

April 1914 to June 1916

The Red Line Division of the Midland Trail

Fielding strong sports teams was a source of Glasco pride—football, basket ball, baseball—Glasco men challenged teams from Alaska to Chicago, from Haskell to KU. This reputation for sports success inspired an ingenious plan: Glasco would field a basket ball team named for the new transcontinental highway that would go through town. The Red Line Basket Ball Team.

By December, 1914, twenty-six games were scheduled for January 6, 1915 to February 13, 1915, along the Kansas Division of the Midland Trail, from Kansas City to Denver. The plan was to play basket ball in the evening, and to paint the red road stripes on telephone poles along the route by day. The games were to generate the money to cover expenses and to pay for the paint.

The team traveled in one of Davidson & Co.'s cars, and pulled a trailer to carry their tools and paint. The published schedule was:

January 6, Miltonvale
January 7, Clay Center
January 8, Leonardville
January 9, Riley
January 11, Manhattan
January 12, Wamego
January 13, St. Marys
January 14, Rossville
January 15, Topeka
January 16, Topeka

January 18, Lawrence
January 19, Eudora
January 20, DeSota
January 21, Kansas City
February 1, Beloit
February 2, Glen Elder
February 3, Cawker City
February 4, Downs
February 5, Osborne
February 6, Plainville
February 8, Hoxie
February 9, Colby
February 10, Goodland
February 11, Burlington, Col.
February 12, Limon, Col.
February 13, Denver, Col.

Having a good time and boosting the Red Line were their first goals—But what kind of success did the team have on the road? *The Glasco Sun*, January 28, 1915 tucked this comment into a column of social news:

In the basket ball game between the Red Liners and Fairview Tuesday evening, the former won by a safe majority. W. A. Davidson, Chris and Ralph Weaver, Roy Martin and Joe Bogue represented Fairview and J. M. Davidson, Chet Halderson, Alf Copple, Frank McCollough and Dave Williams the Red Line club.

While the team was in Glasco, midway through the Kansas City to Denver tour, the Red Line team sponsored a dance and played the high school team. They were raising the \$35 each town contributed

to the tour expenses. Townspeople were urged to show their loyalty, whether basket ball fans or not.

When did the game start? Glasco loved a good time—for the game, in Davidson's Garage, would begin after the picture show closed. The picture show theater was only a door away on Main Street. The show began at 7:00.

In February, the team resumed its tour—even through a snow storm so bad they had to abandon their car in Simpson and take the train to Beloit to make the game there. They were challenged by the high school and town teams on successive nights, winning 55 to 17, and 18 to 8. From there, they were able to go on by automobile to Downs. Downs padded their team with KU players, but went down to defeat 40 to 19. Glasco's only disappointment? Painting poles, Glasco to Downs, was not possible.

A February 11, 1915 news account in *The Glasco Sun* reads like a letter home:

Winning Every Game; The Red Line basket ball team is trimming all comers. Since Thursday they have defeated the crack Plainville team, Hill City and Goodland. They were unable to get a date at Colby, but will probably double back there for a game. They have won every game since leaving by good scores and according to the dispatches the Red Line from Glasco to Denver will soon be a crimson streak. They are doing a good job of marking the route and are having a fine time.

A week later, February 18, 1915, the Red Liners were welcomed home with a front page headline, story and complete run down of their scores.

RED LINERS BACK
Glasco Ball Team Wins Every
Game On Tour of Famous
Route

Also in that February 18 paper, *The Glasco Sun* carried a story from the Hill City paper. The game on February 8 in Hill City was a fast basket ball game with “the famous Red Line Glasco team.” A close 22-21 score at half time, Glasco won their 14th straight game 42-35. Hill City immediately scheduled a return match for February 16, with pleas for a “disinterested party as referee—five men on one side enough for any basket ball game.”

The Flagler, Colorado paper had promised there would be the fastest game ever played in Eastern Colorado, pitting “The Red Line team, champions of Kansas” against the undefeated Flagler team, champions of Eastern Colorado. Flagler, a town of 250, packed 400 into the game, leaving almost no room to play. Glasco players were handicapped by the narrow hall, low ceiling, and 8 foot high baskets rather than the regulation 10 foot height. The conditions contributed to the Red Liners closest game, winning 29 to 27.

March 4, 1915 *The Glasco Sun* carried a photograph of the Red Line Team under the headline: **Red Liners Play Wesleyan College Saturday Night**. An advertisement for the game appeared in the same issue, touting Wesleyan’s record of 12 straight victories over teams like Haskell Indians, Ottawa and Baker University. It included a plea for attendance to cover the \$45 in expenses, listed Earl Woodward as the official, place and time were as usual, Davidson’s Garage after the picture show.

March 11, the paper reported not the results, but the story **Got Cold Feet**. Wesleyan declined to come to Glasco after all their conditions had been met, that is playing on a wood floor and adequate funds, for they doubted that they could play and retain their standing in the basket ball league. The editor noted they had exercised good judgment.

March 1915 *Topeka Journal* describes the **Red Line Show**.

Do you like to go to a circus? Do you like to cultivate sore sides by the laughing process? Are you a good enough sport to pay 2-bits for the best and most worthy public entertainment that was every offered to Topeka fun lovers?

If so, then don't fail to be at the Topeka Auditorium on the evening of Thursday, March 25. But if you don't enjoy any of these things and don't think it is worth 25 cents to see the greatest Barnum attraction ever offered in Kansas, go and spend your money anyway and help Shawnee county bring her Red Line auto trail up to date by equipping it with sign posts and markers.

The Red Liners would play the Topeka Cubs, with Clarence Jordan referee. To add to the entertainment, there would be pipe organ selections, a four-round boxing match, with L. M. Penwell as referee, and an exhibit of rock cracking with an 85 pound sledge hammer.

The *Topeka Journal* continued:

...no matter how big the show, the price will be only 25 cents, and every cent taken in will be applied to the marking of the Red Line....

The basket ball game in itself will be well worth the admission charged and it ought to be the best game staged in Topeka this season. The Glasco five have made a most remarkable record and has defeated teams in almost every part of the state. On the other hand, the Topeka Cubs have given a

good account of themselves in every game they have participated in, and will make special efforts to be in the pink of condition to meet the "Liners."

Don't forget the date—March 25. Don't forget that if you don't attend you will be missing more fun than a dollar will buy any place else in the world and you will be missing a chance to help along a Shawnee good roads proposition.

March 11, 1915, *The Glasco Sun*

OVER THE RED LINE TO FRISCO
Tourists in East Already Active in Plans and Preparations
for Pilgrimage Across Country
the Coming Summer.

GLASCO WILL GET TRAFFIC FROM BIG ROUTE

April 15, 1915, *The Glasco Sun*

INSPECT RED LINE
Cross Country Trip to Be Made
By Prominent Number
of Eastern Men

WILL PASS THROUGH HERE

Famous Highway Will be Given
a Thorough Test as to Its Efficiency

March 15, 1915 *The Glasco Sun* carried these observations, raising questions about whether everyone was pleased by the automobile.

Sunday automobiling provoked discussion of the purpose of traveling. Families seeking fresh air and visiting neighbors was one thing. But an automobile party was a Sabbath breaker—akin to Sunday baseball and theater!

November 22, 1915: Davidson Ad

Buick

Buy Cars While You Can

In June, 1916 The Red Line Division of the Midland Trail merged into the Midland Trail. The Red Line passed away as an official road marker, but the Red Liners continued to play—boosting Glasco and the road that had given them their name.

April, 1916: poster ad for Portis Game

December 20, 1916: ad--Open season for 1917

March 20, 1917: ad –last game for 1917 against Mankato YMCA—
with a neutral official.

March 29, 1917: Results of final game—Glasco winning, 55-25.