Poole

  Poole is located south of Ravenna, three miles north and one east of the Majors cemetery. It was once incorporated as a village, but has dropped that incorporation. It also went by the name Poole Siding because a branch of the railroad passed through there and a lot of cattle were shipped to market from there.

   Today [2000] a few houses remain that, with the surrounding farms, make up the Poole community. The railroad is gone, as is the post office. The school district has consolidated with Ravenna although the school building still stands.

From Mona Houser's Web Site

Towns and Post Offices, Past and Present

Buffalo County, Nebraska

● **Trocknow,** post office established in 1886. In 1887 the name was changed to Nantasket.

● **Poole Siding,** post office established in 1892 about 6 miles southwest of Ravenna in Beaver township, closed and served by Majors until 1906 when it re-opened as Poole.

       ****

Nebraska Place Names (1925)

● **Poole**. This town was established in 1889 under the name of Poole Siding which later was shortened to Poole. Both names were given the town in honor.of W. W. Poole who came to the vicinity and started a ranch in 1876.

       ****

From Rod Stover's Web Site

In 2003, Winona Snell published a comprehensive history of Poole, entitled
   "POOLE, The Beginning - The End - and Beyond."
Printed and bound copies are available for $30 by writing:

   LOIS JOHNSTEN, RGHS
   105 Alba Avenue
   Ravenna, NE 68869

The history is available on CD rom in multiple formats for $12 by contacting:

   WINONA R. SNELL (WRSnell@aol.com)
   2207-D Via Mariposa E.
   Laguna Woods, Ca 92653

HISTORY OF BUFFALO COUNTY

The Village of Poole in Buffalo County had it's beginning about the year 1889, a little trading post with one store, a grain elevator, and was known as Pool's Siding. In the year 1905 the Union Pacific Railroad Company completed a depot and installed an agent. In 1876, W.W. Pool came to Nebraska, taking as a pre-emption claim 160 acres in section 12... in what was later known as Cedar Township. In 1883, Mr. Pool and others organized the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company, which engaged in cattle raising, the company having some ten thousand acres of land in Beaver and adjoining townships... In addition to stock raising the company cultivated about thirty-five hundred acres in mixed crops, and in 1889 grew 800 acres of wheat.

... Mr. Pool being engaged extensively in the cattle business, and living some distance from a commercial center, and it being before the days of telephones, he constructed a private telegraph line from his ranch to Ravenna, and himself and two of his daughters became fairly expert operators. At a later date, when the Union Pacific branch was built to Pleasanton, a siding was put in near the Pool ranch and named Pool Siding, and later the name changed to Poole. The first and only agent at Poole has been J.C. Mahoney.

The Following is from an article which appeared in the "Kearney Hub," probably in the early 1900's:

HUB MAN AT POOL'S SIDING
Found a Prosperous Shipping Point
With Flattering Prospects

Pool's Siding is a way station on the Pleasanton Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad and is a trading place of considerable importance. The large department store here is now managed by Walter Tillson. Miss Tillson presides over the Post Office and Messrs. Stark and Crooks wait on customers and care for the store. A new hotel has been erected by T.J. McConnell and will be run as a first class hostelry, where the hungry will be fed and the weary may rest. Mr. McConnell will also look after the grain elevator of J.P. Gibbons & Co. of Kearney. The power for the elevator is furnished by a large gasoline engine.

Wort Bros. have an elevator here with a capacity of ten thousand bushels, with all modern improvements, which since last October has handled 25,000 bushels of corn. They sell farm machinery and Deering harvesters. W.S. Eldridge is the local manager.

Here is located one of the numerous plants of the F.H. Gilcrest Lumber Company with headquarters at Kearney, carrying lumber, coal, farm implements and machinery, etc. Stewart Thomas, the local manager says the sales have been quite high this Spring.

B.F. Moore, contractor and builder, is kept busy at his trade.

George Duncan, the stock buyer, is feeding two hundred head of cattle at this point. He had bought and fed over 15,000 bushels of corn this past Winter, which has made the Siding one of the best grain markets in the country.

Mr. Goodby is the 'village blacksmith,' and is a good one.

It is thought that the railroad company will soon erect a station building here with an operator attached, all of which is greatly needed at this time.

A prosperous and well-settled farming country on both sides of the Loup River lies adjacent to Pool's Siding, which is destined to be one of the best little towns inside of Buffalo County. Messrs. Abrams, Bourne, Barker, Hanna, Sullivan, Houston, Duncan and many others have fine farms, good buildings, and plenty of stock to show for their farm labor.

WILLIAM W. POOL, POOL SIDING, AND POOLE
A Brief History
by Keith Buss

During the 1860s, the brothers A.H. and W.W. Pool and the brothers W.C. and W.Z. Tillson left their homes in Michigan to go to Oil City, Pennsylvania, where an oil boom was going on. These brothers were attracted to areas of opportunity. Not only were they like-minded, they were linked by marriage, A.H. Pool having married Gertrude S. Tillson, a sister of W.C. and W.Z. Tillson.

In the 1870s when the luster began to go off the oil boom, these brothers started to look around for a new field of endeavor. They believied they found it in Buffalo County, Nebraska. All of them came out in October of 1876 in their own railroad car, which was put off at Kearney while they got themselves settled. W.C. Tillson entered L.R. More's bank in Kearney, while the others went north and settled along Cedar Creek, a tributary of the South Loup Rim. After a year in the bank W.C. Tillson joined them on Cedar Creek. The Pools and W.C. Tillson settled on three quarters of a section, interlocking their claims like a giant jigsaw puzzle, and proceeded to ranch and farm. Slowly, however, there was a falling out among them. It seems that W.W. Pool was becoming too much of a boomer for the others.

In 1879 W.W. Pool want into partnership with B.F. Peck of East Bethany, New York, a well-to-do farmer, and M.F. Shreve of Bordertown, New

Jmey, a dealer in coal and lime, and in 1882 he really hit the big time when, with his new partners and a group of New York City investors, the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company was formed. The formation of this company broke his business relationship with his old partners, but they still remained friends. W.C. Tillson returned to Kearney in 1882 and helped organize the Kearney National Bank. His house, Tower Hill, stood where the Kearney Country Club is today. A.H. Pool sold out and in 1883 moved to the Prairie Center area where he lived for the remainder of his life. He died in 1893, at the age of 63. W.Z. Tillson, the youngest of the four, went into ranching on his own and eventually settled northwest of Poole, where his descendants still live.

   At about this same time, William S. Black and his brother-in-law, Thomas B. Mickle, came out from Burlington County, New Jersey, and with W.W. Pool, filed on a three-quarter section southeast of Poole, overlooking the South Loup. Their claims were interlocked jigsaw puzzle fashion just as before. This was to become the home base of the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company. For years Black and Mickle worked as hired hands for W.W. Pool. William S. Black proved to be an especially loyal employee. If W.W. Pool ever wanted to acquire land or obtain a loan, yet stay in the background, he could count on Black to be a dependable front man.

   The Nebraska Land and Cattle Company was reorganized in 1884. The New York City investors dropped out and the new investors were R.L. Downing and Robert R. Greer of Kearney, along with the old investors, B.F. Peck, M.F. Shreve and W.W. Pool. Officers were B.F. Peck, president; R.L. Downing, vice- president and treasurer; and W.W. Pool, secretary and manager. Two days after the company was reorganized the stockholders voted to mortgage the property of the company up to $100,000 so the company could expand its holdings.

   The Nebraska Land and Cattle Company was a large operation. It had some 10,000 acres of land centered around the community of Poole. The company raised, fattened and shipped an average of 1200 head of cattle a year. Many of them were Devon, for which W.W. Pool had high hopes. An average of 30 hands were employed. In 1884, $5000 in wages was paid. The company also had large tracts in mixed crops, sometimes as much as 3500 acres. In 1891, 2000 acres were put into wheat and 1500 acres into corn. The company's effect on the area in terms of buying area crops for feed and furnishing employment must have been significant.

   When the Union Pacific Railroad laid its tracks up the South Loup, Pool Siding was made a shipping point for the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company.

   In the early 1890s the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company started to break up. The high hopes for the Devon cattle never materialized, prices were not good, and the hard winter of 1888 all may have contributed to it. In January of 1892 the assets of the company were divided among its creditors, R.L. Downing taking the lions share. W.W. Pool continued to

use the name of the company from time to time, but after January 1892, it was only a paper company and the need for Pool Siding ceased to exist.

As early as 1891 there may have been talk of developing Pool Siding as a town site, and in 1892 it did become a town. In that year Jesse Edson and George Duncan opened a general store, R.L. Downing put up an elevator, and on June 23, 1892, George Duncan became the postmaster. In 1885 he had married Susan Pool, daughter of A.H. and Gertrude S. Pool. Although Pool Siding was successful as a town during the 1890s and became a place of commerce for the area farmers, schools and churches did not develop. They stayed out in the countryside where they had already been established. After the break-up of the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company, W. W. Pool became involved with the Buffalo County Cattle Company which he helped form in 1894. During the 1890s his land holdings began to move eastward until they were situated between Pool Siding and South Ravenna (South Ravenna being about a mile south of Ravenna). About 1896 the Union Pacific located a depot at South Ravenna and that summer W. W. Pool was the first to ship cattle from there. His oldest daughter, Ella, was appointed depot agent, and at one time William S. Black had a general store there.

During the 1890s, W.W. Pool, like so many, had financial problems. The Buffalo County Cattle Company was a failure and he had other debts. Then his health began to fail and he was driven to the point of despair. In the early morning hours of March 21, 1898, he left his Ravenna home, went to the cemetery, and there at the graves of two of his children, shot himself to death. He was 54 years old. About two weeks later, his grief-stricken widow, Eva, who was pregnant, went into premature labor and never survived. She died April 5, 1898.

This tragedy almost brought about the and of Pool Siding. One of the creditors, Vermont Savings Bank, obtained a judgment in their favor against the Pool estate. To satisfy the judgment, the townsite of Pool Siding was sold at public auction in the summer of 1900. To keep their store buildings from being sold with the land, their owners had moved them off. It seems the store owners had no title to the land their stores were standing on. The post office was discontinued on June 21, 1900. So the town did indeed die.

Like the Phoenix, however, it rose from the ashes. Later that year and in 1901 the Vermont Savings Bank sold off parcels of the town site to the store owners and the buildings were moved back. In July 1900, the post office was reopened with W.Z. Tillson as the postmaster. This time Pool Siding began to function as a fully developed town, largely made possible by the people from the Majors community located southwest of the town. Two generations of these people made it a successful little town. In 1905 a state bank was opened with S.N. Bently as president and J.C. Miller as cashier. In 1907 a Presbyterian Church was started, an off-shoot of the Majors Presbyterian Church, and District 60 school, which had been located west of town, we moved into town.

The town even received a name change. While Anna S. Sitz was postmistress in 1906, the name was changed from Pool Siding to Poole. There had been confusion about the name since the town started in 1892. The Union Pacific used the name "Poole" and the

post office the name "Pool Siding." In 1906 the post office was changed to Poole to conform with the railroad name. The railroad had opened a depot in 1905, with J.C. Mahoney the depot agent.

In 1910 Poole was incorporated. The first village board consisted of C.E. Clark, J.S. Hanna, J.E. Criffield, Henry Abrams, and J. C. Mahoney. Some of the early business men of Poole were J. E. Criffield, dry goods; George Duncan, general store: William Klein, general store; T J. McConnell, hardware; B.J. Stover, blacksmith; Francis Reynolds, harness; and Wm. S. Eldridge, grain buyer.

The 1920s were the high point for Poole. That decade it reached its peak population of 337. In 1924 the town installed electric lights; and in 1926 when the school house burned down, a new brick school was built. Some of the business people of in 1920s were George Duncan, general store; Alva Linsey, general store; Ross Burton, garage; Wesley Heapy, pool hall; W.E. Whitcomb, elevator; and Floyd Thompson, ice cream parlor.

The town could be a lively place sometimes, although with the Presbyterian influence, things never really got out of hand. In 1914 the Village Board banned as "indecent" the Turkey Trot and the Bunny Hop. Baseball on Sunday was looked upon with disfavor, too, but when Walter Duncan, son of George Duncan, "disappeared" on Sunday afternoons, the Duncan family, strong Presbyterians, looked the other way.

During the 1930s Poole started to go down hill. In 1933 Ravenna lost its banks and Charles E. Clark, who had joined the State Bank of Poole as cashier in 1909, was prevailed upon to move the Poole bank to Ravenna. In 1935 George Duncan, longtime merchant, died. There was still life in the town, though. Ballroom dances were held in the stone garage along the railroad tracks. After the bank moved to Ravenna, square dances were held in the vacant bank building.

In 1947 the South Loup River flooded and the bridges of the Union Pacific Railroad were washed out. Rather than rebuild the bridges, the railroad abandoned the line, which left Poole with no railroad and no depot. In 1953 the Poole Church was torn down. During the 1950's a baseball field was built, which sort of balanced things out a little for the town.

In 1966 the old anchor of Poole was destroyed when the Duncan Store burned down. Glenn Stover had run it for 25 years after the Duncans. That same year the school closed.

In 1972, after 62 years, Poole as an incorporated town was dissolved, and in 1982 the Poole post office was closed.

Today Poole is a small bedroom community, but who knows- maybe it is waiting to play Phoenix. It did it before.