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## Review of *Faded Dreams: More Ghost Towns of Kansas* By Daniel C. Fitzgerald

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*Faded Dreams: More Ghost Towns of Kansas.* By Daniel C. Fitzgerald. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994. Maps, photographs, illustrations, notes, selected bibliography, index. xvi + 318 pp. \$25.00 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

The Kansas State Historical Society maintains a file on about six thousand failed towns in the state, a figure large almost beyond comprehension in this modern age of one town per county. Dan Fitzgerald helps to put urban development in proper perspective by offering thumb-nail sketches of one hundred and six of these nearly forgotten communities. It is history from the grass roots, well done, and written in an unpretentious style that should appeal to scholarly and general audiences alike. The sketches range in length from one to seven pages, usually accompanied by an old photograph or plat map, and are rich in the names of

individuals and businesses, stories of local events, and quotations from early diaries and memoirs. With few exceptions, readers also learn about the hopes for each new settlement and the reasons why these hopes were frustrated. Fitzgerald's selections represent a wide assortment of economic activities and do not duplicate any from his companion volume, *Ghost Towns of Kansas: A Traveler's Guide*, published in 1988. He has grouped the sketches by geographic region, but they can be read in any order.

*Faded Dreams* offers no theoretical structure to explain the "town game" played locally by entrepreneurs between 1854 and about 1915. Instead the book's achievement is to provide a sense of the times. Readers soon will forget the individual accounts of Devizes, Padonia, and Smileyberg but will remember a series of recurring themes: the long-term negative consequences of an early fire or death of a key entrepreneur, the desperateness of the striving to acquire and hold a government agency, the blindness of assuming that a new mode of transportation would follow the same path as had the old. Such piecing together of generalities from a series of case studies is an effective way to learn regional history, and the findings are applicable far beyond Kansas.

Fitzgerald writes without sensationalism or sentiment. His sources, mostly contemporary newspapers and county histories, are solid, and he does a decent job of providing context. The only major distortions I observed were understatements of the role ethnicity played in the histories of Neuchatel, Strawberry, and Tipton, and of the economic promise seen for the Santa Fe terminal at Englewood. Clear reference maps accompany text, but they are drawn at a scale inadequate to guide an actual trek to the towns. In addition, at least three of the sites (Eustis, Voorhees, and Woodsdale) are seriously misplotted.

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