

Raymond - the oldest town in Rice County

by Kelly Young
Raymond has the distinction of being the oldest town in the history of Rice County not to have changed its name or location. It was established in 1871 in the southwest corner of the county with the completion of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. The town was named after Emmus Raymond, a railroad official.

Believe it or not, at one time, the population of Raymond rose to four to five hundred people. This happened when it became the inspection point for cattle on the Chisholm Trail heading to the Union Pacific Railroad at Ellsworth. This famous route is said by local historians to cross the Santa Fe Trail not once but twice before reaching Ellsworth.

Raymond became a cowtown at this point and was known as one of the wickedest towns in the country. The cowtown had become a rendezvous for cowboys, gamblers, and the restless types with its thirteen saloons. At the height of prosper-

ity, the only three story structure in town was built. This hotel, the American House, soon became the center of social activity. On more than one occasion, a group of rowdy cowboys would shoot out the bright lights on the chandeliers and many mirrors. Bullets could be found in building walls years after the fights were finished.

The end of this period came when homesteaders forced the cowboys, by law and barbed wire fence, to go farther west. Then in 1922, the American House was torn down.

Raymond fell victim to a series of fires on the west side of the main street between 1904 and 1905. The buildings were burned one by one with an uncanny regularity. Out of these fires, a brick business section was constructed.

Over the years businesses came and went. Following are a few examples. George Gill began a drug and grocery store in 1907 which also held the Raymond post

office until 1946. At this time, it was moved to the building next door.

In 1909, the F.H. Brown Store was bought out by Brace Sledd and

became known as the Sledd Store. This building was torn down in 1970 and the Brown House Cafe was built and named after the pioneer

owners. The Raymond State Bank started in the spring of 1906. It was one of the first banks in the county to take advantage of the

state's legislature guaranteeing bank deposits. Only a few businesses remain, but Raymond still survives as the oldest town in Rice County.

Origins of Rice County

By DAN NEWBY

Had it not been for the Civil War and the Battle of Jenkins Ferry, there would be no "Rice County," today.

During the 1860s and 1870s, many newly-formed Kansas counties were named for notable government officials, railroad leaders and Civil War military officers. The latter was the case for Rice County.

Samuel Allen Rice, state attorney general for Iowa, was named governor to command the newly-formed 33rd Regiment of Iowa Volunteers (1862) at the onset of the Civil War.

"Although he was married and never had so much as seen a copy of the book of military tactics, he accepted the appointment. He immediately fell to studying available military manuals and took command of the regiment as a colonel. (Horace Jones, Up From the Sod)



Rice's first taste of battle was at Helena, Ark. (1863) when he defended an "entrenched fortress," against gallant attacks by the Confederate soldiers of generals Holmes and Price. Rice was promoted to the rank of brigadier general because of his successful leadership in this engagement.

Rice received notoriety for his acts of bravery, but also met a tragic fate at the Battle of Jenkins Ferry (1864). Under the leadership of Maj. General Frederick Steele, Rice was part of the Red River Campaign (Spring 1864), which called for the ouster of all Confederate forces of General Smith from Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas.

Steele planned to march south from Little Rock toward Louisiana to meet and combine forces with Major General Nathaniel Banks, coming up from the south.

However, Steele ran into complications and skirmishes with the Confederate forces along the way

and was forced to retreat. During this long retreat, the Union troops' flight to Little Rock was halted at the Saline River.

"Before nightfall rebel troops were shooting and slashing at the bedraggled tail of the [Union] column. By that time though, the vanguard had reached the Saline at Jenkins Ferry, and the engineers were getting their pontoons launched, linked and floored, while other details worked at corduroying the two-mile long approach across the bottoms giving down upon the river; beyond which these stretched another just as long and just as mean.

Such labor was too heavy for troops in this condition, faint for sleep as well as food. While they strained at cutting and placing timbers Steele's chief engineer afterwards reported, "wagons settled to the axles and mules floundered about without a resting place for their feet."

After dark, he added, the work continued by the light of fires and "every exertion [was] made to push the impediments across before daylight, it being evident that the enemy was in force in our rear. But we failed. The rain came down in torrents, putting out many of the fires, the men became exhausted, and both they and the animals sank down in the mud and mire, wherever they were, to seek a few hours repose." (Shelby Foote, The Civil War)

Rice was selected to defend the point on the left side while the main body of troops crossed over. He and his men had their backs to a swollen river. They fought off charge after charge by vastly superior forces, sometimes engulfed in a thick morning fog.

"For six hours he [Rice] roamed the field upon his roan mount, carrying cheer and encouragement to his men with his coolness. At length he was struck in the foot by a mini ball which hit the buckle of the spur on his right foot and carried it into the wound. The buckle

remained there unnoticed for a week. (Horace Jones, Up From the Sod)

While the buckle lodged in the bone of his heel blood poisoning developed. He became seriously ill and was sent home to Oskaloosa, Iowa, where he died during surgery.

It is interesting to note the peculiar incident that contributed to his death:

"The day before he was wounded he had noticed that he was wearing his spurs buckled on the inside of his feet, while fellow officers buckled theirs on the outside. He mentioned this to a companion and remarked that he would follow the common practice after that. (Horace Jones, The Story of Rice County)

Rice sat down on a log and changed them then and there. Had he not done so the buckle would not have been carried into his foot, therefore avoiding possible infection.

"So -- you're still asking, "How did our county get his name?"

"After all, Rice was not even a Kansan, right?"

"Fighting next to General Rice at Jenkins Ferry was Samuel J. Crawford of Kansas, colonel of the Second Kansas Colored Regiment:

"At one stage of the battle, Rice needed reinforcements and called upon Crawford, inquiring whether he believed his men would stand firm on the firing line. Crawford assured Rice saying, 'Just try them.'

Rice accepted his word for it, and the men were thrown into the engagement and fought gloriously (Horace Jones, Up From the Sod)

Samuel J. Crawford became the Kansas Governor after the war. He named a newly-organized county in 1867 out of respect for Samuel A. Rice. Rice County was officially organized Aug. 18, 1871.

His men, officers and those who knew him held Rice in the highest esteem. After his death, he was honored as major general for his gallantry and leadership at the Battle of Jenkins Ferry and other notable skirmishes during the Civil War.



The Raymond post office exterior has not changed much over the years

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RV Campgrounds
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Sterling College
Cooper Hall

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Museum
Santa Fe Trail
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Ralph's Ruts
Historic Court House
Veteran's Memorial

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BUSHTON
CHASE
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LITTLE RIVER
LYONS
RAYMOND
STERLING

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Fashions
Women's Accessories
Boutiques
Specialty Shops
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