

CAWKER CITY

Established 1870

History

We've Got it All

Cawker City was founded in 1870 by four men, who played a poker game to see who the town would be named after. The winner, Colonel E. H. Cawker, built the first house in town. The town was incorporated on

March 20, 1874, and grew quickly. Soon Cawker City had mills, banks, churches, an opera house, a city auditorium, and full-time train service. By 1880, the town's population was at its peak, at 2,000.

In 1884, a new high school building replaced the one built in 1871. The local women took over the men's library club in 1884 and stored the books in the Hesperian Library, which now houses a museum. After its peak, the population slowly began to fall. Soon, as happened to many Kansas towns, the last passenger train came to Cawker City in 1960.

Today, despite its small size, Cawker City still has all of the qualities you would expect in a fine upstanding community.

Architecture

Wisconsin Street, Hands Down

Check out the original and outstanding architecture in Cawker City's downtown area. Strung out along U.S. Highway 24, the Wisconsin Street Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Looking east along Wisconsin Street in 1909.



Cawker City's Ball of Twine was started in 1953.

Art

Musical Art

Built in 1886, the Cawker City United Methodist Church organ is the oldest church organ in Kansas. Henry Pilcher's Sons of Louisville, Kentucky built the organ for the congregational church in Kinsley, Kansas. In 1931, the Cawker Methodists bought the organ and placed it in their native limestone church.

The organ is typically English in construction and features painted pipes with "Victorian stencil" designs. English features include a swell box for the upper manual, two foot levers which add or take off stops on the great for quick dynamic changes, and the use of a 12-note common bass stop for each manual for the stops which begin at tenor C. The organ can be pumped by hand or winded by an electric motor. The case is of ash and oak and the key desk and pedalboard are of walnut.

Geography

Springs and Reservoirs

The location of Cawker City on the earth is 39 degrees 30' 45" North, 98 degrees 26' 00" West. In other words, the town is located in Mitchell County in north central Kansas. It was founded near the legendary Waconda Springs and currently sits at the midpoint of the north shore of Waconda Lake.

Cuisine/Commerce

*A Little Grillin'; Some Fishin';
and then Shoppin.*

Wisconsin Street's shops house everything from antiques to hardware to food, and much more.

Check out the local eateries while you spend your weekend fishing and hunting at Waconda Lake.

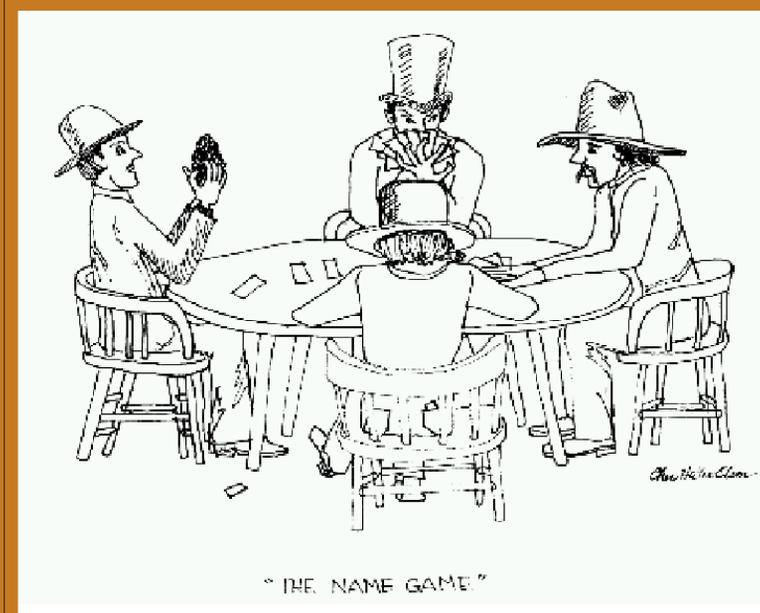
Customs

Some Twine and a Dream

Frank Stoeber started this ball of twine on his farm in 1953. By 1957 it weighed 5,000 pounds, stood 8 feet high, and had 1,175,180 feet of twine on it. Stoeber gave the ball to Cawker City in 1961.

Each year the Twine-A-Thon is held in conjunction with the annual Cawker City Picnic and Parade, so the ball never stops growing. The picnic and parade are on the third Saturday in August, with the twine winding being held the Friday before.

The ball of twine is located in downtown Cawker City on the south side of Wisconsin Street. It is half a block west of Lake Drive, but you shouldn't have any trouble finding it (After all, this is a small town and a BIG ball of twine).



*The poker game for the naming of the new town.
Sketch by Cher Heller Olson.*

People

Boosting Community Pride

A number of churches and civic organizations make up the human physique of this rural community and serve as town "boosters," providing support and direction to the many people and businesses that call Cawker City home.

The North Central Kansas Genealogical Society has its headquarters in Cawker City at the City Library. Members of the Society aid the public in rediscovering their heritage.