

# **TOUR OF STATE HIGHWAY 96**

## **Lane County, Kansas**

Written by Byron Schmalzried

*Consultants: Mr. Charles E. Graves, Mr. Ray Dodge, and Mr. Ed Lee, all of Dighton*

*\*Additional information added about certain people mentioned in this story*

Upon entering the west edge of Lane County and traveling east on Highway 96, you see a good farming territory. Most of the ground is planted in wheat although some feed crops as milo, corn, cane and grass are raised to feed the livestock. Highway number 96, when first graded and made a highway, was a rough grade and was not a hard surfaced road. The highway has since been hard surfaced. It was first surfaced with magnesia rock and after the cars had this rock packed down, the highway was sanded and oiled. The highway east of Dighton was oiled first and the highway west of Dighton was oiled a year later.

As I travel down the highway east from the western edge of the county, I go one mile and come to a small rounded hill on the south side of the highway. This particular hill has the name "Gold Hill". As I travel on, I see wheat fields on each side of the highway. There are very few houses on this road for six miles. Then I come to a rock road that goes north and south through Lane County, and this road runs as far south as Finney County and as far north as Gove County. As I travel south on this rock road for three miles, I come to the Sutton Church and its cemetery. Traveling south on this road one mile and turning west, I drive one-half mile and come to a sod house which was built many years ago. Continuing on, I see a more hilly country and there is not very much farmland. There is one large ranch called the Freeman Ranch. A man by the name of Mr. Freeman owns this ranch and has a large herd of cattle running on it. Returning to the highway, I see mostly farmland of which the principal crop is wheat. The country is fairly level with a few hills. Six miles north and one half mile east is the rock pit where the rock was taken that was used to build this road.

Traveling on north for three miles, I come to the town of Healy. This town has a population of around one hundred and fifty people. It was north of the town that the first homestead was filed in Lane County. A man by the name of Thomas W. Linn\* homesteaded here in 1878. The town of Healy has two elevators, several stores, filling stations, a bank, and it has one church. This town also has a high school and it is the only other high school in Lane County besides the one at Dighton. The Missouri Pacific Railroad runs through Healy and so does Highway Number 4. This highway runs east and west and at the west-edge of town, there is an S curve. It then continues on westward through Lane County.

Continuing on north from Healy I see mostly farming land for five or six miles north, the principal crop is wheat. Six miles north, I come to a winding road and a hillier

countryside. Following this road, I come to the Charlie E. Graves ranch and there are a great number of trees here. This man has a number of cattle and has good pastureland with several water springs on the place. Next, I come to the well-known Baxter place. It has an apple orchard and has running water. Continuing on north, I see mostly grassland all the way to Gove County.

Returning to Highway 96 and driving east one mile, I come to the town of Amy. This town has a population of around 25 people. There is an elevator, a church, and two stores. The schoolhouse is on the south side of the highway. The Santa Fe Railroad runs east and west through the town and is on the north side of the highway.

Driving three blocks north and one block west, I come to the new Farmers Elevator, built in 1931. It is made of concrete and is over 100 feet high. Returning east one block and turning north, I cross the Santa Fe Railroad tracks. There are two sets of tracks. After crossing the railroad tracks and on the east side of the road, I see the George Cano Elevator. Turning west, I drive for two blocks and come to the stockyards. To the north of the stockyards is the Dighton Sales Company.

Returning to the Highway 23 and driving north three miles, I come to a stretch of rock road that is one mile in length. The gravel rock was added at this place because of the large hill, and in wet weather, it was difficult to travel. At the bottom of this hill, there is a large concrete bridge, which is above the north branch of Walnut Creek. There are a great many trees on the west side of the road following the creek, and on the east side of the road the ground is planted in alfalfa. Four miles north on this road I come to the Junction of Highway 23 and Highway number 4. Highway 23 turns west at this point and Highway number 4 goes north.

Following Highway number 4, I drive north one mile and then turn east and drive a mile and a half. I come to the town by the name of Shields. This town has a population of around 25 people. It has two elevators and the Missouri Pacific Railroad runs east and west through the town. Two miles east and six miles north of Shields there is an oil well that is being drilled.

Returning to Dighton and driving south on Highway 23, I drive one mile and come to a large concrete bridge. This bridge was built a year ago and is over the south branch of Walnut Creek.

Continuing back to Dighton, I come to the junction of Highway 96 and Highway 23. On the southwest corner is the building where the old post office of Dighton used to be. Driving east one block and on the north side of the highway is the Exchange State Bank and on the south side is the First National Bank. These are the only two banks in Dighton. Turning south at this corner and driving one block I come to the new courthouse of Lane County. This is a brick building with modern equipment and is four stories high.

Returning to Highway 96 and driving east one block, I come to the Dighton Hotel. It is

on the south side of the street and is a modern hotel, being built out of brick. Driving south two blocks and on the east side of the street, I come to the old courthouse of Lane County. This building has not been used for a courthouse for several years.

Returning again to Highway 96 and traveling east two blocks and turning south and driving two blocks I come to the new high school of Lane County that was just completed. The building covers one block and has all modern equipment. It was built out of steel, wood, and brick. The building of the school cost \$200,000, but was a government project and they furnished part of the money. Returning back to the highway and driving east one block and on the south side of the road I come to the old high school of Lane County which was built out of brick. Going back to the highway and traveling east of Dighton one half mile, I come to a large lagoon. The highway runs through the center of the lagoon and graded up higher than the lagoon so the water will not stand on the road. At one time, however the water came over the highway and was three feet above the road. This made it impossible for traffic to travel through it for weeks at a time.

Traveling east on the highway I see excellent farming country and most of the land is planted in wheat. Two miles east of Dighton I come to the Dighton Cemetery. This cemetery is on the north side of the highway. It has a brick entrance and has a woven wire fence all the way around it. There is a row of cedar trees, planted all the way around the cemetery. It also has a windmill and supply tank to irrigate the trees.

As I continue down the highway for one half mile, I come to a sheep ranch. This ranch has all modern equipment and has one large steel machine shed and a large barn that is equipped with milking machines to milk the cows. North of this ranch on Highway 96 is a large hill. This is the largest & steepest hill on the highway in Lane County. Traveling on east, I come to where the Santa Fe Railroad crosses Highway 96. This is the only place, and the only railroad that crosses Highway 96 in Lane County. As I drive down the highway, going east, I see more farmland on each side of the road that continues with planted wheat. One mile east, I come to where the old poor farm of Lane County used to be. Nine miles east of Dighton on the north side of the highway I see another ranch. The buildings on this ranch are of frame construction. The man who owns this ranch has a great number of Hereford cattle.

As I drive on down the highway, going east, I come to a rock road. This rock road runs north and south through Lane County. Following this rock road north for ten miles, I come to Highway number 4. Traveling north on Highway number 4 one mile and then turning west one-half mile I come to the town of Pendennis\*. This town has a population of around 20 people. It has one elevator, a store and a modern schoolhouse. The Missouri Pacific Railroad runs east and west through this town.

Returning to Highway 96 and then traveling south on a rock road for a few miles and then turning west and driving one-half mile, I come to the town of Alamota\*. This town has a population of about 25 people. It has one Farmers elevator. It also has a

Farmers oil station, one store, and a bank that has closed, due to the depression. They have built a new modern schoolhouse this past year. Another government project helped with the money to build it.

Then, returning to Highway 96, traveling east, I see all farmland and again it is mostly wheat farms. Two miles ahead, I come to an old stone house. This house was built several years ago and is still occupied by the same family that built it. Traveling on east one mile I come to a curve and drive south into more hilly and sloped land. One mile south of the curve, I drive up a hill and then go down another long hill, which is one-half mile long. At the bottom of this hill, I come to another curve and turn east. I then come to the east edge of Lane County and enter Ness County.

I return, back over the highway, until I come within one mile of Dighton. Turning south, I drive three and one-half miles and come to the Hineman Jack Ranch (*See Lane County story "Tour of Herbert T. Hineman's Jack Farm"*). This is the largest Jack Ranch in the United States. H. T. Hineman owns this ranch. He has taken several prizes at the state fairs with his horses and mules.

The Pony Express, owned by William H. Walker and his brother in the earlier days, ran through Dighton. The mail was carried over several different routes. One route was from Dighton to Cimarron, one from Dighton to Grinnell and one from Dighton to Ness City, Utica, and Garden City. These two men also ran a stagecoach line from Garden City to Dighton.

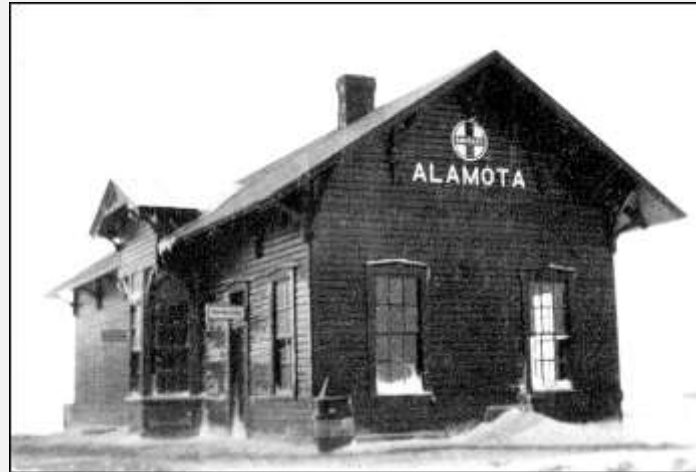
This completes my manuscript on Highway 96 through Lane County.

Additional Information  
UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES  
Mentioned in the story



OLD PENDENNIS ELEVATOR

\* Pendennis, Kansas opened a post office in 1892 and it remained in operation until discontinued in 1957. It is an unincorporated community. This elevator and a couple of houses are the only buildings left in that area. In 2015, this photograph was in the Hutchinson, Kansas newspaper.



ALAMOTA RAILYARD DEPOT

\* Alamota, Kansas is also an unincorporated community. A post office established there in 1877 closed in 1894. It reopened in 1903 and closed permanently in 1992.

#### Additional Information THOMAS W. LINN

**THOMAS WASHINGTON LINN**, son of John Linn (1818-1886) and Nancy Ann Harmeson (1822-1886) homesteaded in Lane County in 1878. He was born on 21 Sep 1847 in Wells County, Indiana. On 7 Oct 1874, he married **SARAH JANE MUNYON** (*also spelled MUNION*), daughter of William Allegheny Munyon and Loney Ann Brown, in Champaign, Champaign County, Illinois. Sarah was born on 19 Oct 1853 in Champaign, Illinois. The census records reveal that from 1900 to 1930, they were living in Cheyenne, Lane County, Kansas. Thomas made his living as a blacksmith. He died on 21 Nov 1930 while visiting his oldest son, Daniel, in Plymouth Village, Hancock County, Illinois. Sarah passed away on 10 Nov 1939. Burial for both was at the Healy Cemetery in Healy, Lane County, Kansas.

Seven known children were born in their marriage: **MARTHA M. (LINN) GILL**, **DANIEL EDWARD LINN**, **ANNA NANCY (LINN) SALISBURY**, **MARY CATHERINE (LINN) PHILLIPS**, **LAURA A. (LINN) ANDERSON**, **WILLIAM CEDRIC LINN**, and **JOHN WESLEY LINN**.

Their son, Daniel, was born on 25 Nov 1879. He was married to Alice Lockwood and they had

two children, Charles and Eldon. Daniel worked as a blacksmith like his father.

Thomas and Sarah's two daughters, Anna Nancy and Mary Catherine, were married in a double wedding at Healy, Kansas on Christmas Day in 1905. Anna married Alfred R. Salisbury (of Sterling, Colorado) and Mary Catherine married Willis S. Eshom (of Boyle, Kansas). Willis died in 1920. Mary Catherine married again to Isaac Phillips and lived in Oregon.

Their son, William Linn was born 31 March 1889 in Healy, Lane County, Kansas. In the 1930 census, William and his son, Alfred, were living with Thomas and Sarah in Cheyenne, Kansas. William was listed as a farmer and as widowed. He worked as an Automobile Mechanic.