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Teter Rock

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Teter Rock

Teter Rock sits alone atop one of the highest peaks in the Flint Hills at an elevation of 1,634 feet. The view from the peak, locally known as Texaco Hill, is an unmatched tranquil panoramic view of the surrounding tallgrass prairie. To the uninitiated, “Teter Rock” may seem a name that describes the precarious monolith, but it is anchored deeply into the ground.

I first heard the name Teter Rock when I was a child, when my father traveled from pump station to pump station working as a pipe-liner for Cities Service Gas Company. More than three decades since I first visited Teter Rock with my father, I now travel these same roads with my own family, sharing with them my passion for the Flint Hills.

The oil rigs, oil towers, and concrete foundations that dot this landscape offer the only evidence of the place known as Teterville. During the oil-boom days of the 1920s, oil wells, oil workers, and shotgun houses appeared almost overnight.

As a child, James Teter came to Kansas with his parents, John and Lucinda Teter, and his eight siblings. The John Teter family left Upsher County, West Virginia, when Confederate soldiers burned the Teter home to the ground. According to Helen, James’s daughter, John barely had time to get a few belongings and his family of eleven onto a covered wagon.

John landed in the Kansas Flint Hills. A cattle operation began and James continued adding acreage to the family’s land. James first marked this place with a simple pile of rocks that were plentiful in these parts. According to local lore, John erected the original marker to guide fellow pioneers to the Cottonwood Valley. As the oil industry emerged in Teterville, the signpost was dismantled as oil workers used the rocks for concrete work in the Teterville fields.

In the 1950s James Teter’s grandson Murle Teter found an immense limestone rock



TETER ROCK (DETAIL)
Phil Epp

on his land. The rock was so large that he had no way to move it. The Arapahoe Pipeline Company was working on a pipeline in the area, and Murle arranged to use their equipment and erect the leaning tower in honor of his grandfather. Teter Rock still draws travelers today. To experience it yourself, travel east from Cassoday on NE 150th Street Road (also known as Teterville Road) for twelve miles. Teter Rock is recognizable from the distance before you reach the Teterville and Teter Rock sign. On the north side of the road is the pumping station where my dad checked gas meters. (My mother assures me that the pump station does not look the same as when my dad worked for Cities Service.) To the south is Teter Rock Lane. The road is rough, with potholes and deep ruts marking the path in the pasture.

Catch your breath when you arrive at the top of the hill where Teter Rock rests. The view, once appreciated by Flint Hills pioneer James Teter, is incredible.

Sandy Dorsey, Volunteer Coordinator at Symphony in the Flint Hills, Inc., has spent most of her life in the Flint Hills and continues to live in Cottonwood Falls with her three children, Gabe, Eli, and Mayah.