

Session I – The Beginning

How many are Kearney/Buffalo County natives
Rich history

I. Early Settlement

*Dairy Queen parking lot, face south



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

*Only prairie – blue stem, short prairie grass, buffalo grass
animals – buffalo, elk, antelope, prairie dogs, ground squirrels



Indians – Pawnee, Sioux

Trappers – 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. Kearney – 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

2 Stations in Buffalo County

Kearney Station (Buda)

On military reservation property

Elm Creek Station

Named for red elms along creek

Aka slippery elm –

reddish when opening

Herbal remedy for digestive problems



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

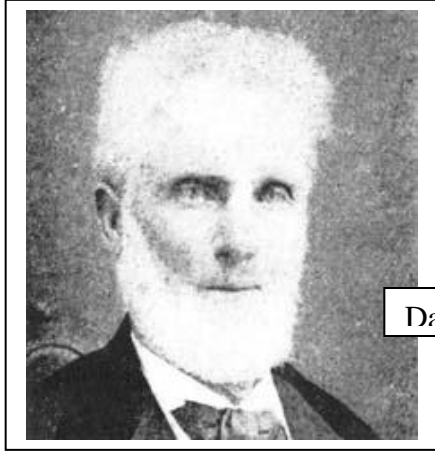
Born in New York state 1810

Ex-Methodist minister

Died sometime after about 1872, before 1881

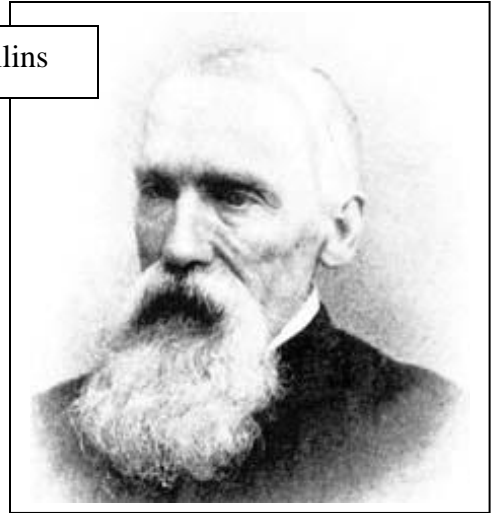
Was to locate the junction – mark the physical spot

Asbury Collins – Former Methodist Minister
Poor health, “hemorrhaging of lungs”



David N. Smith

Asbury Collins



*Arrived at Ft. Kearny in early April 1871



Ft. Kearny in 1870

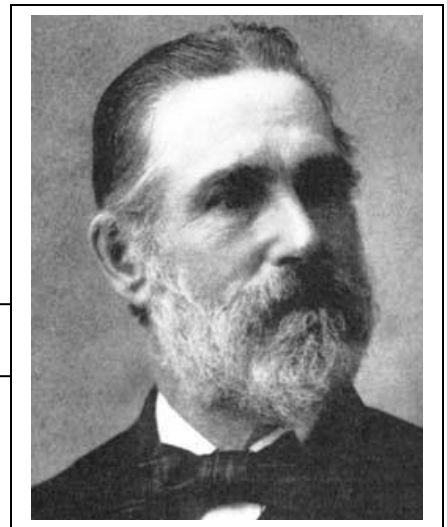
Fort closed in 1877

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



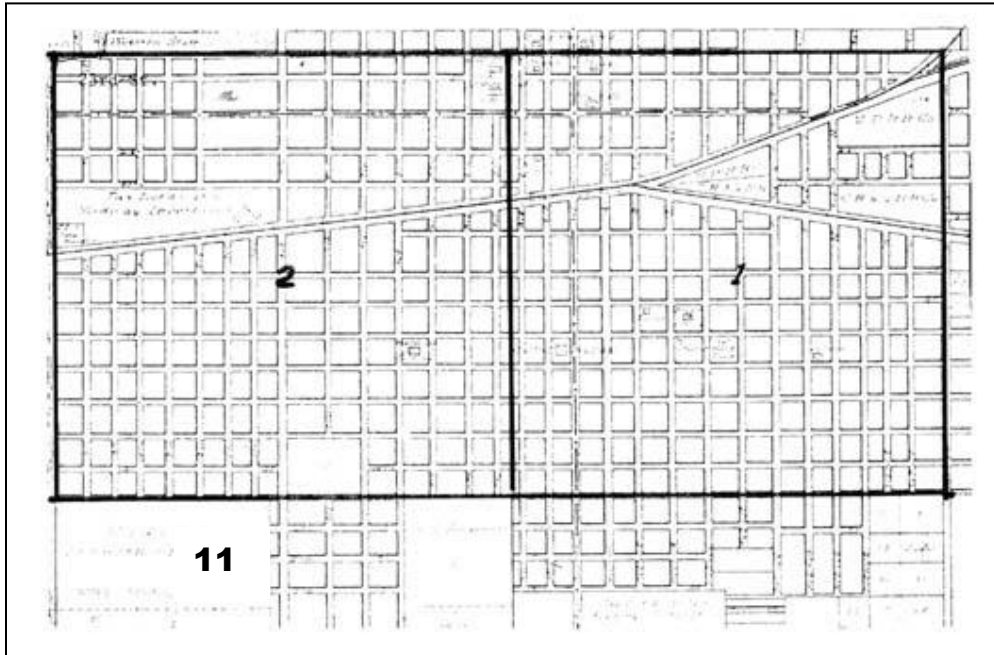
IV. Land Issues & the Smith Bros.

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...

Came to Buffalo County in early 1871.

James filed on northwest quarter
George filed on northeast quarter
Rowen & Wright on the two south quarters
Built sod house in center of section

Both James and George continued to live here in Kearney
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, to be presented as a 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 attached.)

***VI. George E. Smith**

Sold his land to the B & MRR

Then filed on another piece of land about a mile 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.

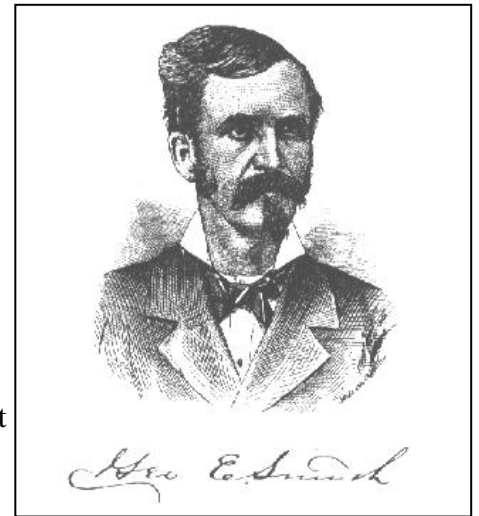
Then sold insurance

Had a retail store -

real estate, books, stationery, musical instruments, news depot

City Clerk off and on from April 1875 to April 1878

- possibly longer.

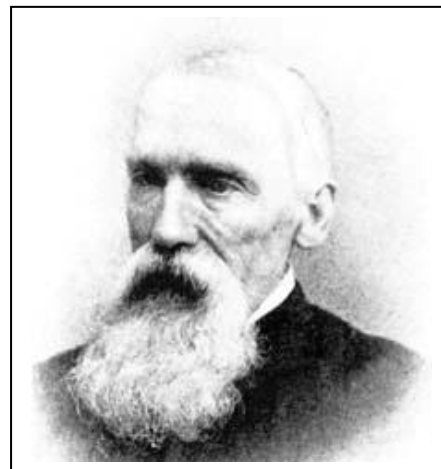
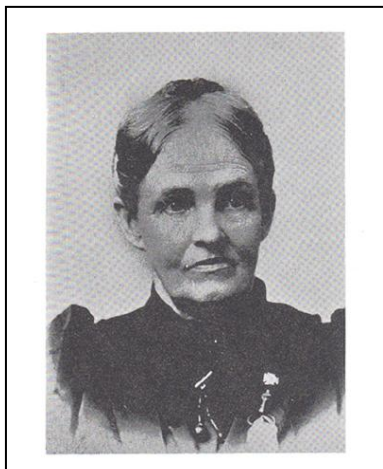


Had 4 children, 3 living

Sometime between 1900 & 1920 - family moved to Lake Forest, Illinois

When they died in early 1920's but both George and his wife were buried here

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-bye 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 journey – diary excerpts about the trip and arrival

Saturday, May 13, 1871 [Left Council Bluffs]-
[We]Bid adieu to O such dear, dear good friends. Heaven grant us a home together in that beautiful land. On our way, darling Lou and I, to meet the balance of the family. On the train bound for, shall I say home? (well, it is 5 miles west of Kearney Station, Nebr.) Yes, home for it is home where husband and children are.

But, O the thought of leaving all beside them that ever was, as can be dear on earth to me again! Home and friends left so far behind. Outside of our family circle I feel that my work is done. O God, forgive me if this is wrong, but all looks dark and bare. Never again do I expect to meet a kind and loving friend in hour of sorrow. Never again will it be our privilege to walk to the altar of prayer with tender hearts and hear the shouts of new-born souls. O Lord, thou hast stood by us in hours of deep affliction. Thou will not forsake us. In thee we would trust.

Here my first sight of a Pawnee. Such looking beings! My heart sunk within me with fear. Is my future home to be surrounded by such beings? O Lord, save me. How can I live in such fear and dread? Glad we don't see any more Pawnees tonight. (O how glad I am) my dear husband meets me. I will feel sure that I am safe

Sunday 14th - Last night my dear companion met us at the train. Our pet Lou was almost frantic with delight. Had us ride five miles in a buggy. Left trunk and all. How glad we were to see the light at the shanty window. As we came near we heard sweet music that touched the tenderest cords of my heart. Took me for a moment back home again, but here we were, our family all together again after a separation of two weeks. Oh, had ever mother such dear children!

There were three [4?] strangers among us, Alfred Gay and James who had come with the teams from Red Oak, and James and George Smith from Indiana who were singing and playing when we arrived. We were met so pleasantly, treated so kindly we scarcely realized they were strangers.

We retired (to a bed on the floor all in the same room). Slept soundly to awake and find ourselves in a strange land, a beautiful country, but not a house in sight on this side of the river save the section house occupied by an Irish family about one mile distant. Our present shanty is sixteen by sixteen and serves us as parlor, bed room, dining room, & kitchen. We find plenty to eat and a stove to back it on. (Husband and children had been there two days before me.) But how shall I go to work? Nothing but my traveling suit to put on. After a little assistance from almost every one about the house I got the breakfast on to cook. Now for the table. It is a small box. Our plates are tin, our spoons and our knives and fork matching well. After prayer and breakfast was over we [went] to the track as the train past.

No church Bell is to be heard in the land, not within a hundred miles, I believe. And is it possible that I am two hundred and fifty miles farther from my dear dear father and mother? But, O, fly thought of home and dear ones. I cannot, dare not, think of them.

When dinner was ready my poor heart was too full to eat. But do you think I have looked sad? [I have] not expressed a sad thought, not a sad or despondent word has yet escaped my lips. They say how brave you are, how can you be so cheerful? After my husband and I took a walk out on the prairie, I saw I could not refrain from tears much longer. [I] did not want any one see me. I only told him I was a little lonesome and then cheered up as soon as possible. He never will know half of the aching of my poor heart. He is so good to do all to make me happy and comfortable. I cannot tell him.

*Life got better – Louisa found an empty liquor bottle – so she knew there was someone to save
She found other people as more came to settle in Kearney

People came, soon small village sprang up – Kearney was born

