

CHEYENNE COUNTY

SIDNEY

This was Indian country when the railroad arrived in this area on its drive west in 1867. After frequent skirmishes between Indians and the railroad workers, the government sent soldiers to protect the end-of-tracks encampment called "Sidney," for the Union Pacific Railroad president Sidney Dillion. Sporadic troubles continued, until the Indians were routed in 1869. In the mean time, the rail-head was on to the west, and with it the unscrupulous portion of the population.

By 1870 the citizens of Sidney felt they should be incorporated into the political activities of the state. Thomas Kane was sent to Lincoln to talk with Governor Butler. That August a proclamation was issued making Cheyenne a new county (the whole south half of the panhandle) and designating Sidney as the county seat. Soon there was a school with a dozen children. May 1873 saw the first issue of the "Sidney Telegraph" printed.

During the gold rush to the Black Hills, Sidney grew to 3,500, then 5,000, and was a "wide open" town. Liquor, dance halls,

gambling, variety shows were open 24 hours a day. Law abiding citizens had many problems to contend with. In addition to 1,000 soldiers the Fort, who sometimes liked to whop it up, many large freighting outfits had headquartered in Sidney, each with hundreds of workers. It took from several thousand men to move the millions of pounds of freight that arrived by train, onto wagons headed for Dakota. Come payday things could get out-of-hand in a hurry.

In the summer of 1876, a host of undesirable characters drifted into Sidney. That's when "the regulators" organized and were able to persuade them to leave town, making Sidney a fit place to live, again.

Bad as that was, the next wave was worse — the cowboys from Texas! In the late 1870s and '80s Sidney was the center of the great cattle range. Horse thieves were also numerous. When horses, stolen from the Indian agency, were sold openly, there



Early Burlington depot and town, 1879.



Left: Southwest corner of 2nd and Rose Street. ca. 1890



Right: This advertisement brochure was published in 1912.

was threat of an Indian uprising. So soldiers from Fort Sidney were asked to step in and clear out the rustlers.

In December, 1877, a fire burned a good portion of the business district to the ground.

By 1882 special officers were placed on the Union Pacific passenger trains between Omaha and Sidney. Any "rough looking character" was arrested and dropped off between stations. By that time there were 200 people buried in "Boot Hill." Some had died a natural death, or accident, some were killed by Indians, several at the end of a rope, but the majority were killed in fights and drunken brawls. Soon things quieted down and "The Telegraph" reported..."if a stranger attended to his own affairs, and kept away from drinking and such, he's pretty safe from quarrels as if further east..."

Many legends have been handed down, such as the great bullion robbery — four bars of gold, worth \$80,000, stolen from the freight room when the agent went to lunch. There were several suspects, but the thieves were never apprehended. It is claimed that Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickock, Sam Bass, Butch Cassidy and Doc Middleton were frequent visitors in town, probably because Calmity Jane resided in Sidney for a time.

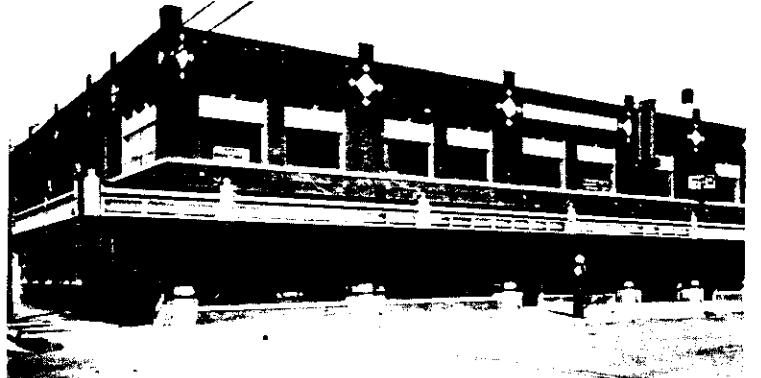
Noteworthy events include: President Chester A. Arthur, along with General Sheridan, was in town long enough to change engines on his special train in August, 1883. Throngs also greeted President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the late 1930s, following a switching from the Burlington to the U.P. tracks at the east edge of town.

A community split during the Ku Klux Klan era was followed by the "Dirty 30s" and the Depression years, but Sidney was planning for the future, and went forward anyway.



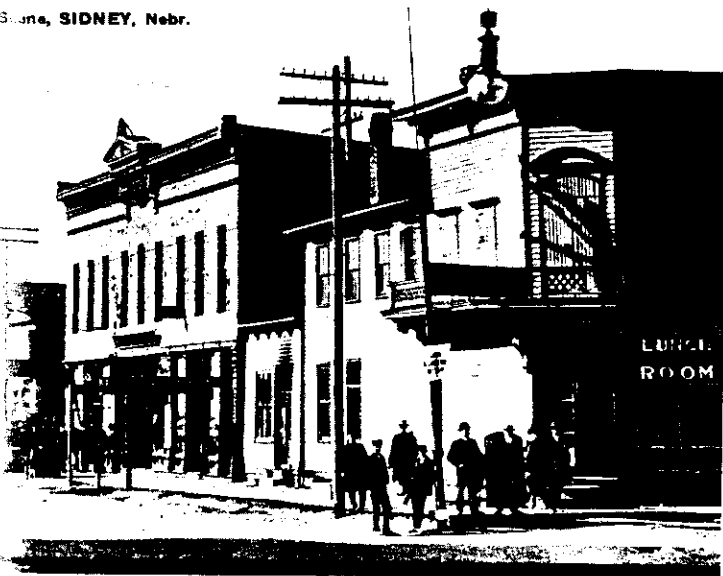
Above: An early Cheyenne County Courthouse that became a rooming house in 1912.

Below: The old Osborn building on 10th and Highway 30. Ku Klux Klan meetings were held on top floor.



Above: Birds eye view of Sidney, n.d.

Left: Street Scene, Sidney, n.d.





Left: Sidney Rodeo 1987, an annual event since 1887, held at the Cheyenne County Fair Grounds. Mr. From in the saddle.

In World War II, the Sioux Ordinance Depot came to the area. This enormous installation northwest of Sidney brought thousands of people to town. Again restaurants were open 24 hours a day, beds were rented by the hour to accommodate the workers on different shifts. The city needed to add utilities — power, water, sewer system, and telephones — and many cement sidewalks.

The City of Sidney, present population just over 6,000, celebrated its centennial in 1985. Sidney has had its wild and wooley days, and at times some thought the town would wither and die — when the rail-head moved on, the fort was relocated, or the Sioux Army Depot closed. Now, in 1988, Sidney is feeling the effects of low wheat prices, the oil bust, the loss of farms, and closing businesses.

What was once a grass-covered, treeless prairie has at times limped, but has survived to become a desirable place to live and rear a family.

God has graced our town and with His blessings — WE WILL SURVIVE.

By Audrey J. Buhrdorf, 1403 Osage Street, Sidney, NE 69162



Above: Union Pacific Depot in its heyday.

Right: Shelter house, a WPA project in the 1930s, made from Old Central Building.



Left: New retired citizens' complex on south side of town.

Above: Zenith Air Photo of Sidney, ca. 1955. (Nebraska State Historical Society)

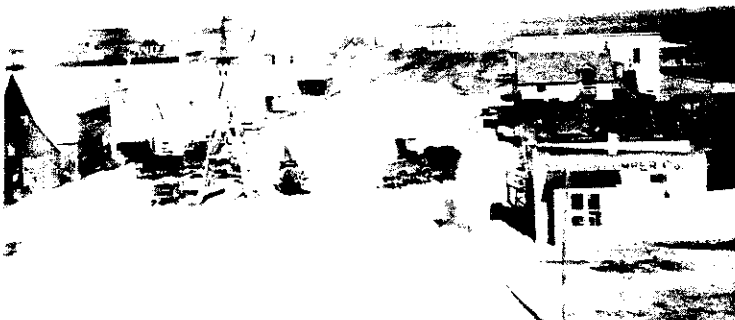


DALTON

In 1899 the Nebraska, Wyoming, & Western Railroad was certified and surveying crews staked its route through Cheyenne County. Dalton was one of the work stations. In January 1900 the railroad purchased 150' strip of land from the Union Pacific, who had received it in a land grant in 1867. By September 1900 there was a daily freight and passenger service north to Deadwood and south to Denver. The railroad erected a depot, section house, water tank, and stock pens. The original depot, west of the tracks, burned and was rebuilt on the east side. In 1961 after most of the service were discontinued, the buildings were sold. The original grounds are now a very nice little park.



Kivett & Miller General Merchandise building, some time before 1910. This is now the Dalton Senior Citizen Center.



Early Dalton, taken from the railroad looking east down main street. Note the schoolhouse at the far end, in the middle of the street.

An early newspaper ad reads: "This is the Town of Dalton which was a year old on the 24th day of February 1908 and there never was another town in the state of Nebraska which made as rapid a growth as this town. Two elevators, two hotels, two livery barns two churches and several stores were started in sixteen months. Land in this locality is level, having a rich black soil five feet deep with a clay subsoil underneath. There never was a better chance for men to get close to a good town and have better soil than this. Price of land at the present time is from \$16 to \$22.50 per acre, for land lying from one to three miles from the town of Dalton."

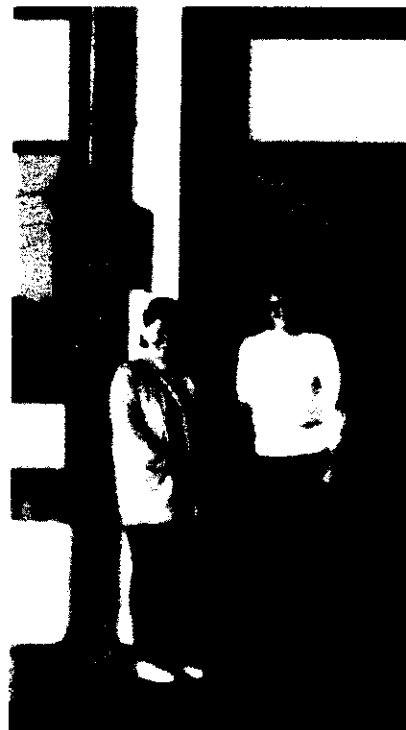
"The Dalton Herald" began publication in 1909 and wasn't in print long. In 1914 "The Dalton Delegate" began publication every Friday until September 1951.

Dalton had a resident doctor prior to 1910 until 1969. Dr. Pankau practiced medicine here for 40 years and died in December 1969. We had a hospital from 1925 to 1969. Since 1978 we have had a clinic which is served by Dr. Jim Nguyer of Bridgeport on Fridays.

Right: Warren Woolsey was named postmaster when the Dalton office was established in 1902. The post is currently held by the ninth postmaster, Kathleen Watchorn and her assistant, Susanne Schreinert.

Below: Dalton, 1925, is up and coming, with street lights, wide sidewalks and some trees.

Photo courtesy of Margaret Johnson



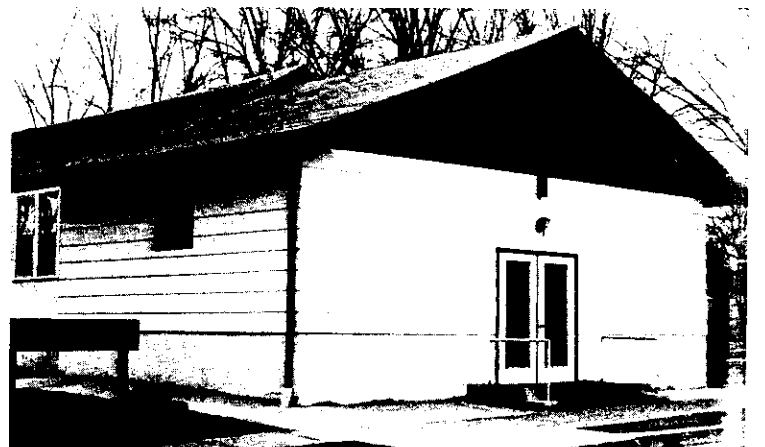


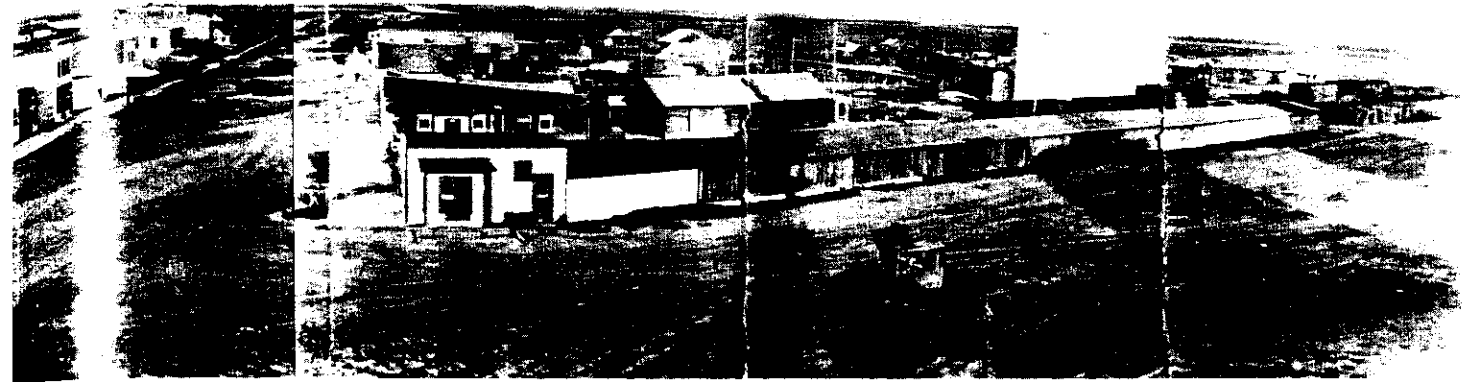
Top: The Dalton Presbyterian Church organized and built in 1908. Prior to this, services were held in homes and a rural schoolhouse.

Top: Trinity Lutheran organized in a stone schoolhouse just west of Dalton in 1913, and built the "Little White Church." This structure was built in 1949 and the old church was remodeled into a parsonage.

Below: The Catholics attended church in Sidney until 1908 when they organized and built their church. It was paid for by the time it was completed. Called St. Boniface until 1927, when it was renamed St. Mary's. Their present church was built in 1959.

Below: The Dalton Assembly of God Church, organized in 1936, first met in homes, the old Woolsey building and then the Foster Hotel, which included living quarters for the pastor and family. In 1940 that building was torn down and the lumber used in the present church, parsonage, and garage.





Above: This panoramic view of Dalton was taken in May 1919, from the Little White Lutheran Church on the left through the stock yards on the right. The grain elevators have replaced the old "shovel houses," where men first shoveled wheat from wagons into the shovel houses, and at night they shoveled it into railroad cars.



Above: The first schoolhouse was built of stone in 1901 just west of town (pictured here shortly before it was demolished). In 1909 a school was built just south of the present facilities, but in the middle of the street (pictured on page 25). It was later moved and used as a hospital until 1969.

Right: In 1916-18 the portion of this school (to the right of the arrow) was built. In 1926 the rest was added. This building served K-12 students for 25 years.



A fire department was organized in 1913. The equipment consisted of a cart which was pulled by the firemen. A rescue unit was added in 1955 and in 1973 Emergency Medical Technicians were trained to better serve the community.

Three windmills provided water for residents until 1914 when a 280 foot well was hand-dug and a water tower erected. The city is now supplied by three wells, still utilizing the original tower.

The first telephone lines in the community were in 1898. It connected Sidney to Water Holes Ranch, Ickes (which was nine miles west of what would become Dalton) and Redington Station. The next telephones were farm lines east of Dalton in 1914. These lines led to the establishing of a phone company probably in about 1917-18.



A gymnasium and classrooms were built in 1952. This structure, insulated with Stramit, was built in 1966, west and south of the old building, prior to removing it. Gurley and Dalton merged in 1978 with K-8 at Gurley and 9-12 at Dalton. It is now known as "Leyton."

Photo by Cary Linton

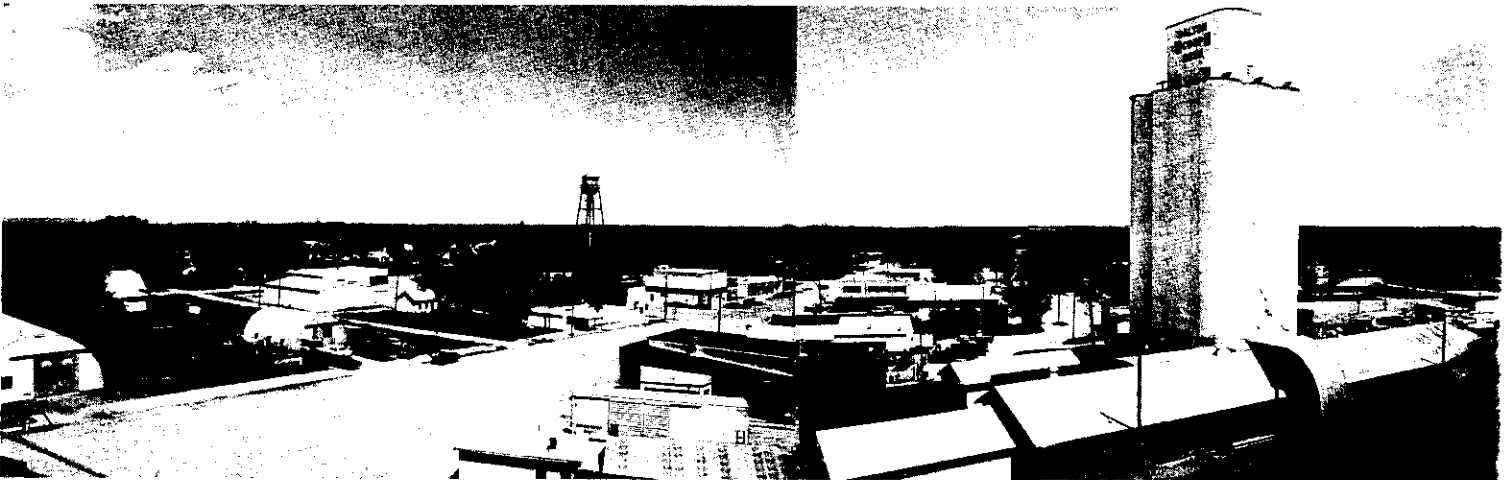


Above: Main Street, looking north in the early days.

Photo courtesy of John Heizer

Below: Dalton, May 1986, taken the day the crew was nearing completion of the demolition of the old elevator.

Photo by Cary Linton



A light plant was purchased in 1921 and operated at a loss for several years. It was finally given to the Western Public Service Company at Scottsbluff. Since 1947 electricity has been supplied by the Wheatbelt Public Power District at Sidney.

Entertainment consisted of movies, dances, and other vaudeville acts. From 1916 to 1930 Chautauqua was enjoyed for one week in the summer.

Dalton has survived a number of disasters. The flu epidemic in 1918 that quarantined the county, and a polio epidemic in 1944, causing the school to close and canceling graduation exercises. The blizzard of 1949 was the worst storm since 1888 and isolated people from even their nearest neighbors for many days.

The first radio program was aired on KSID, Sidney, in 1959. Produced from a room above the bank, volunteer announcers broadcast the news, announcements, and advertising.

In 1963 the Stramit plant opened, the only one in operation in the United States. Stramit is wheat straw compressed into a 2" x 4' x 8' panels covered with paper and used as insulation and wall board. The plant was destroyed by fire in 1968 and was not rebuilt.

The Dalton Historical Society proudly displays a log cabin and a museum with a wide array of antiques.

Dalton, located 18 miles north of Sidney, has a population of 350, is a good town where people have real concern for others and come to their aid in time of trouble.

For more information see the Cheyenne County History published in 1986.

By Faetta Schreinert, HC 82 Box 100, Dalton, NE 69131.

LOCUST AND GRASSHOPPERS

A dread in the area was crop-eating insects — mainly grasshoppers. I still remember the smell of the banana oil that was mixed with sawdust and arsenic to kill the grasshoppers in 1934. This was hauled out to the fields and scattered around the edges by hand. In 1980 the grasshoppers were again a threat, but by this time more modern means of controlling them were used.

By Opal Hinchley, Marsland