

# Comanche County Attractions

Featuring the communities of: **Coldwater, Protection and Wilmore**

Read more about this county using the [Kansas Guidebook 2 for Explorers](#). Order at [kansassampler.org](http://kansassampler.org) or [find one at a locally owned store near you](#).

## • AROUND THE COUNTY

**Gypsum Hills Scenic Byway / Points of Interest** (8 Wonders of Kansas Geography) - Your route begins at U.S. 183 just north of Coldwater and extends east on U.S. 160 to the city limits of Medicine Lodge. The route is a straight 42 miles but on either side of the road you'll see evidence that you're in the Red Hills region - flat mesas, deep canyons, high buttes, and expansive vistas. The rocks and soil are stained red by iron oxide, giving the Gypsum Hills its physiographic name, the Red Hills. Closer to Coldwater you're also in High Plains country where grass pastures punctuate the landscape and come alive with wildflowers in the springtime.

**Rugged Red Canyons Scenic Back Road** - From 2nd in Coldwater, 3 miles south on Central (becomes U.S. 183), 11 miles east on L, 6 miles southeasterly on 24/South Loop, 1 mile south on X, 3 1/2 miles east on Q, 2 1/2 miles north on N/North Loop, 4 1/2 miles east on North Loop (becomes Estill in Barber County), then 6 1/4 miles north on Aetna to U.S. 160. This backroad beauty of a drive starts out through typical rolling red hills, but farther east the larger and more jagged the red canyons become. You're in open pasture with few obstructions. Charred cedar trees are evidence of the 2016 Anderson Creek fires. As you drive into Barber County, the red hills become littered with gypsum, a natural white mineral deposit. On this trip, unpaved roads are your route through this incredibly breathtaking part of the state.

## • COLDWATER, pop. 854

**Chief Theater (NRHP)\***, 122 E. Main. First-run movies are shown on weekends in this historic picture house in downtown Coldwater. The theater will be featuring special events during the BKRT.

**Comanche County Museum**, 104 W. Main. One of the most interesting exhibits showcases the Comanche Cattle Pool. A group of cattlemen combined their herds to form the largest cattle ranch ever established in Kansas. By 1884 the cattle ranch contained 84,000 cattle and covered about 4,000 square miles of open range. Thur-Sat 9am-4pm; Sun 1-4pm. 620.582.2859 or 582.2315.

**Coldwater Country Club Golf Course**. From Main, 3/4 mile south on Central, 1/2 mile west on J, then 1 mile south on Washington. It's not every golf course that has 10 holes, but the one at the Coldwater Country Club does. When club members realized they had an ideal spot to add just one more feature - a swimming pool, a practice green, or another hole - they decided on a 10th hole. Although it's the shortest on the course at 110 yards, it's one of the most challenging. Tee up when you're in town for the BKRT.

**Coldwater Lake**. From Main, 3/4 mile south on Central, 1/2 mile west on J, 1/4 mile south on Washington, then west into the entrance. Lake Coldwater is a wonderful place for water-related sports, camping and enjoying nature in Southwest Kansas.

**Heritage Memorial Park**, Main and New York. A walkway bordered by flowers and shrubs in this beautiful little park is one of the most elegant tributes in the state to county veterans of any war.

**Outdoor Mural**, 104 W. Main. Stan Herd's stylish design of pioneer agriculture adorns an exterior wall of the Comanche County Museum.

## Explorer Extras -

- **Comanche County courthouse (NRHP)\***, 201 S. New York. The 1927 buff-brick structure was built in the Classical Revival style. A projecting pavilion at the main entrance and the dressed limestone window sills and lintels showcase the classical styling.
- **Outdoor Murals**, 136 E. Main (best viewed from New York St.) In 2014 Tiffany Sowa commissioned 17-year old Carlos Casas-Sanchez to paint a mural on her building telling him he could create whatever he wanted. You'll enjoy seeing his youthful exuberant celestial masterpiece. Find other murals painted by Tiffany and her daughter Camille in the alley behind the Prairie Plaza Apartments at 205 S. Central. With glow-in-the-dark paint, the lighthouse mural is a beacon in the night. **NOTE: Check events link** for information about Tiffany's "You're Fired Ceramics & Canvas Digital Art Crawl" during the BKRT.

- **PROTECTION, pop. 530**

**Stan Herd Art Gallery**, 404 N. Broadway. A Protection native, Stan is internationally known for his earthworks—using soil, crops and other earth elements to create such large images that they can only be seen in their entirety from the sky. Stan's art gallery, adjacent to the Protection Township Library, is filled with his paintings, photos of his earthworks and murals, and other colorful tidbits. A bas relief of one of his mural's accents the front of the library. **NOTE: Stan Herd** will be back in his hometown on Saturday, May 5, and will give a presentation at 3 p.m.

**Polio Protection Plaque**, Broadway and Walnut. Protection from polio was the mission of the Salk vaccine. And in 1957 Protection was selected to be the first town to inoculate all its citizens under the age of 50 with the vaccine. A plaque next to the old-fashioned water fountain tells the polio/Protection story.

**School buildings**, 210 S. Jefferson. What a difference 20 years makes in the world of architecture. The Modern Movement style of the 1950 Protection Grade School (NRHP)\*, now South Central Grade School, can easily be identified by its clean and simple lines. It provides an interesting contrast to the detailed 1930 Collegiate Gothic design of the 1930 Protection High School (NRHP)\*, now South Central Middle School. The two schools, side by side and connected by a walkway, reflect obvious changes in architecture in just two decades.

**Protection Community Venture**, 221 N. Broadway. A community-owned grocery store means citizens have stepped up to invest and ensure that the townspeople have access to groceries. Support from the outside (travelers and explorers!) is a bonus. Mon-Sat 7am-8pm; Sun 11am-5pm. **NOTE:** Learn more about this store by attending the **BYOLC** (Bring Your Own Lawn Chair) event facilitated by Marci Penner on Saturday, May 5 at 11:45am.

**Protection Golf Course**, Come play golf at Protection's 9 hole course. Enjoy one round or play all day. Green fees are \$15/day.

- **WILMORE, pop. 55**

**The Carousel**, 210 N. Main. Just honk for a free ride on the carousel! When Ernie and Christy Griffin are home (usually April-June and October-December), they will come out at the sound of your horn and start those horses running. Ernie found this beautiful carousel, made in Venice, Italy, online. It was once used in shopping malls in Minnesota and Texas before making its way to Kansas. Locals helped build a bright yellow-and-red gazebo to protect the ride, then helped put together the spinning tea cup, sleigh, and 13 horses on the carousel itself. For the BKRT the carousel will be open 9am-9pm. Christy says it's quite beautiful to ride at night to enjoy the twinkling carousel lights.

**Catalog House**, 210 N. Main. Before they purchased the carousel, Ernie and Christy Griffin bought and restored the 1913 Sear, Roebuck & Co. house just north of the carousel. Back in the day, families could order a complete house from the Sears catalog. All parts of the house—everything from the wood, to the nails and the final varnish—were shipped by rail to the buyer.

**Stan Herd Outdoor Mural**, Railroad and Taft. Stan's depiction of the coin toss that decided the town's name dresses up the south base of the grain elevator. Local cattlemen and ranchers, Thomas Jackson Wilmore and C.C. Pepperd, participated in a coin toss to determine whose name would be given to the town. You know who won, since you aren't standing in Pepperd, Kansas, to view the mural.

**Explorer extras -**

- **This little town rests in a beautiful valley** on Mule Creek, four miles north of U.S. 160 and six miles east of Coldwater.
- **The red-brick Federated Church** at the south end of Main is the only remaining active church in Wilmore. Dedicated in 1928, it retains the original semicircular pews in its small and intimate interior.
- **The 1910 alarm bell** that was rung in case of emergencies is now restored and proudly displayed in front of the community building at Taft and Railroad. Look for historic photos of the town inside the community building.

\* NRHP - National Register of Historic Places