



~ Part 28 ~

Reflections on a Common Theme

Origin of Town Names

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CLOUD COUNTY

Glasco– What’s in a Name -- by Joan Nothern

Glasco. What is in a name? Glasco, New York shares this name. Located on the Hudson River, boatmen read “Glass Co.” on a roof as they passed, and were responsible for renaming the town Glasco. By coincidence, Glasco, Kansas is located in Cloud County, the Stained Glass Capitol of Kansas. The “Glasco County” could easily be Glass Co.

But there is no such quaint back story. Rather one that conveys respect to a family that recognized the peace and beauty of the Solomon Valley and settled along the river in 1866.

John and Jeanette Hillhouse left Scotland with two young boys in the 1850s, destined for a new home in America. On arrival they traveled by train as far as they could, then continued westward, moving their household by hand cart, until coming to a stop in Salt Lake City. A new hardship was imposed there, for John and Jeanette were not Mormon, and they could not find employment or a means to survive. They made an effort to escape, planning to join a group traveling eastward, but were intercepted by Mormons. Jeanette and the children were allowed to go, but John was taken prisoner. Perhaps he was considered a spy.

Jeanette and the boys settled in Nebraska, supporting the family with her skill in sewing. The couple wrote to their family in Scotland and through them were able to locate each other. John escaped from Salt Lake City, traveled west to the coast, and sailed to the east coast, finally arriving in Nebraska, two years after their separation. Unfortunately, John had health issues in the Nebraska setting, and they ventured south, settling in Missouri.

John enlisted in Company K, 18th Missouri Volunteer Infantry, Union Army, in January 1862. This assured the family years of attack from proslavery Missourians. As soon as the war was over, they headed west again, traveling until they found peace and a place in the Solomon Valley.

Twelve years later, the new town which had been platted five years after their arrival, was incorporated with a name to honor the valiant pioneer family from Scotland. The town’s name was submitted to the state by the postmaster, who was responsible for the spelling, Glasco instead of the intended Glasgow.

A four-panel mural portraying this harrowing journey from Scotland to the Solomon Valley can be seen at the Corner Store, 129 E. Main, Glasco. The history of the family can also be found there in the student Save Our History Project documenting the Civil War veterans buried in the Glasco cemetery.

MITCHELL COUNTY

Simpson

The town that became Simpson began with the name Brittville when a mill was established on the Solomon River in 1871 about a mile west of the present town. It became a small village. When the railroad reached the area in 1879, the town was moved to its present location on land owned by

Alfred Simpson. He reportedly donated land for the new town and the name was changed to Simpson.

Asherville

Civil War veteran John Rees settled on Asher Creek in present Mitchell County in 1866 and opened a store on his farm in 1867. An unincorporated town developed there, and the Asherville Post Office was established in 1869.

Beloit

Aaron Bell settled near Willow Springs on the north bank of the Solomon River in present Mitchell County in 1866, on land that became the townsite, and Timothy Hersey arrived soon thereafter and made plans to construct a mill. The developing town was named Willow Springs in 1868. In 1870 Hersey led efforts to name the town Beloit after his hometown in Wisconsin. The Beloit Post Office was established in 1870 with Aaron Bell serving as the first postmaster.

Solomon Rapids

Solomon Rapids was named for rapids in the Solomon River, and a mill was constructed on the river. The unincorporated town developed nearby, and the Solomon Rapids Post Office was established in 1870.

Glen Elder

There were a few homestead settlements along Limestone Creek in 1866-1867, and a town was started by George and Franklin Stinson in 1868, which they named Glen Elder because of a grove of Box Elder trees. A mill was constructed on the Solomon River in 1870. George Stinson was appointed the first postmaster the same year. Glen Elder was incorporated in 1879.

Cawker City

Cawker City was settled in 1870 and named for Colonel E. H. Cawker, who reportedly won the right to name the town in a poker game with three other founders. The town was incorporated in 1874.

OSBORNE COUNTY

Downs

Downs was established as a railroad town in 1879. It was named for one of the officers of the Central Branch Railroad, Major William F. Downs of Atchison. The town was incorporated and the post office established the same year.

Portis

Settlement of this town site began in 1871, but the town was not named until the Central Branch Railroad arrived in 1879 when it was named Bethany. Later, when the Central Branch was purchased by the Missouri Pacific Railroad, the new owners wanted to change the name because they had another Bethany on the line in Missouri. The residents agreed to change the name to Portis for Missouri Pacific Vice-President Thomas J. Portis.

Osborne

Osborne County and the county seat at Osborne (first called Penn and then Osborne City) were established in 1871 and named for Sergeant Vincent B. Osborne, a member of the 2nd Kansas Cavalry. He was shot in the leg at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, 1861, sent to a St. Louis hospital where the bullet was extracted, and recovered. He returned to his regiment and served through the remainder of the Civil War. After the war he was sent with other troops on a steamboat from Fort Smith to Little Rock, Arkansas, to be discharged from the army. The steamboat was attacked by Confederate troops who did not know the war was over or chose to ignore that fact. The pilot pushed the boat against the opposite shore of the Arkansas River so the passengers could escape, which they did. Sergeant Osborne and another sergeant took time to grab ropes to tie up the boat so it would not float away, and in the process both were wounded. Osborne lost his good leg, the other sergeant lost an arm. They did save the steamboat.

When Osborne returned to Kansas, after recovering from his wounds, Governor Crawford recommended to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton that Osborne be appointed to the position of sutler (post trader) at Fort Harker in Ellsworth County. This was done. Later Osborne moved to Ellsworth where he practiced law and helped organize the county government. He was honored by the state legislature when Osborne County was created in 1867, and the town of Osborne honored him again in 1871. Osborne City was incorporated in 1878 and later the "city" was dropped from the official name of the town.

Bloomington

Dr. Daniel Tilden came to Osborne County in 1870 and laid out a town named Tilden in 1871. The Tilden Post Office was established in 1872. Residents decided to change the name of the town to Bloomington in 1873, and the post office officially changed to Bloomington on January 1, 1874.

Bull City/Alton -- by Carolyn Williams

Bull City/Alton is one of a few cities in the state with the distinction of celebrating two centennials. Bull City originated when General Hiram C. Bull and Lyman T. Earl discovered the little nook at the bend of the South Solomon River one day after their journey west from Cawker City. They had determined individually to settle farther west on the river and became enamored with the scene of the limestone bluffs south of the river and the rolling plain on the north.

Then and there they decided, "This is it! A place for a new town." After much deliberation, they decided on the name. The general wanted Bull City; Mr. Earl wanted Earlton. A flip of a coin decided it for them. Bull City it would be from 1870 to 1885.

After the untimely death of its famous citizen, General Bull, the town began a time of upheaval. Newer emigrants from the East wanted a "more refined name"; the old timers who revered the general wanted the name to remain the same.

However, women will be women. A Mrs. Clark from Alton, Illinois, led the charge. Since her husband ran the drugstore in town, she seemed to think she would have some clout, no doubt being accustomed to a different social life than she found here. Her statement that no new industries would dare come to a town with such a name as Bull City resonated with some in the community, It was through her influence that T. M. Walker became interested in the idea. Walker wrote newspaper articles to the effect that a new name was needed. He drew up a petition to change the name of the little city but got very few people to sign.

The Osborne Farmer had been publishing articles that berated the citizens of Bull City for what they were trying to do. However, petitions for new and better roads were ever popular. When the next petition for road improvements came around, you guessed it! Mrs. Clark with her wily ways affixed the petition for the name change. The names for the road improvements were glued to the petition of her choice. In a few months the post office of Bull City was notified that the name of Alton, Kansas, would become effective on February 27, 1886.

In recent times, however, there has been a push to revere the founding father, Hiram C. Bull, by using the term Bull City in various venues. The community foundation founded in 2000 became known as Bull City Community Foundation, Inc; the local gun shop has been named Bull City Gun Shop; the local café is now the Bull City Café. Who knows, we may become Bull City once again.

ROOKS COUNTY

Rooks County Towns -- by Roger Hrabec

Stockton

The Stockton Town Company was chartered in August 1872 and incorporated in 1880 to develop a new community in the valley of the South Solomon River in Rooks County, as a market center for farmers and ranchers. Early settlers, mostly cowboys, named the town Stockton hoping that it would be a livestock center with the coming of the railroad.

Many people wanted to call the town McNultyville, (after Joseph McNulty who homesteaded 160 acres next to the town site), but Joe thought the name might be considered a little too suggestive of a fresh importation from Limerick or Cork (Ireland). As stock raising was the only industry at first, the names of Stockville and Stocktown were urged, but Stockton was finally chosen.

McNulty built a log home on his property, which adjoined the townsite on the west and was later added to the town when the McNulty Addition was annexed. This building was later enlarged and used as a hotel. It was destroyed in 1924, but a replica of the "Log Hotel" was built in 1961 across Main Street south from the original location.

Stockton, and nearby Rooks Centre, were both candidates for the county seat after Rooks County was officially organized on November 26, 1872. A contest won by Stockton in an election on December 31, 1872, cemented the town's future as the site of local county government. The hope that the town would become a livestock center never materialized. However, the coming of the railroad would prove to be essential in maintaining Stockton as a viable community.

Damar

On October 8, 1884, President Grover Cleveland signed the document which entitled Francis St. Peter to 160 acres of land on the western edge of Rooks County for the consideration of \$4.00. By 1880, most of the government land had been "taken up." Francis St. Peter had hauled ammunition during the Civil War and, like so many other veterans, was lured to seek the free land made available by the Homestead Act.

Almost immediately other Canadian French Catholic people followed. The community became so solidly French in character that it was referred to as the "Acadia of the West." It has retained much of its original tradition to this day.

The first church services were held in the home of Ezra St. Peter, in 1887. Mr. St. Peter then donated three acres for a cemetery and two acres for a church to the east of his home. The new community was first known as St. Petersville. However, the first post office located about two miles to the northeast was named Ainsworth. When the Union Pacific Railroad passed nearby, the first small frame church was moved to the site of the present church. The post office moved also, to the railroad station. It was at this time that the new town became known as Damar.

Some sources say the name came from the owner of the land where the railroad town was established, D. M. Marr.

Woodston

Woodston was founded in Lowell Township, eastern Rooks County, in the summer of 1885, because of a single creating force—the railroad. The railroad, so vital to the economic well-being of every frontier region, was slow in coming. There were already several older towns nearby to serve the needs of the settlers.

The man most responsible for the construction of the railroad and the founding of Woodston was the Stockton businessman after whom the new town was named, Charles C. Woods. He came to Stockton from Marion, Iowa, in 1879, and established the first bank. Woods understood the importance of railroads, and when he could not persuade the Missouri Pacific to extend the Central Branch from Bull City (Alton) to Stockton, he contacted an Iowa contractor and organized the Rooks County Railroad Company to do the job.

The Rooks County Record reported in 1885, "The proposed railroad from Bull City to Stockton contemplates the establishing of a station and shipping point in Lowell Township, and a nice lively little village could soon be built there." The railroad did eventually come, and the townsite was officially founded July 4, 1885, but was not named until September. On July 17, 1885, the Rooks County Record reported: "Alton is badly scared over the railroad town that is soon to be built in Lowell township. A large element in Alton vigorously opposed the change in its name from Bull City, and declare that they will transfer all their business and wealth into Rooks county, if the railroad company will agree to call the new town Bull City." Because of his efforts in securing the location of

the townsite, Robert L. Stephens was acknowledged as the town's founder. But the town was later named Woodston in honor of Mr. Woods who led efforts to construct the railroad and donated \$500 to help build the school in the new town. It is the only town in the United States named Woodston.

Webster -- by Jean Lindsay, 2001

Abundant underground water and deep fertile soil in the broad Solomon Valley in Belmont Township, Rooks County, was an ideal site for a town, the location approximately eight miles west of Stockton. In 1876, a trading point was located there to care for the early settlers in the western part of Rooks County. There were still buffalo in the area in the spring of 1878 when the town of Belmont was officially surveyed, although the plat was not filed at the Rooks County Courthouse until March 24, 1881. The town started on the south side of the river with one store, but due to floods, it was soon moved across the river. Webster's patent for 48 acres was issued in June 1885, surveyed June 23, 1885, with the plat filed two days later. The new patent for Belmont was issued Sept. 15, 1885, platted on 120 acres adjoining the south side of Webster. Both towns shared two common avenues, Main Street, which ran north to south connecting them and Broadway Street running east and west which separated them. Neither town was ever incorporated.

John Stephenson had named the township Belmont in honor of August Belmont of New York, one of the leading Democrats of the nation. When he applied for a post office for the combined town, he asked for the same name, but the application was returned as state records showed a Belmont already existed in Kansas. Demonstrating his patriotism, he reapplied for Webster, after Daniel Webster, one of America's greatest statesmen. The name was adopted and the Webster Post Office was established on the south side of town on December 6, 1879, with Stephenson as postmaster. On November 10, 1885, both towns were surveyed again, replatted and listed only as Webster with no mention of Belmont.

GRAHAM COUNTY

Nicodemus

The town was officially founded on September 7, 1877, by W. H. Smith (African-American minister) and W. R. Hill (White town speculator) although a few settlers had arrived during the summer. Nicodemus was named in part for a legendary African-American slave featured in Henry Clay Work's "Wake, Nicodemus" (1864). It's a poem about an old slave, died away, and buried in a hollow tree who had asked to be awakened for the great Jubilee.

Bogue

Virgil Gay Bogue was born in 1846 in New York and became a civil engineer after graduating from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1868. He became a chief engineer for the Union Pacific system in 1886 for 5 years. It was during this time, when Bogue and a land owner east of Hill City could not agree on the price of the right of way for a railroad depot. Bogue bought the land. On August 28, 1888, the Lincoln & Colorado Railroad Company platted Bogue, named after its founder.

Hill City

W. R. Hill, a Kentuckian, first visited the area in September 1876. Hill and another family returned to the proposed Hill City townsite and a dugout in the southwest portion of the site became the first residence. The charter to establish Hill City as a legal townsite was filed on January 7, 1878.

Penokee

The town, originally called Reford, was founded by Ben Chadsey in 1888 when the L & C Railroad came through. When the mail was consistently getting mixed with Rexford, the postal service and the railroad officials asked Reford to change its name. The towns' people and officials got together along with the conductor of the jitney (passenger train) who suggested Penokee after the Penokee Mountains where he was raised near Lake Superior.

Morland

The town was first known as Fremont, named for General John C. Fremont, noted explorer, on February 24, 1884. In August 1888 railroad officials changed the name to "Kalula" although the post office remained "Fremont." The reason given for the name change was another town named Fremont

on the U.P. system. The citizens of the town never cared for the name of Kalula and in April 1892 the post office and railroad stop were named Morland.

SHERIDAN COUNTY

Studley

English settlers, led by Abraham Pratt, established the town with post office named Skelton (after the Skell River in England) in 1889. Later another town was founded across the road to the east in Graham County and named Carl. When the railroad built through the two towns, railroad officials asked that they be joined together under one name. Abraham Pratt chose Studley (named after Studley Royal Country Park in England) in 1894.

Tasco

The town that developed at the junction of Sand Creek with the South Solomon River was originally called Guy, post office established in 1887. It continued under that name until 1923 when the name was changed to Tasco.

Hoxie

The first county seat of Sheridan County was the town of Kenneth, founded in 1879 and located approximately 2.5 miles north of present Hoxie which was established on the railroad line in 1886, named for Missouri Pacific Railroad official H. M. Hoxie. The town of Kenneth was abandoned and residents and businesses moved to Hoxie which became the county seat.