



A crowd gathers on Yuma Street to witness the groundbreaking for the Yuma Street Cultural Center.

Plans move forward for Yuma Street Cultural Center

A ground-breaking ceremony for the Yuma Street Cultural Center, 930 Yuma St., Manhattan, Kansas, was held March 10. Plans are now moving forward to repurpose the Kaw Blue Masonic Lodge, historically known as Shepard's Chapel, into a hub to highlight Black history in the Flint Hills region while supporting local entrepreneurs and community programming.

The center will feature business training programs; culinary incubator spaces for food entrepreneurs; markets and outdoor engagements to showcase, connect, and drive

cultural and economic growth; affordable technology rentals and Wi-Fi hotspots to provide access for students, entrepreneurs, and families; workshops on financial literacy, home-ownership, digital training, and mental health; and youth development programs to honor the legacy of educators who helped the youth of Yuma Street.

The Yuma Street Historic District was recognized for its historical importance and was added to both the Register of Historic Kansas Places and National Register of Historic Places in 2023.

Yuma Street has been home to many figures who have shaped Manhattan's history, including Dave Baker, the first Black head baseball coach at Kansas State University and the first Black head coach at a predominantly white university. He is the former executive director of the Douglass Center. His efforts led to Yuma Street's recognition on the registers.

Other prominent people who have helped shape the legacy of Yuma Street include:

- **Earl Woods**, father of Tiger Woods and the first Black baseball player in the Big Seven. Woods grew up on Yuma Street, and his sisters were teachers at the Douglass School, 925 Yuma St., now the Douglass Center Annex.

- **Lena Horne**, Grammy-Award winning artist and civil rights activist, who performed for soldiers at Douglass Community Center when it served as a USO for African American service members during World War II. Horne stayed at a Black-owned hotel on Yuma.

- **Martin Luther King Jr.**, who delivered his last university speech at Kansas State University in 1968. He also gave an impromptu speech on Yuma Street.

- **George Giles**, Negro Baseball League player and local entrepreneur, who owned George's Motel on Fort Riley Boulevard in Manhattan, Kansas.

- **Wallace Kidd**, who built his successful pest control business in Manhattan, Kansas, starting on Yuma Street. He was the first African American to be elected as Riley County Commissioner.

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- **Jackie Robinson and Joe Louis**, trail-blazing athletes who were stationed at Fort Riley.

- **Rosa Parks**, civil rights activist, who visited the Douglass Center and Douglass School to talk with Black youth in the community.

To repurpose the lodge/chapel into the Yuma Street Cultural Center will require more than \$1.7 million in critical renovations.

Plans include structural repairs, masonry restoration, window refurbishments, roof replacement, and mechanical upgrades to honor its architectural integrity while creating a safe, welcoming space for community programs.

This story was adapted from information on blackflinthills.com/yuma.



Dave Baker, visionary of the Yuma Street Cultural Center, gets ready for the center's groundbreaking.

RCHS sees a record-breaking Grow Green Day

By **Rafael Garcia**

During the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation's Grow Green day on April 22, the Riley County Historical Society secured \$11,025 from a record-breaking 70 donors, supporting the society's ongoing work to preserve some of Riley County's most significant historic properties.

Matching funds from the community foundation are expected to grow the total raised to just over \$16,500.

"We're beyond grateful for the support and confidence the community has in the Riley County Historical Society in carrying out our mission," said Board President Mary Mertz. "The success of this year's Grow Green campaign ensures that Riley County's historic treasures will continue to educate and inspire the public for generations to come."

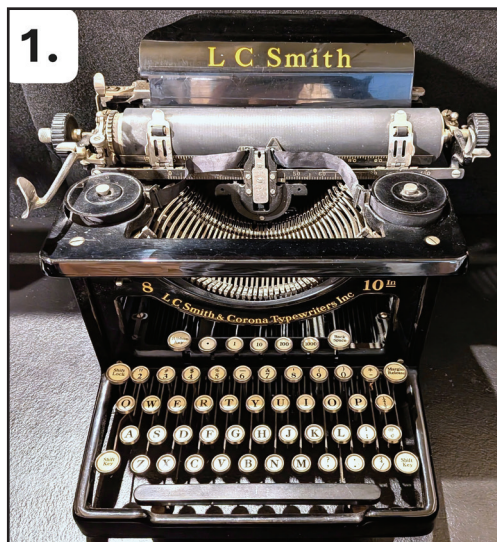
Priority sites for the upcoming year include the Wolf House Historic District — comprising the

Wolf House, Mansfield House, Moses House, and Wolf Photography Studio — as well as the Hartford House, the Rocky Ford School House, and the Pioneer Log Cabin.

All of these structures — representing the growth of Riley County from its earliest settlements through the modern era — are listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

These preservation efforts directly support the Society's educational mission. In 2025, more than 1,000 visitors, including schoolchildren and researchers, engaged with these sites to experience local history firsthand.

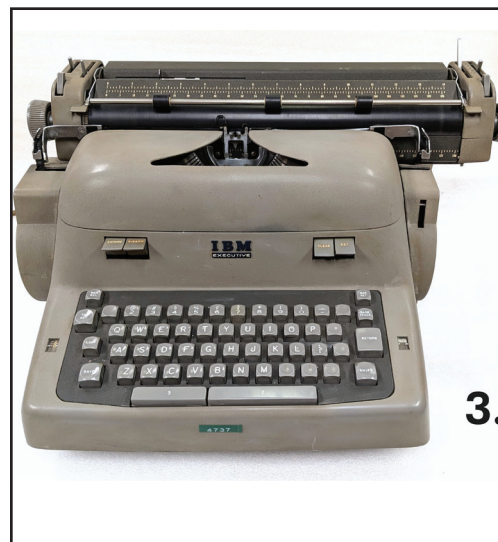
The 2026 funding will allow RCHS to broaden its interpretation of themes like technology and community life while ensuring these buildings remain safe and accessible.



Typewriter from L.C. Smith & Bros., ca. 1915 and rebuilt after 1926



Typewriter from Underwood Typewriter Company, 1936



Electric Typewriter IBM Model B Executive, 1957

COLLECTIONS CORNER

Celebrate typewriters

By Dawn Munger

June 23 is National Typewriter Day! This day commemorates the first typewriter patent, which was granted to American inventor Christopher Latham Sholes on June 23, 1868. The Riley County Historical Museum has many typewriters from various periods in our collection, and we've picked out a few to highlight.

Our first typewriter highlight is an early L.C. Smith & Bros. model, ca. 1915, that appears to have been rebuilt sometime after 1926 when that company merged with the Corona Typewriter Company. This typewriter was owned and used by Elizabeth Hamilton Davis (1887-1970), who came to Manhattan in 1914 to work in the Kansas State Agricultural College library after earning a degree in library science from the University of Illinois. Elizabeth soon became a reference librarian there

and performed this service for decades before retiring in 1958.

Our second example is a 1936 model made by the Underwood Typewriter Company. This typewriter was used by Harry K. Wareham (1899-1980), a well-known businessman and theater manager from the notable Wareham family. After spending his youth collecting bills for the Wareham Telephone Company (as a fourth grader) and grooming the Wareham Ice Company horses in the summers, Harry spent much of the 1920s as manager of numerous big theaters around the country (including Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles). In fact, he made friends with many well-known names in the theater entertainment industry at the time. Wareham finally returned to Manhattan in 1930 to manage the Wareham Theater, though he was also involved in many other family businesses and was a member of many clubs and organizations.

Our final typewriter is a 1957 IBM Model B Executive electric typewriter that was installed at the Kansas State University Department of Economics in 1957. The Executive model is noteworthy be-

cause, unlike standard models, it featured proportional spacing, so instead of every character taking up the same width, the "i" used less space than the "w," giving it a more modern typeface. This typewriter was donated by Robin D.S. Higham, Ph.D. (1925-2015), a British-American, Harvard-educated historian who joined the faculty of Kansas State University in 1963. Higham's area of specialty was aeronautics and military aviation history, about which he wrote extensively, including as editor of *Military Affairs* (now *The Journal of Military History*) and *Aerospace Historian* (now *Journal of the Air Force Historical Foundation*). He was also editor of *Journal of the West*, and in 1977 he founded *Sunflower University Press*, which became a leader in the arena of small publishers. Higham taught in the Department of History until 1999 when he retired and was granted professor emeritus status.

Dawn Munger has been curator of collections for Riley County Historical Museum since 2018. She has a master's degree in museum studies from The University of Kansas.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Don't overlook the pages from your family histories

In April, I had the privilege of attending a sesquicentennial celebratory tea hosted by the Manhattan Domestic Science Club, or DSC. Not knowing anything about this group, I was intrigued to learn more about their purpose, vision, and history (150 years of existence is impressive).

I found out that DSC is actually the second oldest women's club in Kansas. Starting in 1876 as an outgrowth of the Kansas State Agricultural College (now Kansas State University) Department of Domestic Science, the club's evolution ran through many department changes over the decades. The group has stayed constant in their focus, primarily centering on strengthening women through education and community service.

As I sat listening to the history of this club, I remembered something. Many years ago, I came into possession of a family treasure featuring my husband's great grandfather, Joseph Miner (J.M.) Pennington.

In 1923 in the town of Oskaloosa, Kansas, a group of citizens met to discuss the formation of a Community Club. In August of that year, a group of 40 persons met to discuss "the desirability of some sort of a local club that would serve the community needs." I know this because I have the original handwritten journal of this momentous event, scripted by J.M. Pennington.

I'd like to share a passage

from the meeting minutes that, I hope, give you a sense of the civility, humor, and vision that was present that night in that room:

Forty of fifty persons were present, mostly women. Only a few innocent and unsuspecting men were in attendance. A motion was made in a guileless and unguarded moment by J. M Pennington, that a committee on organization be appointed by the chair, and forthwith he got a job as chairman of the committee with J.W. Roberts, Clarence Almon, Rev. Thorpe, and H. Nothdorf as members.*

Then the mass meeting adjourned and went home to bed... to dream of a committee hard at work; of a community club bringing canning factories to town, and creameries, and swimming pools, and dance halls and gymnasiums... of a beaux for every flapper and husbands for every old maid, of fool proof automobiles and free gasoline.

*(*Note: this is Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts' grandfather who was the founder of the Oskaloosa Independent, which is the second-oldest newspaper in Kansas.)*

J.M. Pennington and wife, Nell, had one daughter named Agnes. Agnes had two daughters, one being Leola Jeanne Kueny, my husband's mother. J.M. died at the age of 57 from a three-day illness, shocking his family and community. He was very active in civic organizations, youth pro-



Mary Mertz

grams, his church and was an officer of the local bank. The facts we know about him are important to us. But the personality exhibited within the journal paints a picture of a very loved and respected man, one who chose to make the Oskaloosa Community Club minutes a reflection of his wit and amiability.

Though the journal I have in hand should probably be donated to the Oskaloosa Historical Society, I'm torn about letting it go. It really is a precious piece of family history. I'll have to give some further thought to the matter.

As you sort through family papers and treasurers of past generations, keep an eye out for pages that tell founding history of the counties in which your relatives lived. Make an effort to ask those counties if those documents should be added to the county museum collections. You will be helping preserve important history.

Mary Mertz
RCHS Board President

Spring CALENDAR

APRIL 26 – PIONEER LOG CABIN OPENS FOR THE SEASON, SUNDAYS 2-5PM, FREE

APRIL 29 – HISTORY ON THE ROAD TO RILEY, KANSAS, 5:30-7:30PM AT THE FARMHOUSE RESTAURANT, 212 S. BROADWAY., RILEY, KS; FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; FULL MENU AVAILABLE

MAY 1-31 – MANHATTAN MUSEUMS MONTH, VISIT YOUR FAVORITE MUSEUMS IN MAY - AND EVERY OTHER DAY!

MAY 6 – ON THE BALLFIELD: GEORGE GILES AND A STORY OF YUMA STREET PRESENTATION BY SOPHIE LENKIEWICZ, 6-7:30PM, MANHATTAN PUBLIC LIBRARY, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

MAY 10 - MOTHER'S DAY - RCHS MEMBERSHIPS MAKE A GREAT GIFT!

MAY 23 – JULY 4 – AMERICA250 COMMUNITYWIDE HISTORY SCAVENGER HUNT, MORE DETAILS TO COME!

MAY 25 – CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY

JUNE 4 – HISTORY ON THE ROAD WITH THE DEEP CREEK COMMUNITY, 6-7:30PM AT THE DEEP CREEK SCHOOLHOUSE, 3125 DEEP CREEK RD., MANHATTAN, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

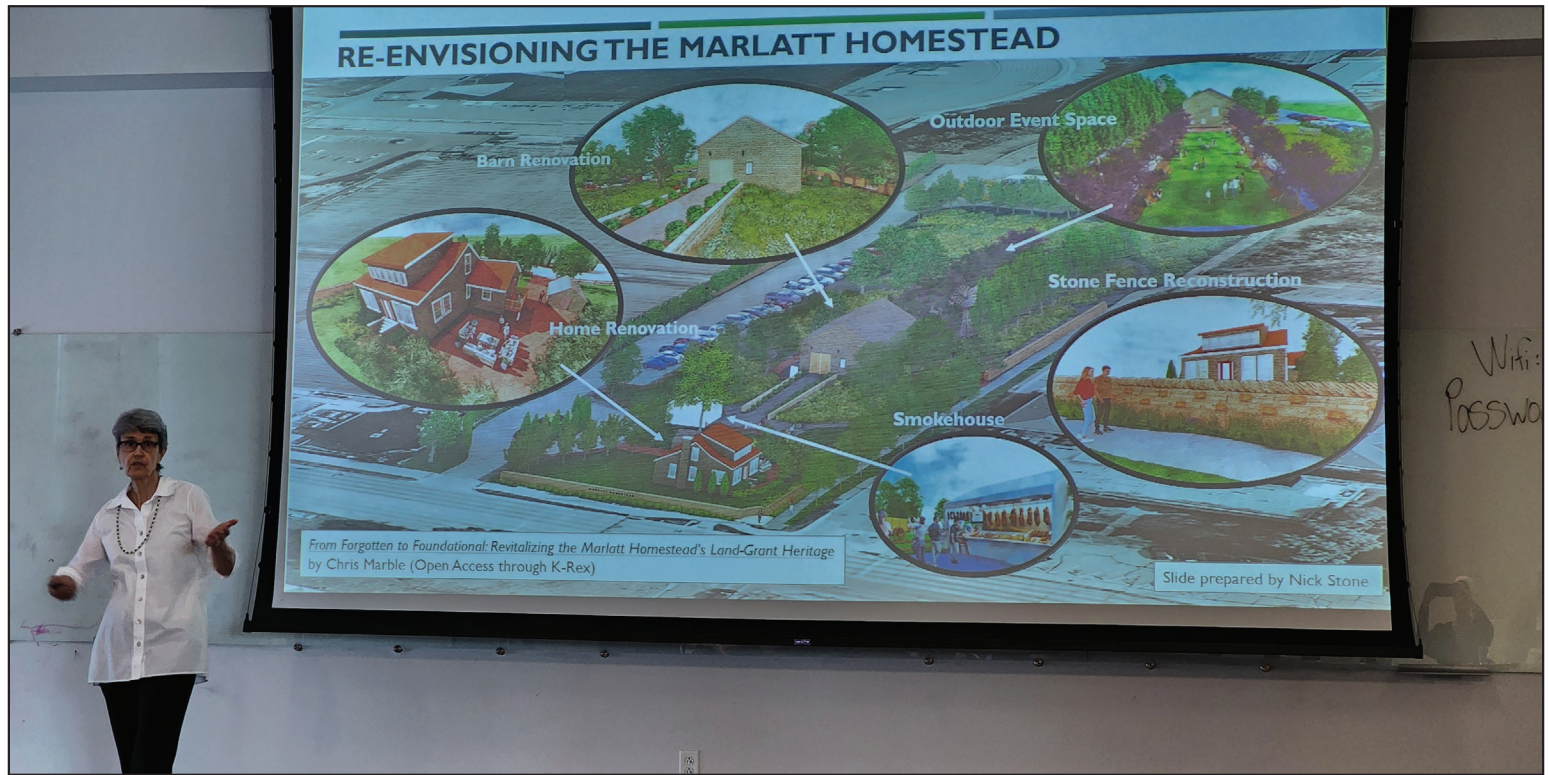
JUNE 19 – CLOSED FOR JUNETEENTH

JUNE 20 – CEMETERY PRESERVATION WORKSHOP AT ST. PATRICK'S CEMETERY IN OGDEN, 9AM-1PM, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

JUNE 26 – HISTORY ON THE ROAD TO THE FIRST TERRITORIAL CAPITOL OF KANSAS, 6-7:30PM AT THE FIRST TERRITORIAL CAPITOL BUILDING, FORT RILEY, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

JUNE 28 – Y2K TEMP EXHIBIT AT THE MUSEUM CLOSSES, 2-5PM, FREE ADMISSION

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH ALL OF OUR EVENTS ONLINE:
WWW.RILEYCHS.ORG/CALENDAR.CFM



Lauren Ritterbush, spoke about revitalizing the Marlatt Homestead at Manhattan's Intergovernmental Luncheon.

Marlatt Homestead Task Force continues work

By Gloria Freeland

Lauren Ritterbush, Kansas State University archaeology professor and member of the Marlatt Homestead Task Force, presented information about the Marlatt property at the March 23 Intergovernmental Luncheon in Manhattan. The Marlatt Homestead Task Force's mission is to preserve and revitalize the historic Marlatt Homestead property as an educational and economic asset for the uni-

versity and community and beyond.

Washington and Julia Marlatt bought the homestead in 1858 and raised their family there. Washington was the first principal of Bluemont Central College, and Julia was one of its first teachers.

The couple added structures, including a barn and several outbuildings, to the property. In 1863, Bluemont Central College became Kansas State Agricultural College.

When the BCC building was deconstructed in 1883-84, Marlatt bought stone and wooden trusses from it to build the barn. He used the Bluemont College arch in the barn, and the arch was later moved to the library and then the K-State Alumni Center, where it is located above the fireplace on the first floor.

The Marlatt Homestead stands as the foundation of K-State and a symbol of the land-grant mission that helped shape U.S. higher education. The property is owned by K-State and is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Gloria Freeland is a professor emerita in the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication and a member of the board of Riley County Historical Society.

Riley County Historical Society

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- Mary Mertz, *President*
- Carol Hockersmith, *Vice President*
- Dori Milldyke, *Immediate Past President*
- Janet Lowell, *Treasurer*
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The William H. Jones family. Front row, from left: William H., Humphrey W. and Margery (Reynolds) Davis Jones. Back: Ellis H. Davis, Mary Ann (Jones) Davis, Ida (Lowery) Jones, Jenny (McMilin) Davis and William G. Davis. (Photo posted by Judith Bowman Holtz on findagrave.com)

The bard of Riley County

William Jones brought a Welsh bard's voice to the Kansas prairie

By Arthur R. Vaughan

Bardd (which is pronounced “barth” by the Welsh and is better known for its English pronunciation “bard”), is a title bestowed by the community to one of its own. While the recipient must be a lover of music, verse, and story, he or she must also bring the community together, not as a leader, but, instead, as a respected member of the community.

Manhattan's bard, William Jones, was born to Humphrey and Mary Jones on September 5, 1832, more than 4,000 miles away on the Welsh island of Anglesey. Their home was Carreg Wen — or “White Rock” — located a few miles south of the north-coast village of Amlwch (AM-looch). Humphrey was a laborer. The couple named the boy William.

When a young man, William moved to Ffestiniog (fes-TIN-ee-og), a slate-mining village 45 miles to the southeast. At 22, he married a local woman, Anne Roberts.



Daughter Mary Ann was born two years later.

Cutting rock by the light of a candle deep in the earth would seem to prompt men to seek quiet relaxation after work. But Welsh men long had a taste for singing, creating verse, and telling stories. Eisteddfods (eye-STETH-vods) were popular social gatherings where the men competed. It was probably here that William earned his bardic name, Wil Sir Fôn — or “Will from Anglesey.”

When Anne died, William immigrated to the U.S. Mary Ann stayed behind, likely with his wife's kin. He worked the slate mines in Peach Bottom, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The pool of proper Welsh names is small, and, like many of his countrymen in America, he added a middle name — an H, apparently for Humphrey — to distinguish himself from others with the same name.

In the early 1860s, he married the widow Margery Davis, who had

boys Ellis and William. In 1864, Humphrey William Jones was born to the couple.

In 1869, Reverend Rhys Gwesyn (rees gwes-in) Jones was searching for a place where immigrants from Wales might settle. His Welsh Land and Emigration Society of America purchased a large tract two miles northwest of present-day Riley. It was to be the site of Bala, a community named after the Welsh village where Jones, the reverend, had married. Two groups of roughly 17 families arrived in late spring 1870. William H. Jones was the second group's leader.

William and his older stepsons farmed, and Eisteddfods, those festivals of Welsh literary and performing arts, were held in the area of their new Kansas home. Ellis traveled widely, teaching music.

In 1880, Mary Ann, now 24, arrived from Ffestiniog to join the family. She married her stepbrother Ellis

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in 1882. The couple had a boy, who died when only a few months old. Daughters Mary and Edith followed.

About 1885, Will and Margery moved to Manhattan. Stepson William and his wife Sarah Jane “Jenny” continued farming.

Ellis and Mary Ann built a home directly west of their parents’ place at Third and Moro streets when their girls were ready for high school. The two homes were located where HyVee’s Market Grille now stands.

Ellis became a contractor, specializing in brick sidewalks. There were 32 miles of them, including those that bordered Moro Street from their home all the way to Aggieville. He was the Superintendent of Public Works for Manhattan, including being the inspector during Manhattan’s Bluemont School construction. He was chairman of the building committee for the Presbyterian Church at the corner of Leavenworth and Eighth streets. Daughter Mary wed Mike Ahearn, horticulture professor at Kansas State Agricultural College (now Kansas State University), better known for his part-time job as coach and athletic director. Edith married Louis Aicher, a long-time experiment station director in Larned, Kansas.

The bard’s son Humphrey graduated from K-State in 1888 and then from Emporia’s State Teachers College. He taught in Texas before becoming the superintendent of the school system in Alma, Kansas. That was followed by being named musical director for the Topeka school system, and finally the principal of the Branner School in Topeka. He sang at many area events and wrote music professionally. He composed the school songs for Branner School, Topeka’s Seaman High School, and Topeka High School, as well as the K-State



Presbyterian Church at Eighth and Leavenworth streets looking to the southwest. (Photo courtesy Art Vaughan)

“Alma Mater.”

William and Margery now rest peacefully in Sunset Cemetery, alongside their children Ellis and Mary Ann. Humphrey and wife Ida are buried in Lyons, Kansas, Ida’s childhood hometown. William and wife, Jenny, are at rest in the Riley Cemetery.

So, Wil Sir Fôn and his family left a mark on Riley County, but the bard isn’t honored by any named building, park, or street.

Arthur Vaughan taught engineering at Kansas State University for eight years and was chief engineer for a local electronics firm before opening his own electronic design business in 1992. History projects, such as gathering biographical information about Riley County men killed in World War II, are a personal passion.



One of Ellis Davis’ sidewalks on the north side of Moro Street looking east from Sixth Street toward where the W.H. Jones and E.H. Davis homes would have stood (Photo courtesy Art Vaughan)

Volunteers relate experiences as Wolf House Fourth Grade Tours docents

By Carol Hockersmith

The Wolf House Fourth Grade Tours, held each year in April, are made possible by volunteer docents, who share 1880s social customs, chores, fashionable foods, and entertainment of Manhattan, with students. Melanie Highsmith, curator of education and design at Riley County Historical Museum, recruits and trains volunteers for the event.

Highsmith also manages the logistics of getting fourth graders to the historic home and sends background information about a boarding house of the 1880s ahead to teachers to prepare students for their visit. This year visits were scheduled for April 14-17, April 21-23, and April 28-30 with about 570 students interacting with about 20 docents.

Volunteer docents shared about their experiences with hosting Wolf House Fourth Grade Tours:

Charlene Brownson

I volunteer as a docent for the Wolf House Fourth Grade Tours to help share the history of Manhattan with young children and to hopefully get them interested in learning more about history.

The Riley County Historical Museum staff have done an excellent job decorating the Wolf House with historical items. The tour includes many hands-on activities to get the kids involved and to make learning about history fun. Each room that the kids visit has items to talk about to help them understand what life



*Above: Fourth graders experienced the Wolf House as a 1880s boarding house in April.
Right: During tours, fourth graders learned about fine dining in Victorian times.*

was like in the 1880s. They learn about cooking, dining, laundry, and many everyday activities.

Julie Doyen

As a retired Kansas educator, I feel an obligation to share my passion, knowledge and skills with future generations. The Wolf House Museum is a special opportunity to be immersed in local history. Kansas has a rich history and sharing that history as a docent is a very rewarding opportunity to serve my community.

Visiting the Wolf House, gives students an opportunity to be surrounded by a history that otherwise could be abstract. The school tours provide students a rare opportunity to learn, see, and actually touch artifacts from our past. They walk away with



a richer understanding of the fabulous history of Kansas and our community.

Mary Stamey

Volunteering at the Wolf House allows me to share my love of children and community, as well as my love of history all in one place.

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Children gain tidbits of knowledge about the “olden days” and what chores the children were expected to do. I love it when they see similarities of everyday living compared with how easy certain tasks are to do today.

Bob Foerschler

My wife has been a docent at the Wolf House for three years and has shared her experiences with me. Those experiences inspired me to volunteer this year.

I hope that the students will gain an appreciation for the difference between their lives and the lives of those who lived and worked in the Wolf House.

G.W. Clift

I enjoy talking to the kids about the Wolf House, about what life was like for Riley Countians a hundred and fifty years ago, and about William Morris [wallpaper designer]. Depending on their level of sophistication, each student learns something about museums, about local history, and about aesthetics. I hope they also learn something about the pleasures of the study of history.

My props used to include several different razors, and most of the kids had never before seen a straight-edge razor. Imagine their reactions to its demonstration. They like the toys and want to

see how they work. Button hooks have to be demonstrated to them. Little by little they get the first glimmerings of what life was like on Juliette in the 1880s. And all along I hope they are learning that museums can be amusing.

Carol Hockersmith holds a journalism and mass communication degree from Kansas State University. She used to write for social service and educational organizations. She is a board member for the Riley County Historical Society.

Celebrating Juneteenth 2026 in the Little Apple

By Pat Hudgins

The Manhattan Juneteenth Committee was recognized last year as the “Best” Juneteenth Celebration event in Kansas by the Neighborhood Academic and Athletic Association and by the Moses Project’s “Summer of Hope” initiative, a program designed to promote community empowerment, health and economic development in Black communities.

The 2026 Juneteenth holiday will mark the sixth year of national recognition since Juneteenth was officially declared a federal holiday in 2021 after decades of celebration. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers brought news of freedom to enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

This year’s celebration in Manhattan, Kansas, continues the momentum with the theme “One Community, Shared Freedom.” Events take place Friday, June 19, and Saturday, June 20.

The celebration begins at City Park with the People’s Choice Grilling Cook-Off, which continues to be a community favorite. By purchasing a taster’s kit, participants can sample each vendor’s barbecue and then vote for a favorite. Vendors can sign up to compete in the cook-off by emailing Manhattankuneteenth@gmail.com.

The Juneteenth concert in the park will be under

the Larry Norvell Band Shell and will feature GAP Band Plus, the world-renowned rhythm and blues and funk band, as the headliner. In the past, the concert has drawn attendees near and far.

Saturday will kick off at Long’s Park, 1615 Colorado St., with the traditional Unity Walk with a Purpose. Participants in the walk are encouraged to meet a new person in the community along the walk down historical Yuma Street to the Douglass Activity Center. The celebration will continue to offer the Juneteenth Fitness Experience, Kids Zone, cultural displays, food trucks, business vendors, music and dance, and more.

To organize an event of this size and scope requires community support and commitments, and those interested may donate at any of our various sponsorship levels. You can donate online at www.mcfs.org/make-a-donation?fid=829 or you may mail a donation to Manhattan Juneteenth, P.O. BOX 841, Manhattan, KS 66505-0841.

Consider being a volunteer or help create a culturally-rich experience in our community by attending Juneteenth 2026!

Pat Hudgins is emeritus associate director of the Career Center, where she retired after 33 years at Kansas State University. She is a member of the Manhattan Juneteenth Committee.