Missouri Pacific Railroad

The first rail laid through Hoisington was 56-pound rail, just about half the weight of the present rails. Through the level part of the country the track was laid on the prairie without grading, later being ditched and the track raised on a grade by filling under it.

Trains were not rated as to tonnage for a number of years. The first westbound trains out of Hoisington consisted of not more than 14 cars while an eastbound train handled not more than 16 cars. They were from 20,000 to 40,000 pound capacity.

In early July 1901, the first depot, located east of the present depot, was destroyed by fire. Among the volunteers who struggled to save a lot of equipment and freight from the depot and freight house was Rev. Cornelius. He worked heroically to save of barrel of something that later was found to contain whiskey.

In addition to its ticket-buying passengers, the Missouri-Pacific brought Hoisington many interesting characters that rode the "side-door Pullmans." In the days of the header-barge and threshers, harvest transient laborers came both with and without tickets. During and after the First World War were the "weary willies" or I.W.W.'s.

In the depression days the railroad was host to multitudes of unemployed. Among those who were removed from a train in the Hoisington yards was a man booked as William H. Demsey.

The largest building in central Kansas, until the Air Bases of World War II, were the huge Missouri-Pacific shops and roundhouse. They were built between 1910 and 1911 at a cost of approximately $1-million to house maintenance of the rolling stock.

The city of Hoisington and the Missouri-Pacific Railroad were linked in growth and economics for the better part of a century until the rail mergers of the 1980's began. The rail line then became part of the Southern Pacific and finally the Union Pacific. The merger of the Southern and Union Pacific in 1997 ended what had been the "central" transcontinental rail route across America. Today the line is leased to Central Kansas Railroad and operated as a short-line railroad.

Many of the families who now live in the Hoisington area are descendants of those who came at the instigation of the railroad, either to farm along its route or to work its right-of-ways, its shops or on its trains.

Hoisington Chamber of Commerce
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