



## Solomon Valley Museum Musings

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### Mitchell County

#### **Mitchell County Museum -- Beloit**

402 W. Eighth, Beloit, KS 67420 -- 785-738-5355

by Kyle Peterson, Museum Director **(March, 2019)**

Remembering the raids of 1868-1870 has been an ongoing theme for the Mitchell County Historical Society since last year going into the county's Sesquicentennial year of 2020. A program and tour of the Bell-Bogardus-Marshal raids in 1868 were hugely attended in August of last year. Museum director, Kyle Peterson, said, "Bringing people on site lets the public get a real sense of how raids took place and how much the topography of the land had to do with its outcome."

The Society hosted its Annual Meeting on January 27, 2019, to a crowd of 150 people. The continuing topic of raid years took precedence. Greg Heller from Fort Harker presented "Defending the Prairie, 1868-1869." The museum had on display several artifacts from that era, including an 1860's wood-beam plow. These artifacts will be static for the next two years.

The museum is excited to announce the upcoming program on Sunday, April 28, 2019, at 2:00 P.M. at the Mitchell County Museum, 1915 North Independence, Beloit, KS, 1/4 mile south of the Highway 24 & 14 Junction. It is entitled, "The Will To Survive, How Faith, Hope, and Miracles kept Gunther Skaletz alive." Mr. Skaletz is a 90-year-old man who survived the concentration camp of Auschwitz in 1943. He was pulled out from there and forced to join the German Army where he was captured by the Russians in 1945. Gunther escaped his captivity and fled across Poland to safety. He later went on to culinary school in Switzerland and then to work at an up-scale New York restaurant. President Lyndon B. Johnson became good friends with Mr. Skaletz and convinced him to write his memoirs. His story is one of great courage and his first-hand narrative is beyond interesting to listen to. You will not want to miss this program!

The museum will host its annual Talking Tombstone performances on May 25 & 26, 2019, at 2 P.M. both days. This year we will hear from: Thomas Howie, a Mitchell County pioneer and stockade owner 1866-1870; John Rees, Founder of Asherville, KS; Sarah Gleason Foote, responsible for starting the Baptist Church in Asherville in 1870 as well as having the first frame house in Asherville; Katherine Stover, a WWI Yeoman; Michael Cotter, WWI soldier whose diary, letters, and photographs are all in collection at the MCHS museum. There will be much to see and learn for these folks.

A special celebration will take place Sunday, September 8, 2019, at Asherville, KS honoring its Sesquicentennial. The Mitchell County Museum will host a lunch, parade, and events throughout the afternoon. Under a huge circus tent, there will be entertainment. While outside, people can walk the small town and see historical kiosks depicting what was at each block, now vs then.

Come join the fun and be part of The Mitchell County Historical Society's vision of making history today by remembering the past. Contact us with questions via our Facebook or email us at [mchistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:mchistorical@yahoo.com), or call 785-738-5355.

Continued on next page

## **Mitchell County Museum Transition (April, 2009)**

by Kyle Peterson, director of the Mitchell County Museum

The Mitchell County Museum has made changes to its long-term business plan that reflect the current changing rural Kansas economic status. Since last we reported to the Alliance, we found through fundraising statistics that the new museum complex plans became out of reach. Our new plans do include a new museum, but we have had to come up with a different approach about reaching our goals.

This is what we have done and what is now in progress. Last year the society purchased the Beloit American Legion building which is 10,427 square feet and of that 3,367 square feet is basement. This basement has a 9-foot ceiling and is tornado and fire proof. The purchase of this building and the remodeling of it will be far cheaper than the construction of a new building. Plus, the building location is directly west of our current living-history project property.

Instead of the old 2.5 million dollar project, we can finish the new project under half a million. This will give us a large banquet and meeting room, kitchen, revolving display space, historic library, several offices, static display space, two handicap accessible bathrooms, large storage room, restoration room, large open greeting foyer, and gift shop. The large 2304 square feet of open revolving display space will have folding display walls that can be folded up to open the floor space for large gatherings or dances. This space includes a large stage platform.

The current space we occupy on Eighth Street is owned by the Mitchell County Hospital and they do not want to give the historical society the building. They have given us as long as needed to move. As of today, we need to raise the \$200,000 to get the essentials done to the new museum site, so we can move and have some displays open.

The key is money. If anyone out there that would like to come and see our plans for the Mitchell County Museum Complex, we would be glad to give you the tour and be more than happy to accept a contribution. Our phone number is 785-738-5355. This is a critical time to preserve the history of Mitchell County and the Solomon Valley.



**Museum Musings** --This regular column features information about a particular museum and a guide to museum events in the Solomon Valley. Kyle Peterson is director of the Mitchell County Museum in Beloit.

The Mitchell County Museum in Beloit had the wonderful opportunity to be involved with a new program that started last fall. The SV24 Heritage Alliance brought together all the museums in the valley to see if we could find a way to work together to benefit each other. They brought in a consultant, Margaret Stanton from Troy, KS, to help answer questions and bring suggestions to each museum. She identified ways to bring out the best for each of us. Now we can start with fresh ideas and possibly a way to start our own museum alliance of the Solomon Valley.

Margaret Stanton identified several things that we here at the Mitchell County Museum need to be looking at. First, updating our inventory database to a Past-perfect program, a more digitally-based system. Second, utilizing archival product companies to update how we tag artifacts. Third, showing us how we need a disaster preparedness, management, and response program. All three of these main issues are being looked at by me and the Mitchell County Historical Society board. It will take some time to address these large issues.

The Mitchell County Historical Society is in the planning stages of building a new museum at a new location. At our current location, we cannot keep the high standards that are required to preserve artifacts. Margaret's suggestions have really helped us see the need for a new facility now, rather than later.

I am the current Mitchell County Museum Director. I am hosting the first workshop for the Valley museum group. This is the second phase for us museums to come together to see how we want to pursue after all of this gained knowledge. In the upcoming workshop, I will present a program on school and museum collaboration. For some time now, I have been putting together a local history based curriculum. This is where students develop and create projects based on local history. The first step of development is working directly with their museum or historical entity. I will present to the museums in the Valley ways that will make it easy for them to handle student museum research relationships.



I would like for the museums to bring to the work shop a list of current available resources that they offer. Also, museums need to bring a list of area attractions that may be of interest to a student. This workshop will do several things: bring the valley museums together, hopefully to develop an alliance to continue cooperation; help strengthen their own research and archival ability; get interest from outside sources, which could lead to funding or volunteerism; and help incorporate more student activity with their local organizations.

I would welcome not just the Valley's Museums, but other interested parties that would be interested in seeing a great vision like this grow. We can only strengthen our own organization by doing this. It will also help travel, tourism, and community stability. The workshop will be held at the Mitchell County Museum at 402 W 8th Street in Beloit on April 3 at 10:00 AM. This is the large 3-story brick building that sits behind the current Mitchell County Hospital. We will break for an hour and a half lunch at 11:30 AM. There are several restaurants available. Please call with questions, our number here is 785-738-5355. We hope every museum in the Valley will be represented.

***by Kyle Peterson, director of the Mitchell County Museum in Beloit***