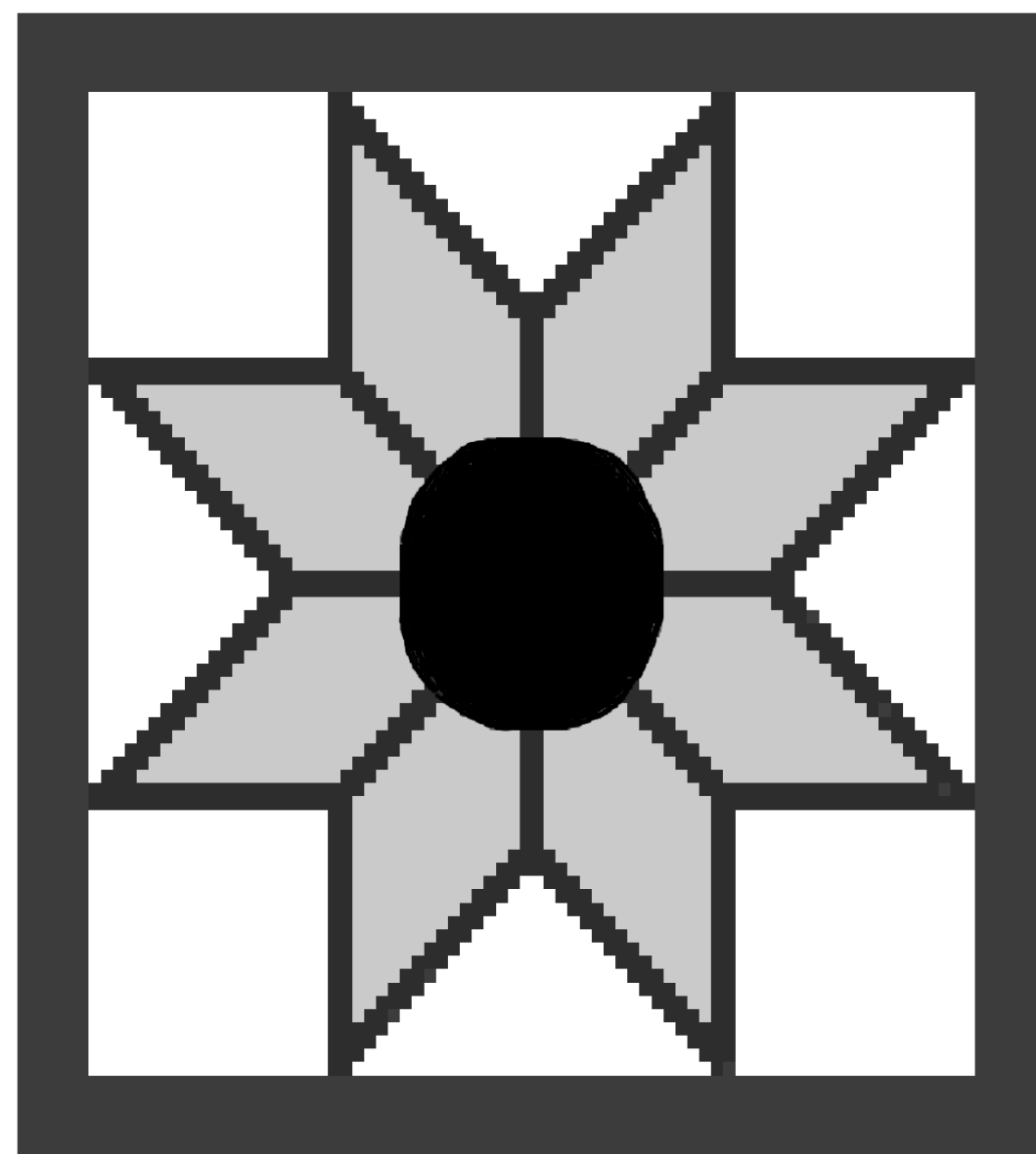


HILL CITY

Established 1880

Kansas Sampler Foundation



Eight Rural Elements

GEOGRAPHY

Rolling Country, Cottonwoods, and Blue Skies
Hill City sits in the High Plains region of the Great Plains. It is built on a slight elevation overlooking the South Solomon River valley. Three draws cross the original town site, making the city appear to be built on hills. Many think the town's name was selected because of this location, but in truth, it was named for the founder, W.R. Hill.

HISTORY

The Fight for the County Seat

The first white settlers in Graham County arrived in 1873. Real estate developer W.R. Hill, speculating on a potential railroad location, settled in Graham County in 1877. He encouraged pioneers from the eastern United States to migrate to the county and founded the town named after him. The mortality rate of towns in those days was high, but Hill City survived. This survival can best be attributed to W.R. Hill and his bulldog-like determination not only to have the town carry his name, but for that town to be the county seat.

Beginning in 1879, a long and bitter fight ensued which included several elections, fires, and violent arguing over where to locate the county seat. On March 6, 1888, the question was settled when a tornado destroyed the rival community of Millbrook.

Still, all was not well in the 1890s when the rivalry between Hill City's two business streets developed into a bitter fight that lasted many years. One can still read the words stamped in the sidewalk on the corner of Pomeroy and Main Streets, "*Here we meet and to part forever.*"

CUSTOMS

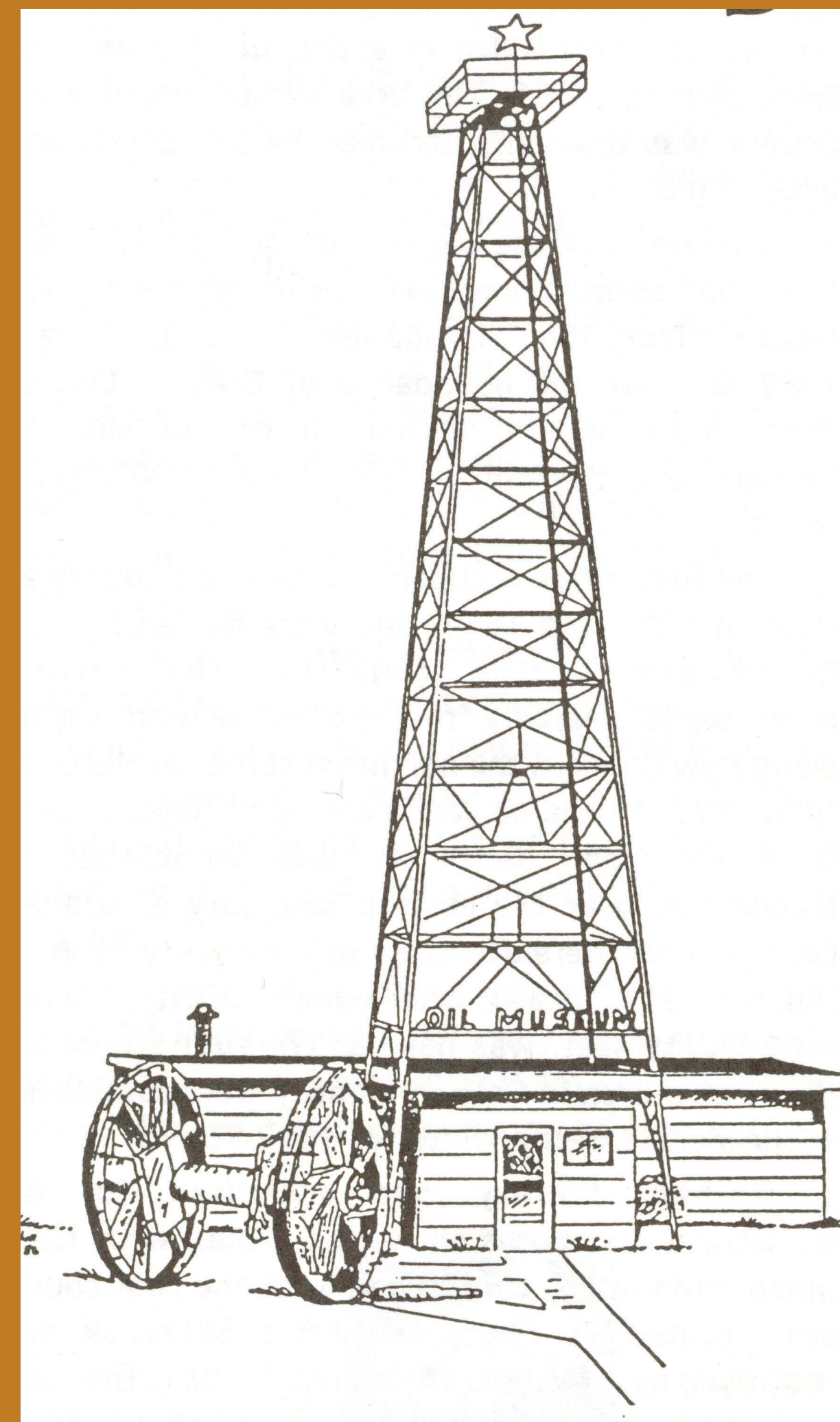
Flocks and Flocks of Hunters Flock to the Flocks

Whether to renew friendships, to escape the daily grind, or just to enjoy the "thrill of the hunt," outdoorsmen return to the area every year to hunt turkey, quail, dove, pheasant, and deer. People flock to Hill City every year for the traditional opening day hunt.

Each summer when the wheat harvest begins, farmers look to any able-bodied friends or relatives who are willing to abandon their air-conditioned jobs, return to their roots, and help with the harvest.



Looking north along Pomeroy Avenue around 1890.



Hill City's Oil Museum pays homage to the area's oil boom years of the 1940s and 1950s.

COMMERCE

Amber Waves of Grain

Originally an agricultural community, Hill City prospered from the booming oil industry in the 1940s and 1950s. As oil production declined, farming and ranching once again became the primary economic activities in the area. Through the years, several families have persevered and continue working second, third, and fourth generation operations. Today, Hill City businesses, some in operation for decades, meet the varied needs of the community.

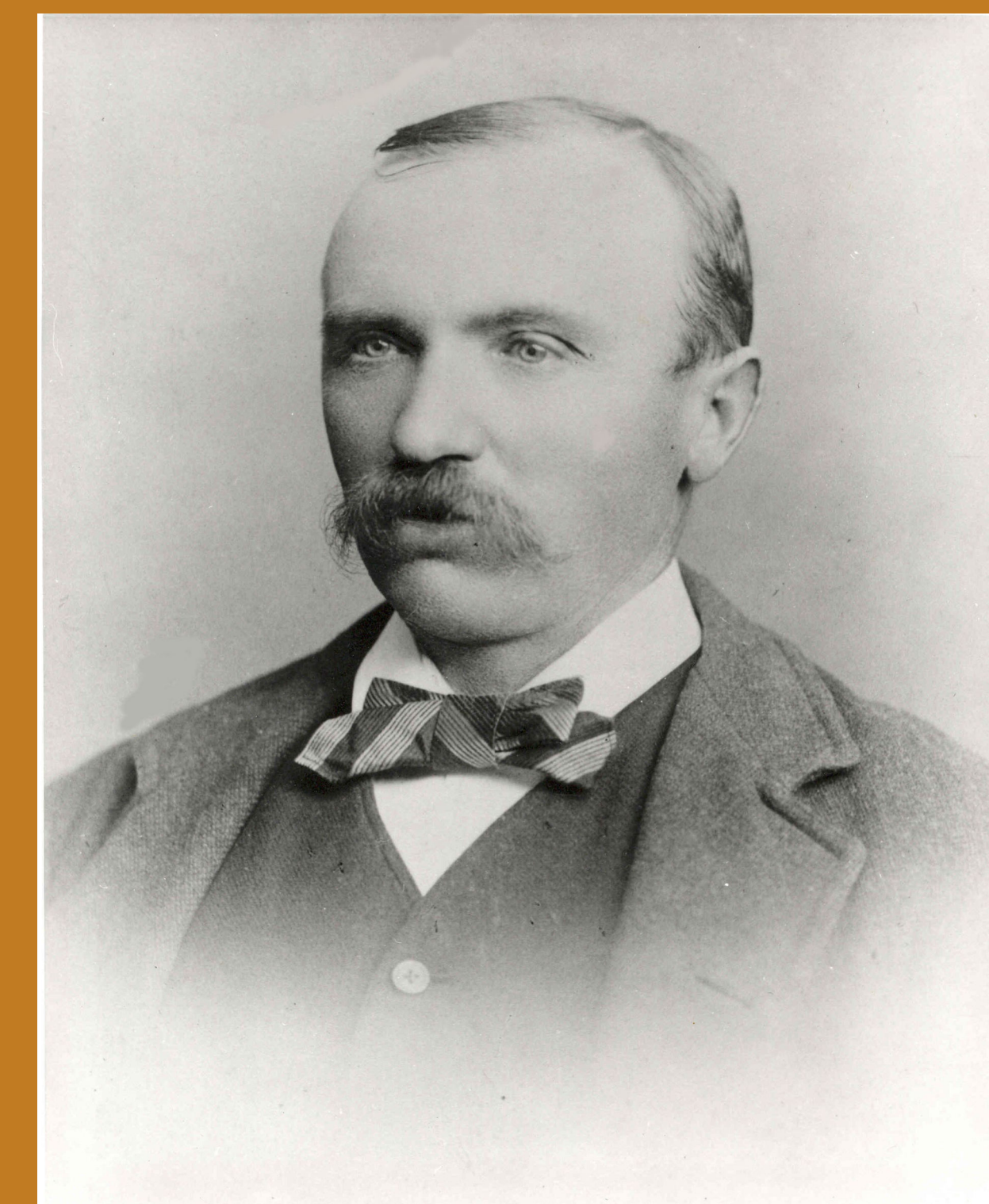
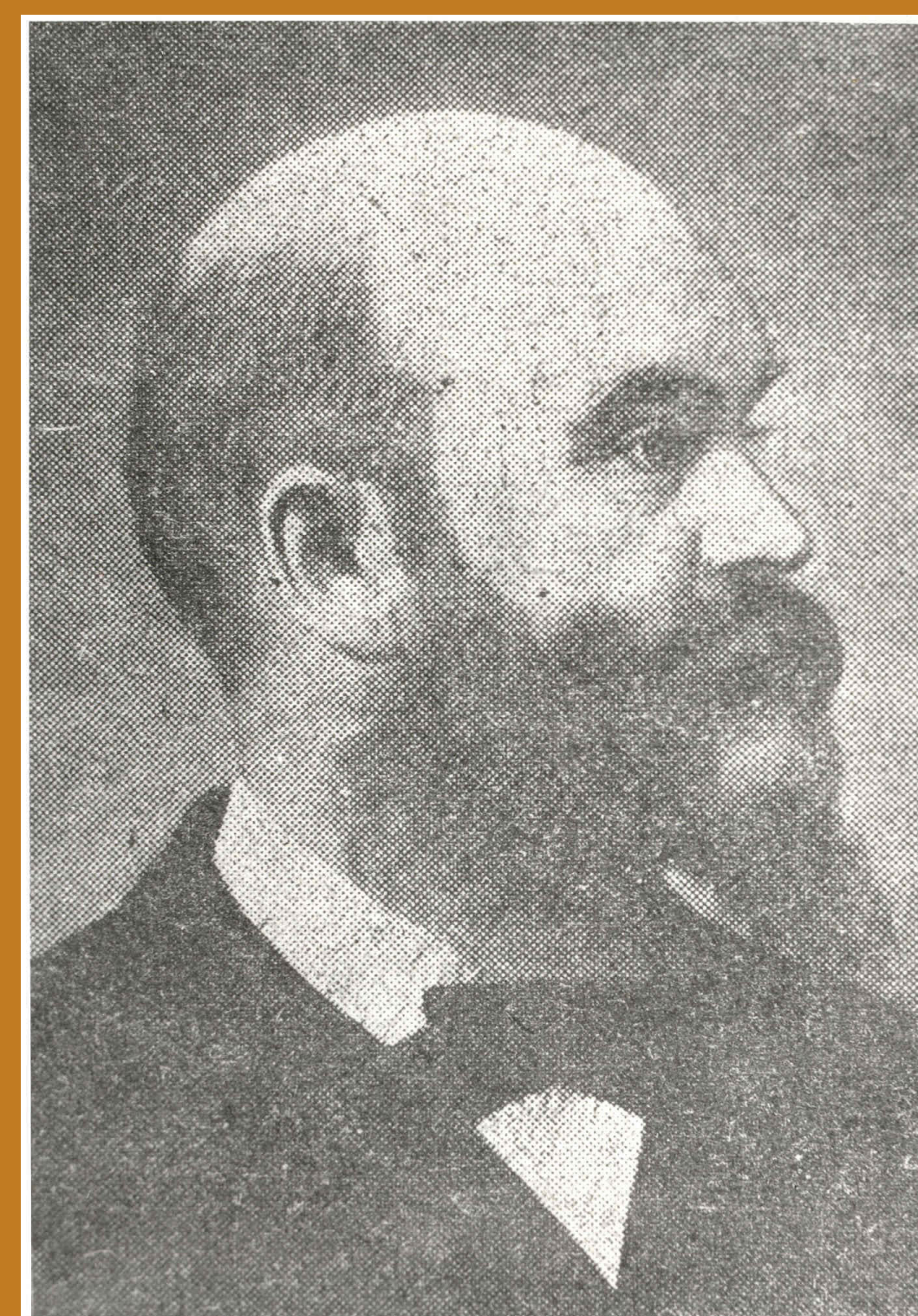
Don't leave Hill City without visiting the Oil Museum, which portrays the development of oil production from its beginning stages to the present. Upon its establishment by the Hill City Chamber of Commerce in 1958, it became the first of its kind in the nation.

ARCHITECTURE

Golly, Oh Golly, Ogallala Everywhere!

Driving through Hill City you will notice buildings constructed of a green quartzite quarried locally from the Ogallala Formation. The City Park shelter house, scout house, swinging bridge, and gazebo, all built by the Works Progress Administration during the 1930s, were constructed of this stone. The Park is located on West Street. Old Memorial High School was built a decade earlier of the same rock. It is located between N. 2nd and N. 3rd Avenue.

Many other interesting structures still in use today, such as the Presbyterian Church built in 1890 and numerous private homes, were crafted from native limestone. These buildings exemplify the excellent craftsmanship of local stone masons of the last century.



James P. Pomeroy and W. R. Hill, Hill City's two great promoters during the town's formative years.

ART

High on the Hill, Almost in the Heavens

Three miles south of town on U.S. Highway 283, look to the eastern hills to see the painted concrete "HC" emblem donated by high school students. Higher up, a cross adorns the hill's crest.

Visit the Graham County Library to enjoy exhibits by local artists, collectors, and students. The Helios Club sponsors an annual art competition each April, and the Hill City High School Art show is held each May.

CUISINE

The Groundhog Who Didn't Get to See his Shadow, and other Local Favorites

Several local restaurants in Hill City offer a variety of specialties for just as many appetites. However, if you're looking for food and community fun, note the date of one of the many local activities that boast home cooking at its finest! These include local church groundhog suppers, hospital auxiliary luncheons, harvest supper, or the traditional Chamber of Commerce-sponsored barbeques. There is always something cooking in Hill City to please the palate and delight the soul!

PEOPLE

The Rivalry of Hill & Pomeroy

W. R. Hill had the dream, and James P. Pomeroy had the finances, to make Hill's hopes for his namesake town to prosper during the 1880s. Pomeroy, a Boston millionaire and head of the Pomeroy Coal Company, arrived in town in 1887, and Hill became the town's first mayor a year later. Starting out as partners, the two became arch rivals as each sought to out build the other. Pomeroy built a business district along Pomeroy Avenue (called "Northside"), while Hill developed Main Street (called "Southside"). Their rivalry continued until Hill's death in 1905, followed by Pomeroy's two years later. The feud between the two town "sides" went on into the 1920s, leaving Hill City today with two distinct business districts.

Founded in 1880, Graham County was named after Captain John L. Graham, 8th Kansas Regiment, who was killed at the Battle of Chickamauga.

Hill City has fielded athletic teams since the 1880's. In the 1950's, Hill City was home to one of the state's best semi-professional baseball teams. In more recent years, Coach Keith Riley has led the high school basketball and track teams to numerous state titles. In 2014, he was inducted into the NHSACA Hall of Fame, and in 2017 he retired after 50 years of coaching in Hill City.



Looking west along Main Street in the early part of the 20th Century.