



Smithton's sawdust pile

Smithton

A part of Clark County's landscape that might have been considered ordinary at the time, proved to be of national interest. It achieved such notoriety that it was featured in the popular "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" newspaper column. The distinction achieved was the "World's Largest Sawdust Pile." The huge sawdust pile was located at Smithton.

James A. "Jim" Smith, for whom Smithton was named, was an entrepreneur and lumberman. He was born in Ireland in 1847, came to the United States in 1867, and arrived in Clark County in 1873 as a construction worker on the Iron Mountain Railroad. He went into business by selling staves, crossties, cordwood, and other railroad supplies. He entered the mercantile business in Gurdon in 1879, and also opened a mill at Smithton. Growth was sufficient enough to warrant establishment of a post office by Smithton in the early 1880s, and the post office remained in operation until 1955.

In 1887 Smith closed his business in Gurdon and moved to Smithton, where he died on January 11, 1889. His wife, Mary Norman Smith, continued the successful operation for years afterward. She is believed to be Clark County's first lumberwoman.

A pile of sawdust that started with Smith's mill was augmented by the waste from other mills in the area. In the 1930s it grew to be so large that it was recognized as the largest sawdust pile in the world. Based on information provided by the Rev. M.D. Williams, it was featured in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" column.