



Buffalo Tales



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Buffalo County Historical Society

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RAVENNA AREA CEMETERIES - PART II

by Valerie Vierk

St. Wenceslaus Bohemian Cemetery is located seven miles south and two east of Ravenna. The center of the cemetery is on a hill that slopes to the east and west. While most older cemeteries have red cedars growing in them, St. Wenceslaus has mostly Ponderosa pine with only two large cedars. These are believed to be the original trees planted by the settlers. A farm pond lies to the east in the pasture that borders the cemetery and provides a very scenic view. The main gate on the north bears the name of the cemetery. Two smaller gate panels on the north reflect a 1930's decorative vintage.

The cemetery was established in 1884 as a Bohemian National cemetery by several Czech settlers of the area. In 1900 the Czech citizens purchased the three acres of land from Joseph and Louisa Skrabel for \$60.00. This group formed an organization and called it Bohemian National Catholic Cemetery. Memberships were sold for \$2.00 each and early records show sixty families as members. The minutes of the meetings were written in Czech from 1900-1930.

In 1912 a church was moved to the grounds and was called St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church. It served the parishioners of the area until 1969.

This cemetery has a quaint and very interesting old world flavor because many of the inscriptions are written in Czech on the older graves. It serves as a reminder that less than a hundred years ago many people of the area did not speak English.

One may be surprised to see markers bearing German names with inscriptions in German. The reason for this is that before St. Joseph's Cemetery was established



St. Wenceslaus Cemetery

WITH THE SOCIETY

A Message from the President:

Progress at the Trails & Rails Museum is always moving ahead even though it seems slow.

Dedication of the Boyd House was held on Saturday, June 5, 1999. We had a very good program highlighted with a Barbershop Quartet and Scott Sidwell, a local attorney, who gave us the life history of Mr. James Boyd.

We have been busy setting up a web site for the Museum. More can be found about this elsewhere in this issue of the *Buffalo Tales*.

We are still in the process of getting our new exhibit and administration building started. We really need more volunteers to work on different committees such as public relations, finance or new building. If you feel you have some expertise in any way, please call Autumn at 237-9845 at the Kearney Community Foundation or myself at 237-2434.

It was an honor to be elected as your president again and I look forward to serving you and the Historical Society.

—Larry Nansel, Past President

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We Have A Web Site:

Please visit the Buffalo County Historical Society web site. Yes, we do have a web site. It is located at www.bchs.kearney.net. We also have an e-mail address at bchs@kearney.net.

We were fortunate enough to be one of the organizations chosen for a web site project at UNK. Two students were assigned to create a web page for our organization. They did a wonderful job of compiling the information they were given and putting together a web site. The finished project was turned over to the Society and is now the responsibility of the newly-appointed Web Site Committee. Committee members are Ed Anderson, chairman; John Shafer, Margaret Hohnholt, Loree Maddux and Mardi Anderson. They will be fine-tuning and editing the web pages.

The web site includes a brief history of the organization, a copy of the latest Buffalo Tales, a list of records stored in our archives, and several pages of information about Trails & Rails Museum. These pages include some great pictures of the buildings at the museum. A page about upcoming programs and tours is "under construction" and will include information as those meetings are scheduled.

Chairman Ed Anderson says we need more members for the Web Site Committee, especially if you have technical knowledge or expertise in this area. If you are interested, contact him at 237-7339 or at the BCHS e-mail address at bchs@kearney.net.

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Membership Chairman Mitzi Steinbrink reminds members that the year 2000 dues purchased after September 1 include the last two 1999 issues of *Buffalo Tales* as a bonus. The year 2000 is an ideal time to consider gift memberships.

(1½ miles to the west) the Bohemians allowed the Germans to bury their dead in St. Wenceslaus. Later many of these Germans were moved to St. Joseph's. One that wasn't moved is Joseph Kreuzwieser, born 1862, died 1888. His marker is a symmetrical four sided sandstone with crosses on each side and a small dome on top. A short epitaph is written but a complete translation was not possible. Above Joseph's name are the words **Hier Ruhel** (here rests.)

There are several monuments that are quite large in this cemetery. One bears the surname Maixner and is an obelisk approximately seventeen feet tall. But unlike most obelisks with a pointed top, this one does not come to a peak, but has a flat top. It towers above all others and seems very unusual for a country cemetery. Anton Maixner 1874-19__ and his wife, Josie, 1881-1928, lie here. Anton's date of death has never been inscribed, for surely he isn't still living.

A sandstone cross about 10" thick and about twelve feet in height (including the base) stands in the center of the cemetery. Two bolts on the back suggest that it may have been hung somewhere before. Words in Czech are written on the front.

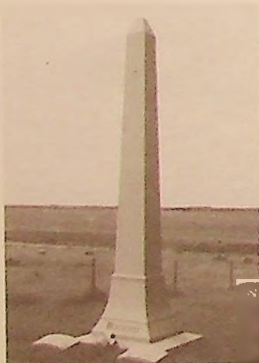
Next to the large cross is a decorative monument, this bearing the SKALA surname. A cross sits atop a curved support that divides into two pillars. This design is very unique and definitely has an Old world look. All inscriptions are written in Czech.

At least two pair of twins also are buried here. The Havlik twins, Joseph and William, died in 1910. Their monument is of sandstone, is symmetrical with two separate gates to heaven each with a large star hanging just behind the opening of the gates. Also, on each is a dove and above that an olive branch. Above the carved picture is the inscription "Our babies 1910."

The other pair of twins were the infants of F.J. and Mary Vacek. They were born and died February 13, 1916. Their marker is of white sandstone with a cross about a foot tall on top. A leaning cross and lamb is carved within the stone. "Our Darlings" is carved below this.

These old sandstone markers are fascinating because often it takes a few minutes of studying them for the details to become clear. The position of the sun can also make a difference in deciphering the writing and artwork.

At least two markers, those of Frantisek Klinkacek and Martin Pesek, bear the emblem of the Woodmen of the World fraternal life insurance company. This company



Maixner Obelisk
St. Wenceslaus Cemetery

was founded in Omaha in 1890. On the Klinkacek granite marker the symbol of the Woodmen is a stump with an axe with branches on each side. Mr. Klinkacek died in 1915 but the inscriptions are very legible, possibly because the marker was placed later. Martin Pesek's marker is gray sandstone and the Woodmen symbol is much harder to read, but it appears to be a dove with an olive branch in her mouth. Martin Pesek died in 1906 at age 42 when a load of lumber fell on him. His farm had been destroyed by a "cyclone" a few weeks before and he was returning home when the load shifted on the hilly terrain, pinning him. He left a wife and seven children, six still at home.

Tucked under a spirea bush is Raymond, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Fisher. Raymond lived December 5, 1889 through February 19, 1890.

The markers of Vaclav and Marie Musil bear similar images of Jesus on the cross, but instead of the usual view of Jesus facing out, He is holding on to the cross facing it. Each marker also has a shroud with tassles draped over the stone. **Rock of Ages** is inscribed above the names.

A granite oval marker honors John and Rosalia Schuller, "Pioneers of 1874, Our father and mother." Rosalia died in 1875 and John in 1888. They would have been some of the very early settlers in the area. Also on this marker is the name of Johnnie Macek, who lived from March to July 1892.

Burials are still made at St. Wenceslaus and local volunteers maintain the cemetery.

The Moss cemetery, formerly called the Bachkora cemetery, is located four miles south, eight east and ½ mile south of Ravenna. One comes upon it while traversing a minimum maintenance road that is bordered by plum bushes. Suddenly two large cedars appear just a few feet west of the road and then the small, iron picket fence enclosure becomes visible if one slows down. A pasture borders on the south and farm ground on the west and north. The cemetery consists of an acre of land, is about 75 feet wide by 230 feet long.

This was originally the site of the first cemetery for the Zion Lutheran Church in this area. The church was built in the winter of 1890 for the sum of \$1,170.60. The sod parsonage that measured 12' x 24' sat across the road. In 1897 the original church was taken apart and moved two and a half miles south and one mile west of the old site. It was used for a church and parochical school until 1912 when the new church was built. The original church continued as a parochical school until 1946.



Moss Cemetery

The old cemetery was generally abandoned when the church was moved and many of the graves were moved to the new cemetery, but five markers still exist. Two lie within the old iron picket fence that measures about 15' x 12'. The small gate on the east no longer exists. The cedars stand on each side of the enclosure. Two separate markers stand here. One is of Henry J. Moss, 1813-1892, the other bears the name of Margaretha Moss, 1850-1935 and John 1848-1903. Margaretha evidently was interred after the cemetery was generally abandoned. On her side are inscribed the German words: **Selig Sinde die in Dem Herrn Sterben.**

Outside the fence and a few feet down the grassy hill lies the grave of John K. Kuster, son of W.F. and Annie Kuster. Little John died May 12, 1888, aged 1 year, 11 months and 20 days. The inscriptions on this marker were not readable until the already dislodged stone was turned and then suddenly the words were readable, but with some struggle. The verse states, "Farewell sweet boy thou shalt be a star to guide us up to heaven with thee." (Little Jimmy in the Ravenna cemetery, see Part I, died April 10, 1888 at age 1 year, 8 months and 25 days. His and John's markers are identically shaped except Jimmy's has a lamb carved above his name. The boys were nearly the same age, died within a month of each other. Perhaps the inscription below Jimmy's name and date (now illegible) is the same one that appears on John's).

Another marker is that of Paulina Puchert, 1871-1886, Charley Puchert, 1840-1893, and Mary Belline, 1875-1885. (Some records show that Mary was the first burial in the cemetery, while others show that Claus Sothman was first. Both died in 1885.) Although this stone is of the old sandstone vintage, it is in excellent condition, which makes one wonder if it is a newer reproduction of an old stone style. At the far west lies J. Gottlieb A. Muhlbach, 1823-1898. The verse upon his marker states: "The pains of death are past. Labor and sorrows cease; And life's long warfare closed at last. His soul is found in peace." This marker is also of the old vintage but very legible.

When the prairie grasses were mown just before Memorial Day 1999, something became obvious that hadn't been noticeable before: in several places iris grew in circles, obviously spreading out from where graves originally had been. Perhaps these were the graves of two children of Herman and Amanda (Putscher) Vierk who settled in the area in 1885. Three of their other children were buried in other places. Ten other siblings survived.

Now on the eve of the new century, many people are delving into their past, eager to document the lives and deaths of their ancestors. Our country cemeteries offer a beautiful and serene place to begin the journey.

SOURCES

1. *The Ravenna News*
2. "Cemeteries" written by Edith Abraham in *Ravenna Centennial 1886-1986* and "Churches" by Evelyn Shrader in same book.

Special thanks to these people who provided additional information: Edith Abraham, Marvin Basnett, Herb and Virginia Nolda, Mike and Elisa Plautz, Ruby Pope, Gene Shipp, Wayne Urwiller and Jack Vierk.

Author's Biography: Valelrie Vierk is a native of Ravenna. She graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with a minor in history. She served on the Ravenna Cemetery board for six years and still has an active interest in Highland.

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Institutional Membership	\$20.00
Supporting Membership	\$30.00 +

Life memberships are \$150.00 for an individual; \$200.00 husband and wife.

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TRAILS & RAILS MUSEUM

Summer is almost half over. Collection Day is over and we thank each and every one for their displays. They were unique and special—all of them. Many who attended asked if we would have one next year.

Our next big project is August 14th, when we have our Living History Day. There will be a display of quilts which have not been at Trails and Rails before. We will have a special display of feather stitching and demonstration. You will be able to make a sample for yourself.

We will receive a gift of a bill President Truman put in the collection plate at the time he stopped in Kearney and attended the Baptist Church. This will be presented by James Pearson, son of the minister at that time. James' mother and sisters plan to attend, also. Watch the Kearney Hub for further details.

—Margaret Hohnholt, Volunteer Director

Trails & Rails Museum 706 West 11th Street (308) 234-3041

Buffalo County Historical Society

Box 523
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