



# Buffalo Tales



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Buffalo County Historical Society

April, 1989

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## WASHINGTON DAY 1889

Compiled by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell

### *Introduction*

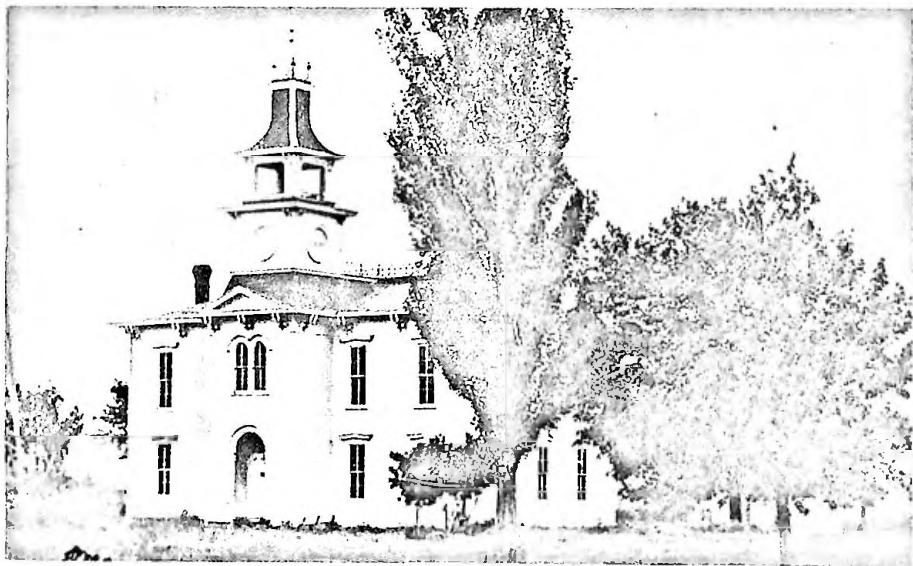
The bicentennial anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as the first president of the United States will be on April 30, 1989. Descriptive accounts of the centennial anniversary observance on April 30, 1889, are found in the *Gibbon Beacon* of May 3, 1889, and in the *Kearney Daily Hub* of April 30, the *Kearney Enterprise* of May 1, and the *Kearney Daily Journal* of May 1 and May 3, 1889. Excerpts from these newspaper articles follow:

### *The Washington Centennial*

#### **How It Was Observed In Gibbon**

Gibbon celebrated the Washington Day centennial Tuesday in an elegant manner, as is always the case when anything of public interest is at hand. The high school was dismissed and the youth of the town were given a chance to celebrate. The (Collegiate) Institute also dismissed school and most of the places of business had closed doors. From many of the business houses the stars and stripes floated. The *Beacon* hung out

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Gibbon High School 1889

BUFFALO TALES is the official publication of the Buffalo County Historical Society, a non-profit organization, whose address is P. O. Box 523, Kearney, NE 68848. It is sent to all members of the Society.

Membership is open to anyone who has an interest in the history of Buffalo County and its people. Annual dues, payable January 1, are:

- Basic Membership ..... \$10.00
- Institutional Membership ..... \$15.00
- Supporting Membership ..... \$25.00

Life memberships are \$100.00 for an individual; \$150.00 for husband and wife, jointly.

Officers and Directors: President, Margaret Hohnholt; Vice-President, Merlin Berglund; Secretary, Colleen Parker; Treasurer, Philip S. Holmgren. Directors: Frances Link, Barb Avery, Minnette Steinbrink, Edna Hehner, Alice Howell, Robert Stubblefield, Viola Livingston, Chandler Lynch III, and Jim Cudaback. Publications Chairman: Alice Howell.

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### WITH THE SOCIETY

The annual meeting of the Buffalo County Historical Society on April 16 at First Lutheran Church in Kearney was well attended. Preceding the business meeting, a slide presentation entitled, "Thanks, Grandpa!" was given by Glenn Thompson of Holdrege. This program was funded by the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities.

Margaret Hohnholt presided at the business meeting. A review of the activities of the year was given by the president. New directors elected for 3-year terms were Philip S. Holmgren, Glen Wisch and Mike Stauffer, all of Kearney, and Chad Anderson of Amherst.

Directors retiring from the Board are Alice Howell, Chan Lynch and Mitzi Steinbrink, all of Kearney, and Bob Stubblefield of Shelton. A certificate of appreciation was presented to each for their service on the Board. Certificates of appreciation were also given to Bernice Oran and Thelma Lyons for their work on Buffalo County archives; to Jo Bissell for heading the school program; and to Lois Tollefsen for serving as museum volunteer coordinator.

Following the business meeting, the group assembled at the Peterson House for a buffet dinner. 75 were in attendance.

Society officers for the 1989-90 year will be elected from the Board at its May meeting.

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Leonard Silver, past president and past director of the Historical Society will be honored at an Arbor Day Celebration at the Cottonmill Park East Turnaround on April 28, 1989, at 1:30 p.m. "Silver Grove" will be established in the park in tribute to Leonard for his longtime service in the county as a man of trees and soil. Past officers and directors, as well as present members of the Historical Society are encouraged to join in the festivities at Cottonmill Park in honor of Leonard. Mark your calendar for April 28.

. . . . .

If you wish to remember loved ones on Memorial Day, do so with a gift to the Buffalo County Memorial Day Fund. Established last year by the Buffalo County Historical Society, the Memorial Day Fund is an opportunity for members to remember family and friends and at the same time benefit the society with a memorial gift.

a very unique streamer composed of small flags placed together so as to spell out "BEACON."

At 8:30 a.m. bells in the town began to ring, inviting the people to come join in freedom's chorus. A few minutes past 9:00 a.m. a large and attentive company of citizens and those of the community around Gibbon had gathered at the Methodist church. The services began with singing, the congregation being led by a male double-quartette. After a prayer by the Rev. O. R. Beebe, the centennial hymn was sung by the quartette.

After the reading of the President's proclamation, Rev. Smith of the Baptist church gave a brief review of the religious progress of a hundred years, followed by musical selections by the Glee Club.

"The Advantages of American Citizenship," was the subject of an address by D. P. Ashburn. In the comparison of our government with that of the nations of the world, he brought out distinctly a few of the many advantages we enjoy. Among others, he mentioned our advantages in the levying and paying of taxes; our common school system compared to the German method, and also the advantage of not having seven years of life put in in the standing army. The speaker closed by referring to the causes of the great flood of immigrants coming to our shores.

Professor C. M. Brooke then followed with a short address on the "Progress of Education," showing the growth of culture in our land and the opportunities for the same. Among other things the speaker said education was our safeguard against future wars, and from this time on our difficulties will be settled by giant intellects. In moulding and fashioning the foreigner, we could not make him a perfect American, but his children we could mould by education.

After the singing of "Freedom's Chorus" by the Glee Club, S. C. Bassett followed in an address on the material progress of our country. The speaker depicted the vast growth in territory, the great increase in foreign and domestic commerce, the wonderful opening up of mineral wealth, and the great growth of our manufactured products.

The Glee Club sang "Home Sweet Home," after which the whole congregation joined them in singing "America." Father Willard pronounced the benediction.

### **Kearney's Tribute**

A fairer day for a holiday celebration it is not possible to ask for than this which has been assigned to commemorate the inauguration of Washington as the first president of our country one hundred years ago. Great preparations have been made all over the land to commemorate this event, and Kearney has contributed its share of enthusiasm and inculcated at the same time a new impetus of patriotism to the many hundreds of young children in its schools by having them participate in interesting exercises.

The morning dawned bright and beautiful. A handsome new flag was raised upon the pole at the high school building and flags decorated many Central Avenue buildings, as well as buildings on the side streets. One of the churches was ornamented over the main entrance with the emblem of liberty—the star spangled banner. For the greater part of the day, and in many cases all day, every public office and place of business was closed. Services were held in the Presbyterian Church at 9:00 a.m., and later at St. Lukes Episcopal Church where the rector reviewed the character of the immortal Washington. These services were well attended.

At 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, the school children from all the city schools arrived

at the high school grounds. They were in holiday attire, and nearly all of them carried miniature flags which waved in the soft spring air. The Midway Military Band, at a given signal, started an enlivening march and led the procession to the model Opera House. The ministers of the city churches were first in line, followed by members of the Board of Education, then the pupils of the High School and the various ward schools, about 1300 in number, followed by Kearney citizens. The procession, marching two deep, moved in a solid column from the school grounds on Third Avenue, down 23rd Street to Central Avenue, thence south to 21st Street, thence east to the opera house (at 21st and Avenue B.)

On reaching the building the members of the Kearney Musical Society were found seated on the stage and to their number the ministers were added, while the children swarmed in, filling the chairs in the front part of the house. By the time the children and the citizens who followed in procession were seated, little space remained in the building. It was considered no hardship to stand, however, and all the aisles were thronged with an interested audience to the anniversary exercises.

The Midway Military Band began the exercises by rendering the "Rival Overture," by Pettee, in a manner which drew loud applause from the assemblage and particularly pleased the children. As there was not a seat left, the band was compelled to retire and some of their fine selections were consequently omitted. The Kearney Musical Society, under the direction of Mrs. Amanda Swenson, rendered "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name." Rev. R. W. Oliver then arose and asked the audience to join with him in reciting the Lord's Prayer. Rev. John Askin addressed the audience, saying that because of the heat and inability of persons in the rear portion of the building to hear, he would simply tell them the portion of holy writ that he intended to refer to and hoped that they would open their Bibles at the first opportunity and read the 44th chapter of Isaiah from the first to the twenty-second verse. The Rev. J. D. Kerr then offered prayer.



Kearney Band, circa 1891

Then was sung "America," at the conclusion of which forty-two children representing that number of states and territories, formed in line, three deep facing the audience and each one recited something appropriate to the state she represented. The participants of this tableaux were of all sizes and ages and looked very pretty. Each one was dressed in white muslin and wore a sash of red, white and blue, on which was beautifully inscribed in silk the name of the state she represented.

The audience was then requested to sing the "Red, White and Blue," everyone rising to their feet. Professor Draper led. At the closing stanza a very pretty effect was produced by all the scholars waving the flags which they were provided. The majority of the children then left the building and the oration of George E. Morris was announced.

Mr. Morris' elocution was a masterpiece of delivery, clear, distinct, with pathos or patriotism in every phrase, as the occasion demanded. His gestures were in harmonious accord with every utterance, and added greatly to the patriotic inspiration that his words conveyed. During the speech the orator was frequently interrupted with applause.

Following another selection by the Kearney Musical Society, Rev. D. K. Tindall offered a short benediction and this finished the day's program at the opera house.

Those who were not able to attend the memorial exercises in the afternoon, devoted that time to outdoor recreation, visiting the lake, driving and riding. The stores were closed and the street had a holiday air. Many of the people from outside the city spent a portion of the day in Kearney. Preparations were active for the festivities at the Midway (Hotel) in the evening and the corridors of the hotel were gay with bunting and the decorations prepared for the grand ball of the Bachelors' Protective Union. Between two hundred fifty and three hundred invitations were issued, and the success of the affair is assured, said the *Hub*.

A news item the following day stated that "during the exercises at the opera house a great number of children could not procure seats. Messrs. Allen and Smith took



Kearney High School and Elementary School 1889

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compassion on the youngsters and marched them to Geo. See's ice cream parlors and 'saturated' them with lemonade. The thoughtful kindness of these gentlemen added another pleasing feature to yesterday's proceedings."

But all was not pleasing to the editor of the Kearney Daily Journal when the Enterprise came out with the announcement: "*The Enterprise in the Schools*. The school board has ordered a large number of yesterday's issue of the Enterprise for distribution among the scholars of the higher grades so that they can study Depew's speech and Whittier's poem and other items of interest connected with the life of Washington printed in that special edition. Although a large number of extra copies were printed, every paper was sold before noon so that extra copies will have to be provided."

To this the Journal replied that the above "was so transparent that it was viewed clear through." It began to leak out yesterday that the school board knew nothing about the above order. The Kearney school board are Messrs. Calkins, Andrews, Aspinwall, Smith, Allen and Hartzell. Each of these gentlemen has been interviewed and all say they never heard of such an order until yesterday morning.

"Consummate cheek is overrated by unadulterated gall," stated the *Journal*. "There is nothing like it."

**SOURCES**

The scrapbook of Harriette J. Nelson covering events of the Kearney High School from 1884 to 1901 contained all of the news items quoted relative to the Kearney celebration of Washington Day, 1889.

**NEW BASIC MEMBERS**

Ben Kimball . . . . .Kearney    Kermit Wild . . . . . Amherst  
Marion Scoville . . . . .Gibbon

**1989 SUPPORTING MEMBERS**

Ruth Anderson . . . . .Kearney    Gordon & Doralene Weed . . . . Kearney  
Dr. Joel T. Johnson . . . . .Kearney    Wayne Humphrey . . . . .Kearney  
Rodney Pierce . . . . .Kearney    Mary A. Burcham . . . . San Diego, CA  
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