

# Story Ideas

## Clafin, Kansas



### Geology

#### ■ Oil and Gas Exploration

- The first oil well in Barton County was drilled near Clafin on the Davidson Farm in 1923. It produced 300 barrels of oil a day for the first year. The old-fashioned engines used to pump oil frequently started fires. The Davidson family was taking in a movie in Hoisington, when a message flashed on the screen: "Will the Marshall Davidson family please hurry home. Their well has started another fire."
- In 1925, a group of Clafin investors drilled an oil well in Cheyenne Bottoms. "On Sundays, the investors and their families gathered at the well to watch the progress. The guy who made the most money on the well was the one who set up a hamburger stand there every Sunday afternoon."
- Because early oil rigs were wooden and constructed on site, the oil business created huge demand for lumber. Every little town in the area, including Clafin, had at least two.

#### ■ Stone Bridges, Stone Fences, Stone Churches (Post Rock Limestone)

- The Works Projects Administration commissioned either limestone bridges in the Clafin area. These beautifully crafted bridges are now designated as historically significant. The limestone used was quarried within miles of the bridge sites.
- When there are no trees, you use what you have for fence posts. And what Clafin has was limestone. Limestone fence posts still line the roads here and gave the limestone common name: Post Rock.
- The Dubuque Church and St. Anne's in Odin are beautiful examples of the use of the rich vein of limestone near Clafin.

### Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Service (54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – May 2015)

#### ■ "We were supposed to help people out and we didn't." – Clafin Fire Chief, 1961

Clafin's outstanding ambulance and EMT service began with tragedy. In 1961, three young boys, digging a cave in the sand hills, were buried alive. The volunteer fire department did their best, but one of the boys died. The town immediately rallied to equip an ambulance service. A Ford station wagon was converted to an ambulance, and for the past 50 years, Clafin's all-volunteer fire department and ambulance service has saved lives. Most young people in Clafin serve at some time as either fire fighters or emergency medical personnel. Because of this, many have gone on to become Life Watch nurses and EMTs.

### Miller's of Clafin

- **Millers of Clafin, Inc** was founded in 1903 by J.W. Miller. The store originally carried furniture, buggies, hardware, implements, and even windmills. Miller's in now the largest furniture showroom in central Kansas (over 90,000 square feet and filling all but two of the buildings in Clafin's downtown) and the oldest and largest family owned furniture store in the entire state. The family touch is the key to Miller's success and today a fifth generation of Millers is preparing to serve customers.

### State Center/State Center School

- The first State Center School building was built in 1890, followed by building number two in 1914 and building three in 1953. The school was closed in 1962. It remained a one-room country elementary school (with students of all grades in one room with one teacher) throughout history. **"Programs were always an exciting time, so afraid you would get stage fright, might giggle, or forget your part."** – Helen Radenberg Foster

For more information: We will be happy to supply photographs, contact information for interviews, tours, guides, background information, and assistance with travel arrangements.

**Ellinwood/Clafin Chamber of Commerce**  
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