

## On the Track to Hiattville



Figure 1. A photograph of where the train tracks were located in Hiattville. They sat atop the tiny hill that is seen above. Katy Railroad ended the operation in the late 1970s and 1980s. The rails and ties were removed in the summer of 1990. Photo taken by Katelyn Vincent, November 21, 2012.

HIST 557

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## The Coming of Hiattville

Located in the heart of southeast Kansas, Hiattville is in Pawnee Township in Bourbon County. As seen in Figure 2 below, it is roughly thirteen miles southwest of Fort Scott along the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad and near state highway thirty-nine.

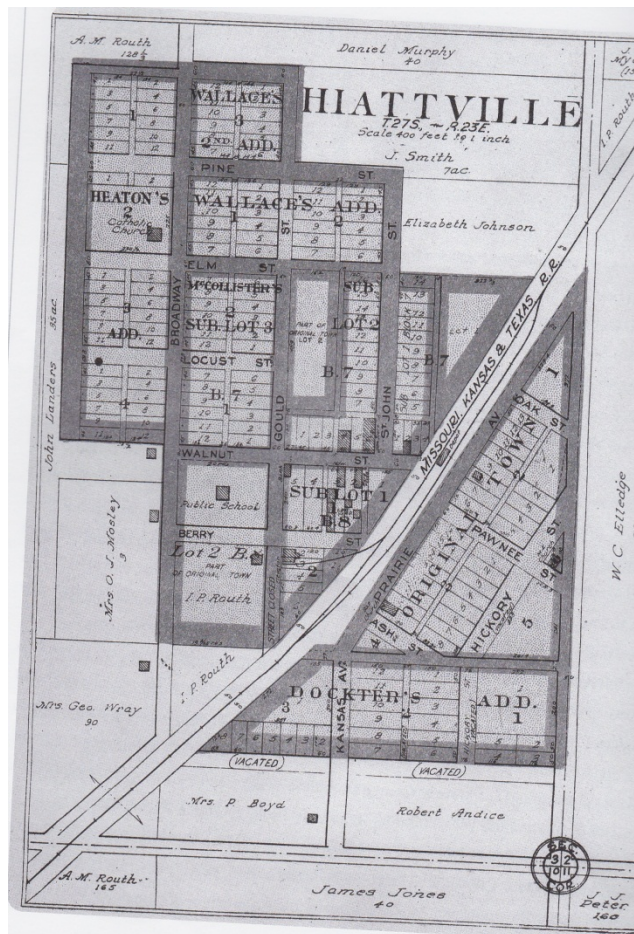


Figure 2. A photograph of the plat map of Hiattville. Source: *Historic Reflections of Bourbon County, Kansas*, 182.

“The town is beautifully situated on rolling prairie, and surrounded by a fine, healthful country, well supplied with good water,” noted William G Cutler.<sup>1</sup> In May of 1870, the post office was established in the small town then known as Pawnee. Harry Cowan noted that, “The

<sup>1</sup> William G. Cutler, “Bourbon County, Part 19,” in *History of the State of Kansas*, (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/>.

creek a short distance east of the town was also named Pawnee after the Pawnee tribe of Indians which had camps along the stream.”<sup>2</sup> However, the name was later changed to “honor James M. Hiatt who owned the land upon which the town was built.” “On April 2, 1872, the name was officially changed to Hiattville when the railroad was built through the small town and a small Depot was erected,” according to Cowan. In Figures 3 and 4 below, it can be seen what an establishment both of the buildings were to the town.



Figure 3. A photograph of the Hiattville Post Office, ca. 1900, that stood during the years of 1870-1986. Courtesy of the personal collection of Fred Campbell.

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<sup>2</sup> Harry V. Cowan, “Hiattville Dates From a Stage Coach Route and a Wonderful Well of Water,” *The Fort Scott Tribune*, n. d.



Figure 4. A photograph taken in 1930 of the M.K.&T. Depot that was built in Hiattville. The depot was a very popular stop for visitors of the town to observe. Courtesy of the personal collection of Fred Campbell.

Local authors Fred Campbell and Don Miller state that, “Edwin B. Rall was the first settler in the town ... The first child born in Hiattville was John Hartwell in 1874, and the first marriage was that of Jacob Dockter, the blacksmith, to Mrs. Queen Hamlin on July 9, 1876.”<sup>3</sup> As seen in Figure 5, it was not long after that the little town began to thrive with “Model T’s lining the streets”<sup>4</sup> and “...hitching racks for the farmers’ horses were at a premium.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Fred Campbell, Jr. and Don Miller. “Hiattville,” in *Historic Reflections of Bourbon County, Kansas*, (Virginia: Donning Company Publishers, 2005), 181.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Brown, interview by Katelyn Vincent, Hiattville, Kansas, November 25, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Cowan, “Hiattville Dates.”



Figure 5. A photograph taken of Hiattville in 1972. The Yeager Drug Store, Hiattville Post Office, and Salmon Grocery Store are just past the railroad tracks of the town. Courtesy of *Footprints of Bourbon County*.

### Getting Down to Business

An article in the *Hiattville Weekly Optic* contains the tale of a man from another town who came to Hiattville to trade.

We saw a gentleman from Hepler with his family trading with our merchants last Saturday. We approached and asked him why it was he came here to make his purchases when Hepler was so much handier. "Well," said he, "Hepler has become so dead of late that every time I go there it makes me imagine I am in a grave yard. Then I take the *Optic* and Hiattville merchants advertised to sell cheaper than at any point in the county. I thought I would investigate and after doing so, became satisfied that it would pay me to trade in your city, and besides that like to get into a live town once in a while."<sup>6</sup>

And Hiattville, with "two blocks of businesses,"<sup>7</sup> was a "live" town, indeed, as seen in Figure 6 below.

<sup>6</sup> *The Hiattville Weekly Optic*, vol. 1, no. 8, n.d., microfilm at Old Fort Genealogical Society, Fort Scott, Kansas.

<sup>7</sup> Martha Ann Callow, interview by Katelyn Vincent, Hiattville, Kansas, November 18, 2012.



Figure 6. A photograph of the everyday lives of those who lived in Hiattville, ca. 1900. They are pictured in front of the Hiattville State Bank on Wall and St. John streets. Courtesy of the personal collection of Fred Campbell.

It was said that, “on busy days when hitching space was at a premium, some of the merchants would go out and untie horses at the racks and make room for their customers to hitch their horses. The E.B. Rall store, the first in town, was located there and another store was operated by the Grange.”<sup>8</sup> But Hiattville was not a one-store town for long, as “D.R. Anderson opened the second store, and shortly thereafter, Jacob Dockter opened a blacksmith shop.”<sup>9</sup> Hiattville’s first postman was named Hezekiah Harryman.<sup>10</sup> According to Martha Ann Callow, Hiattville boasted, “Two blacksmith shops, a livery stable, barber shop, drug store, bank, three general stores, one harness maker shop, shoemaker, cheese factory, Justice of the Peace, hotel, meat market, grain elevator, feed mill, hardware store, three doctors, a restaurant, furniture store, insurance agent, and a railroad depot with a telegraph service”<sup>11</sup> all existed within Hiattville throughout the years.

<sup>8</sup> Harry V. Cowan, “Older Residents Of Hiattville Recall Exciting Incidents Of The Early Days,” *The Fort Scott Tribune*, n.d.

<sup>9</sup> Campbell & Miller, *Historic Reflections*, 181.

<sup>10</sup> Historical Preservation Association of Bourbon County, Inc., “Hiattville” in *Footprints of Bourbon County Families*, vol. I (Fort Scott: Sekan Printing, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Callow, interview.

In an article by Bernice Coleman Tye, a Hiattville resident at one time whose father was the depot agent, it was recalled that crowds would gather to see the train pass through the town to see who was getting on and off. Tye described the Routh General Store, shown in Figure 7, as a “big barny place with cement floors” and remembers sticky fly paper in the front windows.<sup>12</sup> There was a space for women’s accessories, a shoe department, household items, and farm equipment.

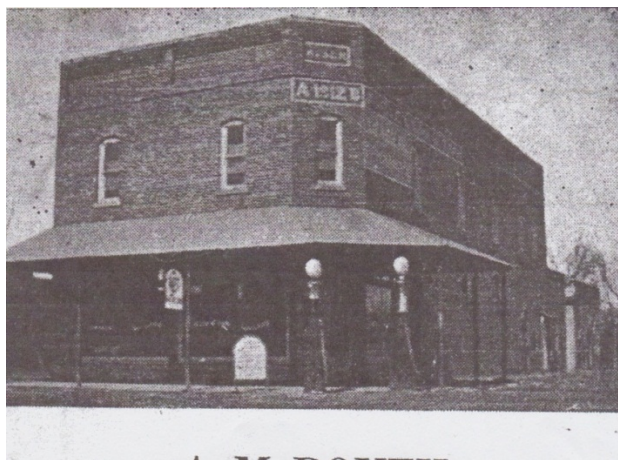


Figure 7. A photograph of the A.M. Routh General Store in Hiattville, ca. 1920. The grocery store was known for its cheap prices and friendly service. Courtesy of the personal collection of Fred Campbell.

She also stated, “Yeager’s Drug Store was very small, but it held the first soda fountain I ever beheld. What a thrill it was to sit on the high stool next to a little friend and drink my first Coke.”<sup>13</sup>

The population of Hiattville constantly expanded, as well. In 1880, the town had a total of fifty people, but by 1891, there were 500 inhabitants. “As late as 1883, no deaths had taken place in the town, but that would change.”<sup>14</sup> A horrific fire started in Hiattville on May 1, 1905, demolishing most of the businesses there. “...The population of Hiattville reflected that when it

<sup>12</sup> Bernice Coleman Tye, “Memories of a Small Kansas Town,” *The Fort Scott Tribune*, June 29, 1972.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell & Miller, *Historic Reflections*, 183.

dropped to 250 persons in 1910.”<sup>15</sup> Reconstruction of the business district did occur, though. Those that were rebuilt included “several general stores, a blacksmith shop, a school, several churches, a post office, and a telegraph and express office located in the M.K.&T. Railroad depot.”<sup>16</sup> As seen in Figure 8, “for many years, Miss Verna Perry was the M.K.T. Railroad agent. The Hiattville Elevator and O’Bryan Ranch were the biggest customers.”<sup>17</sup>

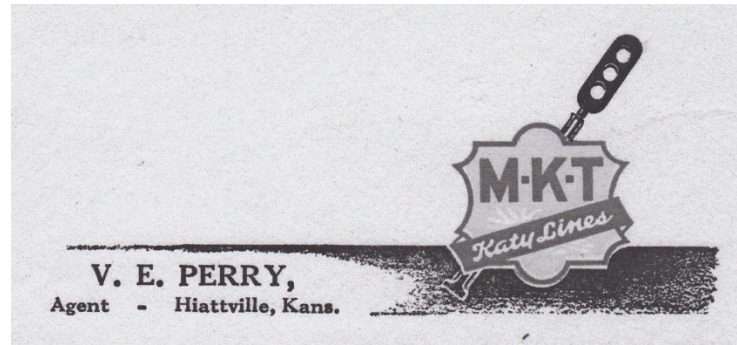


Figure 8. A photograph of the popular logo of the rail lines that ran through and stopped at Hiattville. Courtesy of the personal collection of Fred Campbell.

A group of ranchers established their headquarters in Hiattville and, by doing so, was able to get the town back on its feet. Brown noted that, “The O’Bryan Ranch monopolized the area at the time. They were known for holding an auction to sell their Polled Herefords, and their Hampshire hogs were recognized worldwide. They sometimes fed potatoes to their cattle. As a surplus product, the potatoes would arrive in a boxcar with one-hundred pound sacks.”<sup>18</sup> In an old article from the time period, it explained:

When Joe O’Bryan, owner of the ranches, came to Hiattville the depot, express office and telegraph office had been closed. The rancher succeeded in getting them re-opened and much business now goes out by freight and express. Livestock is shipped in and out. O’Bryan took over the elevator and added new electrical equipment and now handles most of the corn and other feed crops marketed by the farmers of the locality. Through his extensive livestock business he had advertised the town of Hiattville throughout the Midwest.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Callow, interview.

<sup>17</sup> Historical Preservation Association, *Footprints*.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>19</sup> Cowan, “Hiattville Dates.”



Ronald Brown became the general store owner around 1975. Growing up in the area as a small child, he remembers purchasing a sucker for only a penny when staying at his grandma's house. Brown also recalls the window frames of a house while remodeling that had the "Williams Hardware" brand on them.

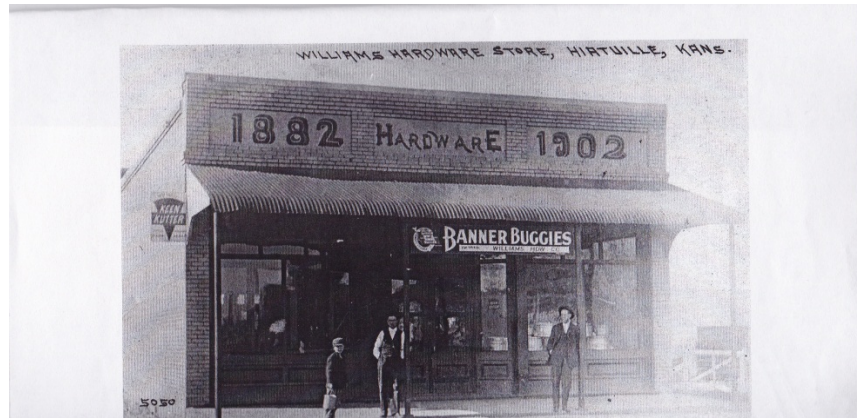


Figure 9. A photograph of the local William's Hardware store in Hiattville, ca. 1900. Courtesy of the personal collection of Fred Campbell.

When Brown purchased the store, business was starting to go downhill because of better transportation and modernization. Items that were provided in the store were hardware, basic groceries, processed meat, and DX gasoline. Very small amounts of packaged meat were sold, and it was not uncommon to see bologna cut from a stick during the time period. Pioneer seed was also sold at the general store toward the end of Brown's time as the owner. At times, Brown also rented out the upstairs of the building to newcomers in the town.<sup>20</sup> The store would survive one more owner before officially closing. In addition, "the Hiattville Post Office was officially closed on June 30, 1986."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell & Miller, *Historic Reflections*, 187.

Hiattville's news media took a downhill turn as time went on as well. "No newspapers have been published in Hiattville since 1910. The discontinued publications are the *Optic*, issued from June 16, 1892, until 1982, and the *News*, issued from February 21, 1908, until 1910. Hiattville was never an incorporated city."<sup>22</sup>



Figure 10. A photograph of the front page of *The Hiattville Weekly Optic*, Volume 1, Number 1, the local newspaper that the townspeople read to stay informed of the happenings in the community. Source: Old Fort Genealogical Society, Fort Scott, Kansas.

## Community Happenings

According to an unpublished manuscript by Martha Ann Callow, "The Fort Scott Tribune, Oct. 23, 1884, reported that 'Hiattville is really booming. A large school building has been put up and religious services are held there. The Catholics of the place have purchased lots and will at once commence construction of a new church. And the Methodist and Christian denominations will do the same.'"<sup>23</sup> Hiattville had as many as four churches at one point in time, including one Baptist, one Methodist, one Roman Catholic, and the other unknown. Campbell

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Martha Ann Callow, "Hiattville Across the Years" (unpublished manuscript).

and Miller note, “The Baptist Church in Hiattville burned in the 1930s, and the Roman Catholic Church closed in the 1950s due to a lack of members, and later was torn down.”<sup>24</sup>

A popular hymn states that “the church is not a building—the church is the people.” On October 25, 1884, “...a charter for the Methodist Episcopal Church was issued and construction of the new building began.”<sup>25</sup> Townspeople helped out in any way that they could. “One of the ladies of the church, Mrs. Milford Matthews, went around the community soliciting rags and used clothing which were cut into strips and woven into a rug which was then sold to buy three padded pulpit chairs. An entry for one dollar and thirty-five cents paid ...for a goose to be given by the church as a whole to the minister and his family as a Christmas gift.”<sup>26</sup> The little church was continually improved by adding hardwood floors, a Sunday school annex, and becoming equipped with a “DelCo lighting system provided by the Ladies Aid Society.”<sup>27</sup> The afternoon of August 20, 1955, would cause hardship to the church as it was completely destroyed by a fire. While the Methodist Church was rebuilt, services were held above the town’s general store. “The first services were held in the new building August 5, 1956, with the Rev. Monte Mitchell officiating.” An annex was later added to the church building, and “classes were held in it for the first time April 7, 1968.”<sup>28</sup>

As Campbell and Miller note, “The Hiattville School District No. 101 erected a new four-room brick building in 1939 to replace the old wooden one. It was built with the help from the Works Progress Administration, part of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal Program to help bring

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<sup>24</sup> Campbell & Miller, *Historic Reflections*, 187.

<sup>25</sup> Callow, “Hiattville Across the Years.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

the country out of the Great Depression.” It provided upper and lower grades until consolidating with Uniontown in the late 1960s due to the Kansas School Unification Act.<sup>29</sup>

According to Cowan, John Barker settled in Hiattville during the Civil War. “He bought out the claim of a homesteader. The newcomer served in the war and while he was away from home the former owner and some of his friends terrorized the Barker family and tried to run them out.” However, when General Blunt, who was in command of the forces at Fort Scott, heard about this, he sent out soldiers to see to it that the Barkers would not be bothered any longer. Cowan adds, “What the soldiers did to the terrorists has since been a secret.” The Barkers were related to a well-known campaign during the time. Another exciting event occurred within the town when a famous parade featuring Teddy Roosevelt and William McKinley campaigning came and passed through the town of Hiattville.<sup>30</sup>

In an interview, Brown recalled one of the Hiattville townspeople’s recreational pastimes:

Hiattville also had a large baseball field. They had one of the best baseball teams in the area. The team’s pitcher was Everett Dunn. It was recalled that Dunn could not pitch unless he was drunk. A homecoming was also a happening event in the small town of Hiattville. The bread/sound truck was provided by A.J. Krieh. Shorty Pruitt played the fiddle and brought the sound system. People from all over the area would come participate in the festivities of the Hiattville Homecoming.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Remains of Hiattville**

Hiattville still lives on today, but few buildings remain, as seen in Figures 11 through 15. The foundation of the grocery store can be seen in the lot where it once stood. A fire station stands in the place of the post office, and the Hiattville 4-H Club and volunteer fire department meet in the building. The Hiattville United Methodist Church still stands today and is very active in their religious activities, including the Sunday school, United Methodist Women, Bible study

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<sup>29</sup> Campbell & Miller, *Historic Reflections*, 187.

<sup>30</sup> Cowan, “Older Residents.”

<sup>31</sup> Brown, interview.

groups, and a youth group. The church also has a parsonage. Additionally, the Hiattville Masonic Lodge No. 216 and Ideal Chapter No. 369 of the Order of the Eastern Star hold their meetings in the school building. Approximately thirty residents reside in the town. To this day, railroad ties are sometimes found when walking along the road where the train tracks once existed—bringing back the cherished times that will forever live in the memories of those who experienced the joyous moments of the small town known as Hiattville.



Figure 11. The foundation where the gas pumps of the grocery store once stood. Many buildings were torn down for bricks, lumber, and supplies. Photo taken by Katelyn Vincent, November 21, 2012.



Figure 12. A photograph of the fire station that stands in the town today. It was built in 1976, and the community-use addition was built in 1988. Photo taken by Katelyn Vincent, November 21, 2012.



Figure 13. A photograph of the Hiattville United Methodist Church. The church was dedicated in 1956 and still remains with an active congregation to this day. Photo taken by Katelyn Vincent, November 21, 2012.



Figure 14. A photograph of the parsonage that belongs to the Hiattville United Methodist Church. Photo taken by Katelyn Vincent, November 21, 2012.



Figure 15. A photograph of the brick school building that was built in 1939 and is still standing in the town today.  
Photo taken by Katelyn Vincent, November 21, 2012.

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