Wichita Stamp Club Newsletter

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Editor

"Go Fly A Stamp"
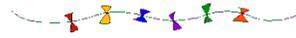
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Barton County
Part I
Fort Zarah, Great Bend, Ellinwood, Pawnee Rock:
The Southern Portion of the County
By Jeff Lough

   The very first corporate charter of any type issued by the State of Kansas was for a corporation to build and operate a log toll bridge across the Walnut Creek on the Santa Fe Trail four miles east of present day Great Bend. The first Post Office in the area and its postmaster, Samuel G. Mason, had been at Fort Atkinson near Dodge City and was officially moved to the Walnut Creek crossing on August 22, 1853. The Walnut Creek post office was one of the 8 pre-territorial post offices established before the organization of the Kansas Territory on May 30, 1854. After established in the Great Bend area, it was subsequently discontinued September 22, 1855 when a trading post with a post office about one mile west was established by William Allison and Francis Booth of Independence, Missouri. They had been "conductors" of the Santa Fe Trail's monthly U. S. mail route. This post office ended operations on November 20, 1857.

   Then, on April 8, 1864, another post office called "Kiowa", with John F. Dodds as postmaster, was opened at the Walnut Creek crossing. Kiowa was in Peketon County.   Peketon County was created by a state legislative act on February 21, 1860. Peketon County consisted of all land in Kansas west of the 6th longitudinal meridian and south of the northeast corner of present day McPherson County. It embraced ¼ of what was later the State of Kansas. The name of the county was changed to Marion County in 1865 and the location is presently in Barton County. Barton County was organized in 1872. Kiowa's presence as a post office is documented by the cover illustrated in Figure 1 with the dull red variety of Scott # 65 sent to a young lady in Neptune, Wisconsin is hand cancelled. The handwritten note on the back is a colorful indication of a special personal need for the couple and an indicator of how some types of "special delivery" needs were handled in Civil War-time west central Kansas.
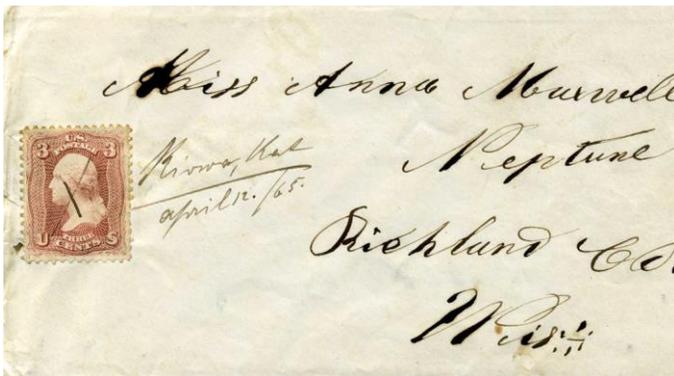

Kiowa, Kansas of Barton County cover, front and back

   When the post office closed in April 28, 1865, mail to that area was processed through the Fort Zarah Post Office. Before Fort Zarah had been established, troops dug rooms in the Walnut Creek banks, piling brush and sod on top for a roof. The military establishment was originally known as Camp Dunlap. In 1864 General Samuel Curtis ordered Fort Zarah to be built near the Walnut Creek crossing. It was a sandstone building sixty feet wide by one hundred feet long with stone towers at two of the corners diagonally opposite from each other.
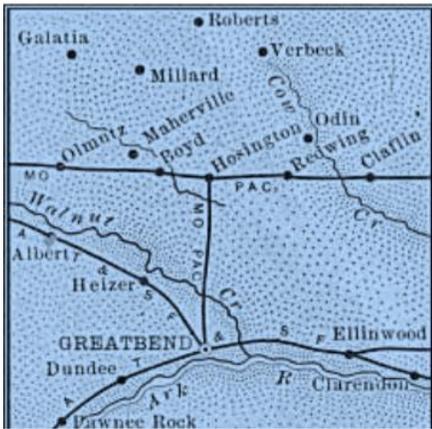
Fort Zarah was named in honor of General Samuel Curtis' son, Major H. Zarah Curtis, who was killed at the Baxter Springs, Kansas massacre in the Civil War while on the staff of Union General James G. Blunt. Just to the southeast of the military fort was a town also known as Fort Zarah. The town board included the President of the Santa Fe Railroad on its Board of Directors, Mr. Ginnery Twitchell, who was also a member of Congress from Boston, Massachusetts. The town of Fort Zarah had several enterprises including a grist mill, brick making plant, soft drink plant, cheese factory and several farming service companies. The original Post Office building in Fort Zarah was also an Express Office and a mercantile. Incidentally there was a town in eastern Shawnee County Kansas known as East Zarah. In 1866 it was replaced by a second Fort Zarah built about a half a mile up river. Ft. Zarah was abandoned in 1869. Even though Fort Zarah had a short life, it saw its share of Indian fights and colorful characters including George Armstrong Custer, Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill Mathewson, Buffalo Bill Cody, Kit Carson and the great Indian chief Satank, also known as Sitting Bear. Zarah competed with and lost to Great Bend for the prize of being the county seat of Barton County. Bernard B, Smyth, in his *Heart of the New Kansas,* says : "After the abandonment of the fort it became a den of thieves and general rendezvous for bats and marauders. These occupied it day and night by turns — the former hiding by day, the latter by night." The stone used in the construction of the fort was gradually appropriated by the settlers in the vicinity, and the "hats and marauders" were finally rendered homeless. A classical cover from Fort Zarah is shown as Figure 2. A 1864 Fort Zarah cover with a hand cancellation of the rose red variety of Scott # 65. This cover was sent to a young lady in the St. Louis suburb of Webster Grove. Perhaps the quick movement of names and locations of post offices as well as the not-so-professional status of post office workers at these locations at these times is reflected in the use of hand cancellations. The Civil War was going on at this time.
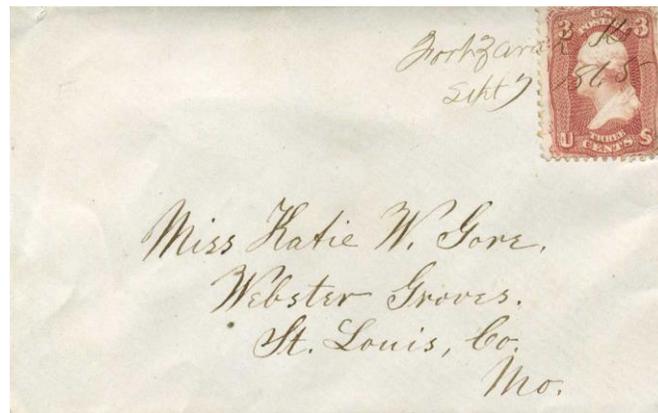
Fort Zarah cover

The 50 acres of the Fort Zarah military reservation was cut up and sold through the Salina, Kansas land office in 1869. All that remains are a couple markers in a small park on the east side of Great Bend. At one point several thousand Texas cattle were wintered there. The town of Zarah is now a wheat field 3 miles east of Great Bend. The last citizen left Zarah in 1875 about 6 years after the fort was abandoned.

Great Bend

In 1541 the first Europeans in Barton County, Coronado's expedition, entered the area near the river called the St. Peter and St. Paul river, later known as the Arkansas River. A myth out of the University of Kansas has an accompanying Spanish ornithologist reported seeing Jayhawks: "These incredible birds...were of all sizes, sometimes appearing in great numbers, then all of a sudden not to be seen….they made themselves invisible...They have long talons, shaped like an eagle's. These claws are so powerful that...these birds have been seen to fly off with one of those hump-backed cattle in each claw." The river had been named after the Catholic feast day on which it was discovered. It was later named the Rio des Acansa, or the Arkansas River. It first appeared on a map drawn by the French explorer Jolliet in 1673. In 1757 Frenchman Antoine S. Lepage du Pratz first mentioned the "great" bend on the "Rio des Acansa" on a map in his *History of Louisiana*. Acansa referred to the Quapaw group of Native Americans that had been found by the early French explorers in the northern midwest who were later forced to move into an area where the present day Arkansas River flows. *Acansa's* meaning is "land of the downriver people."

The Santa Fe Trail in this area was surveyed by the United States government in 1825. The first U. S. Army military escort on the Santa Fe Trail occurred in the summer of 1829. In August, 1846 during the Mexican War, General Stephen Watts Kearney crossed to Santa Fe and stopped at the "great bend". It took a span of three weeks for his army to pass this point. Traffic on the trail increased each year with the Mormon migration and the 1849 California and 1859 Cripple Creek gold rushes. In 1849 an overland mail coach, running the first of each month from Independence, Missouri to Santa Fe and back, began service. At the start of the route the coach was drawn by six horses but at the first relay station the team was changed to six mules. The mail was generally guarded over the more dangerous part of the route by eight men, armed as follows: Each had, fastened to the stage, one of Colt's revolving rifles; in a holster below, one of Colt's long revolvers, and in his belt a small Colt revolver and a hunting knife. After a period of time the coaches began running every other week and in the 1860s daily stages ran until the advent of the railroad. It is estimated that 31,000,000 buffalo were killed in the fifty mile area surrounding the current City of Great Bend during this era.

After the terrible grasshopper invasion of 1874 a famous Civil War nurse, Mary Bickerdyke, organized a wagon train load of supplies from Salina to aid farmers in the Great Bend area. In 1884 Great Bend had three newspapers, a barbed wire factory, a marble yard, a cigar factory, an opera house, a greyhound race track, a two mule street car railway, the Congregationalists' Central Kansas College, and the Central Normal College.

The Great Bend post office was organized as a fourth class post office in 1877. One source claims that a Mr. Fossil was the first postmaster. Baughman claims it was a Thomas L. Morris. Great Bend's became a third class post office in 1905, second class in 1906 and first class in 1938. City delivery service with two deliverers began in 1906, in 1909 a third was added and in 1920 a fourth. In 1930 the local post office got its first official vehicle, a Ford truck, to make parcel post deliveries. Great Bend's first post office is illustrated below. A December 26, 1874 cover from Great Bend addressed to a prominent company in New York is illustrated below as well. The 3 cent National Bank Note stamp, Scott 147, has a crude canceller with a single line date and location postmark. C. E. Hartung later had a city in New Jersey named for himself and his descendants include currently prominent New York City financiers.
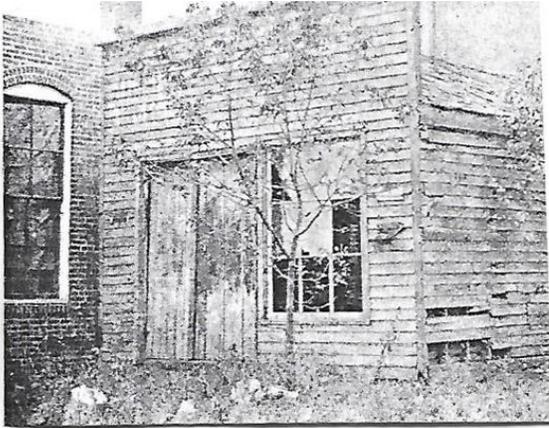
First Great Bend Post Office.
A few years after its heyday

Great Bend Cover addressed to C. E. Hartung

Ellinwood

Ellinwood is situated on the north bank of the Arkansas river 10 miles east of Great Bend. The town site was located and platted in 1871. The first house, a small frame structure, was erected by William Misner. A few miles west was the old village of Zarah. When Ellinwood was started most of the inhabitants of Zarah moved to the new town. One of the buildings thus moved from Zarah in 1872 became Ellinwood's first hotel.

On the corner of Main Street and the Santa Fe Trail and later the Santa Fe Railroad began the remarkable two blocks of underground commercial and store fronts that were established by the settling Bavarians in the 1850s to take advantage of the massive movement of traders and settlers along the Santa Fe Trail. Today the remnants of two underground commercial ventures await the modern day adventurer. One is able to tour a blacksmith/leatherwork store with original tools and original leather, horse cloths and metal wares that were created in this underground business. Another currently existing underground commercial venture that one may tour is a barbershop/ surgeon shop complete with areas to take a bath, have your tonsils removed, your clothes cleaned, have a drink, play cards, visit a lady of ill repute and then leave to get a bite to eat, go to a hotel, or gamble in a more formal gambling atmosphere. The gentleman who established this multi-faceted enterprise was very inventive and highly resourceful. The underground store fronts were connected to their next door neighbors and across streets at the end of the blocks with tunneling passageways that had doorways and windows into the various business. Above the underground businesses were other businesses that could be visited by the wives and daughters of the community. The passageways and neighboring coal storage areas were covered by wooden sidewalks. Eleven or so bars, reportedly some brothels and other "man cave" commercial ventures such as the above mentioned blacksmith/ horse clothing shop were in this underground commercial area. Reportedly the early Bavarian entrepreneurs modeled their Ellinwood efforts on what they had experienced in their homeland in southern Germany. A number of new inhabitants arrived in the spring of 1873, and that year the first school house was built, the first school being taught by Miss Carrie Bacon. For the next five years the growth was slow. As mentioned above, many of the pioneers were Germans, who brought with them the customs of the fatherland, and in 1875 a brewery was established, one of the first in western Kansas. The big crops of 1878 gave the town a new impetus. Early in that year the Ellinwood Express was started and the new newspaper aided materially in building up the town. In 1878, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway and parties from Marion County and McPherson County chartered the Marion and McPherson Railway Company. In 1879, a branch line was built from Florence to McPherson and in 1881 it was extended to Ellinwood. A roundhouse was erected, and before the close of the year

Ellinwood was incorporated a a city of the third class with F. A. Steckel as the first mayor. In 1910 it had 2 banks, 2 large flour mills, 2 creameries, a weekly newspaper, 3 grain elevators, an international money order post office with three rural routes, a telephone exchange, hotels, churches, and annually shipped large quantities of grain, flour and live stock. The accompanying cover contains a circular postmark and a postmaster made cancellation on the definitive workhorse of the era, Scott # 147..

Ellinwood Post Office

Pawnee Rock

Pawnee Rock was founded in 1874.[7] It was named after the historic landmark, nearby Pawnee Rock. Pawnee Rock was incorporated in 1887. From 1821 until late in the 1800s Pawnee Rock ws a noted landmark along the Santa Fe Trail. Thousands of wagons lumbered and creaked by carrying goods to and from the southwest. Many travelers recorded their impressions in journals and letters. A U. S. government surveyor, George Sibley wrote in his journal on August 20, 1825: "After breakfast...we all started...Mr. Gamble and myself rode out upon the high Prairie...to a remarkable rocky point….[Its] Rocks are very large and a glossy Black colour….We rode upon the top which is probably 50 feet above the plain below, and from whence there is a charming view of the country in every direction."The community of Pawnee Rock began in 1874. Pawnee Rock was incorporated in 1887. It was named after the historic nearby landmark. It was on the Santa Fe Railroad about fourteen miles southwest of Great Bend. At its prime the City of Pawnee Rock had a weekly newspaper, about two dozen retail stores, telegraph and express offices and a money order post office with two rural routes.

From atop Pawnee Rock

Current Pawnee Rock Post Office

Pawnee Rock cover of Sept. 11, 1879 containing a letter requesting funds from an estate settlement to help with surviving after a devastating drought. Covered serviced with a 3 cent American Bank Note Washington Scott Number 184 and a simple date and city postmark and a heavily used target cancellation.

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF by Neal E. Danielson

This is the 65th in a series of articles relating to small post cards and small covers so if you have any in your collection that you would like to share please let us know.

This Small Stuff cover comes to you by way of Hutchinson, Kansas through Ellsworth, Kansas, thanks to **Myron Janzen** (Figure 1). Hutchinson is located in Reno County (Figure 2) and serves as the Reno County Seat (Figure 3). This Small Stuff measures 3 ½ by 2 3/16 inches and is franked with a 2¢ George Washington stamp (Scott #406) and is tied to the cover with a circular-date-stamp postmarked from Hutchinson, Kans in Jan 1917. The post office in Hutchinson opened on December 6, 1871 with John A. Clapp service as Postmaster. At the time this Small Stuff was mailed out of Hutchinson, Samuel G. Graybill was serving as Postmaster having been appointed to the post August 25, 1914. He served until March 13, 1922.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Hutchinson was founded in 1871 when the Santa Fe Railway contracted with Clinton "C.C." Hutchinson, an Indian Agent, to establish a town at the railroad's crossing of the Arkansas River. The town was incorporated as a city in August, 1872. Hutchinson has had several 'nicknames' over the years. In 1887 as the home to salt mines it acquired the nickname "Salt City." The Kansas Underground Salt Museum (Strataca) in one of the eight Wonders of Kansas. During the prohibition years it earned the nickname "Temperance City" because alcohol had been prohibited since its incorporation in August, 1872 by its founder "C.C. Hutchinson.

The railroad was a major draw to Hutchinson with the Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska Railway arriving in 1887. That railway was taken over by the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway in 1891 due to foreclosure. After a couple of mergers it became the Union Pacific Railroad in 1997 but locals still refer to the Railroad as the "Rock Island". However the Santa Fe Railroad Station (Figure 4) included the Bisonte Hotel, that was built in 1906 and also became home to the local "Harvey House". Before dining cars became part of the passenger trains business, a passenger on the train had only one option for meal service in transit and that was to visit one of the roadhouses that were located near the "water stops" of the railroad. The Fred Harvey Company was part of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and the first Harvey House restaurant was established in a depot in Topeka, Kansas in January, 1876. *Hutch as most locals call Hutchinson is home to the Annual Kansas State Fair held in September; the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Basketball Tournament; and is home of the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center aerospace museum.*

The Small Stuff cover (Figure 1) was mailed to an individual in Ellsworth, Kansas. As Hutchinson is the County Seat of Reno County, Ellsworth is the County Seat (Figure 5) of Ellsworth County. Ellsworth was surveyed in the spring of 1867 and was located. It is located on the north bank of the Smoky Hill River along the Kansas Pacific Railway (Figure 6) just as Hutchinson is located on the Arkansas River along the Santa Fe Railway. Ellsworth celebrated their eightieth anniversary of the founding along with the organization of the County with a three-day celebration on July 10-12, 194

Figure 3   Reno County Courthouse

Figure 4 Santa Fe Railway facility in Hutchinson



Figure 5 Ellworth County Courthouse

Figure 6
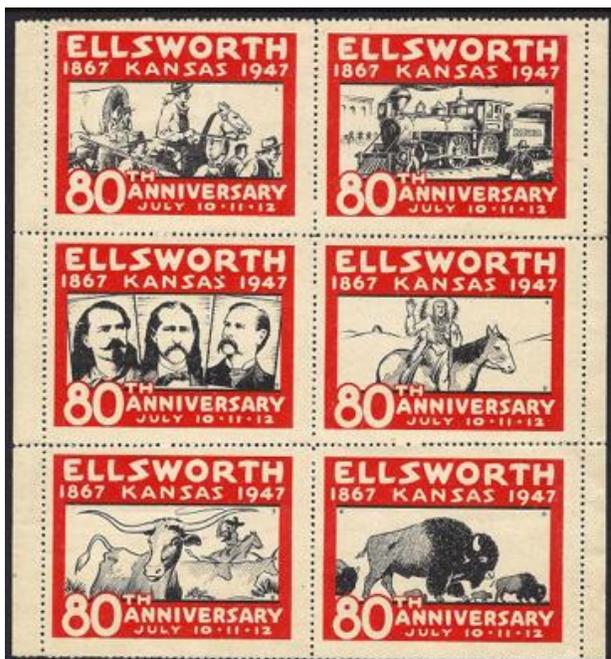
Figure 7

There were sets of Poster Stamps issued for the celebration that provided some historical events (Figure 7). The Poster Stamps shown left to right and down are identified as number 1 through 6. Not sure exactly how many different stamps were included in the set.

Stamp #1 depicts the influx of settlers into the Kansas Territory and into Ellsworth in 1867 as the word had gotten out that the Kansas Pacific was extending westward and were planning to go as far as Ellsworth County. The first structure in the County was a "Stockade" constructed by E. W. Kingsbury and served the settlers as a store and hotel. As soon as the territory opened it was inundated with construction resulting in five different merchants establishing groceries and provisions; a tinware and stoves business; hotel; dry goods and clothing; boots and shoes; along with forwarding and commission houses. In those early day the major staple articles in the grocery store was whisky. Fort Harker was located about four miles from town and housed some 1,500 soldiers and Government employees who consumed what they purchased before leaving town.

Stamp #2 depicts the coming of the Kansas Pacific Railway and with it brought prosperity that was derived from the long trains moving westward across the County through Ellsworth with the westward movement along the Smokey River to Wilson on the western border of Ellsworth County.

Stamp #3 depicts photos of three famous individuals that had a bearing on the town of Ellsworth, along with several others that were not so famous as lawmen in the Territory. William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody; James B. (Wild Bill) Hickok; and Wyatt Earp were among the famous names in history. A well-known notorious gunman by the name of Ben Thompson went to Ellsworth when it was prospering as a cattle boomtown. Thompson extra-curricular activity brought about Wyatt Earp arresting Ben in Ellsworth, Kansas on August 15, 1873
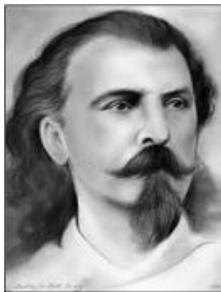
Cody   Hickok   Earp

Stamp #4 depicts an American Indian who occupied the territory before the white man entered the picture. The town of Ellsworth and surrounding area was often attached by renegade bands of Cheyenne Indians. The Indians were responsible for running off a lot of the stock in the County and the town citizens formed themselves in order to guard the town. The Smoky Hill River would often get so low that a youngster could step over the stream and then there were times when the river did its thing in grand style, as it did on June 8 1867 and put about four feet of standing water in the town. When the water subsided the town was again attacked by a band of Cheyenne's resulting in some of the settlers being killed. As if the floods and Indians were enough the cholera outbreak on July 1, 1867 hit Ellsworth and Fort Harker at the same time that lasted two or three weeks, taking the lives of about 300 individuals at Fort Harker and 50 or so citizens of Ellsworth. This resulted in numerous families moving out leaving the town with a population of about 40 out of nearly 1,000. This being early in the history of Ellsworth the Town Company determined that the town was plotted and laid out in the low lying grounds too close to the river. This led to a new survey and plat for an addition to the town and placed on record July 18, 1867. Those individuals still residing in Ellsworth were given similar sites in the new area at no cost to them.

Stamp #5 depicts longhorn cattle that were among cattle drives from Texas into Kansas to Adeline, Dodge City, Wichita, Ellsworth and other locations with access to the Railroad in order to transport to the east coast. These cattle drives often brought rowdy cowboys into town looking for trouble having been out on the trail for months at a time. In 1873 cattle trade brought a new element to town and by 1874 Ellsworth was the headquarters of the cattle trade and became known as a cow-boy town.

Stamp #6 depicts Buffalo that roamed the western frontier before the white man started to indiscriminately kill the Buffalo, including Wyatt Earp who was a Buffalo Hunter before becoming a lawman in Wichita and Dodge City. Of course the Indians hunted the Buffalo for their lively-hood, thus were not happy to see the white man.

All was not gloom for the settlers as they were pleased when a small stone schoolhouse was erected in 1869, which was the first, even though a Mr. Wellington had taught school in a small frame building south of the railroad track. Gris Mills were established along the Smoky River providing power to grind the flour that was produced. A brick two-story court house was built in 1872 with the court room on the second floor and the jail on the first floor. Eventually an iron bridge around 300 feet long was built across the Smoky River around 1872.