

2023-2024 Board Officers & Members

President - Carolyn Godberson
Vice President - Jim Deakins
Secretary - Jade Suter
Treasurer - Susan Rutledge
Historian/Editor - Annette Cline-Pittman

3-Yr. Term
Daniel Pappan, Susan Rutledge

2-Yr. Term
Jack Godberson, Carolyn Godberson,
Dorothy Smith

1-Yr. Term
Jim Deakins, Pilar Burgert,
Jade Suter

Go to kawcitymuseum.com
For updates or call:
Dorothy Smith (580) 269-2085

Museum Memberships

Kaw City Museum is a tax-exempt non-profit 501c3 organization operated by donations of time and money. Memberships, purchases and donations are vital to the operation, upkeep and future growth of the museum and its grounds. Thank you for your continued support.

Family Membership \$10
Donor Membership \$25
Founder Membership \$100
Patron Membership \$200

Please mail your tax deductible donations and dues to Kaw City Museum, PO Box 56, Kaw City, OK 74641.

Tell Us Your Story

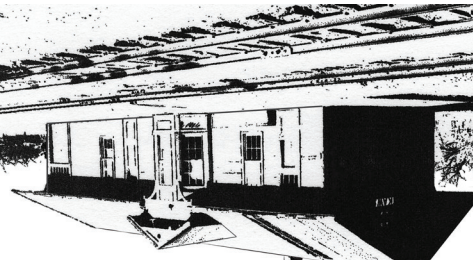
Kaw City Museum is dedicated to preserving the history of the old town and the people who lived in the Kaw area. If you have stories to tell from the “good ole days”, please write them down and mail them to us. We’ll place them in the museum’s files for future research.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Kaw City, OK 74641-0056

PO Box 56

Kaw City Museum Inc.



Kaw City Museum News

A PUBLICATION OF THE KAW CITY MUSEUM

SPRING 2023

The Rise and Fall of an Oklahoma Town

The original Kaw City, established in Oklahoma Territory by the Kaw City Townsite Company, was located in the Ox Bow Bend of the Arkansas River along a railroad line in the midst of fertile farming and cattle country. The first town lots were offered for sale in 1902, five years before Oklahoma became the forty-sixth state in the Union. Within eight years, nearly 600 people called Kaw City their home.

Horses and buggies were the primary mode of transportation in the early days. With the town’s growth, wagons often lined Main Street as shoppers visited the business establishments extending along several city blocks.

The discovery of oil in the 1920s brought wealth and overnight growth to Kaw City. Hundreds of oil workers converged on the area, filling its three hotels and providing additional income to residents who rented out extra bedrooms. The town flourished and new businesses sprang up, but growth didn’t come without growing pains. Wagons laden with heavy loads of lumber for building derricks constantly stirred up dust from the dirt streets. The smells and piles of waste left by so many additional horses were hard to escape. Some of the young roughnecks were a rowdy bunch and fights occasionally broke out in the saloons and on the streets. Saloon owners eventually fenced off areas behind their buildings for the drunks to “sleep it off”.



Large quantities of wood were used to build the oil derricks. Each rig included a tall wooden support derrick and the machinery that raised and lowered the drilling equipment. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Homer Honn.

Kaw City’s close proximity to the Arkansas River facilitated great opportunities for fishing and recreation, but in 1923, the River also brought disaster to the community when it flooded far outside its banks, filling all of the downtown area and many homes with murky, waist-deep water. The loss of both the north and south bridges was a devastating blow that impacted trade from that point on, as the south bridge was never rebuilt.

The 1930 Census credits Kaw City with a population of 1,001 people—the largest it would ever see, although the number was probably much higher if the migrant oil workers had been counted. The Great Depression impacted hundreds of people and many businesses failed. When the United States joined WWII, many residents left to join the armed services and others moved to take advantage of higher paying jobs in the war industry.

The final blow came in the early 50s when rumors circulated that the Corps of Engineers planned to construct a dam which would permanently flood Kaw City. Even though the residents adopted a “wait and see” attitude, improvements and growth came to a virtual standstill. The Dam was authorized by Congress in the Flood Control Act of 1962 and ground was broken in 1966.

By the 1970 census, only 283 people still lived in Kaw City. Many of them were elderly. Adding insult to injury, many of the “closers” sent to purchase their homes were insensitive and pressured them into accepting compensation so low they couldn’t afford to purchase equivalent housing elsewhere.

The Santa Fe Depot (now the Kaw City Museum) and a number of houses were moved to the new Kaw City site which was on higher ground, two miles west of the original location and across the road from Kaw City’s Grandview Cemetery. “The Last Official Day Parade” was held on May 13, 1972 and the “Old Kaw City” was no more.

Halloween Pranks in the Early 1900s

The origins of Halloween go back over 2,000 years to medieval Europe, where children knocked on doors and begged for food and money. By the 19th century, youngsters in the United States celebrated October 31 by going door-to-door, singing songs, telling jokes and staging performances. Then in the 20th century, Halloween night became plagued with pranks and mischief. Most were harmless enough, but they weren't always fun for the recipients. It is believed modern day trick-or-treating emerged as a way to bring order to the growing problems associated with the celebration, and to make Halloween safe for everyone.

One Halloween night, a group of Kaw City boys sneaked into W.T. Conklin's barn located behind his house on the edge of town and kidnapped Conklin's milk cow for the prank of all pranks.

First, the boys had to halter the cow and connect the lead without anyone hearing them. Next, they had to steer the cow to the schoolhouse without anyone seeing them. But the biggest challenge facing them was coaxing the cow up the wide cement steps leading to the school's broad double-door entry—the *locked* double-door entry.

One of the nameless boys was able to pick the lock and in they went...cow and all! That in itself, was quite a feat, but the boys weren't finished yet. They had only made it to the grade school level. This cow was destined for high school on the second floor.

The stairs were steeper, divided by a landing and a turn, and to this day no one knows how they managed to get that cow to the second floor without a major disaster.

The next morning Glen and Hugo Conklin went to their barn to walk the milk cow out to the pasture and discovered she was missing. About the same time, school officials *found* the cow and the mess she had made and notified the Conklins to retrieve their cow.

Another Halloween antic which has never been forgotten involved a different group of boys and Mr.

Boon's outhouse. This event happened before indoor plumbing was available in most houses. The outhouse—a primitive toilet facility—was a little wooden building located in the back of people's homes. Most “outdoor johns” just had one hole, but some had two holes to accommodate larger families.

The plan was to turn Mr. Boon's outhouse over on its side. They worked quietly to loosen it from the ground but when it fell over, it landed with a loud crash, awakening Mr. Boon. Minutes later, Boon threw open his back door and saw what they boys had done. He was angry, but didn't want to hurt them so he only fired his rifle in the air to “scare them to death”. They ran like their life depended on it, but never received just punishment for leaving the Boons without their necessary facility until another outhouse could be built.



The actual Santa Fe outhouse from Old Kaw City was the caboose in the city's “Last Official Day Parade”. It now sits on permanent display outside the Kaw City Museum. Locked doors prevent anyone from using the vintage outhouse for its original purpose.

Kaw City Museum's Annual Reunion Scheduled

Sunday, May 28 from 11:00 am-5:00 pm - 910 Washunga Drive, Kaw City, OK

The Kaw City Museum Board is pleased to announce this year's Annual Reunion will take place on the Sunday of Memorial Weekend. Board members and volunteers will be on hand to greet local residents as well as visitors from across the country. Whether you grew up in old Kaw City or you are new to the area, you're sure to enjoy the countless displays of historical artifacts, photographs, maps, books, name bricks, furniture and even the names and plot locations of Grandview Cemetery. Admission is free.

Clearing the Path for a New Lake

Construction of Kaw Dam which inundated the ill-fated old Kaw City with nearly 40 feet of water took nearly twenty years to complete. Businesses in the path of the coming lake waters were torn down. Houses were purchased and either moved or marked for demolition.

One lone building—the Clubb Hotel—constructed in 1924 by rancher Ike Clubb, stood its ground.

In its prime, the hotel housed the Laura Clubb Art Collection and was said to be one of the safest buildings in the United States. Built with brick and concrete instead of mortar, it was virtually fireproof. Earl Penn who purchased the building for salvage, brought in dynamite to bring the hotel down. He strategically placed the explosives in a corner of the building, but outside of a few bricks falling, the only damage was to the large picture windows in the hotel lobby, unless you count the windows blown out in buildings across the street and in the Methodist parsonage over a block away.

Penn reportedly threw up his hands and declared, “This is too much for me! It looks like we got fifty bricks for fifty sticks of dynamite.”

One of the old timers watching the razing efforts told reporters, “They'll have to blow up the whole town before they get that building down.”

A historical 2-story house (*pictured right*) originally built for an early bank president, E.S. Shidler, was one of the larger residences relocated to the new townsite. Over the years, it was owned and lived in by W.T. Conklin, Glenn Grantham, George Danhour and finally Tommy Trueblood who arranged for it to be moved. The house was wider than the only road to new Kaw City and the winding, two-lane road was filled with one obstacle after another. The house survived the two mile trip in one piece, and remains standing nearly 50 years later.

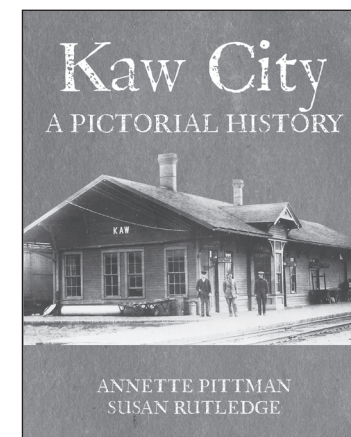


Clubb Hotel circa early 1930s. Photo courtesy of Glenn Conklin.



For hours, the Trueblood house was a real traffic-stopper! Photo courtesy of Tommy Trueblood.

Historical Resources and Gifts Available for Purchase



collected from Old Kaw City's residents. Worn and aged images provide a glimpse of Kaw City's early days.

The award winning two-volume Kay County history

Kaw City - A Pictorial History can be purchased from the museum for a donation of \$20 or more. Written to benefit the museum by native Kaw Citian Annette Pittman and her daughter, Susan Rutledge, this one-of-a-kind pictorial history includes 200 photographs that span a dozen decades,

book, North Central Oklahoma, Rooted in the Past-Growing for the Future, can still be purchased from Kaw City Museum while supplies last. It is out of print, so order yours before they are all gone! In the two books, Kay County's town histories are well documented, the large genealogy section provides the history and pictures of hundreds of Kay County families, and many Kaw City area photographs and stories are included.

Also available are the museum's popular cookbook, a selection of postcard-sized pictures of Old Kaw City, and a DVD presentation of old photographs copied from private collections or from donated pictures. All proceeds go directly to the museum. For ordering information please contact Annette Pittman at susanrutledge@mac.com or (580) 716-4959.