

## Uses of Rocks and Minerals



Changes in the earth's surface in the area have provided us with a great variety of rocks and minerals. The glacier brought in rocks from areas north of us, crushed and carved rocks to change their shapes and buried rocks and minerals of which we still have no knowledge.

Taylor County's earliest residents used rocks as tools. A Native American ax and grinding stone have been found on the Kuse property. Arrowheads and spear points have been found at other locations in the county.

Some of the most important rocks for early immigrants were their whetstones or grinding stones used for sharpening scythes, knives and axes.

The many glacial rocks deposited on the Kuse farm and neighboring farms made clearing land and farming a challenge. Each year these were picked from the field and piled on stone fences. Some were used for building and others for fill.

Farmers who wanted to clear land built a stone boat. It was a low sledge with boards across two wooden runners made of logs. Horses or oxen often pulled these. Because a stone boat was so low to the ground the heavy rocks that were being cleared from the land could be rolled on it without lifting them. A crow bar was often used to move the rocks onto it.

The sand and gravel industry has been an important one in the area. Rocks were crushed by a stone crusher and then used to pave roads.

In the late Nineteenth Century, early settlers of Taylor County were

excited about the prospect of finding gold in the area. Attempts were made to mine iron, copper, and manganese dioxide. Residents even organized mining companies but the ventures were never profitable.

Coal was not found locally but each fall was delivered and poured down a chute placed through the cellar window. The coal reminded us that Great-grandpa Gottfried Bolz had worked in the coal mines of Germany. The small frog lamp he used to light his daily work is a part of the Kuse museum.

Mica or isinglass was often found in granite rocks. Large sheets were put in the front of iron stoves in early settlers' homes. The warm glow of a fire through this rock provided beauty and comfort.

Early settlers used clay mixed with straw or moss as chinking between logs in their buildings. Walter Kuse created one wall in the chicken coup with mud and straw.

There were a number of people in the Taylor County area who manufactured bricks from local clay. The Pete Anderson, Moser brothers, Peter Cullen, Martin White and Albert Kugel, Pechstein and Fischer and George Langenberg families had brickyards in the area. Brick buildings became very desirable after the great Medford fire in 1885.

The area has a special beauty because of rocks. Large patches of lichen form on boulders, ferns, wildflowers, vines and shrubs growing near rocks enhance the environment. Today people bring in favorite large rocks to enhance their yards. They place smaller rocks around and in flowerbeds.