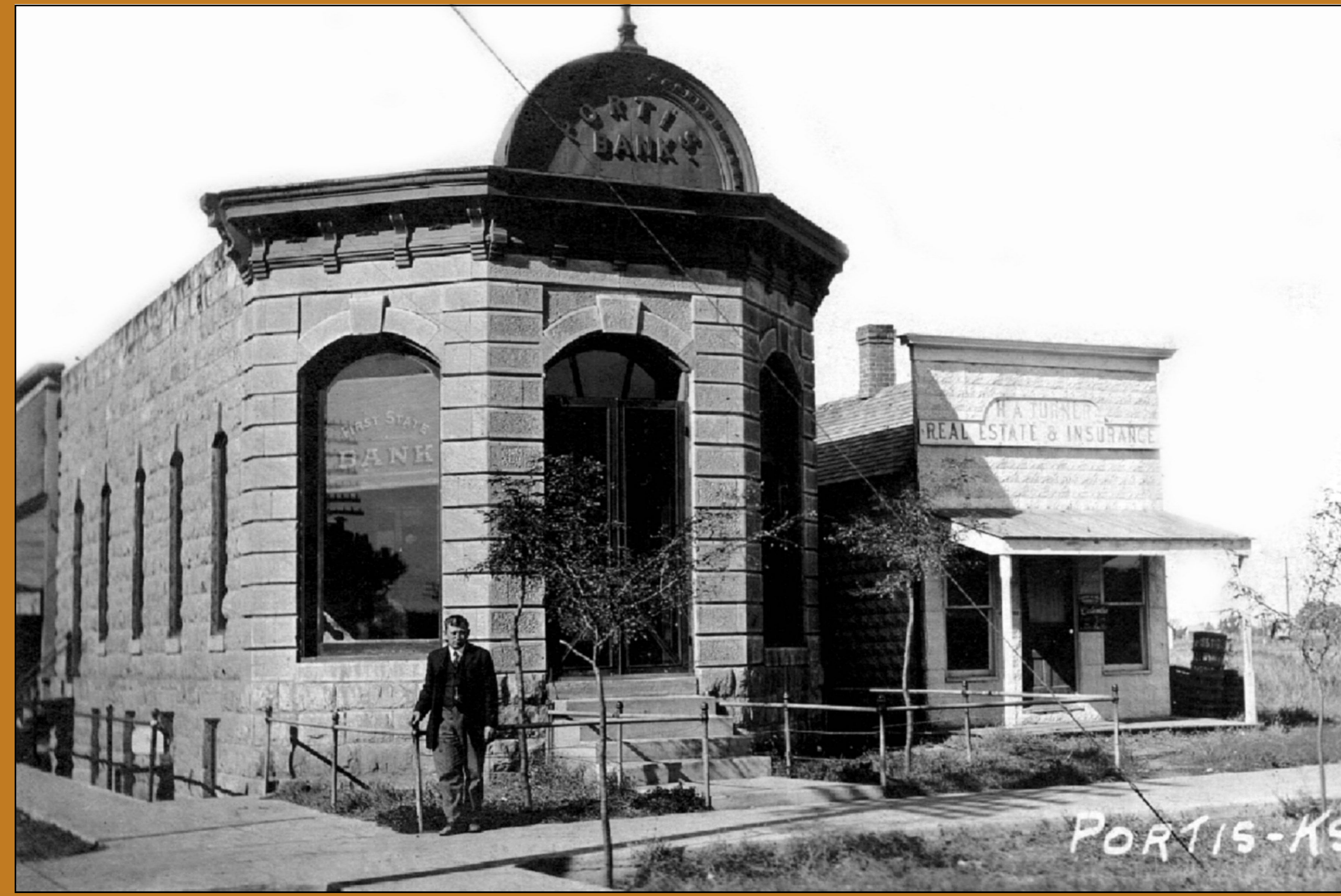


# PORTIS

Established 1871



*The northwest corner of Market and Fourth Streets in Portis as it looked in 1910. At left is the State Bank of Portis, built in 1887, and at right is Hudson A. Turner's Real Estate & Insurance Company. The bank closed its doors in 1992.*

## HISTORY

### *From Bethany to Portis*

The town of Bethany was founded in 1871 and platted by Samuel Chatfield and Philander Judson in 1879. That August the Central Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad was built through Bethany and with it came the problem of the town's mail being mixed with that of Bethany, Missouri. On February 16, 1880, the town and post office changed their name to Portis in honor of railroad official Thomas J. Portis.

In the fall of 1879 Samuel Beardsley erected the first and only hotel, the Northway, ever opened in Portis. Three newspapers saw life during the city's early years. The *Portis Patriot* began in 1880, later became the *Whisperer*, and in 1904 the *Portis Independent* reported the weekly news until 1943.

The first bank in the town was opened in 1885. A drug store was opened in the 1890s and finally closed in 1949. A number of restaurants operated in the city over the years, with the last closing in the 1980s. In 1911 the Portis Opera House was built and served as the city's community center. A theatre was started in the Opera House and then moved into a building of its own, closing in the late 1920s.

In earlier years, townspeople gathered at the Opera House to watch the legendary Portis Dynamos town basketball team. Put together in 1918, for years they dominated all other town teams from across northern Kansas and southern Nebraska. A Dynamo loss was so rare that they are simply not remembered.

The first school started in a sod structure in 1872. Portis High School opened in 1906 and served the town until its closure in 1967. The town's grade school closed in 1972.

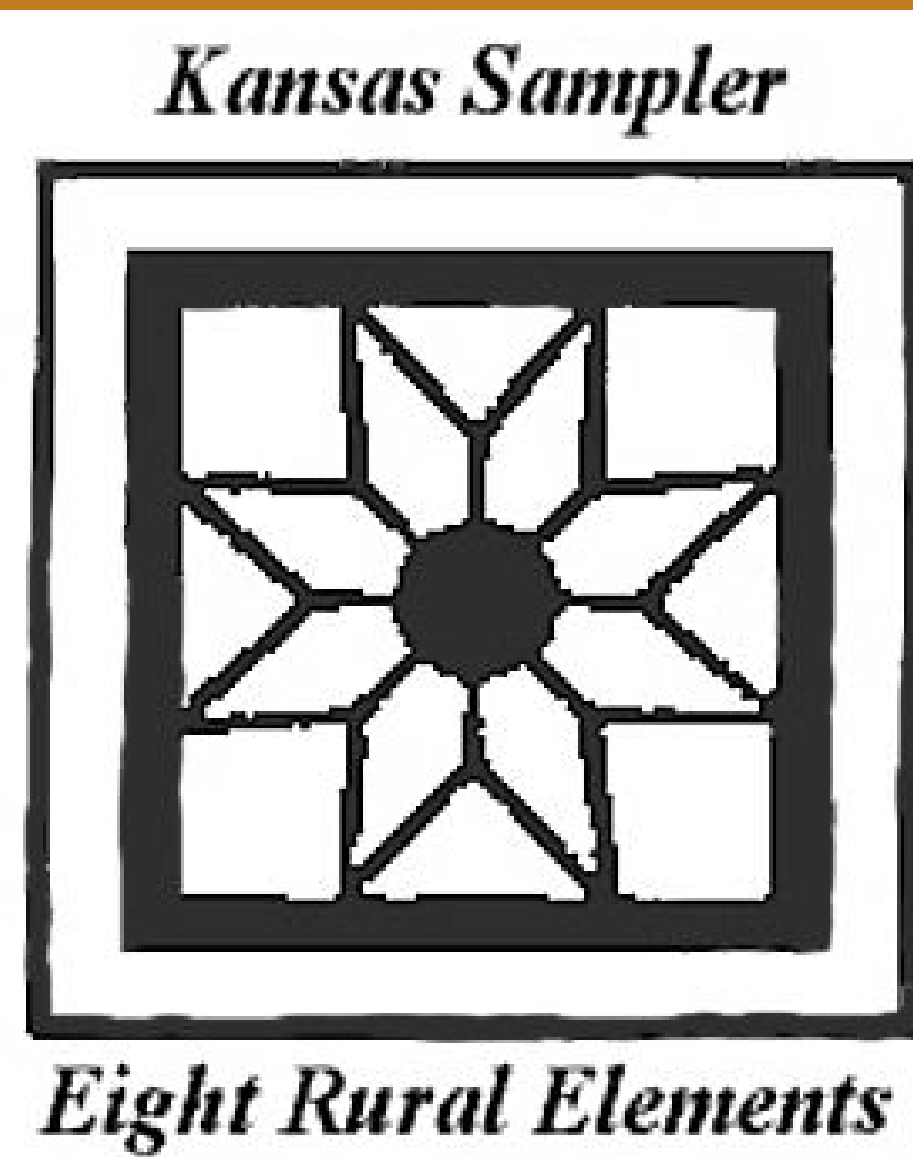


*The Portis sod school in 1879, then located on Windy Point north of Portis just within the Smith County border.*

## ART

### *Welcoming Ironwork*

Welcoming visitors and natives to the community, the ironwork sign featuring the word "Portis" can be found on the west side of South Market Street in the downtown district.



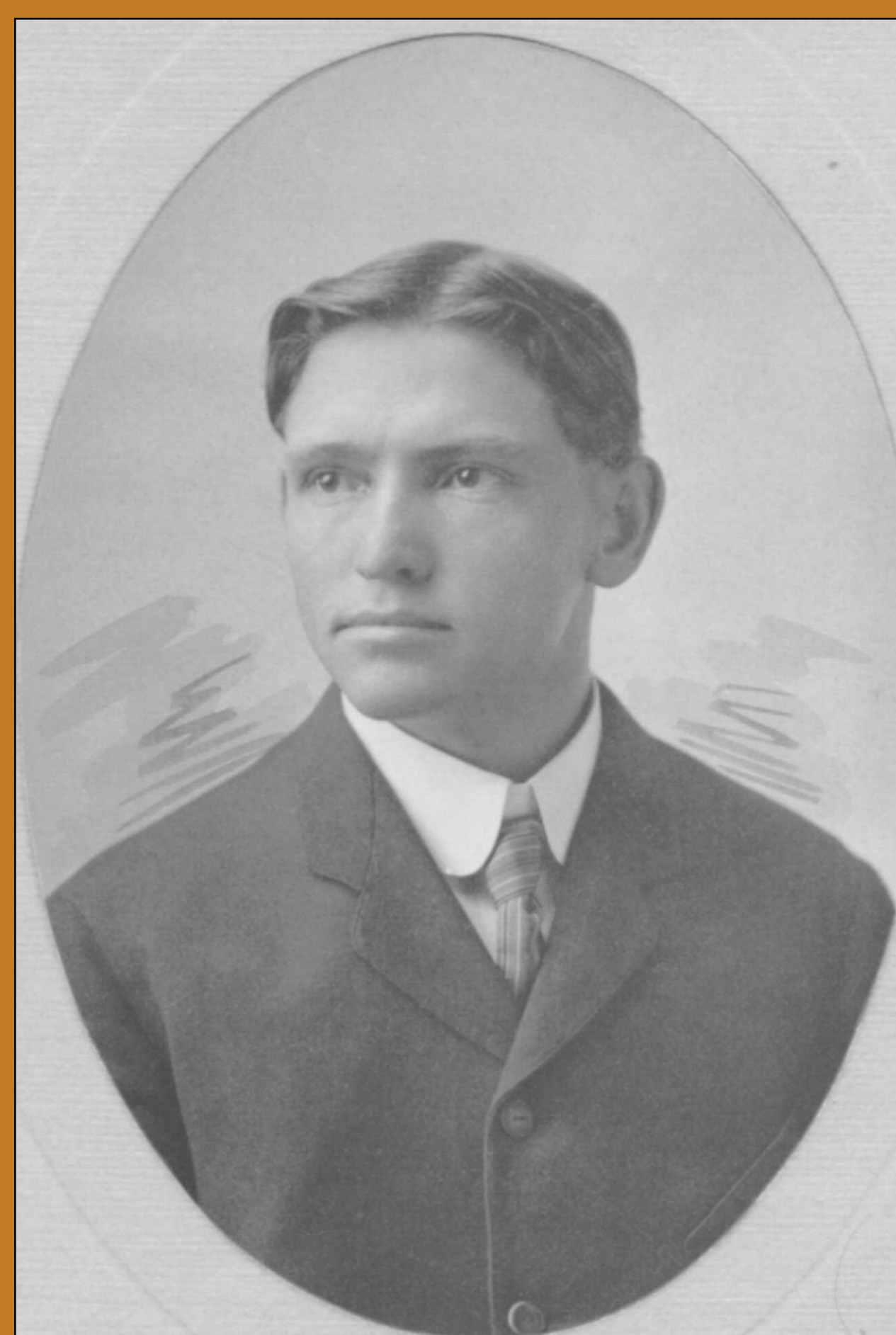
## ARCHITECTURE

### *Banks, Churches & a Hospital*

The native limestone State Bank of Portis was constructed in 1887. Home to Portis' only bank until the 1980s, it houses an interior lined with walnut furnishings.

Two community churches show interesting architectural styles. The older North Solomon Church of the Brethren was organized in 1874 with the building being constructed in 1898. First organized in 1883, the current Grace Brethren Church dates from 1922.

The Burtch Hospital, East Second Street, was a regional hospital until 1952. An abandoned Second Empire-style home, the hospital was built by Dr. Claude Burtch in 1925 and was substantially expanded over the years.



*Dr. Claude Burtch is pictured. Doc Burtch practiced in Portis from 1911 until his death in 1957. A memorial to him can be found in the Portis City Park.*

## GEOGRAPHY

### *From Windy Point to the Portis Bluffs*

The rolling hills near Portis contain many geographical points of interest, from Windy Point to the Portis Bluffs on the southeast. Farther east is Wildrose Canyon, said to have been used by horse thieves as a hideout in the 1870s-1890s.

## CUISINE / COMMERCE

### *Come and Be a Bidder for Bargains*

Catch the sight and sounds of a genuine country auction at Wolters Auction Service, found on South Market Street at the edge of town. Check an auction calendar for dates of upcoming auctions. And don't forget to visit the food stand in the back with the homemade pies!

## PEOPLE

### *Dog lovers, Teachers, & Artists*

Portis native Clyde Lemon was a top breeder of registered Greyhounds for sport racing. In 1979 Clyde was inducted into the National Greyhound Hall of Fame. Inez Lucile Marshall was a self-taught sculptress who achieved national acclaim for her nearly 450 works of folk art. Her work can be seen in the Grassroots Art Center in Lucas, Kansas. Maude May McMIndes began her teaching career in 1901 in a one-room schoolhouse near Portis and rose through the teaching ranks to become one of Fort Hays State College's greatest professors. Melvin "Tubby" Miller was born in 1900 in Portis; as Mel Millar he drew several of the earliest Porky Pig features. The native limestone Porky Pig Marker located in Portis City Park is in his honor.

## CUSTOMS

### *Goin' Fishin' Instead of Just A'Wishin'*

The peaceful North Fork Solomon River at Portis has been considered an excellent location for the sport of fishing for over 130 years, receiving national acclaim since the 1950s.