



~ Part 34 ~
Reflections on a Common Theme
Hotels & Boarding Houses

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Glasco Hotels & Rooming Houses

by Joan Nothern

The imposing hotel built in Glasco ten years after the railroad reached this far was meant to serve travelers, businessmen and salesmen who sought orders for merchandise, extended family members on a visit, and the adventurous seeking to sample the prairie wilds.

The Oakes House was built in the summer of 1887 by H. H. Spaulding. It was originally named by the proprietor, the Spaulding House. It was renamed the Commercial Hotel by 1908, and the street it was located on was eventually named "Railroad." This sealed the connection between the means of arrival and the waiting hospitality.

A notice in the Glasco paper captures the fine points celebrated in the 1887 opening: "GRAND OPENING of the Spaulding House, Glasco, Kas., Thursday night, Nov. 24, 1887. A general good time is expected. Supper served at 10 o'clock. H. H. Spaulding, Proprietor. The Spaulding House to be opened next week is about completed, and has for the past week been receiving the finishing touches. It is built of brown sand stone, suitably trimmed with white magnesia; size 35 x 80, four floors. The inside is particularly arranged for comfort and convenience. On the basement floor is the kitchen, well and cistern room, coal room and a large lighted dining room. The first floor includes the office, wash room, parlors and sample rooms, while the upper floors are divided into sleeping rooms. The building is a credit to Glasco, and reflects well the enterprise and energy of Mr. Spaulding in planning and completing so large a public house, and in finishing and furnishing it throughout in the latest styles."

A century later, Madonna and Larry Sorell restored a historic country home on 40 acres and welcomed travelers to Rustic Remembrances Bed and Breakfast. They raised animals listed on the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, an organization dedicated to protecting endangered livestock and poultry breeds from extinction. The Sorells raised Red Wattle Pigs, Jacob Sheep, Katahdin Sheep, Standard Bronze Turkeys, and Belgium draft horses,

Just as guests at Rustic Remembrances could see the rare farm animals, the home itself offered them an experience in prairie life. This included a large library and a common room with fireplace to encourage conversation. Madonna, who spins and weaves, offered classes, keeping those skills alive.

New York chefs made a trip to Rustic Remembrances to verify the free-range turkeys they got from the Sorells were in fact "happy." Their concern was a variation of the concern that Larry and Madonna Sorell had for their guests.

Both the Commercial Hotel and Rustic Remembrances served travelers. The hotel promised the latest in convenience, the bed and breakfast was dedicated to sharing a glimpse of rare livestock and experiences from the past.

OSBORNE COUNTY

Osborne Hotels

In 1878 James H. Lipton came to Osborne and built the Lipton House, a two-story frame building on the northeast corner of First and Main Streets. Lipton owned it a year before selling out. A third story was added in 1879. During succeeding years the hotel operated as the Maxwell House, Osborne House, Hotel McGuire, and McGuire House. It was torn down in 1920 to make way for the new Crystal Theater.

In 1879 a new hotel was built at Main and Second Street in Osborne by John R. Brodrick and Frank Frizzel. It offered 20 rooms. They called it the Key West Hotel.

They promptly sold it to the Liptons, and successive owners named it the Alamo, Davis Hotel, Reeme Hotel, and Shrader House. It had a fine reputation for a long time, but was finally torn down in August 1946 after being acquired by Samuel Wooley.

Alton Tourist Home by Deanna Roach & Carolyn Williams

When you enter Alton now you see elevators rising to the sky. Much of the impetus for the elevators came from the man who is credited with building what was one of the foremost rooming establishments in Alton. F. W. Gaunt, originally from Illinois, was an enterprising young man in the 1880s when he came to Alton to invest in farming enterprises and rooming houses or hotels.

Although not a farmer, he was a businessman who helped the farmers of the area by building some of the most up-to-date elevators at the time in which to store grains and which the farmers were glad to use. He not only built elevators, but was instrumental in building one of the largest and most imposing homes in Alton for his bride, Stella Franks, who he married November 9, 1890. The home still stands, but is in dire need of TLC and a loving repairman. With the second-story sleeping porch added later, the 18-room house became the "Tourist Home" when the second owner, Joe Krahl and his parents, moved to Alton in 1914 after the house was sold by Gaunt's widow. There have been only two other owners after the Gaunts, quite a record in this time of changing houses and lands.

The house soon became a hotel of sorts with its eight bedrooms and indoor bathroom—one for all the roomers upstairs! During the 1930s the roomers and the chickens and eggs kept the Krahls from needing government aid. Son Joe was adept at fixing machinery, so that helped too. Up until the Krahls died in 1955 and 1976, the house had served the area well as a place to stay. Though not called a "hotel," it became a place for many teachers of the local Alton schools to live throughout the school years. "One notable event occurred on November 16, 1973, when the Creedence Clearwater Revival, music group made an unplanned stop in Alton when the group's car broke down near Alton as they were traveling to Geneva, Nebraska for a concert. They spent several hours at Joe Krahl's Tourist Home while waiting for their manager to come to Alton to pick them up."

Many of the larger homes in Alton were rented as well by the teachers who served the schools. The Forrest Stanfield home and the Stephenson House were used as well by teachers and students alike during the 1940s and 1950s as a place of residence. At one time, four high school students lived in the Stephenson home while they attended the high school just three blocks away.

An earlier building, the Austin Hotel, which once stood where the basketball court in Lyman T. Earl City Park is now, was used in earlier days of what was once called Bull City, for guests but also as an early classroom. Often the classrooms were located in the second floors of businesses until a "real school" could be built for the scholars of the area.

Alton still sports tall grain bins for the bountiful crops of the area. At this writing, a new big bin is in the process of being built. A mere block south you can see the once-grand Tourist Home which we hope will become "grand" again.

ROOKS COUNTY

The Hicks Hotel at Stockton

by Susan McFarland

It was a time of great optimism in Stockton when the Hicks Hotel was built in 1886. The town was founded in 1872 and incorporated in 1879. Its future was secured with the completion of the Missouri Pacific Railroad to the town in 1885, which was end of the line for this branch of the railroad. Stockton grew quickly, boasting a population of nearly 2,000 in 1887. The city issued \$33,000 in bonds to fund a water works, and the water was turned on July 4, 1887. The first light plant was built by Charles Woods and purchased by the city in 1889 (\$13,000 bond issue). The Hicks Hotel contributed to the growth of the city.

Henry A. Hicks (born in Indiana in 1840 and married to Hester Newton in 1862) came to Rooks County and Stockton in 1875 from Nemaha County in northeast Kansas. He and J. R. Hicks operated a blacksmith and wagon shop until March 1881, when Henry became the proprietor of the Randall House

and managed it until he built the Hotel Hicks in 1886 at the corner of Cedar and North First streets. In 1900 he moved his family from Stockton to Idaho, where he lived out the remainder of his life and is buried.

The Hicks Hotel cost an estimated \$11,000, with another \$5,000 to furnish it. Approximately 300,000 bricks, all locally manufactured in Stockton, were used in the construction. It contained 44 sleeping rooms, display rooms for salesmen, a large dining room lit by gas (later electric) fixtures, and heated by steam. A windmill was put up in the back and mounted on a fifty-foot tower.

The hotel formally opened February 22, 1887, with a grand ball and supper. The ball was held at the Opera House and approximately 100 couples danced to the music of the Miles Brothers orchestra. The hotel hosted between 200 and 300 people for supper that night in the elegant dining room. It catered to mostly commercial travelers (i.e., traveling salesmen), railroad crews, and travelers from other towns. It was claimed to have the best accommodations west of Atchison.

In April 1892 a heavy wind blew down the windmill, tower, and tank, crashing into trees, smashing the board fence and demolished in the process.

W. R. McNutt was the owner in 1905 when "a great wind" went through the area. The tin roof and the upper timbers were ripped off and blown as far as one block away. The structure was completely stripped of roof, cornice, chimneys, and layers of brick. The damage to the building was estimated at \$1,200 to \$1,500 (in 1905 dollars).

Other owners between 1905 and 1963 included George M. Nobel, Dartmouth Saving Bank, Perry H. Cooper, Leslie C. Wilson, E. and Sophie Christensen, James E. Adams, Larry S. Beck, Marion R. Larson, and Stockton National Bank. The name was changed to Beck Hotel in 1935. The building was demolished in 1963 to make way for a new Stockton National Bank building.

GRAHAM COUNTY

Nicodemus Hotels

by Angela Bates

Although the St. Francis Hotel and Post Office, owned and operated by Zach and Jenny Fletcher, was the first hotel built to accommodate visitors, there were several hotels established in Nicodemus during the early years. The Boles House was then built but closed in the early 1880s. The Gibson House Hotel was erected by Eliza Smith, an emigrant from Denver, and was constructed on the corner of 2nd and Washington, across from the present Visitor Center/Township Hall. It was a 30-foot square two-story stone-block structure, containing 11 guest rooms, a separate dining room, and a frame livery barn in the back. It was the first traditionally-configured hotel built in Nicodemus. After only a year of operation and when the railroad failed to come to Nicodemus and the banker ran off with her money, she sold it to David Williams and Samuel Garland. They redecorated and renamed it the Commercial House. Later, the hotel was again renovated and renamed the Fisher Hotel in 1888.

Recently, Nicodemus has experienced a resurgence of accommodations for visitors by providing temporary housing. Sharyn Dowdell established Sharyn's Bread and Breakfast two miles north of Nicodemus. Most recently, The Bates Farm Guest House was opened one mile north of town.