

SOUTHWEST QUADRANT DRIVING TOUR

Welcome to the Dickinson County Historical Society's southwest quadrant driving tour. This drive will take you to place, such as the sites of the earliest settlements on Turkey Creek, lost towns of Dayton, Bonaccord, and Acme. The route is approximately 55 miles in length and can take 2 ½ to 3 hours to drive.

Drive south of Abilene on K-15 to the Smoky Hill River bridge. To the west of the bridge, on the right, just before the river curves, is one of the river crossings used by the Texas cattle drovers during the period from 1867 to 1872. In times of low water, you can see the rocks in the bottom of the river at this crossing.

Continue south on K-15 for about six miles to the caution light at Rural Center school. Turn left on 1400 Avenue and travel east for two miles. At the intersection of Indy Road, turn right and drive south. The farm on the left side of the road was the original homestead of Stephan Rohrer, who settled in the Turkey Creek Valley in 1860. He built a cabin east of the farmhouse located near the creek. Continue to drive south to the next intersection of 1300 Avenue and turn left. Drive east for about ¼ mile to the Nathan Kamm farm. It was here, on the left side of the road, that Leonard Hoffman and his son, Michael, took land in 1860 and built a cabin. On the south side of the road, up on the hill, was the location of a cabin that was used as a school during the week and a church on Sundays. This cabin, built in 1863, was the forerunner of the New Basel United Church of Christ, which is located about two miles to the south of this original location, near the site of the lost town of New Basel, or New Basil, as it was known in the early days. NOTE: The roads to the south do not have an all-weather surface so we recommend that you do not attempt to go to the site of New Basel. The original cabin that was used as a school and church is now located in Old Abilene Town.

A little further east, on the east side of Turkey Creek, was the site of Christian Hoffman's cabin, which he also built in 1860. He later built a dam and grist mill at the same location, south of the bridge on the east bank of the creek. Christian Hoffman, Leonard Hoffman, and Stephen Rohrer arrived on Turkey Creek in the spring of 1860 to take up land and build houses. Leonard was Christian's father, and was married to Stephen's cousin, Agatha Rohrer. These families immigrated to the United States from Buchs, S.G., Switzerland. They first planted about 20 acres of corn and potatoes, then started building houses. First, they built Christian's house, then Leonard's, followed by Stephen's. The families were among the earliest settlers on Turkey Creek. Only one other family was in the area when they arrived in 1860, that being Martin Rubin, who had staked a claim one year earlier just south of the Christian Hoffman cabin.

Turn around here (at the Nathan Kamm home) and drive back west about ¼ mile. Turn right at the intersection of drive one mile north to the next intersection. Turn to the left and drive two miles west to K-15.

Turn left and drive south for eight miles. At the intersection of K-4, turn left and go two miles east to Indy Road. Turn left and drive one mile north to 700 Avenue. At this intersection is the

location of the town of Dayton. The town developed in the early 1890's and had a general mercantile store, hardware, gun, buggy, and implement store, a cream station, and three residences. A post office was established here in 1895. Harry W. Dayhoff, the proprietor of the store, was the first postmaster. The Dayton band was organized in Dayton in the mid 1890's by John Miller. This band was a popular entertainment group around the turn of the century.

Turn around and drive back south for one mile to K-4 (600 Avenue). Travel west to K-15 and the village of Elmo. The original townsite of old Elmo was platted in 1885 by the Monniger family at a location one mile west of present-day Elmo (Flag Road). A post office had been established there in 1884, with William H. Caulk as the first postmaster. Old Elmo was once a flourishing village with the post office, a store, brick kiln, school, church, and several residences. Later, in 1885, J.J. Berry founded Banner City at the site of present-day Elmo. Bricks from the kiln at old Elmo were used to construct many of the buildings in Banner City. Elmer Bruce built the first house, which was followed by a hotel and other businesses, including a lumber yard and hardware store. In 1887, the post office was moved from old Elmo to Banner City, but the name of the post office was never changed. Banner City residents continued to get their mail addresses to Elmo, which was probably one of the reasons for the eventual name change from Banner City, and by the mid 1920's, Banner City, now Elmo, had a bank, barber shop, lumber yard, blacksmith shop, general store, two garages, implement business, restaurant, two elevators, township hall, depot, and two churches. The Catholic church is still there with an active congregation. Looking on the west side of the church, you will see the bell tower. It enshrines the statue of "Our Lady of the Farmlands", and was erected by Fr. Louis Mattas in the early 1960's.

The Elmo Permian fossil beds, also known as Insect Hill, are located about three miles south and ½ mile east of the K-15 and K-4 intersection. In the summer of 1899, E.H. Sellard of the University of Texas discovered a most remarkable deposit of Permian insects near Elmo, Kansas. Paleozoic insects are rare and can be found in only a few locations in the world. A total of about 9,000 specimens have been removed from the Elmo bed since Sellard's discovery. The Elmo bed is one of the most famous beds of insect fossils in the world, yielding fossils that indicate that giant dragonflies here once measured thirty inches from tip to tip. Before the Elmo fossil bed was discovered, less was known about insects of Permian period (about 250 million years ago) than any other period of prehistoric time. Since the discovery, more has been learned about the period than any other insect period in the earth's history, except those of today. **The fossil bed is on private property, and under no circumstances should it be entered without permission.**

From the intersection of K-4 and K-15, drive west on K-4. The cemetery, near the original townsite of Elmo, is known as the Banner City Cemetery. Continue driving west from the Flag Road intersection for about 2 ½ miles until you reach Dove Road. You are now ¼ mile south of the town of Carlton. Before you turn toward town, you may look to the south and southwest. The old-timers of the area called the hills that you see, the Black Hills. A short drive west to the crest of the hill will bring the highest point in Dickinson County into view. That hill is straight south on Camp Road and is 1577 feet above sea level. To the south across Marion County line, there is a spring that was a popular picnic and outing spot called Elm Springs. The rocks

surrounding the spring are carved with initials said to be those of Texas cowboys who had come up the Chisholm Trail with the longhorn cattle destined for Abilene. The spring is on private property, so please do not trespass.

From the corner of K-4 and Dove Road, drive north to Carlton. The first and only post office for Holland township was established here in 1872 with Alson L. Durkee as postmaster. The name given to the post office was Carlton. The town was created as a result of the arrival of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, which first started trains through the area in 1884. Southwest of Carlton, the Cornell family and the Cornell University of Ithaca, New York, owned nearly 2,000 acres of land. In the early 1870's, the homesteaders in the area wanted to build a school. The only way this could be accomplished was through taxation. The titles to their land were still with the U.S. government since their homesteads had not been proven, and the only land in the area subject to taxation was owned by Ezra Cornell of New York. The homesteaders called a special election and voted a tax of \$1,500 for the purpose of building a school. Mr. Cornell not only paid the assessment but donated a library of fifty or more volumes for the school. A building was erected about one mile southwest of present-day Carlton. The school's official name was Pinchum, but it was always called Watts school by the students. Sometime after the turn of the century, the Pinchum school house was sold, and a new school was built in Carlton.

At one time, Carlton had a livery stable, drug store, two restaurants, a lumber company, blacksmith shop, dentist, doctor, hotel, church, hardware store, cheese factory, saloon with a barbershop in the rear, a bank, several two-story business buildings, a two-room schoolhouse and several general stores. Carlton is said to have been named after a blacksmith who operated the post office at the time Carlton was founded.

In its pioneer days, Carlton was a stopover point on the Chisholm Trail. The Texas drovers would use the area around Carlton to hold, graze, and fatten their cattle while waiting on stockyard space and cattle cars at Abilene. To accommodate the Texas cowboys who were camped out on the prairie watching the cattle, Mike Rogers set up a supply store and saloon about 3 ¼ miles south and ½ mile west of Carlton on the east bank of the west branch of Holland creek.

From Carlton, drive north of Dove Road, which becomes Eden Road. Continue north for about five miles to the town of Holland. The first post office for Wheatland township was established here in 1884 on the Tom McConnel farm just west of Holland Creek. The village of Holland got its start around 1888 when a creamery was organized in the community. The creamery belonged to the farmers in a cooperative. With the many customers coming to the creamery, S.W. French decided that a store was needed. A store building on wheels was pulled by mules from Carlton to a pasture owned by Clem Bell. Mr. and Mrs. French and their two sons lived in the back of this store, and the post office was soon moved to the store from the McConnel farm.

Some say that the Holland community got its name from the post office, but others say that the name was connected with the quality of the butter produced at the creamery, which equaled that made in the old country of Holland. At one time, Holland had a population of 72 persons.

They had a store, creamery, post office, garage, blacksmith shop, bank, telephone office, barber shop, church, school, doctor, and dentist. All businesses have now vanished. The only business in Holland is the veterinary clinic of Alan Myers.

From the intersection of Eden Road and 1200 Avenue, just north of Holland, continue driving north for two miles to 1400 Avenue. Turn left and drive west for two miles to Daisy Road, then turn left again (south) and go about another ½ mile. This brings you to the Mt. Pleasant Church, which was organized in 1880. A church building of pine wood was built in 1881. A Catholic carpenter, Andrew Grimm, was the carpenter who built the church. He walked four miles in the severe winter of 1881 from his home to the job. Many days his lunch was frozen solid and could not be eaten. A friendly owl, perched in the rafters, was his only companion during the 81 days it took to build the church. The building built by Mr. Grimm was struck by lightning in August of 1911. Only the organ was saved. By December of the same year, a new Mt. Pleasant Church building was dedicated, debt free. The congregation used the Prairie Mound Cemetery near Solomon until 1882, as there was no cemetery at the church at that time. In August of that year, a baby of the James Guest family died. It was a hot summer, and the bluestem grass was four or five feet high. There were no roads, and all transportation was by lumber wagon or horseback. It was decided that the congregation would have to have a cemetery at once, for it was thought that the trip to Solomon in the heat would kill half of the congregation. Robert Mark and James Coleman woke up the DeMersseman family, who owned the land north of the church, at 2:00 a.m. and purchased two acres for fifty dollars. The cemetery was named Green Lawn after a cemetery in Ypsilanti, Michigan, from which many people had come before settling in the community served by Mt. Pleasant.

Drive north of Daisy Road back to 1400 Avenue. Just north of the intersection, on the right side of the road, is the location of the village of Bonnacord. The Bonnacord post office was established in 1884, with Daniel Van Duyn as the first postmaster. He handled the mail in his home. In 1901, a Mr. Martin purchased an acre of land about one mile west of the post office and built a store. For many years, Mr. E. Meek owned this store. The Bonnacord telephone exchange was installed soon after the store was built. The store was at the northeast corner of the intersection of 1400 Avenue and Camp Road. The Acme Creamery Co. built a steam-powered station and residence across the intersection at about the same time the store was built. For a while, the hamlet of Bonnacord also had a blacksmith shop. Today all evidence of Bonnacord is gone.

From the Bonnacord store corner, turn right on Camp Road and drive north for three miles to 1700 Avenue (Marymount Road), turn right and continue driving four miles east to Fair Road. This was the location of the town of Acme, once a crossroads village of several shops and homes. It began as a creamery, which was a community project in 1895. The creamery would take in milk from the surrounding farmers, separate the cream, and give the skimmed milk back to the farmer to be fed to the pigs. The creamery would churn the cream and make butter, which would be sold to several stores in Abilene. Some butter was also shipped out of state.

Will Wolverton opened a general store in 1895. The store served as a social center during the summer on Saturday nights. Homemade ice cream sold for 5 cents a dish. In 1897, a post office was set up in the corner of the store. The establishment of a post office was an important step in the development of any community. Mail was often the only contact with the rest of the world and was an important source of news in the absence of any newspaper. The post offices became meeting places for members of the community, and often supply stores would be operated from the same location. The town of Acme consisted of a creamery, grocery store with post office, a blacksmith shop with a barbershop in the back, and two residences. All of Acme was in the southwest corner of the intersection between the ditch and the wooded area that runs at an angle southwest of the corner.

Early in 1905, the need for a telephone service arose, so Jake Musser installed a switchboard in the kitchen of his home on the northeast corner of the intersection. His daughter, Miriam, attended the switchboard until she married. The Acme Mutual Telephone Association was organized in 1905, and ceased operation in 1969, when it was merged with the Tri-County Telephone Association, Inc., and dial service was introduced to the area. The building was moved to the Heritage Center in Abilene in 1986. It became part of their outside museum and is available to visit when the museum is open.

Drive east of 1700 Avenue, back to K-15 Highway, then turn north and return to Abilene. We hope that you have enjoyed this drive and that you were able to learn some amazing history about Dickinson County.