

Buffalo Tales

MARCH/APRIL 2010

The Homan's Life on the Boyd Ranch

By Janice Shafer



Boyd Ranch House

A Little Background

The Boyd Ranch was one of the first landmarks west of the Missouri River on the California-Mormon Trail. It was located about one mile west of the present town of Gibbon. As a large outfitting store for traffic with immigrants over the trail, it was an ideal location. The Boyd Ranch was thought to be started about 1846. The Boyd house was the first frame house in Buffalo County and was built in 1864 and is now a part of the Trails & Rails Museum in Kearney. James E. Boyd, proprietor, became the seventh Governor of Nebraska from 1891-92.

The Ranch was on the first piece of land in Buffalo County owned by an individual, Joseph Boyd. Later that same year he sold the ranch to his brother, James. According to history, James Boyd was born in Ireland September 9, 1834 and came to the United States at age 10 with his parents. The family settled in Ohio, but Boyd came to Nebraska in 1856 to work with his brother John in Omaha as a carpenter and painter.

In August 1858, Boyd married Ann Henry, the daughter of Dr. Anan Henry, an army doctor stationed at Fort Kearny. He then became manager of an area known as the Boyd Ranch. Boyd then purchased the ranch.

In the early 1860's, Boyd has more than 100 acres under cultivation and raised mostly corn and barley. The corn was sold to travelers and the barley was used at a small brewery on the bank of the Wood River. The beer was sold at Fort Kearny and Dobytown for \$6-\$8.

As a kid I remember my daddy tell that he heard that there had been a brewery located on the bank of Wood River near our barn. I had an ice skating party which we skated on this same pond when I was in high school.

The Ranch also had an ice house and raised about 100 head of cattle. It was a stop on the Western State Lines from Iowa to Fort Kearny in 1860 until the coming of the railroad.

In 1864, Boyd purchased 24 mule teams, with harness and wagons, in Missouri to start a freight business. On the first load of freight from the Missouri River was the lumber for a new frame house.

Some of my Memories as I Remember Them

Over the years, additions were made to the west and north sides of the house, which was occupied until 1990 or 1991. The house was relocated to Trails

& Rails Museum in Kearney, Nebraska. The rest of the buildings were torn down.

I lived in this house with my parents, my brother and a little sister. I moved there as a forth grader (I don't know why but farmers always moved during the month of March) until my senior year in high school. (Years 1946-1954) I do remember the additions that were built on as I slept in one. It was a room on the west side of the house which ad windows on three sides. One thing I remember about sleeping in this room was I had friends spend the night occasionally. One friend hated to stay the night as I am sure she never received much sleep because she heard mice running around in the ceiling. Before I used the



Unidentified young girl in front of the Boyd House

west bedroom I remember sleeping upstairs with my brother. It was cold in the winter and hot in the summer. The stove pipe from the wood-burning heater in the living room downstairs ran through one of the bedrooms. It provided some heat, not much but it helped a little.

I do remember when we [were] younger we all four slept in the one bedroom downstairs. We used very heavy comforters. Sometimes we used what they called feather beds. They were very heavy and bunglesome and were stuffed with feathers, thus their name. Generally, my daddy would be the first one up in the mornings to build the fire in the cook stove and the pot bellied stove in the living room. This was where we dressed when we got up in the mornings... around the pot-bellied stove. Daddy would pack the coals before bedtime so they would heat some during the nights, thus they would sometimes last during the whole night and give us a base to start the fire the next morning. We generally used wood for our fuel, which we cut along Wood River. It was close and didn't cost anything except OUR labor. We also used corn cobs for fuel-they were available and cheap. They were fast burning, and therefore, didn't last long and provided intense heat. After they were burning well, we would add the wood. If I remember correctly the hard woods, such as ash, were slow burning and were an excellent source of heat. We didn't have to continually feed the fire.

The room to the north was the kitchen. I have many fond memories of my mother cooking on our wood-burning cook stove. We also used corn cobs. My brother and I had to bring them into the house in a bushel basket. We also had to carry out the burned ashes. Burned ashes were one ingredient my mother used to make soap. The ashes were combined with lye and other ingredients which I don't remember...



Windmill and Barn, Boyd Ranch

It is amazing to me that my mother was able to regulate the temperature in the cook stove to do her baking. After we received electricity we did get an apartment size electric stove.

I also remember the small hand pump we had in the corner of the kitchen we used for water. We did have a sink where the waste water ran through a pipe to the outside near the chicken house.



Working at the Boyd Ranch

I remember the buildings we had. The granary lay to the east of the house. My brother and I loved it when my dad and our neighbors and relatives shelled corn. These people helped out with any big projects, like shelling corn. When they were

nearly finished, the rats would come running out. We chased them and tried to kill them with sticks or shovels or whatever we could find. Further east was the barn. We usually milked seven or eight cows, all by hand, during the time before milking machines. Yes, I did learn to milk. We had one large cow who was a real problem. She was always getting her foot into the milk pail. If my dad put kickers on her, she would buck and kick straight back like a mule to remove them... and GENERALLY DID!

There was a haymow in our barn. Against my mother's wishes, my dad let tramps who walked along Highway 30 stay there during the night. We had quite a few of these individuals while we lived along Highway 30.

I remember crossing the river to get the cows each evening so we could milk them. Sometimes, I would get suckers on my feet as a result of wading in the river... I preferred riding horseback. It was fun to be on his back as he loped up the river bank. We always had one or two horses. My brother and I even rode horseback to school occasionally, District #3.

I remember when my future husband started courting me, his dad allowed him to drive the car to the railroad tracks, and then he had to walk across the tracks and the highway. We were both fifteen.

I do remember doing the chores during the blizzard of 1949, I believe. Of course, we had to care for the livestock... It was difficult going from building to building trudging through knee deep snow carrying many pounds of feed. We had to break the ice in the stock tanks so the animals would have water.

There were two jobs I did not enjoy. One was washing the separator. The water seemed to turn to slime and there were many pieces to wash. Then I had to put it back together. It was like putting a difficult puzzle together.

The other was gathering eggs. The hens would be on their nests and would not move. If I reached in to get the eggs from under them, they would peck me. I thought I would solve that problem. I took a tin can or a small bucket with me and put it over their heads so they couldn't peck at me. It worked! My brother used to take his BB gun to the chicken house and shoot rats that were lined up along the chicken feeders, which were about two feet from the ground.

My sister was born while we lived at the Boyd Ranch in 1948. We went to School District #3 located a little over two miles away. My dad came to pick up my brother and myself while we were walking home from school. He told us that we needed to do the chores and milk the cows early as were taking Mother to the hospital in Kearney. Dixie was the only one born in a hospital. Needless to say we were excited! I was twelve and Larry was ten.

I do remember a flood which filled our basement. Yes, we did have a basement. It was used for storage of canned goods. We also stored the potatoes that we grew in the basement. We had potatoes and carrots all winter.

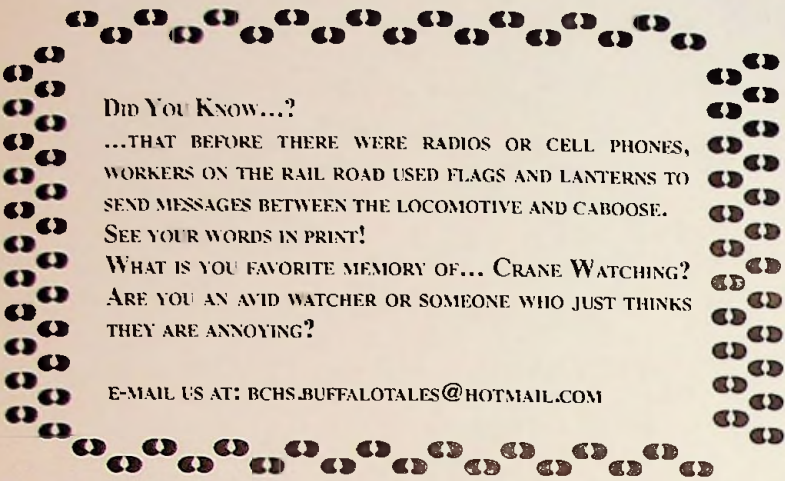
I have many fond memories of living on the Boyd Ranch. I could go on with more, but these are the memories that came to mind first.

Presented at a Boyd Ranch Coffee held July 2007, I found out the room which I called my bedroom, the one built on the west, was once used for young chicks.



Boyd Ranch Flood





Did You Know...?

...THAT BEFORE THERE WERE RADIOS OR CELL PHONES, WORKERS ON THE RAIL ROAD USED FLAGS AND LANTERNS TO SEND MESSAGES BETWEEN THE LOCOMOTIVE AND CABOOSE. SEE YOUR WORDS IN PRINT!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF... CRANE WATCHING? ARE YOU AN AVID WATCHER OR SOMEONE WHO JUST THINKS THEY ARE ANNOYING?

E-MAIL US AT: BCHS.BUFFALOTALES@HOTMAIL.COM



Fiddlin' Round the Trails & Rails

The 4th Annual Fiddlin' Round the Trails & Rails Contest will be on July 10th during our 25th Annual Wagons West Celebration! Registration for the contest will begin at 10:00 and the contest will begin at 10:30. Contact Katherine at bchs.buffalotales@hotmail.com or the Trails & Rails Museum at (308) 234-3041 for information and pre-registration.



Ghost Hunting

The very first ghost hunting class hosted by BCHS and Trails & Rails Museum will be April 30, 2010 at 7:00 pm. The classes will run through the spring and summer on the last Friday of the month until September. Bill Sinnard and Jacob Sikes the founding members of Midwest Paranormal Investigators (MPI) will be teaching a 1-1 1/2 hour class followed by 4-5 hours of supervised ghost hunting in the buildings at the Trails & Rails museum. Volunteers from the community and other members of MPI will be escorting each group of beginner ghost hunters. The classes are \$50 per person. Contact Jen or Lyn at Trails & Rails (308) 234-3041 or by e-mail bchs.us@hotmail.com for more information and registration.

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Dr. Mark R. Ellis, Editor
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2009 Annual dues, payable January 1, are:

Individual	\$35.00
Family	\$40.00
Institutional Membership	\$50.00
Supporting Membership	\$75.00

We have replaced the word 'Basic' to 'Family'.

Directors

Term expiring June 1, 2010: Jim Cudaback, Janice McGregor, Sharon Mason, Jolene Ward
Term expiring June 1, 2011: Dr. Mark Ellis, Sharon Martin, Duane Muhlbach, Barb Riege
Term expiring June 1, 2012: Mary Kenny, Janice Martin, Dan Speirs, Garry Straatmaan

Officers (1 year term)

President	Sharon Mason
Vice-President	Barb Riege
Secretary	Janice McGregor
Treasurer	Jim Cudaback

2010 Calendar of Events

Sunday, April 18th from 1-3 pm: BCHS Annual Meeting

Sunday, June 13th: 3rd Annual ½ Marathon: Buffalo County Stampede— Reg. @ 6 am. Race begins @ 7 am

Tuesday, June 15th from 6:30-9:30 pm: 4th Annual Trivia Contest & Soup Dinner

Saturday, July 3rd from 9-10:30 pm: Members Only Night (watch city fireworks)

Saturday, July 10: 25th Annual Wagons West Celebration— Music and Exhibitors from 10-6 pm

Includes fiddle contest and “What is it?” portion

Saturday, August 7th from 10:30-1:30 pm: Genealogy Open House with spotlight on One-Room School w/ a picnic!

Saturday, December 4th from 12-1pm: Members Only Preview of the 23rd Annual Christmas Tree Walk

Saturday, December 4th-Sunday, December 12th from 1-5 pm daily: Open to the public: 23rd Annual Christmas Tree Walk

Volunteers and sponsors are still needed for these events. Please contact any staff member to help!

Volunteers, chairpersons, and sponsors are still needed. Please contact the office for more information on supporting your Buffalo County Historical Society!

PO Box 523, 710 W. 11th St., Kearney, NE 68845
(308) 234-3041 www.bchs.us bchs.us@hotmail.com

We hope you enjoy these stories about Buffalo County. We would love to have a stock pile of Buffalo Tales ready, so they can go out in a more timely manner. Please submit your memories and stories to us by e-mailing them to bchs.us@hotmail.com or sending them to the post office box: BCHS, PO Box 523 Kearney NE 68848.

We appreciate your support!

Director's Report

-As of March 15, 2010, there have been seven nominations submitted for the BCHS Preservation Award. Nominations are due April 1.

-The grant for a Nebraska State Historical Marker about the Lincoln Highway/Seedling Mile was submitted March 1. The grant was a partnership with the Kearney Visitors Bureau (KVB) and the Lincoln Highway Association. The Lincoln Highway will be having their Centennial Celebration in Kearney in 2013.

-For crane season, we are open on Saturdays in March from 1-5.

-June Flesner-Becker, president of the Kearney Area Preservation Society, and I met with J.L. Schmidt and Elizabeth Chase, both with Heritage Nebraska to introduce our entities to each other and to start conversations about how we can help each other. J.L. and Elizabeth have lots of contacts and experience and are willing to be our sounding board as well as guide us as needed. This should be a wonderful partnership.

Be sure to Join the Buffalo County Historical Society group or the Buffalo County Historical Society/Trails & Rails Museum fan page on Facebook!



Trails & Rails Museum
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www.bchs.us

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