

# **MICHAEL BUHRER**

## Stanton County, Kansas

Written by Eunice Rumford

*Told by Mr. Michael Buhner*

*\* Additional information added about Michael Buhner*

On April 11, 1886, Michael Buhner homesteaded the farm on which he now resides. His first house was a dugout 10 by 12 feet and 4 feet underground. It was 2 feet above ground with one window. The next year a neighbor woman wishing to “up on her claims”, hired Mr. Buhner to plow some land for her. When she “proved up”, she gave him her dugout as pay and left the country. Mr. Buhner moved the dugout next to his own and connected them with a floor. After living in the dugout for several years, he built a 16 by 25 stone house for his family.

He bought the roof from a man in Johnson, and then placed it on several racks. He then hauled it 11 miles to his home. He raised the roof and built his house under it. This roof had already covered three homes as its owners had in turn “proved up” on their homesteads and had added a more updated roof.

Mr. Buhner’s present home consists of six rooms, with additional rooms upstairs. He assembled this home by first going 12 miles southwest of Johnson. Then buying and moving to his farm a three-roomed home that had once stood in Johnson. Using two of these rooms for the north part of his home, he purchased a two-roomed house 15 miles northwest of his farm and moved it here for the two south rooms. He then joined the two houses together by building two rooms between them. This is the way Mr. Buhner describes his way of housing his family, which at one time consisted of Mr. Buhner, his wife, and six children. He says it was by chance that he was able to obtain his claim in such a favorable location. Very few claims were to be had at that time, but luckily for him, a young man who was living close by had received word his aunt would not be able to come and live on her claim, so Mr. Buhner was able to file on the same claim.

During that time, there was someone on every quarter of the land. The boom was on and everything was going strong. The greatest population the country has ever known was during this period. On July 4<sup>th</sup> in about 1886, the town of Johnson had a big celebration, with a barbeque and plenty of horse races. About 2000 people attended the great celebration. This was probably the largest gathering held in the County.

For several years, things were prosperous and all went well. In 1892, there was a good wheat crop but in 1893, there was a crop failure. A great many of the settlers became discouraged and went back to where they lived before moving to Stanton County.

Some moved to places not far away to engage in another type of business, hoping to succeed where they had failed in wheat farming.

The ones who remained to make it their permanent homes soon learned to depend on cattle for a source of income. The raising of cattle brought up the question of how to secure an abundant supply of water. They dealt with this by erecting a windmill and constructing reservoirs.

So in a very few years, the homesteaders who persevered found they must depend on the cow, the sow (*female pig*), and the hen as well as the well-irrigated garden for their success in maintaining a home.

One of Mr. Buhrer's reasons for wishing to settle in this locality was the shallow water. Here the distance of water was only 65 feet down, while in other sections some had to go the depth of over a hundred feet. He dug his 65-foot well in four days. Walled it up with stone and drew the water in a bucket for several years. The water stood two feet in the well and furnished sufficient water for his family and stock. Also, there was plenty for a great many of his neighbors who hauled their water from his well until their own well was ready for use. Mr. Buhrer helped several of his neighbors dig their wells. After using his well this way for several years he cased it and drilled on down 25 feet to the second flow. He then put up a windmill which gave him an excellent supply of water for his family, stock, and garden.

For the comfort of his family, he erected a very convenient well house which has a large flat trough that extends the full length of the east wall. In this trough is placed anything that they wish to keep cool. The fresh water is pumped in at one end of the trough and it flows through 3 or 4 feet deep keeping butter, milk, and eggs as cool as the water coming from the well. The water is then piped away to a reservoir or pond to be stored for cattle and irrigation purposes. The Buhrrers have been able to raise a good garden nearly every year due to irrigating from their pond. When other vegetation would be seared and brown by the dry wind, the garden would be kept green and growing by the stream of water that flows continuously from the pond. The last two years have been the hardest years to raise a garden, but they have not been a complete failure. This year they were able to raise some hardy vegetables. Among them is the banana squash, which has grown to be two and one-half feet long. One can soon see what plenty of water will do in a drought-stricken part of the country. It truly feels like an oasis in a desert. The first header (*a grain-harvesting machine that cuts off the grain heads and elevates them to a wagon*) in Hamilton, Stanton, and Morton Counties was purchased at Larned from the Brinkman Brothers by Mr. Buhrer for \$130 and brought to Stanton County by team and wagon. The first year he cut four hundred acres, the second year he covered a distance of three hundred miles to cut six hundred acres. The patches of wheat were small and far apart. The last job that year was a trip of fifty miles to cut fourteen acres. He received \$1.25 per day for putting the wheat in the stack.

In 1893, the year of the crop failure, many of the families had left the area. School attendance dropped from thirty students to one pupil, and many school districts closed for the entire winter. Yet the failure of one actually helped in making success for another. It meant there was plenty of grass left for cattle belonging to those who remained.

**Additional Information  
MICHAEL BUHRER**

**MICHAEL BUHRER**, son of John Jacob Buhrer (1817-1903) and Catherine Theobald (1832-1914), was born on 17 Jan 1861 in Fulton County, Ohio. His parents moved the family to Kansas in 1878 and in 1886, Michael moved to Stanton County, Kansas.

Michael married **ELMA ALICE MILLSAP**, daughter of Irenius Millsap (1837-1907) and Mary Catherine Dennis (1845-1907), on 11 Apr 1888, in Syracuse, Hamilton County, Kansas. Elma was born on 6 Apr 1866 in Iowa.

Seven children were born in their marriage: **ROBERT F. BUHRER, CLARA BUHRER, ESLIE V. BUHRER, COLUMBUS C. BUHRER, MICHAEL BUHRER, JR., MINNIE CATHERINE BUHRER**, and **ALICE MAY BUHRER**. The last child, Alice May, died in infancy.

Elma passed away on 8 Oct 1946 and Michael died on 2 Feb 1947. Burial was at the Syracuse Cemetery in Syracuse, Hamilton County, Kansas.

**Newspaper article  
50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary  
MICHAEL & ELMA (MILLSAP) BUHRER**

*The Hutchinson (Kansas) News – Sunday, 17 April 1938*

**COUPLE WED 50 YEARS**

It was a “come after breakfast, bring along your lunch, and leave before supper time” affair for Mr. and Mrs. Michael Buhrer, Southwest Kansas pioneers, on their golden wedding anniversary last Sunday.

The party was in the Buhrer home, on the homestead 18 miles south of Syracuse, just across the Hamilton-Stanton county line. Fifty friends and relatives began arriving at about 11 o'clock in the morning, each family armed with a basket dinner.

The occasion was the first reunion in several years for old-timers of the freighter days known throughout Southwest Kansas and Southeast Colorado as an overnight stop on the freighter lines.

Elma Millsap and Mike Buhrer were married on 11 Apr 1888, in Syracuse by the justice of the

peace. Following the ceremony, they went to the homestead on the south edge of Bear Creek Valley, upon which Mr. Buhrer had filed a claim two years earlier, where the two have lived since.

Mr. Buhrer, 77, lived before that in Larned and the Millsap family in Ringgold County, Iowa. Mrs. Buhrer is 72.

Throughout the years, both have been active in the community. Mr. Buhrer was formerly a cattleman and has lately raised wheat.

The two have three sons and three daughters.

PRESENT FOR THE ANNIVERSARY WERE MANY GUESTS

Mary Carrithers, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Millsap, Stella Leighty, Dora Hardin, Nellie Craig, M. E. Craig, Vernon Crumley, Kenneth Leighty, Wayne Shields, Henry Bearman, G. W. Hardin, L. M. Gillum, all of Johnson.

Verna Storey, Mr. and Mrs. Merle Sellers, Helen Raney, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Rosenberry, Mrs. Marie Sellers, J. W. Raney, Clarence Storey, Veryl Storey, Howard Carrithers, G. A. Carrithers, G. R. Carrithers, C. W. Storey, G. W. Thorpe, Claud Storey, Mrs. Mary Rogers, Mrs. Arthur Millsap, Mrs. Lola Buhrer, Mike Buhrer, Clum (*Columbus*) C. Buhrer, Frances Millsap, Frank Millsap, all of Syracuse.

Inez Hixson, John Hixson, Thelma Hixson, all of Holly, Colorado.

J. R. Millsap, Margaret Millsap, Garrelt Millsap, Evelyn Millsap, and Carl Millsap, all of Manter, Kansas.

Also attending were Jake Hays of Larned, Kansas, H. H. Bearman of Wamego, Kansas, and Howard Mackley of St. John, Kansas.