

Barton County Historical Society

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<http://bartoncountymuseum.org>

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The Village Crier

Barton County Historical Society

June 2013, Volume 21, Number 3

Museum Memos

The sign project, sponsored by patrons through the Golden Belt Community Foundation is almost complete! The grand finale of this long project is a wall near the main entrance depicting the important history of Barton County. Sculptor Chet Cale created a bas relief wall sculpture in panels of various sizes that will be surrounded by the names of supporters since the 1960's. It is pictured here but really needs to be seen in person to appreciate this one-of-a-kind piece of art. The entire sign project has taken research, time, thought, many dollars, and a combination of hard working HS volunteers, Christy Tustin at GBCF, and generous anonymous donations. I am sure you will agree it was worth the wait.

I asked Carlos Miller to give us a printing quote over 20 years ago. We were wondering if we could possibly afford this quarterly newsletter. He said the price would be NOTHING, "because it's the right thing to do". Carlos, one of those "greatest generation" veterans, returned home in 1945 and has made this community a better place with his influence. His dry humor and good perspective, as well as his generosity, was always helpful. Sending the Crier to Miller Printers, to Carlos and then to son Phil and Maribeth has always brought the same answer — "nothing". So, it is past due, that everyone reading this please give Carlos a hearty round of applause! We all thank you because it's the right thing to do!

Third graders, 204 of them, from USD 428 arrived on May 8th for "Pioneer Day" with organizer Mrs. Tricia Reiser, many teachers, aides, and parents. We provided every available staff and volunteer, and welcomed additional help from others. The full day was a great success. We have received compliments, positive feedback, and the date already reserved for next year. It was our pleasure to provide these newest citizens a taste their own history.

Village housekeeping has required tree trimming and repairs to the windmill and museum tile floor among

many other projects. Huge thanks to DJ's Tree Service and Kerns Floors for doing an excellent job.

Donors since we last noted include; Benefactor Robert E. Craine Jr. and Contributors Tom and Jan Crissman, Mike and Jeanette Sanders, Neil Frieb, Robert Button, Dr. Perry and Krista Smith. Great Bend CVB, Kuston Floor Designs, Inc., Best Western Angus Inn (Loren and Gayle Unruh), CPI Qualified Planning, Marge Morgenstern, Mary Lou Button, Roy and Marcia Westhoff, John T. and Dr. Marta Edmonds, Kiwanis Club of Great Bend, Dr. Donald Reinhardt, H. Gordon Jones, Charles and Sandra Stos, Marion Lightfoot, Jon Briel DVM, John and Kathy Armatys, Denis and Ronny Lutz, Les and Barbara Logan, Henry Burmeister, Wal Mart, G Michael Allison, DDS, Maurice and Norma Hammeke, Smoky Hill Feeders, M&F Plumbing. These generous people join others who also provide time and talent to keep this great place running somewhat smoothly.

Everyone needs to hear the daily compliments we receive, and we agree, this is the BEST museum to visit. Well, we do know for sure it serves Barton County very well. Thanks to every one of you and, again, thank Carlos for getting this into your hands.

Beverly Komarek, Executive Director



The centerpiece of our new donor wall is this scene by Great Bend artist Chet Cale.

Is it time to renew your membership?

Check the top line of your mailing label for a letter designation and date. If it is circled in red, your membership is now due.

S _____ \$15 Annual Individual Membership

F _____ \$25 Annual Family Membership

C _____ \$100-\$499 Contributor

X _____ \$500+ Benefactor

_____ Additional Donation

R is for Reciprocal and L is for Life members

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Calendar of Events

June 4 - Museum Committee - 1:15 pm

June 24 - Program Meeting - 7:30 pm

July 1 - Board of Directors Meeting - 7:30 pm

July 4 - **Independence Day - Museum Closed**

July 10 - Museum Committee Meeting - 1:15 pm

July 22 - Program Meeting - 7:30 pm

Aug 14 - Museum Committee Meeting - 1:15 pm

Aug 25 - Annual Covered Dish Supper - 5:00 pm

Printing Courtesy of
Miller Printers, Inc., & Carlos Miller

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Karen Neuforth, BCHS Research Coordinator

Alright, there's a blank, page-shaped white space on this computer staring at me. The cursor is blinking in a rather insistent manner. That means that I have to write something. For weeks, we've been throwing around various suggestions for this issue's topic. Whenever possible, I try to come up with something that fits in with celebrations, the time of year, events going on, etc.

A couple of weeks ago, Dennis Call wandered into the museum, looking for ideas to decorate the lobby at the new cinema in Downtown Great Bend. Not terribly long before that, the museum was contacted by the firm doing the graphic design for the newly remodeled Applebee's restaurant in town. Of course, we have also just finished our drag racing celebration and are revving up for Independence Day and the Barton County Fair.

What does all this have to do with me staring at white space on my computer? They all have a common theme: entertainment. Bev looked at me and said, "You know what your next column will be about, don't you?" So ...



Welcome to the Elite Theatre! Now playing are some of the most "Extraordinary Features" from the Vitagraph and Selig Studios, featuring Sydney Drew and Miss Edith Storey in *The Still Voice* and Julia Swayne Gordon in *The Tiger Lily*. What? You've never been to the Elite? Why, it's right downtown in Great Bend, half a block off Main Street on Lakin. Your affable hosts are Bill Boshell (left) and Earl Epperson (right), dressed in the latest gentleman's attire for 1913.

You still don't know that movie theatre? Well, it has been in disguise for quite some time. This building is now

part of the historic Masonic Lodge (home to Great Bend Coffee).



Want a little education with your entertainment? Then let's all go to the Chautauqua! Now, the question is: Where are we going? Unfortunately, other than the statement at the top which says that this was the "First chataque in Great Bend", we don't know where this photo was taken. But, most of the kids in the crowd seem to be dressed as "wild Indians" and there's a pile of watermelons, so there must have been a good time had by all.

Just what is a Chautauqua? President Theodore Roosevelt described it as, "the most American thing in America". Chautauquas were popular educational and entertainment assemblies in rural America from the late nineteenth century into the 1920s. First organized at Chautauqua, New York, in 1874, the gatherings presented speakers, teachers, musicians, preachers, and much, much more – something for everyone.



"Lions and tigers and bears, oh, my!" or, at least, zebras and elephants. That means The Circus is in town. Everybody turned out for the circus parade, of course. This one, probably just before World War I, was heading straight north up Main Street. These two pictures from an album donated by the estate of Barbara Bushnell caught the exotic animals just as they were passing the German American State Bank building on the southwest corner of Lakin and Main.



Did you know that Great Bend had a Grand Opera House? We still do, although it's now a dance studio and the stage and rigging on the third floor disappeared long ago. Built by G.H. Hulme on the southwest corner of Forest and Williams in 1888, it housed Hulme's general store and implement business at ground level, offices on the second floor, more shop space in the basement, and on the third floor, the opera hall itself. Promoted as "one of the finest and most convenient arranged opera halls in the west, including stage, dressing rooms, etc. ... It will seat seven hundred people without crowding." It even had a parquet floor for dances and receptions, the dress circle with cushioned and upholstered seats, private balcony boxes, and a gallery. My, my, weren't we up to snuff! Traveling shows of all kinds were featured, from minstrels to operettas to comedians and popular bands.



Back when – even before I came along – the Barton County Fair was an event long anticipated by folks from all over the county. Farmers and ranchers showed off their prize livestock, proud producers of pickles and petunias entered their latest efforts from garden and kitchen, children of all ages wandered through the side shows.



Some folks around here probably got their very first, and maybe only, ride in an airplane like the one above, which looks a little flimsy to me. How about you? Maybe that's how my late, Great-Uncle Henry got hooked on airplanes.

At the time photos like these were taken, the fairgrounds were on the east side of Frey Street and north of 17th Street. There was an oval racetrack, where just about everything was raced from horses, to sulkies, to motorcycles to the predecessors of our hot rods.

From the photo at the top, which was taken by Miss Annie Taylor about 1906, it looks like there may have been some games of chance, too. I know the picture is small, but there is a table with what may be a "wheel of fortune" on it in the bottom right corner with a bunch of men gathered around it. Meanwhile, another gentleman is seen with a boy's hand firmly grasped scooting him past the temptations of gambling.

See you at the Fair – July 10th through the 14th !!!