

**Curry County**  
**County Seat: Clovis, New Mexico**  
**Established February 25, 1909**

It has been said the history of Clovis is linked with the coal burner and the after burner. This reference is to the Cyrus K. Holiday coal burning train operated by the Santa Fe Railroad around the turn of the century. The Santa Fe Railroad was responsible for the founding of Clovis. It also refers to the after burner of a modern Air Force jet airplane, whose contribution to the building of today's Clovis has been considerable.

The history of Clovis, like that of most towns and cities of what has been described the "Golden Spread." The southwestern edge of the Great Plains region is filled with romance, fun, tragedy, phenomenal growth, hope and disappointment and the whole gamut of events that happened as civilization moved West.

On September 1, 1906, W.B. Storey was appointed chief engineer of the Santa Fe railroad system, succeeding James Dunn. Mr. Storey had been building railroads for the Santa Fe in California, and was destined to become the next president of the line. His first official act after taking over as chief engineer was to send a wire to the engineers on the ground at Texico, "to locate and buy the first level half section of land west of Texico for a townsite and facilities for the eastern terminal." They looked upon an unending sea of waving prairie grass reaching to the horizon in every direction, and chose the site of original Clovis, just northwest of an existing rail switch, known as Riley's Switch. This first section west of Texico turned out to be Section 18, Township 2, Range 6 east. Today this section of land is bordered on the east by Prince Street, on the north by Seventh Street, on the west by Thornton Street, and on the south by Brady Avenue, with the townsite lying to the north of the Santa Fe tracks and facilities.

Now that the line and location for the eastern terminal of the Belen Cutoff was settled, the railroad lost no time. Work was started immediately to survey the townsite for the City of Clovis and to construct the facilities for the railroad that was bringing the town into existence. R.C. Reid was the man entirely responsible for the survey and sale of the lots. The entire original townsite was laid out in checkerboard style from First Street north to Seventh Street, and from Thornton Street to Prince. Mr. Reid was also authorized to name the streets. Those running north and south were "avenues." With the history of New Mexico in mind, Mr. Reid named the streets after the territorial governors.

Rail construction westward through the area and into the central part of the state was undertaken in 1903 and was turned to the operating department in July, 1908. Transcontinental traffic on the route began in April 1907. The Pecos Division was begun in 1910.

Naming of the new town was not a simple task. There was a feeling that it should bear a Spanish name, but no Spanish background existed as in most of the state. Such names as "Cibola" and "Monte Encino" were considered. The story is that a railroad official's daughter chose the name "Clovis" as she had been studying French history. Finally, President Ripley, and the Santa Fe Railway, designated the name "Clovis" after the ancient Christian King of the Frankish Empire. He was the founder of the empire (Clovis I), and King of the Salian Frankish Empire, ruling from 461 to 511 A. D.

On April 6, 1908, the County Commissioners of Roosevelt County, in regular meeting, ordered and decreed that the town of Clovis, said county, be a duly and regularly incorporated town. Less than a year after Clovis had been decreed a town and had elected its first governing body, the governor, under due process of law, ordered and decreed that Clovis be declared a city. Clovis was incorporated in May 1909. In 1910, its population was 3,255. The 1920 census was 4,904 and the 1930 census was 8,027. As a virgin shack town, it grew as nearby acres were plowed. The 1940 census was 10,065; in 1950, 17,318; and in 1990, 30,954.

The oldest building in Clovis is the "Oldest House Museum" open at the Curry County Fairgrounds each fall. It was saved from demolition and moved from 120 Rencher in 1974, by the High Plains Historical Foundation.

Curry County was created on February 25, 1909 by an act of the legislature, carving from the eastside counties of Roosevelt and Quay. A 40x45 mile expanse of flat, semi-arid, high plains land devoid of mountains, trees, and rivers. Charles Adolphus Scheurich, grandson of Governor Charles Bent, first civil

governor of New Mexico, and grand-nephew of Kit Carson, almost single-handedly, was responsible for the creation of Curry County. After quite a hassle with Texico, Melrose, and Center, an election was held which ratified Clovis as the county seat of Curry County. Thus, after less than two years, Clovis had risen from obscurity to a recognized city and the seat of its own county. Curry County contains only 1404 square miles and is the third smallest political subdivision of the State of New Mexico. Charles A. Scheurich, one of the first county commissioners, is recognized today as "the Father of Curry County" for his role in the creation of Curry County. The county was named for Governor George Curry. (1907-1909).

The story of man in Curry County began several thousand years prior to Charles Scheurich's entry onto the scene. The record of man in the immediate area extends backward at least 12,000 years to the Llano culture of the Paleo-Indians who hunted the huge mammoth and other animals. Archeological findings in the Blackwater Draw near the Curry-Roosevelt county line have traced man from the Llano culture (more commonly called "Clovis Man" through the Folsom culture of 9,000 to 10,000 years ago and through the Portales complex to the Archaic group of the period 2500 to 500 B.C. There is then a gap until about 1200 A.O. when an early Pueblo group appeared. From the 1200's through the advent of white men, plains Indians and buffalo roamed over present Curry County.

The cowmen were the first permanent settlers in present Curry County. They chose the semi-shallow draws which were watered by a few springs to dig dug-outs, later erecting rock homes and barns, letting their longhorn cattle drift over the open range.

The first courthouse was built in 1910-1911, planned by L.M. Cassidy, and built by J.S. Marsh and Company, on land donated by the Liebelt heirs. The family donated Block 43 of the Liebelt Addition. The building construction bid was accepted at \$22 ,670. On November 25, 1935 the bid was accepted to build a new courthouse that is still used today. Jerry M. Schaeffer and Robert E. Merrel were the architects, and J. E. Morgan and Sons were the contractors. The building cost \$163,387.83. On September 30, 1954 a contract was awarded for \$94,985 to build west annex to the Curry County Courthouse. When the annex was constructed it was built on the exact site of the original courthouse. Bids were received on August 2, 1984 for the construction of the Juvenile Detention Center. John C. Cornell constructed the facility at a cost of \$1,691,256.83 of Curry County's taxpayers' money.

Deep well irrigation beginning in the early 1950's turned the southeast third of the county into one of the most productive areas in New Mexico. Curry County grows more wheat and sorghum than any other county in the state. Land use of the other two-thirds of the county can roughly be equally divided between dry-land farming and grass land. The grass land and wheat pasturing support the oldest industry in the county, that of raising livestock. Recently large Holstein dairies have come into the agricultural scene. Curry County is home to eight milking dairies at this time.

Cannon Air Force Base was established in 1942; however, its history goes as far back as the mid 1920's when the Portair Field was established. It was used as an Airport for early commercial transcontinental flights. During the 1930's Portair Field was renamed Clovis Municipal Airport.

Major sources of income in the county are agricultural and related industries, Cannon Air Force Base, Santa Fe Railroad, and the Clovis retail trade industry. Three communities in the county, other than Clovis, support a public-school system; Grady (population in 1992- 110), Melrose (population in 1992-662), and Texico (population in 1992-1966).

Clovis is situated 10 miles from the Texas state line in east central New Mexico, and is also located approximately 220 miles southeast of Albuquerque, NM and approximately 100 miles southwest of Amarillo, TX.

The altitude in Curry County is 4,280 feet above sea level. There are 18 square miles of area in Curry County.

**Thank you to the High Plains Historical Foundation for assistance in  
compiling the information contained in this document.**