

WICHITA COUNTY, KANSAS FAIR

Wichita County, Kansas

Written by Elmer Fletcher

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

The first Wichita County Fair was held in the year 1888. They did not have a Fairground or exhibit buildings. Hugh Glenn* owned a livery stable and the livestock exhibits were entered there. The vegetation exhibits were entered at the Leoti City Bank building.

Premiums were not paid for the best and finest quality of exhibits. The main purpose of the exhibits was to show the people of Wichita County what the soil and countryside could produce if it was handled in the right manner. They had horseracing with no prize money given to the winner. The parade was through the main street of Leoti. The people decorated their wagons and buggies or fixed them in some way to look peculiar. There were no automobiles in those days, so if someone got to the fair, it had to be by horse or by walking.

The livestock consisted of only the old "work and saddle horses". There were no thoroughbred horses for taking prizes at the different Fairs. All the horses that were there had to work to help their master make a living and therefore they looked "pretty shabby". The cows were more than likely a person's milk cow and did not look first-class. Some nice hand-raised calves are not large enough to be of much use to their owners just yet.

The vegetation show was probably the best of all the exhibits. The farmers brought a sample of all their crops. The exhibit consisted of wheat, corn, kaffir corn, and cane. The samples were not fixed up in a fancy booth as the Fairs are today. They were put into small containers. Then, set up for display on a long bench or table. The people would walk around the table and look at the exhibits. Each exhibit had the grower's name on it.

The garden crops consisted mostly of beans, squash, peas, and watermelons. One watermelon surprised everyone. It weighed in at 103 pounds. This one would probably take a prize at the state Fairs of today.

Mr. Glenn says that he built a barn and threw dirt up around it to keep out the cold. In the spring, he planted some squash seeds along that dirt bank and took them to the Wichita County Fair for an exhibit. He said it was the best squash he had ever grown.

Several years elapsed before another Fair was held. This time the vegetation exhibits were in another old building, as the County did not own the ground or any buildings

for the purpose of the Fair exhibits. This year, prize money was not paid, but the Fair was much more of a success than before. There were more exhibits but of course, they were handled much the same way as the last Fair. The people thought this was a great boost to their county and the vote was almost unanimous that they should have a County Fair each year. This was agreed upon and they elected a president for the Fair Association. Everyone took part in the program, so a successful County Fair would happen the following year.

The Fairs took place and were a great success. Henry Ewing permitted the Fair Association to put a racetrack on his land. A Carnival company with Merry go rounds and Ferris wheels were ordered. This drew a larger crowd and more exhibits than ever before. The exhibits depended on the kind of year we had. If the crops were poor, the Fair did not go over as well.

Around the year 1910, a few automobiles were in Leoti. William Parish owned the first automobile in Wichita County. This drew the attention of the people and it seemed that each year there was something new to interest them. Many of the old settlers never took their families to town more than once or twice a year and they always looked forward to attending the County Fair. It was a special time for them.

In the years 1912, 1913, and 1914, the crops were poor and so were the County Fairs. The horseraces and foot races went on as before but the exhibit booths were not filled as they usually were. They started paying prize money for the best of the exhibits and races. This was more inducement for the people. Soon the people were having automobile races. After automobiles came into existence, larger crowds attended the Fairs than ever before. The Fair became such a success that the Fair Association asked the County Commissioners to buy a plot of ground and they agreed to put improvements on it with their own money. In the year 1919, they bought the land on which Mr. Ewing had let them put the racetrack. There were forty acres in this plot and the County paid two thousand dollars for it.

Mr. Glenn, who was president of the Fair Association and had held his office for several years, was now going to raise the money to improve the Fairgrounds. The association agreed that they should not charge the gate fees to the Fair. Mr. Glenn started out one afternoon, and by nighttime, he had collected \$3,500 for his work. Each family gave a small sum for this purpose. The men contributed their work free of charge to the building of the grandstand and buildings.

A large exhibit building for poultry and vegetation was built. A large building was built for the livestock. It was a long narrow building with several pens for the different stock which was brought to the Fair. The labor bill for the building was scarcely anything as the labor was done free-gratis. They built a large grandstand that was twenty feet high. It was a peculiar built structure with high poles and it had a large protruding roof. The first high wind that came along scattered it all over the Fairground.

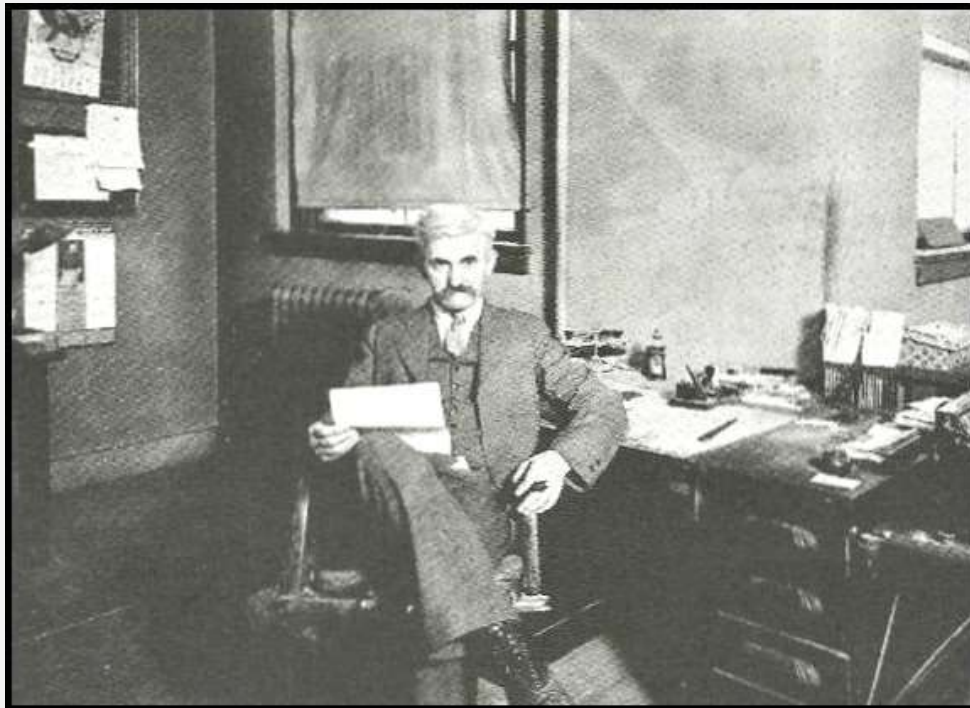
The people used the grandstand for several years before it blew down. They decided not to build another one, as the times were too hard. They parked their cars around a picket fence that was around the racetrack. The people who did not want to stand sat in their cars and watched the race and other events.

The fair progressed and the County paid for prizes. The fair Association had agreed when they first organized, they would never charge admission at the gate before entering the Fairs, but soon realized they could not afford to pay the prize money. The people stopped entering their exhibits when there was not prize money, thus the Fair was never held again after the year 1929.

The exhibit buildings, once used for the poultry and vegetation, are now used for the County to store its machinery. The livestock show building is used once a week for a community sales building. The Old Settlers Picnic uses the grounds and buildings once a year.

In the year of 1934, a new grandstand was built. It is hardly ever used. The picnic Association uses it once a year. The County still owns the land and buildings but they are not of much use any longer. The younger generation is not interested in fairs, and they are not willing to do the things the old settlers did without pay.

Additional Information HUGH GLENN



Hugh Glenn, Register of Deeds, Wichita County, Kansas

HUGH C. GLENN was born on 8 May 1864 in Ontario, Canada. On 29 Sep 1889, he married NETTIE URSULA KISSINGER, daughter of Levi Kissinger (1843-1907) and Julia S. Somers (1847-1927).

Nettie was born on 11 July 1869 in Whitley County, Indiana. They had three children: THEO GLENN, FLORENCE GLENN, and CHARLES GLENN. Nettie died on 24 Aug 1934 and Hugh died on 23 Dec 1945. Both died in their hometown of Leoti, Kansas and buried there, at the Leoti Cemetery.

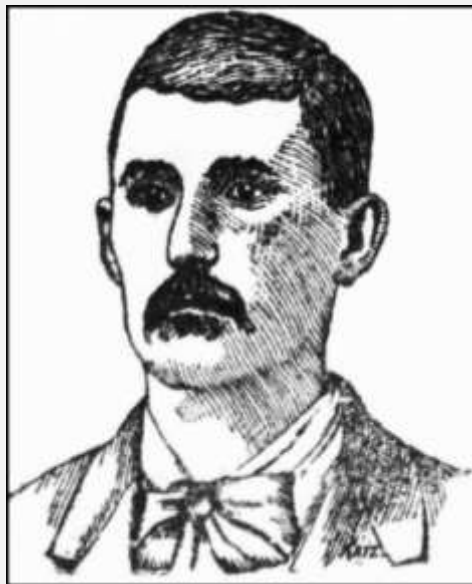
Their son, Theo, married Eva Gilmore. They lived in Hutchinson, Kansas for several years where Theo was a member of the police force. They later moved to Leoti where he again served on the police force. Theo was born on 19 Aug 1892 and died on 9 Mar 1957. His wife Eva was born on 3 Oct 1894 and died on 19 Feb 1981. Their burial was at the Leoti Cemetery.

Their daughter, Florence married Charles Swan and the couple moved to La Junta, Colorado in 1927. Florence was born on 7 Sep 1897 and died on 3 Feb 1988. Her husband, Charles Beech Swan was born on 17 Aug 1895 in Union County, Iowa. He passed away on 12 Dec 1960.

Hugh and Nettie's son, Charles, was born on 7 Nov 1904 and died on 30 Mar 1947. His burial was at the Leoti Cemetery.

THE FOLLOWING IS PART OF A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE WRITTEN AT THE TIME HUGH GLENN RAN FOR SHERIFF IN WICHITA COUNTY...

The Leoti (Kansas) Standard – Thursday, 17 Oct 1895



HUGH GLENN

Hugh Glenn was born in Kingston, Ontario, in 1864, and moved with his parents in 1871 to Newton, Kansas. There he grew to manhood. In the spring of 1886, he also had a severe attack

of the epidemic, "Western Fever," and drifted with the tide that had already set in, until he reached Wichita County and located on a fine quarter section of land in the Beaver Creek Valley.

There he engaged in farming and stock raising and was soon recognized as one of the leading citizens of his township. About two years ago he purchased the East Broadway livery barn, moved to town, and has made many friends both socially and in a business way.

Hugh Glenn is a staunch Republican and has rendered his party much good service in the past, which it has seen fit to renew by placing him on the ticket this fall as their choice for the office of Sheriff. The responsibility and often-disagreeable duties of a Sheriff could not be better placed than in the hands of Hugh Glenn. He has the courage to undertake the discharge of his duty however disagreeable, and the vigor and energy to carry his effort to a successful termination. He is a man of good morals, quiet, but firm, and will make a sheriff the equal of any in the state. The people of Wichita County will not only be doing a good thing for themselves but will give encouragement to a most worthy fellow citizen.

He has been a resident here nearly as long as many of us and has done a lot to help build up the county. He is a fixture here and whether elected or not, will continue to be one of us. His election only means that if there is anything to be made out of the office, there is much more to be used in the improvement and development of this county and all for the public good.

Hugh Glenn will be the next Sheriff of Wichita County, and if you want to be on the winning side just make an X before his name.

Newspaper Obituary HUGH C. GLENN

Provided by Karen Walk at the Wichita County, Kansas Genealogical Society

PIONEER OF COUNTY TAKEN IN DEATH

The community was greatly shocked Sunday morning when it became known that Hugh. C. Glenn, a colorful figure in Western Kansas for nearly sixty years had passed away suddenly at his home in South Leoti. He had been ill with the flu though his condition was not considered serious. This was until friends visiting him insisted on calling a physician. Life ended for him a short time following.

Hugh came to Kansas when a boy and in the early days ran a livery barn, taking passengers hither and yonder for years. He held public office more times than any other man in the county and was at one time representative from this district. For many years, he was the register of deeds. At the time of his death, he was one of the directors of the First State Bank of Leoti.

Not long ago we had a chat with him about the early days of the county. He told us then that he

was celebrating the anniversary of his coming to Kansas and he usually reminded us of that event. Nothing pleased him more, than recalling the yesteryears. Many friends will miss his familiar figure in town.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday at two o'clock from the Presbyterian Church with Rev. E. L. Brandner and Rev. Owen Paul in charge. The interment was in the Leoti Cemetery. Pallbearers were Lester Baker, W. C. Dickey, Robert Ford, Leo Krenzel, M. R. Robbins and R. E. Hollister.

Among those from out of town who came for the funeral services were: Mr. and Mrs. Theo Glenn of Derby, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Swan of La Junta, Colorado, Mrs. Julia Ditto of Newton, Mr. and Mr. Harry Glenn of Ulysses, and Mr. and Mrs. Keith Glenn of Liberal.

FROM THE BOOK TITLED "KANSAS AND KANSANS"

Provided by Karen Walk at the Wichita County, Kansas Genealogical Society

One of our early-day pioneers was Hugh Glenn. He was a cashier of the First State Bank of Leoti, and for many years incumbent in the office of Register of Deeds. He arrived here in 1886, the year following the date of the first permanent settlement. Mr. Glenn was a native of Canada, but he spent nearly all his life in Kansas. He came from Scotch-Irish stock and had many of the hardy and thrifty virtues of that stock.

It is said that when his grandfather, Hugh Glenn, was 80 years old, he was able to outrun his grandson, Hugh, in a footrace. Hugh's grandfather followed him to Kansas from Canada. He was buried in Harvey County. He and his wife had two sons, Robert and William. Robert Glenn was the father of Hugh. He brought his family to Kansas in 1871, settling in Harvey County. Hugh was 7 years of age at that time and grew up there. When he became of age, he was determined to seek a home for himself on the Kansas frontier. He had a team and drove it from Newton to Wichita County. He first settled in North Wichita County and tried very hard to make a living from the land. He was successful except for one year when he worked in Colorado.

During the winter of 1890-91, he was employed in the Pueblo Smelter. In 1893, he left his homestead and bought a livery barn in Leoti. During that time, the livery business was a profitable enterprise. While in business, he was also elected sheriff of the county. He gave four years of his time to that as the successor of Sheriff Elwood Edmundson.

In January 1914, Mr. Glenn became a cashier at the First State Bank. The hometown people organized the bank in 1896. The officers at that time were W. C. Dickey, President; Harry E. Willis, Vice-president; Mr. Glenn, cashier; the board comprised of Mr. Dickey, Harry E. Willis, W. E. Willis, R. B. Christy, and Mrs. Mime Reinheimer.

Although he identified with the business and official interests in Leoti for many years, Mr. Glenn

was active in farming and had a place in the county for breeding Percheron horses.

He began his life in Wichita County as a single man. On 29 Sep 1889, he was married to Miss Nettie Kissinger. Her father (*Levi Kissinger*) was also among the early settlers of Wichita County. The Kissinger's were the parents of two children, Nettie (*Mrs. Hugh Glenn*) and Joseph O. Kissinger of Leoti.

Hugh and Nettie Glenn had three children: Theo, Florence, and Charles. Hugh spent his last years in Leoti, living alone as his wife preceded him in death. He died on 23 Dec 1945.