

The Riley County Historical Society and Museum

2309 Claflin Road Manhattan, Kansas 66502 Telephone: (785) 565-6490

RCHS NEWSLETTER

VOL. LX, NO. 4

October 2012

RCHS Dinner Meeting, Annual Meeting, & Elections!

Tuesday, October 16, 6:30 p.m.

Zeandale Community Church

Directions from Manhattan: cross the K 177 bridge and take the K 18 turnoff to the left.

Go east about 7 miles to Zeandale and turn north onto Tabor Valley Road.

The Zeandale Community Church is visible from the K 18—Tabor Valley Road intersection.

Menu: the famous Zeandale buffet—
assorted hot dishes, side dishes, salads, desserts,
coffee & tea.

Cost: \$13.00
Reservations: please call the Museum at 565-6490
by Thursday, October 11, 2012.

If you must cancel your dinner reservation, please call as soon as possible
so that someone else might have your place.

The public is welcome to attend the 7:15 p.m. program in the Church sanctuary, any number, at no charge.

Program:

The Strong Family, Early Settlers of Riley County

Speaker: Rachelle Routh

Rachelle Routh, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Henry and Elenora Strong, will share the remarkable history of this lineage from the time Henry Strong first set foot in Riley County in 1856.

Early on Henry was a freighter or “bull-whacker” who drove wagons from Leavenworth to Santa Fe and also along the Smoky Hill Trail to Denver. In 1858 he traveled to his native state of Connecticut to marry his second cousin, Elenora Strong. They began their married life in a log home at the foot of Bluemont Hill.

Henry was a master mason whose quarry provided stone for Manhattan’s buildings, including Anderson Hall. He was also a farmer, dairyman, and healer of animals. Elenora was an educated woman who had attended both Mount Holyoke College and the State Normal School in New Britain, Connecticut. She conducted a small, private school for area boys in her home.

Family lore tells of the Strong’s involvement in the Underground Railroad before the Civil War. Henry was later called to active duty in the War.

In later years the Strong’s operated the largest apple orchard in Kansas. Each fall Elenora cooked huge vats of apple butter plus jars and jars of applesauce. The family recipe is still in use today which is one way that descendants of Henry and Elenora Strong continue to make their mark on Riley County history.

Riley County Historical Society Slate of Candidates

Directors—three year terms

Director through 2014 (unexpired term)
Clyde Ferguson

Directors through 2015

Jim Olson
Jim Rhine
Jim Sharp

Officers—one year terms

President—Joan Strickler
V.P./Pres. Elect—Gloria Freeland
Immediate Past President—Lynne Berry
Recording Secretary—Rosalie Thompson
Corresponding Secretary—Judy Regehr
Membership Secretary—John White
Treasurer—Fred Delano
Program Chair—Erma Verhage

Martin Dornberger, Kent Smith, and Mary Stamey will continue on the board through 2013.
Robin Edmunds and Glen Lojka will continue on the board through 2014.

Thank you to retiring board member Julie Jones!

Upcoming Events:



Kevin Olson, author of the new book “Frontier Manhattan: Yankee Settlement to Kansas Town, 1854 – 1894,” will be at the Riley County Historical Museum, 2309 Claflin, Manhattan, Monday, October 29, at 7:00 p.m. (remarks at 7:15) for a book signing. This is the most recent and most comprehensive history of Manhattan.

Kevin grew up in Manhattan, Kansas, and now works in Manhattan, New York, as Assistant Attorney General in the Environmental Protection Bureau of the Office of the New York State Attorney General.

Forces: The Shaping of Manhattan, Fort Riley, and Kansas State University

Visit the exhibit at the Flint Hills Discovery Center (admission charge) and enjoy the following free events.

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| Friday October 12 | Walking Tour of Ft. Riley, meet at the U.S. Cavalry Museum, 1:00 p.m. |
| Sunday October 14 | Walking Tour of Sunset Cemetery, meet at main entrance, 1:30 p.m.
Cheryl Collins, Director of the Riley County Historical Museum leads a visit to some of Manhattan’s influential citizens, 1853-1917. |
| Sunday October 14 | Discovery Lecture: Marla Day “Clues in the Calico” at the Flint Hills Discovery Center, 5:30 p.m. |
| Sunday October 28 | Discovery Lecture: Kevin Olson “Frontier Manhattan: Yankee Settlement to Kansas Town, 1854 – 1894” at the Flint Hills Discovery Center, 5:30 p.m. |
| Sunday November 18 | Discovery Lecture: Jane Marshall “Biscuits and Bison: Exploring Riley County’s Food Heritage” at the Flint Hills Discovery Center, 5:30 p.m. |



Riley County through the camera's lens



Manhattan's Community House, 1940's
Photo courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society

Manhattan's Community House

Manhattan's Community House, southeast corner of Humboldt and North Fourth, was dedicated on July 4th, 1918, as a place for Fort Riley's 50,000 World War I off-duty soldiers to spend their free time. The building replaced a previous temporary recreational facility.

The building got its start with \$3,000 donated by local citizens to purchase a site. A municipal bond issue of \$15,000 and an appropriation of \$16,000 by Rotarians of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma provided the \$31,000 needed for construction and furnishings.

A local council was charged with administration and control of the new building for as long as Camp Funston at Fort Riley was maintained on a war basis. Thereafter it was to be the exclusive property of the City, to be used for public auditorium purposes.

Between the wars the building also served as an American Legion Post and headquarters for the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce.

The need for a servicemen's recreational facility—a USO— returned with the advent of World War II. In 1941 the U.S. government bought the Community House from the City for \$15,000 with \$75,000 budgeted for remodeling and a possible addition to the rear. The building was designated as a "white soldier center" and Douglas Center on Yuma Street was built to serve "colored soldiers." Both were dedicated in January of 1942.

The Community House's 100' x 55' main floor hall was used as a reception hall, a dance floor, and an auditorium where chairs for 500 could be set up in front of a fully equipped stage. The main floor also housed the director's office and a library of 1,200 books donated through the Victory Book campaign as well as newspapers and magazines funded by USO and private funds. Specially built writing tables and free stationery were available for soldiers' use on the mezzanine. The basement housed a lounge centered around a huge brick fireplace. There was a full kitchen plus refreshment center with soda fountain. Men were provided with a free shower, shaving, and locker facility. On Saturday nights 75 cots were set up for the soldiers with a free "Java Club" breakfast provided on Sunday mornings.

The USO operated as an information center for soldiers, their families, and friends. A local newspaper reported that "everything is done for the soldier, from meeting his girl friend at the train to mailing his letters to dad and mother."

After World War II the Community House was taken over by the Manhattan Recreation Commission. The Recreation Commission was later merged with Manhattan's Parks Department, with offices in City Park.

The Community House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places Nov. 21, 2006.

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2309 Claflin Road
Manhattan, Kansas 66502*

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**If your mailing label doesn't say 2013 or L above your name,
we invite you to renew your membership!**

RILEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBER DONATION FORM

January 1 -- December 31, 2013

Member donations are tax deductible.

Please select the category of your choice. Make checks payable to
the Riley County Historical Society and mail to 2309 Claflin Road, Manhattan, Kansas 66502.

Individual Annual Member Donation

_____ Friend \$10 - \$49
_____ Sponsor \$50 - \$74
_____ Sustainer \$75 - \$99
_____ Patron \$100 and above

Family Annual Member Donation

_____ Friend \$15 - \$54
_____ Sponsor \$55 - \$79
_____ Sustainer \$80 - \$110
_____ Patron \$110 and above

Individual Life Member Donation

_____ \$300 (may be made in three annual \$100 installments)

Name(s): _____

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