

# PENOKEE

*Established 1888*

## History

### *Mistaken Identities*

In 1888, the town of Reford, (which would eventually become Penokee), was established by Ben F. Chadsey. Reford soon began to grow and prosper largely because of the fertile soil and the Union Pacific Railroad that went through the town.

Not long after the town was founded, Reford's mail was frequently mixed up with the mail from Rexford, Kansas. To prevent the confusion from continuing, the residents referred to maps and began selecting a town name that would not be mistaken for another town. They based their decision on the Penokee Mountains near Lake Superior. Ever since this decision was made, they have had no problems with mistaken identity. In fact, Penokee, Kansas, is the only town of that name in all of America.

It is thought that a battle between a large number of Cheyenne Indians and U.S. Cavalry took place between Penokee and Hoxie in 1857. A sod fort was erected to house the wounded for the winter, but the exact location of this battle has not been determined.

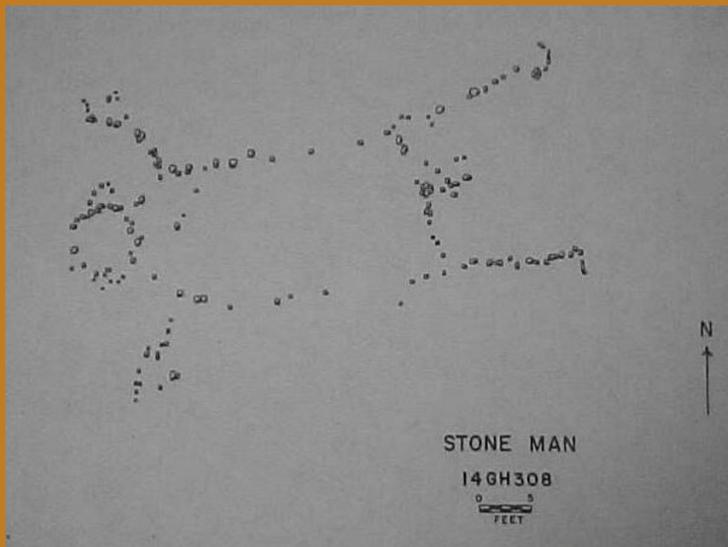
## People

### *Melting Pot*

The community is a melting pot of every nationality, every religion, and all are unique in their own special way. As a melting pot of people, Penokee has some wonderful cooks, that is the reason our potluck dinners are *sooo* good!!!!



A 1965 painting by Bill Bean depicting the Penokee Railroad Depot.



The Stone Man, outlined in rock in a pasture on private property three miles northwest of Penokee. Permission must be obtained.

## Geography

### *River Life*

Penokee rests in a cove along the South Fork of the Solomon River. The river has been, and continues to be, a vital part of community life. Originally, the river sustained nearby inhabitants; today it is used to sustain their crops. As in many places in Kansas, limestone is very abundant. The limestone quarried in this region is known as Ogallah, unusual for its greenish tint.

## Cuisine / Customs

### *Community Affair*

Penokee celebrated a centennial birthday on September 10th & 11th of 1988 with a rodeo and other fun events. A parade was held, followed by a potluck dinner at which a decorated birthday cake was served. A flag that was flown in Washington, D.C. was hoisted at the Post Office. Each year since, the community has had an annual September Penokee picnic, hosted by residents of the community.

## Commerce

### *Fields of Color*

The people of western Kansas are known for their relationship with the land, and Penokee is no different. Farming is the main commerce of the area. Seas of golden wheat spread across the horizon in the early summer months. In the fall, one can take in the milo's array of colors, ranging from dark green, to rustic brown, to angelic white. Cattle are also an important part of this area. In past days the Penokee stockyard held cattle for shipment by rail and in present day a feedlot is located south of Penokee.

## Art

### *Stone Man Turned Legend*

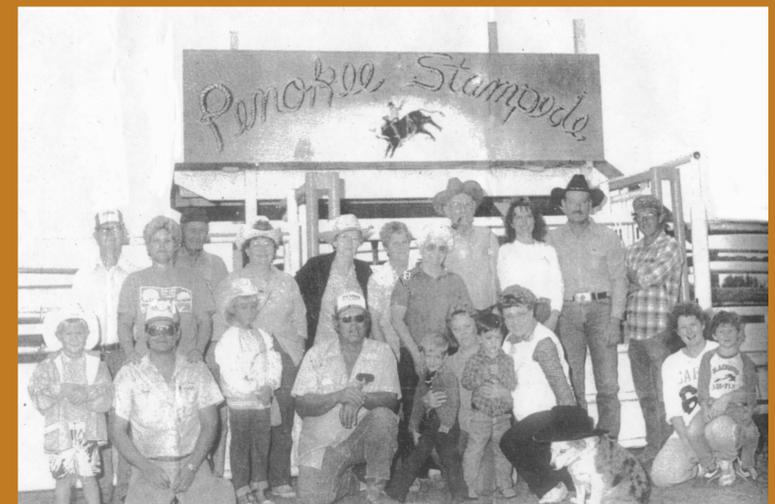
Have you ever seen a 57-foot-tall, 32-foot-wide man made of stone? Locals in and around Penokee have. The giant stone man's origin is a mystery. Did the Indians place it there as a tribute to the sun? Was it a prank done by school children? There are even legends of a giant Sioux Indian that would lie down and place rocks around his self. The exact truth of its creation might never be known, but will continue to mystify all that see it. The Stone Man is located three miles northwest of Penokee on private land.

## Architecture

### *One-of-a-Kind Depot*

The railroads were the lifelines of the west for a long time. The Union Pacific Railroad ran through Penokee. When the town's original train depot burned down on August 26, 1915, Union Pacific decided to offer the little town of Penokee a special treat. The company built a new depot of which only four of this specific design was ever built. It is now being used as a museum in Ellis, Kansas.

The Penokee Methodist Church was the center of social events. It was home not only to Methodists, but all faiths of the community. It closed its doors in 1969. The schoolhouse has seen many children pass through and was a vital part of the community. The ball games, end-of-school-year potluck dinners, and comradeship came to a close in 1970. A red brick store building that was built in 1914 housed a grocery store with a soda fountain. It was closed to business in 1973. The Penokee Post Office in recent years has been not only a place to get mail, but a place to get caught up on the recent news, important notices, and to check up on your neighbor's well being.



Many of the planners of Penokee's Centennial celebration that was held in September 1988. Photo courtesy of the Hill City Times.