



HELP WANTED:

Progressive state-of-the-art Museum seeks inquisitive individual for position of Historian. Successful candidate will be able to read differing accounts of stories, determine similarities and differences, and come to conclusions regarding actual events. **Apply Yourself Here.**

YOU BE THE HISTORIAN

Dead Towns in Saline County

The United States government opened the Kansas Territory to **settlement** on May 30, 1854. Settlers came westward with the idea of **manifest destiny** to claim over 80 million acres of available land. As settlers moved west to follow their dreams of **prosperity**, towns popped up almost overnight. Communities often started with a post office and a store, but the families who moved westward had spirit and hopes for bright futures. These towns were good examples of the **entrepreneurial** activity in Kansas in the late 1800s. Some towns never succeeded because the railroad bypassed them, other nearby towns offered better opportunities, or they just died out. If all the **dead towns** in Kansas had prospered, there would have been one town for every 12 square miles.

VOCABULARY

Settlement: (set-uhl-muhnt) *noun* Place to establish residence; to furnish with inhabitants.

Manifest Destiny: (man-uh-fest dess-tuh-nee) *noun* The idea that people are divinely inspired to migrate westward across the continent.

Prosperity: (pro-spere-i-tee) *noun* The state of being successful.

Entrepreneurial: (on-truh-pruh-nur-e-al) *adjective* Someone who starts businesses and is good at finding new ways of making money.

Dead Towns: (ded-tounz) *noun* Towns that existed, but did not survive.

YOU ARE HIRED

Historians are often asked to research information and determine the importance of the facts that are presented. Read the information about three dead towns in Saline County and decide what would be most important for future generations to know about each town.

Whitman's Corner

Whitman's Corner was a short-lived, little-known place in the northwest part of Saline County. John K. Whitman and family purchased a farm in Pleasant Valley Township in 1898, and began operating a general store to serve the needs of local farm families. As business increased, they bought an abandoned schoolhouse and moved it to their farm to serve as the store. The Whitmans made two trips to Salina each week by team and wagon to buy merchandise from local wholesalers. They purchased kerosene and gasoline in 50 gallon barrels, two 300 lb. cakes of ice during summer months, calico and gingham fabric by the bolt, kitchenware, hardware, lumber, food staples and farm machinery. Sometimes salesman from the two wholesale companies in Salina, Watson-Durand-Kasper and H.D. Lee, brought out wagons of sample stock. Whitman's Corner Store operated until about 1917 when it caught fire and burned.

Chico

Chico was a thriving town in eastern Saline County during the 1880s, with businesses, town lots, streets, and a railroad depot. The town had an agreement with the Missouri Pacific Railroad that no new railroad depots would be built nearer than Salina (thirteen miles away) and Carlton (nine miles away). As business on the railroad line increased, the Missouri Pacific Railroad backed out on the deal and built a depot at Gypsum. A few years

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later the railroad company decided to move the depot at Chico to the town of Kipp. Knowing there would be opposition, railroad men slipped into Chico on a work train early one Sunday morning. They woke the depot agent and told her to get ready to move. The men began tearing down the chimneys before Chico residents even knew what was happening. Realizing they couldn't get a restraining order on Sunday, Chico resident Anson Miller went to Gypsum to get a warrant to arrest the workmen for violating the peace and quiet of the Sabbath.

The railroad men were taken before the Gypsum justice of the peace, but they waived their preliminary hearing and were bound over to district court. This allowed them to go back to work, but Miller requested a second warrant issued against the men for violating the Sabbath law. When the railroad workers heard the warrant read, they merely laughed at the twelve deputies there to arrest them and resumed work. The Chico residents did what they could to disrupt the proceedings until the clock struck twelve on Monday morning when Miller delivered injunction papers to stop the depot from moving. Although Chico kept the depot building, the railroad company moved the depot agent and telegraph instrument to Kipp, where they set up shop in a caboose. Eventually the depot building was moved down the track to Kipp.

Oasis

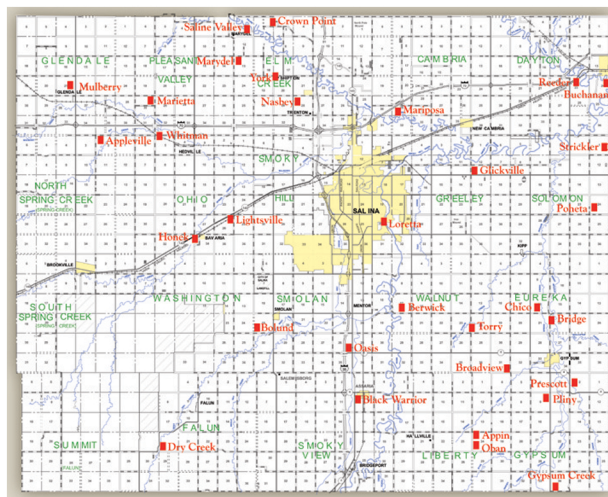
The town of Oasis started on the homestead of Joseph and Catherine Anderson in northeast Saline County in 1868. Their dairy farm, located on the stage line between Salina and McPherson, became a popular rest stop for weary travelers. Being like an oasis in the desert, travelers could stop to sip a cool drink from the Anderson's well and hear the local news. Due to its popularity, a post office was established and mail was delivered twice a week from 1873 to 1875 for about 500 Saline County residents. In 1878, Nicolas and Anna Reed purchased land one mile south of the Anderson's farm and began to attract travelers. In 1879, the Oasis Post Office was reestablished on the Reed farm, and the Reeds opened a general store. Mail was delivered six times a week for residents to pick up, often hand delivering items to their neighbors as well. By 1880, new towns had been established 4 miles to the west and 2 miles to the south, dropping the postal service down to only 25 families in Oasis. With the loss of the post office business, the customer base for their store also dwindled, and the town of Oasis eventually died out.

QUESTIONS

1. How did settlement play a part in a town's survival? Why were people drawn to each town?
2. How important is location as a reason for where each town was settled?
3. Describe the prosperity each town enjoyed. What are the reasons that it did not continue?

BEYOND THE MUSEUM

There are many more dead towns located throughout Saline County. Take a trip through the county looking for remnants of their existence. All that may be left is a cemetery or abandoned building. For more information, look for the book *Ghost Towns of Kansas*, which offers many stories of dead towns throughout the state of Kansas. It is available in the Smoky Hill Museum Store or at your local library.



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A division of the Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina.