



Buffalo Tales



Volume 17, No. 1 Buffalo County Historical Society January-February, 1994

WEST NEBRASKA HOLINESS CAMP MEETINGS

by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell

It was an energetic, sizeable group, the West Nebraska Holiness Association, which held its camp meetings in Kearney from 1908 to 1952. The camp was located first at the south end of Collins Park, later in the block immediately south of the park, between A. Streets D and E and 14th and 15th Streets. At its peak, membership numbered several hundred persons.

The Association grew out of the Platte Valley Holiness Camp, which was organized around 1903 as an auxiliary to the National Holiness Association. Camp meetings were held at Kenesaw, in Adams County, in the summers from 1905 until 1908 when the camp was moved to Kearney.

In 1912 the West Nebraska Holiness Association was incorporated. Its spiritual jurisdiction covered that "portion of the State of Nebraska lying west of a line running north from the east boundary line of Webster County and comprising more than six counties." Although named as an auxiliary to the National Association, it operated at all times as an independent body in south central Nebraska.

The object of the Association was the conversion of sinners to God, the entire sanctification of believers, and the building up of saints in the most holy faith. It was inter-denominational. Denominations represented were United Brethren, Evangelical, Methodist, Friends, Free Methodist, People's Mission, Nazarene, International Holiness

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Camp-meeting Tent, prior to 1913.

WITH THE SOCIETY

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Buffalo County Historical Society is happy to report that this year's programs will begin with a presentation at the Amherst Community Hall, Sunday, January 30th, at 2:00 p.m. The program will be presented by Larry Nansel on the subject, "Mail Service in Buffalo County for the Last 40 Years." Hope to see you there.

We have a busy year ahead of us. That comes with being a vital and growing organization. The meetings for our annual Wagons West Celebration (June 4th) will be starting soon so if any of you would like to be on a committee that works hard and enjoys seeing a major project blossom from an idea, please call me. We can always use ideas and lots of help.

School tours will be starting soon so give Margaret Hohnholt, a call if you would be interested in watching the eyes of children light up in wonderment while they learn about their heritage.

Our annual meeting is just around the corner so if you, or someone you know, would like to be considered for the Buffalo County Historical Society Board, please contact me or a current Board member and we will be happy to submit your name to the Nominating Committee.

I hope everyone is staying warm and well, and has made a New Year's resolution to be a part of "the best kept secret in Kearney".

—Susan C. Lynch, President

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MEMORIALS RECEIVED:

From Paul and Mitzi Steinbrink, in memory of Marion Marrow, Marge Broadfoot, Ruth Wilcox and Mrs. Marge Rundstrom.

From Dr. and Mrs. R. L. Link, in memory of Lester Ramsey and Miller Godberson.

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NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Don and Jerry Keiss Kearney Tom and Carol Bosshardt Kearney
Wayne Humphrey Kearney

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NEW 1994 BASIC MEMBERS

Michael and Carol Woodman Kearney

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1994 SUPPORTING MEMBERS

James W. and Ylonda Anderson	Marlin and Cheryl Heiden	Virginia Parrish
Essam and Barbara Arram	Otto and Elma Lohrenz	Roger Ritter
Josephine Bissell	Mrs. Inez F. McConnell	Mr. and Mrs. Les Robinson
Dr. and Mrs. David Clark	Sid Murrish	Dr. and Mrs. R. C. Rosenlof
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Mr. and Mrs. Jack Erickson	Mr. and Mrs. Richard Nutter	Ruth Schini
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Mark Hadenfeldt	Chas E. Oldfather	Robert and Virginia Tingle
Harder Family	David and Susan Oldfather	Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy A. Walker
Chris Hehner	John D. McQuarrie	Walt and Lois Wilken
Lance Hehner	Mrs. Wayne Reynolds	Dale and Ilia Wright

Annual Members, please note: This is your last issue of *Buffalo Tales* if you have not paid 1994 annual dues. Memberships are due on January 1, and delinquent on March 1.

and Salvation Army. Members were mostly from Adams, Kearney, Buffalo, Dawson and Custer Counties but included people from all over the state of Nebraska.

In the early years tents were used exclusively, not only for the campers' needs, but large tents housed the main camp meetings, the dining hall and kitchen, and the children's services. Some campers brought their own tents, others rented at the camp. Tent rental prices varied according to the economic conditions of the time. In early years rental was \$3.00 if the request was made by a certain date; otherwise, rental would be 60 cents per day. Campers might come for a full two weeks, for only one week, or for only the weekend. In addition to the income from tents and meals, pledges were obtained throughout the state to maintain the camp. Such pledges or requests for money were not encouraged during the camp meetings. As stated in the minutes, "the use of free will offerings, private pledges, and a love offering is much more desired for the spirit and purpose of the camp." Offerings collected during camp meetings were sent to interdenominational mission stations around the world.

Camp meetings in Kearney were held during two weeks in mid or late August. In the era before air conditioning, outdoor meetings had great appeal, whether it was Chautauqua or other specialized sectarian, religious or ethnic gatherings. Camp meetings were a significant part of the American culture during the first quarter of the century.

For most attending the West Nebraska Holiness camp it was a family outing, possibly the only summer vacation the campers might have. Families would load up furniture and supplies from home to outfit their camping tent. A cook was hired and with his helpers three meals a day were furnished at a price of 20 to 25 cents for breakfast and for lunch, and 35 cents for dinner. However, all campers did not eat at the dining tent. For some families with several children, the cost of three meals out for a week or more was prohibitive, so the mother brought her stove and kitchen utensils and prepared meals in the family tent. Evangelists, song leaders and their families were not charged for food and paid only half price for their tents in some years, although as time went on these leaders were furnished room and board in addition to their fee for services and train or car fare.



Tabernacle on Camp Grounds

In 1912 the executive council of the Association appointed B. J. Patterson to solicit funds for an additional block on which to erect a tabernacle at the campground. Seven lots had been secured by February 25, 1913, and at a meeting on that date B. J. Patterson, Chris Samp and B. C. Parr were appointed to act as a building committee. The tabernacle construction was started immediately and was ready for occupancy for the August, 1913 camp meeting. Painting and a roof covering were completed in the next two or three years. The dirt floor was covered with fresh straw each year prior to the meetings. It would be many years before a concrete floor was poured in the building.

The rest of the lots of the block comprising the tabernacle grounds were secured and deeded to the Association on September 11, 1914. A frame cook house and dining hall were soon constructed, and all of the large tents sold.

Alfalfa was sown on the grounds around the tabernacle and the crop sold each year for camp meeting funds. In April of 1926 city water was connected to the grounds and trees were planted, and in later years grass was sown. Most of the labor for upkeep of the buildings and the grounds was volunteered by members of the camp association.

The annual meeting of the Association was held during the second week of the camp. At this time there were elected a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer to hold office for one year. Also three camp managers were elected for a one-year term to plan and take care of the next year's camp meeting. Evangelists and song leaders had to be secured at least two, and sometimes three, years in advance. These officers and managers met once a month during the year for a holiness prayer-meeting and to take care of the business of the upcoming camp meeting. Officers and managers named in the early years of the Kearney camp meetings were Sam Peck, Harry Peck, Oren Peck, Marshall Ash, B. J. Patterson, Nelson Jaco, Anna Rose, Andrew Segard, Frank and John Bohlke, and the Reverend J. C. Hurlbut. In later years Everett and Claremont Peck and Murl Patterson became leaders and carried on the work started by their parents.

The schedule of the day at the West Nebraska Holiness camp began at



Interior of Tabernacle.



B.J. Patterson, a prime mover in the local camp meetings of West Nebraska Holiness Association until his death in 1945. Served many years as president, secretary, or one of the managers from 1908 to 1945.

about six o'clock when campers met for a brief prayer and devotional service. Breakfast was served at 7:00. At 9:30 an informal meeting and song service was held, followed by morning preaching at 11:00. After the noon meal the children gathered for their service at one o'clock. The afternoon preaching continued at 2:30, and the evening service was held after the evening meal.

Through the years many well-known evangelists and singers appeared on the platform of the tabernacle. Among the evangelists were the Rev. George Bennard, author of *The Old Rugged Cross*, "Uncle" Buddy Robinson, the cowboy preacher, the Rev. Jarrett and Mrs. Aycock, Dwight Ferguson, C. B. Fuget, C. W. Ruth, S. E. Polovina, known as "Methodist Sam", Maridell Harding, Dr. Leslie Parrott, Dr. Curtis Smith and others.

Outstanding musicians and singers were the Aeolian Quartet, Geraldine Southern, the Morgan family, Calvin Jantz family, W. Lawson Brown, Shayee, a well-known violinist, James Bohi, and many outstanding quartets.

During and after World War II camp officials had difficulty financing and maintaining the camp facility. No camp meeting was held in 1943 because of the war, but were resumed in 1944 and 1945. In 1946 the Association board granted God's Bible School of Cincinnati, Ohio, permission to conduct a 10-day camp meeting in August. This arrangement was carried on for four years.

In 1951 negotiations were initiated with the Nebraska Church of the Nazarene for a sale of the camp, and in 1953 the West Nebraska Holiness Association sold the camp property to them. Camp meetings were held on the tabernacle grounds in Kearney from 1953 until sometime in the 1970's operated by the Nebraska Church of the Nazarene. No records are available of the camp operation under the Church of the Nazarene.

Laurinne Dustin, longtime member of the church, remembers the camp meetings under the Church of the Nazarene. They were well supported and attended. Many of the trees planted in the twenties were replaced by Everett Peck in memory of his parents, Harry and Ollie Peck, who had been promoters of the camp meetings since their beginnings in Kenesaw. Everett Peck was caretaker of the Kearney camp grounds for many years.

Since its closing in the 1970's, all of the buildings have been razed and the 65-year camp meeting ground is now a residential block.

SOURCES

Minute Books of West Nebraska Holiness Association, August 24, 1912 to July 27, 1952; *Kearney Daily Hub*, undated: Tent Meetings Began in 1905; Interviews with Murl and Dorothy Patterson, Laurinne Dustin, Thelma Jensen, Ella Peck.

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1994 Annual dues, payable January 1, are:
 Basic Membership \$15.00
 Institutional Membership \$20.00
 Supporting Membership \$30.00 +
 Life memberships are \$150.00 for an individual; \$200.00 husband and wife.

Directors

Term expiring June 1, 1994: Howard Kolbo, Mardi Anderson, Lois Rahmann, Jim Cudaback.
 Term expiring June 1, 1995: Glen Wisch, Philip Holmgren, Larry Nansel, Floretta Sullwold.
 Term expiring June 1, 1996: Susan C. Lynch, Margaret Hohnholt, Wilma Harder, Helen Kinnaman.

Officers (1 year term)

President Susan C. Lynch
 Vice-President Larry Nansel
 Secretary Margaret Hohnholt
 Treasurer Mardi Anderson

HAPPENINGS AT THE MUSEUM

The Christmas Tree Walk this year was a good one. We had thirty-three beautiful trees, about six hundred in attendance, good weather, dedicated volunteers and a bake sale with many original goodies! To make it really special, the flights of geese serenaded me each morning as I opened up, then each evening as we were closing up, they were there again, saying "Good Night."

This would not be possible without the dedication of the planning committee and the many volunteers who give of all their time at this busy time of the year. A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU.

We had a record attendance at the museum this past year. Plans are now being made for the coming summer with new displays. You all help make it happen. THANK YOU!!

—Margaret Hohnholt,
 Volunteer Museum Director

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

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