

Duluth, Pottawatomie County Kansas: A Town Company

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At the turn of the century, Duluth in Pottawatomie County, KS was a prospering community. It once boasted a general store, post office, lumberyard, blacksmith shop, band hall, barbershop, restaurant, depot, stockyard, and a Lutheran school and church, all built alongside the Union Pacific Railroad.¹ Now, all that remains of the town now is St. Paul's Lutheran Church, the old Lutheran Day School building, Duluth Lutheran cemetery, and a few houses. The church still holds services every Sunday. Duluth was formed by early settlers who wanted a town to be put on their land and charted the location as a town company.

Duluth was officially chartered on February 4, 1907 by local farmers and businessmen, but resembled a town almost thirty years before.² A school and church building served as a central meeting place for widely disbursed settlers in the area. In 1875, William Kolterman donated a piece of his farmland to the community for the construction of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Reverend Senne of Alma, Kansas organized the church, and local members of the congregation signed its constitution. Some of these endorsers were the same individuals who later signed the town charter. The original church structure was replaced in 1898 by the building in use today.³

With the hope of creating a flourishing city, the Duluth Town Company was established in the early 20th century. The company's directors, W. Kolterman, F.Kuehl, A. Bonjour, E. Kolterman, and H. Hartwick Jr, stated purpose was the "purchase, location, laying out and platting of town sites in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, and the sale and conveyance of the same in lots and subdivisions or otherwise." According to the charter, the town company was to exist for twenty years. This would allow ample time for the community to grow and begin prospering on its own. Under guidance of the town company, a general store opened in 1911 and within it, a

post office was established on September 16, 1912. Together they served the local community until closing in 1986.⁴

The end of Duluth Town Company came before its twenty-year charter expired. In February of 1912, the directors voted to decrease its capital stock and, three years later, to liquidate all of its assets. The company was officially dissolved on February 20, 1915.⁵ Just because the Duluth Town Company is no longer in existence, does not mean that the town died. The church still holds services every week and there are many people who still call the area home.

Duluth may not look like much now, but it was once a prospering community. It all started when a group of landowners decided to form a town company and make something out of nothing. They created a town from scratch with their own two hands. Just like other lost towns of Kansas, it was here one day and gone another. If a person blinks while passing through the town they might miss it, but may never realize how much history has just passed them by.

Illustrations



Figure 1 Church: St. Paul's Lutheran Church established 1875.

Source: Photo taken by author.

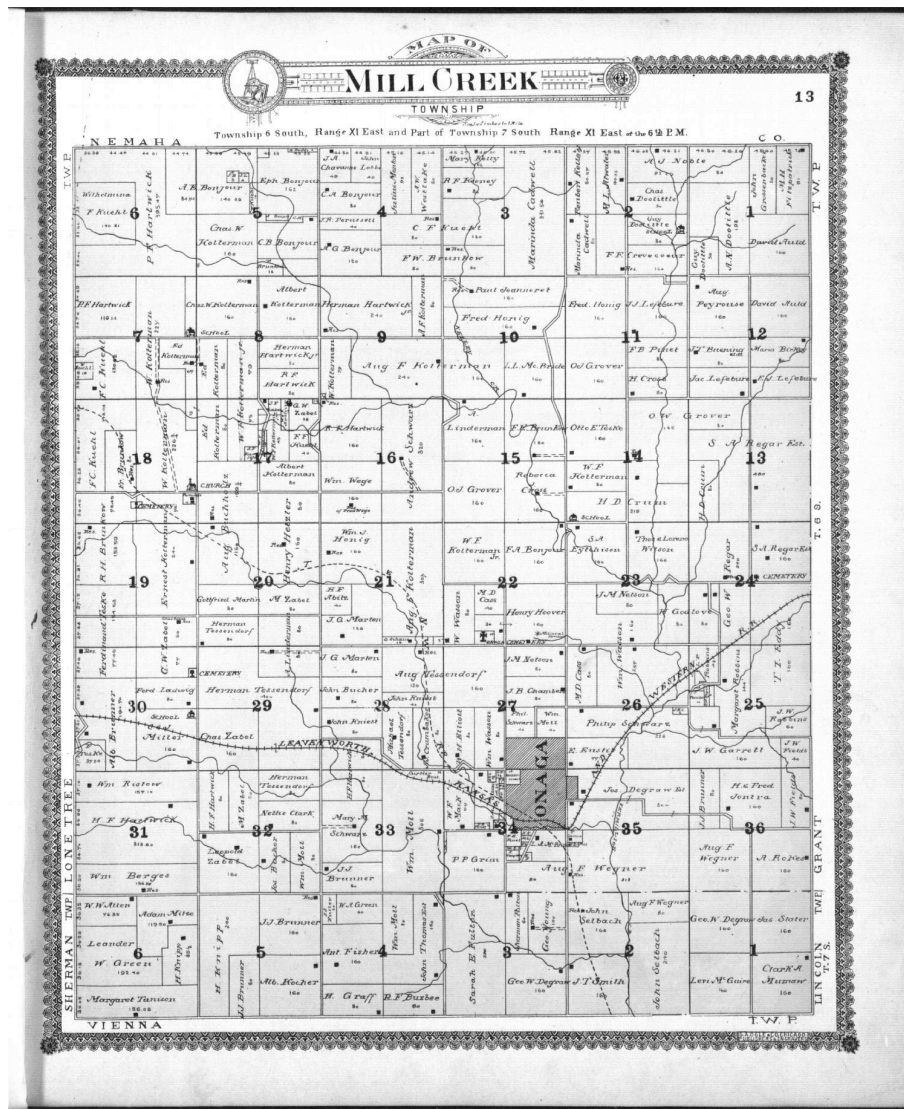


Figure 2 Township: Mill Creek Township - Pottawattamie, Kansas

Source: www.kansasmemory.org



Figure 3 Gravestone: Christian Kolterman's Gravestone – Civil War Veteran. Source: Photo taken by author

Sources

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Statement of Decrease of Capital. Duluth: 1912. Kansas State Historical Society.

Statement of Resolution to Dissolve. Topeka: Office of the Secretary of State, 1915. Kansas State Historical Society.

The Charter of the Duluth Town Company. Duluth: 1907. Kansas State Historical Society.

End Notes

¹ Rae Gutierrez “Duluth, Kansas” *ancestry.com*, last modified March 2009.

² *Office of Treasurer of State: The Duluth Town Company*. Topeka: 1907.

³ Rae Gutierrez “Duluth, Kansas” *ancestry.com*, last modified March 2009.

⁴ Rae Gutierrez “Duluth, Kansas” *ancestry.com*, last modified March 2009.

⁴ *Office of Treasurer of State: The Duluth Town Company*. Topeka: 1907.

