

Session I – The Beginning

I. Early Settlement

Use your imagination

Dairy Queen parking lot, face south



Erase concrete, vehicles (get a horse), buildings, trees

Only prairie – blue stem, short prairie grass, buffalo grass



Indians – Pawnee, Sioux
Trappers – Came from west first
Wagon trains – Arrive in May, June
1846 – Brigham Young’s Mormon train

Road ranches (forerunner of gas stations?)
Wood River Center (Shelton)
– Joseph Johnson, Mormon
General store,
blacksmith shop,
garden, newspaper
Boyd Ranche
– James Boyd
Trade animals,
raised corn

Ft. Kearny – built in 1848



Randall diary of trip in mid-1850's – on north side of river

II. Union Pacific Railroad – through Buffalo County

Summer, fall 1866

Ties from up along the South Loup River
Ravenna area

2 Stations in Buffalo County

Kearney Station (Buda)

On military reservation property

Elm Creek Station

Named for red elms along creek

Gibbon Siding

Section houses – Wood River Center,
Gibbon, Buda, Kearney, Elm Creek
For track maintenance crews



III. Locating Kearney Junction

Burlington & Missouri River Railroad – Form junction with UP east of 100th meridian

D. N. Smith - Land Agent for B & MR RR

Born in New York state 1810

Ex-Methodist minister

Died sometime after about 1872, before 1881

Was to locate the junction – mark the physical spot

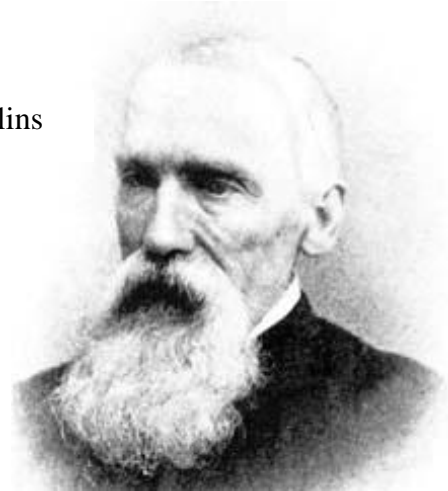
Asbury Collins – Former Methodist Minister

Poor health, “hemorrhaging of lungs”



David N. Smith

Asbury Collins



They arrived at Ft. Kearny in early April 1871



Ft. Kearny in 1870

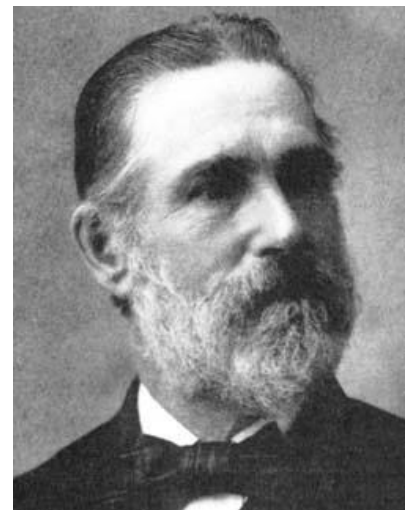
Fort closed in 1877

Blizzard – Same one that greeted the Gibbon Homestead Colony

Crossed the Platte on April 11 to mark the junction site in Section 1.

Guided by Moses Sydenham

Moses Sydenham



IV. Land Issues & the Smith Bros.

Not Smith's first trip – Wm. Patterson, geology

Four persons – Daniel Rowen, John Wright, George Smith & James Smith

Each had claimed a quarter of Section 2

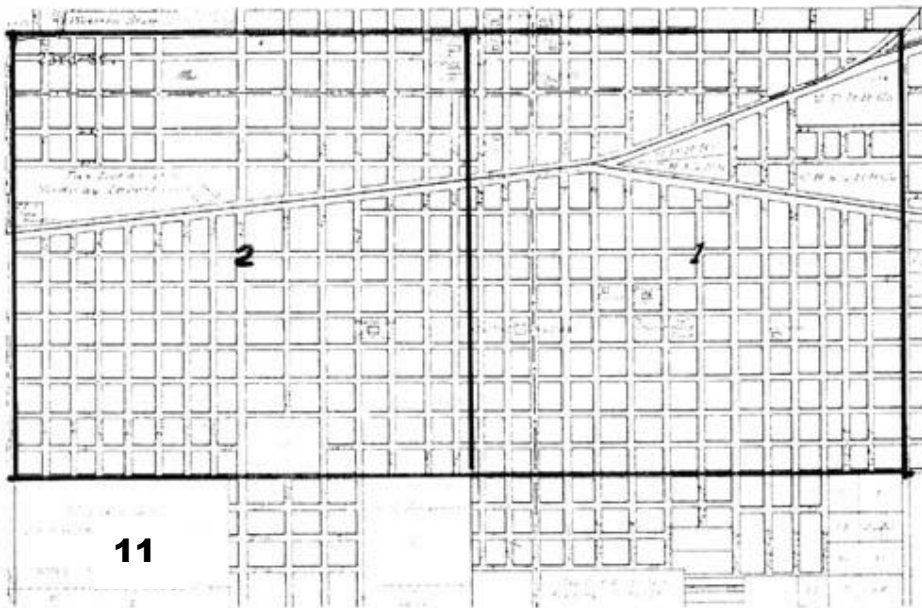
Each later sold their land to B & MRR

D N Smith bought Section 1 & part of Section 11 from the UP.

UP train wouldn't stop until they got some town lots – (See BT Feb 1981 for account of land issues)

Two north quarters of Section 2 claimed by George E. and James A. Smith

Born in Indiana – no proof of relation to D. N. Smith, but...



Smith Bros. came to Buffalo County in early 1871.
 James filed on northwest quarter
 George filed on northeast quarter
 Built sod house in center of section

Both James and George continued to live here
 James for at least the next six years
 George for most of the rest of his life.

V. James, the older brother

Paid taxes in 1872, personal & property, so hadn't sold land to RR land co. until later that year.
 1876 - Lost election for City Engineer
 manager for two plays presented as money-making project for a library.
 Sept. 1877 - last reference – newspaper item –
 “Shoemaker attached some goods bound for Cheyenne at UP depot. Let
 J.A.S. take boots without paying. (Assumption is Smith's goods were attached.)

VI. George E. Smith

Sold his land to the B & MRR, then filed on another piece of land
 about a mile of north of Kearney –
 SE corner of this 80 acres is now the NW quadrant of 39th & 2nd –
 Sunmart

George was a real estate agent for the South Platte Land Co.
 - Burlington's land company.

Then sold insurance
 Had a retail store –
 real estate, books, stationery, musical instruments, news depot
 City Clerk off & on from April 1875 - April 1878 and possibly longer.

Sometime between 1900 & 1920 - family moved to Lake Forest, IL
 Both but both George and his wife died in early 1920's, buried here.



Geo E. Smith

VII. First (Second) Kearney Residents – Collins family



Asbury – 48 - Methodist minister 20+ years, poor health

Louisa – 39 (would have been minister also if women did in those days. Did fill in for Asbury)

Milton – son, 19

Finley – son, 13, 14 in June

Lou Stover – niece, 4

Probably Asbury came home and announced they were moving to this new land.

Asbury, Milton and Finley, with Alford Gay and another lad, James, took household goods, farm equipment and animals to Kearney Junction.

Louisa and her niece, Lou, said good-by to their friends in Red Oak and went to Council Bluffs where they awaited word from Asbury.

They took the train from Council Bluffs to Kearney Station. The trip took an entire day.

Louisa's diary reveals her fear of Indians and expectation of loneliness.

Life got better – Louisa found an empty liquor bottle

She found other people as more came to settle in Kear

People came, soon small village sprang up

– Kearney was born



Resources

- UNK Library - Second floor – documents, reference
- Basement – newspapers
- City Library - Second floor – Kearney Room
- Hub on microfilm
- Buffalo County Historical Society Archives – Trails & Rails Museum, southwest building

Resources On Line

<bchs.us>

<rootsweb.com/~nebuffal/>

For other states - Put that state's abbreviation in place of "ne"

For other counties - Put up to 6 letters of the county name for "buffal"

<cityofkearney.org>

(select *Library* from city departments listed on left)

Suggested Reading for Session 1

History of Buffalo County, Vol. I, by Samuel Bassett, 1917

Chapter I, Before The White Man Came -- Names Of Indian Tribes Inhabiting Nebraska Territory -- Brief History Of The Pawnee Indians -- Faithful To Their Treaty Obligations -- Removal To Indian Territory In 1876 -- Assigned Lands In Severalty In 1892 -- A Pathetic Incident -- In 1915 The Pawnee Making Good, Becoming Useful Citizens. 1-5

Chapter II, Fort Kearney--Date When Established--Boundaries Of Military Reservation--Blew The Bugle--Reference--History Of Fort Kearney By Albert Watkins, Historian Of State Historical Society.....5-6

Chapter V, Huntsman's Echo, First Newspaper Published In Buffalo County--Copies On File In Library Of State Historical Society--Sketch Of Joseph E. Johnson, Nebraska's First Editor--Accompanies Explorers Who Locate Line Of Union Pacific Railroad--Buffalo Destroy Mr. Johnson's Garden And Crops--Grasshoppers Destroy Crops In Buffalo County In 1860--Building Of Telegraph Line To Fort Kearney In 1860--Stage Line Makes A Record Trip, Fort Kearney To Omaha, 33 Hours--Mr. Johnson Visits Pawnee Indians Winter 1860-61--A Saw Mill In Operation At Wood River Centre--A One-Horse Grist Mill In Operation--Grain And Vegetables Grow To Perfection--First Postoffice In Buffalo County.....21-27

Chapter XI, The Boyd Ranch, James E. Boyd, Owner Later Governor Of Nebraska--Raised Corn--Trafficked In Oxen--Brewed Beer--Whisky \$20 A Gallon--The Boyd Ranch First Claim Taken In Buffalo County--First Piece Of Deeded Land In Nebraska, West Of Hall County--Paid For In Land Script Issued To A Soldier Of The War Of 1812.....42-45

Biographical Souvenir of the Counties of Buffalo, Kearney, and Phelps in Nebraska, 1890,

George N. Smith biography

(Both books can be found in the libraries or on line at <rootsweb.com/~nebuffal/>

Buffalo Tales, Buffalo County Historical Society at <bchs.us>

Nebraska Centre and the Boyd Ranch, compiled by Alice Howell, September, 1980

Bits and Pieces: Locating Kearney Junction, by Gene E. Hamaker, February, 1981

Fort Kearny -- The Rest of the Story, Part I, II & III, by Sally Vifquain, January – June, 2000

Moses H. Sydenham, First of the Visionaries, by Margaret Stines Nielsen, April, 1981