

# BARTON COUNTY’S HISTORY

Barton County provides many services and assists with many tasks related to County operations. The County strives to serve its citizens in the most efficient way possible.

Barton County was, prior to 1872, attached to Ellsworth County for judicial and revenue purposes. In 1872, the County met the minimum population requirement of 600. At that time, on petition for Barton County landholders, Governor James M. Harvey appointed Thomas L. Morris, John H. Hubbard and George M. Berry as special County Commissioners. Great Bend was named as the temporary County seat.

On May 23, 1872, the Commissioners met and elected Morris as Chairman. They divided the County into three civil townships - Lakin, Great Bend and Buffalo. An election for the County and

township officers and for the permanent location of the County seat was ordered to be held on July 1, 1872.

Elected were L. H. Lush, John Cook and M. W. Halsey, County Commissioners; W. H. Odell, County Clerk; T. H. Morris, Register of Deeds; J. D. Howard, Clerk of the District Court; E. L. Murphy, Treasurer; D. N. Heizer, Probate Judge; J. G. Howard, County Attorney; A. C. Moses, Superintendent of Schools; John Farbow, Surveyor; George N. Moses, Sheriff; D. B. Baker, Coroner.

In the vote for the County seat, Great Bend received 144 votes, Ellinwood 22 and Zarah 33. Zarah, which was the first town started in the County, quickly disappeared.

Barton County’s previous attachment to Ellsworth created some early problems. The assessors of Ellsworth had assessed the property of Barton County and had returned their assessment book to Ellsworth County.



Photo by Mike Courson  
Barton County Courthouse.

Between the time the assessment was made and the time Barton County was officially organized, a number of Barton County property owners had paid their taxes to the treasurer of Ellsworth County. Ellsworth County refused to pay these taxes over to the new County. For

awhile, the account states, it seemed the matter would have to go to Court, “but finally an amicable agreement was entered into satisfactory to both Counties, and their disagreements were adjusted.”

In 1875, Barton County’s boundary was extended southward in a partition of

Stafford County territory. Pratt received two townships, Pawnee three and Barton three. This put Hudson, Radium, Seward and part of St. John within the borders of Barton County.

Stafford County had not yet been organized, and the legislature apparently intended that Stafford County be eliminated entirely. But the division had left two townships remaining in Stafford territory, and from this small area, Stafford County fought back.

It was in 1879 that the battle was carried to Topeka. The legislature was ready to rule in Barton County’s favor when the bill to do so went to the foot of the calendar and failed to rise before adjournment. So, instead, the matter went to the supreme court. The ruling was swift. The court referred to a constitutional provision which stated that no new county should be reduced to an area less than 432 square miles,

and the Stafford boundaries prior to 1875 were restored.

Today, Barton County is divided into 22 townships. Each township has 3 elected persons: a Trustee, a Treasurer, and a Clerk, each of whom serve a 4-year term. A list of Township Officials may be obtained in the County Clerk’s Office.

Nine cities are located in Barton County: Albert, Claflin, Ellinwood, Galatia, Great Bend, Hoisington, Olmitz, Pawnee Rock and Susank. The population of Barton County according to the U. S. Census (certified July, 2004) is 27,467.

In November, 2002, County citizens approved a referendum to add two new members to the Commission. With a total of five members, new district boundaries were submitted to then Governor Bill Graves for the appointment of the two additional members. The appointed members took office on January 13, 2003.

## BARTON COUNTY OFFICES

Each office carries out specific duties Included here are the departments, their function and where they are located.

**Courthouse**  
1400 Main, Great Bend

**Commission**  
Room 106 - First Floor, Courthouse  
Sets policies and makes decisions on all County operations.  
The Commissioners meet in Regular Session each Monday at 9:00 a.m., unless otherwise announced. Commissioners are in their office on Mondays and as the Chair announces weekly.

**County Counselor**  
Contractual Position Provides the County Commission advice on all civil matters.

**Operations / Human Resources / Finance**  
Room 107 – First Floor, Courthouse

**Operations** – Sees that policies are carried out. Oversees day-to-day operations. Responsible for preparing the Agenda for commission meetings, providing information and special reports.

**Human Resources** – Duties include recruiting and hiring of new employees, orientation of current employees, employee benefits, and retention. Responsible for biweekly payroll activities.

**Finance** – Responsible for a variety of duties relating to finance to include: tracking of the County’s financial condition; assuring compliance with state and federal agencies regarding grants, budgets and personnel; makes recommendations regarding purchasing; prepared the annual budget for Commission consideration.

**County Engineering Room**  
108 - First Floor, Courthouse

**Bridges**

- Design and Construction Inspection
- Structural Bridge Inspections

**Roadway**

- Maintenance of Roadway Records and Surveys
- Paving project Design

- Vacate Roadway and Minimum Maintenance Roadway Procedures
- Traffic Studies**
- Stop Signs, Yield Signs, Roadway signage, pavement markings
  - Intersection Safety and Sight triangle determinations
- Survey**
- Maintain Section Corner and Road Record information
  - Review all plats filed with Register of Deeds
- Storm Drainage**
- Design project improvements
  - Prepare Stream obstruction permits- Division of Water Resources
- Flood Plain**
- Maintain Base Flood Elevations (BFE) for DFIRM
  - Assist property owner submittals of following DFIRM changes
  - Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA), (CLOMA)
  - Letter of Map Revision (LOMR), (CLOMR)
  - Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT)
  - Grant Applications and Maintain and Update KDOT five year plan
  - Project Administration and Construction Engineering
- Mapping**  
Room 102 – First Flood, Courthouse
- As part of the County Engineer’s Department, the Cartographer is responsible for creating and maintaining several different sets of digital map data for various county departments as well as other government agencies and the general public. Answers questions about deed descriptions, and property boundaries and ownership. Helps maintain and update the information on the County’s website and the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway website.

## BARTON COUNTY OFFICIALS

<b>Commissioners</b> Jennifer Schartz, Chairman; Don Davis, Homer Kruckenber, Kenny Schremmer, Alicia Straub (elected)	<b>County Attorney</b> Amy Mellor (elected)
<b>Operations Director</b> Phil Hathcock	<b>Sheriff</b> Brian Bellendir (elected)
<b>Human Resources / Finance Officer</b> Matt Patzner	<b>Health Director</b> Shelly Schneider
<b>County Engineer</b> Barry McManaman	<b>Central Kansas Community Corrections Director</b> Amy Boxberger
<b>Emergency Risk Manager</b> Amy Miller	<b>20th Judicial District Juvenile Services Director</b> Marissa Woodmansee
<b>County Appraiser</b> Barb Esfeld	<b>Communications Director</b> Dena Popp
<b>Treasurer</b> Kevin Wondra. James Jordan takes office October 10, 2017. (elected)	<b>County Works Director</b> Darren Williams
<b>Information Technology</b> John Debes	<b>Environmental Management Director</b> Judy Goreham
<b>County Clerk / Election Officer</b> Donna Zimmerman (elected)	<b>Solid Waste Director</b> Phil Hathcock
<b>Register of Deeds</b> Pam Wornkey (elected)	<b>County Counselor</b> Carey Hipp, Sherman, Hoffman and Hipp LC

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