

Cyclopedia of Kansas History

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The History of Salina, Kansas

Salina, the metropolis of central Kansas and judicial seat of Saline county, is located 115 miles west of Topeka, on the Smoky Hill river about 8 miles west of where it is joined by the Saline. It is one of the leading cities of Kansas, especially in a manufacturing and jobbing way. Its tributary territory includes not only several counties in the central part of the state, but also three or four tiers of counties as far west as the state line. This is partly due to the railroad facilities with which Salina is provided. Four lines—the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, the Missouri Pacific, the Union Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe—center here, affording transportation facilities in all directions. In appearance Salina is a spacious, well built and well kept town. The streets are wide, paved and clean. The buildings are of good size and substantial, some of them costly. Shade trees line some of the business streets as well as those in the residence districts. Among the manufacturing establishments are a \$50,000 alfalfa mill, flour mills. Vitrified brick plant, planing mill glove factory, foundry, machine shops, sunbonnet factory, creamery, carriage and wagon works, cigar factories, body brace factory, oil refinery, agricultural implement works, cold storage plant, razor strop factory, broom and mattress factories, etc.

The wholesale and jobbing interests represent an investment of \$3,000,000 and an annual distribution of \$8,000,000 worth of goods. There are 2 state and 2 national banks, one of which is a United States depository. In the way of educational institutions there are a hospital and training school for nurses, four colleges, the Salina Wesleyan, the Salina Wesleyan business college, Shelton's school of telegraphy, and the St. John's Military school, 6 newspapers—two daily, two semi-weekly and 2 weekly—a \$15,000 Carnegie library, a yearly Chautauqua assemblyman opera house which will accommodate 3,000 people, and excellent graded and high schools. Some of the best buildings include a \$75,000 Federal; building, a \$60,000 convention hall, and a \$50,000 cathedral. Salina is a good lodge town, and has 14 churches. Oak Park adds greatly to the attractiveness of the place. There are ample express and telegraph accommodations, and the international money order post office has six rural routes. The population in 1910 was 9,688.

Salina was founded by Col. W.A. Phillips, in 1858. Being practically the only settlement in Saline county until after the war, the early history of Salina is included in the county history. (See Saline County.) The original town company, chartered by the territorial legislature in 1859, was composed of W.A. Phillips, A.M. Campbell, James Muir, Robert Crawford and A.C. Spillman.

The survey was not completed until 1862, when there were only about a dozen families in the town. Very little progress was made prior to the coming of the first railroad, the main line of the Union Pacific, which was built as far as Salina in 1867. The early business men were George Pickard, A.M. Campbell and H.L. Jones. Their chief trade was among the Indians, whom they furnished with provisions, ammunition and a poor grade of whiskey. The immigrants for Pike's Peak, New Mexico and other Western points furnished considerable business in the early '60s. With the coming of the railroad four new additions were made to the original plat of the city. They were the Phillips, Jones, Calkins and the "Depot" additions. The shanties and log cabins were replaced by neat frame and stone buildings, a school house and churches were built. C.R. Underwood set up a combination grist and sawmill in 1867. The court-house was built in 1871, Salina having been made the county seat in 1860.

A disastrous fire occurred on Christmas day, 1871, in which \$20,000 worth of property in the business part of town was destroyed. The buildings thereafter were built of stone and brick. The next year Salina became the trading place for the cattle men. This class of business helped it in a financial way but had its undesirable features. A number of new additions were made in the '70s and several manufacturing plants and other buildings were put up. In 1874, aside from the grasshopper disaster which was common to all Kansas, Salina was swept by a destructive fire, in which property to the extent of \$25,000 was destroyed. Fire limits were then described by an ordinance and frame buildings forbidden to be erected within those limits. Improvements continued and by 1880 the town took on a metropolitan appearance. Large stone and brick business buildings with plate glass fronts, fine public buildings and parks, good school and magnificent church edifices were erected. Salina became a city of the third class in 1870, with C.H. Martin as the first mayor. In 1878 it was declared a city of the second class. The first newspaper was the Salina Herald, Established in 1866 by J.F. Hanna. The Salina Journal was begun in 1871 by W.H. Johnson and M.D. Sampson. In 1895 another fire occurred destroying considerable property. In 1903, the great flood, which damaged every river town in Kansas, did much damage to Salina.