

From the time of its creation in 1857, Sarpy County relied on rented space scattered around Bellevue to conduct its official business. In 1860, the county purchased the former Fontenelle Bank building for use as a courthouse. A few changes, including installing the county jail in the basement, made the building useable for governmental purposes. It served as the courthouse until the county seat was moved to Papillion as a result of an election in 1875.

Transportation was improving; more roads and bridges were being built, but the overall quality left something to be desired. In 1861, the Pacific Railway Act authorized the Union Pacific Railroad to build a railroad from Nebraska westward to Utah where it would join the Central Pacific Railroad, which was being built eastward from California. The main line of the Union Pacific passed through Sarpy County. With the completion of the railroad, it was possible to travel across the whole continent.

Education was improving. A number of new school districts were formed, expanding the teaching of the 3 R's to more and more youngsters in the county.

The 1860s brought about a building boom in stone. Limestone (and occasionally Dakota sandstone) from the bluffs along the Missouri and Platte Rivers provided the raw material. Most of the buildings were constructed within about three miles of the source of the stone. A limestone school was built near 36th St and Highway 370. Four stone barns were built as well as a number of houses. The school, three of the four barns, and most of the house are now gone.

On March 1, 1867, Nebraska was admitted to the Union as the 37th state. Statehood meant more than changing from one type of government to another. It meant that Nebraskans were no longer second-class territorial citizens. It meant being able to elect our own governor. It meant that we had proved to the country that we were just as good as New Yorkers or Ohioans or Californians. And, yes, it also meant that we could look down our noses (but of course we didn't) at our neighbors in Colorado, Wyoming and Dakota who were still territories. Colorado became a state in 1876, Dakota Territory was split

into two states North and South Dakota, which were admitted in 1889, and Wyoming joined the states in 1890.

It may seem that this was still a wilderness, but the pioneers who moved into the new territory were well aware that there wouldn't be much of what was considered civilization when they arrived here. The only way to achieve that was to settle down and work. Eventually churches, schools, comfortable homes, well-stocked stores, and the other signs of progress would be the rewards for all of their labor.