

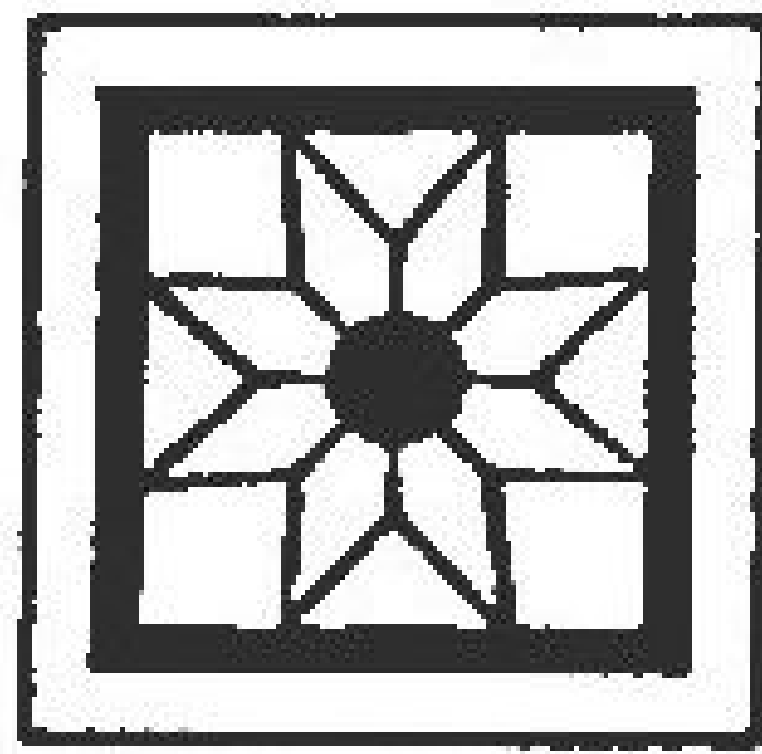
# WEBSTER

*Established 1885*

## HISTORY

### *Town Underwater*

*Kansas Sampler*



*Eight Rural Elements*

Webster's roots tie closely to the history of buffalo hunters and the early settlers on the western frontier. Due to an abundance of underground water, deep fertile soil, and the proximity of the South Fork Solomon River, a trading post called Belmont was established in 1876. When applying for a Kansas Post Office in 1879, the Belmont name was in use, so Webster

was chosen.

In June 1885, 48 acres were surveyed as Webster, with an adjoining 120 acres to the south surveyed in September as Belmont. They were connected north and south by Main Street and separated east and west by Broadway. In November, both were filed at the Rooks County Courthouse only as Webster.

Under the Flood Control Act of 1944—passed due to the severity of flooding along the South Fork Solomon River—plans were begun for the dam which was completed in 1956. The lake now covers the original town site of Webster. The town was relocated two miles to the southeast, but only five homes and the frame Methodist Church were moved to the new location. Sixty-six adults and fifty-nine children moved out of the reservoir area and 278 bodies were moved from the cemetery.

## ARCHITECTURE

### *Three Community Cornerstones*

Three important structures were built in Webster. Philander Mott Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1911 of cinder blocks and adorned with beautiful stained glass windows. It was destroyed by fire in 1944. By 1950, a country school was moved to the location and remodeled for church services.

After consolidation with an adjoining school district, Union #3, a two-story brick building used for both grade and high school, was dedicated in 1914, becoming the heart of



*Baptism in the South Fork Solomon River*

the community. The all-steel bridge south of town was built in 1888 for \$2,424, but washed out in 1951.

## CUSTOMS

### *Pioneer Settlers Reunion*

In the early years, entertainment opportunities were few but people learned to maximize them. The annual Jubilee Celebration, later called the Pioneer Settlers Reunion, was an all-day affair held after harvest under the towering cottonwoods in the "Grove" with a basket dinner, visiting band, political speeches, horse races, baseball games, horse-shoe pitching, checkers, children's games and a carousel.

There was a last day of school celebration, literary debates, box suppers, hay rides in the summer and sleigh rides in winter, organizations, church activities, revival meetings and sporting events. All times when the entire community came together to socialize.

## CUISINE

### *Fish for Food*

Since old Webster is now submerged, the old cafés hold the freshest fish you can find. The area around the reservoir has a variety of animals, including deer and wild turkey. Hunters and fisherman value the region for its excellence. This, coupled with the beautiful surroundings, make it one of the best places in Kansas to go out and catch your own dinner.

## COMMERCE

### *Small Beginnings*

A trading post was established here in 1876 to serve the buffalo hunters and early settlers. By 1881, farmers who were beginning to settle the west spurred growth and activity in Webster.

There was a boom in 1885 when the railroad was being built up the Solomon Valley. Thirty-six new buildings and 24 businesses were added, but the railroad never came past Stockton.

Webster continued to service the farming community until the Depression caused the bank and other businesses to close. In 1953, the town consisted of two churches, two general stores (one which included the post office), and 113 people.

## PEOPLE

### *Religious Diversity*

Members of the Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Methodist Episcopal, Methodist and Assembly churches helped found Webster. Two denominations, the Methodist and Assembly, were active until the end of the old town. These religious overtones influenced citizens' lifestyles and values, providing opportunities to worship and socialize.

Author Daniel Fitzgerald wrote about Webster in his book, *Ghost Towns of Kansas*.

## GEOGRAPHY

### *3,700 Acres of Water Cover Webster*

Gaze upon the rolling hills surrounding Webster Lake. In them you will find the embodiment of Mother Nature's plan. Three-thousand, seven hundred acres of open water



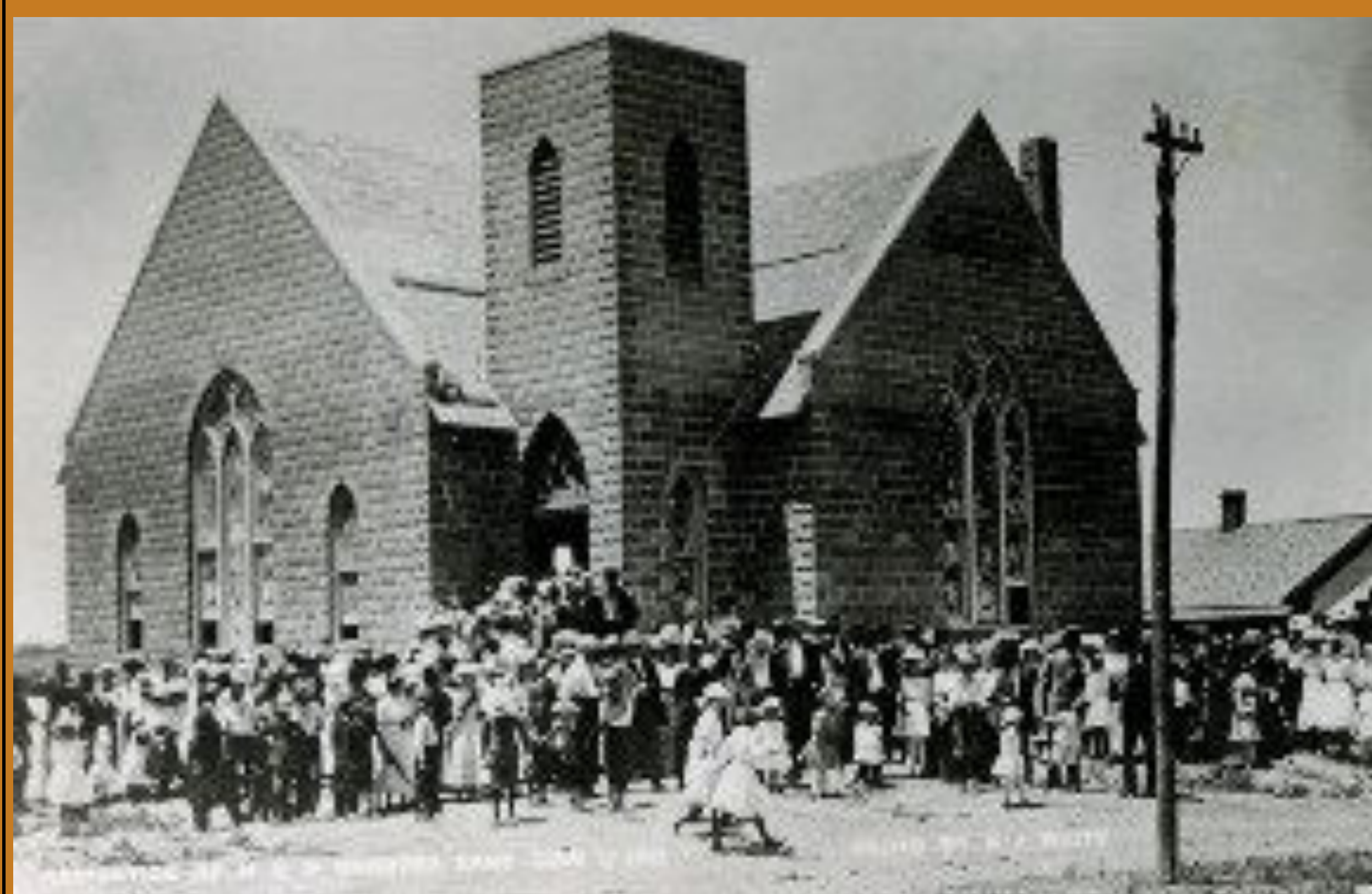
*Union #3 Grade School and High School dedicated in 1914*

cover the original site of Webster. The man-made lake helps keep rains retained and sustains irrigation.

## ART

### *Natural Beauty*

Come early and stay late. You won't want to miss a beautiful sunrise or sunset over Webster Lake. Natural beauty plays a unique role in portraying Webster's artistic impressions.



*Philander Mott Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church built in 1911. The Church was destroyed by fire in 1944.*



*Webster Lake is now a tourist attraction for all of northwest Kansas.*