



~ Part 33 ~

Reflections on a Common Theme

Depots

To Read More about
Solomon Valley History
visit our website at

www.hwy24.org

CLOUD COUNTY

Three Depots --- by Joan Nothern

Union Pacific Depot in Glasco

The Solomon Branch of the Union Pacific established a station in Glasco in 1878. The depot was built shortly after and was in service until June 30, 1975, when Paul Hoops, the last depot agent, closed the door for the last time. The depot was destroyed by a wind storm in 1978.

The railroad is credited with stimulating the growth of Glasco. Trains still go through town on the Kyle-owned tracks, but they no longer stop to load wheat. The elevators have closed and been dismantled.

In the 1930s, natural gas was transported from Texas to Chicago. The little depot in Glasco played a role in this historic development. The huge pipes that were laid underground were delivered by train to the Glasco depot. A pumping station was built northeast of town, and a small village grew there for the natural gas pipeline workers. When the technology for moving gas changed, the huge crew was no longer needed. The houses are gone, but the Natural Gas Pipe Line Company of America, 687 Deer Road, Glasco, remains, deposited by the depot.

Concordia, A Depot With a Second Life

The 1917 Union Pacific depot in Concordia has been completely restored and is now the National Orphan Train Museum. It contains exhibits on the children and adults involved in the history of the Orphan Train Movement. The Freight Room, Men's and Women's Waiting Rooms, and Station Master's Office provide the setting for pictures, stories, and activities.

Simpson Station Still Stands

A small wooden depot was built in Simpson at the same time as the station in Glasco. The abandoned, gray-weathered station stands next to the tracks in view of all who stop to eat at the café. The depot is a link to Kansas railroad history.

MITCHELL COUNTY

Beloit Residents Hope to Restore Depot --- by Barbara Axtell

The railroad depot in Beloit has not had any activity for several years. However, Joyce Benedick, who was a member of the Willow Springs Arts Council, still hopes someone will take hold of a project to restore the depot and make it available to the public for events and viewing.

Benedick said the Willow Springs Arts Council leased the depot for 100 years from the railroad company in the early 1980s. They did some remodeling inside and out to make it into a small venue theater with a kitchen. One of the bathrooms was remodeled and a new one was added. Memorial windows were installed that were partially provided by some residents as a memorial for a family member.

When the Willow Springs Arts Council vanished, the City of Beloit started paying for electricity and water and that eventually got forgotten. There has not been any electricity or running water at the depot for quite a while.

In the past it was used occasionally for bridal showers and art club exhibits, but the building is deteriorating. A hail storm damaged the building and roof slightly, but most of the deterioration is happening inside. Local lawyer Curt Frasier said since the Arts Council is no more in existence the lease could be null and void.

Benedick has been trying to get some interest in the building but so far nothing has come from that. She went to the Strategic Doing meeting held in Beloit recently and has not found any interest in the depot. She would like to find someone that would be interested in taking over the building and performing needed repairs.

It is certainly not past fixing up, Benedick said. It still has potential for usage. The bathrooms are pretty well shut down at this time because of the lack of heat. It just needs some loving and someone that would be ongoing to take on such a project, she said.

Clint Sewell was in charge of the key and taking care of the depot for many years after the arts council faded away, but he turned that over to Benedick and there has not been enough interest to keep it going. It is such a pretty building and has a nice space around it that could be developed, she said. The Kyle RR sent a letter recently wondering what is going on with the depot so something needs to be done if the building will remain a vital part of the area.

Railroad depots in Mitchell County

According to the Beloit Gazette, March 2, 1911, the Missouri Pacific Railway Company was incorporated under the articles of agreement and consolidation of May 1909. According to the report of the Kansas Board of Railroad Commissioners for the biennial period ending June 30, 1910, the Missouri Pacific operated 2379.44 miles of main lines and branches in Kansas, and the entire mileage of the company was 4717.78 miles, plus 105.5 miles operated over leased lines. The Missouri Pacific operated more than one-fourth the entire railroad mileage in Kansas.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1910, the company carried a total of 5,890,556 passengers an average distance of 40 to 48 miles per capita. In Kansas that year the freight revenue alone was \$9,940,747.

The following regarding a fire at the depot in Beloit was taken from the February 19, 1906, Beloit Call: "Went up in Smoke - The Missouri Pacific warehouse and contents completely incinerated this afternoon - origin of fire unknown - loss estimated at about \$2,000.

"For the first time in many months Beloit's big fire bell was brought into use at 1:40 this afternoon to awaken the populace to the fact that a conflagration was raging in the First Ward. It was but a few moments until the hose carts, the firemen and a large crowd of spectators had gathered at the Missouri Pacific depot, the building which was on fire being the Missouri Pacific freight depot.

"Although gallant efforts were made to subdue the hungry flames, the depot and all its contents fell prey to their ravages, and it was for a time doubtful whether or not some of the surrounding buildings would not share a like fate.

"The building was first discovered to be on fire by 'Jack' Raney, the baggageman, at which time the east end was ablaze. The alarm was at once sounded, but the depot, flammable as tinder, was too nearly gone to be saved. There was considerable freight stored in the building, among which were two pianos and all of this was burned also.

"During the early stage of the fire a line of freight cars was standing on the side track south of the depot and one on the track to the north.

Although it was far from being a pleasant job the Union Pacific freight train, which was switching on its own tracks, detached its engine and run in on the Missouri Pacific tracks and pulled the endangered cars out to safety. The car, which was on the north tracks was badly burned and when pulled out of the smoke was a mass of flames, which the fire boys quickly subdued.

"The Missouri Pacific depot employees have not the slightest idea as to the origin of the fire, their first intimation that anything was wrong being when Mr. Raney broke the news to them. The loss, as nearly as can be roughly estimated, is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2,000.

The wind was blowing in as favorable direction as could have been asked as had it been in almost any other direction the result might have been disastrous. The freight depot was bounded by the passenger depot, the Standard oil tanks, the Union Pacific depot and numerous coal sheds and the Gise elevator. As it was, the roof of the Union Pacific depot was in constant danger from flames that seemed to be bent on reaching the place. A liberal supply of water poured on with buckets tended toward cooling the shingles.

“Two streams of water were sprayed on the burning building, but the pressure was not of enough force to effect to any very great extent a flame of any significance.

“The warehouse will probably be rebuilt as soon as possible, for at the best the depot employees have all they can do to handle the freight and without a depot it will make it doubly inconvenient.”

Following the fire a new depot was built, with the following taken from the March 2, 1911, Beloit Gazette.

The new Missouri Pacific depot in Beloit was said to be the best on the road and was one of the best railroad depots in the state of Kansas. The new \$20,000 building was finished and the trains were stopping on March 2, 1911. Passengers were walking about the platform and in the depot making comments but pretending to feel natural.

The new depot is one that does credit to both the Missouri Pacific and to Beloit; the building is strictly modern and up-to-date and gives everyone who sees it a good impression of the town, no matter if they are arriving or departing.

At that time the Missouri Pacific Railroad ran trains in 63 of the 105 counties in Kansas, with more than double the mileage of any other railroad in the state with the exception of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad.

Most of the depots in Mitchell County still exist, however some of them have been made into houses. Two of the old depots in Beloit have been made into houses, plus the Missouri Pacific depot is still there.

The depots also remain in Scottsville, Simpson, Glen Elder, Cawker City, and Hunter. Tipton's is now being used as a warehouse.

ROOKS COUNTY

Stockton Depot --- by Roger Hrabe

An unfortunate consequence of the gradual demise of many short-line railroads has been the loss of fixtures in the community such as the train depot station. Such is the case in Stockton. The last depot building in Stockton was located just to the east of South Walnut Street, between South 2nd and South 4th streets.

The Stockton Town Company was chartered in August 1872, which preceded the coming of the railroad in 1885. In the case of many other towns, the railroad was the determining factor in where the town was located.

With the coming of the railroad to Stockton, the depot became the center of activity. It was at the depot that freight arrived and was shipped, passengers arrived and departed, and the mail was loaded and unloaded. The railroad provided inexpensive transportation for building materials, such as lumber and hardware, and for other items necessary for construction.

The depot served its purpose for many years, but eventually as other forms of transportation, namely automobile transportation, the railroad began a slow decline, and thus the importance of the train depot declined as well.

A record from the Kansas Historic Resources Inventory shows that the Stockton depot was moved in 1980 to the Thomas Bigge residence west of Stockton. It was to be used as a mechanic shop.

GRAHAM COUNTY

Graham County Railroad Depots

Bogue's depot, built in 1888, was one of the larger depots on the branch at 24' x 80'. The agency at Bogue closed June 18, 1971, and the depot retired in 1972. It was declared surplus property by the U.P. R.R. and sold to an area farmer. On June 28, 1973, it was moved to his farm to be used as a storage building.

Hill City's depot was in operation for about 100 years, from 1888 to about 1988. After being taken out of service, the depot was purchased for its timber and torn down around 1990. The timber was reused by the owner to repair other buildings.

Penokee's first depot was destroyed by a fire that resulted from being struck by lightning on August 26, 1915. During the blaze, the faithful telegraph agent was at his post frantically notifying headquarters that his depot was burning. The replacement depot, constructed in 1916, is a rare "pagoda" style building. It was moved in 1994 to the grounds of the Ellis Railroad Museum.

Morland's first depot was consumed by a fire on February 18, 1909. The depot was rebuilt in the same year and is the only depot in the county still standing in its original location. On the west outskirts of Morland was a 145-foot Pegram Truss and 20-span timber trestle which was the largest bridge on the Plainville branch, crossing the South Fork of the Solomon River.