Friends of the Museum,

What an exciting year we have had at the Kansas Oil Museum. Most recently we were selected as the Best Tourist Attraction and Best Museum in Butler County. I am guessing these terrific recognitions resulted from a very ambitious and exciting past year of activities. And we are busy making headlines for 2018 as well.

Who could have imagined we would have more than 200 people join us for a solar eclipse twilight luncheon? Such a gathering for such a celestial experience was out of this world.

Rockfest in April welcomed another several hundred guests, many of them children, who learned about the geology of Kansas. We also had our annual meeting in which our new board of trustees was selected. If you are a member of the museum, we highly suggest you participate this coming April in our next annual meeting and help us plan the future of KOM.

And if you love Santa — and who doesn’t? — then you will be thrilled to know that he made a stop at the museum on Dec. 2 and was greeted by more than 400 children who sent letters to the North Pole as well as being photographed with old Saint Nicholas.

But it is the headlines that we have been making recently which points towards our 2018 objectives. We started a year of preservation at the museum. We have replaced the roof on the primary museum building as well as the old school house. These were not small expenses, but because of donors and members such as you, we were able to begin our work towards preservation. Preservation, however, does not stop with several new roofs. Over the last several months we have received some very generous gifts to preserve the Conner Cabin, plus monies to preserve Grandma Anderson’s house, the Redburn Grocery Store, the Landman’s Office, and the Cable Tool House. We especially wish to thank Howard and Barbara Redburn as well as the family of Bill Johnson, in particular Norma and Anna, who contributed to these projects in Bill’s memory. The cabin’s preservation work is so popular it was recently highlighted on KPTS’ “Positively Kansas” program.

Included in this newsletter are many future activities at KOM. We hope that you consider supporting the museum with a year-end gift or membership. The only way we can continue to be the best tourist attraction is with your help.

Happy New Year!

~ Perry Schuckman, Director
The Wichita tribe that lived along the Arkansas River called themselves Kitikiti’sh, “the pre-eminent men.”
Although many people don’t realize it, one of the most extensive collections in the museum is our historic photograph archive, consisting of literally thousands of photos from over 150 years of Butler County history. These photographs are a great asset for genealogists, researchers, and history buffs of all kinds, in addition to being essential for the development of nearly any of our exhibits here at the museum.

While exhibits and research are the most common ways for people to access our photograph collection, it has long been a goal for us to be able to bring these photos to a wider public and to improve the ease of access to them for people across the state and country. It was with this goal in mind that we applied for a Kansas Digital Access to Historical Records (KDAHR) grant from the Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board. This grant provided funding enabling us to digitize a large selection of photographs uniquely illustrating Butler County’s rural heritage. In the new year many of these photos will be available on Kansas Memory, a Kansas Historical Society website dedicated to making primary historical source material publicly available.

The photos chosen include a variety of agriculture, ranching, and rural scenes; farm family portraits; and farm equipment and field crews. A significant portion are rare pictures of Butler County’s Kaffir Corn Carnival, a unique annual harvest festival that took place in El Dorado in the years from 1911-1915, and 1922-1926. While the Kaffir Corn Carnival was just one among many harvest festivals in early 20th century America, it was among the largest and most elaborate of any such event anywhere. Weeks were spent in preparation for it — planning the parade route and organizing participants; creating floats; designing and erecting booths representing townships, schools, and local businesses; and of course electing the Kaffir Corn Queen, who would preside over the festivities along with her court of glamorous young ladies. Kaffir corn itself, of course, was beloved for its hardiness to heat and drought, and this south African crop was to become the ancestor of most of today’s modern varieties of milo. So it is still with us today!

With this digitization project we hope that, like kaffir corn, the visual representations of our agricultural heritage will persist in one form or another for generations to come.

~ Ardath

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Kaffir corn was brought to Butler County in 1886 from South Rhodesia, the predecessor of modern-day Zimbabwe in Africa.
One hundred men from El Dorado enlisted and served in Company H during the Spanish-American War.

Collections News

We’ve had an interesting year in the Collections division of the museum, with a variety of unique objects donated. Just some of our recent acquisitions include letters from the Star Vu movie theatre, a bread basket used to make deliveries from the Superior Baking Co. on North Main in the 1930s and ‘40s, and blueprints from the Eureka Federal Savings & Loan (now White Eagle Credit Union). Possibly the most impressive artifact we have received is a large square of gym floor from the old El Dorado High School that is presently being torn down. In fact, this section of floor is large enough that we aren’t quite sure yet where in collections to put it!

You may have read in the newspaper about one of our most exciting donations of the year, the 1862 Civil War commission of Brigadier General Alfred Washington Ellet. General Ellet was a hero of the Union Army who commanded a ramboat fleet in the struggle for control over the Mississippi River, and his efforts were integral to winning the battles at Memphis and Vicksburg in 1862. After the war he became a prominent and well-respected member of the early El Dorado community, and also farmed a large acreage near Latham. When the locust plague of 1874 decimated crops and ruined the livelihoods of many local farmers, General Ellet gave money to the affected families to help them get through the year until they could plant and harvest again. He also gave useful work to several of these farmers, paying them to help build a stacked

Exhibit Watch

We’ve got a great new year of exhibits planned for 2018!

“ABCedarian: The Alphabetical Adventure,” will kick off our temporary exhibits in January. What’s an abcedarian, you ask? It’s actually a once well-known but now archaic word referring either to the very youngest learners in school — the ones just mastering their ABCs — or to the instructors or tools that taught them. In this case, the ABCedarian is an exhibit that pulls out a variety of different objects from our collection to illustrate each of the letters of the alphabet, leading visitors on a whimsical journey through Butler County history!

The year ahead is bringing many changes to El Dorado’s schools, with old buildings coming down and new going up. But while our schools are looking toward the future of education, let’s not forget the past that has brought us here. Our summer exhibit “El Dorado: Old-School” seeks to remember and celebrate just that. Revisit old landmarks, mascots, and traditions, from the days of the one-room schoolhouse to your own school days. Discover the classrooms of yesterday in our collection of old school photographs. Maybe you’ll even find yourself!

Our fall exhibit, “Hidden Histories,” will explore the people and events of Butler County that have slipped through the cracks of history and been forgotten to all but a few. From buffalo soldier heroes to the dark day of the Ku Klux Klan, from pioneering women doctors to the epidemics no doctor could stop, Hidden Histories will invite visitors to delve into Butler County’s buried past. The exhibit will also touch on Butler County’s experience of World War I, the first modern war but one that has often been forgotten or overlooked by Americans.

Finally we will end the year with our annual Christmas exhibit, which will once again feature kids’ crafts and activities along with an assortment of old-timey holiday decorations and memorabilia from our collections.

Stay tuned to our website and Facebook page to get the latest news on these exhibits and their opening dates!
stone wall around his property. Much of this wall can still be seen near Latham today.

The commission and several family portraits were donated by Larry Ward of Oregon, a descendant of General Ellet. He saw them as a legacy belonging not just to the Ellet family, but to the people of Butler County. We plan to put these items on display for a year-long exhibit in the courthouse alcove of our museum galleries.

In addition to these donations, we were fortunate enough to receive a grant from the Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board, allowing us to digitize over 200 historic photographs from our collections (see p. 3 for more details). In addition to helping preserve our photographic archives into the future, a selection of these photos will be made available on the Kansas State Historical Society’s website Kansas Memory (www.kansasmemory.org) next year.

~ Ardath, Museum Educator, Curator, & Research Librarian

**AROUND THE MUSEUM**

Larry Ward of Oregon presents to the KOM the Civil War commission of early El Dorado citizen and war hero, Alfred Washington Ellet, as members of the Ellet family look on.

Danny Guthrie and Carol Turner explore the collections with care at November’s Night at the Museum: White Gloves Edition.

The KOM hosted more than 20 high school juniors with Youth Leadership Butler County.

Everybody got to be a scientist at the July Free Family Fun Day’s Water/Color Laboratory!

Guests at the Eclipse Watch Party observe the shrinking of the sun during the Great American Eclipse in August.

Wonderland Park opened in El Dorado on 8 June 1918, announced in the newspaper as “clean wholesome fun for all.”
The Preservation Project is our latest initiative to fund the ongoing care and upkeep of our many historic buildings. Thanks to several generous donors we have been able to set aside funds that will not only allow for repairs in the near future, but will also create a resource pool to respond to long-term maintenance needs.

Want to hear about the first beneficiary of the Preservation Project? So did Channel 8 in Wichita! A film crew from the Kansas Public Television Service (KPTS) came out to film the museum’s very own historic Conner Cabin, El Dorado’s oldest remaining structure and the town’s first house and trading post. Once a haven for horse thieves, the cabin was later purchased by Jerry Conner after original owner William Hildebrand was run out of the county for his disreputable ways. You can check out the Conner Cabin video in the episode of Positively Kansas that it was featured in. It’s available on YouTube at:

https://youtu.be/RyShRktplis

The segment highlighting the Conner Cabin starts at 12:16 in the video.

Recent Projects

Volunteers both old and new continue to be one of our most valuable assets! Throughout the year they have been hard at work on a variety of projects and events:

- Dale Wilson clocked a lot of hours at the museum this fall! Thanks to several busy days’ worth of power washing and a full new coat of linseed oil, our cable tool rig house is looking almost like new.

- If you enjoyed seeing photos from our Country Heavy Metal Digitization project (p. 3), you should give thanks to Sharon Guthrie — we sure do! Sharon spent many hours getting well acquainted with our archives while scanning the over 200 photos that went into this project. She and her husband Danny also donated a new scanner to the museum!

- Carol Turner is a fixture here at KOM — and a good thing too. She is here just about every week to pick up the newspapers and clip articles and obituaries from them, and she has been steadily adding to the museum’s obituary catalog. Now she’s got another project on top of that: exhibit curating! Come January visitors will be able to see the objects she and museum curator Ardath Lawson have picked out for the next exhibit, The ABCedarian. Come check it out!

- Barry Avery has kept our boomtown plantings looking nice and healthy all summer, even after the rains stopped coming. He also rototilled a plot in back of the schoolhouse where our native plant garden will be seeded this winter.

- Several volunteers came out to the museum back in October for our Done in a Day project, which saw our busy crew sweeping and mopping floors, raking sticks and leaves, trimming and cleaning out flower beds, and much more. A big THANK YOU to everyone who helped spruce up our beautiful boomtown!

The rustic interior of El Dorado’s Conner Cabin.
The year has flown by as guests from near and far have come to spend an hour or two (or three, or four, or ten or twenty..) at the Rolla A. Clymer research library. We have received visiting researchers from literally all around the world this year!

Our farthest-traveled guest came to us from Germany, where he works at the Biessenhofen Heritage Museum, a small historical society in Bavaria. He visited our museum because of his home community’s links to the Wiedemann family, whose own roots lie in the Biessenhofen community. This gentleman was even kind enough to donate to the library a copy of the book *Historisches Biessenhofen*, which features a photograph of the J.A. Wiedemann birthplace (K.T.’s father). Although the book is written in German, it is a wonderful reference for anybody who is interested in seeing what life was like in late 19th and early 20th century Germany — the world that many of Butler County’s own settlers once called home. To see just a few of the other interesting materials the library has received this year, check out the sidebar on the right.

While we receive visitors and requests from all around, many of our most dedicated patrons are local people researching their own Butler County families. The KOM will continue to be the meeting place of the Butler County Genealogical Society, which has another great slate of meeting topics for the year ahead — check them out on the right, or keep up with the group on their Facebook page.

~ Ardath
Another year is coming to a close, and our busy season of tours, programs, and classroom visits is winding down. What does that mean for the Education Division? It means it’s time to get busy planning a new round of fun and educational programming for 2018!

Of course one of our busy times is right around the corner again: Kansas Day is January 29th, and that means classroom visits in El Dorado and Augusta, as well as our annual Family Fun Day Happy Birthday Kansas bash. From Kansas symbols to famous Kansans to living history presentations, we are always happy to bring Kansas Day programs to our schools around the county!

One thing we are especially excited about this year is offering expanded summer camps this coming July and August. KOM will be partnering with the Butler County Farm Bureau to bring two weeks of half-day camps with a farming and ranching focus. Kids who sign up will be able to explore the many exciting career options in the fields of agriculture and the life sciences, from modern farming to the biomedical sciences. They will have a chance to meet real professionals in these fields, see farm equipment and animals up close, and learn how Kansas’ long history of farming and ranching has led the nation to where we are today.

We also have plenty of adult education in store for the year ahead, whether it’s exhibits for the whole family or a history symposium to observe the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. Stay tuned for this and more!  

~ Ardath

Want to schedule a tour or program for your own group? Contact Ardath Lawson at (316) 321-9333, or education@kansasoilmuseum.org

From rocks and fossils to historic artifacts, the KOM education collection includes a wide array of objects for hands-on exploration that can come to any classroom.
The average wage of a pioneer cowboy in the late 1800s was $1.50 a day.

The Gusher Gift Shop has a number of new items in, plus plenty of old favorites. Even once the holidays are over, it’s not too late to come find some things to brighten up the new year for friends and family — or yourself!

Whether it’s snacks or books, jewelry or kids’ toys, there is a little something for everyone at the Gusher Gift Shop.
Wiley’s Marble Top Lunch Room, opening in 1918, was advertised in the paper as equipped to cater to 1500 people in 24 hours.

2018 EVENTS

These are just a few events coming up at the museum in the year ahead. Keep checking our website and follow us on Facebook for more events and information!

MARCH — GATHERING BARN TOUR
Join us for an exclusive tour of the Gathering Barn Museum, a dazzling private collection right here in Butler County that features a huge variety of objects and artifacts from Kansas history.

APRIL — ROCKFEST & ANNUAL MEETING
Our 3rd Annual ROCKFEST, a day of fun celebrating geology and the science of oil and gas exploration. Featuring living history, craft vendors and demos, kids’ crafts & activities, the Great Dino Dig, and more!

JUNE 17 — ICE CREAM SOCIAL & FATHER’S DAY TRIATHLON

JULY 23-27 — SUMMER CAMP I: ADVENTURES IN AG CAREERS
JULY 30-AUGUST 3 — SUMMER CAMP II: PRACTICAL AG
These two camps will highlight the role of farming and ranching in Kansas, both historically and right here in Butler County today. Participants will learn all about different careers in agriculture and life science, meet real professionals in these fields, and even have close-up encounters with crops and livestock at the museum and fairgrounds!

SEPTEMBER — NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

OCTOBER — CEMETERY TOURS

NOVEMBER — WORLD WAR I HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

DECEMBER — OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

ROCKFEST 2017
Commerce Bank, El Dorado
Maclaskey Oilfield Services
Stanfield Roofing
Sundgren Realty, Inc.

Volunteer Dinner / Trailblazers
History Symposium

Ice Cream Social
Commerce Bank
El Dorado TrueCare Pharmacy
Freddy’s, El Dorado

Summer Camp 2017
Kansas Strong
Thomas & Connie Paulson

Night at the Museum:
White Gloves Edition
ICI Insurance
Old Fashioned Christmas
El Dorado Main Street
Willie’s Sports Bar and Grill

~ 2017 Sponsors ~
Automobiles line the snowy street along the first block of West Central Avenue in El Dorado, 19 February 1931.

**From The Archives**

On 25 Mar 1925, famed train bandit Bill Latrasse was captured in an abandoned house on refinery company land near El Dorado.
Ways to Help...

2018 is dedicated to preserving history that will provide a lifetime of learning for today and future generations.

Your donations and continued support enable us to impact lives, preserve history, and promote greater understanding in public schools, corporations, and throughout the community. Every dollar counts! Over 80% of your donation will go directly to educational programming. Funding is the only limitation we currently have on the number of lives we can impact.

Please consider making a donation to the Kansas Oil Museum today!

Planned Giving

Contribute to the Kansas Oil Museum’s future by planning a special gift. Although cash contributions are always appreciated, there are other creative and flexible options that can benefit you and the Museum.

When planning your legacy remember the museum by:

- Including the museum in your will or irrevocable trust
- Giving the gift of real estate, stocks, IRAs, qualifying retirement plans and other assets
- Listing the Museum as an owner and/or beneficiary of a life insurance policy.

Giving a charitable income tax or estate tax deduction, your gift will benefit you and your heirs.