

Story Ideas

Hoisington, Kansas



It Came Without Warning – Severe Weather

- **Tornadoes** . April 21, 2015 marks the 14th anniversary of the F4 prom night tornado which unleashed winds of over 200 miles per hour, affecting 45% of households and causing over \$43 million in damage and one death. The prom venue was not hit, nor students injured. This was the second disastrous tornado to devastate the town. The first hit on October 4, 1919, destroying many of the commercial buildings on Main Street and the Lutheran Church.
- **Dust Storms**. The “black blizzards” that hit Hoisington between 1932 and 1935 were caused by above normal temperatures and drought conditions. These dirt storms caused a buildup of static electricity that stalled cars and shocked people who unwittingly touched metal.
- **Floods and Hail**. When Blood Creek overflowed its banks in August 1927; a quarter-mile rope was used to rescue people from the flood caused by 10-16 inches of rain. Seventeen years later, in June 1944, another intense summer storm dropped 4-6 feet drifts of hail. In 1991 and 2007, the great march of Cheyenne Bottoms flooded.
- **Winter Blizzards**. The January 1886 blizzard was Hoisington’s first record disastrous storm. Temperatures dropped below -30 degrees. Winds were so fierce that people were lost just a few feet from home. Two other storied blizzards followed in 1912 and 1919.
- **Storms of Insects**. Rocky Mountain Locusts arrived by the millions in 1874, blocking the sun and sounding like rain. These grasshoppers consumed everything in their path including crops, wool on live sheep, and clothing off people’s backs. They stayed a week. Fifty years later, the town was invaded by “green bugs” that swarmed the field during a football game, reducing visibility on the field and driving fans from the stadium. When it cleared, the bugs were piled 5 inches deep under the light poles.

Art and Architecture

- Works Progress Administration (WPA) buildings in Hoisington include the 1936 post office, the 1938 municipal building and auditorium, the 1937 stadium and athletic fields, and the high school. The Hoisington Post Office is home to one of the 1200 historic murals commissioned by FDR’s New Deal and the Kansas Post Office Artwork Program. The mural was painted by Dorothea Tomlinson in 1937, and was one of the first Art in Public Buildings programs in the country.
- Sixty award winning, intricately hand cut metal banners line Hoisington’s Main Street. About half of them depict birds and wildlife found at Cheyenne Bottoms and the other half portrays Cheyenne Bottoms and Hoisington history. Hoisington native Bruce Bitter (B&B Metal Arts) crafted these unique works of art for Hoisington’s Main Street.
- The Prairie Wavemaker mural (2006) was painted by artist Christina Lamoureux and over thirty volunteers. The mural represents the culture and history of Hoisington and reflects the city’s deep connection to Cheyenne Bottoms.

Calp’s Fur and Root

- In business since 1969, Calvin Calp has revived a vanishing trade and has a successful nationwide business. Mr. Calp is a trapper who processes furs (by skinning, scraping, and drying) and also sells a variety of roots and herbs.

Cheyenne Bottoms – Wetlands of Unexpected Uses

- Cheyenne Bottoms is a 41,000 acre basin that boasts visits from 46% of the nation’s migratory shorebird population. 19,857 acres are managed as a wildlife area by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism, and 7,500 acres are managed by the Nature Conservancy. Both are designated as internationally important wetlands and have taken on many roles over the years: expected uses include homesteading, cattle grazing, hay growing, hunting, and fishing. Unexpected, however, were its uses first as the most popular Greyhound coursing venue in the United States (1886-1892), then as a bombing range, using flour sacks as targets – for the top secret B-29 bombers in the 1940’s.

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

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