



~ Part 20 ~

Reflections on a Common Theme

**Anniversary Observances
100 Years, 125 Years**

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CLOUD COUNTY

Recognizing the Impact of Town Boosters: A Cloud County Story (Glasco)

by Joan Nothern

On October 3, 2014, Glasco hosted its annual community festival, known simply as Fun Day. Mayor Charles Wilson led the effort to dedicate this year's event to celebrating the centennial of the Red Line-Midland Trail, a transcontinental auto route that just happened to go right through town on Main Street.

This theme was embraced. Downtown windows were painted with model T fords and wagons. The parade included a long line of antique cars that stayed for the car show throughout the day. Light poles were marked with the Midland Trail identification used years ago to guide early tourists. A planned walk followed the trail from one end of town to the other, and then back again. An early morning 5 K run included the Midland Trail. The road history was exhibited at the Corner Store.

By coincidence, the Fun Day Committee discovered that the Glasco Booster Fall Festival was held in 1914, September 24-26, one hundred years and one week before Fun Day. The three-day event in 1914 dedicated days to Delphos, Concordia, and Simpson. There were some activities in 2014 that had been held in 1914: horseshoe pitching and music. But the long days in 1914 also featured balloon ascensions, horse races, motorcycle races, foot races, pole vaulting, high jumping, baseball, volleyball, and football.

The activity-packed days 100 years ago reveal the town booster spirit that had earned the Midland Trail designation. That was the spirit and route recognized in the 2014 Fun Day.

MITCHELL COUNTY

"A Merciful Man is Merciful to His Beast" (Cawker City)

by Steve Richardson

We pass it almost every day without even giving it a glance. Designed to serve both man and beast, I don't remember seeing it work or being used as originally intended. As kids, we loved climbing all over it. The naughty ones would try to twist off a metal letter from the bronze plaque, and if successful, carelessly toss it away. Another kid would come along, find the letter, pick it up, examine it, and then add it his cigar-box treasures. On either side were pipes from which we could hang suspended and observe the upside down world. There is not a person in town who remembers when the mammoth piece of gray granite wasn't there, yet many don't know why it was put there. But there it stands, motionless, watching over us as time marches by, like a lone sentinel guarding the city.

A century ago, the E. Harrison Cawker Memorial drinking fountain was fabricated by the Stotzer Granite Co. of Portage, Wisconsin. It was a gift from Miss Lenore H. Cawker and her sister Pauline in memory of their father, the founder of our town. Today, it remains the most direct, tangible link to the namesake of our town. Costing \$2,000, it was a substantial gift to the city which deserved an equally proper and dignified location where it could be enjoyed by all. The women of Cawker rose to the challenge of creating a city park befitting the fountain, led by Mrs. L. L. Alrich, who had solicited the donation through correspondence over a five-year period.

On March 18, 1914, a meeting was called at the home of Mrs. Alrich which resulted in the formation of the Cawker City Woman's Civic Association. Fourteen women signed the pledge. Three days later, the preliminary plans made that evening were discussed further at a City Hall gathering.

Eighteen new members were added and all agreed that the north half of the block behind the business houses on Wisconsin Avenue was a blight to the city which could be transformed into a centrally located "recreation park." The new fountain would find a practical location on the west side of the park along Pennsylvania Avenue (Lake Drive today).

At that meeting the date of Friday, May 8, was set as the grand dedication day for the fountain and city park which left only seven weeks in which to plan and execute their preparations. An estimated \$925 was needed to procure the land as soon as possible. Dr. Chapman's yellow frame house needed to be sold and removed, Mrs. Berry's stone barn razed, the rest of the property cleared, and a waterline installed. Spelling bees, fiddle contests, and pie auctions were planned, as well as an entire day of parades, music, speeches, food, and baseball games for the dedication.

As the red-letter day drew near, the fountain arrived by train and a crew from the Kimball Bros. of Lincoln NE were wired to come and set it in place. Numerous thornless locust trees were planted, a speaker's platform constructed, and a flagpole placed in position. Unfortunately, at the last minute, word was received that Miss Lenore Cawker would be unable to attend the dedication due to business, but that her sister Pauline and niece Hortense would come in her stead.

On May 8, as the first sunrays lit a cloudless sky, Old Glory rose for the first time over the new city park and received a 21-gun salute. The Old Settlers and Old Soldiers began arriving from every direction to register at the City Hall and get directions for the grand parade. Such a crowd had not been seen in Cawker since the Old Soldiers' Reunion of 1886 and was estimated to be about 3,000 people. Shortly after 11 a.m. the parade began, headed by a medicine man on horseback surrounded by Indian women and children on foot. This was followed in succession by Uncle Sam, the Old Soldiers, early settlers, grasshoppers (1874), the 21-man band from Downs, children of the first settlers headed by Mrs. Pauline Cawker, mayor and councilmen, school children, the Phoenix Fire Co., various floats, and auto escorts of the early women settlers. A basket dinner followed, with band music in the grass-bare park. At 1:30 p.m., 21 decorated cars paraded before the crowd.

At 2 p.m., the formal dedication ceremonies commenced. After an invocation and greeting, Mrs. Alrich gave a short historical context to the day's events. Then she introduced Hortense, the only granddaughter of Col. Cawker, to formally present her aunt's gift to the city. After a response by Justice Clark A. Smith, Mrs. Snyder presented the City Park to the mayor. This was responded to by J. W. Tucker, followed by a prayer. The band invited the assembled to join in singing "America" and "Home Sweet Home." A few words from former U. S. Senator Charles Curtis were among the other responses that rounded out the formal ceremonies. Two baseball games provided the afternoon's entertainment and an 8 p.m. reception for Mrs. Pauline Cawker and her daughter at the Public Library concluded the day.

Having never married, Miss Lenore Cawker dedicated her life to the humane care of neglected animals in Milwaukee and led the battlecry against cruelty to animals. The inscription above the drinking fountain proclaims "A Merciful Man is Merciful to His Beast." The fountain provides a watering trough for man's beast of burden, the horse, and two, small, low lying pools of water for man's best friend, the dog. (Oddly, cats are never mentioned in the contemporary descriptions of the fountain!). But in 1914, the automobile was already replacing the horse for transportation. The Midland Trail, the first transcontinental highway, had just been established for automobile travel between the coasts. The horse was destined soon to disappear from city streets as had the buffalo from the vast prairie. Precisely when the transition took place is not known, nor the day when the water to the fountain was turned off.

In 1976, the local Bicentennial Committee led a campaign to spruce up the town. The fountain received special attention by having the defaced bronze plaques recast and colorful flowers planted in the former watering trough. In the ensuing years, a sanitary, stainless steel drinking fountain was plumbed into the old one to make the fountain functional again. Eventually, even the hitching posts that were located on either side of the fountain, the last surviving ones in town, were removed.

Despite the many changes that come with the passing of time, we have all become so accustomed to seeing the Cawker Memorial Fountain that we hardly notice it any more. However, if it were ever removed, what a gaping hole it would leave in our hearts.

ROOKS COUNTY

Damar Celebration

by Roger Hrabe, with information from Dawne Leiker, *Hays Daily News*

Memories sprang to life on the streets of Damar on Saturday, August 30, 2014, as former residents returned to the community to mark the 100-year anniversary of its historic St. Joseph Catholic Church and the upcoming 125th anniversary of the French-Canadian settlement.

The Damar Jubilee celebrated the community's unique history that dates back to its founding by French-Canadian settlers in 1888. As descendants of those early settlers displayed their historical memorabilia at the recently remodeled junior high school, they shared stories that had passed down through the generations.

Across town at the church, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, all was silent as the midday sun illuminated the ornate stained-glass windows. The Rev. Henry Saw Lone prepared for the upcoming Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving.

The Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving was held with 37 priests and Bishop Edward Weisenburger proceeding from the community center to the church.

Throughout the weekend, other community events included a craft show, poker tournament, parade, car show, barbecue dinner, catered dinner, kids' games, helicopter rides, tractor show, vendors, dance, movie, and fireworks.

"There are families that haven't been here for years," said Mayor Brian Newell, standing in the middle of the town's main street. He said that more than 550 tickets had been sold to the evening's barbecue dinner.

Community leaders have been working several years to improve the main street area. In addition, most every resident has been busy throughout the past month sprucing up their yards and houses for the celebration.

"We've been working on it (the jubilee) for five or six months," Newell said. "There's a lot of pride here."

On October 8, 1884, President Grover Cleveland signed the document which entitled Francis St. Peter to 160 acres of land on the western edge of Rooks County for the consideration of \$4.00.

Almost immediately other Canadian French Catholic people followed. They came by way of Illinois, then Concordia, Aurora, and St. Joseph and on further to the west, looking for cheap land and a new home. The community became so solidly French in character that it was referred to as the "Acadia of the West." It has retained much of its original tradition to this day.

Today, the St. Joseph Catholic Church is recognized as one of the most beautiful churches in the area. Due to hard times, the building was completed in stages. The limestone was quarried at Waldo and shipped to the site. The towers were completed in 1913 and the first mass celebrated in 1917.

[Editor's Note: Several years ago a couple we met in France (he a native of France and she a native of Germany) spent six weeks in Denver (a house exchange) and decided to visit us while there. They were accompanied by her sister from Germany. He spoke French and English, she spoke English, French, and German, and the sister spoke German and English. English was our only common language. Bonita was on a bicycle ride and I wondered how to entertain guests from Europe in western Kansas. Since we visited historic churches and towns in their region of France, I asked if they would like to visit historic churches and towns here. Yes, of course, they responded. We started with a visit to Damar and St. Joseph's Catholic Church. We visited Nicodemus and other places in the Solomon Valley. Later we visited Volga German churches in Ellis County. They were delighted, impressed, and surprised to find such beautiful churches in rural Kansas. One of the goals of the SV24 Alliance is to encourage tourism. We have the attractions and need to work more to publicize these and encourage more people to get off the Interstate Highway, travel on Highway 24, and visit the historic communities and churches of the Solomon Valley.]