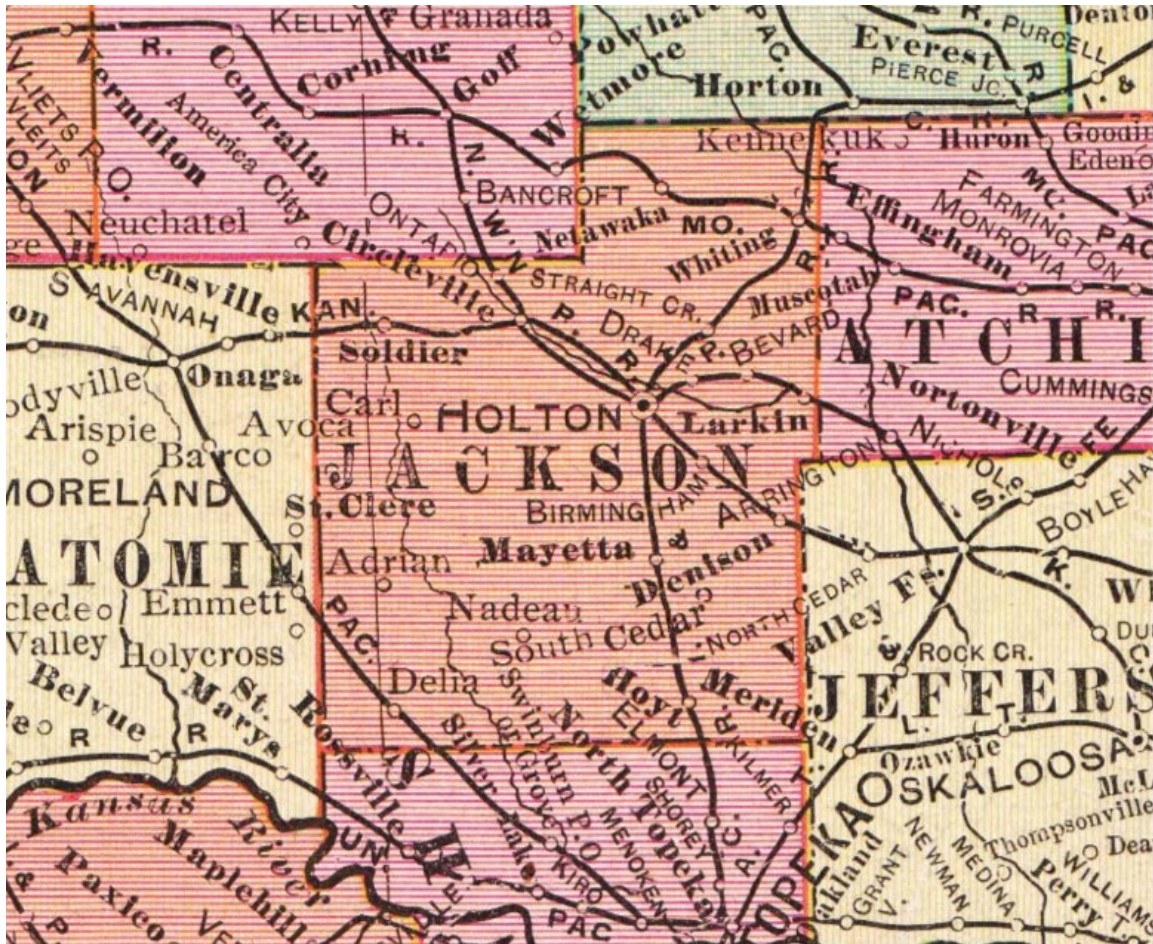


# Delia, Jackson County, Kansas

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David W. and Delia Cunningham, along with their three sons, moved from New York to Kansas in 1893 and began farming a portion of land in Jackson County. In 1904 and the subsequent year, the Cunninghams sold a portion of their land to the Union Pacific Railroad, formerly known as the Northwestern Railroad.<sup>4</sup> Another portion was sold to the Delia Township Company, chartered on September 22, 1905 and presided over by the Cunningham family.<sup>1</sup> In December of 1905, David Cunningham Jr. began advertising building lots.<sup>3</sup> The location of the town site came under dispute when another gentleman, Albert Sarbarch, expressed desire to situate it south of the railroad tracks, against Cunningham's wish for building to the north. Although Cunningham won the debate, Sarbarch built a grocery store on the south side, which became known as the community of David until Delia spread and encompassed both areas.<sup>5</sup>

The railroad tracks running adjacent to Delia brought life to this small town. Within ten years of its formation, "a railroad depot, two hardware stores, at least two grocery stores, blacksmith shop, livery stable, post office, lumberyard, café, barbershop, bank [Delia State Bank], and picture show," as well as two churches, a hotel, a grade school, and a high school were established.<sup>6</sup> Delia also possessed two newspapers which were published successively. *The Delia News* was published for a short time and quit in 1920...the *Delia Bugle* was published by C.D. Hornbeck" and followed in the *News*' footsteps.<sup>12</sup> Like the *Daily News*, many other businesses were eventually shuttered. When the bank closed in 1933, the building was transformed into a post office and remains standing today.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 1: Former Delia State Bank, current Delia Post Office

Source: Photo taken by author

Over time, Delia adopted many modern conveniences as they became available. Electrical lights were installed in 1922, water was supplied in 1957, and the Northwestern Telephone Company installed dial telephones in 1959.<sup>13</sup>

The First Presbyterian Church of Delia was organized in 1907 and continues to hold weekly services.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2: The First Presbyterian Church of Delia  
Source: Photo taken by author

The protestant church was followed one year later by the construction of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. A fire in the late 1930s wiped out the church records, but did not destroy the church. It remains in use today, mainly for special occasions.<sup>9</sup>

The first school formed before Delia officially came into being. In 1874, District Fifty-Four was established. At that time school was held in three-month terms, following the agricultural calendar. Classes were held at a location south of Cross Creek for more than twenty years. A two-room school was built there in 1908. It was used until 1928 when they relocated the building across the street to make room for a new structure. The Delia Community Building, as it is known today, was built in its place. The new building served as a school until the schools were unified in 1966.



Figure 3: Delia Community Center

Source: Photo taken by author

The Washington Township High School was completed in September of 1914, however, students did not move into the building until January of 1915. The building burned down on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1954. A new building was erected and dedicated on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1956. It served as a high school until 1966, after which it became a grade school. Today, the building is home to Delia Charter School.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 4: Delia Charter High School

Source: Photo taken by author

Delia has lost much of its population as well as businesses over the years. The decline started in the late 1930s.<sup>15</sup> One of the major problems currently is the lack of

available jobs. Most wage earners now work thirty miles away in Topeka or at the Jeffery Energy Center north of St. Mary's.<sup>16</sup> Delia citizens have rallied to keep their town alive by forming the Delia Community Action Network (otherwise known as DCAN).<sup>17</sup> DCAN is a revitalization program through KEM, a non-profit, inter-denominational organization. Citizens of Delia reached out to KEM for help in forming DCAN. One of their major revitalization projects is the hosting of town events.<sup>18</sup> On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 they hosted Delia Days, a softball tournament. It seemed as though everyone in the town was there, whether they were playing, watching, or serving food. Delia, even though it may be labeled a "lost town," is fighting the label, battling to bring their town back to life. The history of Delia runs deep. Building upon on the determination instilled by their forefather, who prevailed in the debate over the town's location, citizens of the little town might gather strength and win the battle.

Notes

1. Smith, Gene. "Twilight of a Small Town," Delia File at Holton Museum.
2. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005." *Holton Recorder*, 21 September 2005.
3. Smith.
4. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
5. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
6. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
7. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
8. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
9. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
10. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
11. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
12. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
13. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
14. "Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005" 2005.
15. Smith.
16. Smith.
17. James, 1994.
18. James, 1994.



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"Delia Centennial, Sept. 24th & 25th, 2005." *Holton Recorder*, 21 September 2005.

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*Liberty Clicks in '76.* Holton, KS: Jackson County Bicentennial Committee, 1976. Print.

Stoll, Emily Jane. Volunteer at Jackson County Historical Society. 10 September 2011.

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