did not flirt with others. A couple went places together; a hostess always invited both of them, and the man came over to see the woman much more often than he did before they were engaged.4

Engagements were broken more frequently by women in Blanche's opinion. She added: "When I was a kid many times

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1Story, 28 December 1976. 2Story, 12 August 1976.
4Story, 12 August 1976.
I read and heard of breach of promise suits but I don't know of one." The situation was unusual enough to capture a front-page headline in a 1911 issue of the Butte Gazette: the story related the adventures of a German-Russian man in nearby Naper, Nebraska, who had hired a "matrimonial go-between" to locate a wife for him. This male matchmaker found not one, but two prospective brides and eventually the first woman sued the young man for refusing to go through with their previously arranged wedding:

The young lady claimed damages in the sum of $2,000.00 for the blighted affections and a broken heart. After a general 'gab-fest' and 'katsenjammer' in which the interested parties and most of the relatives participated a compromise was at last agreed upon. Johnny paid the disappointed lady $250 for full and complete release from his hastily made contract. . . .

According to Blanche, asking a father for his permission was no longer very common in her area by 1911. Her own parents, married in 1887, did not have to have their parents' blessing. She simply told her mother and father that she had accepted Hod's proposal. However, some parents were not so liberal and they exerted a great deal of power over a young couple's actions, as illustrated by this oral traditional recollection: 7

5Ibid.


I remember one elopement that was really exciting! In fact, I knew the girl. She was a friend of mine. And I knew the man she eloped with was her teacher! His name was Skibinsky, in fact, I think he was a Pole, but he was very good-looking and this girl was his student. Of course, the father had no idea this was going on, but the teacher fell in love with his student, and she fell in love with him. When she asked her dad about it, he was very much against it because he thought she was too young.

But they were bound they were going to be married so one night--of course, this was all team and buggy; there were no cars in those days--they got the team and buggy and started out. The word got around that they had started, that they were eloping and running for the South Dakota line; ... and when the old man heard about it, and his son, they hitched up their team and they started out on the gallop and word got around through the telephone--as I tell you we had good telephone--word got around. Some of the girls called us up, 'Did you know that Phoebe whatever-her-name-was was eloping and her dad is after her?' I guess they were running just as fast as they could, and the father and brother were behind them but just before they caught up to them--they got across the South Dakota line!

Well they couldn't do anything about it. As soon as they reached the South Dakota line, you see, that was another state and our laws didn't work over there. So they had to stop. ... I'll bet her father was armed but he couldn't--. They crossed right there where there was a small town just over the line ... and when they got into town they had help--sheriff and everything--and they were protected. That was exciting--oh! But anyway they were married and lived happily ever after. I don't remember them divorcing or anything.8

This story may be corroborated through three articles which appeared in the January and February 1908 issues of the Butte Gazette. In the recounts of the story the identities of the eloping couple do not correspond, but in other respects Blanche's condensed version is essentially correct.

The Gazette version states that Golda Adkins, a young girl (fourteen or sixteen years old), and Henry Schonebaum eloped on New Year's Eve. They drove a team and buggy

8Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 16 August 1976.
twelve miles north to Fairfax, South Dakota, where they were
married by Justice Morrissey. Subsequently, Golda's mother
swore out a complaint charging Schonebaum "with enticing and
leading away Golda Adkins, a female child under the age of
fifteen years," and the South Dakota sheriff placed him under
arrest. The Boyd County sheriff, armed with warrants for the
couple, rode to Fairfax, accompanied by an attorney and Golda's
brother. Schonebaum's lawyer determined that the warrants
were not legal, so both parties took the case to South Dakota
Governor Crawford. He refused to issue extradition papers
"for the happy young couple who are living quietly and unmo­
lested at their home in Herrick." 9

The fact that after seventy-six years Blanche Story
remembered this incident, coupled with the extensive coverage
accorded it by the Gazette, seems to indicate that such dra­
matic elopements were not standard events. However, several
other newspaper articles confirm that disapproval of a marria ge
was the major reason for elopement.

The children of a seventy-one-year-old man were
"opposed to his getting married claiming he was too old and
of unsound mind." The resourceful groom brought his bride-to­
be from Holt County to Butte where the local judge married
them at the Boyd Hotel "in the presence of a large crowd of

9 For complete texts see the Appendix: "Young Lovers
Elope; Cupid derides Landlord Adkins and Wife of their
Daughter Golda," Butte Gazette, 3 January 1908, p. 1; "Chap.
2 of the Elopement," Butte Gazette, 10 January 1908, p. 1;
and "Extradition Papers Refused," Butte Gazette, 7 February
1908, p. 1.
of school children." A South Dakota couple whose families objected, eloped to Butte where they were married after their "marriageable" ages (thirty-six and thirty-seven) were established. One other elopement involved a fifteen-year-old girl who married a twenty-one-year-old man. The girl's father tried to stop them but arrived in Butte "several days" too late.

Parental disapproval was by no means the only reason for elopements:

My own wedding wasn't so much fun because Hod and I eloped. My boyfriend was quite shy and he didn't want to have any public wedding so when he found out that his mother was getting ready with a big dinner he said, 'We're not going to attend that big dinner; we're going to be married. We can eat the dinner but we're going to be married already!' So I got ready and he got ready and we went out the back door into the alley and up the alley about a block to the parsonage. The minister already knew we were coming so we went in the back door. The minister's wife was there; he and his wife were the witnesses. And we were married right there in the living room.

She adds, "We did it on the sly, sort of 'stole a march' maybe, on our friends and relatives." For those couples who married in a more traditional manner, the routine wedding preparations were remarkably similar to what today's bride and groom go through. By 1911 "stag parties" were already known by that name and were fairly

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13 Story, 12 August 1976.
14 Story, 16 August 1976.
usual:

Some of the groom's friends would get together. I imagine they had plenty of toasts and things like that for the man before he was married. My husband went to two or three of them. He did say... they sat up quite a long time and had something to drink.15

As the wedding day drew nearer, bride and groom split up the responsibilities in almost the same manner that they do now. The groom was responsible for inviting the guests he wanted, and for choosing a best man. He also purchased the marriage license for which the bride was not required to appear; there were no blood tests either. "It didn't cost much because some people were very poor and they couldn't afford to buy a license. That would sort of stop the population!" Following this purchase, a small announcement soon appeared in the newspaper (for examples, see the Appendix). The man also arranged for the preacher and paid him. The price of a service varied: If a man had money he usually paid about ten dollars; if he were poor he did not have to pay at all. Otherwise he paid what he could.16

An additional task was the purchase of a wedding ring. Wedding bands were much wider (⅛ inch) yet they cost considerably less than today's rings. If a couple did not exchange wedding bands17 the ceremony was shorter. Later, double-ring

15Story, 12 August 1976. 16Ibid.

ceremonies became popular but at the time "men didn't use a ring very often." Jokingly, Blanche added that there was one crucial responsibility for the bridegroom: "He had to be there! That was the main thing!" 18

The brunt of the wedding preparations fell to the bride and her family. First she invited whomever she chose. Blanche's younger sister, Lizzie, married Bert Clute in 1907. Their families and close friends were "just invited over the telephone." Blanche's invitations were engraved ones—but they were never used. 19

The major expense and responsibility for the bride was her wedding dress, accessories, and trousseau. Blanche's excellent memory, as well as her talent as a seamstress, allow a generational presentation of bridal clothing to be made. As a girl, Blanche used to sew doll clothes; then she made a simple dress on her own, requiring her mother's assistance only to set in the sleeves. From then on she made all her own clothes, and because of her skill began to clothe the entire family. As a teenager she hired out as a seamstress, and became known as one of the few women in Butte who knew how to sew "good clothes, like for a wedding."

She sewed her own wedding dress, which was actually a "going away" dress. It was made of white serge with blue trim and was worn to evening events in Omaha on her honeymoon.

My dress was made of white woolen material and it wasn't really a wedding dress... It was very pretty, but not like a fancy wedding dress... I didn't want to spend

18 Story, 12 August 1976. 19 Ibid.
the money. It had long sleeves and a sailor collar of blue velvet trimmed with white soutache braid, with blue velvet cuffs and a tie. . . . I still have the collar but I made the dress over for Mary Gayle (her eldest daughter). Most people put it in a box and kept it for their oldest daughter.20

Storebought wedding dresses were never worn to the best of her knowledge. A dressmaker, mother, or sister made the dress, if the bride did not, as when Blanche sewed for Lizzie. That wedding gown was long-sleeved and high-necked, not floor-length but ankle-length, and was worn with a little veil.21

The following narrative details the trousseau belonging to her mother, Mary Ann, who was married in 1887:

My mother had her wedding dress and then she also had her "going away" or traveling dress if they took a honeymoon trip. . . . She was married in blue; it wasn't really navy blue, it was a little brighter blue than that. It was real pretty. When I was six or seven years old I had a dress made from it. . . . I remember she would make over--one of the nicest dresses I ever had was made out of one of her dresses for her wedding trousseau. . . . I remember this dress was kind of a maroon color. It was kind of a real pretty flannel, not heavy, and it had gold-like plaids in it--it was a real pretty thing and she made me a dress out of it. Now that one dress I remember because I thought it was so pretty.22

Blanche's grandmother's unbelievable skill at sewing and tailoring is remembered more than the actual clothing prepared for her wedding in England in 1861:

Grandmother had quite a large trousseau. She was a wonderful seamstress. I have her wedding nightgown that she made herself with puffings on the yoke; she crocheted the lace and put it all down the front and around and up again, and the little cuffs were all made with this handmade lace, and very beautiful buttonholes--she even made the buttons--and the Shirring on it, it was all made by hand, and where she sewed it, it looked just like machine stitching. . . .

20 ibid.  21 ibid.  22 ibid.
Her wedding dress was made with quite a lot of pleats in the back to look like a small bustle. It was sort of princess-like; it came in at the waist and then out with a fuller skirt, but it didn't have a belt. In the back it had a peak that came out over the pleats that made the bustle. It might have been her best 'going away' dress because it was green velvet. I think she was married in a white dress although she never kept that. It was made of silk, you know, and silk deteriorates. 23

Between the weddings of her friends and the weddings for which she sewed, Blanche had the opportunity to see many different dresses:

The weddings that took place in Butte, they would have a real fluffy thin dress, maybe chiffon over silk, or something. Chiffon cost about one dollar a yard; it just took so much material, maybe five to ten yards, to make a wedding dress. When I was married, dresses were ankle-length; trains took more. They were made of woolen material in the wintertime, and summer material—sheer—in the summertime. Satin was used, even taffetas; taffeta was always real silk then and satin was quite the thing for wedding dresses because it was showy. It made a nice dress. One girl in Butte had a white, long, high-necked, long-sleeved dress that I sewed. It was not real sheer. ... I remember Mrs. Brown was making a dress for a girl, a doctor's daughter, Mary, and when she was married Mrs. Brown made that dress. I remember she complained, 'Making this dress is just like sewing nothing on nothing!' It was made of chiffon over crepe de chine; both were real sheer and really hard to sew. Some girls had fancy embroidery and beadwork. I don't remember exactly how this dress was made. I know it was supposed to be a real pretty dress. 24

Over a nine-year period, Butte Gazette accounts described such varied wedding attire as a white silk dress, a "blue gown and white veil reaching to the floor held in place by a wreath of orange blossoms," white silk with a long veil, "a white silk mousseline," "brown satin trimmed in white chiffon," 25

23 Ibid. 24 Ibid.
25 See these articles in the Appendix: "Sebers-Weber," Butte Gazette, 20 January 1911, p. 1; "Wedding Bells," Butte...
and a light blue satin gown, a heliotrope silk foulard trimmed in cream with silk overlace, and a gown of silk embroidered net over white messaline. Obviously, the traditional white dress was not always worn, and brides could freely select their choice of color. The groom, however, always wore the "conventional black."

Accessories were few and rather simple: veils had little headdresses of flowers, usually orange blossoms, from which the veil would stream down the back. If they were full-length, the veils usually went out a bit longer than the train. A girl's best shoes were worn, and if she could afford it, she wore white shoes. If not, black and brown high-button shoes were acceptable. Family heirlooms and jewelry were worn, and flowers were carried with a little Bible. While flowers were an important element of the bridal costume, it was sometimes impossible to have them: "They didn't have beautiful artificial flowers like they do now. Lots of women had beautiful flowers, picked from gardens, but during that time of year--


26 Butte Gazette, 1910, passim.


28 Roses, carnations, and orange blossoms were most frequently carried in Butte, Butte Gazette, 1903-1911, passim.
late autumn and winter--you just didn't have them. ... Hod didn't want flowers."29

The bride's family had to arrange for a place to hold the reception; most usually it was held at home, or a church or parsonage was rented. The bride's mother had to prepare a dinner, but since most of the raw foodstuffs were readily available, the major work entailed cooking, cleaning the house, decorating, and borrowing enough of everything to provide for a huge crowd. Only the best linens, dishes, and glasswares were used, as wedding dinners were designed to impress, and if the family did not have enough of its own, the neighbors most likely did! Nevertheless, improvisation was a key word, as a plank was laid across two chairs to form a table bench, or the party was moved outside so that there was room for all.30

Much as today, weddings in the early days of Boyd and Holt Counties were not designed so much for the bride and groom as for their families, friends, and neighbors. Marriage ceremonies were celebrated in a variety of ways: how a wedding was held, where, how many people were invited, and the style of reception following it were all status indicators. Newspapers of the day offer corroborative evaluations of the "quality" of individual weddings, as well as a comprehensive listing of wedding elements deemed important by society reporters, and ultimately, the community. A summary of the elements found in six Butte Gazette articles from the years 1903 through

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29Story, 12 August 1976. 30Ibid.
1911 appears below:

Aside from descriptions of the bride's apparel, all six reports mentioned the location (four weddings at private homes, two at churches), the time (one noon, three morning, and two evening weddings), the official (all six weddings were performed by ministers or priests), the music (four weddings were complemented with music; two were not), the attendants (four weddings included bridesmaids, maids of honor, and bridegroom's best man; two included no attendants except witnesses), and the reception (all at private homes: two dinners, a midnight ice cream reception, a three-course dinner, and a supper). 31 Blanche's reminiscences include specifics concerning most of these all-important wedding elements.

After some reflection, Blanche decided that just as many weddings were held at home as were held in church. The location of the wedding was usually dictated by the amount of money available, but occasionally by the romantic whims of the couple:

I think most of them were held in church, now my sister's was in the church. I was married in the parsonage. They were married in the church and then they would come home for the reception. That was the way it was done mostly. . . .

But I think quite a lot of people were married in their own homes. I made this girl's wedding dress when I was sixteen years old, and I guess that's why I was invited to the wedding. The wedding was at home. If they had more money they had a larger church wedding. If not, they did what they could do at home. The minister would come out, and there would be as many people there as the house could hold; the reception was right there. It was not a big elaborate thing if they didn't have much money. . . .

I remember there was a couple, I think before we were

31 For texts see the Appendix; see n. 25 above and "Married," Butte Gazette, 20 January 1911, p. 1.
married, they were married out on the Twin Buttes at sunrise--whatever they could think of that was outrageous! There was a wedding held out at these Buttes at one time too.\textsuperscript{32}

Most people were married in the afternoon or just before dinner (noon). That way they had "time for a nice dinner and to go home for the reception before they were ready to start on their wedding trip." Spring weddings were very popular in general, although within the Staples family late autumn seems to have been a favorite. Blanche married on the first of October and her mother, on the twenty-fourth of November.\textsuperscript{33}

The ceremony itself was not much different from a present-day exchange of vows. However, Blanche mentioned twice that the vows were always traditional: "We didn't add on to it like they do now and make up things like young people. We took the regular ceremony and that was it!" She reiterated, "It was there and you answered the questions the same as the old time ceremony." Without rings the ceremony was shorter, and length and content depended on who married the couple:

The minister usually performed the ceremony. If you didn't know any minister or didn't go to a church, then the judge did it. Maybe they would read through the vows and add a few words of their own at the last. With the minister it would be mostly religious words. Now with the judge it's according to the kind of judge you had. If he was a religious person he might give you some very kind words of advice, but otherwise, he might end up with a joke!\textsuperscript{34}

Talented vocalists and musicians sang for weddings either in the church or at home. Hod Story played in a trio

\textsuperscript{32}Story, 16 August 1976.  \textsuperscript{33}Ibid.  \textsuperscript{34}Ibid.
which performed at weddings, where the most popular numbers were The Wedding March, The Lord's Prayer, and O Promise Me. 35

The traditional accompaniment to the wedding was the reception or dinner following it. By 1911 the nuptial dinner was on the way out, and the reception (ice cream, cake, tea, coffee, and punch) was coming into vogue. It was still somewhat difficult to make ice cream, but if it were at all possible a hostess served it. Particularly memorable were the cakes baked for receptions; they were one-tier or two-tiers tall, in a tube shape. By 1907 light white or yellow cake was the typical wedding choice, never dark cake. These confections often were surrounded by candles or decorated in a "fancy" style, with the wedding date written in icing on the top.

Blanche's nuptial dinner was not served because she eloped; rather, her wedding was commemorated with a reception, an elaborate one which included not only the basics but also fancy sandwiches and salads. 37 Blanche's reception contrasts distinctly with her sister, Lizzie's, held only four years before:

I stood up with my sister, Elizabeth. We all got in our buggies and drove home which was about fifteen miles. Mother had a good country dinner ready: fried chicken, roast pork, roast beef, salad, vegetables, just a regular good old farm dinner. Out here in pioneer country, it was a pioneer meal. . . . Everybody was seated. The house was small but I guess everyone got seated, and then after dinner they all went outdoors because there was much more room there than in the house.

35 Ibid.

36 For a discussion of the traditional significance of the wedding cake, see Brasch, pp. 43-44.

37 Story, 16 August 1976.
It was a beautiful day! What they did— they amused themselves in many ways. They made the older sister, which I was, and an older brother dance in the pig trough. Because we were older than the brother and sister getting married! They actually used a pig trough because we lived on a farm and the pigs' pig-pen was out in the barnyard. But they pulled us out there, and got us out there, and made us dance in the pig trough! There was no music; maybe they whistled. I think the men whistled or did something. They made us dance! Everybody clapped after it was over with.38

We knew how to dance without clapping. We were all great dancers in those days. That was our main amusement. I remember all afternoon we entertained ourselves. How country kids entertain themselves I can't tell, but anyway they didn't have to— no time dragging— they didn't have to have anyone tell them what to do. They made their own entertainment! They played games. I don't remember whether the men played horseshoes or not. The women didn't, of course. They were all young fellows and young girls and, of course, we were all together because it wouldn't have been any fun any other way!39

Within the Staples family the usual bridal superstitions and traditions were not very common: the groom should

38This memorandum refers to the custom of “dancing in the pig trough;” for further information see Gayle Waggoner, "They Made Us Dance in the Pig Trough," Western Folklore 36 (April 1977): 69-70; T. W. Higginson, "Brides Dancing Barefoot," Journal of American Folklore 2 (January-March 1889): 66-67; and for discussion of the related custom of "dancing barefoot" at a wedding, see Urrill, p. 207 and Monsarrat, p. 35. The locution "dancing in the hog trough" is examined in Mary Washington Clarke, "Dancing in the Hog Trough: Folk Expression," Kentucky Folklore Record 18 (July-September 1972): 68; Harold W. Thompson, "Proverbs and Sayings," New York Folklore Quarterly 5 (April 1949): 300; and is presented contextually in an 1857 diary entry: "Dora's birthday. Seventeen! I think affairs are coming to a climax between Daily and Dode, and I guess the family will have to acquiesce. They seem happy... She will be married perhaps before myself, and I, to use a homely phrase, will be left dancing in the hog trough! Boo! hoo! Boo! hoo!" (See Mollie Dorsey Sanford, Mollie: the journal of Mollie Dorsey Sanford in Nebraska and Colorado Territories, 1857-1866, ed. Donald F. Danner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), p. 55).

39Story, 16 August 1976.
not see the bride or her dress before the ceremony, and the bride should wear "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue, and a penny in her shoe," are the only two customs recalled. A third seems to be a family tradition which has taken on the "something old" characteristic: "The girl would wear some kind of garter. Oh! The garter would be old; that would be a garter from some of her aunts."

One final note: alcohol was never served at the Staples' wedding celebrations, even though John Staples made excellent wines and served them on other occasions. Yet the ritual of the toast was not forsaken because of the lack of intoxicants: "They gave a toast with the fruit punch. My dad and John, one of the older brothers, gave a toast to the bride and groom. Dad was quite a big hand for that; he could always think of something to say!"

Nowadays, after the reception, as a new wife drives away with her husband—tin cans rattling behind them, shaving cream announcements of their marriage covering the car—the

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41 The "penny" version was collected in Nebraska as found in The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, vol. 6: Beliefs and Superstitions, ed. Newman Ivey White (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964), p. 656; and is discussed generally in Urlin, p. 241; Pound, p. 192; and Monsarrat, p. 231.

42 Story, 16 August 1976. 43 Ibid.
two are on their own. Couples of an earlier day were not so independent. Less than seventy years ago, the "aftermath" of a wedding was as intense an experience as the pre-nuptial celebrations. In historical narratives and personal experience narratives\(^{44}\) which follow, Blanche enumerates details of this aftermath.

Then, as now, the pair of newlyweds customarily enjoyed a honeymoon.\(^{45}\) These "wedding trips" as they were commonly called, served many functions. Most important, a honeymoon was most likely the first chance a couple had to spend any length of time alone together. And what better way to start out a marriage which might be hard-pressed to withstand the difficulties of Plains life, than to spend a few days in elegant surroundings! Where one went on a honeymoon, how long the stay, and the activities experienced gave a certain status to the couple when they returned home. Even if the pair were very poor, they at least managed to travel to a relative's house to spend a few days, a custom known on the Plains as the "infare."\(^{46}\)

\(^{44}\)Historical narratives include oral traditional recollections and genealogically-oriented recollections which are "not told for the sake of transmitting genealogical data, but . . . do carry names and episodes which aid in reconstructing genealogy." Personal experience narratives or autobiographical stories are "simple everyday life experiences which grow out of the past and present events in the life of the narrator" and are also defined as "person-oriented memorable, factual episodes." See Montell, pp. xv-xx.

\(^{45}\)For a discussion of the historical tradition of the honeymoon, see Brasch, p. 45.

\(^{46}\)Pound, p. 192.
After their wedding, Blanche remembers that her parents did not take a wedding trip—they went home to their farm—probably because they did not have enough money to take a trip. By the time Blanche married, however, honeymoons were "the thing to do!" Here, an account of her wedding trip gives a glimpse of Omaha nightlife in 1911:

We went down on the three o'clock train and it landed in Omaha in the evening. We didn't do any sightseeing that night because we got there and just got to our room and got in that first night. ... Stella and Ver /Sister and cousin/ were down there at the time and they went to lots of places with us; when we went out to the Aksarben show they were with us.

The Aksarben /Which is Nebraska spelled backwards, is an entertainment guild whose major spectacles, horse races and theatrics are more popular today than ever/ was on, and of course, there were many things to see; there were quite big shows. I can remember Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves was on and that was a great big show. They used to have in Omaha, they had big theaters then; it was a stage show. Everything was stage show then. They had a big show in the afternoon, and one in the evening, with skating--wonderful skating--and all such things as that.

We ate out in the big hotels and I remember we ate downstairs in one ... ; it was called The Vineyard. And the ceiling was all beautiful glass grapes with lights in them, and big leaves. All of the lighting in the ceiling was big bunches of grapes hanging down. There would be a purple bulb with a light in it, and it was a beautiful place! I remember we had lobster a la Newburg. It was wonderful--Hod was going to order two of them and the waiter said, 'No, you won't need two. One will be enough!' And when they brought it in, it was a great big tureen with lots more than the two of us could eat! Other times we ate at some big dining room, you know, where it was very wonderful food.

It was quite an experience; it was very nice. That's the first time I'd ever been to Omaha. Hod used to travel with the band, you know; he was a musician and he traveled with Parker's Band. They played in all the big cities, like Denver and Kansas City, and so he was showing me the sights. It was old stuff to him! We saw Joslyn's museum, all the big things like that, all the sightseeing places. 

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47 Story, 14 August 1976.
When the couple returned they probably moved into their own home, if they could afford it. Blanche says, "When I was married, the man always had a home to go to."

Our parents didn't make any arrangements; we made our own arrangements beforehand. Hod bought the store a year before we were married and then he bought the house probably three or four months before we were married. But we couldn't live in it right away because it had to be remodeled and painted, so we lived a month with his mother, with Grandma Story, before we moved into our house. Through this time Hod was working on the house; he had Zeke Hale helping him, and by that time our house was--see, he didn't dare go up and fix this house up, or everybody would have known he was getting married!48

No sooner than a couple moved into their house, they went to the photographers to have their pictures taken; photos were not taken during the wedding, but after the pair returned from their honeymoon. Then, the girl could expect that within a few days her friends would begin giving showers49 for her, similar to what Blanche describes here:

Nowadays they have the showers before a girl is married, but when I married they most always had the showers after the wedding! Now mine was a linen shower. I got a beautiful three-yard-long tablecloth, and twelve napkins. I got lots of other handmade and decorated towels and smaller tablecloths--anything that was linen. Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Gordon were two friends of my grandmother, and they got the shower up for me. They had a program: they had different ones giving a program, had readings, little skits, and then they served a lunch. They had cake and ice cream; some of them went into the kitchen and served lunch. This was in my home; Grandma Story and the girls helped.

I didn't even know it was going to be done. It was a surprise on me! Some of Grandma's might have told me--

48Ibid.

49The "shower" is a custom of American origin which appeared "very early in this century." It evolved from the custom of women giving a prospective bride one of their own belongings, enabling her to set up her own household. See Monsarrat, p. 232.
kind of on the q.t.—that they were coming. They brought everything; the girl wasn't supposed to know it but she always did. . . . In those days it was usually linen. Showers were just new, in fact, I don't remember of very many showers before mine.

By 1911 "housewarmings" were still not very popular in northcentral Nebraska; thus, the community's final commemoration of marriage continued to be the "shivaree." Oh yes, there were a lot of shivarees. Nearly every couple that got married, if they were popular and they lived around where there were young people, they had a shivaree on them. A real noisy one. . . . All your friends and anyone else who wanted to join in, they did a lot of hollering. They had a lot of cowbells, lots of tin cans on strings that they shook, and lots of pots and pans with spoons they banned on. They did everything they could to make a big noise. . . . They were always held after the wedding, and always in the evening after dark. They came for us—I think it was the first night we got home because, you see, we got in to Anoka and then we had to come home on the bus, and the

50 Story, 14 August 1976.

51 "Charivari" is a French term for "mock serenade" accompanied by beating on tin pans, kettles, and so on. "The French of Louisiana and Canada introduced the charivari into America, where it became known under the corrupted name of 'shivaree.'" Originally in France, it was a "mockery for all who were unpopular," as noted in Urrlin, pp. 237-38. The custom was reported in Nebraska by Pound, p. 193. See also E. Bagby Atwood, "Shivarees and Charivaris: Variations on a Theme," in A Good Tale and A Bennie Tune, eds. Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1964), pp. 64-71; and Monica Morrison, "Wedding Night Pranks in Western New Brunswick," Southern Folklore Quarterly 38 (December 1974): 285-97.

52 In Tennessee, as in Nebraska, a couple was unpopular if no shivaree was given for them according to Francis Boshears, "The Shivaree," Tennessee Folkl ore Society Bulletin 19 (September 1953): 65-69; similarly, an absence of revelry "may indicate that the couple is not fully accepted in the community," see Alva L. Davis and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., "'Shivaree': An Example of Cultural Diffusion," American Speech 24 (December 1949): 249-55.
bus man phoned them right away!

You might be sitting there visiting, and all at once you'd hear a terrible clattering and yelling. They didn't come after you'd gone to bed; they wanted you to be able to get out there with your pocketbook! Because they had to have their treats! A shivaree around here was usually a fair-and-square shivaree, and I don't think they tried to do any pranks. To stop the noise they went out and paid them off; Hod gave them from ten to twenty dollars.53

I don't ever remember anyone being shivareed where there were bad pranks played on them. Sometimes they'd have two or three bunches come and, of course, the man always had to come out and pay off! I remember they shivareed us and Hod got right out there in a hurry with his money and paid them off. He had to pay them off pretty good, too, because he was a prankster right with all those fellows before he was married, so he knew what it meant!

They had to look at the size of the crowd, and of course, they had to pay them enough so that everybody would get a treat. Now it was according to how many people were in it, and I know there must have been a lot. . . . The men and women would go downtown and buy themselves a treat. The women, I suppose, had one kind of treat, and the men had another--maybe the men had to have a glass of beer.

She also remembers that occasionally the crowd played pranks if the man would not come out and pay up.54 The reason for having shivarees in Butte, however, was probably more in

53 It was difficult to escape a shivaree in Butte, and the only way to end the disturbance was to "buy off" the crowd. The following news item cites another example of the pay-off within that community:

"Thinking to escape the reception he was sure was waiting for them upon their arrival in Butte, Dr. J. R. Beatty and wife stopped off in Spencer Saturday evening taking an auto from there so as to arrive home about 10 o'clock, but it happened that the news preceded them and shortly after entering the house a crowd of about 40 or more appeared on the scene and for some time made the night hideous with their noise. The doctor stepped to the door and put a quietus to the din and commotion by generously handing the leader of the army $20 which was spent in treating the crowd to ice cream, lemonade, and other refreshments" (Dr. Beatty's Shivaree, "Butte Gazette, 9 July 1909, p. 10).

54 Story, 14 August 1976.
order to receive "treat money" than to bother the couple. Elsewhere shivarees seemed to be motivated by the desire to embarrass the newlyweds by dragging them out of bed and playing jokes on them.  

Only after showers and shivarees, moving to their new home, and wrapping up the loose ends of the wedding, was a couple finally left alone to discover what it would be like to be married to each other. Until that point, the community and families had wielded great power in sanctioning the marriage or deeming it unacceptable. Woe to the young man and woman who, after a short engagement, were married at home with only a few guests present; spent their honeymoon with nearby relatives or in-laws; or were never once shivareed--surely they would have felt cheated somehow, and as though they were social pariahs.  

55For specific Kentucky examples of such pranks and jokes see Bowling Green, Kentucky, Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Archives, Wilgus Miscellaneous Collection, Courtship and Marriage Section.
Blanche's reminiscences concerning sexual and marital attitudes are subjective oral testimonies which are difficult to corroborate because few people have communicated, and even fewer have recorded such information. Generally speaking, as Blanche suggests, "The same things that are called immoral now were called immoral then."

Parents tried to bring up their children well, and they worried about with whom their offspring spent time:

Lots of times there were girls that were kind of 'fast.' We had bad examples /pointed out to us/ but my parents weren't very much on pointing out people like that. They didn't want me to associate with girls that were too loud and boisterous, you know. I don't think I was ever told that only 'good girls' get husbands, because I was smart enough to see that some of the girls who weren't so good got husbands, too! Might have got more of them than the good girls did! I couldn't say for sure that they were bad, but they might have been a little bit fast. . . . They nearly all of them got husbands. There weren't too many of them in my time that were 'old maids.' A 'bad' girl was pretty loud, bold. Girls didn't smoke or drink; they didn't do that in my day. . . . Teddy Roosevelt was president, and his daughter, Alice, was a young lady at the time. I remember reading in the paper that Alice Roosevelt smoked cigarettes, and everybody thought that was terrible! One of the first women I ever heard of that smoked.

Despite parental pressure, or more likely, because of it, Blanche Staples set her own standards and held to them. "I

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1 Interview with Mrs. Blanche Story, Butte, Nebraska, 13 November 1976.
remember we had a girl that didn’t have a very good reputation and I didn’t care about going around with her.”

Blanche relates that a girl was "supposed to be" a virgin when she was married: "Nobody could prove that it was the usual thing, but I imagine it was. Much more than now. It was fairly important and they all wanted to be. . . ." 3

Obviously, however, sometimes she was not, and a 'fast' girl might find herself pregnant, eventually being married off to whomever would have her:

Oh sure, they were pretty popular—until something might happen. Then, of course, they were dropped like a hot potato if they got into trouble. There were girls like that in Butte back then. I remember a girl, in fact, she's got a daughter that lives here now. Years and years ago she had that happen. Then she married an older man who had been married before, and he had four girls when she married him, and then she had some more children. But that's the way it was, if anything like that happened: they usually had to marry some older man. . . . Her parents were mighty glad for her to marry most anyone after that. 4

Unwed mothers and illegitimate children were problems which confronted the Butte community:

There were out of wedlock babies in those days too. Not as many as there were later, but more than there are now. I think because now, of course, they have the pill and there aren't so many. . . . I think illegitimacy was talked about by the women themselves, when they were alone. It wasn't talked about freely like it is now. It was gossip and kept under cover. . . . Sometimes the woman was excluded from society, according to how kind her friends were 5 and sometimes if she didn't have kind friends, she was

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2Ibid. 3Story, 29 December 1976.

4Story, 28 December 1976.

Two solutions existed for the young woman who was about to have a baby out of wedlock: abortion or raising the child by herself, if the father would not marry her. To choose abortion as the solution to an unwanted pregnancy in those days was risky:

Abortion happened sometimes. It was heard of, but it was very dangerous. It was dangerous and sometimes girls died. There were doctors here that would do it. Sometimes girls died. There was a married woman one time, she was kind of older and she didn't want to have this child, and she had an abortion but she died. Blood poisoning. It was very dangerous in those days, I don't know, the way they did it sometimes blood poisoning would enter into it. It didn't happen very often. But this woman, of course, everybody was shocked at her because everyone knew. She was a married woman, you know. She died and everybody was shocked. This happened at Spencer, because there was a doctor down there who was supposed to be pretty good, and he didn't do it right or something. Anyway, they didn't get the doctor because she wanted it, she pushed it on to him. For some reason or other he came out all right.7

The second alternative was almost as unpleasant as the first, but was chosen more frequently.

This girl I told you about... kept her baby. She didn't marry him /the real father/; she married another man. It was a boy; he lived in this town until he was a young man. He was kind of an odd character. The kids used to make fun of him. Those kids had a hard life usually because everybody knew it,... you know, the teenagers would get on it, and the children were very cruel and they would tease this kid. Poor kid, it wasn't his fault. Say something that would make him feel bad, tell him what he was.

The real father didn't marry very often. Usually he was a scoundrel and a stinker, and he'd hike off and leave her. The poor girl, she just had to raise her baby, and marry somebody else the best she could. I don't know, usually the fellows that did that in those days weren't

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7Story, 29 December 1976.
of too good a character.

Once in awhile there might be somebody kind enough to marry the girl. Course, we don't know ourselves, because usually they—if the man did decide to marry her—he'd marry her quick enough so that it couldn't be detected. They could say that the child was a seven-month baby, or something like that, if a couple of months elapsed, you see. Lots of times there might have been a lot more of those cases than anybody knew because it could be turned off that way and nobody ever knew. Nobody would dare come up and say they knew this other because they'd be blackening their character and they could be sued for that. They couldn't prove it so they kept their mouths shut. 8 If they were born early, well, people weren't in a hurry to jump to a wrong conclusion, so they let it pass. 9

Only very rarely did a father resort to a forced "shot-gun wedding." 10

The treatment accorded an unwed mother by the community was similar to the treatment given a woman who lived with a man without marrying him. Depending on their friends, the couple might be accepted, but were more often "sort of ostracized."

Sometimes people lived together without being married and this was considered immoral. The kids didn't know so much about it, but I often heard the remark of 'She's just a common-law wife,' or something like that. I would hear women when they were visiting sometimes; they didn't know the kids were listening and I would hear those remarks.

It might be that the man might have come here; there were a lot of transients through, you know, men riding through. And he might have found a woman he liked. He might have been married someplace else, and he didn't dare get married, or I don't know, sometimes they just didn't believe in marriage. It might be that they just started living together and kept it that way. I heard of one couple that had children but they were not married. There were not many common-law marriages. As I remember, I don't think I heard of more than one of them at one time in the community. 11

8Blanche refers to the fact that no one made public accusations; certainly people gossiped about the situation.

9Ibid. 10 Story, 13 November 1976. 11 Ibid.
A Plains bride entered into her marriage with certain expectations. Before she was married her mother had a heart-to-heart talk with her about the new responsibilities and lifestyle she would encounter. Imparted to Blanche, during these talks, was the sense of the finality and seriousness of marriage:

My mother--my grandmother did too--I can't remember the words they used. They seriously advised me . . . how serious it was, how marriage was, and that it was a serious thing for life. When you married someone, you married them for life. Of course, I meant it anyway. All I remember is just the little talk, just the little things she said, and she didn't give me any long story.12

One of the primary responsibilities of a woman was to bear children; a bride was expected to have a child as soon as it was "respectably" possible:

Girls always think they don't want to have many kids right away, but I remember he said, 'Oh, we'd better have one or two'--we had six!
I remember my grandmother had eight children, and she quit having children quite young because of her health, I guess. She always thought that was a terrible thing! She had all her children by that time; every one of her children died but one. She thought it was terrible if women didn't have children. If they went too long without having a child, then they must be doing something to keep from having a child. Women should have a child every two years or something was wrong.13

If a couple could not have children of their own they could adopt some. Blanche recalls a man and woman who adopted two children, but will never forget the man's brother--who adopted five!14

A woman's other major responsibility was to raise the children and provide a good home for them and her husband.

12 Ibid. 13 Story, 29 December 1976.
14 Story, 13 April 1977.
Typically, the man was the breadwinner for the family, but sometimes the woman held a job.

They pretty much just raised the children, but if say, a girl married a man that was no good, that couldn't furnish her with enough money to live on, or if the husband died or left her, then the woman would try to take sewing into her home, or take care of other children who were motherless, or something--anything she could do in her home to make money. In her home--but if she couldn't, I think if they had their parents living there, the parents would take care of her children while she worked. It was something that was not unheard of; they did, once in awhile, but not like they do now. 15

Blanche's own mother was one of the few women in the area who worked outside the home, but was by no means the only woman in Nebraska to carry the mail!

My mother carried the mail16 from Badger to Grand Rapids. For about a year. That was during those hard times; we had a terrible drought here in this country. Dad had to go out and work wherever he could to get a little money, and Mom, ... this was a government job and it paid pretty well 'long side other jobs, you see, because it was a government job.

And there happened to be some girls living just up on the hill not very far from us; these big Casey girls used to come down and take care of us. These girls would come down and babysit us while Mother would--I don't know how long it took her.17

She had to go by horse and buggy. She had a little one-horse cart: it had a seat in the back, a sort of little box thing with a lid that came down over it--and that's where the mailbag was! And see, up there must have been probably fifteen miles or more. I remember her hitching the horse up and going down and getting the mail; when she came back, she went right up the river road.18

From, let's see, from where we lived up to Grand

15Story, 29 December 1976.
16In 1887, "The mail was brought to Collins twice a week. Often the mail carrier was a girl Miss Jennie (Mrs. L. J. Wyman). ... A. Mason bid in the contract and his daughter, Miss Lettie, carried the mail." See Blanche Nichols Russell, Memoirs of a Pioneer Schoolma'am (Gering, Nebraska: Courier Press, 1948), p. 29.
17Story, 29 December 1976.
18Story, 16 August 1976.
Rapids. We had Badger Post Office there on the other side of the Niobrara River; she'd get the mail from there. We lived not very far from the river--it was sort of a gulch came down, you know how the hills come gliding down to the river--and we lived about a block away. She got the mail from Badger--that was down the river away from where we lived--then she had to come back up the hill up above. She had to drive at least ten miles to what was called the Grand Rapids Post Office. That was the next post office from Badger, west, up the river. Badger was on the other side of the river, on Sandy Creek, only on up past Dustin--but Dustin was a little more south. She didn't go through Dustin; on to Grand Rapids. Then she had to come back. So she had to drive twenty to twenty-five miles in a day, every day. But she had a good little horse. He was a fast trotter. As I remember it was in the summertime mostly; it might be in winter too. 19

Grand Rapids is still there--I mean, where it was--but the post office isn't anymore. Neither is Badger. 20 There weren't too many women that carried the mail, I guess, not around here. 21

Almost always, the man in the family was the "boss;" he controlled the finances and owned all the property and belongings. He could cut off his wife's funds at any time, as illustrated by this notice which appeared in the Butte Gazette: "To Whom it may Concern: I hereby give notice that I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by my wife, Susan E. Ross. C. E. Ross Butte, Nebraska, Oct. 10th 1903." 22

A source of amusement for early Butte residents, however, was the occasional man whose wife "wore the pants:"

There were different characters, you know. Sometimes two people marry, and the woman overpowers the man. She's that kind of character. But as a general rule, the man ruled the home. What he said was supposed to be it--unless she was a 'dominating' woman. We used to have a neighbor, and the old lady told the old man where to get

21Story, 29 December 1976.
22"Notice: C. E. Ross," Butte Gazette, 30 October 1903,
off at, what he was to do today, and what he should do the next day! Course, we didn't call him 'Mr. Milktoast' because that name came on later in the funnies. Henpecked! We always laughed and called him the henpecked husband! 23

A man may have been henpecked now and then, but a woman, unfortunately, was very often beaten:

They used to beat their wives like they do now, I mean, worse I think. There used to be more wife-beating back then than there is now, because now they're protected by law. A woman can now go to the law. In those days the poor woman didn't even—they lived so far away from the law-makers that they didn't know how to get there. They didn't have any car they could jump into, and they couldn't take the team because the team was being worked out in the field, and it might have been too far to walk. So they just had to stay there and take it. There used to be a lot of real mean husbands that were miserly with their family and wouldn't give them any money; the man in most cases used to keep the money and dole it out to the wife. And if he didn't give her enough, the poor woman just had to make out for her children on hardly anything. 24

A 1906 Gazette news item reveals the fact that local law officials were able to assist a beaten wife:

Feb 15th, petition was filed in court praying for an order of injunction against Robert Bice, by Mrs. Bice, charging among other things that she is afraid that he will, if not restrained, do her great injury. The injunction was allowed and the matter filed with the clerk of the district court. 25

Wife-beating was not considered a crime in those days, and there were few people a wife could turn to if her husband were cruel. Neighbors usually did not get involved 26 because they could not afford to take her in. If a wife-beater went too far, however, perhaps townspeople would be moved to censure

23 Story, 29 December 1976. 24 Ibid.


26 Story, 13 April 1977.
him. In the following article, the final paragraph indicates that the reason for this elaborate public punishment was more for Mr. Sampson's desertion of his family and adultery, than for the beatings he gave his wife:

Lyons, Neb., Dec. 12.--Whipped, stripped and doused into the icy waters of the Logan river was the treatment given Sewell Sampson, a wife beater, upon his return to this place Saturday night. He has gone and odds are being bet he won't come back.

Sampson returned after an absence of some months and he was met on the street by a far different reception committee than he had even dreamed of. If he had been quicker he could have recognized many he had formerly known, but he was too slow.

The reception committee had provided itself with a gunny sack, which it spread over the head of Mr. Sampson. The sack was then securely tied under his chin, he was loaded into a wagon and carried to the banks of the meandering Logan river. It was here Mr. Sampson decided there was somethin' doin'. The reception committee stripped its guest to the bare skin and proceeded to lay on a new lash at points of Sampson's anatomy where it was thought he would longest remember the affair. To somewhat cool his anger and pains the committee scourched Sampson into the ice cold waters of the river and when he clambered, shivering, to the shore he was told that he had but ten minutes to leave the place and that he would not be allowed to return.

It seems the reception tendered Mr. Sampson was in retaliation for his having run off with another man's wife last fall. Both he and the errant wife had large families of children, and as desertion is one of the unpardonable offenses up in Lyons the affair in Sampson's honor was arranged and pulled off without the formality of a printed program.27

Was there any way out for the wife who was trapped for years in an unhappy situation? She had fewer recourses available for the dissolution of her marriage, and in those days it took a great deal of time to secure a divorce:

27“Whipped, Stripped, Put Into River; Wife Beater Gets All That Was Coming to Him in Nebraska Town, Quits Lyons For Good (Sewell Sampson Returns to Nebraska Town and is Given a Warm But 'Cold' Reception,)” Butte Gazette, 21 December 1906, p. 2.
There were divorces. It was a lot more difficult than it is now, because it took so long to get one. The laws were different. If you had the money you could go to Reno, but not too many people had money in these old pioneer days. So sometimes the woman would be long-suffering and stay with the man and take all kinds of abuse before she would even try to separate from him. When marriage vows were broken a couple separated and got a divorce, but not so often as now. Sometimes the poor woman was beat up and had to stand a lot.

The "kinds of abuse" which might lead to divorce for either a man or a woman, may be gathered from randomly-selected divorce petition notices which appeared in the local paper from 1896 through 1908.

These reasons were cited by lawyers on behalf of five wives: "failed to provide for and maintain her;" "wilfully refuse and neglect to support the plaintiff and on the ground of habitual drunkenness;" "willfully abandoned the plaintiff for more than two years past without reasonable or just cause;" "willfully abandoned the plaintiff for the term of three years last past, and for while being well able to support the plaintiff you have failed and neglected to do so;" and "extreme cruelty practiced by you against her during the four years last past, calling her vile names and threatening to kill her and her two children." These women asked for

28 Story, 13 November 1976.

29 "There was a certain spirit of gallantery about the laws granting divorce in which the woman's side of the case apparently received the more generous hearing. Almost constantly, early newspapers... told stories of both men and women shirking the responsibilities of marriage... Sometimes cases of bigamy were exposed... Sexual irregularity prevailed of course, but generally speaking illicit love and illegitimacy of childbirth were scorned." For further information on frontier social life and sexual mores, see Clark, p. 210.
simple divorce, divorce and alimony, and divorce with custody of the children.30

As might be expected, all blame does not fall on the husbands' shoulders. Four men filed for divorce for such reasons as "wilfully abandoned the plaintiff, without good cause, for more than two years last past;" "you have committed adultery /signature/;" "you had another husband when married to the plaintiff;" and "wilfully abandoned the plaintiff without good cause for the term of two years last past."31

Women did leave or "abandon" their husbands:

It wasn't common, no. But it happened. Because many times, . . . I don't know if I can think of a name, but I know that I've known of that since I was young. That sometimes things got too hard, and the man just got too mean, and the woman would have to get out and leave him.32

It was quite rare. And if she did, in some communities she was sort of ostracized. It wasn't common like it is now, because of the money. They had to live with their husband no matter how cruel he was, or how bad it was.33

After waiting for two, or perhaps four years, filing

30 For complete texts see the Appendix: "Notice (Philinda D. Wassom vs. Jame A. Wassom,)" Butte Gazette, 23 March 1900, p. 8; "Legal Notice (May Lane vs. Albert E. Lane,)" Butte Gazette, 3 August 1900, p. 8; "Notice (Minnie Norris vs. Vern C. Norris,)" Butte Gazette, 2 March 1906, p. 8; "Notice (Nora Record vs. Siegel Record,)" Butte Gazette, 4 January 1907, p. 8; and "Notice to Non-Resident (Nannie Temper vs. Frederick M. Temper,)" Butte Gazette, 19 June 1908, p. 8.

31 For complete texts see the Appendix: "Notice (John D. Gormley vs. Harriet Gormley,)" Butte Gazette, 3 April 1896, p. 1; "Notice (John W. Chapman vs. Margaret J. Chapman,)" Butte Gazette, 23 March 1900, p. 8; Notice (Silas N. Lewis vs. Annie Lewis,)" Butte Gazette, 23 March 1900, p. 8; and "Legal Notice (Arthur E. Gore vs. Laura A. Gore,)" Butte Gazette, 4 March 1904, p. 8.

for, and receiving a divorce, an individual still had to face
the community and its reaction to divorced people. It all
depended upon the circumstances which led to the divorce:

It was according to if they knew the couple, and knew
that one of these people were at fault. Of course, then
the reaction was, the one that was at fault was not very
popular, and they would feel sorry for the one that was
getting hurt. Sometimes people got married and you just
knew that they weren't going to stay married anyway, be­
cause they weren't a bit alike. That kind of divorce
wasn't thought so much of. Lots of times, too, this
divorce happened because some other woman or man inter­
fered and made trouble in the family. And maybe the man
divorced his wife and married this other woman. Of course,
that was very unpopular in those days, lots more than it
is now. Some of them /divorces/ stayed in town, and
some didn't. There weren't too many, really, to take note
of. I don't know as there were more than one or two
people in this town that had divorces in those days.\(^{34}\)

Previous marriage and divorce could be a major prob­
lem for a person later in life, especially if that individual
wanted to marry again. This notice, published by the Gazette,
witnessed by a Notary Public, and accompanied by an explana­
tory statement, serves to point out the lasting stigma which
was attached to a person who had not stayed married "for
life."

We publish the following affadavit and statement at
the request of Mr. P. H. Simons. State of Nebraska, Boyd
County.

I, Peter H. Simons being first duly sworn depose that
I have been married once and only once in my life, and
that about twenty three years ago in the state of Iowa.
That since said marriage my wife obtained a divorce from
me in the state of Iowa and I obtained one from her in
Nebraska, and that as far as the courts can make me I am
now a single man. Peter H. Simons

Subscribed in my presence and sworn to before me this
15th day of April, 1909. Webster A. Goble, Notary Public

I publish the above affadavit for the reason that
people who seem unduly interested in my affairs have cir-

\(^{34}\)Story, 29 December 1976.
calculated the report that I am a married man. I would not do this, were it not that I have been informed and believe that this story was made and is being circulated for the purpose of influencing my father and other friends against me.

I have lived in Butte and vicinity for eleven years and so far as my standing and character as a citizen are concerned, I am willing to stand for comparison, with the people who have started this story, without fear of suffering by it. Peter H. Simons

Whatever the circumstances, separation and divorce were not very common, "So when there was a separation, it was something to talk about! The women all talked about it at the sewing bees and when they got together."

Yet another topic of discussion for sewing circles and afternoon coffee was the individual who never married. In the Sandhills, when a woman "was twenty-five she was commencing to consider herself as 'old maid,'" although others might have labeled her a 'spinster' up to four years earlier. A man could be a little older; "he might have been nearly thirty" before people considered him a bachelor for life:

There were a few people here and there that didn't marry. Everyone I knew got married; they were all about normal. But now there was a family right here in Butte where they had six children, and one died; there were five left... Only one of those got married...

There were a few jokes about a few families in Butte, about a guy and this girl he went with... The older man, he sort of liked a girl up by Naper, and I guess he wanted to ask her to marry him. But I think they were sort of bashful; he didn't know just how to do it. He went over to this girl's house and he said, 'I'm thinking of getting married.' And she said, 'Oh you are!' He said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Well, who is the lucky girl?' And he said, 'I thought I'd ask you!' She just

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36 Story, 13 November 1976. 37 Ibid.
got so mad when he did that, that she opened up the door and told him to get out! I don't know if he ever asked anyone else or not. Anyway, he didn't get her, because he didn't ask her in the right way. He thought he'd come up with a good plan, you know. I guess everybody heard about it; I think she told it all around. So it got to be a joke. A good joke on Joe.

The other brother also had a girl. I think he gave her a ring, but I don't know what really came in between them. He was the younger one and he really thought he was a flashy dude! There was something strange about that family. . . . Someone said they always said they would come to town and marry some rich widow! But they never found a widow that wanted to give up her money to them. And, of course, the two girls [their sisters]—they never tried to get married.38

I remember one poor fellow who did not marry. I used to sew and I was sewing for his mother, and she rigged it so he could take me back home. Course, he was older than I was and I was sort of uncomfortable with him. But anyway he brought me home. He never married, and later on he sort of was mentally deranged. He was okay at that time, but he never did marry. And he had a sister that never married too.39

Stories like these circulating within the community, along with humiliating types of customs such as "dancing in the pig trough," served to guide young people toward marriage by making the alternative, independent singlehood, uncomfortable and unnatural.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

The oral accounts in this thesis give a comprehensive picture of dating, courtship, marriage, and related sexual attitudes, as viewed by one woman in a small Nebraska town near the end of the frontier period. It is through narrations such as these, collected while those who remember are still able to pass along their impressions, that the roles of basic institutions, as well as attitudes and beliefs held about those, may be exhaustively examined and historically traced.

The detail with which Blanche Story was able to describe the stages of dating, courtship, and marriage seems to offer support for data veracity and trustworthiness; Jan Vansina's adjectives "astonishingly detailed," "reliable," and "very diverse" certainly refer to this informant. While it is risky to generalize too much from the word of one person, most assuredly broad patterns and localized specifics may be identified.

Certain general observations may be made with respect to Blanche Story's recollections of dating and courtship: social activities were bountiful and varied; groups and couples participated, chaperoned unofficially. Young people of

\[1\text{Vansina, p. 160.}\]
that time appear to have led lives curtailed by few prohibitions. Much unrestricted behavior and social experimenting fell within the parameters of the community definition of a "good girl." However, many emotional and sexual experiences were not shared with parents, siblings, or friends, perhaps because of fear of social repercussions (i.e., encouraging a bad reputation). Parents had definite ideas about dating behavior and tried to encourage that which they felt was most acceptable. Some men, for example, were not considered suitable for a woman's company.

Women attempted, through various means, to find a man who offered what they wanted in a husband. The single most important factor in determining male eligibility seems to have been money: enough to set up a business, purchase a home, and start a new household. The most common method of finding a husband was dating different men, although postcard or letter exchanges and matchmakers were tried occasionally.

Finally, the principal element in courtship was time—time for families to get to know each other, length of time a man and woman dated steadily, and time necessary for a man to prepare himself financially for marriage. Each courtship was different, but all followed a basic pattern; the specifics within an oral personal narrative transform an account of an institution into an emotional picture of a woman choosing between a half dozen men for life.

Specifics abound in Blanche’s reminiscences concerning weddings. Local customs appear to have differed quite
distinctly from what may be found in corroborative materials: the telephone was used to invite guests; wedding dresses were often brightly colored, not white; flowers were not always carried; "dancing in the pig trough" existed as a custom around Butte, if not within the Sandhills area as a whole; showers were held after the honeymoon and photographs were taken then as well; and shivarees were motivated by the desire for treat money, not the urge to harass newlyweds. It is very probable that these customs existed among other families in Butte; however, further research is needed in order to establish their regional currency.

Broad patterns may be delimited, which find support in traditional bibliographic sources. There is a strong resemblance between turn-of-the-century Nebraska weddings and contemporary weddings: pre-wedding preparations are very similar. Basic traditional patterns of wedding ceremonies were limited in number, yet reveal an infinite variety of detail. The couple and their families gained status from their choice of wedding elements: church weddings, rather than at home (with a minister, not a judge); many attendants, not merely witnesses; an elaborate dress, flowers, and trousseau in place of simple items; a dramatic reception over a plain country dinner; and every affordable "extra"—music, decorations, and so on.

Elopements occurred, much for the same reasons as they do today. However, the frontier couple seems to have been much more dependent upon their families, and the families and
community played a pivotal role in sanctioning or disapproving individual marriages.

Community sanction, or lack of it, figures prominently in a discussion of sexual and marital attitudes. Blanche specifically acknowledges the active existence of gossip and rumor in at least eight instances. Naturally, the community commented upon any situation which did not conform to the standard, recognized norm: there appear to have been levels or degrees of commentary. For example, everyone knew that it was possible to arrange an abortion, and if a young girl had one she was probably subjected to gossip; when a married woman died from one, however, "everybody was shocked." If people suspected that a baby was born just a little too early, but they couldn't prove that pre-marital sex was the reason for it, no public accusation or commentary could be made, although certainly the couple and their new child would be "discussed" for some time.

Blanche's definitions of "good" and "bad" girls were commonly held by most Butte residents, and thus may be labeled community stereotypes. The girl who was loud, bold, fast, boisterous, too flirtatious, had "heavy dates" or "spooned,

drank, smoked, or worst of all, found herself unmarried and pregnant, was identified as "bad" by the community and probably had a very difficult life there.

Some stereotypes are not so obvious as those of good and bad girls; the comment "She's just a common-law wife," subtly indicates that the preferred status is to be officially married, not "just" a wife by virtue of having lived with a man for a long time. Other elements revealed in attitude-related accounts form a composite picture, or stereotype of the ideal wife. She should be serious about her marriage for life, have lots of children as soon as possible, be submissive—not dominating, content not to handle the finances and business, hold a job only when necessary, and take her husband's beatings, threats, and neglect without complaint. If she left her husband, divorced him, or had an affair with another man, she knew the community reaction she would face.

On the other hand, a sketchy but similarly limited male stereotype may be pieced together: a husband provided for his wife and children, bore almost total responsibility for their well-being, and might suffer the consequences if he went too far in breaking community moral regulations. If he were divorced, the same suspicious speculating to which a divorcee was subjected was his fate as well.

These general stereotypes may be abstracted from oral

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3"Attitude-related" account refers to oral testimony which portrays or in some manner communicates folk attitudes. This type of account is subjective, often intimate, and sometimes stereotypically oriented.
materials and postulated by the scholar but importantly, the community member is usually not aware of their existence. Blance could not articulate the content of a frontier wife stereotype, she could only explain a dozen aspects of marital life, leaving the subsequent analysis to be conducted later.

Nowhere is this phenomenon clearer than within the accounts referring to the unmarried. The fact that one man asked a woman to marry him in the "wrong way" and lost her is not compassionately perceived as a traumatic or pitiful incident. It is considered, rather, "a good joke on Joe." The community utilized a stereotype of an awkward bachelor and his failure in order to encourage young people to avoid such ridicule by marrying. Another long-time bachelor became "mentally deranged," a handy illustration of what would happen to the young man who did not take a wife! These and other subtle folkloric stereotypes and customs functioned as inducements for behavioral modification and maintenance of the married couple as the central family unit.

The marital/sexual attitudes chapter ultimately reveals that each non-standard moral situation was most likely individually judged. People were categorized by stereotypes; but depending upon who they were, how long they had lived in the area, the kind of people they were, and their previous actions, the treatment accorded them by the community varied. What

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emerges from these accounts is a fairly sophisticated, and practical tolerance of non-standard moral behavior, coupled with the traditionally powerful roles of gossip and rumor in reinforcing marital attitudes and values in daily life. A woman's position was economically weak but socially strong, because of the key role played by her in determining standard marital and sexual behaviors, and as the "civilizing" influence within a frontier community.

Lastly, the period 1885-1910 may be viewed as the beginning of sexual attitude change, especially in the cities, but also on the frontier. Reasonably tolerant acceptance of non-standard behaviors would increase until the end of the First World War, at which time such acceptance would begin to be the exception rather than the rule.5

Within this thesis lies a special contribution to the disciplines of folklore, and social and oral history. All of the social activities discussed existed generally in the Plains area, and while no one has analyzed them (and scarcely even collected descriptions of them), obviously personal relationships sprang from the opportunities presented by these events. What Blanche Story's accounts offer are particularized examples of specifically how social events functioned. Through such subjective, intimate memoirs as these, an analytic, objective investigation can be realized.

5In a comparison of past and contemporary mores, Turner observes, "The sex morals of the working girl of 1890 were about the same as those of the society girl or college graduate of 1930." For further information see Turner, p. 193.
Dependence upon a single oral source pressures a researcher to examine the total picture, highlight the obvious, and make general observations. Perhaps even more important, however, than these broad patterns which are discernable, are the myriad details within Blanche's recollections: not only lengthy paragraphs on "first dates" or "letter exchanges" and their roles in finding a suitable husband, but also the kind of team and buggy that a girl would "like to be seen with," or the light blue willow plume on a $13.50 hat. It is in coming to know these minute but significant emotions, colors, and textures, that we may understand and interpret past persons and cultures.
Appendix

My use of a local newspaper for documentation purposes was, in part, inspired by an article which appeared in the Journal of Marriage and the Family, entitled "Family Articles in Frontier Newspapers: An Examination of One Aspect of Turner's Frontier Thesis." The dearth of materials with which to corroborate Blanche Story's recollections led me to examine the contents of fourteen newspapers in Boyd and Holt Counties, Nebraska, for the years 1885-1910: the Butte Gazette, Anoka Herald, Bristow Enterprise, Boyd Co. Register, Lynch Herald-Enterprise, Lynch Journal, Monowi News, Naper News, Spencer Advocate, O'Neill Frontier, Holt County Banner, Holt Co. Independent, Atkinson Graphic, and Atkinson Plaindealer.

To ensure a representative sample of information I examined every other issue of alternate years.

The result of this tedious task was recognition of the Butte Gazette as the only newspaper which included descriptive reports of weddings, elopements, shivarees, wife-beatings, and so on: it was also one of three newspapers to feature divorce petitions. It is impossible to explain why the newspaper of my informant's hometown proved so detailed. I fully

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expected that all of the region's newspapers would include articles concerned with such basic human-interest topics. Fortunately for my research, the Butte Gazette ultimately provided not only a number of specifics related to marriage and divorce, but also corroboration of a particular historical event described by Blanche Story, the Adkins-Schonebaum elopement.

The appendix which follows contains the full texts of the articles which dealt with that elopement, breach of promise, purchase of marriage licenses, wedding ceremonies, and divorce petitions.
A BROKEN HEART
A Naper Man Escapes by
Settling for the
Sum of $250

Naper Advertiser. About the first
of the year John Poor, a young Russian
German living southwest of Naper,
decided that a life of single
blessedness was subject to many in-
conveniences and that a life of wed-
ded bliss would prove more appropri-
ate to his present station in life.
Following the custom of his native
land he engaged the services of a
"Kuplesmann," or matrimonial go-bet-
tween, and hired him forth to seek a
partner for his earthly joys and ar-
toes.

In due course of time he and his
"Kuplesmann" arrived at the home
of Jacob Mauch near Carlock, Gregory
county, S. D., and were made wel-
come. The daughter of the house a
foxy and blooming young miss, was
at once interviewed by the "Herr Kup-
lesmann" and matters were quickly ar-
nanged. The "hoaxette," or wedding
was set for the early part of Febru-
ary, the prospective groom returned
to his lonesome hearth, happy in the
contemplation of future bliss.

That the course of true love never
runs smooth" was exemplified when
"Herr Kuplesmann," not content with
his good work, continued his search
and discovered another young lady
who was matrimonially inclined, one,
perchance whose personal charms
were more pleasing to the eye, or,
perhaps, whose "dot" was more sub-
stantial and the young swain was pre-
vailed upon to change his affections
to a young lady living near Fairfax.

Tuesday of this week Mr. Mauch,
accompanied by his daughter came
down from their Gregory county home
to fulfill their part of the original
agreement and found that the young
lover had changed his mind and re-
fused to proceed with the ceremony.
A Naper lawyer was then consulted
and a suit for breach of promise in-
stituted.

The young lady claimed damages
in the sum of $2,000.00 for the blighted
affections and a broken heart. After
a general "gal-up" and "katzen-
jammer" in which the interested
parties and most of their relatives
participated a compromise was at
last agreed upon. Johnny paid the
disappointed lady $250 for full and
complete release from his hastily
made contract and is now musing upon
the fact that "too many cooks spoil the broth."

Butte Gazette, 2 February
1906.
On New Year's Eve, Miss Golda Adkins of Butte, Nebr., daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Adkins, and Henry Schonebaum of Herrick, were married at Fairfax, S. D., by Justice Morrissey.

It was a case of "love laughs at locksmiths." The young man who is but nineteen years of age, has of late been making frequent visits to Butte, and the parents of the young lady, on account of her age, objected to young Schonebaum's attentions to Miss Golda who is but sixteen years old. This state of affairs was not met with approval by the "kids" and they soon determined to settle the dispute for all time to come. Consequently while the parents were busy attending to the many duties of the Hotel Oxford Golda quietly slipped up to her room and dressed for the occasion, then hurried to the Butcher livery barn where the lover was waiting with their swiftest team. No time was lost, for in about an hour the distance of twelve miles had been covered, a license secured and the ceremony performed which pronounced them man and wife until death do part.

At about this stage in the drama it was discovered that their pretty young daughter was missing and things were a-doing around the Hotel Oxford for awhile. The telephone wires were put in use and the runaway couple soon located but too late to prevent the "knotty" problem from being solved, to the satisfaction of the young folks. To say that the parents of the young lady were indignant is putting it mild. Dire threats were made and the Sheriff of Gregory county instructed to arrest and hold them for further instructions, but after a deliberate consideration they concluded to let them go. Forgiveness and reconciliation are next in order.

Butte Gazette, 3 January 1908.
Chap. 2 of the Elopement

A warrant was issued Tuesday, the complaint being sworn out by Mrs. Rosa Adkins mother of the young bride, for the arrest of Henry Schonebaum who was charged with enticing and leading away Golda Adkins, a female child under the age of fifteen years. The young couple were located at Herrick, the home of the groom, where Sheriff Thomas Coleman found and placed them under arrest. Henry refused to be lead peacefully, consequently the necessary affidavit for requisition papers was signed by County Attorney McCutchan yesterday and placed in the hands of Sheriff Coleman.

Extradition Papers Refused.

Our readers will remember reading of the elopement and marriage of Henry Schonebaum of this place and Miss Golda Adkins, of Butte, Neb., some four weeks ago, and the subsequent issuing of papers for the arrest of young Schonebaum for abduction, in a case started by the girl's mother two weeks later.

Warrants were issued in Boyd county for the taking of Shonebaum and Sheriff Coleman of that county together with Ed Adkins brother of the girl, and Attorney Al Tingle, of Butte went over to Fairfax where they were joined by Sheriff McMullen, of this county and the party came out to Herrick to take the young couple into custody.
An attempt was made by the Butte contingent to induce Mr. Schonebaum and wife to return to Boyd county ostensibly to settle the matter, but friends of the couple at this place advised them to stay where they were. Mr. Schonebaum consulted Attorney Williamson who upon examination of the warrants advised that the sheriff of this county was not armed with proper credentials for making the arrest and turning the parties over to Boyd county, Nebraska, hence the Butte people returned empty handed. However, they did not cease their action for application was made to Governor Crawford of this state for extradition papers. Attorney Williamson foreseeing this action had notified the Governor that a showing would be made why such papers should not be issued.

Last Wednesday Governor Crawford, of South Dakota and Governor Sheldon, of Nebraska were both in Sioux City in attendance upon the Missouri River Navigation Congress. Attorney Williamson met the gentlemen there and filed his case before them with the result that no extradition papers will be issued for the happy young couple who are living quietly and unmolested at their home in Herrick.—Herrick Press.

Butte Gazette, 7 February 1908.
Cupid Still at Work.

On Jan. 1st marriage license was issued by Judge Lee to Frank Styer of Winnipeg, Nebr., and Miss Edna Eveland of Butte.

On Jan. 4th Gerhard Tunink and Miss Gesena Knipe both of Butte, were granted a license to wed.

On January 7th marriage license was issued to Fred Sievert and Lydia Herrmann both of Naper.

On Jan. 9th Judge Leslie issued his first marriage license. It was granted to Mr. Ernest Berg and Miss Maggie Goodmiller, both of Anoka.

Butte Gazette, 10 January 1908.

Feb. 10th Marriage license was issued to Carl R. Peterson, of Monowi and Miss Amelia Skondal, of the same place. The father of the bride, made the application, and seemed to be more than willing that his daughter should be the wife of Carl Peterson.

On Feb. 10th marriage license was issued to William F. Fuhrman of Norfolk and Miss Ziech of Spencer Nebr. The father of the bride making the application for the said license.

Butte Gazette, 16 February 1906.
Sebers-Weber

A very pretty wedding took place at the St. Peter and Paul's church Tuesday morning, January 17, at 9 o'clock, performed by Rev. Father Strautmann, the contracting parties being Mr. Louis Sebers and Miss Agnes Weber.

The bride was gowned in white and wore a long veil and carried a bouquet of pink and white carnations. The bridesmaids, Laura and Amelia, sisters of the bride, were dressed in pink.

The groom wore the conventional black and was assisted by Eugene O. Forgette of Dallas, S. D., and Peter Roth of Templeton, La.

A reception was given at the home of the bride where a bountiful repast was spread. The dining room was profusely decorated with carnations, the colors being pink and white. A large number of friends and relatives partook of the feast which was interspersed by music rendered by Miss Marie Smith.

The groom is well and favorably known here, having been in business in Butte for a number of years, and by his gentlemanly bearing and upright dealing won a host of friends.

The bride is a winsome young lady of a happy and amiable disposition who will be a real helpmate to her worthy companion through life.

Mr. and Mrs. Sebers left yesterday morning for Omaha, Chicago and other eastern points where they will spend some time. After their wedding trip they will reside at Dallas, where the groom is in business. Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Roth accompanied them and will visit relatives in Iowa.

The out of town guests who attended the wedding were Mr. and Mrs. Franz Sporier of Medora, S. D., Henry Sebers of Salem, S. D., brother of the groom, and Gerhard Bushee of Breda, La.

Married

Last Sunday at high noon Ralph E. Coburn and Miss Ethel Anderson were united in the holy bonds of wedlock, Rev. H. O'Neil officiating.

The wedding took place at the home of the groom's brother, Ray E. Coburn. It was a very quiet affair only a few friends and relatives being present.

The bride was beautifully attired in white silk and carried a wreath of roses, while the groom wore the conventional black.

The bride is the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Anderson and is a bright and accomplished young lady. The groom is the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Coburn, being reared among us from childhood. He is a graduate from the A. H. S. and an accomplished musician, graduating from Mars conservatory of music of Chicago. The past few years of his life he has been engaged in ranching near Phoenix.

The many friends of the amiable couple join in extending congratulations.

Butte Gazette, 20 January 1911.
Tinsley--Parker.

Last Tuesday evening, at 8 o'clock, in the presence of only immediate relatives, occurred a most beautiful and impressive ceremony when Mr. Cam Tinsley and Miss Ethel Parker were joined in the holy bonds of wedlock.

To the strains of a wedding march the bridal party came down the stairs and into the parlor, which was a bower of ferns and flowers. They stood under a large, white wedding bell, made of flowers and ribbon, from which were strong festoons of flowers. Rev. P. B. West, of Butte officiated. Mr. Kloke of Spencer, was best man and Miss Mary Knowlcamper, of Turner, was bridesmaid. The bride was beautifully gowned in a white silk mouseline and the groom wore the conventional black.

A sumptuous supper was served. They were the recipients of many valuable and beautiful presents, some being sent in by friends not present.

Cam is one of Boyd county's most industrious and promising young business men. He has been a resident of Spencer for a number of years. Miss Ethel is the only daughter of Hon. Sanford Parker, Atty, and U. S. Land Commissioner. Mr. Parker and family were one of the early settlers and have been instrumental in helping to make Boyd county famous.

They will soon go to housekeeping in a neat cottage which Cam is having erected in Spencer.

Their many friends in Butte join the Gazette in wishing them a prosperous and happy journey through life.
Nickerson-Evans.

On last Wednesday morning at 10:30 o'clock occurred the wedding of Mr. Dean A. Nickerson, of Butte, and Miss Anna Louisa Evans, at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. Evans, at Creiplhton, Neb. The wedding ceremony was beautiful and impressive and was performed by Rev. A. A. Brown. Little Ethel Evans acting as ring bearer, the ring being concealed in the petals of a large rose, carried on a silver tray.

Miss Cleveland played a wedding march as the bride came down the stairs leaning on her father's arm who gave her into the keeping of the bridegroom, who stepped forward to receive her.

The bride wore a dress of brown satin, trimmed in white chiffon, and looked exceedingly pretty. The groom wore the conventional black. The house was profusely decorated with cut flowers and ferns. A three-course breakfast was daintily served to some forty guests. Many beautiful presents were given to this popular young couple.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans took the early morning train for Omaha and other eastern points. They will be at home after March 1st, on the Nickerson farm, three miles east of Butte.

Mr. Dean A. Nickerson is the son of Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Nickerson and is one of the most highly respected and industrious young men of Boyd county.

Miss Anna Evans is well and favorably known as one of Boyd county's best school teachers, having taught here for a number of years, and was assistant in the Anoka school for a couple of years.

The GAZETTE voices the sentiment of the entire community in wishing Mr. and Mrs. D. A. Nickerson unlimited joy and prosperity.

Butte Gazette, 23 February 1906.
Wedding Bells

A very pretty and impressive wedding was solemnized, in the Catholic church, at Butte, last Thursday morning, Father Krupa, of Spencer officiating. The contracting parties being Mr. Joseph Kutzer, of Naper, to Miss Anna Holishek, of Butte. The maids of honor were Miss Martha Holishek, a sister of the bride and Miss Anna Siegel. The groomsmen were Joe Holishek, brother of the bride and Frank Klampa.

The bride was beautifully gowned in blue and wore a white veil reaching to the floor held in place by a wreath of orange blossoms and the groom wore the conventional black. After the ceremony the bridal party repaired to the home of Martin Bedner, at Basin, where a sumptuous dinner awaited them.

Anna is well and favorably known here having lived in Butte for a number of years past. Mr. Kutzer is in business in Naper, where he has a home prepared for them. They will go to housekeeping immediately.

Many beautiful and useful presents were given them. Their many friends join the Gazette in wishing them a happy and prosperous journey through life.

Butte Gazette, 23 October 1903.
One of the most elaborate social events of the season took place at the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. H. Gustafson, Wednesday evening, June 3rd, when in the presence of 60 guests Olaf Munson and Chas. Allison lead Mangina and Flora Gustafson, to the marriage altar, the home being decorated for the occasion.

At eight o'clock the wedding march was played by Miss Martha Brood.

The brides and grooms were attended by Miss Anna Ross, niece of Chas. Allison, and Miss Bessie Wilder, a bridesmaid and Nels and Gustaf Gustafson, brothers of the bride as groomsman entered the parlor; they took positions under a large floral bell in front of the bay window where the marriage rites were administered by Rev. Lindahl, minister of the Swedish Lutheran Church.

The brides were attired in white silk and wore long veils. The grooms wore conventional black.

After the ceremony the company repaired to the dining room where supper was served.

These young people were the recipients of many beautiful and valuable presents.

At midnight ice cream was served after which the guests departed for their various homes wishing Mr. and Mrs. Munson and Mr. and Mrs. Allison many years of happy wedded life.

These young people have grown to man and womanhood in our midst and are loved and respected by all who know them.

Mr. and Mrs. Allison left for Gregory, S. D. Thursday, near where Chas. Munson prepared a neat home on his farm for his bride.

Mr. and Mrs. Munson will remain at the Gustafson home for a few weeks before leaving for their home at Gregory where they will reside on a farm joining the Allison farm.

The Gazette joins their many friends in wishing to the young people all of the best things of life.

Butte Gazette, 5 June 1908.
LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS.

Notice.

In the District court of Boyd county, Nebraska.

Minnie Norris.

Petitioner.

By

Vera C. Norris.

Defendant.

To Vera C. Norris defendant: You are hereby notified that on the 23rd day of March, 1900, Minnie Norris filed a petition against you in the District court of Boyd county, Nebraska, the object and purpose of which is to obtain a divorce and alimony from you on the grounds that you have wilfully abandoned the plaintiff for more than two years last past without reasonable or just cause.

You are hereby required to answer said petition on or before Monday, the 3rd day of April, 1900.

MINNIE NOSRIS.

By W. T. White, her Attorney.

Butte Gazette, 2 March 1900.

Notice.

To Nancy Lewis, defendant: You are hereby notified that on the 4th day of January, 1907, Nava Record filed a petition against you in the District court of Boyd county, Nebraska, the object and purpose of which is to obtain a divorce from you on the grounds that you have wilfully abandoned the plaintiff for the term of three years last past, and for while being well able to support the plaintiff you have failed and neglected to do so.

You are hereby required to answer said petition on or before Monday, the 7th day of January, 1907.

NAVA RECORD.

By John E. Taylor, her Attorney.

Butte Gazette, 4 January 1907.
Legal Notice.
In the District Court of Boyd County, Nebr.
Notice to Non-Resident Defendant.

Arthur E. Gore, Plaintiff.

vs.

Laura A. Gore, Defendant.

To Laura A. Gore, Non-Resident Defendant:

You are hereby notified that on the 9th day of February, A.D., 1894, Arthur E. Gore filed his petition against you in the district court of Boyd county, Nebraska, the object and prayer of which are to obtain a divorce from you on the ground that you have wilfully abandoned the plaintiff without good cause for the term of two years last past.

You are required to answer said petition on or before Monday the 14th day of March, 1894.

ARTHUR E. GORE,

By K. M. Staeche and W. T. Wills, his Attorney.

Notice.
To Harriett S. Gormley, Non-Resident Defendant:

You are hereby notified that on the 27th day of March, 1896, John D. Gormley filed a petition against you in the district court of Boyd county, Nebr., the object and prayer of which are to obtain a divorce from you on the ground that you have wilfully abandoned the plaintiff, without good cause, for more than two years last past.

You are required to answer said petition on or before Monday, the 20th day of April, 1896.

JOHN D. GORMLEY,

By C. J. SKUBE, his attorney.
Notice to Non-Resident.

To Frederick M. Temper, Non-resident defendant:

You are hereby notified that on the 6th day of June, 1900, Nannie Temper filed a petition against you in the District Court of Boyd County, Nebraska, the object and prayer of which are to obtain a divorce from you on the ground of extreme cruelty practiced by you against her during the four years last past, by cursing plaintiff, calling her vile names and threatening to kill her and her two children.

You are required to answer said petition on or before Monday, the 25th day of July, 1900.

By A. H. Tingle, Her Attorney.

Butte Gazette, 19 June 1900.

Legal Notice

May Lane

vs

Albert E. Lane

In the District Court

of Boyd County, Nebraska

To Albert E. Lane non resident defendant

You are hereby notified that on the 24th day of August 1900, May Lane filed a petition against you in the District Court of Boyd County, Nebraska the object and prayer of which are to obtain a divorce from you on the grounds that you willfully refuse and neglect to support the plaintiff and on the ground of habitual drunkenness the plaintiff asks for alimony and the care and custody of the minor child.

You are required to answer said petition on or before Monday the 24th day of September 1900.

May Lane

by W. T. Wills, her Atty.

Butte Gazette, 3 August 1900.
GLOSSARY

bowery; dance floor shaded with leafy boughs supported by poles; constructed for the Fourth of July, County Fair, and other summer celebrations.

breach of promise; refusal by a man or a woman to go through with a previously arranged wedding.

courting; regular visits, usually on Sunday, by a man to a woman's family home, coupled with the two dating each other exclusively.

dancing in the pig trough; wedding custom, folk locution; the older unmarried sister of the bride must dance in a hog trough to publicly acknowledge her willfulness in turning away suitors; this action ensures that she will later marry.

party; or play party. Frontier recreation consisting of "folk dancing" or steps to the accompaniment of the dancers' voices.

proving up on a claim; the final step in purchasing a parcel of government-owned land. The homesteader had to prove that he had lived on the land for a certain length of time, and that he had made improvements. Then he was able to buy the land at a cheap rate, perhaps $100.00 for one hundred acres.

shivaree; wedding custom in which the friends and neighbors of the newlyweds "serenade" them with tin pans and other noisemakers, and often played tricks and pranks on the couple for the purpose of embarrassing them. The bride and groom were expected to invite the crowd in for a snack, or to give them "treat money."

sparking; going out with a young man. This term was used mainly in the early to mid eighteen-hundreds, and is still in use in some areas.

spooning; heavy dating or petting with a young man. This term appears to have been used in the late eighteen-hundreds.
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"And They Were Married." Butte Gazette, 28 October 1910, p. 1.

"Chap. 2 of the Elopement." Butte Gazette, 10 January 1908, p. 1.

"Cupid Still At Work." Butte Gazette, 10 January 1908, p. 1.


"Judge's First Marriage." *Butte Gazette*, 4 September 1903, p. 8.

"Legal Notice (Arthur E. Gore vs. Laura A. Gore.)" *Butte Gazette*, 4 March 1904, p. 8.

"Legal Notice (May Lane vs. Albert E. Lane.)" *Butte Gazette*, 3 August 1900, p. 8.


"Notice (Silas N. Lewis vs. Annie Lewis.)" *Butte Gazette*, 23 March 1900, p. 8.


"Notice (Nora Record vs. Seigel Record.)" *Butte Gazette*, 4 January 1907, p. 8.


"Notice (P. H. Simons divorce announcement.)" *Butte Gazette*, 16 April 1909, p. 7.

"Notice to Non-Resident (Nannie Temper vs. Frederick M. Temper.)" *Butte Gazette*, 19 June 1908, p. 8.


"Old Folks Harry (Adams-Olmstead.)" *Butte Gazette*, 14 September 1900, p. 8.


"Tinsley-Parker." *Butte Gazette*, 4 September 1903, p. 8.


"Whipped, Stripped, Put Into River; Wife Beater Gets All That Was Coming to Him in Nebraska Town, Quits Lyons For Good (Sewell Sampson Returns to Nebraska Town and is Given a Warm But 'Cold' Reception.)" Butte Gazette, 21 December 1906, p. 2.

"Young Lovers Elope; Cupid deprives Landlord Adkins and Wife of their Daughter Golda." Butte Gazette, 3 January 1908, p. 1.

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