

Grinnell is thought to be the second oldest town in Gove County, Kansas. Park was platted and named first and Grinnell was laid out just as much later as it took the Union Pacific to build from Park to Grinnell. The first bona fide settler in Gove County was George Von Dehson.

Grinnell at first was inhabited by those working on the railroad and by buffalo hunters. In 1872, Grinnell was described by *Weston's Guide to the Kansas Pacific Railroad* as being "364 miles from Kansas City, consisting of two large turf houses built for the purpose of drying buffalo meat." In July of 1873, Grinnell had a population of forty people including a railroad supervisor, two telegraphers and a few railroad laborers. Grinnell had a population of seventy five in 1880 and was described as follows, "it ships cattle and banks in Wakeeney." Grinnell was located too far west to attract many settlers.

The majority of the first settlers in Grinnell were from Iowa, among them many Civilian War Veterans. They named the town after Captain Grinnell, a Union Veteran.

A sketch was made by George Lynch showing Grinnell during the years from 1879 to 1881. This sketch shows the Cimarron, Dighton, Colby and Atwood Trails that all passed through Grinnell. The Atwood Trail was the trail where most of the mail was carried. One of the earliest thriving businesses in this community had to do with the buying and shipping of buffalo bones. In fact one of the busiest places of business in the early days was the boneyard located on the edge of town.

North Grinnell and South Grinnell were platted at the same time in 1885 by two promoters who staged a fight to determine whether the town would be built on the north side or the south side of the railroad tracks. The south side eventually won. North Grinnell was platted by Nathaniel Daniels and South Grinnell by three Hollanders; Beuf, Guptill and Guessman. Later John Boswell filed a new plat of South Grinnell without annulling the first. In this plat he moved the town sixty feet farther south, leaving a strip between the north and south sides. The north promoters put up a spike fence and also planted sixty feet of corn so the south people would have to go to the section line to get to the depot or over to the north side. The Grinnell rail depot has since been moved to the junction of I-70 Interchange and State Highway 83 north of Oakley.

This fight between the north and south sides of Grinnell continued until the end of the 1880's. There was much competition and threats between the two sides, causing many prospective businesses to bypass Grinnell and move on to Oakley. There were some who felt that this conflict was detrimental to the development of Grinnell.

The first store was owned and operated by John Corrette, one of the earliest settlers. George Van Marter, Corrette's rival, owned a hotel and store on the west side of main street, just opposite of Corrette's store. The post office moved from east to west and back again, depending on which man, Van Marter or Corrette, happened to be the postmaster at the time.

The first school was held in a one-room shack and the first teacher received twenty dollars a month. In 1885 a nice one-room frame schoolhouse was built. The first schoolhouse south of

the tracks was built in 1887. This schoolhouse was used until 1905 when another was built on the same location.

The first church was the Catholic Church, built north of the tracks in 1882. It served Grinnell until 1915 when a new one was built. A church wasn't built south of the tracks until the Christian Church was built in 1900. Jacob Mather organized a Methodist Church in Grinnell in the early 1900's and its services were held in a sod house until a church was built in 1905. This church served the people until the present church was built in 1925. In 1948 and 1949 the present Immaculate Conception Catholic Church was built.

Gove County was organized in 1886. Before, this area had been part of Trego County. Grinnell cast 107 ballots in the first election and two men from Grinnell, W.H. Stokes and D.A. Borah were elected to the positions of County Commissioner and County Clerk, respectively.

In 1890 and the years following, a drought hit Western Kansas, bringing with it much personal suffering, loss of crops and abandonment of homes. There were many who were forced to leave Grinnell at this time to seek employment elsewhere. Many of those who left went to Denver and later returned when the times were better.

Prior to the drought of the 1880's Grinnell had two newspapers. In 1886 the first newspaper, The People's Press, was started. The Golden Belt absorbed The People's Press in 1887. The Golden Belt suspended in 1890 due to the drought and hard times.

The first big wheat crop since the drought was in 1903. This was the beginning of a prosperous time for Grinnell which lasted until the late 1920's. Those who had moved away in the 1890's returned and many new businesses began to appear. In 1905 another newspaper, The Grinnell Record Leader, was started and was in operation until 1972. Also in 1905 a new grade school was built and ten years later in 1915, a high school district was set up and bonds were approved for the building of a high school building which was completed in 1929.

The peak years for Grinnell were the years following World War I. During this time prices paid for crops were high and there was a growing market. Grinnell at this time had four grain elevators, three grocery stores, a hardware store, a butcher shop, and ice house, two hotels, a cafe, a lumber yard, a dry goods store, a bank and a newspaper. There were also two doctors each with their own drug store. In 1920 Grinnell became incorporated with a population of 250.

The crops continued to be good and the price of wheat remained high until the end of the 1920's. Grinnell began to grow during this time. Many new houses were built and many settlers came to Grinnell and the surrounding area to establish farms of their own.

The 1930's brought with them another drought and with it came the depression. It affected Grinnell as it did other small towns throughout the United States. The unavailability of money, high mortgages on farms and the inability to produce crops forced many to leave Grinnell and

the surrounding area. The bank closed at this time as did numerous other businesses.

World War II brought a new boom to Grinnell although many of its men were called to serve their country. Prices for farm products were again high as these products were in great demand. In the years during and following the war, many new businesses were started in Grinnell. A theater, a drugstore, a bank, a barbershop, beauty shop, hardware store, an electric shop, an implement shop, an insurance company and a grocery store were among the new businesses. Grinnell at the close of the 1940's had a population of about 350 people.

The 1951 bonds were approved by voters of the township and the construction of a new grade school began and in 1953 the building was complete. At this time there were seventy-two students enrolled in the high school and eighty in the grade school.

A few businesses were begun in the 1960's. A number of people moved to Grinnell during 1963 and 1964 due to the construction of Interstate 70 Highway that passes by on the edge of the present city limits. Most of these people moved on as the highway project was complete.

The 1960's brought the question of consolidation and unification of Grinnell's Schools. Since most of the town activities centered around the schools, Grinnell very much wanted to keep its schools. Many feared that losing the schools would lead to a deterioration of the town. In 1968 Grinnell high School and Grinnell Grade School unified with Angelus and Coin and this district became known as Unified School District 291. This unification gave the Grinnell Schools a larger enrollment and made it a much more functional district.

The next big educational project was the voter approval for the addition to the Grinnell High School. Since then two shop buildings have been added to the Grinnell High School Campus. This gave USD 291 adequate facilities to provide a larger curriculum, especially at the high school level.

Grinnell takes much pride in her schools. The sports and other activities are well supported by the townspeople. There have been a good percentage of college graduates from the Grinnell Schools, including college professionals, elementary and secondary school teachers, lawyers, doctors, a nuclear physicist and many in the business profession.

The businesses today are varied. There are two beauty shops, a tanning salon, a barber shop, two insurance companies, a grocery store, a locker plant, a bank, a mechanic repair shop, a tire repair shop, a restaurant, three gas stations, a lumber yard, three grain elevators, an ice plant, a post office, a collision repair shop, a furniture store, a chemical application service, a ceramics shop, several independent contractors, a well drilling service and a credit union.

The population of Grinnell is approximately 350 people at the present time. The rise in population since the 1940's is mainly due to retiring farmers moving to town as well as farmers moving to town and commuting to their nearby farms.

*This information adapted from work by Barbara Rueschhoff Broeckleman for a Kansas History Individual Project in April of 1970 when she was attending college.*