# SODTOWN, THE COMMUNITY THAT WOULD NOT DIE

**by Irvin Urwiller and Alice Howell**

Sodtown, a cluster of hastily erected, crudely fashioned sod buildings at the crossroads of four section corners in Cherry Creek Township, became the first thriving settlement in the northeast corner of Buffalo County. It was a promising site for a new town in the late 1870's.  At the crossroads of Sections 28, 29, 32 and 33, and on the trail between Grand Island and Broken Bow, it was an ideal place for wagon trains and freighting outfits to put up for the night and to feed and rest their horses and oxen.

Although the first post office, established in 1879, the cemetery, and the Presbyterian Church to be later established, were named Cherry Creek, the new settlement was dubbed Sodtown from its very beginning because of its sod buildings - two general stores, blacksmith shop, school house and post office, as well as a lumberyard which was part sod and part frame….

A cemetery was started on one acre of land in the southwest quarter of Section 32, purchased from A. Brumley for $10.00 in April 1880.  First known as the Sweetwater Cemetery, the name was changed to Cherry Creek in 1909, then to Sweet Creek Cemetery in 1922.  This name carried until 1939 when it became the Sodtown Cemetery.  The 100th anniversary of the Sodtown Cemetery was observed on May 25, 1980….

When the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad surveyed the land for its railroad line from Lincoln northwest through Grand Island and Broken Bow, the first survey from Grand Island was through Sodtown, on three miles straight west, then northwest to Beaver Creek, then only a rural postoffice.  Because of the hilly terrain the railroad company was not satisfied with this route.  A second survey was made whereby the railroad would by pass Sodtown and instead go through Cairo, stay on the north side of the hills and canyons up the South Loup River bottom to Beaver Creek, and thence to Broken Bow.  Construction was completed into Buffalo County in 1886.  Thus a death blow was struck at Sodtown, and Beaver Creek on the new railroad became the new town of Ravenna and grew with the development of the Burlington line along the Loup River valley.

# EARLY POST OFFICES IN BUFFALO COUNTY

**by Alice Shaney Howell**

  Erastus Smith was the first settler and first postmaster of **Beaver Creek**, appointed December 11, 1878.  When the Burlington built across northeastern Buffalo County, Beaver Creek became **Ravenna**, the name change effective July 23, 1886.  Other early post offices in the area were **Cherry Creek**, February 14, 1879; **Baker**, March 2, 1885; **Tracnov**, February 1, 1886; **St. Michael**, February 18, 1887, and **Nantasket**, November 9, 1887. Cherry Creek served **Sodtown**, which never had a post office even though it was a busy village in the 1880's and larger than Ravenna in 1885.

# ROOTS OF BUFFALO COUNTY - THE GERMANS AND AUSTRIANS
by Margaret Stines Nielsen

## Part I

As land around Shelton was taken, German immigrants moved north and west. In 1879 the town of
Sodtown (Luce) was established in Cherry Creek township *(Tales of Buffalo County, Vol. II)* and became an important social center to Germans living in the surrounding area.