

Approved March 31, 1989  
Date

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The meeting was called to order by Elizabeth Baker at  
Chairperson

3:36 ~~xxx~~/p.m. on Tuesday, March 28, 1989 in room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representatives Heinemann, Foster, and Dean. Excused.

Committee staff present:  
Jim Wilson, Revisor  
Lynne Holt, Research  
Elaine Johnson, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:  
Glenda Fink, Russell Area Chamber of Commerce  
Larry Rutter, Kansas State Historical Society  
Duane Vonada, Vonada Stone Co, Sylvan Grove, Kansas  
Representative John McClure

The meeting was called to order at 3:36 p.m. by Chairman Baker.

The minutes of the March 21, 22 and 23, 1989, meetings were approved.

Chairman Baker opened the hearing on H.C.R. 5019 and recognized Glenda Fink from the Russell Area Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Fink testified in support of H.C.R. 5019 which designates a 17-county area of North Central Kansas as Post Rock Country. The Russell Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau promote the native limestone to draw tourists from Interstate 70. (Attachment 1).

Ms. Fink responded to questions from the committee.

Larry Rutter of the Kansas State Historical Society was the next conferee to testify in support of H.C.R. 5019. Mr. Rutter went over some of the history of post rock cutting and stated that although the popularity of working with the stone has declined somewhat over the years the tradition has never stopped. He also stated that today these massive rock posts, imposing churches, houses, barns (some deserted) stand as a monument to a people of determination and ingenuity. To preserve and promote the post-rock landscape is an obligation of the State of Kansas, the people of the area themselves and to all the visitors who come to admire it. He heartily endorsed this resolution because the geographical region of post rock country is special, unique and significant and favorable consideration of a resolution will help in making this region and its cultural manifestations of post rock a signal attraction. (Attachment 2).

The next conferee to testify in support of H.C.R. 5019 was Duane Vonada of Vonada Stone Co. in Sylvan Grove, Kansas. Mr. Vonada stated that Post Rock Country is truly a historical region, with stories of hardship, battles and Indian raids. It is authentic and unspoiled by commercialism. It is a place of beauty and peacefulness. It is a place that the tourist will never forget. Mr. Vonada has begun his own tours of the area. (Attachment 3).

Representative John McClure addressed the committee briefly, thanking the committee for hearing the resolution and stating that it is a unique area with its geologic formation. Passing the resolution and getting the area on the map will help draw tourists and money into the area.

This closed the hearing on H.C.R. 5019.

Chairman Baker opened the resolution for discussion.

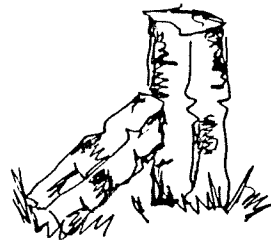
Representative Kline made a motion that H.C.R. 5019 be adopted. Representative Moonhaw seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

*Elizabeth Baker*



Testimony Presented by  
Glenda Finke,  
Russell Area Chamber of Commerce  
March 28, 1989  
3:30 p.m., Room 423 S  
House Economic Development Committee



POST ROCK COUNTRY

Madame Chairwoman, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear on behalf of HCR 5019, which designates a 17-county area of North Central Kansas as Post Rock Country. Our Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau promote the native limestone to draw tourists from Interstate 70.

The historical concept of our greenhorn limestone is very unique and certainly warrants promoting. The first settlers arriving in Russell County in 1971 from Wisconsin, labored long hours turning the ground to provide shelter and provisions for their family. Due to the absence of tree for timber, they turned to the greatest natural resource of their time, native limestone. The native stone was quarried from the hillsides, using a horse-drawn slip, to remove the top soil and exposing the greenhorn limestone. The rock was then cut to sizes suitable for loading and transformed into shelter for both the pioneers as well as their livestock. Miles and miles of stone fence posts were erected.

Yet today, there remains over 175,000 stone posts in place throughout Russell County. Several hundred limestone structures still stand including the courthouse, middle school, Fossil Station Museum, homes, and several business buildings in the area.

Quarries still exist and provide many modern day decorative and functional uses. Post Rock Limestone, a locally owned Russell business has provided 5 1/2 tons of limestone to build the base of the Vietnam Memorial in Junction City. In December, The Kansas Film Commission brought a Japanese Film crew to Russell to do a

*House Eco Dev Committee  
Attachment 1 3/28/89*

feature on the limestone being quarried by Post Rock Limestone. Besides using the stone for decorative purposes, small souvenir items, are manufactured and marketed throughout the State.

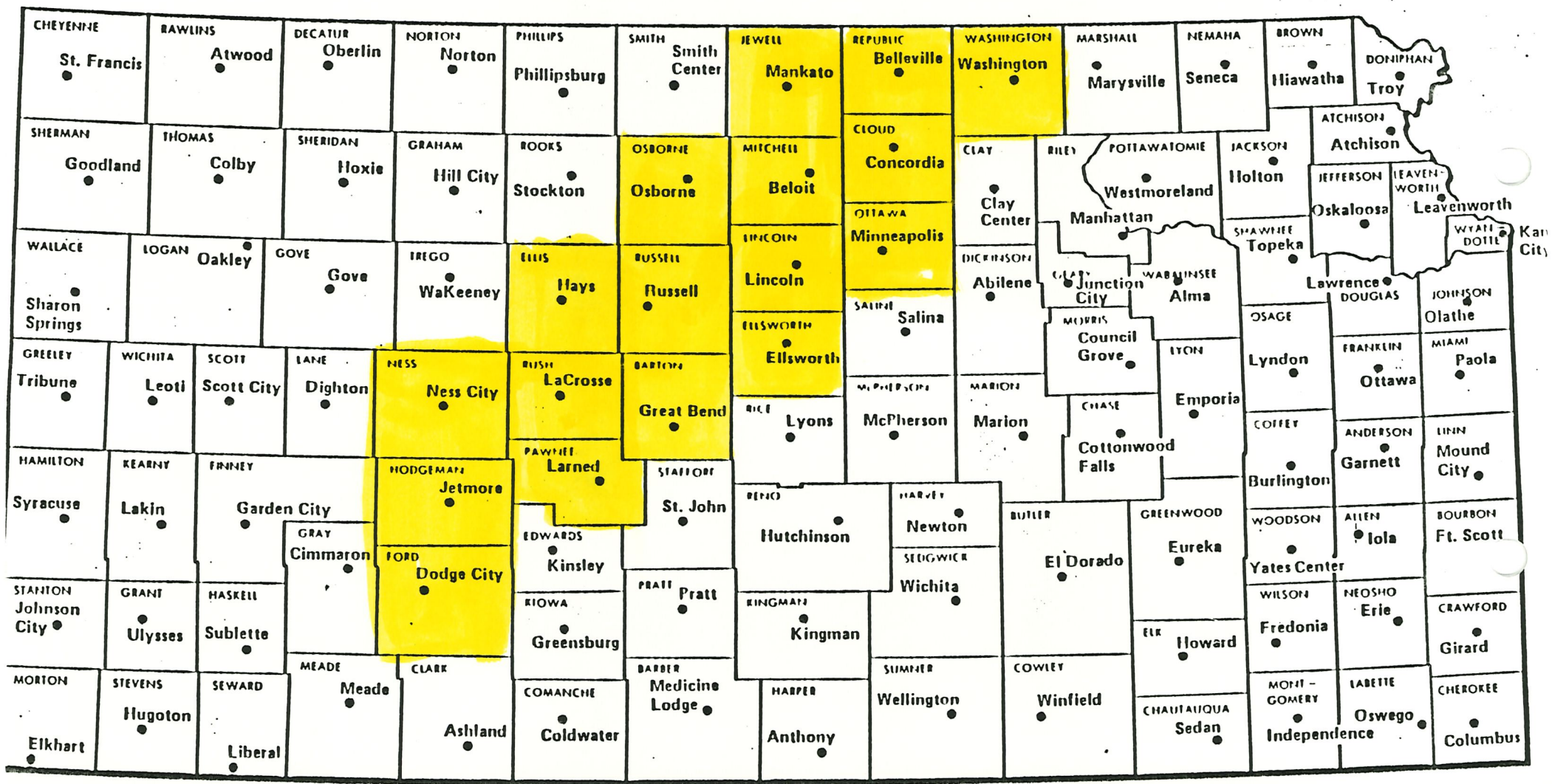
The City of Russell placed decorative stone posts throughout the community, including eight blocks of the downtown business district. Our Revitalization Committee is researching the possibilities of using the limestone as a beautification project to include planters and to build up the base of the mural.

Though I can only speak for Russell, I do know other towns within the 17-County area capitalize on the use of limestone. The Vonada's from Sylvan Grove have organized Post Rock Tours, originating in Salina and traveling K-18 through Denmark, Lincoln, Lucas, Sylvan Grove, Lake Wilson, stopping at the Vonada Stone Quarry.

As recent as November, the native stone was introduced to 3000 plus tour bus planners at the National Tour Association Convention in Kansas City. This natural resource attracts thousands of travelers every year, making it possible to capture the tourist dollar and strengthen the economy.

It is our belief, that designating this area as Post Rock Country, will further advance our economic standing, as well as promote the rich heritage of the area. For these reasons, we ask your consideration of HCR 5019.

# KANSAS COUNTIES AND COUNTY SEATS



2-1-3  
 3/28/89

## PRAIRIE MONUMENTS

The area known as Post Rock Country stretches for approximately 200 miles from the Nebraska border on the north to Dodge City on the south. Geographically, it encompasses approximately 17-18 counties. The limestone that is found here comes from the uppermost bed of the Greenhorn formation. It was out of necessity that settlers in the late 1800s began turning back the sod and cutting posts from the layer of rock that lay underneath. By the mid 1880s limestone fenceposts were in general use due to the widespread use of barbed wire.

Although the practice of using stone as a building material is in no way unique to Kansas, there may be no other region in the world that can claim a specific type of limestone that has been used so extensively as fenceposts. Since this occupational skill or (art form if you will) grew out of the uniqueness of the land and the needs and inventiveness of early settlers, post rock cutting may be the one uniquely Kansas folk art.

In traveling through this area with abundant shelterbelts and tree-lined creeks, the miles of post rock and barbed wire lining the highway can too easily be seen as no more than a curiosity. But to view them as such would be to underestimate the importance of limestone to those who settled this treeless prairie during the late 1870s and 1880s.

At the time of settlement most of the communities in central Kansas had at least one man who had learned masonry in the old country. Since post rock cutting was generally a community task, others learned the technique as well. In this way the traditional skills have been passed down for several generations.

The limestone itself is found close to the surface and is usually uniform

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in thickness. One of its greatest features (or attributes) is that it is soft enough to shape when freshly quarried but hardens with exposure to the air. The feather and wedge method is most commonly used to remove the stone. A rather modest set of tools is required, often made by the local blacksmith. A drill, a hammer, a chisel, and a set of feathers and wedges are needed. After the soil is removed, holes are drilled into the limestone about eight inches apart. Feathers and wedges are placed in the holes and the wedge is hit with the hammer to split the rock.

After the rock is quarried it must be moved to the site of the fence. The posts are then set in the ground about ten steps or more apart. They are then prepared for the wire fence. Several methods can be used but perhaps the most popular is to notch the post's edges to hold the barbed wire after which smooth wire is wrapped around the post to hold the barbed wire in place.

Although an occasional new post rock fence is constructed today, the popularity of this type of fence began to decline in the 1920s due to the fact that it was no longer cost effective. During the Depression, however, the Federal Works Projects encouraged the cutting of the native stone. Estimated 40 to 50 thousand miles of post rock fence by the Kansas Department of Agriculture in 1930s. The limestone known as post rock has had many uses other than for the construction of fenceposts. Due to the material's durability it is an excellent building material. Traditionally homes, churches, businesses, barns, bridges, sidewalks, and even gravemarkers have been built of the native stone.

Although the popularity of working with the stone has declined somewhat over the years the tradition has never stopped. There have always been at least a few post rock cutters in the state who not only do repair work on older

structures but also help build an occasional new structure. Recently post rock has become a cultural symbol of central Kansas symbolizing both the land and the people who settled it. This symbolic use of the post rock has caused a renewed interest in this Kansas folk art.

Today these massive rock posts, imposing churches, houses, barns (some deserted) stand as a monument to a people of determination and ingenuity. To preserve and promote the post-rock landscape is an obligation of the state of Kansas, the people of the area themselves and to all the visitors who come to admire it.

.....

I heartily endorse this resolution because the geographical region of post rock country is special, unique and significant. I likewise recommend your favorable consideration of a resolution which will help in making this region and its cultural manifestations of post rock a signal attraction.



I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to talk with you about Post Rock Country.

The land of the Post Rock is a unique area! It lies in Mid-America almost entirely in the Smoky Hill region of Central Kansas. Beginning near Mahaska in north western Washington County, it stretches for about 200 miles ending a few mile north of Dodge City. If one were to measure the distance along I-70, east and west, it would run for 60 miles.

There is so much of interest in this area! I have been so encouraged by others, that I have started my own tour. The Post Rock Country Tour, which has been given rave reviews, usually begins in Salina, travels the Smoky Hills, visits many stone structures, a museum, a church, a demonstration of splitting post rock from a working quarry, a working farm, the Garden of Eden and the World's Largest Stone Post. Also an ethnic meal of Danish origin is served at lunch. People in Lin<sup>s</sup>burg and Dodge City are excited about the new found tourist attraction. This new "hot spot" tends to tie our state together in a travel and tourism sense.

I have lived in north western Lincoln County all of my life and have watch<sup>ed</sup> my dad, the late Alfred Vonada, quarry rock for stone posts and building stone. Most of the quarring I observed was during the late 30's and the early 40's.

In 1976, our Bi-Centennial year, Sylvan Grove was celebrating its first 100 years of existence. A huge celebration took place. The Centennial Committee asked themselves, "What is our heritage"? It soon became obvious that the limestone material now coined as Post Rock which was used for fences, bridges, buildings and water towers is our unique heritage. On that day in June of 1976, my father demonstrated how he had quarried the rock for the rock fence post.

Since that day, the Vonada family continues to demonstrate ~~the~~ how the early settlers split stone post and blocks from the earth and dressing those blocks for use in building construction. Many tourists and passers-by stop at the Vonada Stone Quarry to look and hear how it was done. Most of them come from the United States, but thanks to the Kansas Wheat Commission several of our guests have been from many different foreign countries.

*House Eco Dev Committee*  
*Attachment 3 3/28/89*

Dr. Donald E. Hattin from Indiana University, last summer, brought a class of geology students to our working quarry to observe and examine this area. To him it is an area that is so unusual. Many of you may not know that this area was once under a shallow sea. Thus, the evidence is found in the limestone in terms of fossils with in the rock. These are found everywhere in Post Rock County.

Post Rock Country is truly a historical region, with stories of hardship, battles and Indian raids. It is authentic and unspoiled by commercialism. It is a place of beauty and peacefulness. It is a place that the tourist will never forget!

I have been diligently promoting Post Rock County. I have appeared on KAYS, channel 7 from Hays, and KSNW, channel 3 in Wichita. Also we ~~have~~ can be seen in several national and state magazines. In these spots the reporters highlight the Post Rock Region, it history, heritage and Post Rock. After, they always remark that they never knew such a place existed. This should not be a well kept secret any more!

Therefore as a member of the Lincoln County Planning Counsel, as President of the Spillman Creek Watershed district, trustee of the Sylvan Grove Historical Society and Tour Director of the North Central Tourism Council, I urge you to support House Concurrent Resolution 5019. Again, I thank you for this opportunity.

Leo Duane Vonada

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Leo Duane Vonada

President and stockholder, D. D. & D. Vonada Farms, Inc.  
Owner, Post Rock County Tours  
Co-owner, Vonada Stone Co.

6320 Zarda Drive  
Shawnee, Kansas 66226  
June 21, 1988

Mr. Duane Vonada  
Rural Route  
Sylvan Grove, Kansas 67481

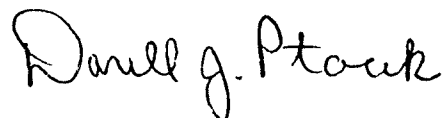
Dear Mr. Vonada and family,

Upon reading the June 9 issue of the Wilson World, I was very pleased to see the story about the world's largest stone post. I moved more than one old stone post while growing up in Wilson. My great grandfather Bouska owned a quarry site, and I still value the heritage they stand for, including a "post rock country" T-shirt I wear proudly in the Kansas City area.

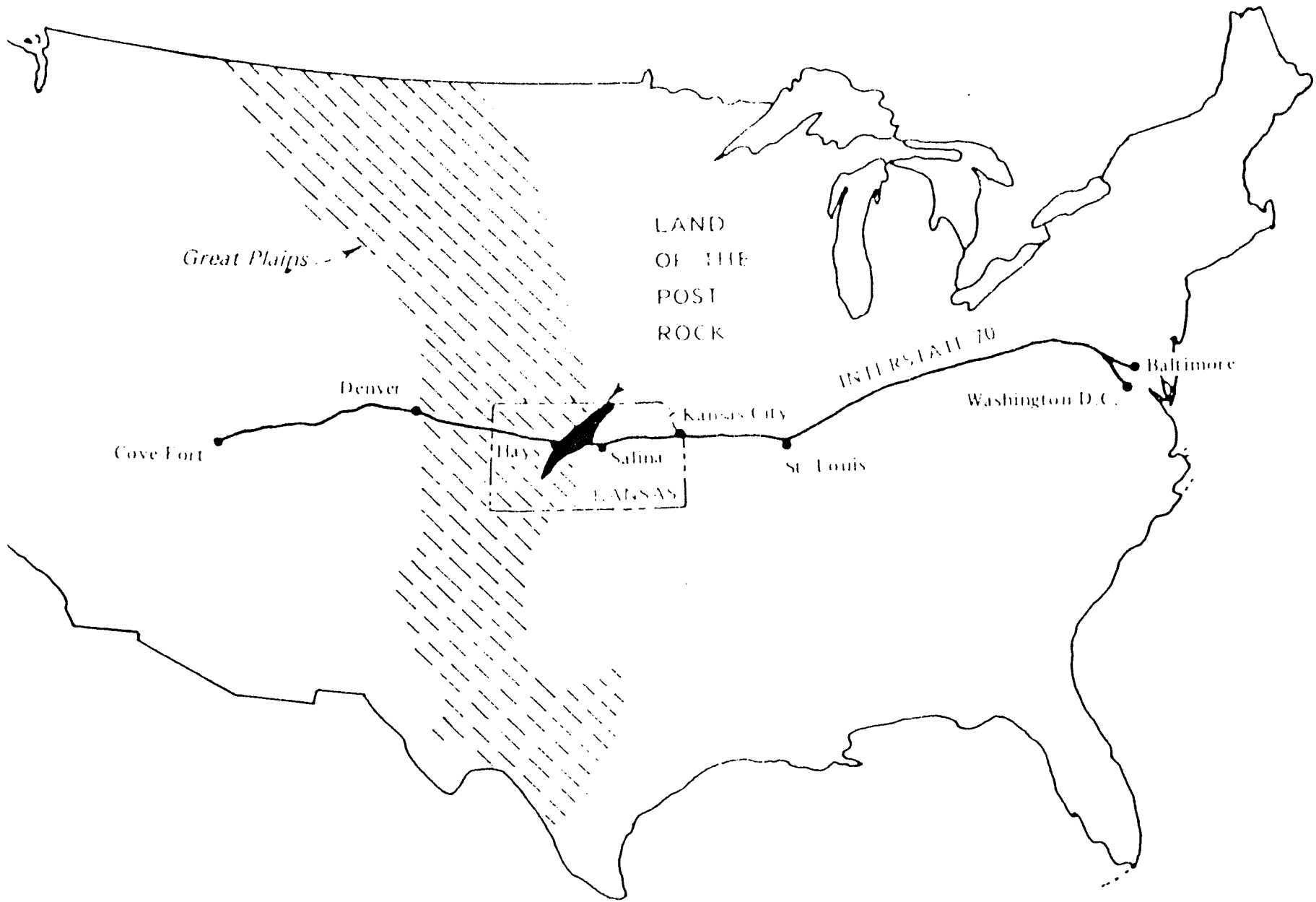
Your persistent effort to quarry the two giant posts is monumental. It preserves an almost-forgotten technology and a time when family members all worked together. Even more noteworthy, is your desire to share this calling card with all the communities in the Wilson area. That is the type of city-to-city cooperation that is needed to keep central Kansas communities viable. The specialness of your effort has all been brought to mind during an Ottawa University Architecture class I am taking this week. Therefore, I would like to present you and your family with a special award we give to improvers of our cities, be they large cities like Kansas City, or small ones like the ones in Post Rock Country.

Congratulations, and may your post long stand as a symbol and inspiration for others to follow. I will look forward to seeing it when we return this summer.

Sincerely,



Darell J. Ptacek

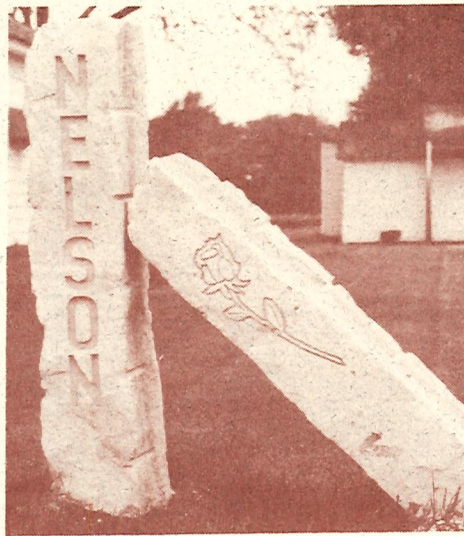


A unique area in mid America.

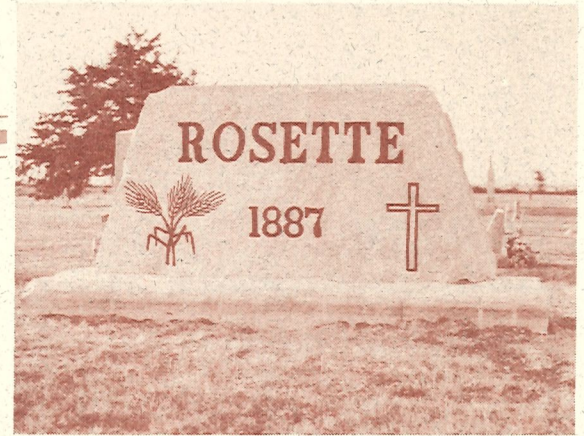
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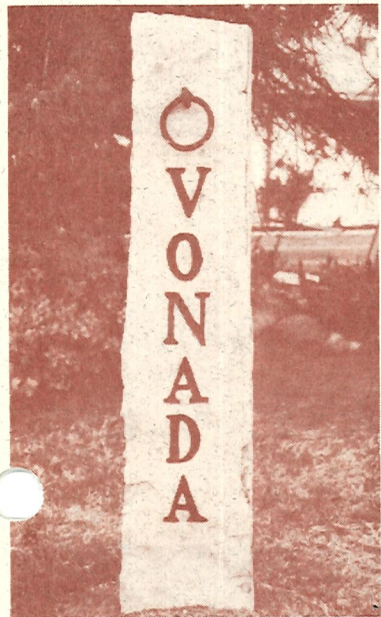
Hanging Sign



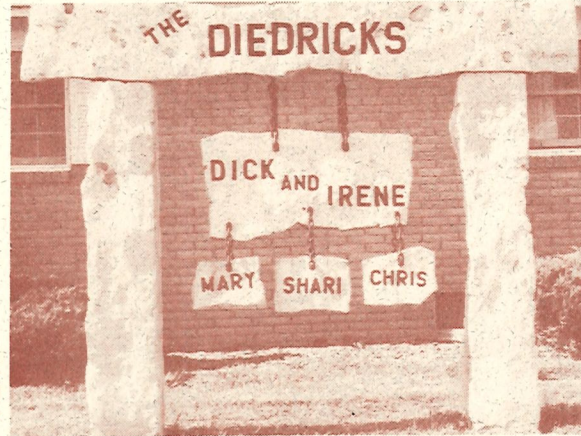
Corner Post with Names



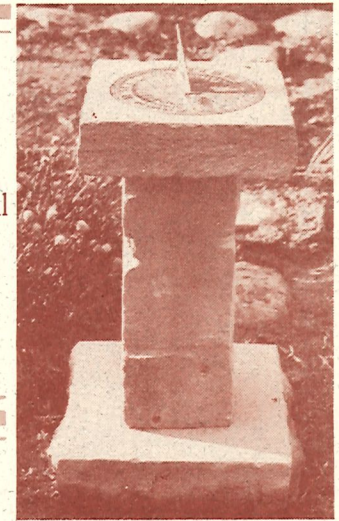
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Hitching Post with Iron Ring

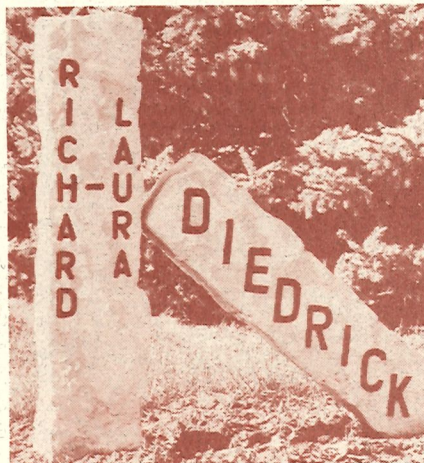


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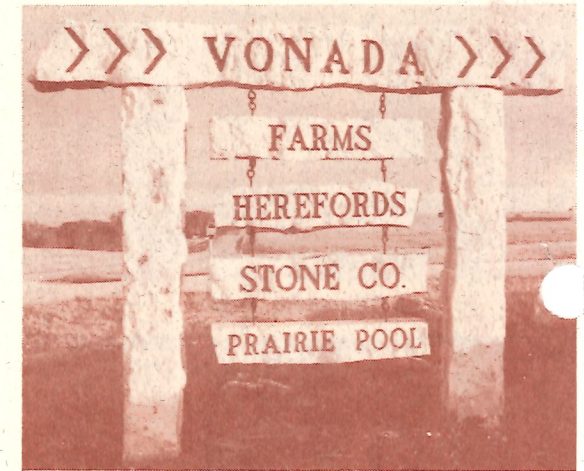
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