

Economy booming in county

By **KIRBY ROSS**

Phillips County Review

Phillips County, bisected by highways U.S. 36, U.S. 183, K-383 and K-9, is undergoing an economic boom due to its agriculture, insurance, manufacturing and fuel refining industries.

Because of the strength of its economy and its active commitment to funding and otherwise supporting local economic development, in 2006 Phillips County was selected to be a showcase model for reversing negative trends that have been overtaking rural America.

Spearheaded by the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Kansas State University, and the Huck Boyd Center for Rural Development, and working in partnership with Phillips County Economic Development, the Huck Boyd Foundation, the Phillips County Community and Development Foundation, the Solomon Valley Entrepreneurial Center, and a number of area businesses, organizations, and people, the "Discover Phillips County Project" is acting as an innovative and positive model for community development.

Known as being "The Cow-Calf Capital" of the state, Phillips County's fertile fields and grassy pastures make it ideal for raising beef cattle as well as growing wheat, milo, sunflowers and cane sorghum.

Entering Phillips County on U.S. 36 from the east, a couple of miles later a driver will come upon the small town of Agra. There the traveler will find a brick bank building, several historic native limestone-block storefronts, as well as modern metal buildings housing the city hall, library, grocery store and post office.

Just a few miles to the south is historic Kirwin, the oldest town in Phillips County. Kirwin is well-known by its nicknames, "Sportsman's Paradise" and "The Goose Capital of Kansas," due to the fish and fowl found at the Kirwin Reservoir and the Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge.

Both the reservoir and the refuge nestle, lit-



A SENTINEL ON THE PRAIRIE — this old limestone house between Phillipsburg and Stuttgart along U.S. 36 way. is a popular photo opportunity for travelers along the highway.

erally, into Kirwin's western city limits.

The lake is a fishing hot spot, with species ranging from walleye to crappie to catfish to bass (multiple species).

The refuge is being restored as a prairie land habitat. In addition to viewing the ducks and geese, abundant in spring and fall, a visitor can also see large populations of deer, pheasant, turkey, prairie dogs and coyotes. Rarer wildlife, such as bald eagles and whooping cranes, can also be seen at the refuge.

The town of Kirwin is noted for its picturesque, historic red brick city hall and library building, which sits on the town square.

Flanking the square is the only cafe within a 10-mile radius, as well as a large antique store located in an old lumber yard.

On the first Saturday in October this year, Kirwin will be observing its 76th annual Old

Settler's Day, which will be celebrated with politicians, a parade, horse show, demolition derby, games on the square, food booths, and a community play.

Continuing back to U.S. 36 and on west, the towering grain elevator at the little hamlet of Gretna dominates the landscape for miles around. An old one-room school house is one of the few buildings left in town.

A little further to the west is another popular antique store, with Phillipsburg located just a couple of miles beyond it. Phillipsburg, the county seat and business center of the county, has a courthouse, hospital, service stations, convenience stores, motels, restaurants, and businesses that line U.S. 36 and adjacent streets.

Phillipsburg is currently benefiting from a major economic boom, fueled by its ethanol plant, oil refinery, and roofing plant. In addition,

Brooke Corp., based in Phillipsburg and employing over 200 workers, is rated as being one of the foremost insurance franchising operations in the nation. Illustrating this is the fact that Brooke has recently been listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

On the west side of town is a city park fit for a Norman Rockwell painting, with a swimming pool, baseball diamond, large playground, and camping facilities. A skateboard park to be located there is currently in the planning stages.

Adjoining the city park is the Fort Bissell Museum, complete with stockade and authentic historic one-room school, mercantile store, log cabins, train depot, and world-class antique gun collection.

Fort Bissell is open from May-September and currently has major improvements underway.

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Fort Bissell Museum

For more info. 785-543-6212

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