



Buffalo Tales



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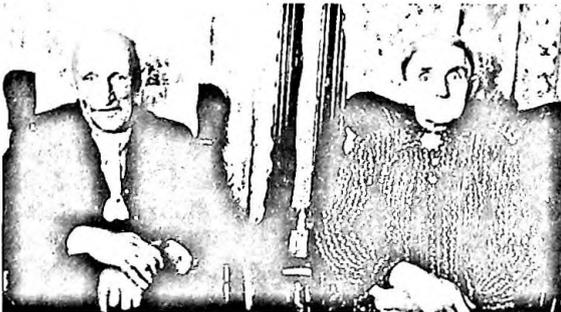
THE DAYTON EMIGRATION ASSOCIATION

Compiled by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell

One of the not so well-known bits and pieces of Buffalo County history is the emigration in 1871 of a colony from Ohio, the Dayton Emigration Association. Some of the story is told in an excerpt from *The Religious Telescope*, dated July 26, 1871, found among the papers of the late Kenneth H. Dryden, given to the Buffalo County Historical Society archives by Mrs. Dryden.

Entitled "A Trip to Nebraska and Elsewhere," and written by D. K. Flickinger from Elk Point, D.T. (Dakotah Territory), the article sheds light on some of the members of the Dayton colony and where they settled in Buffalo County. Incidentally, it was while on this trip that the Reverend Flickinger preached the first sermon in Kearney Junction at a gathering in the home of Asbury Collins at the Junction House in July, 1871.

"My trip was taken at the instance of Mr. I. B. Wambaugh, agent of the Dayton Emigration Association, who secured a free pass over the Indianapolis, Bloomington & Western, and Burlington & Missouri River, and Union Pacific railroads, from Indianapolis to Kearney Station, which is but four miles from Fort Kearney, Nebraska. ... I saw all the country my passes would carry me through, making good time and having first class cars in which to travel. My object in accepting this free ride was twofold: First, to see the country along the lines of these railroads in Nebraska...and inspect it as a field of missionary labor; second, a cheap way to visit our missionaries in



George and Rebecca Cornell
members of the Dayton
Emigration Colony.

Dakotah Territory and Southern Illinois.

"I shall confine myself in this paper to Nebraska... The Platte Valley, from Omaha to Kearney, is without exception as fine a body of land as can be found anywhere. On the line of the Union Pacific Railroad, for miles in width, its soil is highly productive, as the corn, potatoes, wheat, and oats we saw upon it abundantly prove. I spent two days at Kearney, one the Sabbath, upon which I preached, and on the other I looked at the lands upon which the Dayton Emigration Association are settling. The two

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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.....\$ 5.00
Individual membership... 3.00
Institutional membership. 5.00
Sustaining membership... 25.00 +
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Trails and Rails Museum Phone . 234-3041 If no answer, call 236-5566 or 237-7858.

WITH THE SOCIETY

The March meeting of the Buffalo County Historical Society will be held in the Community Room of the First State Bank of Shelton on Sunday afternoon, March 28, at 2:00 p.m.

Gary Straatmann of Kearney will give the program on Touring America, 1920's Style, a slide presentation made up from the photo collection of the late Lloyd C. Thomas, who was a pioneer in radio in Buffalo County.

All members and guests are welcome.

Notice to Members of Buffalo County Historical Society
ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, April 25, 1982, 1:00 p.m.
at the Nebraskan on KSC Campus

The annual meeting of the Buffalo County Historical Society will be held at the Nebraskan on the Kearney State College campus on Sunday, April 25, 1982. A buffet luncheon will be served at 1:00 p.m., followed by the business meeting at 1:45. The cost of the luncheon is \$4.00 and reservations must be made and paid for in advance.

On the agenda for the business meeting is the election of president, vice-president and secretary, and three 3-year directors. A report of the year's progress will be given, and acknowledgment made of donations and accessions. Life members will be recognized.

Please make your reservation by April 22. Send check to cover the cost of the luncheon to the Society at Box 523, Kearney, Nebraska 68847.

townships in which this colony is located lie on both sides of the railroad, and west and north of Kearney Station (present day Buda) and close to it. These lands extend toward the river, which with its high banks will afford, at a small expense, water power sufficient for small grist mills; and the soil is of first-rate quality.

"There are already about thirty claims taken, among whom are Mr. Collins and son, and two of the Mr. Smiths, who have built a two-story frame house thirty-two feet square, in which Mr. Collins lives and furnishes boarding and lodging for the Smiths, who are bachelors, and for newcomers, at \$4.50 a week, as good as it can be had in Dayton at the same price. Messrs. Faddis, Mack, Comstock, Wilt, Cornell and Wambaugh, members of the Dayton Emigration Association, accompanied me to Kearney Station. All but Mr. Collins have taken claims, and at once commenced preparing them for homes, leaving their families in Dayton till this is done, except Mr. Wilt, whose wife and children went with him. Immediately across the river from their lands is Fort Kearney and a few miles below it Kearney City, both being in sight. Owing to a heavy rain I was prevented from going to these places. ... There are thousands of acres of good land near this place. ... One of the most surprising facts respecting this place is that last winter a large drove of cattle were herded the winter through without any protection but that which the bluffs, which are some distance from the river, afforded them. Around Kearney an abundance of good water may be had by digging from eighteen to twenty feet, and upon the table lands the same may be had by digging as much deeper as they are higher than the valley, say from thirty to fifty feet. The uplands are equally as fertile as the valley, and in some respects, more desirable.

"For further information respecting the Dayton Emigration Association and the advantages of uniting with it, address Mr. I. B. Wambaugh, Dayton, Ohio."

I. B. Wambaugh settled in Buffalo County, but later moved to Phelps County. George Cornell and J. A. Wilt lived the rest of their lives in Buffalo County. As to Faddis, Mack and Comstock, and other members of the Dayton Emigration Colony who came to Buffalo County, we have no further information.

Grandmother's Furniture

Irene Rebecca Bishop Reynolds, a granddaughter of Dayton Colonists George and Rebecca Cornell, has written for her family an account of her grandmother's life in Nebraska. In June of 1972, at age 83, she recalls the story as related to her by her grandmother, Rebecca Cornell, and her mother, Mary Cornell Bishop.



My grandfather Cornell was made president of the organization (Dayton Emigration Association) and was employed to head groups of men who went by train to investigate the possibilities in the territory along the railroad and in the towns that were springing up in central Nebraska along the Platte River. As a result, quite a colony from Dayton did settle in and near the new town called Kearney Junction.

My grandmother did not feel any desire to become a pioneer. They had a pleasant home with all the modern conveniences of those days and a freed slave as a household servant. However, Rebecca and her two daughters, Florinda, aged about 12, and Mary, about six, did move to Nebraska. She was leaving her lovely home, her parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives and friends, as well as her church. I often heard her say she had always regretted leaving Ohio and coming to the raw western

country where Indians, prairie fires, and wild cowboys terrorized the people. However, Grandmother had the fortitude that was needed to meet the problems of the pioneers.

The family came on the train, bringing along their household furniture and other possessions. A five-room frame house was built on their land and still stands there nearly 100 years later... Their road into town was a diagonal trail that ran across the section of land that lay between them and town. That trail was later made into a permanent highway and was known as East Lawn Boulevard (now Grand Avenue). During the boom days some fine, large houses were erected along that road by monied men from the east. When little Mary walked to school though, the one and one-half miles of narrow trail had tall blue stem grass on each side. A man on horseback could hardly be seen as he rode across the prairie.

I don't recall hearing of droughts in those early years, but their crops were menaced by hordes of grasshoppers. The skies became overcast as the insects flew in and swarmed over the fields and gardens and devoured all the vegetation. Also great flocks of large gray and white wild geese landed at the Platte River as they were migrating on their way north to their nesting grounds. In the early morning they would



Ohio Home of Rebecca Cornell

rise like a cloud and drop down on fields of tender green crops and utterly destroy them. Farmers and their families would run out waving old clothes to try to get them to leave. As they were driven from one spot, they flew to another. Their loud squawking and the fluttering of their wings made such a noise that voices could not be heard above the din.

There were no churches in Kearney when the Cornells came, but groups of different denominations met in the homes of others of like beliefs to worship, and they felt that God was with them in these services. Grandmother's church in Ohio had been the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She was one of those who were instrumental in forming the first organization of that body in Kearney. Before long they were able to provide a small church building.

Perhaps about 1890 the Cornells left the farm and moved into Kearney. Two other children had been born to them after they came to Nebraska. The family lived at several different locations in the city. Grandfather Cornell died in January 1907, and a few years later, Grandmother broke up her home and went to live with her daughter Mary and her husband, Will Bishop. Her possessions that she no longer needed were placed in the homes of her children and grandchildren. She died December 3, 1920 and was buried in the Kearney Cemetery, which is in view from the house where she first lived when she came to Nebraska. She was not quite 84 years old.

Among my earliest recollections are my visits to my grandmother's home. In my mind's eye, I can still see the pictures on the walls, the big clock which struck the hours with a melodious gong and other articles which I will tell of as I continue the story. All were cherished things which Rebecca had brought along from her beloved Ohio home and are now treasured in the homes of her descendants a century later. She often spoke of that home and there was a tone of sacredness in her voice as she related events of those days long ago.

There was the marble-top table, oval shape, about two and a half feet by two feet, as I recall. It has four carved legs that drop in somewhat of an inward curve from the wooden frame that supports the heavy marble slab. I remember it in Grandmother's large living room. The big family Bible rested on it. I was allowed to leaf through that Bible. Along with some pictures that illustrated familiar Bible stories, there were the records that told the births, marriages, and deaths of the family. My sister Crete's recollections are that a tall kerosene lamp stood on the table, resting on a green lace doily. The lamp had a green crystal bowl and a bulbous chimney of clear glass with floral designs.

I can still see the big wall clock that stood on a small shelf near by. It was perhaps as much as 28 inches tall and 14 inches wide. A large glass door was opened to wind it. I've seen my grandparents open the door and take out the crank-like key and insert it in holes, one on each side of the face, and turn it to lift the heavy weights which kept the clock running from day to day, and striking the hours. What made the clock most attractive was a picture of luscious strawberries painted on the lower part of the door, below the face or dial. How tempting that fruit looked in those early days when there was little fruit except the wild plums and grapes which were found along the creeks and rivers. It kept time in the Cornell household for perhaps 50 years.

An interesting wall hanging in Grandmother Cornell's living room was the hair wreath made some years before she came to Nebraska. Grandmother had had it made, using strands of hair from at least 16 members of her family. The hair was wound and laced through coils of fine wire forming different shaped leaves and flowers, some quite tiny and others larger. Some colors are blond and some shading to almost black. These were formed into an intricate design forming an oval wreath about 10 x 12 inches in size. In the center was written the name of Rebecca's parents, three sisters, seven brothers, her husband, and others we are unable to identify. The names are numbered and can be matched up with the different flowers on the wreath. This wreath is set in a deep wooden frame.

One antique that hung over a door was the framed motto, "No Cross No Crown," about three feet long and one foot deep. It is worked with colored yarn or thread on some kind of paper that has holes in it, much like little girls' sewing cards of today. It was made by the black woman servant Grandma had in her home in Ohio.

Another picture that hung on the wall of Grandmother's "sitting room" was one that was called "Lost in the Park." As I remember, I never tired looking at it as I lay on the floor when I was a little child, studying the faces of the two little girls dressed in their finery, clinging to each other. They were among dense, tall trees and their faces expressed their fear as some friendly deer came near them. It is a large picture, brightly colored, and in a neat frame with glass over it. When I was about nine years old I was very ill with pneumonia and my grandmother drove the fifteen miles from her home in Kearney to see how I was. As she was ready to leave she bent over my bed and told

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me to hurry and get well and when I could come to see her she would give me that picture. I was very happy to bring it to my home later.

A cherry wood drop-leaf table was brought to Nebraska from Ohio and was in Grandmother's dining room until she broke up her home. It still serves gatherings of the family, now down to the sixth generation from the Cornell grandparents.

A mirror, five feet by two and a half feet with a wide frame, was also brought from Ohio. It always hung in Granny's "front room." Other keepsakes include glassware, china, silverware and kitchen utensils; also articles of clothing, including her gray-checked wool shoulder shawl and a white apron. There is also a little glass thumbprint dish that was a wedding gift when the Cornells were married in 1860.

All of these heirlooms have been handed down to descendants of George and Rebecca Cornell, and are cherished and used in their homes.

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Note: A great grandson and great granddaughter of the Cornells who are members of the Buffalo County Historical Society are Marion Bishop of Kearney and Doris Huddell of Akron, Pennsylvania.

SOURCES

The Religious Telescope. July 26, 1871; Kearney Times, July 20, 1876; Bassett's History of Buffalo County, Vol. II, 1916; Biographical Souvenir of Buffalo, Kearney and Phelps Counties, 1890, Grandmother's Furniture, by Irene Reynolds, 1972.

NEW ANNUAL MEMBERS

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Keith Buss | Gothenburg | Shirley Simmons | Miller |
| Mary Q. Nye | Kearney | Mr. and Mrs. Allen Stover . . . | Riverdale |
| Kathleen Q. Mastin | Kearney | Sharon K. Webben Family | Shelton |
| A. Lauritz Larsen | Kearney | Mrs. Wm. H. Flippen | Fair Play, SC |
| Pamela L. Klein | Kearney | Mrs. Lawrence | |
| Jeffrey Craig | Kearney | Pickering | Arlington, VA |
| Germaine Oldfather | Kearney | | |

LIFE MEMBERS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|----------------------------|---------|
| Jeanette Mercer | Kearney | E. E. Chittenden | Kearney |
| Ward Schrack | Kearney | | |