

## Lori Lennen – Trail City

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

The overnight guest wrote a note in the guest book. That's not so unusual, but this note was written in Spanish. Of course, that is understandable, since this guest came from Argentina. Today we'll meet a woman who is marketing her community and operating a bed and breakfast which is attracting guests from all over. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Lori Lennen and her mother Larue Lennen are the owners of the Trail City Bed and Breakfast in Coolidge, Kansas. Coolidge is located in western Kansas – in fact, two miles from the Colorado border.

Lori's grandparents on both sides homesteaded near Coolidge. Her family moved to a ranch near Russell but eventually came back to Coolidge where her dad was an auctioneer. He purchased several of the old buildings there. Lori's career took her to Arizona for twenty years, but when her father passed away, she moved back to help her mother.

They scheduled an auction to disperse the old buildings, but when Lori heard people talking about what it would cost to tear down those historic limestone buildings, they cancelled the auction. "Dad bought those old buildings to save them," Lori said.

One of the buildings was a historic opera house. They got it listed on the Kansas Register of Historic Places and are working on a renovation. The Lennens also own a limestone mercantile building which houses a visitors center.

Then a home next to the opera house came up for sale. "The realtor threw me the keys and said, 'Take a look. This would make a great bed and breakfast,'" Lori said. Lori was busy at the time, but when she did take a look, she decided the realtor was right. They were needing a place for their building contractors to stay anyway. Lori and her mother Larue bought this historic home, remodelled it and now operate it as a five bedroom, five bath b and b.

The home has a fascinating history. It was once a saloon in the now non-existent town of Trail City just west of Coolidge.

In the 1880s, Kansas cattlemen were trying to get the Texas cattle drives out of their state, and Colorado cattlemen were doing the same thing across the state line. However, due to a surveying error, there was a three mile gap between where Kansas ended and Colorado began. That gap with no official jurisdiction made it possible for the trail drives to continue up to Wyoming. It became known as No Man's Land or Hell's Half Acre. Here sprung up the town of Trail City, which became a haven for rowdies and outlaws.

Trail City was wild and woolly. For example, times were so crazy that Coolidge passed a city ordinance which banned women from riding horses naked. Wow.

Eventually the cattle drives ended. Trail City withered away, and nothing is left but crumbling foundations. The territory was given to Colorado and the saloon was moved to Coolidge where it became a home. That home is now the Trail City Bed and Breakfast.

The Arkansas River flows gently nearby. Silt from development in Denver has washed downriver and created a soft, sandy riverbed which meanders through the

cottonwood. Deer, turtles, and two-foot-long catfish can be found here in this scenic setting. Geocaching and wildlife viewing are popular pursuits. “It is magnificent,” Lori said. She is now organizing horseback rides (fully clothed) along the riverbed.

The Trail City Bed and Breakfast has hosted guests from all over, across the country and as far away as England and Argentina. That’s pretty impressive for a rural community like Coolidge, population 86 people. Now, that’s rural.

“It’s lots of fun,” Lori said. “People enjoy the authentic experience. The potential for rural America can’t be beat.”

For more information, go to [www.trailcitybb.com](http://www.trailcitybb.com).

The overnight guest left his message in Spanish – which is understandable when one learns that he is originally from Argentina. We salute Lori Lennen and Larue Lennen for making a difference by preserving and sharing this history and hospitality. To them we say “Muchas Gracias” – and make sure your guests keep their clothes on while riding.

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