

# HISTORY OF EMPORIA AND LYON COUNTY

*by*

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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EMPORIA GAZETTE PRINT  
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Rayford Newcomb

# TOWN AND COUNTY TODAY

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## CITY WATER SYSTEM

'Dan Dryer, commissioner of public utilities of Emporia for six years, with the cooperation of the other members of the commission, solved the water problem for Emporia. In 1920 the Neosho River probably never had been so low, and the scarcity of water was the concern of every citizen. Mr. Dryer, with a gang of workmen, ditched the dry bed of the Neosho for thirty miles, across the northwestern part of Lyon County and into Morris County. With dynamite they blasted out the rocky bed, forming a channel by which the water might flow from shallow pool to shallow pool. Work on the dry and frozen river bed was extremely difficult. The men established a camp, moving from one location to another as the work progressed. Much of the rocky, frozen bed was picked and hammered out with hand tools. Often the temperature was below zero, and the men suffered from the cold.

All along the river the men opened springs, connecting them with the channel. The Ruggles dam and the Correll dam were raised and these, with the dam at the waterworks, provided three high dams. A new

'Dan Dryer died September 13, 1924. The naming of the municipal park at the waterworks in his honor was an expression of the City Commission's appreciation of his work in securing the town's water supply. Ed Mitchell was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Dryer.

filter plant was built at the waterworks, a new reservoir and a larger distributing system were installed, also a new booster tank. The three dams furnish storage capacity for 252 million gallons of water. The value of the entire water system of Emporia is \$900,000.00. This includes the entire property—the land and all appurtenances of the plant, the dams and distributing system.

In 1879 the city voted \$50,000.00 bonds for the installation of a waterworks system connecting with the Cottonwood, and the plant was established at the foot of Congress Street. In 1885 W. T. Soden applied to the courts for an injunction to prevent the city from obtaining water from the Cottonwood, as it interfered with the work of his gristmill, which was operated by water power, only a short distance below the waterworks plant. Rather than enter into what might have been prolonged litigation, the city decided to abandon the Cottonwood.

Bonds for \$162,000.00, for the construction of a waterworks plant on the Neosho River, were voted by the city in 1886, and were sold for \$158,000.00. A site for the new location was condemned, W. S. Jay, Van R. Holmes and F. E. Smith having been appointed appraisers. Dr. Thomas Armor was paid \$13,500.00 for his mill site, including the dam and all water rights. Lewis Labron received \$1,200.00 for his forty acres adjoining the mill property, and other adjacent landowners were paid in \$525.00. A dam and two reservoirs were built, and by 1889 the city had incurred a waterworks indebtedness of \$227,000.00. In 1896, the city began furnishing water to the Santa Fe and, had the supply been sufficient for the needs of both town and railroad, this arrangement would have aided ma-

terially in meeting the indebtedness. But again and again the water supply was low.

In 1891, fourteen miles of sewers and laterals had been constructed, and ten miles of water mains. The dam was raised ten feet in 1901, increasing the storage capacity from 80 millions to 110 million gallons of water. In 1929, there were fifty-two miles of water mains, in the distributing system inside the city limits, and two and one-half miles of flow line between the pumping plant at the river and the filter plant and the city limits. There are thirty-eight miles of sewer mains and laterals, and thirteen miles of storm sewers.

After many vicissitudes, many seasons of water shortage and the outlay of many large sums of money, without lasting result, and sometimes with no benefit whatever, Emporia's waterworks plant furnishes an abundant supply of water, kept pure and sanitary by chemical processes, approved by the State Board of Health. Water is sold at a reasonable rate, and in dry seasons there is no excuse for householders allowing their lawns and gardens to burn up. With this plentiful supply of water, Emporia grows yearly in the beauty of trees and shrubs and flowers and lawns.

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### EMPORIA'S PHYSICAL GROWTH

Annexed to the original town site of Emporia are between one hundred fifty and one hundred sixty additions, varying in size from a few blocks to large acreages, the city now covering two and one-half square miles. In spite of the vicissitudes of the first decade in the life of the town, records show that additions, the Ruggles and Copley, were made as early as 1867. H. E. Norton, Robert and Susannah Ruggles,