

Huntsman's Echo

History of Buffalo County, Samuel Bassett, 1917, p. 21-26

“Mr. Johnson was a Mormon, having two wives and numerous children on his arrival at Wood River Center in 1859. In 1860, it is related, another woman came from an Iowa point to whom later, in Utah, he was married, and possibly the increasing prejudice against the Mormons and especially polygamy caused Mr. Johnson too abandon this suggested financial venture and remove to Utah, there to dwell among a people more in sympathy with his beliefs and practices....In 1859 he moved to Wood River (Center), Nebraska, and for three years published the Huntsman's Echo. At this point he had a large outfitting store for the accommodation of the many who were rushing to the gold fields of California. He had also a printing office, bakery, hotel, daguerreotype studio, etc. In 1861 moved to Utah, bringing a long train of teams loaded with all manner of goods and chattels. * * * On November 6, 1882, he was taken sick with pneumonia from which he died December 17, 1882.” He was survived by 3 wives, 27 children and many grandchildren.

“Early settlers in the county state that the store of Mr. Johnson was not extensive in character and that in connection with the store and newspaper he also conducted a blacksmith shop and repair shop for wagons and that the repair shops were much the more profitable as a business.”

“ Mr. E. Oliver, now a resident of Shelton, and who was employed by Mr. Johnson to work in his garden, states that Mr. Johnson took great pride and pleasure in tilling the soil, not only raising quantities of vegetables, but was also a lover of flowers and small fruits to which he gave much attention. The store and printing office was in a building fourteen feet square, built of hewn logs, and was located on the bank of Wood River, east of the main street. In front of this store was the Overland Trail; across the trail, to the south, was the house in which Mr. Johnson lived, and his garden extended to the south as far as the present railroad tracks. This garden was enclosed with a fence built of poles. After the removal of Mr. Johnson to Utah, the store building was used as a residence by the families of E. Oliver and A. Meyer.”

Newspaper Set-up

p. 1 – Advertisements & boiler plate

p. 2 – Local and Nebraska news; national news about the Civil War in 1861 issues

p. 3 - All advertisements

p. 4 – Advertisements & some boiler plate & Fillers – Jokes – many of them puns

Vol. 1, No. 7, June 14, 1860

Page 1

Advertisement – J. H. Wagner, Surveyor & Engineer, Johnson’s Rancho, Wood River, N.T., Will attend to all calls in his profession—Surveying, Platting, Engineering, &c.

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Back Again - Johnson had just returned from a 20-day trip east including Council Bluffs, Omaha and Florence.

Rain, Rain ! --- after little rain during the past spring the area received a good soaking rain.

Crops---Fruits---Gardens. Despite little rain the crops were looking good because of subsoil moisture. Specific items mentioned: Apple and other fruit trees, wild plum & grapes, radishes, lettuces, onions, green peas, & beans in the garden, field potatoes

Buffalo.---“our beautiful town site has been rudely trampled by upon by those ugly-looking wild beasts known as buffalo”

“For Utah Tuesday 12---The first Mormon train for Utah passed, consisting of 31 wagons, 53 yoke oxen, 35 cows 9 horses, with 169 souls, 97 males, and 72 females, all well, and stock in fine order.... The company are two weeks out from Florence---no accidents or sickness.”

Items – High water in the Wood River has driven 4 beavers out of their homes and up on the bank in front of the Echo office. Improvements are again going on at Ft. Kearny. A theatrical group was playing to crowded houses at Ft. Kearny. The Platte was high but teams occasionally were crossing. A new military ford had been made at Wood River Centre.

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All advertisements

Vol. 1, No. , July 26, 1860

Page 1

advertisement – Butler & Davis, Dealers in groceries, Provisions, liquors, hay, corn, and oats. Two miles west of Fort Kearney, on the Pike’s Peak, Utah, & California Road. Emigrants will find the best accommodations – wood and water free

Page 2

Ft. Kearney had posted an advertisement asking for 700 tons of hay, contract to be let Aug. 1 for delivery over the next two months.

“Some Love to Roam!”

A description of an exploring tour by Smith and “several of the boys” northwesterly toward the Loup River. Went about 6 miles over the Wood River bottom and saw several small herds of Buffalo Finally shot one which they followed a couple of miles before finally killing it. They cut off the “rare hump-rib, for to roast, broil and fry. Three of the boys asnd one tem were sent back with the meat. The rest continued on overf hilly country covered with short sweet grass, no wood or water. Finally reached the Loup, a broad rich valley, groves of timber. They camped by the river. After supper and sleeping arrangements were made, a “heavy shower of mosketos (sic) fell, which gave us enough business until sleep overtook us.” They awoke to thunder and lightning. They made a rude tent by putting the wagon cover over a pole held up by forked sticks where they put their food, blankets, arms and ammunition. The rain stopped about the time they were drenched and daylight appeared. But they slept some before getting up for a buffalo-roast breakfast. They road in the hills parallel to the river where they saw herds of antelope, a tributary with beaver, otter & fish. There were plums, grapes, cherries, gooseberries, & currents. That night they spent at the junction of the two branches of the Loup. Supper was fish caught in a pool there. During the night the horses disappeared and could not be found in the dark. Didn’t know if they were stolen or strayed but at daylight they turned up a few miles away. Then they headed back home where at the Wood River they saw a sentinel buffalo which they killed, skinned, and cut up. With the 1000 pounds of meat they continued on home where they would dry it. The waters of the Platte had receded so crossings were being made easily.

“Buffalo in the Cane-brake”

Many buffalo in the area. Last week one broke down a fence and got into Boy’s corn field. Boyd shot it. On Friday two more were killed when they got into the crops.

On Sunday the 22nd and last handcart train came through. 144 people – 20 Swiss, 53 English, and 71 Scandinavians. 21 carts, 9 wagons, 30 head of stock. 14 days out of Florence.

Advertisement – Vegetables! Vegetables! I have an extensive Vegetable Garden at Wood River Center, and have now ready for sale, all the earliest varieties of roots and vegetables. Orders from the Fort, and elsewhere, promptly attended to. J. E. Johnson.

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Advertisement – Peck, Robertson & Co., Wholesale & Retail Outfitting Merchants Kearney City, N. T. Dealers in Groceries, Dry-Goods, Grain and Provisions. Boots, Hats, Shoes, Caps, and everything wanted in that line by either emigrant or citizen. Also, A good supply of all necessary articles kept at Peck’s Ranche, Wood River, 15 miles East of Fort Kearney, in prices, They are determined not to be undersold by any firm in this region.

Advertisement – Seldon, McGivern & Co. Sign of the American Flag! Two miles west of Fort Kearney, on the Great Military Road to Pike’s Peak Utah and California. Dealers in Groceries, Provisions, Dry-Goods, Indian-Goods, Liquors, Corn, Oats and Hay, -o-o-o- at our ranche Can be found the largest and best korralls, and stabling, west of the Missouri river. Wood and Water Free

Advertisement – Muir & Hammond’s Junction Ranche, Ten miles east of Ft. Kearney, N .T. Hay, Corn, and Hotel Accommodations For Man and Beast. Wood and water convenient if you want good fare at the Lowest Figures, call at Junction Ranche.

Advertisement – Cheaper Than any other House West of the Missouri! -o-o-o-o-o-o-o- McDonald & Young, Kearney City, Nebraska Territory, two miles west of Fort Kearney. Wholesale & Retail Dealers in Dry-Goods, Groceries, Provisions, Liquors, Bacon, Meal, Corn, Oats, &c. We keep on hand the largest and best assorted Stock of Goods ever kept on the Plains, which we will sell cheaper than any other House west of the Missouri river. We have good Camping grounds in the rear of our Store, where Emigrants will be supplied with wood and water free of charge! –o-o-o- We have purchased the interest of Dr. Henry, of the late firm of Morrow, Rankin and Henry, and having just completed our New Store, - -frame building,-- we are prepared to offer greater inducements to Pike’s Peak, Utah and California Emigrants, in the way of Fresh Goods, and Lower Prices than any other house west of the Missouri. Dr. Henry will remain at our Store, where he will be pleased to see his old friends and customers, until his departure for the Mines. Remember thee place. Kearney City, May 15, 1860.

Advertisement – Johnson’s Ranche, Wood River Center. ----- Grinding. A good Corn Mill is now in operation, and ready for corn and buckwheat, at Johnson’s Ranche, Wood River Center. Corn in the ear ground likewise. Blacksmithing. Do you want your horse or oxen shod, or anything done in the above line, go to Johnson’s Ranche, where you can be served on the shortest notice and in the best manner. Entertainment. “We want but little here below!” Good accommodation for man and beast are now prepared at Johnson’s. Upper Crossing of Wood River. Hay, grain, and stabling, plenty, and charges low. Emigrants and settlers can get supplies of potatoes, groceries, liquors, provisions, clothing—and many necessary articles, at prices a shade higher than sold on the Missouri River. If you want anything, call there and your wants may be satisfactorily supplied with articles of almost every variety—to be had at Johnson’s Store Wood River Center. For Sale.—A giant Cob-mill, at Johnson’s Ranche. Also a Breaking Plow.

Vol. 1, No. 12 – Aug. 2, 1860

Page 2

The contract for furnishing poles for the telegraph line from Ft. Kearney to Omaha had been let.

Twitchell & Saddler’s saw mill at the Wood River crossing was up and running.

Vol. 1, No. 14 – Sept. 6, 1860

Page 2

New Post Office

A Post Office has been established at this place, to be called "Wood River." This will be a great convenience to us, and many of our neighbors.

Construction of the telegraph line was progressing between Omaha and Ft. Kearney.

Buffalo were coming around the farm, ranche, and office, and eating his vegetables. He sent "the boys" out to chase them away with the result of two buffalo being shot. "...and as dogs and wolves are scarce we have had to breakfast, dine and sup from their flesh..."

Advertisement – Johnson was offering vegetables from his garden

Vol. 1, No. 15 – Sept. 13, 1860

Page 2

Johnson killed another buffalo which had wandered onto the townsite and was outside his office.

Corn crop in settlements along the Platte on ground broken last year will yield 20-35 bushels per acre. Corn on ground broken in the current year was not doing well. Potato yield was light.

Troops from Ft. Kearney were being sent out to help protect the Pawnee from attacks by the Cheyenne

Page 4

Fillers – Jokes – many of them puns

"The man who was lost in slumber found his way out on a night mare."

What throat is best for a singer to reach high notes with? --- A soar throat."

[politically correct] – "A young lady in town is so refined in her language that she never uses the word *blackguard* but substitutes *African sentinel*."

Vol. 1, No. 16 Sept 27, 1860

Page 2

Six new families had been added to the settlement

No frost yet and the vegetables were still growing

Many “Peakers” who had gone through to the mines were returning as quickly as possible

Someone had opened a ranche at the Kearney crossing, on the north side. He had built a sod house, karrel & stables.

J. E. Boyd had given Johnson a large watermelon. His farm is 7 miles away with comfortable buildings, several hundred fenced in acres and about 200 acres in crops, a wife and baby

“Varmints!” – Several antelope, a red fox, three large white wolves, buffalo have not been bothering in the last couple of weeks. There were still plenty of them cross the river

Nov.2, 1860

Page 2

Telegraph poles were erected along the main street of Wood River Centre. There would be three offices in this division, in Omaha, Columbus and Ft4. Kearney with “testing stations” at Fremont, Parker and Wood River Centre.

Visited Kearney City. Last spring there were five hovels in the “adobe town” but now there are 40 or 50 buildings including a dozen stores.

Vol. 1, No. 23 - Feb. 7, 1861

Page 2

Prairie Varieties – Little stirring – hunting taken a temporary recess, small parties coming from the Peak, Western Stage generally full. Last snow decreasing slowly, a few patches on the road, some sleighing, meetings for dancing few and far between. Indians not seen since summer

Senate considered the Pacific R.R. bill but it did not pass.

Vol. 1, No. 24 – Feb. 21, 1861

Page 2

2-3 day storm, cold, drifts, several days of heavy clouds, no sunshine.

Vol. 1, No. 26 – April 25, 1861

Page 1

Johnson was advertising vegetable seeds.

Johnson's Ranche,
Johnson's Ranche,
Wood River Centre,
Wood River Centre :
Good Place to Stop!
Fine Place to Put-up!
Pleasant Place to Stay!
 Good east or west,
 Here is the best---
 Good place to rest!
 Try it!!

For man an easy bed,
And table plenteous spread,
For stock there's kraal – shed,
 Near by it!

Page 2

Johnson was home after a 4-month absence. Since his return he planted a 4-acre garden and put up a 12 x 30 addition on his house besides looking after his cows and pigs.

Some questions asked by mail and the answers:

How long since the first settlement?

 Dr. C.A.Henry built the first house in this settlement less than three years ago.

Have you any mills?

 One saw mill 18 miles below. Lumber \$30 per M.

Vol. 1, No. 27 – May,2, 1861

Page 2

A Home Guard was organized calling themselves the Wood River Rangers. Their objective was to protect themselves from thieves, marauders, and those of any color who disturb the peace. They also adopted the Hall County Cattle Regulation which made owners of stock responsible for any damage done to neighbors' crops. The stock could be held hostage until a satisfactory settlement was made with the owner...

The telegraph line had been completed from Omaha to Ft. Kearney and construction on west continued.

Vol. 1, No. 34 – Aug. 1, 1861

Named one business in Kearney City which was not paying its advertising bill. Also praised two others who were paying theirs.

Announced that he was moving to Utah