

Ellis County Historical Society
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**HERE FOR VISITS
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**
Please call or email to schedule a time, we
would love to see you.

Your membership will expire on

Your most recent membership level is

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

MEMBER BENEFITS:

- Free admission to the museum and archives
- Subscription to *The Homesteader*, ECHS's quarterly newsletter
- 10% discount in the Museum Store (excluding consigned items)
- Vote at the Annual Membership Meeting
- Participation in the *Time Travelers* network of 300+ organizations
- in 40+ states (www.timetravelers.mohistory.org)

SPONSORSHIP:

Categories, listed below, include all the benefits of membership at a higher level of financial support. We list our sponsors by category in *The Homesteader* as well as in guides to our special events. ECHS is a 501 © 3 organization your sponsorship is tax deductible.

STEP UP BECOME A SPONSOR

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

ELLIS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP <i>(Check One)</i>	LEVELS OF SPONSORSHIP <i>(Check One)</i>	NAME/BUSINESS _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$10 (ID required) <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$10 (65 and up) <input type="checkbox"/> Single \$15 <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (Single) \$500 <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (Couple) \$750	<input type="checkbox"/> SCOUT (\$75 - \$99) <input type="checkbox"/> PIONEER (\$100 - \$249) <input type="checkbox"/> HOMESTEADER (\$250 - \$499) <input type="checkbox"/> SETTLER (\$500 - \$999) <input type="checkbox"/> BENEFACTOR (\$1,000+)

FOR OFFICE USE: MEMBER # _____ CHECK # _____ AMT _____ DATE _____ PP _____



2021 ECHS BOARD

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ECHS STAFF

Interim Director
Amanda Rupp

Curatorial, Book Keeping, Office Management, Programming and all around best team ever
Adam Conkey
Amanda Unrein

Archivist
Betty Macdonald



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.

DEEP IN THE ARCHIVES

I was searching through the archives this week, looking for a rodeo story to post on Facebook as it is FHSU Rodeo weekend April 17th and 18th. I just happened to find an odd and interesting story in a file marked "Accidents." My first thought was I'm about to read up on some horse and buggy happenings in early Ellis county. And there were some of those, however many other topics made the cut for accidents in news articles during the turn of the century. Quite a few bull gorings and other injuries of town folk occurred. They were interesting enough but none quite as much as the Headless Body Found printed in the Republican (an Ellis Co paper), dated May 2, 1896. It was so interesting, I thought I would include it in this newsletter.

I hope to find some interesting old news to print in each newsletter. Letting these forgotten stories of our area inspire new discussion. What is the good of preserving all this neat stuff if it just stays in the files? Maybe one or two articles will pique your interest and you will find yourself at the ECHS archives thumbing through the past with us.

Oh the treasures we keep!

...continued on page 3.

Headless Body Found.

Michael Dening came to Hays Thursday forenoon and notified Sheriff Miller that he had found the headless body of a man that morning on the NW¼ of Sec. 7, T. 13, R. 16, about one mile from his farm and 12 miles northeast of Hays. Sheriff Miller at once sent word to Coroner Schmitt, and with Dr. Kohl, County Attorney Mulroy, and H. W. Oshant, drove at once to where the body was. As Coroner Schmitt could not be found, Justice of the Peace A. Karlin was notified, who empanelled a jury. A horrible sight it was to the jury. The body was that of a medium sized man, badly decomposed. His head was gone and one arm and hand were detached from the body. He had on three shirts, a pair of congress shoes and a pair of cotton pants. His hat was gone and his coat lay about three feet from the body. It is believed the body has been lying there fully two months. On his clothes was found a bottle containing morphine and 6 cents in money. His hat and head could not be found. Nothing was found on his person to identify him. Following is the verdict of the jury:

"We, the jury, empanelled to view the body of a person unknown, found on the NW¼ of Sec. 7, T. 13, R. 16, do hereby find that the said person came to his death by means to the jury unknown."

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Summer 2021 / Historic Churches of Ellis County Caravan Tours ~ This summer we hope to once again have the Historic Church Tours for one Saturday each month. These will be caravan style travel with hopefully an option for riding in the trolley as well. Visiting 5-7 of the oldest and most popular churches in our area, telling of the pride and dedication of the immigrants who built them. Watch for more information on HaysPost, Facebook and in the mail in the coming weeks.

4 Seasons ~ HAC Art Walks ~ It is also our goal to have a presentation at each of the 4 Art walks held downtown during the year. Whether these will be in our Stone church or other locations will be dependent on multiple factors. Looking forward to our first display to be during the June 18th Art Walk.

Fall 2021 ~ ECHS 50 year Anniversary ~ This year is 50 year anniversary of our incorporation. We look forward to honoring those who started the Ellis County Historical Society and reminisce on the years since.

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



FROM THE DESK OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

Amanda Rupp
Interim Director
Email: director@echshays.org

2021 is bringing many changes to ECHS. After what might be described as a stagnant year in 2020, due to the pandemic and other unforeseen circumstances, the new board and small staff is ready to "move it move it!" Now is the perfect opportunity and timing to restructure our museum and organization for the 50th anniversary of our incorporation on November 1, 2021.

Let me quickly introduce your new staff. A search was sent out, in December, for a part time office manager to oversee weekly operations such as online orders, bookkeeping, helping anyone with research and tours to our three extra buildings on the museum grounds. These tasks alone are nearly enough hours for a full-time person. As luck would have it all three applicants were a perfect fit for the job as a TEAM. By splitting the part time paid hours between them and adding volunteers, our money is extremely tight since our income from the county and city, memberships and others are all cut. Hence our new team —Triple A's, as I call them, have a monumental challenge ahead of them. They are skilled and willing to meet the many obstacles ahead.

Adam Conkey is an Edmond Ks native with a passion for history and languages. He has a BA in History and German along with a Masters in History from FHSU. Adam is involved in Hays Community Theater and portrays Buffalo Bill with enthusiasm. Conkey will be involved in research along with artifact care. Also, he will assist in general museum duties and western program development.



Amanda Unrein is from Ellis and her husband Darren was elected to the board of trustees this spring. She is an experienced bookkeeper and is eager to get ECHS office and finances organized making workflow more productive. She will be a great asset in reorganizing the collections and helping in transferring all our old database to the Past Perfect museum software we purchased in 2012.

THANK YOU — SPONSORS

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Scout (\$75 to \$99)

Bank of Hays Kaylynn Philip Ivan & Verda Werner

New Life Members: Steve & Deb Ludwig

* Big thank you to our recently joined sponsors.

MEMBERS AND SPONSORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It is true that none of this is possible without the help of our community. Ellis County is rich in tradition and pride. ECHS has the honor of keeping these treasures of traditions and records alive for generations to come. Imagine that your grandchildren and great grandchildren will be able to enjoy a glimpse of the Ellis County you knew as a youngster. Even without a traditional museum space at present, work is still being done to care for items and plan for a future BIGGER touring space.

All this takes money. Not only for operating costs of housing the collections but in paying for help to organize and present our history. For several years, the county and city's portion of our budget has been cut. It is more crucial now than ever to have individuals' support through sponsorship donations and memberships.

A number of membership renewals were not sent out during the height of the pandemic but even with those counted ECHS has less than 100 annual members, about 26 annual sponsors and around 40 life members. I know there are more history loving, hometown pride families and businesses in Ellis county who would love to contribute but have not be contacted yet. So we humbly reach out to you.

Will you help get the word out to your family, friends and neighbors that Ellis County Historical Society is an entity that is excited for their support? On the back of every newsletter is a member/ sponsor form.

Please help us grow.



PASSAGES: ECHS members who have passed since the last newsletter.

Marilyn Seibel

They shall be missed.

... continued from front page.

As Paul Harvey used to say “and now you know the rest of the story.”

INTERIM DIRECTOR

Lastly, me, Amanda Rupp, is a name you may remember as I assisted director Donald Westfall from 2012 -2015. Having stepped down from my position after having my first child, I am excited to be back and honored to take on the temporary roll of interim director on a volunteer basis. Adam, Amanda and I (Triple A's) hope is to bring some fresh eyes and new enthusiasm to this organization that has seen some tough years as of late.



What would you like to see
in the newsletter? Email us at
director@echshays.org
and offer a topic idea.

IN OTHER NEWS

The annual meeting was postponed twice but was held in March without snow! And what a showing it was. We had a full room for the meeting which was a wonderful start. The bylaws were changed to include 12 board members instead of only 8. This goes back to the way ECHS was originally functioning and gave the opportunity to include many new and young faces to our board. The new board members are posted on the front page of the newsletter. If you see these folks around town please tell them congratulations and a big thank you for their time and effort going forward.

WE ARE GRATEFUL

A special thank you to those volunteers and board members who have put in EXTRA WORK these past few weeks. Cleaning, dismantling, clerical, and general building maintenance have been on a long list of items “to do” for some time. Holly Unrein, Brad Boyer, Darren Unrein, Brian Gribben, Donna Maskus, Amanda Unrein, Adam Conkey, Amanda Rupp and Derrick Pfannenstiel your efforts have not gone unnoticed!

follow up article in the
Republican; May 9, 1896

Body Identified.

Since printing our report last Saturday of the finding of a headless body of a man northeast of Hays, Sheriff Miller has received a letter from Catherine Aicher of Walker, who claims the body found to be that of John Kraus. Following is the letter:

“John Kraus left us April 6, 1896. He had on a full suit of jeans and clothes; also a checked coat and pants, a suit of cotton flannel underclothes, cotton socks, a pair of congress shoes, one of which had a hole at the toe. He also had an outing flannel shirt on and carried another one with him wherein he had his double gray blanket tied up in. He wore a stiff black hat and had a velvet cap in his coat pocket. He also had a little pocket knife with two blades in his pocket, and had some bread and a quart bottle of water, which he always carried. This is as close a description as I can give of the person leaving us. The pants he had on were patched on the knee and on the seat. He also had six cents of moaeey and some morphine in a small bottle in his pockets.”

The above description seems to tally with the description of the body found. Last September Kraus came to the home of the Aicher family from Denver, Col. He was an uncle to Mrs. Aicher. He looked after the chores about the farm. About New Year's he was taken sick and would often go away and stay five or six days, then come back again. On the 6th day of April he left. After that no one ever saw him until his body was found last Thursday. The body was found about four miles from the Aicher farm. Kraus was about 45 years old. The head has never been found. It is supposed the coyotes have made away with it.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Let's be real. Let's talk about space. Let's talk about treasures tucked away in every nook and cranny. Through the doors of the brick building at the corner of 7th and Main there is so much more than just an exhibit gallery and office space. Over the past 50 years ECHS has collected everything from silver spoons to farm equipment, from wedding dresses to tombstones and everything in between. All precious memories of times gone by, graciously gifted by you, the people of Ellis County. And in those 50 years those items have lovingly been put on display or stored in every available space at our disposal. To say the collections have out grown their space is an understatement. Along with the lack of space a new dilemma has presented itself. Some storage facilities are failing. Water damage and age have put our operations in a bind despite everyone's best efforts.

A semi-condensed overview of our current space:

MAIN BASEMENT houses archives, general office space, cabinets and shelves for storage of artifacts, and a work area for preparing displays and caring for artifacts (this area is taken over with shelves for more collections)

SUB-BASEMENT even further below the main basement are storage rooms full of shelves and drawers keeping artifacts neatly cataloged away. Tightly packed with narrow walk ways. One of these areas was affected by mold from the previous years' water damage, the area is now dry but artifacts will need proper attention and cleaning.

ATTIC EAST AND WEST ROOMS up a narrow stairway above the old main sanctuary are rooms that once held all the clothing collections including the large collection of Wedding Gowns. The plaster has fallen from the south wall of these rooms and is no longer suitable to hold such precious textiles.

THE VAULT a room off the stone church with it's own HVAC system was designated "the vault" for it's priority in keeping the most precious of collections, all the photos and negatives, many 100+ years old. This room is our best storage area, however it is also the smallest.

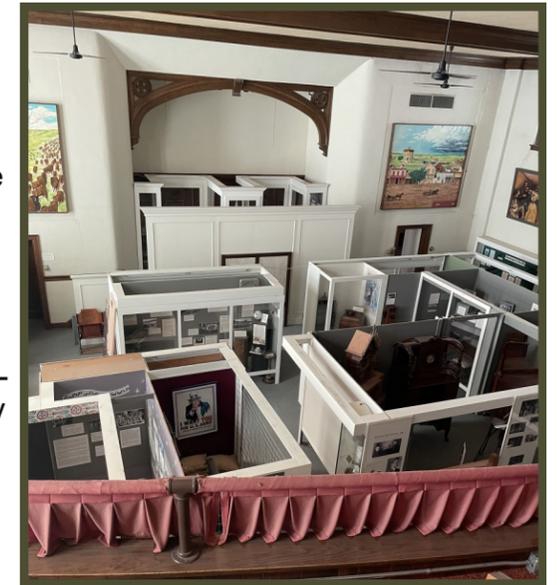
HALLWAYS every hallway and small closet in the building keeps its own hidden treasured artifact collection.

HAYS DAILY NEWS two very large storage units packed to the brim with the larger items of ECHS collections such as furniture and architectural models.



SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

- ⇒ We need to have all the archives in one place. With easy access for those needing research material.
- ⇒ All items, large and small, deserve a safe, dry, and accessible place for holding. Work is being done to dismantle the main gallery and prepare the house at 110 W 7th for use as a large storage space. Transferring every piece to our property.
- ⇒ And speaking of display, where do we display these memories for all the public to view? The current gallery space is not available, because of the cost of bringing the building up to ADA standards is not within our budget or current funding.
- ⇒ Temporarily our offices and about 40% of the archives are located at 1111 E 30th. The two rooms dedicated for our use, in the white dome building, are a gracious collaboration by ECHS and past president Brad Boyer. But they are not large enough for our entire archive materials.
- ⇒ Every last item, paper, and pictures will be logged into our new user friendly database. Each artifact was previously cataloged, years ago, with an accession number and description. Now we will have photos of each treasure to view at the click of a button.



**These are our challenges. We need your help.
We need volunteers, donations and adequate funding
to bring ECHS into the 21st Century.**

TOGETHER let us take pride in keeping Ellis County's history alive. As you follow us in the coming months remember that even though we are unable to offer as many programs during reconstruction — hard work IS being done behind the scenes.



ECHS's top priority at this time is organizing our many precious collections in adequate and correct space. I know as a community we can accomplish that for our children and grandchildren. How long will it take? It all depends on you and funding.

I will sign off with this: Every dollar counts. We will put to good use small, medium, and large donations. First we dream and then we set goals. We are not lacking in vision or elbow grease in Ellis County — our varied and proud history proves what we can accomplish great things — **TOGETHER.**