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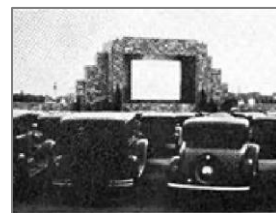
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## THE LOST DRIVE-INS OF WEST STREET

The first patented drive-in theater was opened on June 6, 1933 by Richard Hollingshead in Camden, New Jersey. He originally created it for people unable to fit into the smaller movie theater seats, but he soon discovered that it appealed more to families with young children. His advertising read, "The whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children are."



Drive-ins became extremely popular during the post-war era with the Baby Boomer generation. The creation of in-car speakers boosted the trend.



Hollingshead had mounted speakers on his screen's tower, but it caused an annoying sound delay for patrons. Sound continued to be a problem until 1941, when RCA introduced in-car speakers with individual volume controls.

Drive-ins grew in popularity until they peaked at 4,063 theaters in 1958. They were found throughout the U.S., and most were in rural areas or on the outskirts of towns.

But slowly, they began to lose their appeal. In order to construct a drive-in, at least 15 acres of land was required. It became more economical for owners to close their theaters and sell the land to developers to build malls or industrial buildings. By 2020, there were only 321 drive-ins still in operation.

The first drive-in in Wichita was the 81 Drive-in, built at 6250 N. Highway 81 (Broadway). It opened in August of 1946. The whole drive-in concept was so new to Wichita, that the theater's marquee had a line which read, "Sit in your car see and hear the movies." It was a big hit!

The fourth drive-in theater to be built in Wichita was the K-42 Sky-Vue. It was officially located at 4308 W. Southwest Boulevard, but actually it sat in the northwest corner of the intersection of West Street, Pawnee, K-42, and Southwest Drive. The entrance was reached by driving west on Pawnee from West Street.



*Wichita Eagle photo announcing the opening of the K42 Sky-Vue, July 19, 1949*

The K-42 opened on July 22, 1949, with a Randolph Scott movie entitled *Albuquerque*. The theater had a 500-car capacity, and RCA speakers. There was a wonderful playground area located in front of the screen to allow for convenient parental supervision. The snack bar at the rear of the parking area held every kind of movie goodie imaginable. Kevin Mount, who grew up across the street, remembers that he and his brother would grab some free popcorn from their mom, who just happened to work at the snack bar, and head to the child-sized benches that sat just behind the playground. They were in movie heaven!



Late in 1986, the speakers are gone, and the grounds are cleared.

Photo left from Pinterest.

Photo below from ShockerNet.net

The theater closed briefly in the mid-'60's, then reopened in March of 1968. There was a change in management, and Sky-Vue was dropped from the name. Finally, after facing dropping attendance, a changing demographic in the area, and financial troubles, the drive-in closed for good on September 22, 1986. The property is now owned by Midway Wholesale, a building materials store and industrial salvage. Nothing remains of the K-42 Drive-in but the main entrance driveways and a few ornamental cedar trees.

This *for sale* sign for the K-42 can be seen in the photo above.



The Westport Drive-in was located at 401 S. West Street. It sat back from West behind frontage property, and was surrounded on all four sides by cedar and elm trees. The trees ran along Taft on the south, University on the north, and Tracy on the west. The screen was in the northwest corner.

The Westport opened on August 27, 1953 with Farley Granger in *Roseanna McCoy* and Errol Flynn in *Rocky Mountain*. The theater was smaller than some, with a capacity of just 325 cars.

It too had a nice playground in front of the screen, and a contemporary-style brick snack bar with a complete array of movie snacks. The box office matched the snack bar in design. But in 1968, the box office met with an accident when a delivery truck backed into it, ripping the roof off.

*Aerial view of the Westport. The street below is West; earthwork above is the future Towne West. For a larger view, go to [cinematreasures.org](http://cinematreasures.org), Westport.*

The staff had to use a little creativity to sell tickets until the damage was repaired.



*Westport marquee on Sept. 2, 1979. Photo from cinematreat*



The Westport showed its last movies on September 2, 1979. They were Disney's animated feature *The Jungle Book*, and Dennis Duggan in *Unidentified Flying Oddball*. The theater stood in the path of development along the West Street Corridor. The Westport property became a Target store, and the land just west of it became the Towne West Mall.

Even the Target is gone now, purchased by Print Source after sitting empty for years. Four gnarled old trees still stand in the northern tree line among younger volunteer trees; and there is a small cluster of cedars still growing along the western edge of Print Source's parking lot. And this lone, disfigured old elm stands proudly near the spot where the movie screen once was. That is all.

## WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM CHURCH RECORDS

1. Birth information may be in a baptismal record.
2. Relatives and potential relatives often appear in church records.
3. Affiliation with a particular church may suggest an ancestor's national origin or ethnicity. Church records may reveal an immigrant's overseas hometown.
4. If a family didn't live near their church, it was not uncommon to find several children from one family being baptized at the same time.
5. Marriages are the most reliably kept church records, since they were both a legal and a religious event. The type of information recorded varied by time period and faith.
6. Many Protestant congregations kept registers of their members, which often included migration details. When church members moved away, they were often given letters dismissing them to another congregation.
7. Churches often recorded the deaths and /or burials of current and even former members.

The Melting Pot Genealogical Society

Hot Springs, Arkansas

## HELP FOR FADED WRITING

If the writing is too faded to read, use a 75 watt black light bulb in any lamp that casts light directly on the written passage. The writing will miraculously appear.

Northwest Iowa Genealogical Society

"Root Diggers"

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Please see the Google calendar or our Facebook page for details.

<b>GENEALOGY ROUNDTABLE SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP</b>	<b>DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION</b>
<b>Second Tuesday @ 1:30 to 3 pm</b> <b>Led by Julia Langel</b>	<b>Fourth Tuesday @ 1:30 pm</b> <b>Led by Twila Ackley Brown</b>
<b>PHOTO MYSTERIES</b>	
<b>Third Tuesday @ 1:30 to 3 pm</b> <b>Led by Rex Riley</b>	

Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 1121

Wichita, Kansas 67201

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