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Tiny NW Mo. town calls it quits after 150 years

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QUITMAN, Mo. (AP) - A tiny northwest Missouri town that was the birthplace of a governor and home to one of the country's largest cattle ranches has ceased to officially exist after 150 years.

The Maryville Daily Forum (<http://bit.ly/TO8e9N>) reported that the Nodaway County Commission voted to disincorporate Quitman this month after a local resident asked for it. Green Township likely will take over responsibility for graveling the streets, but beyond that it's unclear how the move will affect the remaining residents.

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Quitman, which had 45 residents in the 2010 census, quit collecting taxes in September because no one ran for any of the five board of trustees' positions.

The board already was down to three members before the April election, and then two of them died. The widow of one of the board members was the only remaining trustee and she moved away.

With no board to set a new tax rate, the tax came off the books in September, as required by state law. And no tax revenue, no town - the county commission's vote was a formality.

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Joseph.

In its heyday, Quitman was home to the Bilby Ranch, founded in the late 1860s by John S. Bilby as the headquarters for his cattle-trading operation and grain elevator, according to historian Bob Bohlken, a retired Northwest Missouri State professor. The town became a trading post for sharecroppers.

Bilby's massive empire, collapsed before he was killed in a train accident in 1919, Bohlken said.

The town's future was sealed decades ago when shops and stores that once served a bustling farm and ranch community closed, as did its schools. The only business left is an auto repair shop.

Forrest C. Donnell, who served as the state's reform-minded Republican governor from 1941 to 1945, was born there in 1884.

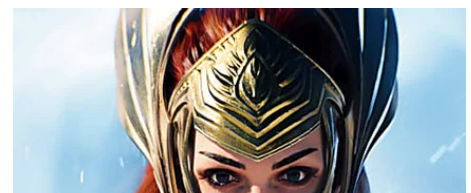
Donnell was the only Republican elected to a statewide office in 1940, and Democratic lawmakers delayed seating him for six weeks until the Missouri Supreme Court forced them to do so. That event became known as the Great Governorship Steal.

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