

## A (not so) Brief History of Peabody, Kansas

### The Settlement of Peabody

The Wisconsin Colony played a major role in the settlement of Peabody. In the spring of 1870, a group of men in Wisconsin, organized for the purpose of settling in Kansas. Membership in the association cost \$25 per member. Leaders of the alliance were Colonel J. E. Cone, president, William C. Nye, secretary, and C. D. Bradley, general agent. These men, along with M. Birdsall, were the commissioners of the organization. The group planned to settle a tract six miles wide and nine miles in length along both sides of Doyle Creek, which was part of the proposed route for the Santa Fe Railroad. After arriving on the scene, the group enlarged its claim to a tract 12 by 8 miles in size. A surveyor was hired to plat the acreage and show settlers which lands were available in the region named Coneburg, in honor of the company president. The townsite extended from where the present U. S. Highway 50 is on the north end of present-day Peabody to Division Street (so named when the street became the dividing line between the two early communities of Coneburg and Peabody). Civilian homesteaders of this acreage paid \$2.50 an acre under the Preemption Law, soldiers who had not fought for the South in the Civil War could acquire acreage for \$1.25 with soldier warrants. The railroad land grant, which went on the market 1 January 1871, sold from \$3 to \$10 an acre (Gazette, 29 June 1961).



The part of the Wisconsin Colony formed the Coneburg Town Company on 31 March 1871, and the plat of the town was recorded on 10 April at the United States Land Office in Augusta, Kansas. After surveying the site, the organization soon discovered it was unable to control claim jumping or jurisdiction over the tract. The Wisconsin group quickly splintered because of infighting and a new group spun-off from part of the old. By May 1871, the community of Coneburg included at least two "boarding houses, a lumber yard, two grocery stores, a dry goods store, a drug and grocery store, a boot and shoe store, an agricultural implement house, a blacksmith shop," and approximately 12 dwellings (Peabody the First 100 Years 1970:3)

A legal battle ensued between various segments of the area. By the Congressional Act of March 1867, probate judges were granted the authority to enter townsites but were not authorized to create such areas. On 23 February 1873, the Secretary of the Interior canceled the new Coneburg townsite. The group petitioned to have the case reopened during the winter of 1874-1875 (White 1970: Chapter One). A new hearing occurred in the summer of 1875, at Wichita. The court ruled in favor of the earlier judiciary decision made by Judge I. W. Bouse who had ruled in favor of the Coneburg Company (White 1970: Chapter One). However, this decision was overturned in September 1877 when the Secretary of the Interior affirmed the rights of the North Peabody Town Company. In 1877, the federal government ruled Probate Judge I. W. Bouse had overstepped his authority when he approved the entry of the Coneburg townsite. Bouse ordered

the site surveyed, platted, apportioned to the occupants, and partly deeded. The federal government saw his ruling as a violation of the law.

In the meantime, the community of Peabody was also created south of North Peabody. For \$2,878.97 William and Annie Endicott (of Suffolk, Massachusetts) acquired title on May 6, 1870 from Amos Lawrence for the south-half of Section 4, Township 22, Range 3, the future site of Peabody. On January 12 1871, the Endicotts sold the acreage for \$2,700 to Marion schoolteacher Thomas M. Potter. While construction was underway on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad line west of Emporia, the directors of the company traveled through the area on an inspection tour six days before a new townsite was filed. Businessmen rushed to the new site. With the Wisconsin Colony land in legal dispute, Potter's clear title on the south-half of section four was seen by town speculators as the most desirable location for a community. Potter's holding was platted, adjoining North Peabody at Division Street. Because of the county surveyors error in measurements, the width of Division Street (the dividing line between Peabody and part of Coneburg that became North Peabody) was 90 feet wide on the east edge of the town and fifteen feet wide on the west edge.

Potter, Col Robinson, S. B. Riggs, R. K. Tabor, L. Carson, and J. S. Straughen (attorney for Potter) formed the Peabody Town Company. (Peabody the First 100 Years 1970:3). Potter was president and F. H. Kolloch (often spelled Kollock) has been reported as one of the secretaries of the company. On June 16, 1871, when the charter for incorporation was filed for the Peabody Town Company, Potter and his wife, Mary sold the land to the Peabody Town Company for \$6,400. The town was named Peabody in honor of F. H. Peabody of Boston, the railroad's vice president after the directors of the line recommended the railroad be routed south of North Peabody.

In 1874, Peabody visited the community named in his honor and agreed to donate the funds necessary to build a library and furnish it with furniture and a collection of books and periodicals if the residents agreed to maintain and support the bequest. The facility was the state's first free public library and is on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1901, the structure contained 7,000 volumes. In 1914, a new Carnegie Library Building, also on the National Register of Historic Places, was erected nearby to replace the earlier frame structure. The older building was converted to a utility house for the city park. The original library is currently used as a local museum.

About 1871, Kolloch and Waller Chenault formed the Kolloch Chenault Bank, later the First National Bank. During the 1870s, Kolloch served as a judge. Chenault was the local public notary. Kolloch and Chenault were local real estate representatives for the Santa Fe Railroad. The men sold acreage and issued loans. In 1878, Kolloch was elected to the Kansas legislature. The bank played a major role in the settlement of the area. From November through April of 1882-83, the land department of the bank sold 5,000 acres in the area; this sales period was during a time of slow activity (Gazette, May 10, 1993).

By July 1871, the population of the community (or combined communities) totaled approximately 500 persons who occupied about 75 dwellings in the vicinity (Peabody the First 100 Years 1970: 15). A continual stream of emigrant wagons passed through Peabody daily in

1878. Peabody was incorporated as a third class city of March 15, 1878. By April 1878, the population of Peabody was 525. During the following year, that figure had increased to 841. Between April and September 1878, more than 40 new dwellings were built and demand for additional housing still exceeded the supply. The commercial district began near the Santa Fe Depot. By 1881 most of the lots in the business sector had standing structures upon them, many of which were single-story, frame buildings. In 1882, a total of 125 buildings existed in Peabody. Three years later, the population of Peabody totaled 1,630, and an additional 120 persons were believed to be temporary residents in the community. Although the number of residents dropped during the depression of the 1890s, by 1910 the population numbered 1,628 individuals.

### **1885 Kansas State Fair**

The State Fair was held in Peabody when many of the extant buildings were finished as replacements for those lost in the 1884 fire. During the summer of 1885, the sidewalks were finished linking the fair grounds to the commercial district along Walnut Street four blocks east. The grounds for the event were owned by the Fair Association, a group that sponsored 14 county fairs and exhibitions prior to 1888. The association had purchased the land west of town several years previously and had instituted improvements upon the property in preparation for a future fair site. Until 1885, the practice of the Fair Association had been to hold two, large, state fairs in the eastern part of Kansas. Until the Peabody State Fair, the sites of the big events had always been Bismark and Topeka.

The Peabody site was surrounded by a hedge fence and cottonwood trees, and included a one-half mile, horse racing track that is currently used as a park drive. Numerous stalls, sheds, and pens were erected for the event. A nonextant, exhibition hall with three wings held the various exhibits. A (nonextant) dining hall was staffed with sufficient help to capably feed 10,000 people daily. The dining hall was managed by Harry Hamilton and Company of Emporia, the facility was staffed by a dozen men. A 40 foot belisk constructed of 40 bushels of ears of corn was erected as a tribute to President U.S. Grant who had recently died. The sides of the monument had the words "Union, Liberty, Peace, and Plenty" composed in red corn, surrounded by a field of yellow ears. A portrait of Grant was located on each side. At the corners of the base were large pumpkins. Cornstalks (which were suppose to resemble muskets with the bayonets attached) were stacked military style upon the ground near the monument.

September 1885 commenced with the State Fair of Kansas being held at Peabody, during the first four days of the month. The fair offered a chance for the rural sector to come together, sharing ideas, communal spirit, and displaying products, chattel, and games of sportsmanship. Class A exhibits included horses: Normans, Clydesdales, grade draft, general purpose, roadsters and thoroughbreds. Class B exhibits were cattle: short horns, Herefords, polled Angus and Galloways, Holsteins, and Jerseys. Class C exhibits were sheep judged for fine or coarse wool. Class D exhibits were swine: Berkshires or Poland China. Class E exhibits were poultry, including a variety of chickens, turkeys, and ducks. Class F exhibits were farm products, including a variety of wheat; corn; oats; timothy, clover, and flax seeds; castor beans, sugar cane, tame and native grasses, potatoes, onions, rutabagas, turnips, parsnips, carrots, beets, peanuts, tomatoes, beans, cabbage, watermelons, squash, pumpkins. Class G was comprised of a variety of fruit. Class H was provisions, which included butter, cheese, breads, cakes, cookies, preserves,

jellies, canned fruits, pickles, honey, and catsup. Class I was products domestically manufactured: plain sewing, fancy sewing, quilt making, embroidery, crochet work, knitted items, window treatment, scarves, cushions, and other miscellaneous subgroups. Class J was the children's department which included sewing, bread, cake, and butter making, samples of drawing, color landscapes, and penmanship. Class K was fine art, which included a wide variety of subgroups. Class L was flowers and plants. Class M was farm implements, carriages, buggies, and both spring and farm wagons. Class N included harness, boots, and shoes. Class O was miscellaneous articles, including displays of hardware, furniture, dry goods, millinery, and jewelry. The horse track was used for a variety of events, including horse walking teams in harness, trotting, running, and pacing, and mule racing.

One of the more unusual racing events in the 1885 fair was the chariot races that pitted female drivers against male teamsters. Two reproductions of Roman chariots were used for the event, which was run once each day of the fair. Each vehicle was powered by four horses harnessed abreast. One male and one female driver raced against each other daily. At the beginning of each race, the team of horses were held in check at the starting point by assistants. At the signal for the race to begin, the attendants released the teams.

The race track, which included grandstands with seating sufficient for 2,000 people, was considered equal to any in the state. Another 10,000 people could witness the races comfortably beneath the nearby shade trees. Peabody was the home of famous race horses well into the 1900s. Three of the more famous horses were world champions. Joe Young (known as the "iron horse") sold for \$10,000; the first horse west of the Mississippi to sell for such a high price. Joe Young sired Joe Patchen who earned his owner \$40,000 in race purses and then was sold for \$44,000. Joe Patchen sired Dan Patch, a horse that sold in 1907 for \$60,000. Other famous local racing horses included trotters McKinney, and Silver Sign. Silverthorne toured Austria where he competed for three years against the best race horses in Europe.

Temporary accommodations were created for fair visitors who were attracted to the event by the special rail rates, horse racing, and various exhibits. The Methodist Church women outfitted Dr. Loose's new building now the building just south of the Gazette-Bulletin with furnishings to lodge 50 people. The women also offered meals for the lodgers and others. More than 200 ministers and mission workers attended the fair. These individuals were boarded in private homes of local residents. Others found rooms at the local hotels and boarding houses.

### **Agriculture and Cattle**

Peabody became an important supply point for one of the state's most important cattle feeding districts. By 1911, approximately 20,000 head of cattle were fed within 20 miles of Peabody and shipped to Kansas City, Chicago, and St. Joseph, aboard 53 Rock Island Railroad livestock cars and 455 Santa Fe cars. Most of the cattle that were brought in for temporary grazing on the grasses of the Flint Hills came from New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Texas. At least 50 cattle feeding enterprises existed near Peabody in 1911. These concerns were equipped with cattle yards and pens sufficient to handle all herd sizes. Because of the cattle industry, the most

profitable agriculture harvested near Peabody during the first decade of this century were corn, alfalfa, and other feed and grain crops.

### **Peabody Floods**

Spring and Doyle creeks overflowed their banks numerous times. However, only three floods have actually been credited to these streamlets. During heavy rains in 1903, 1951, and 1965 the lower part of Peabody flooded. Before 1970, when the channel of Doyle Creek was dredged, and the new bridge constructed on South Maple across the creek, flood waters would often inundate the town of Peabody as far north as Second Street on the edges of the business district. The flood waters often formed an arch, with the furthest point often reaching where Victorian Peabody Antiques Building is now.

In 1884, the city council mandated a survey of the streets of Peabody in order to establish the grade of the streets. The survey was conducted by County Surveyor Stuges, of Florence who was assisted by Ben Dunloop also of Florence. The survey proved that the grade north of Mayesville Mercantile was anywhere from one to two feet higher than that of the same lot, and the grade of the south part of town (between the railroad tracks and First Street) along Walnut Street was the lowest area in Peabody. After announcing the findings, the city council ruled the existing sidewalks were to be raised to current grade, despite any inconvenience to businessmen whose buildings were below grade, and that north of Mayesville Mercantile the terrain was to be excavated at street level to a lower elevation. Evidence of the lowering of north Walnut Street may be seen on some of the residential properties that have a setback with a much higher elevation than that found at the street.

On June 11, 1891, the Gazette reported that the basement of the First National Bank Building had water so deep the barber conducting business in the basement was compelled to abandon his trade. The basement floor of the bank building appears to be dirt. Based upon newspaper accounts of the time, it is possible, if not probably, a floor of masonry may be beneath the dirt. The silt deposits that resulted from the flooding may have been so great, that over the years the owner of the building simply abandoned occupancy of the basement and let the deposits continue to collect, thus forming the dirt floor that is identified with the building today.

### **Lights, Electricity & Phones**

Illumination was added to the commercial district of Peabody in 1879. On September 12, 1879, coal oil lamps were installed along Walnut Street. In the 1880s, electric lights became commonplace throughout America, replacing the earlier oil and arc lights. Between 1887 and 1904 at least two efforts were made to produce electricity for the local residents. In 1887, the obsolete oil fixtures were replaced with arc lights which were one of the earliest electric systems available. Arc lights flicked, like flames, giving them a more natural appearance. On September 14, arc lights were tested on one of the (nonexistent) corner buildings in the business district. the event drew a crowd the following evening that congested the street as nearly all the main stores were illuminated by arc lights, leading local residents to claim the stores were "better lighted at night than during the day".

The first dynamo, located in the flour mill, was powered by steam which generated the power for the mill. In December 1887, the electric system became self-sustaining after a boiler and other equipment were installed. However, the system operated only a year. Lack of adequate financing forced the closing of the plant.

At the turn-of-the-century, Peabody leaders once more returned to coal oil lamps, which were installed on alternate intersections. The marshal, Charlie Marsh, had the task of lighting the lamps. The marshal was also the street commissioner, deputy sheriff, and fire chief. Nightly, Marsh maneuvered his buggy to each lamppost where he hoisted a ladder, filled the lamp reservoir from a fuel can, and trimmed the wick before lighting it. About 1906, electric street lights were installed by Thomas Osborne, owner of the Osborne Building.

These first lamps of Osborne's consisted of 4 carbon arc lights which were placed in the commercial district.

On May 23, 1887, several local businessmen proposed a variety of improvements which were presented to the mayor and council members in the form of a petition. The signers of the document were Thomas Osborne, C. A. Loose, J. H. Morse, Fred Russel, and J. H. Johnson, directors of the Peabody Railway and Motor Company, the Peabody Gas Electric Light Company, and the Peabody Telephone Exchange Company. Although ordinances were passed granting the companies franchises, the businesses had little success. The plan for a street railway never materialized, the two attempts at generating limited public electricity achieved little, and the Peabody Telephone Company, which had 52 subscribers, became embroiled in a dispute with Bell Telephone Company which claimed the local firm had infringed upon the patent of the interstate company. Bell Telephone won the battle and the local system closed on May 16, 1888. Another attempt to bring a telephone system to Peabody was made in 1894, but that also failed. In 1899, a third effort was made to operate a phone system, this time the endeavor proved fruitful. A 25 year franchise was granted to J. E. Wright. Wright's company rented the phones to subscribers for one-dollar a month for private phone lines and two-dollars for business lines.

### **Mennonite Migration**

During the 1870s the community had become an informal headquarters for emigrants. Several Mennonite communities are located near Peabody. The first group of Mennonites arrived in Peabody aboard a Santa Fe train to claim lands purchased from the railroad company in 1874. An advance group had purchased 12 sections of land in western Marion County from railroad agent C. B. Schmidt. The main party of 35 families arrived in Peabody on August 16. During 1879, Schmidt traveled to Russia, recruiting more Mennonite farmers. That year, about 16,000 Mennonites came to Kansas from Russia because of military draft requirement in that country which had reinstated the Mennonites' duty to service.

This group of people are credited with introducing Turkey Red wheat to Kansas, a hardy winter wheat that changed the agricultural and milling industries of the state. (Many revisionist historians believe the introduction of the Turkey Red wheat to Kansas is a result of the grain being furnished by the railroad to farmers who accepted their offer of free grain for the first

year's harvest.) A cluster of unique privately owned barns with grain elevators belonging to Mennonite families is located near Peabody. Descendants of these Mennonites also formed close friendships with many of the German prisoners of war that were interned at Peabody during World War II.

### **The New Santa Fe Trail**

Prior to 1910, the crusade for new highways within the state was spurred with promotion for the New Santa Fe Trail highway. The many supporters for an improved transportation network were encouraged by enthusiastic automobile owners who banded together in various communities forming independent groups of "Good Roads Boosters." These progressives campaigned nationally for better roads for automobiles. These individuals succeeded in creating a new highway built by local communities that wanted to be included along the route of the thoroughfare. From Emporia, the road went west through Saffordville, into Strong City, south two miles to Cottonwood Falls, west over the hill to Elmdale, then southwest through Clements, Cedar Point to Florence, west from Florence to a point four miles north of Peabody where it turned south into Peabody along Walnut Street, where it turned at Second Street west to the park gates of the Peabody Park at Locust Street. There, a curve turned south and then approximately six blocks later another curve led west to Walton and then to Newton. The road, which followed the route of the Santa Fe Railroad, was graded and dragged. The road was later sanded, a state in which it remained until the current U.S. Highway 50 was constructed.

The impact of the highway on the local 1,628 residents of Peabody was immediate. In October 1910, the first automobile garage along the New Santa Fe trail west of Emporia opened in the community of Peabody. The facility provided a repair shop, a fully steam-heated parking garage, an automobile dealership, a full line of accessories, including oil, tires and batteries. Service stations became commonplace in this small town. At the corner where the highway turned into Peabody on Walnut Street were two stations, between Division and Second streets were two more stations, one on each side where the highway turned at Second there were two more stations between Walnut and Vine, and two more between Vine and Olive. At the park gate, there was another service station on the southeast corner of Second and Locust and on the last turn going west from Peabody was a final service station just outside the city limits. Because of the automobile rationing during World War I, most of these businesses closed. Two of the buildings were adapted to ice houses. One became a produce house. Approximately four remained in operation, two of which were located along U.S. 50.

### **Peabody City Park**

The county fair grounds became the city park. The city acquired the 23+ acre park from the Marion County Agricultural Society in 1900. By 1909, the race track was broadened and graded for drivers of horses or automobiles to use. Local residents donated additional saplings for the site. The Twentieth Century Club had four maple trees planted, Frank McKercher furnished 40

trees that consisted of oak, pecan, hickory, chestnut, maple, and buckeye. Twenty-five black walnuts were also planted, and P.C. Hansen provided hickory, pecan, and an English walnut sapling. New flower beds were cultivated. The flower beds consisted of roses, tulips, and snowballs, just to name a few. A water tank that had been in use since the park began, was installed below ground level in 1909 and filled with water lilies from Maine, a gift of Mrs. E. W. Stephens and Charles Sawtelle. The same year, the old windmill at the site was dismantled and sold and swings installed. During August, the park was the site of the Chautauqua. In the autumn, the Anti-Horse Thief Association held its annual picnic.

## **Peabody Fires**

For a small community, with a small business district and dependent upon volunteer fire protection, the threat of fire was, and is, a frightening concept for property owners in Peabody. This town has experienced more than a dozen blazes in the commercial area. The first serious fire in Peabody occurred in 1876 at the Wiley Saloon. The establishment was located in a small double-store front building owned by W. O. Wiley. The editor of the Gazette believed the fire may have been intentionally set, because the owner had been warned the night before the destruction that the building might go up in flames unless Wiley permanently closed.

In the latter part of March 1881, prairie fires swept the area around Peabody, but the community was spared. Three years later, a conflagration swept through the commercial district of Peabody. In 1884, a total of eight commercial frame buildings along the west side of Walnut Street were destroyed in a blaze that was fire reported in the evening about 10 o'clock. The fire was contained on the south by the stone, Kolloch Bank Building. For awhile, it was feared buildings on the east side of Walnut Street might also be consumed from flying sparks, but the low winds helped those battling the blaze that burned until daylight. Extra police patrolled the streets. Approximately \$20,000 worth of property, including merchandise, was destroyed in the catastrophe.

The community battle against the fire made the residents aware of their need to: construct commercial buildings of masonry, enact fire prevention ordinances, create a reliable water supply, and organize fire fighters. Ordinances were passed that required only masonry structures be erected along Walnut Street in the downtown area. Within the first few days after the fire, the city approved the sale of bonds for the creation of a city water works.

In 1886, the Peabody Fire Department was organized as a volunteer branch of the city government. Four years later, it was reorganized as a salaried department, but soon reverted to a volunteer department. By June 1901, firemen had responded to 35 fires and participated in several state tournaments where the crew proved it could run 100 yards, stretch 100 feet of hose and complete all required couplings in approximately 23 seconds.

Two, possibly three, fires occurred in the business district during the 1890s. In 1892, the flour mill in Peabody was destroyed by fire. A new mill was built by Sam Moffett and his partner

Janette who relocated to Peabody from Ellsberry, Missouri, after the mill they owned there was consumed in a fire.

In October 1898, residents of Peabody once more battled a fire in the business section of the community. The frame buildings owned by Mrs. A. H. Grinnell, suffered extensive damages. The building was nearly destroyed by the blaze. By May 1899, a second frame structure was under Fireconstruction. This structure was also destroyed by fire in late January 1901. At the time of the blaze, Ed and Will Bragunier, twins, were the proprietors of a restaurant on the site. The destruction forced the brothers to find employment elsewhere. In January 1901, the newspaper announced Mrs. Grinnell's plans to erect a stone building on the site to be cleared of a frame building burned in an earlier fire.

From 1901 through 1931 at least eight fires occurred in the commercial district, including the second fire. In June 1901, sparks from a passing locomotive set the roof of the Commercial Hotel ablaze. The quick response of residents, who formed a bucket brigade, limited the property loss to approximately \$50, most of which was caused by water damage. On May 1, 1902, the Gazette reported a fire at the Morse Building on the north Senior Center building site. The blaze caused limited damages to the stone building that housed the restaurant of Newton Davis.

In early February 1905, residents of Peabody witnessed the most destructive fire the community had experienced in 25 years. The J. C. Slaymaker Livery barn was demolished as flames swept through the structure, destroying 18 horses. The cause of the blaze was unknown, but the editor of the Gazette speculated arson may have been the cause. According to the newspaper, Slaymaker had experience property losses from several fires, possibly caused by "an implacable enemy". Slaymaker's private stables associated with his residence had burned, and since moving to Peabody the businessman had been visited repeatedly by a "fire fiend". Losses resulting from the livery fire included \$6,785.00 worth of property, of which only \$1,000 was covered by insurance. Value of the losses were inventoried as follows: barn and buggy shed, \$2,500; Slaymaker horses, \$1,500; vehicles, \$1,000; 15 halters, 25 tails, and 25 fly nets worth \$65; clothing, bedding, and fixtures worth \$50; wagon harness, \$300; 75 saddles, 75 robes, 20 blankets, \$170; employee loss of clothing, harness, and miscellaneous items, \$100; R. B. Slaymaker carriage, \$100; Wood Slaymaker's mare, \$125; Dr. Johnson's horse buggy, and miscellaneous equipment, \$100; J. E. Baker's horse and harness, \$150, Ira Sterling's hearse, \$200.

One of the more spectacular fires occurred in the area known as the Santa Fe Park. The buildings destroyed in the blaze, which is believed to have happened about 1906 or 1907, destroyed Bragunier Hall and the three storerooms of Thomas Holler. The storefront was known as the Holler Block.

In June 1912, the three-story, Commercial Hotel was once more the scene of a fire. This one, the largest fire experienced in Peabody in numerous years, esulted in extensive damages. After the

blaze was brought under control, about the only remains of the hotel was the main facade. According to the Gazette, the building had been the site of several fires. The flames from the 1912 fire spread to the adjoining buildings. The buildings north of the hotel including the Beeton Brothers Livery, were all lost except the harness shop of N. Miller. In less than 15 minutes, \$10,000 worth of damage was sustained. The nonexistent Commercial Hotel was built in 1876.

In January 1913, a fire destroyed the upper part of the Peabody Laundry (on the southeast corner of 2nd & Vine). The blaze swept eastward from the laundry, to H. A. Roscoe's veterinary barn and then to J. N. Baker's paint shop where the fire was brought under control. The damage to the laundry was limited to the building and machinery, because during the blaze the articles left for cleaning had been removed by the Haases, who operated the laundry with the help of their seven children.

In 1917, the city purchased a \$1,800, Hale type "C" light fire Despatch Model Number 9, fire truck from the George Hale Fire Company of Kansas City. the 20 foot long vehicle was powered by 4 cylinders. It had solid rubber, artillery type wheels with a 110 inch wheelbase; a 35-gallon chemical tank (that held sulfuric acid and bi-carbonate of soda), 150 feet of chemical hose and 600 to 800 feet of water hose, and a hose basket; heads for six fire axes, two torches, search lights, and two ladders, one 12 foot roof ladder and a 20 foot extension ladder. The addition of a chemical tank was seen as a great advantage for home owners who lived at the edge of town without hydrants nearby. Although taxed for fire protection, these individuals were unable to receive adequate service until this vehicle was purchased.

In August 1918, a blaze at lot 30, the location of Earl Brown's Brown Cafe, occurred at 5:15 in the morning the week of August 15. Within minutes of arriving, the fire department had the blaze under control. The fire loss included \$2,000 worth of damage to the structure, restaurant stock, and fixtures. At the time of the fire, the restaurant was owned by C. M. Clark. Alvah Jenkins and Ray Beeton, of Cockley's Bakery, reported the fire after they smelled pine burning. Cockley's Bakery, located where Stan and Jeanetta Farr's building is, was destroyed by fire in 1945. In 1931, a blaze, caused by an automobile stored in the rear addition, began at the back of the Ellett, Post Office, Stockmen's Exchange Bank Building, Mitch Moffett's Building. Damage was limited to just the rear of the building.

In 1945, a fire broke out during the evening hours in the Cockley Building. Volunteer firemen Fred Highfill, Jr. and George Higgins saw the blaze, and returned to the fire station where they turned in the report and manned the pump truck. Even before an alarm sounded, the two men had returned to the scene with the truck. Additional assistance was requested from the nearby communities of Newton and Florence, each of which provided one crew and a truck. Loss from the fire and water included residential damage to private property owned by the family occupying the second-story of the building. Approximately one-half of the rear of the building was destroyed, and the lower room of the Huguenin Building on lot 38 received smoke and water damage.

On December 29, 1946, a fire completely destroyed the Peabody Mill and Gepharts Filling Station. The buildings were located at the corner of Maple Street and Central Avenue at the south end of town, along the Santa Fe tracks. The site is currently occupied by the Farmers' Grain Cooperative Elevator and Service Station.

In late January 1967, the Gazette-Herald building and equipment sustained heavy damage from flames that were reported about 11:30 p.m. When firemen arrived on the scene, they found the entire building engulfed in smoke. The blaze began beneath the floor, near the entrance to the basement, at the rear of the structure. The fire spread to the roof. In addition to the equipment and structural damage, most of the windows cracked from the heat, a skylight was broken, and the fixtures were scorched. The nonextant, ruins of the building were located on the east side of the 200 block of Walnut Street just north of Peabody Market. The building had originally shared a common wall with the building now housing Peabody's Printing Museum.

In October 1977, fire destroyed the Masonic Building (just north of the Peabody State Bank), the two businesses within it, and the I.O.O.F. building was also damaged. The Bayes Cozy Casuals and Eskridge Card and Gift Shop were complete losses. All the records and furniture, some of which were antiques and hand-crafted furnishings of the Halcyon Lodge Number 221, were completely destroyed. Various items belonging to other Peabody residents were also ruined, including a large inventory of brand new equipment for Shirley Strotkamp's new tavern which was then under construction.

Mayor Tod Porter, who lived less than a block from the building, discovered the fire at 3:00 a.m. after he was awakened by the smell of smoke. Within minutes of the arrival of the volunteer firemen, the entire roof of the building was ablaze. Less than an hour later the structure was in ruins. Additional fire fighting assistance arrived from Florence, Marion, Hillsboro, and Newton. The Dietrich building, north of Masonic Building sustained modest damage from the fire. The blaze spread from the Masonic Building to the Dietrich Building before it continued north to the I.O.O.F. Building. At the time of the fire, the Dietrich Building was owned by Mrs. Dorothy Tate and occupied by attorneys Maples and Egan. Two windows of the I.O.O.F. Building exploded after flames spread to the roof of the structure. The carpet inventory of Baker Furniture and Carpets received neither fire nor water damage. The lots of the Masonic Building were later converted into a public park.

On November 13, 1984, a fire destroyed the Irwin-Doyle Hardware Building (on the northeast corner of Second and Walnut streets). At the time of the blaze, the structure functioned as the Peabody Hotel Apartments and the Peabody Laundromat. The fire began about 9:30 in the morning. By 11:00 a.m. the blaze was visible through the roof, and the fire department conceded the building was a total loss. Efforts were then directed towards saving the adjacent buildings. Fire units from Marion, Florence, Burns, Hillsboro, Newton, and Walton helped save the nearby structures. By 12:30 p.m. the Irwin-Doyle Hardware Building was in ruins and firemen were dousing the last of the burning embers. The only personal belongings saved were furniture from

one apartment and a cat that appeared at a second story window. The animal was rescued by a fireman.

During an electrical storm on the night of June 14, 1990, about 8:30 p.m., a fire started on the second-story of the now Corey Lawson Building, after lightning struck the electrical line leading to the structure. A renter was occupying one of the apartments in the building at the time of the blaze. He escaped without injury. The common roof and common wall, and rear walls of the flames engulfed the second story. The heat caused all the window panes of the second story to explode. The flames charred the inside of the window frames. Because the cornice trapped the blaze beneath, firemen tore out the corners of the element of the north building and the south end cornice of the south building to saturate the materials beneath with water. Only two small areas of the flooring in both buildings sustained fire damage.

### **The Petroleum Boom**

Peabody experienced an oil boom from 1918 until 1920. For the next couple of years, the influence of the petroleum industry remained strong in Peabody, and resulted in the greatest change upon the community in the shortest time. Although drilling continued in the area until the early 1930s, few wells were producing by that time, and even fewer new holes were being sunk. After 1930 most of the oil fields near Peabody were abandoned.

On September 1, 1918, one of the oil wells on a lease of Wichitan Sylvester Forrester came in. The drilling was financially backed by the Elmhurst Investment Company, of Topeka. The well was located six miles east and one mile south of Peabody. The land was owned by Orlando Jolliffe. Although never a producer, the well initiated the two-year, petroleum boom of Peabody history. The first "good" producing wells were also found on land owned by Jolliffe. Forrester later became the vice-president of Orlando Petroleum Company.

S. W. Forrester purchased a private railroad car for the use of the firm Forrester and Cook. Forrester brought numerous Eastern and Canadian capitalists to Peabody aboard his private car. He first used the car for a private hunting trip in Canada. On the return trip, he brought along several Pullman cars filled with interested men and women who wanted to invest in the local fields.

Jolliffe came to Peabody in 1878 from Wisconsin. He lived on his farm until his retirement in 1907, when he and his wife Drucilla moved to town. He was president of the Peabody State Bank and part owner of the Peabody Power and Light Plant. From 1917 to 1919 he served as mayor of Peabody. He also served four, two-year terms as County Commissioner, and was elected for one term in the state legislature. His real estate holdings included the 320 acres where oil was first discovered near Peabody, a ranch in Texas and Beaver counties in Oklahoma, and a summer cottage at Waupaca, Wisconsin.

Jolliffe's two nephews, Delbert and Alvin Burton, moved to Peabody soon after Jolliffe settled in the area. The brothers bought the land adjoining Jolliffe's. Prior to the oil boom, Alvin purchased his brother's interest in their farm. Petroleum was later discovered on the property, thus opening the Burton Oil Field. Alvin was First Vice President of the Peabody State Bank and held extensive financial interests in several agrarian enterprises near Peabody. He was a member of the board of trustees of Southwestern College at Winfield. He donated \$25,000 for the construction of the Peabody Memorial Nursing Home, \$15,000 to the Kansas Masonic Home in Wichita, \$25,000 to the Methodist Home for the Aged in Topeka, \$50,000 to the Methodist Home for Children in Newton, \$15,000 to the Prairie Lawn Cemetery Association, and \$50,000 and one-half section of land which included producing oil wells was given to the Methodist Church in Peabody. Burton and his wife also donated a large sum to Wesley Hospital of Wichita for a nurses home.

The Peabody fields brought financial salvation to Forrester who had gone bankrupt drilling near Augusta. In addition, the find created an economic and population boom for Peabody and altered the demographics of the community. No longer was Peabody simply a rural community with a railroad station and a main street that was only busy on Saturdays. Traffic congested the commercial streets from dawn until the late evening. The town became a bustling city with prospects yet to be tapped. North Walnut Street was dubbed "Millionaire Row" because at least half of the residents of that area had oil wells on their farm land. Among those residents with wells that lived on North Walnut were: W. W. Davis, Ed Slocombe, Orlando Jolliffe (with more than 30 wells), Alvin G. Burton (constructed a \$40,000 home fronting North Walnut and had more than 12 wells at the end of 1920), John Clark, Gilbert Waltie, J.T. Liggett, John Wallace, Arnold Berns, Chris Nonken, S.P. McDonald, and C.M. Nusbaum.

During this time, a variety of events occurred in and around Peabody. By 1920, the traffic between Wichita and Peabody had increased tremendously. Much of this activity was conducted by those employed in the petroleum industry who were based in Wichita but whose companies were involved in the oil exploration in Marion County. Until late 1920, many of these individuals drove to Peabody from Wichita via Newton in Harvey County. However, a number of these persons believed they were being unduly harassed by law enforcement officers in Harvey County when the oil men were en route to Peabody. One speculator reported he almost lost a \$30,000 deal when a Harvey County Sheriff's officer arrested him for crossing an intersection in excess of the 8 miles per hour crossing speed. The businessmen met with Wichita officials to establish a marked road between Peabody and Wichita that would allow traffic between these communities to by-pass Harvey County. Along the route signs marked with oil rigs identifying the "oil road" directed the traveler. The course began one mile west of Peabody, on the New Santa Fe Trail, then south to Andover, there the traveler turned west on Thirteenth Street road which entered Wichita on the northeast.

During the boom, several automobile garages were built in Peabody, including the Eyestone Garage. The building was publicized as "the largest garage in Kansas". Other commercial

buildings were also erected during this time. The volume of Post Office trade tripled, causing the office to be reclassified from third-class to second-class. Five oil field supply companies opened for business in Peabody: National, Jarecki, Atlas, Continental, and Oil Well Supply. A new bank was under construction; two \$10,000 warehouses were completed by two oil supply companies. In addition, the Berns Sunflower Theatre was constructed, one of the local lumber companies replaced its old structures with new ones, and a large wholesale bakery building, a new laundry, and new boiler shops were erected. "Nearly every business house in town" was remodeled or a new front installed". More than 100 residences were constructed in October and November 1919. In 1919, six miles of street paving was under construction and another four miles previously contracted were nearing completion. Sewer lines were extended in all directions, and the first street signs were erected to aid in directing transients, many of whom were associated with the oil fields.

The value of farms increased from \$10,000 to over \$100,000. Petroleum royalties sold for \$50,000. Frank Eyestone, original owner of the Eyestone Building, opened the Peabody-Elbing field with the leasing of 120 acres of his land in Marion County to the National Refining Company of Cleveland, Ohio. The firm erected two drilling rigs on the property and began the search for oil. In February 1919, the first petroleum was found when that well came in. Lacking pipeline facilities, National Refining hired "every available man and every available team of horses" and quickly constructed a huge hole which the company hastily converted into a petroleum pond to handle the ever increasing oil flow. This second well became known as the Eyestone Gusher, which produced between 3,500 and 4,000 barrels of oil daily, was talked about in reverent tones among those involved in the industry. The company struck oil at a third well on July 29, a fourth on August 17, and a fifth about the first of September 1919. Three more wells were rapidly sunk, and by October 1919 the Sinclair Pipe Line Company had laid the first pipe to the Elbing field. Soon after the Sinclair line was completed, the Prairie Pipe Line Company laid another line to the area.

About the time the second well was brought in, Eyestone formed the Eyestone Syndicate, to which he sold one-half of his total royalties. The syndicate was comprised of a small group of leading Peabody businessmen. The syndicate owned one-half of Eyestone's royalty interest in the oil and gas development on his land.

Eyestone moved from his farm to Peabody where he purchased a house for himself and one for each of his sons. With an income of several thousand dollars a day coming in from the wells, Eyestone daily worked at his filling station, measuring oil for Ford cars.

The petroleum boom created a greater demand for rail shipments than could be met by the existing number of switching lines at Peabody. Santa Fe and Rock Island laid extra track. The additional Santa Fe tracks ran south of its station while the Rock Island track was laid north of its depot. Despite these additions, rail traffic remained congested because of insufficient siding and switching facilities.

In 1918, the population of the community was 1,948, by the following year that figure had risen to between 3,500 and 6,000 people. Because many of these persons were transient, oil-field workers who slept wherever they could find available room, an accurate count of people living in Peabody was not possible. Some chicken houses and barns were converted to living quarters for the workers. Others shared the same bed, sleeping in shifts.

Plans were made for the construction of a \$100,000 Forrester Hotel. The lodging facility was a concept that never made it past the planning, design, and investment stage. The building was to have been the focal point for visitors to Peabody

### **WWII POW Camp**

In 1943, German and Italian prisoners of war were brought to Kansas and other Midwest states as a means of solving the labor shortage caused by American men serving in the war effort. Prisoner camps were established in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Farmers were to have first priority over other industries in requesting prisoner labor. County agents were responsible for processing the application of local residents seeking the use of the prisoners who were to be available only as group laborers. Two large internment camps were established in Kansas, one at Concordia and the other at Camp Phillips near Salina. "Side camps" were founded at Peabody, Hays and Neodesha. By September 1944, nearly a dozen camps were located in Kansas, including those at El Dorado, Eskridge, Elkhart, Council Grove, Peabody, Hays, Cawker City, Coldwater, Fort Riley, Concordia, and Camp Phillips. No fewer than four prisoners could be assigned to any farm. The men were not allowed to operate farm equipment, but they were permitted to make repairs. Their tasks typically included baling hay, shocking corn and sorghums, combining sorghums, filling silos, cutting hedges, broadcasting fertilizers, erecting farm bridges, removing drift and debris along streams, constructing and repairing fences, digging cisterns, drainage construction, picking apples, and husking corn.

The employer of the workers paid approximately forty-cents an hour, or \$3.25 a day, for the use of each prisoner. The prisoners who were enlisted men and non-commissioned officers were given \$3.00 a month for camp "spending money" while the officers were provided \$10.00 to \$40.00 a month. Those individuals who volunteered for additional work details received an extra eight-cents per day.

The farmer collected the workers at the camp and returned them at the end of the day. One guard accompanied each group of four prisoners. At the Hays and Peabody camps the prisoners were sent to work with three sandwiches provided by the camps for the lunches of each man. The employer was expected to provide coffee and doughnuts or some similar snack during the morning, coffee at lunch, and a drink and snack in the afternoon. In Peabody, some local residents became outraged when they learned several Mennonite families were feeding and sharing with the prisoners hardy luncheons in place of the sandwiches the workers took with them. This treatment by the Mennonites was actually the same as that provided at Council

Grove. The Geneva Convention required prisoners be fed the same ration as that provided soldiers of the United States Army or food common to any community. Each commander of the prisoners interpreted the rule as he desired. For some, the statement meant the prisoners were to receive the same food as the workers on the farm they were assigned while other commanders believed the rule meant army rations that were to be supplemented by farmers.

In August 1943, the Gazette reported that Marion County Agricultural Agent F. A. Hagans had received 17 requests from farmers for prisoners of war to help supplement the labor shortage. Hagans notified the War Manpower Commission of the local interest in having a temporary, prison camp established. By the first of September plans were underway to transfer prisoners to the Peabody Creamery site. The initial contingent of 60 German prisoners arrived. Fifty-eight guards were also assigned to the Peabody camp.

The use of German prisoner labor continued around Peabody until December 1, 1945, when the camp closed. The prisoners were to be returned to Germany, and A. H. Perrin acquired a lease on the Eyestone Building where he planned to relocate his machinery store. Army trucks from Fort Riley transported the prisoners, army personnel, and camp equipment back to Fort Riley. The Peabody Farm Association, the sponsors of the local camp, had provided many of the items needed to establish and maintain the facility. After the camp closed, the association held a public sale of the items it owned inside the Eyestone Building. These features included thousands of feet of lumber, wood panels, tables, benches, booths, radiant and circulating heaters, toilets, various plumbing fixtures, and miscellaneous items.

### **The Silk Station**

The ease with which mulberry trees flourished in Kansas made silk manufacturing a viable industry, as the tree is needed as a food source for the silk worms. E. V. Boissiere, of Silkville, Franklin County, began the first experimental silk enterprise in the state. In 1870, he planted 20 acres of mulberry trees. Two years later, the first silk cocoons were spun at the location. By 1883, Boissiere's efforts were still in the experimental level. In 1885, plans were discussed at the state level about establishing a state funded silk station. Although various locations were discussed, the representative of Marion County proved the most persuasive for locating the facility near Peabody. Funds to establish the station were provided by the Kansas legislature. After the station was established at Peabody, more than a ton of green silk worm cocoons were shipped to the area the first year. Silk growers pledged themselves ready to furnish sufficient "cocoons to supply a reeling station for six months"

At the Kansas State Fair held in Peabody in 1885, I. Horner displayed reeled silk, a variety of silk cocoons, and thread locally manufactured by hand. The same year, the Kansas Silk Association was chartered. Samples of Kansas grown and spun silk were displayed at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Two years later, the silk station near Peabody closed.

In 1887, J. H. Morse of Peabody, sixty-sixth District Representative, sponsored a bill, that was passed by the legislature, appropriating \$13,000 for the formation and maintenance of a commercially based silk station in Kansas. Although Larned, Hutchinson, McPherson and Newton lobbied to have the industry, Morse's influence swayed the legislature to establish the station approximately one-eighth of a mile north of Ninth Street. The station grounds were donated by the Peabody Investment Company and the station was named Mulberry Park. Until the facility was constructed and the machinery installed, temporary quarters were established in a building on Second Street in Peabody.

### **Waterworks**

In February 1888, town leaders boasted the community had its own "water works, telephone lines, electric lights, and all improvements usually found in a city of 10,000 people". The fire of 1884, which destroyed eight commercial, frame buildings, led to the creation of a city owned water works to replace the piped wells previously used for fighting fires. Local businessman D. J. Roberts played an active role in the creation of the Peabody Waterworks System. He joined his brother and family in Peabody, after he first settled in Chicago where he worked as an accountant for a hardware firm, a position he held until the Great Chicago fire of 1871. The Great Fire destroyed his place of employment, and gave him a deeper insight into the damage possible from such disasters.

On January 7, 1885, city bonds were approved for the construction of a city water works. The railroad companies contracted with the city to supply their water needs. From the highest point of the city, a well was dug to the depth of approximately 40 feet. The contractors for the project were Mr. Trimble and Mr. Grayson. The U.S. Wind Engine and Pump Company received the contract for the erection of a windmill, tower, elevated tank, pipes, hydrants, hose and hose cart. Powered by a windmill, the water tank was filled nearly every day, and an engine was included in case of emergency. Two-and-one-half miles of pipe were laid along the principal streets, including Walnut Street, and attached to 25 water hydrants. In January 1898, a windstorm destroyed the water tower. Six months later, a steel, 16 foot windmill and 60 foot tower were installed as replacements.