

# A Colorful History

The City of Shawnee was originally a campsite named Gum Springs. It was later named Shawneetown for the Shawnee tribe that was forced to relocate here in the late 1820's from Ohio.

The Shawnee farmed the area, yet in 1854, they sold most of their allotted 1,600,000 acres to the United States government. This opened Kansas Territory for White settlement and Gum Springs grew rapidly.

The area was platted in 1856 and served as Johnson County's first county seat. In 1859, the Shawnee Town Company began selling lots priced from \$15 to \$100, with those surrounding the public square commanding the highest prices. The Town of Shawnee was officially incorporated in 1860, but conflict between pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions plagued the new town.

After the Civil War, Shawnee and the surrounding countryside settled down to peaceful farming, growing from a population of 500 in 1860 to 2600 in 1880. Many area farmers specialized in growing fruits and vegetables that were transported to market in Kansas City, Missouri first by wagon and then by truck.

Shawnee remained a stable farm center and small community well into the 1950s. The town accommodated the growth of local businesses, saw the arrival and demise of a trolley line and the growing use of automobiles. Street names and buildings have changed, but traces of the past remain.

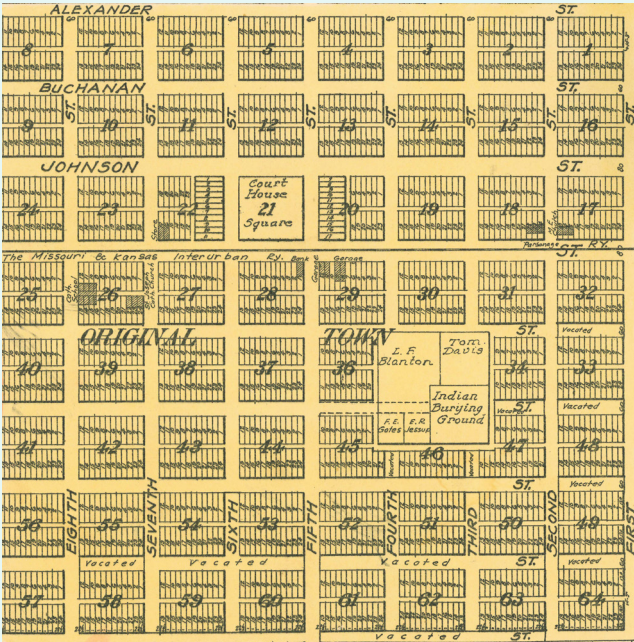
# Your Town and Our Town

If you have photos, stories or objects that would help illustrate Shawnee's history, please contact Shawnee Town 1929 at 913.248.2360 or [www.shawneetown.org](http://www.shawneetown.org).

All funding, content, and design for this project is provided by City of Shawnee, City staff and museum consultants.

The walking tour is 1.1 miles.

## Shawnee Plat Map 1922



## Photo Credits

- Town Square Gazebo July 4, 1897 courtesy of Greg Reike
- Shawnee State Savings Bank, 1911 Shawnee Town 1929 Collection
- Tom Davis Store c. 1920 Shawnee Town Collection
- Garrett Grocery, 1930 courtesy of the Garrett Family
- Shawnee Grade School, 1933 courtesy of Clena Wilson
- Chief Charles Bluejacket, c. 1890 Shawnee Town 1929 Collection
- Bousman's Barber Shop, 1922 courtesy of Gary Yantis
- Archer Dry Goods, c. 1860 courtesy Johnson County Museum
- Standard Atlas of Johnson County 1922, Shawnee Town 1929 Collection

# Shawnee Downtown Historical Walking Tour



**1** City Hall  
Johnson Drive and Nieman

**2** Shawnee State Savings Bank  
Tom Davis's Dry Goods Store  
Citizens Protective Association Building  
Geysels Building  
Mission Theater  
Bill Gastl  
Goddard Electric Company  
Gastl Coal and Feed  
Johnson Drive from Nieman to Barton Street

**3** Quantrill's Raid Marker  
SW corner of City Hall parking lot,  
Johnson Drive and Barton

**4** Garrett Grocery  
Shawnee Public School  
West along Johnson Drive,  
Barton to Flint Street

**5** Chief Bluejacket Sculpture Plaza and Garden  
Herman Laird Park  
Johnson Drive and Cody, NE corner

**6** Shawnee Town 1929  
Pantel's Mill  
57<sup>th</sup> Street, Cody to King

**7** Hollenback General Store  
58<sup>th</sup> Street, Barton to Nieman

**8** Dr. Henry and Helen Sullivan's house  
George and Mary Bousman  
Home Telephone Company  
Homer Bousman's Barber Shop  
A.J. Blattman's Dry Goods Store  
Joseph Yotz's Typewriter Repair Shop  
Thomas Archer Dry Goods & Groceries  
Clarence "Red" Hartman  
Nieman Road, 58<sup>th</sup> Street to Johnson Drive



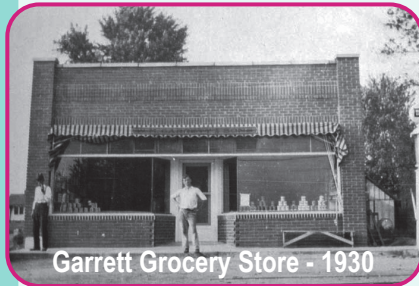
Town Square Gazebo - July 4, 1897



Shawnee State Bank - 1911



Bouseman Barber Shop - 1922



Garrett Grocery Store - 1930

57<sup>TH</sup> STREET

6

57<sup>TH</sup> Terrace

CODY

Flint

KING

Barton

7

58<sup>TH</sup> STREET

1

City Hall

8

NIEMAN

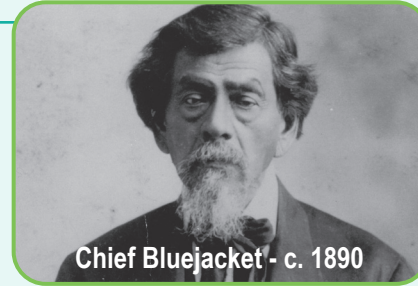
5

4

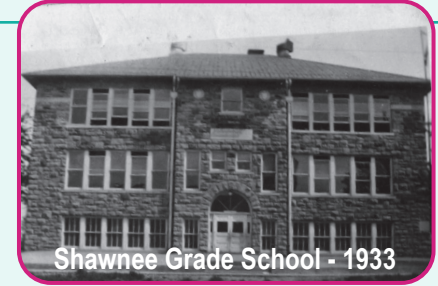
3

2

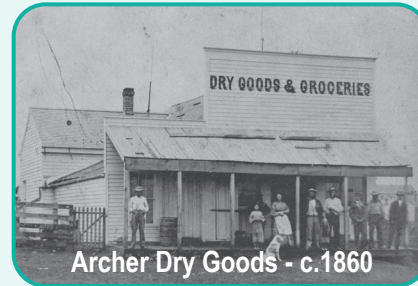
JOHNSON DRIVE



Chief Bluejacket - c. 1890



Shawnee Grade School - 1933



Archer Dry Goods - c.1860



Tom Davis Store - c. 1920

# Shawnee Downtown Historical Walking Tour

Walking tour is 1.1 miles

## 1 City Hall, Johnson Drive and Nieman

The heart of early Shawnee was the public square, where City Hall stands now. Beginning in the 1880s, the square was a park with a gazebo and shade trees. From 1908 to 1930, an interurban rail line stopped here for passengers, transporting riders and produce into Kansas City. In the 1940's the square became a tennis court, and in the winter served as an ice hockey rink.

The first Shawnee City Hall was built on the square in 1960 and has been expanded several times. In 1992 artist Charles Goslin added murals to the lobby to illustrate Shawnee's rich history. A free brochure is available from the City Clerk's office inside.

## 2 Johnson Drive from Nieman to Barton Street

Shawnee's earliest business district was located on the south side of Main Street, now Johnson Drive. Local legend has it that late one night in 1874, Henry Earnshaw repaired shoes on Jesse James' horse in his blacksmith shop at this corner. Jesse and Frank James, along with Cole Younger sought Earnshaw's help at gunpoint after robbing a train at Muncie Station, just north in Wyandotte County.

Shops were added to the strip to include a grocery store, drug store, barber shop, town hall and bank. In 1914, fire destroyed most of the block. The blaze caused \$25,000 in damage, destroying all but the stone Shawnee State Savings Bank. The block was gradually rebuilt with fireproof buildings.

The **Shawnee State Savings Bank** was built in 1908 on the southwest corner of Nieman and Johnson Drive. Robbers targeted the bank twice. First, the night of May 17, 1909, thieves broke in and blew up the safe. The second robbery took place during the day of December 7, 1932. Two men entered the bank and ordered the till opened at gunpoint. The thieves tripped the bank's alarm system, and were caught after a car chase and gunfight. Tom Davis, owner of **Tom Davis's Dry Goods Store** next door, aided in the recovery of the money and the apprehension of the robbers. Located just west of the bank, his store included the license bureau and a coal office.

The **Citizens Protective Association Building** was built after the 1914 fire. The CPA was formed in 1865 to protect the property and livestock of the members. Businesses, such as a grocery and restaurant, were located in the first story of this building. The second story had meeting rooms and a dance hall.

The **Geysels Building** at 11113 Johnson Drive had a hardware store in the early 1920's and a barber shop in the late 1920's.

The **Mission Theater** was opened in 1927 by Marion Summerour, Shawnee's third mayor. In the late 1920's, Lloyd Charpie ran the Mission Theater Barber Shop in the east half of the theater lobby and Lois Meyer DeWitt owned the Mission Beauty Shop on the mezzanine. In 1940, it was sold to the Dickinson Company, which reopened it as the Aztec in 1941. The Aztec closed in 1974 and remained shuttered for over four decades. In 2020, the renovated theatre opened once more for movies, concerts and events.

**Bill Gastl** purchased the property next to the theater in 1922 and opened a hardware store. The **Goddard Electric Company** moved into the building in 1927, selling crystal and battery radio sets and electric appliances, including washing machines.

**Gastl Coal and Feed** was built on the southeast corner of Barton and Johnson Drive in the early 1920's by Bill Gastl. The store sold farming supplies, including seeds, coal, chicken feed, and clothing. The lots behind the business contained a chicken hatchery, coal yard and hay barn. Today the tile brick building is covered with modern stucco, but the Nutrena sign painted on the tile of the west wall is still visible.

## 3 SW corner of City Hall parking lot, Johnson Drive and Barton

### Quantrill's Raid Marker

On October 17, 1862, William Clarke Quantrill and around 140 pro-Confederacy guerillas from Missouri stormed into town and corralled Shawnee residents in the square. Two men were killed, and 15-20 buildings were selectively burned. The summer of 1863, Quantrill and his gang returned to Shawnee, scouting an escape route for their planned attack on Lawrence. Approximately 150 Lawrence residents were killed in that raid on August 21, 1863.

## 4 West along Johnson Drive, Barton to Flint Street

**Garrett Grocery**, northeast corner King and Johnson Drive. In 1913, William Garrett bought a grocery store from Homer Bousman. Renovated in 1929, the store had a gas pump and provided grocery delivery. Expanded in 1967, Garrett's Food Mart operated in this location until the mid-1980s. The current building retains much of its original appearance.

### Shawnee Public School

Shawnee's first public school, a brick building, was located on the northwest corner of King and Johnson Drive. Replaced in 1893 by a five-room wood frame building, one first floor room was used solely by Black students. Around 1907, Black students were moved to the segregated Dunbar School at 57th and Reeder Streets. The frame school was replaced in 1922 by an eight room stone building that was later demolished.

## 5 Johnson Drive and Cody, NE corner

### Chief Bluejacket Sculpture Plaza and Garden, Herman Laird Park

Charles Bluejacket, a Shawnee Indian, moved here in 1832. He helped negotiate the 1854 treaty that reduced Shawnee land holdings and in the 1860's, he was elected chief of the Shawnee. In 1871, he moved with his family to Oklahoma. Chief Bluejacket has two wives and five children buried in the Shawnee Indian Cemetery at the west end of 59th Terrace. This sculpture by Charles Goslin was dedicated in 2003.

Herman Laird (1913-2000) served for 11 years on the Johnson County Parks Board, acquiring thousands of acres for parks and recreational use.

## 6 57<sup>th</sup> Street, Cody to King

**Shawnee Town 1929** is an open-air museum that interprets farm and town life in the late 1920's. Open for tours, accurately detailed buildings and robust educational programs enable visitors to connect with our shared past. [www.shawneetown.org](http://www.shawneetown.org).

Late in the 1800's, **Pantel's Mill** operated along the creek on the eastern edge of the property. This steam-powered mill ground corn meal and wheat flour.

## 7 58<sup>th</sup> Street, Barton to Nieman

This block once boasted an elevated boardwalk to keep pedestrians out of the mud. In Shawnee's early days, this block had a Masonic Lodge, houses and a general store. The Vita Craft Corporation gradually filled the entire north side of the street with their factory.

Benjamin Hollenback opened his two-story **Hollenback General Store** on the northwest corner of 58th and Nieman in the 1860's. He lived above the store, which also housed a post office and, until 1916 provided court space for the Justice of the Peace. The store was sold in 1922 to William F. Blanton, who also lived there and operated Blanton's Furniture Store. A stone building, probably built in 1870 as a store, was located next door to this building. Once believed to have been a territorial jail, in 1966 the stone building was demolished and rebuilt in its current location at Shawnee Town 1929.

## 8 Nieman Road, 58<sup>th</sup> Street to Johnson Drive

Several homes and businesses were built along this block in the early 1900's.

**Dr. Henry and Helen Sullivan's house** was on the southeast corner of 58th and Nieman. Sullivan used his front room for an office and his family of five lived in the rear of the house.

**George and Mary Bousman** lived at 5807 Nieman with their adult daughter, Olive, who operated the **Home Telephone Company** exchange out of this house--reporting the 1914 fire that destroyed several buildings on Johnson Drive.

**Homer Bousman's Barber Shop** was located at 5813 Nieman. Built around 1896, Bousman gave haircuts to men and children. In the 1920's, women began coming to the shop to have their hair bobbed. He continued working as a barber until his death in the 1940's.

**A.J. Blattman's Dry Goods Store** was built around 1926 at 5815 Nieman. Quickly renamed as Blattman's Cash Store, they sold items like shoes, hosiery, clothing, and handkerchiefs.

The small building at 5817 Nieman housed **Joseph Yotz's Typewriter Repair Shop** during the 1920's.

**Thomas Archer Dry Goods & Groceries** was built in 1866 on the northeast corner of Nieman and Johnson Drive. It sold cloth, buttons, needles, shoes and accessories. Al Pierson's hardware store was later built on the site, which was then purchased by **Clarence "Red" Hartman**. The Masonic Lodge met on the second floor until 1955, when the space was remodeled into living quarters for Hartman family. Hartman Hardware closed in 2020.