

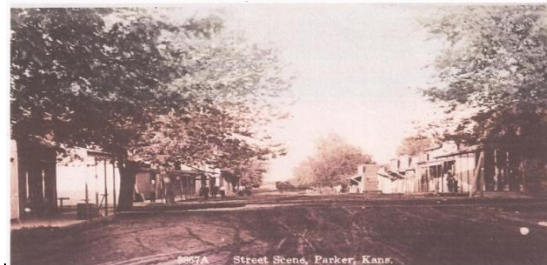
Large Orchard Hid a Secret in Parker, Linn County, Kansas

When taking a stroll through a vast orchard of peach, apple and cherry trees a person would expect to find a variety of birds, animals and plants; however, anyone who walked into the 2000 acre orchard owned by John W. Parker in Linn County, Kansas during the late 1880s would have found the peaceful *town* called Parker nestled in the center of its acreage. This hidden town started out as a small village community of orchard workers and as the orchard grew, the need for a more permanent community grew. J.W. Parker wanted to entice the Missouri-Kansas-Texas railroad to develop a stop there so it would be easier for him to ship his fruit to market. He sold town shares to people within the community and on November 12, 1888, J.W. Parker, and others laid out the town. They named it Parker in honor of the man who owned the land and the orchard. In fact, at one time people said that J.W. Parker ran the second largest orchard in the state of Kansas. Below is a picture of some of the orchard workers packing crates of fruit.



Orchard workers packing apples at the Parker Orchard, in Parker, Kansas. Found at the Wichita State University in their special collections library.

Parker is in the northwestern corner of Linn County and established its Post Office on December 22, 1888. A few days later, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad started to run trains into Parker. The town grew and at one time had two newspapers, two banks, four general merchandise stores, a lumberyard, a furniture store, two restaurants, a dentist, two doctors, and two hardware stores. Then disaster hit this quiet town nestled so peacefully within the orchard. Two tornados stuck this area within ten years of each other. The first on April 12, 1893, destroyed most of the town and the second in early 1904 destroyed much of the rural area. Between these two disasters, the town lost its forward momentum. Today, Parker has a population of about 277 people; some people consider it a bedroom community between Overland Park and Kansas City. Parker still has a post office, a library, a museum, an elementary school, a restaurant, a convenience store, a lumberyard, two churches, a wood working shop, two storage unit services, and an auto repair shop. According to the Parker Community Historical Society, none of the original apple trees from the orchard remain in the area.



The city of Parker in the late 1800s with its tree lined streets. Obtained from the Parker Community Historical Society at www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kspchs/index.htm

Sources: Parker Community Historical Society at www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kspchs/index.htm