

ALBUM

JOHNSON COUNTY MUSEUM

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Scenes from two towns of the past: left, Coker General Store in Monticello, ca. 1896; right, the construction of Sunflower Village, 1943. Johnson County Museum Collection.

A Place in History: Past Villages and Communities in Johnson County

While many modern cities celebrate milestone anniversaries, other cities, towns, villages and communities have long since disappeared from our landscape. We have featured many such towns of the past in previous newsletters, but there are scores of others. Although they have long since vanished, remnants of their existence and interest in their histories continue. Here is a brief look into a few of those towns and some of the circumstances that led to their demise.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

With the opening of Johnson County for settlement, frontier towns sprouted throughout the area. Location was a critical component to the success of towns. Early settlements crowded around waterways and natural resources. In addition, locating along existing transportation routes and later attracting new transportation routes were key to a town's survival. Towns sprang up along overland routes, stagecoach lines, railroads and later highways. Commerce continues as a critical factor in the success of the cities today.

Monticello, laid out as a town in 1857, was named after the Virginia estate of Thomas Jefferson. Early success came from its location near the overland trails and military roads. In 1858, businesses in Monticello were booming and the town boasted 250 people. Although a tornado hit the town later that year, the townspeople rebuilt. Ahead of the game in development and prosperity, the town of Monticello was an early favorite for the county seat. However, it lost the distinction to the favored central location of Olathe. As new roads and transportation routes were built over the years, they bypassed this town. The Monticello Post Office ultimately closed in 1905. The former town site of Monticello is now in the City of Shawnee.

Monticello was not the only town in the county vying for the honor of county seat. A little known town of Princeton, founded in 1857 on Cedar Creek near Olathe, had similar aspirations. Although it shared a favored central location with Olathe, it lost out in the vote. In short, that was the end of Princeton. The former town site of Princeton is now a part of the City of Olathe.

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DONORS TO THE COLLECTION

The Johnson County Museum thanks the many generous people and organizations whose donations have been added to the permanent collection since the last newsletter.

**Roberta Idoux
Peggy Burmaster
Genelle MacPherson
Freelyn McGee
Mary Savage
Quinton Wells
John Capra**

We thank also the donors of items added to our interpretive collections. These “working” artifacts are put to active use in hands-on activities such as education programs.

Mary Tearney

NEW ACQUISITIONS

The Johnson County Museum collects artifacts from all periods of the county’s history, from early settlement through the present day. The following items are among the many recent donations to the permanent collection.



HI-YO, LIGHTNING!

Stuffed animals have been favorite children’s toys for well over a century. Lightning, this well-loved stuffed horse, belonged to donor Mary Savage when she was growing up in Johnson County in the 1960s. In a letter accompanying her donation, she noted that “Lightning’s red bridle faded after I left him outside in a willow tree during a rainstorm.”

FACE THE MUSIC

Fisher-Price first entered the toy market in the 1930s with a line of pull-toys. Later the company expanded its products to include educational toys and the multi-piece play sets familiar to kids since the early 1970s. This musical clock, intended to help children learn to tell time plays “The Farmer in the Dell.” The clock dates from the 1960s and was used by donor Peggy Burmaster’s children, who were born between 1957 and 1966.



THE GOOD LIFE

Quinton Wells Jr. recently donated this 1957 photograph of himself and his younger brother Stephen with their grandparents, James and Frances Stafford. The photo was taken by the patio of the All-Electric House, which the Staffords purchased in May 1955. Now restored to its original appearance and open for tours as part of the Johnson County Museum, the house was originally located at 4602 Homestead in Prairie Village. The Staffords lived in the house until 1973. The house was donated to the Museum in 1994.

CUTTING EDGE

Donor Genelle MacPherson brought these ice skates with her when she and her husband moved to Johnson County in 1957. She remembers using them at Antioch Park in Merriam.



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WISH LIST

The Museum seeks photographs that document communities mentioned in this issue’s feature article. We are particularly interested in images of Clearview City, Sunflower Village, Countryside, Monrovia, Ocheltree and Kenneth. If you have images of people and places in these communities, please call Anne Marvin, Curator of Collections, at 913-631-6709.

MUSEUM NOTES

THE MUSEUM HITS THE STREETS OF SHAWNEE!

Participating in area parades has proven to be an excellent way to let the community know about the Johnson County Museum and all we have to offer. A group of dedicated volunteers gathered on Saturday, June 5th to represent the Johnson County Museum in the Old Shawnee Days Parade. About



The Johnson County Museum Old Shawnee Days Parade participants pose for a group photo before the parade start (above) and photographed during the event followed by the fabulous Fifties cars (below.)



twenty board members, Friends members and volunteers walked in the parade alongside two vintage 1950s cars. The theme was obviously the 1950s — and we passed out close to 5,000 free tickets to the 1950s All-Electric House to parade spectators. We hope many of them take advantage of the opportunity to explore their county history museum this summer and take a tour of the 1950s house. Thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who participated. And a special thank you to Ray Council of Shawnee for driving his 1957 Ford Fairlane Hard Top and to Kent Hunter for driving his 1957 Ford Skyliner Retractable Hard Top Convertible.

MUSEUM OPENS NEW EXHIBIT ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS!

On May 29th, the Museum of History opened its latest exhibit, *Touching History: A Kid's Journey Through Time*. This exhibit represents somewhat of a departure for the Museum. We haven't focused an exhibit specifically to children before, but it appears to be paying off! We have had a steady stream of children and their families through our doorway since we opened. I encourage you to bring your children and grandchildren to the museum this summer to explore the highlighted Johnson County themes. The exhibit features 30 hands-on activities, audio and computer components plus Johnson County artifacts and photographs. We hope the exhibit serves as a fun and effective way to introduce history to young children and creates a community of life-long learners! See you this summer at the Museum!

VIRGINIA SCHOOL

Johnson County's latest addition to the National Register of Historic Places is the Virginia School, located at the intersection of 71st Street and Clare Road in western Shawnee. Both as a building and as a long-time center of community activity, the structure is typical of one-room country schools that dotted the rural landscape from the late 19th through mid-20th centuries. The school closed in 1962, a victim of school consolidation. The building later served as a church.

Recent research conducted by members of the Monticello Community Historical Society indicates that School

District No. 33, Virginia School, was originally organized in 1865. The first school structure stood about one-half mile east of its present location. In 1875, Sarah and C.J. Mize deeded an acre to the district for a new school. The present one-room frame building on a stone foundation was com-



Virginia School students and their teacher pose for the photographer, 1924. JCM Collection.

pleted in time for the first term of school in 1878. Modifications since that time included the addition of an entry vestibule in the early 1900s. This entryway is topped by a small cupola to house the school bell. Improvements to the building in the 1940s included electric lights in place of kerosene fixtures, a new oil-burning furnace in place of a coal stove and cistern and pump to replace the old well. The building never did boast indoor plumbing. An outhouse still stands to the northeast of the school.

The Virginia School building housed numerous community activities over the years. These included religious services, lyceum programs and social events such as

Mother's Day teas in the 1950s. Enrollment varied considerably, with 27 students in 1898 and 57 in 1920. Later increases in the student population led to construction of a second building on the site in 1954. Grades one through four met in one building, five through eight in the other. The second structure was sold and moved at the time of consolidation.

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN PARTNERS

Many thanks to the following corporations and foundations who have contributed to the success of the Museums through the Annual Campaign.

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REMEMBERED BY NAME

Overland Park, Olathe, Lenexa and other cities are hard to miss on maps of Johnson County. Ever heard of the communities of Jerusalem or perhaps Frisbie? Finding Romance might be difficult in present day Johnson County. These places, as well as many others, once existed here.

Potosi, better known to the townspeople at the time as "Little Shab," survives in the recollections of J. L. Morgan, a pioneer of De Soto. A little more is known about Phila, a nearby town. This town had a Post Office from 1890-1894 and again in 1898-1899, documenting the town's existence. It then promptly disappeared into obscurity. Jerusalem, two miles north-east of Gardner, was noted as having a store, blacksmith shop, school and several residences. It later vanished from the maps, the school renamed "Concord." No mention can be found of why they changed the name of the school or what happened to the town of Jerusalem.

Historians note Chouteau as a stop on the Santa Fe Railroad, located between Wilder and Holliday. It was named for the Chouteau brothers who established a small trading post there in 1827. Switzer was listed as a station on the Frisco Railroad, 12 miles north of Olathe. It was known for the vast quantities of milk shipped through the station. Craig also was



1899 Map of Johnson County as printed in *History of Kansas* by Noble Prentiss.

a stop on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, seven miles to the north of Olathe. Lackman, a station on the Frisco Line, was credited at one time with two claim shanties.

Some places in Johnson County can only be found as points on historic maps. Mastin, located 11 miles east of Olathe on the Kansas/Missouri border, was a station on the Kansas City, Clinton and Springfield Railroad. Nel-Aro,

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BORDER TOWNS

Some of the early settlements along the Missouri-Kansas border were in essence an extension of pre-existing towns in Missouri. One such case was Oxford, created in 1857. Oxford Township was originally named Santa Fe Township, after New Santa Fe, a neighboring Missouri border town. A number of early Oxford settlers were from the Missouri side and had distinct pro-slavery political beliefs. With the onset of the Civil War, many residents left the town and joined the Confederate army. Deserted houses and shops were later used by Union soldiers. Known as a rebel community, the town of Oxford did not fare well under their control. They took lumber from razed buildings for use in new stables or as firewood. Citizens of southern sympathies who had left the area returned after the war to find their homes destroyed.

At the end of four years [of] war, they straggled back, haggard with hardships and cares, impoverished in purse, with broken health, and utterly dispirited, to find their fine dwellings burned or torn down, the magnificent orchards dead from neglect or destroyed by vandals, the fences gone, and fields a wilderness of weeds;—only ruin and desolation where once was thrift and prosperity.

Atlas Map of Johnson County, Kansas
1874.

Of the buildings that remained after the war, many were moved to New Santa Fe, and the town of Oxford never recovered. The City of Leawood now contains the former town site of Oxford.

The turbulent town of Aubry also suffered from an unfortunate case of location. It was surveyed and organized in 1858, named after noted Santa Fe trader F.X. Aubry. Its location near the Missouri line brought difficulties. An early historian of Johnson County noted:

With the commencement of the national difficulties, rural quiet and peace came to an abrupt end. Located on the border of Missouri—the worst part of Missouri too where the adherents of rebellion were most numerous and rampant—the township was most unfortunately situated.

The border town of Aubry just happened to be located where most of the Missouri insurgents entered Kansas. Aubrey was a town of divided sentiments. With the onset of the Civil War, a number of citizens joined the army of one side or the other. Many of those that stayed attempted to maintain a neutral stance. It was considered wise to not have an opinion on the war. Raids began in 1862 and Aubry was often the first target for pillaging bands as they crossed into Kansas Territory. The town became known as a battleground. The Aubry Post Office was closed in 1862, reestablished in 1866 and finally eliminated in 1888. What remained of the town of Aubry eventually merged with Stilwell, a settlement established 30 years later a half-mile east.

RIVAL TOWNS

The conflict over whether Kansas would enter the Union as a free or slavery state often led to two towns of opposing viewpoints located close to each other. Pro-slavery settlers started the town site of Lexington, in northwestern Johnson County, in October 1855. In 1857, the anti-slavery town of De Soto formed just a few miles to the north. Lexington was considered very prosperous at the time, with a post office, a two-story hotel, a general

store, blacksmith shop and a few houses. The daily stage coach that traveled between Kansas City and Lawrence stopped for dinner and a change of horses at the hotel. The hotel also served as an Indian supply office. As described by J. L. Morgan, a De Soto settler:

De Soto was a Yankee town, Lexington a Southern town, hence there was a political as well as business rivalry between the two. But the latter town was gradually deserted, and its site is now an excellent farm.

Lexington's politics led to its demise. Kansas entered the Union as a free state, and free-state towns had a distinct advantage when attracting settlers and future resources. By 1864, the town was vacant and purchased by Hugh Penner for use as farmland. Pro-slavery towns slowly began to vanish from the landscape. The post office in Lexington was discontinued on January 14, 1863. The hotel, such an important feature to this town, stood until 1919, when it was torn down.

Another example of rival towns was the pro-slavery settlement of McCamish, located near where the Santa Fe Trail crossed Bull Creek in southwestern Johnson County, and its rival anti-slavery town, Lanesfield, just a short distance away. Although the town of Lanesfield was on the winning side of this battle, passing McCamish in longevity, the victory was short-lived. By 1870, Lanesfield would experience a new challenge.



The Hodges General Store in Holliday, ca. 1878 JCM Collection.

THE RAILROAD COMETH... OR NOT

Like the town of Lanesfield, the life and death of many Johnson County communities was often tied to the railroad. Attracting the railway was considered key to their growth. Lanesfield was one of many communities in the area that vanished when the railroad did not come to town. The neighboring community of Martin (also known as Martinsburgh) was instead the beneficiary of a highly-sought after train depot. It was renamed Edgerton, after the Chief Engineer responsible for laying the route of the railroad, and residents of Lanesfield and McCamish moved to the booming town.

Lexington also did not fair well after the Civil War when the railroad passed it by. Although Lexington had dominated local politics before the Civil War, De Soto, with benefit of Union supporters, ultimately got the railroad after the war. Other communities failed slowly but surely when unable to attract the railroad. Squiresville was the first stop along the stage route from Westport and was located two miles east of Ocheltree in southern Johnson County. After the war, the railroad bypassed the town and that proved to be the end of Squiresville.

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Many readers may not realize that some towns in our area are named for prominent railroad officials. Morris, established in 1866, was named after an officer of the Santa Fe Railroad. Some older communities changed their names to honor railroad men in hopes of attracting the railroad. The community of Waseca became Holliday in honor of Cyrus K. Holliday, founder of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. A junction of two lines of the AT&SF was later located in the town.

NATURE'S WRATH

Although attracting the railroad was a key factor in the life of a town, sometimes even that was not enough to ensure success. In some cases in Johnson County, nature itself delivered the final blow. The town of Wilder was located on fertile land across the river from Bonner Springs. Named for Edward Wilder, the secretary-treasurer of the Santa Fe railroad, Wilder showed bright promise. Not only freight trains, but also passenger trains stopped in town, enabling residents to travel to and from Kansas City or Lawrence. Unfortunately, nature wrought havoc on the town. The flood of 1951 devastated the town of Wilder. The flood also affected the soil itself and crops no longer flourished as they had in the past. The flood of 1951 also dealt the final blow to the nearby river town of Holliday. The former town sites of Holliday and Wilder are now within the boundaries of the City of Shawnee.



The Carolyn and Frank Enloe residence after the 1951 flood in Wilder, KS. JCM Collection.

CASUALTY OF WAR

War brings about many changes, but few would guess that World War II would cause the demise of a town in the heart of the Midwest. Johnson County lost a town when approximately 9,000 acres of land including about 150 farms were selected as the site for a new ammunitions plant. Prairie Center was a thriving community originally established on April 9, 1871. The town was aptly named, located in the heart of prairie land equidistant from Edgerton to the south, Gardner to the southeast, De Soto to the northeast and Eudora to the northwest. Prairie Center boasted three churches, a post office, a store, a blacksmith shop and several other amenities of a solid rural town. Chosen for its easy access to major highways and its relatively isolated rural location, Prairie Center was obliterated when it and the surrounding farmland (ironically including the former town site of Lexington) became the site for the Sunflower Ordnance Works.

MODERN BOOMTOWN

The establishment of the Sunflower Ordnance Works in 1942 flooded nearby De Soto with workers looking for housing. Sunflower Village was built by the federal government in 1943 to house thousands of people attracted by the opportunity to work at the ammunitions plant. The community was located just north of the plant and was operated by the Federal Public Housing Administration. The "Sunflower Sentinel," official newsletter for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, published the plan for Sunflower Village in 1943.

The plan for the 175-building site showed houses 40 feet apart with space for a miniature victory garden in back. The buildings included 352 housing units with two bedrooms, 250 with three bedrooms and 100 with five bedrooms. The landscape plan called for thousands of trees and bushes to beautify the complex.

A new addition made to Sunflower Village in 1945 included 12 two-bedroom units and six one-bed-



The plan for Sunflower Village, 1942. JCM Collection.

room units. Adjacent to the Village was a small trailer park often referred to as Trailer Town. Sunflower Village included a City Hall complete with ballroom, a post office, a school, a bowling alley, a grocery store, a dairy store, a beauty shop and a theater. A service station selling Phillips 66 gasoline and Firestone accessories opened in 1945. In the 1950s, Sunflower Village experienced its peak population of around 5,000- 6,000 occupants, including military personnel.

In 1958, the plant was in stand-by status and the need for nearby housing was no longer pressing. Sunflower Village was sold to Louis Ensley of Lawton, OK on November 30, 1959 for \$313,000. It operated on a private basis featuring low to moderate rent apartments. In the 1970s, Paul Hansen had a vision to change Sunflower Village into a retirement community. He renamed the site Clearview City, because of the prairie scenery. The change of name was also an attempt to disassociate the property from the stigma attached to Sunflower Village, which had fallen into disrepair over the years. Many of the trailer homes that dotted Sunflower Village were sold off for \$1,000 each in the 1970s. Today, the remaining houses of Sunflower Village can still be seen in this quiet community. Although it still retains its own zip code, Clearview City is now a part of De Soto, annexed in 2001.



W. G. Rice's Blacksmith Shop circa 1890 in Prairie Center, KS. JCM Collection.

A PLACE IN HISTORY

Many cities and towns in Johnson County are built upon the remnants of former communities, long since forgotten. Residing in overlooked fields, camouflaged by luxurious new subdivisions or surrounded by larger cities, their struggles to exist form a unique chapter in history. While some showed great promise initially, others quickly faded. Whether due to nature, politics, war, development or just sheer bad luck, the demise of these cities and communities is an integral part of the county's history. While we celebrate the upcoming 150th anniversary of Johnson County in 2005, it is fitting to recognize the contribution of the towns and communities of the past that, if nothing else, have earned their place in history.

TO LEARN MORE...

History of Johnson County Kansas, by Ed Blair, (Lawrence: Standard Publishing Company, 1915.) or online at <http://www.kancoll.org/books/blair/>

History of Kansas by William G. Cutler, (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883.) or online at <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/johnson/johnson-co-p1.html>

Local Memoirs:

The Community of Aubry-Stilwell by Anita M. Tebbe, 1980.
De Soto by Cecile Culp, 1987.
My Memories of Prairie Center by Edwin L. Rice, 1975.

Local memoirs are available for on-site research in the Research Library of the Johnson County Museum of History. The library is open 10-4 Tuesday- Friday and by appointment on Saturdays. Visit the Museum of History to learn more about past communities in Johnson County or contact Kathy Daniels, Assistant Curator at 913-631-6709.

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another border community, lay to the north. Just south and west of Wilder was the railroad stop of Frisbie. Allendale, Bartleson, Meadowbrook, Newington, Red Clover, Romance, Sherman, Spring Place, Wainwright and others are mentioned as Post Offices, but little else is known about these sites or the surrounding communities they served. Johnson City was to be located on what remained of Turpinville in central Johnson County, one stop to the south of Lackman. It may have existed only in local legend as what is commonly referred to as a "paper town," a promoter's vision that never came to fruition

FUN FACTS ABOUT JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITIES

The pioneer town of Monticello was laid out in 1857 soon after Kansas territory was open for white settlement. Located on the Lawrence to Westport territorial road, the town contained several stores, saloons, blacksmith shop and a hotel which was burned during the Civil War. James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok lived in the area and worked as a stock tender at the Reed Hotel. Three early buildings remain: an early home, log cabin and township hall. The town of Monticello which had hoped to become the county seat, was the victim of a destructive tornado, fire and grasshopper plague. The town dwindled after the turn of the century as the railroad was built a few miles to the east.

Shawnee Journal Herald
June 1, 1988

Oxford in Oxford Township is perhaps the most famous of all the extinct towns in Johnson County. It was laid out early in 1857...Its founder was a rampant pro-slavery man who rejoiced in the name of Christopher Columbus Catron. Oxford grew to be a substantial village with good stores, shops and dwellings, and was a trade center for the surrounding country. Its claim to fame rests upon the election held there October 5, 1857, at which the returns showed something like 1,600 votes cast. A congressional investigation developed the fact that the names entered on the poll lists were taken from an old Cincinnati, Ohio directory.

The Olathe Mirror
November 22, 1934

The gathering at Prairie Center last Sunday was a happy occasion for those who returned for the fifth annual home-coming of the community...The big basket dinner at noon was apparently well enjoyed by all. Chicken and all the trimmings were in abundance, and following the dinner considerable time was spent renewing old friendships and greeting friends.

Johnson County Democrat
September 26, 1935

PEEK INTO THE PAST...

House History Detective

Looking for a fun summer activity? Look no further than your own backyard! Find out the history of your home: the land, the building and the people who lived there. You might just uncover something amazing!

What is the story of your home? Was it built on a former town, farm or land crossed by the overland trails? Whether you live in an old home or a new home, the land you live on has history. Here are some ways you can find out the history about the place you call home.



1. Interview people.

Write down what you know about your house or apartment building. Then, start doing interviews. Ask your parents or neighbors these questions:

When did the family move in?

If your family owns the house, who did they buy it from?

How many families have lived in the house?

When was the house built?

2. Take a field trip.

A trip to the county archives or a local history museum can give you lots of information. Look for deeds, title documents or other public records at the county archives. Many local history museums have copies of old maps that can give information about former towns or properties that your house may be built on. Compare an old map with a modern map of your community and see what you can find out!

Tip: Always call before visiting the archives or a museum. Many places require research appointments and may be able to pull out the information for you before you come, saving you lots of time!

3. Do your homework.

Once you find out about the land your house was built on, visit your local library or historical museum to do research.

Good places to look are:

- newspaper articles
- diaries
- local history books
- photographs
- oral histories
- letters
- maps



4. Record your history.

Add to your home's history by keeping a journal, writing a history of your house or doing a video documentary of your family's daily life. Make sure to include the history of your home!

Here are numbers of places you can call if you are researching a building or land in Johnson County:

Johnson County Museum of History
Call 913-631-6709 for a research appointment.
www.jocomuseum.org

Johnson County Archives
(Located at the County Administration building in Olathe)
913-715-5000
<http://archives.jocogov.org/>

Johnson County Central Resource Library
913-465-2400
www.jocolibrary.org

TO LEARN MORE...

Read:

My Backyard History Book by David Weitzman. Little Brown and Company, 1975.

Through the Eyes of Your Ancestors: A Step-by-Step Guide to Uncovering Your Family's History. Houghton Mifflin Co, 1999.

HISTORY MYSTERY

The students of Greenwood School posed with their teacher, Thelma Rafferty, in 1921. Only two students were identified when the photograph was shared by Helen (Metz) Hiebl. The fifth girl on the left in the second row is Daisy Merrit and the seventh girl on the left in the second row is Helen Metz. If you recognize the individuals in this photograph please contact us at 913-631-6709. We appreciate your assistance!



LEE FITS JOHNSON COUNTY

Lee Jeans, a leading manufacturer of apparel with world-wide recognition, is headquartered in Johnson County. Throughout the years, the company has moved its headquarters from Salina to Kansas City and in 1966, to suburban Johnson County (State Line and Johnson Drive-now Shawnee Mission Parkway.) An office at 9090 Nieman Road was added in 1971 to handle the overcrowding until the new national headquarters opened at 9001 W 67th Street in Merriam, KS in 1976. Lee Jeans continues to be recognized for its innovative research, design and marketing; traits that have characterized this company from its very founding.



The company founder was Henry David Lee, an Ohio businessman who made his fortune in the kerosene oil industry.

Lee moved to Kansas for health reasons and in 1889 he established the H. D. Lee Mercantile, a wholesale grocery in Salina, Kansas. His mercantile rapidly expanded to include general merchandise such as furnishings, school supplies and apparel. Lee actively expanded his business to include a flour mill, a wholesale hardware company, an ice plant and a bank. Unsatisfied with the quality and delivery of apparel to his mercantile, Lee expanded to manufacture work wear in 1911.

Ties to this area started in 1915, when Lee opened the first of many manufacturing plants in Kansas City. The H. D. Lee Company continued to expand its share of the apparel market with innovative nationwide marketing. In the 1920s, Buddy Lee, an overall clad doll, emerged as part of a marketing campaign that continues in popularity today. In 1939, the H. D. Lee Company celebrated its 50th anniversary as the

nation's largest manufacturer of work wear, with their slogan *The Jeans that Built America*. In 1969, the H. D. Lee Company consolidated with the VF Corporation. The merger was considered a success as Lee continued to grow with the new motto *The Clothes You Need for the Life You Lead*. Lee expanded in the 1970s, emphasizing comfort and fit for the entire family with the slogan *Lee Fits America*.

Lee has continued with innovations such as stonewashed denim in the 1980s and the use of twill in today's casual wear. This Merriam-based company is also well known for its involvement with the community and fundraising efforts. Established in 1996, Lee National Denim Day has become the nation's largest single day fundraiser for breast cancer research. Today, Lee Jeans is recognized for their wide variety of apparel including designs for western, work and casual wear sold in over 20 countries around the world.

ENDOWMENT GIFTS

We thank those who have invested in the Museums' future with donations to the Endowment Fund.

- Eliot & Marcia Berkley**
- Paul and Dorcas Doering**
- Exxon matching gift for Dick and Gloria Haberkorn**
- Paul and Barbara Gorman in memory of Ruth Hervey**
- Ralph Hays**
- IBM Foundation matching gift for Randall and Helen Ferguson**
- Mindi Love in memory of Corinthian Nutter**
- Janet Vaughan in memory of Corinthian Nutter**
- Joan Barkley Wells in memory of Marguerite Wells**

JOIN US!

We invite you to be part of the Museums' future by joining the Friends of Johnson County Museums. The Friends support exhibit development, educational programs and special events. Your membership and other contributions are tax deductible.

Your membership brings you the following annual benefits:

- **Free admission to The 1950s All-Electric House**
- **Quarterly newsletter, ALBUM**
- **10% off museum store purchases**
- **50% discount on programs**
- **Invitations to Members' Only events**

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____ Phone _____

- \$25-49 **Friend**
- \$50-99 **Good Friend**
- \$100-249 **Really Good Friend**
- \$250 and up **Best Friend**

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ payable to **Friends of Johnson County Museums.**

I am making an additional contribution of \$_____ in honor/memory of _____

Please charge \$_____ to my credit card.
 Mastercard Visa

My company matches charitable donations. The matching form is enclosed.

Please send me information about volunteer opportunities.

Acct. Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Return to 6305 Lackman Road, Shawnee, KS 66217.

MUSEUM OF HISTORY

6305 Lackman Road
Shawnee, KS 66217
(913) 631-6709
Fax: (913) 631-6359
Email: jcmuseum@jocogov.org
www.jocomuseum.org
Tues-Sat 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Sunday 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.
ADMISSION IS FREE

THE 1950s ALL-ELECTRIC HOUSE

6305 Lackman Road
Shawnee, KS 66217
(913) 631-6709
www.jocomuseum.org
Tues - Sun 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.,
guided tours every half hour
**ADMISSION: \$2 for adults; \$1 for
children 12 and under**

**LANESFIELD SCHOOL
HISTORIC SITE**

18745 S. Dillie Road
Edgerton, KS 66021
(913) 893-6645
www.jocomuseum.org
Tues - Sun 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
ADMISSION IS FREE

SOMETHING FROM THE OVEN



Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950's America, by Laura Shapiro. Viking Penguin, 2004.

Laura Shapiro's *Something from the Oven* is a well-researched history of the 1950s American woman's relationship with the food industry. At the dawn of the

decade, women were expected to be not only wife and mother but business manager, practical nurse, housecleaner, child psychologist, home decorator, chauffeur, laundress, cook and hostess. The American food industry saw a need to minimize the housewife's time at the stove. By liberating the women from preparing meals from scratch they would be able to spend that time elsewhere. What followed was a sometimes comical attempt at gourmet convenient foods that were already prepared and recipes that required little preparation.

The early chapters of the book follow the food industry's forays into the housewife's kitchen. Their first attempt came at the end of World War Two with products such as frozen orange juice, fish sticks, frozen whale steaks, dehydrated wine and frozen bouillabaisse. Some items lasted, while others did not. The industry kept at it though and published cook-books with recipes such as ketchup meringue and one including the following directions: Spam placed in the bottom of a casserole dish, then layered with canned macaroni and cheese, then a layer of canned

asparagus and finally a layer of cheese and bread crumbs. For all the industry's failures, they also came up with products that have stood the test of time such as Spam, canned peaches, frozen vegetables, Nescafe, Bisquick and Jell-O.

Shapiro follows up in later chapters with mini-biographies of many of the women involved in the food media, especially Julia Child who brought French cooking into the mainstream, the fictitious Betty Crocker and the noted food columnist M.F.K. Fisher. What the food industry and their public relations firms didn't realize was that while they were trying to take the stress off of cooking dinner, the housewife saw house cleaning as the dreaded chore and actually looked forward to cooking dinner. Shapiro contends that the women in her mini-biographies encouraged women to "take charge of their own world and to cook something very good from scratch." Socially, the food industry was trying to replace lengthy prepared meals with instant food and in doing so implied that women were mere functionaries in the kitchen and not up to the hard task of cooking meals.

This fascinating book takes the reader through the changing 1950s American kitchen. From tasteless gourmet meals through humorous recipes to popular inventions and interesting figures, this history will have you yearning for a bowl of a Red Crest Salad made with chopped tomatoes and pickles stirred into strawberry Jell-O...or maybe not.

Editor's note: This book is for sale in the Museum of History's Museum Store. Members get a 10% discount.

ALBUM
JOHNSON COUNTY MUSEUM

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Shawnee, KS 66217

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