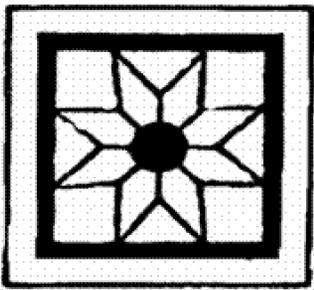


DOWNNS

Established 1879

Kansas Sampler



GEOGRAPHY

Hunter's Paradise

Downs is located in north-central Kansas on the upper reaches of Waconda Lake. The lake is a haven for fishing and offers plenty of pheasant, turkey, and deer hunting.

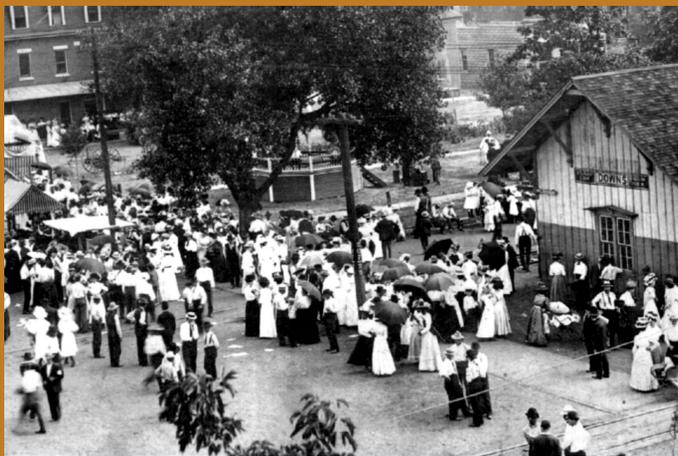
CUSTOMS

Storytelling Capital of Kansas

Downs is the *Storytelling Capital of Kansas* and entertains adults and children of every age from areas nationwide at the *Kansas Storytelling Festival*, which is held during the last weekend of April. Storytellers both locally and from far away entertain through sessions of stories, workshops and music. Events are held simultaneously at different locations, all within walking distance. Downs is called "*The Town of Many Stories.*"

The Downs Arts Council organized in 1994 and sponsors many activities throughout the year. Major events include TreeFest activities, which are held the weekend after Thanksgiving and feature a winter land of fully decorated trees. Theatrical performances by the DAC Players are always enjoyed and anticipated events. The group is also the sole organizer for the Arts in Education program, which allows area children the opportunity to enjoy professional artistic performances.

The Downs Celebration is an annual tradition since 1879. Hosted by the Downs Chamber of Commerce, the Celebration takes place every July and was inspired by local enthusiasts for harvest completion. Local volunteer organizations help provide activities. The Celebration features a carnival, local food booth, live entertainment, dances and plenty of socializing.



A crowd of celebrants enjoying a Downs Celebration from the early 1900s. The Missouri Pacific Railroad operated special Celebration Trains from cities in eastern Kansas to Downs that brought thousands of visitors to the famous event held each July.



Downs at one point saw as many as eighteen trains a day pass through town, with the last passenger train departing in 1960. In the heart of the city still stands the Missouri Pacific Railroad Depot.

ARCHITECTURE

Historic Depot, Hotel, Library, & Hall

The current Downs Railroad Depot was built after the previous wooden depot burned to the ground in 1917. Located in Railroad Park on East Railroad Street, the depot was listed in 2001 on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Lipton Hotel was originally the Howell House, a place for guests to rest from their journeys on the railroad. The former hotel was built in 1881 by lumber baron George W. Howell. It is located on Morgan Ave.

Andrew Carnegie provided a gift of \$5000 to construct the Downs Carnegie Library in 1905. Believed to be the smallest Carnegie Library in existence, the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

Memorial Hall was dedicated in 1923 to the veterans of World War I. The hall seats 1,500 people and features a stunning stage curtain depicting the Statue of Liberty.

PEOPLE

German and Dutch Influences

The Downs region was first populated by three major immigrant groups — German, Dutch, and Swiss. Most were farmers and craftsmen from Europe. By 1871 most of the earliest settlers were from the Northern states, with some arriving from foreign countries — the most notable being northeast of Downs at the Dutch settlement of Rotterdam, later renamed Dispatch. Many "settlers" were adventurers who moved on West while others gave up in the face of illness, drought and other privations, and headed back East.

Downs is famous as the setting for the classic book *Sod & Stubble*. Written by native John Ise in 1936, the book details the struggles endured by his parents, Henry & Rosa Ise, as they sought to carve a prosperous farm from the raw prairie and raise their 12 children during the homesteading period on the Great Plains of 1870-1910. The Ise homestead and schoolhouse can still be seen three miles northeast of town.

ART

Downs a center for the arts

Whether it is the Sod and Stubble monument at the U.S. 24 rest stop, the annual Kansas Storytelling Festival, or one of the many other events held throughout the

year, Downs is known for the arts. Visit the Carnegie Library and view the large collection of tea cups and pots. If you are lucky, it might just be a formal tea day.

CUISINE

Hometown Variety

Save your appetite for the hometown tastes of Downs. Our café's, inns, and restaurants feature everything from deli cold and hot sandwiches and soups to full dinners, salad bars, and homemade pies and desserts to please every appetite. All offer daily specials.

HISTORY

Downs, A Railroad Town

Downs was founded as a railroad division point in 1879. Named after Major William Downs, it quickly became a railroad and farming community. Downs is located in the heart of America's breadbasket where much of the country's wheat is produced. While the roundhouse and other railroad-servicing facilities no longer exist, the bustling community provides many jobs in the industrial, service and agricultural areas of business to the community.

Until 1870 this country had been occupied by the Indians, except for an occasional hardy soul who was willing to risk his scalp, as was the case with buffalo hunter Jim Higgins, whose life was taken by Indians in a local skirmish in 1868. But his name is remembered by those who are familiar with Higgins Bluff just northeast of Downs.

COMMERCE

Luxuries and Traditions of Rural Life

Downs offers some of the finest retail business in Kansas. Downtown streets are organized as a mini-mall with a variety of retail and service-related businesses. The town is backed by two locally-owned banks.

Farming is the leading commerce in the Downs area, as farmers are local producers of a variety of crops and livestock. Pork Packers ships products nationwide from its primary Downs facility. North Central Air manufactures air compressors to sell to major retailers and independent farmers. SI Industries manufactures heating products for the farm and home.



As a railroad division point Downs handled the repair and refurbishing of numerous Missouri Pacific Railroad engines from throughout north-central Kansas. This photograph shows the newly-completed second of three roundhouses. This roundhouse burned to the ground just over a year later on July 31, 1908.