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Niotaze Has Had Its Ups and Downs

By BEULAH MCMULLEN

NIOTAZE — What now is Niotaze mostly was prairie land before the railroads came. It has changed names several times, has had its ups and downs, had a flare as an industrial center and has settled down to a rural community.

The population at one time was better than 500. It has settled back to 134. A number of its working folks are employed in Bartlesville, Caney, Sedan and Coffeyville.

Began With Log Cabin

The town started with one log cabin in what now is the north east part of town. The land was owned by N. H. Rayl.

The village of Montanzas was started in 1872. The mother of Newton, Willie, George, Frank Rayl and Mrs. Mae Raymond, when she was a young girl, worked for Mr. and Mrs. Cal Robinson at Montanzas. The Robinsons lived in the house now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Dickey and family.

Montanzas came to be known as Jayhawk community, the first recorded town in Chautauqua County. It had a post office.

The files of the county clerk also show that the plot and field notes of the city of Niotaze were true and correct in a survey requested J. A. Clements. A. Jerone, W. S. Hamilton.

The Santa Fe Railroad built a line from Havana to Cedar Vale and laid a switch to Niotaze in 1886. Bonds in the amount of \$150,000 were voted to be used to help influence railway owners to lay track across the county.

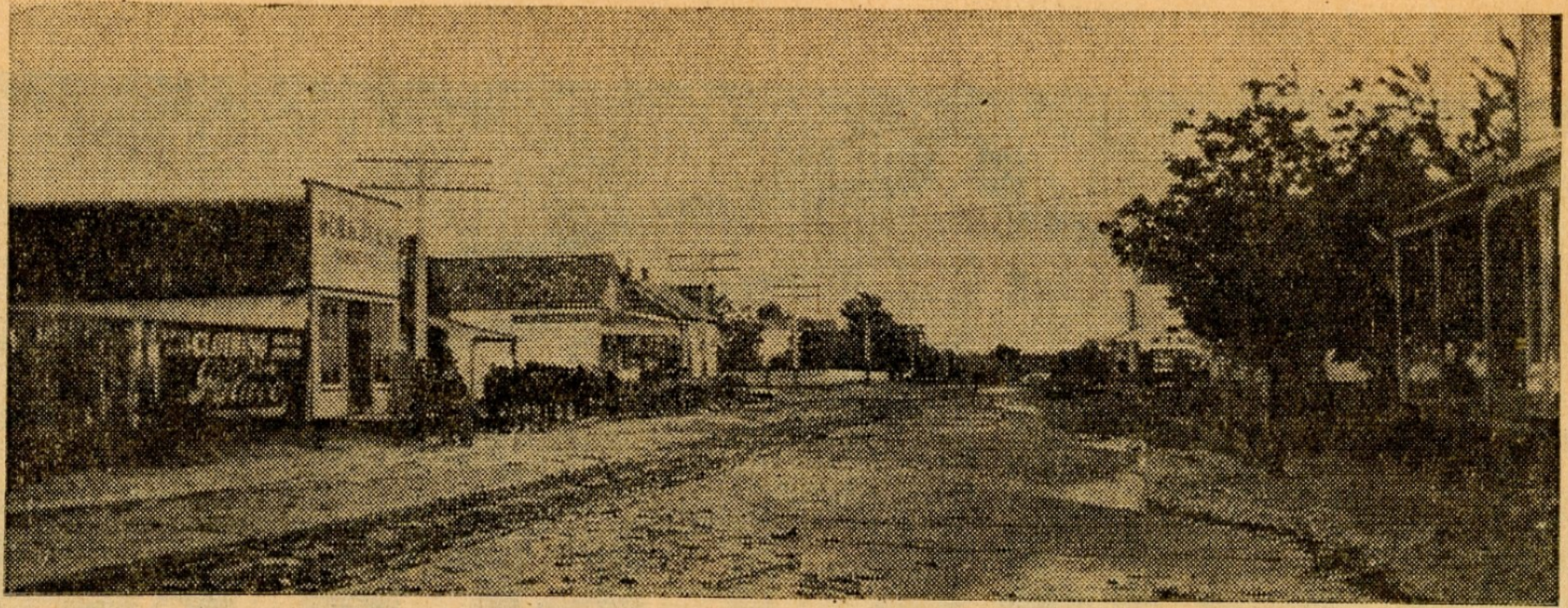
The Santa Fe laid rail to Cedar Vale in 1886. The next year the D & R Railway, later sold to the Missouri Pacific, crossed the county.

When the railway didn't come through Montanzas, the store owners moved their business to Niota, about two blocks north of the present US-166.

Between Two Hills

New houses were built and shortly the town covered the valley from hill to hill. Niota is an Indian name meaning "valley between two hills."

Mail for the town frequently was missent to Neota, Kan., so its name was changed to Newport, but the mail then went to



THIS IS EARLY DAY MAIN Street in Niotaze, looking east.

Newport, Ky. Mr. Huffman, the post master, was responsible for changing name to Niotaze in 1890, later adopted by the post office.

The first school was known at Walnut Valley, a two-room building with folding doors to permit it being used also as a church and for community gatherings. In 1899 a two-story building was erected on the present site. It was partially destroyed by fire and was replaced by a concrete building.

Paul Clements built a hotel here in 1887 and stores, blacksmith shops and other businesses followed, including cotton gins. Some men worked at the Peru tile plant. There were 100 enrolled in school then, compared to 51 this year.

At Its Peak

At its peak Niotaze had two railroads, a grain elevator, stockyards, drug store, doctor, dentist, barbershop, lumber yard, bank, livery stable, later becoming a garage, blacksmith shop, photographer, ice cream parlor, greenhouse, meat market, ice house, hardware store and pool hall, post office, grocery and merchandise stores and a refinery.

Today there are two filling stations, two grocery stores, post office (in the Mathers' grocery with Mrs. Mathers as the postmaster), modern school with cafeteria, city park, several new homes.

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