

# \* State panel hears views on district

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ignored them in some instances. Several communities, including Lawrence and Junction City, came to the Legislature to request that they not be broken apart. The final map divided Lawrence between the 2nd and 3rd Districts and separated Junction City from Fort Riley.

"It was a map that put congressional politics before one person, one vote," he said.

As an example, Sen. Hensley showed a map he created, which gave the 1st District all the counties along the north border of Kansas and south to Leavenworth and part of Kansas City. The map also gave the 2nd District more territory. He said it fit the criteria of evening out the population, but would violate the committee's guidelines in other ways.

Whatever map is finally drawn by the committee, Sen. Hensley said, it should be in the best interest of Kansas, rather than any partisan agenda. He said putting Pottawatomie and Riley counties—including the city of Manhattan—into the 1st District would likely be enough to bring the district up to ideal size. The 2nd District would have to find more population elsewhere, he said, but that plan would put Kansas State University—a land grant college—in with a rural farm district and keep Kansas City together.

Rep. O'Neal, who was involved in the redistricting process 10 years ago, said that almost any plan will require some counties and cities to be split or end up where they don't want to be, and it will be impossible to satisfy everyone.

After Sen. Hensley's presentation, the committee took questions from the audience.

Bob Strevey, a Democrat from Decatur County, asked what the

timeline is for the committee to come up with a new map. Rep. O'Neal said it has to be done before the next election cycle. He said the committee wants to have it finished early in the session, which begins in January, so it can be approved by the Legislature and out to county clerks with plenty of time to spare.

Mr. Strevey also asked what order the Legislature would tackle the House, Senate and U.S. House districts in. Rep. O'Neal said the state districts are usually done first.

Mr. Strevey recommended the committee consider adding Smith County to the 120th House District, since the communities in that district have a common interest in improving U.S. 36 and all border Nebraska. He has been a frequent Democratic candidate in the district.

Rep. Clay Aurand, whose district currently includes Smith County, laughed and said he gave up Phillips County to the 120th in 2001.

"One thing I know is that we can't push into Nebraska," Rep. O'Neal joked.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeier (R-Grainfield) said that had there been an open seat, the committee could have easily dissolved a district. He said that Rep. Jim Morrison had intended to retire after this session, and had he lived, the 121st could have been divided up. Rep. Morrison died last year, however, there is an incumbent, Rep. Rick Billinger of Goodland.

Sheila Frahm, a former state senator, U.S. senator and lieutenant governor, was the only other citizen to speak. She said she appreciated the committee coming to Colby, and reminded them that western Kansas needs a voice. Rep. O'Neal said a lot of the committee members had been chosen because they represent rural areas around the state.

# \* Directory in works

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are tax deductible. Mr. Tally said most memorial money went to building a wall around the new section of the cemetery west of Martin.

Not included in the \$20,000, he said, is a gazebo or structure to get people out of the weather while they use the directory.

Mr. Tally said the cemetery gets more visitors than some might think, including people looking for where their loved ones are buried.

The computerized directory is easy to use, he said. It has voice instructions and a touch screen.

So far, Mr. Tally, said he's talked with the American Legion, the Oberlin Rotary Club and the Knights of Columbus about supporting the project. Anyone who wants him to come give a presentation should call the city office at 475-2217.

Brochures are available at the city office and cemetery.

Mr. Tally said he would like to have the new directory in by Memorial Day. The information on the system will also be available online.

# \* Rules set at cemetery

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are sober or not.

Oberlin is a small town and council members want to cater to the people, said Councilman Josh Williby. Putting up gates at the cemetery won't do that.

While some may say they don't want vehicles in the cemetery after dark, said Chief Lockhart, there are elderly people who aren't able to walk in there.

"If we put up a sign," said Councilwoman Fonda Farr, "the law-abiding citizens who are going to read the sign aren't going to go in there, and the others are going to go in there anyways."

No decision was made.

At the same meeting, the council approved an ordinance governing the cemetery.

Sexton Jeremy Tally said the ordinance stemmed from a request by a relative that that wasn't really covered by the existing rules. The ordinances don't change a lot, he said, but will cover the city if someone wants to think "outside the box."

Mrs. Farr asked about an additional \$50 charge that is now included for some lots. The charge applies if a resident buys a lot and then a nonresident later is buried in it, Mr. Tally said. Residents of the city pay less.

# Hurry up, guys!



**JUST IN TIME FOR HALLOWEEN**, a big, voracious Pac Man pumpkin chases a trio of ghosts across a lot off of Hall Street just west of U.S. 83 each night. Halloween is Monday, and homes around Oberlin have lights, blow-up decorations and pumpkins out on display.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

# \* Norcatur opposes closing post office

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rated from the government, he said, but that shouldn't mean it should be a hardship on the people.

Betsy Jakowski asked if people would have to change their addresses on the rural routes. Mr. Mikulecky said no. People in the country will use their "911" street addresses, he said.

People asked if the service was eliminating jobs for higher ups in bigger cities or closing post offices in cities, where, someone said, there seems to be one on every corner.

The service has done a lot things to save money in cities, too, Mr. Mikulecky said.

One man asked how much the Postal Service will save by closing the office in Norcatur. Mr. Mikulecky said he didn't know, but that information is posted in the lobby at the post office.

The study, he said, showed that the office has less than two hours of work a day.

J.J. Deges, from Bogue, domi-

nated much of the meeting, asking questions and making statements. He said he had been at two meetings like this where the offices had closed.

Mr. Deges asked how the service decided to look at the 3,700 offices on its closing list. Mr. Mikulecky said the list was based on the workload reported in a study.

"There are three kinds of lies," said Mr. Deges. "Lies, damn lies and statistics. Right now, the post office is using statistics."

"How are you going to sell your house in your community? Don't you think no post office will affect your retail market?"

What happens to the women who work at the post office? asked one woman. The service will try to find them a place, said Mr. Mikulecky.

Mr. Mikulecky said he doesn't make the decision on which offices get closed or don't. His manager had 46 meetings like this to do by the end of the month, he said, so he volunteered to help him.

Even if the office closes, the town would keep the same mail carriers. They would just work out of a larger office.

"I understand that closing a small-town post office hurts a community," he added.

Deb Marshall, who works at the Norcatur office, read a letter from County Attorney Steve Hirsch opposing the plan. The crowd applauded.

"I don't get how you can say that Alice Barnett and Deb can do what they do in less than two hours a day," said Dwight Wentz, a Norcatur business owner. "I challenge you to come up here and do what they do

in that time. If you do, I'll just buy you a new pickup."

He said the post office is using national averages to say how long things should take or do take at the post office here, said Mr. Wentz. The national averages don't see the women putting up the flags, sweeping the walks, mowing the lawn, shoveling snow or any of the rest of what they do. He added that he thinks their workload is five to six hours a day minimum.

The meeting ended just shy of the two-hour mark. State Rep. Ward Cassidy attended, as did a staff member from Sen. Jerry Moran's office.

# School to get dough

Decatur Community High School will receive 15 percent of the total sales generated at the Old Home Bread Store in McCook today.

Last month, customers got a coupon for a free loaf of bread for every \$10 they spent. That also gave them a chance to vote for their favorite school.

# There's No Place Like Home

By Eunice Boeve  
Illustrated by Michelle Meade



## Chapter 10

### Ghosts of the Past and the Present

*Last Chapter: Jack and Mollie were transformed into runaway slaves hiding in a dark cellar in Doniphan on their last adventure. They met Abraham Lincoln and were sent on to the next safe place, with the other runaways, hidden in a wagon load of hay. Not having found their glasses, the twins are fearful.*

The wagon wheels rumbling over a rough road jolted the twins and sent bits of hay down on them, making Jack's nose itch. Ever since they had landed in that dark cellar,

Jack had worried about not having their glasses. If somehow they were lost, not only would they never see their home and parents again, but they would have to live as runaway slaves. And if caught and sent back ... He shuddered. Back to where?

Mollie, who had been fighting the same fears, felt a sudden small weight in the pocket of her ragged old dress. A wave of giddiness washed over her as she reached in a hand and touched their glasses. "Jack!" she whispered.

They stood on an empty road, once again two redheaded kids in jeans and T-shirts, and to their right set the time machine.

"Oh, Jack," Mollie cried, "I'm so glad to be out of that hay ... and away ... She started to say those people and was ashamed.

"I know what you mean," Jack said. "I wish they could know that Mr. Lincoln would keep his promise and abolish slavery," Mollie said.

"But it will take a war," Jack said. "I could have told them about Martin Luther King and President Obama," Mollie said. "Oh, and Nicodemus, Kansas, that all-black town settled by ex-slaves."

Now that he was no longer afraid, Jack thought of how awesome it was to have met Abraham Lincoln. "Did you know he'd been to Kansas?" he asked Mollie.

Mollie shook her head. Mr. Lincoln's visit to Kansas was on the computer. Besides Doniphan, he'd gone to Elwood, Blair, Troy, and Leavenworth. The runaways in the cellar at Doniphan

existed only as an oral account and could not be proven.

"Like the Post Office Oak," Mollie said. The twins spent time reading about the Underground Railroad, a network of places, like the cellar in Doniphan, where runaway slaves could hide and be transported on, hopefully, to freedom.

When the familiar ticking of the time machine began, Mollie held up two crossed fingers.

"That won't help get us home," Jack said. "It won't hurt either," Mollie replied.

The woman stood on top of the hill, the wind ruffling her long blue dress. As they came up beside her, she turned in surprise. "Oh! I didn't realize I wasn't alone. Did you come from Hays?"

Startled the twins looked at each other,



each seeing in the other's eyes, a small gleam of hope that quickly died. Long dress ... pants ... a shirt ... all of another era? Even if they were home, it wasn't 2011. But the glasses! Mollie patted her skirt pockets and grinned.

Jack felt his heart give a little leap. "Yes," he told the woman.

Now, looking down from the hill, Jack noticed in the distance a cluster of limestone rock buildings, corrals, and a barn and realized they were seeing Old Fort Hays

when it was a military post for the U.S. Calvary. Remembering that General George Armstrong Custer, who was killed along with the Seventh Calvary at the now famous Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana, had once been at Hays, Jack asked the woman if he were there now.

"No," she said. "And he is most fortunate for cholera has stricken the Fort and many are dying. I try to ease their suffering, but there is precious little one can do. When I can bear it no longer ... She paused ... "Up here, the air is clean, fresh, not laden with the fetid breath of sickness and death. Up here, for a little while ..." She wiped a handkerchief at sudden tears. "But I must go. Duty calls."

As the woman in the blue dress descended the hill, Mollie said, "Okay. Let's go home."

The ordinary sights and sounds of modern-day Hays, thrilled the twins. Even the trucks and cars speeding along Interstate 70 and the slower traffic through town filled them with happiness. They were home!

They could no longer see the old fort, hidden as it was behind motels, fast food restaurants, and used car lots. "Remember," Mollie said, when we were 5 and Dad and Mom took us there for an old-time program called Christmas at the Fort?"

"I remember," Jack said. "But let's think now about getting home. It's quite a ways and we'll have to keep our glasses on all the time or get sent back to 18 something ... And we may have to go back, anyway."

"Maybe there's a switch or something on the time machine that Mom and Dad can turn off," Mollie said, daring to hope.

"Maybe," Jack said, also hoping. "But first, it'll only take a minute to see who that woman was and what year they had a cholera epidemic in Hays."

"Okay," Mollie said. "I can stand to wait a minute."

The information on the computer gave the year of the cholera epidemic as 1867, the hill as Sentinel Hill, and the woman as probably Elizabeth Polly, the young wife of Ephraim Polly. She, too, died of cholera.

"The park on Indian Hill road is called Elizabeth Polly Park," Mollie said. "And there is a statue of her there by that artist, Pete Felton."

"Look at this!" Jack said. "Elizabeth Polly was buried at the foot of Sentinel Hill and people say she haunts it. Some claim to have seen her. They call her the Blue Light Lady."

"We saw a ghost?" Mollie's face screwed up in a look of disbelief.

"No," Jack said laughing. "She wasn't a ghost then. But she might be now."

"Whatever she is or was," Mollie said, "I still want to go home. Let's walk to our school and ride the bus home."

The twins anticipated a kind of hero's welcome from Mr. Crawford and the kids as they burst into the classroom, but not one kid even looked up, and Mr. Crawford kept right on talking about a math test. On the blackboard where he wrote it every morning, was the day's date.

"It's the day we left," Mollie said. She glanced toward their empty seats. "And we're not here."

Jack frowned. "Time must have stood still."

"We're like ghosts," Mollie said. Like Elizabeth Polly. She laughed, but tears sparkled in her eyes. "Let's go. Maybe Dad and Mom can see us."

"How?" Jack said. "If time stands still ..." His voice trailed off.

Mollie frowned. "The school bus won't come until schools out and school won't be out until we get back home."

To Be Continued.

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