

# Homeless

## Hub

May 8, 1891 – Poor farm opened a year ago. “a source of comfort to several homeless and helpless people.” Presently 11 inmates:

John Weaver, 82, from Kearney, deserted by his son last winter

Five small children of Newton King, from Kearney, deserted by their mother who eloped with an actor who appeared in Kearney. [Newton King died in 1934 of apoplexy at age 75 and is buried in the Kearney cemetery.]

Jacob Snyder, 76, from Gibbon

Gus Holstrom, from Thornton Township, partially insane

Three small children, family of Hamilton Brown, from Grant Township

June 17, 1891 – A home was found for Mellissa Brown with a gentleman in Sherman, Texas. He wrote back reporting that all was well and he proposed a plan for placing the other children in homes.

May 9, 1893 – “Five homeless wanderers found refuge in the ‘hotel de Overmire’ last night.”

July 6, 1893 – Steps taken to organize the Girls & Boys Aid Society branch in Kearney.

August 8, 1893 – There was a Girls & Boys Aid society in Kearney whose goal was to provide homes for homeless children. Rev. E. J. Bosworth was elected president & C. H. Gregg vice president.

Feb. 10, 1894 – “A couple of homeless houseless wanderers were given shelter in the city lockup last night.”

Jan. 30, 1895 – “Ed Hill, the homeless lad, arrested for stealing coal, has been committed to the Industrial school.”

June 10, 1895 – A Kearney branch of the Nebraska Children’s Home Society was organized in Kearney. Most of the Kearney churches were represented.

Oct 24, 1898 – “A homeless boy was afforded shelter at the city hall last night.”

Dec. 21, 1898 – a 7 year old girl abused and neglected was ordered sent to the Industrial School at Geneva. Several testified about the mother’s abuse of the girl. The girl’s stepfather tried to protect her but was unsuccessful.

Sept 9, 1901 – A homeless Syrian baby was taken to Omaha by a representative of the Nebraska Children’s Home Society.

June 3, 1902 – Nebraska Children’s Home Society in Kearney being reorganized

March 17, 1911 – Nancy Hull died. She was “Mother” to sick, poor, and homeless. Often kept them in her own home.

June 2, 1914 – Finding homes for boys was more difficult to find than for girls.

March 9, 1915 – Tramps are housed in lockup during heavy storms. 16 were held there Monday night. Police chief is letting tramps and bums take refuge in the city jail during this period of heavy storms. He figures it is safer to have them there than out on the streets where they could break in to businesses or be a general annoyance on the streets.

Sept 25, 1919 – WCTU hospital was seeking new quarters. The building in which it was located had been sold and the new owner wanted to use it for some other purpose.

[this may have been the 2213 1<sup>st</sup> Ave location, now the VFW. They were there from the 1890's until sometime after WWI.]

Oct 28, 1922 – Superintendent of Neb. Children's Home was in Kearney to accept 8 children to take back to the home in Omaha. Four (siblings in one family) went with him, the other four were taken by a relative who objected to having them go there so he left before the Superintendent arrived, and took them to Sherman County. 60 children have been placed in the home in the last 30 years [since 1892]. Of those, 39 were placed in homes where they were adopted.

Aug 14, 1929 – Suggested use for KMA buildings and 40 acres of ground – Girls & boys home – Suggested by county judge Easterling. City could buy the property.

Dec. 18, 1929 – Six homeless wanderers were sheltered at the police station last night and five the previous night in sub-zero temperatures.

Feb. 3, 1930 – Now the homeless wanderers who seek shelter at the police station at night are headed in an easterly direction. In Jan. most were headed west. Four to 8 come to the police station every night.

Aug 7, 1931 – Increased number of nomads along the highways. A large arm of unemployed, mainly younger men, stays on the move, seeking shelter at police stations or Salvation Army headquarters along the way. Homeless families are in cars. They camp out and look to those living along the roads for food and gas & oil for their cars.

Aug. 19, 1932 – a homeless widow and her 6 children, ages 3-12, came through Kearney. They had walked from Dallas, TX. Trying to get to Washington state where she has distant relatives. Going there because she does not want to be “on the county”. All she wanted was a place to sleep and some breakfast and they would be on their way again. The only transportation she would accept was a lift for a mile out of town in the morning.

August 20, 1932 – much has been written about the bands of youth wandering about the nation. Relatively few come through Kearney. As many as 19 have registered in a night at the city jail. They are boys ranging in age from 16-21. Most prefer hitch hiking but more and more are using the rails. A check of an east bound freight train yesterday showed 37 such passengers. They are not hobos or beggars. They will take a job when available and accept a handout if they have to.

# Vagrants

## Hub

July 14, 1890 – [typical] “Three tramps, arrested as vagrants, spent the night in the dungeon, and were released yesterday morning on the solemn promise that they would shake the dust of Kearney from their feet.”

April 12, 1898 – Mayor Bruno Hostetler’s speech when sworn in to office, relating to vagrants – He said he was in favor of enforcing the ordinance on the tramp question, and making vagrants work out their fines on the streets.”

UP rock pile policy – suggested Kearney get one. A reporter later said there should be one behind city hall.

# Ed Hill

## Hub

Feb. 24, 1894 – (Saturday) Ed Hill, 14, had been caught abusing his stepmother and putting furniture through the window The judge of the police court ordered him to be sent to the County Judge Easterling who laid the case over until next Wednesday to get more witnesses and hear more testimony before sentencing.

March 1, 1894 – Ed Hill was turned loose by Judge Easterling and told to go and sin no more.

May 26, 1894 – Arrested for stealing a ride on the street car last night. Boys had been doing this and warned not to. It was thought this arrest would put a stop to it.

Jan 28, 1895 – Ed Hill, a good-sized boy without a home, who has been a leader among other boys in wrong doing about Kearney, for some time, was taken by the police Sunday for stealing coal from the train.

Jan. 30, 1895 – Ed Hill was sent to the Industrial School for stealing coal.

# Poor Farm

## Some background information about the Poor Farm

**Location: Go four miles east of Kearney to Poole Road (Buda School corner). Turn north and go four miles. The farm was located on the northwest corner of that intersection.**

Poor Farms were **the forerunner of welfare and care homes**. They were owned and operated by the county. Buffalo County’s Poor Farm was **established in 1878** when 160 acres was purchased in Center Township. Later another 80 acres on the north was added. Livestock and crops were raised and the inmates were expected to help with the farming. Inmates were there

because they could not support themselves because of ill health or had no visible means of support or no relatives who would take responsibility for them.

There was a 3-story [counting the basement] house on the farm with the dining room in the basement, sitting room on second floor and sleeping rooms on third floor. Plans for house were drawn by an architect who designed it so it could be doubled in size by building a mirror image. The second half was never constructed. I saw the plans once among papers the archives got when the move was made from the old court house to the new one, but don't know where it is now.

**Hub**

Dec 12, 1889

## **COUNTY POOR FARM.**

### **THE POOR FARM RECEIVES A CALL FROM THE SUPERVISORS.**

**The Supervisors Inspect the Buildings, Farm and Furnishing — They Dine with Warden S. W. Powers and Look Over His Plans.**

Yesterday the board of supervisors drove over to the poor farm to see the arrangements for caring for the poor and to look over the buildings. Col. Butts accompanied them to see that none of them got away or was left at the farm. As usual he drove Dexter and gave the boys a great deal of fun in chasing along the road.

The poor farm building was erected by W. T. Scott, contractor; D. B. Marston, superintendent; building committee for supervisors, Frank Rice, H. H. Bowie and W. J. Sterns.

The building is located on an elevation, north side of farm, overlooking the Platte valley. It is a very comfortable frame building, two stories and brick basement, fifty by fifty feet.

The basement is used for kitchen, dining rooms and bed rooms. The first story is cut up into sitting rooms and sleeping rooms. The third story contains all bed rooms. The entire room is neatly furnished, and will accommodate the county poor very comfortably.

There is a barn on the premises two stories high and a basement.

The cost of the buildings and barn is \$3000, and the work was accepted by the county board yesterday. They pronounced it very good.

The following is a list of supervisors and visitors who went there to visit: P. F. H. Schar, C. I. Tuttle, R. Hughes, W. A. Downing, T. G. Spencer, N. Grimes, Perry Frame, B. F. Tussing, J. M. Long, H. H. Bowie, Frank Rice, W. J. Stearns, George Mortimer, J. Miller, Simon Landis, R. A. Reynolds, C. Minor, J. W. Reddy, S. T. Trott, S. S. Veal, James Broadfoot, John Haase, supervisors.

The following visitors were present: John Wilson, M. J. Sanders, W. T. Scott, G. H. Cutting and Col. Butts.

Mesdames H. Morris and W. Ross who reside near by the farm came over to assist M. Powers in entertaining the visitors. Mr. Morris and Mr. Ross also helped Mr. Powers in many ways.

### **From the Hub, 1889**

The entire building is neatly furnished and will accommodate the county poor very comfortably.

### **Kearney Daily Hub - Oct. 4, 1893**

Mrs. Anna Francis, aged 77 years, died at the poor farm Sunday of old age.

**A January 1909 report to the county board had six men and one woman living there.** A 1909 Gibbon newspaper article reported four inmates living there but in harder times there were more.

### **Buffalo Tales, Volume 9, No. 6, June 1986**

KEARNEY WOMAN'S CLUB by Dorothy S. Wilson

...At a meeting in 1921 a report was made on the county poor farm where pasture land was rented at \$5.00 an acre, and cultivated land for one-third of the crop. The county poor were cared for at the WCTU Hospital at \$6.00 per week for nursing care. The Woman's Club made donations of bedding and food.

**Kearney Daily Hub – Feb 23, 1910** – Article gives an itemized inventory of what is at the poor farm. There were three inmates.

### **Kearney Daily Hub, Saturday, April 3, 1920**

#### ***Women Anxious to Sell County Farm***

Want Relocate Home for County Charges in City

All patients and inmates at the county farm have long since been removed to the W. T. C. U. hospital here where they are cared for under a contract entered into between the board and the

hospital management. Now the farm and buildings are standing idle and the women taking up the disposal movement are anxious that this step be taken, preparatory to the erection of a suitable place for looking after county charges, either in Kearney or some other central point.

It has been learned that the women, if the poor farm property can be disposed of, will recommend that money derived from such a sale will be used toward the purchase of another building to house county charges, or erection of such home if necessary and in addition the location and operation of a home for incorrigible boys.

The Poor Farm was **closed about 1920**. It was rented out as farm until the land was sold in 1958 to help pay for the new jail.

## **Mother Hull Home**

**Hub – Dec. 18, 1926** – Mother Hull Home a Haven of Refuge for Those in Need

Not a charity institution, does not replace the poor farm. It is a W C T U hospital.

But not all the inmates are sick. Currently 13 inmates, only 2 are sick, the others are elderly. They also help younger people, even children.

Costs \$8/week for room, board, laundry and care if needed. Many pay their own way. If they can't, the county does at the rate of \$1.25/day [\$8.75] and the hospital furnishes any medicine they might need.

Not all county patients stay here. Some are able to work. These are placed with families in need and the county pays them the \$1.25/day for care given.

Current staff consists of the couple who manage the hospital, Mr. & Mrs. Staubitz, a kitchen girl and a nurse.

**THE FOUNDING MOTHERS OF KEARNEY by Margaret Stines Nielsen, Buffalo Tales, Volume 14, No. 5, May-June, 1991**

Mrs. Nancy Hull, wife of Dr. John C. Hull, was an early leader and "dominant spirit" of the W.C.T.U. At her urging the members took an active role in aiding the needy. Mrs. Hull, "sometimes with one of her lieutenants", rode her white horse around Kearney and the surrounding area to help the poor.<sup>(3)</sup> She had a special concern for "lonely girls" and took many of them into her own home.

Although the Mother Hull Home was incorporated in April, 1889, there was no record of a building for that use for several years. The women provided meals and clothing from their club rooms until 1893 when they rented the Clifton House at 1809 Central Avenue. The first floor was used for a meeting room and the W.C.T.U. library, while the second floor became a hospital. The name Mother Hull Home was at

last adopted when the members bought the former D. B. Clark home at 23rd Street and Avenue B in 1932.

When Mrs. Hull died in March, 1911, the *Keamey Daily Hub* captioned her obituary as follows: "Mrs. Hull was Founder of the W.C.T.U. Hospital, Mother of the Sick, the Poor, and the Homeless and one of the Best Loved and Most Widely Known Women of Buffalo County."

*The Origins of The Mother Hull Home 1889 - 1929* by Mrs. Ella Melton Peck, *Buffalo Tales, Volume 3, No. 6, June, 1980*

The Mother Hull Hospital was incorporated in April, 1889 with Mrs. Nancy Hull as president.

WCTU organized in 1880 at the home of Louisa Collins.

One woman who soon became a member of the W.C.T.U. was Mrs. Nancy Hull, wife of a Kearney physician. The minutes reveal that she became treasurer in 1882 and in 1886 was elected president. Mrs. Hull was soon recognized as the leading personality and dominant spirit of the organization and continued to be until her death in 1911.

The members began aiding the needy in their second year of organization and were the leaders in relief efforts during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Another move was made in the fall of 1893. The Clifton house at 1809 Central Avenue was rented. The W.C.T.U. was to use the lower part and the upper part became their hospital.

An article in the **Kearney Daily Hub** of February 13th, 1896 reviewed the operation of the hospital, still located in the Clifton house, but since October, 1895 under the management of Mr. and Mrs. J. Sleeper. There were six patients in the hospital at this time, at least two of whom were county charges. The county paid the expenses of the latter and were also paying the salary of the nurse and probably the rent for the building. The W.C.T.U. ladies met the other costs, including that of patients unable to pay for their treatment. One such patient, a lady aged 87, had been there for a long time, "and while she was not ailing with any sickness, she has no one to depend upon for a living."

Late in 1896 the group did move the hospital to the Scott hotel building. This must have been at 2213 First Avenue where the next surviving city directory shows them in 1904. [site of VFW]

Following World War I, the W.C.T.U. was again discussing a new location for the hospital. As there are no minutes for several months, it has to be assumed that it was in this period of time their quarters at 2213 First Avenue (where the V.F.W. building now stands) were relinquished and the hospital was moved to a two-story frame house

at 1513 Central Avenue across from the Courthouse. This building, then owned by Mrs. Anna Gard, is today in the area of the Roller Ranch.

March, 1912 as St. Lukes Hospital and it served the community until the Kearney General and Good Samaritan Hospitals were built in 1922 and 1924 respectively. The building of these hospitals no doubt made it seem wise for the Mother Hull hospital to be incorporated as a care home, a function, as we have seen, they served from the first years.