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Literary Connected Oklahoma Towns

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ILLUSTRATION BY NORETTA WILLIAMS

"Literary Connected

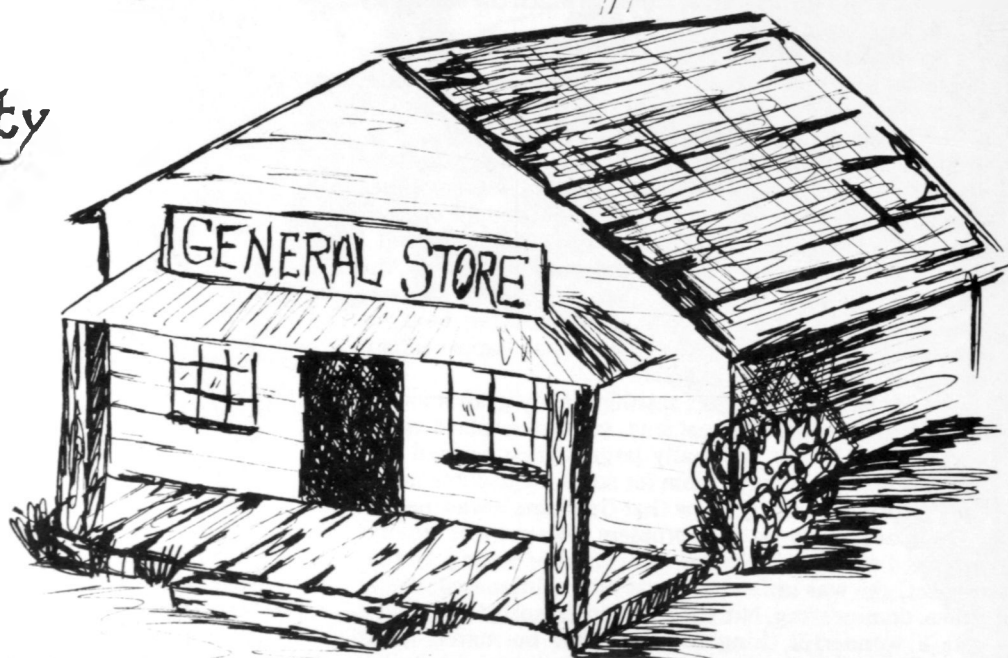
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Oklahoma

Towns "



- by OHB Garrity



WESTVIEW

Literary Connected Oklahoma Towns

Dryden, Shakespeare, Poe; Romulus, Enid, Nebo. These and other towns in Oklahoma at the turn of the century indicate at least a portion of the early cattlemen, railroaders, and homesteaders knew literature. The Bible was one of their most popular sources for names.

Ark, Antioch, Bethel, Bethany, Eden, Iconium, Kidron, Nebo, Olive. As a matter of fact, there were two Bethels, two Bethanys, and two Beulahs.

Ark in southern Love County, five miles northeast of Marietta, existed from 1895 to 1912. The word *Ark* is from the Hebrew Language and means "chest" or "box." Genesis 6:14-16 and other scriptures tell about the ark Noah built and used for a boat and the Ark of the Covenant, used for storage.

Antioch was in Garvin County, ten miles west of Pauls Valley from 1895 to 1932. The Antioch for which it was named was the site of Paul's preaching and where the disciples (of Christ) were first called Christians, Acts 11:26. Today, the same town is in Turkey as Antakya.

Bethel, a Hebrew word meaning "House of God," was in Grant County and existed from March 2 to November 2, 1895, only eight months. A second Bethel was established in McCurtain County in 1900 and still exists.

Bethel of Bible fame dates back to the twenty-first century B.C. Mentioned more than any other Biblical city, except Jerusalem, it is ten miles north of Jerusalem on the way to Shechem. Many Old Testament characters, especially Abraham, Jacob, and David, were connected with Bethel.

The Bethany in Ellis County, five miles southwest of May, had a post office from 1903 to 1906. The one joining Oklahoma on the west was established in 1913 and still exists.

In the Bible, the word *Bethany* meant "house of poverty." The town sat at the foot of the Mount of Olives about 1 3/4 miles from Jerusalem. It was the home of Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus, whom Christ raised from the dead.

Beulah was established as Sequoyah in 1871, changed to Beulah in 1909, and discontinued in 1913. Named for the postmaster's daughter, it was in present-day Rogers County, six miles northeast of Claremore.

Another Beulah was organized in 1906 by a church group in Beckham County, ten miles southeast of Sayre. It is now Carter.

In the Bible, Beulah means "married" and is derived from "Land of Beulah, a land of rest," in Isaiah 62:4. The name was given to Palestine after the exile when it was resettled and restored to God's people.

Eden in central Payne County existed from 1895 to 1902. In Genesis, Eden, or "plain" was the garden in which Adam and Eve lived, believed generally to have been in the land of Sumer near the Persian Gulf.

Iconium was in Logan County, three miles east of Meridian. Originally, the name came from the city in Asia Minor, now Konya in Turkey. It was here Paul and Barnabas converted Jews and Gentiles to Christianity.

Kidron, eight miles north of Sallisaw, was once the Marble Salt Works and remains a historic site. It existed from 1835 to 1886. Its Bible predecessor, Kedron or Cedron, meant "torrent valley" or "dark, turbid" and in the Greek suggests "cedars." It was a valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

Nebo, about eight miles south of Sulphur on Highway 177, existed from 1890 to 1922. Only a store, some ranches, and the school building, occupied by the Church of Christ, remain.

Named for Mt. Nebo, now in the Kingdom of Jordan, it was the site from which Moses surveyed the Promised Land and upon which he is believed to have been buried.

Olive in Creek County, six miles northeast of Drumright, existed from 1896 to 1938. Its Bible connection is the Mt. of Olives, separated from Jerusalem by the Kidron Valley. Four sections of the Garden of Gethsemane are on its lower reaches.

Mythology was recognized in the naming of six early-day communities: Romulus and Remus, Cupid, Eolian, Orion, and Aquila.

Romulus and Remus were close together in Pottawatomie County — Romulus, 1892 to 1918, was four miles south of Macomb, while Remus, 1893 to 1906, was four miles northwest of Maud.

In literature, these mythological twins, cast adrift on the Tiber River, were suckled by a she-wolf and raised by a shepherd. They restored the throne to Grandfather Numitor, founded Rome in 753 B.C., and wound up in another Cain and Abel conflict. Romulus killed Remus.

In keeping with mythology, Romulus, Oklahoma, outlived Remus twelve years. The only thing left of the "slayer's" namesake is a sign on Highway 177 between Tecumseh and Asher.

Cupid, in Harper County five miles southeast of Laverne, lasted from 1895 to 1916. The word means "desire." Its Roman equivalent is Eros, the Greek god of love, son of Venus and Mars. Another name for Cupid is Amor.

Eolian in western Carter County was established 1904, but changed to Joiner in 1909. It met its demise in 1918.

The name originated from Aeolus, Greek god of the wind who kept the winds in a cave on the isle of Aeolia.

Aquila was in north Dewey County, six miles south of Mutual. It lasted only five months during 1901 and 1902. A Latin word, it is the same as Boreas, another Greek god of the wind. It is also from the Constellation Eagle.

Orion, 1895-1932, was in western Major County, twelve miles northeast of Seiling. In

Greek mythology, Orion was a great hunter, also a constellation in the north sky. According to the myth, Orion loved Merope, violated her, and was blinded by her father. The sun's rays healed him.

From novels and history came two Ivanhoses, Damon, Micawber, Barkis, Phroso, Ramona, and Zenda. The first Ivanhoe lasted from 1887 to 1891 when it was changed to Custer in Custer County, honoring George Custer.

A second Ivanhoe developed in southeast Beaver County, four miles west of Slapout. It lasted from 1892 to 1920.

The name originated from Sir Walter Scott's famous romantic novel on British History, written in 1820.

Damon, in Latimer County six miles southwest of Wilburton, lasted from 1906 to 1934. The name is from a citizen of Syracuse. When Pythias was condemned to death, Damon stayed as a pledge. Pythias would return after he attended to his affairs. Dionysius was so impressed by Pythias' return that he freed both men.

Micawber, nine miles northwest of Boley in Okfuskee County, existed from 1904 to 1955. The name originated from a character created by Charles Dickens.

Another town named for Dickens' character was Barkis. Located in Greer County, it was three miles southeast of Jester, and active from 1904 to 1908.

Phroso, 1900 to 1937, was in Major County, eight miles northwest of Chester. The name originated in a novel by Anthony Hope.

That author's work inspired another Oklahoma town, Zenda, from PRISONER OF ZENDA. Now a ghost town, Zenda was in Ellis County, six miles north of Shattuck. It lasted from 1903 to 1905.

Perhaps the most romantic novel-inspired town was Ramona, at one time called Bonton. The name was changed in 1899 to honor the novel, written in 1884 by Helen Hunt Jackson. There is, also, a song, "Ramona."

Poetry and song inspired the names of Avoca, Cathay, Wanette, Enid, and Mondamin. Asher was established in 1894 as Avoca, but changed in 1901. A second Avoca appeared two miles north in 1902 and lasted to 1906. Both were in Pottawatomie County.

The name was inspired by Thomas More's poem "Sweet Vale of Avoca," which romanticized a river in Ireland.

Cathay, 1903-1914, was in McIntosh County six miles north of Eufaula. Cathay, poetic for China, was immortalized by Marco Polo. The name continues to romanticize the Far East in Cathay Airline.

Enid, in Garfield County since 1893, is said to have been taken from IDYLLS OF THE KING, written in 1859 by Tennyson.

Mondamin, 1903-1913, was in Kiowa County five miles south of Roosevelt. The word meant "corn" and was taken from "Hiawatha."

Wanette, in southern Pottawatomie County seven miles west of Asher, was established in 1894. Its name is from a once popular song "Juanita."

A newspaper and a magazine prompted the names of Sentinel and Whizbang. Sentinel, in southwest Washita County, was named in 1899 to honor the HERALD SENTINEL, published at Cloud Chief, also, in Washita County.

Whizbang, 1921-1942, was the local name for Denoya. Located in Osage County, three miles southwest of Shidler, it was tagged for Captain Billy's magazine, the "Play Boy" of the 1920s.

Seven towns honored authors: Irving, Poe, Pollock, Posey, Dryden, Shakespeare, and Zangwell.

Irving, 1892-1894, was in Lincoln County nine miles north of Chandler. The American author, Washington Irving, traveled in the area in 1832 and wrote his experience in TOUR OF THE PRAIRIE, published in 1835.

Poe was in southwest Jackson County, six miles northwest of Eldorado from 1891 to 1895. It honored Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849.

Pollock in Lincoln County, six miles southwest of Langston, was established in 1892, changed to Belton in 1893, and discontinued in 1895. It honored Sir Frederick Pollock, an Englishman of letters.

Posey was in Tulsa County, five miles northeast of Mounds, which became its successor. Posey existed from 1895 to 1898 and honored the Creek Indian poet, Alexander Posey. He lived from 1873 to 1908 when he drowned.

Dryden in Harmon County, seven miles northeast of Hollis, had a post office from 1892 to 1919. Its honoree was the English author and critic John Dryden, 1631-1700.

The town Shakespeare lasted from 1903 to 1905. It was in Sequoyah County, eleven miles northeast of Muldrow, and was named for the English dramatist William Shakespeare, 1564-1616.

Zangwill, active from 1897 to 1905, was in Southwest Garfield County, ten miles west of Bison. It honored the English author Israel Zangwill, 1864-1926, best known for THE MELTING POT, published in 1914.

Ten of the literary connected towns still exist. A glimpse of them reveals the Bethel in McCurtain County faded to some 200 inhabitants; Beulah, now Carter, has about 300, and Ivanhoe, now Custer, nearly 500.

Ramona has about 600, Mounds 800, Wanette 300, Sentinel about 1000. Only Bethany and Enid have been smiled upon by the "gods."

Bethany, with a population in the 25,000 bracket, is noted for Bethany Nazarene College, Wiley Post Air Port, and an airplane plant. It is part of the Oklahoma City Metroplex.

Enid, which became an instant city in 1893, is honored as the County seat of Garfield

County and blessed by cattle, wheat, and oil. It has Vance Air Base, Phillips University, Museum of the Cherokee Strip, lakes, parks, and has produced such notables as Clyde Cessna and Marquis James.

Reaching for 50,000 population or more, Enid, from IDYLLS OF THE KING, merits a story all its own.

Sources of Information

Kent Ruth, OKLAHOMA TRAVEL HANDBOOK, University of Oklahoma Press, 1977.

Personal visits and research.

George Shirk, OKLAHOMA PLACE NAMES, University of Oklahoma Press, 1974.

FUTURE ISSUES



SPRING, 1983. "Oklahoma Education" has long been a significant topic and should thus provide a good theme for this issue. Deadline for submissions is February 1, 1983.



SUMMER, 1983. "Ranching in Oklahoma" will be the general theme of this edition, and it will no doubt prompt many good submissions. The deadline for submissions is May 1, 1983.



FALL, 1983. The theme to be developed in this issue is "Oklahoma Pride," and the deadline for submissions is August 1, 1983.



WINTER, 1983. This issue will have the theme "Oklahoma Athletics." Submissions may deal with athletes and athletic events. Deadline: November 1, 1983.



SPRING, 1984. This issue — "Oklahoma Teachers" — will give our readers a chance to give deserved honor to outstanding Western Oklahoma educators.

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