



Kansas Day festivities set for Wednesday

By Marsha Magley

The 85th annual Kansas Day celebration in Bird City is set for Wednesday, Jan. 29, at the American Legion hall. There will be a potluck lunch at noon with the program starting at 1 p.m. The theme is "Homestead Heritage." Guest speaker will be Tina Miller (see related article elsewhere in this issue).

The following is a homestead heritage story with excerpts from "Dust On The Sunflowers," (1983).

Into this cheerless, treeless, forbidding land came the new settlers, many fresh from German and the Scandinavian countries, others from the already crowded midwest, all seeking free land. The answer to a lifelong dream.

They were not conscious of their status as pawns in the changing annals of the West, from the wild, scalp-raising, nomadic Indian tribes, to a stationary taxpaying, law-abiding, citizenry. They sought nothing more than sufficient land to make an honest living, raise their families and enjoy freedom from arbitrary regulation. To this, they were willing to labor, long and hard, from sun to sun, with extra time donated to take care of the multitudinous chores that are an inherent part of mixed farming, such as, a few cows to milk, hogs to feed, chickens to attend, horses to care for, some calves to see to, a vegetable garden to weed and water. All this, in addition to a 12-hour day in the field, planting, cultivating, harvesting, threshing and storing.

Friend wife also had a few back-breaking jobs. Up before dawn, getting breakfast, washing dishes,

preparing vegetables from the garden, gathering eggs, skimming cream off the milk in crocks, churning butter, sewing most of the family's clothing, cooking three hearty meals, mending, patching, darning and doing the family wash on a washboard set in a sudsy tub and later ironing with an old-fashioned flatiron, heated on the kitchen stove.

The most harassing duty was the training, restraining and entertaining of her growing children. At times, she might feel like including, "Braining," to the above list. But, at night when she made her final check on her brood, noted their innocent red-cheeked faces, their grotesque body postures, with out-flung arms and legs, a feeling of sweet contentment crept over her, and she knew she would not willingly have exchanged places with Lily Langtry as she accepted a goblet of champagne from the hand of the Prince of Wales.

A bone-chilling north wind of late April, passed over the plains of the Dakotas and across the sandhills of western Nebraska, to screech an eerie wail around the corner of a sod house in northwestern (Cheyenne County) Kansas. It had blown in blustering gusts for three days and nights without ceasing. Inside the farmhouse, a 37-year-old woman tossed and moaned on the wooden bed, gritting her teeth during the agonizing spasms of imminent childbirth.

She was alone in the room, having banished her 12-year-old eldest daughter, together with the four younger children into

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THE COUNTY'S CRANE was evident last week as it lifted the new heating and air conditioning unit to the top of St. Francis Super's and lowered the old one. Getting it set and ready to hook up are Ed Marin and Terrence Lamb with Heartland HVAC, St. Francis.

Herald staff photo by Tim Burr

County declared national disaster

Kansas Sens. Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran announced the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has designated 37 Kansas counties, including Cheyenne County, to be in a natural disaster area due to the severe ongoing drought.

The department designated Thomas, Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Logan, Rawlins, Sheridan, Sherman and Wallace counties, and Clark, Comanche, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Lane, Meade, Morton, Ness, Norton, Pawnee, Phillips, Rooks, Rush, Scott, Seward, Stanton, Stevens, Trego, and Wichita, as disaster counties.

"Kansas continues to face one of the worst droughts since the Dust Bowl," said Roberts. "The lack of rainfall has had a devastating impact on our crops,

and our ranchers are facing severe hardship due to a lack of feed caused by the drought."

"In spite of the exceedingly dry conditions," Moran said, "this designation will mitigate the drought's effects and enable farmers and ranchers to continue their agricultural operations."

Farmers and ranchers in eight counties also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous: Barber, Barton, Edwards, Kiowa, Osborne, Russell, Smith and Stafford.

All listed counties will now be eligible for disaster programs, such as the emergency loan program administered by the Farm Service Agency.

Affected farmers should contact their county office or go to www.fsa.usda.gov/ks.



WIND, SOME GUSTS over 60 miles per hour, piled up tumbleweeds along fences, tree lines and buildings. Blowing dirt and wind were also responsible for accidents and several deaths in Thomas County.

Herald staff photo by Tim Burr

Park ranger to speak to Kansas Day crowd

Tina Miller will be the speaker for the Bird City Kansas Day festivities held at the Legion hall on Wednesday, Jan. 29.

Ms. Miller is a park ranger and Homestead National Monument of America's Education coordinator who specializes in distance learning and the use of technology for teaching and learning, especially in social studies. She has written numerous curriculum units, conducted various teacher workshops and presented at several conferences.

She holds a master's in management from Doane College in Crete, Neb., and a bachelor's degree in information technology from the University of Texas-Arlington.

She said she likens herself to Forrest Gump, going where the wind blows her. She honorably served in the United States



Tina Miller

Marine Corps for 10 years. She has worked in professional sports as the director of Promotions and Game Entertainment for the Dallas Stars Hockey Club. She has also worked in politics in the Nebraska Attorney General's office and as an event planner for Dave and Buster's.

High winds and blowing dirt cause accidents, fire in northwest Kansas

By Amanda Miller, Sam Dieter, Heather Alwin, Kevin Bottrell
The Saint Francis Herald

Northwest Kansas was hit with high winds and dry conditions last week, fueling a massive dust storm. Highways were shut down as motorists were left with zero visibility. After the dust settled, many traffic accidents and some fatalities were reported.

On Thursday, High Wind and Red Flag warnings went out, meaning that dry conditions and wind would increase fire danger. According to the official weather station in Goodland, wind gusts were recorded at 64 mph. The highest average wind speed over two minutes was 48 mph. The

weather observer in St. Francis recorded winds of 40 mph, with gusts at 53 mph.

As winds whipped up to 64 mph, accidents were reported west of St. Francis, on I-70 and elsewhere across northwest Kansas.

The Department of Transportation was forced to close many roads across the area on Jan. 16. Interstate 70 from Colby to Burlington, Colo., K-27 from Goodland to Wheeler and U.S. 36 from Atwood to Colorado were all shut down for a period of time. The transportation department cited high winds and poor visibility as the reason.

The first accident was reported on U.S. 36, shortly before that

highway was shut down. An empty cattle truck rolled over about eight miles west of St. Francis. The Cheyenne County sheriff's office first reported the rollover at 1:31 p.m. The truck was partially blocking the road until it was removed a couple hours later.

Later, a UPS truck caught fire on County Road 80 between roads 33 and 34, on the border between Cheyenne and Sherman Counties. The Cheyenne County Fire Department was the first to arrive on the scene. The fire bled into a patch of thistles or tumbleweeds, and the high winds pushed it into pasture ground, endangering some nearby cattle.

the fire out when Sherman Rural and Brewster firefighters arrived to provide support and mop up hot spots. It was estimated that the fire burned 30 to 40 acres.

Fired firefighters and first responders had difficulty getting to the fire because of its remote location and the lowered visibility due to blowing dust.

Emergency services from Cheyenne County and surrounding counties worked hard to keep everyone safe during the high wind and reduced visibility.

Other accidents were reported across northwest Kansas as blowing dust reduced visibility.

Five cars and six trucks piled up

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