

OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM BUSINESS DISTRICT BARBERSHOP

- 1 . The Barbershop represents a business and social institution of Wichita during the 1870s.
2. Barbershops were sometimes referred to as "shaving saloons."
3. Barbershops catered to the permanent residential community and the transient population. Some barbershops had facilities for bathing.
4. Due to the barbershop's gender-specific orientation and its bathing facilities, the barbershop often reflected the atmosphere of a men's club -- a place for men to get together and gossip, socialize and occasionally conduct business.

The Barbershop, located in the Business District of Old Cowtown Museum, represents a business and social institution of the expanding metropolitan community of Wichita during the 1870s.

In the early 1870s, there were several "shaving saloons" in Wichita. Both permanent residents and transient visitors patronized the barbershop. Many of the regular customers had their own shaving mugs with their names and an illustration of their vocations on them. Once or twice a week, a townsman would come in for a shave and the barber would mix the lather in the man's personalized mug from a bar of a popular soap such as Williams Shaving Soap.

Some barbershops, like the one interpreted here, had a back room

where a man could take a bath. During the cattle season in Wichita, after weeks on a cattle drive, cowboys would come first to the barbershop for a shave and a bath before moving on to the saloon for refreshment, relaxation, and entertainment. The facilities for baths were provided for the transient population at large: newcomers, cattle drovers, cowboys, traders, hunters, traveling salesmen, performers, and railroad employees.

In issues of the 1872 and 1873 Wichita City Eagle, J.B. Thompson advertised under the heading "Shaving Saloon." Shaving, hair-cutting and dressing done in the latest style of art. Baths, hot or cold, 50 [cents]. Soap, towels, and Lilac Water (a bathing cologne), were generally available at extra cost.

During the 1870s, no "self-respecting" woman would ever set foot in a barbershop for fear of catching a glimpse of a man in the Bath Room. Often the barbershop took on the atmosphere of a men's private club -- a place to gossip, socialize, and occasionally conduct business.

A Close Shave and a Hot Bath

*Shaving, hair cutting and dressing done in the latest style of art. Baths, hot or cold, 50 (cents).
J.B. Thompson -The
Wichita City Eagle, 1873*

Late 19th century barber shops provided local residents and visitors to Wichita with grooming services and bathing facilities. Local

residents frequented barber shops, which were also called shaving saloons, on a regular basis. The men of the town often kept personalized shaving mugs at their favorite shop. While they were there, patrons swapped stories, advised each other in politics, read the local papers, and enjoyed an atmosphere of a private men's club. Transient visitors, such as cowboys and others associated with the cattle industry, would visit the shops for shaves, hair cuts, and for a long anticipated bath at the end of a trail drive. Given the nature of these establishments, it is clear that women were not among the patrons