

The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer

The Howard Branch



Map by James Burke, *The Iron Horse and I*

The Howard District or Howard Branch was an 84.4-mile rail line from Emporia to Moline, Kansas, constructed in 1878-79. The Santa Fe built this line in sections under subsidiary names to avoid legal and financial liabilities.

The Kansas City, Emporia and Southern Railroad ran from Emporia to Eureka. The local promoters could not raise the necessary funding and got the ATSF to build the line south for them. Construction started at Emporia Dec 4, 1878 and was completed to Eureka on June 30, 1879. According to Marshall's *Santa Fe* (p.398- 399) the Santa Fe control started on June 30, 1879, the same day as completion. The ATSF bought it outright April 10, 1901. Originally built as a narrow gauge, Santa Fe widened it to standard gauge on Sunday August 3, 1879.

The line on south was built to standard gauge by the Elk and Chautauque Railroad Company reaching Howard at the end of 1879 and completed to Moline Jan 1, 1887. See Hilton's *American Narrow Gauge Railroads*, page 401 for a bit more info. (Art W. Gibson)

The Elk and Chanute Railway was built out of Howard. Moline was on the South Kansas and Western. The lines covered Lyon, Greenwood, and Elk Counties. The original line split at Madison Jct. and continued to Benedict.

- **Branch overview**

- **Emporia**

- **Stations**

- Olpe
- Root
- Madison
- Bisbee
- Hamilton
- Utopia
- Eureka
- Small
- Climax
- Severy
- Fiat
- Howard
- Moline
- Hilltop
- Virgil

- **Consists of 1950**

- Cars
- Combines
- Locomotives

- **Consists of 1970**

- Locomotives
- Waycars

Locos of 1950 in the area.

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The Virgil-Benedict Junction part of the 2nd District was abandoned in 1944 leaving just the Madison Junction-Vigil section. That section was abandoned in 1963. The last freight on the Emporia to Moline line ran on Tuesday, April 15, 1975. Track was 85/90 pound on 8' ties.

Towns included in this branch were (with Station code, 2000 census figures and 1972 track notes from Rod Riley):

Emporia (NR) - growing town of 26,760.

Olpe (OL) - 504. House track, siding capacity 56 cars.

Root. House track with stock yard. The town no longer exists.

Madison (MD) - 857. House track, elevator spur, National Supply spur. Passing siding south of town. Water Tank.

Madison Jct. - where the Virgil - Benedict line cut off, with a wye.

Bisbee. Stock track

Hamilton (HM) - 334. House track and siding.

Utopia (UT) - No longer exists. Stock track, capacity 21 cars.

Eureka (UK) - 2914. Stock track, house track, passing siding of 62 car capacity, spur with a dock. Water Tank.

Small. Spur for an alfalfa mill.

Climax (IC) - 64. House track and elevator spur.

Severy (SY) - 334. Frisco interchange and diamond and spur. Siding capacity of 24 cars. Wye.

Fiat (FN) - No longer exists. Stock track.

Howard (HC) - 808. House track, 2 elevators, alfalfa mill, dock.

Moline (NX) - shrunk to 473. Water Tank, engine house, elevator, yard. Limestone quarry at Crusher.

Hilltop (TP) - today a crossroads

Virgil (VR) - shrunk to 113.

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Inspiration for this site comes from the wonderful book by James Burke, *The Iron Horse and I*. In it, Burke documents in story and photos his childhood growing up in Climax and Eureka, 1946-52. He covered every inch of the Howard Branch numerous times and tells the stories of people and steamers with soul. I am indebted to him for permission to use many of his photos on this site.

Livestock

ATSF facilities on the Howard District included: Olpe, Root, Madison, Bisbee, Hamilton, Utopia, Eureka, Climax, Severy, Fiat, Howard, Moline, Hilltop, and Virgil.

While Emporia was a feeding station for trains headed east, the Howard Branch facilities served stock from Texas which was brought to Kansas for fattening prior to sale. The Flint Hill's Blue Stem grass was a favorite. Train loads of cattle would be brought up the branch, with cars set out at various pens for unloading. After several months, the fattened cattle would be picked up for movement east. The only pens on the line which were known for the handling of local cattle was the one at Moline.

Stock movements on the Santa Fe ceased February 27, 1974.

In the 40s and 50s, Santa Fe operated LCL stock car service on the Howard Branch. This car would pick up the odd few cows, sheep or goats for the various farmers along the line meeting them at the various stock pens.

Santa Fe System Standards, Vol. 1, by Kachina Press contains Plans and details for ATSF stock pens.

An excellent resource is *Stock Cars of the Santa Fe Railway*, published by the Santa Fe Railway Historical Society, 1986. It includes plans for ATSF stock cars and stock yards. *The Warbonnet* 7:3 and 7:4 also has excellent material on stock handling.

For those interested in more detail of the livestock industry and its history, D. A. Chadwick has written the book, *Blatherskites* "*Blatherskites* is the true story of two Kansas cattlemen, John S. Frazer and William H. Gibson, who were murdered in 1890 in Elk and Chautauqua Counties. What began as a genealogical project soon blossomed into a saga regarding the dark side of the Range Wars. "

Ice Houses and Reefer Service

The 2nd Quarter, 1989, *Santa Fe Modeler* contained a table of Ice Manufacturers and Cold Storage Plants on the Santa Fe Railway System, 1934. With reference to the Howard District it showed the following suppliers:

Emporia: Emporia Ice & Cold Storage Co., with icing dock / side track.

Madison: Madison Ice Co.

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Howard: Howard Ice Plant.

Moline: Moline Ice & Storage Co.

Santa Fe's heavy icing of reefers occurred at Waynoka and Argentine. Emporia Ice & Cold Storage Co. serviced reefers used by Armour and others as needed. The other ice companies were probably rarely used and would have been serviced by trucks when necessary.

In the 40s and 50s, Santa Fe operated LCL reefer service out of Emporia once a week on the branch. This reefer would carry meat supplies for the Graerig Markets along the line meeting them at the various stations. Burke reports that "Brakeman Monty Edwards threw ice off to section gangs from the top of the reefer on its return (empty) trip."

Petroleum

A number of towns near the Howard Branch had refineries:

Kansas City - Sinclair/Mobil/Phillips.

Sugar Creek, MO - Standard Oil of Indiana.

El Dorado - Skelly and Fina.

Augusta - Mobil

Wichita - Derby.

Potwin - Vickers.

McPherson -Coop

Neodasha - Standard Oil of Indiana.

Arkansas City - Apco.

Ponca City, OK - Conoco

Coffeyville - Coop.

Longton - Superior/Kanotex/Apco

Eureka had at least five bulk oil dealers, two on the ATSF (Sinclair and one across the tracks) and three on the MoPac (Phillips with its own spur, Skelly east of the grain elevator, and Continental across from the depot). Hamilton also had a Sinclair dealer and Madison another which were rail served.

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The Howard Branch was in an oil field. Oil field equipment came to the team track in many towns, and Madison had a spur serving National (Oilfield) Supply. Saunders Tank originally was in Madison and made storage tanks first of wood then of steel. In the 60s a lot of pipe went into Olpe for the Panhandle Eastern pipeline in gondolas.

Moline had Peerless Oil Co. which shipped out crude to refineries. It appears that most oil producers used pipelines to ship their crude by 1950.

All rail served bulk oil was gone by the 70s.

Grain

Every burg had a grain elevator. Wheat and corn were grown throughout this area of Kansas.

The water tanks at Eureka and Moline were eventually converted to grain elevators after the steam age eliminated their original purpose.

Major grain elevators were located at Emporia, with the Bunge Corporation being the major player today.

Limestone

A large limestone quarry was located 4 miles east of Moline. It provided a large portion of the traffic on the Howard Branch until the branch was closed. More details concerning this operation will be explained on the Moline page.

LCL Movement

Santa Fe has three types of "Less than Car Load" shipments on the branch. Hard goods generally were picked up and delivered by the combine. There was also the LCL reefer and stock car service from the 50s mentioned above.

Rod Riley reports concerning the early 70s, "One bit of revenue moved in little blue L&N boxcars. They had partial loads of appliances that would unload in Wichita and then move to Moline for us to take to Madison to finish unloading. For the branch move the revenue waybill said we got \$49.00 for hauling washing machines (and stoves?)."

"Company material and empties were common cars to have in the train. The Santa Fe did keep most of the revenue off the branch in the 70s. Santa Fe filed for abandonment several times. However, one of the commissioners was from Howard and abandonment hearings seemed to fail until he retired from office."

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Passenger Service

John McCall documents mixed train service between Emporia and Moline back to 1911. In 1911 it was #270/269 Daily except Sunday. The numbers were changed to #96/95 around 1930. Until the late 40's, trains 95 and 96 were operated with two different consists, one originating in Emporia and the other in Moline. They often met at Eureka. In December of 1948, the Southern Kansas Division was dissolved, and the Eastern Division formed. The 95/96 then used one locomotive and combine originating in Emporia and eliminating the meets at Eureka. A separate page is dedicated to the combines used on this route. The 1952-3 scheduled is below.

#96	Miles	Depot	#95
6:30	0	Emporia	4:10p
7:10	10.9	Olpe	3:35p
7:40	20.2	Madison	3:05p
	23.8	M. D. Jct.	2:40p
8:10	32.9	Hamilton	1:05p
8:30	29.8	Utopia	12:50p
8:45	47.4	Eureka	12:30p
9:05	56.6	Climax	12:05p
9:45	63.7	Severy	11:50
10:00	69.4	Fiat	11:35
10:20	76.3	Howard	11:20
10:40	84.4	Moline	11:00

On the return trip, at M. D. Jct, 95 went southeast to Virgil

			#195
1:30p	0	M. D. Jct	2:40
1:45p	5.4	Hilltop	2:25
2:00p	10.0	Virgil	2:10

The fare from Eureka to Climax was \$.35 in 1950.

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Service was changed in 1953 and 95/96 became 97/98 and operated 98-Daily except Sunday and 97-daily except Sat. By 1958, 98 was a MWF train and 97 the TTS version. Mixed service ceased in 1960. Moline became the point of origin of this train, not Emporia, and until the end of rail service, Moline was the crew origination point.

The Howard branch had a 30-mph speed limit in 1948, so the schedule was very leisurely. The time allowed for the trip in the 70s was 3 hours and 20 minutes. The pages on consists and locomotives will be informative.

Moline was served by motorcar passenger service between Coffeyville and Newton via Wichita.

In 1953 the schedule was:

#13 Eastbound at 9:42a.

#14 Westbound at 6:30p.

Motorcar service was discontinued by October 30, 1955.

As of 8/7/1947, M.154 and M.175 were assigned to this service. The M.154 was later moved to the Panhandle Division, retired in 1954 in Wichita and scrapped in 1958. M.175 saw service in Missouri in 1954, was retired in 55, and scrapped in 58. More information can be found in John McCall's *The Doodlebug*. Photos of M.154 can be found on pages 28, 95, and 183, and M.175 on pages 30 and 236. A color photo of M154 (1931) with its trailer can be found in *Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, Volume 1*, from *Vanishing Vistas*. M.154 was baggage-express only, so it usually had a trailing coach which was converted from a heavyweight coach or smoker. Chair 1204 was its common companion. A photo of its twin, 1203, appears in McCall on page 165. M.175 had its own passenger compartment.

"On April 6, 1950, the Howard Branch saw its first diesel and its last passenger train - and it was a dandy. Arrangements had been made to ship a trainload of grade school students to the Kansas City Zoo and - reluctantly - for their return. And so, at 7:35 on that morning freight diesel 175 rolled north past the Eureka station with a steam generator car for train heating and 23 coaches - almost certainly a record." (James Burke, *Iron Horse and I*)

Other Railroads

The MoPac from Kansas City to Wichita crossed the Howard at Eureka. The diamond was controlled by a gate.

The Frisco from Cherryvale to Wichita crossed at Severy. The diamond was also controlled by a gate. Portions of that track lasted until 2001.

All three lines are now just a memory, and a number of the towns they served are just memories as well. Most of the 84-mile grade is still apparent and the 19th century stone bridge supports still stand at the Cottonwood, Verdigris, Fall, and Elk Rivers as well as at Honey and Otter Creek.

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The former Tulsa, Moline, and Coffeyville subdivisions of the Santa Fe now are part of WATCO's South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad. This line was featured in the November 1991, *Pacific RailNews*.

Geography

The line runs across rolling prairie land.

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Howard Branch: Olpe

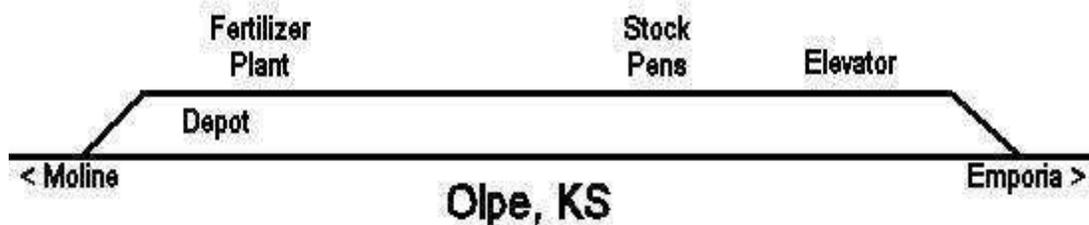
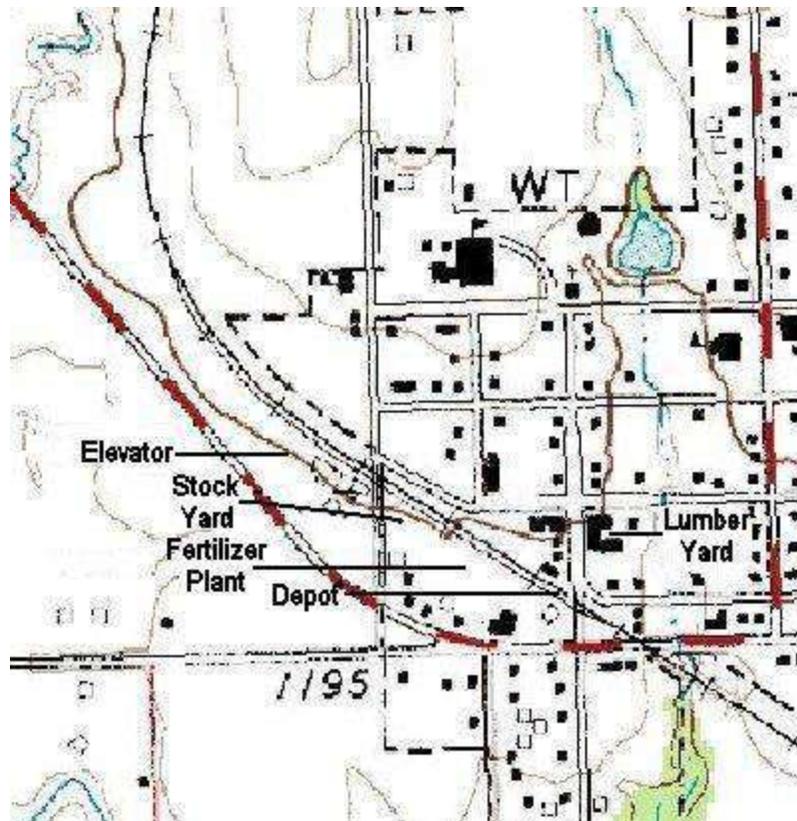
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USG image, courtesy of TerraServer

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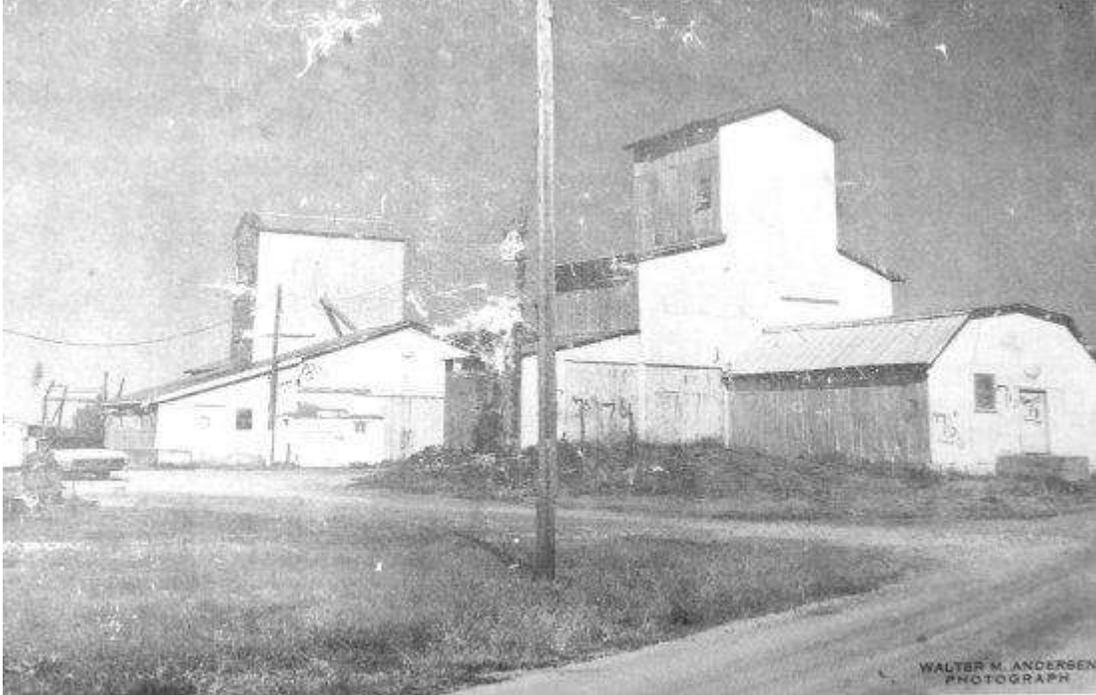
Olpe consisted of the main track and a house track which served the elevator, stockyard, depot, and fertilizer mill. The stockyard had 22 car capacity, 7 pens, a pump, and a 5-ton scale. The elevator could accept box cars only.

When first built, the railroad called this Eagle Creek, and the post office was named Bitler. Both were subsequently changed to Olpe.

Rod Riley reports that in the 60's a lot of pipe went into Olpe for the Panhandle Eastern pipeline in gondolas. At times they had so many gods that they left both tracks full, an interesting switching challenge. An occasional 80' auto box would be loaded with hay for other markets. Tank cars of liquid fertilizer were also unloaded on the house track.

A lumber yard just east of the track was sizeable and received goods on the house track.

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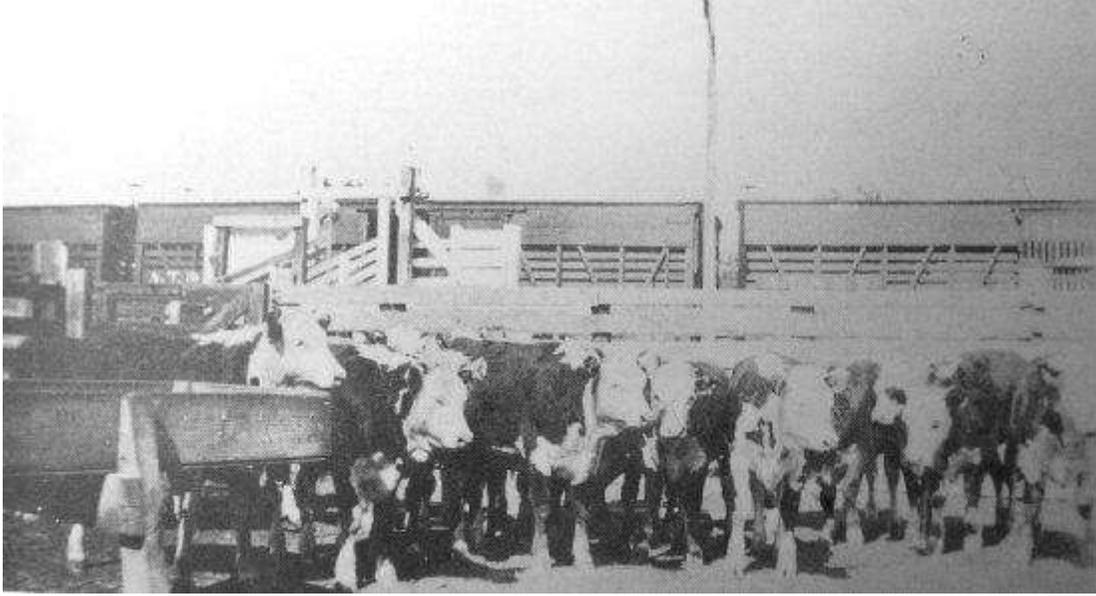


Walter Anderson photo from 1976 of the elevator



From the Lyon County Historical Archives

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Stockyard photo from the Lyon County Historical Archives.



Photo from *Santa Fe Depots of the Plains* by Frank M. Ellington.

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Additional Olpe, KS Depot Photos



Lyon County Historical Archive collection



Lyon County Historical Archive collection

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Lyon County Historical Archive collection

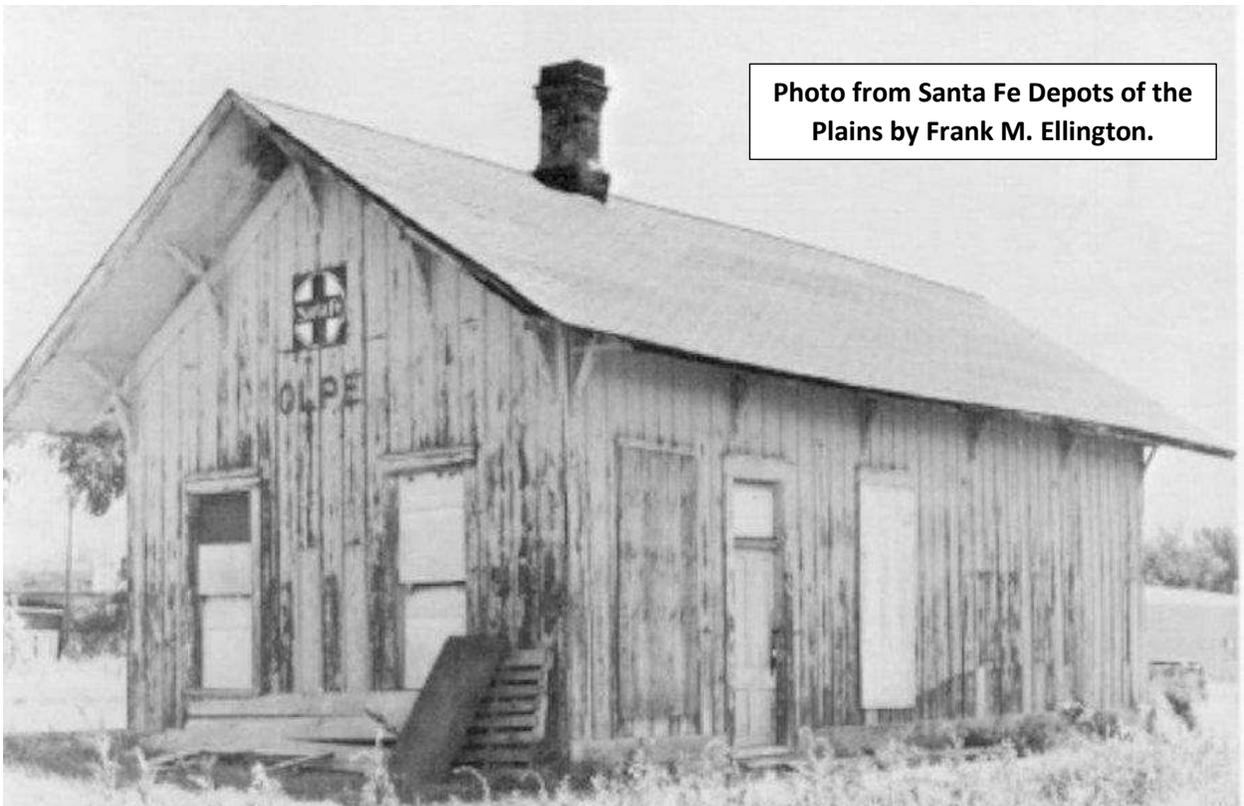


Photo from Santa Fe Depots of the Plains by Frank M. Ellington.

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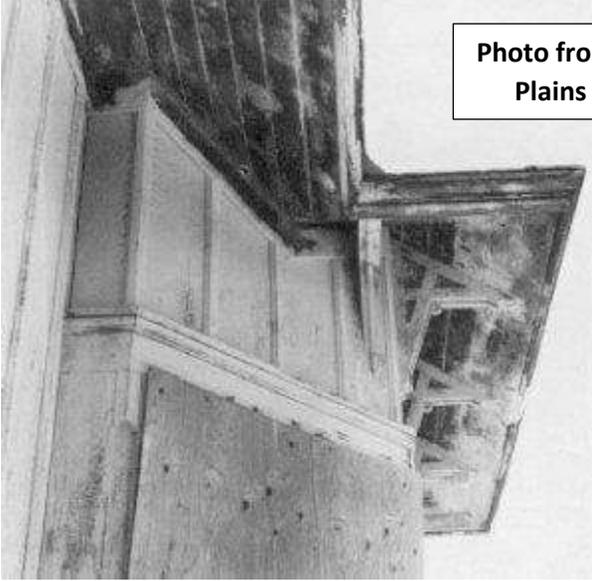


Photo from Santa Fe Depots of the Plains by Frank M. Ellington.

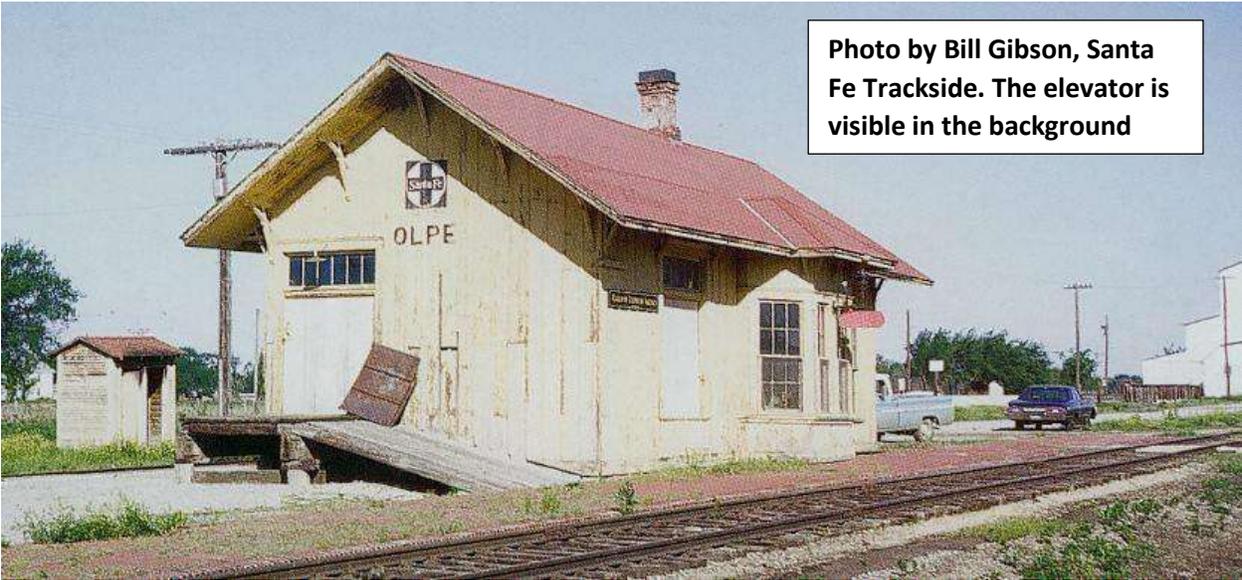
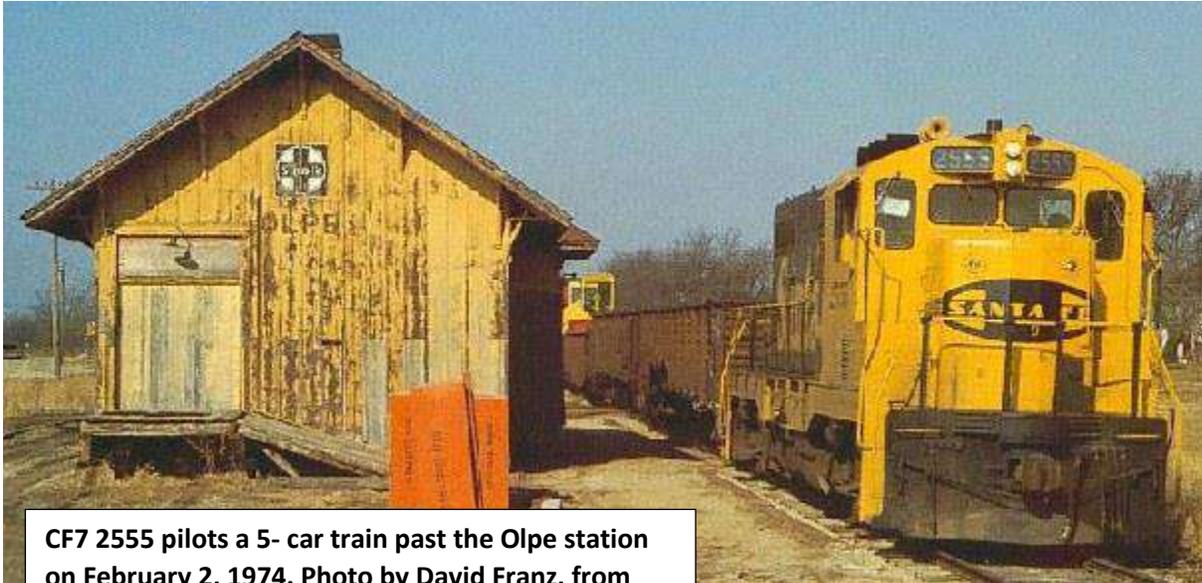
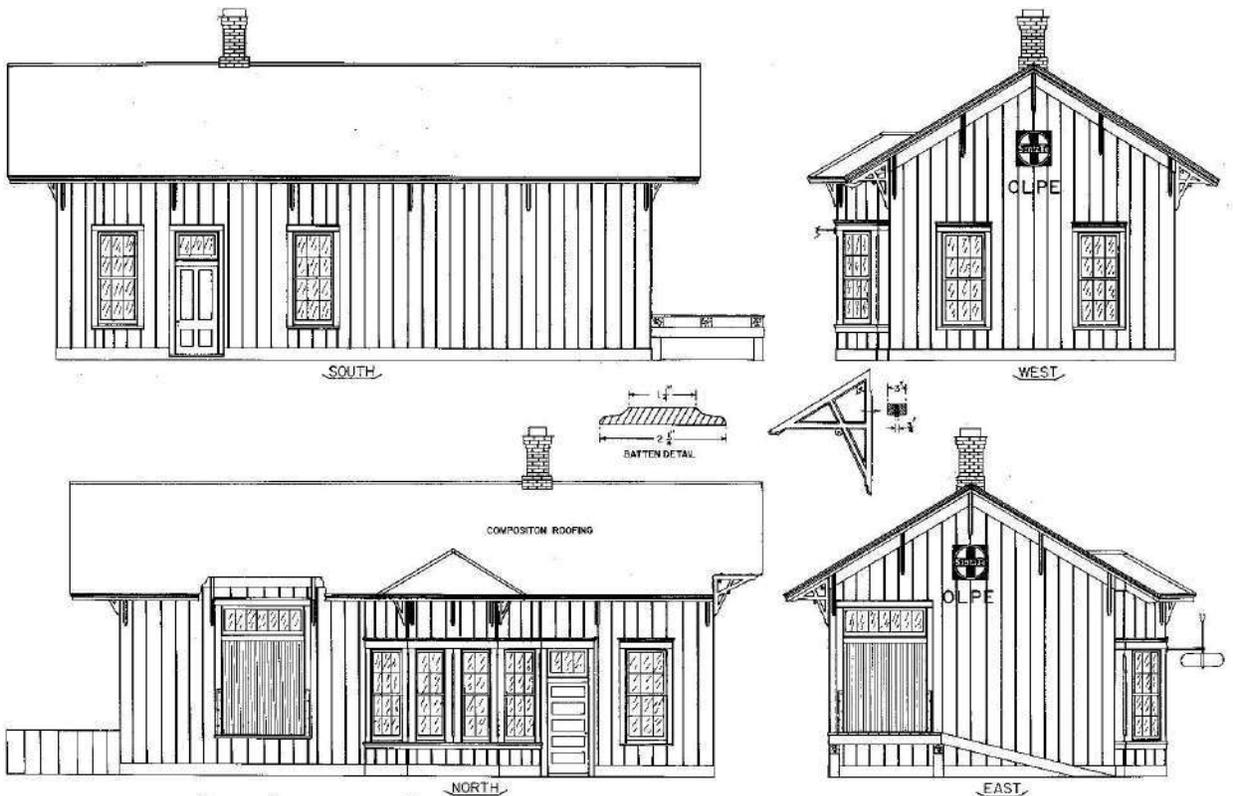


Photo by Bill Gibson, Santa Fe Trackside. The elevator is visible in the background

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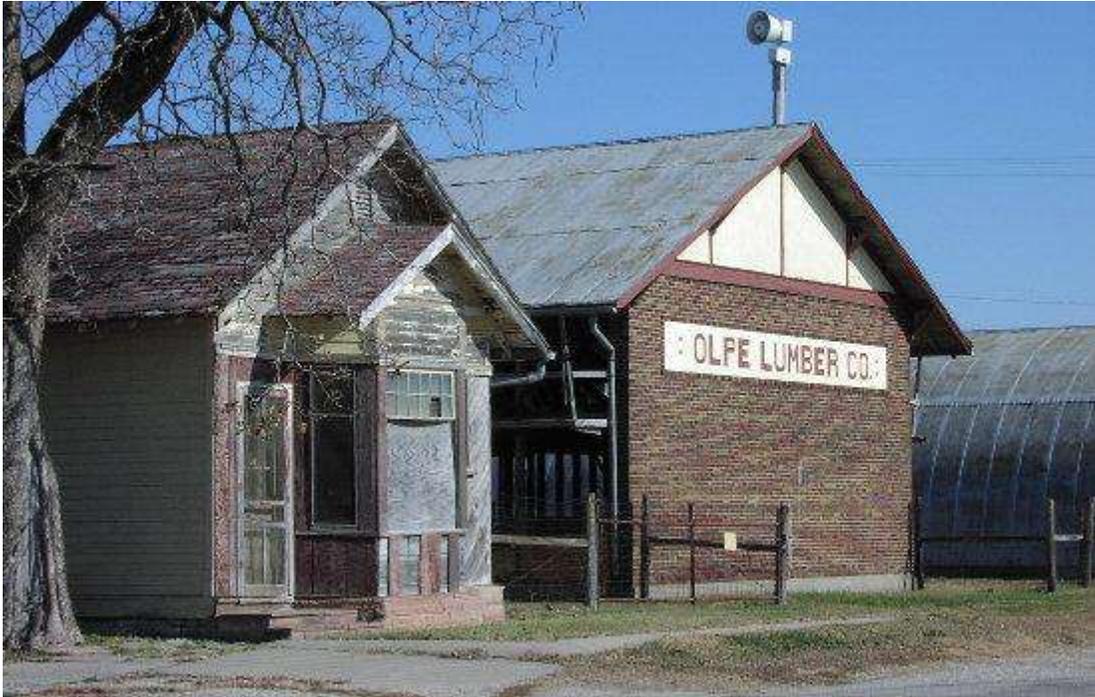


CF7 2555 pilots a 5- car train past the Olpe station on February 2, 1974. Photo by David Franz, from *Wheat Lines and Super Freights* by Joe McMillan.



Drawings from *Santa Fe Depots of the Plains* by Frank M. Ellington.

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Olpe Lumber Co, 2001, Steve Sandifer photo.

Olpe Lumber Company - These photos were taken by J. Stephen Sandifer in November 2001.



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Howard Branch: Root

"Root was a station with a stockyard between Olpe and Madison on the toughest hill going towards Emporia. The track was gone in my days, but the stock pen and a barn were still there. The old timers on the branch talk about the 2100's (RSD4) 6 axle Alco's ability to start a heavy train of rock at this location when they had to pick up a car of stock." Rod Riley

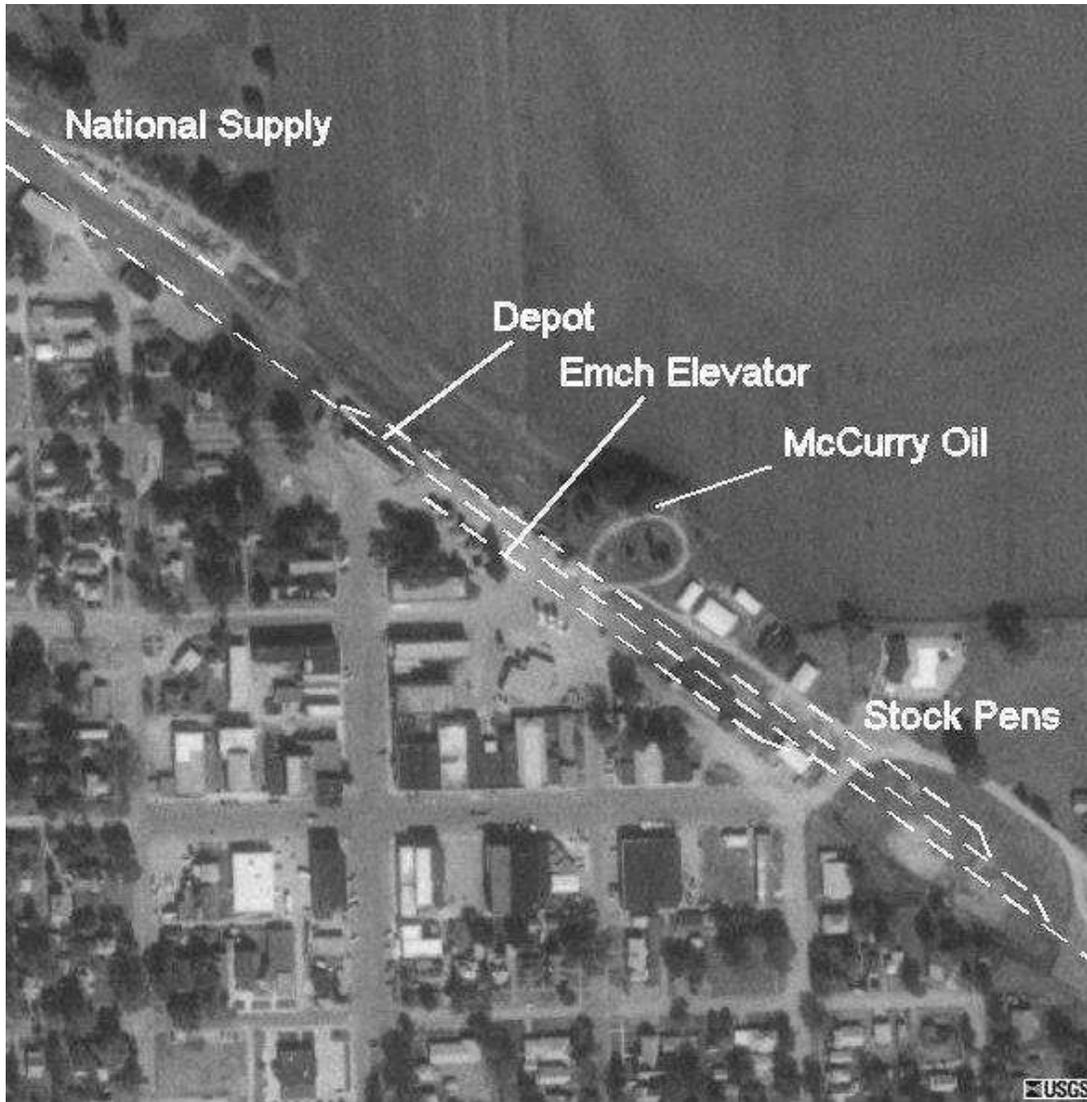
The stock yard had 14 car capacity, 5 pens, holding pens with 9 car capacity, a well, 2 holding pens, and a 10-ton scale.

I have been unable to locate Root on a map.

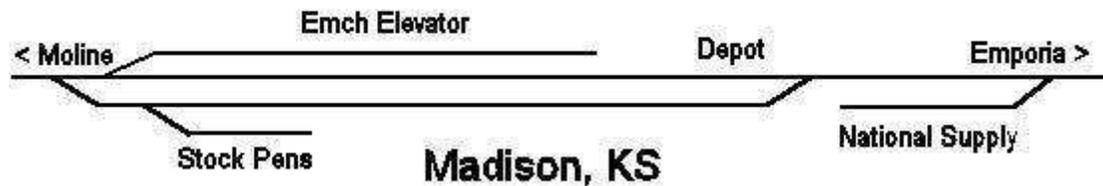
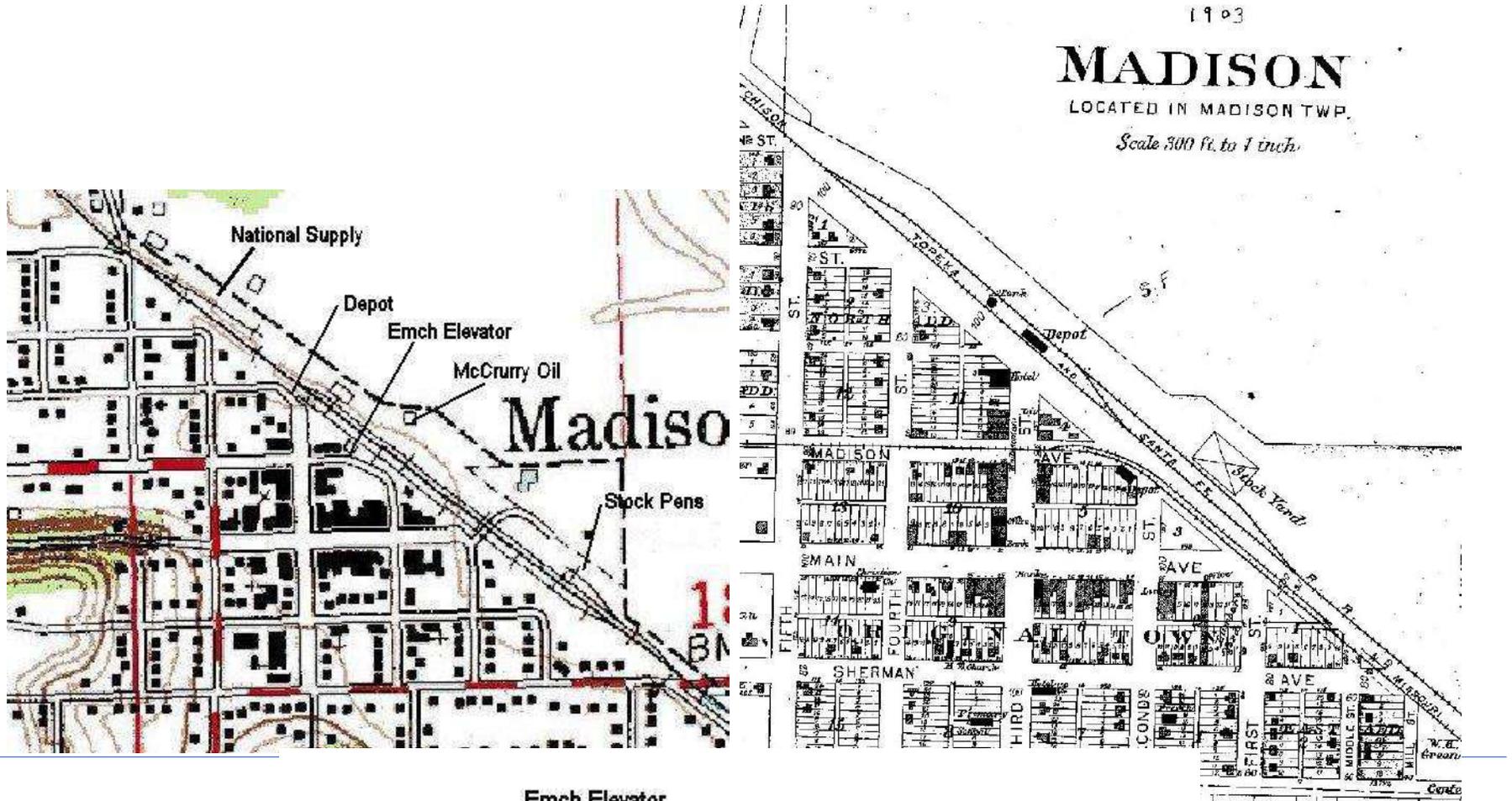
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Howard Branch: Madison

Revised 12/22/05



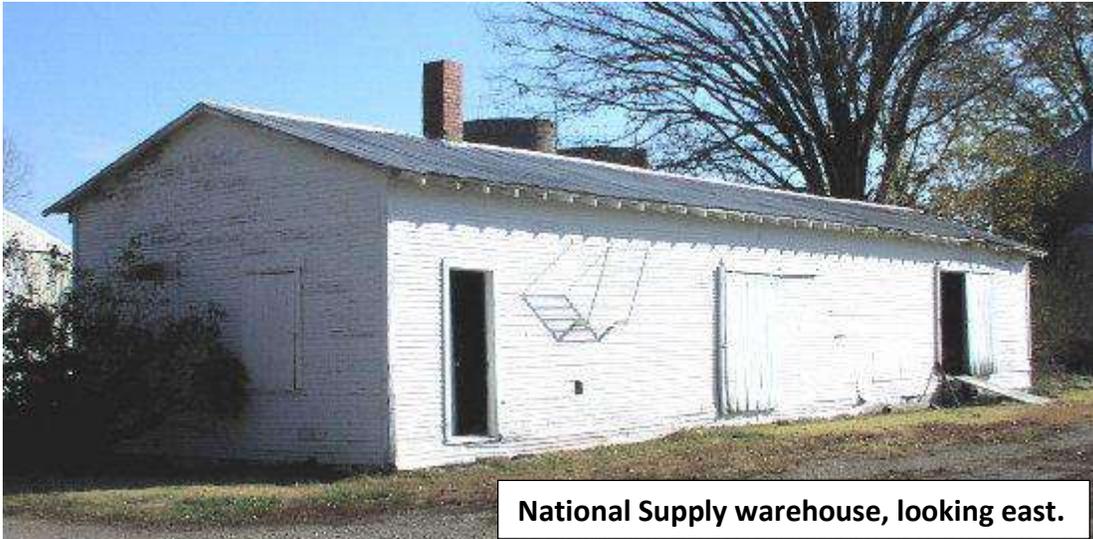
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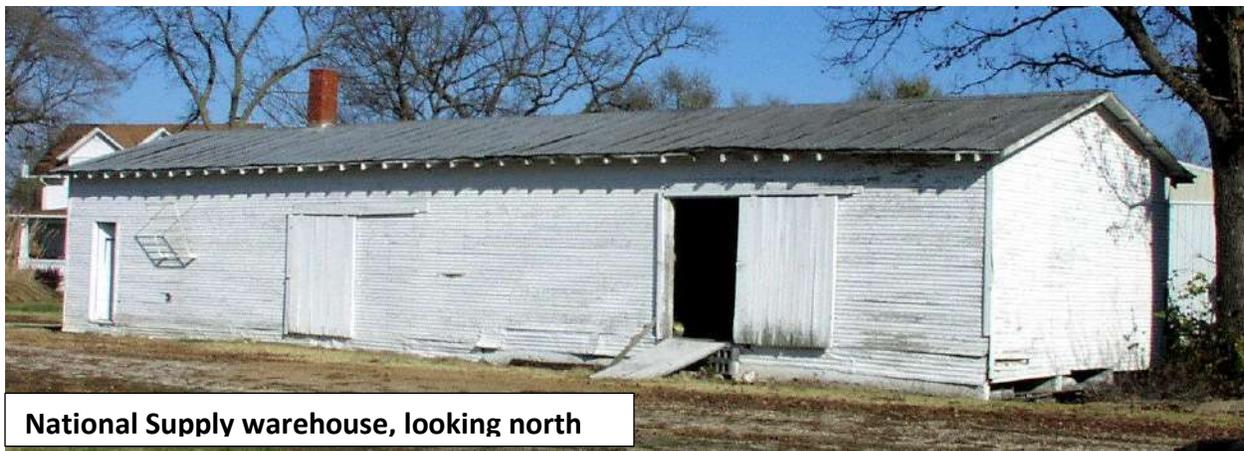
The first Santa Fe passenger train arrived in Madison on June 19, 1879, with 120 people aboard. By 1900, there were two freight and two passenger trains each day. The fare to Emporia was 42 cents. Also, in the early days, the Missouri Pacific came through Madison in 1887 and served Madison until 1942.

Madison had a spur going into Emch Elevator, a passing track across from the depot, a stock track, and a track called National Supply Spur. There also may have been another track, possibly serving Sauder Tank Co. That company originally built wooden and then steel oil storage tanks. At some point Sauder moved to Emporia.



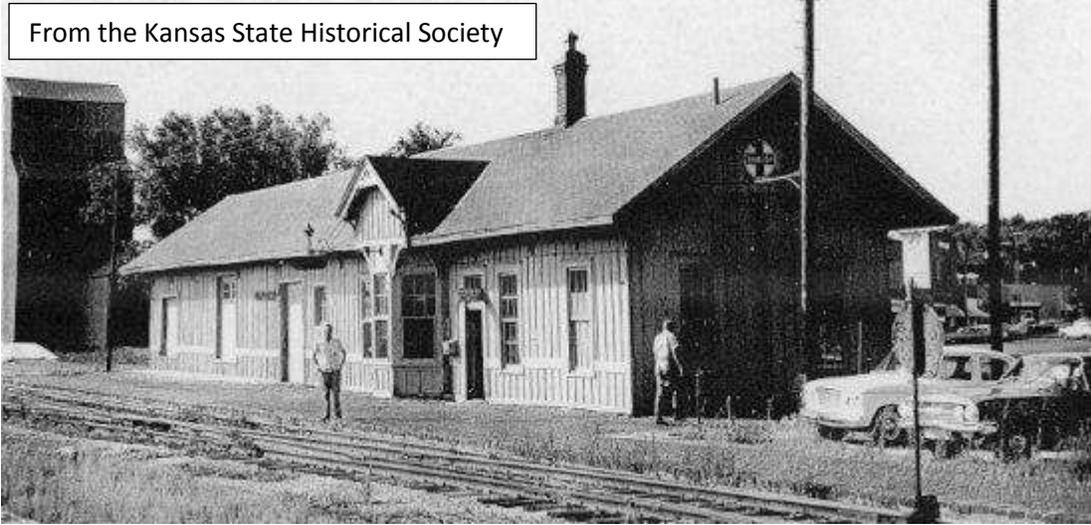
National Supply was an oil field supply company and received pipe, pump rod, pumps, and other oil field equipment. Their warehouse is all that remains of a yard which must have been filled with metal goods.

All photos by J. Stephen Sandifer, November 2001. Revised 11/30/01



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By Steve Sandifer***

From the Kansas State Historical Society



Note the Emch elevator in the background. Notice the depot is located at the switch for the house track.

The Madison depot was constructed in 1879. When it was built, the front faced in a southwesterly direction. This location was southeast of the town, and debate arose over whether to move the depot to the town, or the town to the depot. Eventually, the town moved to the depot, across from the front of the depot.

The depot was similar to but not Santa Fe Branchline Standard #3. The original building was 20'x60'. In 1915, the building was extended 8' to increase the waiting room. In 1920, an additional 32' were added to the freight room. It still stands today and has been restored as a museum and community center. It is listed on the National Register of Historical Places. Additional depot photos appear on the following pages.

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Photo, 1910, looking toward Moline. Note the train on the left. Madison Railroad Museum Collection



Madison Railroad Museum Collection.

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By Steve Sandifer*



Madison Railroad Museum Collection.



Madison Railroad Museum Collection.

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Madison Railroad Museum Collection.



This photo was taken after the expansion of 1915 and 1920. Note the Emch elevator in the background. Madison Railroad Museum Collection

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By Steve Sandifer*



The depot is located at the end of the main street of Madison. You are looking at the back side.
Kansas State Historical Society Collection



The museum prior to restoration. Madison Railroad Museum Collection.

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Howard Branch: Madison Depot as restored – Following are photos of the depot after restoration. All photos by J. Stephen Sandifer, November 2001. Revised 11/30/01



The back side faces the city



This end faces southeast

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The camera now looks in a north westly direction



The mainline side

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Looking in a southerly direction



The ticket windows

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The waiting room



The office area, now a meeting room.

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The office area



A third view of
the office area

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The freight room.

Howard Branch: Madison Emch Elevator



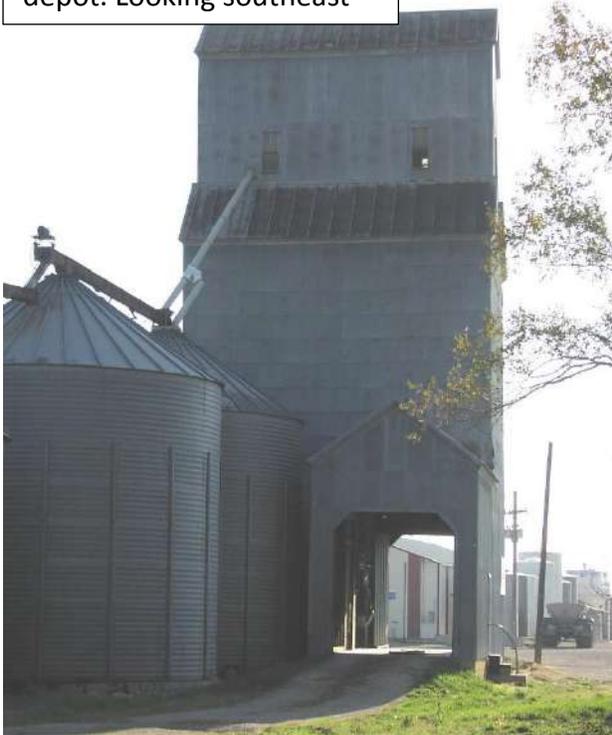
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The Emch elevator is adjacent to the depot. This view is looking northeast.

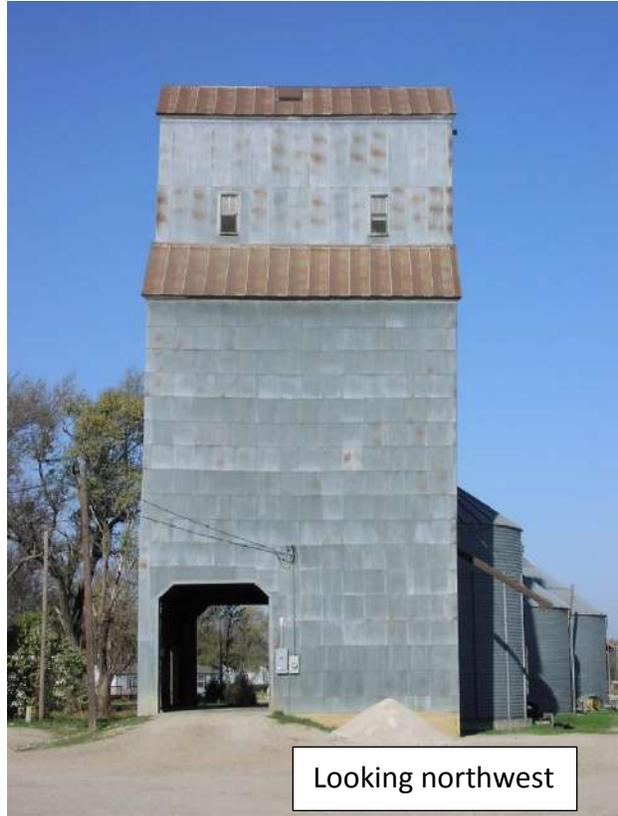


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Elevator as seen from the depot. Looking southeast



Looking northwest



Looking west.



Looking south. The circular bins are built on the old track right-of-way.



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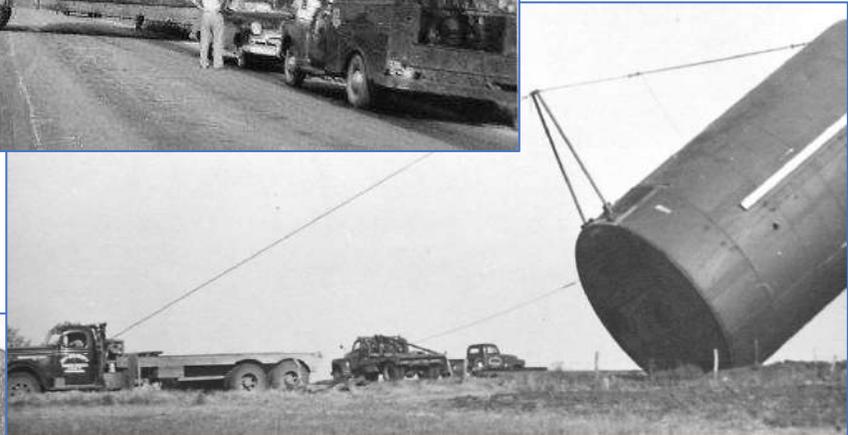
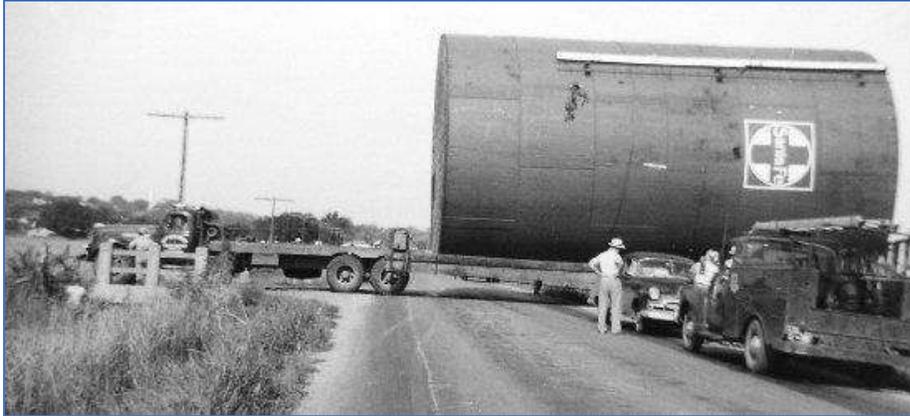


The interior of the dump area

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Howard Branch: Madison Water Tank

Madison was one of two locations between Moline and Emporia with water for the steam engines. After the close of the steam age, the water tank was moved from the railroad to the top of a hill where it served the city of Madison for many years.



Removing the water tank.
Photos from the Madison
Depot Museum.



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Howard Branch: Madison, McCurry Oil

All photos by J. Stephen Sandifer, November 2001. Revised 11/30/01

McCurry Oil was a bulk dealer just off the house track. It later became R. Noil Oil, but I don't have a date on when that took place.



Looking east at the complex

Looking east, the office / warehouse



Pump House, looking east



Pump House, looking north



Former tank racks

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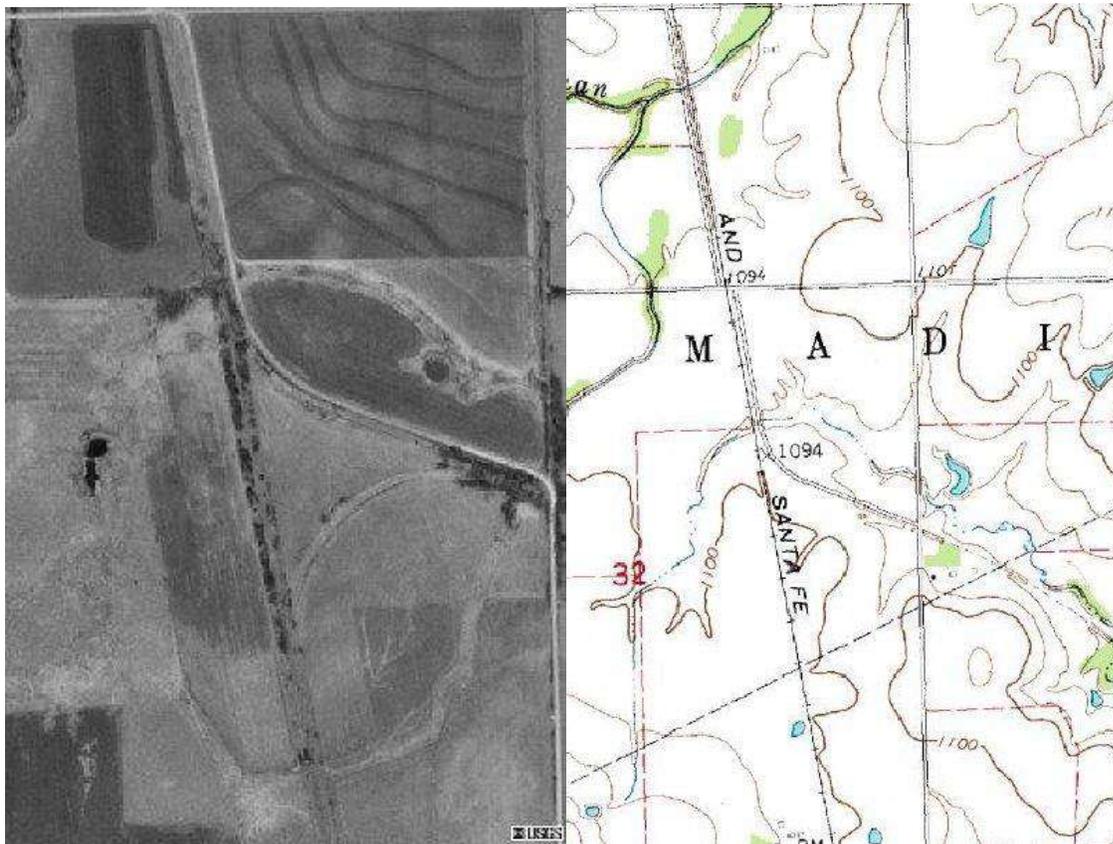
The original Madison stock pens were located in town. They were moved south of town in 1926. The newer Madison stock pens measured 147'x160' and had a 29-car capacity, 10 pens, hydrant, shed, 7 car hog pen, 6 car holding pen, 10-ton scale.

In 1894, 500 cars of cattle and hogs, 75 cars of hay, 13 cars of fescue and flax, and 18 cars of apples were shipped from Madison. The population of Madison was 749 in 1920, 1439 in 1925 because of the oil boom, and 1647 in 1930.

There was also a passing track south of town. Near the bend that connects Township Road 204 with 205 was housing for the local section crew.

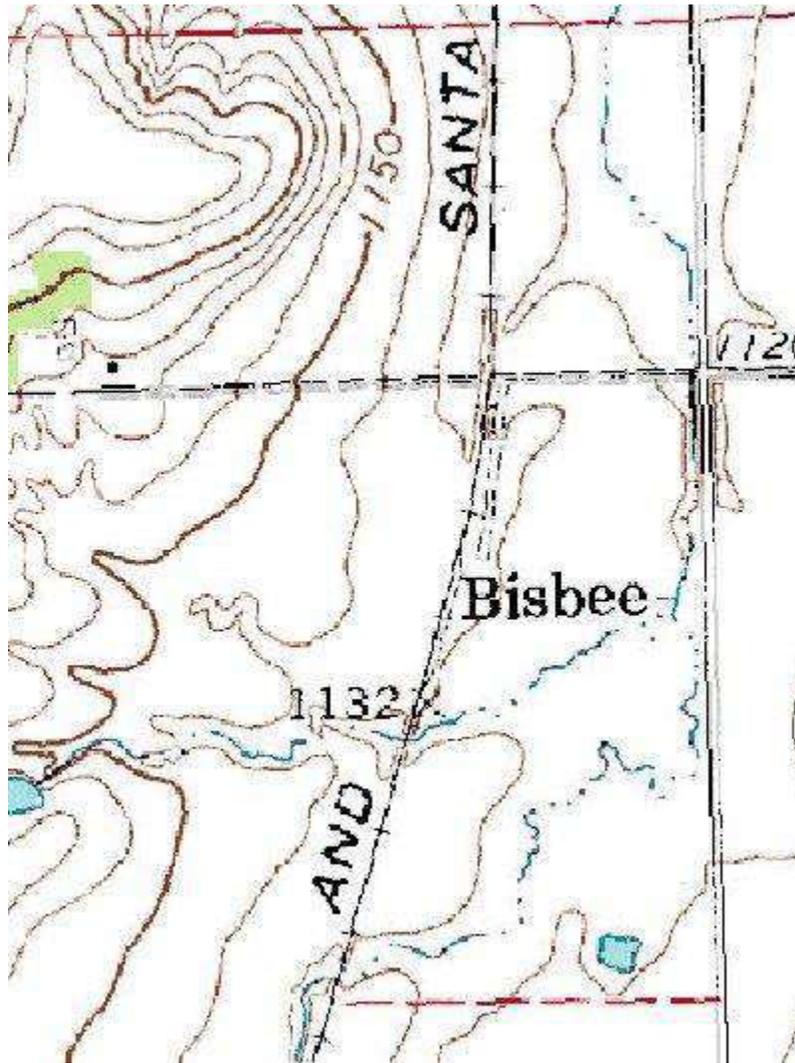
Madison Jct.

The Branch split south of Madison at Madison Junction with the easterly leg heading to Hilltop and Virgil. Originally it went all the way to the line at Benedict. In the 50s, Virgil was the end of the line. By the 70s it was gone. The TerraServer view of 1996 still shows the wye.



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Howard Branch: Bisbee



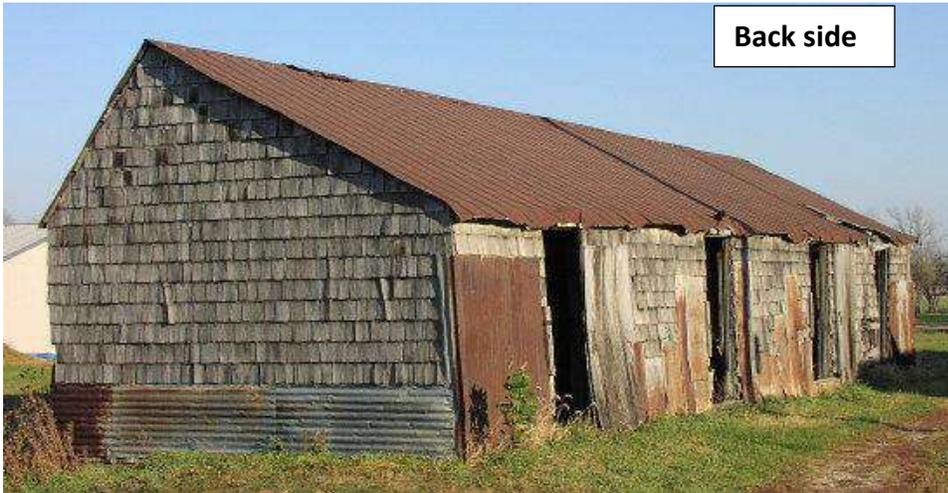
Bisbee was a stock yard with 5 car capacity, 2 pens, a holding pen with 10 car capacity, and a 5-ton scale. There was no depot. Nothing exists today.

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Rod Riley photo, 1973. The slanted roof building on the left is for coal storage. The depot is in the middle. Just left and behind the depot was a grain warehouse.

Howard Branch: Hamilton Coal bin



Coal bins of this design were common in the Midwest. This coal bin is 60' long and 14' wide. The sides are 7'3" from the ground and the peak rises to 12'6". There are 4 ground level doors (4' wide) on the back side and 4 hatches in the side of the roof facing the tracks. A gondola would be spotted by the bin and would be hand shoveled into the bin through the roof hatches.

All photos by J. Stephen Sandifer, November 2001. Revised 11/12/02

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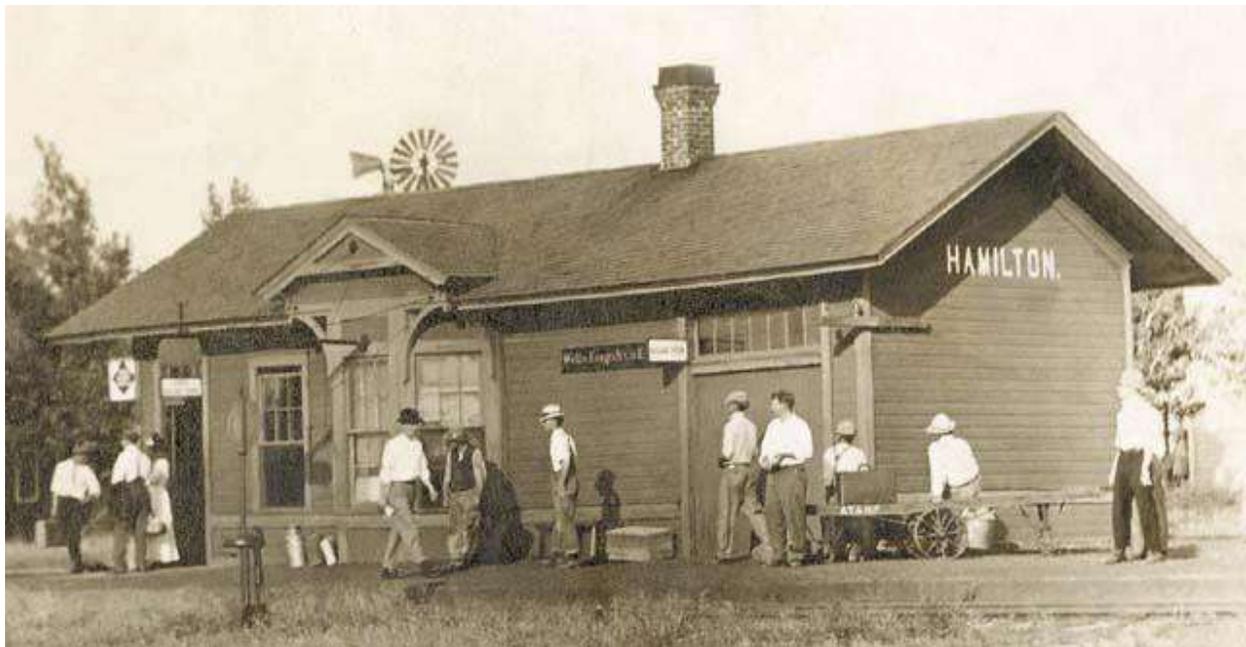
Hamilton had a house track and a siding. The siding was used for loading grain with a portable blower in the 50s.

When first founded, the town was called Fullerton. It was later changed to Hamilton.

"The warehouse at Hamilton had an ATSF boxcar still in Santa Fe paint built into it because a car derailed and demolished a shed, so the railroad gave them a boxcar which they built in. I spotted feed at it door to door. Occasional gondolas for logs were loaded on the spur." Rod Riley

Howard Branch: Hamilton Depot

The depot, a Branchline Standard #2, still stands. Two extensions were added giving a second freight door and larger waiting room.



1912 postcard view, submitted by Wilbur Schutz

The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer

All photos by J. Stephen Sandifer,
November 2001. Revised



Track side. This side faces west-northwest. Note extension on this end compared with photo above.



***The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer***

The baggage end has been extended to add a second door.



The extension shows up well on this photo. This side faced east and the house track.



Greenwood County Historical Society collection.

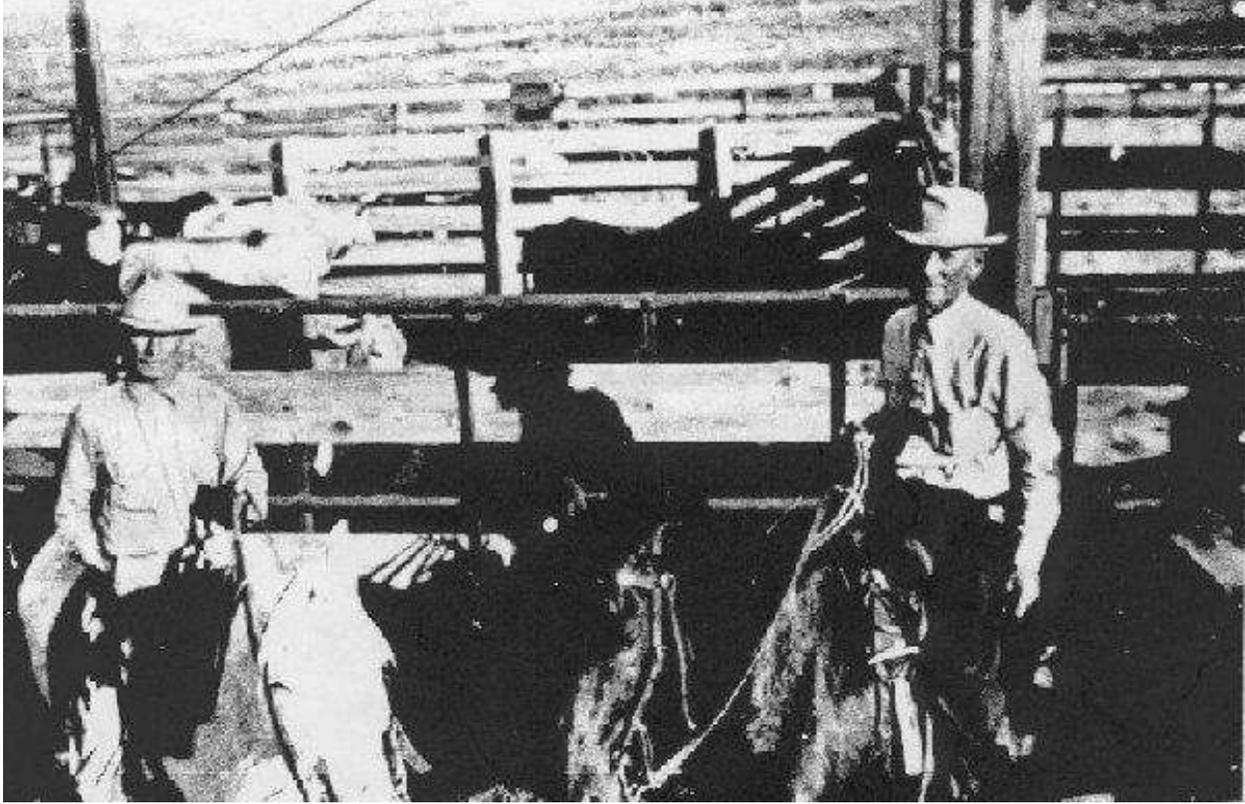
The stock yard had 31 car capacity, 10 pens, hydrant, and a 6-ton scale. A lot of cattle was loaded here in the 50s.

The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer

Howard Branch: Utopia



The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer



Bob and Cecil Parks were prominent cattlemen in Greenwood County. Greenwood County Historical Society Collection.

Utopia was a 72'x161' stockyard...gone by the 70s. It had a 14-car capacity, 7 pens, and a pump. There was no depot here.