

Old homes, parks top area landmarks

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkansas.com

There are several reasons to come visit Northwest Kansas. A couple of reasons to visit Northwest Kansas is to see the historical landmarks and parks.

The Houston Home at Rexford was named an historical landmark by the Kansas Historical Site. The house is located on Main Street. It's a Victorian house with a circular porch and stained glass windows.

It was built by a man named Phillip Houston in the little town of Gem in 1905, said Joan Dingworth of the Shepherd Staff. Houston was a renaissance man in his time, working as a banker, rancher and a farmer. He had six kids.

Maxine Neville was one of Houston's children. She was a resident of Colby who donated to the Shepherd Staff for years, said Dingworth. The Shepherd Staff is a Christian Conference and Retreat Center.

Neville donated her father's house to the group five years ago. Neville died last year. Dingworth said her organization had the home moved from Gem to Rexford.

"Everything was moved but the front porch," she said.

The group paid for the moving expenses and for the foundation the house was placed on. Dingworth said they painted the house last year. The group plans to turn the house into a bed and breakfast and a place for special events.

Fike Park in Colby is a place to take the kids for a picnic, to shoot some hoops, to play tennis or to explore the playground area. During the Christmas season the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce presents Santa City in the park. Santa City is an annual event where Christmas decorations are put up and the Boy Scout hut in the park is turned into a winter wonderland full of Christmas characters, trees and even Santa himself. The city is open to children and adults starting the day after Thanksgiving on the weekend, and then in the evenings in the two weeks before Christmas on Dec. 24.

Legend has it that before Fike Park, the area where the park currently sits was a buffalo wallow, said Sue Taylor, director of the Prairie Museum of Art and History. But the wallow ceased to exist after a railroad was built near the park a few years after the city came into existence.

Taylor said that after the railroad was built

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The Houston Home at Rexford has been named a historical landmark by the Kansas Historical Site. The Victorian home was donated to Shepherd Staff, a Christian Conference and Retreat Center, by Maxine Neville five years ago. Neville was the daughter of the man who built the home in 1905.

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