

Brookside

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Item
26

Fremont,-----The death here on January 18 of William P. Clark removed another pioneer whose coming to this community recalls the rise, growth, and decline of the little community five miles south-west, known as Brookside.

The settlement at Brookside began in 1862, when John Fellows pre-empted the south-west quarter^{of} section 15, Sheridan township. Warren Gould, two years later, took up 80 acres across the road from the northern part of the Fellows place and in another two years Daniel Ashcraft had settled a half mile west. In 1868 Frank Bacon settled directly south of the Gould place. This same year Alfred G. Meade settled on section 22, south of the Fellows place. He then bought the Fellows place, afterward selling most of it to William F. Palmer. He retained forty acres through which Brooks Creek, the outlet to Fremont Lake flows, and at once built a dam and erected a water-power saw mill.

The mill pond was on section 15 but the mill was across the road on section 22. Mr. Clark came into the community as mill-wright for this mill. It was here he met Miss Fannie Ashcraft, daughter of Daniel Ashcraft, and they were married on New Year's day in 1874. On January 1 of this year they celebrated the 59th anniversary of their wedding.

With the opening of Meade's mill, the little settlement grew faster. In 1880 Mr. Meade added a grist mill and this enjoyed a large patronage until long after the saw mill was discontinued. The grist mill had the old-fashioned stone process and farmers

for miles around took their grain there and waited for it to be ground into flour or meal, paying the miller toll and receiving back their own bran and middlings.

The old mill served not only as a mill, but also as a social center. Here the farmers from many directions would meet and discuss the news of their respective neighborhoods. Mr. Meade afterward bought back the farm he sold to Palmer and he lived there for many years. He was prominent in politics, being supervisor of Sheridan township for several years and later county surveyor. He had a family of eight children, the surviving members of which now all live in California.

Warren Gould lived on his farm until his death. His widow remained there for years and reared a large family. Carrie Gould, a daughter, was one of the early school teachers of the county. She married George W. Hall, who died a few years ago. After several years, she married D. W. Westbrook and now lives in Hesperia.

William E. Gould, a son, graduated from the Brookside school and from Fremont High School. He took up teaching as a profession and worked his way up to the office of county school commissioner, a position he held for a time and then became superintendent of the Fremont schools. Among the country schools he taught was his home school at Brookside. He taught here eight years in all, five of which were consecutive. During his incumbency he did a great service for the educational interests of the state by grading Brookside school, the first completely graded rural school in the state.

After many years as superintendent of various village schools in the state, he became chemist for a large manufacturing plant

in Muskegon . But failing eyesight so un-nerved him that he committed suicide on a farm near here in 1929. His educational contributions to Brookside and to the state made him Brookside's most distinguished citizen.

The Brookside school was built on an acre of land from the Frank Bacon place and a town hall was built across the road south. In 1838 David W. Squier built a shingle mill on Brooks Creek on section 22. This same year John Pikaart built a large store directly across the road from the school house. Other changes took place. The settlement had been the most populous part of the township, but the village of Fremont was growing rapidly and half it was in Sheridan township and so the voting place was moved into town.

Pikaart's store did a flourishing business for 12 years. A post-office was established. William E. Gould "waxed poetical" as John Harwood expressed it, and gave it the name of Brookside. Pikaart moved to Fremont and his old store was operated successively by William Rainouard, Henry Kamps, and Dirk Smalligan. It burned down during Smalligan's regime and was not rebuilt.

In the meantime Squier's shingle mill had burned and Meade's mill had been torn down. Cornelius Hammer started a feed mill about 1905, ran it for eight years, and then moved it to Fremont. A two-room school was built in 1903 to replace the old one. After Fremont became a city, Sheridan Center, or Brookside, became once more the seat of the town hall, which was built on the corner east of the school house, on the old Meade farm.

While the community now has some of the best farms in the county and is much more populous than in the days when Wm. P. Clark was mill-wright at Meade's mill, the business formerly done at Brookside is now done in the city. But in the development of this progressive community, Meade's mill had a most important part.