



SVHA News Archive 2018 – 2019

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2018

November, 2018

Osborne Carnegie Research Library -- by Laura McClure

The Carnegie Research Library, 317 West Main Street, Osborne, is instrumental in the preservation of Osborne County records and boasts a treasure trove of collections: family files, school annuals, 1875 homestead maps, obituaries, tax records, rural school records, Osborne county census records, community history, Hall of Fame books (newest OCHF of 2016 recently released), business ads from 1940-1951, assessment records, etc. Patrons also have access to Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and Fold3.com to further aid their genealogical research. The Carnegie Library welcomes all to use this local gem of a resource.

FamilySearch volunteers Dale and Margaret Smith are now at the Carnegie photographing and digitalizing over half a million documents. When the project is completed these records will be available, "free" at familysearch.org. FamilySearch believes in families. "The more one knows about their families helps them build a sense of belonging." Family- Search is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

September, 2018

Waconda Visitor And Education Center -- by Linda Clover

Volunteers from the area have joined the Glen Elder State Park in creating the Waconda Visitor and Education Center in the original visitor center which in 1969 was the only entrance to the Park. The project is part of a broader plan to create more recreational and tourist activities in the State Park and provide the history of early Waconda Springs (including American Indian cultures), the Waconda Springs Sanitarium/Hotel, the development of the Solomon River Valley, and the building of the Glen Elder Dam. The next phase will include repairs to the Waconda Springs Pool Replica and educational kiosks as visitors climb to see the Springs. This all began with Glen Elder State Park manager Tyler Bletscher having the idea of "simply having a building available to the public for viewing and learning of our local history and this committee has brought it to life."

The newly-formed Waconda Culture Committee received a grant from the Solomon Valley Community Foundation and is now in the process for forming a 501(C)3 organization. The Waconda Culture Association also received financial support from Mitchell County Convention & Tourism and donations. The grant from the Solomon Valley Foundation was used for UV window film, an ipad kiosk available for verbal history and additional pictures, landscaping, and informational panels. More is scheduled in the future.

Renovations for the building included a new roof, air-conditioning/heating units, new security system, handicapped restrooms, several windows and door provided by the State Park. Master Gardeners under the direction of Cassie Homan, Kansas State Extension Horticulturist Specialist,

joined with the Park Staff and volunteers to plant over 100 square feet of new landscaping designed by Joyce Benedick of Great Plains Landscape.

Previously, after the dam was built, the Waconda Heritage Association sought to preserve the history of the Waconda Springs by supporting the building of the Waconda Springs replica on a bluff just south of the current Park Office. The historical Hopewell Church was a part of their plan for a Waconda Heritage Village, along with the Hazeltine School which was destroyed by tornado just before it could be moved to the park area. The organization was terminated, and little had been done to help visitors recall Waconda Springs history. Now it will be possible to tell those stories.

A full-sized Plains Indian in authentic attire, as well as many artifacts, is displayed in the center. A colorful, original mural painted by Jim Nelson from the earlier visitor center portraying one of the legends connected with Waconda Springs has been returned to its place in the center. Educational panels portray each of the topics along with maps, old and new. The I-pad kiosk is available for verbal history and additional photographs of the area from the 1870s through building the dam in the 1960s and can be updated as more information becomes available.

An opening and ribbon cutting for the center was held June 30 at 10:00 a.m. for the public. Over 150 people attended activities, viewed displays and enjoyed refreshments on the patio. Kyle Peterson, director of the Mitchell County Historical Society Museum, shared the history of the area along with a song accompanying himself on an authentic drum belonging to Sharon Sahlfield. Linda Clover portrayed Dr. Anna Bingesser and told the history of the Waconda Springs Sanitarium. Lucille Heller told the history of the Waconda Cultural Committee. Park Manager Tyler Bletscher welcomed everyone to the Center and cut the ceremonial ribbon.

Thus far, the Center has been used for Waconda at Sunset, the first event. To arrange events at the Center, please contact the State Park Office. The view is beautiful, and the Center and patio are available for use by all. It is hoped as visitors view the Center, that they might choose to share or loan articles for display. The Center was open every day during the summer and, now that the college / high school student workers have returned to school, the Glen Elder State Park Office must be called for an appointment: 785 545 3345. An annual Park pass or day Park pass is necessary with no additional charge to visit the center.

June, 2018

SV24 Alliance Kiosk Renovation Project -- by Roger Hrabe

Nearly 14 years ago SV24 Heritage Alliance took on a project to document the story of each member community from Glasco to Hoxie, using the Kansas Sampler Foundation's 8 Rural Cultural Elements as a guide: Architecture, Art, Commerce, Cuisine, Customs, Geography, History, and People of each community.

Kiosk structures were built by the inmates at the Stockton Correctional Facility and installed in nearly all of the communities, along with existing Kansas Department of Transportation kiosks in a few. Each kiosk was then fitted with laminated inserts that told the unique story of each community. On the other side of the kiosk the history of the Solomon Valley was documented.

Over the years, the inserts began to fade and some of the information became outdated. It was decided in 2017 to undertake a renovation project for the kiosks, update the information on each community and also upgrade the quality of the inserts. Instead of the laminated paper, the new inserts are a vinyl cover on an aluminum back, making them more visible and long-lasting. Repairs were also completed on the physical structure of the kiosks when required.

With big plans in mind, it would take some financing to complete the project. Enter the Dane G. Hansen Foundation which agreed to fund a grant application completed by the Alliance to cover the renovation project. Information was then updated and inserts printed. Installation of the kiosk inserts is ongoing and should be completed during the spring.

Information on the kiosks and locations can be found on our website.

Nicodemus Chautauqua

The 2nd Annual Nicodemus Chautauqua was held on Saturday, May 26, under the big tent in Nicodemus. There was free food and refreshments for all. The big tent provided shade for the visitors and performers on a very hot day. Todd Tomar and his "Nicodemus Old New Timers Band" provided period musical entertainment between performances. Performers shared stories and history of Nicodemus's past. A number of historic characters shared the stories of the founding and development of this African American community that survived to the present and is now a National Historic Site.

This community is one of the treasures of the Solomon Valley Hwy24 Heritage Alliance and one of the five National Parks in Kansas. The following scenes from the Chautauqua are provided by Angela Bates, Nicodemus historian and director of the Nicodemus Historical Society.

December, 2019

"Art in the Heart"

Do you have one or two unique art attractions in your Alliance community? The Alliance would like to create a road trip brochure, "Art in the Heart", that would feature the creative, unique, and unusual art along U.S. Highway 24 and Kansas Highway 18. Murals, stained glass, sculptures, and architecture are all examples of art that could be included. Send all your examples, including pictures, to roger@rookscounty.net.

Kiosks Continue To Evolve

One of the more ambitious projects undertaken by the Highway 24 Alliance was the production and installation of the community kiosks in each of the 24 communities of the Alliance. After the initial installation nearly 18 years ago, all of the inserts have been updated with a new durable material, and the 8 Rural Cultural Elements information has been checked for accuracy. Most recently, a few of the kiosks have been moved to make them more accessible to the public. Kiosks in Glen Elder, Hoxie, and Bogue have been relocated in close proximity to their original location. Coordinates of the new locations will be updated soon.

No "Call for Voices" in 2020

The Alliance Board has decided to not continue the Call for Voices competition. Interest had waned over the years, and it was decided to move on to other activities to better involve the public in the activities throughout the Solomon Valley. Thank you to all who have submitted their writing through the years.

Kansas High School Database, 1858-2019

- View this information in our site's "Archive" section

2019

June, 2019

"New" E-mail Newsletter Plan

Over the next few months we will be looking to implement a new way of communicating with our membership. This newsletter will replace the **Anthology** that was published quarterly through the hard work of **Joan Nothern** and **Leo Oliva**. While this short newsletter can't replace all that was done through the Anthology, we do hope to continue to keep in touch with our membership as we transition to new leadership and an *expanded mission*. The new email newsletter for SV24HA will aim to keep members up-to-date with all that is going on in the Valley. The plan is to deliver the newsletter electronically at least every quarter, and also as events and happenings dictate. Members can submit information for possible publication, just as they have in the past. We have a lot of emails, but we still need you to send your email address to roger@rookscounty.net to make sure you are on the list to receive the newsletter.

Upon the Departure of our First President, Joan Nothern ... Tributes

Saying farewell to Joan Nothern is not easy. We understand why she is leaving and wish her the very best on her new journey. We have known Joan for over 20 years in so many different circumstances. As a writer in a local self-help writers group, as a member of Marci's Kansas Sampler Foundation, and most recently as the mover and shaker of the SV24 Heritage Alliance. Joan has poured her heart and soul into the Solomon Valley with all its twists and turns. She had a beautiful vision of what should be done and how to get it done. I don't think there was a grant she wrote that the group did not receive. There was the signage, music of the valley, and so much more.

I believe the legacy of the Alliance will be the Solomon Valley Anthology and its fourteen years of the "Call for Voices." The best meeting of every year was in January when we got to hear and meet the winners of the contest. Joan always arranged for a special speaker or two to end the day with a flourish.

The Anthology is a treasure! Not only does it showcase past and present authors but possibly those that will continue to write about the Solomon Valley. In addition the Anthology, Joan's accomplishments as one of the founders of the group and as its faithful president are part of our heritage.

There are so many great memories of our time spent together over the years up and down the Solomon Valley. Joan, we will all miss you!

–Barbara Wilson and Laura McClure, Carnegie Research Library, Osborne Kansas

Joan has brought our Solomon Valley Hwy 24 alive during the last 20 years. So many of us have learned not only about each other but even more about our own communities. Those 8 rural elements have encouraged us to see more than the obvious. Your visits to the Ball of Twine were always appreciated. You attended so many activities in each of our communities. Our past has made us—now we must go forward without Joan as our leader. We will attempt to keep you proud of our Alliance. Enjoy time with your family. I'm happy to have become your friend, you will be missed.

–Linda Clover

The success of the Highway 24 Alliance is a direct result of the dedication of Joan Nothern. Joan enlisted the help of many good people to develop a plan to preserve what they saw as a unique heritage of the Solomon Valley, a place they call home. It was a vision that could have easily faded throughout the years if not for the persistent push, or should I say gentle tug, from Joan that kept us moving forward, trying new things while committing year-after-year to the reliable standbys.

I observed many times during meetings where Joan patiently listened to members talk about doing something, and she would gently and respectfully nudge us back to our core purpose. I hate to say

that I often thought that the Alliance would live and die with Joan, but I am happy to say that I think the Alliance will be just fine, mostly due to Joan's faithful persistence and dedication. It is a legacy that she will take with her. Thank you Joan for your leadership!

–Roger Hrabec

Joan Nothern has “staying power.” I’ve never seen anyone who continues to persevere through the tough times, apathy on our part, death of a husband, bad weather—snow storm, unhelpful helpers (remember setting up Waterways in Alton?). She has always been persevering and encouraging. Thank you, Joan. Till we meet again.

–Bill & Carolyn Williams

When the “experts” told Joan Nothern it couldn't be done, she went ahead and founded the SV24HA anyway, then proceeded to lead it successfully for two decades. It was an honor to work with her gentle management skills, never saying “we are going to do it this way,” but asking others “how can we do this?” The projects completed during her tenure show how her faith in communities cooperating for common goals produced lasting results. Thank you, Joan.

–Leo E. Oliva

For the past 10+ years, it was my delight and honor to work closely with Joan in creating and maintaining this website as well as assisting with many other notable projects of which she was the pillar and pulse. Joan's vision of the past and future, and her call to action of and for the *Solomon Valley Highway 24 Alliance* has been, was unfaltering. Joan is one of those people who made a lasting positive difference along our portion of Hwy 24 and our communities. I am fortunate to be able to call her my friend.

--Greg German

March, 2019

Nicodemus Spring Chautauqua Noon, May 25, 2019

”Steel Wheels, Steel Rails, and Hell on Wheels,” The Railroads Bypass Nicodemus

by Angela Bates

It is often said that railroads would either make or break a town. In western Kansas during the mid1880s several railroad companies were seeking to provide service to newly-populated areas along and north of the South Solomon River. The Missouri Pacific planned to lay track from Salina to Colorado, via the Plainville Branch. It was along this Plainville Branch that Nicodemus would have been targeted to receive the railroad and a depot, but Nicodemus never got a railroad.

The annual Chautauqua was conceived with the idea to bring life to the history of Nicodemus, through various historical periods, events, and people. This year's theme for our third annual Nicodemus Spring Chautauqua is all about the railroads and why they bypassed Nicodemus. You'll be entertained during the day with characters from this historically pivotal pass. You'll hear from characters like the railroad surveyor and engineer, business owners, politicians, attorney, newspaper editor, frustrated homesteaders and cowboys, to J. P. Pomeroy—Kansas railroad tycoon, philanthropist, and Hill City funder.

We often wonder what Nicodemus would have been like if a railroad had laid track through the town. Would it have thrived and even surpassed the county seat of Hill City? We wonder why the decision was to lay tracks south of the Solomon River and establish the town of Bogue four miles to the west? What was the role of Kansas railroad tycoon and philanthropist J. P. Pomeroy and how was his influence used? Why were businesses lured away and the banker not support the decision to secure the railroad at Nicodemus? What was the role of the newspapers, and why was W. R. Hill the owner of both Nicodemus and Hill City papers? These are only a few questions that beg answers as we look at the dynamic of the railroads and their interest in laying track through Nicodemus. We

hope to address these and other interesting facts during the May 25 Chautauqua. We hope you will join us. Other related railroad stories and history will be shared, such as the killing at the Bogue Depot and the many Nicodemus men who worked on the railroad as mail sorters, chefs, porters, etc.

An exhibit of oil paintings of railroad depots along the Plainville Branch through Rooks and Graham counties by artist Mike Boss will be on display during the event. Free food and refreshments in the theme of the railroads will be provided by Walmart of Hays.

Period music by the Hays Barber Shop Singers will entertain you, and throughout the performances the New Nicodemus Old Timers will tickle your ears and maybe even motivate you to get up and dance during intermissions.