



Solomon Valley Museum Musings

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Rooks County

Frank Walker Museum & Rooks County Historical Society

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Museum Musings --This year (2006) we celebrated the 30th year of our Historical Society and the 20th year of having a museum in Stockton. It all started in 1973 when the PRIDE Committee met to discuss organizing a countywide historical society. In August 1974, State Historical Society officer Robert Richmond, grandson of a Stockton doctor, met as a consultant with 13 interested individuals and recommended the name Rooks County Historical Society. A motion to that effect was made and carried.

In 1975, the society was incorporated with meetings held in the courthouse with limited privileges as all but one show case of memorabilia was stored in homes of society members. In 1976 they took the responsibility of the Old Log Hotel replica which was built for the Kansas Centennial, where they housed some of their artifacts and was open to the public on special occasions. In 1977, they started gathering information prior to the year 1911 to publish in a book of Rooks County history which grew to two volumes titled *Lest We Forget* and published in 1980 (reprinted in 1998 and still available).

That same year a county tax levy was granted and plans were made for a Rooks County Museum which was completed in 1984. In 1991, they asked the county for funds to build an addition for storage, but the idea was tabled due to a shortage of funds. In February 1993, Frank Walker, a local individual who had benefited from the Stockton oil boom, offered funds to build a new museum if a site could be located along Hwy 183. Work on the new building started in 1994 and the first meeting in the new museum was in February 1995. After the fire that consumed the Big Barn north of Woodston, the Classic Big Barn Association donated a draft-horse sculpture by Pete Felton and funds for landscaping to the museum. After this was completed the dedication of the building and a "Thank You, Frank" celebration was held in June, 1998.

Some of the displays included in the museum today include: archeology items, one-room school, doctor's office, beauty parlor, barber shop, kitchen, living room, general store with post office, livery stable, the Woodston telephone central, the Plainville jail, room full of dolls, car tag collection, and a music room which includes instruments from the traveling Fuller Concert Co. Recent temporary displays have been: wedding and formal wear; World War II items, quilts, aprons, advertising, school memorabilia, vintage motorcycles, Modern Woodmen drill team photos and video, Olive Reed/Schafer memorabilia, World War I items, Rooks County Fair, and Webster Dam 50th Anniversary.

We have: presented a Kansas Day program enjoyed by around 400 school children with 20 portrayals of Kansas characters; received a small grant to purchase archival supplies so items can be freed from the cardboard boxes; received funds to purchase computer software to list all items collected for research purposes; found Birger Sandzen and Grant Wood paintings and a set of Civil War diaries when digging through storage boxes; had "picture parties" to identify

photos, sorted by family, towns, and categories, which have been filed; and currently are sorting items to de-accession to fulfill the responsibility as written in our mission statement "to collect, preserve, and interpret the artifacts, writings and history reflecting the development and cultural diversity of Rooks County."

The museum is open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10:00 to 4:00 and by appointment. Volunteer work nights are Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Regular meetings are held the 3rd Sunday of each month (except August and December) at 2:00 p.m. at the museum meeting room, with special quarterly programs, the public always welcome. A newsletter is published quarterly. Dues are \$5 for individual, \$10 for family (send to Rooks County Historical Society, 913 S. Cedar, Stockton KS 67669); add \$3 to receive the newsletter.

by Jean Lindsey