

Forester measures county's big tree

By Karen Krien

It was big but not the biggest in Kansas.

On Tuesday, Jim Strine, district forester with Kansas State University, Tye Faulkender, Cheyenne County Extension Director, and Tobe Zwegardt, county historian, measured one of the larger trees in Kansas and most likely, the biggest tree in Cheyenne County. They traveled 4 miles west of St. Francis on U.S. 36 and 1 mile north, and then down a narrow trail to the Cherry Creek where a giant tree was growing along the bank.

Forester Strine and Director Faulkender measured the base of the eastern cottonwood tree and found it to be 23 feet, 11 inches. The crown spread was 104 feet and it was 62 feet tall. Each tree is classified by "points" and the Cheyenne County tree totaled 375 points.

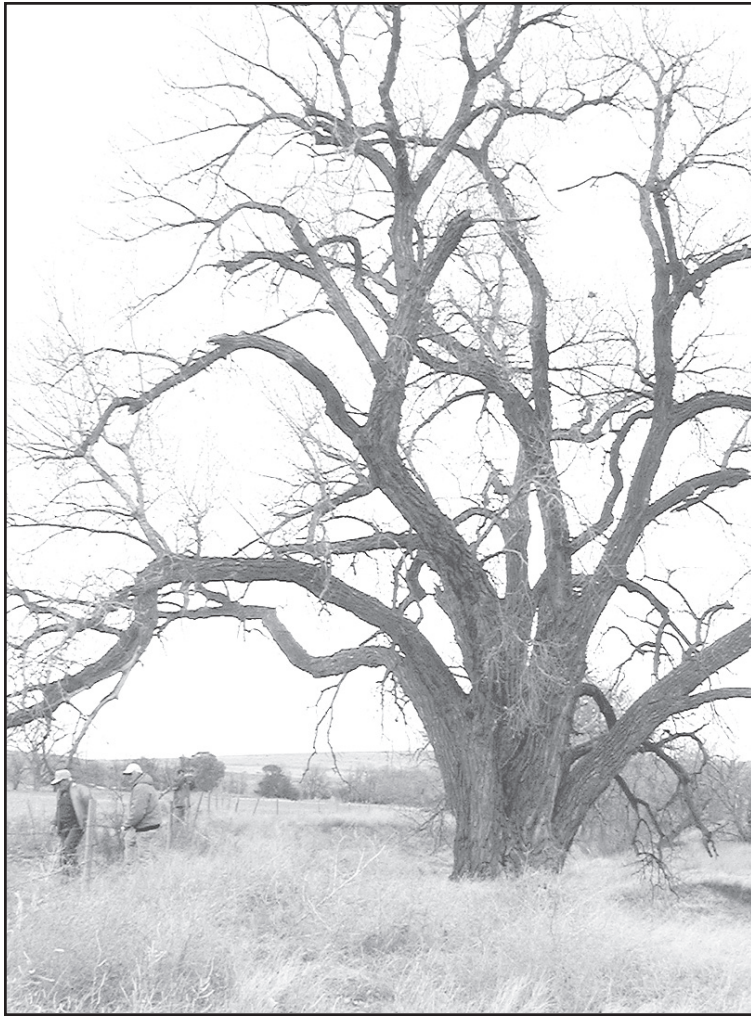
The largest eastern cottonwood tree in Kansas is located in Sheridan County near Studley. It is 32 feet, 7 inches around and was 82 feet tall with a crown spread of 123 feet. The Sheridan County tree had 504 points.

Mr. Zwegardt and his son Marv had measured the tree last fall and then notified the Extension office.

He said the tree had to be at least 100 years old. As a boy and young man, he had hunted and fished the creek and remembered the tree. He also pointed to a wall of giant rocks, some which had fallen to the bottom.

"When I was a boy, those rocks were at the top and now, through the years, they have rolled down to the bottom," he said.

"Large trees have a certain mystique. How old are they? What



OBSERVING THE MEASURING were Tobe Zwegardt, left, and Billy Krien.

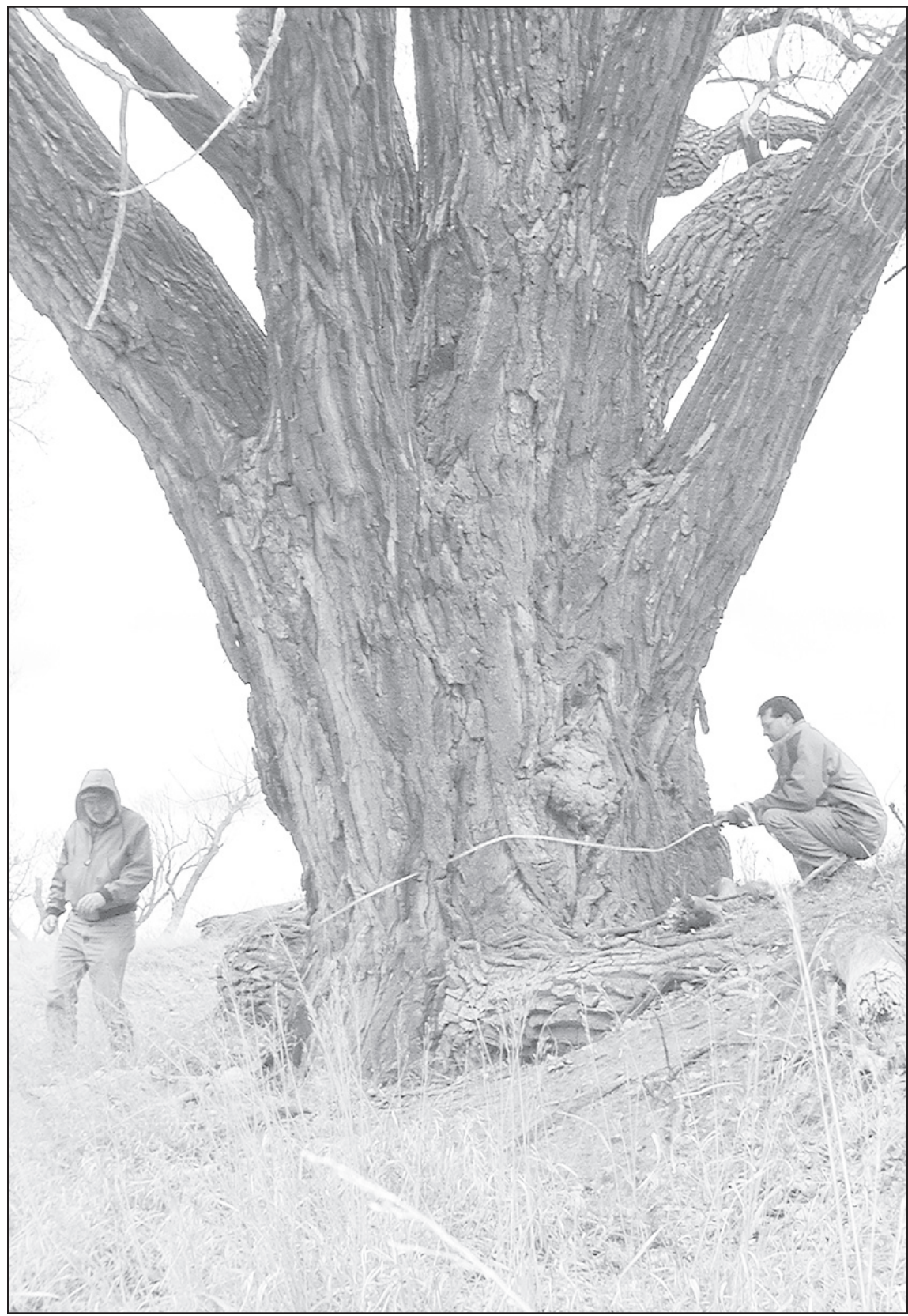
sights and sounds have they witnessed?" said Forester Strine.

Often large trees were guide posts to the early settlers. Maybe the Cherry Creek cottonwood was one of those markers.

There is now a listing of Kansas Champion Trees. Forester Strine asks if people know of a tree

which has a very large base, they should report it.

"Your help is needed to locate and document outstanding trees," he said. Additional information may be received by contacting the forester at 785-625-3425 or e-mail: jstrine@oznet.ksu.edu or http://www.kansasforests.org.



EASTERN COTTONWOOD TREE measured almost 24 feet around at the bottom. It was not the largest tree of this type in Kansas but it is still a mighty big tree. Herald staff photo by Karen Krien

Sainty man receives counterfeit money orders

By Karen Krien

A St. Francis man came to the St. Francis Post Office on Monday with four \$900 money orders from Nigeria and suspected a problem. Penny Sheldon, postmaster, immediately spotted them as being counterfeit.

Bud Erskin, St. Francis businessman, said he had been talking to a woman on the internet about once a month and recently she has been talking to him more often.

"She asked me if I had gotten her money yet?" Mr. Erskin said. "I asked her 'what money?'"

"I tried to get her to tell me who her contact was in Denver and I would personally call the person — she never would give the number."

Postmaster Sheldon said her supervisor had alerted her and other postmasters of counterfeit money orders but she had not

expected to see any in St. Francis.

"It appears that this is just one of the ongoing money laundering systems coming out of Nigeria," she said.

The money orders had been sent in a plain white envelope with a Denver postmark. The money orders were supposedly from

Alabama. There was no letter or note in the envelope and the checks were wrapped in carbon paper.

Postmaster Sheldon bought two \$1 cashier checks and took them to the banks in St. Francis so they would have the real money. See COUNTERFEIT on Page 8A

School funding is main concern

By Karen Krien

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier and Rep. John Faber were in St. Francis at the Dusty Farmer Restaurant early Saturday morning where the main topic of interest was what Legislators were going to do about school finance. Among some of the other topics was the cutting of Medicaid and grant funds.

The overall feeling at the end of the meeting was if schools were going to get very much more money, there would probably be a tax increase.

Sen. Ostmeier said he had always made school funding a priority, and, while Legislators are working toward a plan that would fund schools for three years, he didn't see how it could be done unless the economy would make a big turnaround or taxes were increased.

Johnson County, one of the most powerful districts, wants to raise all of the money it can from the local option budgets which are raised with local property taxes.

Carl Werner, St. Francis Schools superintendent, said his district is using only about two-thirds of the allowed local option budget.

"Most schools in northwest Kansas are using just what is needed (out of the local option budget allowance)," Superintendent Werner said.

It was noted that rural, poor districts are having a hard time making



REP. JOHN FABER AND SEN. RALPH OSTMEYER, right, were in St. Francis to conduct a town meeting on Saturday. They explained some of the bills coming up in the Legislature and answered questions.

Herald staff photo by Karen Krien

it without raising more taxes and can't get enough money out of local option budgets.

Rep. Faber warned that if Johnson County doesn't get what it wants, they might join Democrats to pass a tax increase.

Sen. Ostmeier said that to get a finance bill passed, the Legislature will have to increase the amount districts can collect from local option budgets. However, to get money in the base for small schools, rural lawmakers will probably have to compromise and give Johnson County what it wants.

He also said if the Legislator from Johnson County doesn't get what it wants, it will never vote to raise the base amount that districts get per pupil.

The Senate plan would raise the per pupil base in the St. Francis schools \$204 per student and, in the Cheylin Schools, it would be a raise of \$263 per student.

Superintendent Werner said that the St. Francis schools had lost \$420,000 in two years and could see that the amount would be down another \$92,000 next year.

"It has been a stressful, tearfilled

gnashing of teeth in our schools in the past two years," Superintendent Werner said.

"Whatever you cut, it is emotional," Sen. Ostmeier said. The senator also stressed that he does not support consolidation because, once the school is gone, the town tends to die.

Paul Rainbolt, Good Samaritan Village administrator, asked why there were Medicaid cuts? He briefly talked about the PACE? (Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) program, a program that See SCHOOL on Page 8A

Board lining up fair entertainment

By Leslie Hilt

The Cheyenne County Fair, set for the first week of August, may seem like months away but the Fair Board members have been lining up entertainment since the 2004 fair ended.

Thursday night fair entertainment will be the Street Side Band. The contract is here and John Finley said it needed signed and sent back.

The board had also been approached about possibly having a motorcross race on Friday night during the fair. The motorcross would get the entry money and the fair board would get the money for the admissions at the grandstand. This entertainment was tabled until the board could get more information and see if some of the members of the motorcross could come to the next meeting to answer questions.

Projects

The remodeling on the fair building is still going on with Thursdays being the designated work night.

Another project which the board is working on is negotiating with Butch Ewing to trade 16.5 feet along the road going down and around the livestock barn. They would give Mr. Ewing land behind the horse barn to the railroad tracks. The members discussed the fact that once the posts were pulled, they would probably not be able to reuse them. Jared Douthit offered to donate a bundle of new creosote post to be used. The members would help set the fence back the 16.5 feet.

The matter of the fence was tabled until the board could visit with Mr. Ewing and see if this would work for him. The members felt that moving See FAIR on Page 8A

Registration books to close March 21

Those wanting to register to vote or change their party affiliations have until March 21 when the books will close at the end of regular business hours. Those wanting to register will need to come to the courthouse or the city clerk's office in St. Francis or First National Bank in Bird City.

"The books will remain close until April 6, the day after the general election," said Terry Miller, election officer.

To register, the person must be a

citizen of the United States and at least 18 years of age at the next election. When the person has registered, his or her registration will be valid until the voter changes their name by marriage, divorce or legal proceedings or if they move to a different address.

A person can apply to register in person or by mail to the election officer. Application forms will be provided but the applications will need to be signed by the applicant under penalty of perjury.

COUNTERFEIT

Continued from Page 1A

orders to compare with the counterfeit money orders, if one or more would happen to come through.

She said there are two ways to identify whether a money order is genuine.

She held the counterfeit and real money orders up to the light and on the left is a watermark and, if it is the real thing, there is a picture of Benjamin Franklin. The counterfeit money order watermark had a blurred image of a man which could have been Benjamin Franklin.

To the right of the watermark is a line which runs down through the money order. It should read USPS in tiny letters and is slightly raised which can be felt by running the finger across it. The letters on the counterfeit money order could not be seen and it was smooth to the touch.

A similar case happened in Colby several weeks ago when a man tried to cash four money orders for \$950 each. Brenda Wagner at Peoples State Bank thought something "just wasn't right."

According to the Colby Free Press, the man had been in a MSN Hotmail chat room with someone who wanted to know how to get money for an airline ticket to the United States. The woman on the Internet told the man she'd send him four money orders to cash and he was to send the money to two different addresses.

Colby Postmaster Kenton Krehbiel cautioned the public to be aware of the severity of trying to cash such fraudulent money orders. He said if a person uses the United States Postal Service for such transactions it's considered mail fraud, which is a federal crime.

He said should one of the fraudulent money orders be cashed, it would be returned to the institution which cashed it and the customer would be responsible for returning the money.

When carriers such as FedEx or United Parcel Service are used for sending fraudulent money orders; it does not come under federal post office laws.

Postmaster Sheldon contacted the local law enforcement about the counterfeit money orders as well as informing the United States Postal Service. She said postal inspectors will try and track down the person who sent the money orders to the United States.

Postmaster Krehbiel said people involved in the Nigerian Scam are hard to catch, and encourages people not to become involved with anyone wanting them to cash money orders in the United States for them.

Mr. Erskin has also received cashier checks from Nigeria.

"I took them to the bank and told them they could call the 800 number to see if they were any good," he said.

"The numbers immediately switched to a 900 number."

He went on to explain that 900 numbers are overseas numbers and there is no limit as to what the caller might be charged for.

Troy Gardner, Cheyenne County Sheriff, advises anyone receiving checks, money orders or other questionable items in the mail should contact the sheriff's office. That number is 785-332-8880.

Book review from St. Francis Library

The Fifteen Streets

By Catherine Cookson

Catherine Cookson was one of the world's most beloved writers. Her books have sold millions of copies, and her characters and their stories have captured the imaginations of readers around the globe. Now, available for the first time in this country, comes one of Cookson's earliest and most stirring historical romances: *The Fifteen Streets*.

John O'Brien lives in a world where surviving is a continued struggle. He works long hours at the

docks to help support his parents' large family. Many other families in the Fifteen Streets have already given up and descended into a dismal state of grinding poverty, but the O'Briens continue to strive for a world they are only rarely allowed to glimpse.

Then John O'Brien meets Mary Llewellyn, a beautiful young teacher who belongs to that other world. What begins as a casual conversation over tea, blossoms into a rare love that should have been perfect. Fate steps in, however, when John is accused of fathering the child of a local girl, and Mary's parents forbid her to see him. The couple begins to realize that the

gulf of the Fifteen Streets between them is a chasm they could never bridge - or might they still find a way.

In these pages Catherine Cookson displays the irresistible plotting, scene-setting, and characterization that have made her a recognized master of historical and romance fiction. Fans of her novels, with their larger themes of romantic love and class conflict, will be delighted to find that even at the beginning of her illustrious career, Cookson had the power to captivate audiences. Filled with passion and compelling drama, *The Fifteen Streets* is a rare treat for lovers of romantic fiction.

FAIR

Continued from Page 1A

and installing the fence would be well worth it just for the extra land around the corner of the livestock barn. It was noted that this area is dangerous.

It had been suggested to blow insulation above the ceiling in the fair building. The board had Harold Tygart bid this project. The bid was turned in at \$3,732. The board felt that there was no way that they could afford this project.

In other business

In other business:
• A thank you was read from Scott and Nancy Schultz for purchasing the carpet at Schultz's.

• It was voted on to charge a flat fee of \$150 for the rent of the fair

building. There will no longer be a non-profit fee.

• The Livestock Spring Show will be held May 28 at the fairgrounds.

• Several people have complained that when they are using the blowers to groom their animals that they are blowing breakers. It doesn't seem to matter whether they are behind the barn or along the rail in front of the barn. The members agreed to have electrician Sam Miller, St. Francis, check it out and see what needs to be done.

Next meeting

The fair board meetings are held at 7 p.m. the first Thursday of each month in the commissioners' room in the courthouse. The meetings are open to the public.

Personal Property AUCTION

Saturday, March 19, 2005 • 10:30 a.m. CT
LOCATION: Cheyenne County Fairgrounds Building • St. Francis, KS

- VEHICLES → FURNITURE
- APPLIANCES → GLASSWARE
- HOUSEHOLD → KITCHEN

AUCTIONEER'S NOTE: Margaret did very ornate and detailed paintings and decorative pieces. Most all items are signed by her. There are many more items, too numerous to mention. Plan to attend this very well kept, extremely clean auction.

SELLER: The Late Margaret Stasser

Sale conducted by:

EWING AUCTION SERVICE

TERMS: Cash or your good check day of sale. Not responsible for theft or accident. Announcements day of sale take precedence over printed material. Lunch will be served.

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St. Francis, KS
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SELLERS: Estates of Joe C. & Raymond Wahrman, Ken Eland & Lindon Montgomery, Executors

This land will sell at ABSOLUTE AUCTION in the following tracts and combinations:

- | | |
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| RAWLINS COUNTY, KS | RED WILLOW COUNTY, NE |
| TRACT 4: NE/4 of 14-2-32 | TRACT 1: E/2 of 30-1-29 |
| TRACT 5: SW/4 of 5-2-31 & E/2SE/4 of 6-2-31 | TRACT 2: W/2 of 30-1-29 |
| TRACT 6: SE/4 of 31-1-31 & SW/4 of 32-1-31 | TRACT 3: NW/4 of 31-1-29 w/farmstead |
| TRACT 7: SW/4 of 16-1-31 | CHEYENNE COUNTY, KS |
| TRACT 8: SW/4 of 25-1-32 | TRACT 16: NW/4 of 24-4-39 |
| TRACT 9: Oil Well on SW/4 of 25-1-32 | SHERMAN COUNTY, KS |
| TRACT 10: SE/4 & S/2SW/4 of 27-1-32 | TRACT 17: N/2 of 25-6-38 |
| TRACT 11: N/2 of 34-1-32 | LOTS IN HERNDON, KS |
| TRACT 12: NE/4 of 6-4-36 | TRACT 18: Lots 7 & 8, Block 10, Original Town |
| TRACT 13: NW/4 of 6-4-36 | |
| TRACT 14: Grassland w/farmstead in S/2 of 6-4-36 | |
| TRACT 15: Cropland acres in S/2 of 6-4-36 | |

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INTRODUCING THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2017



CLASS OF 2017: back row, left to right - Jeremiah Neitzel, Trey Van Allan, Makayla Rogers, Jenna Confer, Jocelyn Pacheco, Ryan Grover; middle row - Kensley Krien, Sophie White, Lakyn Pettijohn, Taylor Rogers; front row - Taryn Zweygardt, Tasha Ritchey, Jessica Pacheco, J.R. Landenberger. Not pictured - Dalton Meyer.

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