



Buffalo Tales



Volume 7, No. 10 Buffalo County Historical Society November-December 1984

GENE EDWARD HAMAKER, HISTORIAN

February 28, 1928 - October 19, 1984

by Philip S. Holmgren

Gene E. Hamaker, editor of **Buffalo Tales**, died at his home in Kearney on October 19, 1984. I would like to share with you some of my thoughts and impressions of this extraordinary man.

It was my privilege to know Dr. Hamaker for over three decades. Yet few of us knew this versatile, complex, cultured gentleman who dearly loved classical music, this very kind decent human being, this very private person. Here was a man who possessed the skills necessary for life in the ranch country of northern Nebraska where he spent the early years of his life. He was skilled as a hay stacker in the years before machines negated the need for such skills. Perhaps some students who mispronounced his name spoke more truth than they knew when they called him "Mr. Haymaker." He was at home in the halls of learning, as a student, as a professor, as a researcher and as a scholar. He was also at home on the ranch in Cherry County. From 1946 to 1949 he was a skilled member of the Eighty-Second Airborne Division



Gene E. Hamaker, Editor of **Buffalo Tales**,
January 1978 - October 1984

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Buffalo Tales is the official publication of the Buffalo County Historical Society, a non-profit organization. It is sent to all members of the Society.

Alice Howell . . . Publications Chairman
Telephone 237-7858

Membership in the Buffalo County Historical Society is open to anyone who has an interest in Buffalo County and its people, or in the history of the area.

Annual dues, payable January 1:

Family membership \$ 7.50
Individual membership 5.00
Institutional membership 10.00
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Trails and Rails Museum, Mardi Anderson, Director. Phone 234-3041

WITH THE SOCIETY

Christmas Open House

Henrietta Rhamy will be hosting an Open House from 2-7 p.m. on Sunday, December 16, and extends an invitation to all members of the Buffalo County Historical Society. This will be your opportunity to view her collection of dolls dressed for Christmas. The Rhamy residence is located at 200 West Avenue in Gibbon, across the street from the northwest corner of the school.

Nebraska History Network

The Nebraska History Network was born on November 3 of this year. This association of Nebraska history organizations was formed to unite groups which have a mutual interest in preserving and developing Nebraska's historical resources. Both the Buffalo County Historical Society and the Gibbon Heritage Center are charter members.

The Board of Directors is composed of two representatives from each of five districts in the state. Representing our area are Steve Holan of the Dawson County Historical Society and Mardi Anderson of this Society. Mardi was also elected secretary. The board will meet at Trails and Rails Museum next March.

At the Museum

The museum was open during Veterans Day weekend with a special display of military uniforms worn by Buffalo County residents. A section of the display illustrates activity carried on in the county in support of the war effort, especially during World War I. This display will remain in place until the end of the year. Since we do not have regular hours during the winter, call the museum to make an appointment to view the display.

Trails and Rails has acquired two depot waiting room benches which will be installed in the waiting room of our Shelton depot. First, however, they need to be sanded and painted. Anyone interested in volunteering to take on this project should call or stop by the museum. (If the gate is open, come on in.)

even though he said he never enjoyed jumping out of a plane.

Possessing the superior intellect which he did, and being the superb scholar which he was, yet he was never guilty of being condescending to those who were less endowed or less accomplished than he was. He always treated others with consideration and respect. Although he was fearlessly independent in his political and personal thinking he never tried to force his views on others. He was not afraid to take an unpopular stand if he thought it had merit. Always in control of his emotions he was never guilty of making derogatory, spiteful or unkind statements to or about others. He never lost his cool. Considerate of others and their feelings, he was a good listener and a good conversationalist on a wide variety of topics. When you talked to him you knew he was listening to what you were saying not just thinking about how he was going to respond.

Seven years ago when the Buffalo County Historical Society launched its monthly publication **Buffalo Tales** Gene agreed to serve as the editor. Much of the credit for the very favorable reputation which the publication enjoys is due to Gene's ability to take a group of average, and sometimes below average, writers, prod us into doing better and if that didn't work, do some extensive re-writing to make the articles of professional quality while retaining the style of the individual writer. In April of 1981, at the Society's annual meeting, Gene was awarded a life membership in the Buffalo County Historical Society, the only person to ever have been so honored.

Dr. Hamaker's interest in research and writing led him to propose a number of things that would promote such activity at Kearney State, some of which were never realized like a Center for Nebraska Studies, some of which were only partially realized in his lifetime like the Nebraska Center for Archives and History.



Opening the cornerstone box of the Administration Building at Kearney State College, June 20, 1984. Looking over the contents, left to right: Philip S. Holmgren, college historian, Gene E. Hamaker, college archivist who accepted the box and its contents, Jim McKay, who cut the box open, and KSC President Wm. Nester.

When he became aware of the nature of the illness from which he was suffering he busied himself with making arrangements so that students and researchers would have access to his own extensive collection of books, journals and research material. His generous contributions to the College library and to the Historical Society will long be appreciated by students, researchers and writers.

Gene demonstrated almost unbelievable courage and fortitude during the last months of his life. Turning aside nearly all offers of assistance he did make two requests "don't feel sorry for me" and "don't bury me while I'm still alive." His incredible dedication to duty was demonstrated by the fact that he was in his office at the College - less than 48 hours before his death. We are grateful for his contributions to the Society and to the **Buffalo Tales**. We miss his friendship and professional counsel.

Gene Edward Hamaker, Professor of History at Kearney State College and Director of the Kearney Center for Archives and History was born February 28, 1928, in Wood Lake, Nebraska, the son of Harry and Grace Hamaker. He was a 1945 graduate of Ainsworth High School.

Professor Hamaker earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1951 and his Ph.D. degree from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 1958.

He came to Kearney State College in 1969 after a year as Associate Professor of History at Midwestern University in Wichita Falls, Texas. Earlier he had held a five year Associate Professorship at the University of Hawaii, spent four years teaching at Idaho State University and was chairman of the Department of History and Political Science at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, from 1956 to 1958. He was also an instructor at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln Extension Division. Love and concern for his family prompted Gene to leave a position at the University of Hawaii, return to the mainland and finally select Kearney State College as the place to spend the rest of his academic life. Our location placing him between those members of his family living in the Denver, Colorado area and those in Cherry county was attractive to him. Once at Kearney State he saw the need for the college to publish a scholarly journal. The result was the **Platte Valley Review** of which he was the founder and first editor. A perfectionist, he contributed much energy and guidance to making it a high quality publication.

His memberships included the Midwest Archives Center, Popular Culture Association, Rocky Mountain Social Sciences Association, Nebraska State Historical Society, Western Social Science Foundation, Organization of American Historians, National History Association, the Iowa History Department, The South Dakota Historical Society, and was a member of the executive committee of the Nebraska State History Records Board.

His areas of teaching expertise included Russian history, East Asia, the philosophy of history, and the late nineteenth century United States. Professor Hamaker authored two books, **Irrigation Pioneers** and **Brighton, Colorado**. He also contributed to chapters in another book, **Public Power in Nebraska**. His articles and book reviews were published in a number of journals including *Buffalo Tales*, *The Platte Valley Review*, *Educational Perspectives*, *Nebraska History*, and the *Journal of Popular Culture*.

A Gene E. Hamaker Memorial Fund has been established by the Buffalo County Historical Society. Memorials may be sent to the Society at P. O. Box 523, Kearney, Nebraska 68847.

!!! CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS !!!

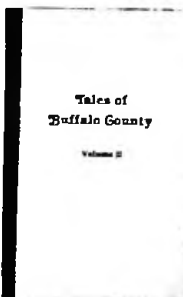
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Life memberships are one-time payments, are placed in an investment account with only the interest used.

All memberships entitle the member to a subscription to **Buffalo Tales**, participation in meetings, tours and other events sponsored by the Society.

Books



“NEW”

TALES OF BUFFALO COUNTY, Volume 2

editor Gene E. Hamaker, indexed by Alice Howell
 Published in 1984. Reprints of stories originally published in **Buffalo Tales** during 1981-1983. Stories include accounts about Sodtown, Kearney Junction, Sartoria, Elm Creek, Irish and English settlers, the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department and many others.

149 pages, 94 illustrations, 30 stories in all
 Paperback. \$5.95 plus 75¢ postage if mailed.

TALES OF BUFFALO COUNTY, Volume 1

Published in 1981. Reprints of stories originally published in **Buffalo Tales** during 1978-1980. Stories include accounts about the Oregon and Mormon Trails, the Kearney Canal, Odessa, the Watson Ranch, parades and many others.

145 pages, 84 illustrations, 31 stories in all, indexed
 Paperback. \$4.95 plus 75¢ postage if mailed.

The above books are available at Trails and Rails Museum; Kaufmann-Wernert, Gerbers Books & Gifts, and Little Professor Book Store in downtown Kearney Centre, and at read all about it at Hilltop Mall.

- Kearney Centennial Booklet, 1873-1973, 106 pages, illustrated** \$ 2.50
- Trail Dust to Star Dust, Gibbon centennial, 1871-1971, by Mabel Vohland, 132 pages, illustrated** \$ 8.00
- The Untold Story of Boot Hill, (Lowell in the 1870's) 70 pages, illustrated, compiled by Mrs. George H. Myers** \$ 5.00

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Judge William Gaslin , Nebraska Jurist, by John Haskell, 94 pages, illustrated	\$ 5.00
The Life and Times of Doc Nielsen , by Margaret Ellen Nielsen, 169 pages, illustrated	\$ 4.95
Kearney State College, 1905-1980 , by Philip S. Holmgren, 224 pages, illustrated	\$ 7.00
Heroes Without Medals , (Gibbon centennial) by Fern Walker Gillming, 96 pages, illustrated	\$ 4.00

Notepaper

Sketches of early Kearney, by Barb Avery, 10 notes with envelopes	\$ 4.00
Sketches of historical Fort Kearny area, by Carol Kimball, 12 notes with envelopes	\$ 4.00

Union Pacific Dining Car Service

Demi tasse cup/saucer, "Challenger" emblem	\$ 25.00
Goblet, etched with Union Pacific emblem	\$ 10.00
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Fork, small, silverplate, with U.P.R.R. marking	\$ 6.00

Miscellaneous

Prints, paperweights, bookends, Union Pacific postcards, Kearney centennial medallions and genealogical helps.

Available at the Trails and Rails Museum, 710 West 11th Street, Kearney
 or order from Buffalo County Historical Society, Box 523, Kearney,
 Nebraska 68847. (Tel. 234-3041)