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RGHS Newsletter

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President's Report – Your 2023 Society Year-in-Review by RGHS Board President Debbi Thompson



Your Riley County Historical Society Board of Directors has been busy this year working on our mission of collecting, preserving, and presenting the heritage of Riley County and the State of Kansas, supporting, advocating for, and promoting an interest and awareness of our local history, and the Riley County Historical Museum for the benefit of all. **The RGHS Newsletter** is back, thanks to museum staff member Lisa Jones, who volunteered to create this digital publication for the Society. With content and article ideas provided by the communications committee and society members like you, she publishes and distributes the newsletter every other month digitally and by mail if requested. She is always looking for article ideas. Please contact her at the museum if you would like to contribute.

The RGHS Preservation committee members Gloria Freeland and Colene Lind, along with Kathy Dzewaltowski of the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance, formed the **Marlatt Homestead Task Force**. The committee worked on an interpretive marker to be placed at the Marlatt House property on the Kansas State University campus just south of the K-State women's soccer field.

The task force worked with Ethan Erickson and Casey Lauer of K-State on this project, and through this collaboration the sign was created and placed at the property in July. The sign tells the story of this historic property.

The Pioneer Log Cabin, the Society's first museum and located in City Park, opened for the season on April 2nd. Derrick Doty and Tony Conners were hosts on Sundays from 2-5pm through October. They greeted 380 visitors during this past season. Doty, a museum staff member, even entertained those visitors with his violin playing. Thank you, gentlemen.

The Wolf House and the Wolf Photography Studio will soon each have new and much needed roofs. The Wolf House required maintenance repairs through 2023, and the Wolf Photography Studio, located directly behind the Wolf House, will have ongoing repairs in 2024. In addition, the Studio had its doors and windows restored by John Wood during the summer.

The Wolf House continues to welcome visitors free of charge and the popular 4th grade tours were conducted in April, with 438 students and teachers enjoying this educational opportunity hosted by RGHS volunteers and RCHM staff.

Thank you, Doug Tippin, for heading up the **Rocky Ford School Pals committee**. Several workdays were organized, with the interior cleaned, and the grounds groomed. This past year, the school's shingles and interior ceiling were repaired, and exterior buildings, front doors and window casings were repainted by Doug. The merry-go-round was also repaired and repainted. The large dead tree was removed from in front of the school and others trimmed and removed off the grounds.

The museum staff hosted an open house and ice cream social in October at Rocky Ford, complete with lessons in handwriting and spelling conducted by museum Curator of Education and Design Melanie Highsmith. Plans to hold other educational events in 2024 are in the works.

The Greater Manhattan Community Foundation held its Grow Green Day on April 21st. The Wolf House complex was this year's recipient of the donations received from 66 donors of the Grow Green Day campaign. The donations totaled approximately \$9,163. The Greater Manhattan Community Foundation matches 50 percent of the donation up to \$10,000. This year's donations total of \$13,740 will be used for the Wolf House operations, programs, education, and preservation of the complex. **Be sure to look for the Grow Green event in April 2024 and donate!**

Thank you to Program Chair Carol Hockersmith, committee member Gloria Freeland, volunteer coordinator Marie Martin, and museum director Katharine Hensler for planning and providing us with four excellent programs this year. The programs were Lunch and Learn with Museum staff member Derrick Doty presenting "The Pioneer Log Cabin in the Park: The Society's First Museum;" Marla Day's program "Sunbonnets and Calico: Clothing of the Kansas Frontier," with live model museum staff members Heather Bigwood and Derrick Doty demonstrating the clothing worn by pioneer Kansans; Ron Wilson's presentation of "Off the Reservation: Chief Standing Bear in Riley County;" and our annual meeting program, David Seay and his restoration of the Riley County Courthouse Clock in the clock tower.

"Sadie, Isaac Goodnow's Wandering Cow" has been representing our Society for many years. She's wandered miles, in many parades up Poyntz Avenue in her homecoming cheerleading outfit, her Veterans Day army beret, her St. Patrick's Day green tutu and her lighted elf costume. After putting in her steps, Sadie has decided it's time to retire. She asked that she be turned out to greener pastures, fenced pastures of course, so as to wander no more. We thank her for her many years of service and contributions to the Society.

I've saved the best for last! Our announcement of the Riley County Historical Society new logo and updated website. This project was a huge undertaking and took several months to complete. There were many meetings, emails, sharing of ideas, editing of website content, revisions, discussions, and tweaking, did I say tweaking? of the website content. Thanks go to the Communication Committee chaired by Gloria Freeland, and members Janet Duncan, Mary Stamey, Margaret Pendleton and Carol Hockersmith for their contributions.

A special thank you goes to Museum Director, Katharine Hensler. Katharine worked closely and diligently with web developer Brian Tesene of Outdoor Resources, LLC. to give the website a new and updated look. She also spent many hours with graphic designer Cora Wilson of Cora Wilson Designs to provide the committee members with logo ideas, eventually providing us with the new logo design. **Give the new website a look at www.rileychs.org.**

From the front page of the website, you can check on upcoming events, RCHS news including the current newsletter, plan your visit, and check out educational tools. You can support RCHS with a donation, become a member of RCHS, renew your membership, and volunteer. By clicking on "Become a Member" and "Donate" buttons you will be able to make your payment online through a secure link. Thank you all for creating a fresh new look for the future of RCHS.

As you can see, 2023 was a busy year. In 2024, we will begin developing a strategic plan that will help carry your society through the next five years. The board's goal is to hire a leader to work on marketing and fundraising to support our museum, to coordinate with our museum director on upcoming and ongoing programs, and to manage day-to-day operations of the Society.

Please join us in 2024 by volunteering, renewing your membership and supporting your society and museum with a donation. Do your part in the ongoing effort to preserve the history of Riley County, Kansas. Thanks to all of YOU!



David Seay, owner of Regulator Time Company and restorer of the courthouse clock at the Annual Meeting, November 9, 2023.

Did you know...? Following the end of the Civil War, Kansas newspaper editors and publishers were seeking a way to record the founding of the state and its heroic role in the fight against slavery. A committee of the Kansas Editors' and Publishers' Association met **December 13, 1875**, and formed the Kansas Historical Society to collect newspapers and manuscripts on the territorial period. These early newspaper publishers started a tradition of donating copies of all newspapers published in Kansas to the Kansas Historical Society. Publishers became members of the Historical Society by donating issues of their newspapers. For all others, the annual membership fee was \$2. Consequently, the Kansas Historical Society has one of the most comprehensive collections of state newspapers in the nation. *From Kansas Historical Society website, www.kshs.org.*

Did you know...? On December 22, 1915, a fire decimated several of the principal businesses in the town of Riley. The businesses destroyed were the Powell Furniture Store, Farmers State Bank, Hass Hardware, the New Electric Theatre (only the movie picture machine was saved), and the Masonic Lodge. Losses were estimated to be as high as \$20,000. *From the Riley Regent, December 23, 1915.*

Riley County Historical Society 2023 Board of Directors

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Our Region's Indigenous Past by Dr. Lauren W. Ritterbush

The written history of Riley County reflects but a brief sliver of time in comparison to the 13,000 years during which Native Americans called this land their home. Archaeological evidence shows that the first people to live in this area arrived near the end of the Ice Ages when the climate was warming and environments were changing. Clues to their lifestyles are limited by the passage of time, but they do exist, primarily in the form of early stone tools occasionally uncovered through erosion and other ground-altering processes. These artifacts and the contexts in which they are found reveal the activities they pursued, for example, making tools of stone, wood, and other natural materials; hunting, butchering, and processing hides; and collecting plant foods. The fact that many of these early tools were made of non-local stone indicates that the pioneers who explored this area originated outside this region.

Later generations increasingly associated with lands they came to know most intimately. Family groups formed and reformed according to the seasons and traveled around their band's domain to harvest a wide range of wild plants and animals. Even during periods of extended drought, they found water in the diminished rivers and streams and various food-stuffs and necessary raw materials in associated habitats. The abundant chert (flint) of the Flint Hills was readily available and used to make spear or dart points, knives, scrapers, axes, gouges, and other cutting, scraping, piercing, and digging tools. By 5000 years ago, the Native peoples of this region occasionally used clay to form figurines and beads.

Over the millennia, the area's hunter-gatherers cultivated and domesticated selected native plants including sunflowers, marsh elder, and goosefoot (lamb's quarters). These provided a ready supply of food at repeatedly-used camps. With longer-term camps, people found it useful to make large and small ceramic vessels for cooking, serving, and storing food. They also replaced their spears and spear-throwers with the bow and arrow for hunting. While abundant resources in the stream



Ceramic effigy recovered from the William Young archaeological site in nearby Morris County (KansasMemory.org/Kansas Historical Society).



An early arrow point from the Macy site along the Kansas River at present-day Manhattan (KansasMemory.org/Kansas Historical Society).

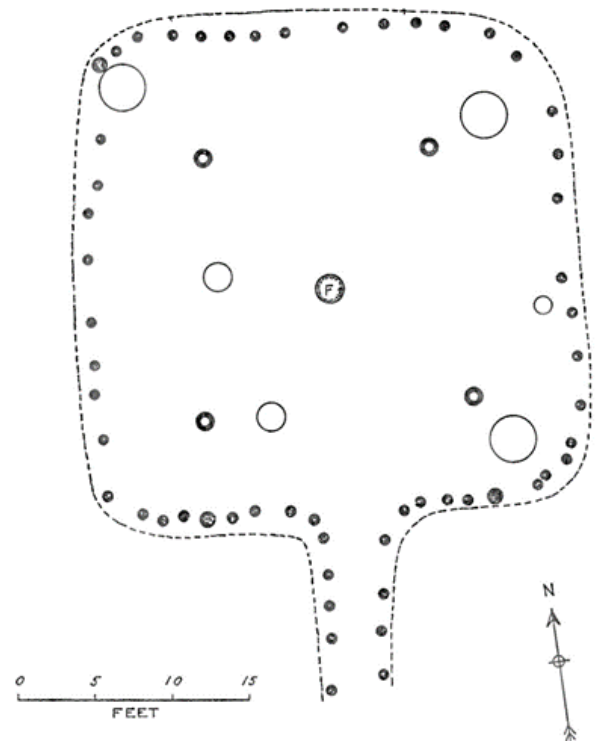
valleys created rich habitats for living, other grassland products and chert were obtained from the upland prairies. By roughly 2000 years ago, local inhabitants also used the uplands as a place to memorialize the dead. They honored their ancestors with low stone mounds constructed atop prominent bluffs with views over their homelands. These continue to serve, where left undisturbed, as monuments to these earlier inhabitants of our region.

The descendants of the early foragers changed their lifestyles as farming became more prominent in daily life, especially with the addition of corn, squash, and beans to the existing inventory of wild and domesticated native plants. These early sedentary farmers settled into permanent homes adjacent to water, arable land, and the riparian woodlands and prairies rich with useful plants and animals. Nearly all the goods needed for a diverse diet, tools, clothing, and shelter were available close to their homes. These were wattle-and-daub structures supported by wooden posts and beams with a central fireplace for cooking, working, and social gatherings and cache pits to

store goods through the lean winter months. As families grew and new homes were constructed, many small farmsteads were established along the stream valleys from the Blue to the Kansas River. Abundant archaeological evidence demonstrates that communities of scattered farming families thrived in this area between about CE 1100 and CE 1450.

By the seventeenth century, the indigenous people of the Central Plains had shifted their places of residence and created large multi-family villages. They developed a dual economy focused on gardening corn, beans, and squash or pumpkins and large-scale bison hunting. It was at this time that the ancestors of the Kanza (Kaw) entered what we now recognize as northeastern Kansas. Initially settling along the Missouri River but traveling annually to the Plains, the Kaw soon became associated with the Kansas River valley and surrounding lands. While they maintained certain ancestral traditions from their eastern homelands, the Kanza also adapted to the Plains. They built large post, beam, and earthen houses like the ancestral Pawnee natives to the north. These structures defined the primary settlement of the Kanza including Blue Earth village located just outside today's Riley County. They planted and reaped produce while hunting deer and elk nearby. Bison, however, played a vital role in their lives by providing meat for food, bones for tools, and hides for robes, shelter, and bedding. Seasonal expeditions to the western Plains also fostered community cohesion through communal movement, camps, and hunting.

The lifeways and stories of the native inhabitants of what we now call Kansas are varied and stretch far back in time. Although displaced by Euro-American encroachment, their descendants continue to recognize the lands upon which we live as their homeland and resting place of their ancestors.



Floor plan of a Central Plains traditional house showing central fire-place, four central and additional peripheral support posts, extended entry, and in-floor pits used for storage. This lodge was uncovered at the Griffing site along what is now Wildcat Creek valley in present-day Manhattan (from Waldo R. Wedel's 1959 Introduction to Kansas Archeology, p. 181).

Treasures Await at the Museum Gift Shop by Carol Hockersmith

Have you considered the museum gift shop for a holiday hostess gift, stocking stuffer, or otherwise thoughtful gift? The gift shop is in the main lobby of the museum and is open during museum hours (8:30am-5pm Tuesday-Friday; 2-5pm Saturday and Sunday).

Among the things you'll find are packs of notecards: eight cards of four watercolors by Ralph Fontenot portraying historic Manhattan scenes, or a different set has ten blank cards with photographs of five Kansas landscapes packaged by The Konza Press.



A few of the many books for sale in the museum gift shop.

Smaller items to tuck in a stocking or tie on a gift bag include brass ornaments:

one a Kansas sunflower and one a wheat wreath encircling a meadow lark and a stalk of sunflowers. Slightly larger yet still a good size for stocking stuffers or package tie-ons are hand-crafted woodcuts featuring Kansas symbols made by local artists Daryl Wichman and Doug Tippin. For a few dollars, you can also pick up enamel lapel pins featuring the Kansas flag, the Kansas sunflower, and the Kansas State University Powercat. Any of these items would also make nice mementos for an international student you know.

For buyers who prefer books for gifts, you could share some local history, including "On This Day in Kansas History: Spiritual Lessons from the Heartland" by Paul E. Barkey, "Neighbors of the Past: A Sesquicentennial Project of the Manhattan Mercury" by Lowell Jack, "Digging K-State: The History of Bluemont Central College" by Patricia O'Brien, and "Land Grant Ladies: Kansas State University Presidential Wives" by Michaeline Chance-Reay.



Assorted Riley County Historical Society and Museum gift shop items.

Another fun item offered for a few dollars are Kansas historical posters. A student you know might enjoy the one showing the counties of Kansas with the origins of county names and dates of origin. These posters are about the size of a placemat, and a clever hostess could turn them into a fun table mats for a Kansas Day party in January. ***The RCHS is running a special discount from December 1-31 —50% off all non-consignment merchandise.*** We also now take credit cards for payment. It's a small shop, yet treasures await...come check it out this gift-buying season!

Sunset Cemetery Tour Recap

The Second Annual Sunset Cemetery Tour, sponsored by the Riley County Historical Society and Museum, took place on the morning of Saturday, November 4. Over one hundred hardy souls made their way to the cemetery for an informative visit to the final resting places of some of Manhattan's most well-known residents. Included in the tour were the graves of such Riley County luminaries as Josiah Pillsbury, Dr. Belle Little, brickmason Charles Howell, Earl Dennison Woods Sr., Seth Child, and Elizabeth Hoyt Purcell. Additionally, stops were made at the grave of the 'buried Fortunes' and the Grand Army of the Republic monument (cannon).

Many thanks to the patrons whose interest in the history of the cemetery helped make the tour a reality, and to the volunteers and staff who helped make it possible. This tour raised \$510 for the historical society's preservation projects. Again thank you to all who came out to support the program.



Photo courtesy Kim Westcott.

The Role of Riley Countians in the Morganville-Fèves Story by Art Vaughan

On the evening of August 27, 1948 - 75 years ago - the small village of Morganville, Kansas put on a play that brought three people into town for every one of the community's 300 citizens. It would ultimately lead to providing help for an equally small town in France during its recovery from the destruction of World War II. Morganville native Velma Carson, 1919 K-State class president and a professional writer, wrote the play's script, which utilized 50 percent of Morganville's citizens. Sound and lighting equipment were secured from Manhattan.

While Morganville is in Clay County, the play wouldn't have happened without the help and encouragement of some folks in Riley County.

In 1947, Kansas State College president Milton Eisenhower was chosen to be the U.S. representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He wanted Kansas to take the lead in the new organization, and to that end, promoted a large conference in Wichita. The notoriety created by this curious event on the Kansas prairie prompted communities across the United States to seek "sister cities" to adopt in post-war Europe. Wichita today has two such 'sisters,' and Manhattan is a sister city with Dobrichovice, Czech Republic.



KSC President Milton Eisenhower, courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

In 2015, Fèves, the village Morganville adopted, sent a busload of its citizens to visit its benefactor. In 2019, Manhattan's Gloria Freeland and husband Art Vaughan led a similar group to visit Fèves. In 2020, the couple completed their book, "An Opportunity to Be Better," about the relationship between the two towns, and followed up with a French version with the help of friends in France in 2022. This past summer, they visited France to give copies to friends and to a museum that specializes in the history of the Lorraine region during the 1939-1945 years of Nazi occupation.



Velma Carson, 1918 Royal Purple photo.

So impressed was Manhattanite Robert Walker, who was Kansas' UNESCO leader, that when he left to become dean of undergraduate studies at Stanford University, he encouraged every undergraduate to spend at least one semester abroad.

Milton was moved by this example of people-to-people democracy. When his brother became president, he encouraged Ike to promote the creation of an organization which would foster such sister city arrangements. Today, Sister Cities International supports more than 2,000 such alliances with three out of every four countries in the world participating. Some have little more than a cultural connection, while others include student and governmental exchanges.



Morganville-Fèves play finale, August 27, 1948. Photo courtesy Clay County Historical Society.

With each **Curator's Corner**, one of our curators pulls an object from the collection that they find interesting so they can share its story with you! With over 90,000 recorded objects in our collection, there is no possible way we could ever showcase each item through exhibition. This is our way of giving you a peek into the vast storage areas housing our massive collection and of all the wonderful treasured objects our institution protects.

Curator's Corner by Dawn Munger, Curator of Collections

These handmade Isaac Goodnow and Ellen Goodnow "character" dolls have hickory nut heads with pencil-drawn faces and hair made of thread. The fabric-wrapped, wire frame bodies are dressed in hand-sewn clothing made from scraps of original Goodnow family clothing. In 2019, Marla Day, Curator of K-State's Historic Costume and Textile Museum, analyzed the clothing fabric. Isaac is dressed in a black twill weave suit with silk buttons, paper collar, and top hat. Ellen is dressed in a brown/gray basic weave dress with cape and soutache trim, with a straw bonnet.

Hickory head dolls, and other dolls with heads made of nuts (walnut, hazelnut, even cashews!) were popular in America in the nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the south. Carolyn Sherwin Bailey even wrote a 1947 Newberry Award-winning children's book titled "Miss Hickory" that followed a hickory head doll on her adventures.

These two dolls are part of a very large doll collection donated by Mary Ahearn McNall in 1972, noted as "one of the largest of its kind" in the February 21, 1977 issue of the Manhattan Mercury. Mary Davis was born in Bala in 1884, to parents who helped settle that Welsh colony in 1870. She graduated from Kansas State Agricultural College in 1904, and worked for a while after in the university registrar's office. Mary met the "Father of Kansas State athletics" Mike Ahearn shortly after he arrived in Manhattan, and the two were married in 1907. She became a serious collector of dolls in the 1930s, adding to her collection during frequent travels abroad with her husband. After Mike passed away in 1948, Mary was a widow for many years before marrying Preston E. McNall in 1969.

Although the Goodnow dolls are not currently on display due to fragility, you can stop by and see the other dolls we have on exhibit at this time made of nuts, seeds, dried apples, straw, and cornhusks.

*Dawn Munger has been Curator of Collections at the Riley County Historical Museum since 2018. She received her Master's degree in Museum Studies from the University of Kansas (*gasp!*), and previously spent over a decade as an archeologist in cultural resource management. She loves researching items to better tell their history and the history of their previous owners. In her free time, she enjoys a good sour beer or gin-based cocktail, reading, video games, and cat snuggles.*



Isaac and Ellen Goodnow dolls.
Courtesy Riley County Historical Society and Museum.

Calendar of Events

November 23 & 24—**Thanksgiving holiday**, museum is closed

December 7—Hanukkah begins at sundown

December 13—RCHS Board of Directors monthly meeting, 3:30-4:30pm, Dallas Gallery at Riley County Historical Museum

December 17—Wolf House Holiday Open House, 2-5pm, 630 Fremont St., Manhattan, KS, free and open to the public (tentative)

December 18—**In-Focus** KMAN radio program featuring Melanie Highsmith from RCHM, 9:05-10:00am

December 19-25—Thank a Soldier week

December 25—**Christmas holiday**, museum is closed

January 1—**New Year's Day**, museum is closed

January 10—RCHS Board of Directors monthly meeting, 3:30-4:30pm, Dallas Gallery at Riley County Historical Museum

January 15—**In-Focus** KMAN radio program featuring Melanie Highsmith from RCHM, 9:05-10:00am

January 15—**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**, museum is closed

January 19—Members' Opening for new Wolf House Exhibit, "**Remember Me Fondly: Funerals in Victorian Era Riley County**", 6-8pm; invitations will be issued

January 20—Public Opening for new Wolf House Exhibit, "**Remember Me Fondly: Funerals in Victorian Era Riley County**", 2-5pm, free and open to the public