

The Winding Valley and the Craggy Hillside

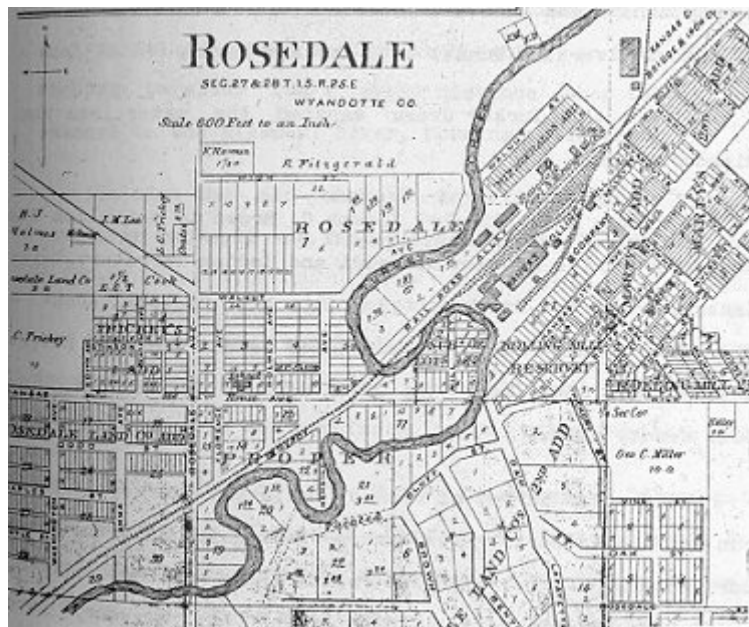
A History of the City of Rosedale, Kansas by Margaret Landis.
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Chapter VIII TURKEY CREEK and THE DIVERSION TUNNEL

"...Since there were still many Wild Turkeys along the little stream by which they were to build, it was given the name of Turkey Creek."

"To the eyes of the Beholder" Turkey Creek has been and is "to many different people many different things."



The above detail showing how Turkey Creek meandered thru Rosedale is from a map in the Official Atlas of Kansas City, 1887.

"Turkey Creek, a live, impetuous stream, meanders at will through the place seemingly priding itself on its independence in designating its own path, regardless of the points on the compass, or the predominating requirements of this expeditious age in economizing time and space by taking air line courses." (As described in the Wyandotte Herald Newspaper, January 26, 1882.)

As we know Turkey Creek today, it originates in Johnson County, Kansas and ends in Rosedale as it flows thru the Turkey Creek Diversion Tunnel into the Kaw River.

At one time Turkey Creek emptied its water into the Missouri River.

A survey made 1823 by Joseph C. Brown to establish the State Boundaries between Missouri and Indian Territory, later Kansas, shows the Creek emptying into the Missouri about a mile down stream from its confluence with the Kaw River. West of the State Line the Creek drained a watershed of about twenty miles.

1826 - The Survey of John C. Sullivan, (Survey of Jackson County, Missouri) shows Turkey Creek going into the Missouri River. Father Nicholas Points' map of 1840 showing where his parishioners lived, (Kansas City, Missouri) also shows Turkey Creek.

When Turkey Creek emptied into the Missouri river, the towns were "separated by two streams rather than one stream." The Kansas River could be crossed by boat or ferry; but Turkey Creek was impassable because it was a "narrow stream too muddy to be forded and too narrow to call for a ferry."

The Flood of 1844, the all-time record of being the largest local flood, changed the course of the Creek to become a tributary of the Kaw River near the old-water-works of Kansas City, Missouri and the Stock Yards (19th Street).

In 1856, the survey of Wyandotte County by Surveyor General J. Calhoun shows Turkey Creek going to the Kaw River, running parallel for a short distance then taking its old channel to the Missouri River, forming an island.

In time the old channel was filled either by natural causes or man-made and Turkey Creek again flowed into the Kaw River.

Rosedale was supplied, in the early days, with water from wells and cisterns for household use. Turkey Creek was the water supply for manufacturing and other domestic uses.

In the Flood of 1903, Turkey Creek was a "flood-gate." When the waters of the Kaw "backed-up" and went into Turkey Creek about 19th Street, this caused the flood in the West Bottoms along Santa Fe Street.

Turkey Creek has flooded many times in Rosedale after periods of heavy rain.

Flood Protection and the drainage of Turkey Creek was a complicated situation because of the many parties and legislation involved. Early in 1911, the idea of the Diversion Tunnel thru Greystone Heights emerged; damming the Creek and channeling the water thru the tunnel into the Kaw River.

The City of Rosedale, Kansas Ordinance #1020 approved the diversion, altering and changing the course of Turkey Creek in Rosedale. (August 1913).

There were delays and disagreement; other plans submitted and time consuming legislation.

The contract was awarded January 1918 for the "Upper Section" and the "Lower Section" of the diversion of Turkey Creek. The "Lower Section" was the work on the

diversion tunnel thru Greystone Heights Hill. The "Upper Section" was the straightening of the creek in Rosedale and a new bridge across Southwest Boulevard.



View of Turkey Creek Diversion Tunnel Under Construction - 1919



Another View Showing the Tunnel Under Construction and the Dam on the Creek

The Diversion Tunnel has well served its purpose in preventing floods beyond the "Lower Section" and some valuable land has been reclaimed.

The straightening of Turkey Creek and the work on the "Upper Section" has not been the complete answer to the problem of Turkey Creek flooding in Rosedale.

June 1, 1935 - Turkey Creek went on a rampage deluging homes and business places along the Boulevard.

In the 1930's the Work Progress Administration (WPA) worked in widening the creek and cleaned away the debris. The heavy rains of May 1937 cause the creek to swell but this time it stayed within its banks.

There was another destructive flood September 13, 1961.

There is much about this small, insignificant stream that has not been recorded.

Many will recall personal experiences of going wading or "craw-dadding" in the creek and ice-skating in the winter by the old Bath House.

Many young fellows took advantage of the "Ol' Swimming Hole" that Turkey Creek afforded by the Frisco's Number 8 Bridge. Number 8 Bridge was close to Gray's Park in back of the old Ball Park.

Early residents used to cut ice from the creek.

Some of the churches used "to do their baptizing" in the creek.

From Walnut Street, there were some large rocks in the bed of the creek that served as "Stepping Stones" for a "Short-cut" across the creek. But "When the creek was up" you had to go around.

Then to cross the "Swinging Bridge" over Turkey Creek on Henning Street in the back of the Depot.

... Or standing on the Bridge on the Boulevard tossing pebbles in the placid stream and to watch the ripples.

As it has been it will continue to be:

"Many Different Things to Many Different People!"