

LINDSBORG

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For Immediate Release
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Coronado Heights *if only the Heights could talk....*

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Wheatfields frame this place today.
a gift: how the riches of Mexico,
the wandering tribes, the golden wind,
all come true for us, bowing
in reverence with Coronado.

--excerpt from "Coronado
Heights" by William Stafford

One of the most recognizable landmarks
in the Smoky Valley is Coronado Heights,
winner of [8 Wonders of Kansas](#)
Geography and now on the historical
registry. The Swedish pioneers originally
settled at the base of the bluff, but
eventually moved the community to the
floor of the valley. Anna Olsson, Olof
Olsson's daughter, wrote in her memoir
Child of the Prairie that looking from the
top of the Heights, when homesick, one
imagined seeing all the way to Sweden.



Photo courtesy of Jim Turner

The original road was built in 1920 and
named Swensson Drive. A footpath was
also formed and called Olsson Trail. Early in Lindsborg's history, it is apparent the Heights were to
be vaulted and accessible for everyone to enjoy. As the 1988 sculpture by John Whitfield, located
halfway up the road, says "A Place to Share."

The Heights are where Lindsborg townspeople go to watch thunderstorms roll in and roll by. Artists and photographers have for years converged on the Heights for the exceptional panorama. The soft native Dakota sandstone is littered with names and dates from years ago. Hiking and biking trails wind around the bluff. A town joke is when visitors insist Coronado himself built the 1936 Works Project Administration (WPA) castle. It is *the* place for watching a sunrise or sunset. The perfect place fly a kite, have a picnic, meet friends and to take visitors to show them the landscape of the Smoky Valley.

The place where someone once remarked, "If Coronado Heights could talk, half of Lindsborg would have to move!" Early Bethany College students would dance on the Heights as dancing was outlawed on campus. At least one attempt has been made to roller skate down the road. And a few ghostly, mysterious stories have been michevously concocted to accompany the end of a picnic at dusk.

Dominating at 300 feet above the Smoky Hill River valley, Coronado Heights is on the southern edge of a succession of seven hills known as Smoky Hill Buttes. It is alleged to be the summit where Francisco Vasquez de Coronado abandoned his search for the legendary seven cities of gold before his eventual return to Mexico. Coronado's diary records how he believed the valley to be an abundant land to grow grapes.

The Dakota Formation was deposited about 100 million years ago, during the Cretaceous Period. Erosion exposes 230 million years of ecological prehistory. Coronado Heights remains a natural habitat of wildflowers and grasses. Yucca, gooseberries, Prairie Racerunner lizards, sumac, sage and spiderwort flourish. Because of its natural beauty, it is a popular site for destination weddings and family reunions.

According to Chris Abercrombie, President of the Smoky Valley Historical Association (SVHA), further improvements to the road and rehabilitation of the 75-year-old castle, restroom facilities, and some picnic areas are currently in the planning stages. A professional road construction engineer and historical preservation architects have been brought in to consult with the SVHA board of directors as these plans unfold.

"The goal of the SVHA is to maintain and preserve this Central Kansas treasure for the enjoyment and education of future generations," states Abercrombie.

Coronado Heights has been and will continue to be a dominate factor in the lives, the art, the psyche and the cultural viewpoint of Lindsborg. Open from sunup to sundown, please adhere to the [SVHA use policy](#) . For more information on Lindsborg historical sites go to visitlindsborg.com .



Photo courtesy of the Old Mill Archives



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