



Buffalo Tales



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PLEASANTON SCHOOL DISTRICT 105

by Barbara Reidy O'Neill

District 105 was first formed February 12, 1886, and at this time covered land in Harrison Township. In February 1890 a petition was filed to abandon District 105 and join the land to District 71—Redwing. With this action there was no longer a school district in Buffalo County operating under the name of District 105.

On October 18, 1890, a petition was filed asking for a new school district to be formed from lands taken from District 87—Mt. Zion or Vest, and District 113—Johnson. The first meeting was held November 14, 1890 at the store of Mr. Hays in Pleasanton. The newly formed district contained six sections of land and was to be known as District 105—Pleasanton. The first school officers were Rudolph Ritter, Sr., James Welliver, and A. H. Hlava.

It is believed that these first students attended school in the home of Jim Hunter. The 1891 school report for District 105 listed 35 persons between the ages of 5 and 21 years—19 males and 16 females. The families listed in this first school census were Mauler, McCain, Baillie, Ferris, Welliver, Hlava, Van Buskirk, Eldridge, Vosepka, Leslie, White, Smith, Backus, Hays, Adams, Shively, Peters, Geisler, and Ritter. The school report for the first year (1890-91) did not list a school building. Jennie Valentine was the first teacher. She taught 120 days and was paid \$30.00 per month.

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School south of the river, 1907. Ice and water flooded the schoolhouse.

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, Jim Cudaback; Vice-President, Philip S. Holmgren; Secretary, Alice Howell; Treasurer, Susan McFerrin. Directors: Frances Link, Barb Avery, Viola Livingston, Michael Stauffer, Glen Wisch, Chad Anderson, Merlin Burglund, Elmer Holzrichter, and past president Margaret Hohnholt. Publications Chairman: Alice Howell.

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

Hamaker Distinguished Professorship. Many will remember Dr. Gene Hamaker who served as Professor of History at Kearney State College from 1969 until his death in 1984. He was the first editor of *Buffalo Tales*, a service he performed for the Buffalo County Historical Society from 1978 until his death.

Professor Hamaker generously left a substantial portion of his estate for the endowment of a distinguished professorship at Kearney State College. A distinguished professorship is supported by interest earned on an invested fund. Presently an additional \$40,000 is needed to fund this professorship in Dr. Hamaker's name.

We encourage all readers of *Buffalo Tales* who would like to support the creation of a Hamaker Distinguished Professorship to contact the Kearney State College Foundation, Box 113, Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska 68849. Please make checks payable to the KSC Foundation, and note that your gift is designated for the Hamaker Professorship.



Wagons West Celebration for this year was cancelled due to rain and wind. It will not be rescheduled this summer. However, it will be held next year and the following years as an annual event at the museum.

The historical play, *Wood River Center*, will be given at Harmon Park on July 6 and 7 at 7:00 p.m., in connection with the Kearney Art Festival. Buffalo County Historical Society will also conduct downtown tours on Saturday morning, July 7, as a part of the art festival.



A reminder of the quilt display at Trails & Rails Museum during July and August. Bring your quilt, with name of pattern and story about the quilt, to the museum on June 25 and 26. Our display will be up during the Nebraska State Quilt Guild which will be meeting in Kearney this summer.



Would you like to keep the Historical Society's scrapbook? Phyllis Roberts has done a superb job of being responsible for the scrapbooks for several years past, and has asked to be relieved.



Thanks to Naomi Rebekah Lodge of Kearney for the two Dwarf Alberta Spruce trees planted at the Freighters Hotel.



Officers elected for the 1990-91 year are Jim Cudaback, president; Philip S. Holmgren, vice-president; Alice Howell, secretary; Susan McFerrin, treasurer.

The school report for the year of 1891-92 stated that the census of persons between the ages of 5 and 21 years was 27—16 males and 11 females. But, only 14 students were enrolled in school for that year—nine males and five females. The school term commenced on September 14, 1891, and continued for six months with Fannie Leslie as the teacher. The school was now listed as being a frame structure.

The first schoolhouse was a one-room, frame structure with four windows on two sides of the building. There was a chimney at one end and a bell tower at the other. The building was located on the south bank of the South Loup River, probably in the vicinity of the orchard located north of the present (1990) home of Charlie and Bernice Edson. It was built close to the wooden bridge that crossed the South Loup River from the town site of Pleasanton.

Due to increased enrollment, a second classroom was added in 1901. The building now contained chimneys on both ends of the building and the bell tower was now in the center of the building.

The location of the schoolhouse on the south bank of the river began to pose some problems for the students. On March 9, 1903 a large ice gorge formed above town and finally broke, sweeping a wall of ice water on the town and school sites.

The river again caused trouble for the school in 1907. On February 12, ice and water again backed up above the town and the streets were navigable by row boats. The water stood in the school building to a depth of six feet. The Director's Report for 1907-08 indicated that \$184.05 was paid for repairs. 70 pupils were enrolled during that year.

In September 1908, District 105 purchased the present school site from Albert and Grace Pearson and D. and Ada Phillips for the sum of \$150.00 and spent \$211 for a well and fencing at the new school site. The district also sold \$2,000.00 of bonds for new construction.

A two-story brick building with basement was constructed "on the hill" at a cost of \$4,625.85. The first day of school in this building was September 21, 1909. At that time it was noted that the kindergarten was held in the basement, with the first floor for classrooms, and the assembly hall and a small library on the second floor. 57 students enrolled in school for 1909-1910. The old schoolhouse south of the river was purchased for \$300.00 by Rudolph Ritter and moved to his farm south of Pleasanton where it was made a part of his home.



**Pleasanton School
1909 - 1936**

The tenth grade was added to the school in September 1912. There were 70 pupils in grades one through ten and three teachers. At this time a fire escape was added to the upper story. This fire escape was a large metal tube affixed to a window so that students could use the tube as an enclosed slide to get to the ground in case of a fire. It was also used for many "monkey shines."

In 1922 a white frame building—containing four classrooms—was built on the west side of the brick school at a cost of \$270.00 and was called the "sheep shed." The reason for this expansion was the addition of two more grades to become a full-fledged high school. The first Pleasanton High School class was graduated in 1923. Members of the class were: Rosa Bramer Zimmer, Earl Eaton, Isabelle Eaton Phillips, Harvey Grammer, Alfred Hadwiger, Marnie Klein Rohrich, Minnie Lammers Beckman, Eletha Swearingen Hansberry and Bernice Zbinden Hoffman.

The first school newspaper was printed in December 1926 and it was named "Bulldog." From that time to the present the school publication has been known by this name. The first yearbook was printed in 1939, and has grown into an award-winning production in recent years.

By 1935 the old brick building had become drafty, and the "sheep shed" needed modernizing. Despite the "Great Depression," school authorities presented a plan for the approval of the voters of District 105. In November 1935 a \$19,600 bond issue was approved. The amount represented 55 percent of the cost and the remaining 45 percent was constructed as a Public Works Administration project.

Although essentially constructed in 1936 the new facility was not occupied until January 1937 and was "of the newest type of brick and concrete construction, and of latest fireproof and scientific design." The building featured concrete column supports for the concrete floor slabs and stairs, and the roof, leaving the partitions free to be arranged as might be required at any future time. It was equipped with a new type of draftless ventilating window, and there were extensive installations of recessed storage facilities for books and supplies. The building cost was in excess of \$36,000, and the Class of 1937 was the first class to hold graduation exercises in this building.

Joe and Leon Nickman demolished the old brick building and used the brick to veneer buildings at their farm. Part of the old embossed metal ceiling that had been in the building was installed by Raymond Hand for a ceiling in the building that is presently (1990) occupied by L. E. "Buck" Razey's Repair. The sheep shed was demolished by a man from Kearney for the lumber.

There had been 120 schools organized in Buffalo County by 1895, 109 were rural. All were in operation through 1920. The numerous rural school districts were formed as a convenience for farm families. The homestead law had given 160 acres for farming purposes, and generally there were four families to a section. As the years progressed and farming practices expanded with modern machinery, the rural population declined. Instead of four farms per section, one began to see one household farming one or more sections. Redistricting became an issue in the 1950's. This caused a rapid decline in the number of rural schools to 56 by 1960, 18 by 1976, and 12 in 1988.

Before 1953, rural school districts would contract to send their students to high school. Due to low enrollment District 113—Johnson contracted to send their elementary students to Pleasanton. In 1952, District 23—Sunflower contracted with Pleasanton to educate their elementary students, and the first school bus was purchased by the Pleasanton system. It was at this time that many area schools were in the process of trying to redistrict. On May 14, 1953, patrons in Districts 23—Sunflower, 32—Peake, 33—Brock, 57—Pleasant Valley, 66—Star, 85—Prairie Bell, 87—Vest, 100—King, 105—Pleasanton, 109—Munster, and 113—Johnson voted to establish one school

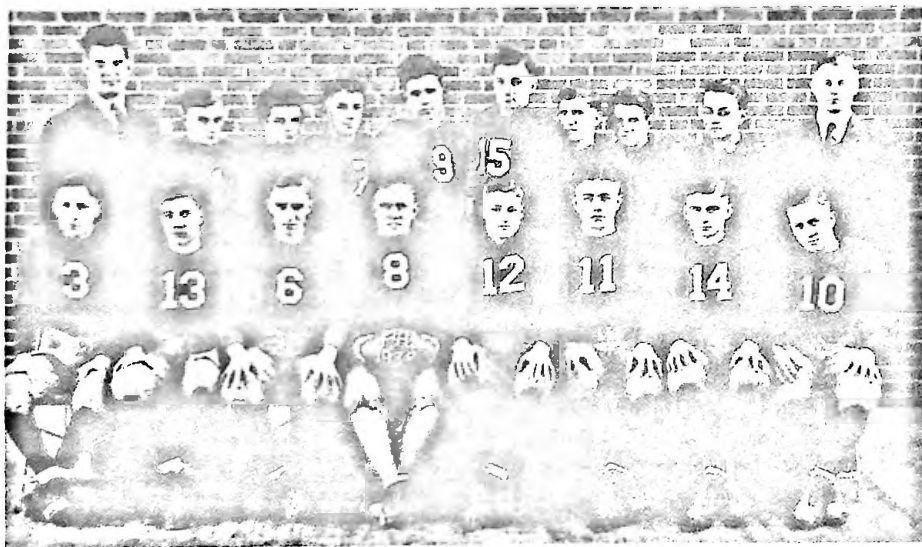
district and operate under the name of District R-105. Vaughn Phelps was the Superintendent of Schools at this time, and members of the School Board were Leona Franke, Harry Zimmer, Bill Phillips, Ella Bauer, Earl Eaton, and Gillus Mauler.

District R-105 was the first major reorganization to take place in Buffalo County.

Before reorganization District 105 had a teaching superintendent, three high school teachers, two elementary teachers, plus a part-time high school instructor who taught half-days. But in September 1953 under the new reorganization the school employed a superintendent, and five high school instructors, six grade school teachers with an additional instructor for shop to be hired when possible. In addition an expanded music program and a hot lunch program were added to the school.

To prepare for the additional students that would flood into the Pleasanton School, three new school buses were purchased. The bus drivers for 1953 were Ernest Zimmer, Lawrence Mauler, Duane Reese, and Albert Karsten.

In order to handle the 171 students and the increase in teachers, it was necessary to move five of the former rural school buildings to the school grounds to use as classrooms. These five buildings were moved to the school site where they formed a "Little Campus." The schoolhouses that were moved in were District 23—Sunflower, which was largest and became the lunchroom; District 113—Johnson, used for classroom and shop; District 109—Munster, a kindergarten classroom; District 85—Prairie Bell, occupied by the 5th and 6th grades; District 33—Brock, used by the band and glee clubs for their rehearsals; and later District 32—Peake was moved into town for use as the home economics classroom. These buildings were heated by coal, and none of them had water. Drinking fountains and bathrooms were located in the main building only.



Pleasanton High School's first football team—1938. Back: Coach Brower, Lorin Elliott, Henry Southworth, Paul Musil, Kenneth Brucker, Douglas Frederick, Laurel Talbot, Harold Southworth, Beryle Hand, Supt. Roos. Front: Graydon Graham, Doyle Dixon, Joe Lea, Harold Holdt, Bob Metz, Melvin Nuttelman, Keith McCurry, Glenn Krichau. Jack Hendrickson is not in the picture.

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In July 1959 District R-105 started construction of a new grade school addition that included seven grade classrooms, a kindergarten, administrative unit, and multi-purpose cafeteria, kitchen and music room. A new shop building was constructed north of the school. The cost of this construction was \$156,000.00.

In September 1960 the "Little Campus" was abandoned and the former rural school buildings were sold at auction. District R-105 retained two of the buildings at this time—the lunchroom and the home economics room.

In 1963 District R-105 voters approved a \$104,000.00 bond issue for the construction of a new gymnasium and home economics room. The home economics room was ready for occupancy in the fall of 1963, but the gymnasium was not put into use until January 1964 when the first basketball game was held there. This gym provided seating for approximately 550 people.

In 1970 another addition was made to the school. A library and audio visual room and an office for the guidance counselor were added. Also added to the school property was a new football facility on the former railroad right-of-way. In 1974 a teacherage was built for the residency of the superintendent, as housing was at a premium in Pleasanton.

Basketball was the early sport for boys and girls, and was played outdoors or in a downtown hall. Volleyball was started in 1928 after the state outlawed girls basketball. Six-man football was first played in the fall of 1938. Teams of 1942 and 1943 were undefeated, and in 1944 suffered but one loss. The high school switched to eight-man football in 1955.

Girls volleyball qualified for state tournament in 1975 and were state champions in 1976. Boys basketball qualified for state tournaments in 1952, '76, '77, '79, '83, '84, '85, and '90. Girls basketball qualified for state competition in 1977, '78, '86, and '87.

Probably the most outstanding athletic year for Pleasanton High School was 1976-77 when the volleyball team won State Class C, football went undefeated, both boys and girls basketball qualified for state tournaments, and the girls track team won the Fort Kearny Conference in track.

At the present time Pleasanton High School is a member of the Fort Kearny Conference for school-related activities. At the end of 1989-90 school year there were 260 students in grades kindergarten through 12th. In May 1990 a proposed \$2.1 million bond issue for school improvement failed 287 to 215.

Each renovation of the school not only improved the school and its educational value, but improved the economic value of the town and community. A community is only as strong as its school, and the Pleasanton school is a strong force in all educational and extra-curricular activities.

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