

Towns in Garfield Township:

Ravenna – two miles into the township, a mile from the Sherman County line.

Nantasket – two miles east of Ravenna

Railroads in Buffalo County

Omaha & Republican Valley RR – (1886) This was a Union Pacific line which went north from Grand Island to St. Paul. There it divided with one branch going to Ord and the other to Loup City via Boelus which they proposed to call Howard City. The branch from Boelus (Howard City) west is the one that went into Buffalo County at St. Michel and along the north side of the South Loup River through Poole (Poole Siding) to River View (now Pleasanton). The plan was to run it on up the South Loup through Sartoria, Pilot, Cumro, & Georgetown in Custer County to Callaway but that never happened.

Grand Island and Wyoming Central – (1886) A Burlington line from Grand Island to Broken Bow and on northwest, cut through the northeast corner of Buffalo County. The Omaha & Rep. Valley crossed it at about Nantasket southeast of Ravenna.

From *Kearney & Black Hills*, a Historic Branch of the Union Pacific, by Francis Gschwind, 1990

Volume 8, No. 4 *Buffalo County Historical Society* *APRIL, 1985*

FREIGHTING IN BUFFALO COUNTY- Part III

Other Wagon Routes

by Mardi Anderson

The railroad had entered Buffalo County near St. Michael. It followed the South Loup River to Nantasket and then after crossing the river, entered Ravenna. From here it followed Beaver Creek to Sweetwater and on into Sherman and Custer Counties following Beaver and then Muddy Creek to Broken Bow and on northwest.

Volume 1, No. 8 *Buffalo County Historical Society* *August, 1978*

EARLY POST OFFICES IN BUFFALO COUNTY

by Alice Shaney Howell

Nantasket, November 9, 1887.

Volume 8, No. 6 *Buffalo County Historical Society* *June 1985*

THE CZECHS IN AND AROUND RAVENNA - Part II

by Edith Fiala Abraham

Other Czechs in business in Ravenna in 1893 were Frank Benes, Frank Bohac, Jan Fiser (Fisher), Joseph Hach, Anton Hlava, Joseph Hlava, Karel (Chas.) Humpel, Jan Janecek, Joseph Jelinek, Vaclav Macek, Frank Mrkvicka, Joseph Shebl, Joseph Simon, Vaclav

Skala, Joseph Spevacek, Anton Tomiska, Frank Velek and Joseph Velek; in Pleasanton, Frank Soukup and Vaclav Vosypka; in Nantasket, Jan Rocek.

Volume 1, No. 5

Buffalo County Historical Society
RAILROADS IN BUFFALO COUNTY

May 1978

by Alice Howell

Nantasket, South Ravenna, and Pool's Siding, later incorporated as Poole, were stations on this branch line within the county.

Precinct Officers elected in 1890 –

Assessor, Max Schlund, St. Michael

Clerk, S. Urwiller, Nantasket

Treasurer, J. C. Bruckner, Nantasket

Justice of Peace,

G. M. Hawkins, Nantasket;

Chas. Karp, St. Michael;

Constable, L. L. Hile, St. Michael

Road Overseers:

district 29, R. J. Hodson, St. Michael;

district 67, Frank Havlik, Nantasket.

Buffalo County Sun -
January 23, 1897

George FLEIBIE, of Nantasket, charged with the larceny of ties from the railroad at that point, was tried to a jury this week and acquitted.

October 16, 1897

County Teachers

Who They Are and Where they Will Teach.

96 - Miss Hattie Wartnaby.....Nantasket

BIRTH RECORDS

These delayed birth records are located at the Buffalo County Courthouse, Kearney, Nebraska.

GEHRT, William

born 20 September 1881, Nantasket, Buffalo Co., Nebraska

son Peter Gehrt, born 1824, Holstein, Germany

Margaret ALPEN, born 1836, Holstein, Germany

GRAMLY, Luther William

born 17 June 1891, Nantasket, Buffalo Co., Nebraska

son William Luther Gramly, born 1862, Bellfonte, Pennsylv.

Lizzie Catherine BLUE, born 1872, Rockaway, New Jers.

THE RAVENNA NEWS

The following excerpts from the RAVENNA NEWS, Ravenna, Nebraska, were published in August, 1888.

Thursday, August 2, 1888

Sodtown Items:

Miss May BUSH, of Nantasket, was visiting the Misses BERNET's Friday and Saturday.

Legal Notices:

F William BOHEING, files his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, No. 168904 for NE 1/4 Section 22, Town12, Range 14, and witnesses to prove his residence and cultivation there were: John S SALSBURY, Ravenna P O; Jeremiah TAWNEY of Ravenna P O; Fred be LYTLE of Nantantasket P O; and Frank WATT of Nantasket P O

Edward L Smith & Judith Fellows Smith (name researched)

Combined information furnished by Nancy Bender and BCHS Archives.

1888 –

Judeth Smith, Dist. 96 [Nantasket], Taxpayer

J. Baker, Dist. 30, 12-10-14. Children: Jacob Long, 20

Volume 14, No. 4 Buffalo County Historical Society April, 1991

THE TOWN THAT WAS NANTASKET

by Rochelle A. Hunt

Countless towns sprung up along the frontier only to disappear within a short span of time. Armada, Sartoria, Buda, and Nantasket are only a few of the names that will not be found on a map today. Reasons for a town's demise vary, however in several cases, the nation's developing railroads played a major role in deciding the fate of Buffalo County towns. Where to lay the track and mark the division points were crucial for a town's future. The promoters of these towns planned and schemed to make sure theirs was the town that succeeded.

At an uncertain date in the 1889s, the town of Nantasket arose in Garfield township, Buffalo County. It was originally called Trocnov (pronounced Trots'-nof) after the hometown of John Zizka, a famous Bohemian soldier of the sixteenth-century Hussite wars. The village flourished in 1886 with a doctor, a dentist, a pharmacist, two hotels, a dry goods store, an elevator, a school, and a post office. According to the Nebraska State Historical Society, Nantasket boasted one hundred citizens by 1889.

(Click to enlarge picture)



The only original building left on the townsite of Nantasket.

A race between Erastus Smith, the promoter of nearby Beaver Creek (now Ravenna), and Nantasket promoter, Dr. McKinney, ⁽¹⁾ began when railroad officials from the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (C.B.&Q.) ⁽²⁾ came in the early 1880's to decide where the division point of the railroad should be laid. The story goes that Dr. McKinney was called away to Kearney on false pretenses, so the C.B.&Q. officials met with Erastus Smith and decided to change Beaver Creek's name to Ravenna and make it the division point of the new railroad, thus securing the future of Ravenna, a town as successful as Nantasket was supposed to have been. ⁽³⁾

"Early day promoters believed a town would flourish at the crossing of the Union Pacific and Burlington railroads at that point. But the Burlington established Ravenna a little further west and when St. Michael was started to the east, the town of Nantasket was squeezed out." ⁽⁴⁾

Another race then developed, not between the two towns, but between the two railroads. The Burlington and Union Pacific Railroads built west out of Grand Island (the Burlington headed toward Wyoming; the Union Pacific west through Pleasanton). A race ensued, stemming partially from the fact that the two tracks would have to cross each other two miles east of Ravenna. Apparently the rule was that the company that laid the track across the crossing first would get the right of way.

The story is told that one bitterly cold night the Burlington won the race by:

"lining the stomachs of the guards posted by the Union Pacific line with an ample supply of liquor; so ample, in fact, that the guards were unwilling, or unable to do anything when the Burlington crews laid their track through and beyond the crossing, thus earning the right of way." ⁽⁵⁾

Thus the Union Pacific had to give up control of that point, but were determined, nevertheless, to make the village into a station.

In 1886 the town was platted and called Nantasket (accounts vary whether it was named after the New York or Massachusetts towns of the same name). Nantasket is also known as "Bottle Town" for its "unsavory reputation" it earned from the four or five saloons it boasted and through the "exuberance of the patrons" of a large dance hall and bar. ⁽⁶⁾

According to historian Charles Jenkins, George M. Cumming arranged for the plat and purchased a half interest in the site from owner, Mr. Fred Lytle. The original plat shows Nantasket as more than three times the original thirty-block plat of Ravenna. "Over fourteen blocks were subdivided into business lots, with great expectations of the town booming in a like manner as Ravenna to its west."⁽⁷⁾ A few lots were sold and a few buildings, including a school, were built. A depot and grain elevator were also raised. The townspeople named the streets after trees and called them Willow, Elm, Oak, Maple, Cedar, and so on.

Ravenna's boom soon completely overshadowed Union Pacific's and Nantasket's efforts and the town could not get a firm hold. As early as 1901, sections of the plat were vacated. The post office operated only from November 9, 1887, until 1895 when mail service was transferred to Ravenna.⁽⁸⁾

Mrs. J. C. Mahoney lived in Nantasket as a girl. She recalls it as quite a lively town in 1886 when her family moved there. She attended school at School District #96. In its boom days, W. W. Hurd ran the general store which sat between the two Union Pacific tracks located there at the time. Fred Lytle operated a livery stable and Dr. Fletcher was the local physician and druggist.⁽⁹⁾

Another prominent townsman was Jacob L. Blue, M.D., who was the hotel proprietor of Nantasket in 1890. He was a man of many professions throughout his lifetime, serving as a millwright, a physician, a farmer, a librarian, a Civil War hero, as well as businessman. He first came to Nebraska in 1875 and returned a second time to Buffalo County with his family and colony, numbering forty-three in all. He then settled in Garfield township in 1883, where he located his homestead in the northwest quarter of section 22, township 12, range 14 -- in the nearby vicinity of Nantasket, Nebraska.

In addition to his hotel property in Nantasket, he dabbled in real estate and owned over twenty-eight town lots and also owned and conducted a flour and feed store. Dr. Blue was an elder of the Presbyterian church and held offices there including treasurer and secretary. In civic matters, he filled the office of justice of the peace and in 1890 was the deputy postmaster of Nantasket, the post office being located in his own store and his son-in-law being the postmaster.⁽¹⁰⁾

Being a rural postmaster was "a family affair" in the developing West. It was carried on in the home or community store.⁽¹¹⁾ The first post office established in Buffalo County was at Nebraska Centre (Boyd Ranch) on July 29, 1859. It was only sixteen years later that Nantasket's post office was

established, running for eight years. With the introduction of Rural Free Delivery about 1907, most of the country post offices closed and rural mail routes were established. They were missed by the country folk because they were social meeting centers and the new settlers used them to gather information about their new homes.

Many of the new settlers were extremely politically active and held an opinion on current events such as prohibition. Dr. Blue was an active member in politics as was Fritz Stark, a local farmer. Stark moved to the area that later became Nantasket in 1876, and located on one-half of Section 2, Garfield township. His farm showed "thrift and good management ... and his residence and barns" were "large frame structures, surrounded by fine orchards and groves." (12)

(Click to enlarge picture)



Site of railroad crossing at Nantasket.

It was people like these who made up the now-defunct town of Nantasket, a town that died before the boom it expected. The Czechs, who were the original settlers of the area, emigrated in great numbers during the mid-1880's to the early 1890's. (13) They came from an area of religious persecution, economic hardship and political oppression, seeking opportunities and conditions they could only dream of.

These original Nantaskans made one of the first buildings a meeting hall/post office for the Western Bohemian Brotherhood-ZCBI, or more properly known at the time as "Zapadne Cesko-Bratrska Jednota". (14) Many of these fraternal lodges existed during this time -- nearby Ravenna having several. It gave the immigrants a chance to keep their heritage and maintain contacts with their fellow people. Generally speaking, the members of the lodges not only came from the same country but even from the same village.

"It has been well over a century since the first Czech immigrants arrived" in the Ravenna-Nantasket area. "Their children and grandchildren still take pride in their heritage. It has been determined that 6.5% of Nebraska residents can trace their roots to Czech ancestry." (15)

The year 1959 marked the town's official demise when the final twelve lots of what used to be Nantasket were sold by Buffalo County School District

#96 to Frances O. Fiala for a consideration of \$25. ⁽¹⁶⁾ The school was north of the tracks and was used until about 1959,

"when the building was moved to Ravenna and used as a hay barn by the Ravenna Livestock Commission Company. The hotel building was moved a quarter-mile west of Hankins Comer on Highway #2 and became a home. The bridge across the South Loup River one-half mile north of the townsite is still called the Nantasket Bridge by the local people. ⁽¹⁷⁾

As of 1990, one house still remains abandoned across the road.

As Charles Jenkins concluded, if there was

“any reason for the failure of Nantasket to achieve the success of Ravenna, or perhaps even to replace it, it was probably the decision of the Burlington to make Ravenna a division point on the Burlington & Missouri line.” ⁽¹⁸⁾

[\(Click to enlarge picture\)](#)



Map from Buffalo County Atlas, 1907.

The dotted line running through Section 14 is referred to as the Nantasket Road.

The two railroads are shown crossing at Nantasket.

NOTES

1. Dr. McKinney's name comes from a conversation Lois Johnsten, Ravenna Librarian, had with Blanche Hervert, Ravenna resident.
2. The Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad and the Burlington and Missouri Railroad officially consolidated in early 1880. Their names seem to be used interchangeably until March 2, 1970, when the names were changed to Burlington Northern.
Overton, Richard. *Burlington Route: A History of the Burlington Lines*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1965.
3. Interview with Lois Johnsten. 1990.

4. *Ravenna News*. "Nantasket, Once Thriving Village, Is Wiped Off the Deed Records." September 10, 1959.
5. Jenkins, Charles. *A Place Called Banishment: History of Ravenna, Nebraska*. 1961. (131)
6. [bid. (132)
7. [bid. (132)
8. According to Charles Jenkins, the closing date of the post office was 1895. However, other dates include 1908, from the 1986 Ravenna Centennial publication, and 1909 from the September 27, 1959, article in the Lincoln Journal-Star.
9. *Ravenna News*.
10. *Biographical Souvenir of the Counties of Buffalo, Kearney, Phelps, Harland and Franklin, Nebraska*. 1890 (203)
11. Ibid. (203)
12. Ibid. (201)
13. Abraham, Edith Fiala. *Buffalo Tales*. "The Czechs In and Around Ravenna, Part I." May 1985.
14. Ibid.
15. Abraham, Edith Fiala. *Buffalo Tales*. "The Czechs In and Around Ravenna, Part II." May 1985.
16. Register of Deeds Office, Buffalo County, 1990
17. Johnsten, Lois.
18. Jenkins, Charles. (132)

SOURCES

Buffalo Tales, May, August 1978; May, June, July 1985; *Biographical Souvenir, Counties of Buffalo, Kearney and Phelps, Nebraska*, 1890; *Buffalo County Plat Book*, 1907; Jenkins, *A Place called Banishment; History of Ravenna*, 1961; Overton, *Burlington Route*, 1965; *Ravenna News*, September 10, 1959; *Lincoln Journal-Star*, September 27, 1959; *Ravenna Centennial 1886-1986*, 1986; Personal interviews conducted by Lois Johnsten, 1990.

About the Author: Rochelle Hunt graduated from Ravenna High School. She is now attending Kearney Sate College and will be receiving her B.S. Degree in May 1991. Her plans are to continue the study of history in the Masters degree program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

BIOGRAPHICAL SOUVENIR OF BUFFALO COUNTY

Fritz Stark, miller of Garfield township, Buffalo county, Nebr., was born in Holstein, Germany, November 28, 1834. His father, Friedrich Wilhelm Stark was superintendent of a large farm in the old country; he married Lucy Schall, and by her became the father of five children, of whom Fritz is the youngest. Fritz Stark came to America alone, landing in New York, June 16, 1864; from that city he went to Davenport, Iowa, and for three years followed his trade as miller; from Davenport he came to Nebraska in February, 1867, and until the first day of May of the same year resided at Omaha; thence he went to Grand Island, where he remained until October, 1870; then he moved to Fremont and to Council Bluffs, being employed as an elevator hand at the latter place; he next returned to Grand Island, in April, 1871, and later started a saw-mill on Oak Creek, but the mill was not profitable, and he passed two more years at Grand Island; he then passed two and a half years in the milling business at Gibbon, and in 1876 located on his present homestead, it being one-half of section 2, Garfield township. One quarter section is a homestead and the other quarter is a timber claim. He has sixty acres under cultivation in mixed crops, has good buildings and most of his farm fenced in. His residence and barns are large frame structures, surrounded by fine orchards and groves. The farm shows thrift and good management, and is situated opposite the town of Nantasket in the valley of Loup river, with water convenient for his stock. Mr. Stark was married at Grand Island, in 1877, to Miss Wilhelmina Gaden, a native of Germany, and two children bless this union -- William and Anna. Mr. Stark has two brothers in this country -- John C., a plasterer and mason, living at Grand Island; and Carl, a farmer living near Litchfield, Sherman county. Mr. Stark is in politics independent and unfavorable to prohibition. He takes great interest in the development of his country, and is a true American citizen.

BIOGRAPHICAL SOUVENIR OF BUFFALO COUNTY

Jacob L. Blue, M. D., hotel proprietor, Nantasket, Nebr., was born in New Market, Middlesex county, N. J., February 24, 1826. His father, Henry Blue, also a native of New Jersey, was a manufacturer of shoes at one time, but afterwards became a merchant. He married Miss Mary, daughter of Harmon and Charity Staley, both natives of New Jersey and of German and French descent,

respectively. Harmen Staley was a farmer and he and family were highly respected in the neighborhood in which they lived. To the union of Henry and Mary Blue were born twelve children -- nine girls and three boys -- the subject of these lines being the fifth child. Henry Blue died in his native state in 1861. Jacob L. Blue was educated in the common schools of New Jersey, and at the age of fourteen years began learning the trade of millwright, at which he continued four years. He then went to an uncle, a practicing physician at New Brunswick, N. J., and with him as preceptor studied medicine, was admitted to practice and became a partner or assistant to his uncle and preceptor. In 1844 he purchased a farm and was married. He followed agriculture about three years, then sold and went to Orange, N. J., where he entered mercantile trade, together with building and dealing in real estate. Three years later he sold out all his possessions and moved to Ohio, where for two years he followed farming, and then for a year practiced (sic) medicine. Again returning to New Jersey, he resumed the real estate business and was appointed marshal of Orange.

September 3, 1862, he was enrolled as a private in Company G, Twenty-sixth New Jersey volunteers. For nine months he was on detailed duty as recruiting officer, and after the regiment was fully organized he was appointed librarian. But in a short time the regiment became actively engaged, and Mr. Blue was compelled to abandon the library and follow his regiment, which had been ordered to Washington, where it was assigned to the Sixth army corps. He was a participant in some of the most memorable battles of Virginia, in which state the greater part of his duty was performed, and he served gallantly until the close of his term of enlistment. On one occasion, he was detailed to take pontoon boats out of the Rappahannock river; the night being very very dark he was caught between two boats and was badly crushed, and from the internal hemorrhage caused by this accident he has never fully recovered -- neither has the government recognized his claim for a pension. He was treated for his injury in the hospital at Washington, and after re-enlisting was employed in that institution during his convalescence, but was stricken down by typhoid fever, and had therefore to be treated for the complication of two disorders. He recovered sufficiently, however, to return to his post of duty, but soon after received his discharge. After a brief stay at home he revisited Washington, where he was employed for a month as gardian (sic) of public property; resigning, he joined Gen. Grant's engineering corps; but a short time afterwards returned to Washington and was re-instated in his former position, which he held until the close of the war.

After another brief visit to his native state, Dr. Blue bought a farm in Maryland, on which he resided two years, practicing medicine. He then sold out and returned to New Jersey, where for a year he engaged in merchandising; then for three years he filled a position in the state asylum,

and, after that, passed nine months in the West. On his return to his native state, he sold out all his effects, raised a colony, and in April, 1876, again started for the West. His first visit to Nebraska was in 1875; his second coming, as intimated above, was less than a year later. He, his family and colony, numbering forty-three in all, settled in Buffalo county, in Buckeye valley, which, since its organization, is known as Valley township. He pre-empted a quarter-section, and, like the rest of the colony, began the work of improvement. For three years he followed farming and the practice of medicine, then sold out and went to Burgh, where he practiced medicine and held the offices of postmaster and justice of the peace for three years; and in September, 1882, he moved to Gibbon, where he lived ten months, then settled in Garfield township, where he located his homestead in the northwest quarter of section 22, township 12, range 14. He here, after two years, relinquished the regular practice of his profession -- attending only old friends and patients -- and devoted himself to the development of his farm, on which he lived five years, proved up his claim and still owns. In the interval, he purchased a hotel property in Nantasket, and is now making his home in that town. He has been dealing to some extent in real estate the past few years, and besides his hotel property he owns over twenty-eight town lots and also owns and conducts a flour and feed store.

Dr. Blue was first married, in 1844, to Olivia Stetson, daughter of Stephen Stetson, a hat manufacturer of Orange, N. J. To this union six children were born and named in the following order: Alonzo, Caroline, Melissa, Susan, Stephen and Martha. The mother and two of the children (Stephen and Martha), died in 1866, while the doctor and his family were residing in Maryland. The doctor afterwards married Miss Alice, daughter of Charles Crampton, of Rockaway, N. J. To this union have been born six children, viz. -- Ella (deceased), Lizzie, Amos (deceased), Clarence, Lucinda and Albert.

While living in New Jersey, Dr. Blue was a member of the Baptist church, but on reaching Nebraska, finding no congregation of that denomination here, he united with the Presbyterians, and has always since been a faithful member. He has always taken great interest in the moral training of the young and has devoted much time to this purpose since he took up his residence in Nebraska. While living in Buckeye valley he established a union Sabbath-school at Burgh, and has been prime mover in establishing seven other Sabbath schools. For three years he has been superintendent of two of these schools, and is director of a day school. He is now an elder of his church and has also held all the more important offices thereof, including those of treasurer and secretary. In civic matters he has filled the office of justice of the peace; and is at present the deputy postmaster at Nantasket, the postoffice being in his own store and his son-in-law being the postmaster. Mr. Blue is a member of the society of American Mechanics, as well as of the G. A. R., of which last-named body he is chaplain. Mr. Blue has purchased a building in Nantasket, which he furnishes for church privileges, never charging anything for rent. It is

needless to make any comment upon the career of so progressive a man as Jacob L. Blue.

In politics, Mr. Blue is an active prohibitionist, striking hard blows for the cause, wherever he lives.