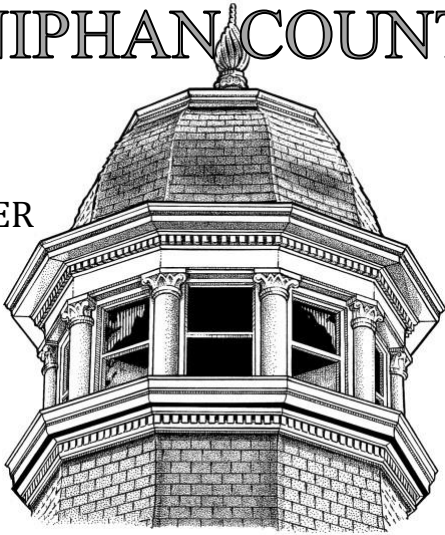


# DONIPHAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER  
2023

Vol. 29  
No. 10



## News Notes

### 2023 OFFICERS

#### PRESIDENT

TODD MILLER

884 240<sup>th</sup> Rd, Highland KS 66035

913-426-1353

toddnelsonmiller@gmail.com

#### VICE PRESIDENT & CO-

#### TREASURER

JASON MIDYETTE

PO Box 197, Bendena, KS 66008

785-988-0796 amjm@indra.com

#### SECRETARY

VICKI JONES

634 Highway, Bendena KS 66008

785-226-3995

vljonesrs@gmail.com

#### CO-TREASURER & NEWSLETTER EDITOR

ANNA MIDYETTE

PO Box 197, Bendena, KS 66008

785-988-0796

annam2807@gmail.com

October 26, 2023 6:00 pm

## Local Legends and Monsters

by Mike Kelley and Lance Foster

Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission at Highland. 1737 Elgin Rd, Highland

Horror stories are a dark reflection of a specific moment in time. Understanding when and where a story is told can give some important insights and context about what the fears and anxieties are for society. In the spirit of Halloween, this presentation by Lance Foster and Mike Kelley will feature stories of monsters and spirits of Ioway legend, along with a discussion of the importance of horror as a historical tool.



*A modern  
depiction of  
Two  
Face/Sharp  
Elbows. Lance  
Foster*

### 2023 BOARD MEMBERS

PETE DUNCAN

785-985-2544

1195 Last Chance Rd, Troy KS 66087

CINDY HOVERSON

913-370-3702

17701 334<sup>TH</sup> Rd Atchison 66002

ROBERT NOURIE

785-985-2382

1501 92<sup>nd</sup> Road Atchison KS 66002

LARRY FAULKNER

816-591-8898

6108 Kentucky Ave, Raytown, MO 64133

CLIFTON ISRAEL

816-262-8824

2208 190<sup>th</sup> Rd Wathena KS 66090

MARVIN SMITH

785-850-0063

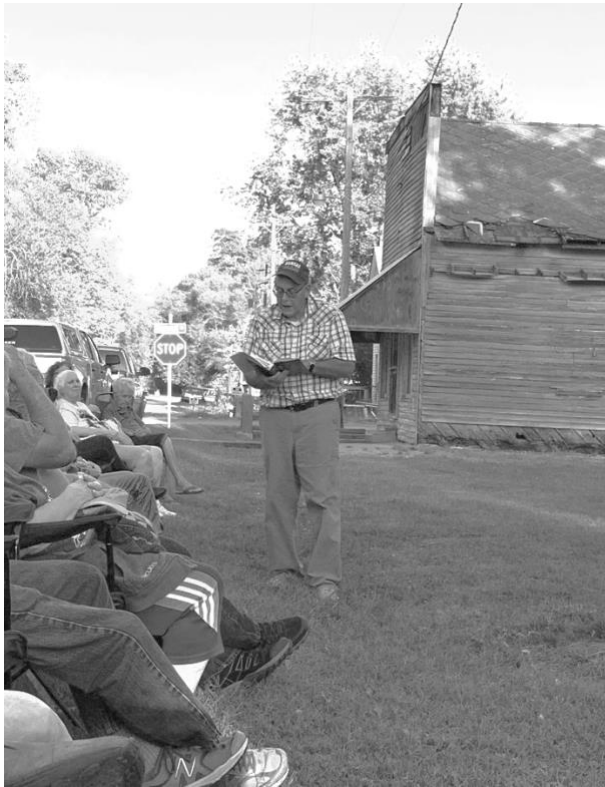
1288 Peck Rd Troy KS 66087

## MEETING MINUTES

September 28, 2023

Approximately 43 members and guests gathered in Sparks for Todd Miller's presentation about roads in Doniphan County. Thank you to Todd Miller for the presentation and Faye Miller for the refreshments.

Since the light was fading, no business meeting was held.



## TREASURER'S REPORT

OCTOBER 14, 2023

SEPT 14 BALANCE	\$38,108.10
INCOME:	
Sept interest	6.10
Dues	10.00
Income total:	\$16.10
EXPENDITURES:	
Expenditures total:	\$0
OCT 14 BALANCE	\$38,124.10
CD #7175	\$6,896.29
CD #6519 (for Save Our Liberty Project)	\$7,702.22

## KANSAS FOLKLORE

Folk tales and folk songs, compounded of dreams, idle imaginings, and wish fulfillment, are usually based on the prosaic doings of men who "earn their living by the sweat of their brow." In Kansas, the first workers were the farmers and the cowboys. Within the short span of three decades, their not-so-heroic figures were draped with a spangled mantle of lore and legend.

The 20th century did not deal kindly with the farmer. His legends became all but obsolete, and the professors at colleges of agriculture pared away his beliefs. Even the farm-bred bards who twanged guitars before radio microphones preferred *I'm Headin' for the Last Roundup to Turkey in the Straw* or *Father Put the Cows Away*. Agronomists showed the absurdity of planting crops by the phases of the moon; meteorologists disproved many hitherto infallible weather omens, and bacteriologists dispelled the hobgoblins who once merrily soured cream and addled eggs. Nature, in short, ceased to be mysterious, and the farmer became more of a workman.

The cowboy, however, became a figure of magnificent proportions. Bowlegged and gaunt, he stood as the apotheosis of manly perfection. Songs, novels, movies, magazines, and operettas made the least inquiring of us well acquainted with his extraordinary courage, unflinching gallantry, and uncanny skill with gun or lariat. The farmer, meanwhile, sat stolidly on his tractor, bereft of romance and adventure.

There was a time when farming in Kansas was not without perils. One story goes that Lem Blanchard went forth one afternoon in mid-July to inspect his cornfield in the Republic Valley. He scaled a young stalk to overlook the forest-like field and saw into the next county from its top. When he turned to descend, he was horrified to find that the stalk was growing upward faster than he could scramble down. For two days, he made back-breaking efforts to reach the ground. At last, to keep him from starving to death, kind neighbors who had tracked him to the foot of the towering stalk shot Lem dead.

Some say that a balloonist rescued Lem but that seems improbable. If Lem had not perished on the cornstalk, surely other of his adventures among the gigantic squash,



*Kansas Farming Mural at the U.S. Courthouse Wichita by Richard Haines 1936*

grazed on the west side. When they returned, they had a child, one-year-old.

The winds that swept across the big farms often reached hurricane velocity. The ducks' feathers were invariably blown onto the chickens, and the chickens' feathers were invariably blown onto the ducks. Frequently, the wind scooped the cellar from beneath the house but left the house intact, hoisted the well from under the pump but left the pump intact, and carried the whole farm away but left the mortgage intact. An inexperienced dog dared to bark at an approaching "twister." The ensuing entry of air turned the animal inside out.

The grasshoppers that ravaged the big farms were as large as mules. Champing huge mandibles and lashing great antennae, the monster insects deliberately bullied the hogs, cows, and sheep. Nothing escaped their voracious appetites. Wagons and well platforms were favored tidbits. Armed with ax handles, buggy whips, and pitchforks, the gargantuan hoppers fought viciously in fence corners for the last ear of corn. After devouring the crops, they would insolently pick their teeth on the barbs of the barbed-wire fence.

The lore manufacturers of the cattle trails scorned to imitate the extravagances born of the farmers' hopes and fears about mysterious Nature. The cowboy was a man in full, a rootin' tootin' son-of-a-gun, tougher than the leather of his saddle. Had he met a "big wind," he would have galloped dead against it; had he encountered a giant grasshopper, he would have peppered the insect with his six-shooter. Indeed, the ordinary activities of the cowboy out-fictioned the farmers' folk fiction. The puncher rode hard, shot fast, drank copiously, and, as verified by subsequent exhumations, often died with his boots on. In his midst moved Bat Masterson, "Wild Bill Hickok, Doc Holliday, Big Nose Kate, and other interesting people.

On arriving at Newton, Wichita, Abilene, and other Kansas cowtowns, the pleasure-starved cowpunchers engaged in mad bouts of drinking, gambling, and dancehall cavorting. Sometimes, they "painted the town red" by galloping through the streets and firing their "shooting irons" into the air.

The cowboy's speech was crisp and pungent. The farmer was a "nester" or "drylander" and an inquisitive person, an "eyeballer." Courting was termed "sittin' her," traveling by a circuitous route was known as "anti-godlin," and to make your best effort was "to cut a rusty." The phrase "wild and woolly" is said to have originated in Dodge City, where the stock answer to a query about one's past was: "I came up the Chisholm Trail with the buffalo wild and woolly."

Each cowtown had its badmen who, if court records are reliable, were mighty, mighty bad. When badman Jack Coulter was killed at Coronado in 1887, his trigger finger

is said to have jerked desperately for a half-hour after he died. The badmen had a sadistic sense of humor.

The hardboiled, devil-may-care attitude of the cowboy shielded a shy, brooding nature. His fatalistic philosophy was often a social pose that he upheld publicly but disavowed in private. The cowboy was deeply concerned with an untimely end, whether it found him booted or abed, strongly indicated by his songs and ballads. Sam Bass, Mustang Gray, The Cowboy's Dream, and The Dying Cowboy evidence a preoccupation with death, which is at direct odds with the generally accepted picture of a swashbuckling puncher with two guns on his hip and an "itching trigger finger."

Cowboy sports and customs were frequently revived in Kansas by "Cowboy Rodeo" and "Frontier Day" celebrations. Pioneer times were regularly recalled at various old settlers gatherings held annually throughout the State. Spelling bees, bean suppers, oyster suppers, box socials, amateur minstrels, and similar old-fashioned amusements are occasionally revived as novelties by clubs and church societies.

The Kansas reservoir of superstitions was fed by streams from the general pool of American taboos and beliefs. A small percentage of the population believed that a tipped new moon presages frost, that surface crops should be planted in the light of the moon and underground crops in the dark of the moon, and that bad luck follows spilled salt or a broken mirror. That misfortune could be warded off by knocking on wood. Beliefs prevalent among Kansas children included "stamping a white horse," the ubiquitous "bread and butter" incantation used in passing on opposite sides of a post, and the performance of "thumbs" when two persons say the same word simultaneously.

Many still believed that if the church bell gave an after toll, a member of the congregation would soon die, that bad luck would come if a broom struck someone, and that a sleeping person would tell his dreams if his hand was placed in cold water. The last was said to have been a fundamental and useful tenet in the credo of wives.

In the early 20th century, the imaginations of rural Kansans were relatively lax in populating empty houses and lonely lanes with "haunts" and creatures of the underworld. Several such manifestations were reported periodically. Greeley County has its Ghost of White Woman Creek, a white-clad shade who, according to legend, drowned herself in the creek when she found her lover lying dead on its bank. A "giant panther" was said to inhabit the farming district along a draw northwest of Norton. Tales of the beast's fiery eyes and hideous screeching were intermittently revived. Since the 1890s, residents of Wallace County reported seeing a strange light bob across the countryside. Some asserted that the light was the ghost of a man murdered, but the more literal-minded explained the phenomenon as a

phosphorescent glow arising from decaying bones on the prairie.

Compiled and edited by Kathy Alexander/Legends of Kansas, updated September 2023.

About the Article: Most of the historical text in this article comes from *Kansas, A Guide to the Sunflower State*,

written by authors working for the Federal Writer's Project, Viking Press, New York, 1939. However, other sources have also been used, the content combined, and heavy editing has occurred, resulting in much change from the original.



*Doniphan County, Kansas 1882 Plat Book*

## 2023 MEETINGS

*All meetings at 6:00 unless otherwise noted.*

***Presenters/topics/locations subject to change.***

**October 26** *Local Legends and Monsters* by Mike Kelley and Lance Foster. Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission at Highland. 1737 Elgin Rd, Highland. Refreshments Sharon and JR Peuker.

**November 23** Program by Jason Midyette.

**December 1** Annual soup dinner at the Tenant Baker House in Troy.

**Christmas party** at Star 36 Diner in Wathena. Date to be decided.

**Please continue to support your Doniphan County Historical Society. Your membership is greatly appreciated. Please consider receiving this newsletter by email to keep our mailing costs low.**

### **DONIPHAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Detach and mail with payment to: Anna Midyette, PO Box 197, Bendena, KS 66008

All Memberships are \$10.00. This is a:  Renewal Membership  New Membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please send newsletter by email. Email address: \_\_\_\_\_