

# Local residents give accounts of Dirty Thirties

By Amanda Miller  
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Several local people from St. Francis made an appearance in a book about sod houses and the "dirty thirties."

"Sod Houses and The Dirty Thirties, Tales from the Good Old Days in Northwest and North Central Kansas" is a book compiled and edited by Todd Blair and Karen Garvey that holds written accounts from the "dirty thirties."

Each person gave their account of the most memorable moments from that era. The stories in the book vary from how World War II affected them, to simply their favorite memories about St. Francis.

Ruth Anne Yonkey of St. Francis was born in 1942. In the book, she says, "When we got to go to St. Francis, we sometimes would get an ice cream cone while buying groceries. Sometimes we got a bottle of pop. The flavors we picked from were orange, grape, lime or strawberry. Strawberry was our favorite."

Ruth Anne talks about how, when she got her homework done in time, she got to listen to

the radio or play checkers, Chinese checkers, or rook.

"The only state I have ever lived in is Kansas. It seems to me that living in a smaller community, people are friendly, and when someone needs help, they will help one another out."

Bonnie Jean Cram of St. Francis wrote about rationing during World War II.

"As I experienced the graduation of 2008, I remembered my own ceremony in 1944. World War II was the central focus of our lives, as the men and boys were being drafted to serve in the armed forces."

Bonnie says she could not go to college because the government did not finance the education of anyone, unless they were studying to be a nurse, because they were in shortage. She worked as a clerk in the office of Price Administration, which was in charge of rationing products. There were committees that decided who got which rationed items, such as tires or gasoline.

"The draft committee was the most hated group, because each month the county had to provide a certain number of men to fill the requirement designated for

## Did you or a member of your family live then?

The town of St. Francis has a rich history. Many people will read the stories from "Sod Houses and The Dirty Thirties" and have their own story to tell.

During the early twentieth century, life was very different. The Great Depression and World War II dominated most American's and Kansan's minds. Life was hard. There was no television, although many

homes had a radio they listened to in the evenings. Outhouses, party line phones, and countless other experiences unknown to many today defined life during that time.

We encourage anyone who remembers what life was like in the earlier years, especially any person that lived in a sod house, to contact The Herald so we can tell your story!

the county. These people had to decide whose son, or husband, or father would be chosen to go into the service."

"Everyday, news would be on the street of one of our home town boys being injured or killed, so tensions were great. I remember thinking that when the war ended, we would all be sublimely happy for the rest of our days. No one would complain again about anything if we got our boys back home, and

could live peacefully. Have we forgotten?"

Marie Holzwarth of St. Francis was born in 1930. She talks about life during the schoolhouse years.

Marie says, "From the time I could understand what the white building down the hill from our house was, I knew I wanted to go there. Our school was one room and a lean to, where we hung our coats, our dinner pails were put on a shelf, and fuel for the heat-

ing stove was stored."

Later, she went on to say, "Opening exercises consisted of the flag salute, roll call, and health inspection, which was when we were checked for clean hands and a hanky, no Kleenex."

Marie speaks fondly of passing finals after eighth grade, and getting to go to her first beauty shop for graduation.

"Many years ago, the powers that be decided to close the one-room schoolhouses and consolidate them with the town school. This ended an era; the schools had served their purpose and now are only a memory to all the people who attended them."

Linda Palmer Hilt of St. Francis was born in 1936. Her fondest memories are about learning to swim in Lake Atwood.

"The lessons were given by a husband-wife team."

She says once she mastered her stroke, they advanced to swimming out to the buoy.

"At the end of the season, swimmers who had advanced, the goal was to swim across the lake. The instructor followed in a rowboat to rescue a swimmer who could not make it to the other side of the lake. I remem-

ber vividly the pride I felt when I completed the Red Cross swimming lessons."

Bonnie L. Jones of St. Francis, born in 1934, talked about the blizzards and how cold it could get.

"We lived in the new shop Dad had built. A pot-bellied stove heated it, and we used an outhouse north of the granaries... the snow got deep."

She goes on to say that officials had called her dad to check on U.S. Highway 36, because a bus was stuck. It took him two hours to get the tractor started, and after crossing two roads and realizing he was two plus miles away, he finally turned around and went home.

"Neighbors east of us took in the passengers. It was weeks before the highway crew got the cuts opened at 36."

Each story is a picture into the history of St. Francis and Cheyenne county and the people that lived here during that time. There are also stories from Goodland, Atwood, and many other towns throughout Kansas.

To purchase Hometown Memories' "Sod Houses and The Dirty Thirties", please call 1-877-491-8802.

## Expo returns to Red Willow County

The McCook Farm and Ranch Expo is returning to the Red Willow County Fairgrounds on Wednesday and Thursday, Nov. 20-21. The show opens at 9 a.m. both days and closes at 7 p.m. the first day and 4 p.m. the second. Admission and parking are free.

To kick things off, there will be a free producer's breakfast at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday in the Community Building.

"It's a great place to come see the newest and latest in farming and ranching practices and technology," said Darren Dale, owner. "We are expecting 350 vendors from 20 states, Canada and Australia."

Exhibitors include displays for farm and ranch equipment, seed and chemicals, agricultural services, irrigation manufacturers, financial providers, commodity organizations, colleges, governmental services, home services, furniture and art galleries and much, much more.

Coming back to the Expo will be the working ranch horse sale at 6 p.m. on Wednesday. The sale will show case the best performance horses for sale in the tri-state area that will be sold to the highest bidder.

Also, back at the Expo by popular demand will be the FFA auction. Immediately following the horse sale many local FFA chapters made a project that will be auctioned off with all proceeds going back to that chapter. If your local FFA chapter would like to participate, Mr. Dale said, please give us a call.

Group seminars both days, sponsored by Plains Equipment Group, will be held at 10 a.m.— Dave Meissner, ISG Consultant, Plains Equipment Group will present John Deere Ag Technology and Field Connect. You can learn about the new ag technology products from John Deere for 2014 and take an in-depth look at the

Field Connect Water Management product and the benefits it provides to producers.

Then at 2 p.m.— Mike Peterson, Precision Tillage Agronomist, Orthman Manufacturing and Plains Equipment Group will present Three Principles of Precision Tillage. Learn about the benefits of strip tillage and the research behind it.

### Horse training

Scott Daily Horse Training will be displayed this year at the expo. Scott has been featured on RFD-TV. He will be show casing his low-stress horse training techniques both days at the expo. Scott has been around horses most of his life. His love for horses and desire to train them began in 4-H while he was growing up in Inola, Okla. He started training horses about 15 years ago. After many years of working with challenging colts and horses, Scott has developed and perfected his own techniques. He believes in building trust between horse and rider. The training is sponsored by Ag Masters Marketing Group and McCook National Bank.

### For more information

McCook is in the center of rich farmland and cattle feedlots in southwest Nebraska and northwest Kansas.

"Our parking lot counts from last year showed vehicles from 37 Nebraska counties, 20 Kansas counties, 13 Colorado counties and 10 other states," Dale said.

The Red Willow County fairgrounds are in north central McCook, near West Fifth and O Streets. For more information, contact Darren or Tana Dale at 866-685-0989 or "mailto:info@starexpos.net" info@starexpos.net or go online to www.starexpos.net.



THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION met to discuss Kansas Day and other items

Herald Staff photo by Norma Martinez

## Historical Association holds meeting

### Kansas Day discussed

Last Thursday the Historical Association conducted their first meeting since July.

They now have the Genealogy, History and Topology of the Bird City News from 1880 – 1896 on CD disc thanks to Wanda Dowdy.

The history of Banking Institutions in Bird City from 1885 – 2002 has been completed and the group put ten copies together for sale to those who are interested in

purchasing a copy. The library has a copy if you wish to look at them.

Due to the illness of Dorthy Mast the Stewards of the Land articles have been tabled for now.

Those who researched and wrote portions of The Mystery of The Past, IV Volumes, have been asked to read them at the Rough Writers Read in January.

The first planning meeting for the 2014 Kansas Day was held in the Bird City Historical Association room, in the Robertson-Griffin-Bacon Memorial Building on Friday, Nov. 8. Those present were Rod Klepper Sally Wieck, Rosemary Powell, Helene Landenberger, Marsha Magley, and Shirley Watson.

The American Legion Hall

has been reserved for Jan. 29. The theme for Kansas Day will be "Homestead Heritage". The Lutheran Ladies will be in charge of the kitchen, and the Wesleyan Ladies are in charge of the decorations. More will be announced about the guest speaker and other items as the agenda as plans are finalized.



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