

Silver Lake History

Compiled by Nikki Womack

In 1833, the Pottawatomie signed the Treaty of Chicago, which ceded more than 5 million acres of land in return for money and a reservation west of the Mississippi. The Pottawatomie tribe were then removed to Council Bluffs, Iowa until they were again moved, this time to a new reservation near Silver Lake, KS. They arrived in what is now the town of Silver Lake in the spring of 1847. The treaty of 1861 provided the Potawatomie an opportunity to become U.S. citizens and official landowners under American law. Madore Beaubien and his wife Theresa were one such recipients. They received allotments in Silver Lake, Kansas, near the Kansas River. ¹

He received 320 acres of land and his wife, Theresa Beaubien, received 80 acres adjoining his on the west side. During the next few years many homes were built, mostly out of logs. The Beaubien's donated their land for the townsite of Silver Lake.²

The town was platted in February 1868 by a Mr. Huntoon from Topeka, KS.³ The original town plat extended northward from the lake three blocks to what is now the railroad location, and eastward three blocks to the present site of the Methodist Church. Later an addition to the east of Madore Street was platted as Palmer's Addition. Streets parallel to Madore were known as Chestnut, Walnut, and Pine. ⁴

The Union Pacific Railroad reached Silver Lake March 19, 1866. The village was a flag station until 1874, when a frame depot was built some distance east of town. ⁵

The first store building was erected on the townsite in July, 1868, and a store was started by M.B. Beaubien and Chas. Palmer. The first dwelling house was erected by Chas. Palmer on Railroad avenue and Madore street, ⁶ where the stone buildings now owned by the Silver Lake Public Library now stands. Throughout the years the bottom portion has seen many grocery stores and other general stores pass through. The upper levels were lodging rooms, the Silver Lake Opera House, and the finally the Oddfellows Order meeting space.

On April 18,1870 the first regular meeting of the board of trustees of the townsite was held. Members were: Madore Beaubien, Charles Palmer, J.B. Oliver, and C.D. Ward, and D.C.

Covington. Beaubein was unanimously elected chairman, Oliver was made Clerk, Palmer was elected assessor and collector and Charles Dorman was named constable.

At a meeting on August 7, 1870 a building was authorized to be constructed for a jail on the lot donated by Beaubein near the lake.

On October 1, 1870 Jesse Barnette made an application to have his land adjoining the town on the west added to the city plat and A. S. Thomas requested that his land on the north side of the railroad be taken into the city. Both were granted. ⁷

The city of Silver Lake was incorporated in the spring of 1871 under the "town and village act". It was classified as a third-class city (Try to find how much our population was back then/what is meant to be classified as a third class). The following officers were elected:

Mayor—E.H. Couch
Police Judge—D.C. Covington
Councilman—C.D. Ward
Councilman—J.B Oliver
Councilman—J.O. Neiswender
Councilman—D.L. Lane
Councilman—M.B. Beaubein

Mayors:

1871	E.H. Couch
1872	J.B. Oliver
1873-1875	M.B. Beaubein
1876	W.F. Hazelton
1877-1879	M.B. Beaubein
1880-1883	Ed Thompson
1884-1885	R.A. Richards
1886	G.W. Petro

1887-1888 A.G. Magill
1889 G.W. Ellinger
1890 J.M. Clayland
1891 F.M. Neiswender
1892-1893 J.B. Oliver (Died 2, 1893)
1893 -1894 J.F. Johnston
1895-1897 W.C. Maddox
1898-1899 John L. Fowler
1900-1904 Peter Pelle
1905 J.S. Kelly
1907 T.R. Johnson (Resigned July 1907)
1907-1908 Charles Alexander
1909 W.A. Luthye
1911 Clarence Henry
1913-1923 George B. Harper
1925 Lester O. Parr
1927 Clarence Henry
1929 H.F. Kellner
1931 Harry Reeder
1933 Fred Chambers (Resigned in April 1934)
1933-1935 N.R. Cowperthwaite (Resigned in August, 1936)
1936 -1943 J.D. Maupin
1945-1947 L.C. Christenson
1949-1951 Roy E. Dent
1953 Lee Jennings
1955 Roy E. Dent (Resigned January 1957)
1957 Virgil O. Hansford
1957 Glen Miller

1959 Frank Bills (Resigned April 1959)
1959-1961 Thomas F. Wade
May 1961 – April 1963 Marion B. McDaniel
May 1963 - 1973 John W. Dozier, Jr. was reelected, but resigned/moved out of city
June 1973-May 1977 Lloyd Martin-resigned at reappointment meeting
May 16th of 1977-April 20th 1987 Leonard Lee
April 20th of 1987-August 20th 1990 Charles Brown(resigned)
September 1990-March 1991 Rodney Butler
April 1991-1998 Martha Brady
January 1999 Mack Smith-current

City Name

There are two stories on how the town received its name:

1. The town derived its name from the clear and silvery waters of the lake which rests in the town.
2. The town was named after a bird dog owned by the chief of the tribe, Chief Joseph LaFramboise, whose name was “Silver” due to its white curly hair.

City Development

- The first telephone was installed in 1885 by the Bell Telephone system but it wasn't until February of 1907 that a switchboard was added. Charles D. Williams began work of the Independent telephone system for \$15,000 in 1905 and in 1910 300 miles of wire was added.⁸
- The first schoolhouse was built in 1868 on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Palmer.
- John Ogee was elected as city Marshall in 1873.
- In 1910 a brick, two-story school was built to replace the small, one-room schoolhouse.
- In the fall of 1911 a group of students began the process of working their way through ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade.

- Henry Carder, in June of 1912, finished a cement walk along the west and north side of the school building, which was “a very much needed improvement”⁹
- In October of 1917 the first street lights were installed and serviced with electricity by Geoge B. Harper from his privately-owned plant. They burned from the hours of sunset to 11pm.”
- In 1952 the high school burned down. A new high school was completed in 1953.
- New grade school construction was completed in 1961 and in 1970 and again in the mid 1990’s the schools saw additional construction.
- The two-lane, hard-surfaced road through the city was completed in 1928. It was originally known as Victory Highway and was later changed to US Highway 40 in the 1930’s and still later became what we know it as US Highway 24.
- The original waterworks system, including a 50,000-gallon water tower was completed in 1946. This tower is found on the west side of town by city hall.
- A volunteer fire department was established in 1949.
- In 1959 street signs were added to the city.
- The rural fire service was organized as the Shawnee County Fire District #1 in 1965 and operated separately from the city fire department.
- The Lions Club numbered all homes in 1965.
- The Silver Lake Community Center was built in 1969
- The city park shelter house in 1970 that is located in Lions Park was built by the Lions club.
- Construction of the sewer and main facility began in 1976 and was completed in 1977.
- The City of Silver Lake’s Fire Department and the Shawnee County Fire District #1 merged in 1984 to form the Shawnee County Consolidated Fire District #1.
- A new 200,000-gallon water tower was constructed in 1996. This tower is found on the east side of town by the community building.¹⁰

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Information sourced from:

¹<https://www.potawatomi.org/blog/2020/10/08/beaubien-family-history/>

¹ The Revised Ordinances of the City of Silver Lake, KS 1956—Book

² The Revised Ordinances of the City of Silver Lake, KS 1956—Book

³Kancol.org

⁴ History of SL by Emma Richerter

⁵ History of SL by Emma Richerter

⁶ History of SL by Emma Richerter

⁷ The Revised Ordinances of the City of Silver Lake, KS 1956—Book

⁸ History of SL by Emma Richerter

⁹ Silver Lake Mirror – Newspaper

¹⁰ <https://silverlakeks.org/About/History>

