

Post Rock 2- Rosslyn Schultz

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Is it a post or is it a rock? In central Kansas, it might be both. A unique limestone formation in central Kansas has given rise to the name Post Rock country. Now a dedicated group of community advocates is launching a new coalition to attract visitors to the Post Rock region. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Last week we learned about the Russell County Area Community Foundation which is supporting the new Post Rock Limestone Coalition. The coalition is co-chaired by Rosslyn Schultz of the Grassroots Arts Center in Lucas.

As we have shared before, Rosslyn went to K-State and met and married a Lucas-area wheat farmer. Her interest in wheat weaving led her to become involved in folk art. She eventually became director of the Grassroots Arts Center which specializes in outsider, self-taught art environments across Kansas and the midwest.

Lucas is in the heart of a unique region known as Post Rock country. It takes its name from the pieces of stone which were used as fenceposts by inventive pioneers more than a century ago.

When settlers came to the mostly treeless plains of central Kansas, they solved their fencing problems by quarrying and shaping slabs of limestone for use as fenceposts and other purposes. Homes, barns, churches, bridges, caves, and water towers were constructed from the honey-colored stone as well.

In 1975, the book *Land of the Post Rock* was published. Kansas designated Highway 232 from Wilson to Lucas as the Post Rock Scenic Byway, but the underground stone formation went well beyond that highway.

For years, tourism leaders in the area had thought about working together as a region. When the Russell County Area Community Foundation offered a new grant program, it stimulated action to make this a reality.

In August 2018, Rosslyn Schultz and others started working on a grant proposal. This involved a detailed application and an oral presentation before a review board. "It felt like we were gearing up for a masters' thesis," Rosslyn said.

The Russell County Area Community Foundation ultimately made a \$25,000 grant to develop the Post Rock Limestone Coalition. This coalition represents 17 counties which cover this underground limestone formation. In March, 23 individuals representing 20 different organizations and ten counties in the Post Rock area attended the second organizational meeting.

The region is located along a diagonal line from north central Kansas toward southwest Kansas. Russell County, including Lucas, is in the heart of this region.

The Grassroots Arts Center is located in three historic stone buildings in downtown Lucas. In back of these buildings is the Postrock Limestone Courtyard, a landscaped area highlighting what can only be described as examples of native stone artistry. Lucas is a rural community of 394 people. Now, that's rural. Many historic stone buildings can be found in rural communities throughout the Post Rock region.

“Our group has a passion for limestone architecture,” Rosslyn said. “This layer of stone is found nowhere else in the world,” she said. “We want to educate about these stone buildings and the people who built them,” she said.

“We need to get people off the interstate,” Rosslyn said. “A study showed that, if we can get current visitors to stay one more night and eat two more meals, that is a 2.5 million dollar benefit to the region,” she said.

Eventually, the group hopes to have a visitors center or gateway, mobile apps for guided and self-guided tours, and an artist-in-residence program. “We also need masonry people to restore these buildings,” Rosslyn said. The coalition is seeking more partners to expand this effort. For more information, search for the Post Rock Limestone Coalition on Facebook.

Is it a post or is it a rock? In one unique region of our state, we find both. The limestone which served the pioneers as fenceposts also became beautiful homes, stores and churches, and now serves as an iconic symbol for the region. We commend Rosslyn Schultz and all those involved with the Post Rock Limestone Coalition for making a difference by preserving and promoting these historic artifacts. I think I will post that this idea rocks.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.