



Buffalo Tales



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e-mail: bchs@bchs.us

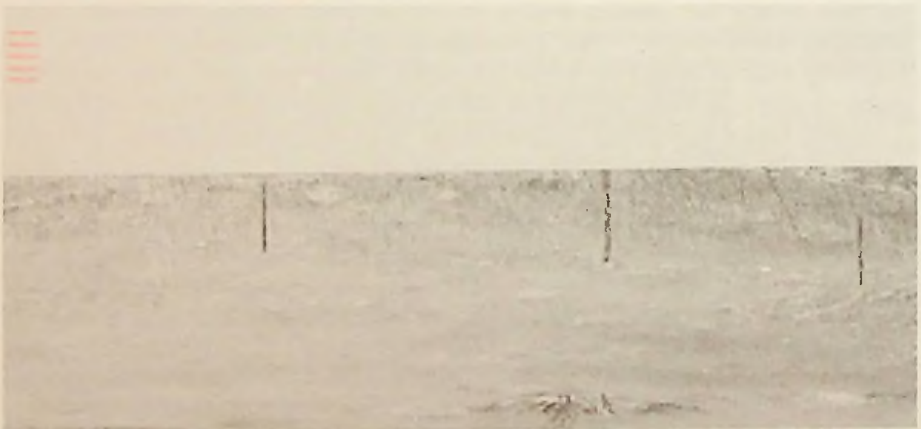
website: www.bchs.us

Harrison Township

By Mardi Anderson

Harrison Township is located in the northwest corner of Buffalo County. Originally it was part of a larger township called Taylor. That township included what is now Harrison, and Sartoria Township (directly east of Harrison), and the north half of Scott Township (south of Sartoria). Harrison became a separate township in April 1884.

Compared to the Platte Valley in the southern end of Buffalo County, Harrison Township is high country. Much of the township consists of rolling hills, mainly grassland and hay ground. Most of the cattle are black and white face Angus although a few Herefords can be seen. More of the land in the southwest part of the township is tilled, and corn is the main crop.



Much of the land in Harrison Township is in grass or hay.

Photo by Ed Anderson

The South Loup River enters Buffalo County in Harrison Township and crosses almost the entire width of the township, entering Sartoria Township only about 1-1/2 miles south of the Buffalo/Custer County line. There have been several smaller streams flowing into the South Loup. The largest is Elk Creek which flows from the north. Otter and Dry Creeks and several drainage routes flow in from the south. The south edge of the township appears to be a watershed with streams starting there and flowing into the South Loup while a few others meander south to the Wood River in Armada Township.

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The soil is sandy along the South Loup River where a finger of the Sand Hills reaches into the county. It blends into more clay soil farther south. Harrison Township has fewer roads than most townships. Only 44 miles of road plus three miles of minimum maintenance roads traverse the township. Highway 183 travels through the entire township on a north-south route.

There are no towns or even unincorporated communities in Harrison Township. The nearest town is Miller two miles south of its southern border. But there have been several businesses. Milt's Store was located on Highway 183 at the Buffalo/Custer County line. Milton and Seraphine Willard opened a country store and service station in 1914. It was a favorite place to drop in and buy ice cream. Seraphine continued to operate the store after her husband's death in 1954. With her daughter, Virginia Hutchins, Seraphine operated the store until 1985. She celebrated her 100th birthday that year and never did retire.

Over the years the store had three locations, always near the Buffalo/Custer County line, but always on the Buffalo County side. First it was located by the railroad bed which had been built from Pleasanton through Sartoria and on into Harrison Township on the north side of the Loup River. When Highway 183 was built a mile east of the store in 1941, Milt's store moved to be near the new transportation route. The third move was not very far. When the highway was widened in 1970 the store had to be moved back off the right-of-way. In 2005 the site is marked by two residences but no store.

Aspen Dairy is located two miles north of Miller on Highway 183 just north of the section road that marks the southern boundary of Harrison Township. The Slegers established the business in 1999. They chose this spot in northwestern Buffalo County because of the deep soil and availability of water. The dairy currently milks between 3,000 and 4,000 cows twice daily. The cows are all Holstein except for about 80 which are a Jersey/Holstein cross. The cows are fed corn silage that is purchased locally and ground corn purchased through the Holdrege elevator. Four bulk truck loads of milk are produced daily. It is sold to a coop that supplies the cheese factory at Ravenna and to Roberts Dairy. Roberts distributes the milk in Omaha and Lincoln with the surplus going to Kansas City. The dairy employs 31 people who live as far away as Kearney and Lexington.

Grand View is the only church in Harrison Township. This rural church is Emmanuel Missionary, part of a small sect headquartered in Indiana. The church is a small rectangular building with a lean-to on the back. Beside it are an outhouse and a windmill. There is also a small house which was the parsonage but no minister has lived there since the 1960's. All the buildings are well maintained and appear to be freshly painted. There still are weekly services and a Vacation Bible School is held every summer. Current membership is less than 20. There is no cemetery connected with this church nor is there a cemetery in the entire township.



The Grand View church (left) and parsonage (right) are located four miles north and four miles east of Miller at the corner of 325th and Cessna Roads. Photo by Ed Anderson

Harrison Township was originally served by two school districts. District 37 included the east half along with part of Sartoria Township. District 54 covered the west half of Harrison.

When Wild Horse School (District 58) was organized in 1882 it served early settlers along the South Loup River in the northeastern part of the township for a year. Then it merged with District 71 for five years. In 1888 it reorganized to serve the northwest quarter of Harrison. The first schoolhouse was probably made of sod, as were most early schoolhouses in the county. But soon a frame building was built which was used until 1928. In that year a new building was erected and used until the district closed in 1956. The schoolhouse was located two miles south of Mill's Store and one mile west.

Grand View School (District 82) was organized in 1884 and served the southeast quarter of the township in the Grand View Church area. In fact, the church and Sunday School first met in this school before the church building was erected. There were 19 school age children (ages 5-20) in the first school census but not all attended school. In 1907 the school had an enrollment of 40 students. Literary meetings were held at the schoolhouse and it also served as a polling place. When the school closed in the spring of 1957, an auction was held to sell the school furnishings and building. After changing hands a couple of times, the building was moved in 1960 to the edge of Miller to become the Wood River Medical Association Clinic. Dr. Ruth Christensen practiced there until she moved to New York in 1982.

Mt. Pleasant (District 104) was organized in 1886. This small district in the southwest corner of Harrison Township also included part of Dawson County. In Buffalo County it was formed from three sections of land in District 58, Wild Horse, to the north and three sections of District 54 to the south in Armada Township. The district consolidated with Sumner in 1957.

Red Wing School (District 71) is the most well known school in Harrison Township. It was founded in 1883 by consolidating the

original Districts 37 and 54 and served the northeast part of the township. Originally the school was called the Harrison Township School, or Harrison for short. The school building was painted white and the window shutters were painted red. Some said that at a distance it looked like a white bird with red wings. Thus the name became Red Wing.

The district was organized at the home of Frank Burdick, who had homesteaded along the South Loup River. He leased one acre of land at the price of \$1 per year for as long as a school was on the property. A frame building was erected at a cost of \$200. Included in that cost was \$7.50 for a new heating stove. The door was on the east end of the building and there were three windows each on the north and south sides. The teacher's desk sat on a stage at the west end and the heating stove was in the middle of the room.

This building served until 1916 when a new building was constructed a mile or so west. This was a larger building with a bell tower. In the mid-1950's a library and restrooms were added. It was at this time that both Wild Horse and Grand View districts closed and consolidated with Red Wing and Mt. Pleasant closed and consolidated with Sumner.

At the beginning of the 1980-81 school year the Red Wing teacher assigned some of the students to write a history of their school. They gathered information from parents, grandparents, and friends who had attended Red Wing. Most mentioned the red shutters that had produced the name Red Wing. A few mentioned the big bell that sometimes caused problems. One student wrote that "there was a big school bell on top but it would get stuck and the ding dong would fly off and almost hit the children." To keep the children safe, the school later sold the bell at the Riverdale Community Sale.

Like many school houses, Red Wing School was a social center for the community. Church and Sunday School were held there. During World War I the local ladies met at the school to knit socks and scarves for the Red Cross. When funds were needed to purchase playground equipment, the community sold box suppers.

When the first school census was taken in April 1884 there were 79 school-aged children from 51 families. But the population fluctuated in this part of the county and in 1886 the number of school-aged children dropped to 31. Over the years the school enrollment reached as high as 50 pupils. By the 1980's, enrollment declined to a point that the school could no longer remain open. In 1989 the school closed its doors and school supplies and equipment were disposed of at auction. The children in the area attend elementary school in Amherst, Ansley, or in the Sumner-Eddyville-Miller District. The building was purchased but the new owner did not move it off the property within the required 60 days. The building and the land on which it sits reverted back to the land owner. Today the old school house sits, dilapidated, beside 362nd Road. The paint is peeling, window panes are gone, and the bell tower is empty.



**Red Wing School, closed, deserted,
as it appeared in February 2005.**

Photo by Ed Anderson

From the Society:

Hello to all! What an exciting summer! Our attendance is well above last year and we have had a lot of positive feedback about our organization. You should be proud to be a part of the Buffalo County Historical Society!

Due to road construction, we are starting to slow down a bit. Parking for the next couple months will be a bit different. There will be designated parking for Trails and Rails Museum on 11th Street. We will also open up the back gate, so you can park on 10th Street.

Bids have been accepted for both the Depot Renovation Project and the Livery Barn project with contracts in the works! We are so excited to see the progress and improvements coming along nicely. If you have fund raising ideas or would like to help us with the grant process, it would be much appreciated!!! We enjoy seeing your enthusiasm and your willingness to help us grow stronger.

Speaking of growing...we have been awarded a very nice grant from the Kearney Area Community Foundation for our **Trunk Tales Program**. Trunk Tales are going to be a travelling trunk system that teachers, librarians, scout leaders, Head Start programs, and anyone else interested, may borrow from BCHS. We currently have three themes: 1) Life on the Prairie with a Pioneer Family, 2) Exciting Life of the Railroad Man and 3) Life in a One-Room Schoolhouse. There is no charge for borrowing the trunks (other than insured shipping costs). We have guidelines set. Items just need to be pulled together and then we can market this wonderful asset to schools and organizations! If anyone is interested in jumping in to help, I would love it!!

We have several new items in our gift shop and we now offer gift certificates called "Train Tickets." "Train Tickets," memberships to BCHS, and the Buffalo Tales CD are great gift-giving ideas!!

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any reason. I am open to listening to all of your comments and ideas. Jennifer Murrish, Executive Director. My e-mail address is jennifer@bchs.us.

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Dr. Mark R. Ellis, Editor

2006 Annual dues, payable January 1, are:

Individual	\$25.00
Basic Membership	\$30.00
Institutional Membership	\$40.00
Supporting Membership	\$50.00

Life memberships are \$150.00 for individual; \$200.00 for couple.

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Term expiring June 1, 2006: Dora Day, Jan Fern, Merlin Burgland and Robert Guge.

Term expiring June 1, 2007: John Shafer, Barb O'Neill, Dick Mercer and Susan Underhill.

Terms expiring June 1, 2008: Dan Speirs, Susan Lynch, Barb Reige and Mary Henning.

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Summart's S.O.S. Program: Save your Summart register receipts and drop them off at the Trails and Rails Museum's depot. When we collect \$150,000 worth of receipts, they will cut us a check for \$1,000 to use for educational programs. We are designating this money to go towards our Trunk Tales program. (see inside for details)

Labels for Learning: Save all "Our Family" labels with the bar code on it and drop those off in our depot. We will receive a nickel for every label we collect.

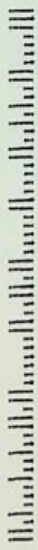
Community Day at Herberger's: You can purchase coupon packets from us that include offers for great savings throughout their stores (including Younkers). **Our organization retains the entire \$5 from each packet we sell!!!**

Trails & Rails Museum 710 West 11th Street (308) 234-3041

Buffalo County Historical Society
Box 523 • Kearney, NE 68848-0523

Return Service Requested

Vivian Blomekamp
1023 Forest Avenue
Palo Alto CA 94301



54301#3021