

# Smith County

## County offers many attractions

There are many attractions in Smith County of interest to those passing through, including the Statue of Liberty, Home on the Range Cabin, Geographic Center of the USA and the Old Dutch Mill.

The Statue of Liberty is high on a hill 10 miles south of Smith Center on US-281. At the top of the hill is a small park with a copy of the Statue of Liberty.

In 1872 Dr. Brewster M. Higley, a homesteading doctor from Ohio, wrote the words for the song, "Home On The Range." It was set to music by Dan Kelley of Gaylord, and played at a dance by the Harlan Brothers Orchestra. The song was adopted as the state song of Kansas in 1947. The Home on the Range Cabin is located on the Beaver Creek in Smith County, eight miles west, eight north and 3/4 of a mile west of Smith Center.

The Geographic Center of the USA is located one mile north and one mile west of Lebanon in Smith County. This is the geographic center of the country, as determined by the government geodetic survey in 1898. It is the crossroads of the nation proper on US-Highway 281. Built around it is Center Park, a place for the public to stop, relax and picnic.

The Old Dutch Mill was moved to Wagner Park in 1938 from its original site near Reamsville, northwest of Smith Center. The old mill was built by Charles Schwarz, a native of Germany who homesteaded in Smith County in the 1870s.

The mill timbers were hewn from

native logs and its burrs cut from native stone. It was completed about 1882, and for years it ground corn, wheat and buckwheat brought by farmers of the area. Wind power operated the mill until about 1913 when a kerosene engine was installed. After being moved it became the center attraction in a beautiful city park built around it.

Today the Old Dutch Mill serves as a meeting place for groups and events. Many tourists drive downtown to see it every year, especially at Christmas to enjoy the thousands of lights illuminating the mill and the new gazebo. Wagner Park underwent a major renovation in 2005 adding a gazebo, wooden playground equipment and landscaping.

The county seat of Smith County, Smith Center is located at the crossroads of US Highway 36 and US Highway 281. It is just 12 miles southwest of the exact geographical center of the continental United States. Smith Center offers a lifestyle rooted in raising crops, nurturing families, building community relationships and open spaces.

Natives and visitors alike enjoy the fine fishing in the farm ponds and nearby lakes that offer bass, walleye, crappie and catfish. Smith Center's farm fields attract hunters of pheasants, turkeys, ducks, geese and deer.

Smith County offers an array of annual county events. Citywide garage sales are held every first Saturday in June. The Smith County Free Fair is held every July. Every August



**LADY LIBERTY LOOKS OUT** over the landscape 10 miles south of Smith Center (above) while the cabin, where the song, "Home on the Range" was written, sits on the Beaver Creek.



Kensington holds its annual Old-fashioned Saturday Night. Gaylord holds Watermelon Day every Labor Day. Old Settlers Day is celebrated annually the fourth Saturday every September, and the Kensington Veterans Day parade is held every November.

Smith County has a lot to offer everyone. From people just passing through to lifelong citizens, there is always something interesting and insightful for everyone.



**AN OLD DUTCH MILL**, built by German native Charles Schwarz, sits in Wagner Park in Smith Center.

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#### Special Attractions:

Just northwest of Athol is the "Home on the range" cottage (1871).

\*Lebanon is close to the "Center of the US" and a good state road gives access to the little park where the marker is located.

\*Smith Center, the county seat has an Old Dutch-style windmill once used to grind grain.

#### Special Events in Smith County

\*Gaylord has become known as the "Watermelon City" and people from miles around gather on Labor Day weekend to celebrate Watermelon Day.

\*Kensington celebrates Veterans Day with a community barbeque.

\*The Smith County Free Fair is held in July in Smith Center.

**Stop in, your welcome anytime!**

### PICK UP A SMITH COUNTY PIONEER TO FIND ...



... all the great sales, specials and places to shop at, rest in, or visit on your way through the Heart of America. We also have the latest local news and activities. So join us in Smith County, stop in and visit old friends and make new ones, you'll feel right at home.

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