

Coronado Heights History

Coronado Heights is the most recognizable landmark in the Smoky Valley and a winner in the 8 Wonders of Kansas! Geography. The history of the Heights with Europeans began in the 16th century. It is believed that in 1541, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado climbed to the summit of the Heights and abandoned his search for the city of Quivira. More than 300 years later in 1869, Swedish immigrants settled initially at the foot of the bluff and built the first land company house. The need for water to operate a flour mill and the indication the railroad would parallel the Smoky Hill River prompted the settlers to move closer to the river which is the current location of Lindsborg. In 1869, Olof Olsson, then only 28, led a group of more than 100 immigrants to settle in the Smoky Valley by invitation from the first Swedish Agricultural Land Company.

The original road to the top of Coronado Heights was built in 1920 and named Swensson Drive. A footpath was also formed and called Olsson Trail. Early in Lindsborg history, it was apparent the Heights were to be valued and accessible for everyone to enjoy. By 1936, Coronado Heights was a staple in the lives of Lindsborg citizens and thus began the Works Project Administration (WPA) building of the castle and picnic areas. Located halfway up Swensson Drive, the 1988 sculpture by John Whitfield states Coronado Heights “A Place to Share.”

Coronado Heights is one in a chain of seven bluffs formed from sea life. Erosion exposes 230 million years of ecological prehistory. Today, rising 300 feet above the valley floor, Coronado Heights remains a natural habitat of wildflowers and grasses. Yucca, gooseberries, Sand Hill plums, spiderwort, wild sage and sumac flourish.

Budding astronomers, artists and photographers have for years converged on the Heights for the exceptional natural viewpoint. Photographs dating as far back as 1893 show community picnics. Church youth groups, local Boy and Girl Scout troops use the facilities for activities. It is an ideal place for watching a sunrise or sunset. Coronado Heights is the perfect location to fly a kite, have a picnic and view the landscape of the outlying Smoky Valley.

The Prairie Trail Scenic Byway offers Coronado Heights as a prominent site stop. Destination weddings in and around the castle have become hugely popular in the following years. Hiking and biking trails wind around the bluff for beginners and experts alike. Also a Lindsborg Tour target, Coronado Heights is requested by most bus groups.

Coronado Heights is well-loved and well-visited and extensive repairs are necessary to upkeep the facilities for current and future generations. Visitors continue to be amazed something “like this” exists in central Kansas. Improvement and preservation of Coronado Heights is imperative to Lindsborg’s continuing heritage and our aspirations of sharing this geographic wonder with the world at large.

Höglund Dugout History

One of the more unusual and unexpected sights in Kansas is the Höglund Dugout. Even though it is not readily apparent on the beaten path, the grave-like home dwelling is remarkable and worth searching out as one tries to imagine residing years in a rock reinforced 6ft x 12ft hole in the ground. The dugout is located outside of Lindsborg near Coronado Heights.

Gustaf Höglund was born on July 18, 1841 in Fernebo, Sweden in the province of Värmland. He moved to Kansas as so many did, for a promise of a better life and religious freedom. Maria née Olsson was born September 20, 1846 and arrived in America with her family in 1869. Gustaf and Maria were married on January 8, 1871 by Rev. Olof Olsson in the Bethany Lutheran Church where they both were members.

Mr. Höglund built the dugout where their first two children were born, Gustaf Jr. in 1872 and Alma in 1873. As the Höglund family was diligently occupied with farming, they also found time to construct a shanty that served as their second home when Emil was born in 1875 and Lydia in 1877. By 1880 the building of a large 2 story, five bedroom home was complete. Four more children were born after this time: Elizabeth in 1879, Gustaf Simon in 1884, Anna Olivia in 1886 and Alma Sophia in 1888.

The Höglund children proved to be robust as they all lived a long life which was quite extraordinary at the time. The children worked hard at their parent's farm and continued to labor long after their parents passed away. The children never married or moved from the farm.

The last of the seven Höglund children, Alma, died in 1975. The Höglund land was willed to Bethany Lutheran Church, the Bethany Home and the Lindsborg Community Hospital. A one acre plot on which the original dugout and homestead were located was deeded to the Smoky Valley Historical Association.

The dugout is open and free admission for public visits 1 mile west of Lindsborg on Wells Fargo Road (continue west from Swensson Street in town), and approximately 1/4 miles south on 12th Avenue. Or take Highway K-4 west out of Lindsborg and drive 1 mile to 12th Avenue. Turn north onto 12th and drive approximately 3/4 mile. The dugout is on the east side of the road. Look for an opening in the tree line and a low silver iron rail fence on the east side of the road. Pull in and park. Go through the opening in the iron rail fence and walk approximately 50 feet to the dugout. There are no directional signs.