

**The Lost Community:
Iwacura, Clay County**



Figure 1: Iwacura Cemetery is the only remaining evidence of the town of Iwacura. Source: photo taken by author

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Within the state of Kansas there are 105 counties, and within each county are numerous townships. Townships consist of communities that are all distinctly independent, but formally linked together because of their small populations. Generally any location with less than 2,000 inhabitants is included in the township. Many of these communities once thrived with optimistic hopes of becoming grand urban centers. However, due to a variety of factors, the communities lost their momentum, slowly dying off and threatening to reach extinction. The community of Iwacura in Bloom Township, Clay County, Kansas is one of those communities.

Iwacura was a small community formed around the United Brethren Church. Its members lived in the areas to the north and west of the church. The church and adjoining cemetery were built on one acre of land donated in April of 1889 by James H. Geist, Sr., in the southeast corner of his farmland¹.



Figure 2: Gravestone of James and Christina Geist, who donated the land for the church and cemetery at Iwacura. Source: photo taken by author.

The church was completed and formally organized on May thirteenth of that same year and presided over by a board of five local men. Today, the cemetery holds 37 graves, half are which belong to members of the Geist family.¹ The Iwacura United Brethren Church was moved to Abilene, KS in the late 1940s after services were discontinued due to declining attendance. According to church records, the last service was held on March 26, 1937 and only 6 members were present at the service.³

Because Iwacura was too far from the nearby towns of Idana and Morganville for farmers to conveniently ride their horses and buggies to retrieve their mail, James Henry Geist Sr. established a post office at his home on March 24, 1882. He served as postmaster until the office was closed after twelve years of service. It was discontinued on June 30, 1894.²

The community of Iwacura was never able to gain enough momentum to become a full-fledged town. Iwacura never became the central business hub it may have aspired to be. The church the community was built around was able to serve the locals for almost forty years. The small community was extremely important to those whom it connected. Like similar communities across Kansas, Iwacura provided the social support system necessary to survive the harsh isolation of rural farm life. These communities slowly lost their importance when the automobile became popular and quickened travel times to larger towns nearby. Although people no longer look to Iwacura for escape from isolation, the community's past is still important because it represents the experiences of many early Kansas settlers.

Endnotes

1. "Iwacura Cemetery." *Heritage*. 15 September, 1986.
2. "Iwacura Church and Cemetery" *Lila (Kaiser) Haynes*.

Sources

"Iwacura Cemetery." *Heritage*. 15 September, 1986.

Haynes, Lila (Kaiser), "Iwacura Church and Cemetery". Available at Clay County Historical Society.