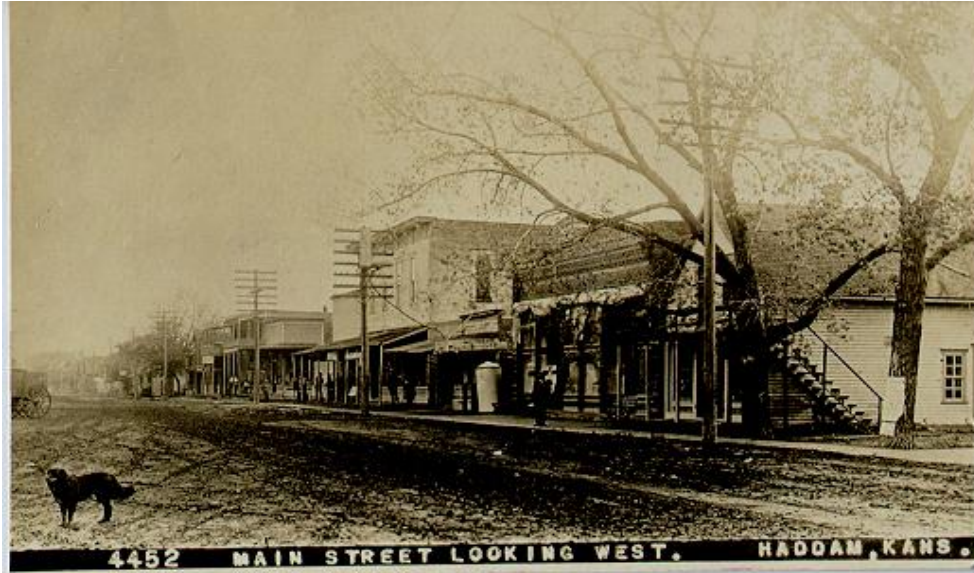


A True Kansas Town:
Haddam, KS - Washington County



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Abstract: Haddam is a little Kansas town ten miles from the Nebraska border that has managed to survive through a slew of fires and other tragedies throughout the years. Flour factories, honey business, and a once thriving auto dealership have all stuck their stake in Haddam, Kansas and are all part of its rich history.

When most people think of a Kansas town, they generally envision a small, rural, close knit community where everyone knows everyone. There is little to no crime and people get along for the most part. This perfectly describes the little town of Haddam, Kansas. Haddam is a small town with a population of about 110 people, according to the most recent Census (2010), though it used to be common to have as many as 500 back in the 1940s and 50s. Haddam is located in North Central Kansas, three miles north of Highway 36 between Belleville and Washington, and about ten miles south of the Kansas-Nebraska border.

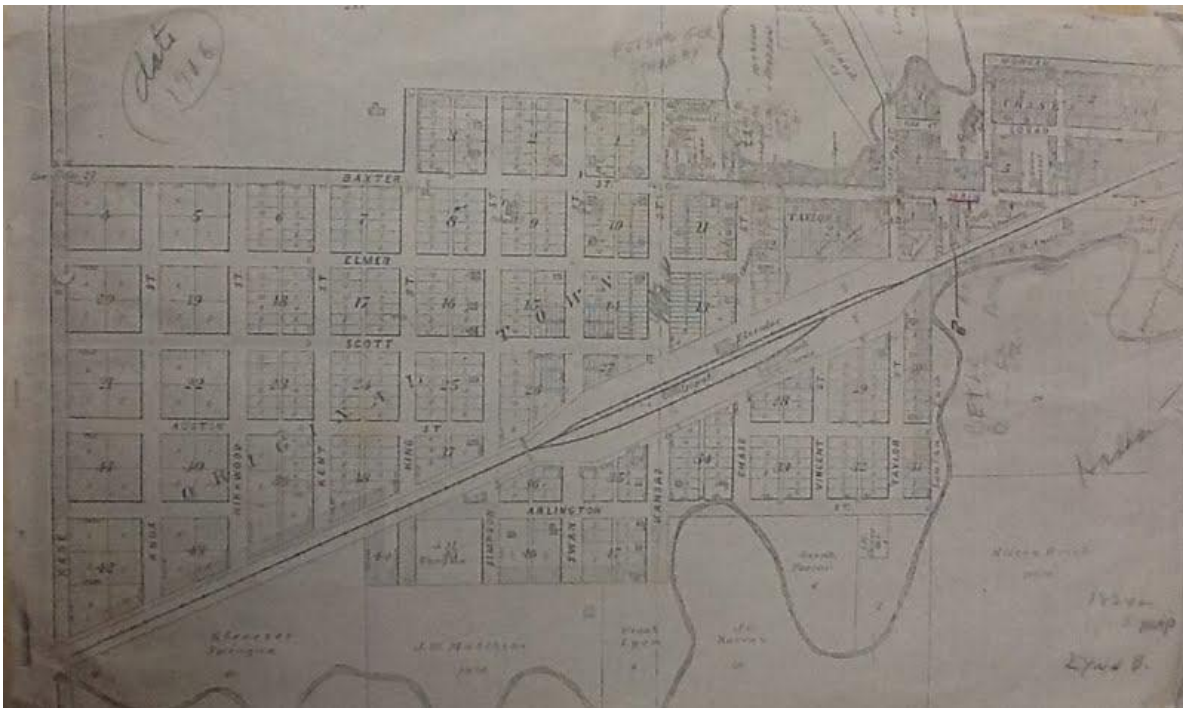


Figure #1: The town of Haddam, Kansas is located in Northwest Washington County. Map circa 1906. Source: Washington County Historical Museum: Washington, Kansas.

The Start of Haddam

The origin of the small town dates back to the year 1870, when a small store was opened by a man by the name of J.W. Taylor. Just down the road another town was established

called "West Haddam" which had the stage road and a hotel; however this town did not have the means to stay separated from Haddam, so in 1874 they joined to become one town which had two stores and three houses. Interestingly the town's name was briefly changed to Knowles, and then it was changed back to Haddam soon after which is the name it has kept ever since. An interesting fact about the name of Haddam, is that there is only one other town with the same name in the United States and that is located in Connecticut. Many of the residents of Haddam, Kansas continue to spread that news to newcomers even to this day. One resident in particular said, "There is only one other Haddam in the United States, and two in the world, one being in Connecticut and the other being in England somewhere" (Frye, Jay. Interview with Zach Hanson, 2/17/12, Haddam, KS).

The town of Haddam really began to flourish when the Burlington and Missouri railroad first arrived in town in 1884. This opened up the small town to a number of outside resources, and eventually led to the building of a flour mill in the same year. This flour mill brought a big business into the town, but sadly it was moved to a different location in Nebraska in 1890, though the building stood in its location until about the year 2006. Haddam elected its first mayor in 1885, a man by the name of Dr. John Hoover. Things went on for several years as the town continued to expand. A new school was erected in 1905 in place of an old school that had been burned to the ground in the same year. City Hall was constructed in the year 1912, after several disputes between the members of the city council, mayor, and contractors who were hired to do the job. Though there were several disputes spanning over a two year period, an agreement was finally made and the new City Hall contracts were drawn up for the amount of \$8,985.

Businesses in Haddam throughout the years

Haddam has had a wide variety of businesses come through throughout the years. One of the most important was the Haddam Clipper, the town's newspaper. The Clipper produced many stories following both the good and bad times that the town went through and without it, who knows what kinds of information would have been recorded throughout the years.

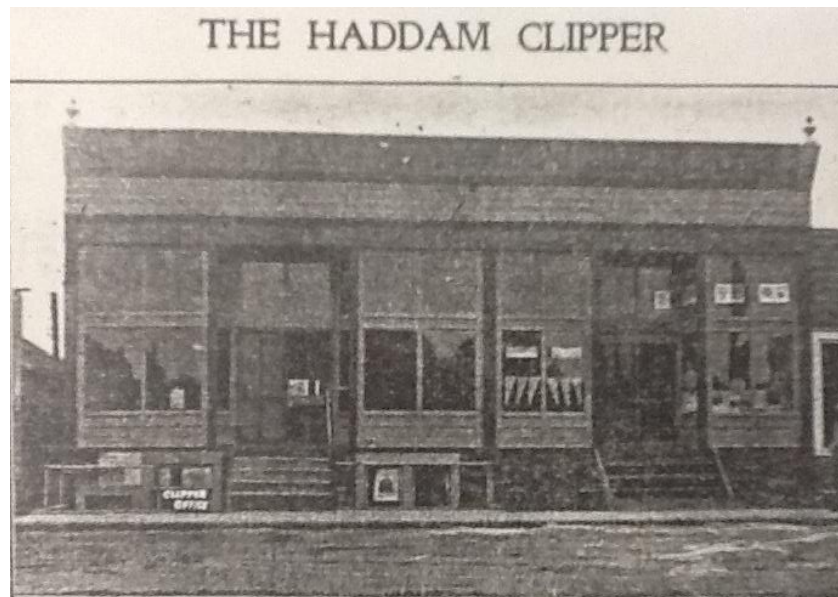


Figure #2: The Haddam Clipper Newspaper building in the year 1908. Source: Washington County Historical Museum: Washington, Kansas.

In addition to the Clipper, the Potter Ellinger Mercantile Co. was also a very prominent business in the town. It opened in 1905 by the brothers, W.E. and C.L. Potter and Gabe Ellinger and was very well known for having a large stock of items, an excess of \$30,000 dollars' worth. The store was known for carrying; clothing, groceries, shoes, hats, and a great variety of other items that people in the town needed. Mr. Ellinger soon got out of the business and by 1915, it

had transformed into the Potter Bros. Mercantile Co. In addition to these businesses, Haddam was also a host to J.E. Janaway Drug store, Yoder Bros. store, Citizens State Bank, A. R. Hoffman Hardware and Furniture, and a couple of different restaurants. A small jail house was also constructed in 1901 and still stands today.



Figure #4: Pictured here is the City Jail which was built in 1901. The picture on the left is a view from the street looking at the front of the jailhouse. The picture on the right is a view of the cell from the inside. Source: Hanson, Zach. 2/17/12. Haddam, KS.

Another notable business in Haddam in the past was Frye Motor Company. A man by the name of Glenn Frye was the proud owner of the company. In 1932 Frye started his own filling station, called Frye's service, when he was just 16 years old. From there he transformed it into a very successful business, and in 1956 he started a Pontiac franchise car dealership. "The dealership was very successful for being in such a small town" Frye's son Jay Frye said in an interview, "During the 60s and 70s we sold over a hundred vehicles per year, so those were good times for the business" (Frye, Jay. Interview with Zach Hanson, 2/17/12. Haddam, KS).

Frye's dealership remained in the town of Haddam until it closed down in 1996, but today it is still open under the same name as an auto repair service run by Glenn's son Jay Frye.



Figure #3: Frye Motor Company as it stands today. This is the original building that Glenn Frye started his company in over 80 years ago. Source: Hanson, Zach. 2/17/12. Haddam, KS.

Possibly the most interesting business that began back in the 1930s in Haddam is the honey business. Back in 1936 the former mayor Vernon Adee and his family began producing honey in the town of Haddam. Soon they had almost 3,000 colonies of bees and were shipping honey all over the United States, even as far as New York which is impressive. One of the biggest shipments was a shipment of over a thousand sixty-pound cans of honey that was shipped to Sioux City back in the 1940s. How does such a thriving honey operation start up in such a small town you might ask? In an interview with a man by the name of Babe Zenger, I asked the same question and Zenger replied "Well it really got big in the 1950's, but there is a great deal of clover around these parts and that produces a certain type of honey, and lots of it. So, they brought in the boxes and started harvesting and it really took off" (Zenger, Babe.

Interview with Zach Hanson, 2/17/12. Haddam, KS). Today the same business continues to thrive, except with a new twist. Today the company is called “RevHoney”. RevHoney is a successful company that decided to take its honey production and to create a new type of energy drink that uses honey rather than massive amounts of sugar, and it is really beginning to flourish. The headquarters is just outside of the downtown area in Haddam and is continuing to grow in popularity.

Tough Times for Haddam

Haddam has a very interesting history if you look back through the past. One interesting thing about the town, given its location, is that a tornado has never hit or even touched down in the town. There have been many in the surrounding areas, but this little town has managed to keep out of harm’s way in regards to tornadoes. However, another disaster has managed to make its way into Haddam’s history a number of times, and that disaster is fire. In the towns 140 year history, there have been an amazing amount of fires that have devastated the town. “The south side of the town has burned down once, and the north side has burned down twice” (Frye, Jay. Interview with Zach Hanson, 2/17/12. Haddam, KS). Schools also seem to have a bad omen in Haddam, as one was burned down in 1905 which was a tragedy, though later that year another school was built. That school stood for only about 20 years, and then in 1925 a fire occurred there as well. All of the original buildings except for one were burned down by the 1950’s, and in 1967 the last of the original buildings in town was burned down as well. Any small town would struggle to deal with this many devastating fires, and it is amazing that Haddam has been able to rebuild and continue on through all of them.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that Haddam has encountered throughout the years was when Highway 36 moved out of town in 1936. Highway 36 used to run directly through Haddam, which brought a great deal of business through. There used to be 4 filling stations in town and there used to be a hotel in which people would stay at when they would pass through. In 1936, the construction was completed and the new Highway 36 was officially moved out of Haddam. "That was really the demise of Haddam", Jay Frye said in an interview. "After 36 moved out of town, businesses began to struggle and shut down. It was a sad time for Haddam" (Frye, Jay. Interview with Zach Hanson, 2/17/12. Haddam, KS). "That was really bad for the town in all ways. Highway 36 went from running through the town to being three miles away" (West, Ella. Interview with Zach Hanson. 2/17/2012. Haddam, KS). Since this Highway moved out of town, the population has increasingly dwindled throughout the years, and Haddam is now about one-fifth of the size it was at its biggest point.

Though the town of Haddam, Kansas seems to be dwindling away, with the population dropping by the year, there is a great deal of history surrounding this town. Haddam residents have seen things change throughout the years, most of which were devastating for the town, yet they still have strong pride in their little paradise. It may not have malls and movie theatres like many cities do in the state, but there is something special about this town. From the little Café in downtown to the 110 year old jailhouse that continues to stand strong, Haddam truly is a special part of Kansas history, and is definitely a place to remember.

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