

Louisville

Louisville is one of the oldest towns in Pottawatomie County. Before the close of the Civil War it was known as Rock Port. People received mail by the address of Rock Port, also Louisville.

At the close of the Civil War, soldiers who were mustered out at Leavenworth, Kansas, came on up by stage to Rock Port or Louisville and settled. One of the veterans was John W. McNay, father of Charles W. McNay, of Louisville. Other early settlers were: G. W. Forrester, a stock raiser and father of Mrs. Dane Aikinson, now of Louisville, Mrs. Laura Kolterman, Mrs. Frank Fox, Edgar Forrester, the late Sylvester and George Forrester, and C. T. Baker, father of Henry Baker, a farmer and raiser of hogs. Andrew Korneman, uncle of J. C. Korneman, now of Louisville, was a farmer. A. J. Shaw, father of the late J. W. Shaw was a United States Marshall before the county was organized.

The first town meeting with legal officers was held in Louisville on December 19, 1866. The town plat was filed January 17, 1867, Louisville being one of the first towns to be incorporated.

Louisville is located on the old Fort Riley Military Road, where the road forded Rock Creek. Robert Wilson, who came to St. Marys Mission with the Indians as the government blacksmith, was the first settler of what is now Louisville. His claim of land is the present townsite of Louisville.

Mr. Wilson was the first Postmaster of the town. He was also the first Justice of the Peace of Louisville Township. Wilson's Old Log Cabin was the stopping place for travel on the Old Military Road and was the first Hotel in Pottawatomie County. When Horace Greeley made his trip across

Aug 1954

the plains in 1859 he spent several days at this house as the water in Rock Creek was too high to ford.

When Pottawatomie County was organized in 1861 St. George became the county seat. Louisville, a fast growing town, desired to have the county seat. After many attempts an election was held November 5, 1861, and Louisville received the majority vote and became the county seat. The first meeting of the board of county commissioners to be held in Louisville was on April 7, 1862. During the years of the sixties and seventies Louisville was a central trading point in the county.

Louisville was located on the old Fort Military Road, a south branch of the Old Oregon Trail, which divided just east of the town. It was close to the Indian Reserve. The Indians received yearly allowances from the government. Much of their money was spent in Louisville as they were good spenders and made lots of business for the merchants. The town grew in population until the county seat was moved to Westmoreland in the early eighties. The Union Pacific Railroad had also built its railroad along the Kaw River because there were swamps and buffalo wallows near Louisville. Wamego then began to grow and Louisville started to decrease in population. Wamego still is the depot town for Louisville.

Just east of town, the 49'ers fought battles with the Indians and many of them died. The 49'ers also had cholera which caused many deaths. At the Vermillion crossing east of the town are the graves of some of the people who died with the plague. Their graves are still marked with rock markers placed there over a century ago. An Indian cemetery is also there.

The first school was a two-story brick building. J. U. Allen made the bricks from clay found at the south edge of town. Mr. Allen operated a brick kiln and ran an ice house. The ice from Rock Creek was put up during the winter and sold during the summer.

The brick school house was later replaced by the present rock building. Some of the old bricks were used inside the building.

The old Hultz house near the dam was used as the post office. The building is still there and is owned and used as a resort cabin by relatives from Kansas City who spend vacations, boating and fishing there.

Other early businesses were: Two hotels; George Travis, hardware; Eli Barthelemeu, tin shop; Billy Telcamp, harness shop; John Balderson (father of Neil Balderson, Wamego), blacksmith; Justin Chilcott, blacksmith; Charles and Val Bittman, general store; J. W. Shaw, general store; a third general store; Dr. Hedding's office; another doctor; flour mill; drug store; court house; pool hall; barber shop; and a cheese factory. Patrick Sullivan, father of the late Ed and Gene Sullivan, shod horses for all of the people in this community. He also took care of the military horses and mules when they came through on the Old Military Road. A big camping ground was located south of town, which the travelers with covered wagons used. There would be from fifty to seventy-five wagons camped there for days, while the horses and people rested. The wagons were also repaired. Steve Rozelle, who passed away November 20, 1953, age 98, was the main well-driller for this section. Many of the wells dug by him are still used.

Louisville had its town well, which was used by the townspeople and travelers. It was located in the street in the middle of the block between the present store, Odd Fellows Building, and the Ford Crossing.

Citizens of Louisville met in 1867 to organize the Congregational

-19-

Church. This meeting was held in the court house. The minutes of this meeting are still in the town. A meeting to make arrangements for building the church was held in 1869. Eighteen years later the Methodist Church was built. It still stands and is used.

A large park was made in the west part of town and later it was extended across Rock Creek among the trees. A pontoon bridge was built to cross Rock Creek. Later a swing bridge was built to cross to the park. Many gay celebrations were held here. The Fourth of July was the gayest. Chautauquas and play people held weeks of engagements in the parks. Boat races on the creek above the dam also furnished entertainment.

The Louisville Lyre was an early newspaper. It was edited by Billy Hauldren, who later printed the St. George News, then moved to Havensville.

The city jail was built of rock and still is in fine condition.

The Workman and Woodmen Lodges were established in the early

p. 20