

History of the Town of Calumet, Oklahoma



Calumet is in the North Canadian River Valley in the western half of Canadian County. Its site was a part of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. Parts of the town are on four quarter-sections divided by the section line between 13 and 14 of T13N R9W and centered at the intersection of Todd Street and U.S. 270. Two of these quarter-sections were homesteads and two were Indian allotments.

During the first months after the land run of April 19, 1892, settlers in the area got their mail and bought supplies at Fort Reno, Darlington, Okarche, or El Reno. County stores and post offices were soon established in the area. The Calumet Post Office was established in 1893. This post office was on Mrs. Anna Cowdrey's homestead and she asked friends for help in naming her post office. Mrs. Lillie Crump suggested the name Calumet, a word meaning peace pipe, because Mrs. Cowdrey was an avid pipe-smoker. This was sent in to the Post Office Department, and the name "Calumet" was approved.

After the railroad built a depot on land in the NW1/4 Sec 13-T13N-R9W, ten acre town sites were made available for anyone that wanted to build on them. The town site was surveyed and streets and alleys were laid out. The plat was dated May 21, 1898. The Post Office was moved to one of the new sites and people thought naming the town Calumet was easier than letting their correspondents know they had a new address.

Because Calumet was not incorporated, it had no government and no taxes could be assessed. Any improvements had to be made with volunteer labor and donated funds. A town well was dug in the middle of the street just north of today's bank. The well furnished drinking water for the mules and horses farmers brought to town and water for fighting fires. The well was filled in long ago, but its location is still marked by a round patch in the street. A small plant to supply electricity to all of Calumet was installed in October 1921.

Attempts to incorporate the town were made in 1909, 1924, 1929, and 1931; all failed. Finally, the need for a city water system led to the incorporation of the town on June 13, 1942. The town's population was 338. The first town officials were elected on June 22, 1942.

In 1944, a water tower and complete water system were installed. In 1960, Calumet was the third largest town in the county, with a population of 352, but it had no sewer system. A bond issue was approved and a sewer system was installed.

Folks point to peace and quiet as Calumet's number one attraction.

Source: *History of Canadian County Oklahoma*. El Reno, Oklahoma: Canadian County History Book Association, Inc., 1991.