

Some say the last buffalo was killed in the county

By Margaret Bucholtz

By the late 1880's, buffalo were seldom seen in Kansas. Some people say that the last buffalo killed in Cheyenne County was in April 1887 when the animal wandered into the county.

However, according to a newspaper article, the last buffalo hunt in Kansas started in Cheyenne County and ended in Sherman County in June 1887.

When Kansas became a territory, the settlers began taming the land in eastern Kansas. As each little town cropped up, the settlers chose the wooded areas and where the water was the most available. Long after eastern Kansas was settled, the western part was being grazed by the buffalo. The price of a buffalo hide was high and hunters enjoyed the chase.

When the Union Pacific and Santa Fe railroads were built across the state, the expense of shipping buffalo hides by train was so much less than it had been by ox team that the slaughtering of the buffalo began for the sake of the hides instead of the joy of the chase.

According to "Four Centuries in Kansas," a 1936 school book, the slaughter was so great that in the single winter of 1873, 400,000 buffalo hides were shipped from Dodge City alone. Shipments from other Kansas railroad stations that winter were reported by the railroads to exceed 750,000 hides. It is estimated that 5 million buffalo were killed between 1868 and 1874.

In the middle parts of Kansas, hunters built stands and would just wait until the buffalo came close. One man around Dodge City killed 1,500 in seven days. As he killed them, 15 men followed him to skin the animals and load the hides in wagons.

In the far northwestern part of Kansas, the Indians drove the buffalo off cliffs instead of using the bow and arrow. Many old timers tell about a cliff that on the "Big Timber" north of Bird City. The buffalo were driven off the cliff and the fall would kill them.

The Indians would skin the buffalo and get their meat. Years later, people in the area found bones at the bottom of the cliff,

but the Indian cam sites were at the top. This was to get away from the stench of the decaying buffalo.

By the end of 1875, very few buffalo remained in Kansas, but some stray animals lingered on the plains for a dozen years longer.

The Cheyenne County *Rustler* on April 29, 1887, told that the first buffalo to be seen in several years had wandered into the county. The article said this buffalo was perhaps the last one that would ever wander from his western retreat so far into civilization as to be seen in the county.

The buffalo came in from the southwest corner of the county, passing along close to Guy. (Guy was a town in southwest Cheyenne County which existed only a few months.) Earlier, there were two seen together, but they were separated and only one was seen in this area.

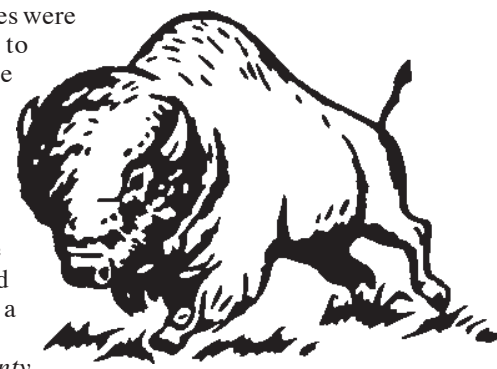
The buffalo was killed by S. A. Ferguson 2.5 miles west of Wano (northeast of St. Francis). A few hours after he was first spotted, grocer Sam McCartney had a portion of the buffalo dressed and was dealing out buffalo meat to his customers.

There are conflicting stories about the last buffalo.

Cheyenne County historian Tobe Zwegardt, St. Francis, says this was the last buffalo killed in Cheyenne County. Zwegardt said the buffalo was run over the cliff on Cherry Creek and died from the fall.

One last buffalo hunt in June 1887 started in Cheyenne County but ended in Sherman County.

According to the *Cheyenne*



County Democrat, a party of homesteaders had quite a thrilling buffalo hunt in the western part of the county. One of them discovered four bulls and a cow buffalo galloping across the prairie with a party of cowboys three or four miles in the rear.

Neighbors were notified and a party was soon in pursuit, armed with revolvers and one Winchester.

The buffalo were chased about 30 miles, being run from Cheyenne into Sherman County. The game was finally overtaken and bullets flew.

One man rode up alongside a bull and pulled his revolver with the intention of shooting the animal through the shoulder. As he pulled the trigger, his fellow hunters were pushing a gentle buffalo across the prairie at a wild gallop. The enraged animal turned suddenly and disemboweled the horse. The rider escaped and the buffalo was killed. Out of the herd, the cow was the only one to escape.

The age of the buffalo roaming the range ended but, for many years, settlers earned money by picking up the buffalo bones. The bones were hauled by wagon to Haigler, Neb., where they got \$2 a load. The bones were ground and used in fertilizers and feed for the livestock.

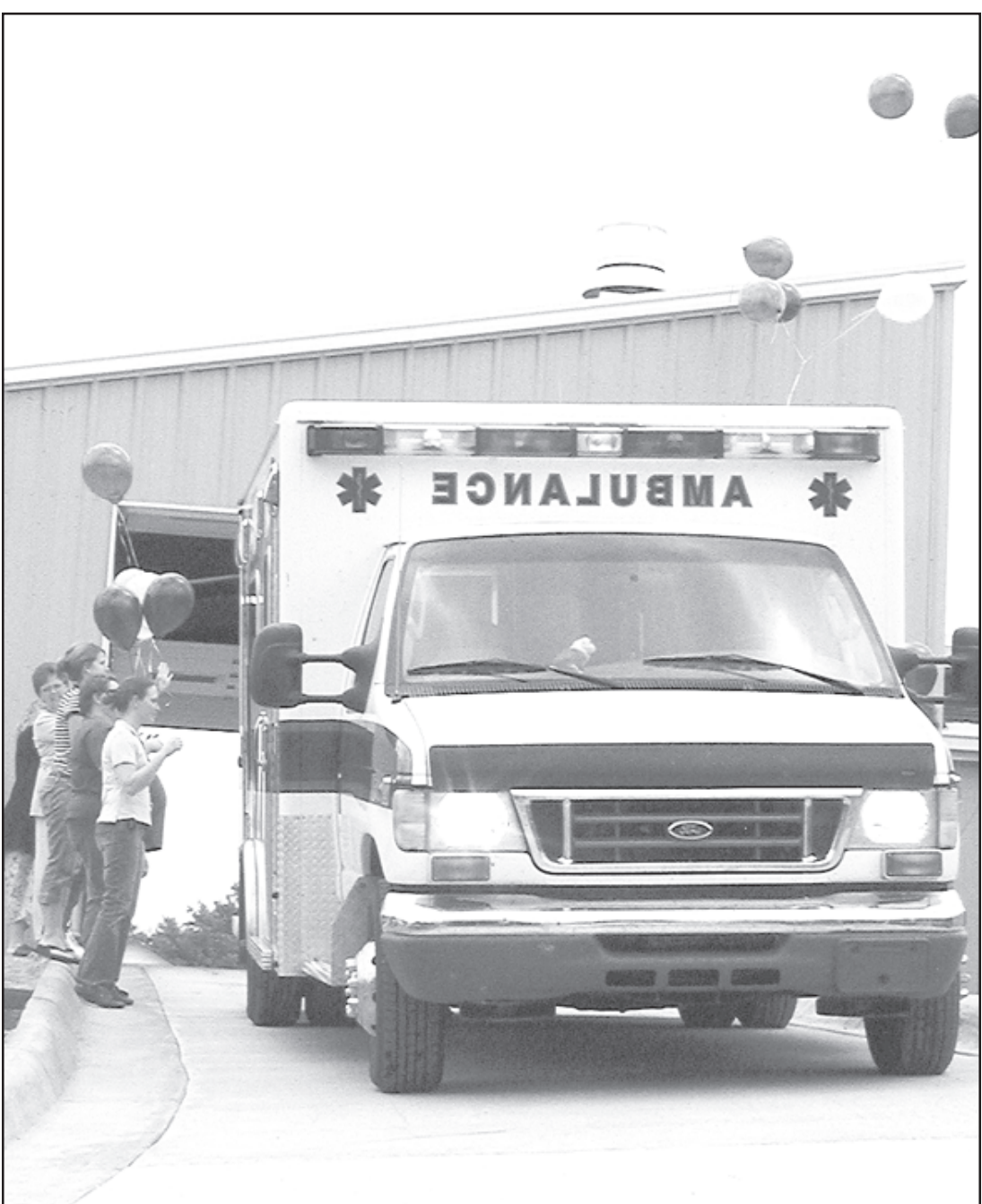
Fun Facts

How can you live without knowing these facts?

- The first couple to be shown in bed together on prime time television were Fred and Wilma Flintstone.
- Coca-Cola was originally green.
- Every day more money is printed for Monopoly than the U.S. Treasury.
- Men can read smaller print than

women can; women can hear better.

- The state with the highest percentage of people who walk to work: Alaska
- The percentage of Africa that is wilderness: 28 percent (now get this...)
- The percentage of North America that is wilderness: 38 percent.



AMBULANCE ENTRANCE at the hospital is finished. The staff turned out to celebrate with balloons. Michael Hanson, Emergency Medical Technician, is driving the ambulance. Herald staff photo by Karen Krien

Volunteers needed to take survey

Carol Redding, coordinator of the Cheyenne County Development Corporation is looking for volunteers to help conduct a survey in the county.

During October, the Kansas Department of Commerce (KDOC) will provide technical assistance to Cheyenne County to conduct a business survey, Business Retention and Expansion E-Survey (BREES). The Kansas Department of Commerce believes the well-being of the residents of Cheyenne County depends upon a healthy, growing economy. Efforts to attract new employers and encourage entrepreneurship are important. How-

ever, the expansion and retention of established businesses is the foundation of our economic development.

The objectives of the program:

- Demonstrate that the community cares about and appreciates local firms
 - Identify concerns, problems, and opportunities for businesses in the area
 - Assist firms in using state programs
 - Improve the overall business climate
 - Develop a strategy for long-term business retention and expansion efforts
- This survey is sponsored by the

Cheyenne County Development Corporation, and includes assistance from Century II Development Foundation. Bird City has already completed this survey, so the Cheyenne County Development Corporation is completing the county business assessment.

The Department of Commerce will provide training during the first half of October; the exact date will be announced later. Approximately 25 volunteers will be needed to conduct this confidential survey. Please call the Cheyenne County Development Corporation at 332-3508 to volunteer for this community service opportunity.

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