



the Homesteader

Mission Statement (Adopted 2018): The Ellis County Historical Society Museum collects, preserves, and exhibits Ellis County History for the surrounding community and its visitors.

Kansas Museum Association

2023 ECHS BOARD

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Cynthia Stone

Archives/Research Assistant

Patty Nicholas



ECHS hosted dessert for the attendees of the Kansas Museum Association (KMA) for their annual November meeting. A variety of kuchen flavors, catered by Union Catering—Phil Kuhn, was served and very quickly devoured! Yum! Wes Windholz entertained our visitors on his dulcimer.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

NEW SEASONAL HOURS:

Monday—Thursday

10:00am—4:00pm

SAVE THE 2024 DATES

SESQUICENTENNIAL ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING

All are welcome!

January 15, 2024, 7:00pm

100 W 7th St, Basement

ECHS ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

January 29, 2024, 7:00pm

100 W 7th St, Basement

CHAMBER CHAT

February 16, 2024, 9:00am

100 W 7th St, Basement

VOLUNTEER BANQUET

February 17, 2024, 6:30pm

Thirsty's on Vine Street

TRIVIA NIGHT

March 2, 2024—6:30pm

Community Theater

**Watch for registration
details on our website
and Facebook coming
in January**

PIONEER DAY

MAY 1, 2024

Grades 3 and 4

Hays Campus

Invitations will be sent to
the schools

WATERFEST Quest for Gold

July 2024

Hays Campus

Date and Details TBA

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the year quickly draws to a close, Adam and I have been reflecting on just how much has been accomplished within the society since the day we took the keys. It is truly remarkable the support that has stepped up in the last 12 months and we cannot express our appreciation enough. I am very proud of our society's small crew and dedicated board members who have put in many hours into the entity everyone assumed was destined to be history itself. Our community has seen our efforts and it never gets old hearing the positive comments from citizens I meet throughout the county. The list of tasks accomplished and goals set will come out in the annual report at the end of January, but for now let me just say, WOW!

As a brief update to our situation I offer some important points:

- Capital campaigns for both the Hays and Victoria ECHS museum sites have been wonderfully successful in 2023.
- Volunteer help is gaining every month.
- Special projects and programs have been funded through small grants like never before.
- Fundraising events were successful this year.
- Utilizing intern opportunities allowed us to serve more tourists during the peak season of summer.
- Operational funding is not yet on par with what it will take to run a full time facility. ALL 4 employees are still only part-time.

In lieu of sending out a separate end of the year annual appeal I want to encourage our members to reach out and recruit new members and sponsors. Share our mission and good work with those you know, ask them to be a vital part of our society and join this exciting time of success!

Our current members have come through time and time again when we needed special funds (like the dehumidifiers this past summer). If you are looking for an end of year charitable deduction please consider giving to the ECHS general fund. Along with public funding, membership and sponsorships are the main source of revenue for operational expenditures. For 2023 our bottom line is in the black. But as we begin to open our doors for more events etc. it will become harder to make that goal without the community's generous help.

I am committed to using ECHS funds wisely as we forge ahead. A couple of other side projects on the horizon involve moving the millstones from FHSU campus to ECHS grounds, transporting an original dolcett (one of under 10 known to exist—invented, designed and produced by the Bissing family of Hays) from Montana, and reviving Pioneer Day and other kid friendly activities while the museum is still under construction.

I am honored to serve as your Executive Director and I believe our partnership will secure our society for the generations yet to come! Thank you!



LET US INTRODUCE YOU TO PATTY!

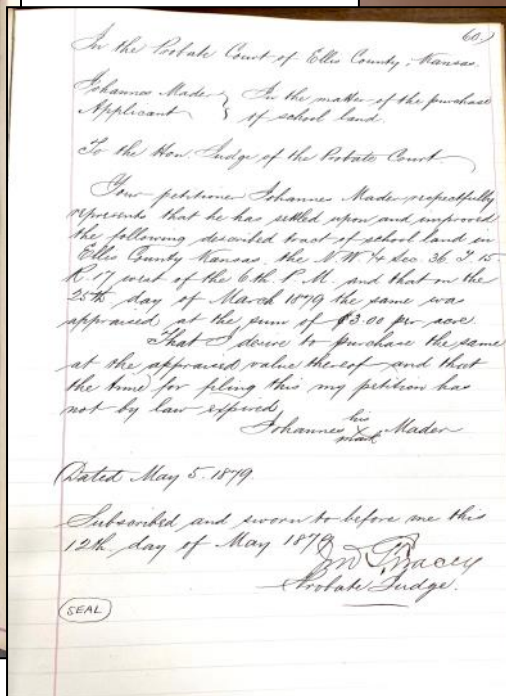
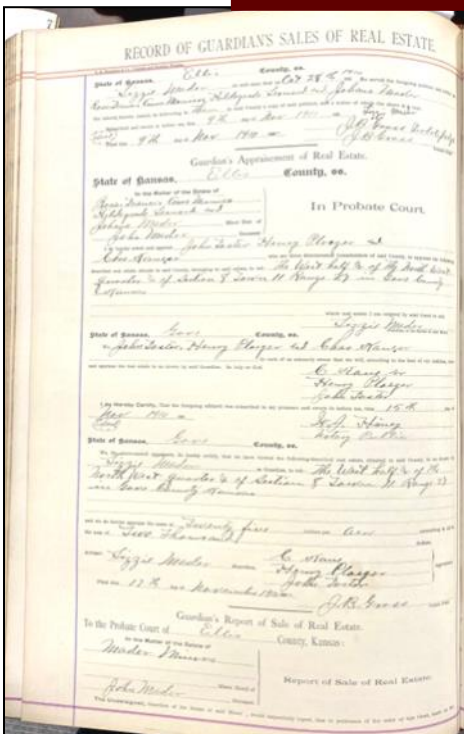
Patty Nicholas is a native of Western Kansas where she lived in Monument and Stockton during her childhood. She graduated from Stockton High School and started attending Fort Hays State University. While at FHSU, she worked in Forsyth Library in the Periodicals Department. Patty graduated from FHSU with a bachelor's degree in history and stayed at Forsyth Library with a full-time job after graduating.

She worked in the periodicals department for about 19 years, and then was asked to work in the Special Collections and Archives area of the library. The Special Collections area is mainly focused on the history of the university, but it does have other collections which includes the Center for Ethnic Studies that focuses on the history of the Volga-Germans. Patty was in that position for about 20 years, and she retired in June 2021.

Patty says, "During my years of working in Special Collections, I learned about the history and heritage of this area, and I met many people who helped me to learn along the way. It was my great pleasure to help patrons who had questions or were doing research on topics relating to this area".

After retiring, Patty started volunteering at the Hays Public Library. And she was offered an opportunity to work for the Ellis County Historical Society. Patty started in April 2023 as the ECHS Archival Assistant. She is available for reference questions, but her main job is to input information into the museum software, Past Perfect.

Continued on page 8...



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA FOUND CELEBRATING HERITAGE...

We took a short road trip west to attend this Volga German Heritage event held in the renovated Opera House. Their food is all traditional and home-made! The Wes Windholz Band provided music for the polka dance. Just the sound makes us happy! Vendors provided a variety of brews for tasting. Gove County citizens have a mix of Volga German (mostly from Ellis County) and Black Sea German ancestry.



DRINKING BEER,
POLKA DANCING
AND ENJOYING
GREAT FOOD...



WAY OUT WEST IN
GRAINFIELD, KS

Stay tuned for information on the 2024 Hops at the House heritage event. *ECHS hopes to coordinate transportation for any who wants to attend but does not want to drive.*

DREAMS OF A DULCIMER

Brian McCormack, who lives down under in Australia, but has roots in Ellis County, wrote to us by email with a unique request. He is dedicated to preserving and passing on his Volga German heritage and traditions to his family. His mother is a Wasinger, daughter of Carl & Catherine (nee Pfeifer). Brian is searching for a dulcimer in need of a good home. He is a long time musician (drums, bass, keyboard, vocals) and also a composer. As Brian is reaching retirement age, he wants to master the hammered dulcimer. This news article from the Hays Sentinel in 1877 is from a time before Ellis County citizens gained a much deserved love of the dulcimer!

Monshure, a Russian village three miles below town, has a band of musicians, and their music is said to be excellent. A violin, clarionet, base viol and dulcimer are the instrument used. We would raise a voice of objection to none of them unless it might be to the dulcimer, for that is an instrument of torture which a free born citizen taketh to only under protest.

Please contact ECHS if you want more information.



To help you get ready for New Year's Wishing, we are providing the Volga German text below for you to learn and teach your children and grandchildren.

ICH WUENSCH EUCH

*Ich wuensche
euch ein Glueckseliges
neues Jahr,
langes Leben,
Gesundheit,
Frieden und Eingkeit,
nach Eurem Tod,
die ewige
Glueckseligkeit!*



We received the beautiful donation (above) for our newly remodeled front entryway. It was a winning bid in the annual Hays ARC Park Festival of Trees Fundraiser.

We love it when we can add stunning décor to our space and support a great cause!



Programs this fall included:

September— Kansas Music History by Derrick Doty

October—Railroaded, The Industry That Shaped Kansas by Leo Oliva

In November our Humanities Kansas speaker, Mary Kohn, presented on the “Evolution of Language in Kansas” and it was our best attended speaker to date.

Thank you to everyone who came out to share our Volga German dialects with Mary.



We will be hosting about four guest speakers a year from this program.

Humanities Kansas has a wide variety of topics in their Speaker's Bureau Catalog. If you find one you are especially interested in please let us know and we will look into booking that topic.

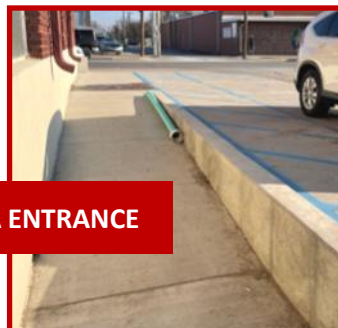
To browse the speaker topics go to the Humanities Kansas website then to the speakers bureau tab:

Humanitieskansas.org

BRICK-BY-BRICK

PHASE 2

BACK PARKING AND ADA ENTRANCE



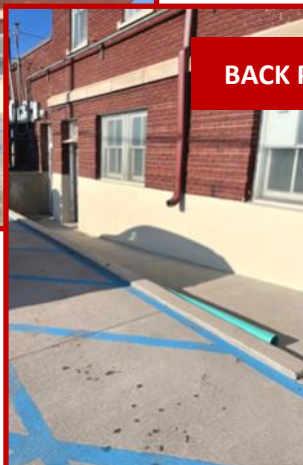
SCHMIDT
FOUNDATION

Restoration is moving right along. A couple months without heaters didn't bother us until this last cold spell. But Glassman has restored services to the basement area as they continue the complete system overhaul.

The curator lab is on schedule to be useable by the annual meeting (great time to take a tour).

And the best part—all current public areas are now accessible by ramp!

Plans for Phase 3 will be revealed on January 29th at ECHS Annual Meeting of Members.



BEAUTIFUL FRONT BASEMENT ENTRANCE WITH ORIGINAL TO THE BUILDING LIGHT FIXTURES!!!



STONE CHURCH ADA ENTRANCE



BREAK ROOM



CURATOR LAB



DANE G. HANSEN
FOUNDATION

HUNTING HISTORY



Part of our mission, one we enjoy a great deal, is finding and preserving artifacts which are part of Ellis County history. With the recent closing of The Brass Rail, an iconic bar in Hays, we were invited to demo items of interest for future exhibits. *Thanks to Lyle and Jerry: ECHS Board Muscle Sorry... not the sign!*

— CUT THROAT DUROC WITH GERMAN VISITORS —

A group of tourists from the **HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION OF GERMANS FROM EASTERN EUROPE E.V** (Munich Germany) visited us in September. They were excited to see all the Volga German heritage and pride that nests in the plains of the USA. They are associated with the Bayerisches Kulturzentrum der Deutschen aus Russland (BKDR) or in English the Bavarian Cultural Center of the Germans from Russia. BKDR is the publisher of the "Insights Into Religion.." exhibit we had on display during the fall. We invited the group to return in 2026 when we will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Volga German settlers of Ellis County. They in turn invited us to visit them when they open a new BKDR cultural center building in Nuremberg in late 2024 or 2025. Perhaps we can get a group and travel funds together by then!!

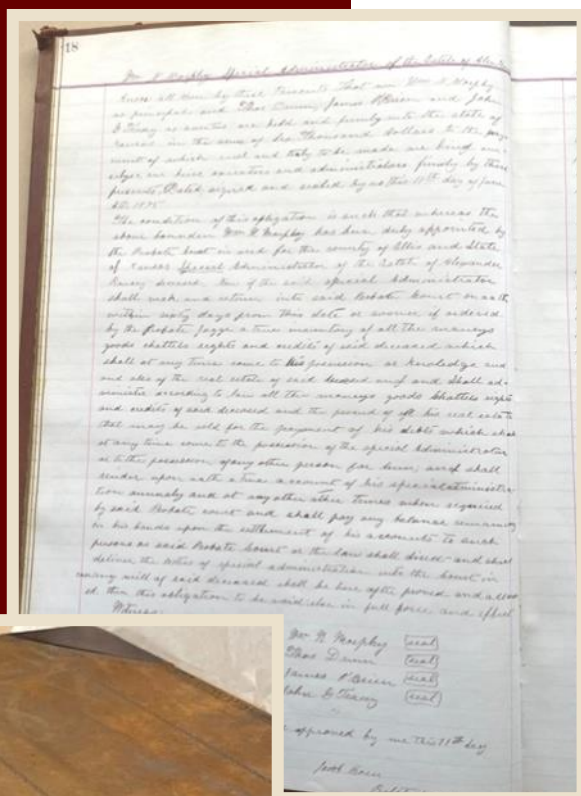
They visited on Wednesday but did not have time to stay for the Duroc card night that evening but they sat down to play a few hands with Adam and I before they departed. We were curious to see if the version they play was exactly like the one Jerry Braun has been teaching (and kicking our behinds in) all summer. It was similar but a lot more cut-throat. But still so much fun and laughter.



Oh and in case you didn't hear, we finally beat Jerry Braun and ended his undefeated streak of "LUCK."

Pictured left, our new German friends: Irina Sutter, Elena Schwab, Sophie S., Dominik R., Leo Rung, and from Hays Kevin Rupp and Amanda Rupp.

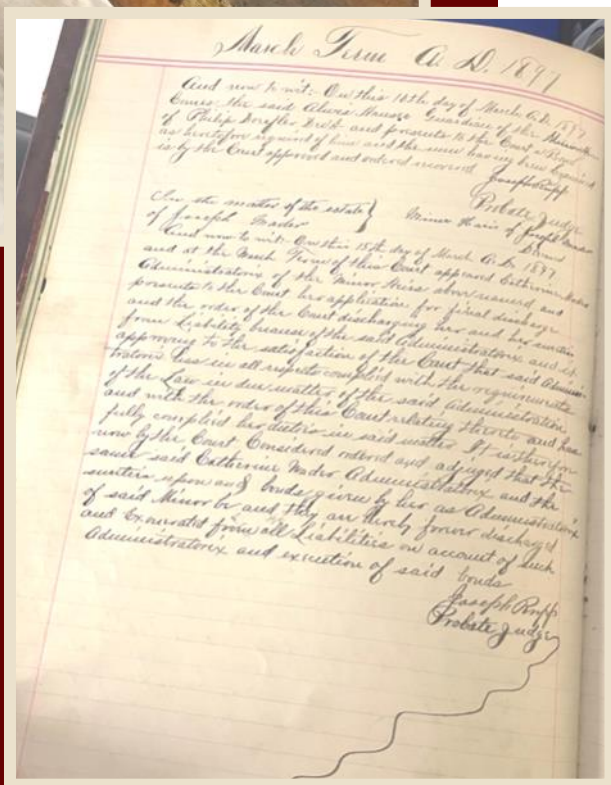
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The ECHS archives own over 300 ledgers from the Ellis County District Court dating back to 1868. She goes through each ledger to get the names of plaintiffs, defendants, judges, etc. so that there will be an index to make it easy for researchers to look for specific names. To aid her work, Patty's has created Excel spreadsheets or Microsoft Word documents to keep track of the names which are then added to Past Perfect. The spreadsheets and Word documents are also added to Past Perfect. They contain the listing of the names, and any corrections, additions or notes.



The ledgers books are arranged in the archives room by slot number, and Patty started with Slot 1 back in April. On December 6 she began work on Slot 17.



There have been a small number of ledgers that have less than 50 names, but for the most part, many of the ledgers have between 500-700 names.

There are over 300 ledgers which makes this a long but vital project for our archive resources.

We are so excited that Patty is part of our ECHS family and her work will mean future researchers have easy and important access to these records which were created in the earliest days of Ellis County.



ECHS STORE HAS UNIQUE GIFT IDEAS!

Stop in, order online, or even call and we can process your order by credit card directly.

AND WE CAN SHIP TO YOU!!



Durable vinyl decal stickers (2" to 3" in size), great for water bottles! Makes perfect gift to send in a card or stuff a stocking. \$2—\$3 each.

Volga German themed apparel:



1. "I'm Not Yelling, I'm VOLGA GERMAN"
2. "I'm Kansas Grown With Vintage, Heirloom, Volga German Seed"

Our hottest item is of course the "lazy cook" aprons (\$25). The newest item is a children's shirt (pictured above) for your favorite niece, nephew or grandkid with those dashing Volga German good looks. (sizes—2T, 4T, Youth Small, Youth Medium — \$16).

Both adult shirt designs (phrases listed above) are available in multiple colors and sizes, and now in the softer material.

Call for detailed availability! 785-628-2624



2023 Capital Donors

For all those who truly understand the value of history.

As we near completion of Phase 2 Funding in the Brick-by-Brick capital campaign ECHS acknowledges these very generous gifts during the 3rd quarter:

Grant Award of \$50,000 from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation.

\$10,000 Donation made by the Beach-Edwards Family Foundation

Matching campaign initiated by Darrell Seibel's \$18,000 challenge (netted over \$52,000 total)

ECHS is fully committed to completing the Brick-by-Brick campaign, saving the Brick Church, and fully re-opening its doors to the public. Our success is fueled by our many committed donors who so generously give of their time, their talent and their treasure.

As our plans begin to be realized our need for funds increases in correspondence. ECHS is blessed to have growing support throughout the community. Although general operating funds are in most need currently, capital funds set the timeline and pace for accomplishing our larger goals. Unlike membership and sponsorship dues, these gifts are sometimes a one time donation and the money donated goes directly towards capital improvements, it is not put into our general operating budget.

Anonymous Donors

**Beach-Edwards Family Foundation
Greg & Jessica Atkins
The Beach-Edwards Family Found.
Dennis & Marsha Bieker
Jack & Nancey Curtis
J Randall Clinkscales
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Darrell & Barbara Werth
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Robert & Susan Wolf**

For recent happenings or exciting news that did not make the newsletter...



Like us on
Facebook

THANK YOU — SPONSORS

Sponsorship dues go directly to operating expenses of the society. Staff, utilities, insurances etc. are all an important part of regular business even for a non-profit. ECHS depends on public funding for a large portion of operating expenses but those are subsidized with private donations like memberships. A sponsorship is a membership at a higher level of support.

AMBASSADOR **(\$1500+)**

LYLE NOORDHOEK



Benefactor (\$1,000- \$1499)

JEFF PINKNEY CPA, Inc.

HAYS LIONS CLUB

Settler (\$500 to \$999)

Bank of Hays
Classic Quality Body Shop
Downing Nelson Oil

Emprise Bank
Eyesmile Vision & Dental*
Brian Gribben
Insurance Planning

Kiwanis Club of Hays
Midwest Energy
Patricia Phillips
Melanie Roth*

Homesteader (\$250 to \$499)

Margery Haas*
Hays Conv & Visitors Bureau

Hays Medical Center
Leona Madden
Andrew & Kathleen Rupp

Daniel & Mary Kay Schippers
Neal & Carolyn Younger

Pioneer (\$100 to \$249)

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** Big thank you to our recently joined/renewed at higher level sponsors.*

Ellis County Historical Society

100 W 7th

Hays, KS 67601

Phone: (785) 628-2624

director@echshays.org

Non-Profit Org

U.S. Postage

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Your most current membership level is

**This agency is funded in part by
the City of Hays and Ellis County Kansas.**

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Gifted Membership from:



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CHOOSE ONE FROM THESE TWO COLUMNS:

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____ Senior \$10 (65 and up) CODE 1140	____ PIONEER (\$100 - \$249) CODE 1175
____ Single \$15 CODE 1110	____ HOMESTEADER (\$250-\$499) CODE 1180
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Please make checks payable to the ELLIS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

----- **ENTER credit card information below** -----

____ Visa ____ Mastercard ____ American Express ____ Discover

Acc # _____ CVV# _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ Amount \$ _____

***You are a person who understands
the value of history. Thank you!***