

# **Poliska and Tauromee, Riley County, Kansas**

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## **Park's Experiment, Why It Failed and Where Did The Towns Go?**

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**History 533**

Summary: This is a study of Poliska and Tauromee, Kansas. These two towns, in the vicinity of Manhattan, Kan., only lasted two-three years, due to several factors, including the ever-growing city of Manhattan, which basically sucked both towns in. This study uses early maps, field work, and early histories of Manhattan.

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**Poliska and Tauomee, Riley Co., Kansas—Park’s Experiment: Why It Failed and Where Did They Towns Go?**

Two years. That’s all some towns get before they are abandoned for new land or enveloped by a bigger community nearby. This was the case of Poliska and Tauomee, located in what would become Riley County, Kansas, during the mid-1850s. Poliska lasted from 1854-1855, and Tauomee lasted from 1856-1858. Although both of these towns never rose to be big enough to survive, their presence was enough to leave noticeable traces of their existence in present day times. Still, the questions remain: who started these towns and why? What was their significance? Why were they abandoned? The main reason these towns were abandoned was Manhattan, Kansas, which grew to the point where the city basically sucked in these two, smaller towns.

**Poliska**

Poliska, also known as *Polistra*, *Pulaski*, *Polaski*, *Poleska*, *Parkville*, and *Manhattan*, was a small community located just north of the junction of the Wildcat Creek and the Kansas River. The present day location is on Wildcat Creek, but the Kansas River channel has changed to a more southern location. The site was chosen at the foot of Longview Hill, which is a part of the rolling Flint Hills in Kansas, and one of the tallest hills in Manhattan today. There are a few interpretations for why the name “Poliska,” was chosen. According to Melvin D. Bruntzel’s *Quick Reference to Kansas Lost-Found-Missing Towns and Places*, the name was taken from Count Casimir Pulaski, a Major General in the Revolutionary War in the U.S. Army. However, Donald Parrish, the author

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*of This Land Is Our Land—Public Domain in the Vicinity of Riley County and*

*Manhattan, Kansas*, says that the original name of the town was “Polistra,” from the Greek meaning “location of a political place” or “central city,” since Poliska was near the center of the United States. Parrish says that “Polistra” was the chosen name by the community founder, Col. George S. Park, and that no other known names of “Polistra” have the same Greek meaning. Although Parrish used the name “Polistra,” this paper will

be going with the name of Poliska for the town, because that is what the community is best known by.

As stated earlier, Col. George S. Park of Parkville, Mo., was a veteran of the Texas Revolution and the founder of the town Poliska.

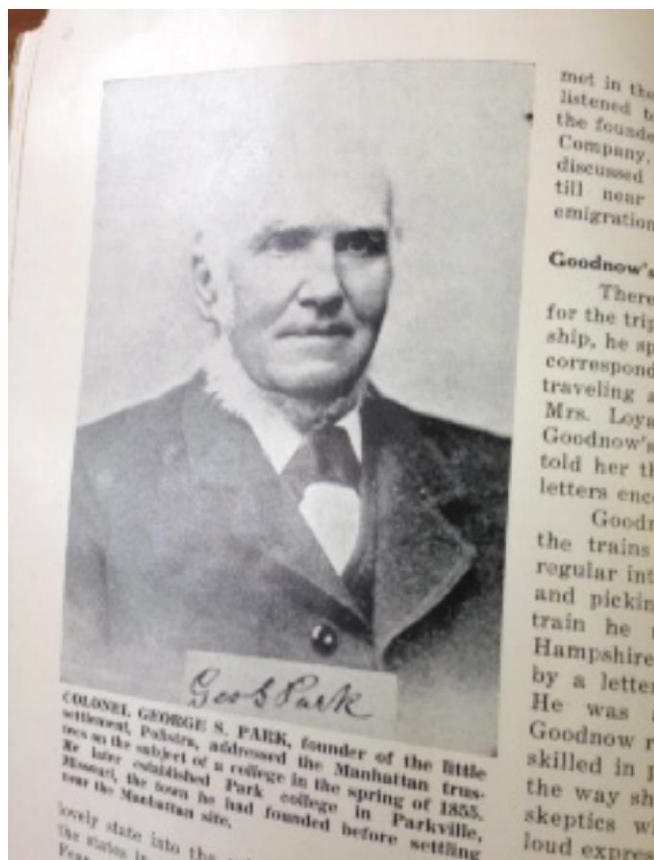


Figure 1: A photograph of Col. George S. Park, founder of Poliska, Kan. Photograph from "The First One Hundred Years, A History of the City of Manhattan"

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Melvin Bruntzel says that Col. Park was the editor of the free-soil newspaper *Industrial Luminary* in Parkville, Mo., and that he wanted to publish a newspaper, the *Central American*, in Poliska. However, on April 4, 1855, his press at Parkville had been thrown into the Missouri River by a pro-slavery mob (some of what Park's papers published were not popular among the pro-slavery crowd). Col. Park had a small steamer named the *Excel*, on which he made five to six separate trips from Parkville, Mo., westward on the Kansas River, to Ft. Riley, Kansas. He had even gone 40 miles up the Smokey Hill River one time, scouting for land, according to Parrish. Parrish said that Park had the hopes of starting a city, in which he was finally successful in the fall of 1854, with the founding of Poliska. According to Parrish, Park made no mention of others helping him with the lay out of the town, but Rev. C.E. Blood said that he and Seth Child—both well-known at the time around the Manhattan area—came with Park from Parkville, Mo. in 1854 and helped him lay out a town site and build his cabin. Realizing that it was necessary, Park combined his cabin as not just a single room living space, but also a blacksmith's shop as well, according to Parrish.

Judging from where Poliska was located in present day Manhattan, it's easy to see why Col. Park would have chosen the site for Poliska. It was right off of two waterways, and just north of the largest and most traveled river in Kansas (the Kansas River.) It was also at the foot of Longview Hill, one of the tallest hills around the area. This provided the site with some sort of protection from weather and other elements. The hope was probably one day, the settlement would grow up on to the hill and thrive as a community.

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Not much is known about what Poliska was like during its 1854-1855 lifespan, or even how many people lived in the town, but there is one odd story that comes from this town. During both winters of 1854 and 1855, Col. Park was away, visiting Texas at the time. According to several sources, including Parrish, a Mr. Martin, of Juniata, Kansas — now also extinct — claimed preemption on Park's land. Mr. Martin saw that Park had left in the winter of 1855, broke into Park's blacksmith's shop and had actually begun to live there, even though he spent most of his time in Juniata. So it seems like Martin took over the town while Park was away.

This situation came to a pitch in March of 1855. Around 1854 and 1855, there were two other towns founded in the vicinity of Poliska, Boston and Canton. Boston was lead by Isaac Goodnow, who with others like Child, had the idea to combine the three towns into one. According to Parrish, Goodnow was friends with Child and Blood, and they had told him of Col. Park. So Goodnow set out to talk to Park about consolidating the towns. When he got to Poliska he was introduced to Mr. Martin. Martin, angry that Goodnow was on his land, claimed the land and told Goodnow and his companions to go away. On March 30, 1855, the election day of whether or not the three towns would consolidate, Martin met with Goodnow again at Juniata, where again, Martin ordered Goodnow off of his land. It wasn't until a few days later that Martin and Goodnow compromised on the land that was Poliska, and on April 6, 1855, Poliska was no more, as it, along with Canton, was officially considered a part of Boston—later changed to Manhattan. Parrish says that Goodnow and Park finally met on April 30, 1855, where

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Goodnow paid Park \$100 for the land. Although his town Poliska was no more, Col. Park still decided to move from Parkville to Manhattan, due to more threats against him and his papers. Park actually went on to play a role in creating Bluemont College, now Kansas State University.

So why did Poliska not survive? The obvious answer is that Manhattan was growing at a far greater pace than that of Poliska. From all the research I did, it seems to me that Poliska never got off of the ground. There was little evidence of any other people but Col. Park who lived in Poliska. And from reading that Park was not in Poliska both winters of its existence, it seems like he may not have been as involved as he could have been in order to start the town. In its short life, there were no reports of any natural disasters that happened to Poliska, but it would not have surprised me if that area had flood problems, due to its location right on the Wildcat Creek. Although the town of Poliska only lasted two winters, it left a permanent mark on present day Manhattan. Located on the southwest side of Manhattan, where the Poliska town site used to be, now

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is a road named after the town. Poliska Ln. is all that is left of what used to be Poliska.



Figure 2: A photograph of Poliska Ln. street sign, in present day Manhattan, Kan. Photographed by Thomas Morgan, January, 2013.

### Tauromee

Also known as *Tauromie*, *Tauroma*, *Turoma*, *Rocky Ford Station*, and *Juniata*, Tauromee was established on Aug. 5, 1856. According to the Kansas Historical Society, Tauromee was also a town located in future Riley County, in the vicinity of Manhattan, Kansas, that didn't have a very long life. Located on the Big Blue River, north of Manhattan, south of Rocky Ford and west of Juniata, which was in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, this little community actually had a post office, making it a legitimate town. The post office which was originally located across the river in Juniata, was moved to create the town of Tauromee. Yet Tauromee was discontinued on March 26, 1858.

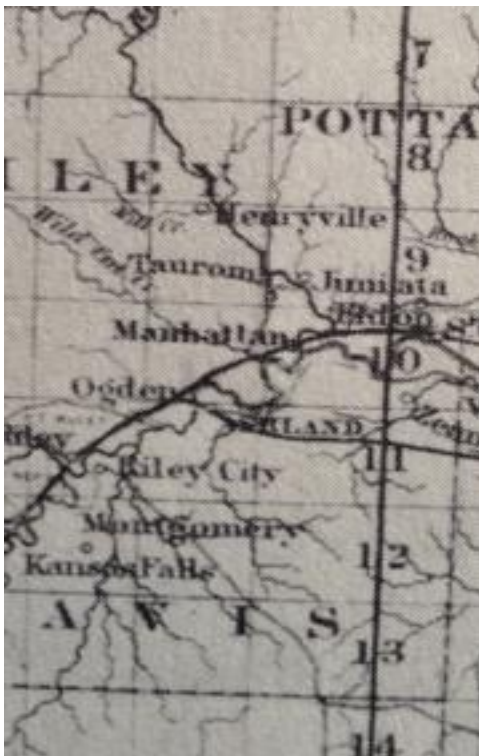
According to the *First One Hundred Years—A History of the City of Manhattan, Kansas*, Juniata was selected as the site of the original federal post office in 1853,

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creating the town of Juniata. According to an account by Isaac Goodnow, he called Juniata “a little ‘Pro-Slave’ town,” located on the Ft. Leavenworth Military trail, connecting Ft. Leavenworth to Ft. Riley. Since Juniata was discontinued in 1856 when the post office was moved to Tauromee, it is reasonable to believe that this town might have had some pro-slavery people within it. Although there was no report of that, it’s hard to believe that that wouldn’t be the case. However, according to the same source,



Rev. Charles E. Blood was a missionary of the Congressional Church, which was located a mile west of Juniata. So his church would have been located around the area of Tauromee.

According to *Kansas Kin*, which is produced by the Riley County Genealogical Society, Seth J. Child, was the first postmaster of the post office in Juniata. However, when the post office moved across the Big Blue River, Marshall A. Garrett took over the postmaster job in Tauromee on Aug. 5, 1856. His brother Alonzo A

Garrett took over as postmaster on Feb. 2, 1857.

Unfortunately, the office only lasted two years, until it was abolished on March 26, 1858. A year later, the Kansas legislature

Figure 3: A map of the vicinity of Manhattan, Kan. circa 1860. Photograph from "Kansas In Maps," written by Robert W. Baughman, 1961



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authorized the first ferry across the Big Blue River, going to the foot of Manhattan at Poyntz Ave. This was the “beginning of the end,” for both Juniata and Tauomee, according to Winifred Slagg’s *Riley County Kansas*. Because of the new ferry, the military trail heading through both towns had to be re-routed, and would no longer go through the towns.

Much like Poliska, not much was known about Tauomee, due to its short life.

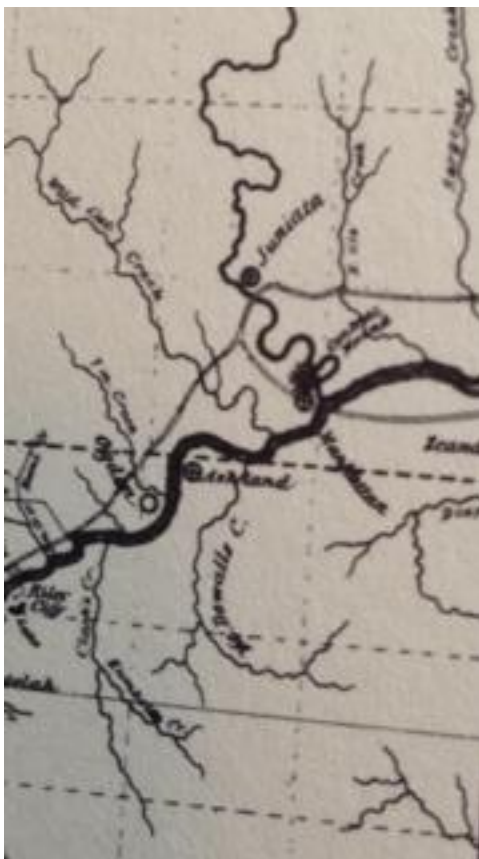


Figure 3: A map of the Ft. Leavenworth-Ft. Riley Military Road circa 1860. Road went through both Juniata and Tauomee, Kan. (1 Mile west of Juniata.) Map from *Kansas In Maps* by Robert W. Baughman, 1961

One negative factor that I think was probably prevalent to both Tauomee and Juniata was that they were situated on the Big Blue River, on a flood plain. The Big Blue was notorious for flooding before the Tuttle Creek Dam went in in the 1950s. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that both towns had to deal with flooding. Also much like Poliska, Tauomee was just too close to a growing Manhattan to survive. Manhattan had everything going for it to thrive, growing community, big businesses, river access, a post office, schools, more churches and other factors that Tauomee and Poliska just did not have. But the strongest reason for Tauomee’s demise, was

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the re-routing of the military trail from Ft. Leavenworth to Ft. Riley. This was undoubtedly the reason why Tauromee failed, because a good source of traffic and income to the local economy was now not attached to the town anymore. After the re-routing of the military trail, Tauromee did not have a chance.

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