AT THE **CROSSROADS:**

Stories of Change in Rural Kansas

A STATEWIDE INITIATIVE PRESENTED BY HUMANITIES KANSAS

HUMANITIES KANSAS

Humanities Kansas is pleased to present *At the Crossroads: Stories of Change in Rural Kansas*. This collection of community stories is inspired by the statewide *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* initiative. Anchored by the Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition of the same name, *Crossroads* explores the history and culture of local rural life in Kansas and sparks conversations about our state's future. The Smithsonian exhibition will travel to six Kansas communities with an additional 10 communities exploring the theme independently. The stories found in this publication reflect the interests and themes behind the local exhibitions and public programs. *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and Humanities Kansas. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress.

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5.4.7 Arts Center, Greensburg
Allen County Historical Society, Iola
Dodge City Community College
Ellinwood School and Community Library
Hays Public Library
Independence Public Library
Kansas Oil Museum, El Dorado
Kauffman Museum, North Newton
Lebanon Community Library
Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm Historic Site, Olathe
Morris County Historical Society, Council Grove
Norton County Arts Council, Norton
Onaga Historical Society
Satanta Area Arts Council, Satanta
Thomas County Historical Society, Colby
The Volland Store, Alma

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Lost-in-the-Midwest/Shutterstock.com

Geographic Center of the United States marker in Lebanon, Kansas.

Foreword by Kim Stanley

On a hill outside Lebanon, Kansas, you'll find a monument, a flagpole, a gazebo, an old tourist court, and a tiny chapel. From the hill you can see fields of wheat and soy, a copse of cottonwoods, and the straight, narrow highway leading down to the interstate: this is smack in the middle of the Lower 48, at one end of what may be the shortest highway in the state, K 191 (.999 mi.). The rivers Kansas and Missouri, major highways for centuries, now run beneath I-70 and I-35. "Crossroads" is a particularly apt metaphor for Kansas.

But Kansas has been at the center of more than just geography – in areas such as women's rights and opportunities, green energy, rural high-speed internet, food activism, immigration, and sustainable agriculture. Kansans have often been trail-blazers.

When you read these stories, you'll encounter surprise after surprise. You'll meet Kansans who took a stand for the future: farmers focusing on sustainable agriculture; Mexican-Americans using fast-pitch softball to carry on tradition; a rural community celebrating gender diversity; an urban community celebrating its farming heritage.

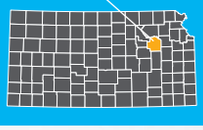
Now, Kansans face challenges at least as difficult as those they have mastered: how to encounter a rapidly changing world without losing touch with the past; how to encourage diverse perspectives; how to use our intimate connection to land, water and weather to face a future of climate change. In *Crossroads*, we see Kansans from farms, cities, and small towns seeking to steer a course between nurturing tradition and adapting to inevitable change.

The *Crossroads* initiative being spearheaded by Humanities Kansas and the impressive work of communities statewide will help bring the stories of Kansas into focus and provide a platform for robust conversations that will almost certainly lead to new ideas for the future.

Kim Stanley is chair of the Department of Modern Languages at McPherson College and teaches courses in English and world literature, poetry, and beginning and advanced writing.

The Lyons' Share

ALMA, WABAUNSEE COUNTY



Jan Lyons and Ace

Jan Lyons didn't set out to become a role model, but that's exactly what happened when she was elected president of the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) 25 years ago. Although women have always been involved in their family's farms and ranches, Lyons was the first woman to "ride point" for the cattle industry in Kansas.

Growing up, Lyons loved all aspects of working on her family's small Angus farm. She thought she wanted to pursue a degree in animal husbandry, and she started down that path in 1963. When she arrived at university, she says there very few girls in the animal science courses. Her advisor explained that she needed to find something "more suitable."

Although she says she certainly wouldn't allow that door to close today, at that time she changed her major to education and eventually completed a master's degree in counseling. After graduating, Lyons entertained several job offers as a school counselor. But ranching, she says, kept calling to her. She and her husband instead bought land and cows in the Flint Hills and began to build a ranching business. Lyons held the reins.

It wasn't easy, but she persevered. Lyons's husband, a physician, worked full-time in town. As the ranch grew, Lyons recognized the importance of staying up to date and supporting other farmers, which led her to get involved in local agricultural organizations. "Sometimes I may have been the only woman in the room, but I focused on our similar interests in the beef industry, and I just felt like I needed to do my part," she says of her efforts. She was a forthright advocate for her interests and those of other ranchers, and she increasingly took on leadership positions.

When she became KLA president, some in the media seemed to want to portray her as a trailblazing woman. Lyons, however, is uncomfortable with that designation and simply considers herself a rancher. "Women have always been in agriculture. They just haven't always been the spokespeople," she points out. Instead of centering the narrative on herself, she used the media spotlight to promote the KLA's goals.

"I would like to think that I am a just a good rancher and good leader," Lyons says with a smile. "Not a good woman rancher."

When Lyons was recently invited to speak at Kansas State's College of Agriculture, she was pleased to find that half of the class was composed of women—a far cry from her own college days.

For Lyons, stewardship and ranching are inseparable, and as president of the KLA, she heard from other ranchers again and again that they wanted to be able to pass their land on to the next generation. "People in agriculture have to take a long-range view and to use resources [responsibly] to be sustainable for future generations," said Lyons.

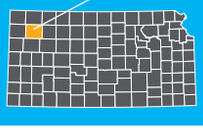
Lyons and her husband raised two daughters who worked the ranch beside them. They both raise cattle and love the industry as she does. Three generations are working together at Lyons Ranch today—Lyons's younger daughter Amy and her husband Karl manage and operate Lyons Ranch with their sons in Wabaunsee County near The Volland Store.

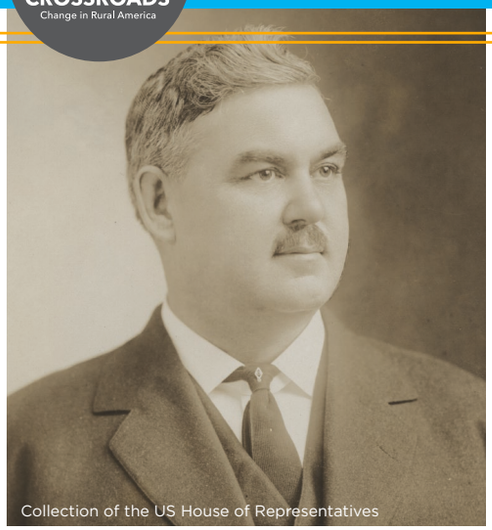
"The Jan Lyons story is a perfect example of how change is coming to rural America, how history and circumstance inform decisions that are being made, how tradition is preserved while embracing the realities of present-day economy and culture," shares Patty Reece, project director for *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* at The Volland Store. "The Volland Store's community looks forward to presenting stories of how our friends and neighbors are navigating the crossroads of contemporary life with the strength and values that spring from their history on the land."

Visit the *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and the *Deep Roots and New Growth in Wabaunsee County* exhibition both on display at The Volland Store, 24098 Volland Road in Alma, from March 13 to April 25, 2021. www.thevollandstore.com

The Nine Lives of the Thomas County Press

COLBY, THOMAS COUNTY





Collection of the US House of Representatives

John Robert Connelly

Over the course of Colby's history, the nature of the American press has changed, but Colby's newspapers have exerted a unique, community-building influence that has contributed to the economic and political wellbeing of the town, not only reporting on change but creating it**.**

Today, the press has become a highly politicized topic nationwide. In Thomas County's early history, however, the press was instrumental in developing local culture and infrastructure, with an emphasis on local rather than national issues.

The first newspaper to be issued in the county was the *Thomas County Cat,* beginning in 1885. It was produced in a sod house and bore an image of a cat in the title. In its early days, the *Cat* had 14 subscribers and allowed trades for subscriptions, according to its editors in the paper's second week of production.

The *Cat* was in print for six years under several different editors. By the time it closed its doors, there were several other newspapers being produced in the county. The *Colby Free Press* was founded by Joseph A. Borden and Sam W. Edmunds in 1889, claiming in its first issue to be a "Democratic paper…uncompromising in its stand on various issues." Its later ongoing feud under editor J. R. Connelly with the Republican *Colby Tribune* edited by Nat Turner was in part geared to selling papers, as the two amicable editors reportedly got together each week to decide what to argue about.

In the early decades of the 20th century, *Free Press* editor Connelly appealed to the morality of his readers and galvanized them to take action on community projects. He was the first to suggest that Colby should have an opera house, and he helped raise over $10,000 for that project. He subsequently used the paper as a platform to raise money for a new county high school.

The *Colby Free Press* is still in existence in Colby today. In the early years of its run, it was able to bridge the partisan divide in Thomas County and inspire community members to take action, profoundly influencing the culture and infrastructure of the county. "Newspapers exist in a very different world today than was the case in the early twentieth century," shared Ann Miner, director of the Prairie Museum of Art and History. "They are at a sort of crossroads of their own in finding ways to adapt to the broad preference for onlline news sources." As American culture and media have changed over time, the press in Colby has adapted while maintaining the community-oriented approach that made it an early pillar of this rural community.

Visit the *Meeting at the Crossroads: Tales of Five Counties* exhibition on display at the Prairie Museum of Art and History, 1905 S. Franklin Avenue in Colby, from May 1 to June 13, 2021. http://prairiemuseum.org

THOMAS COUNTY CAT.

VOL. I. NO. 40. COLBY, THOMAS COUNTY, KANSAS, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1885. $1.50 PER YEAR.

THE THOMAS COUNTY CAT.

BIRD ARCHITECTURE.

A SAD MISTAKE.

LUMBER!

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Have opened a yard in Colby and keep constantly on hand a full and complete stock of

Lumber, Lath, Sash, Doors, Lime, Etc.

Give us a call and be convinced that our prices are the lowest.

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NOW OPEN!

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Down prices go. Save money by patronizing us.

Groceries, provisions, hardware, stoves, tinware, queensware, boots, shoes, hats, dry goods, blankets, comforts, etc.

LUMBER, LIME AND FEED.

Best lump coal from $6.00 to $6.50.

A car load of splendid Iowa potatoes. We are sole agents for the celebrated Star windmill, tubular well supplies and deep well pumps.

LAND. LAND.

Homes for the Homeless!

I have for sale some very desirable tracts of land in the now well known beautiful county of Thomas at from

$4.50 to $6.00 Per Acre.

Terms to suit the buyer, and at low rate of interest. The spring rush is going to be immense, and land must raise in value, so

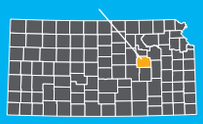
Now is the Time to Invest.

If you can't come, write me for description of lands and prices.

W. H. COPELAND.

Chronicling America/National Endowment for the Humanities and Library of Congress

Thomas County Cat, Dec. 10, 1885



Dunlap: Promised Land or Pit Stop Along the Way?

John Summer residence, Dunlap, Kansas, c. 1880

The establishment of railroads across Kansas throughout the 1860s and 1870s brought with it new towns, economic prosperity, and optimism. Morris County experienced the boom of numerous railway towns on four rail lines: the Rock Island line; the Missouri, Kansas and Texas (MKT); the Missouri Pacific; and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe.

These towns quickly grew due to the economic opportunities offered by the railroad. Dunlap, established in 1869, was one of these towns. Augmented by the MKT and later by the migration of Black settlers from the south in 1878 to the area, Dunlap grew exponentially for several years.

Groups of Black settlers, organized by Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, arrived by the hundreds, drawn by the hope of land and fair and equitable treatment.

Crossroads partner site co-director, Sharon Haun explained "What they found in Dunlap, however, was more complicated than that."

The new Black residents, who made up half of the town's population by 1890, contributed much to Dunlap's economic and social infrastructure, establishing homesteads, churches, businesses, and the Freedman's Academy, which became a cultural pillar in the community, educating both Black and white residents before a high school was built.

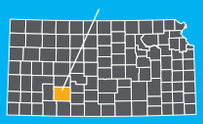
The town's history is characterized by accounts of both racial harmony and tension, reflecting the larger racial ambivalence of the state, which has been home to a strong abolitionist movement as well as laws that disenfranchised Black citizens. The railroad in many instances served as the dividing line between Black and white residential areas.

The Black population of Dunlap diminished over the course of the 20th century, due in large part to the disproportionate effects of the Great Depression on Black workers. A second exodus began, this time carrying families from rural Kansas to urban centers.

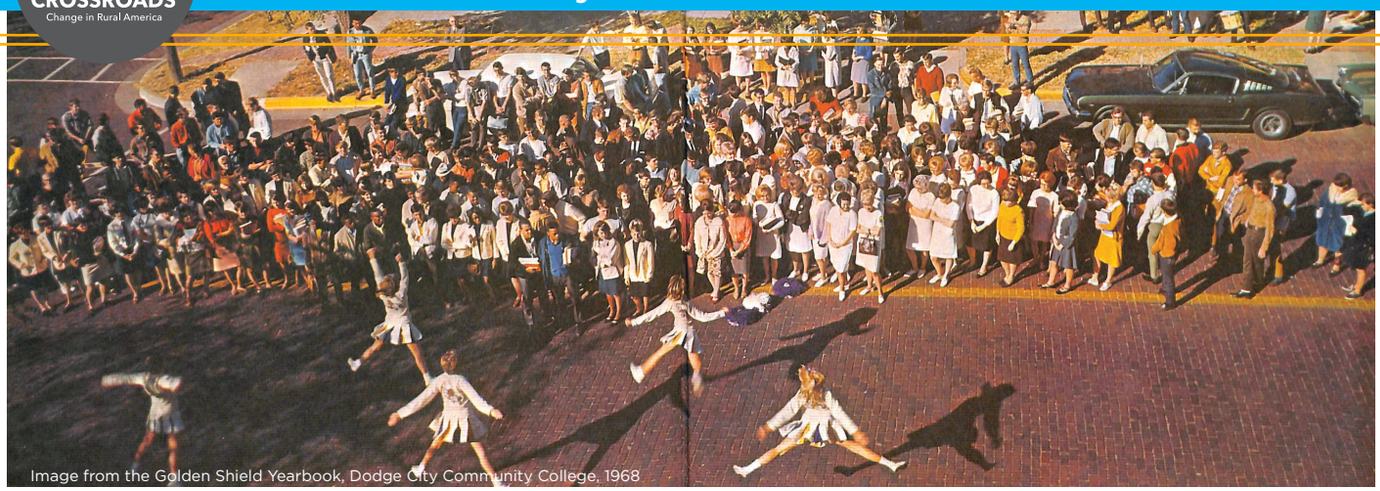
The story of Dunlap is inseparable from the story of the American railroads, which brought new people and places into contact and produced both opportunities and obstacles. Although Dunlap was not the promised land the Exodusters had hoped to find, it was a stop on the road to a better life, and these people left behind a legacy of hope, hard work, and continual striving for equality.

"Our Smithsonian *Crossroads* partner site exhibit, *The Trails We've Traveled Since*, will explore the rise, fall, and rebirth of the Morris County towns from the 19th century into today," added *Crossroads* partner site co-director Jan Kimbrell.

Visit the *Morris County: The Trails We've Traveled Since* exhibition on display at the Morris County Historical Society, 303 W. Main Street in Council Grove, from March 13 to April 25, 2021. www.morriscountyhistory.com



85 Years of Change, Challenges and Community



A pep rally at Dodge City Community College, c.1968

When confronted with the hardships of the Great Depression, the citizens of Ford County, focused on creating opportunities for higher education. The result of this action was the founding of Dodge City Community College (DC3) in 1935.

For 85 years, DC3 has been creating opportunities for the people who live and work in its nine-county service area in southwest Kansas. From offering business, secretarial, and general education courses in the 1930s to agriculture, automotive, and vocational training through the 1950s to the addition of residence halls and comprehensive athletic programs in the 1970s and a 21st century learning initiative in the 2000s, DC3 has demonstrated its commitment to its founding purposes and its responsiveness to challenges and change.

Through the years, DC3 has graduated thousands of students with certificate and associate degrees. Several alumni are even the third or fourth generation in their families to attend DC3. And many of them have remained in the area, assuming leadership positions in agriculture, business, education, government, industry, journalism, philanthropy, public service, ranching and technology.

One of the current members of the DC3 board of trustees, Kathy (Wheaton) Ramsour, is one such graduate. Not only did she graduate from DC3, but so did her husband Don, her sister Pamela Preston, her brother-in-law Steve Preston, and her son-in-law Tom Armstrong. Ramsour, who graduated from DC3 in 1970, went on to become an educator for 46 years in the Dodge City school system. She said she credits DC3 with teaching her leadership skills, time management, and the love of education.

When it came time for the college to move from Second Avenue to its new campus on 14th Avenue, Ramsour was actually one of the students who helped with the move over the 1970 spring break. "When the new campus was built, that was huge!" she said. "We became a hub of other communities and a feeder college to St. Mary of the Plains College."

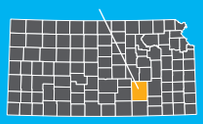
Another DC3 success story is Ernestor De La Rosa who graduated from DC3 in 2010. After DC3, De La Rosa attended Fort Hays State University and Wichita State University, and he is now a Dodge City assistant city manager.

"As an immigrant and the first member of my family to attend college, DC3 was the gateway to experience college while continuing to be close to my family," De La Rosa said. "DC3 gave me the confidence, experience and the tools needed to be successful at FHSU and WSU."

De La Rosa said he thinks DC3 has made many strides to engage and involve the local Latino population, especially those who have never been to a college campus. And he said Latino participation will only increase if the college continues to meet Latinos "where they are."

In order to stay relevant, as the demographics and culture have changed through the years, the college has changed with them. And so, after nine decades, the secret of DC3's success remains unchanged since its founding: Meet the needs of the people—where they are.

Visit the *Dodge City: Roots and Renascence* exhibition on display at the Dodge City Community College Little Theatre Gallery, 2501 North 14th Avenue in Dodge City, from October 18 to December 1, 2020. Dc3.edu.



Suffragist County

Image courtesy of kansasmemory.org, Kansas Historical Society

A meeting of suffragists in Kansas c.1905-1910

During the Civil War, many women became heads of household while the men were away at war, which helped to spark the movement for women's suffrage in Kansas and across the United States. In 1867, a statewide referendum to affirm women's right to vote failed, an outcome that, ironically, may have served to invigorate suffragists in the state: A year later, the Women's Suffrage Association of Kansas held its first meeting, with prominent suffrage leaders including Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in attendance.

While women were granted the right to vote nationwide with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, Kansas women were a few steps ahead. Though a second attempt to gain women's voting rights in 1893 failed, a third attempt was introduced to the state legislature in 1911 and soon passed. The Equal Suffrage Amendment was ratified in 1912, making Kansas the eighth state in the United States and the first in the Midwest to provide equal voting rights to women.

The women's rights movement was about more than just voting rights, however. Leading up to the passage of the Equal Suffrage Amendment, Kansas women won a series of key victories, including the right to vote in school district elections and municipal suffrage, which resulted in the election of 14 female mayors before the turn of the century.

Among Kansas counties, Butler County stands out for contributing several milestones to women's equality. The women's rights movement found an ally in Butler County judge Granville Pearl Aikman. In 1912, immediately following the ratification of women's suffrage in Kansas, Aikman appointed Eva Rider as the first woman bailiff in the nation, and he further instructed her to assemble an all-women jury—another first.

The judge told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Women became qualified to act as jurors when the new constitutional amendment made them electors, and I desire the honor of presiding over the first trial in which their new rights are exercised."

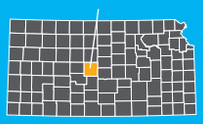
The case that this female jury was tasked with deciding was a case that had previously been tried before a jury of men, with no verdict reached. The women jurors, however, completed their deliberations after two days of proceedings and were praised for their rapt attention and careful consideration of arguments.

Butler County served as a leading example in the state at a time when women's rights were still untested, and the all-women jury enabled women to prove their capacity to exercise their new rights, paving the way for future generations of women. "Butler County's involvement in the women's rights movement is a *Crossroads* story of change and progress," explains Tiya Tonn, *Crossroads* Partner Site project director for Kansas Oil Museum. "It's important to remember stories like this so that we can gain a better understanding of our history and use that knowledge to inspire others."

Visit the *Rural Crossroads: The Changing Faces and Places of Butler County* exhibition on display at the Kansas Oil Museum, 383 E. Central Avenue in El Dorado, from December 1, 2020 to April 6, 2021. kansasoilmuseum.org

Fully Wired

ELLINWOOD, BARTON COUNTY



More than half of all Americans living in rural areas report difficulties in accessing high-speed internet. A reliable internet connection is crucial in the 21st-century economy, and many rural communities struggle to access the opportunities it offers. Unlike many small towns, however, Ellinwood boasts internet as fast as that of any city in the United States. The key to the town's success? A local internet provider.

Rural internet is a challenge because it requires more equipment per customer than in urban areas where people live closer together. To many larger internet providers, it's not worth the cost and effort to put the infrastructure in place to serve farther-flung areas. However, for H&B Communications, a family-owned telecommunications company in Ellinwood, it was an investment in the community. Providing a necessary service to the town was more than a practical business decision for H&B; it provided economic opportunities to residents of the town and surrounding areas. Sheri Holmes, director of the Ellinwood School/Community Library and *Crossroads* project director explains the importance of having access to high speed internet stating that many of the library's patrons rely on its technology to provide universal access to information. "We are fortunate to have the services that H&B Communications provides our community," says Holmes.

Five years ago, Jennifer and Scott Andersen never would have imagined that they'd own a candle company. Kansas Earth and Sky Candle Co. began in their family farmhouse in 2016 with the goal of making fragrant gifts for family and friends. Demand for their products grew quickly, however, and they took their business online. Today, they receive orders from across the United States and operate both a storefront and an online shop, selling candles with scents such as "Dirt Therapy" and "Prairie Wildflower" that convey a uniquely Kansas identity. Without a fast, reliable internet connection, Jennifer and Scott would have been unable to reach an audience wide enough to support their business.

The Historic Wolf Hotel, too, has taken advantage of the internet to draw in hundreds of guests, tour groups, and events each year. Originally built in 1894, the hotel sits on top of a system of underground tunnels that used to house a number of saloons selling "giggle water" during the Prohibition Era. Over the years, the hotel has undergone a number of transformations, but in 2013 it was restored to its

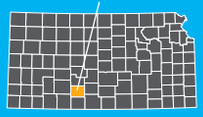
The staff of the Wolf Hotel, Ellinwood

original purpose as a hotel, and its new owner has used the internet to draw in guests from across the country to stay and tour the underground tunnels. The hotel has even attracted the attention of a number of ghost hunters, who have descended upon the place with carloads of beeping, crackling equipment, though the consensus is still out on whether the hotel is haunted. "Technology allows Ellinwood to compete in the global economy," shares Chris McCord, owner of Wolf Hotel. "It brings people to our community through tourism and marketing and allows us to showcase the charm of our small town."

The Wolf Hotel and Kansas Earth and Sky Candle Co. have used their access to reliable high-speed internet to create economic opportunities for themselves and their community. More than that, they've used the internet to bring a piece of their town to the world—and to bring the world to their town.

To learn more, visit the *Ellinwood: Continuous Innovation* exhibition on display at the Ellinwood School/ Community Library at 210 N. Schiller Avenue in Ellinwood, from October 16 to December 2, 2020. http://hslibrary.usd355.org

Kansas Earth and Sky Candle Co., Ellinwood



A New Story

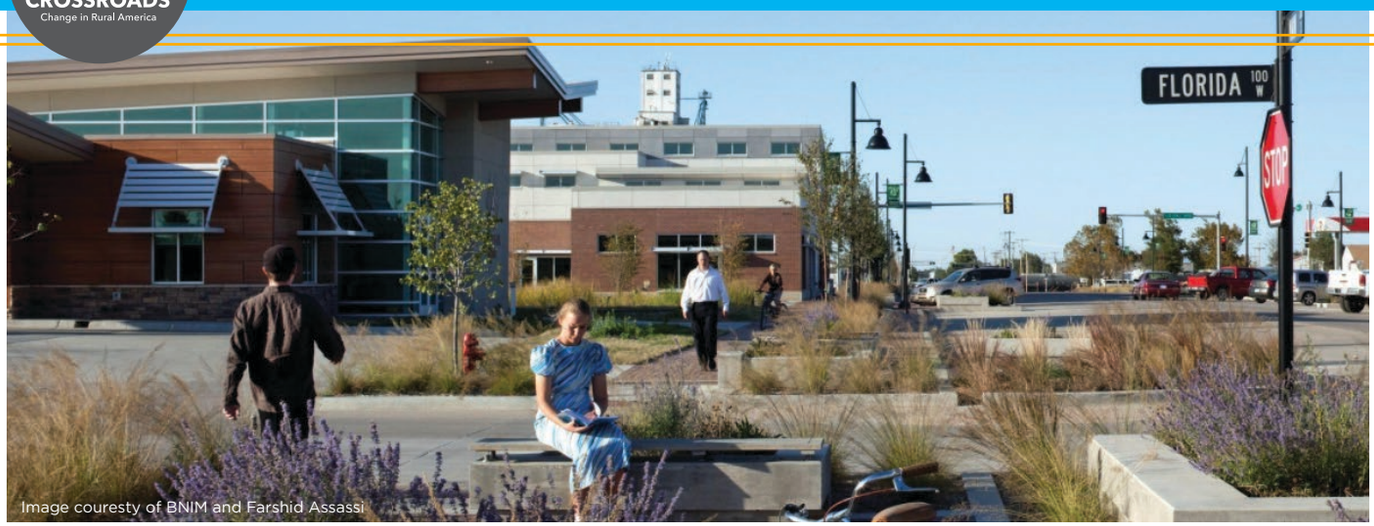


Image couresty of BNIM and Farshid Assassi

Downtown Greensburg, Kansas

It's a narrative that many residents of Greensburg are tired of hearing. After an EF5 tornado leveled the town on May 4, 2007, Greensburg was at a crossroads: They could rebuild what they had before, or they could make a radical investment in green energy. They chose the latter and became a model for environmentally friendly construction across the nation.

But that decision was made more than a decade ago. The people of Greensburg are ready to move on and define themselves by something other than their town's greatest tragedy. The town's focus, which was once designing and rebuilding a new, sustainable Greensburg, has now shifted to developing and implementing ongoing environmental, social, and economic plans for future residents.

When Travis Powell, now the principal of Kiowa County High School, moved to Greensburg in the summer of 2008, he was arriving just as others flooded out. It was "a leap of faith," he said, that caused him to accept a new job and move his family to a town that was still devasted a year after the tornado. And, amid the ruins, Powell saw the potential. By then, the town had committed, by then, to the green rebuilding initiative that has made it popular in the media in the years since.

During Powell's first two years as a teacher at Kiowa County High School, classes were held in FEMA trailers as the new school building was constructed. The district could have built something faster, he acknowledges, but he thinks the wait was worth it: The school has the highest possible LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and provides some of the best facilities in the state.

But, Powell points out, the school was opened nearly ten years ago. From an outsider's perspective, the school might still seem new, but it's just a normal part of life for its students. "We can't live off the new building anymore," Powell says. "Let's not just settle for what we have been. Let's create a new narrative."

That sentiment is not uncommon in Greensburg. Going green is part of the town's story, but it's not the whole story. Like other small towns in rural areas, Greensburg strives to confront new challenges posed by economic and population stagnation and the need for technological and entrepreneurial innovation. *Crossroads* project director, Ann Dixon explains that one way that the community is addressing these obstacles is with the recent installment of fiber-optic cables every home and business. This process has opened the door to new services, opportunities, and the ability to work remotely. The town has also seen a slow but steady influx of families who have migrated to the area from across the U.S. and Kansas.

"Though we still have far to go and grow, we are not stagnant and we press on to create a welcoming environment for new residents and businesses," says Dixson. "We strive to continue to build for the future generations that will grow up to lead in this community."

To learn more about Greensburg, visit the *Crossroads* Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and the *Greensburg Crossroads: Envision, Engage & Endeavor* exhibition both on display at 5.4.7 Arts Center, 204 W. Wisconsin Avenue in Greensburg, from October 17 to November 29, 2020. www.547artscenter.org

The Past Is Never Dead

HAYS, ELLIS COUNTY

Image courtesy of Hays Oktoberfest

Hays has celebrated its Volga German heritage with an Oktoberfest since 1973.

Author William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." For residents of Ellis County, these words ring true: On a daily basis, they encounter influences from their community's history that continue to shape their lives and culture today.

Descendants of the Volga Germans in Ellis County make up some of the last remnants of a remarkable immigrant group that has had a profound influence on the region, from its language and food to its traditions and resilient spirit. The Volga Germans originated in Germany but immigrated to Russia in the 1760s, settling around the Volga River at the invitation of Catherine II, who hoped these newcomers would modernize Russian agriculture.

After a century in Russia, these immigrants had retained their distinctive language and culture, but Russian society was changing. When the Russian government revoked some of the benefits it had once offered them, the Germans began to look for a new place to settle.

Their eyes fell on Kansas. The land was cheap and similar to what they were accustomed to farming, and so they began arriving in the United States by the hundreds, buying up land and establishing farms.

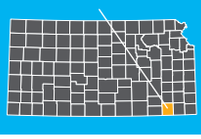
Though Kansans initially considered the Volga Germans to be backward, with their unfashionable dress and unfamiliar language, these industrious and devout people soon earned the respect of other Kansans, and some even went on to hold public office.

Despite maintaining a separate culture for decades, by the 1940s the Volga Germans had largely integrated into mainstream society. However, their cultural influence is still evident today. Kevin Rupp is a second-generation American of Volga German descent who feels a strong connection to his heritage. He doesn't speak the distinctive German dialect, but his parents learned it from their parents, and some speakers of the language remain. "If you go into a coffee shop [in Hays], you'll still hear some of the older guys speak it," Rupp says, although the language has not been passed on to younger generations.

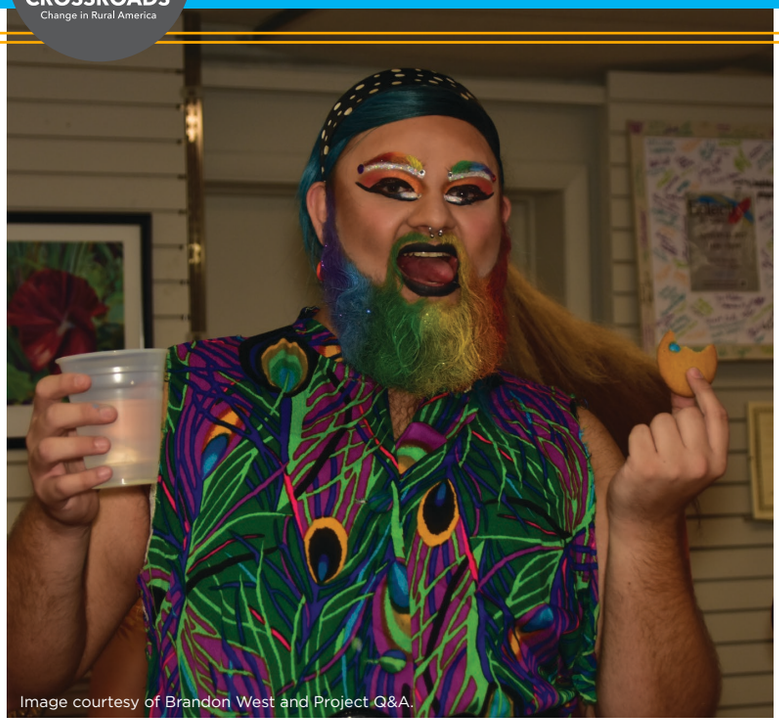
Additionally, residents of Hays can find traditional Volga German foods in local restaurants, including katoffeln knebble (potatoes and dumplings) and bierocks (pastry pockets with savory filling). Even local cemeteries reveal evidence of the area's Volga German forebears: Many graves are marked with iron crosses due to the prominence of blacksmithing in their folk traditions. Rupp notes that there has been a recent resurgence in this practice, revealing the community's determination to preserve its heritage.

Several years ago, Rupp visited Russia and reported that, in many places, evidence of the Volga Germans had been erased and recognizable cemeteries had been destroyed. Ellis County is one of the last strongholds of Volga German culture, and local residents continue to embody the spirit of hard work, independence, and resourcefulness that made the Volga Germans successful. "It is important our community preserves this history because of its uniqueness," shared Jeremy Gill, Hays' *Crossroads* Partner Site project director. "We should be mindful of it when moving into the future as to not forget the hardships of those who settled in Ellis County and made a go of building a community."

Visit the From *Crisis to Conservation to Conversation* exhibition on display at the Hays Public Library, 1205 Main Street in Hays, from May 1 to June 13, 2021. http://hayslibrary.org



Proud to Be Rural



Drag queen Amanduh Master participates in Pride festivities, 2018.

> "... the local community has been supportive, defying stereotypes of small towns."

Independence is a self-proclaimed city of festivals. Each year it hosts, among others, the William Inge Theatre Festival, the Neewollah (try reading it backward) Festival, the Astra Arts Festival, and several holiday festivals. Most of these events have been established for years, but in 2017, a new festival arrived on the block: Southeast Kansas (SEK) Pride. Pride is often considered the purview of big cities, but Independence proves that rural communities have plenty of pride to go around, though they have different strengths and face different challenges than urban areas.

Project Q&A organizes SEK Pride, an LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) social and advocacy organization in southeast Kansas. Project Q&A's purpose, according to founder and Independence's *Crossroads* Project Director Brandon West, is to "raise awareness for the LGBTQ community through education, empowerment, and visibility." SEK Pride is sponsored by both local businesses and two national organizations, the "It Gets Better Project, and the Stonewall Inn Gives Back Initiative. In the three years since the festival began, there have been over 1,100 individuals attending the three-five-day event. According to West, the local community has been supportive, defying stereotypes of small towns.

While SEK Pride is unique for a rural community, it is just like any other festival in Independence. It takes an entire community to be a "city of festivals." Volunteers are vital to over 1,000 community events each year, including four festivals and six parades. Community spirit brings Independence residents together to showcase their fantastic town, volunteer before and after celebrations to beautify the city, provide housing for visiting artists and speakers, and promote the robust event calendar year-round.

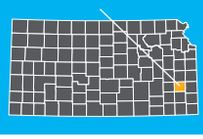
Being a city of festivals requires a community to have ambition, an entrepreneurial mindset, and a sense of civic responsibility. Businesses, organizations, and churches all work together to ensure that events within the community exceed expectations. With local businesses supporting community events and organizations and churches utilizing members to pull off all of the activities Independence has to offer, it is no wonder why this small town has the resources needed to be the city of festivals.

In Independence, pride isn't just about LGBTQ people; it's about building a community where everyone can come together regardless of their differences. Pride is taking ownership of your community, and ensuring that Independence prospers in times of hardship, as well as excels in times of prosperity.

Visit the *Crossroads* Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and the *Independence: Include, Initiate, Innovate* exhibition both on display at the Independence Historical Museum and Art Center, 123 North 8th Street in Independence, from January 23 to March 7, 2021. www.independencehistoricalmuseum.org

Oh, SNAP! Farmers Market Makes Food Fresh, Affordable and Local

IOLA, ALLEN COUNTY



For 18 years, Iola hosted a thriving farmers market—until the state started requiring vendors to collect sales tax. Farmers revolted, and the market closed. A few years later, the local grocery store followed suit. This created what is known as a food desert, a problem all too common in rural areas.

Debbie Bearden, a coordinator at the Allen County Farm Bureau Association, laughs when she learns she has been labeled a food activist by her community. "I never thought of that term for myself," she says. Then she adds, "I look around, and I see needs. What motivates me is if there's something I can do to improve the situation, then I go for it."

When farmers approached Bearden about creating a new farmers market in the winter of 2009, she sprang into action, and the market opened for its first season in spring 2010 with 64 participating vendors.

The results for the community have been substantial: 87 cents for every dollar spent at the farmers market stays in the local economy, with shoppers spending an average of $10-20 at each market. The market has also increased from once a week to three times a week. In order to serve fresh, healthy, locally grown food to families of all income levels, the market accepts SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) credits and participates in the Double Up Food Bucks program, which provides additional assistance to SNAP users who purchase fruits and vegetables.

It has taken some time for Allen County consumers to grow accustomed to shopping at farmers markets, but Bearden says people now approach her frequently to ask when seasonal products, such as tomatoes and watermelons, will be available at the market, reflecting the growing enthusiasm for local food.

Despite these improvements, however, challenges remain.

"In 10 years, the growers we have will not be growing," says Bearden. Most of the farmers who sell at the farmers market in Allen County are in their 60s. Without young people to take these farmers' places, the local food movement will struggle.

One of Farm Bureau's upcoming projects involves teaching practical horticulture techniques to local high school students with the goal of empowering them to feel confident enough in their skills to break ground on a backyard garden or set up their own aquaponics system.

Bearden is passionate about teaching others to grow and farm because "no one can take your skills from you.... We can't sit back and wait for other people to meet our basic needs when we have the power to accommodate them."

Daniel Kays, executive director of the Bowlus Fine Arts Center and *Crossroads* project director highlights Allen County's past efforts to improve the community: "From the earliest days of Allen County's formation, and with the arrival of an ambitious vision of the Vegetarian Emigration Company in 1855, Allen County residents have strived to create healthier and improved opportunities for our children and community." The Bowlus Fine Arts Center is proud to support Debbie Bearden and the Allen County Farmers' Market as they continue to shape the county's vision of lifelong health and wellness.

Visit the *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and the *Allen County: Trails to Rails to Highways and Back* exhibition both on display at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center, 205 E. Madison Avenue in Iola, from August 29 to October 11, 2020. www.bowluscenter.org

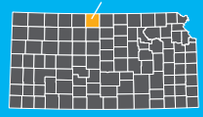
Iola Farmers Market

©Photo by Robin Schallie

©Photo by Robin Schallie

Smack-dab in the Middle

LEBANON, SMITH COUNTY



When the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey declared Lebanon to be the geographic center of the United States in 1891, it was cause to celebrate for the small town. However, the centrality of Lebanon would not go uncontested: Other Midwestern states were soon jostling for a slice of the fame. To meet the challenges of being at the nation's geographic center, Lebanon created the "Hub Club" to maintain and promote the town's designation. The Hub Club, in turn, helped the town to solidify its identity and to create a sense of solidarity and civic pride among its citizens.

In one tourist brochure from the 1950s, the Hub Club wrote, "Lebanon is a transportation 'natural' for industry, being centrally located, with two major highways leading to major markets in four directions." In addition to the geographic center monument (erected by the Club), the brochure also promoted the town's "progressive, growing, friendly community" and its location in "'Home on the Range' Country." The Club notes that, in 1956, more than 18,000 people visited the monument of the geographic center, indicating the town's successful marketing.

Even in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Midwest was often considered something akin to that modern-day epithet "flyover country," and states were eager to make a name for themselves. Consequently, Lebanon faced challenges from other cities and states, particularly Missouri, for claims of centrality. The Northwest Missouri Chamber of Commerce even promoted the region as the "Center of the World's Breadbasket," and there was a Missouri-wide effort to brand the state as the "Heart of America." Meanwhile, Indiana put forth claims about being the *population* center of the United States.

Despite the challenges to its title, Lebanon held onto its claim to centrality. Headed by local business leaders, the Hub Club succeeded in having the geographic center site listed as a state historic site and gaining publicity from a number of state institutions, including a place on several official tourist maps.

The Hub Club also had to deal with the consequences of United States expansion. When Lebanon was declared the geographic center of the United States, there were only 48 states in the union. The addition of Alaska and Hawaii further complicated claims of

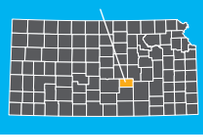
Visitors to the monument near the Geographic Center of the United States in Lebanon, Kansas, 1953.

centrality, but Lebanon solved that problem with a small amendment to its claim: it now distinguishes itself as the geographic center of the contiguous 48 states. "To our community, being at the center of the 48 states has brought many interesting visitors from a variety of countries and walks of life," explains Linda Scott, project director for *Crossroads* in Lebanon. "We enjoy meeting and getting acquainted with visitors who come to visit the landmark, but it's especially rewarding when they take the time to discover our way of life."

Lebanon's claim to celebrity might be humble, but it is the result of a concentrated community effort to promote the town and to establish a distinctive identity. Scott says the Hub Club is still active and meets to discuss ways to improve the community.

In 2007, locals banded together to form another group, the US Center Foundation, Inc. The group adopted the motto "Community Connection for a Proud Tomorrow." Part of the Foundation's mission focuses on revitalizing the town through volunteer-led efforts. These efforts demonstrate continuous local pride and camaraderie, and eventually lead to the revival of the annual Lebanon Bash, a popular daylong festival. Though being in the center of the U.S. might be an accident of geography, Lebanon succeeded in putting itself on the map through local efforts that had a statewide impact—and that was no accident.

To learn more about Lebanon, visit the *Farming at the Center of It All* exhibition on display at the Lebanon Community Library, 404 ½ Main Street in Lebanon, from May 1 to June 13, 2021.



Los Peloteros: Mexican-American Softball Players in Kansas

Each year over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, gray-haired men take the field for the "old timers game" that kicks off the annual Mexican-American Fast Pitch Softball Tournament. For these men, it's a chance play softball and reunite with friends and former teammates who are more like family.

For more than 70 years, the Newton Mexican-American Athletic Club has hosted the summer softball tournament, making it the longest-running Mexican-American softball tournament in the United States. This event is beloved among local residents and members of the Mexican-American community across the state of Kansas and beyond because it is about more than sports: It is about building community, preserving traditions, and ensuring that memories and stories are passed on to the next generation.

"The Newton Mexican-American Softball tournament represents one Newton tradition that connects generations," commented Andi Schmidt Andres, acting director of the Kauffman Museum. "As a crossroads, Newton became home to other groups as well—Mennonite immigrants from Europe in the late 1800s and African-American railroad workers after transcontinental transportation opened up the west. Established and growing in Newton, these communities formed a rich—yet often segregated—tapestry."

Because professional ball teams were segregated, Mexican-Americans had to form their own leagues. As the mid-20th century approached, softball teams cropped up across the United States. These teams provided not only a recreational outlet to players but also opportunities for social, economic, and political networking. The connections formed through softball leagues also helped spread unionization efforts to empower the community.

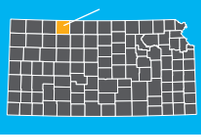
These days, American sports teams are integrated, but Mexican-American teams continue to fulfill important community functions. In Newton, the annual softball tournament functions as a family reunion, a time when those who have moved away return home to catch up with family and friends. The tournament's opening ceremonies include an Azteca dance, ensuring the passage of a tradition on to the next generation. In addition to sports, the softball tournament each year is about reaffirming the community's identity, forged from Mexican traditions, Kansas soil, hard work, and fellowship.

Visit the *Crossroads* Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and the *Of Land and People: Our Community at the Crossroads of Change* exhibition both on display at the Kauffman Museum at Bethel College, 300 East 27th Street in North Newton, from December 5, 2020 to January 17, 2021. http://

Los Bravos, of Kansas City, won the 2019 Mexican-American Fast Pitch Softball Tournament.

Dr. Phebe, Medicine Woman

NORTON, NORTON COUNTY



Dr. Phebe Amelia Oliver Briggs, 1871.

Image courtesy of Allie Oliver Burns

On Phebe Amelia Oliver's first day as a medical student at Pennsylvania Hospital in 1867, she and 38 other female students were greeted by a throng of male students from every medical college in Philadelphia, hissing, jeering, and protesting the decision to admit female students. The women faced frequent harassment and even stoning during their education, but as a pioneer in both medicine and her personal life, Dr. Phebe would face far greater challenges than many.

"Dr. Phebe's story as one of the first female doctors in the US, a pioneer woman, and a founding member of our northwest Kansas community is woven with heartbreak, humility, and hope," explains *Crossroads* project director, Caryl Hale. At the age of 15, Phebe had already begun teaching school. She eventually became a school principal before apprenticing herself to a pharmacist, the first step in her medical career. After enrolling in medical school, she studied under Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to receive a diploma from an American medical college (though earlier women, barred from formal study, had used other means of studying medicine).

After earning her M.D. degree, Dr. Phebe accepted an appointment from the Quakers of Philadelphia to serve as a physician to the Otoe and Missouri tribes of Nebraska in 1872, to the dismay of her family. In her new position, she worked with the 800-member strong Otoe nation. Not long after taking up her post, she met and married John Story Briggs, a trader.

Her honeymoon with Briggs was anything but conventional: The couple joined an Otoe buffalo hunt and, according to family legend, survived the Battle of Massacre Canyon (1873). Stories claim that she was even taken prisoner but was freed in recognition of her status as "medicine woman." However, this story may be apocryphal. Whatever the truth, Dr. Phebe and Briggs turned south toward Norton, Kansas, to complete a trade deal. Though the deal fell through, they eventually settled in the area and Dr. Phebe established her own medical practice, becoming Norton's sole female doctor.

The doctor became known in Norton for her unflagging dedication to her patients. She was fearless and regularly traveled up to 50 miles, undeterred by night or blizzards, to treat the sick, often remaining with patients for several days even when they couldn't afford to pay.

The Briggs family was also generous outside of the doctor's medical practice. Their home became known as "a county poor house" because anyone who passed by could find a meal there.

Tragedy struck in 1889 when Dr. Phebe and Briggs's daughter contracted diphtheria croup and died. Brokenhearted, John Briggs died a year later, and Dr. Phebe soon returned to her birthplace in New York where she continued to practice medicine for many years. However, the doctor never cut her ties with Norton. She would travel back to Norton where she continued to own land and visit former patients.

"Dr. Phebe believed in living in a rural community in spite of the instability and lack of resources available when she first came to Norton," shares Hale. "During our present time, as our state focuses on rural prosperity and how to boost our rural communities, it's a great opportunity to also reflect on stories like hers to gain a deeper level of understanding of the culture and history of our small towns." Dr. Phebe is remembered today for her trailblazing bravery, independence, and devotion to the Norton community.

Learn more about Dr. Phebe at the *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and the *Breaking Ground: Tales of Norton County Fireballs* exhibition both on display at the Gloria Nelson Cultural Arts Center, 112 S. Kansas Avenue in Norton, from May 1 to June 13, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/nortoncountyartscouncil/

Rural Roots

OLATHE, JOHNSON COUNTY

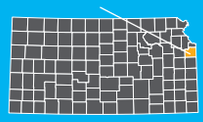


Image courtesy of the Mahaffie Stage Coach Stop and Farm Historic Site

Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm Historic Site, Olathe

> “The rural roots of our communities serve as a foundation to make transformation and progress possible.”

The words ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ often seem at odds with one another, offering two differing perspectives. So, you may be surprised to learn that roughly 45 percent of the land in Johnson County, the most populated county in Kansas, is considered rural and still devoted to agriculture. Despite transforming into a flourishing suburb, Olathe maintains a connection to its rural foundation as implement dealers, farms, and feed stores continue to occupy the area.

While few would consider Olathe, the county seat, an agricultural community today, Olathe’s roots are rural. In 1857, the same year that Olathe was founded, James B. and Lucinda Mahaffie purchased the 340-acre farm located on the Westport Route of the Santa Fe Trail. Due to the farm’s buzzing location, the Mahaffie’s contracted with the Barlow, Sanderson, and Company Stagecoach to serve as a stop for coaches carrying passengers headed westward. But, James “Beatty” Mahaffie thought of himself as a farmer first and foremost.

> *I knew it was a fine country…with three other men, I started in a wagon from Indiana for Kansas Territory. From what I saw of the Territory, I know it was a fine country and we prepared to return. -letter from James “Beatty” Mahaffie*

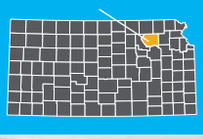
Beatty seems to have hardly done anything by chance. His farm prospered after the Civil War and he was a major contributor to getting the first railroad line to Olathe. Not only was the Mahaffie farm active in raising crops, they kept sheep and cattle. In 1870, the average value of an Olathe Township farm was $4,359. The value of Beatty Mahaffie’s farm was $12,000, more than double the average farm value. The farm’s success was acknowledged in an article from *The Olathe Mirror* newspaper on July 18, 1872, stating, “Maj. Mahaffie has commenced the erection of perhaps the largest barn in the county, on his farm, near our city. Beattie [sic] never does anything by halves.” He and his like-minded neighbors of similar economic status ventured into the world of what we now call agri-business, setting an example of how farming successes can grow a thriving community.

The Mahaffie family’s story offers an opportunity to explore the crossroads of rural, suburban, and urban life. “As more people live in cities and suburbs, there seems to be less interaction with rural landscapes. Many suburbs have rural roots and Olathe is a fine example,” shared Alexis Radil, *Crossroads* Partner Site project director. “Visiting the Mahaffie farm today provides a unique opportunity to connect how one family joined others in building a thriving community by embracing innovation and progress.”

The rural roots of our communities serve as a foundation to make transformation and progress possible. When we explore our rural past, engage with its stories, and visit historical farmsites, we reconnect with the pioneering spirit of those that laid the way for our present. An appreciation of our Kansas heritage allows us to realize that regardless of whether we live in rural, suburban, or urban communities, if we look beyond our differences, we might find that we’re more alike than we think.

Visit the *Olathe Rural Roots as a Catalyst of Our Success* exhibition on display at the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm Historic Site, 1200 Kansas City Road in Olathe, from August 20, 2020 to January 31, 2021. mahaffie.org

Article contributed by Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm Historic Site.



Caring for Health

Ribbon cutting for the Community HealthCare Systems hospital, Onaga

> The leadership of influential doctors helped to cultivate a community that continues to value and prioritize health care today even in the face of challenges and against national trends.

Onaga physicians and citizens have always understood the importance of health care and serving the community. For many, the two are intrinsically linked. Dr. E. F. Richardson served as mayor from 1902 to 1906, was elected to the state legislature, and served on the school board in addition to running his own medical practice. On his passing in 1908 the *Onaga Republican* wrote, "Dr. Richardson was a living, pulsing part of this community." The doctors who succeeded Dr. Richardson would continue his legacy not merely of practicing medicine, but of serving the community.

Dr. Charles Fleckenstein arrived in Onaga in 1937 and, recognizing the town's need for a true hospital rather than a "horse and buggy" doctor who paid house calls, established Onaga's first hospital in a three-story Victorian house. Dr. Eugene Walsh joined Fleckenstein in 1947, and together they opened the Onaga Clinic in 1959. The leadership of influential doctors helped to cultivate a community that continues to value and prioritize health care today even in the face of challenges and against national trends.

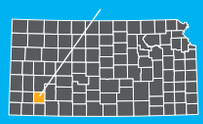
In a time when much of rural America is struggling to keep hospitals open and provide affordable health care to local citizens, Onaga has continually doubled down on its commitment to health care. Voters in many Kansas counties might balk at the notion of increasing taxes, but when their hospital was threatened with closure in the 1950s, the citizens of Onaga were at a crossroads: They could save their money and lose their hospital, or they could approve a tax hike to keep their convenient hospital with its familiar, trustworthy doctors.

Reaffirming nearly a century of values, Onaga and the surrounding communities voted to create a tax-supported hospital district, and in 1955, 78 percent of voters in the new district voted yes on a bond issue to build a new, state-of-the-art hospital.

The region's commitment to health care has continued into the 21st century. In 2013, the hospital district again voted, with a margin of approval of 80 percent, to fund the construction of a new hospital facility. Known as Community HealthCare Systems, the hospital that began with a small facility in Onaga now serves 10,000 square miles at multiple locations and receives up to 50,000 outpatient visits each year. "We are survivors," explained Linda Roggenkamp, *Crossroads* Partner Site project director. "We adapt and change to provide a quality of life for those who live here now and in the future."

Onaga's early history of valuing doctors has created a culture of prioritizing health care that distinguishes it from other parts of the state, and though challenges remain in the American health care system, the community has found a way to support these vital services.

Visit the Onaga Historical Society's exhibition, *Onaga Area: Crossroads into the Future*, on display at the Pottawatomie Fairgrounds, 209 East 9th Street in Onaga, from October 2020 to June 2021. https://www.facebook.com/Onaga-Historical-Society-1742220376089128/



Changing with the Times

> "... recent studies suggest that rural areas across the U.S. have begun to see population growth again. Immigrants from Mexico and Latin America are driving this growth."

Photo by Bethany Wood

Erica Olivas and Family

When she arrived in Satanta at age nine, Erica Olivas only knew two words in English: "apple" and "yes." It made life at her new school difficult, but she credits the school's excellent ESL program with helping her flourish, going on to graduate from high school and begin a busy career at a local bank.

Like many families in Satanta, Olivas's family ended up settling in the town due to the availability of job opportunities. Olivas's father had left Mexico to seek work in the United States while the rest of the family remained in Mexico and, after he found a job at a Satanta feed lot, they joined him. Satanta, like many other southwest Kansas communities, has received a population boost due to the influx of workers eager to fill the many jobs available in the agriculture industry, particularly in feed lots, dairies, and processing plants. These jobs—usually low-paying and arduous—are often difficult to fill, and so immigrants who are willing to take them have grown to be of vital importance to the animal agriculture industry.

For decades, many of Kansas's rural counties have been facing population decline or stagnation, but recent studies suggest that rural areas across the U.S. have begun to see population growth again. Immigrants from Mexico and Latin America are driving this growth. This trend is reflected in minority-majority cities like Garden City, Dodge City, and Liberal, and in towns with growing immigrant populations, including Satanta, where the population is more than 35 percent Latinx or Hispanic. In addition to filling an abundance of vacant jobs, immigrants contribute to the economy in many ways: buying groceries and houses and other consumer products, paying taxes, and filling schools, churches, and community organizations.

Immigrants also contribute to communities like Satanta in other ways, like "the way they all come together when they see someone in need," says Olivas. And the rest of the community is stepping up, too, to support all of its members. Olivas explains that businesses and public spaces have become increasingly accessible: In addition to the school's ESL program, it employs bilingual aides, and most banks, churches, small businesses, and medical facilities also employ Spanish speakers. This emphasis on communication has contributed to an "environment [that is] open to questions," according to Olivas.

At a time when immigration has become an increasingly polarizing issue, *Crossroads* partner site project director Bethany Wood chose to focus on the topic of immigration for the exhibition *Connecting at the Crossroads*. Wood explains, "People who have chosen to immigrate to our corner of the world enrich and enhance life in our community. Their stories should be preserved and remembered." Native-born Kansans seem to appreciate that these newcomers are not only reviving rural economies but are also infusing the area with energy, vitality, and cultural richness Although immigrants still face many challenges as they fight for their place in the United States, communities like Satanta are learning to welcome and support them.

Visit the *Connecting at the Crossroads* exhibition on display at the Dudley Township Library, 105 Sequoyah Street in Satanta, from January 6 to February 28, 2021. www.satantaartscouncil.com

Crossroads: Change in Rural America

August 2020 through June 2021

Find the full schedule of *Crossroads* exhibition dates and locations and the link to virtual *Crossroads* exhibitions and activities at humanitieskansas.org. #movementofideas

HUMANITIES KANSAS