

Buda

Buda is the oldest “town” in the county. It is located 2 ½ miles east of Kearney, just east of the airport road, along Highway 30, on the south side of the highway and south of the Union Pacific Railroad Tracks.

When the Union Pacific Railroad was completed through Buffalo County in late summer 1866 a town was laid out here and called Kearney Station. Because it was directly across the Platte River north of Fort Kearny, this was the station where passengers and supplies coming to the fort would disembark. According to Andreas’ *History of Nebraska*, “When the town was first laid out considerable effort was made to build up a town of importance. It is said that the town had at one time a population of nearly 600. This population, however, was of a temporary character, if, indeed, there ever were so many residents.” It was discovered that the town was actually located on the Fort Kearney Military Reservation. A small corner of that 10-mile square tract of land extended into Buffalo County at this point. The U.S. government could have forced any residents to vacate the land at that time. Since there was no clear title to the land the town was almost completely abandoned. What few buildings had been built were moved away and by the end of 1866 only the station and a section house remained. Later, in 1877 after Ft. Kearny was closed, the land was opened to settlement. But it was too late for a town to develop here because the City of Kearney had been founded and was flourishing five miles to the west and Gibbon had been founded and was flourishing seven miles to the east.

Soon after completion of the railroad, the Union Pacific was awarded a mail contract. Post offices were set up along the rail route. The first of these was Kearney Station, on December 3, 1868. But since a community did not develop here the post office was closed on March 17, 1869. Later references are made to local resident getting their mail here so apparently the railroad mail trains continued to drop mail here for several years.

The name, Kearney Station, was changed to Shelby in 1872 because of confusion caused by the new town of Kearney Junction. But this new name was soon confused with another newly founded Buffalo County town, Shelton. So the name was changed again. According to Fitzpatrick’s *Nebraska Place-Names*, “...according to local tradition, it ‘was called Buda after an old religious center,’ but more probably either directly or indirectly after Buda, now part of Budapest, [Budapest] Hungary.”

From about 1871 to 1876 John Reddy worked for the Union Pacific. His territory extended from Gibbon to Kearney Station (Buda). When the weather was bad he would walk the whole 9-mile section between Gibbon and Buda checking for loose track or washouts.

When the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad was built across southeast Nebraska and into this area to form a junction with the Union Pacific, they sent Ralph Grimes to Kearney Junction as depot agent. When the junction site was located by D. N.

Smith, he had also claimed land south of the U.P. and sold it to the Burlington. Since the U.P. did not own land at the junction it had no depot and would not stop its trains there. Instead trains stopped at Kearney Station on the east or at Stevenson's Siding on the west. Finally an agreement was reached in which some land was transferred back to the Union Pacific. Then they would stop their trains at Kearney Junction.

The Burlington built a depot in Kearney Junction. The plan was to have Mr. Grimes serve as a joint agent for both railroads. But that plan fell through when the Burlington learned that he was a former U.P. employee. The Buda agent at that time was J.N. Keller. He was sent to Kearney as the U.P. agent in the north half of the Burlington depot while Grimes served as the Burlington agent in the south half of the building.

In the very earliest days of the county, which was organized in 1870, county business was conducted in both Wood River Center (modern day Shelton) and Kearney Station (Buda) before Gibbon was founded and named the county seat.

In 1890 Buda had a population of 25. Its inhabitants included an agricultural implement dealer, a justice of the peace, a blacksmith, and the station agent who was also the postmaster.

D Wort operated a grain elevator in Buda. He started the business there after losing the election for a second term as county sheriff in 1899. He already had a grain business in Pleasanton and after the election expanded to several towns in the county including Buda. So by 1900 Buda had a grocery, church, D Wort's grain elevator and a school. The agricultural implement dealer, justice of the peace, blacksmith, and the station agent named 10 years earlier were apparently gone.

A Presbyterian Church was established about 1907-1909 in Buda. It was located next to the general store. Perhaps this was the formal organization of the church that was meeting there in 1900. Later, after the church closed, their building was moved to southeast Kearney.

Buda School, District 11 was organized in 1871. The school was actually located a mile east of Buda on the north side of the highway but near enough to take the name. Bonds with a total value of \$1700 were issued in June, 1873 for building and furnishing a school. Funds for repayment were raised through taxes in the district. One would guess that a sod structure was used for the first school sessions until the wooden structure was erected. A picture in the *Hub* newspaper shows this building to be the typical rectangular structure with three windows on a side and the entry door on the end.

.At some time before the turn of the century a new larger school was built. We might guess that it was in the summer of 1894 because in September a ceremony was held for the raising of a 40-flag pole from which a "spick and span new flag flung to the breeze." There was a program and speeches by Sen. Norris Brown and W. L. Hand. The *Hub* proclaimed this a great day and "at the close 'Old Glory' will float over one more school house as an inspiration to the rising generation."

As was true of schools in so many parts of Buffalo County, the Buda School was a community center. The first 4-H horse and colt club in the nation was organized at this school in about 1915.

In 1918 or 1919 the schoolhouse burned. Classes were held in a barn while the new building was being built. This is the one that is still standing today (August, 2003). It is a two-story building with a basement. The basement had two restrooms, the lunchroom and a shop for the boys. On the first floor there was one large classroom with a divider that could be lowered. The high school classes (9-11) were taught on the second floor. The last high school classes were taught in school year 1941-2. Then Buda was an eight grade school until it merged with Center School District #28 at the end of the school year in 1959.

The building had various uses after the school closed. It served as a family home and as a place to raise dogs before being purchased for the purpose of renovating into apartments in 1995. Presently the building has five apartments. In the basement are two 1-bedroom apartments. There are two 2-bedroom apartments on the main floor and an efficiency apartment on the second floor.

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