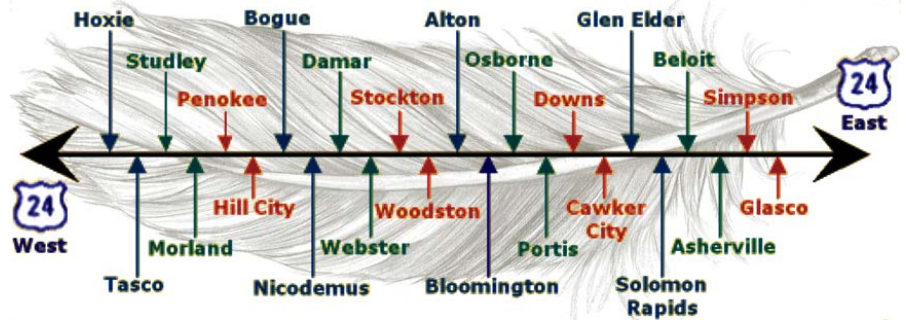
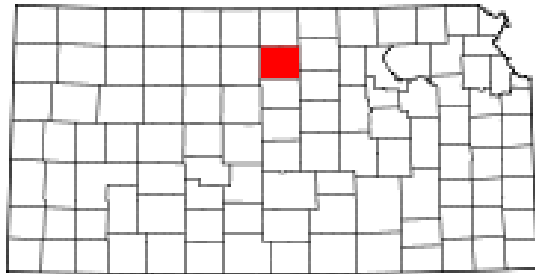




Solomon Rapids, Kansas

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This information was compiled & written by ...Bill and John Bunger

IN the spring of 1870, a stockade was established by a party consisting of C. J. Brown, G. W. Anderson, R. C. Clark, and John S. Smith on the north side of the river about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile west of present-day Solomon Rapids. The purpose of the stockade was to provide a place for the settlers to go in case of an attack by Indians.

Solomon Rapids got its name from the rapids in the Solomon River a half a mile south of the townsite. From the outset all thought Solomon Rapids was destined to become quite a town. Early settlers built a grist mill at this point beside the river, and Yates Douglass opened the first general store. The Solomon Rapids Post Office was opened on August 9, 1870.

That fall the governor of Kansas appointed Don Peaslee of Solomon Rapids as Special County Clerk to oversee the first election to organize Mitchell County. In that election Don Peaslee was elected the first Mitchell County Attorney, and Beloit was selected the permanent county seat by a vote of 143, only 43 for Solomon Rapids.

School District #11 was formed in October 1872, and the Solomon Rapids United Presbyterian Church was established east of the village on the north side of the Solomon River on May 17, 1873, with thirteen charter members. These two essential institutions served the community for several decades.

One of the first settlers in the Solomon Rapids area was R. C. Clark, a prominent attorney. By the early 1880s other community leaders included W. C. Cochran, Civil War veteran who served as Justice of the Peace and Trustee of Solomon Rapids Township; Yates Douglass, farmer and mercantile store proprietor; O. B. Douglass, a farmer and miller who erected a water-powered flour mill on the Solomon River near his farm that stood four stories high and was 40-feet by 60-feet in size; Don A. Peaslee, who served as county attorney for two years; and English-born John W. Wood, said to have raised the first barley crop in Mitchell County and marketed it at Junction City, 110 miles to the east.

In those early years a blacksmith is said to have operated just south of Solomon Rapids, and a dentist office also opened in the community. A private home, grocery store, and hotel stood a mile north of the village proper, and for many years this was the location of the post office as well. In 1902 the post office was moved south into the little village and stayed there until its closing. By 1910 some 50 people called "the Rapids" their home post office.

In 1893 C. J. Johnson, a Swedish immigrant, and D. H. "Jud" Thierolf formed a partnership and built a wooden grain elevator along the railroad tracks in what is now Solomon Rapids. This partnership lasted

until 1909, when it was dissolved and the partners formed a corporation. During the period between 1893 and 1909 one of the first concrete elevators in the region was built, along with a large two-story stone store and a lumber yard. The second story of the store was used for many community meetings. In June 1914 the concrete elevator, the store building, and coal sheds were rented to the Farmers Union, now called Farmers Co-op. In 1934 the Johnson heirs bought out the Thierolf heirs and the company remained with the Johnson family until it was sold to Ron Tice. Meanwhile the Co-op built a large concrete elevator in 1950 and built an annex in 1954.

In March 1969 the wooden elevator caught fire and burned. Witnesses said that it was a spectacular fire, and because there was not a fire department available at that time the building was allowed to burn to the ground. A steel feed mill was then erected in its place.

Other buildings no longer standing include the railroad depot, which was south of the tracks; a stockyard where the present Co-op annex is located; several big tanks now sit on the site of several former coal sheds; and the lumber shed, where the firehouse now stands. Also at one time there were three houses that are long gone.

Though it saw some lively times, Solomon Rapids never grew into a real town, mainly due to the fact that it was neither platted nor incorporated as a city. By 1950 the population of the village and area around was in decline and on December 31, 1953, the Solomon Rapids Post Office was discontinued.

**The following information was added by Kyle Peterson,
director of the Mitchell County Historical Society Museum.**

Solomon Rapids now doesn't look like much of a social center to many travelers that drive by on Highway 24. If you turn off the highway and head south on its main road and take a strong hard look, it's interesting what you might find. Not only are there obvious things, like the grain elevator, a few houses, and a beautiful limestone building, but you can continue south on the gravel road about half a mile and see an awesome high stone cliff and remnants of the several mills that stood on the river.

Solomon Rapids is named because of a series of rapids in the river south of the town site. When early settlers came to the county, they felt that these rapids should be taken advantage of and that this location was the best spot in the area to harness the river's energy. Later on, they would find out that their assumption was not correct.

Between 1866 and 1868, settlers were drawn to this area not only for the great farming opportunity but for the fact there was a very good stockade very close by named Cheyenne Springs. By 1868, there were more dugouts in the Solomon Rapids area than in any other part of Mitchell County. So the problem became evident by 1870, where to put the county seat. Aaron Bell, who founded Willow Springs and a better producing mill site, made people realize the potential for his area as county seat rather than Solomon Rapids. Business interests also seemed to favor Willow Springs. Solomon Rapids put up a good fight because they had more population, but they could not sway the other parties in the rest of the county. That is why Beloit is county seat.

Solomon Rapids had many businesses over the years: the first cement grain elevator in north central Kansas, general store, post office, blacksmith, dance hall, hotel, grist mill, saw mill, dentist/doctor office, grocery store, lumberyard, coal yard, depot, two churches, and a school. Most of these enterprises had closed by 1940, even though today some business still takes place here.

So next time you drive by Solomon Rapids, take a few moments and make the turn south and enjoy what is still there to see. Look around you, even get out of the car for a moment and take the time to think about what this little town once was.

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