

SUNDAY DRIVE – SOUTHEAST QUADRANT

Welcome to the Dickinson County Historical Society's southeast quadrant driving tour. This drive will take you places, such as, the Swedish colony east of Enterprise, the historic Lyona community, the lost towns of Shady Brook, Aroma, Dillon, and Donegal. The route is approximately 55 miles in length and can take 2 ½ to 3 hours to complete.

From the southeast corner of Enterprise, where Highway 43 turns south, travel two miles east on 2100 Avenue, turn right on Oat Road and travel about two-thirds of a mile south to the Swedish Mission Church, located on the west side of the road. This stone church was built on a five-acre plot of ground in 1881. The first seats in the church were planks without backs and coal oil lamps were used for light. In the early days, the men sat on the south side of the church and the women on the north. Newly married couples were permitted to sit together in a middle section. In 1891 the steeple and bell were demolished by a storm. No regular services have been held at the church since 1934. The Swedish settlement east of Enterprise began when the first settler, John Swenson, came to the area in 1858. Others followed him and built their homes in the Swenson Creek community. Many of the beautiful stone homes, barns, and other buildings that were built by the Swedish colonists still stand. A driving tour brochure of the native stone homes in the Swedish community is available at the Dickinson County Heritage Center in Abilene.

As you leave the church, continue south on Oat Road to 2000 Avenue and turn left. The southwest corner of this intersection was the site used in the filming of the movie "The 34th Star" in the 1970's. Drive east on 2000 Avenue for one mile. Just beyond Paint Road, on the right side of the road, is the Pleasant Hill School, which was built in 1877 at a cost of \$600. The first teacher, Miss Mabel White, received a \$100 salary for a three-month teaching term. About 20 pupils were in attendance that first year. Classes have not been held in the school since 1956, when the school districts unified. The decorative stone facing on the north wall of the school is called "woodpeckering". The school is on privately owned property, so please remember not to trespass.

For forty years, until a well was drilled in 1917, water for the school was carried from a spring located a short distance to the east, on the left side of the road. The location of the spring was near the cottonwood tree that was estimated to be over 150 years old. Unfortunately, the tree is no longer standing. Olof Nystrom or "Sorghum Olle" as he was called, operated a sorghum mill under its branches. Nystrom lived in a dugout on the east side of the creek. Allie Diehl also operated a cheese factory in this area.

Continue driving east for about 3 ½ miles crossing the Rain Road and continuing on 2000 Avenue. Located on the right side of the road is Prospect Park Farm, a Kansas Farm Bureau Century Farm whose farmstead is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The farm is privately owned, and we ask that you admire it from the road unless you have received permission from the current owners, Dale and Sonya Anders.

The farm had its beginnings in 1872 when John “Jackie” Taylor arrived in Dickinson County and purchased ten sections of land in Rinehart, Liberty, Logan, and Union townships for just \$4 an acre. Jackie built a small stone house in 1876 and lived there for about eight years, when he deeded the property to his son, John Hiram. After John Hiram married in 1884, he added on to the house, using the original house as the kitchen wing. The new house was built of cream-colored native limestone quarried from the Borman quarry about eight miles northeast of the house. The Scottish stonemasons, Mr. Medley and Mr. Wilkie, dressed the stone with a five-toothed chisel. Each of the house’s fourteen rooms had several windows, each with a stone lintel hand carved with designs which portrayed signs of prosperity, health, and happiness. Two large stone barns were built in 1877 and 1882, each with a built-up driveway to reach the upper floors with cisterns for collecting rainwater located under the driveways. John Hiram and Fannie Taylor raised ten children to Prospect Park Farm, and the youngest, Paul, who passed away in 1996, was the last Taylor to live at the farm.

The Anders received a 1999 preservation award for their restoration work on the home. The project involved roof replacement, repair of the gutters, and cupola, strengthening the foundation and re-pointing the limestone exterior to restore the home to its 1884 appearance.

Travel south on Trail Road to 1800 Avenue (Pearl Road). Turn left until you come to Wolf Road, then turn left again and drive ¼ mile north to the Lyona Church. This was the first church of any denomination to be organized in what is now Dickinson County. For the first four years, the church services were held in homes or outdoors. In 1863, the first Lyona Church was built of logs and mud. It stood just to the east of where the stone church now stands. The log church also served as the community school from 1863 to 1870. This school was called Union School, the first public school in the area. The Lyona Church you see today was built of stone in 1871. The congregation gathered at the old log cabin and walked in a body to the new church for the dedication ceremony. The old stone parsonage, built in 1866-67, was east of the church, and was replaced by a memorial playground in 1989. The current parsonage was built in 1900 and is occupied by the current minister.

Many of the original settlers in the Lyona community were of German descent, and the German language was used in the early church and school until after the turn of the century. There is a small cemetery near the church that contains many interesting burials, including Julia Staatz, infant daughter of Charles and Fredericka Staatz, who died in 1859 and is the earliest burial. Church records note a person who died of “old age” at 38 years, and a plaque of fever in 1887 added twenty-two graves to the Lyona Cemetery. You may get out here and stretch your legs.

Return to Wolf Road and turn left, traveling south. The first stone house that you see on the left belonged to Wesley Staatz, a descendant of Charles Staatz, who built the house in 1867. The house has been occupied by Staatz descendants since that time. Charles Staatz was one of the first pioneers to take up a claim in the Lyons Creek Community. He came here in May of 1867 and built a log house daubed with mud. The log house stood near where the stone house now stands. Mrs. Staatz wrote “when we reached here in late May, we lived in the wagon until the

cabin was completed in October.” She said “we had no clock or looking glass. When I wanted to see if my hair was parted straight, I went to the water pail and looked in.” Julia Staatz was born in the wagon a month after their arrival and died in October. Their second child, Fred, was born a year later, and is the first white child born in Dickinson County to reach adulthood. The Staatz farm is the oldest Century Farm in Kansas Farm Bureau’s fifth district.

Continue south for about one mile, or to the third house on the right, now the Jeff Shippy home. This native limestone home was built by J.F. Staatz in 1867, after having lived in a log home for six years. It was here, in the summer of 1861, that the town of Lyonsville was founded on the J.F. Staatz claim by Staatz and Daniel R. Emery. The town was laid out and platted, but the town company never sold any lots, and the townsite was eventually turned into a farm. The first post office in Liberty township was established here in 1869 and was called Lyona. Daniel R. Emery was the first postmaster. The house is still served by a spring-fed water system. The head of the spring is located ½ mile east of the house in the pasture. This system is all gravity-fed, no pumps being used in moving the water. The house even has an upstairs bathroom since the springhead is still higher than the second floor of the stone house! A gas-powered generator was located in the basement of the house and an electric line run the schoolhouse, providing electricity for the school in the very early years.

The stone building just to the south had its beginnings as the Lyona School. The Lyona School District #1 was the first public school district to be organized in Dickinson County. It was organized in 1869. In 1870, J.F. Staatz donated land for a frame school building which was replaced in 1901 by a 24-foot x 36-foot stone building. The first teacher in the new building was Harvey Shippy, an uncle of Gerald Shippy, who lives in the “old schoolhouse” today. The school barn still stands to the north and west of the house, the tin shed with the four openings to the east. The children put their ponies they rode to school there throughout the day.

Indians used to camp on the school grounds when they made their annual trips, north in the spring and south in the autumn, during the 1880’s and 90’s. They came, fifty or more, in groups of five to eight covered wagons and put their horses in the Neuzenmayer feedlots, south of the barn, near the spring. Gypsies also used to camp on the east side of the road by the spring as they moved through the area in the late 1940’s.

The last year school was held here was in the 1950-51. Charles Shippy, who lived at the time in the J.F. Staatz home to the north of the school grounds, acquired the building. Since 1962, it has served as the home of the Gerald Shippy family. It has been remodeled a handful of times. The tallest part of the roof is still the original stone building. The original stone can be seen on the outside, on the north and west sides of the building.

As you proceed south on Wolf Road, you will pass the William Brussow home on the west side of the road. William Brussow was among those who came from Wisconsin shortly after Charles Staatz and Herman Oesterreich. It is from the farm where the stone was quarried for the Woodbine (Zion) G.M.E. church for its construction in 1904-1905.

Continuing south on Wolf Road, you will pass the 1600 Avenue intersection. About ¼ mile west of this intersection is where the August Volkman cabin was first constructed. It was built just below the bluff and after being flooded several times, it was disassembled and moved up the hill. It was later incorporated into the larger framed house. The cabin was rediscovered when the larger house was being demolished. The cabin was subsequently donated and moved to the Heritage Center in Abilene, Kansas.

As you continue south around the curve and back south on Wolf Road, you will see a modern residence on your right (west). That is the location of the homestead of Herman Oesterreich, who settled here in 1857. First, a log cabin was constructed. Herman then returned to Wisconsin in 1859 to "find a bride!" he married Albertina Timm and returned to Kansas with Albertina's parents and siblings. Peter Timm bought a cabin just south of Lyon Creek, west of where you crossed the bridge over the creek, just south of the Lyona church.

In 1867, Herman and Albertina moved into their new stone house at the same location. This farm has remained in the possession of Herman Oesterreich's heirs since he settled it in 1857. This is probably the second oldest continuously owned family farm in Dickinson County, second only to the Staatz farm near Lyona settled by Herman's sister Frederika, and her husband, Charles Staatz, earlier in 1857.

As you continue south, you will pass the 1500 Avenue intersection. As you pass this intersection, you are crossing the Phillip's Topeka-Salina Trail (Military Trail between Fort Riley and Fort Ellsworth/Harker). This trail was first used by Native American's traveling from Council Grove to Salina. To the west ½ mile is the Salina Crossing on Lyon's Creek. This crossing was used until the late 1940's. Erosion has now made its use impossible. All are on private land and should be accessed ONLY with permission of the adjacent landowners.

Continue on Wolf Road to 1400 Avenue, turn right. Continue west to the intersection of Union Road, turn left and drive south four miles to 1000 Avenue. The town of Shady Brook was there, though no traces remain. The town was located along the Rock Island Railroad tracks. The railroad had a small open depot here. West of the tracks was a grocery store and a creamery. East of the tracks was an elevator and nearby was a stockyard. On June 4, 1901, a post office was opened in the grocery store with Oscar S. Bowers as the postmaster. When the grocery store burned, the post office was moved to the creamery, where it remained until it was closed in 1907. The elevator stood for many years until the Rock Island weed burner got too close and it burned to the ground. Nothing is left of Shady Brook today...it is one of Dickinson County's many "lost towns". These lost towns are featured in a book written by Helen Dingler entitled Past and Present, Towns of Dickinson County, Kansas". This book is available at the Heritage Center to purchase and is full of wonderful history about the towns in Dickinson County, Kansas. One mile west on 1000 Avenue at the intersection of Trail Road, is the Shady Brook Church and Cemetery, if you would like to get out and stretch your legs.

Return to Union Road, turn right and continue driving south to the intersection of K-4 highway (about three miles) and turn right. Travel west towards Hope for about ½ mile. Just beyond the road, to the right and about 300 feet north of the highway, was the location of Aroma. It was

here that the first post office in southeast Dickinson County was established in 1869. The post office was located in the home of postmaster Alex Blanchett. The home was a 16' x 20' log cabin. The post office was named after Blanchett's hometown back east. He built a cupboard, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, in the corner of his home. The lower portion of the cupboard was enclosed with doors, where he kept the first-class mail, registered mail, and small parcels. The upper portion was used to display patent medicines that Blanchett kept on hand to accommodate his patrons. The nearest doctor was either at Abilene or Junction City. This old mail cupboard from the Aroma Post Office is on display at the Heritage Center in Abilene.

Before the farmers of the community had their own hand crank cream separators, Mr. Blanchett purchased a large cream separator and set up a creamery a short distance northwest of his cabin. This large piece of machinery was pulled from Junction City by a team of horses, using rollers under the machinery to move it along. It was a slow process, as the rollers would have to be picked up and placed under the front of the machinery every few feet as the team moved the machinery along. After Blanchett got his separator in operation, farmers from miles around would bring their milk in to be separated, returning home with the skimmed milk, which was fed to the pigs. Blanchett churned the cream into butter and stored it at the spring near the creek until it was sold to the Army at Fort Riley. The post office was discontinued in 1888. North of the old homestead, about ½ mile on the east side of the road, up on the hill east of the bridge, out in the pasture, is a small cemetery where Alex Blanchett and his wife are buried. The burial site is on private property, so please do not trespass.

Travel on west of Aroma for about ¾ mile to a point just west of the Lyon Creek bridge. To your left, on the south side of the highway, is St. John's Evangelical Church, which was also known as the Lyon Creek Church. It was founded in September 1861. The Reverend Lange became the first pastor at a salary of \$180 paid annually, plus five bushels of corn and one-half sack of flour per member and a free parsonage. The first church building was dedicated on January 29, 1871, and in October of 1881, the native stone parsonage was completed. The church building you see here today was completed in 1899.

Continue west on Highway 4 to Hope. With the coming of the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1885, and the Santa Fe Railroad in 1887, the mining of gypsum became a large industry in the Hope area. The Kansas-Nebraska Plaster Mill was located on the northwest side of Hope and was operated as a gypsum mill from 1887 to around 1903. It was operated by the U.S. Gypsum Co. The Crimble Stucco Mine was a strip gypsum mine located about two miles west of Hope from 1887 to 1894. Stucco, made from gypsum from this mine, was used in construction of buildings for the 1892 Chicago World's Fair. The Cook Mine was located about 2 ½ miles west of Hope. This shaft was sunk in 1894 and was worked until 1910.

Turn left at Hope and follow Highway 4 south through Hope to the south side of town. Take the curve to your right and follow Highway 4 for about four miles to Key Road. At the blacktop road, turn to the right and drive one mile north to Dillon. Dillon got its start around 1868, when settlers started taking up claims in the Turkey Creek Valley. In 1871, Nathan Dillon bought a large tract of land in the Dillon area and moved there in 1872. The Dillon Post Office was established

in 1872, and the town was platted in 1886. The community started to grow when a colony of about 60 persons from Tennessee, under the leadership of W.E. Meek and A.L. Evers, arrived in 1878. At one time Dillon had two blacksmith shops, a grocery and dry goods store, confectionery store, hardware and implement store, a lumber yard, cheese factory and cream station. A grain elevator was built, followed by the Dillon Co-operative Elevator, which is still in operation today. Dillon also had two churches and a school. It's population around the turn of the century was nearly 300 persons. The Dillon flour mill was located one mile west and 1 ½ miles north of Dillon. It was first operated by a water wheel and later by a gasoline engine. There was a gypsum mine just west of town and another one about 2 miles to the south.

From the crossroad at Dillon (700 Avenue), continue north on the Key Road for six miles to 1300 Avenue. Here at the intersection on the southwest corner was the village of Donegal. The Donegal Post Office was established here in 1895 with John E. Musser as postmaster. At one time, Donegal had a general store, blacksmith shop, hardware store, telephone exchange, and a doctor's office. The house that is still standing here was the general store. It has been added on to and is used as a residence today.

Upon leaving the Donegal intersection, continue driving north of Key Road. On the left is the original site of the old Belle Springs Creamery which was founded by River Brethren colonists who migrated to Dickinson County in the spring of 1879. There were almost 300 persons who came to Kansas on several trains, representing the largest cash inflow the county had seen up to this time. Crops were planted and harvested, and the people prospered on their new Kansas farms. Many of the farmers had milk cows, and there was a problem of an abundant milk supply with no market. Eli Hoffman and his brother, Christian, and a brother-in-law, J.K. Forney, along with Noah Hershey, were among the Pennsylvanians living on Turkey Creek. In the summer of 1868, they laid the groundwork for a creamery that could process their supply of milk into butter. Forney agreed to return to his home state to investigate building a creamery in Kansas. While there, he hired J.E. Nissley to operate the plant that they prospered to build.

After Forney returned, the creamery was erected on the hillside south of a small branch of Turkey Creek called Cobb Creek. The south side (high side) had a dock, and the north side of the building faced the creek, into which waste was dumped. Business was so good that the need for a larger creamery soon became evident. A new plant was built in Abilene in 1892 near where the Drovers Cottage Hotel stood. A new creamery was later built on the site of the hotel, and still stands today east of the courthouse in Abilene. The creamery is listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

Continue north on Key Road for less than ½ mile. You will see a cemetery on the right side of the road. This is the site of the Belle Springs Brethren in Christ Church, which was established in 1891 by the colonists who had arrived in Kansas in 1879. The first church services were held in private homes. The Rev. Jacob Engle was the first pastor. Regular church services were held at the church until 1946. The building was later sold at auction and razed in 1957. The cemetery was established in 1879. President Eisenhower's great-grandfather, Frederick, and his

grandfather, Jacob, are both buried here, along with other members of the Eisenhower family. You may get out here and stretch your legs.

Continue driving north on Key Road to the intersection of 1400 Avenue and turn left. Drive one mile west to Jeep Road, where you will turn to the right. Continue north for five miles to 1900 Avenue. Turn left and drive west one mile to Indy Road. At this intersection is the Farmington Cemetery and the plot where the Farmington school once stood. One mile south, on Turkey Creek, is where A.J. Markley took up a claim in 1859. He called his settlement on Turkey Creek Union City. The first regular election held in the county was held in the fall of 1861. The county was divided into two almost equal precincts by the Smoky Hill River. Voting places were established at Union City south of the river and at Newport north of the river. Markley is buried in the Farmington cemetery. It is interesting to note the percentage of women and children buried here compared to the number of men.

Turn right at the Farmington corner (Indy Road) and drive about ½ mile north to 1935 Lane. Turn left into the entrance of Brown's Park. The park, which was built by C.L. Brown of Abilene, was opened to the public in 1927-28. The park contains 226 acres and includes the palatial Brown Memorial Home for the aged, which was built as a memorial to his parents, a Boy Scout Camp, and a Methodist Church camp. The park had its beginnings in 1873, when the Kiddo brothers built a grist mill on the Smoky Hill River. Later, Jacob Brown, C.L. Brown's father, purchased the grist mill and ground grain and sawed wood for neighboring farmers. In 1898, C.L. Brown joined his father, and the grist mill was remodeled to generate electricity for Abilene. The Brown's Abilene Electric Light works expanded first to serve the local businesses and residents, then extended into nearby communities. In 1906, the light works was incorporated as Riverside Power and Gas Company. Success of the Riverside plant led Brown to secure franchises in other towns and cities and extend lines in all directions. By 1916, the Brown electrical enterprise had increased its capacity to serve some 20 communities. More plants were added and in 1924 the company was incorporated as the United Power and Light, which was sold in 1926 to what would become Kansas Power and Light.

Brown had made a fortune and wanted others to enjoy the fruits of his efforts while he was still alive. He incorporated the Brown Memorial Foundation in 1926. He had purchased the 226 acres south of the Smoky Hill River in 1913. In 1926 or 27, the firm of Hare and Hare of Kansas City submitted a plan which included landscaping the 226-acre site, construction of the home for the aged, and the park. The park became a recreation center for the entire north central Kansas area. It included a lake with sand beaches, a diving tower and approximately 40 small boats. There were tennis courts, baseball diamonds, a nine-hole golf course, rifle range, picnic and playgrounds, a zoo and buffalo coral, and both a Boy Scout and Girl Scout camp. On the south side of the lake, a full-sized replica of a New England whaler was built for the Sea Scouts for training. A dam was built on Turkey Creek and a large water wheel installed. The water wheel was used to move water from the creek, by way of an aqueduct, to the lake to keep the water at constant level. Just to the east of the home for the aged was an airplane hangar. Rides were given for a fee, with the pilot using the golf course for take-offs and landings.

C.L. Brown died on November 12, 1935. He is buried at Brown's Park, up on a hill near the Boy Scout camp. Due to the depression, the death of Brown and other factors, the park operation was drastically reduced in 1935. The zoo gradually disappeared, the lake dried up, and the golf course reverted back to pasture. The park property remained intact, and still serves as a beautiful setting for picnics and recreation. The camps and the home for the aged are maintained through an endowment and continue to thrive.

You may exit the park and return to Abilene, driving north of Highway 15. We hope that you have thoroughly enjoyed this drive and will do more of the drives.