

Delia, Kansas



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Looking to the southwest from on top of a hill in Northeast Kansas sits a little town in the valley. A creek runs southeast to the northwest around the south side of the town; railroad tracks sit parallel. In the fields around the town are farmers harvesting wheat and plowing in the fields on a nice warm summer day. Kids are running around playing in the yard and helping in the fields. The valley is full of good, rich, bottom ground which will produce high yields for farmers.

Many early settlers moved to Kansas after the Civil War motivated by nationality, race, religion, land, or idealism. Some immigrants who settled in Kansas were from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia. They left their homelands in search of new homes in the U.S. where their children and their children's children would be safe from compulsory military service and political oppression.¹ Some of the incentives for coming to the U.S. were political independence, religious freedom, and economic improvement. Even Czech people heard the wonderful stories of gold being discovered in California. When they came to the U.S., they landed in New York, St. Louis, and Chicago.² The first group of "Bohemians" arrived in Chicago on November 1, 1861, and then migrated to Marysville, Kansas, in August of 1869. Marysville was the first Bohemian colony in Kansas and more were being organized as more and more immigrants were traveling the Santa Fe Trail toward the west in search of the promise land. The majority of the Bohemian and Czech immigrants that decared settled in Ellsworth, Barton, Russell, Lincoln, Mitchell, and Osborne Counties. These counties had good farm ground for wheat. Bohemians were farm people, not city people.³

¹ N.B. Waldren. *The Bohemian colonies in Kansas from 1861-1890*. 1932. p. 34

² Barabara Ann Bryant. *The Moravinas of Delia, Kansas*. December 1971. p.4

³ Waldren. p. 37 & 44

Moravian immigrants from Czechoslovakia started to migrate to the states in 1741.⁴ The Bohemian and Moravian people both left their homelands for the same reasons. The potato crop in Czechoslovakia was a failure and the U.S. sounded promising with cheap land for farmers open for settlement. The Czech people were agricultural people so they chose agricultural states like Kansas. Since Czech people were farmers in their homeland, they were able to prosper using America's rich soil and in land ownership.⁵

When the Czech immigrants came by train to Rossville, many of them worked on John Stach's farm until they were financially independent. Stach was a Moravian native and the founder of Rossville in 1871. Stach owned about 3,000 acres of land on which a part was his ranch. They also came to St. Mary's by train. Many early settlers came to Delia by horseback, on foot, or by covered wagon.⁶

The Bohemian people were very proficient in playing musical instruments such as the violin, accordion, clarinet, tuba, guitar, and several others. Delia had a band that played for church socials, Fourth of July celebrations, and other community activities until WWI in 1918 when it broke up.⁷ Dancing was important to the Czech culture and their music was called "Polka." Czechs were also very good writers and stupendous craftsman in woodworking, crafts, locksmiths and blacksmith.⁸ Their children were taught to work hard and be useful. As the children grew up, they had jobs to do every day, and as they became older, their jobs consisted of

⁴ Bryant. p.4

⁵ Bryant. p.6

⁶ Zlatnik, J. Laverne. "In Delia Centennial 1905-2005." Presentation Presented at the Delia Centennial Celebration, 2005. np.

⁷ Zlatnik. np.

⁸ Gary Lee Kraisinger. *Bohemians in Kansas (Freedom in the Wilderness)*. 1986. np.

more responsibility but maturity was considered attained by marriage. In the house and church they were taught to obey the “Golden Rule” and to “trust in God.”⁹

It was tradition that the oldest family member would inherit the family property, but today that’s not the case anymore. Another tradition was the bride received a dowry from her parents when she married. Czech culture was almost immediately influenced by the local American culture. There were no more arranged marriages, kids were taught English in school, children no longer had to live on the farm unlike the first and second generations did. The first and second generations of Czechs grew up with their cultural traditions along with the Anglo culture which changed the way they lived. Since people didn’t have to stay and live on the farm, younger residents began to leave and the populations declined.

Women worked in the house. Some worked outside the home as school cooks or postmasters but the men were still head of the house. The father taught the kids morals and to eat everything on their plates. The boys did outside tasks and helped their father. The girls helped with the household tasks indoors. Children learned by watching and doing.¹⁰ People of the Czech community or Czech ancestry still dressed girls in dresses or skirts with head bonnets, and boys wore overalls just like the men. Many Czech-American women still wear dresses every day and stay at home. The St. Mary’s community is a good example, but there are still a few families in the Delia area.

There were also some Irish settlers in the Delia Community. Irish immigrants came to America for two reasons: They were forced to leave due to the terrible potato famine of the 1830s and harsh and discriminatory laws that were imposed on Catholics by the British government which made it hard to practice their religion. Irish immigrants settled north and west

⁹ Bryant. p.9 &10

¹⁰ Bryant.p.9

of Delia sometime in the 1880's, while the Czech immigrants settled south and east of Delia.¹¹ Over the years there was much inter-marrying between the different nationalities. Both nationalities enjoyed acting, dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, playing games and parties.¹²

Germans from Russia and Germany came to America for some of the reasons the Czechs did. They came because of world modernization and population growth. Germans saw a future in America from all the stories heard about life there. When German-speaking immigrants came to Kansas, they didn't just settle anywhere. Most Germans knew English so they could settle anywhere, but the Czechs didn't understand English. So wherever the Germans settled, the Bohemians would settle close by so that the Germans could communicate to the white settlers for them. The Moravians settled near the Bohemians because they knew the same language.¹³

Another huge aspect of migration was religion in the immigrants' homeland. Irish people were being persecuted by the Protestants. The Czechs were being persecuted by the Roman Catholics. This was a major deciding factor for people who came to America because here they could practice free religion. The Czechs, Irish, and Germans all reared large families. This was a traditional thing to have large families because they helped in the fields¹⁴

People lived in the area long before Europeans settled the Delia area. The first people who came to this part of the state of Kansas were Indian nations from Green Bay, Wisconsin and parts of Michigan in 1837. Indians, and their mixed heritage children, and some French came to the area along with the very first settlement, the "St. Mary's Mission," which was founded for

¹¹ Zlatnik. np.

¹² Kraisinger. np.

¹³ Milan J. Hejtmanek. *History of the Delia United Presbyterian Church. Delia, Kansas.* 1984. np.

¹⁴ Star, Kansas City. "Foreign Feet in Kansas Furrows: The Bohemians." *Immigrants*, December 10, 1911. Vol.1 Clippings. np.

the Potawatomi. The first white settler around this area near Cross Creek was Squire Edward McNeive and his family in 1868.¹⁵ Cross Creek Settlement was established in 1875.¹⁶ McNeive purchased his land from the Indian Merr-was-gea, on August 22, 1868. He traded with the Indians. Ann Nolan received a warranty deed from the Indians (who owned it as a “float”) for land where Delia is currently located for the price of \$400.00. Washington Township was established in 1873 before the area was a part of the Rossville Township.¹⁷ The Cross Creek Settlement kept attracting new people until there was the idea of a town.

The Cunninghams arrived by train at St. Mary’s in 1872. After arriving, they moved to the Cross Creek Settlement where Delia Cunningham bought the warranty deed from Ann Nolan for \$612.00 on April 10, 1893. David W. Cunningham, Jr., the son of David and Delia, was born in New York City on November 10, 1860. Delia was a shrewd lady who sold the land to her son for \$1,200.00 which was twice what she had paid.¹⁸

¹⁵ Kevin Kerwin. *"The Town of Delia, Kansas."* *St. Marys Star*. September 29, 1977. np.

¹⁶ Mr. John Lane. *"Cross Creek was Early Settlement: 1875."* *Holton Recorder*. Tuesday, March 14, 1935.np.

¹⁷ Zlatnik. np.

¹⁸ Kerwin. 1977.

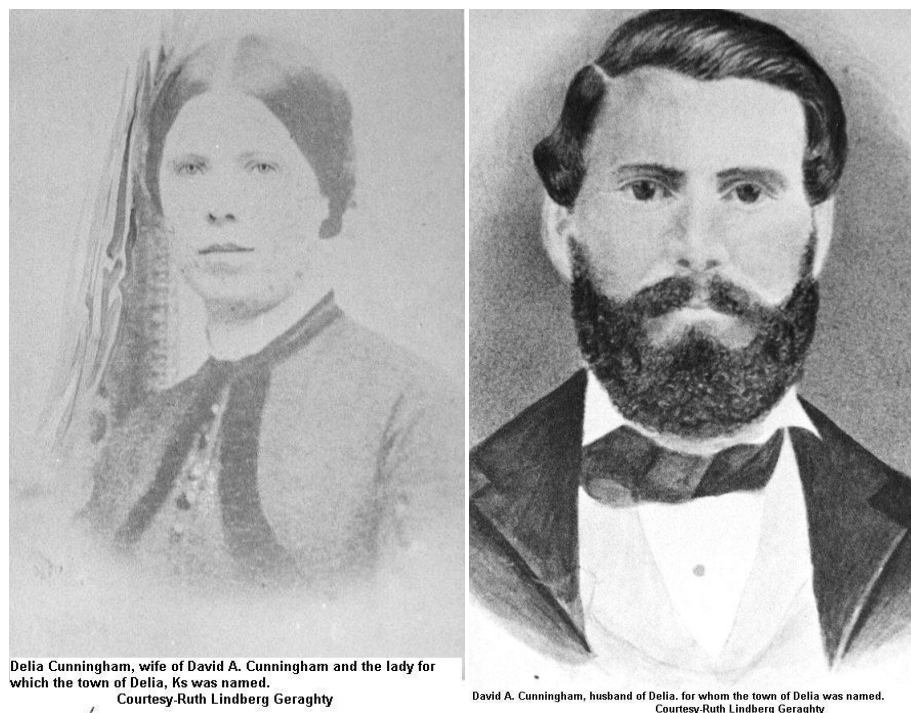


Figure 1: Delia and David A. Cunningham. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik

David A. Cunningham farmed the land with his five sons for years. His wife lived in St. Mary's because she wouldn't live out in the country which she considered a hostile environment. They had two daughters, but the daughters died at a very young age.¹⁹ David A. Cunningham died sometime in the 1880's and Delia Cunningham died on December 15, 1894. In 1904 and 1905, the family sold 40 acres to the Union Pacific Railroad which was formerly the Northwestern Railroad. During that same year the "Delia Townsite" was organized with David W. Cunningham, Jr. as president, George A. Cunningham as treasurer, and James C. Cunningham as secretary. On November 23, 1905 and February 23, 1906, the Delia Townsite Company purchased more land from the Cunningham's for the townsite. The Delia Townsite was chartered on September 22, 1905, surveyed on October 22, 1905, and a plat of town recorded on December 1, 1905. Mrs. Katie Simecka bought the first lot in Delia in 1905. Lots

¹⁹ Zlatnik. np.

were sold from \$40-200 apiece.²⁰ Delia, Kansas was founded in 1905 by David W. and Delia Cunningham. David Cunningham wanted to name the town “Cunningham” but there was already a town by that name. The town received its name Delia in honor of Delia Cunningham.²¹

The Delia townsite settlement started on the south side of the railroad tracks. Albert Starbarch from Holton argued with David W. Cunningham about which side of the tracks the town was going to be located on. Starbarch wanted Delia to be on the south side but Cunningham wanted Delia to be on the north side. Starbarch went ahead and built his grocery store on the south side which was known as David and the north side was known as Delia. Cunningham’s dream became a reality when more and more new settlers settled on the north side of the tracks and built businesses and homes.²² Although David Cunningham won the argument, Delia soon spread to both sides of the tracks.

By the end of 1907, Delia consisted of a railroad depot, two hardware stores, two grocery stores, three doctors, a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, post office, lumber yard, a restaurant, and a barbershop.²³

²⁰ Kerwin. 1977.

²¹ Kerwin. 1977.

²² Kerwin. 1977.

²³ Kerwin. Interview. 2012.



A picture of the Delia Depot in 1908. To the right stands the livery Stable. On the left the track is going to the northwest.

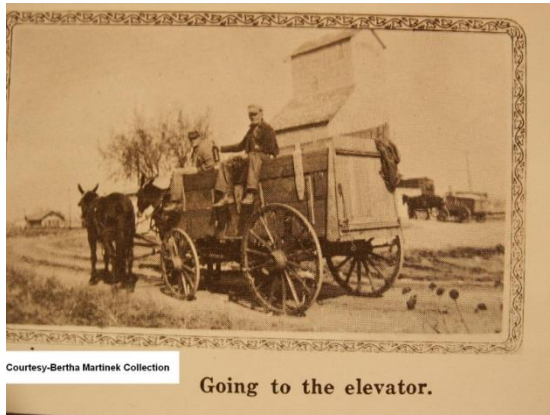
Courtesy-Dr. Ernest Kratina

Figure 2: Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

In a few years other structures were built in town including a drug store, a bank, two churches, a hotel, grade school, and a high school.²⁴ The railroad ran right through town from the southeast to the northwest. The railroad was the way farmers brought their crops to market and it also brought life to the town. Farmers initially piled husk corn on the ground along the railroad tracks and later this was shelled or just hand scooped it into box cars on the ears.²⁵ Delia had two grain elevators in its earlier years along the railroad tracks which were located on the east side of the depot. “The elevator built several long sheds which still stand today and are used by the city for storage,” said Eudora McQueen, a current resident living in Delia.

²⁴ Hejtmanek. np.

²⁵ Kerwin. 1977.



Courtesy-Bertha Martinek Collection

Going to the elevator.



A view of the two elevators and the lumberyard on the right from the yard of the Mulligans to the west. Courtesy-Steve Hanrahan

Figure 2: Picture on the left is the elevator and to the left of it is the depot. The picture on the right has the two elevators and the lumberyard in the middle. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

The first elevator was built on the east side of town by Mr. John Cameron. Another was built by Mr. Whitney and Mr. Sebring in 1908, but burned down and was rebuilt. After it burned down about 70,000 bushels of corn were piled along the tracks and hundreds of bushels were damaged by the weather before it was shipped.²⁶

²⁶ Kerwin. 1977.



Figure 3: Site where one of the elevators used to sit on the south side of the tracks with the long sheds off to the left for storage which is now used by the city. Photo courtesy of J. Lavern Zlatnik

The first store on Main Street on the north side of the tracks was operated by Mr. Isaac Lawrence. The second store on the south side of the tracks sold grains, and the post office was owned and operated by Mr. Ed Reser. When the town was being settled on the north side of the tracks, the post office was moved to the north side. Mr. E.I. Zirkle owned the first general store in Delia and was open for 40 years.²⁷

Mr. R.J. McCoy was the first blacksmith to come to Delia. While he was in business, he owned and operated three blacksmith shops in his 29 years until his retirement in 1938. Mr. George Olejnik built a new blacksmith shop across the street to the east and operated it until 1975. People say that he was the best blacksmith in the world and also one of the last.²⁸ The

²⁷ Kerwin. 1977.

²⁸ Bryant.p.7

things he could build or fix was impressive. Fred Foster purchased the building from George in 1975 and converted the place into a hardware store.²⁹



Figure 4: On the left is Mr. George Olejnik and on the right is his Blacksmith shop. It still stands today but has been remodeled in to a metal shop. Photo courtesy of J. Lavern Zlatnik.

Mr. William and Mr. Fred Hopkins started the first hardware store. Mr. A.E. Macha and Mr. Lee Houck also operated a hardware store. On December 31, 1919, when Marvin Macha came back from the service, he and his sister Bertha Martinek ran the store along with Marvin's mechanic shop in the back. Marvin contributed to the town because he worked on people's tractors, trucks, cars, as well as being the only plumber in the town. He was a guy that if you named it he could do it and was also considered the town's handy man until 1976 when he died.³⁰

²⁹ Kerwin. Interview. 2012
³⁰ Kerwin. 1977.

On September 22, 1933, the Delia bank closed its doors because it was robbed, then later funds were embezzled and left the people broke. Delia's post office was established on January 12, 1906. The post office was relocated to the bank building in 1933 and was closed on August 13, 2011. The post master's position was determined by the town. If a republican or a democrat was in office for President of the United States, then that was who would be in the post office.³¹



Figure 5: Post office of Delia, Kansas. Photo taken by Author.

“A passenger train brought the mail to Delia. It would be in Delia at 8 a.m., then run up to Marysville and be back by 3 p.m. Then it would go through Topeka, Lawrence to Kansas City and back by the next morning at 8 a.m.,” said Eudora McQueen.

³¹ Kerwin. 1977.

The Bug. This Passenger and Baggage Vehicle hauled people, Mail, and cream cans to early Delia on the RR.



Figure 6: The “Beetle Bug” was a part of the railroad system.
Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

The first hotel was owned and operated by Ben Ford. Some accounts written about Delia are difficult to substantiate, and lack precise dates. One history claims that there were two separate newspapers in Delia. Other accounts note that Mr. Mock operated the “The Delia News” until January 1920 when it was canceled. The “Delia Bungle” was printing the newspaper during the 1920’s and edited by C.D. Hornbeck. Hornbeck was apparently not very well liked by the town’s people. No exact dates are known of when the papers were established or ended, but it seems that they didn’t stay in business very long.

Mr. Worthington owned the first livery stable for years until Jess Willard bought it. The livery was located to the south of the blacksmith shop.³² Willard would make trips toward the west to buy horses and bring them back to his livery. Pottawatomie County used to cover parts of Jackson County. Jackson County was annexed after surrounding counties were formed. So some cities were once a part of different counties than they are now. Jess Willard was born in Delia on December 29, 1881, then a part of Pottawatomie County, Kansas. Jess started boxing at age 26. He was a World Heavyweight Boxing Champion and became a professional at age 29. The people knew Jess as “The Potawatomi Giant,” “The Cowboy Champion,” and “Giant White

³² Kerwin. 1977.

Hope.” He sold horses at his livery in Delia. He loved to ride wild horses, hunt and be outdoors. He died in 1968 at age 84.³³

Francis Wehner remodeled his dad’s grocery store which sold fresh meat and eggs. It was the only grocery store in Delia to sell those items. After remodeling, he built a beautiful restaurant along the side of it and called it, “Missile Inn.” The Missile Inn served breakfast, lunch and dinner. His wife Mary ran the restaurant every day and made homemade pies. Organization dinners were held here as well as some family gatherings. Francis sold his businesses in 1964.³⁴

Paul Matyak purchased a building from his uncle and started his own business in March of 1946, which was a combination of a filling station and a garage. He ran his shop for 32 years. This business stands empty today.³⁵



Figure 7: Matyak fuel station on Main Street across the street from the Post Office. Photo taken by Author.

³³ Zlatnik. np.

³⁴ Kerwin. 1977.

³⁵ Kerwin. 1977.

There are only two businesses in Delia today. One is a beauty shop owned and operated by Mrs. Shirley Mitchell and is located next door to Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The other business is Dean's Small Engine Repair owned by Dean in his own garage located at his house on the eastside of the grade school.³⁶

As the population around Delia grew, so did the town. In 1922 electricity came to the town, running water in 1957, and telephone lines from the North-Western Telephone Co. on January 1, 1959.

The Delia cemetery is located about one and a half miles north of Delia. The Czech-Moravian Cemetery is located a couple miles southeast of Delia and the Czech-Bohemian Cemetery is located to the northwest half way between Delia and Emmett. The Cunningham's are buried in the Czech-Bohemian Cemetery.³⁷

The first school was built three miles east of Delia in 1877. Classes at this school ended in 1965, due to other schools that were built. This school was named "Stach School" after John Stach who donated an acre of land for the site. In 1983, the school was purchased at auction and donated to the Historical Society. Today, it stands in a prairie field to the west of the Kansas Museum of History and has been restored to its 1910-1920 appearance.³⁸

³⁶ Eudora, McQueen. Personal Interview. December 11, 2012.

³⁷ Zlatnik. np.

³⁸ Kansas Historical Society. *Stach School*. <http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/stach-school/11929> (accessed November 20, 2012).



Figure 8: The Stach school house located at the Kansas History Museum in Topeka, Kansas. Photo taken by Author.

There were several schools built to the north, east, and south of Delia when most of the Moravian, Bohemian, and Irish immigrants attended. Most of the town's people attended the Marry school house which was just south of town. The town consisted of white settlers, Czech immigrants, Irish immigrants and a few Germans who moved from other cities to Delia. Czech or other languages weren't taught in Delia schools, only English.³⁹

Before the school house was built east of Delia, there was a school built south of town between Salt Creek and Cross Creek. This school house was located half a mile south of town on the east side of the road. This was the primers school for about 20 years and classes were usually held for three months terms with two weeks of vacation between terms. In the early years, it wasn't required for children to attend school by law, so boys would only go to school during the winter months which were considered the "off season," and girls attended year

³⁹ Bryant. p.9

round.⁴⁰ The town decided to build a two room school house in 1908; this was because the little school house was not big enough for 100 students. The two room school house was built where the Community Building stands today. Classes were held in this building until they relocated it in 1928 across the street to the west.



Delia Public Grade School-54 Courtesy Delia Grade Sc

Figure 8: First two room school house of Delia from 1908-1928. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

A new grade school building was built and now is the Delia Community Building.⁴¹ The Community Bazaar is still held today in Delia on December 1st every year since 1966.⁴²

⁴⁰ Bryant. p.9

⁴¹ Kerwin. 1977.

⁴² McQueen. 2012.

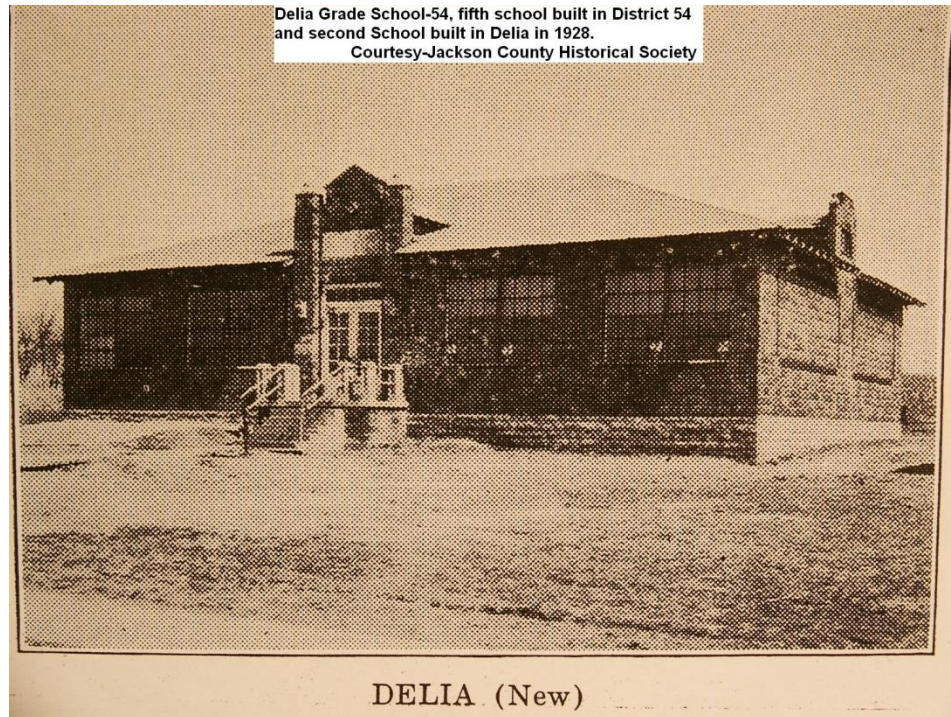


Figure 9: Delia Grade School was built in 1928, where the old school once was from the above picture. This is the present location of the Community Building. Photo courtesy of J. Lavern Zlatnik.

In September 14, 1914, Delia built a high school which was named “The Washington Township High School.” Classes didn’t start until January of 1915 in the new building but were held in the upstairs of Bryan’s store which was located on the south side of the post office. The first year of classes only 24 students attended and one person graduated in the spring and four graduates the following year.⁴³ On the night of April 14, 1954, there was a fire that completely destroyed the school leaving only charred bricks.

⁴³ Kerwin. 1977.



Courtesy-Jackson County Historical Society

Figure 10: Delia High School. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

The new high school building was dedicated on September 7, 1956. This building served as the high school for ten years until in 1966 when it became the grade school due to the consolidation of the USD 321. The Delia Grade School's name was changed to "Delia Charter School" in 2003 by the USD 321 school district.⁴⁴ The new high school was located in Rossville or St. Mary's. The old grade school was converted into a community building by the volunteers from the town, where city council meetings and other community events are held, located on the north side on the grade school.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Zlatnik. np.

⁴⁵ Kerwin. 1977.



Figure 11: Was the new High School after the first one burned down and became the grade school and then the Delia Charter School. Photo taken by Author.

During my interview with Kevin Kerwin, a farmer in Saint Mary's who went to school in Rossville and wrote a paper in about Delia and whose family lived there over the years, he said his history teacher when he was in school is still teaching in the Rossville High School and every year makes the students read Kerwin's paper he wrote back in 1977 on the town of Delia. Kerwin said it's nice to know that the younger generations are learning about the history around them.⁴⁶

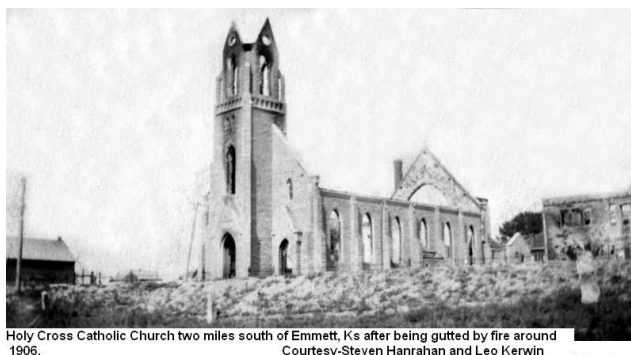
Delia's high school had a track team, football team, baseball team, and a basketball team. The new and the old high school had an indoor gym. The high school had some very successful years and then it had some real bad years for sports. The town of Delia has always been a do-it-yourself community. This was because they took pride in their little town.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Kerwin. Interview. 2012.

⁴⁷ Zlatnik. np.

Delia had two churches, The First Presbyterian Church was established on June 27, 1909, and Sacred Heart Catholic Church was established in 1908.⁴⁸

A priest would come up from St. Mary's to celebrate Mass in the Woodman Hall until the Holy Cross Catholic Church was built in 1881, two miles south Emmett. The Catholic Church of Holy Cross was originally a mission attended by Jesuits from St. Mary's. A fire destroyed the church in 1906, and the two towns decided to build their own church out of the rubble which was divided between the two. In 1908, Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built. In the late 1930's a fire destroyed the parish rectory and all the records and history of the church and some of the town's records were lost.



Holy Cross Catholic Church two miles south of Emmett, Ks after being gutted by fire around 1906.
Courtesy-Steven Hanrahan and Leo Kerwin

Figure 12: Holy Cross Catholic Church after it burned. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

The church held annual bazaars and picnics. The bazaars were unsuccessful but the annual picnic is still held today on Labor Day.⁴⁹ Services are no longer held at the Sacred Heart Church due to the Archdiocese in Kansas City, Kansas, but the church is still used for special occasions.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Hejtmanek. np.

⁴⁹ Kerwin. Interveiw. 2012.

⁵⁰ McQueen. 2012.



Figure 13: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Photo taken by Author.

The Delia Presbyterian Church was constructed in September of 1907 and dedicated on June 27, 1909. Preaching services didn't start until the spring of 1910.



Figure 14: The Presbyterian Church. Photo taken by Author.

The town held weekly Sunday school in the upstairs of Mr. Bryan's store after the Czechs bought the Marry school house. The United Brethren Church was disbanded so the Czech-Moravian people purchased it in 1920. The Czech-Moravian people had a settlement southeast of town and held their Sunday school at the United Brethren Church located two miles south of Delia and at the Marry School in their native tongue until they joined the Czech Presbyterian Church in 1940's, east of town on the hill. The Czech-Moravian people were very strict about their religion and ways. When the town sold their building in the 1940's, half of them moved to Delia and joined the church there, while the other half moved to Rossville. This was because many of the older Czech-Moravian people didn't understand the English language.⁵¹ Services are still held at the church but alternate weekends with Rossville. Only the first and second generations of Czechs were required to hold Sunday school in the native tongue. The language was taught and spoken at home, and when not at home, the children were required to speak English.

Women were the backbone of the church. They were called "The Ladies Aid Society." They held bazaars, soup dinners, put on plays, and organized quilt and food sales. They also helped with Sunday school.⁵²

A community building called the Bohemian Hall was built in 1909 by the Czech people. Funerals, church services, social gatherings, and weekly dances were held in this hall. Mainly only Czech immigrants attended because everything was spoken in their native tongue. Before any churches or community buildings were built, services were held in people's private homes.

⁵¹ Hejtmanek. np.

⁵² Hejtmanek. np.

The Bohemian Hall is located two miles south of Delia, about two miles east and sits on the north side of the road.⁵³

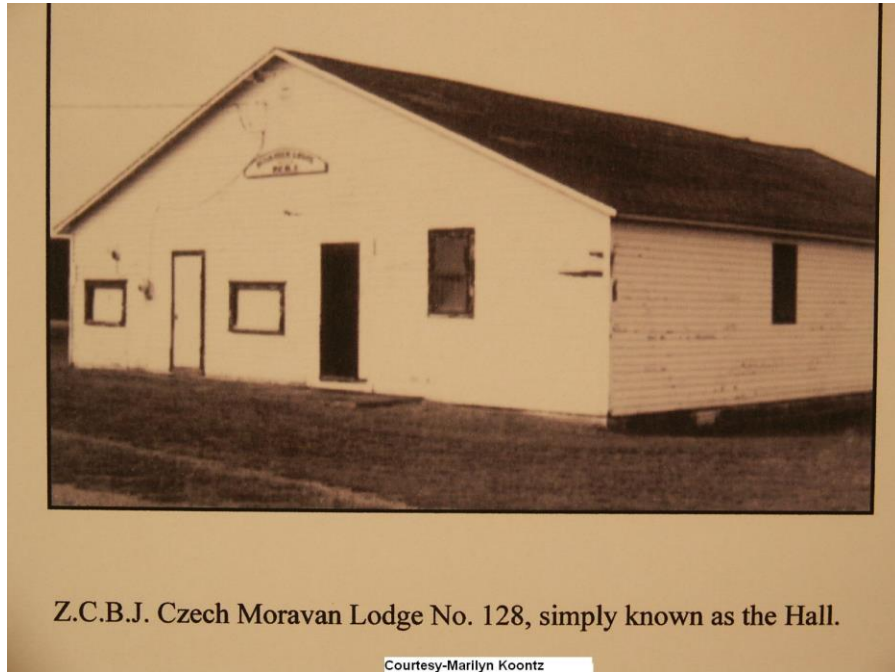


Figure 15: Bohemian Hall. Still stands today in its original appearance. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

Farming and ranching were the occupations of the area. Farming operations brought people to this country and area in search of a better life for their families. Everybody farmed unless they owned a business in town. Wheat was cut and bounded by binders and threshed using steam rigs. Corn was picked and shelled by hand. Alfalfa was cut and sold to make extra money.⁵⁴ Delia's farmers started with horse and plow but then mechanized to steam engines and then to tractors. The farmers upgraded their methods as the country did.⁵⁵

⁵³ Zlatnik. np.

⁵⁴ Star. np.

⁵⁵ Zlatnik. np.



George Olejnik II's tractor and combine in the 1930's or 40's.
Courtesy--Mary Hobart Macha

Figure 16: Farmer cutting wheat near Delia. Photo courtesy of J. Laverne Zlatnik.

Transportation in the town was by horseback, spring wagons, or on foot until cars and tractors came along. Since transportation was limited, children only visited with their friends mainly on Sundays and free time.⁵⁶

Some of the old traditions and pastimes still hold today. In the earlier years of the town, men and boys loved to play baseball. There was an old swimming hole around the bend at Cross Creek west of town where all the kids loved to play in. Ed Rezac operated a picture show and an ice skating ring in town. The town held an annual baseball game in conjunction with the Fourth of July celebration. Today, the town holds a community wide picnic on Labor Day every year.⁵⁷ Kevin Kerwin said, “The picnic on Labor Day is a big deal in our town. It brings back families and old timers that use to live here and everyone tells their stories about the town and the good old times.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Hejtmanek. np.

⁵⁷ McQueen. 2012

⁵⁸ Kerwin. Interview. 2012.

Having a population as high as 450 people and as low as 100 people has never hurt the people's pride of their town of Delia.⁵⁹ In 1957 the town had a population of 186 people. Over the years, much of the population and business have declined. This decline started in the 1930's due to the lack of jobs and hard times in the U.S. Businesses started to decline in the 1950's.⁶⁰ One of the major problems currently is the lack of available jobs in the town. People have to travel to Topeka, Rossville, St. Mary's, Jeffery Energy Center or Goodyear Tire Co. for jobs.⁶¹ Delia's citizens have rallied to keep their town alive by forming the Delia Community Action Network. The town holds town events to help bring their town back to life. On September 10, 2011, the town hosted Delia Days, a softball tournament. Delia is labeled a "lost town," but the people are fighting that label and trying to bring their town back to life.⁶²

The town started to die after WW II and in the 1970's. People after the war didn't come back home or people moved to the big cities. In the 1970's after graduating from high school, the young people left the community in pursuit of something new. Some continued their education, others found jobs elsewhere, and others discovered new trades.⁶³ Delia was a town in the country isolated from the outside world.

The town of Delia has witnessed disaster and tragedy over the years. Fire destroyed houses and businesses. Floods in 1903 and 1951 about wiped the town out, as well as tornados in 1960 and 1966 and not to mention the grasshopper invasion of 1871 and droughts.⁶⁴

"Delia's population is small today but once was almost 500 people. There are only two businesses left today, but the people who have stayed still have pride in the town, churches,

⁵⁹ Kerwin. 1977.

⁶⁰ Zlatnik. np.

⁶¹ Kerwin. 1977.

⁶² Kelsi Horner. *Delia, Jackson County, Kansas*. Class Paper, Manhattan: Chapman Center for Rural Studies, November 18th 2011. p.7.

⁶³ Hejtmanek. np.

⁶⁴ Zlatnik. np.

school, and in themselves. That is what makes us Delia. We care about each other and our history,” said Kevin Kerwin.⁶⁵ The people of Delia helped each other in good times and in bad which has kept the town together and formed them into the community they have become. Their old Czech cultures influenced by the Anglo Culture has transformed the community into what it is today. A small town which has not lost its pride or identity.

⁶⁵ Kerwin. Interview. 2012.

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